The Reinvention of Thai Traditional-Popular Theatre: Contemporary Likay Praxis

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Abstract

This thesis examines contemporary likay praxis in Thailand through processes influenced by socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the ideology and methodology of making contemporary likay, a tradition-based contemporary approach to Thai popular theatre, including development, transformation, theatrical techniques, rehearsal processes, productions, and audience reception. The thesis provides a background of the duality of court and popular theatre forms; a performance history of traditional likay; a construction of artistic elements, conventions, and functions; and a socio-political context for Thailand’s modernisation period, which impacted theatre development. An examination of contemporary urban conditions is conducted, which offers new creative and possibly alternative forms of thinking about traditional-popular performance, particularly contemporary likay, explored through examples of contemporary likay performances.

This study of contemporary likay praxis uses interviews with dramatists, practitioners and scholars, and documentary research. I investigate how the contemporary theatre troupes utilise the intra-cultural, inter-cultural and transcultural theatrical aspects, the format of hybridisation of Thai performing arts and the relevance of Western artistic to Thai theatre in their working process in reinventing likay performance, especially, Makhampom’s contemporary likay productions. Analysis of likay reinvention or contemporary likay performance demonstrates the way that dramatists bridge traditional and contemporary, rural and urban theatre practices. I also demonstrate reflexive ethnography and practice-led research, in which I reflect on personal experiences in practising and performing both conventional and contemporary likay performances from 2001 to the present. The thesis is categorised into two key areas: the first part, highlighted in Chapters 1-3, reflects the socio-politic-economic contexts of Thai society, which shaped the cultural formation of the Thai theatre revolution. The second part focuses on contemporary likay practice and praxis from the 1990s to 2010, demonstrated in Chapters 4-6.
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Above all, this thesis is also dedicated to a blooming study and research in performing arts in Thailand
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**DVD 1: Conventional Likay Performances**

**Clip 1: Ram Tawaimue**

**Clip 2: Ok Khaek**
Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7-1er6nqwM> [Accessed 10 August 2012]

**Clip 3: Ok Khaek Ok Tua**
Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dmrl9_C3eg> [Accessed 10 August 2012]

**Clip 4: Love Scene**
Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNq2iTXo-cM> [Accessed 15 October 2012]

**Clip 5: Comedic Scene**

**Clip 6: Lukthung Concert**
Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOMUY5CwVr4> [Accessed 29 November 2012]
DVD 2: Makampom’s Contemporary Likay Performances
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Clip 1: An example of a freezing technique

This clip is edited and modified from the video recording of Suek Mueang Prae (2004) performed by Makampom Theatre Troupe at Thailand National Theatre, Bangkok.

Clip 2: A clownish villainess exhibits sexual attack a hero.

This clip is edited and modified from the video recording of Suek Mueang Prae (2004) performed by Makampom Theatre Troupe at Thailand National Theatre, Bangkok.

Clip 3: An introductory scene that the main characters introduce themselves holding over-sized tools.

This clip is edited and modified from the video recording of Mueang Ho Mok (2006) performed by Makampom Theatre Troupe at Thammasat University, Bangkok.

Clip 4: The performers from three nations speak the languages of the other performers in encountered scenes.

This clip is edited and modified from the video recording of Naga Wong (2005) performed by Lao, Cambodian and Thai actors at Siam Association, Bangkok.

Clip 5: A stage design of The Message

This clip is edited and modified from the video recording of The Message (2008) performed by Makampom Theatre Troupe at Lido Multiplex Movie House, Bangkok.

Clip 6: Ok khaek, an opening scene in Akaoni

This clip is edited and modified from the video recording of Akaoni (2009) performed by Makampom Theatre Troupe at Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space.