

IN MEMORY OF CRISTINA



Cristina Wistari Formaggia, sixty-two, died peacefully of cancer in her hometown of Milan, Italy on the 19th of July 2008. She will always be known in Bali as the woman behind the Gambuh Preservation Project in Batuan village. Her dedication to the classical performing arts of Bali knew no bounds.

This month, we have lost two pillars in the world of Gambuh: I Ketut Kantor of Batuan, who died of a series of strokes on July 5th, 2008 and Cristina Formaggia, who spearheaded The Gambuh Preservation Project in 1992 and was taking the Pura Desa Batuan troupe to Europe to perform in a collaboration with Eugenio Barba's Odin Teatret for the performance *The Marriage of Medea* a month before she suddenly passed away.

Cristina had been a serious student of Asian art for decades. Her interest in the ceremonial paintings of women led her to live in Mithila, a remote area of northern India. Subsequent journeys took her to the Hindukush in Northern Pakistan where an almost extinct tribe, the Kafir Kalash, dwells. Her fascination was with the songs and dances that formed an integral part of the ceremonial festivals of their animistic religion. She studied Kathakali, a South Indian dance drama, for two years. In Kerala, India, she worked with Guru Gopinath, one of the great masters of this art.

On reading Antonin Artaud's essay on the Balinese Theatre in his book, *The Theatre and Its Double*, she was drawn inevitably to Bali and its rich Hindu culture, complex rituals, and metaphysical dance theatre. The study of Topeng, the masked dance drama, was a catalyst for further development. And she began studying and performing Gambuh in earnest in the 1990s. From 1995 she collaborated in the ongoing research of ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology), directed by Eugenio Barba. From 1985 she taught and performed in various festivals throughout Europe, Australia, Asia and South America.

Anyone who knew Cristina would understand that when she put her mind to something, she got it done. She was precise, thorough and intense; and one of the few Westerners who has been able to totally embody the essence of Balinese movement in her own body.

She lived a very simple life. Her home, set back behind the Ibah Hotel, was a simple one room affair with very little furniture - in fact only a desk and a chair and cushions neatly lined up in row. Short wooden steps led up to a tiny sleeping loft and her open air kitchen was big enough for one person and a two-burner stove. She disliked clutter and loved living among the greenery and the river that ran below her. Two months ago she moved into a new house

just metres down from her old one; same layout, same energy but with a different view.

She was a strict vegetarian and did not smoke. Her lifestyle was so healthy that it is hard to imagine that cancer of the brain, liver and lungs finally took her away from us.

When Cristina first came to Bali in 1983, it was to recover from a near fatal car accident she had in Australia, which injured her neck badly. She was planning on going back to India to study Kathakali again. But the fates had something else in mind for her. She began studying Balinese dance, specifically the Baris warrior dance and then Topeng, the mask dance-drama. She studied with none other than the great Topeng master, I Made Djimat of Batuan, who went on to co-teach workshops with Cristina all over the world. Her favourite masks were Topeng Tua, the old man, and Topeng Dalem, the king. She became part of Djimat's troupe and performed throughout Bali.

The village of Batuan is famous for Gambuh and there are four extant troupes there today. Cristina would see rehearsals of Gambuh at Djimat's and there she became fascinated by this ancient form. Gambuh at that point in time was only done for temple festivals, mainly local, in Batuan, and for some of the larger ceremonies at Besakih and other temples. Yet as the form was not so popular with the Balinese, it was in danger of dying out.

Along with a number of scholars and performers, Cristina began the Gambuh Preservation Project funded by the Ford Foundation. Beginning in 1993, committees were formed to study and research the music, movements, literature and history of Gambuh. The Gambuh Project plays a fundamental role in keeping a precious tradition alive in contemporary Balinese society. The Gambuh of Batuan is one of

the rare examples of a highly aesthetic art which was still being performed in its complete form when the Project began. The main aim of the Project in Batuan was to prevent possible decay and to ensure continuity in the teaching of the dance with the old masters passing down their knowledge to the new generations.

All of the Batuan Gambuh troupes were involved in the beginning although over the years various alliances formed and many of the original performers dropped out of what became known as the Batuan Village Temple Troupe (Sekeha Gambuh Pura Desa) as rehearsals and then performances were held at the Pura Desa or Village Temple (and they still are held every 1st and 15th of the month at 7 pm). A decision was made to limit the performance to two hours; some argued that tourists wouldn't be able to sit through even that much traditional dance. But Cristina was adamant that authenticity should reign and two hours of spectacle held.

