GUIDELINES FOR CREATING A PERFORMANCE BASED ON THE LEGEND OF THE SARASIN BRIDGE

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ABSTRACT
This qualitative study aimed (1) to examine and analyze the "Sarasin Bridge love legend" as source material for "performance creation" and (2) to synthesize guidelines for developing "contemporary performance" from the legend. Documentary materials, academic publications, photographs, video recordings, and related visual media were examined through qualitative content analysis and interpretive synthesis. The findings identify love, social-class inequality, familial opposition, attachment, and tragic loss as central narrative themes. Three interrelated strategies were developed: using flowing fabric to signify water and shifting emotional states; incorporating ribbons with patterns reminiscent of the traditional Thai pha khao ma cloth into costume design to evoke cultural identity and interpersonal attachment; and developing "embodied expression" through movement quality, spatial relationships, rhythm, and performer interaction. The proposed dramaturgical structure consists of three phases: an encounter characterized by soft and continuous movement, a crisis represented through forceful movement and spatial obstruction, and a tragic ending expressed through deceleration, lowered body levels, and stillness. Music, sound, lighting, and stage space support these embodied and symbolic choices. The study offers a practice-oriented framework for translating local cultural narratives into "contemporary performance" without relying on literal reenactment. As the research primarily analyzes documentary and visual materials, the proposed framework should not be interpreted as empirically validated audience reception.
Keywords: Sarasin Bridge Love Legend, Contemporary Performance, Performance Creation, Embodied Expression, Symbolism, Thai Cultural Narrative

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INTRODUCTION

The “Sarasin Bridge love legend” provides a culturally resonant narrative through which “contemporary performance” makers may investigate love, social hierarchy, family authority, personal agency, and loss. The legend is associated with Sarasin Bridge, connecting Phuket and Phang Nga in southern Thailand. In widely circulated accounts, two young people from different social backgrounds encounter familial resistance to their relationship, and their story ends in tragedy. The narrative has continued to circulate through oral retellings and screen adaptations, becoming a point of reference for public memory and cultural representation. Details of the story should be treated as claims within circulating narrative sources unless corroborated by independent historical records.

Rather than reproducing the narrative as a chronological series of events, “contemporary performance” can reconfigure its emotional and social tensions through choreographic composition, bodily interaction, scenography, music, and symbolic materials. Such an approach allows the creative process to preserve recognizable narrative motifs while developing an artistic language responsive to present-day audiences. Performance scholarship recognizes the interplay of embodied action, context, and cultural interpretation (Schechner, 2020), while theatre semiotics provides a framework for understanding how stage objects, gestures, and spatial configurations can generate layered meanings (Pavis, 1998).

A research-informed creative process therefore begins with systematic engagement with the source narrative, followed by the identification of major events, character relationships, conflicts, emotional turning points, and potential scenic images. These elements may then be translated into movement vocabulary and integrated with lighting, sound, costume, and spatial design. The present study asks how the Sarasin Bridge legend can inform an internally coherent “contemporary performance” language, and what practical principles can guide that translation. The objectives were: (1) to study and analyze the narrative information of the Sarasin Bridge love legend relevant to performance creation; and (2) to synthesize guidelines for creating a contemporary performance from this narrative material.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

The Sarasin Bridge and the circulation of its love legend

Sarasin Bridge links the mainland in Phang Nga Province with Phuket. The source manuscript describes it as an early road connection and identifies the love story of Ko Dam (Dam Sae Tan) and Kiw (Kanchana Sae Ngo) as a major element of its cultural significance. According to the narrative presented in the source material, differences in family status and opposition to the couple’s relationship culminated in their deaths on 22 February 1973) The manuscript also describes film and television adaptations, as well as supernatural motifs that circulate in popular retellings. These elements demonstrate how an event is transformed into a culturally shared story; they should not all be assigned the same status as independently verified historical facts.

The legend is especially relevant to performance because it combines identifiable protagonists and a place-based memory with recurring motifs of class inequality, separation, attachment, and tragedy. The bridge functions both as a physical location and as a possible metaphor for connection and rupture. A checked cloth associated with the couple becomes a particularly evocative material motif, capable of signifying intimacy, binding, shared choice, and loss.

