



Thai Dance for Aesthetic Enhancement through the Light and Sound Performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya”

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Abstract

The purposes of this dissertation were to study the patterns and the creativity of the traditional Thai dance for aesthetic enhancement by observing the light and sound performance of Khon Dee Sri Ayutthaya and to create and conserve the traditional Thai dance in order to pass on to the next generation. The performance of this traditional Thai dance was created by Assistant Professor Dr. Lady Winita Diteeyon, the national artist, and was directed by Professor Dr. Naraphong Charassri. The first display of this Thai dance was on 27th December 1992 at Chai Wattanaram Temple in Ayutthaya on the occasion of celebrating His Majesty the Queen Sirikit's the fifth cycle birthday.

The research instruments were consisted of 6 types: 1) Research literature review 2) Specialist interview 3) Seminar 4) Multi media 5) Field study 6) Criteria of traditional Thai Dance. The period of collecting data started from December 2011 to July 2013. The data of the research was analyzed according to the traditional Thai Dance performance criteria. The result of the research found that there were 6 features: 1) Role play 2) Dance patterns 3) Costume design 4) Sound & Music design 5) Light display 6) Performer. In addition, the result of the research in creativity of Traditional Thai dance for aesthetic enhancement found that there were many findings: 1) Variety of cultural dance patterns 2) Symbolic in the dance 3) Performing arts and visual arts based on the theories 4) Various dance patterns 5) Reflecting the ways of Thai living and society 6) Focusing on creativity 7) Conserving the ways of Thai life 8) Concerning morality 9) Creating and enhancing the aesthetic arts 10) Communicative performance and conveying the meaning of the display 11) Concerning the perception of the young generation. The publication of this thesis has been supported by CU Graduate School Thesis Grants, the Graduate School at Chulalongkorn University.

Key words: Thai dance, aesthetic enhancement, light and sound performance, Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya

Introduction

The light and sound performance for aesthetic enhancement was developed from a light and sound performance that relied on techniques that emphasized the spectacular effects of the light and sound system as well as the music that accompanied the presentation of places of worship and important places of the

country. The descriptions and narrative enables the audience to understand the art, culture, customs and the way of life in history. It is a pity that though the light and sound performances in the past were quite popular with the public, some of them failed to help the audience to imagine and fully appreciate the past glory that was related to the venues of the perfor-

mances. This resulted in some people to further develop the original light and sound performance to become the light and sound performance for aesthetic enhancement. This new kind of performance is deemed to be another entertaining element of culture in Thai society, which emphasizes the presentation of historical accounts, images, culture and ways of life of different community. This kind of performance has continued to enhance aestheticism by organizing performing components that can create a connection between the performers and the places of worship through the historical narratives. Originally, the light and sound performance consisted of the presentation of still pictures accompanied by historical accounts, emphasizing the light and sound techniques. In 1992, the first light and sound performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya” was presented at a royal audience of Their Majesties the King and Queen in the grounds of Chaiwathanaram Temple in Ayuthaya Province. The performance was organized through the cooperation of the Royal Thai Army, the Thai Army Bank and the Faculty of Allied and Fine Arts at Chulalongkorn University. Associate Professor Dr. Khunying Winita Dithiyont, a National Artist, wrote the script and Professor Dr. Naraphong Charassri was the Director. The performance was developed through the use of light and sound techniques to accompany narratives of the history of important places in the community, together with a combination of Thai dance and drama to enhance the spectacle aesthetically. Ultimately, the light and sound performance for aesthetic enhancement was presented again in 1995 on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of His Majesty the King’s birthday. The fact that the light and sound performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya” was presented at a royal audience twice is proof of its good quality and importance to the country because it had to relay knowledge about the historical places to the audience and make them proud of and aware of the goodness of the monarchs and people of the Ayuthaya Period.

The culture of attending live performances in

Thailand and in many countries around the world has declined because modern technology has made it possible for recorded live performances to reach the audience at home. The light and sound performance in Thailand is considered to be a way of continuing the culture of attending live performances in Thailand, especially when it is presented at historical places in provinces across the country. Many light and sound performances had already been popular since 1976 when the Department of Fine Arts and the Royal Thai Navy presented one in the grounds of the Temple of Dawn. Another was organized in 1977 by the Department of Fine Arts at the Celebration of the Reign of King Narai the Great at Phra Narai Ratchnives Palace in Lopburi Province. However, this kind of performance was not yet widely known. Later, in 1980, when the Tourism Authority of Thailand (the Tourism Organization of Thailand or TOT at the time) organized a light and sound performance, “the River Kwai Bridge” during the River Kwai Bridge Week in Kanchana Buri Province to celebrate Thai Tourism Year, this kind of performance had become more popular and had been organized in many places. In 1982, the Ratanakosin Bicentennial Light and Sound Performance was presented as part of the Royal Ceremony Held in Commemoration of the Bicentennial of the Ratanakosin Period on April 6th, 1982 when General Prem Tinsulanonda was Premier. This auspicious occasion celebrated the stability of the country and the light and sound performance on this special occasion was the result of the long history of development from the past to the present.