A two-volume book was written on the music and movements entitled *Gambuh: Drama Tari Bali* (Gambuh: a Balinese Dance-Drama), which was edited by Cristina and published by Lontar Press of Jakarta in 2000, and a DVD was created, which is sold at the performances and at local bookshops in Ubud. A series of tapes were also produced, containing interviews with the old masters as well as documentation of the movements, music and dialogue of each style; currently these are being digitalised in Switzerland.

Two or three times a week, Cristina would set off in her little blue pickup truck and go the ten kilometres from Ubud to Batuan to rehearse. She often played the role of Panji, the refined prince, which was a speaking role that demanded the use of Kawi or Old Javanese. She made sure that the younger generation were at the

rehearsals, learning their lines, notes and moves alongside their older siblings. Continuity and sustainability were all important to her.

The Project performers not only perform the Gambuh regularly to this day in Bali but also went to Europe to perform in 1999 and 2006; the latter was a trip to perform a version of *Hamlet* in a collaborative work with Eugenio Barba, in Denmark where they performed at the actual castle of Hamlet. Just this month, they performed *Medea* with Barba's Odin Teatret. Even in this form, the elements of Gambuh (music, costumes, movements) are all there in their complete form so it would be recognised (and advertised) as Gambuh. In this way, they are heightening world awareness of the form.

Cristina collaborated with ISTA and Odin Teatret from 1995 and was a permanent member of the Theatrum Mundi Ensemble. ISTA is a multicultural network of performers and scholars giving life to an itinerant university whose main field of study is Theatre Anthropology. During its sixteen years of existence ISTA has been a laboratory for research into the technical basis of the performer in a transcultural dimension.

Cristina often wondered what would happen if she could no longer be involved with the Gambuh Project - would the villagers take it on and continue to perform? Who would be the liaison with ISTA in Europe? Now, with her passing away, these are questions that must be answered sooner rather than later.

While she was working with the Gambuh Project, she felt she wanted to work on creating an all-women's Topeng Troupe. She met with Desak Nyoman Suarti, the director of the all women's gamelan troupe Luh Luwih in 1999 to talk about her idea. Suarti, who has been empowering Balinese women through the

performing arts for years through gamelan, thought it was a terrific idea. Cristina came up with the name Topeng Shakti; *shakti* means female power so it was the perfect name. Months were spent looking for the perfect story - most Topeng tell the stories of Balinese Kings and their exploits. In the end, a Panji story from the Gambuh cycle was chosen that focused on the female protagonist Candra Kirana. Then female performers who were excellent storytellers and felt comfortable with masks had to be found. In the end, the main performers were Ni Nyoman Candri and Cokorda Isteri Agung from Singapadu village, both accomplished Arja singers and dancers; and of course, Cristina. In 2000 and 2001, the three of them went to Paris to perform and give workshops and, accompanied by the full female gamelan orchestra, to Holstebro for the Transit Festival.

More recently, Cristina began exploring her own movement, calling it the *Spirals of Sand*. Even though the Balinese sense of movement flows through it, this was definitely a new side of Cristina blossoming forth. She performed it at festivals in Europe and felt this was the new direction her life was taking her.

The Balinese say that she is now dancing for the Gods. I can imagine her, with her long hennaed hair with shocks of white streaks running through it, her huge grin lighting up the heavens, moving with a precision and intensity that would please all beings.

Thanks to Cristina's revitalisation project, Gambuh will live on a bit longer. Thank you, Cristina!

Rucina Ballinger

Ubud, 27th July 2008

Dear *Open Page*,

Cristina left us today, about two hours ago. I don't know if it is right to say she left, she will probably take some time to do so and because of this I think that our thoughts will be able to accompany her, and with the sorrow it will be good for her to receive serenity and strength as well.

Rossella (Viti)
Italy

She lived and will continue to live in the heart of those who loved her,

Alberta (Formaggia),
Ettore (Formaggia), Gigi (Cerizza)
Italy

My heart is full of pain,

Alberta (Formaggia)
Italy

I am not able to write anything yet. Give me some more time. My emotions are too much and I cannot manage them, I'm sorry.

