

## *SchoolTime* Study Guide



### **Cambodia's Khmer Arts Ensemble** ***The Lives of Giants***

Monday, October 3, 2011 at 11 a.m.

Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley



# Welcome to *SchoolTime*

On **Monday, October 3 at 11am**, your class will attend a performance of **Cambodia's Khmer Arts Ensemble** at Cal Performances' Zellerbach Hall.

Cambodia's Khmer Arts Ensemble is renowned for performing dazzling, powerful works that dramatically expand the repertory of Cambodian dance. In *The Lives of Giants*, the company of 36 dancers, instrumentalists, and singers combine gestural dance, traditional music and spectacular costumes and staging to bring to life the ancient tale of a power-drunk and vengeful giant who wreaks havoc in the kingdom of heaven..

## Using This Study Guide

You can use this study guide to engage your students and enrich their Cal Performances field trip. Before attending the performance, we encourage you to:

- **Copy** the Student Resource Sheet on pages 2 & 3 and give it to your students several days before the show.
- **Discuss** the information on pages 4-6 About the Performance & Artists with your students.
- **Read** to your students from About the Art Form on pages 7-10 and About Cambodia on pages 11-14.
- **Engage** your students in two or more Activities on pages 15 & 16.
- **Reflect** with your students by asking them Guiding Questions, found on pages 2, 4, 7 and 11.
- **Immerse** students further into the subject matter and art form by using the Additional Resources on pages 16-17.

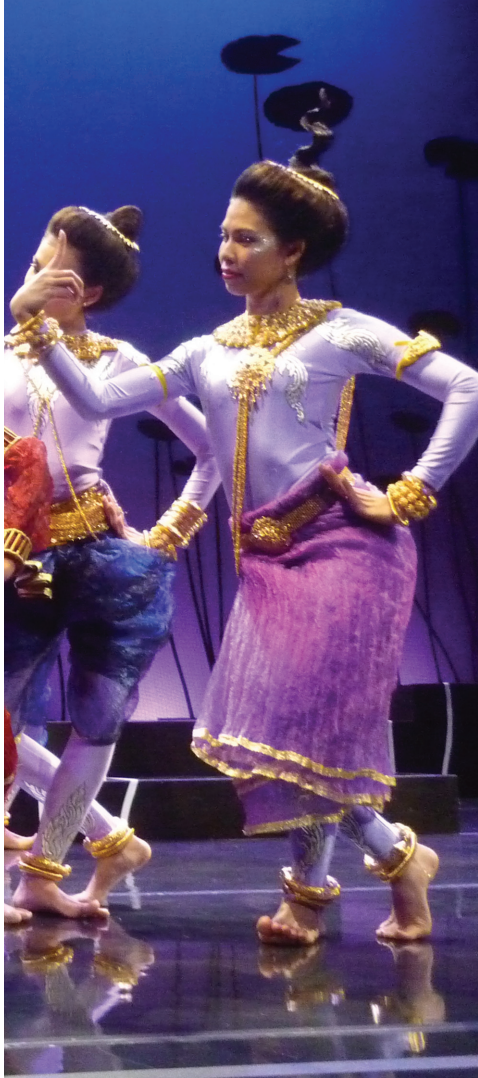
## At the performance:

Your class can actively participate during the performance by:

- **Listening** carefully to the rhythms, melodies and harmonies of the music
- **Observing** how the dancers tell a story and express ideas and emotions through their movements
- **Thinking** about the culture, traditions and history expressed through the dance and music
- **Marveling** at the skill of the dancers, musicians and singers
- **Reflecting** on the sounds, sights, and performance skills you experience at the theater.

We look forward to seeing you at *SchoolTime*!

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# 1 Theater Etiquette

**Be prepared and arrive early.** Ideally you should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time and parking, and plan to be in your seats at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

**Be aware and remain quiet.** The theater is a “live” space—you can hear the performers easily, but they can also hear you, and you can hear other audience members, too! Even the smallest sounds, like rustling papers and whispering, can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to stay quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance without distractions. The international sign for “Quiet Please” is to silently raise your index finger to your lips.

**Show appreciation by applauding.** Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation. Performers return their appreciation for your attention by bowing to the audience at the end of the show. It is always appropriate to applaud at the end of a performance, and it is customary to continue clapping until the curtain comes down or the house lights come up.

**Participate by responding to the action onstage.** Sometimes during a performance, you may respond by laughing, crying or sighing. By all means, feel free to do so! Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form. For instance, an audience attending a string quartet performance will sit very quietly, while the audience at a gospel concert may be inspired to participate by clapping and shouting.

**Concentrate to help the performers.** These artists use concentration to focus their energy while on stage. If the audience is focused while watching the performance, they feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!

**Please note:** *Backpacks and lunches are not permitted in the theater. Bags will be provided for lobby storage in the event that you bring these with you. There is absolutely no food or drink permitted in the seating areas. Recording devices of any kind, including cameras, cannot be used during performances. Please remember to turn off your cell phone.*



# 2

## Student Resource Sheet

Cambodia's Khmer Arts Ensemble

### Questions to Think About During the Performance

- What happens in *The Lives of Giants*?
- How do the performers tell the story of the dance?
- How did the Khmer Rouge's rule affect Cambodia?