Contemporary performance and embodied interpretation

“Contemporary performance” may combine elements of established Thai dance practices with exploratory movement, nonverbal dramaturgy, and interdisciplinary design. Its interpretive potential lies not simply in replacing traditional forms, but in reconsidering how body, time, space, sound, and material objects can carry narrative significance. Schechner (2020) situates performance within a broad field of artistic and social action, while Pavis (1998) explains the

interpretive function of theatrical signs. These perspectives support an analysis of performance as a system of interconnected choices rather than a sequence of illustrative gestures.

Symbolic objects, movement language, and stage space

Theatrical objects can serve simultaneously as practical materials, visual motifs, and signs. A piece of fabric, for example, can suggest a body of water without reproducing a realistic landscape. Its speed, tension, elevation, and direction can alter its expressive character. Costume details may similarly refer to a cultural object while reinforcing a relationship between characters. Movement vocabulary can convey attachment through approach, shared balance, and responsive gestures, or conflict through interruption, resistance, and spatial division (Pavis, 1998).

Dramatic progression and interpretive openness

The source narrative lends itself to three linked phases: encounter, crisis, and tragic conclusion. These phases are not proposed as an exhaustive historical reconstruction. Rather, they provide a dramaturgical structure in which the qualities of movement and stage composition change as the emotional stakes intensify. The resulting performance may preserve interpretive openness, allowing the audience to consider social pressure and personal relationships without requiring a literal depiction of the final event.



Figure 1 Visual representation associated with the Sarasin Bridge love legend
Source: MGR Online, https://mgronline.com/onlinesection/detail/9610000015824

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research titled “Guidelines for creating a performance based on the legend of the Sarasin Bridge” is a qualitative study that explores in-depth information from the legend and related media, subsequently analyzing and synthesizing these findings into a framework for performance creation. The research methodology is detailed as follows:

Data Collection: The researcher gathered data from four primary sources: 1) online websites featuring information about the Sarasin Bridge romance; 2) video clips related to the events and the retelling of the legend; 3) photographs and still images depicting the locations, events, and relevant contexts; and 4) the performance piece titled “Phuk Phan Rak Sarasin” (Bound by Love at Sarasin), which the researcher created specifically for this study. This piece was performed on March 26, 2026, as part of the “Serve Sub Khayap Sin” event held in front of the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The collected data were examined and compared to gain an understanding of the legend’s background and key elements, serving as a foundational basis for the analysis and creation of a performance inspired by the Sarasin Bridge romance.

Scope and Sources of Study: The research focuses on the Sarasin Bridge romance—a love story between Ko Dam Sae-Tan and Kanchana Sae-Ngo that took place at the Sarasin Bridge in Phuket Province. Data were compiled from news websites, historical and tourism-related websites, as well as documentaries and video clips covering the story. This allowed for an examination of the historical events, social context, disparities in socioeconomic status, and the

ways in which the legend has been portrayed across various media. The sources used for this study include

1) Website of Phuket City Development Co., Ltd., featuring the article "Tales of the Past… The Love Legend of Sarasin Bridge, Phuket," published on November 9, 2017; used for studying the background and story behind the legend of the love at Sarasin Bridge.

2) A Thai PBS video clip from the program (Khwam Ching Mai Tai) (The Truth Never Dies), episode: "Sarasin Love Bridge," aired on January 30, 2019—used for studying how events and the context of a cross-class romance are presented through a documentary format.

3) The Thai Film Archive (Public Organization) website, featuring the film (Saphan Rak Sarasin) (Sarasin Bridge of Love), serves as a resource for studying the adaptation of a legend into a motion film, as well as examining elements of storytelling and the portrayal of culture.

Data Analysis: The researcher conducted a content analysis of information gathered from websites, video clips, and photographs related to the “Sarasin Bridge love legend.” This involved categorizing, interpreting, and synthesizing data concerning the legend’s historical background, key events, social context, and its portrayal across various media. These insights served as the foundation for developing concepts and approaches for a creative performance, ensuring alignment with the narrative and unique identity of the “Sarasin Bridge love legend.”

