

*Creating the Contemporary Performing Arts With an Implementation of
Acting Techniques Integration: A Case Study of the Contemporary Performing Arts
"Return to the Spirit"*

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Abstract

Inspired by John Luther Long's novel, *Madame Butterfly* (1904) is Giacomo Puccini's famous opera. The story of *Madame Butterfly* has continued to gain popularity among audience, as the main character, "Jo Jo-San" depicts the idealistic female character of the Eastern world in Japanese background. During King Chulalongkorn second visit to Europe in 1907, he went to watch this opera in Paris, France. Later, He inspired Prince Narathip Praphanphong to adapt the story into a piece of musical play in Thai background and give a title "Sao Kruea Fah". "Return to the Spirit" is a contemporary performing arts that combines the ideal female characters from those two plays to depict an emotional feeling of a woman. Although the story has a tragic ending, but the determination of a woman who fought until her last breath is obviously portrayed. From the philosophy and the essence of thought that leads to the renowned literary works, this contemporary performance has been developed and restyled by the integration of Japan's "Noh" and traditional Thai dance into a solo performance in order to represent an ideological perspective and a cultural relationship connecting to each other in the Eastern world. This creative research aims to search for its theme, and develops to a contemporary performing arts, by selecting to design the elements of the play for emphasize its theme in order to communicate with nowadays audiences. The achievement that came from the creativity of this one-piece performing arts had been obtained from the synthesis of knowledge using various acting techniques that were cultivated from the rehearsal process.

Keywords: Contemporary Performing Arts, Acting Technique, Return to the Spirit

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Introduction

Madame Butterfly originally presented in the form of novel by John Luther Long published in Century Magazine in 1898. It has been adapted in various forms of play, opera, and film.

The original version of the opera in two acts by Giacomo Puccini, had its premiere on 17 February 1904 at La Scala in Milan. Later, Puccini revised it in three acts. This version performed on 28 May 1904 in Brescia with a great success. In 1907, Puccini made his final revisions to the fifth version and has been known as the standard version.

Madame Butterfly takes place in the early 20th century, set in Nagasaki, Japan.

Lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton, an officer in the U.S. Navy, is captivated with Jo Jo – San (known as Butterfly), a young geisha. Pinkerton's desire for Jo Jo – San is so strong that he would do anything to have her. He therefore arranges through Goro, a marriage broker, to marry her in a Japanese wedding ceremony.

Sharpless, the American Consul at Nagasaki, recognizes that Pinkerton is not truly in love with Jo Jo – San, but rather is entranced by the young geisha's fragile beauty and innocence. Sharpless also recognizes that Jo Jo – San truly loves Pinkerton, and he warns Pinkerton not to marry her. Pinkerton, overwhelmed with desire for Jo Jo – San, dismisses Sharpless' warnings, and the marriage ceremony is performed. Together, Jo Jo – San and Pinkerton face the scorn of her family, and the foreboding caution of Sharpless, who realizes the improbability of the union.

Pinkerton is called back to America and Jo Jo – San patiently and confidently waits for him to return to Nagasaki. She is kept company throughout her long vigil by Sorrow, her son by Pinkerton, and her handmaiden Suzuki. Eventually, Pinkerton returns to Nagasaki. But it is not the joyous reunion of which Jo Jo – San had dreamed. She is devastated to hear that Pinkerton has arrived on the shores of Nagasaki with a new American wife. In anguish and despair, the heartbroken Jo Jo – San ends her own life.

King Chulalongkorn or King Rama V (20 September 1853 – 23 October 1910), the fifth monarch under the House of Chakri of Thailand, had his second visit to Europe, during March 27 to November 17, 1907. He went to watch the opera, “Madamae Butterfly” on September 25, 1907, in Paris, France. After he came back to Thailand, he told the story of that opera to Prince Narathip Praphanphong. The Prince was so taken with the tale, he adapted the original story into a musical play in Thai background and give a title “Sao Kruea Fah”. It was performed for the first time at a Songkran Festival fair held at Saun Dusit Palace, and later, the performance were performed at Preedalai Theatre.