Cristina (Galbiati)
Italy/Switzerland

I could not imagine Cristina suffering or leaving us. She left. A part of us has left with her. A lot of her remains with us. I still can't believe it. It is still as if she will reappear at any moment she will reappear.

Ana (Woolf)
Argentina

In my eyes I only have two images now: Cristina pale and suffering when she arrived at the theatre and Cristina in the hospital who is ironic about the doctors who don't understand anything and who says goodbye with a "see you another time" and a bright smile despite everything.

Claudio (Coloberti)
Italy

I am very sad about Cristina. After working together at Transit we kept in touch. I was

very impressed by her work, how we managed to surprise each other and conduct a workshop together as we had been asked to do.

I remember the first day I met her; she had prepared a meeting in the music room at the Odin to speak about her idea of working on a scene from the Mahabharata. She had asked me to come a day early. She was very worried because I had not answered her letters concretely. When we sat down she already had a proposal. I listened to her and then instead of saying something I showed her what I had. I took my Bohora sticks out and I told her the story of the Monkey and the Tiger at war, I passed over to the maracas and told her the stories of how the Challahuitas women from the Peruvian Amazonia speak with the sun and the moon and at the end speaking with the rhythm, of the Peruvian *cajón*, I presented to her the stories of the Guayabo black children. Her face changed, her eyes lit up and she started to laugh. I could see her little girlish happiness. I remember she closed her notebook and said, "let's do it with the sticks and Balinese dances together. What do you think?" And I breathed deeply, getting rid of my fear, said "yes" and we embraced.

The workshop flowed in between rigorous codification, the body's pain because of the new patterns, the singing improvisations, the martial training with the sticks, the stories of princes and princesses and the happiness of overcoming obstacles and then discovering what we wanted to tell. She always arrived early at the workshop, with new ideas. At the end of each session we got together to comment on what we had liked, what managed to make a connection, and I received her suggestions gratefully because I felt her respect and experience. When we saw the presentation of the workshops I think all those watching



Cristina Wistari Formaggia in Fara Sabina, 2007. Photo: Emanuela Bauco

felt the same: that our small group had reached a subtle, and at times sublime, energy. We had managed most of all that two experienced women, coming from such different places, could connect, lead and open up to give and, at the same time, receive from younger women.

We said farewell physically by promising ourselves to make another meeting in Peru. At the end of last year she sent me all her material and I presented it to the Asian Studies Department of the Catholic University in an attempt to organise something this year in the context of the Asian-Pacific countries' meeting. Our proposal didn't succeed but nevertheless the seed we planted at Transit did flower.

Cristina leaves me her love for ancestral cultures, her attention to detail, her rigour and respect for the actress's work, for a creative, studious and responsible woman... but most of all she leaves me a smile when remembering her dancing eyes, her fine fingers drawing *mudras* and secret dialogues, her faces of sculpted wood, her shadow behind the cloth illuminated by fire.

Ana (Correa)
Peru

I have just learned of Cristina's passing. I did not know her well, but was inspired by her work. I remember in particular her work in progress at the last Transit and was profoundly touched.

Deborah (Hunt)
New Zealand/Puerto Rico

My colleague Vibeke came to see me for work reasons at the summer house. The others left us alone at the big outdoor table to concentrate on our work. In the middle of a sentence Vibeke added, as we often do, another sentence, which was: ... and then Cristina...

It was a little sentence left hanging in the air, and my mind half engaged on this, and half over the other information she was giving me, searched for the possible Cristinas that I know, geographically near to me, or in the world theatre family. Vibeke must have seen my oblivious expression, because she hastened to say: "Oh, you do not know, do you? But it has been all over!" She had been in town, at the theatre, at the web. I had been far away from people, computers and people. I had been surrounded by beauty.

When I realised it was Cristina, she immediately came in front of my eyes, standing in the doorway of her tiny bedroom in the corner of the Music Room, next to the toilet and shower that we all used at all hours, all us participants at Transit, "Stories to be told".

Beauty. Cristina. Smiling. Standing there in the doorway, waiting for her turn to have a shower, we engaged in a humorous whispering conversation about who showers when, and I think I told her about the experience of performing in Beijing, meeting the Chinese people out on the street in their pyjamas ready to go to bed, ready showered, but just out to say hello to the world one last time. Or the Cuban people, also having their most important shower before going to bed, putting on talcum powder and sitting there cooling off. But we were in Holstebro, where there were no tropical summers, I

insisted, what was the need to have a shower?

