



Angkor Dance Troupe

FALL 2007

ANGKOR DANCE TROUPE
PO BOX 1553
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Elephants Weep on the Banks of the Merrimack

Paris, Phnom Penh, New York City — these seemed likely venues to premiere the first Cambodian-American Opera ever to be produced. The production's international team included Arn Chorn-Pond, founder of Cambodian Living Arts, John Burt and Catherine Filloux, both based in New York City, Him Sophy of the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, and other performers and choreographers from Cambodia, the US and Europe. The opera ran from April 27th-29th, not in any of those global cities but rather in Lowell. An extensive team worked for over a year to stage the production at Lowell High School. Angkor Dance Troupe was a vital part of bringing this show to Lowell, and to the thousands of people who saw it.

For those Lowell residents of Cambodian heritage the opera was particularly poignant. It melded old and new art forms, it told the story of suffering and



A scene from *Elephants*

survival that so many have experienced, and it offered an exam-
ple of new life, in the form of this artistic production. Angkor Dance Troupe trained performers in classical dance techniques, and worked with musicians from Cambodia and the US. Four Troupe dancers performed in the show.

Phousita Huy led the Troupe's dancers. Her deeply moving performance reminded the Troupe of why she is so valuable to us; Ms. Huy's dancing mixed immense reserves of innate talent and grace with skill born of discipline and training.

Peter Veth, Monica Veth and Sophy Leng joined Ms. Huy onstage. Monica Veth of Angkor Dance, said of "usually we dance to traditional music. Now we had to dance to music for the opera. The most memorable moment for me was the speech that Mr. Burt made backstage, before the play, using such nice words. I became very emotional." Sophy Leng said, "We were the only four dancers. Everyone else was acting or rapping. The day of the show, before it started, we were preparing, getting dressed. The traditional Khmae band was setting up their instruments. We did a quick blessing ceremony. We knelt with our hands in a praying position and prayed that the opera would go well. The incense was burning—it was a special moment. I loved the feeling, and I hope that others can have this experience too."

After 21 Years, An Endowment

On October 31st, 2007, a dream came true: Angkor Dance Troupe established an endowment with the Greater Lowell Community Foundation. Thanks to generous and timely donations by our friends and supporters, the Troupe was able to meet the \$5,000 minimum required by the Foundation to qualify for an additional \$2,500 match.

An Endowment is a fund that will last as long as the Troupe does, and will pay the Troupe a dividend every year, based on interest earned. All of this is to say that Tim Thou and Phousita Huy and the dedicated and talented dancers of the Troupe will have some guaranteed income every year. At this point it is small — perhaps only

enough for a costume upgrade, or to pay for a Master Teacher workshop — but with the generosity we have seen from our donors and with the goodwill and guidance of the GLCF, we are confident that it will only grow with time. This is a true investment in the Troupe's future and in Lowell's cultural treasure.

Apsaras Come to Life After 1,000 Years



While this may seem like a headline from the National Enquirer (Cambodian Version), in reality it speaks to the artistic talent of the Troupe's Phousita Huy and Phnom-Penh based musician Him Sophy. It is through their combined talents that the Apsaras will come to life, stepping off the walls of the ancient temples and speaking of modern-day suffering, need for compassion, and appealing to the international community for conser-

vation of all things precious. This includes not only the welfare of those in distress or in need, but also the expressions of culture and humanity that are embodied in ancient artifacts in Cambodia, and elsewhere in the world.

Returning from Phnom Penh this summer, Ms. Huy returns to work on this new piece. Her collaborators include musicians, dancers and writers on both sides of the globe. Their first step in the

production of this work is bringing together the artistic team and creating the music and dance that will anchor the story.

Coming on the heels of the Cambodian-American opera this past spring, *Where Elephants Weep*, this new piece signals deep growth for Cambodian arts in the 21st century.



Photograph by
Michele
Mittelman

Troupe Chosen for 2007 Catalogue for Philanthropy

Angkor Dance Troupe has been selected for listing in the 2007 prestigious Massachusetts Catalogue for Philanthropy. This year 390 charities applied for new listings, and 54 were selected, as "examples of excellence" in all fields of Massachusetts philanthropy—the environment, culture (arts and education), human services and international.

The purpose of the Catalogue, now in its 11th year of annual publication, is "to strengthen the culture of philanthropy in Massachusetts...through donor education..." "The Catalogue is designed as a showcase for Massachusetts philanthropy," McCully said,

According to George McCully, President of

the Catalogue, "Angkor Dance Troupe, Inc. was chosen because they are a great example of 'private initiatives for public good, focusing on quality of life' in Massachusetts, and because they are both excellent and cost-effective. We urge donors, especially in the Lowell area, to consider adding Angkor Dance Troupe, Inc. to their giving list this year."

