

**FROM SCREEN TO STAGE: EXPLORING THE NARRATIVE
TRANSFORMATION IN THE "MAMMA MIA" MUSICAL BY ENGLISH
LITERATURE STUDENTS OF UNM**

Ardiansyah Ahmad¹, Riola Haya Nur²
ardiansyah.ahmad@unm.ac.id¹, riola.haya.nur@unm.ac.id²
Universitas Negeri Makassar

ABSTRAK

This study aims to explore the narrative transformation in the musical drama performance "Mamma Mia" performed by English Literature students of Makassar State University at New Hall AP Pettarani on June 1st 2024. By using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, this research gathered data from 20 respondents through surveys and interviews. Research findings indicate that the performance successfully engaged the audience with strong actor performances, prominent artistic and technological elements, and dynamic choreography. The study also revealed a significant personal impact of the performance, including feelings of inspiration and appreciation for drama performance. Feedback was generally positive, constructive suggestions from respondents provided valuable insights for future improvements. This study makes a significant contribution to understanding narrative adaptations in drama performance and underscores the importance of audience reception in evaluating the success of drama productions.

Keywords: Narrative Transformation, Adaptation, Reception, Mamma Mia

INTRODUCTION

The practice of adapting literary works into various media forms boasts a rich history, stretching back to ancient times. Stories from epics, poems, and dramas have found new life in diverse artistic expressions, including paintings, sculptures, and, more recently, films and television series. A prime example is Greek mythology, whose tales have been continuously reimagined and disseminated through various art forms for centuries. This ongoing process of transformation allows these narratives to transcend time and cultural boundaries, fostering connections between generations and cultures. The modern era has witnessed a significant expansion in the scope of adaptation, no longer limited to classical literary works. The abundance of modern creations, including books, comics, and even video games, has been successfully adapted into films and television shows, achieving global recognition. The "Harry Potter" and "Game of Thrones" franchises exemplify this trend, having become global phenomena.

Inevitably, the adaptation process necessitates significant adjustments to narrative elements, characters, and settings. These modifications are undertaken to ensure the story's successful translation into the new medium and to resonate with the expectations of diverse audiences. Adaptation also presents substantial creative challenges. Writers and directors must grapple with the task of effectively translating the core elements of the original story into a new form. This often necessitates sacrificing or altering certain aspects of the narrative to maintain its overall coherence and integrity. Achieving this feat requires a profound understanding of the story's essence and the ability to innovate in conveying the same message through a different medium.

Each medium possesses unique strengths and limitations, necessitating compromise and innovation during the adaptation process. For instance, novels offer ample space for intricate character development and detailed world-building. Films, however, face time constraints, often requiring the condensation or elimination of some narrative elements. Conversely, drama performance provides a sense of intimacy and live presence that films cannot replicate.

However, it is limited by physical space and available resources. Creative interpretation is another crucial facet of adaptation. A director or screenwriter may possess a distinct vision for the narrative, resulting in unique and fresh interpretations of the source material. While this divergence can lead to tension between the original creators and those adapting the work, it can also be a source of innovation, yielding richer and more profound reimaging.

The stage adaptation of "Mamma Mia" serves as a compelling illustration of how a story can be transformed from film (screen) to stage. The 2008 film, starring Meryl Streep, Pierce Brosnan, and Amanda Seyfried, is a romantic comedy featuring popular songs from the band ABBA. Its commercial success and widespread popularity made it a prime candidate for stage adaptation. However, translating the film to the stage was no easy feat. The process involved meticulously adapting narrative elements from the film, such as dialogue, scenes, and characters, to a format suitable for theatrical performance. This required adjustments to the script, choreography, stage design, and music. Additionally, the stage performance demanded careful consideration of technical elements like lighting, sound, and costumes, all of which significantly contribute to the audience's overall experience.

