

# I am Don Quixote the Trio *Likay*: A Soul-searching Content within Thai Popular Performance

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## ABSTRACT

This article mainly focuses on the recent production of Anatta Theatre Troupe, named "I am Don Quixote the Trio *Likay*," which presented in Bangkok Theatre Festival 2019. The performance exhibited the combination of social themes and entertaining images belong to both Don Quixote of La Mancha and *likay* form as a reconstruction of popular theatre. The story is about a broke business man who assumes himself as a world-renowned knight, Don Quixote of La Mancha, in *likay* style. He makes the great efforts in promoting justice and equality for underprivileged people in Thai society. The production demonstrates a confidence in presenting identity of popular theatre and challenging Thai socio-cultural formation of popular status. The result demonstrates that sophisticated messages, such as soul-searching, social critique and satire, humanity and equality can, in an apparently paradoxical manner, be conveyed through *likay*-style performance. "I am Don Quixote the Trio *Likay*," therefore, enables to hybrid the theatrical practice between tradition-popular based and contemporary theatre in Thailand.

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## Introduction

Reflecting upon questions of how popular theatrical practices can be reconstructed within the context of their socio-politic-economic-cultural formation, "I am Don Quixote the Trio *Likay*" is a representational case. Typically stigmatized as a light entertainment for the low-class circle and poor education, the form has also encountered critiques of limitation in providing deep-thought message to audiences. In this kind of cultural hegemony, Anatta Theatre Troupe, the renowned troupe of using popular folk in creating popular-based contemporary performances, employs the recognizable and acquaint aesthetic conventions of *likay*, put together slapstick humor combine it with an intellectual wittiness that exposes social critiques, class conflict, economic decline, and political crisis through funny dialogue. This can evoke thoughts and

emotions to attach the audience members to the socio-political-economical struggles in Thai context.

## Aesthetic Dichotomies and Re-signification of a *Likay* Performance

*Likay* is a hybrid theatre form and is an amalgamation of a variety of traditional/folk theatrical elements. It is the most entertaining of the stage-popular genre, as most of the stories concern abridged monarchical legends and fairy tales, and melodramatic and comic presentations with various emotion-based elements such as humor, romance, and violence. Elaborate ornate costumes, glittering headdresses including crystal crowns and ornaments, and over-acting style, as well as the vulgar burlesque are aesthetic elements

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of *likay* (Sompiboon, 2012). Stereotype characters reflecting a protagonist, antagonist, and jokers sharing emotional release with televised soap drama features, such as vulgar language, face-slaps, hair-pulling, and screaming outbursts, are simply presented. These help release the emotions of audiences who are restrained by politeness and hierarchy in real life (Cornwel-Smith, 2005). Other romantic and comic narratives provide daily-life communication-pleasure, seen as enjoyment, contentment, serenity, and delight. This is opposite to communication-pain, which is a command for work and action and negative connotations (Stephenson, 1967, as cited in Bates & Ferri, 2010).

*Likay* has been stigmatized as an unsophisticated, and to some degree vulgar, popular performance which is considered inferior to elite or intellectual performances. This is because Thailand has been perceived as a “highly hierarchically structured society” (Bechstedt, 1987, as cited in Reynolds, 2002), reflecting on social hierarchy, cultural etiquette, and even aesthetic expression. Aesthetic judgment and discrimination between dominant class and dominated class has been clearly discerned (Ferguson, 2007). The principal cultural function of criticism is to make judgments of value in which (popular) entertainment has been underestimated. General audiences might be expected to devote energy to thinking rather than enjoying (Maltby 2003, as cited in McKee et al., 2014). This might result in the guilty pleasure of participating in popular entertainment.

Since popular stage artists, who are supported and patronized by common people, perform the lives of and speak for their audience by voicing its social concerns, the aesthetic elements are, therefore, not subject to the courts, elites, or government rulers' pleasure (Schechter, 2003). Without subvention from the state, popular theatre is exempt from taking instructions from those forms of superiority. It formulates popular artistic principles simply from (its) own immediate experience with audiences (Hauser, 1951, as cited in Schechter, 2003). The hierarchical hegemony and dominance can be satirically used (Barber, 2007) and is commonly seen as mockeries and parodies of supremacy.

