

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

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**to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of  
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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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## List of Audio-Visual Materials

DVD 1	To Accompany Chapter 2
DVD 2	To Accompany Chapter 6

### DVD 1: Conventional *Likay* Performances

#### Clip 1: *Ram Tawaimue*

Available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sM7jNhvnG2A>> [Accessed 7 September 2011]

#### 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=\\_dmrI9\\_C3eg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_dmrI9_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

Available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OfAogtHyrI>> [Accessed 9 February 2011]

#### Clip 6: *Lukthung* Concert

Available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOMUY5CwVr4>> [Accessed 29 November 2012]

## **DVD 2: Makhampom's Contemporary *Likay* Performances**

**The copyright belongs to Makhampom Theatre Troupe and Pradit Prasatthong (a written permission of this use is provided in appendix 3)**

**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 Makhampom 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 Makhampom 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 Makhampom 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 Makhampom 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 Makhampom Theatre Troupe at Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space.