Because the light and sound performance is, in many ways, important to Thailand, the researcher considered that it has not been appropriately studied and researched into in a systematic way. The researcher thus considered it necessary to conduct research into this kind of performance in order to improve the quality of performances in Thailand and this should, in turn, contribute to the creation of a new body of knowledge that would be of benefit to

Thai society and make the organization of each performance worth the budget invested in the presentation in all parts of the country. The light and sound performance for aesthetic enhancement can be used as a prototype for other light and sound performances in Thailand and in-depth study of it should, therefore, be promoted, particularly into the creation of dances to enhance aestheticism and imagination which leads to artistic conservation that will enable the audience to realize the architectural value of places that are part of the nation's heritage as well as ensuring the continuing existence of the historical, architectural, cultural and traditional heritage of Thailand.

Objectives

1. To study the format of creating of the dance for aesthetic enhancement through the light and sound performance, "Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya".

2. To study the creative concepts of the dance for aesthetic enhancement through the light and sound performance, "Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya".

Scope of Research

To study the the light and sound performance of "Khon Dee Sri Ayutthaya" created by Assistant Professor Dr. Lady Winita Diteeyon, the national artist,



Photo 1: the light and sound performance for aesthetic enhancement, "Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya" Source: Video of the 1992 performance



Photo 2: Their Majesties the King and Queen at the performance Source: Video of the 1992 Performance

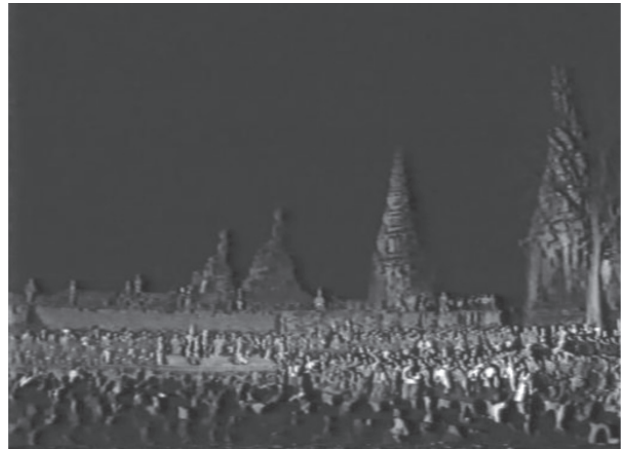


Photo 3: the light and sound performance for aesthetic enhancement, "Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya" Source: Video of the 1992 performance

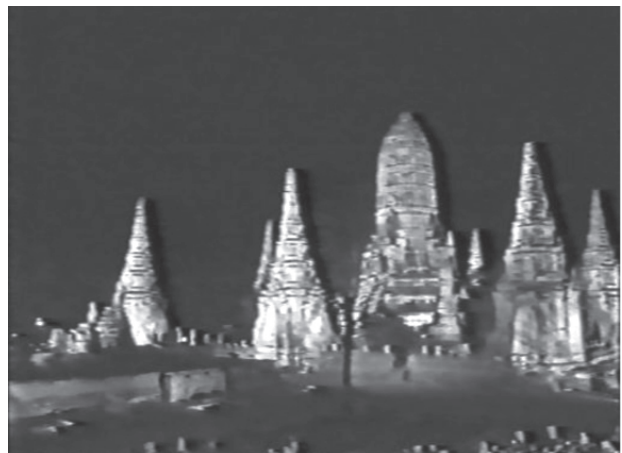


Photo 4: the light and sound performance for aesthetic enhancement, "Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya" Source: Video of the 1992 performance

and was directed by Professor Dr. Narapong Charassri. The first display of this Thai dance was on 27th December 1992 at Chai Wattanaram Temple in Ayutthaya

Definition of particular terms

1. The light and sound

The performance on techniques that emphasized the spectacular effects of the light and sound system as well as the music that accompanied the presentation of places of worship and important places of the country.

2. Thai dance for aesthetic enhancement

The creation of aesthetic enhancement: adding something extra to what is present is a way of making the performance more interesting; what is added may differ according to the taste of the producer or the audience. The content of the performance aims to boost çThainessé.

