

# Chulalongkorn University Revives Rare Piphat Dukdamban Tradition to Preserve Thailand's Musical Heritage

BANGKOK, THAILAND, August 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For nearly four decades, Chulalongkorn University has led efforts to preserve [piphat dukdamban](#), a rare Thai classical music ensemble known for its soft, mellow sound, ensuring that this unique musical tradition continues to be passed on to future generations through education, research, and public performance.

Presented annually on March 26 as part of the university's anniversary celebrations, the performance has become one of the few opportunities for the public to experience this nearly forgotten musical tradition. This year's event featured more than 150 musicians, vocalists, and dancers who spent over three months preparing for the production.

Unlike the bright, powerful sound of the traditional piphat ensemble commonly heard in Thai ceremonies and khon performances, piphat dukdamban is known for its soft, deep, and refined tones. The ensemble emerged during the reign of King Rama V after Prince Narisara Nuvadtivongs drew inspiration from European opera and redesigned the traditional piphat orchestra using gentler instruments and new musical innovations. Chao Phraya Thewet Wongwiwat later developed a new theatrical form in which performers both acted and sang, creating a Thai opera-style performance for visiting foreign dignitaries.

Although the tradition flourished in the late nineteenth century, it gradually disappeared after the closure of the Dukdamban Theatre and changing social conditions reduced performance opportunities. By the mid-twentieth century, few practitioners remained.



**Chula Revives Thailand's  
Rare Piphat Dukdamban Tradition**

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The revival began in 1985 when Chulalongkorn University launched a dedicated preservation project in preparation for the 60th birthday celebrations of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great. The university assembled leading Thai music scholars and master musicians to document the repertoire and train a new generation of performers. Since 1987, piphat dukdamban has been performed annually at Chulalongkorn University, becoming a signature cultural tradition.

Preserving piphat dukdamban requires skilled musicians, sustained institutional support, and audiences willing to keep the tradition alive, according to Kunchit Jitratan, Director of [the CU Office of Art and Culture](#). Chula has sought to ensure all three by integrating the repertoire into the curriculum of [the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts](#), ensuring that every Thai music student studies it. Through its Office of Art and Culture, the university also maintains one of Thailand's most comprehensive collections of Thai music resources, including instruments, recordings, research materials, photographs, and archival documents available to the public.

Read the full article at <https://www.chula.ac.th/en/highlight/411366/>

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