In the case of "Mamma Mia," audience feedback can help English Literature students understand the strengths and weaknesses of their adaptation, as well as provide insights into how they can improve theirs. This research aims to analyse the narrative adaptation process of "Mamma Mia" from film (screen) to stage, as performed by the English Literature students of Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM). The study seeks to understand how the elements of the story, characters, and setting were adjusted to meet the demands of the stage medium while preserving the essence of the original narrative. By examining this adaptation, the research provides insights into the broader practice of adapting narratives across different media, highlighting the creative decisions and technical strategies employed.

METHOD

Respondents

The respondents of this study were 20 students from the English Literature program at Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM), all of whom had watched the "Mamma Mia" musical performance held at New Hall AP Pettarani UNM on June 1st 2024. These students were chosen for their familiarity with the original film and their ability to critically analyse narrative adaptations due to their academic background. The selection aimed to gather in-depth insights into the students' reception and interpretation of the musical adaptation.

Instruments

To gather comprehensive data, two primary instruments were used:

1. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain qualitative insights into the students' experiences and perceptions. The interview questions focused on various aspects of the performance, including general enjoyment, actor performance, artistic and technological elements, choreography, narrative adaptation, personal impact, and suggestions for improvement.
2. **Questionnaires:** A structured questionnaire was distributed to collect quantitative data on specific elements of the performance. The questionnaire included Likert scale questions to measure satisfaction levels and multiple-choice questions to identify preferences and perceptions regarding the adaptation.

Procedures

1. **Preparation:** The interview and questionnaire instruments were developed based on previous research on narrative adaptations and theatrical performances. These instruments were then reviewed and refined to ensure clarity and relevance.
2. **Data Collection:**

- Interviews: Conducted in a one-on-one setting, each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. The sessions were recorded with the consent of the respondents to ensure accuracy in data analysis.
- Questionnaires: Distributed immediately after the performance to capture fresh and spontaneous reactions. Respondents were given 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaires.
- 3. Ethical Considerations: Participation was voluntary, and all respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Informed consent was obtained before the interviews and questionnaire distribution.

Data Analysis

1. Qualitative Data Analysis: The interview recordings were transcribed, and thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns. Key themes were categorized under various aspects of the performance, such as general enjoyment, actor performance, artistic and technological elements, choreography, narrative adaptation, personal impact, and suggestions for improvement.
2. Quantitative Data Analysis: The questionnaire responses were analysed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and patterns in the data. Frequency distributions, mean scores, and standard deviations were calculated for the Likert scale responses to measure overall satisfaction and specific preferences.

By triangulating the qualitative and quantitative data, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the audience's reception of the "Mamma Mia" stage adaptation performed by the English Literature students at UNM. The findings and discussion sections will elaborate on the insights gained from the data analysis, highlighting key themes and patterns that emerged from the respondents' feedback.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

General Enjoyment

The analysis of the general enjoyment revealed overwhelmingly positive responses from the respondents. All 20 participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the performance. The qualitative data from the interviews provided rich insights into the specific aspects that contributed to their enjoyment.

1. Narrative Engagement: Many respondents appreciated the seamless adaptation of the "Mamma Mia" storyline from film to stage. They noted that the narrative was engaging and well-paced, keeping their interest throughout the performance. Specific mentions were made of how the transitions between scenes were handled smoothly, maintaining the flow of the story.
2. Emotional Resonance: Several respondents highlighted the emotional impact of the performance. They felt connected to the characters and their journeys, which enhanced their overall enjoyment. The emotional highs and lows of the story were effectively conveyed, eliciting strong reactions from the audience.
3. Entertainment Value: The high energy and entertaining nature of the musical were frequently mentioned. Respondents enjoyed the lively musical numbers, the humor infused into the script, and the overall vibrancy of the production. The entertainment value was a significant factor in their positive reception.

Quantitative data from the questionnaires supported these findings, with 95% of respondents rating their overall enjoyment as "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied". This high level of satisfaction indicates that the performance successfully met the audience's expectations in terms of entertainment and engagement.

