

# Si Kasathriya Dern Dong: A creative musical work in the form of a choral

Yutakorn Sarikkaganon<sup>1</sup> and Thassanai Phensit<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand

E-mail: <sup>1</sup>Yutakorn.sa@ssru.ac.th, <sup>2</sup>Thassanai.ph@ssru.ac.th

## Abstract

This research is a creative music project with the objective of composing the song "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong" in a choral format. The creator has studied the lyrics, melody, and structure of the original "Si Kasat" song. The concept involves rearranging "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong" by blending elements of the traditional Thai "Lae" song melody with Western choral singing techniques. This creative work retains the original structure of the "Lae" melody and connects the sections using a refrain, ensuring continuity and cohesion in the melody.

From the composition and arrangement of "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong" it is found that the song has a total of 127 musical sections. The song is a ballad that narrates the "Vessantara Jataka" and consists of 13 chapters. The specific arrangement of "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong" in choral form corresponds to Chapter 4, titled "Vannapa Vesana," which translates to "The King Walks." The arrangement follows a structure similar to the Rondo form, consisting of: 1) Introduction, 2) Narrative, 3) Refrain. The song is composed and arranged using principles of harmony based on Western music theory, in the key of D minor, with alternating slow and fast tempos throughout the piece.

**Keyword:** Si Kasathriya Dern Dong, Music, Choral

## 1. Introduction

Music is an art form that can be experienced through listening, serving as a means of communication through sound, which originates from the composer's creativity and emotions. These musical sounds are transmitted to the audience, affecting their minds, emotions, and can also help foster motivation. The diversity of sounds that form melodies, along with the variation in rhythms and the selection of different instruments, plays a key role in enriching the musical expression. This leads to the development of creative musical works. The composer's work, which involves both composition and arrangement, creates harmony and beauty that resonate with listeners, eliciting emotional responses and providing a profound emotional experience through the music. (Thassanai, Sirima, and Promot, 2022)

Singing is the use of the human voice to create music, allowing the singer to convey emotions and feelings through carefully controlled melody and rhythm. Singing consists of several key components, such as melody, which is a sequence of sounds arranged to create a pleasing tune; rhythm, which helps the music move and adds excitement; breathing, which is crucial for controlling high and low notes and sustaining the voice; and harmony, which adds variety and beauty to the music (Sundberg, 2000; Appelman, 1986).

Lae is a distinctive form of vocalization in Thai music, differing from Western-style singing. Lae emphasizes speech with elongated sounds and adjusted rhythms that align with the emotions or content of the story being told. It is often used in storytelling or emotional expression, and can be found in Thai musical performances, such as narrating the "Vessantara Jataka" or "Ramakian," or in various rituals, such as Lae used to communicate with deities. Lae typically involves a combination of speaking and singing, with elongation of syllables or phrases to deepen the emotional impact and correspond with the mood of the story being recounted (Charnnarong, 2005). Performers of Lae frequently adjust the rhythm and tone of their voices according to the nature of the event being described, such as slowing down or speeding up depending on the appropriateness of the content or the emotion they intend to convey (Phothong, 1999).

In Chapter 4, "Vana Pravesa 57," when King Vessantara, Queen Maddī, Prince Kanhā, and Princess Chālī (the four of them) journeyed to the forest of Vānāsandha, their arrival was known to King Jētārāj, the ruler of Mātulānagara. He then petitioned King Vessantara to become the ruler of Mātulānagara, but King Vessantara declined. King Jētārāj then described the difficult, winding path to the Himavanta forest and instructed Jētabutr, a hunter, to be in charge of guarding the forest's entrance to prevent anyone from disturbing it.

The "Lae" (a form of traditional Thai performance) is considered a type of folk song that resembles a sermon. It uses voice and melody in accordance with the structure of poetic meter. The lyrics are characterized by rhyming and focus on maintaining the distinct beauty of the sound. Most often, the content is related to teachings of Buddhism, customs, traditions, and philosophies, as well as moral values and ways of life from that era. In some cases, entertainment or contemporary content may be incorporated into the performance, following the style of the performer or "Mor Kwan" (sermonist) who composes the Lae.