### What You'll See

On Monday, October 3, your class will attend a performance by Cambodia's Khmer Arts Ensemble. This troupe, led by Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, performs new works and classic Cambodian dance pieces, set to traditional Cambodian music. At *SchoolTime*, the 36-member troupe will perform *The Lives of Giants*, a story drawn from the Reamker, the Cambodian version of India's ancient epic the Ramayana.

### The Story of *The Lives of Giants*

A giant who lives in a heavenly kingdom has been teased since he was little by a group of mischievous angels. Tired of being bullied, he asks the king for a way to protect himself. The king feels sorry for the giant, and although his wife warns him not to, the king gives the giant a magic finger with which he can defend himself. At first, the giant is unsure about using his magic finger. But when the angels start knocking him on the head, he points his finger at them and breaks them into pieces. Soon, he goes wild with his new power, destroying the heavenly kingdom.

The angels ask the king for help, but he runs away, afraid for his own life. The king's wife, Uma goes to the god Visnu for advice. When Visnu says the giant will have to be killed, Uma disagrees, saying all the giant needs is to discover his kindness again, then he'll stop being violent. Visnu agrees to let Uma try her plan, but warns that he'll step in if it doesn't work.

Uma dances for giant, and the beauty of her performance soon calms him. But as he relaxes and joins Uma in her dance, Visnu becomes impatient and forces the giant to point his magic finger at himself. The giant rages that he will return in another life to get his revenge. Then, he falls into Uma's arms and dies. Seeing more destruction to come, Uma mourns that violence has won over compassion.

### Cambodian Dance

Traditional Cambodian dance began in the country's royal courts. Classical dance centers around tales of gods and goddesses, folk myths or stories of royal characters, and were performed as a way to call on the gods, or give honor to royalty.

Dancers wear elaborate costumes decorated with sequins and semi-precious gems as well as gold headdresses, bracelets and anklets. They use stylized movements and gestures to help tell the story. Hand gestures have clear meanings, some represent items from nature, like fruit, flowers, and leaves, some show thoughts or emotions.

A pinpeat ensemble of musicians accompanies the dance, with singers voicing the characters' words and thoughts.

## Cambodia

Thailand, Laos and Vietnam border Cambodia, as does the Gulf of Thailand on the west coast. Cambodia's climate is tropical. The rainy monsoon season lasts from May to November; it is dry from December to April. The terrain consists mostly of low, flat plains and mountains in the southwest and north. Phnum Aoral is the highest point. Southeast Asia's great river, the Mekong, runs through the center of the country and is called Tonlé Thom ("Great River") by Cambodians. Forests and woodlands account for 66% of the land; only about 13% is farmland. Cambodia is slightly smaller than Oklahoma.

Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh (pronounced Nohm Pen) lies on the banks of the Mekong. The city of Siem Reap (pronounced See-am Reeb) lies at the north end of the Tonlé Sap lake and is the gateway to Angkor Wat (meaning "capital monastery"), the ancient temple complex built in the 12th century. Angkor Wat is Cambodia's best-known tourist attraction and appears on the country's flag. The temple is known for its beautiful architecture and reliefs.



## Cambodia's History

The area that is now Cambodia was the center of the Khmer Kingdom of Angkor, a powerful force in Southeast Asia from about the 9th to 15th centuries. Cambodia was a French colony from 1863 to 1953, but gained its independence in 1953, and entered a short period of peace and prosperity. However, by the late 1960s, Cambodia was drawn into the Vietnam war. In 1975, communist forces known as the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh and emptied cities and towns. Over one million people forced from their homes were executed or died from hardships. The Khmer Rouge believed that Cambodians needed to return to a simple, farming way of life, so they targeted people they felt were elite – especially teachers, writers, artists and performers. After years of struggle, in 1993, Cambodia held general elections and restored a king to the throne.

Today, traditional dance and arts are making a strong comeback, taking their place once again at the center of Cambodian culture.



# 3 About the Performance & Artists

Cambodia's Khmer Arts Ensemble

## Guiding Questions:

- ♦ Describe what you might experience at a Khmer Arts Ensemble performance.
- ♦ What main theme does *The Lives of Giants* explore?
- ♦ Who are some of the characters in *The Lives of Giants*?



## The *SchoolTime* Performance: *The Lives of Giants*

Cambodia's Khmer Arts Ensemble explores universal themes through traditional Cambodian movement, music and costumes. The ensemble is made up of 36 dancers, musicians and singers and is led by Sophiline Cheam Shapiro who has been instrumental in preserving and advancing the performing arts traditions of the millennium-old Khmer civilization. Cheam Shapiro has injected contemporary choreography and music into the company's work producing "innovative, enchanting [and] riveting" performances (*Voice of Dance*).

## Performance Synopsis

For *SchoolTime*, the Khmer Arts Ensemble performs a selection from *The Lives of Giants*, an interpretation of an ancient tale of power and vengeance. The production examines the culture of violence – how violence generates more violence, how the abused become the abusers, and tragically, how compassion is trampled in the urge for revenge.

