

CHAPTER II

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECT OF STUDY

2.1 History of Srimulat

Srimulat, as a comedy group, started with a group of "Kesenian Keliling" (a moving art group) Gema Malam Srimulat, a group of artists who moved around from one place to another place. This group was founded by Teguh and his wife, Srimulat, on August 8th, 1950 in Solo.

Srimulat, as a woman, as artist and a primadonna was born on May 7th, 1908. She came from "Kasunan Surakarta Hadiningrat" or Surakarta Kingdom (Solo). Her noble name was Raden Ajeng Srimulat. Her father was a "WEdono" (the head) of Kawedanan Bekonang, (a Kawedanan is larger than a Kecamatan but smaller than a Kabupaten) in Surakarta Kingdom. When she was about twenty years old, after the death of her husband and child, she ran away from Kawedanan Bekonang. She left the aristocratic and quiet atmosphere of the palace to pursue her ambition in the art world. Then, as an artist, she moved from one group of artists to the other groups, such as Lief Javaanische Muzieksclub, Wayang Orang Surya Baskara, Wayang Orang Sri Darmo Wandowo, Orkes Keroncong Bunga Mawar, Sandiwara Bintang Timur and so on.



In one of her performances, she met Teguh, an artist and free lance gitarist, who later became her husband. On August 8th, 1950, Srimulat married Teguh when she was 42 years old and Teguh was only 24 years old. And on the same day, they founded an artist group which was named "Gema Malam Srimulat" (Janarto, 1990:29).

"Gema Malam Srimulat," which is then called Srimulat in this paper, consisted of two kinds of performances, music and comic performances. At that time, the group which stressed on music performances were dominated by "Langgam Jawa" (Javanese Melody) and Keroncong. The home base of this group was Taman Sriwedari Solo, but it often had its performances, particularly in a fair, in many cities outside Solo. For about ten years, it has held its performances in most cities of Java. It has even visited several cities outside Java, for instance Medan Palangkaraya, Balikpapan, and Banjarmasin.

The joining of some comedians of "Dagelan Mataram" to Srimulat, such as Ranudikromo, Johny Gudel, Atmonadi, Bandempo, Hardjo Gepeng and Rusgeger have changed the atmosphere of Srimulat performances and influenced its style. Since that time, comic performances have become an important part in every Srimulat performance.

In 1961, exactly on May 19th, Srimulat was offered a place at "The Taman Hiburan Rakyat" (The Peoples Amusement Center) Surabaya. Since that time all members of

Srimulat have moved from Solo to Surabaya. For a while, the name of the group, "Gema Malam Srimulat" was changed to "Srimulat Review" (Janarto,1990:48).

Some artists in Suurabaya who joined Srimulat, were Budi S.R. (a painter and then worked as stage designer), A. Rafiq (a dangdut singer), Paimo (a pianist) and they became members of Srimulat. Furthermore, in the middle of 1963, the name of the group "Srimulat Review" was changed to "Aneka Ria Srimulat" (Janarto,1990:59). The name Aneka Ria, meaning varieties, indicated that there were varieties of performances in the group, particularly in music and song performances. There were varieties of music and songs performed, such as Keroncong, Langgam Jawa (Java Melody), Javanese and Indonesian Pop and even English Pop. The name Srimulat, as the founder of the group and also the primadonna of the group, was used as trade mark. On 1st of December 1968, Raden Ajeng Srimulat, one of the founders of Srimulat group, passed away. But her name used as the trade mark of the group is still alive.

In competing with the other groups and in trying to get more and more audience, Teguh as the leader of the Srimulat group has changed the performance's style of the group. Before 1968 Srimulat's performances were dominated by music, songs and comic or funny performances only functioned as variation, since 1968 Srimulat has stressed on dramas with spontaneous comic performances (comedy)

and has become a comedy group. And as a result of this change, Srimulat has succeeded in getting more audience at the Taman Hiburan Rakyat (THR) Surabaya. Moreover, it has become so popular. It got many invitations from outside Surabaya, such as from Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta.

In 1971 Srimulat group founded "ludruk," a kind of Javanese traditional art group, called Surya Bhaskara. Unfortunately, this "ludruk" only survived for four months. On the other hand, due to Srimulat's shows held every four months at the Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta, since September 1972, Srimulat had become more and more popular, it had reached its glory. This popularity made Teguh, the leader of Srimulat, founded Srimulat Film Corporation Ltd.. Several films were produced by this corporation, but these films failed to get enough audience. Just like ludruk Surya Bhaskara, Srimulat Film Corporation could not survive. At the same time, there was a crisis in Srimulat due to the problem of payment toward the members of Srimulat. As a result of that crisis, in 1975 Johnny Gudel and some of his friends such as Karjo AC/DC, Suroto, Subur, Rujilah, Ruspentil and Sumini deserted the group. Furthermore, there were some musicians and light operators who also deserted Srimulat. The total number of artists who separated from Srimulat was 43 persons.