The Lae is believed to have evolved from the "Mahachat Sermon" tradition and is found among the Tai-Kadai ethnic groups along the Chao Phraya and Mekong river basins. It is thought to have originated in northern Thailand before spreading southwards. Lae is a form of religious instruction delivered through a sermon, categorized under "Khosappamanika," which uses melodious words combined with musical rhythms to express principles that are admired and praised. Lae sermons usually take place in temples or religious sites during important monthly Buddhist ceremonies (Hīṭ 12) and may also be conducted in non-religious spaces such as the homes of hosts who organize ceremonies. These locations transform into sacred spaces where religious rituals can take place, acting as a physical manifestation of belief. Thus, such settings play a crucial role in transforming ordinary spaces into sacred ones, allowing for religious activities to occur and fostering social cohesion among the community through educational entertainment (Sujit Wongthep, 2007; Chor, 2006).

At that moment, Indra, the king of gods, received a divine command and instructed the divine craftsman Vishvakarman to create two pavilions. King Vessantara, Queen Maddī, Prince Kanhā, and Princess Chālī all entered the ascetic life and became hermits, residing in the two pavilions.

The merit (Anisong) derived from this act ensures that their lives will be protected and kept safe in all circumstances, at all times, and in all places.

While Lae may not be as widespread in contemporary society, its cultural value still persists in modern forms. This includes Lae sermons in temples and performances by renowned Mor

Kwan artists, who have transformed the Lae into an entertainment form while maintaining its original purpose—teaching and preserving moral teachings, cultural knowledge, and lifestyle values that remain relevant to contemporary society. Even though it may seem like an ancient tradition less familiar to modern audiences, Lae still holds significant value through its craftsmanship, techniques, and the ability to make religious teachings accessible through artistic expression. Therefore, Lae should be regarded as an important cultural heritage that deserves attention and preservation for future generations (Chor, 2006).

Therefore, the creator conceived the idea of crafting the composition of the song "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong" by integrating the unique Thai vocal style of "Lae," which is distinctive and unparalleled, with Western-style Choral singing in the form of a choral. This approach blends the traditional Thai vocal expression with the structured harmonies and arrangements of Western Choral music.

### **1.1 Objective**

To create the song "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong" in the form of choral

### **1.2 Scope of the research**

This research is a creative music research project aimed at composing the song "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong" in the form of choral. The creator studied the structure of the song and integrated the concept of the "Lai" singing style, arranging it into a choral

## **2. Research methodology**

In the study and creation of the song "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong" in the form of choral singing, the creator followed the steps outlined below:

1. Conducted a literature review related to music.
2. Reviewed research papers, literary documents, and creative works.
3. Studied the format and structure of the song "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong."
4. Analyzed the song's structure, with the creator adhering to the principles of musical composition.
5. Arranged the song by modifying the chord structure while preserving the original melody and lyrics, utilizing music theory principles and Western choral harmony.
6. Composed a research paper and presented the creative musical work.

## **3. Results**

The creative work of the song "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong," which has been rearranged into a choral arrangement, retains the original melody and lyrics. It is composed in the D Minor scale, employing Western music theory and principles of harmony and arrangement. The song's tempo alternates between slow and fast sections, creating variation and interest throughout the piece. The slow tempo is set at 60 beats per minute (BPM), while the fast tempo is at 100 BPM. The arrangement follows a 4/4 time signature, with the total length of the piece being 127 bars.

Figure 1: Introduction Bars 1-13

สี่กษัตริย์เดินทาง in choir

The musical score for the Introduction section (bars 1-13) is presented for a four-part choir. The staves are labeled Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The music is in 2/4 time, marked with a tempo of 100. The lyrics are in Thai, and the score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The introduction begins with a prelude and incorporates the phrase "จะ-กล่าว-ถึง-องค์-สี่-กษัตริย์-ตรา" (which refers to "will speak about the four kings").

