

The art of the humor in Thailand and in France

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“ตาพรานบุญ” or “Pran Boon”

Pran Boon in Thai Traditional Comedy: Adding Humor to Nora Performances

The “Pran Boon” tradition, originating from classical Thai theater like “Khon,” serves as a comedic element enhancing Nora performances. These characters, recognized by their distinct red masks and long-nosed costumes, engage in witty banter, wordplay, and comedic gestures, accompanied by musicians, during Nora dances and songs. This dynamic interaction not only entertains the audience but also contributes to a lively and playful atmosphere.

Cultural Links and Influences: Connecting Pran Boon to Indian Heritage



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The historical roots of “Pran Boon” and “Khon” can be traced back to epic narratives like the Ramakien, a Thai adaptation of the Indian Ramayana. This cultural connection underscores centuries-old exchanges and influences between Thailand and India, particularly in religious, literary, and theatrical realms. Thus, the art of “Pran Boon” embodies shared cultural elements, enriching its artistic legacy and symbolic depth.



“Bouffons” from France

The vibrant red attire of the Pran Boon, characterized by their distinctive masks, finds a fascinating parallel with the historical court jesters in France, often depicted in similar red outfits. Just as the Pran Boon brought humor and entertainment to traditional Thai performances, the court jesters, or bouffons, played a vital role in amusing and diverting royalty and nobility in medieval and Renaissance France.

Bouffons in French Court Entertainment: Masters of Satire and Wit

Much like the Pran Boon, bouffons were skilled in the art of satire, using sharp wit and comedic timing to comment on societal issues and poke fun at authority figures. Their performances, often accompanied by music and dance, created a lively and jovial atmosphere in the royal courts, providing a welcomed break from formalities and protocol.

Influence on Theatre in Europe



Bouffons profoundly influenced European theatre by shaping comedic styles, creating archetypal characters, and innovating staging techniques like expressive masks, colorful costumes, and extravagant sets. Their impact extended to the Italian Commedia dell'arte, enriching its repertoire with comedic elements and performance techniques. This legacy laid the groundwork for modern theatre, with their innovative approaches to comedy, physical performance, and social satire continuing to resonate in contemporary theatrical traditions and popular culture throughout Europe.

Important dates

During the Early Middle Ages in the 5th century, bouffons emerged as entertainers linked to popular festivals and street performances, showcasing their comedic talents in informal settings.

By the Central Middle Ages (11th - 13th centuries), bouffons had become fixtures in royal and aristocratic courts, delighting nobles with their humorous acts and establishing themselves as professional entertainers with troupes performing across Europe.

The 14th century witnessed the formalization and development of bouffonry as an art form, with renowned artists and skilled troupes showcasing their comedic prowess and influencing the burgeoning comedic theatre scene.

In the 15th century, bouffons reached the height of their popularity, with their performances becoming integral to stage arts and contributing significantly to the evolution of comedic theatre styles.

However, by the Late Middle Ages (16th century), changing artistic preferences and the emergence of new entertainment forms led to a decline in the prominence of bouffons, although their legacy continued to influence popular theatre and cultural expressions.

References

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