*The Lives of Giants* is drawn from the **Reamker**, the Cambodian version of the *Ramayana*, an ancient Sanskrit epic. Its principles, philosophy and characters are fundamental to the cultural consciousness of South and Southeast Asians.

Akaeng Khameaso, a giant in god Preah Eyso's heavenly realm, has been the target of relentless





taunting and bullying by a band of mischievous angels since he was a child. Fed up with the abuse, he complains to Preah Eyso, pleading for a way to protect himself. Preah Eyso pities the giant and gives him a magic finger, despite protests from the king's wife, Uma, that this will only cause more trouble.

Akaeng Khameaso celebrates his new weapon, although at first he's reluctant to use it. However, when the angels return and start knocking him on the head, he points his finger at them and breaks them into pieces. Before long, the giant becomes drunk with his newfound power and lays waste to heaven.

Panicked, the angels plea for Preah Eyso's help. But worried for his own safety, he resists and flees in the opposite direction.

With her husband and leader now gone, Uma turns to the god Preah Visnu for help. Preah Visnu declares that the only choice is to kill Akaeng Khameaso. But Uma disagrees. She

wants to put the giant in touch with his sense of humanity so that he'll renounce violence. Preah Visnu insists that her plan will never work but allows her to try. If she fails, he'll step in and slaughter the giant.

Uma dances before Akaeng Khameaso. Entranced, he approaches, allowing her to redirect his destructiveness and hunger for power toward beauty and transcendence. As he relaxes and joins in her dance, an impatient Preah Visnu enters and attacks. Despite Uma's attempts to protect the giant, Preah Visnu gets hold of the giant's finger and forces him to point it at himself.

Emerging from the grace of Uma's dance, Akaeng Khameaso rages at Preah Visnu, proclaiming that he will be reborn with even more power in his next life so no one will be able to defeat him. Then he collapses into Uma's arms and dies. Uma, foreseeing the coming violence, laments the triumph of violence over compassion.



## Cast (in order of appearance)

### ***Akaeng Khameaso (child)***

Chea Socheata

### ***Uma***

Keo Kunthearom

### ***Tevabot (male angels)***

Kong Bonich, Lim Chanboramy, Sao Phirom, Sao Somaly

### ***Tep Thida (female angels)***

Long Chantheary, Mot Pharan, Pum Molyta, Som Saymalyrou

### ***Akaeng Khameaso (adult)***

Rin Sreyleak

### ***Preah Eyso (Shiva)***

Chao Socheata

### ***Preah Visnu (Vishnu)***

Sot Sovannndy

### **Instrumentalists**

#### ***Roneat Ek (xylophone)***

Nil Sinoeun

#### ***Sralai (quadruple reed oboe)***

Touch Sarin

#### ***Sampho & Skor Thom (drums)***

Ros Sokun

#### ***Gong Thom (circle gong)***

Soun Phally

### **Singer**

Cheam Chanthopeas

### **Dresser**

Sam Ratha

### **Scenic and Lighting Design**

Marcus Doshi

### **Costume Design**

Merrily Murray-Walsh

### **Producer**

Kymer Arts: John Shapiro, Executive Director

### **Touring General Manager**

Deirdre Valente

### **Technical Director**

***Robert W. Henderson***

*In Cambodia, a person's family name precedes the first name when written or spoken. The honorific is associated with a person's first name - e.g. Sao Phirom: Sao is the surname, and Ms. Phirom is the proper form of address.*

## About the Artists:

### **Khmer Arts Ensemble**

Kymer Arts Ensemble was established in Cambodia in 2007 by Sophiline Cheam Shapiro to keep ancient performing arts of the Khmer region alive and vital. The company performs both contemporary creations and works from the classical repertoire. The Khmer Arts Ensemble has been hosted at major venues around the world and regularly tours throughout the United States. The ensemble lasted performed at Cal Performances in 2005.

Khmer Arts, dual-based in Cambodia and Long Beach, California (home to the largest Cambodian community outside of Southeast Asia), is an independent non-profit organization founded in 2002 by Sophiline Cheam Shapiro and John Shapiro. In Long Beach, branch encompasses a school, a pre-professional company and a Salon Series, which showcases classical dance in Cambodian communities throughout California. The Cambodia campus is in Takhmao outside of Phnom Penh's city center, which is fast become a vital center for dance. Along with producing Khmer Arts Ensemble, Khmer Arts conducts media projects and has established an important international center for dance scholarship and documentation.

# 4

## About the Art Form

Cambodian Dance & Music

### Guiding Questions:

- ♦ How is Cambodian dance evolving?
- ♦ What do the four basic hand gestures represent?