Research tools

In conducting this study Thai Dance for Aesthetic Enhancement through the Light and Sound Performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya” the researcher has relied on the following research tools:

1. Documentary data collection

Data is collected from books, textbooks, and academic articles on issues Thai Dance for Aesthetic Enhancement through the Light and Sound Performance as well as interviews of experts, academics and the artists creating the work.

2. Seminars

The researcher has participated in the first and the second seminar projects on the establishment of standards in celebrating model dance artists, regarding related knowledge issues.

3. Interviews of experts and academics

Interviews of those knowledgeable of the Light and Sound Performance and group interviews

4. Other information media

Studies of other information media relevant to the Light and Sound Performance of Thai Dance for



Photo 5: Choreographing the portrayal of the death of a member of the royal family Source: Video of the 1992 performance



Photo 6: Choreographing the portrayal of the battle-the victory Source: Video of the 1992 Performance



Photo 7: Choreographing the portray of the death of a member of the royal family Source: Video of the 1992 performance



Photo 8: Choreographing the portrayal of the battle-the victory Source: Video of the 1992 Performance

Aesthetic Enhancement both in Thailand and abroad.

5. Field data collection

Field data was collected with the use of questionnaires, surveying the opinions of the audience attending the thesis work projects of creative dancing art work for ethics in educational institutes on 31 January 2013 and on 1 February 2013, at the Department of Dance, Faculty of Fine Arts, Chulalongkorn University.

6. Criteria for recognizing model artists of Chulalongkorn University

The researcher studies the criteria for recognizing model artists of Chulalongkorn University of Witchuta Wuthathit and the second group of students in the Ph.D. in Arts program, Department of Thai Dance, Faculty of Fine Arts, Chulalongkorn University. Then an analysis was done to compile the qualifications of model artists pioneering Thai contemporary dance.

6. Expected benefits

6.1 To develop the management of the process and different stages in the presentation of the light and sound performance for aesthetic enhancement so as to be able to provide a manual for the organization of light and sound performances.

6.2 To develop Studying and researching into design and directing methods of the dance for aesthetic enhancement, this has its unique identity in



Photo 9: Thai style and Western style costume Source: Video of the 1992 performance



Photo 10: the costume of the king and commoners Source: Video of the 1992 Performance

communicating the meanings to the audience. There are still very few of this kind of performance in Thailand.

Results

The thesis, *The Thai Dance for Aesthetic Enhancement through the Light and Sound Performance, "Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya"* consists of the following details:

1. The script of the performance was written by Associate Professor Dr. Khunying Winita Dithiyont, a National Artist. This was the first and last time she had written this sort of script. The script



Photo 11: Lights from lighting instruments Source: Video of the 1992 performance



Photo 12: Lights created by firecrackers Source: Video of the 1992 performance

consists of a combination of different kinds of literary language presented in the form of conversations which reveal the story step by step, and narratives in prose and verse presenting the stories of the good people of the Ayuthaya Period, who played a major role in history or those who saved Ayuthaya from being ruled by outsiders and brought it prosperity. The script demonstrates the writer's ability to extract from history and turn historical accounts into a script for a performance to be presented in the appropriate amount of time. The performance was divided into nine scenes, following the chronology of important monarchs of the period.

2. The choreography has to be in accordance with the format, the script and the conventions of per-



Photo 13: Performers doing Western-styled dance Source: Video of the 1992 performance



Photo 14: Performers doing Thai-style and Western-style dance Source: Video of the 1992 Performance

formance. Because the light and sound performance for aesthetic enhancement, "Khon Dee Sri Authaya" was presented in the royal presence on an auspicious occasion, certain restrictions were applied; for example, pictures portraying bloodshed in the battle scenes would not be presented. This was, in fact, unavoidable when tragic incidents in history were presented. Thus, the choreographer and the director had to use the dance composition to stir the audience's imagination, and employed scenes known as "Tableau Vivant," which refers to the use of still pictures to accompany the performance, emphasizing the postures of the performers. The performance combined

Western and Thai dance. The site-specific dance performance was also adopted to communicate the notion of the fighting and the deaths of members of the royal family and important people of the Ayuthaya Period.

3. The costume of the performers in “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya” is designed to show the identity of the characters, their time and their social status by following the traditional style of clothing. At the same time, new costume has been created to enhance the dance style. This contributes to the flexibility of dance movements and facilitates a dance style adopted from different cultures and, at the same time, makes the traditional costume appear more outstanding. This was the way to adjust the old style to make it acceptable to the new generation and easier for people in the generation to understand.

4. The music and sound to accompany this light and sound performance was prerecorded. The sound and music were designed and created in three ways: creating the sound and music anew based on the traditional music, creating the sound and music from other cultures and maintaining the principles that are the gist of the performance of Thai dance and music. This made the sound and music the important part of the performance that helped to stimulate the imagination of the performers and the audience.

