

Research Article

## The Development of Thai School Marching Band During the Reign of King Rama IX

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### Abstract

This article is part of the research on Musicology: Development of School Marching Band 1947-2016. The objective is to study the development of Thai school marching bands during the reign of King Rama IX (1947-2016), using qualitative research methodologies based on the concepts of musicology and utilized historical and ethnohistorical approaches by conducting studies through documentary research and personal interviews with informants. The scope of the study is as follows: 1) The temporal scope is divided into three periods based on significant events: Period 1, from 1947 to 1975; Period 2, from 1976 to 1995; and Period 3, from 1996 to 2016. 2) The content scope focuses on examining the emergence, developments, and trends of school marching bands, as well as the popular songs used in competitions and performances.

Before the political revolution changed (1932), Thailand had brass bands owned by the military, which were used only for military purposes. Student brass bands were started by the Boy Scout group in some secondary schools. Later, they were used in student sports events. Student brass bands began with brass instruments and percussions. It took several years to become an absolute marching band. This thesis intends to study the developing phenomenon of school marching bands by the musicological methodology. It was evident to this research that the school marching band has been developing not only by the number but also in musicological progression, band activities as well as band competition, which brought the

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marching band up to the success of music and prompted activities of the marching band. Thus, this research will conclude the development of school bands between 1947-2016, which was in the range of King Rama IX. Results will be described in 3 periods as follows.

The 1<sup>st</sup> period was early school marching band development (1947-1975). It began with the conduct of the Ministry of Education. In 1957, ten school marching bands were found. They used only the brass instruments and percussion. To encourage a further number of brass bands. The organizer brought up the idea of a band competition. This idea started in 1958, all bands must show their activities by marching, display, and concert. Later 1959, the Bangkok Boy Scouts Club was founded at the Santiratbamrung School. They were responsible for organizing the official Boy Scout band competition. From the original brass band, it appears that there has been a lot of improvement in the number of musicians and the size of the band, and the most significant change was the use of several woodwinds in the band. These changes made the school marching band growing up.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> period (1976-1995) was quite interesting since the Ministry of Education had added a music course in the middle school. Later, the number of school marching bands increased, and some of them were able to travel out of the country for band competitions. In 1980, Wat Sutthiwararam's marching band won a marching band competition in Indonesia, and later, in 1981, they joined the competition in the Netherlands with great successful results. Later, the academic progress and skills of the musicians increased when a private company brought Danish experts for training in Thailand, and later, they sent a Thai instructor for more training in Japan. These two private assistantships resulted in better music band qualities in later years.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> period (1996-2016) was a more diverse and pronounced development than the past. There came the private sector, the Siam Music Yamaha Ltd., which organized a marching band competition for the first time. Therefore, competitions are organized by the government and private sectors, and both indoor and outdoor competitions are increasing with better results. So, participation in national and international competitions has increased. There was an unusual battle of musical instruments. More competition categories were organized than before. Several bands were sent from many schools all over the country to compete domestically and internationally.

Of the 3 developmental periods mentioned, it was found that the school marching band had more successfully developed. Most people with talent in Western musical instruments have emerged from the school marching bands. It made more rising to the number of music teachers and artists. These people returned to develop school marching bands. Music skills in the marching band were increased in many schools. Students' knowledge and skills in music and song numbers were enlarged to play. There are many more songs for marching bands. Many band students later continued their music studies in the College of Music for a higher degree in music.

**Keywords:** School Marching Band / Military Band / Brass Band

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The military band, or brass band, is a musical ensemble from the Western world. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, various brass instruments were found in the courts of several places in Europe. Later, infantry soldiers grouped together to perform music with these brass instruments, calling this grouping a Military Band. This brass ensemble became a source of pride for the army. Eventually, it spread to the military units of various European colonies and reached the Kingdom of Siam around 1851, leading to the emergence of military bands. During the reign of King Rama IV (1851-1868), military English-style signal horns were used, and two retired English officers from Calcutta, India, came to serve in Siam, entered the service of the Grand Palace and the Front Palace: Captain Impey and Captain Thomas George Knox. These two officers trained Siamese conscripts in European-style bugle playing, which led to the popularity of signal horns in the Siamese military.<sup>1</sup> Later in the reign of Rama IV, a French officer named Lamache came to serve and continued training soldiers after Captain Thomas George Knox left. A ceremonial military band was established, and trumpet training was conducted for this band to perform at various important ceremonies and different official events.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Poonpit Amatyakul, "Summary of the Origin of Brass Bands in Europe, The United States, and the Origin of Military Bands in Thailand," in *Siam Trumpet*, ed. Poonpit Amatyakul, and Nachaya Natchanawakul (Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing, 2016), 39-41. (in Thai)