### Dance in Contemporary Cambodia

*By Toni Shapiro-Phim*

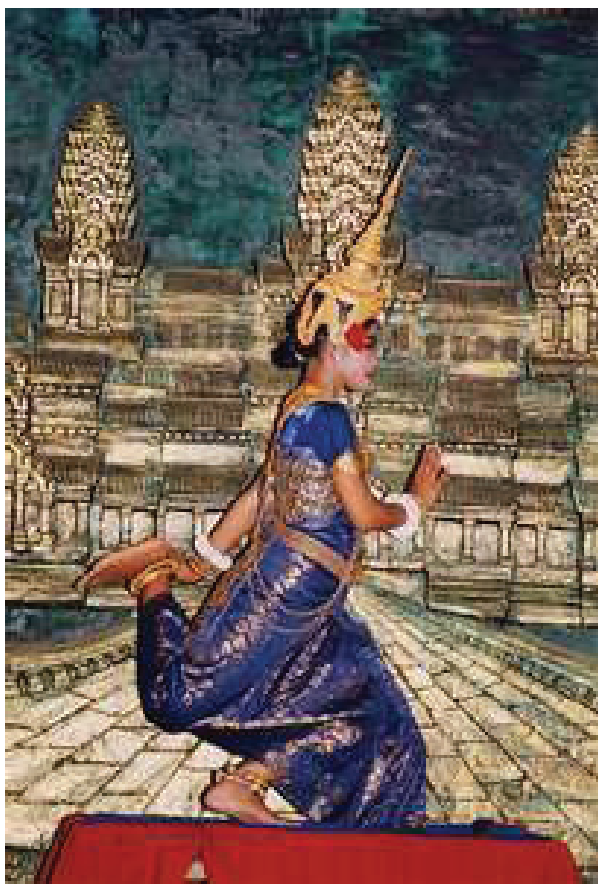
Dancers in Cambodia are responding to a contemporary environment that includes both lightning-speed development and reminders of a devastatingly violent past. During the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979), nearly a third of Cambodia’s population perished. Large numbers of professionally trained dancers died, with a mere 10-20 percent surviving the genocide. Classical dance, with long historical roots intertwined with spirituality and with the monarchy, was nearly wiped out. With the loss of so much embodied knowledge, government arts officials have publicly prioritized the preservation of Cambodia’s traditional dance heritage for more than 30 years. Stylistic innovation, officials claim, threatens efforts to recover and rebuild Cambodia’s arts. As a result, younger generations of dancers— students of genocide survivors

who had danced before the war, and their students—embody the main force of creativity in professional dance circles in Cambodia today.

### Traditional repertoire and customary themes

Government-sponsored dance activity, beyond the teaching and performance of selections from the traditional repertoire of classical and folk pieces, includes both the re-staging and completion of previously unfinished works, and the creation of new choreographies for state celebrations and festivals. These dances have been fashioned strictly within the classical or folk movement vocabulary, representing customary themes, such as the celestial, royal, and sweeping mytho-historical focus of the classical repertoire. Thus, while the production of contemporary work in the state institutions of the arts is ongoing, it is most often only specific storylines that are new.





### **“Robam Sahasamay”: Contemporary dance**

Until very recently, discussion of professional Cambodian dance within the country revolved predominantly around “tradition.” Over the past several years, Cambodia’s dancers have come to translate the phrase “contemporary dance” as robam (dance) sahasamay (modern/of the same time period), acknowledging that this is a new construct on their part. Nonetheless, Cambodian choreographers, and the institutions supporting their work, are still often tied to concerns about national identity and history. Many sahasamay dances employ common conventions of Western contemporary (and other) dance such as pedestrian costumes and movements, a variety of musical accompaniment, innovative choreographic patterns, projections and spoken word. These dances have often taken as a central theme the desire of the younger generation to explore new creative grounds while still honoring

their country’s long artistic heritage. Despite occasional criticism from teachers and peers for straying from strictly “Cambodian” performances, these artists are exploring their unique creative voices through movement and music, looking to literature, biography and autobiography, emotion, nature and politics for inspiration.

### **Expanding possibilities**

The neo-classical choreography of Sophiline Cheam Shapiro represents another approach to creativity. Her company, the Khmer Arts Ensemble, performs both contemporary creations and works from the classical canon. Sophiline has a firm base as an accomplished performer and teacher of classical dance. She was a member of the first generation to study dance professionally after the ousting of the Khmer Rouge.

Since 1999, Sophiline has been expanding classical dance’s possibilities through the development of original dance dramas that break with received storylines, and through experimentation with gesture, vocabulary, partnering, movement patterns and costume – all of which are often officially considered inviolate. Sophiline also makes pioneering use of traditional musical arrangements and instrumentation.

In *The Lives of Giants*, you see and hear all of these elements at play. Choreographic patterns are dynamic and sometimes asymmetrical; movement flows out of but is not restricted to codified gesture, vocabulary or posture. Melodies that never before accompanied classical dance are employed to great emotional effect. Merrily Murray-Walsh’s costumes synchronize with Marcus Doshi’s scenic abstractions of water and light while referring to traditional motifs in decorative patterns and accessories. Akaeng Khameaso’s mask incorporates a metal mesh with traditional papier-mâché elements, allowing dancers to breathe and see more easily.

