

For My Beloved Motherland: The Music Composition for the Nation <sup>\*</sup>

## “ฝากแผ่นดิน”: บทประพันธ์เพลงเพื่อชาติ

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*For My Beloved Motherland* is intended for reciters, mezzo-soprano singers and orchestra. It depicts a soldier who defends his nation with his life and the family ensuring the loss of its beloved son, father and husband. At the same time, it reflects the division within the country, leading to ever-increasing conflicts between people on different sides. The infighting thus inflicts pain and suffering to citizen of the country.

I determined to make this composition accessible for all strata of Thai society. Thus, it is presented in the form of poetic music, which is the effective way to engage the audience with the text, not just the music. Lyrics from Gongbhoap Ruensiri's *For My Beloved Motherland* are accompanied by the music I compose. To make this poetic music effective, the music and the words must intertwine to make audience understand and feel the message of this composition. Various techniques are used to convey the poet's message such as word painting, transformation, and quotation. In addition to blending Thailand's identity, harmonization and contemporary composition techniques incorporating rhythm and accent of Thai music are also used in the composition.

There are five movements to *For My Beloved Motherland*. This is the same number of movement Gongbhoap Ruensiri's poem possesses. Respectively, the five movements are *The Departed Good Soul* (คนดีที่จากไป), *Father's Dream* (ฝันของพ่อ), *Mother's Son* (ต้นกล้าของแม่), *In the Heart* (ใจ) and *Passing On* (ฝากแผ่นดิน). *For My Beloved Motherland* runs for approximately 35 minutes.

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## บทคัดย่อ

บทประพันธ์เพลง ฝากรแผ่นดิน สำหรับผู้อ่านบทกวี นักร้องเมโซโซปราโน และออร์เคสตรา พรรณนาเรื่องราวเกี่ยวกับทหารไทยคนหนึ่งที่ปกป้องผืนแผ่นดินไทยด้วยชีวิต พร้อมถ่ายทอดมุมมอง ของคนในครอบครัวทหารต่อการสูญเสียบุคคลอันเป็นที่รัก ในขณะเดียวกัน ได้สะท้อนให้เห็นถึงสถานการณ์ความขัดแย้งที่เกิดขึ้นในสังคมไทย อันได้ก่อให้เกิดความเสียหายและความสูญเสียต่อประเทศชาติอย่างใหญ่หลวง

เพื่อให้บทประพันธ์เพลงสามารถที่จะเข้าถึงคนไทยทุกกลุ่มในสังคมได้ ผู้ประพันธ์ได้เลือกการประพันธ์เพลงในรูปแบบการอ่านบทกวีประกอบดนตรี อันจะช่วยให้ผู้ฟังเข้าใจความหมายของบทประพันธ์เพลงมากกว่า การฟังเครื่องดนตรีบรรเลงเพียงอย่างเดียวโดยไม่มีภาษามาอธิบายความหมายร่วมด้วย ผู้ประพันธ์ได้คัดเลือกบทกวีไทย “ฝากรแผ่นดิน” ของ ก้องภาพ รื่นศิริ มาร้อยเรียงประกอบดนตรีที่ประพันธ์ขึ้นใหม่อย่างเป็นเนื้อเดียวกัน สิ่งที่สำคัญที่สุดในการประพันธ์เพลงที่มีการอ่านบทกวีประกอบดนตรีคือการสร้างดนตรีให้มีความไฟแรง กลมกลืนและสอดคล้องกับเนื้อหาของบทกวีอย่างเห็นภาพ โดยใช้เทคนิคการประพันธ์ต่าง ๆ เช่น เทคนิคการระบายสีเนื้อร้อง (word painting) เทคนิคการปรับทำนอง (transformation) และเทคนิคการคัดทำนอง (quotation) นอกจากนี้ บทประพันธ์เพลงยังมีการนำเสนอกลักษณ์ของความเป็นไทยอีกด้วย โดยใช้เทคนิคการประพันธ์เพลงร่วมสมัยมานำเสนอสำเนียงและลักษณะจังหวะของดนตรีไทยในแบบประยุกต์

บทประพันธ์เพลง ฝากรแผ่นดิน ประกอบด้วย 5 องค์ เข่นเดียวกับบทกวี ฝากรแผ่นดิน ได้แก่ องค์ที่ 1 คนดีที่จากไป องค์ที่ 2 ผู้ของพ่อ องค์ที่ 3 ต้นกล้าของแม่ องค์ที่ 4 ฝังหัวใจ และองค์ที่ 5 ฝากรแผ่นดิน บทประพันธ์เพลงใช้เวลาในการบรรเลงประมาณ 35 นาที

## Introduction

In the past few years, Thailand has been troubled by situations which hinder its development both socially and economically. Everyone, as a citizen, should contribute, within means one has, to advancement of the country. As an artist, I choose to contribute with a skill I have honed – composition.