<sup>2</sup> Nachaya Natchanawakul, "Western Music in Siam: The Development between 1841-1941" (PhD diss., Mahidol University, 2012), 71-72. (in Thai)

In the year 1871, during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1868-1910), European brass band instructors were stationed at the Royal Military Band, including Wester Feil from Germany and C. Hewetson, also known as Kru Yusen. At the same time, another notable foreign brass band instructor, Jacob Feit from Germany, served as a band instructor at the front palace and later moved to the Royal Army Band. In 1877, another significant foreign brass band instructor, Captain Michael Fusco, originally from Italy and later naturalized as an American, came to serve in the Marine Corps band.<sup>3</sup> During the reign of King Rama V, significant changes occurred in the Siamese brass band as His Royal Highness Prince Paribatra Sukhumbandhu returned to work in the navy. He improved the naval band through the organization of Western music education, which included training in Western note reading, knowledge of four-part harmony, and arranging concerts for various important occasions.

Later, during the reigns of King Rama VI (1910-1925) and Rama VII (1925-1935), the public began to enjoy brass bands more, leading to the establishment of local brass bands that performed at various ceremonies. During this time, a trumpet teacher named Alberto Nazzari traveled to Siam. He trained the military brass bands stationed at the Department of Military Affairs (currently the Ministry of Defense). He was later transferred to the Royal Guard Cavalry Regiment. He then brought the cavalry band and musicians to play alongside the musicians and brass bands of the vanguard troops, which eventually evolved into a Western string orchestra or symphony orchestra. This international orchestra was known as the Combined Horse Orchestra, and it was regarded as the first Western string orchestra in Siam.

Additionally, the brass band has been disseminated into the education system by being present in schools across the country. It is utilized in scouting parades and plays a role in leading sports teams onto the field. It is evident that the marching band has permeated the education system through various school activities, as music has been integrated into teaching and learning processes, as well as multiple activities, which are significant undertakings that have contributed to the establishment of marching bands in schools.

In Thailand, the competition for school marching bands has been organized since 1981, initially as a competition for scout bands. In 1982, the first National Marching Band Championship

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<sup>3</sup> Nachaya Natchanawakul, 124. (in Thai)

was organized by the Department of Physical Education to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bangkok and National Children's Day. The competition established regulations and clearly defined the formats and methods of judging, which included both concert performance and field music performance (marching and display), as well as specifying mandatory pieces for each category, such as Krao Keela (Sports Anthem) in marching competition.

Currently, marching band is an activity present in almost every school in Thailand. The size of the band depends on the budget and policies of the school. The marching band is an activity that involves various processes in developing the students' aesthetic musical skills. Additionally, it is an activity that fosters discipline and teamwork. The marching band also aligns with the school's policies for community service and building a reputation for the institution.

During the era of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great (Rama IX, 1947-2016), the first marching band competition was organized in Thailand. The competition has continued at both national and international levels. School marching bands were consistently sent abroad to compete. The organization of this competition and the participation of marching bands have led to the rapid development of Thai school marching bands. However, studies and research have not explored or compiled information related to the development, roles, and competitions of school marching bands, especially during the reign of Rama IX. This has created a gap in education and related information, posing a problem in explaining historical data regarding the development of Thai school marching bands. So, collecting historical data benefits the study of history, development, changes, and various phenomena that have occurred. This data serves to broaden knowledge related to school marching bands in Thailand. Therefore, the objective of this research is to study the development of school marching bands during the reign of King Rama IX.