Presentation of Research Findings: The research findings are presented through an analytical, descriptive account, detailing the concepts and creative process behind a performance based on the “Sarasin Bridge love legend”—specifically the piece titled "Phuk Phan Rak Sarasin" (The Bond of Love at Sarasin), which was showcased at the "Serve Sub Khayap Sin" event on March 26, 2026) Drawing from this creative experience, the researcher has synthesized the study process, design concepts, and various performance elements into an article that explores approaches to creating “contemporary performance” art rooted in the Sarasin Bridge legend. The work focuses on conveying the core essence of the story through symbolic movement, the use of props, music, lighting, and stage space—all of which are essential for communicating themes of love, deep attachment, social conflict, and the tragedy of the characters. Ultimately, this endeavor aims to disseminate the creative concepts and processes employed, while reflecting on the application of local legends in the creation of contemporary dance and performance art.

RESEARCH RESULTS

1) Based on an examination of the legend of the Sarasin Bridge and the creation of the performance piece (Phukphan Rak Sarasin) (The Bond of Love at Sarasin Bridge), the researcher has synthesized the findings to conclude that a “contemporary performance” approach—integrating traditional dance forms with modern concepts and techniques—is well-suited for conveying the narrative to a contemporary audience. This approach allows for flexibility in interpretation; it does not necessitate a literal, chronological retelling of the events, emotions, or meanings inherent in the Sarasin Bridge legend. Instead, the performance focuses on the "essence" of the story—themes of love, deep attachment, social and familial conflict, and the tragedy of loss—expressed through a symbolic and abstract performance language. All elements of the production are systematically interconnected, with the performers serving as the central medium for communication, utilizing their bodies, emotions, and movements to convey meaning. By blending traditional Thai dance gestures with free-form movement, the work establishes a “contemporary performance” language accessible to a diverse audience. Regarding the "props," the use of fabric to represent water serves as a pivotal symbol, evoking both the setting and the emotional landscape of the narrative; the fabric shifts in function—representing the stillness of water, the turbulence of emotions, or the finality of life. Meanwhile, the "costumes"—incorporating ribbons patterned after the (pha khao ma) (traditional Thai loincloth)—reflect Thai cultural identity and signify a simple way of life, as

well as the profound bonds between the characters. “Music and sound” are employed to enhance the atmosphere and emotional tone of the performance, blending traditional Thai music with contemporary elements to achieve a harmonious balance between the classical and the modern. Meanwhile, “lighting” and “stage space” serve as tools to highlight key moments, establish mood, and define the significance of specific scenes—for instance, using pink lighting to evoke the feeling of falling in love, employing dim lighting to convey sadness, or utilizing a confined space to reflect a character’s sense of pressure. These elements are integrated into a cohesive whole, allowing the performance to convey its narrative with profound depth, even in the absence of direct dialogue. The researcher developed and presented a performance based on the tragic romance of the Sarasin Bridge—titled (Phuk Phan Rak Sarasin) (The Bond of Love at Sarasin)—as part of the “Serve Sub Khayap Sin” event. By documenting and analyzing the concepts, creative processes, and design elements derived from this practical work, the researcher aims to outline an approach for creating “contemporary performances” based on the Sarasin Bridge legend. Furthermore, this work seeks to disseminate the design process for performance elements, offering a valuable resource for the study of dance and the creation of future performance art. Regarding the specific performance elements, the researcher has outlined a design approach that ensures a strong connection between these components and the content and context of the Sarasin Bridge legend, as detailed below: Symbolic strategies for communicating meaning

1.1 Fabric as a representation of water. Fabric is proposed as a visual substitute for the water surrounding Sarasin Bridge, a key setting in the narrative. Its flowing quality can evoke calm, continuity, turbulence, and emotional transformation. Slow, continuous undulations may suggest tranquility and the initial development of affection; increasingly forceful manipulation may suggest conflict and uncertainty; and a final subsiding of the fabric may contribute to the atmosphere of loss. In this way, the same object links setting, emotional development, andsymbolic meaning.