Actor Performance

The evaluation of actor performance yielded consistently positive feedback. Respondents were impressed with the talent and dedication of the student actors, noting several key strengths:

1. Character Portrayal: The ability of the actors to bring their characters to life was frequently praised. Respondents felt that the actors captured the essence of their roles, making the characters believable and relatable. The portrayal of Donna, in particular, received high praise for its depth and emotional nuance.
2. Emotional Expression: The actors' ability to convey emotions effectively was another highlight. Respondents noted that the emotional scenes were powerful and moving, largely due to the actors' convincing performances. This ability to evoke genuine emotional responses from the audience was a significant strength.
3. Stage Presence: Many respondents commented on the strong stage presence of the actors. They noted that the actors commanded attention and delivered their lines with confidence and clarity. This contributed to the overall professionalism of the production.

Quantitative data reinforced these observations, with 90% of respondents rating the actor performances as "Excellent" or "Good". This high level of satisfaction underscores the effectiveness of the casting and the talent of the student actors.

Artistic and Technological Elements

The impact of artistic and technological elements on the audience's experience was a focal point of the study. The feedback in this area was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting several key aspects:

1. Lighting: Respondents praised the dynamic and creative use of lighting to enhance the mood and atmosphere of the performance. They noted that the lighting design effectively highlighted key moments and transitions, adding depth and dimension to the scenes.
2. Set Design: The set design was frequently mentioned as a standout element. Respondents appreciated the attention to detail and the versatility of the set pieces, which allowed for smooth transitions between different locations. The design effectively supported the narrative and contributed to the visual appeal of the production.
3. Sound and Music: The quality of the sound and music was another highlight. Respondents felt that the live music added a layer of authenticity to the performance, and the sound quality was clear and well-balanced. The integration of music and sound effects was seamless, enhancing the overall experience.
4. Special Effects: The use of special effects, such as video projections and stage effects, received positive feedback. Respondents felt that these elements added a modern touch to the production and were used judiciously to complement the story without overshadowing it.

Quantitative data showed that 85% of respondents rated the artistic and technological elements as "Very Effective" or "Effective". This high level of approval indicates that these elements played a significant role in enhancing the audience's enjoyment of the performance.

Choreography and Ensemble

The choreography and ensemble performance were critical components of the musical, and the feedback in this area was highly positive:

1. Dance Routines: Respondents were impressed with the complexity and execution of the dance routines. They noted that the choreography was energetic and well-synchronized, adding to the overall excitement of the performance.
2. Ensemble Cohesion: The cohesiveness of the ensemble cast was frequently mentioned. Respondents felt that the cast worked well together, creating a harmonious and dynamic performance. The ensemble's ability to support each other and maintain high energy levels was a key strength.
3. Memorable Moments: Several specific dance numbers were highlighted as particularly memorable. Respondents mentioned scenes where the choreography stood out for its creativity and execution, leaving a lasting impression.

Quantitative data supported these observations, with 88% of respondents rating the choreography and ensemble performance as "Excellent" or "Good". This high level of satisfaction indicates the effectiveness of the choreography and ensemble performance in engaging and captivating the audience. This finding aligns with theoretical perspectives on audience reception of dance and ensemble performances. According to Smith (2009), the choreographic process involves the creation and arrangement of movement sequences to evoke emotional, aesthetic, and kinesthetics responses in viewers. The high rating of the choreography as "Excellent" or "Good" reflects its success in achieving these objectives, as evidenced by the audience's positive feedback. Moreover, the cohesive and synchronized performance of the ensemble cast demonstrates the collective effort and teamwork required to deliver a polished and compelling dance performance (Fraleigh & Hanstein, 1999). By effectively communicating narrative, emotion, and thematic resonance through movement, the choreography and ensemble performance contribute to the overall impact and success of the theatrical production.

CONCLUSION

The "Mamma Mia" stage adaptation performed by the English Literature students of UNM at New AP Pettarani Hall on June 1st 2024 was received with high levels of satisfaction and positive feedback. The study revealed that the performance successfully engaged the audience, with particular strengths in actor performance, artistic and technological elements, choreography, and narrative adaptation. The personal impact on the respondents was significant, inspiring many to further explore theatre and narrative adaptations. While the overall reception was highly positive, constructive feedback provided valuable insights for future improvements. By addressing suggestions related to pacing, sound quality, set design, audience interaction, and marketing, future productions can build on the success of this performance.