I told her that when I was little, we had a bath every Saturday, and we had to share the tub with a brother or a sister, and you could not expect to have new water in between when changing from one pair to the other. I said that probably the one reason to have a shower in the evening, unless you were very dirty from manual work, was if you were going to make love. This made us giggle even more, because the reason for us whispering in the first place was for not waking Candri, who was Cristina's room mate, but not lover.

True beauty is Cristina. Her being, to me, was beauty, and I fell into liking her from the first moment she stood in front of me. So likeable, so easy, so sincere, so thoroughly and totally in and inside what she was doing.

Around me, at the summer house, the green of the forest became greener, the blue of the sea became bluer, the milky white sky became whiter. And the image of Cristina in her sarong in the doorway became alive.

Geddy (Aniksdal)
Norway

I only met Cristina at Transit and loved her beauty and spirit and dancing and something so spiritual and clear about her,

Helen (Chadwick)
Britain

I remember the expression of Cristina's eyes during her performance at Transit in 2004. It was one of the most intense experiences I have had as an actress-spectator. She made me change my whole perspective and in fact I am looking now for someone who can give us a workshop in Balinese dance. Now I can feel in my stomach the same as I felt when I saw Cristina's eyes that night.

María (Sánchez)
Mexico

I read with deep emotion the story of Cristina Wistari's illness and of her final departure. I know what the loss of such a valiant artist means. When I saw her dancing so beautifully at Transit I remembered the thesis of a theoretician of the 1980s who felt the moment had come for the goddess to dance again... that is if she ever stopped dancing in the darkness. Cristina embodied this marvel for me.

Marga (Borja)
Spain

I read the news of Cristina Wistari's death and I just wanted to say how sorry I am. I had met her at Transit and even if I had just seen her once, I often thought of her, she has left me with a positive and available feeling. A woman of delicate beauty. My thought goes to her and to all those people, work and life colleagues, who miss her now.

Ledwina (Costantini)
Switzerland

I am sitting here crying as I read the beautiful tributes to Cristina. I was so shocked when I read the e-mail last night. I have such vivid memories of Cristina - her delicacy, her grace. At the last Transit we talked about how we always met at festivals and never had time to sit together properly and we promised that we would do it next time...

Gilly (Adams)
Britain

I am pleased to see and read that Cristina is and will be remembered with the beauty that she deserves.

Francesca (R. Rietti)
Italy/Denmark

I wake up every day thinking of Cristina. This morning I was thinking of her dancers,

what will happen to the Pura Desa Ensemble now? To her home in Salina? People like Cristina leave a wake of energy and beauty that continues to live in us and materially around us as well because with their humanity they have dared to go along valiant paths, far away from common banality, but within the simplicity of what they love. I will always be grateful to Cristina, she has been a teacher of theatre and life; I feel such a bond with her.

Annamaria (Talone)
Italy

Thanks for the beautiful story about Cristina on Magdalena's web-site; very important. What a horrible pity. The (very difficult to assemble) Balinese boat from the Festuge, which is sitting on my desk, will never bring happy memories again.

Kasia (Kazimierczuk)
Poland

I hope I was at least able to give Cristina some comfort during her last days in Holstebro. It is such a great loss. I sent an e-mail to the *Ur-Hamlet* participants to inform them and they are all very shocked and sad. I keep thinking about the Balinese, how hard it will be to keep that group together, how sad they must be now. I didn't know her very well, only for the time of *Ur-Hamlet*, the Festuge and some exchange of e-mails that were always very nice. She was a very strong presence on stage, very strong. I can only imagine how it must be for her family and friends.

Bruna (Longo)
Brazil

A great loss; irreplaceable in this world. Even if I never had the opportunity to meet her in person I feel sad to know it will not be possible to do so.

Alejandra (Nettel)
Mexico/The Netherlands

The news has arrived, a few words on a mail like we receive at times and a few fatal words. Of course I expected it, of course I knew, of course it is always an unbearable sorrow. Cristina had spent many days with me last year, we had some informal projects. We all have projects. Our capacity for creating relationships, bonds and our advancing age give us sorrows more often than to others. We can only carry with us our sadness and her wonderful eyes.

Cristina: her calm and burning eyes, her smile, her patience, her calmness, her doubts, her questions, her incessant wish for perfection and beauty. Her laughter as well.