## Methodology

1. The researcher employed qualitative research methodologies based on the concepts of musicology and utilized historical and ethnohistorical approaches.
2. For data collection, the researcher gathered information by studying various data documents, conducting interviews, and media, audio recordings, and various social media platforms with relevant information.

3. The researcher conducted a verification of the accuracy of the obtained data by analyzing and reviewing the information in the following order:

3.1 Checking the accuracy and consistency of the data and evidence, as well as the context surrounding them, to determine whether the obtained data and evidence are accurate and credible.

3.2 Conduct a triangulation check by examining information obtained from experts, relevant individuals, and those present during the events to find consistency in the data and ensure its accuracy.

4. Study and analyze the overall characteristics of the music (compositions for the marching band). The researcher analyzes the roles and functions of the compositions, the overall aspects of the music, and the key issues found in the compositions.

5. Ethical Approval: The study was reviewed and approved by the Office of The Committee for Research Ethics (Social Sciences), Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University (Certificate No. 2020/114.1205; Research Project Code 2020/141 (B2)). The approval was granted on May 12, 2020, and renewed until May 11, 2023.

## Research Results

The brass band or marching band was first introduced into the Thai education system in schools run by foreign missionaries who came to teach in Siam. The teachers were friars or priests who instructed students in playing the trumpet and pipe while also training them to read music notes. The foreign schools that began teaching brass bands were all-boys schools located in the capital and provinces. These schools offered a diverse education system, organizing various activities for students in a Western manner, such as writing essays in English, theater performances, sports, and music. In terms of music education, instruction in brass bands and Western string instruments was provided at these schools. Music was eventually taught in schools that included some female students, although they were not as numerous as the male students.

Later, students in government schools were taught to play brass instruments, leading to the establishment of student bands used in various school activities. During the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925), brass bands became prominent in schools across the country at

both primary and secondary levels, performing roles such as playing the national anthem while raising the flag, leading athletic parades, and directing scout lines. During this period under King Rama VI, the first scout band was established in 1915. The first scout band was the Suankularb Wittayalai School Scout Band, created to perform in front of the ranger unit (Figure 1). In addition to the scout band at Suankularb Wittayalai School, scout bands were also established in other schools for scouting activities, including Bangkok Christian College, Assumption College, Vajiravudh College, and Debsirin School, among others.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1** Suankularb Wittayalai School's Boy Scouts' Band, 1915.<sup>5</sup>



From the scout band established solely for scout activities, there has been continuous development, including competitions, changes in the band's arrangement, the songs used for performances, and the roles and responsibilities involved in performing. This development was most evident during the reign of King Rama IX (1947-2016), as detailed below.

#### 1. The school marching bands in Thailand during the reign of King Rama IX

Period 1 (1957-1977) was a time of development for school marching bands in Thailand. In 1957, school marching bands were established at 10 government schools across the country,

<sup>4</sup> Nachaya Natchanawakul, 320-322. (in Thai)

<sup>5</sup> Nachaya Natchanawakul, 322. (in Thai)

with Phra Chenduriyang leading the formation of the bands. He arranged for the purchase of musical instruments for all and had each school send teachers to participate in training so they could return and teach at their schools. Later, in 1958, the first scout band competition was held as part of the student arts and crafts event. All participating scout bands were dressed in scout uniforms. In the early stages of the competition, the bands consisted of brass instruments; however, in the later stages, woodwind instruments were incorporated into the bands, resulting in a formation that more closely resembled contemporary marching bands.<sup>6</sup>

During this period, Thai school marching bands began to perform displays inspired by those in the United States. The first instance of marching band formations in the United States occurred in 1907. This initial display was performed on a football field in the form of a Block P, designed by Paul Spotts Emrick, the director of the Purdue All-American Marching Band.<sup>7</sup> However, the initial display by the school marching bands in Thailand during 1958-1968 focused on order, harmony, and sound quality as its main principles. At that time, there was no formation of pictures. Later, from 1969 to 1977, the formation of images began, and pauses were included to make the pictures more distinct. The formations during this period did not flow continuously from one image to the next; instead, the first image was completed before forming a new line to create another image. Once all images were completed, they returned to the original formation. From the information, the researcher sees that the marching bands in Thailand have been influenced almost entirely by the United States, including in terms of performance style, use of musical instruments, performers, and props. The reason why Thai marching bands have been influenced by the United States is because the United States is the country of origin of marching bands and has constantly developed the form of marching bands to be more interesting.