My aim is to create a composition that reflects dimensions of problems Thailand is facing as well as delivering the message to the largest number of audience. With such goals, *For My Beloved Motherland* conceives.

*For My Beloved Motherland* requires a full-sized orchestra, with a wide range of folk, common and contemporary percussion instruments. As the piece relates to military experience, the music is powerful and intense. There are parts of the movements that portray violence and death from defending the nation, considerable amount of percussion instruments are needed to create a powerful effect. They contribute to the tones and emotions of this composition. Regarding the reciters, I require that five are involved to convey messages from each movement. The first reciter represents a Thai citizen who looks at the soldier's family with an outsider perspective and reflects how much Thailand will suffer if Thai people do not stop the violent infighting. It is recommended that the reciter of the first movement is a male

because of the gender's generally deeper voice which creates the sense of power. Nevertheless, a female could assume the role under certain circumstances. The second reciter must be a male to portray father's thought and dream. The third reciter must be a mezzo-soprano singer to sing and recite the poem about the love of a mother. The forth reciter must be a mezzo-soprano singer to sing and recite the poem of the soldier's wife. Another male reciter is required for the fifth movement to assume the voice of the soldier.

### **Research on Related Compositions before Conception of *For My Beloved Motherland***

Poem accompanied by a piece of music is an obvious form chosen to express messages. It gives clear and complete details of the messages due to incorporation of language. Researches show that, generally, composers choosing this form of expression are inspired by certain occurrences such as politics or national security. Composers then pick a literary piece of their liking – folklore; speech; poem; an original piece. Then, they compose an original composition to accompany the literary piece. The results always affect audiences in one way or another.

Before starting to compose *For My Beloved Motherland*, I extensively study pieces in the same form. Topics include techniques which harmonize the music and lyrics, contemporary approach to invoke emotions and to balance the literary piece and the accompanying music. These are the key factors to successfully create this form of composition. My research emphasises on pieces reflecting miserable situations of one's countries. This is because they have messages similar to *For My Beloved Motherland*. I believe those pieces will help me create the piece on the beloved nation more successfully.

Such nation-focused pieces tremendously succeed because they realistically reflect the nation's status or invoke positivity in audience. Such effect contributes to powerful composition which makes audience feel moved. Some pieces can invoke patriotism. A *Survivor from Warsaw* by Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) is an example. Schoenberg depicts miserable conditions of Jews in Nazi concentration camps. Audience are asked to be aware of destruction the war brings about. Consequentially, they would seek out peace and humanity. *Lincoln Portrait* by Aaron Copland (1900-1990) is another example. The composition refers to speeches of Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865). It shows the president's aspiration to make America a country where everyone has a voice. This composition aims to uplift Americans after the tragedy at Pearl Harbor leads the country into World War II. The form of expression chosen by both Schoenberg and Copland is one of the best to invoke patriotism from the widest audience range.

## Composition Methods

The main purpose of *For My Beloved Motherland* is to communicate with Thais from every background. The composition is expressed in the form of music-accompanied poem. Contemporary techniques and combination of Thai music accent are incorporated into the piece to present Thailand's identity. In addition, I create the main composition ideas that are suitable for music accompanying poem. Such main ideas unify the music and the poem. They also give clear composing direction. The result is imagery in which audience immerse. The imagery matches messages each movement conveys. The main composition ideas of *For My Beloved Motherland* are as follows:

### 1. Creation of the Themes and Their Development

Two basic themes inspired by the interval of fifths as well as descending and ascending scales are developed consistently all over the piece. Needless to say, they are developed with various techniques, but the core technique of thematic development is transformation. Transformation is a contemporary technique which gives composers more freedom to develop the theme than the conventional technique of variation does. It aims to create varying themes from the original theme to make more varieties and tone colours, or to have 'unified difference.' This is opposed to variation which follows the original theme.

### 2. Relations between Music and Lyrics

Gongbhoap Ruensiri's *For My Beloved Motherland* is a five-movement poem which narrates a soldier defending the country with his life. Points of view include those of the soldier, his family and an outsider. The poem reflects Thai society in which conflicts remain unresolved. Gongbhoap Ruensiri's *For My Beloved Motherland* is a beautiful narration-like poem, asking Thai to become one and invoking patriotism at the same time.