Fortunately, the problem could be solved in a short time, because of some artists of "Lokaria" (a group of drama), especially comedians, such as Abimanyu, Triman, Sofia and Asmuni who joined Srimulat. The joining of some comedians of "Lokaria" made Srimulat enter its golden era for the second time in about 1977. And the same time, Srimulat was broken up into two groups, one located in Solo (at Taman Hiburan Balekambang) and the other in Surabaya, the center of performances.

Since October 1981, Srimulat has founded another branch of Srimulat group in Taman Ria Remaja, Senayan, Jakarta. Even since the beginning of 1982, the Indonesian Republic Television in Jakarta (TVRI Stasiun Pusat Jakarta) had given an opportunity to Srimulat to appear on TV for 55 minutes show once a month. This opportunity made Srimulat more popular. Furthermore, this popularity gave a chance to the comedians of Srimulat to act in films.

In 1986, Srimulat began to lose its popularity. The first indication is the closing of Srimulat's shows at Solo on June 20th, 1986 because it failed to get enough audience. The group, then, was moved to Semarang on August 20th, 1986, located at Taman Hiburan Tegal Wareng (THR Tegal Wareng). The second indication is that at the same time, in August 1986, some senior comedians of Jakarta Srimulat deserted the group to form a new comedy group outside Srimulat. The reason for this desertion was

due to payment. Those senior comedians were Freddy alias Gepeng who was well known for his expression "Untung Ada Saya," Basuki, Timbul, Tarzan, Kadir, Nurbuat and Rohana. As a consequence, Srimulat's shows at Taman Ria Remaja, Senayan, Jakarta, failed to attract a lot of audiences.

Srimulat in Semarang could not survive for a long time, on November 8th, 1986, the group was closed. Some of its comedians sent to Jakarta Srimulat and some others to Surabaya Srimulat. But the joining of Semarang Srimulat's comedians into Jakarta Srimulat could not attract more audience. Finally the one in Jakarta was closed on May 1st, 1989. Since that time, 1989, automatically there has been only one Srimulat group which still survives, that is Surabaya, Srimulat.

2.2 Surabaya Srimulat at Present

Aneka Ria Srimulat in Surabaya, then called Surabaya Srimulat periodically shows its performances at its permanent place at Aneka Ria Srimulat Building, behind the THR Surabaya Mall, Jl. Kusumabangsa Surabaya every night.

According to Sardjito, the coordinator of the Surabaya Srimulat, the total members of Srimulat are 73 persons and 22 of them are comedians. Besides the comedians, there are some musicians, singers, stage organizers, light operators and ticket sellers. The stage manager is

Rustanaji. Furthermore, Sardjito added that most of Srimulat members are graduated from senior and junior high school and most of them have other part time job, besides their main job at Srimulat.

About audience, Sardjito said that Srimulat Performances has the largest audience on Thursday night when Srimulat plays horror story, Dracula for instance, and on Saturday night which is well known as "long night" because the next morning is a holiday (Sunday).

Among the 22 comedians, there are some comedians who are relatively more popular than others, such as Tessy, Bowo, Didik Mangkuprojo, Pete, Totok Hidayat, Vera, Isye, Karman and Bedor.

"Batur" or servant is often used as the main character of Srimulat's comic performances which usually tells about the relation between master and servant in everyday life.

Srimulat performance usually begins at 8:15 pm. For the first 45 minutes, there is a music performance which is played by the music crew of Srimulat. Varieties of music which are played are for instance Rock music, Dangdut, Keroncong, "Langgam Jawa" (Javanese Melody), Pop music both Indonesian and Javanese and even European Pop. The number of songs which are sung in those music performances are about nine to ten. Of course the singers are Srimulat singers.

After the first 45 minutes, a comic performance which takes about 90 minutes begins. This comic scene is divided into two acts. Each act need 45 minutes. Between the acts is a break during which a song is sung.

To attract more audience and to get more income, occasionally Srimulat invites other artists to participate in its comic performance. These artists can be comedians from other group, movie stars and also singers.

If in the past time Srimulat had the opportunity to appear on state television periodically, at present it does not happen anymore. Sometimes fragments of Srimulat's episodes may appear on state television as part of music programs, such as "Galarama" and "Kamera Ria."

On private televisions since the middle of 1992, Srimulat had the opportunity to appear periodically for a 30 minutes show once a week. These private televisions are Rajawali Citra Televisi (RCTI), Jakarta and Surya Citra Televisi (SCTV), Surabaya. But there is a difference between the group that appear on private televisions from the one which is performed at THR Surabaya, in Aneka Srimulat Building. There are always some guest stars that appear on private television. This maybe the consequence of the name given to the television program, "Srimulat Plus." So, "Plus" here distinguishes conventional Srimu-

lat from the one that appears on SCTV or RCTI.