

Research Article

## Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi: A Fusion of Nora and Bharatanatyam in the Worship of Parvati for Creative Performance

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### Abstract

This study focuses on the creation of the performance “Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi”, which portrays the worship of Parvati, her eight weapons, and eight blessings. The research synthesizes information from historical documents, observations, interviews with Nora dance and Indian dramatic arts experts, and the creators’ experiences using Suraphon Wirunrak’s seven-step creation theory.

The performance integrates Nora dance and Bharatanatyam, featuring three movements for worship, eight for Parvati’s weapons, and eight for her blessings. It is divided into three parts: Worship Dance, where the Devadasi honors Parvati; Arms of Parvati, depicting her eight weapons; and Blessings of Truth, illustrating her eight blessings. The costume combines elements of traditional Nora and Bharatanatyam attire, while the music blends southern Thai traditions with Bharatanatyam influences. An arati lamp is used as a worship prop. This creative performance applies traditional art forms to convey Parvati’s spiritual significance, offering a unique blend of cultural aesthetics and symbolism.

**Keywords:** Creation, Performance, Arms, Blessings of Truth, Parvati

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## Introduction

The cultural relationship and connection between localities would leave cultural marks on modern performances and could be traced and compared to see the cultural diffusion that seeped through many areas by means of religion, political administration, and trade. Nora was also a performance culture that showed adoption of performance arts from other places, especially India.

The belief, ritual and performance identity of the modern Nora performance still had clear traces of Hindu culture and beliefs, as in commemoration and acceptance of Hindu deities as supreme in the city foundation ritual as follows:

“...Respect the Golden deity Shiva	the founder of Land and Sky
The pea-sized land	the leaf-sized sky...”
He leaves the dragon	but the glass later on.
Lay the soil, sky and forest,	He grows lotuses and lilies....”

(Butsarat, 1992)

The writing showed that the city foundation ritual, as the first ritual of Nora ritual set, the theater that was set to represent Earth or the sacred area for Nora, still held onto worshipping Shiva as the world creator. This was a noticeable Indian influence, concurring with the study by (Inpakdee, 2016) which mentioned the Nora theater area designation as before the ritual, the theater was declared a special Nora’s realm, isolated from human world. The legend of Shiva’s world creation was used as the main plot for the ritual.

Faith in deities is not limited to Thais or Indians, but foreign tourists also pay respect to the deities that have lasted for a long time. In Thailand, faith in Parvati, the goddess of womanhood, and the mother of the world and universe. Parvati’s architecture and art at Sri Maha Mariamman Temple, in Silom, Bangkok were built during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). Sri Maha Mariamman Temple is a sacred place for followers to worship and make wishes. It can be said that Thailand is selected by the Brahmins to propagate the religion, and the importance of Parvati in Southern Thailand, especially in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, is visible through the Shiva Tower and the Swinging Post at Rajdamnern Road, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. They host a lingam that is a symbol of Shiva, as well as a yoni base, and various bronze images, such as Nataraja, Parvati, and Ganesha, replica of which are kept at the National Museum of Nakhonsithammarat (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2024).

The author saw the value and importance of both arts and sciences, for presentation of cultural relationship in the form of dance performance as an offering to deities per the belief and faith of followers and wish-makers. Creation of performance art “Dance of Parvati” is a creative dancing work that aimed to show dancing performance, with actors representing the dancers as offering to the deity (Parvati) as a shared deity between the Indians and Thais. This performance would lead to cultural connection between the worshippers to Parvati to reflect such connection in the display of worshipping, arms and the eight blessings through Thai dance. It can be seen that historical data presentation is not limited to relics, archaeological sites, or architecture, but performance art can also express the cultural and artistic value, as well as entertainment.

## Objective

- 1) Create the “Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi” performance.
- 2) Evaluate the “Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi” performance.