*This essay is adapted from “Professional Dancers and their Contemporary Context in Cambodia”*  
[www.goethe.de/ins/id/lp/prj/tac/zgt/kam/enindex.htm](http://www.goethe.de/ins/id/lp/prj/tac/zgt/kam/enindex.htm)



## Elements of Cambodian Dance

### Hand Gestures

The four basic hand gestures describe the cycle of growth in nature: the vine, the leaf, the flower and the fruit. When the fruit drops, its seed grows into a new vine. Used together and in combination with different postures, these gestures form the vocabulary of classical dance. The language the movement communicates can be specific or general; it can depict a complete sentence (“I will pick this flower”) or a feeling (happiness).

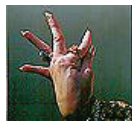
One easily recognizable gesture to watch for is when a dancer (holding her hand as in *The Fruit* gesture) flicks her middle finger, demonstrating that the fruit has dropped. This movement signifies an ending or farewell. Hand gestures, along with hyper-extended elbows and highly arched backs, also mimic the shape of a serpent, with the flower gesture forming the mythological creature’s head in one hand and its tail in the other.



*The vine*



*The leaf*



*The Flower*



*The Fruit*

### Costumes

In Cambodian dance, costumes are elaborate and made of silks, woven through by hand with silver and gold threads and adorned with sequins and jewels. Gold arm bands, headdresses, anklets and bracelets complement the outfits. Costumes provide important clues to gender. Male characters wear pantaloons (kben) rather than skirts and feature epaulets on their shoulders.

### The Music and Instruments

Like Western opera, Cambodian classical dance dramas are set to music performed by singers and instrumentalists. Traditionally, the musicians are placed on floor level to one side of the playing space. Dancers and musicians cue one another to begin or end a section, establish or change tempo, heighten or release dramatic tension and generally move the action forward.

Instrumental passages alternate with verses sung by vocalists. A Cambodian audience will recognize classic melodies and rhythms, and know that they are about to see a battle scene, or that a popular character is entering the scene. As dancers do not speak in Cambodian dance-dramas, the singers voice individual characters and also narrate the overall story. Vocalists sing solo, or in unison as a chorus. Classical dance is a form most often performed by women, while musicians accompanying them may be male or female.

The mainly percussive orchestra is called a pin peat ensemble and consists of some of the instruments below that you’ll see at the SchoolTime performance. Each instrument is treated with respect, made by hand and often decorated with sculpted or inlaid accents. Incense, candles and other offerings are placed in front of the orchestra (most importantly in front of the sampho drum, believed to house the spirits of the arts) before rehearsals and performances.





**Roneat Ek:** A high-pitched wooden or bamboo key xylophone

**Sralai:** A quadruple reed wind instrument, similar to an oboe; an ensemble may include one sralai, or both a smaller, higher-pitched (sralai touc) and a larger, lower-pitched one (sralai thom).

**Sampho:** A double-headed barrel drum that rests horizontally on a stand.

**Skor Thom:** A large pair of barrel drums played with mallets.

**Gong Thom:** Low-pitched circle of knobbed gongs.

**Chheung:** small brass cymbals.



# 5

## About Cambodia

### Guiding Questions:

- ◆ Where is Cambodia located?
- ◆ What is Angkor Wat?
- ◆ Name some significant events in Cambodia's history.

### The Country

Cambodia is located on the mainland of Southeast Asia, bordered by Thailand to the north and west, Laos to the north and Vietnam to the east and southeast. It has a relatively short coast line onto the Gulf of Thailand to the south/ southwest. Mainland Southeast Asia's great river, the Mekong, runs through the Cambodia's center, from Tibet through China, Thailand and Laos on its way to its delta in southern Vietnam. The river is also called the Tonlé Thom (pronounced "Tohn-lay Tohm," which means "Great River"). Its major tributary is the Tonlé Sap (pronounced "Tohn-lay Sahp" or "Great Lake"), a combined river and lake that is the largest freshwater lake system in Southeast Asia. About three quarters of the country consists of a low and very fertile plain rich enough to support complex societies for several thousand years.

Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh (pronounced "Nohm Pen") lies on the banks of the Mekong, at the confluence of the Mekong, Tonlé Sap and Brassac rivers. The city of approximately 1 million people dates from the 14th century, and had the name Krong Chaktomuk, meaning "City of Four Faces" for the four corners created by the rivers that cross in an X in the middle of the city. Phnom Penh became the seat of government in 1866 during the reign of King Norodom I, but under the instructions of the French, who had become the country's colonial power. The city of Siem Reap (also spelled Siemréab and pronounced "See-am Reeb") lies at the north end of the Tonlé Sap lake, and is the gateway to the ancient temple complex of Angkor Wat.



### The People

Cambodia is dominated by one ethnic group, the Khmer (pronounced Kuh-mare in English or Kuhm-eye in Khmer), who make up over 90 percent of Cambodia's population. Other important ethnic groups include the Vietnamese and the Cham (a Muslim minority closely related to the Malays). These groups were more prevalent in Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge took power in 1975, instigating large-scale genocide against these populations as well as the country's intellectuals, teachers and artists.





Another effect of the Khmer Rouge era is that Cambodia's population is overwhelmingly young. Over 50% of Cambodia's population is under the age of 25, and the median age is just over 20 years.

The Khmer are Buddhists, practicing the Theravada version of the religion found across Southeast Asia in Laos, Thailand and Burma as well as in Sri Lanka. The Khmer language is tonal, and is similar to both Thai and Lao.