A few moments remain with me from her magnificent house completely open in the jungle in Ubud; we had eaten and drunk some wild fruit juices like the ones that can only be found in Bali and in the humid breathless heat we spoke of her solo dance project, of the harassing fatigue of maintaining a group alive, about work and more work.

In Marseille, we had spoken a lot about transmission and of a possible workshop in Salina, one of the Lipari Islands in the south of Italy. I will not go to Salina now. She had that sharp awareness of the necessity of passing on, of giving what she had received. She told me she was happy about her regular return to the West.

I was shocked to find out she was ten years older than me, I was convinced we were of the same age! So much vivacity, lightness and beauty. I am left with a hole in my stomach, a hole I don't manage to fill with the passing of the hours. Her eyes and smile wake me up at night and in the morning. I am sorry not to have held her body, both fragile and strong, in my arms once again, of not having shared a last

moment together. She is for me an example of resolute and steadfast courage, exiled in a country she had chosen, where she built the most beautiful home and family - a group of musicians and dancers. I hope this group can continue to grow with the strength and enthusiasm she has left them.

Often during the rehearsals of *Ur-Hamlet*, I looked at her, untiringly working, dancing, rehearsing, translating, convincing, and again dancing and trying. I was inspired by her perseverance when I felt lost and without reference. To see her work was always a lesson, her precision, her capacity to have power and lightness at the same time, her changes... She told me she did not know how to sing, but nevertheless her whole way of moving, speaking and addressing was musical and rhythmical.

I also want to remember the clown scenes she prepared in Ubud for the rehearsals of *Ur-Hamlet* that made us all scream with laughter. She was a magnificent clown and I loved this mixture of concentration and seriousness in her work coupled with her incredible naughty sense of humour.

Homages are always the same, we say and repeat how the absent person was beautiful and marvellous, and how we miss her unbearably. But it is for ourselves, to bear the pain, to continue to live, perhaps because to find and articulate the words, the memories recreate for a last time the image of she who is absent before letting her fly away in the wind.

My dear friend how this painful goodbye is nearly agreeable to me because I have the impression of having you with me for a few more hours. One day I will go to Salina, my Cristina.

Brigitte (Cirla)

France

"Cristina Wistari Formaggia passed away": it is very cruel news for the world of art and

culture. Let her soul inspire every one who loves traditional dance, theatre and every form of art. She is a woman who dedicated her whole life to this. Let us all pray for peace for her soul.

Butto (Annada Prasanna Pattnaik)
India

It is very sad that Cristina has left. I am thinking of all the Balinese whose life she has been such a big part of; the very young ones who have grown up with her. A lot of incense must be lit in her honour. I have lit a candle in the garden for her that lights up the night.

Kai (Bredholt)
Denmark

It is a big shock and terribly sad. Cristina had asked me to collaborate with her on her solo, and I was about to begin organising her visit to New Zealand later this year, to teach and perform and for us to make time to work together, when I learned of her death. It's hard to understand how such a vital and alive person can so suddenly be gone, and so unfair that she didn't get to finish her solo. But she has left a rich legacy and beautiful memories, for many many people. Thank you, Cristina.

Helen (Varley Jamieson)
New Zealand/Aotearoa

Dreadful, horrible news; a devastating loss. I visited Bali in early August, planning to see her; it felt so empty. Instead, I went to Ubud on August 8th and her old home, with fond memories of her flashing eyes and superb teaching. I took a rusty wind chime to remember her. When she came to Japan to study and teach, she was so open to the food, the temples, the arts, always curious and humble. The simplicity and grace, beauty and honesty in everything she did, and the humour. I miss her greatly.

Jonah (Salz)
USA/Japan

I just read about Cristina's death. It is really very sad that such a great person as her leaves us so quickly. Cristina always will stay in my mind and my heart as a strong woman and an extraordinary artist, an inspiration.

Karolina (Spaic)
Serbia/The Netherlands

Thank you so much for your description of Cristina's last tour and last days. I have just learned of her death and find it heartbreaking. The world has lost a great artist and teacher. It is nice to know that she was, until the end, working on the things she loved.