To suit the piece's mood and the flowing narration, I intend to have no breaks between the first two movements. This is also the case between the fourth and the fifth movement. There is a slight pause at the beginning and at the end of the third movement to help audience distinguish emotions. In overview, this piece looks as if all five movements are played continuously.

Gongbhoap Ruensiri's *For My Beloved Motherland* uses a popular form of Thai poetry (กลอนสุภาพ). With its simple prosody, wide range of emotions can be expressed, making it easily accessible to audiences. Below is the rough translation of the poem which is originally in Thai.

## For My Beloved Motherland

Gongbhoap Ruensiri

**Movement 1 (The Departed Good Soul)**

The sky's groom, from dusk till night	rain pouring, soaking up the temple
People thronging the pavilion	a young monk following an elder
The first night held funeral of a soldier	killed in line of duty the other night
The young monk contemplating	pitying the widow, son and parent
How the loss brings them misery	life of the beloved taken
Tears will not lift them	free from the loss
When men do not put aside differences,	violence becomes a mean
More departed good souls	more mourning there will be

**Movement 2 (Father's Dream)**

Your mom holding my shaking hands	helping me to sit, to see you
This young man, our son that you are	wearing the uniform makes me proud
In my youth, there's a dream	to enlist when of age
Then, a car crushes the dream	leaving me to hold wand in misery
Yet, fate brings your mom to me	blesses me with a son
You who live up to my expectation	I hold dear the mom and the son
The son, when learnt of dad's dream,	fulfils that wish to enlist
To defend the nation, its king and beliefs	to bring its people peace
Last night in my dream	seeing you wearing the full uniform
Grace and respect, you plead	let you be my son every life
Thunder rumbling, tears fill the eyes	my son becomes a man
Fulfilling my forlorn dream	give your life to your motherland

**Movement 3 (Mother's Son)**

Listening to the prayer	my heart's aching
30 years since you, my son,	born to me, to hold dear
Breast-fed and held	in my arms, won't let go
Growing up, my boy is adored	napping on my lap, smiling
School ends, you fulfil father's dream,	volunteer to faraway stations
Two years pass since your marriage	a young bride from when you're young
Promotion, a grandson	this mom revels in
But when fate washes away those gifts	tears trickling down

Bid farewell, smiling  
I reproach you  
looking at the widow and orphan  
Birth, sick, death surround us  
Bearing a son is like sowing a seed  
Help it grows, a helpless baby  
Then, it becomes a big tree  
Life fulfilled before death

asking me to take care of your family  
why ominous words, like the dark sky  
I realize how transient lives are  
you my son are not the exception  
to water, like breast feed  
bad weather or locusts can break it  
on solid soil, standing weathers  
leaving legacy behind, to mom's pride

#### *Movement 4 (In the Heart)*

Remember, still  
The warmth in your arms, solacing  
Feel your heartbeat, smiling  
Looking at your back until it disappears  
The baby cries. I feed him  
Three months old, he will be  
Duty calls for the baby's father  
Amidst violence between Thais and Thais  
Today, the sky's gloom  
Is someone from above mourning  
I whisper to his body  
His soul parts, my heart is buried

that kiss before goodbye  
'I will be back, don't worry.'  
hiding my loneliness and worry  
I send off the soldier  
he clings on, staying with me  
your lip on the little one. Same smile.  
fight alone, faraway, for the nation  
yet, he fights for the nation  
rain's pouring  
the loss of this man?  
to love him, every life  
he passes Thai flag on to Thais

#### *Movement 5 (Passing On)*

Moving through the morning's fog  
Duty calls as a Thai soldier  
Sun burns, sweat drops, I stand  
Let my parents and son be safe  
Guns in hand, on alert in the cold night,  
Waiting for me to come back,  
A shot fired, echoing through the wood  
Till my blood dries. I beg my comrade

dewdrops over my back  
patrolling, defending this golden land  
tired, praying to the wind  
tirelessly, I will defend this land  
stars please protect my bride  
for my head on her lap  
wounding. Yet, I fight  
please defend this motherland

When the poem is to be accompanied by music, the music's tone must accommodate the poem's meaning in order to make audience immerse in the experience. I must bring together tone colouring, harmony, contemporary composition techniques and orchestration to bring that experience to audience. Thus, I decide to use word painting. Certain words are interpreted and turned into the tone I deem appropriate. Those words can refer to concepts or objects such as dream, pride and intensity or rain, soldier and thunder.

