



The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Beliefs in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor

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Abstract

This thesis is entitled “The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Beliefs in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor”. It was inspired by the native Southern Thailand Nora Dance Guru’s belief in the Spirits. This is based on the creative practice-based research in which the researcher enquired on the result of the presentation on “The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Beliefs in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor” research and its underlying creative concept. This leads the author to an in-depth study of the Nora performance, the traditional Thai choreographic arts, the creative choreographic performance, and the collection and analysis of the opinions of the renowned experts related to the subject of this dissertation.

In this creative practice-based research, the author used the six creative research tools, namely: documentary data survey, operational experiments in choreographic arts, expert interviews, the standards on qualification of the national artist, other archives and media, and evaluation of the viewers’ opinion survey and performance assessment related to the subject. The data was collected between January, 2011 to December, 2012 both domestic and abroad. All collected data was analyzed and the outcome provided the answer to this research enquiry, which included the performance presented, and the underlying concept for the creation of “The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Beliefs in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor”.

Key words: Nora dance, life after death of Nora ancestor, choreographic

Introduction

Nora had been the most popular art and cultural form in the South of Thailand (Pikku Panyanantamuni 1980:17-19). Nora had been the symbol of the performing art that showed the rich Southern culture. It had been the symbol of development in the South that was related to the art and cultures of the other parts of Thailand, since the time of Ayutthaya was the capital of the central part of Thailand. It had been known that Nora was the unique art that communicate the culture of the South. But the belief in the afterlife of

the Nora ancestor was a very important part of the artistic influence in the art itself. It was not given enough attention or relevance it deserved to carry on into the future.

Patravadee Poochadapirom (2011) has said that the Southern entertainment cultures have a long history the same as the ancient importance of the Southern cities, which is the main reason for the varieties of the cultural entertainment. Some of which have complicated developments that challenge specific study; one of which is the Nora.

In the modern Thai culture, there are still believes and faiths in the unproven things in every aspects of the Thai culture, both in communities and the country sides. The respects and the many of the ceremonies to the worships of the spirits that lasted from times immemorial. Especially it originated from the Buddhist religion which the forefathers do not go anywhere, but still looking after their children and passed on the skills in choreography.

From the above mentioned data, the researcher wanted to study this believes in the life after death of the Nora ancestor through interviews, participative observations and research data to get to the clear evidence and the possibility of the life after death of the Nora ancestor. In order to analyze the data for use in the creation of the choreography, to create the concept of passing down the art that would reflect the ancestors' believes in the life after death of the Nora ancestors. This was to develop the creative process that would reflect the contents of the belief in the Thai society.

Objectives

1. To study the creation of Nora dance.
2. To establish contextual meanings and ideas as related to the Nora dance.

Methodology

Research Framework

For this study, the researcher applied the concept of choreography that reflected the belief in life after death of the Nora ancestor. The research included data from the real people who was related to the Nora ancestor in their after death and other documents, the theories on esthetics, the theories on creativities and the contemporary choreography creation of Naraphong Charassri. By including the concept, theories, and other related researches to support the researcher's study that would reflect the creation of choreography that reflected the belief in life after death of the Nora ancestor. This was because there were no prior works done that would reflect the be-



Figure 1 Life after Death of Nora Ancestor show at SEAPA 2013.

lief in life after death of the Nora ancestor. The researcher wanted to apply the concept, the theories, and other related research works to this research.

Tools

1. The Documents Study

The researcher studied documentary data available through the textbooks and academic articles regarding The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Believes in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor. However, it was found out that there are very limited publications on the subject. The researcher therefore used other methods: such as interviews, and participative observations.

2. The Interviews with the Related Persons

The interviews were carried out in depth both in group and individually with those related in the various specialties related to The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Believes in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor.

3. Other Related Media

Both domestic and international contemporary choreographies were reviewed.

The collection of the data about Nora brought the researcher down to the staging area by following the rules in participative observation: 1. observation,

2. interviews, 3. note taking, and 4. field study. The process of analysis and synthesis to create the works of the choreography that would reflect the belief in life after death of the Nora ancestor.

In the research: the Creation of the Choreography that Reflect the Beliefs in Life After Death of the Norah ancestor, the researcher analyzed the different aspects of the subject and in order to easily convey the story clearly and to have it correspond to the number of days arrived at the form of the result: the Creation of Dance to Reflect the Beliefs in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor. It can be explained separately as per the different compositions of the choreographies as follows:

1. The Script

The researcher divided the script of the show clearly into sections to correspond to the actual number of days that the actual ceremony was held (which were 3 days). The first day is the day of initial worship. The second day is the day to invite the “Toncheark” to come. The third day is the actual worship day. The researcher gave equal weights to each section in telling the story so that there will be continuity of emotion.