Period 2 (1978-1995) was a notable and concrete development period. In 1978, music was included in the lower secondary school curriculum as an elective subject, with four courses: Marching Band 1-4. Later, the curriculum was revised again in 1990, and the Marching

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<sup>6</sup> Satana Rojanatrakul, *Brass Marching Band*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bangkok: Odeonstore, 2016), 103-104. (in Thai)

<sup>7</sup> William Meiners, "Purdue 'All-American' Band's historic Block P turns 100," accessed November 28, 2023, <https://www.purdue.edu/uns/x/2007b/071023MeinerBlock.html>.



Band 1-4 was no longer specified. From the information, the researcher sees that the lower secondary school curriculum in 1978 lasted only 12 years. Still, during this time, the Marching Band in the education system experienced significant development. The activities of the Marching Band in schools expanded as extracurricular activities, allowing many schools to send bands to participate in competitions both domestically and abroad, earning various awards. For instance, in 1980, the Marching Band of Wat Suthiwararam School participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Band Competition in Indonesia and won the first prize, receiving the top score in another six categories. Later, in 1981, the Marching Band of Wat Suthiwararam School was invited by the Ministry of Culture of the Netherlands to participate in the 9<sup>th</sup> World Music Contest in the Netherlands. In this competition, they received second-place awards in two categories: Marching and Display. The participation of the Marching Band of Wat Suthiwararam School in this competition marked the first instance of a Thai school marching band traveling to compete in an international marching band contest abroad.<sup>8</sup> In the same year (1981), Thailand organized another scouting band contest to celebrate National Children's Day.

The activity of school marching bands has resulted in the continuous organization of marching band competitions in Thailand, aiming to encourage school marching bands to showcase their potential in front of the public. In 1982, the Scout Band competition changed its name, and format, and was more appropriately named the Marching Band Competition for Students and College Students of Thailand. It continues to be held during National Children's Day, as it did before. The format of the competition includes concert performances and marching and display music, along with the stipulation of mandatory songs used in the competition. This event marks the first marching band competition held in Thailand,<sup>9</sup> which has continued for over 40 years to the present day. Currently, it is called the “Thailand International Royal Trophy Band Competition” and has diversified its competition formats. In addition to outdoor competitions, in 1988, a Thai music performance competition organized

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<sup>8</sup> Anupong Amatayakul (Marching Band Specialist), interview by Phatravee Tienchaianan, February 7, 2023. (in Thai)

<sup>9</sup> Department of Physical Education, *Guidelines for Organizing Marching Band Competitions* (Bangkok: S.Offset Graphic Design, 2015), 49. (in Thai)

by the Ministry of Defense for marching bands was held at the National Theatre, which was the first time a competition was held in a theatre.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, regarding the development of the capabilities of marching bands during that time, it was discovered that in 1982, the Thai government invited the Tenri High School Band, a school marching band from Nara, Japan, to perform at the celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Bangkok. This performance allowed Thai marching band musicians to observe a band with excellent playing skills and high sound quality. At that time, the understanding and practice of achieving good sound quality in Thai marching bands were not well-developed, as there was no established knowledge of training for quality of performance. The arrival of the Tenri High School Band was considered the starting point for improving the sound quality of marching bands in Thailand.<sup>11</sup>

In 1983, Siam Musical Yamaha Company Limited organized a workshop for teachers and trainers of marching bands, inviting Prof. Per Gade, a renowned trombonist from Denmark, as the speaker for the training. The workshop focused on establishing foundational practices for marching band musicians to produce better-quality sound. After completing the workshop, they applied the knowledge gained to their bands, improving the sound quality for many marching bands and allowing them to perform music more beautifully. This marked the beginning of focusing on sound quality within marching bands in Thailand. Thus, the workshop was a significant factor in the development of marching band excellence in Thailand.<sup>12</sup>

