



## Bangkok Post Learning: *Test Yourself*

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### The sound of silence by Gary Boyle



Photo by Jetjaras Na Ranong

Read the following story by Suwitcha Chaiyong from the *Bangkok Post*. Then, answer the questions that follow.

The 1928 German-Swiss silent film *Fight for the Matterhorn* screened at the opening of the 6th Silent Film Festival on Friday. Hosted by the Thai Film Archive, the festival runs until Sunday May 26 at the Scala Theatre. But on Friday, the silent movie wasn't silent. Instead, it was accompanied by a musical score performed live by Thai contemporary fusion band Korphai.

Over nearly four decades, Korphai have forged a considerable reputation. For around half of that time, they have been involved in film scores. Firstly, more than 20 years ago, Korphai played to the 1929 comedy *Magic Ring* by King Rama VII. Some years later, their score for the 2004 film *The Overture* won several domestic awards. And in 2012, the band collaborated with international musicians to compose a score for *The Light of Asia*, a 1925 German-Indian film, based on the life of Lord Buddha.

Korphai (the name translates as a bunch of bamboo), was formed in 1980. Two years later, Korphai won the prestigious Thailand National Music Contest at the National Theatre. Since then, their numbers have expanded. However, they still consider themselves an amateur band.

Currently, the group has more than 10 members. Most have full-time jobs and gather to play music in their free time. Chief music arranger Chaibhuk Bhutrachinda admitted that creating scores for silent films presents a significant challenge.

“Sound film can communicate through the dialogue, score and even silent moments,” he said. “But for a silent film, live music performance is used to express atmosphere, emotion and just about everything else. It is difficult because we have to create music to fill 117 minutes.”

In order to come up with the music for *Fight for the Matterhorn*, Korphai started off by studying the film to get a sense of its mood, storyline and concept.

“We discussed what the music should be like in order to express the different scenes,” Chaibhuk explained. “It could be fast, slow, floating or grooving. All band members have to agree on the sounds and rhythms, but the details are improvised by each musician. Improvisation is the charm of live performance. It makes the music different each time we play.”

Chaibhuk was one of the Korphai members who performed the score for *Magic Ring*. He said most live performances for silent films in the past used either a traditional Thai brass band or Thai string instrument ensemble. Without prior experience playing music scores, Korphai decided to do what others did and chose to use string instruments.

For their score for *The Light of Asia*, three musicians from Korphai performed with Indian musicians, a guitarist from Singapore and a pianist from Europe.

“Each musician had different backgrounds. We shared our ideas and feelings about the film. The Indian musicians played the tabla, which suited the film very well. We expressed the story with our guitars, which added a Thai flavour. We divided the parts for each musician. The resulting music was smooth, diverse and colourful.”

Korphai has always been made up of members with diverse musical characteristics, allowing the group to continue to expand its repertoire from traditional-based compositions into areas such as folk, pop, fusion jazz and experimental music. Over the years, the band has released a number of CDs and performed throughout Thailand and abroad, including in the US, the UK, Austria, France, South Korea, China and India.

While some are concerned over the future of Thai traditional music, Chaibhuk believes it will continue to have a place among a wide audience. But it needs help.

"If people don't support Thai traditional music, it will fade in popularity. The instruments will probably be played only in academic institutes. The media should play a role in supporting this important cultural tradition and provide more content on it. Thai traditional music is for a niche market. It's difficult to make money out of it. But it's important for educational purposes."

**Section 1: Read through the story and answer the following questions.**

1. When did Korphai first play together? .....
2. Korphai members are full-time musicians. True or false? .....
3. When did the band win a national music contest? .....
4. The band had made music for films before doing Magic Ring. True or false? .....
5. The music for which film featured a Singaporean musician? .....
6. The band has played in Europe. True or false? .....
7. Which film did the band first work on? .....
8. Their work on The Overture won an international award. True or false? .....

**Section 2: Write the noun forms of the following words in the space given.**

9. silent .....10. won .....11. translates .....12. different .....13. expand .....

**Section 3: Read the following passage. Then, fill in the blanks with the correct words from the choices given.**

"Back ...14..., there were no musical arrangements for silent films," Chaibhuk ...15... . "We used whatever music we ...16... went with the film. If there was a scene ...17... water, we performed a song about water. If there was a ...18... moment, we played a romantic song. We often had to stop playing suddenly because the scene would ...19... before we had time to finish the song. But it was our first experience."

- |                 |           |             |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| 14. a. before   | b. then   | c. ago      |
| 15. a. remember | b. recall | c. recalled |
| 16. a. feel     | b. felt   | c. feeling  |
| 17. a. for      | b. about  | c. without  |
| 18. a. tender   | b. dull   | c. exciting |
| 19. a. ending   | b. end    | c. ended    |

**Section 4: Find words or phrases that match the following definitions.**

- 20. the music written for a film .....
- 21. modern music that is a mixture of different styles .....
- 22. the opinion that people have about what something is like .....
- 23. not foreign or international .....
- 24. respected and admired as very important or of very high quality .....

For the answers, find the story online at [www.bangkokpost.com/learning](http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning)

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact the Editor at [garyb@bangkokpost.co.th](mailto:garyb@bangkokpost.co.th)