

Photo Gallery

Second Best of ASEAN Performing Arts “Tapestry of Thai Beauty and Grace”

Jakarta, 8 August 2008

“Through culture, we can bring the peoples of ASEAN closer together. The Best of ASEAN Performing Arts reflects ASEAN’s common shared values and history that will contribute towards building an ASEAN Community and an ASEAN identity.”

Dr Surin Pitsuwan – Secretary-General of ASEAN

The Best of ASEAN Performing Arts is a series of cultural events that showcases the richness and diversity of performing arts in the region. The purpose of the series is to promote ASEAN awareness through the region’s rich and diverse cultures as well as to acknowledge the important role that Jakarta has played over the last 32 years as the host city of the ASEAN Secretariat.

The Best of ASEAN Performing Arts was proposed by the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr Surin Pitsuwan, at the 3rd Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Arts and Culture in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 January 2008.

After the success of the inaugural Best of Performing Arts series, Thailand has the pleasure to present the Second Best of Performing Arts titled “Tapestry of Thai Beauty and Grace.”

The performances features Traditional Thai Puppet Performance “Hanuman Caught Nang Nenyakai”, “Ramayana” Khon Mask Dance Drama: the Battle Scene, Traditional Folk Dance “Fon Pang”, Martial Arts Performance: Short Stick – Long Stick Fight, Nora Dance, Traditional Ritual Dance Ram Tang Wai, Ritual Dance and Lum Ploen Dance.



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The event, which coincided with ASEAN's 41st Anniversary, was attended by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Indonesia, Ambassadors of ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners, Jakarta-based diplomatic corps and other dignitaries in Jakarta, as well as members of the public.

A cake cutting ceremony was held to mark ASEAN's birthday.



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Traditional Thai Puppet Performance

By Joe Louis Theatre

Thai theatrical puppetry is unique among the various forms of puppetry in that each puppet represents a character taken from the traditional Thai Khon Theatre – a highly sophisticated and stylized form of staged entertainment with dancing, singing and music comparable in complexity with the European opera ballet of the 18th Century French royal court at Versailles. It is also unique in that each puppet requires the synchronized effort of three puppeteers in its manipulation, all of whom is a *Khon* dancer in his or her own right. The puppets, in short, perform *Khon* on stage with the puppeteers.

The Traditional Thai Puppet Theatre (Joe Louis) is the only troupe of Thai theatrical puppeteers in existence. It remains the sole guardian of this dying art form: the directors and senior members of the troupe are direct artistic successors of the founder of Thai theatrical puppetry. Performances are as unique as they are authentic.

Performances at the Joe Louis Puppet theatre are a showcase for the Thailand’s cultural heritage and reflect the unstinting efforts of the troupe to preserve and perpetuate this exotic art form.

“*Hanuman Caught Nang Benyakai*”

Duration: 25 minutes

The performance presented here is part of the Ramayana epic called “Nang Loy” meaning a floating lady. The show comprises one scene: “Hanuman caught Nang Benyakai.”

Thotsakan abducted Sida, Rama’s wife to his kingdom, Longka. He commanded his niece, Nang Benyakai to disguise herself as dead Sida and to float down the river to deceive Rama to withdraw his army back to Ayodhya kingdom.

At dawn Rama and his monkey army went to the river to take a bath. He saw Sida’s body floating down the river. Rama was deeply sad and bitter. He blamed Hanuman for setting fire to Longka City, which caused Thotsakan to be so furious that he killed Sida.

After looking at the body carefully, Hanuman noticed that the body was floating upstream. This, he told Rama that he doubted that the body was Sida’s. he then asked Rama’s permission to prove the truth by burning the body. If it were Sida, the body would be able to withstand the fire; if it were not Sida, the body would burn. When the body was set alight, Nang Benyakai tried to run away from the heat. Hanuman realized immediately that she was not Sida. He then flew after her. When he caught her, he forced her to surrender and become his wife.

In this scene the male voice is Hanuman and the female is Nang Benyakai.

Notes:

Rama: Prince of Ayodhya Kingdom; **Sida:** wife of Rama; **Hanuman:** a monkey warrior, Rama’s envoy to Longka; **Thotsakan:** Demon King from Longka; and **Nang Benyakai:** Thotsakan’s niece.

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“Hanuman Caught Nang Benyakai”

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Traditional Thai Dance and Music

By Bunditpatanasilpa Institute (Institute of Fine Arts)

Bunditpatanasilpa Institute is an educational institute under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. The institute specializes in dramatic arts, music, and fine art; both in Thai and western arts. The institute was established on 3 November 1998, providing education under the mandate of the Royal Decree of Bunditpatanasilpa Institute 1998.

Bunditpatanasilpa Institute is an educational institute in the fields of arts; emphasizing on academic arts, performing arts, and fine arts; producing graduates who excel in the arts and possess high morals; upholding the conservation and dissemination of national tradition and culture.

“Ramayana” Khon Mask Dance Drama: the Battle Scene

Duration: 10 minutes

In the Khon Mask Dance Drama, masks are worn by the performers. Each mask depicts a particular character in the story and is made in a wide variety of designs. While wearing the masks, the performers are unable to speak. They, therefore, have to utilize dance movements and mime, accompanied by vocal recitations and songs of the narrators, singers and the orchestra. The main characters are the male and female characters, enacting Gods and humans; the demons and the monkeys. Accessory characters include comedians and animals.

The only story played in Khon form of dance drama is “Ramakien” which is the Thai version of the Indian epic “Ramayana.” The main part of the story is about the long struggle and war between the demon king of Lonka City “Thotsakan”, personification of Evil, and the Prince Rama of Ayodhya Kingdom, an incarnation of Vishnu and personification of righteousness.

In this episode, we depict a battle in which Rama, Lakhsman and their army of warrior monkeys confront Thotsakan’s demon army. Rama wins this fight, but fails to kill his archenemy who will return to fight again on another day.

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Fon Pang

Duration: 7 minutes

The word “Fon” means a folk dance of the northern region of Thailand. Its movement is slow, courtly and graceful. The dancers hold lighted receptacles as they gracefully do their worship dance. This dance is usually performed on festive occasions and religious ceremonies.



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Martial Arts: Short Stick – Long Stick Fight

Duration: 7 minutes

The art of fighting with short sticks depends on the agility of the fencer who has to take the offensive step and always keep close to his adversary. On the contrary, the fencer using the long stick when pitted against a man armed with the short sticks, has to back away; otherwise he will not be able to use his long stick effectively.



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Nora

Duration: 7 minutes

‘Nora’ is one of traditional performances of the South. The gestures, choreography and ceremonies of this dance have been passed on from one generation to the next for more than 100 years. It has also become the original dance form for the other dances later on. The gestures of a performer depict a mythical creature known as ‘Kinari’ a half-bird half-human. This dance is performed to pay homage to the past teachers; in order to show gratefulness and thus to bring blessings to the performers. Therefore the lyrics of the accompanying song contains words of praise for those teachers.



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Ram Tang Wai – Lum Ploen

Duration: 7 minutes

Tang Wai Dance is originally a ritual dance of the Thai people in Ubon Ratchathani Province in the northeastern part of Thailand. It is performed as a token of respect to the holy spirits, and usually is part of a ceremony of thanks offering to the local deity. Nowadays, this dance has been popular in the annual festival as well as a special dance recital to welcome guests.

Lum Ploen is a local Northeastern dance which is full of gay and fun. There are several styles totally appear only in the Northeastern dance, especially the fingers movements.



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Performers