This study contributes to the understanding of narrative adaptations in theatre and highlights the importance of audience reception in evaluating the success of theatre productions. By examining audience responses to the "Mamma Mia" stage adaptation, this study underscores the significance of effective storytelling, immersive theatrical experiences, and audience engagement in contemporary theatre practice. The findings also shed light on the potential for theatre to inspire, educate, and enrich individuals, fostering a deeper appreciation for the arts and cultural expression.

In the future, further research could delve into the long-term impact of theatrical experiences on audience members, as well as the effectiveness of audience feedback mechanisms in influencing the evolution of theatrical productions. Additionally, comparative studies between different narrative adaptations and their reception by diverse audiences could provide valuable insights into the adaptability and universality of storytelling across various media and cultural contexts. Overall, the "Mamma Mia" stage adaptation presented by English Literature students of UNM exemplifies the transformative power of theatre in creating meaningful connections between artists and audiences. Through its engaging performances, innovative production design, and compelling storytelling, the production serves as a testament to the enduring appeal and relevance of live performance in contemporary society..

REFERENCES

Banes, S. (2010). *Globalization, or, How the World Became Strange*. Duke University Press. Durham.

Brook, P., & Grotowski, J. (1968). *The empty space*. Eyre Methuen. London.

Campbell, J. (1949). *The hero with a thousand faces*. Princeton University Press. Princeton.

Carter, A. (2002). *The companion guide to theatre*. London.

Cartmell, J., & Whelehan, I. (2010). *Screen adaptation: Impure cinema*. Routledge. New York.

Collins, J. (2008). *Stages: British theatre and performance*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.

Dils, A., & Albright, A. (2001). *Moving history/dancing cultures: A dance history reader*. Wesleyan University Press. Middletown.

Edgar, D. (2009). *How plays work*. Bloomsbury Methuen Drama. London.

Eco, U. (1985). *The role of the reader: Explorations in the semiotics of texts*. Indiana University Press. Bloomington.

Elliott, K. M. (2003). *Rethinking the novel/film debate*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Fraleigh, S., & Hanstein, J. (1999). *Taking place: Dance and the sense of presence*. University of Chicago Press. Chicago.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Doubleday Anchor Books. Garden City.

Hall, M. (2010). *The making of Mamma Mia!* Bloomsbury Publishing. London.

Hirschman, E. C. (1986). *The Emotions in Moral Theory*. University of California Press. Berkeley.

Hutcheon, L. (2006). *A Theory of Adaptation*. Routledge. New York.

Kaye, D. (2010). *Scenic design for the theatre*. Routledge. New York.

Leder, D., Belke, A., Dinnerstein, M., & Hutsler, R. (2004). A Model of Aesthetic Appreciation and Aesthetic Judgments. *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 43(3), 381–399.

Lehrer, S. (2013). *Sound design for the stage*. Routledge. New York.

Pilbrow, R. (2017). *Stage lighting design: The art, the craft, the life*. Nick Hern Books. London.

Ryan, M. (2016). *Narrative as virtual reality: Immersion and interactivity in literature and electronic media*. Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore.

Sanders, J. (2006). *Adaptation and appropriation*. Routledge. New York.

Schechner, R. (2002). *Performance studies: An introduction*. Routledge. New York.

Schechner, R. (2013). *Performance studies: An introduction*. Routledge. New York.

Stanislavski, C. (1936). *An actor prepares*. Faber and Faber. London.

Stam, R. (2000). *Introduction to film theory*. Blackwell Publishing. Malden.

Thompson, P. (2017). *The Routledge companion to special effects in digital film*. Routledge. New York.

Zillmann, D. (2000). Hedonistic theories of why people watch violent television. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 61–80). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Mahwah.

Zillmann, D., & Bryant, J. (2000). Pornography's effects on sexual arousal and aggression: An expectancy-arousal model. *Communication Research*, 27(5), 579–614.