Figure 2 Fabric used as a symbolic representation of water.
Source: Pichamon Kongkerd (2026) Created a performance piece titled "Phukphan Rak Sarasin" (The Bond of Sarasin Love) for the event "Serve Sub Khayap Sin"

1.2 Check-patterned ribbons as costume “symbolism.” The source legend associates a traditional checked (pha khao ma) cloth with the couple’s final act. The proposed costume design incorporates ribbons with a pattern reminiscent of this textile. These ribbons function beyond decoration: they refer to ordinary Thai life and cultural identity while also recalling attachment, shared decisions, and the tragic implications of being bound together. Their integration into costume design creates a visual relationship between the performers’ bodies and the narrative motif.



Figure 3 Ribbons incorporated into costume design as symbolic elements.
Source: Pichamon Kongkerd (2026) Created a performance piece titled "Phukphan Rak Sarasin" (The Bond of Sarasin Love) for the event "Serve Sub Khayap Sin"

1.1 “Embodied expression” and performance language. The third strategy develops a nonverbal language through gesture, posture, movement quality, rhythmic contrast, direction, and spatial relationships. It draws on the expressive potential of Thai dance while allowing freer movement approaches. The central artistic concern is not the imitation of specific historical gestures, but the ability of coordinated movement and physical interaction to communicate love, separation, resistance, and grief. Performers become the principal carriers of dramatic meaning, while supporting stage elements intensify or redirect the interpretation.



Figure 4 Embodied expression and movement-based storytelling.
Source: Pichamon Kongkerd (2026) Created a performance piece titled "Phukpha Rak Sarasin" (The Bond of Sarasin Love) for the event "Serve Sub Khayap Sin"

2) Dramaturgical structure of the performance
The proposed structure is organized into three phases, each associated with distinctive movement qualities, spatial compositions, and emotional intentions. The design favors an evolving stage image over a strictly chronological narrative. Music, stage lighting, and the symbolic use of fabric and costume provide continuity across the phases.
2.1 Opening phase: Encounter and emerging love. The opening communicates the gradual formation of an emotional bond. Two principal performers begin in separate stage areas, suggesting independent lives. Eye contact, reaching, reciprocal movement, and progressively shared pathways allow their relationship to develop. The choreography privileges softness, ease, continuity, and fluid transitions. Spatial distance decreases as the performers move toward a common area, creating a visible image of connection. The gentle movement dynamics and a warm scenic atmosphere establish the emotional starting point for the narrative.



Figure 5 The encounter and development of affection.
Source: Pichamon Kongkerd (2026) Created a performance piece titled "Phukphan Rak Sarasin" (The Bond of Sarasin Love) for the event "Serve Sub Khayap Sin"

2.2 Crisis phase: Obstacles and conflict. The central phase represents the pressure exerted by family and social hierarchy. Performers embodying opposition may use abrupt, decisive, and forceful actions to interrupt the couple's movement or block their pathways. The principal performers attempt to reach one another, move against resistance, or are drawn apart. Group formations may enclose the couple or divide the stage into contrasting zones, suggesting restriction and social separation. The tempo and intensity of movement increase as interpersonal relationships become strained. These spatial and kinetic decisions create a dramatic tension between personal desire and collective constraint.



Figure 6 Obstacles, social pressure, and conflict.
Source: Pichamon Kongkerd (2026) Created a performance piece titled "Phukphan Rak Sarasin" (The Bond of Sarasin Love) for the event "Serve Sub Khayap Sin"

2.3 Final phase: Tragedy and loss. The conclusion shifts away from the rapid, forceful movement of the crisis toward slower, heavier actions, descending body levels, and extended stillness. The principal performers may move from separation into renewed physical connection through hand contact, shared support, and synchronized movement. A bridge can be evoked through the alignment of bodies or the arrangement of performers without constructing a realistic scenic replica. The ending may be suggested by a gradual lowering toward the floor and a shared moment of stillness rather than a literal staged leap. Reduced lighting intensity, restrained musical pacing, and deliberate silence may further articulate grief and finality. This progression completes the emotional arc from softness, through resistance, to stillness.