Again, thank you,
Margaret (Coldiron)
Britain

I was struck dumb by Brigitte's e-mail with the news of Cristina's death. I can't believe it. What happened? I must tell all my group. One of the nicest things we have done with Proskenion is when we painted Cristina's house in Salina, as a "barter" she and I had arranged with joy: we both had no money, her house needed repainting and I wanted my group to train with her. We laughed a lot, afterwards, at the image of my theatre group landing on the island with paint, brushes and tools; then of all of us covered in whitewash while working during the day before training at sunset, surrounded by silence and the wonderful landscape. When we finished working on her house, we all went for a tour of the island. She even agreed to ride on a vespa, behind one of us, very frightened but happy and we took her to the beach. I want to remember her like this, off stage, or in my house in Scilla, on the porch, at night speaking of our many

brothers and sisters.

Maria (Ficara)

Italy

I found out today from Juliana, her other student. We were together in Bali. She was crying. I couldn't believe her. Is it fair? I don't know what to think now. Also the other girl had a nice dream about her yesterday, she was laughing. It is good she did not suffer. And in Bali her new house was eventually the house of her dreams. I can't stop thinking of her.

Mary (Vastaki)

Greece

It is too hard for me to accept, my sorrow is immense.

Nathalie (Gauthard)

France

We imagine the sadness, but also the worry for her life and work companions. We are grateful, like many others, for having been able to meet her.

Pierangelo (Pompa) and Sofia (Monsalve)

Italy and Colombia/Italy

In these moments of pain for the loss of a great sister and teacher, in the name of those in Seville, part of the great ISTA family, I wish to send all our positive energy, solidarity and love. Here in Seville this year could not have started worse, with the loss of my brother and teacher. It was supposed to be our magic year and it started by being the most tragic, and now that we wanted to invite Cristina to the MITIN, we are faced with this great loss. Only the lucidity and irredeemable search for utopia gives us the strength to continue, as well as the memory of all those who have disappeared.

Ricardo (Iniesta)

Spain

What terrible news. We spent unforgettable days with her in Fara Sabina. We must not waste our life in small things, we have to take advantage of the life that life gives us, but at times it is difficult to go beyond the feeling of solitude. We will always remember her with her sweet smile and will be left with the void of not having been able to bring her to Cuba as she wanted. It is very sad.

Roxana (Pineda)

Cuba

I have received the message with much regret. Cannot help thinking - though - that her anxiety and sufferings were brief. I am deeply sorry. What can I do now? It is difficult for me to express my feelings.

Tage (Larsen)

Denmark

I am so very sorry to hear of Cristina's passing... such a superb artist and lovely person. She was very hospitable when Sally and I were in Bali, and we were hoping to invite her to Claremont to work with students. We will miss her very much. Thank you for writing about her, and sharing this with me.

Tom (Leabhart)

USA

I heard from Brigitte about Cristina's passing which has made me very sad. I have beautiful memories of Cristina in my home in Paris, where she spent fifteen days and various visits on Sunday when she was working at the theatre beside Arianne's. She was a person I admired a lot, for her work and her dedication. I really hope that her group will be able to continue also without her, that they find an honest 'leader', dedicated in the same way and who will want to continue the precious work she

completely gave herself to. It is thanks to the Magdalena Project and to Odin Teatret that I got to know Cristina and for this I am very grateful.

Vicki Ann (Cremona)
Malta/France

It hurts our soul to lose a person so distant in space and at the same time so close to our hearts. It is incredible but Saturday the 19th I woke up and told Ricardo that I had just dreamt of Cristina, that she was leaving us that day, my heart was with her since I knew she was so ill.

The meeting we had with her during her last workshop with us was very, very special. With her characteristic marvellous generosity she offered to see the work with masks that I was starting. I always wanted her to see my small clumsy work in the new centre of the TNT, but that she looked at it with all the fondness used to looking at a small child.

The atmosphere she created working with the whole group was very special, everyone adored her. And we were anxious to meet her again. An exceptional being has left us, with a great heart, none of us expected it, at least we can thank life for having had the possibility of knowing her a little. Thank you Cristina, always dancing with life.

Silvia (Garzon Rodriguez)
Spain

Not a day goes past without me thinking repeatedly of Cristina.