Over the past 100 years, the "Madame Butterfly" and “Sao Kruea Fah” has become a fundamental plot of love betrayed. Both of them have the same characters, plot and theme in difference background/setting.

“Return to the Spirit” is a contemporary performing arts that combines the ideal female characters from those two plays to depict an emotional feeling of a woman. Although the story has a tragic ending, but the determination of a woman who fought until her last breath is obviously portrayed.

Creative research methodology

From the philosophy and the essence of thought that leads to the renowned literary works, this contemporary performance has been developed and restyled by the integration of Japan's "Noh" and traditional Thai dance into a solo performance in order to represent an ideological perspective and a cultural relationship connecting to each other in the Eastern world.

"Return to the spirit" is a symbolic contemporary performing arts, its theme about love and betrayed which is present through with concordant theatrical elements, such as plot, character, characterization, thought, diction, and song.

In addition, various techniques were utilized for integration in acting techniques, as follows:

The Basic of Japan's "Noh" techniques

(1) Kamae

Kamae is the basic standing position with the knees slightly bent, the center of gravity placed on the hips, and the center of the body kept stable. It is a position of readiness. Actors are grounded, centred, energised and ready to do next position or movement. It is a position of relaxed strength, tension and contained energy.

(2) Suri-Ashi

Suri-ashi or sliding feet means that feet are not lifted from step to step, but rather slide across the floor.

(3) Kata

Kata is the stylistic movement patterns that form the gestural vocabulary and blocking of the movement. The actor needs intense concentration and a willingness to find freedom within the limitations of that rigorous gestural vocabulary.

(4) Ma

Ma means about a space, pause, interval or gap that allows the imagination of the viewer to fill something in and complete it.

(5) Jo-ha-kyu

Jo-ha-kyu is really about expansion and contraction of energy. it literally means "beginning, middle, end" or "slow, fast, faster".

The Basic of Thai Traditional dance techniques

(1) The Fundamental Series of Movements

The fundamental series of movements includes slow movements (phleng cha) and fast movements (phleng reo). The basic movement patterns for each role type corresponding to the individual actor's physique.

(2) The Refined Characters (Phra and Nang)

There were originally 108 basic movements, but later they were reduced to 68 movements in the major movement series (mae bot yai) and to 18–20 in the smaller series (mae bot lek). The dance of heroes and heroines represents Thai classical dance in its most complex form. It makes full use of the meaningful and elegant hand gestures, echoing the Indian *mudras*. The

steps are light. The bare soles of the feet rarely touch the ground, while the toes are often turned upwards.

Moreover, the researcher uses the breathing technique which is the the most important foundation of acting as a meditation to integrated Japan's "Noh" techniques and traditional Thai dance techniques together. To control the breathing rhythm effected to each movements and emotions. It will help the performance become more powerful and meaningful.

Result and Conclusion

"Return to the Spirit" had been recreated into a contemporary performing art and successfully achieved the objectives as follows:

- (1) One creation of "Return to the Spirit" Contemporary Performing Art.



Figure 1: The main character in Madame Butterfly: Jo Jo-San
(From; Mr.Kittipod Sahawiriyasakul, 2019.)



Figure 2: The basic of Japan's "Noh" techniques: Kamae
(From; Mr.Kittipod Sahawiriyasakul, 2019.)



Figure 3: The integration between Noh and Thai classical dance techniques
(From; Mr.Kittipod Sahawiriyasakul, 2019.)



Figure 4: The main character in Sao Kruea Fah: Kruea Fah
(From; Mr.Kittipod Sahawiriyasakul, 2019.)

(2) The synthesis of knowledge for producing art creation through an academic article titled “Creating the Contemporary Performing Arts with an Implementation of Acting Techniques Integration: A Case Study of the Contemporary Performing Arts "Return to the Spirit".

However, the creative researcher has a suggestion to develop, and continue the creation of “Return to the Spirit” - The Contemporary Performing Arts at the next international level in other countries to synthesize the result in conveying the message/theme to the audience and to expand more knowledge.

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