

BREAKDANCE CHOREOGRAPHY IN “HERN” THAI CONTEMPORARY DANCE PERFORMANCE.

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ABSTRACT

The article “Breakdance Choreography in *Hern* Thai Contemporary Dance Performance” aims to study the process of dance fusion between Breakdance and the arts of Northern Thai folk Dance in *Hern* Thai Contemporary Dance piece. The research found that 1) Blending Breakdancing and King-ka-la bird dance was created the unique of dance fusion which emphasizes on stationary postures, shaking the body and the acrobatic step in the air. These dance elements can convey many kinds of emotion of the bird character. 2) The body movements of Breakdancing allow to increase dance skills and techniques in Tai Yai martial arts form. 3) Blending Breakdancing and Northern Thai Dances make the dancers realize the understanding of Thai performance and local wisdom. Moreover the movements of this dance fusion represented the symbolic of ethnicity and culture traditions. It is a reflection between human relations, imagination and creation. The process of *Hern* contemporary dance creation, therefore, represents the identity of Tai Yai ethnic people through new kinds of dance fusion.

Keywords: Breakdancing, Contemporary Dance, Northern Thai Folk Dance, Dance fusion Choreography

INTRODUCTION

As for ‘Hern’ contemporary performance, I, the researcher, have developed it from a myth of Tai Yai people from Tripitaka, a main character from which is ‘King Kara Bird’ which is a mythical creature in Himavanta Forest (Mythical Forest) that attended the celebration when Lord Buddha came back to human world after going to bless his mother in Trāyastriṃśa Heaven. In the celebration, angels, human beings and other mythical creatures went to welcome Lord Buddha with joy. Not only is this belief expressed in the form of story or myth of Tai Yai people but it is also reflected as a ritual dancing performance that links members of communities in order to build harmony. It has been practiced, trained on and reproduced, which is the conservation from a generation to another through several groups of workers who conserve Lanna Arts and Culture in the northern part of Thailand. It can be regarded as a ‘cultural tool of Tai Yai ethnic people’ that is implemented in order to turn belief into a tangible asset with exact and clear form and pattern, weaving the relations between human beings and the world of imagination, between human beings and supernatural things, and among human beings at the current time. This is the creation of folk arts that has been conserved and passed on from generation to generation from belief and faith.

However, even though the myth of King Kara Bird incorporates beliefs and culture, combined in the tangible manner, portraying the history of the movement of the ethnic people, which is the conservation of beliefs and arts across time and places. When the societal contexts change, arts are changed accordingly in each era in order to meet different needs of the society. Studying on the myth of King Kara Bird in the current era, I, the researcher, have discovered that King Kara Bird has been reproduced in entertainment media of various types. I, the researcher, deems that if the myth of King Kara Bird is applied to the

creation of 'Hern' contemporary performance, which is Breakdance which is a western body movement performance that is globally popular that even Thai youths have widely practiced, the new 'King Kara' dance will have movements that are different from the original ones but still conserve the roots of ethnic belief, identities and culture of Tai Yai people through different time and spaces. This will reflect the values of the myth of King Kara Bird of Tai Yai people in a new dimension, with the main ideas effectively communicated to modern audience.

METHODOLOGY

The method of this research work consists of 5 steps, namely, data collection, data analysis, creation of work, discussion and conclusion, and reporting. This research project, which is a study on the creation of the contemporary performance entitled 'Hern' which is developed from the application/combination between the myth of King Kara Bird of Tai Yai people and the Breakdance forms. In this research project, I, the researcher, use the methods of creative research and qualitative research, with the emphasis on the study on fundamental data, inspiration for the creation of work and the collection of bodies of knowledge in order to explain the created work of performance art in the organized manner. The execution is divided into 2 phases. The first phase is the designing of the body movements and gestures in the performance, by 5 dancers with proficiency in Breakdance and the researcher working together in order to design the choreography that can convey the meanings effectively. The second phase is the publicity of 'Hern' contemporary performance in November 2019 in order to evaluate the work and collect feedbacks and suggestions before the complete report is concluded.

FINDINGS

From the study, it is discovered that the choreography of 'Hern' contemporary performance to combine Breakdance with Animal Exercise whereby dancers have to imagine that their bodies are turning into King Kara Birds. I, the researcher, try having dancers improvise their movements and think how they will change their body gestures. First, dancers have to come up with the imagination of birds before changing the gestures of human to those of a bird, from one organ to the entire body, by comparing to the characters of various birds such as a hawk is agile, a pigeon hops before flying, a peacock likes to show their beauty, a crow is very loud and a swan is graceful. From the experiment, each dancer starts to turn into a bird from a body part that is different from that of one another; for instances, some dancer starts with arms, some starts with legs, body torsos or heads. This difference in the beginning makes the performance look interesting because there are various movements and each bird that is going to be transformed. Next, each dancer has to learn a Tai Yai martial art technique (Top Maphap), which will be incorporated in the choreography. Also, all the 5 dancers have to add Breakdance technique into the performance. The findings show that 1) Breakdance can blend with the movement of King Kara Bird, and build new identities that are different from conventional performance because there are body freezing, body shaking with acrobatic movements that require strength and speed, and body isolation such as to nod head and to stretch neck, all of which can express the feelings of King Kara Birds in Different situation; and 2) Breakdance can also add some moving techniques to Tai Yai martial art (Top Maphap) from the movements of King Kara Birds, which have well reflected the expertise of each dancer; and 3) the combination of Breakdance and folk arts of Thai northern part enables dancers to understand the cultural root and wisdom in Thai performing arts until they can create another combined performances.



Figure 1: Group Choreography



Figure 2: Duet Choreography

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