## Why a *Likay* Performance is Comparable to *Don Quixote* of La Mancha

*Likay* is a common people-empowering performance because of its popular form, which is ‘of the people’, ‘for the people’ and ‘belonging to the people,’ and uses its significant attributes to tell a dramatic story that relates to audiences’ imaginative world providing a source of pleasure

and entertainment (Sompiboon, 2012), which is widely accepted and enjoyed. Artists are able to express fictitious suppositions which might not be possible in reality, challenging the aesthetic judgment in performing styles. Social judgment and hierarchy as well as politics and oppression are clearly seen in *Don Quixote*, which is comparable to the *likay* form of struggling in cultural contest and aesthetic discrimination. The over-acting and stylized presentation of *likay* corresponds to *Don Quixote* who seeks goodness in the name of insanity and make-belief. It can be seen as praising virtuousness by ultimately scoffing at it.

Although *likay* is still not considered to be representative of being (official) Thai performing arts, and is considered a *chaobaan* (villager or commoner) performance which is a substandard form that fails to meet the aesthetic standards of the Thai national arts, it is popular amongst common people. Even though it is excluded from the high standard arts, it is often exploited for the purposes of government campaigns or public relations, because *likay* has a crowd-pulling capacity (Sompiboon, 2012). The element of form matches the meaning of the English term ‘entertainment’ that is ultimately from the Latin *inter+tenere*, meaning ‘to hold together’, ‘to maintain to uphold’ and it is enjoyed by most people in today’s diverse societies (Shusterman, 2003).

As mentioned above, a *likay* performance is archetypally labelled as light entertainment for the low-classes and poorly educated, the form has also encountered critiques of limitation in encouraging profound thinking amongst its audiences. Pradit Prasatthong, founder and director of the Anatta Theatre, and his troupe members employ the recognizable and acquaint aesthetic conventions of *likay*, combining slapstick humor with an intellectual wittiness that exposes social critiques, class conflict, economic decline, corruption, demoralization or democratic awareness and political crisis through funny dialogue. This approach is not considered solely a way of bridging the gap between aesthetic judgment in cultural hegemony and popular and highbrow performances, but it can manifest *likay*’s backbone of presenting Utopia in its repertoire and voicing dialogues of imagination and reality.

In a clichéd melodramatic presentation of tradition-based popular theatre, the aesthetic virtue of the good characters must manifest their quality and outlook, i.e., their persona, costume, physical appearance, and their speech. They are the symbols of the ideal human being. The antagonists must reveal their evil/bad quality in contradiction to the protagonists in order to reveal the dark human instinct (Eoseewong, 1995, as

cited in Sompiboon, 2012). These are well reflected in mainstream popular performances. The power of good commonly triumphs over bad with miracle assistance or meritorious fate of the protagonist. The audience members are inevitably encouraged by dreams and hopes.

Popular entertainment provides "the image of something better" to escape into something that daily life does not offer (Dyer, 2002, as cited in McKee et al., 2014). Dyer, to some degree, argues that entertainment gives alternatives, hopes, and wishes of the stuff of Utopia, the sense that things could be better (*ibid*). Likewise, Bakhtin (n.d., as cited in Shusterman, 2003) suggests that carnival entertainment has a convalescent power in which Utopian ideals and new possibilities are brought to audiences' minds, enabling them, for a moment, to forget the restraints of official roles and established truths. The appeal of popular entertainment with its recuperative power and links to Utopian function can serve all strata of the population (Bakhtin, n.d., as cited in Shusterman, 2003).

According to Montaigne (1962, as cited in Shusterman, 2003), pleasure and serious intellectual activity can be consistent and attached in entertainment. Moreover, pleasure is as crucial as other tools for cultivating the mind, since the mind's powers can be strengthened by providing it with both relief and alternative exercise in changing the focus and style of its activity. I assert that pleasure in entertainment interrelates with a soul-searching stage in bringing intelligence and contemplation to audiences. The meaning of a valuable message might be perceived after a period of an enjoyable form of entertainment that provides audiences with amusing and witty approaches of narratives and performing techniques. According to Eliot (1957, as cited in Shusterman, 2003):

"...It is certain that we do not fully enjoy a poem unless we understand it; and on the other hand, it is equally true that we do not fully understand a poem unless we enjoy it. And that means enjoying it to the right degree and in the right way, relative to other poem."