Additionally, the display of the marching band in Thailand continuously developed, remaining primarily influenced by the United States, particularly in terms of performances, props, and costumes. Since 1984, the formations have become more complex, featuring fluid transitions from one image to another. Furthermore, there has been an increase in additional performers and various performance equipment, along with the use of field instruments, resulting in larger marching bands. In 1993, Wat Suthiwararam School's marching band

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<sup>10</sup> Poonpit Amatyakul, "Royal Thai Music Marching Band Competition Award Ceremony of the Ministry of Defense," *Siam Rath Newspaper*, February 24, 1988, 13. (in Thai)

<sup>11</sup> Surapol Thanyawibool (Lecturer, Department of Western Music, Faculty of Humanities, Kasetsart University), interview by Phatravee Tienchaianan, March 28, 2023. (in Thai)

<sup>12</sup> Wisit Chitrangsan (Marching Band Specialist), interview by Phatravee Tienchaianan, March 16, 2023. (in Thai)

collaborated with Suranari Witthaya School's marching band to participate in the 12<sup>th</sup> World Music Contest in the Netherlands, competing under the name “Suranari-Suthiwararam Thailand Marching Band” and winning a gold medal (Figure 2). This competition showcased fluid formations, performers, props, and costumes that had been modernized.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 2** Suranari-Suthiwararam Thailand Marching Band  
in the 12<sup>th</sup> World Music Contest 1993.<sup>14</sup>



Period 3 (1996-2016) was when Thailand organized marching band competitions through government and private sector organizations. Various competitions, including the first international marching band competition, were held in Thailand. In 1996, Siam Music Yamaha Co., Ltd. organized the King's Cup competition for marching bands. This event was solely a display competition and marked the first instance of a private sector organization organizing a marching band competition, a practice that continues to present. Subsequently, more marching band competitions organized by the private sector were held. In 2011, a competition

<sup>13</sup> Anupong Amatayakul, interview. (in Thai)

<sup>14</sup> Photo by Anupong Amatayakul.

transformed the history of marching band competitions in Thailand and raised international standards for these competitions. This was the first time that indoor marching and display competitions were held in Thailand. The indoor marching band competition was influenced by foreign countries, as this format had gained popularity in several nations at that time, such as the United States, Canada, and Japan. This indoor competition allowed for better control of various elements, such as lighting and temperature for the performances.

In addition to the national competition, in 1999, the first international marching band competition was held in Thailand, named “The International Wind Ensemble Competition of Thailand.” This competition has risen in an auditorium setting, with regulations stipulating the division of bands into two sizes: large and small. The competition was further divided into two categories: adult and student levels. Evidently, this competition was not limited to student marching bands but opened opportunities for participation to marching bands of all age groups. In 2010, the competition “The World Marching Band Competition for the Royal Trophy of Thailand” was held at Suphachalasai National Stadium and featured many international bands. This competition, in addition to marching band performances, included a Street Parade and Drumline Battle, which were organized for the first time in Thailand and influenced by international practices. Subsequently, in 2013, the competition was renamed “The World Marching Band Competition” and introduced the Brass Line Battle and Woodwind Battle, both of which were conceived and initiated by the competition organizers. Currently, both types of battle competitions have gained widespread popularity in many countries. In 2020, several more competition categories were added, such as Color Guard Battle and Ensemble Battle. This competition format represents a significant advancement in the organization of competitions in Thailand, having been conceived by Thai individuals, and has since become widely accepted and popular in many countries.

From the development of Thai school marching bands over the past 70 years, there has been continuous progress in terms of performance style, band arrangement, playing techniques, sound quality, and attire through marching band activities within schools and various competitions, both domestically and internationally. This has been an important factor in the development of Thai school marching bands, resulting in student members improving

their instrumental skills, which can further enhance their studies at higher levels and ultimately lead to potential career opportunities.

