

Ramwong Loi Krathong

(traditional, arranged by John Melcher)

The holiday:

This folk song of unknown origin is usually known simply as “The Loi Krathong Song”, It celebrates the *Loi Krathong* holiday in Thailand, which falls on the full moon of the twelfth lunar month in mid-November, celebrating the end of the rainy season. Traditionally, Thai people go to the local rivers, canals, or any other accessible body of water to float a *krathong*, a "small float made of banana leaves (sadly, now often made of styrofoam), which also includes flowers, a candle, some incense sticks and a coin.



The dance:

Another part of this tradition is the *ramwong*, a graceful folk dance in which men and women dance in pairs in circle, (the name “*ramwong*” literally means to dance in a circle with one’s hands). It has been very popular among Thais and foreigners since The Second World War, when ten *ramwong* song and dance patterns known today were established as part of a Nationalism promotion by Prime Minister Field Marshall Plaek Pibulsongkram in 1938.



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The words:

<i>wan-pen duean sip-sawng</i>	On the full moon (of) the twelfth month,
<i>nam gaw nawng dtem dtaling</i>	As water fills to the banks,
<i>rao tung-laai chai-ying</i>	We men and women
<i>sanook gun jing wun loy gratong</i>	Really have a happy time on Loi Krathong day.
<i>loy loy grating</i>	Float, float the krathongs,
<i>lol lol gratong</i>	Float, float the krathongs,
<i>loy krathong kan laew</i>	After we've floated our krathongs,
<i>khaw choen nawngkaew</i>	I invite you, my darling
<i>awk maa ramwong</i>	To come out and dance a ramwong.
<i>ramwong wan loy krathong</i>	Ramwong on Loi Krathong!
<i>ramwong wan loy krathong</i>	Ramwong on Loi krathong.
<i>bun ja song hai rao sukjai</i>	Making merit will give us happiness.
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About the arrangement and recording:

I actually began working on this in 1987, when I was stuck in Shanghai on a business trip with nothing to do for entertainment (times have changed). It's part of an ongoing project of setting old Asian songs in unconventional ways.

This is an instrumental arrangement is scored for piccolo, flute, soprano and alto saxophones, *khaen* (a Northeastern Thai reed instrument) trumpet, trombone, harp, piano, Rhodes electric piano, 12-string guitar, electric bass guitar, xylophone, marimba, vibraphone, percussion (including trap set, gongs and Japanese singing bowls), a "wordless" chorus (SATB) and strings.

In this recording, all instruments are actually digital "samples" played back with Gigastudio 2.54 and recorded with Pro Tools HD at 48-kHz, 24-bit resolution. The digital master was encoded directly to MP3.

John Melcher
Bangkok, October, 2005