5. The design of lights was done through the use of lighting technology in the form of lighting instruments; for example, firecrackers and lights from aerial lanterns were applied to the outdoor performance to create a spectacular effect and stir the audience’s imagination to help them to understand past incidents.

6. There were 400 performers of the light and sound performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya”. They were capable dancers who were able to integrate different skills and use a variety of dance techniques from different cultures, both Thai and Western. They also used the Tii Bot technique and the Chai Bot dance of the original Thai culture. The performers were

able to transfer the thoughts or the imagination of the choreographers and the director to create images that were unfamiliar, particularly to the new generation, and yet were accepted in both Thai society and other cultures.

Studying the concept of creating the Thai dance for aesthetic enhancement through the light and sound performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya,” the researcher was able to reach a conclusion that could be divided into the topics that the researcher had specified; namely, the use of cultural diversity, the use of symbols, the use of dance and visual arts theories, the use of a diversity of performing formats, reflection of social conditions, awareness of the creation, conservation, awareness of moral virtues and ethics, an awareness of communication and an awareness of the perception of the new generation. The details are as follows:

1. The use of a cultural diversity: if the diversity of cultures is appropriately used in a creative work, those cultures will support and make Thai culture more outstanding.

2. The use of symbols: symbols have been used as components of contemporary Thai dance in order to enhance the aesthetics that can be communicated with the audience.

3. The use of dance and visual arts theories: the dance for aesthetic enhancement through the light and sound performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya,” applies visual arts theory with dance theory to create dance movements and styles.

4. The use of a diversity of dance forms: a diversity of Western and Thai dance forms is appropriately integrated for aesthetic enhancement and to create a creative work that is able to attract a new generation.

5. Reflection of social conditions: good performing arts must reflect the image of a certain society. The dance for aesthetic enhancement through the light and sound performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya” reflects heroism and incidents relating to

Thai ancestors of the Ayuthaya Period and Thai beliefs.

6. Awareness of creativity: the use of creativity in the performance is through the use of places of worship to create a sense of uniqueness and newness that enables the audience to remember.

7. Awareness of conservation: the dance for aesthetic enhancement through the light and sound performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya” is considered to be a way of conserving the culture of a certain community that has been practiced from the olden days to the present.

8. Awareness of moral virtues and ethics: it is acceptable that cultures of different societies may be similar or different, depending on what they specify and accept as common practices for everyone in the community and that are worth being respected.

9. Awareness of the communication which is derived from various components of the performance; this is the technique and the method of enhancing the aesthetics in the communication between the performance and the audience.

10. Awareness of young children and the new generation; this is done by adapting the traditional art style to the contemporary style to make it easier for the new generation to approach. This is a way of enabling young children and the new generation to remember past artistic glory, which is part of the country’s cultural heritage.

Conclusions

The thesis, *Thai dance for aesthetic enhancement through the light and sound performance*, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya,” aims to search for the format and concepts in creating the Thai dance for aesthetic enhancement through the light and sound performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya”. The researcher conducted research into the background and significance of the problems through the process of quality research. The research starts with the study of related literary works through research methodology, analyzing the infor-

mation, discussing the results of the analysis and providing a conclusion about the format of the performance from the components and concept of the Thai dance for aesthetic enhancement through the light and sound performance, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya”. This dance relies on creative ideas which yield a cultural diversity through the use of symbols and dance and visual art theories to create a dance diversity but, at the same time, maintain “Thainess” and communicate the dance with the audience by stimulating their imagination and reflecting the Thai social condition to the new generation.

From studying the thesis, *The Thai Dance for the Aesthetic Enhancement through the Light and Sound Performance*, “Khon Dee Sri Ayuthaya,” the researcher would like to offer some suggestions for further study of this kind of performance in the future.

1. Studying and researching into other performances of this kind for an in-depth analysis of the format and concepts of the dance components.

2. Studying and researching into some precautions when organizing the light and sound performance at a historical site because each performance might have a negative effect on the architectural structures, caused by pyrotechnics, fire crackers and fireworks. The sound from amplifiers might cause ancient buildings to shake and ruined by sound vibrations.

3. The dance for aesthetic enhancement through the light and sound performance, which has been widely performed, suggests the economic, social and cultural progress of the country. However, because most of the content of the performance is from history, the repeated presentation of stories taken from history may cause boredom in the audience. Therefore, there should be further study into dance design, movement, formats and concepts to present performances through a variety of plots in order to add more aesthetic value to spectators and to enable this kind of performance to continue to exist in Thai society.

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