



Angkor Dance Troupe

SPRING 2008

ANGKOR DANCE TROUPE
PO BOX 1553
40 FRENCH STREET
LOWELL, MA 01853

Graduating Into the Wider World

In auditoriums, courtyards and on street corners, young graduates in their black robes show their exuberant joy at having stepped into the next phase of their lives.

This graduation season got us thinking. How does learning the delicate hand gestures of the Apsara dance prepare a person for the rest of their life? How does mastery of the rollicking rhythms of the coconut dance help with mastering the art of making a living?

We asked people in their early 20s who had danced with the Troupe for a number of years to reflect on how their time with the Troupe shaped who they are now. Here is what one of them said:



Old Traditions and New Technologies prepare Angkor dancers like Linda Sou for their futures

"I am Sopheap (Linda) Sou. I'm 24 years of age, 20 of which I spent with the Angkor Dance

Troupe. I am now the Director of Youth Development for the Lowell Community Health Center. I'm also the Assistant Program Director for Angkor Dance Troupe. And I am attending full time graduate school at the Springfield College School of Human Services in Boston, studying for a Master of Science in Human Services.

My time with the Troupe shaped me by supporting my leadership in both fields. The dance discipline has taught me dedication and commitment to what is near to my heart — culture, dance and community organizing. I am very pleased with where I am in my life. I would like to continue the work that I am doing.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Follow the Fibre: Migrating Silk 3

Merrimack-Mekong Bridge is Strengthened 2

Empowerment! Southeast Asian Women and Girls Get a Boost 2

NEW Pins and Folds 3

Over 2000 Lowell students enjoy NEA-funded workshops

Rapt faces followed every gesture made by Monica Veth, as the crowd of over 600 middle schoolers sat unusually still and silent, absorbing the graceful demonstration of Cambodian dance. Linda Sou spoke with quiet authority and humor about dance, how it is learned and her own experiences as a child, as she gradually came to master over 1500 of the 5000 gestures that make up Cambodian classical dance.



This compelling workshop was part of a joint endeavor between Angkor Dance Troupe and the middle schools of Lowell, facilitated by a \$10,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

More than 2,000 students were treated to a lesson in Cambodian culture and a classical or monkey dance performance by the Troupe in the spring of 2008. All students completed a questionnaire about their experience — 100% positive! — and about 25% expressed an interest in learning Cambodian dance. Fifteen students in the Fine Arts Academy at Lowell High School participated in a 5-day residency where they learned the history of Cambodia and Cambodian dance.

Merrimack-Mekong Bridge Strengthened



John Burt and Samkhann Khoeun with framed poster of the show

The Mekong-Merrimack bridge becomes more solid, connecting our communities across many kinds of distances, not only geographical.

The partners that put on the Cambodian rock-opera *Where Elephants Weep* in Lowell last year met this June for the one-year anniversary of that event. The overwhelmingly enthusiastic response to the opera shocked even its producers, who watched the Lowell High School auditorium fill up night after night with people from many parts of New England

and many walks of life.

A year later, at Tep Thida restaurant on Chelmsford Street, producers, actors, dancers, and others met to revisit the wonder of last year's collaboration, and to talk about the future. The Cambodian Arts Alliance unveiled a program of cultural production goals for the next three years.

Angkor Dance Troupe is delighted to play a pivotal role in continuing artistic creation, across the Mekong-Merrimack bridge. We

are instrumental in commissioning a new work, the *Apsara Dancing Stones*, a dance-drama that brings the Apsara figure out of the ancient Cambodian past, and into the light of our own time. This new work shows her relevance today as an icon that embodies peace and beauty, harmony between opposing forces and a respect for the forces of nature and humanity alike. We look forward to sharing this creative process with many of last year's partners and with new artists and supporters along the way.

Empowerment for Southeast Asian Women and Girls

In our drive to support our young dancers on their own paths to success, the Angkor Dance Troupe are participating in a community-wide effort to empower Southeast Asian women and girls. The first step is a pleasure – working on a Special Event that draws professional women not only with networking opportunities,

but with Asian-fusion beauty products, design, cuisine and cocktails. Proceeds benefit a one-day conference on matching Southeast Asian girls in Lowell with professional women mentors as part of building up job skills, contacts and readiness. Board President Sophy Suon leads this exciting initiative



Girls at 2008 New Year Celebration



Sticky Summer Heat Calls for Cambodian Grilling Secrets

Spend This Summer At Home with Cambodian Culture

Spend the steamy months of August learning about the food, culture, and customs of this beautiful Southeast Asian country. After sampling the tastes, smells, sights and sounds of Cambodian dishes,

holidays and "at-home" customs, you'll feel like you've traveled 10,000 miles and seen the wonders of the world.