## Research Methods

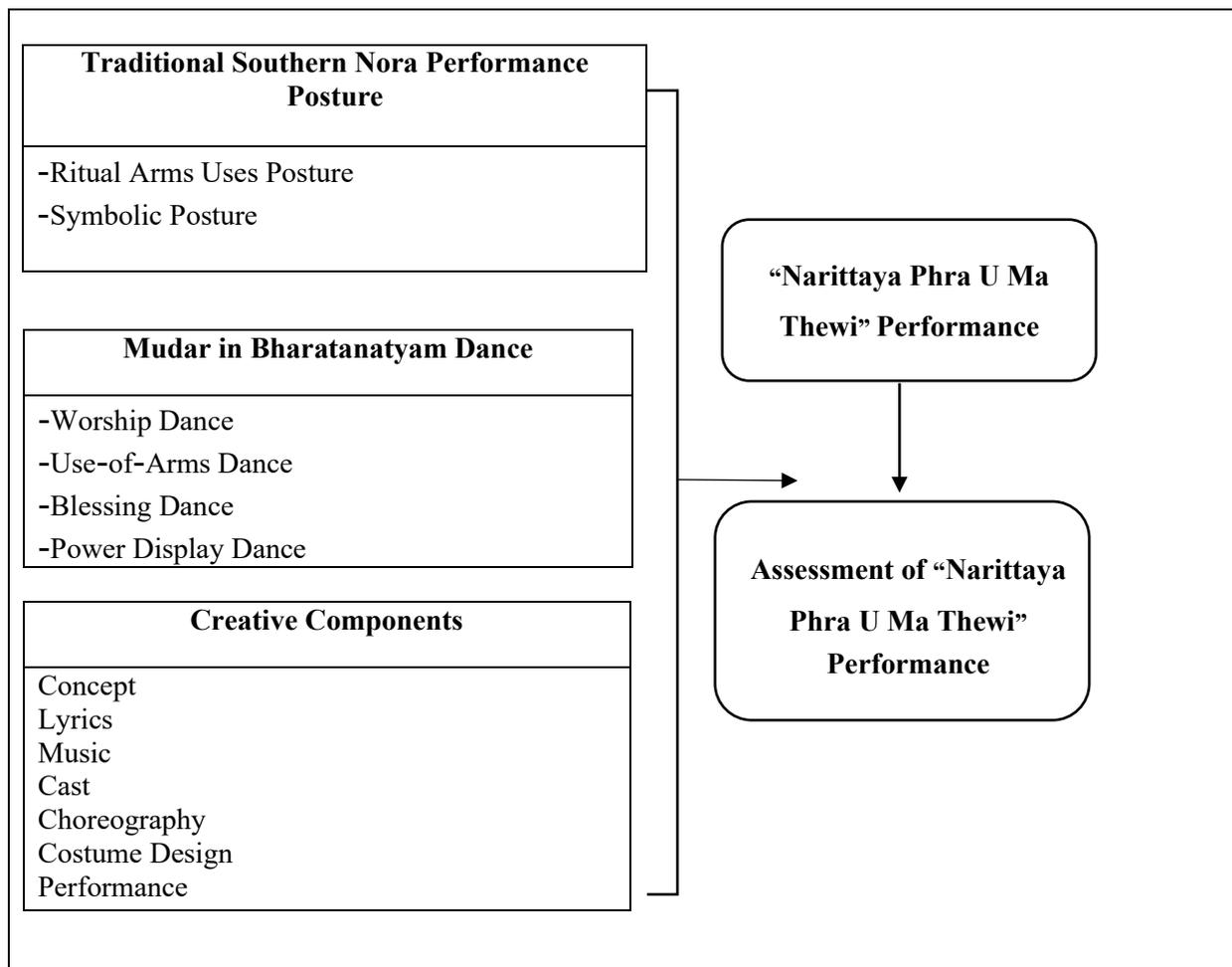
The author has set the scope for creation of this performance.