Many foreigners recognize Khmer culture in the graceful and controlled gestures of classical Khmer dance, which draws its inspiration from bas relief carvings on the walls of Angkor Wat. This art form was became a world cultural treasure under the artistic sponsorship of the Cambodian royal court. Although dancers and musicians were heavily targeted by the Khmer Rouge, the dance form has made a strong comeback, becoming a symbol not only of Cambodian cultural legacy, but also of Cambodian cultural rebirth.







Angkor Wat was built during the reign of Suryavarman II (1112-1152). More than 2,000 Apsaras (celestial maidens, progenitors of Cambodia's classical dancers) are depicted in bas-relief carvings found throughout what is now Cambodia's most recognized symbol.

## Cambodian Chronology

*Compiled by Deirdre Valente*

### **Kingdom of Cambodia**

Recorded history traced to 100 A.D.

9th-15th centuries A.D: Age of Angkor Empire

1867: Cambodia incorporated into colonial French Indochina

1941-1945: Cambodia occupied by Japan during World War II

November 9, 1953: Independence from France declared and a constitutional monarchy is established under King Norodom Sihanouk.

1950s-1960s: Disparate political groups (including nascent Khmer Rouge) emerge and militarize. Cambodian arts flourish. Classical dance gains international exposure during state visits hosted in Cambodia and abroad by King Sihanouk.



### **Khmer Republic (1970-75)**

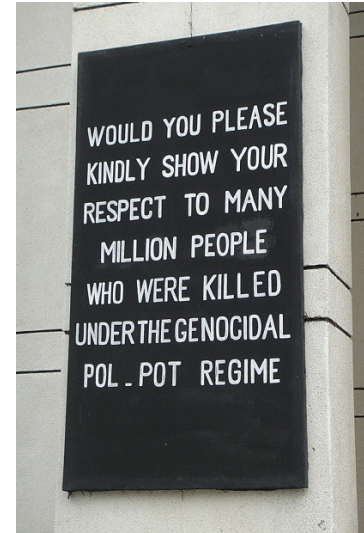
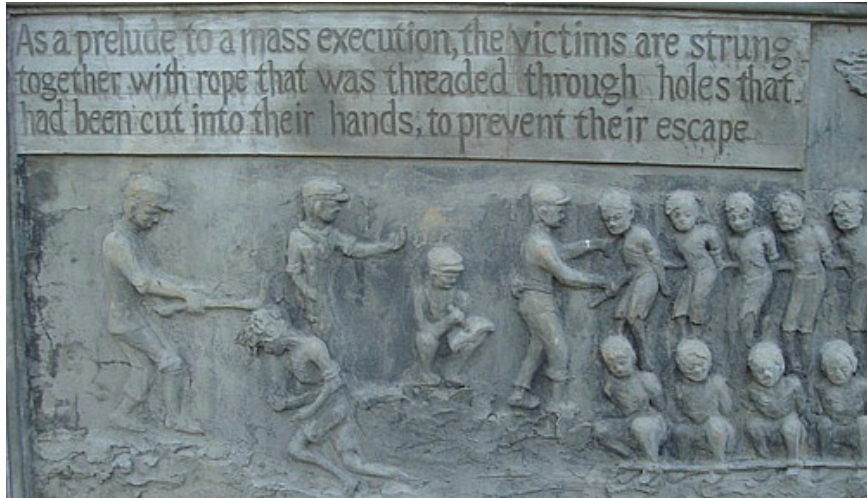
Military coup d'état in 1970 led by Lon Nol deposes monarchy; royalty goes into exile. Violent conflicts devolve into civil war. USA launches covert bombing and other military campaigns through 1973 during what Americans refer to as the Vietnam War. As many as 800,000 Cambodians die during this period.

### **Democratic Kampuchea (1975-79)**

A communist regime headed by Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge reaches Phnom Penh and seizes power on April 15, 1975. More than 2 million Cambodians (estimate) are executed, or die of starvation, torture, and forced labor. 90% of Cambodia's artists are thought to perish during what comes to be known as the "killing fields."

### **People's Republic of Kampuchea (1979-91)**

January 6, 1979: Vietnamese forces 'liberate' Cambodia and back a second communist regime. 13-year civil war ensues; hundreds of thousands of refugees flee, many to Thailand; thousands more Cambodians die. International peace talks begin in Paris in 1989.



### ***State of Cambodia (1991-93)***

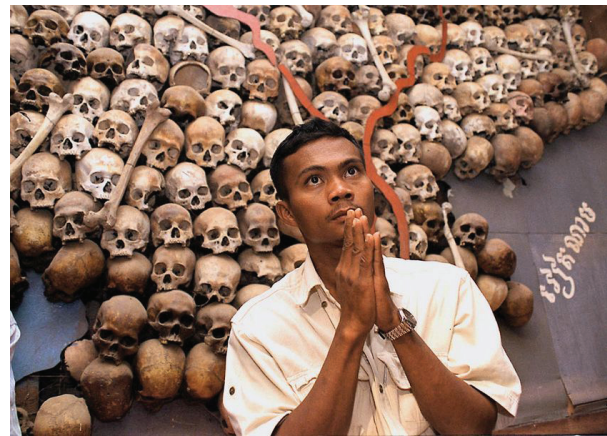
Vietnamese occupation ends in 1991 when the United Nations is given a mandate to enforce a ceasefire, oversee disarmament, and manage the care and repatriation of refugees (estimated at some 370,000 people). An interim government is formed.