## The Journey of Don Quixote the Trio *Likay*: Reimaging the Popular Theatre in a Soul-searching Narrative

Don Quixote of La Mancha, written by Miguel de Cervantes in 1605, was firstly translated from Spanish into Thai in 2005 on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the novel. The first two volumes were printed by the government of the Kingdom of Spain in Thailand and presented to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit and His Majesty Juan Carlos I and Queen Sophia of the Kingdom of Spain on the occasion of visiting Thailand.

However, the musical play of Don Quixote of La Mancha was first performed in Thailand between August and September 1987 at the Thailand Cultural Centre by the 28 Theatre Troupe. The troupe translated and arranged the repertoire and music from the original version by Dale Wasserman in 1964. A play-within-a play style was presented about Cervantes and his servant in the Spanish Inquisition. Cervantes plays Alonzo Quixano, an elderly man who is addicted to medieval knight adventure novels. He created himself as a knight called "Don Quixote of La Mancha" after spiraling into insanity. He also invented his servant taking the role of Sancho, a fellow of Don Quixote. His mission is to fix the wrong things in the world through their peculiar journey and behavior. Finally, Dr. Carrasco who became the "illusionist" in the Knights of the Mirror healed Alonzo Quixano by telling him the truth that he is not a knight-errant. However, Don Quixote's message envisioned the value of living for others as well as giving essence to having hope in a disconsolate world.

Pradit adapted the musical version into his *likay* style with a trio band playing traditional Thai and western scores (see Figure 1). The one-hour show features a *likay* performance in five scenes. The first scene is the introduction of Prasert (Don Quixote) and Bualoi (Sancho) on a street where a bus is presented as a giant dragon. The second scene is in a karaoke bar visited by Prasert and Bualoi, the third scene is a dressing room in the bar, offering the secret of Prasert's mental illness, which was told to Renu (Dulcinea) by Bualoi, the fourth scene is a fight between Prasert and the illusionist. The last scene is at Prasert's house, portraying his regained hope and last breath.

**Figure 1 Prudit Prasatthong in *Likay* Costume Performed Don Quixote's Role**



All the characters have new names which were taken from famous characters in popular Thai televised drama and series, songs, and movies. The names of *likay* characters are conventional fictitious which is agreeable to both audiences and performers in using any selected names that fit well along the story's context and setting. Employing these names of famous leading characters in those popular dramas and songs can make acquaintance to audience members. More to the point, each name has a hint characteristic of a referred character.<sup>1</sup>

Prasert (Alonzo/Don Quixote) is a former old businessman who broke down because his business collapsed, causing his former friends to flee. Being alone resulted in a mental illness, imagining himself as a knight. He asked his fellow Bualoi (Sancho Panza) to travel with him to the castle asking for a knighthood so that he is able to ward off the evil in society. During the

course of their journey, they came across a low-class karaoke bar, but Prasert thought that it was a castle. Prasert (Don Quixote) thought Renu (Aldonza), a bargirl as Dulcinea; the Barkeeper, Lamyong as Maria, the wife of the castle lord; Daeng Bailey, a bar boy, as Pedro, and his grandson Chaiklang as a priest and illusionist. Along this journey to be knighted, he faced obstacles from Daeng Bailey who falls in love with Renu (Aldonza/Dulcinea). His grandson disguised himself as an illusionist using a mirror to convince him that he was just a sick old man, and took him back home for psychiatric treatment. Renu, as Dulcinea visited Prasert and reminded him of the story of Don Quixote that helped her to believe in justice in a world full of injustice (see Figure 2). His memory of being Don Quixote was refreshed. He sang a song again before slowly running out of breath.

<sup>1</sup> Prasert is a name of a wealthy business man from the series “Leud Kon Khon Jang” (In Family We Trust); Lamyong, a drunken woman in Thong Neu Gao (the Purified Gold) relates to Maria, a barkeeper character; Renu, a former prostitute in Krong Kam (A Kharma Cage) relates to Dulcinea/Aldonza, a country prostitute. Bualoi is a diligent and honest guy from the Caraboa’s song “Bualoi” that refers to Sancho behavior; Daeng Bailey is a thug from the film “2499 Anthapharn Krong Meung” (Dang Bireley’s and Young Gangsters) denotes as Petro, a bar boy; and Chaiklang, a member of the royal family in “Ban Saithong” (The Golden Mansion) which represents the status of this character as Prasert’s nephew.