1) Regarding the content, the author studied basic dances, the Twelve Dances, the instructor script, the Nora nature-inspired choreography of Khun Uppathammarakon, by Asst. Prof. Thammanit Nikomrat Nora Yok Chubua (by Asst. Prof. Suphat Naksen, and Mr. Decha Damkliang (Noradecha Watthasin), the study on the Indian performance art Bharatanatyam by Master Aekkalak Nungern, as well as information about Parvati in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, and the seven components of performance art (Concept, lyrics, music, cast, choreography, costume design, and performance) were used as a guideline.

2) Regarding the person, key informants consist of academicians, Nora artists, Baharatanatyam experts, and female performers for eight persons in total, selected from undergraduates of Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Dramatic Arts that met the criteria.

3) Regarding the area, the study area was Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Dramatic Arts, Tha Ruea Subdistrict, Mueang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, and Bharatanayam, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute of Fine Arts, Bangkok.

4) Regarding the time, the performance would be 7.23 minutes long. The research period was from April 2022 to June 2024.



**Figure 1** Creative scope  
source: Buathong, 2024

**Creative method**

The performance “Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi” is a study into the mix of Menora dance and Bharatanatyam that display the worshipping of the Eight Arms and Blessings of Parvat.

**Data study and collection**

The document study was based on documents, books, research works by collecting data from the national library, the Nakhon Si Thammarat College of Dramatic Arts Library and various online media. The field study was done by interviewing relevant parties and experts in Nora and Bharatanatyam, in two groups:

- 1) Three Nora experts
- 2) One Bharatanatyam expert

### **Creative process**

In the performance “Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi”, the author studied the theory of Saithongkham (2015), which stated that the creative process consisted of seven steps: 1) Performance concept creation; 2) Creation of music; 3) Actor selection; 4) Dance design; 5) Costume, headdress and accessory design; 6) presentation to the experts and faculty members; and 7) Public performances. The author also examined the components of performance outlined in Buathong (2022), which mentioned the clothes, music, and dance postures. The author brought in Nora and Bharatanatyam accessories, such as the frontal cover, pants, and bracelets. The author also mixed both arts’ music together, as the double-headed drum, the nagara, and the flute are mixed with the Bansuri flute and sitar to create a new music based on the meaning of each part in the performance. Regarding posture design, the author blended in similar postures of both arts into new ones. The first part has 10% Thai dance, 40% Nora, and 50% Bharatanatyam. The second part has 10% Thai dance, 40% Nora, and 50% Bharatanatyam, and the third part has 10% Thai dance, 50% Nora, and 40% Bharatanatyam.

### **Creative work quality assessment**

Creative work quality assessment for completeness and creativity standard compliance was done by inviting six experts in relevant fields, consisting of performance art and performance creation expert, Nora expert, Bharatanatyam expert, Thai and Southern traditional music expert, and traditional Southern Thai performance art expert. The method was satisfaction analysis using basic statistical values such as mean and percentage.

### **Display of creative work**

After evaluation of the “Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi” performance art by the experts and revisions, the performance was then shown to the public and on electronic media.