**Example 2.1** Intervals, rhythms and instruments used to accompany the poem

From the verse 'Amidst violence between Thais and Thais.' (ห้องถีนที่ ไทยกับไทย ใจปืนเกลี่ย), broken secondal chords are played by the first trumpet and the second trumpet. Each trumpet plays different triplets at the same time. This results in dissonant and chaotic, which accompanying the important phase 'violence between Thais and Thais.' Simultaneously, brass instruments with low registers play an extended blocked chord to make the intense effect, matching the poem's tone.

Relations between music and lyrics can be found in other parts of this composition, including when no poems are recited. The music either lingers on the mood of the previous verse or leads to the new mood of the next verse.

### 3. Adaptation of Sangkaha Funeral Prayer (การสวัสดิศักขะ)

*For My Beloved Motherland* depicts a few scenes where Buddhist funeral of the soldier is held. I, thus, want to convey images and moods of such gloomy occasion. I study Buddhist funeral prayers to look for intonation which assembles singing. If such intonation

exists, I intend to imitate it in my composition. In addition, I visit temples and observe monks pray and the atmosphere around temples during funerals. Emotions experienced during funeral ceremonies are transformed into contemporary music which accompanies a poem.

### 3.1 Imitation of Sangkaha Funeral Prayer

Funeral prayers are recital of Tripitaka which has philosophical denotation. They are Pali excerpts from 7 bodies of Tripitaka recited continuously. Apart from being dedicated to the dead, it also aims to teach attendees. The content is about principle of nature which includes mind, state of the mind, body and the state of nirvana. In brief, one does not own anything. Praise and fortune are what one invents. The only true thing is when state of mind, body and the state of nirvana combined.

Tripitaka is the highest level of dhamma. It thus suits the occasion of sending off the dead. By reciting it in a rhythmic pattern and limited melodic motion called Srpayya (ສະກັບຜູ້ຜະຍະ), it creates a form of funeral prayer called Sangkaha.

I imitate the prayer with D natural minor scale or D Aeolian in analysis of musical modes. The imitation that I recreate incorporates glissando, trill and acciaccatura. Its overall theme mostly moves within interval of seconds, however, the interval can be larger. The prayer's rhythmic pattern is transformed into a harmonized music, played by four instruments. Each instrument has different rhythm pattern based on D natural minor scale to introduce contemporary elements which would draw audience's attention to the composition. This is in contrast to the tradition of monks reciting the prayer in monophonic texture.

The number of musicians is influenced by the number of monks reciting the funeral prayer as well. Four are the minimum number of monks with which funeral ceremonies can be performed. With such ominous association, people avoid the number in other auspicious ceremonies. Thus, I required that four musicians play the part which imitates this prayer.

**Example 3.1.1** Imitation of Sangkaha funeral prayer using four woodwind instruments.



#### 4. Harmonization

Various techniques of harmonization are incorporated into this composition. Either consonance or dissonance is chosen to match the poem's content in each verse. The harmonization techniques I use constantly are that of the interval of fifths and modes. In addition, these techniques are used concurrently with some contemporary techniques – Viennese trichord, polychord, secondal chord and klangfarbenmelodie. The use of klangfarbenmelodie in this composition is prominent to convey different dimensions such as tone colour and dynamic.

#### 5. Imitation of Thai Double-Headed Drum (กลองทัด)

Thai double-headed drum is a big drum covered with cow or buffalo hides on each end. The drum produces powerful low pitch. In the past, the drum is a signaling instrument during wars – calling armies; making advances; battling; declaring victory. My composition adopts the double-headed drum's rhythm to accompany the scene where the soldier is fighting, making the audience feel the war. Since my composition's genre is contemporary, I use bass drum to imitate the dead sound of the double-headed drum by muffling the bass drum with a piece of cloth placed on its end. Alternatively, the percussionist can muffle the bass drum with knees instead. When the drum trembles less, the sound has less echo. The percussionist can then play faster and sharper rhythms which are characteristics of Thai double-headed drum.

#### 6. The Use of Gong and Temple Bells

The first three movements from *For My Beloved Motherland* have a few parts that depict the soldier's funeral, I believe the use of gong and temple bells will help draw images of a funeral in Buddhist temple, in addition to imitation of the funeral prayer and the use of saddening harmonization. Bells are one of many items people associate with Buddhist temples. I use heart-shaped bronze bells with diameters between 8 – 12 inches. They will produce clearer sound and better echo than smaller bells. Small bronze bells, although more commonly found, give feeble sound. Their volume is also low. I would have to use an impractical amount of small bells in order to incorporate them into an orchestra.