### ***Kingdom of Cambodia (1993-present)***

1993: UN-sponsored elections are held within the governing framework of a parliamentary representative democratic monarchy. Stability remains fragile as factional fighting with resistant elements of the Khmer Rouge continues until 1999; (Pol Pot, infamous ruler of the Khmer Rouge, dies in April 1998). Norodom Sihanouk once more becomes King (though his role is largely ceremonial) and serves until 2004, when he abdicates in favor of his son Norodom Sihamoni.

Hun Sen (born 1951), Prime Minister, has been the leading player in Cambodian politics and government for more than 30 years. A self described 'freedom fighter' beginning in 1970, he was Khmer Rouge functionary and has held positions of power in every government since 1979, serving variously as Foreign Minister, Prime Minister, co-Premiere (often serving in multiple positions at once).

2007: Nearly 30 years after the end of Cambodia's genocidal Khmer Rouge rule, an internationally backed war crimes tribunal has made its first indictments. In the intervening years, many top leaders died or were pardoned; other party-members hold positions in Cambodia's government.





# 6

## Learning Activities

### Dance & Language Arts (Grades 2-12)

#### ***Gesture Dance***

Cambodian dance often depicts stories with dancers portraying gods and goddesses, animals or objects from the natural world. Dancers rely on hand gestures to communicate meaning or emotion, for example, one gesture signifies happiness, another represents a flower in full bloom.

Read aloud a book listed in the resource section (page 17), choose a Cambodian folktale from: [http://gocambodia.com/Cambodian\\_folktales/index.asp](http://gocambodia.com/Cambodian_folktales/index.asp), or use the synopsis of *The Lives of Giants* (page 4). Students can also bring in a Cambodian legend or folktale of their own choosing.

- Select a section of the story for your dance (or use a very short tale)
- Read the section to your students again and ask them to identify where adjectives are used to describe a character or object.
- Capture these adjectives on a chart pad or board.
- Ask each student to choose one of the adjectives listed and create a hand gesture (or other precise, expressive movement) for this adjective.
- Go around in a circle and have each student in turn share their gesture; the group should repeat each gesture immediately after.
- Play some Cambodian music (you can find selections at: <http://www.asianclassicalmp3.org/mahori.htm>) and read the story again. Go around the circle one more time, ask the students to try to use their whole bodies when they show their gestures.

#### ***Option for grades 3 & up:***

- Divide the class into groups and give each group a section of the story.
- This time ask students to create movements or gestures for the actions (or action verbs) in the story.
- After they create movements for the actions in their text, ask them to choose a narrator to read their section of the story as they practice their dance.
- Have the groups perform their section in the same order as the original story.

### Language Arts / Social Studies (Grades 3-12)

#### ***Journey Interview***

During the Khmer Rouge's brutal regime, many Cambodians fled to the San Francisco Bay Area and other cities in the US. Like many emigrants to America, they faced difficult challenges on their journey here, and when facing a new life in this country.

- As homework, ask students to interview someone in their community who emigrated to America.
- Have students do some research on the country, history, culture and political situation of the person they interviewed. Ask students to write up the interviews, but write them as short first person narrative essays. (Students may also draw pictures to accompany their essays.)
- Ask students to share their essays with each other, in groups or with the whole class.

### **Post-Show Discussion Topic: Bullying**

When adapting *The Lives of Giants* from an ancient epic tale, Khmer Arts Ensemble focused on a timeless theme – bullying and its after-effects.

- After watching the performance, discuss how the company chose to portray this theme. What thoughts or emotions did it evoke for the students?
- In groups, ask students to discuss where they see bullying in their own lives. Some questions to consider might include: *When someone is bullied what happens to the victim, the victimizer and the community? Why does someone choose to bully others? What are some ways we might prevent bullying?*
- As a whole class, reflect on what emerged from the group discussions.

## **Additional Resources**

### **Khmer Arts Ensemble**

<http://www.khmerarts.org/>

### **Video Clips of Khmer Arts Ensemble**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8441iW1VOY> (scene from *The Lives of Giants*)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8BVy1Fk-oE>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRDKLi8Lsk4&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRDKLi8Lsk4&feature=player_embedded)

<http://vimeo.com/10252176>

### **Online Articles**

[http://www.reninc.org/BOOKSHELF/Silent\\_Temples\\_Sam\\_and\\_Campbell.pdf](http://www.reninc.org/BOOKSHELF/Silent_Temples_Sam_and_Campbell.pdf)

Link to an extensive article on Cambodian music and instruments.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2732.htm>

### **Information on the country of Cambodia**

Publications- Cambodian Arts and Culture

Blumenthal, Eileen, 1990. "The Court Ballet: Cambodia's Loveliest Jewel." *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 14 (3): 35-38.