**Figure 2 Renu (Dulcinea) Visited Prasert (Don Quixote) and Reminded Him of the Story of Don Quixote**



The *likay* form was chosen to perform Don Quixote because it is a characteristic of Thai folk musical theatre that has continued traditional aspects while being relevant to current life and society. Sophisticated messages, such as soul-searching, political, and social agendas and didactic orientations can be conveyed through the sparkling clothes, flashy make-up, over-acting and vulgar burlesque of a *likay* performance (Barber, 2007, as cited in Sompiboon, 2012). This has been seemingly considered a paradoxical manner of depicting worldly-wise content in a light-entertainment form. But, in point of fact, social critique or satire is typically presented in a *likay* performance. Indeed, *likay* characteristics can be seen as a transformation of people theatre offering a dialogue of social concerns and voicing people's repression and imagination through and underneath the farcical and pleasurable style.

The adaptation in Anatta's version is about a broke businessman who assumes himself as a world-renowned knight, Don Quixote of La Mancha. He strives to promote justice and equality for underprivileged people in (Thai) society. The production demonstrates a confidence in presenting the identity of popular theatre and challenging Thai socio-cultural formation of popular status. The 'play-within-a-play' technique which was used in the musical version was omitted. However, the *likay* version employs a 'play-within-*likay*' technique, in that an inner and outer style of acting is designated to present a parallel world of a fanciful characters in a fanciful theatrical form. Although the characters were not in prison, an injustice society as well as the obvious inequality seems an invisible prison that constricts the poor with no freedom and no exit. Some characters depicted despondency by accepting bad fate and corrupt social construction.

Realistic action in these kinds of dialogues drew audience members out of the *likay* world to identify with real life.

Don Quixote the Trio *Likay* can be newly coined against the deep-seated culture that *likay* is solely light entertainment full of vulgarity and farce, but this, folkloric recuperation of the past and present, is an effective performing tool that brought a soul-searching substance with stylization as well as forthright and outspoken social critique. Employing *likay*, an entertainment or amusement form which is considered contrasted to philosophy and the serious business of life, can achieve real aesthetic merit, and serve worthy social ends (Shusterman, 2003). Satire regarding the extravagant lifestyle of the higher class, for instance, was presented in a scene of the female characters quarrelling. This scene offers the sense of both 'black comedy' and 'slapstick.'

Renu (Dulcinea):

"I am not sure which one is insane between me and this world. But he (Don Quixote) is the first person ever who told me about equality and dignity as a human being. I believe that we are never equal to anyone throughout our entire life, until I was told a different aspect by him."

Lamyong (Barkeeper): "Listen to me, you might feel excited by a daydream that he encourages. This is only an illusion of goodness which is not real. A better place of living does not exist. Nobody helps us, we have

to earn our living by ourselves.”

Renu (Dulcinea):

“So, we have to surrender and live this poignant life?”

Lamyong (Barkeeper):

“Can you prove that an insane guy hasn’t lost all his crazy dreams? He might have been electrocuted until he lost consciousness and might forget what he dreamt about. I recommend that you accept the fact that you are a bar girl who will never have a better life or be a lady. Well, I will stop preaching to you because I just get a sore throat.”

*The play script “Don Quixote the Trio Likay” written by Pradit Prsatthong. [author’s translation]*

### **Likay Imaginative Exercises in Don Quixote of La Mancha**

The core characteristics of a *likay* performance are addressed by Sompiboon (2012) as follows: Firstly, improvisation, a core characteristic of Thai tradition-based popular theatre, is typically employed by performers by applying their stock dialogues and lyrics clinging to plot outlines told by a director or a troupe’s storyteller shortly before a show begins. More to the point, often, without a script, some actors/actresses sing songs asking for support from audiences for their decision-making; asking for clapping and yelling, to encourage them to fight and curse their enemies; asking for advice on a dilemma, or asking for their opinions and thanking them for their attendance and support. Furthermore, *likay* performers often incorporate current or ‘hot’ issues and political commentary into their dialogues and lyrics, in order to present up-to-date performances. Fun-making and comical moments are offered together with a serious play with social-concern dialogue that most city dwellers share and experienced in common.