Apart from temple bells, I also use gong to depict funeral scenes because of its low pitch and poignant sound. Moreover, gong also represents Thai identity.

### 7. Presentation of the Poem

Researches show that there are many ways to present literary pieces. Narrator of *Peter and the Wolf* by Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) only narrates the folk tale. A *Sermon, a Narrative and a Prayer* by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) includes narration and a solo singing performance. The fourth movement of *Symphony No. 4* by Lou Harrison (1917-2003) are intervals of narration and solo singing performance. Narongrit Dhamabutra's *Pledge to HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana* (ถวายปฏิญาณ) and *Piyasayamintra* (ปิยสยามินทร์) incorporate recital with designated rhythm, solo singing performance and chorus. *The Soldier's Tale* by Stravinsky includes recital, conversation and choreography. *Pierrot Lunaire* by Arnold Schoenberg presents the text in the way of speech song. Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* presents the content by narrating and singing in group. Furthermore, *Lincoln Portrait* by Aaron Copland does not provide any specific narrating direction. The composer only marks the beginning of each paragraph and asks narrator to narrate President Lincoln's speech directly and simply, without exaggerated sentiment. Different techniques and presentations are chosen to reflect varying message of literary pieces.

I believe that various presentation methods would suit the poem *For My Beloved Motherland* because different scenes depict wide range of emotions. Apart from recital with designated rhythm, my composition includes non-rhythm narration, poem singing and non-poem singing. Also, each verse's spacing varies. Some verses are evenly spaced. Some had shorter or longer spaces. This is because each verse contains different meanings and emotions. Narration between each verse also affects spacing. Some verse requires more extension to help audience draw imagery. In addition, reciters must consider their voices' intensity to convey meanings and emotions. Nevertheless, reciters are not required to make gestures. They only convey each verse's emotion and meaning through their readings. Audience should immerse in the composition via words and music.

**Example 7.1** Poem presentation. The arrow mark indicates the reciter's entrance. The reciter will recite this part in free rhythm.



### 8. Quotation of Thai National Anthem

It is needless to say that every Thai citizen knows their national anthem by heart.

Every day, Thai people hear the lyrics that speak about patriotism and conscience to defend this nation. Thus, national anthem represents Thai identity best. It reflects unity of its citizen. It is comparable to an oath Thais take to love and protect the existence of this country. Thus, I quote in my composition a melody from the anthem ‘Sacrificing every drop of blood for the nation (ສະເລືອດທຸກໝາດເປັນชาຕິພິລິ).’ That melody is played suddenly after a verse from my composition ‘fighting until the last drop of my blood (ສູ້ສົ່ງເລືອດ ທຸກໝາດ ໄມດກຳລັງ)’ has been recited. Audience should sense the connection between the verse’s meaning and the quoted national anthem in the composition.

Before the melody where national anthem is quoted, the quotation is foreshadowed albeit subtly. Only rhythm of the melody ‘Sacrificing every drop of blood for the nation (ສະເລືອດທຸກໝາດເປັນชาຕິພິລິ)’ is presented. Snare drum continuously repeats the rhythm since the beginning of the fifth movement (Passing On). This is to convey the presence of the soldier. Also, the rhythm denotes the meaning of the quoted anthem, which is the heart of the fifth movement.

One of the reasons Thailand still exists is because countless soldier lives are lost to defend the nation, and to unite Thais. As a composer, I intend to convey such statement through music towards the end of the fifth movement, which serves as the composition’s conclusion. Another quotation from the national anthem “Thailand unites flesh and blood of Thais” appears during the fifth movement’s coda. Brass instruments play this quotation together with full orchestra. Audience would feel the power and pride the music is conveying unity of Thai people that makes up Thailand.

### Conclusion: Aesthetics Combined with Social Development

Although *For My Beloved Motherland* focuses on a soldier's love of the nation that keeps Thailand one nation, I also incorporate other aspects of preserving Thailand. Preserving and being proud of Thai cultural legacy is a form of patriotism. This composition presents recital of Thai poem, the use of Thai music instruments and their rhythms and Buddhism prayers. If the country's cultural root is strong, its identity will remain despite outside influences. In addition, love of one's nation can be expressed through an international body of knowledge – classical music in this case. Development of such body of knowledge also shows advancement and civilization of the country.

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