The Introduction section, spanning from bars 1 to 14, begins with a prelude in which the phrase "จะ-กล่าว-ถึง-องค์-สี่-กษัตริย์-ตรา" (which refers to "will speak about the four kings") is incorporated. This section utilizes traditional Thai vocal techniques, specifically the "euan" style of ornamentation, in interplay with rhythm, creating a dynamic and colorful presentation. This approach aims to capture the listener's interest and attention, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 2: Bars 15-19

The musical score for bars 15-19 continues the choir's performance. The staves are labeled Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The music is in 2/4 time, marked with a tempo of 100. The lyrics are in Thai, and the score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* (mezzo-forte). The section begins with the lyrics "จะ กล่าว ถึง องค์ สี่ กษัตริย์ เดินทาง" (will speak about the four kings journey).

Movement 2 begins at bar 15, where the lyrics narrate a story about the king's journey through the forest, accompanied by his queen and two children.

Figure 3 "Melisma"

The musical score for the "Melisma" section (bars 15-19) is presented for a four-part choir. The staves are labeled Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The music is in 2/4 time, marked with a tempo of 100. The lyrics are in Thai, and the score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* (mezzo-forte). The section begins with the lyrics "จะ กล่าว ถึง องค์ สี่ กษัตริย์ เดินทาง" (will speak about the four kings journey).

Movement 3 serves as a transition, connecting the previous melody with the subsequent one. It utilizes traditional Thai vocal techniques, characterized by distinctive features, to create a seamless flow between the two sections.

#### 4. Conclusion

The creation and arrangement of the choral piece "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong" is a successful creative work that meets the expected outcomes and achieves the defined objectives. This composition blends traditional Thai vocal techniques, known as "Lae," with Western choral singing. The arrangement follows Western harmonic principles, separating the vocal harmonies into four parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. This creative work stands out as innovative and harmonious, presenting a vibrant blend that differs from both traditional Thai singing and conventional Western choral arrangements. The fusion of traditional Thai vocal techniques with separate vocal harmonies creates an intriguing and contemporary dimension to the melody and lyrics, resulting in a modern yet culturally enriched choral piece.

The creation of musical works is a process that requires both creativity and the technique of arranging various musical elements. A successful work is not solely dependent on musical performance skills or vocal abilities but also on the capacity to convey emotions, thoughts, and experiences through music in a way that can deeply connect with the audience. Therefore, recommendations for musical creation focus on developing and improving musical skills, selecting appropriate musical techniques, as well as learning from experiences and being open to feedback from others. Additionally, learning from diverse experiences and cultures is an important aspect of music creation. Studying the musical cultures of different regions and incorporating unique local musical characteristics can be blended with universal musical techniques to produce works that are distinctive and clearly reflect the creator's identity.

#### 5. Acknowledgment

The creation of the song "Si Kasathriya Dern Dong" can serve as an exemplary model for the study of arranging other musical works. It provides a framework for studying and developing creative musical compositions, making them more beneficial and diverse in their application.

#### References

- Appelman, D. H. (1986). *Choral Arranging*. Waveland Press.
- Charnnarong, S. (2005). *Traditional Thai Music and its Influence on Thai Culture*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.
- Chor, P. (2006). *The Lae Sermon in Thai Culture*. Bangkok: Thammasat University Press.
- Phothong, W. (1999). *The Development of Thai Music*. Bangkok: Silpakorn University Press.
- Sundberg, J. (2000). *The Science of the Singing Voice*. Northern Illinois University Press.

Thassanai, P., Sirima, P., & Pramot, T. (2022). *Factors that affecting learning: A case study, Creating a melody from instruments name* Music Department, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The National and International Conference on Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences. P.445-455

Wongthep, S. (2007). *Lae in Traditional Thai Folklore*. Bangkok: Silpakorn University Press.