The next point demonstrates the nonrealistic world of fictitious supposition and stylized performing, an everyday practice of exaggeration. After the characters finish singing their introduction songs, *likay* performers always start their first dialogues with announcements of their fictitious names, for instance, “I myself am named according to the story as Mr. or Miss So-and-so.” For example, Prasert (Don Quixote) wore a *likay* costume at the very beginning of first scene and introduced himself as Don Quixote. Bualoi, his fellow, entered the stage wearing a

white shirt and blue jeans and followed his boss’s imagination with the name of Sancho. Performers are able to imagine themselves as a king, a queen, a prince, a princess, a noble or prevailing person in consort with the told storyline. Clowns (a typical lowest status) and kings, as well as comical and noble characters, are allowed to appear together on stage, where the inferior characters are able to tease or insult characters of kingship and aristocracy without penalty. When Don Quixote talked about ideals, Sancho, one way or another, said the opposite to invoke his boss’s consciousness of reality. Performing as a clown in *likay* convention, Sancho is allowed to tease or disobey a superior character.

Furthermore, Sancho, in the musical version, employs rhetorical monologues on knighthood which were considered old-fashioned at the time. In the *likay* version, the royal words that *likay* conventionally use in their conversation are suitable for an out-of-date knight’s life. *likay* costumes with flashy jewelry and ornaments reflect an imaginative world of ultimate beauty. Crystal and glass adornments can be pasted on every possible part of the body. For this reason, the phrase ‘muen *likay*’ [dress and make up (very thick) like *likay*] is used for anyone who dresses and makes up extravagantly or for any showy object (Smithies, 1971, as cited in Tungtang, 2015), and this can also imply a crazy person. Prasert (Don Quixote) in his (*likay*) knight costume perfectly matches this concept.

As the show title is ‘*likay*’, audience members expect to see all characters wearing *likay* costumes as well as singing and dancing in *likay* style throughout the story. Pradit, the director and actor who played the role of Don Quixote, states that some *likay* performing techniques were minimally employed, since suggestive and minimal *likay* aesthetic elements can represent marginal people who are often forgotten and are somehow oppressed by the state and government. Although other characters, except Don Quixote, wore everyday clothes and uniforms as bar waiters, they presented the suggestive qualities of a *likay* performance, such as singing a ranikloeng verse lib, a trademark *likay* song to introduce themselves and their characters. The use of an off-stage narrator is to fill in all the dramatic gaps on stage and provide comments on the scene being performed. For example, an off-scene narrator who announces the names of characters, or asks the characters on the stage to introduce themselves. This process is clearly seen as an introduction of fictitious supposition.

The non-realistic element begins at an early stage when a performer announces that he/she is to ‘become’ a character, not ‘being’ a character. This allows a ‘character’ to be a ‘performer’ who

can be 'in' and 'out' of the performing role throughout a performance. Asides are also commonly used by characters as direct communication with audience members when characters need to express their inner thoughts or feelings. When presenting fictitious supposition, asides are inaudible to other characters although they accompany the same scene. Social criticism or parodies are normally articulated in this interaction between performers and audiences.

Non-realistic objects are extensively used as stage props to represent real objects. Close-at-hand materials that are easily accessible are simply used when needed, for example, a new-born baby is created by folding a towel into a doll model fastened with rubber bands or ropes. It can be also announced by a behind-the-scene-narrator or a clown that this towel new-born baby will become a young prince or princess (or other adult character) in the next scene. A carved paper horse,

for instance, representing Don Quixote's exhausted horse, Rocinante, is attached to the waist of a performer presenting a horse-riding action. Comical fictitious props such as a toilet plunger is used as a sword to officially ordain Don Quixote a knight, and range of cloth representing the robes of Buddhist monks is used in a priest scene created a comical spectacle (see Figures 3 and 4). The imaginative exercise in *likay* and in Don Quixote's imaginative quest is similar. Impossible daydreams and super romances often toy with meaning through exaggerated speech, costumes, lights, and sounds, and even the expression of dance movements and hand gestures that display crying, going, coming, happiness, anger, and so forth. These elements of non-realism conventionally represent realistic situations occurring on and off stage.

**Figures 3 and 4 A Comical Fictitious Prop--A Toilet Plunger is Presented as a Sword to Officially Ordain Don Quixote a Knight**



The aesthetic of interruption is another necessary artistic component of a *likay* performance. According to Nagavajara (1996) on Thai tradition-based popular theatre, there is no sharp dividing line between actors/actresses and audiences in a *likay* performance, where audience participation is always encouraged to stimulate the performance by laughing loudly, yelling, and applauding during a performance. This theatrical element of *likay* transgresses the dividing line between performers and audiences, encouraging them to 'perform' together during shows. In this atmosphere, *likay* performance offers what Pronko (1967) asserts 'a place to live, not a place to sit'. It encourages the audience to be active and a part of the pleasurable experience.