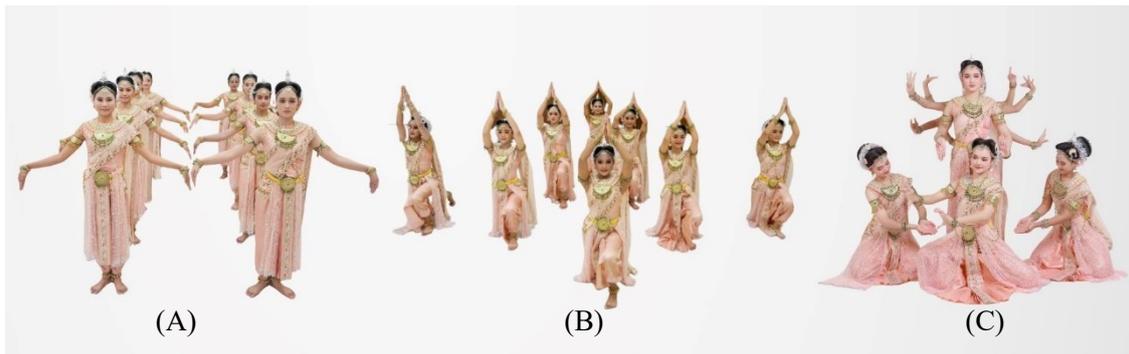
### **Result/Finding**

1) Creation of the “Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi” performance was an application from the traditional dance that expressed the worshipping of the Eight Arms and Blessings of Parvati and to publicize the Nora/Bharatanatyam hybrid identity as creative dramatic art per the purpose through quality assessment. The author used information from the study of document, research works, observations, interviews and experiences to synthesize knowledge based on the concept of performance creation, and set the scope for creation, choreography, costume design, and music. Then, selected performers were trained, dressed and performed in front of six experts that served as evaluators. The result was as follows:

Concept and inspiration: The inspiration was from the study of Ayutthaya-period bronze images of Parvati in Brahmin temples and the National Museum in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province. The author studied a major Brahmic ritual “Triyampawai ceremony” that mentioned the importance of Parvati and was inspired to create a dance to show the Parvati dance as an offering, and use them for other performances in the future.

Performance Type: This was an application of the traditional art, as a dance with Southern Thai traditional music per the identity of Nora mixed with Bharatanatyam. The performance was 7.23 minutes long and was divided into three parts:

The first part: Naruttaya Pucha (Worshipping Dance), that mentioned the Parvati worshipping dance by the Devadasi. This part was a mix of Nora and Bharatanatyam, in which the performer took short steps with an artti lamp in hand to place it in front of the altar of Parvati (signifying worshipping with fire), and then use the postures Dora, Bharatanatyam, and Suriya Namasar. The posture of Parvati, mixed with the Nora’s sitting posture, were the first that showed worshipping of Parvati. The music was Naruttaya Pucha.



**Figure 2** Part 1 Naruttaya Pucha  
(A: Dora; B: Suriya Namasar; C: Parvati Posture)  
source: Buathong, 2024

In the second part, the Arms of Parvati, the Devadasi displayed the Eight Arms of Parvati by means of Nora mixed with Bharatanatyam to the Arms of Parvati music. This was the interpretation of musical dance based on the traditional posture, and newly-created, natural-inspired posture. The eight arms displayed in the performance were: a trident, a sword, a bow, an arrow, a chakra, a conch, a wreath, and a lotus.



**Figure 3** Part 2 Arms of Parvati  
source: Buathong, 2024

The third part, Blessings of Truth, mentioned the eight blessings of Parvati. This part used the newly created musical dance, but still a mix of Nora and Bharatanatyam. The dance displayed the eight blessings of Parvati: 1) All problems can be solved; 2) Infinite success; 3) Determination; 4) Clear mind; 5) Smooth progress; 6) Fulfilled wish; 7) Deep access to the deity and 8) power over others.



**Figure 4** Blessing 1: All problems can be solved  
source: Buathong, 2024



**Figure 5** Blessing 2: Infinite success  
source: Buathong, 2024



**Figure 6** Blessing 3 determination  
source: Buathong, 2024



**Figure 7** Blessing 4: Clear mind  
source: Buathong, 2024



**Figure 8** Blessing 5: Smooth progress  
source: Buathong, 2024



**Figure 9** Blessing 6: Fulfilled wish  
source: Buathong, 2024



**Figure 10** Blessing 7: Deep access to the deity  
source: Buathong, 2024



**Figure 11** Blessing 8: Power over others  
source: Buathong, 2024

### Performer

Eight female performers portrayed the Devadasi that danced as an offering to deities and sacrificed their time for the common good. They were supposed to be of a good build, beautiful face, good posture, and 160-170 cm. in height. They must be good at Nora and Thai dramatic arts.