## 2. School Band Music in the Thai Education System during the reign of King Rama IX

School band music in the Thai education system has been continuously developed. Currently, there are more composers and arrangers of music for school bands, increasing the number and diversity of pieces available for bands. In this context, the researcher divides school band music in the Thai education system into three main groups:

2.1 Marching Music: Marching is one of the fundamental forms of performance in a marching band that has existed for many years. It is performed in a manner that involves walking in formations arranged in deep lines. Marching is commonly used to lead parades for various events, such as military parades, athlete processions, and more. Alternatively, it can be performed exclusively by the marching band itself, as seen in marching band competitions. Most often, marching is accompanied by march rhythm music, a type of composition specifically written for marching formations due to its consistent tempo and appropriate speed for marching. In addition to march rhythm music, there is some use of other rhythmic compositions in marching, but such instances are relatively minimal.

The music used for marching not only includes songs for marching in formation but also features songs used in various ceremonies. The researcher grouped the songs for ceremonies together with the songs for marching, as ceremonies often coincide with marching or are performed in the context of an honor guard, which has a style of performance similar to that of music for marching. The music for marching has a clear format and function, with minimal changes in the arrangement and role of the music performed. The details of the songs in the category of music for marching are as follows:

1) March rhythm music is a composition specifically arranged for use in marching and parades, such as military parades or athletic marching formations. It ensures orderly marching, allowing participants to walk in unison to the rhythm of the music. Since this march rhythm music features a consistent tempo and a strong beat, it typically follows a time signature of 2/4 or 4/4, which is suitable for walking.

2) The royal anthem is a song specifically used in functions related to showing respect, performed to honor the King and the royal family. In the past, Thailand

borrowed its royal anthem from a foreign country and did not have one of its own. The borrowed anthem was *God Save the Queen*, from England. The use of *God Save the Queen* as a royal anthem was prevalent among the military in several European countries. Even in the United States, during its early establishment as a new nation, the melody of *God Save the Queen* was part of the national anthem before it adopted its current anthem. Besides the United States, many other countries have also incorporated *God Save the Queen* into their national anthems. After World War II, these countries began using their own national anthems.<sup>15</sup>

In Thailand, the salute song in the Western style has been used since the reign of King Rama IV (1851-1868); however, there was no original melody, as it borrowed the tune of the English salute song. Later, during the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910), Thailand developed its salute melody, which is the melody of the royal anthem still used today. Additionally, there are several other Thai salute songs used for different occasions. The orchestration of salute songs for various events is clearly stated in the Royal Gazette, which outlines the regulations of the royal household concerning the performance of music during royal ceremonies and events in 2019, with which all marching bands must comply. Therefore, salute songs, which are used in various ceremonies, form a music category that all student marching bands can perform. Important salute songs in Thailand commonly performed by marching bands include *Thai Royal Anthem*, *Thai National Anthem*, *Maha Chai*, and *Maha Roek*.

2.2 Display Music: The display is a form of performance by marching bands that is very popular, as it showcases abilities in every aspect, including instrumentation, formation, movement, and various poses in sync with the rhythm of the music. It emphasizes beauty, elegance, and the melodiousness of the music used for the performance. Display performance is a combination of musical performance and movement that creates images and patterns. The music performed during the display is very important to the overall presentation. Therefore, it is necessary to choose music that complements the display visuals in a way that suits both the performance and the capabilities of the musicians.

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<sup>15</sup> Poonpit Amatyakul, "Chapter 42 Thai Salutation Song," accessed February 14, 2024, [https://sirindhornmusic.library.li.mahidol.ac.th/thai\\_contemporary\\_mu/plengthaisakol-42/](https://sirindhornmusic.library.li.mahidol.ac.th/thai_contemporary_mu/plengthaisakol-42/). (in Thai)



2.3 Concert Music: The sitting performance is also known as a “Concert.” The music used for this type of performance is arranged for a concert band specifically for sitting performances, or it may involve rearranging pieces originally composed for a symphony orchestra so that the concert band can use them for concert performances. Musicians in the concert band must possess great skill in interpreting the music, as pieces for concert performances typically contain numerous details and require a lot of interpretation. These pieces are more challenging than those intended for other performance formats. Therefore, musicians must have good instrumental skills and a strong understanding of musical aesthetics to perform sitting concert pieces beautifully. Songs for concert performances come in various styles, such as traditional Thai songs, classical music, royal compositions, and music for singing. Choosing songs for instrumental performance is essential to ensure appropriateness, as each group of songs has its own details and unique characteristics.