These workshops are also a great way for families to spend time together during the summer, learning skills that you can share with others.

Chef/owner Sophy Suon of Modern Catering brings her in-depth knowledge of Cambodian ingredients, cooking, culture and customs to you, through workshops that you can take a la carte, or as a prix-fixe menu. Workshops will take place in Lowell, location TBA.

Follow the Fibre: Migrating Silk

Recent talks between Angkor Dance Troupe and the American Textile History Museum reveal common threads and bold new designs. The Troupe and Museum have collaborated in the past and now plan a



joint workshop and exhibit featuring the brilliant golds, blues, purples and greens of classical and folk dance costumes.

The beauty and the learning don't stop there – the two institutions will invite audiences to engage with the dramatic stories behind the costumes, and with the silken threads that literally constitute them. The ATHM deepens our understanding of how plants and other fibres become the textiles we use in our daily lives – this collaboration will be no exception. By working together, we hope to in-



troduce our audiences to the silk-making villages that produce the fabrics and the dyes, and to the people whose technical skill turns them into the garments you'll recognize in the dramatic legends brought to life by Khmer dance.

Parents and Friends Learn Ancient Costuming Techniques

This spring, parents and friends of the Troupe took part in our first-ever workshops on Cambodian cloth and costuming techniques. Knowledgeable instructors, led by Phousita Huy, rolled and squeezed the cloth into the shapes that make up the *k'ben*, one of the basic elements of the dance costume.

Parents and friends also learned about different grades of

silk, how to care for the cloth, and the kinds of performances associated with certain silks and patterns. In another workshop, our presenters showed many examples of traditional Cambodian clothing and spoke about cultural meanings of certain colors and fashions.

Our participants deepened their knowledge of Cambodian culture and spruced up their appearance

at the Cambodian New Year festivities. See page 2 for our next workshop series — this one on Cambodian cuisine. What better way to bring your family closer to what is beautiful (and delicious) in Cambodian culture?



Pins and Folds

Especially for parents and friends of the Troupe, this section keeps you up to date

on the shows, the events and the in-house business of the Troupe. This spring we want to let you know about the following:

Performances:

- August 6th, 11am, Boot Mill, Lowell National Historical Park. Open to the public.
- August 16th, Water Festival, Lowell. Portions of the Ramayana epic. Open to the public.

Registration:

Now is the time to send in your registration for next session, which starts in August 2008. Please look for forms sent home with dancers or write to request one (timthou@yahoo.com). An annual fee of \$25 per dancer should accompany each registration. These fees cover the costs of food and drink for dancers during the year's worth of rehearsals and performances.



Angkor Dance Troupe

PO Box 1553

40 French Street

Tel: (978) 275-1823

Fax: (978) 275-1824

Email: TimThou@yahoo.com

Website: www.angkordance.org

OUR HEARTFELT THANKS...

to our many supporters including the Theodore Edson Parker Foundation, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lowell National Historical Park, the City of Lowell, Butler Bank, Enterprise Bank,, the Catalogue of Philanthropy, the Elephant Walk Restaurant, Minuteman Press, and our Board, Staff and Troupe members.

Last but by no means least, we thank **YOU**, the Friends of the Angkor Dance Troupe.

MEMBERSHIP!

The Troupe is delighted to announce that as of April 2008, we have a brand-new, thriving and supportive membership network.

The members of the Friends of Angkor Dance Troupe make it possible for our young dancers to keep learning and to keep Cambodian fine arts alive and well in the 21st century.

Recent members include: Khanh Dinh, Elaine McKinnon, Toni Shapiro Phim, Linda and Steven Myers-Tierney, Alison Miller, Steve Katz, Paul and Rosemarie Krenitsky, Susan McCombs, Eleanor Rizzo and family, Brown and Lois Pulliam, Nancy Donahue, Jim and Joan Ross, Charley Todd, Julie Malozzi, Stephen and Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Sokhanarith Moeur Tung, Frank and Joan Gendron, Samkhann Khoeun, Nancy Colburn, Kevin, Arthur, Mao and Chet Patton-Hock, Lester Lloyd, Joanne and Iain Goddard, Duncan Smith, and TimThou and family.

JOIN today. You can strengthen the fine art of Cambodian dance, as it strengthens youth and the wider community in which it flourishes. See enclosed membership materials.

Angkor Dance Troupe

PO Box 1553

40 French Street,

Lowell, MA 01853