Chet Chan, Daravuth Ly and Ingrid Muan, 2001. *The Reamker*. Phnom Penh: Reyum Publishing.

Kam, Garrett, 2000. *Ramayana in the Arts of Asia*. Singapore: Select Books. Compares and contrasts

Phim, Toni [Shapiro] and Ashley Thompson, 1999. *Dance in Cambodia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roveda, Vittorio, 2000 [1997]. *Khmer Mythology: Secrets of Angkor*. Bangkok: River Books.

Sam, Sam-Ang and Patricia Shehan Campbell, 1991. *Silent Temples, Soulful Hearts: Traditional Music of Cambodia*, Danbury, Connecticut: World Music Press. (Introductory text, with photographs and a companion CD, for teachers and young audiences.)

Chandler, David, 1992 [1983]. *A History of Cambodia*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Coedes, George, 1984 [1963]. *Angkor*, trans. and ed. Emily Floyd Gardiner. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

### **DVDs**

*Dancing Through Death: The Monkey, Magic, and Madness of Cambodia* ( 1999)

*The Flute Player* (2003)

*Samsara* (1988)

*The Tenth Dancer* (1993)



## **Music**

<http://www.myspace.com/khmerartsacademy>

<http://www.asianclassicalmp3.org/mahori.htm>

Various artists: "The Music of Cambodia." Celestial Harmonies

Various artists: "Homrong." Real World.

Various artists: "Folk and Ceremonial Music." Unesco

## **Children's Books**

Chamroeun, Yin. 1997. In my heart, I am a dancer. Philadelphia Folklore Project. For grades K-3.

Lee, Jeanne M. 1991. Silent Lotus. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. For grades K-3.

Ho, Mingfong. 2003. Gathering the Dew. New York: Orchard Books. For grades 6-9.

Him, Chanrithy. 2001. When Broken Glass Floats: Growing Up Under the Khmer. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. For grades 10-12.

## **Online Folktales**

[http://gocambodia.com/Cambodian\\_folktales/index.asp](http://gocambodia.com/Cambodian_folktales/index.asp)

## **Local Companies featuring Cambodian Dance, Music and Culture**

Charya Burt Cambodian Dance

[info@charyaburt.com](mailto:info@charyaburt.com)

The Cambodian Dance Troupe of San Jose

[dances@caraweb.org](mailto:dances@caraweb.org)

San Jose Cambodian Buddhist Society, Inc.

840 Mervyn's Way

San Jose, CA 95127

(408) 251-4458

<http://www.watkhmer.org>

# 7

# California State Standards

## Music Grades K-12

### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

#### Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to Music

Students read, notate, listen to, analyze, and describe music and other aural information, using the terminology of music.

### 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

#### Creating, Performing, and Participating in Music

Students apply vocal and instrumental musical skills in performing a varied repertoire of music. They compose and arrange music and improvise melodies, variations, and accompaniments, using digital/electronic technology when appropriate.

### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

#### Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Music

Students analyze the role of music in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting cultural diversity as it relates to music, musicians, and composers.

#### Role of Music

3.1 Describe the social functions of a variety of musical forms from various cultures and time periods (e.g., folk songs, dances).

#### Diversity of Music

3.2 Identify different or similar uses of musical element in music from diverse cultures.

3.4 Describe the influence of various cultures and historical events on musical forms and styles.

### 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

#### Responding to, Analyzing and Making Judgments about Works of Music

Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of music and the performance of music, the elements of music, and original works according to the elements of music.

## Dance Grades K-12

### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

#### Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to dance

Students perceive and respond, using the elements of dance. They demonstrate movement skills, process sensory information, and describe movement, using the vocabulary of dance.

### 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

#### Creating, performing and participating in dance

Students apply choreographic principles, processes, and skills to create and communicate meaning through the improvisation, composition, and performance of dance.

### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

#### Understanding the historical contributions and cultural dimensions of dance

Students analyze the function and development of dance in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting human diversity as it relates to dance and dancers.

### 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

#### Responding to, analyzing, and making judgments about works of dance

Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of dance, performance of dancers, and original works according to the elements of dance and aesthetic qualities.

### 5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS

#### Connecting and applying what is learned in dance to learning in other art forms and subject areas and to careers

Students apply what they learn in dance to learning across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and management of time and resources that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to dance.



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## About Cal Performances and *SchoolTime*

The mission of Cal Performances is to inspire, nurture and sustain a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts. Cal Performances, the performing arts presenter of the University of California, Berkeley, fulfills this mission by presenting, producing and commissioning outstanding artists, both renowned and emerging, to serve the University and the broader public through performances and education and community programs. Cal Performances celebrates over 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus.

Our *SchoolTime* program cultivates an early appreciation for and understanding of the performing arts amongst our youngest audiences, with hour-long, daytime performances by the same world-class artists who perform as part of the main season. *SchoolTime* has become an integral part of the academic year for teachers and students throughout the Bay Area.





This Cal Performances SchoolTime Study Guide was written, edited and designed by Laura Abrams, Rica Anderson, Nicole Anthony and Toni Shapiro-Phim.

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