### Costume

The costume was Nora mixed with Bharatanatyam, with Nora accessories such as the upper arm bangles, wrist bangles, and small hanging silver plates turned into amulets, waist sashes, and front waist sashes, and Bharatanatyam accessories such as crystal flowers, hair bun flowers, crown-shaped hairpins, Moon-shaped Raakodis on the right side of the head, and half-moon Raakodis on the left side of the head, head necklaces, earrings, ankle bells, sleeveless shirts, breast clothes, pants with front pleats, and sashes. The color was based on the dressing of the Parvati image at Wat Khaek Silom (Sri Maha Mariamman Temple) on the Vijayadashami day or 24 October 2023, which showed the hot pink color which signified new clothes for the deity, and virginity of the Devadasi as they were high-class women offered by their families as dancing servants, as some sort of marriage to the deities. The Devadasi could not have normal husbands, so the color of their costume was set accordingly. The costume was decorated with beads, diamonds and gems, mostly on the neck cover, chest strap, sash, and front sash.



**Figure 12** Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi costume

(A: The front of the Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi costume; B: The back of the Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi costume)  
source: Buathong, 2024

### **Music**

The music were instrumentals, with three music pieces and an epilogue: 1) Naruttaya Pucha, 2) Arms of Parvati, and 3) Blessings of Truth. The instruments in each part were from Nora performances such as double-headed drum, drum, mong, small cymbals, wooden clappers, and flute, mixed with Bharatanatyam instruments such as mridangam, kanjira, manjira, venu, veena, tambura, surpeti and violin for the three parts. The first part or Naruttaya Pucha was worship of Parvati, and the music was slow, signifying sacredness and greatness of a powerful woman, with 30% being traditional Southern Thai music, and 70% being Bharatanatyam music. The second part or the Arms of Parvati had a moderate tempo, showing the Eight Arms of Parvati, along with their power and characteristics. The weight was based on the weapons: a trident, a sword, a bow, an arrow, a chakra, a conch, a wreath, and a lotus. Again, 30% of the music was traditional Southern Thai music, and 70% Bharatanatyam music. The third part was the Blessings of Truth, showing the eight blessings of Parvati. The music was faster, more entertaining, more powerful, with distinctive music. The blend between traditional Southern Thai music and Bharatanatyam music was now 50/50.

### **Quality evaluation and publication**

The author presented the creative work to six relevant experts for evaluation in six aspects: concept, dance, music, costume, overall quality, and research knowledge, using a Likert-scale survey (Sritrakul, 2006). It was concluded that the concept got the highest satisfaction level with average score of 4.86, dance got the highest satisfaction level with average score of 4.83, music got the highest satisfaction level with average score of 4.70, costume got the highest satisfaction level with average score of 4.90, overall quality got the highest satisfaction level with average score of 4.96, and research knowledge got the highest satisfaction level with average score of 4.90. The overall average score was 4.81, at the highest level or 97.16%, thus being “excellent”.

### **Conclusion**

The study about the Ayutthaya-period bronze Parvati image in the Brahmin church and the National Museum in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, the major Brahmic ritual “Triyampawai ceremony”, and creation of dance posture for processing and development of performance scope per the research goals, based on Nora and Bharatanatyam dances, as well as Thai traditional dance choreography, and creative concepts and theories, led to a development of Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi. Dances were developed to accompany the Narittaya Pucha music that showed the worshipping of Parvati, the Arms of Parvati music that showed the Eight Arms of Parvati, and finally the Blessings of Truth that showed the Eight Blessings of Parvati. The dances were made to fit the choreography based on the traditional Nora dance, natural-inspired postures, and symbolic meanings, as well as Bharatanatyam and Thai traditional dances. Thus, the dance was newly developed to express the meaning based on the act, with emotion, facial and eye expressions as follows:

#### **First part**

The first part consisted of three basic Nora postures: 1) Wai, 2) Sod Soi, 3) Nad; three Bharatanatyam postures: 1) Dora, 2) Suriya Namasar, 3) Parvati; four conjunctive Thai postures: 1) Chib Prok Na, 2) Tang Wong Na, 3) Chib Song Lang, 4) Soi Thao. The dances had 40% Nora, 50% Bharatanatyam, and 10% traditional Thai dance.