1) Traditional Thai music consists of compositions performed by marching bands using traditional Thai rhythmic instruments such as Ching (small cup-shaped cymbals), Chap (cymbals), and Klong Khaek (double-headed drum). (Figure 3)

**Figure 3** The Khon Kaen Wittayayon School's Marching Band Plays Traditional Thai Music.<sup>16</sup>



<sup>16</sup> Photo by Komson Wongwan.

Originally, these pieces were performed according to the style of traditional Thai ensembles in every aspect. During the late reign of King Chulalongkorn, Rama V (1868-1910), His Royal Highness Prince Paribatra *Sukhumbandhu* arranged harmonies and adapted traditional Thai music specifically for marching band performance, fully preserving its Thai essence and employing traditional Thai harmonization.

2) The royal compositions of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great, Rama IX (1947-2016), are musical pieces for which His Majesty composed both the lyrics and the melodies, or one or the other. He had great musical talent, having composed melodies since he was still a royal prince. In total, he composed 48 songs. Arrangements of the royal songs are a category of music often performed by marching bands, and they are also mandatory pieces in various competitions.

3) Classical music often means music from the period 1750 to 1820, which is known as the Classical era. However, in reality, classical music refers to Western music that is neither folk nor indigenous music, encompassing a wide period from before the Common Era to the present day, which is divided into eras according to the history of Western music. Classical music comes in various forms, including vocal pieces, instrumental ensembles, solo instrumental performances, and music for ballet. Typically, classical music is complex in composition, featuring rich harmonies, intricate rhythms, and diverse performance techniques. In other words, classical music is often challenging to perform, requiring musicians to be well-trained, possess strong instrumental skills, and understand the distinctive performance techniques of each era, as these techniques vary across different periods. Therefore, classical music is a genre that marching bands frequently perform to showcase their capabilities.

4) Popular international songs and Thai pop music are other categories of songs frequently performed by school bands. This is because these songs are well-known to the audience, resulting in interest and active engagement from listeners. The performances also allow the audience to be easily impressed. The notes used in the performances are mostly arranged anew for the school bands specifically, either by using pre-arranged harmonies or by creating new arrangements exclusively for the bands.

From the details of the school marching band songs in the Thai education system, it is evident that there is currently an increasing diversity of songs, along with a



continuous composition and arrangement of new songs for the marching band by both foreign and Thai composers and arrangers. Thailand now has more composers and arrangers who create works that showcase Thai uniqueness, such as using traditional Thai songs as raw material for new compositions. These works have been performed in competitions abroad, gaining acceptance from foreign audiences, and bands from other countries have also played pieces by Thai composers and arrangers.

This newly composed or arranged piece of music reflects the performance skills of Thai school marching bands today. This is because, when composing music or arranging harmonies for the band to perform, the composer or arranger considers the musical abilities of the band. The newly composed or arranged piece comes in various levels of difficulty, allowing the band to choose accordingly. Additionally, it reflects the current social context and conditions.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The researcher summarized the findings and discussed the research objectives as follows: The school marching bands in Thailand during the reign of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Rama IX, from 1947 to 2016, have developed continuously. In the early stages, student brass bands were established in ten government schools across the country, and the format of the bands evolved from being brass bands consisting only of two types of instruments: brass instruments and percussion instruments. Later, woodwind instruments from abroad were incorporated into the bands, resulting in a structure that became increasingly similar to modern marching bands. The establishment of school brass bands in government schools throughout the country and the acceptance of woodwind instruments from abroad align with the theory of “Cultural Diffusion” by Franz Boas,<sup>17</sup> which the spread of cultural trends across different locations. Beliefs, practices, and ideas are shared from person to person and sometimes even around the world. Many cultural practices spread through a type of diffusion called expansion diffusion. This occurs when a trend moves outward from its original source, as the setup of school brass bands in government schools represents the diffusion of

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<sup>17</sup> Franz Boas, *Race Language and Culture* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), 251-252.

these bands from a central point to various regions across the country. The incorporation of woodwind instruments from abroad into the bands signifies the acceptance of foreign musical culture, blending it with the existing musical culture in Thailand and leading to further local development.