Paying respect to the Nora Teacher, scheduled for 3 days, began with the preparations. The play was represented by the gray color, to convey the possession of the descendant of the Nora ancestor, by going shopping in the market for things to use in the ceremony, without knowledge of the procedures. Next is the meditation of the medium, to clear the mind for the possession by the Nora teacher spirit, represented by white color for purity. Relating to the Nora teacher’s past, other Nora teachers also possessed the dress assembler. Ending with the Nora dance in black, to convey the intensity of the Nora ancestor’s full possession, showing the full beauty of the dance, incomparable to anything by the new generation. Participation by the other Nora ancestors’ and the spirits that surround the ceremony ground, by involving the audience as if the show was taking place inside the hall itself.

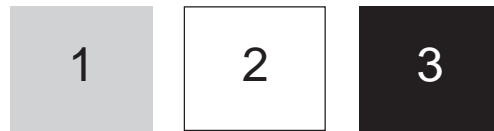


Figure 2 The plays were represented by 3 colors: grey, white and black.

2. Choreography

The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Beliefs in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor will correspond to the story that contained the past and the present. The ancient style will preserve the details and the patterns of Norah and the domestic Southern choreography. The modern and the post-modern dances will utilize the artists’ concept of the time through the varieties, e.g. the simplicities and the minimalistic movements, and the everyday movements.

3. Costume Design

The costumes for The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Beliefs in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor will emphasize the sociological theory in the everyday life of the villagers. The costumes of the supporting actors and actresses therefore used the clothing of Southern part of Thailand which is different to find beauty of the Norah costumes in the aspects of conservation and the creativity. All inclusive is the same context to convey the similarities and conflicts to reflect the present day social condition.

4. Sound and Music

The sounds and the music in The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Beliefs in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor will be used to accompany the movements of the actors and actresses from place to place and to carry on the show. It will be lower and lower until it become silent in the end. The researcher selected the accompanying sound and music that was rhythmic and fun to create the atmosphere for the show and the follow up. The conservative sounds of the Norah and the Southern folks were alternate with the sounds of drums to create excitements.



Figure 3 The costume design for the Nora characters.

5. Performance Area

The staging area for *The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Believes in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor* will comprise the stage and the balcony that reflect the Southern lifestyle. It would reflect the simple construction using local and natural materials that was typical suburban residence. All of these were used in the designs of balcony and the stage. They were used to make low and looked like one story platform used for the ceremony and later changes freely with more varieties. At the same time to convey the atmosphere of rural Thailand.

6. Lighting and Special Technique

Lighting and the special technique used in *The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Believes in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor* conveyed the fearsome and the loneliness of the standard stage. Using lights to create interests in the actors and the actresses and placing the strong and weak lights to convey the atmosphere for the three plays according to the story-day of worship, day of the invitation, and day of the ceremony, which conveyed the full dance. Monochrome film was used as part of the lighting to show the minimalism of lighting.

7. Props

The props used in *The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Believes in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor* to convey the real ceremonies by designs and

reduce but still leave enough symbols to communicate with the audience. Some of the props of natural origin conveyed the rural purity and may convey the conservation of the old tradition in order to balance the new technologies that only communicate the present society.

8. Performers

The actors and actresses that were used in *The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Believes in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor* will have been trained in Thai choreographies and the modern dance. They can communicate the basics of Norah. Especially when they have to go with the new electronic media which required accurate practices which the creator designated.

Results

Consideration for the Creativity in the Show

The creativity will help in *The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Believes in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor*. The design will emphasize the importance of the relationship to the antiquity, the inspiration, and the story told. In the consideration of the creativities of the show will yield new information that would reflect on the old believes. New information in the various elements in choreography will allow varieties of the show without repeating ancient themes.

The Conservation of the National Artistic Heritage.

It can be presented in the form of The Creation of Dance to Reflect the Beliefs in Life after Death of Nora Ancestor. The contemporary presentation does ignite in the audience to feel the Southern culture that hold on to the importance of the Norah teachers though long gone. This show therefore reflected in the audience to feel the culture of the belief in the Thai society.

Conclusions

Through investigations, interviews, and the participative observations. In order to obtain clear evidence and the possibility of the idea of life after death of the Nora Ancestor, in order to bring it into the analysis to create the dance. The researcher was inspired by the belief in life after death of the Nora Ancestor in the sense of good behavior, love, and the tied of

the family members. The transferring of the artistic of the dance that enhances in the development of creativity and the reflection of the beliefs in the context of Thai society. The researcher hopes that more creation of the dance will lead to understanding the people of various cultures such as that in the South.

The creation of dance into the arts in order to communicate with society just mentioned is one thing that will collect all the valuable cultural heritage of the South which is the Nora. It is to be used as the tool to mold the hearts of all people of the nation to realize its importance. It can mix the ancient Nora and the contemporary dance into the creative art form through the principle of esthetics that can be spread to a wide area both nationally and internationally.

Recommendations

1) Arrange for creativities so that there would be the conservation of culture.



Figure 4 The Final Show of “Life after Death of Nora Ancestor”.

2) Use the results from this dissertation to develop the potential of creative thinking for young people materialistically and to lay down the guidelines for the newer generation to be creative future choreographers in the future.

3) Take the form and concept from this dissertation to construct a curriculum about creative Thai contemporary choreographies to develop quality works in the future.

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