#### **Second part**

There are six Nora postures: 1) Sword (hand), 2) Bow, 3) Arrow, 4) Chakra, 5) Conch, 6) Wreath, 7) Lotus; three natural-inspired Nora postures: 1) Elephant; 2) Tiger; 3) Lion; six Bharatanatyam postures: 1) Trident, 2) Sword with the jumping part called Utplavana bhada, 3) Chakra, 4) Conch, 5) Lotus Bud, 6) Blooming Lotus; and three conjunctive Thai dance postures: 1) Soi Thao, 2) Nang Tang Khao, 3) Kao Na. The dances had 40% Nora, 50% Bharatanatyam, and 10% traditional Thai dance.

#### **Third part**

The first blessing had four basic Nora postures: 1) Kao Na, 2) Tang Wong Radab Lai, 3) Yok Thao Na, 4) Chib Pha mixed with Chu Phan Thong, one Bharatanatyam posture called Aaleedam (strongly tapping

the floor with one foot), and one conjunctive Thai dance posture: Jod Thao. The dances had 40% Nora, 50% Bharatanatyam, and 10% traditional Thai dance.

The second blessing had four basic Nora postures: 1) Phrom See Na, 2) Khao Khwai, 3) Kradok Thao Lang, 4) Chak Noi with one master posture (Phrom Deva), one Bharatanatyam posture called Paraval adawu (alternatively move both feet), and one conjunctive Thai dance posture: Kao Na.

The third blessing had two basic Nora postures: 1) Phala Phianglai, and 2) Tangwong Radab Chaiphok or Thiam Pok, one instructing posture (Phai Mue), one master posture (Phrom Deva), one Bharatanatyam posture called Tattat Ekapada (two feet moves, and then lift one leg with the tip of the foot pointed down), and one conjunctive Thai dance posture: Jod Thao.

The fourth blessing had five basic Nora postures: 1) Kao Na, 2) Phala Phiang Lai, 3) Tang Wong Radab Lai or Thiam Ba, 4) Khao Khwai, 4) Chib Khao Khwai with one master posture (Phai Mue). There is no Bharatanatyam or Thai traditional dance posture.

The fifth blessing had three basic Nora postures: 1) Kao Na, 2) Tangwong Radab Chaiphok or Thiam Pok, and 3) Thong Rong with two master postures (Sod Mue or Roi Malai and Kinnorn Liab Tham). There is no Bharatanatyam or Thai traditional dance posture.

The sixth blessing had two basic Nora postures: 1) Kao Na, and 2) Khao Khwai, one instructing posture (Khom Wian). There is no Bharatanatyam or Thai traditional dance posture.

The seventh blessing had three basic Nora postures: 1) Kao Na, 2) Chak Noi, 3) Wai, one Bharatanatyam posture called Phra Uma, and one conjunctive Thai dance posture: Cloth to the shoulder, showing the depth of enlightenment.

The right blessing had one basic Nora posture: Kradok Siao or Chak Khang, with Tang Wong Na and Chip at the shoulder level. There is no Bharatanatyam or Thai traditional dance posture. The dance had 50% Nora, 40% Bharatanatyam, and 10% traditional Thai dance.

The movement direction and line patterns are 25 for line formations, eight directions and five triangular formations.

### **Suggestion**

From the creative performance “Narittaya Phra U Ma Thewi”, the author has gained knowledge and viewpoint in dramatic art creation, and thus would like to offer the following suggestions for academic improvement.

1) Creation of mixed dramatic arts is based on a study of major traditions and rituals, which are highly critical. The creator must really have to conduct exhaustive research to be sufficiently and correctly understand creation, including what to do, performance principles, the correct postures, constructive mixing, music composing principles, and costume/accessory design, that are all important for a correct, complete and high-quality creative work.

2) The guideline of mixing various dramatic arts is one way to extend dramatic arts, or information about mixing diverse dramatic arts should be included in dramatic arts education to foster creativity within the Thai dramatic arts community.

3) Bharatanatyam is the oldest Southern Indian performance, and there are other interesting dramatic arts such as Kathakali and Manipuri. If there are people interested in these two arts and adapt them for Thai folk dance, then this concept might be very interesting.

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