Music courses were eventually included in the lower secondary school curriculum, resulting in the clear development of brass bands and marching bands in schools. Many schools have been able to continuously send their bands to compete in various competitions, both domestically and internationally, and have received numerous awards from these contests. Additionally, the “School Marching Band Competition for the Championship of Thailand” has been organized by the Department of Physical Education. In this competition, regulations were established along with clear guidelines on the format and methods, as well as specified compulsory pieces used in the contest. This event is considered the first marching band competition in Thailand because it marked the first time a clear format for the competition and the compulsory pieces to be used were established. The competition mentioned above has been held continuously for over 40 years.

The marching band in Thailand continues to develop, with invitations extended to marching bands and experts from abroad to perform and share their knowledge about marching bands in Thailand. This initiative began when the Thai government invited the Tenri High School Band, a school marching band from Nara, Japan, to perform at the celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Rattanakosin Kingdom. The performance of the Tenri High School Band allowed Thai marching musicians to observe a marching band with excellent playing skills and good sound quality. At that time, the understanding and practice of achieving good sound quality in marching bands in Thailand were not evident. Later, Siam Music Yamaha Co., Ltd. invited Prof. Per Gade to be a speaker for a workshop tailored for teachers and trainers of marching bands in Thailand. This resulted in significant improvements in the sound quality of marching bands in Thailand and enabled them to play music more beautifully. This aligns with the theory of Fuek Hat Khat Klao (practice, learn, polish, chamfer)

proposed by Poonpit Amatyakul,<sup>18</sup> which states that opportunities to understand, learn, and practice good techniques are essential for achieving success. Because of this training, the teachers and trainers of marching bands in Thailand had the chance to learn and comprehend the correct practice methods for instrumental skills, enabling them to perform with improved sound quality, which in turn leads to more beautiful music. Once they developed and achieved success, they passed that knowledge on to their students, resulting in school marching bands exhibiting enhanced sound quality and the ability to perform music beautifully, contributing to successful development overall.

In addition to the contests organized by government agencies, private sector organizations later organized a competition. Subsequently, the first international competition conducted by Siam Music Yamaha Company Limited was held in Thailand. This event featured a seated performance in an auditorium, with many bands from various countries participating. Additionally, Thailand hosted its first indoor marching and display competition, marking a significant turning point in the history of marching band competitions in the country and raising the standard of such competitions to an international level. The indoor competition allowed for better dimensionality and control over various elements of the performance. Indoor marching band competitions have been held in other countries for a long time, but Thailand organized its first indoor marching band competition in 2011. This aligns with the theory of “Rian Rup Prap Chai” (imitation, reception, adaptation, application) proposed by Poonpit Amatyakul,<sup>19</sup> which arises from the imitation of existing forms to adapt them to the context and culture before further utilizing them for benefit. Thailand adopted the format of seated performances in auditoriums, as well as indoor marching and parade competitions from abroad, adjusted them to fit the context and culture of Thai marching bands, and

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<sup>18</sup> Poonpit Amatyakul, “Summary of Knowledge About Body, Mind, and Behavior with the Training Process of Refinement and Motivation from the Environment as a Guide to Excellence in Art, Theory of Fuek Hat Khat Klao” (Course notes for Doctoral Seminar in Eastern Music, Collage of Music, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, June 28, 2017), 4. (in Thai)

<sup>19</sup> Poonpit Amatyakul, “Theory of Imitation and Adjusting to Local Culture” (Course notes for Doctoral Seminar in Eastern Music, Collage of Music, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, June 28, 2017), 3. (in Thai)

subsequently organized seated performances in auditoriums and indoor marching and parade competitions, which is considered a utilization of what has been learned.

From the data regarding school marching bands during the reign of King Rama IX (1947-2016), as mentioned above, it is evident that Thai school marching bands have continuously developed in tangible ways, including improvements in musical instruments, band arrangements, sound quality, and performance styles. There were also ample opportunities to enter various competitions conducted by the government and private sectors. These are all crucial factors in enhancing the potential of Thai school marching bands to meet international standards.

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