Figure 7 The final phase representing tragedy and loss.
Source: Pichamon Kongkerd (2026) Created a performance piece titled "Phukphan Rak Sarasin" (The Bond of Sarasin Love) for the event "Serve Sub Khayap Sin"

3) Integration of performance elements

The synthesized design positions the performers at the center of communication. Fabric and costume motifs establish visual continuity; Thai and contemporary musical elements can shape atmosphere and pacing; lighting can emphasize intimacy, conflict, or grief; and the arrangement of stage space can represent connection or restriction. For example, pink-toned lighting is proposed for the encounter, subdued lighting for grief, and restricted spatial configurations for moments of social pressure. These are creative recommendations derived from the source analysis rather than outcomes measured through an audience study.

Table 1 Synthesis of the Three-Phase Performance Structure

Phase	Movement and stage-space design	Dramatic meaning
Encounter and emerging love	Soft, flowing and continuous gestures; movement from separate areas toward shared space	Affection, attraction and emotional attachment
Obstacles and conflict	Rapid, forceful and resistant movements; blocked pathways and divided stage space	Familial opposition, social hierarchy and pressure
Tragedy and loss	Decelerating movements, lowering body levels, restrained energy and shared stillness	Grief, loss and tragic finality

Pichamon Kongkerd (2026)

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the “Sarasin Bridge love legend” can be translated into a “contemporary performance” framework through systematic interpretation of narrative content and coordinated use of embodied and scenic signs. The three-phase structure—encounter, conflict, and tragedy—organizes the emotional progression while allowing performers to communicate without extensive dialogue. Movement qualities become dramaturgical resources: fluid continuity suggests emerging attachment; resistance, acceleration, and spatial division suggest external opposition; and deceleration, lowering, and stillness suggest grief and loss.

A distinctive feature of the proposed approach is the relationship between material “symbolism” and “embodied expression.” Fabric does not merely depict water; through

changes in movement it can also reflect shifting emotional states. Check-patterned ribbons do not merely reference a familiar textile; they can connect cultural identity with the couple's attachment and tragic conclusion. Such layered functions are consistent with the semiotic understanding of theatrical signs discussed by Pavis (1998). More broadly, the adaptation of a locally circulated narrative into a performance event illustrates the intersection of cultural representation and embodied practice described within performance studies (Schechner, 2020). The study further emphasizes that artistic interpretation should remain distinguishable from historical verification. The legend includes details reproduced through popular accounts and screen representations; their relevance as cultural material does not automatically establish them as verified historical evidence. Likewise, the suggested possibility of multiple audience interpretations is an artistic premise, not an empirically demonstrated result. Future studies could strengthen the framework through archival source comparison, documentation of rehearsal-based experimentation, expert review, and audience-response research. In conclusion, the research proposes a practical sequence for creative development: investigate the source narrative; identify its central themes and conflicts; select meaningful objects and bodily signs; construct a coherent emotional progression; and integrate performers, costume, sound, lighting, and spatial composition into a unified contemporary performance. This approach offers a way to reimagine the "Sarasin Bridge love legend" while retaining its social and cultural resonance. Its principal contribution is an analytically grounded set of creative guidelines, rather than a claim of experimentally proven performance effectiveness.

Practical and theoretical contributions

The practical contribution is an integrated sequence for translating documentary narratives into performance: interpreting the cultural story, selecting emotionally significant themes, developing fabric and costume symbolism, composing movement vocabulary, and aligning lighting, sound and stage space. The theoretical contribution is a narrative-to-performance framework that distinguishes the historical or narrated source from its embodied artistic interpretation.

Limitations and future research

The source manuscript primarily reports qualitative documentary and visual analysis. It does not report a controlled audience-reception study, measured effectiveness, or systematic expert evaluation. Future work could document rehearsal iterations, assess interpretation with expert reviewers, and examine audience responses to the "symbolism" and the three-phase dramatic structure.

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Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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