As *likay* performance is not getting involved totally and emotionally with the play with its in-and-out technique and direct talk to the audiences, commenting on their actions onstage and situations would encourage audiences to realize that they are watching a show. This can imply that Brechtian dramaturgy is not at all remote from traditional Thai theatre and is very familiar to Thai traditional audiences (Nagavajara, 1964, as cited in Sompiboon, 2012). Nagavajara asserts that this stylistic manner that deconstructs the 'fourth wall' and shatters the strict line between our imaginative and real worlds is the native essence of Thai traditional (popular) theatre. Aiming as pleasure-seeking, this discontinuity, to some degree, inspires intellectual awareness and

real-life struggles that are criticized by performers. In *Don Quixote* the Trio *Likay*, Brechtian's alienation is unnecessary, the real situation in society is articulated by an argument in a scene between Renu (Dulcinea) and Lamyong (the Barkeeper). While performing over-acting in almost every single scene following *likay* style, this scene is full of realistic conversation which took the audience members out of the illusion of theatre, into reality. Performing the Renu (Dulcinea) character on my own was my most difficult scene because the performing stylization had to change back and forth from to a more natural style of acting. Switched acting from unreal to real, from being characters to performers, however, is *likay*'s identity, which is not a strange or weird when viewed.

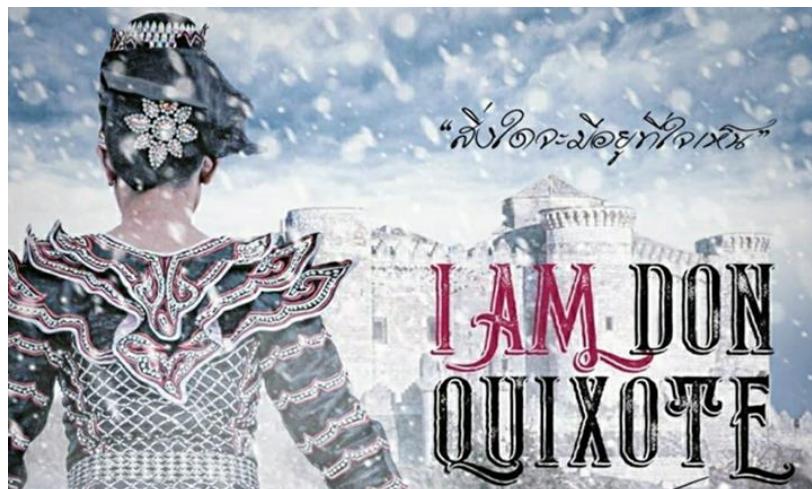
Anything is possible in a *likay* performance. Fictitious suppositions allow performers to be sovereignties and nobilities, similarly, Don Quixote can dream about an ideal world in his imagination within an imaginative *likay* space. Symbolic and stylistic motifs, which are legitimately employed in *likay*, were significantly used by Don Quixote. A *likay* performance is homogenous and unified with

Don Quixote of La Mancha since its aesthetic elements are embraced, such as, stylized outfits, exaggerate expression, and victory of good deeds over bad deeds, presented with fictitious supposition through the repertoire. When Don Quixote makes his appearance on stage in a *likay* costume, dressed as a knight looking for a castle and aiming to kill a giant dragon, it conforms perfectly to *likay* aesthetics.

### **The Combination of Stylization and Realism: The Possibility of Contrast**

The ebullient traditional *likay* is adept to the kind of depth and insightfulness that Pradit gives his creations. The poster of Don Quixote wearing a *likay* costume with his back turned walking towards the castle with falling snow, presents a paradoxical vision between Thai traditional costumes in the snowy scenery of western countries (see Figure 5). This contrast seems to show the impossible journey, interpreted from the theme song 'The Impossible Dream'.

**Figure 5 The Poster of Don Quixote the Trio *Likay***



Pradit stated that he would stop scripting and directing unless he composed a song adapted from 'The Impossible Dream'. The theme song in his version was not a word-by-word translation. He maintained the main points of the original lyrics, composed a Thai version and employed Thai traditional melody. Don Quixote sang this song along with Renu (Dulcinea) who he has enlightened and has begun to have hope and faith in the value of living. When Prasert (Don Quixote) dies at the end of the story, his dreams and hopes remain and are transferred to Renu (Dulcinea), a low-class bar girl, who represents

equality of having good quality in all human beings. In other words, all human beings can dream their dreams and have faith in life regardless of their social status, rank, or state of birth.