National Endowment for the Arts Grant

The National Endowment for the Arts recognized Angkor Dance Troupe through a \$10,000 grant this year. The

grant will provide for performances and workshops in Lowell Public Schools. Look for news and pictures from these work-

shops in the next issue of our newsletter.

Ancient Meets Nouveau at Fall Fundraiser



“Let the dresses talk,” said Peter Veth, Assistant Artistic Director and talk they did in ancient Khmer idioms as well as through the sleekest fashions of today. By combining classical and folk dance with fashion, Artistic Director Phousita Huy and her staff engaged the attention

of each of the 300 people in the room at the fall Fundraiser on November 10th. The Sampao Meas Hall of the Sunnys Restaurant on Chelmsford Street echoed with the sounds of thousand year old Khmer melodies and rythm, accompanied by the graceful and polished gestures of the Troupe's young dancers, and also with the sounds of the more contemporary Nasty Band — all of this punctuated by applause from the appreciative audience.

To experience the rich details of ancient arts, created and first performed thousands of years

ago is rare enough, but to have them aligned with present-day aesthetics, is truly unusual.

A five-course Cambodian Banquet and delicious appetizers, complemented the show, and the Silent Auction of varied items offered our guests a chance to do some holiday shopping for beautiful artifacts made in Cambodia.

If you missed the show, look for us next year!



Cambodian Culture in Colorado



Recent stages on which Angkor Dance Troupe has performed include one in the shadow of the great Rocky Mountains, in the western part of the United States.

In August of this year, three Troupe dancers travelled to Colorado for the annual Cambodian Culture Camp, sponsored by Families with Cambodian Children. By performing for this group of families, Troupe members brought a taste of the Cambodian arts to an audience with a great appreciation for things Khmer.

Linda Sou, the Troupe's

Assistant Program Director, said “It was a very rewarding experience. When we began to dance the younger kids all stopped talking. They became quiet and watched, sitting absolutely still.” Board Member Deborah Nelson, who attended the Camp with her family, reflected on how meaningful it was to those gathered there to connect with ancient Cambodian traditions and to each other.

National Park Service Performance

This September we added Williamsburg, Virginia to the growing list of venues, near and far, where Angkor Dance Troupe has performed. This time the occasion was a special one: the annual conference of the National Leadership Council of the National Park Service (NPS). Lowell National Historical Park Superintendent, Michael Creasy, invited the Troupe to

perform not only as a treat for the attendees, but also as a way to model cutting edge private-public partnership, and exploration of cultural resources. Among those who enjoyed the performance were the NPS Director Mary Bomar, and the Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne. Lowell NPS's Duey Kol remarked that “the dancers who represented the Troupe on

this special day were magical, and we received many compliments. Their professionalism and passion for their heritage and traditional arts really came through. To be recognized formally by Mary Bomar is a great achievement.”



Troupe Members, NPS's Duey Kol and Michael Creasy, with Dirk Kempthorne and Mary Bomar.



Angkor Dance Troupe

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The Angkor Dance Troupe, Inc is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the traditions of Cambodian performing arts while providing a positive social and educational environment for our young members.

Through a generous arrangement with the Lowell National Historical Park, Angkor has offices and rehearsal space on the third floor of the Mogan Cultural Center.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Parker Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities generously support the work of the Troupe.

We thank the many individuals, businesses and charitable groups that make our work possible. We would like to especially mention the following people and businesses to thank them for their support this season:

Raymond Anstiss and Company, David Blair, Paul Borgasand, Claire Breckon, Eleanor Briggs, Karla Brooks-Baehr, Casey Family Services, Jim Cooney and the Arbella Foundation, Nancy Donahue, the Elephant Walk Restaurant, Enterprise Bank, Maryalice Foley, Khemara Restaurant, Bonna Mai and family, Sokhanarith Moeun, Deb Nelson and family, Louis Pinn Insurance, Jonathan Pulliam, Samuel Pulliam, the Lowell Sun, Tim Thou and family, Unwrapped, Inc., Geoffery and Chenda Wilson, and many others.

We also thank our Board, Staff and troupe members, as well as the merchants and vendors who provided items Annual Fundraiser's Silent Auction. We particularly thank Phousita Huy and Chhaan Touch and their family for all that they do for the Troupe.

Last but not least, we thank **you**, the Friends of Angkor Dance Troupe!

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