Roberta (Carreri)
Italy/Denmark

CRISTINA'S MEMORIAL

At first it looked like it might rain. But then the mood lightened and it was a bright and crisp day. As I walked down the path to Cristina's house, it hit me. I will never walk this path again. I entered the archway which

her helpers, Ibu Ketut and Pak Made had decorated with coconut fronds. Two big offerings of fruit and flowers flanked her doorway. Rio had printed up a lovely photo of Cristina by a river holding her favourite mask, Dalem the king, and hung it on the outside door. She was looking up at us. I walked into her living space and there was another photo of her looking out to the actual river and the view outside, in profile with the mask, by her side, in profile as well. The kitchen was filled with coffee, tea and Balinese cakes that Asri had organised. I started working on a *buku kenangan* or memorial book (thank you, Tom Hunter for that idea!), filling it with photos from Cristina's albums. Everyone who came signed it, saying good bye to Cristina for the last time.

The Gambuh troupe filtered in, we could see them coming down the path carrying their instruments, all the men in long blue t-shirts and *kain* (sarongs). They set up the instruments and were given coffee and cakes. Other artists arrived, such as Ibu Nyoman Candri, Pak Wayan Dibia, Ibu Made Wiratini, Pak Made and Ibu Intan Wianta, scholars and friends. People sat everywhere: on the porch, inside, on mats on the grounds looking out to the river. It was a poignant atmosphere. Not sombre, but celebratory. The Pura Desa Gambuh group began playing. The scent of heady incense permeated the house. All of us with our own thoughts about Cristina, remembering the last time we had seen her.

The committee, if you will (Rio Helmi, Asri Kerthyasa, Pino Confessa, Antonella de Santis and Rucina Ballinger), after making sure everyone had been fed a little bit (thanks to Ketut, Made and Nyoman Kejut of Asri's household and a number of other friends who pitched in) began the "talking bits". We started with reading an e-mail from Alberta, Cristina's younger sister. Pino read it in Italian; Rucina the translation in

English and Rio translated it into Indonesian.

Desidero dire poche parole su Cristina, mia sorella, che ho amato e che continuerò ad amare. La sua lealtà, la sua purezza, la sua integrità l'hanno accompagnata sempre, non potrò mai dimenticare i suoi occhi nei quali leggevo tutto l'amore, l'entusiasmo, la fatica, la serietà per la danza, la sua compagna più fedele, perchè questa era la sua vita; ed è per questo che vorrei che anche attraverso le sue maschere e i suoi costumi lei continuasse a danzare per noi. Non dimenticatela, lei non vi ha dimenticato!

I want to say a few words about Cristina, my sister whom I loved and continue to love. Her loyalty, purity and integrity will stay with us always, I will never forget her eyes in which you could read love, enthusiasm, hard work and seriousness for dance, her faithful companion, because this was her life and for this and through its masks and costumes she continues to dance for us. Don't forget her as she will not forget you.

Cokorda Raka Kerthyasa, the owner of Cristina's house, spoke about Cristina and when she first came to Bali and stayed at Tjetak Inn (the former very humble incarnation of Ibah Hotel), how she built her first and then second houses, and how the hotel guests would complain about the loud singing coming from the back of the hotel (Cristina practising). He applauded her dancing abilities as well as the fact that she had written a two volume book on Gambuh. He led us in a moment of silence to remember her.

Pak Made Suamba, the head of the Pura Desa Gambuh troupe then spoke - calling Cristina a real maestro and a fanatic about tradition.

Rucina then talked about how Cristina had started an all women's Topeng troupe:

Topeng Shakti and how much she had learned herself from Cristina.

Ni Nyoman Candri, dancer and singer supreme, spoke about Topeng Shakti as she was the main performer (along with Cristina) and how they gave workshops in Paris.

Rhoda Grauer reminded us that Cristina was an eminent scholar as well, not only performing Gambuh but researching it as well.

The Gambuh dancers then did a full story so that all the major characters were represented. At the end, there was a scene where food was brought out for them to eat. The main dancer of that group looked at the food and his eyes lit up and he said "Ah, vegetarian" (Cristina was a well known non meat eater) and then he and the others offered up the food and said "for you, Cristina" and held it up to her portrait that hung behind them.

Then Ibu Candri led the troupe in a Balinese children's song (Putri Cening Ayu) and the pièce de resistance was the whole troupe singing "Brindiam" from La traviata by Giuseppe Verdi in Italian that Cristina had taught them.

And afterwards, we all ate our vegetarian *nasi bungkus* (rice in a banana leaf). The performers hoisted up their instruments and went down the path once again, leaving only the strains of their beautiful music lingering in the air for Cristina to hear.

Rucina Ballinger

Ubud, 31st July, 2008