The song entitled 'Khwa Fun' (Grasp a Dream) is newly composed, and interpreted from the original 'The Impossible Dream'. Don Quixote sings this song directly after Renu (Dulcinea) finishes her question about the value of life.

Renu (Dulcinea): "I want to know why a noble man with dignity and wealth

left your happy life in a huge mansion to live a life on the streets. I wonder why you try hard to find justice that does not exist. You could enjoy your beautiful world full of splendid flowers, not the world of poor people which is full of debt and a broken business. The illegal authority is watching and suppressing us. We can see and sense only injustice around and above us. Where is the justice in reality?"

Don Quixote asks Renu (Dulcinea) to close her eyes and explains further that the light of justice can be seen by heart. Here are the song lyrics:

"Things that are not seen with the eyes can be seen with the heart, even though it's blurry and hidden.

Justice does not drift far away, even though it fades in our breath, we can feel and touch it within our imagination.

I believe in my dreams and strive to seize the glittering stars in my palms.

With my courage, enemies and evils cannot obstructively stand in my way.

No matter how many times I die, I will not give up on my dreams, I will hold on and not let them be destroyed.

I shall grasp the shining stars, placing them in the bottom of my heart, also letting them dazzlingly shine to people and light a brighter way for them.

I believe that the world must be better than it is. No matter how difficult it is, I will not stop hoping.

Even if the sun goes out until dark, I, on my own, will light up the hearts of the people."

*The play script "Don Quixote the Trio Likay" written by Pradit Prsatthong. [author's translation]*

While the audiences were laughing, they were perhaps sobbing with despair at the same time. Little by little, the image of the insanity and optimism of Don Quixote in a *likay* costume is actually the idea of an ideal world. Why Utopia or a romantic world full of justice and equality is perceived as a daydream even an impossible dream. The contrast between Don Quixote and other characters is memorable, because it is the contradiction and confrontation between imagination and reality, and morality and

lustfulness, reflecting and implying polarity in the world.

### Conclusion: The World is a *Likay* Theatre

While one side of a *likay* performance manifests burlesque on the surface, Pradit dares to venture into the other side of *likay* as a (common) people empowering theatre, which has served as an important thematic source of popular theatre form that reflects the enjoyment of righteousness and happiness coated with a farcical stratum. If the world were a *likay* theatre, performers and audiences are participants. We might live in a world where a dreamer is basically imposed on insane person. Therefore, Don Quixote can exist everywhere, not only in *likay* theatre. A person full of hope is not silly, likewise everyone is able to dream and look for a better world. Don Quixote in a *likay* costume and character is labelled as a mad person, but he uncompromisingly dares to talk about the value of life, while other characters who keep saying that they are not insane do not have the courage to live their dreams, and dare not stand up and fight against any injustices.

*Likay* provides perspectives of the capability of *likay* to promote the transformation of performance discourse and practice in a socio-cultural context that currently encourages, to some extent, a dialogue on the subject of social efficacy. It is simply because the term popular theatre is still associated with democratic, proletarian, and politically progressive theatre (Schechter, 2003). Additionally, popular entertainment, in opposition to a dominant practice, is a memory of a forgotten matrix that includes resistance, replication discourses, and silences (Martín-Barbero, 1980, as cited in Scolari, 2014). *Likay*, as a popular form is capable of telling tales that incorporate events from the real world, and this genre also goes beyond the limitations and boundaries of social hierarchy in real life.

Remarkably, when artists recognize and understand 'conventions' of theatrical practices, they might, one way or another, further reinvent the genres and forms of origins in various approaches and creations. Cross or hybrid contributions beyond levels of designated tradition or contemporary; high or low culture; or even the cliché outlook of East meets West can bring possible perspectives in searching back into both kinds of performing arts and artists themselves in making cross or syncretic theatre. Anatta Theatre Troupe, commonly envisions the value of cross-cultural theatre, combining social agendas and didactic orientations with elaboration of melodramatic and comic styles of *likay* together with contemporary staging. It enables the

troupe to demonstrate the spirit of Thai artists in finding the amalgamation of many (theatrical) routes within their own roots.

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