

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**MUSIC AND DANCE FROM CAMBODIA COME ALIVE IN
SEASONS OF MIGRATION: AN ODYSSEY OF TRANSFORMATION
FRIDAY, APRIL 29 AT 8:00 P.M. IN ZELLERBACH HALL**

SCHOOLTIME: SPECIAL 1-HOUR SHOW FOR STUDENTS, FRIDAY, APRIL 29 AT 11:00 A.M.

***Sightlines*: Pre-performance talk by choreographer Sophiline Cheam Shapiro**

BERKELEY, March 23, 2005—Cambodian-born choreographer **Sophiline Cheam Shapiro** brings *Seasons of Migration: An odyssey of transformation*, part of a program of Cambodian music and dance, to **Cal Performances** on **Friday, April 29 at 8:00 p.m.** Created in collaboration with Cambodia's **Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA)**, the company of 27 dancers and musicians, sumptuously bedecked in sequined sarongs, golden bangles and high-spired crowns, tells a tale as old as the roots of mythology and as timely as today's news. The Cambodian classical dance tradition noted for its elegant and highly-stylized gestures and movements is a combination of theater, ritual and storytelling that has its origins in ancient royal ceremonies and religious observances.

Under Ms. Shapiro's direction, the RUFA troupe will also present the rarely performed *Ream Eyso & Moni Mekhala* (The God of Thunder and the Goddess of Lightning), a sacred drama of fertility that describes the origin of rain, thunder and lightning. Both pieces will feature the RUFA dancers moving to the rhythms of the *pinpeat*, the traditional Cambodian ensemble composed of drums, xylophones, gongs, and reed instruments. The dancers and musicians are Cambodia's best, and as Ms. Shapiro states, their presentation of a traditional drama alongside her most current work "demonstrates how the new emerges from the old and how one brings new perspective to the other."

There will be a *SchoolTime* performance of *Seasons of Migration: An odyssey of transformation* for Bay Area students **Friday, April 29 at 11:00 a.m.** in Zellerbach Hall. Tickets available in advance only. A free *Sightlines* talk will be given by Sophiline Cheam Shapiro on **Friday, April 29 at 7:00 p.m.**

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Seasons of Migration: An odyssey of migration is the most recent of Ms. Shapiro's creative attempts to both preserve Cambodian classical dance and to render it relevant to contemporary audiences. Its story, rooted in Ms. Shapiro's own experiences, re-imagines immigration as a sojourn of divinities who descend to earth to live among mortals and undergo, like all immigrants, the psychic transformation that has been called culture shock. Through the colorful and hypnotic language of Cambodian classical dance, the drama's four parts communicate the stages of that transformation: initial euphoria, followed by disappointment and bitter rejection, and then a period of exhausted and tentative adjustment. Finally comes equilibrium—acceptance of one's new surroundings and one's place in it, and even a promise of creative renewal.

SOPHILINE CHEAM SHAPIRO

Only eight years old when the Khmer Rouge invaded Phnom Penh and took power in Cambodia, **Sophiline Cheam Shapiro** survived the devastation to become one of the first generation of young artists to graduate from RUFA after the regime's collapse. She subsequently taught at RUFA and joined with colleagues and other Cambodian artists in a movement to revive the rich cultural traditions that had been all but obliterated by the Khmer Rouge. Although Ms. Shapiro immigrated to Southern California in 1991, she returns to Cambodia frequently to teach and conduct dance projects. The trauma inflicted by the destructive reign of the Khmer Rouge during her childhood, her love and concern for her native culture, and her experience as an immigrant artist are all sources of her highly original creative vision.

Ms. Shapiro first received widespread attention in April 2000 with her concert-length dance drama, *Samritechak/Othello* (*samritechak* translates as dark prince), which premiered in Phnom Penh and has since been performed in several venues in the United States as well as the Venice Biennale and the Hong Kong Arts Festival. The *Los Angeles Times* called the unorthodox retelling of the Elizabethan tragedy a “beautiful and illuminating bridge between the two cultures.” Though Ms. Shapiro intends her work to be a fusion of eastern and western traditions, she also sees it as a means to educate her fellow Cambodians and to challenge what she considers her native country's continued moral and political corruption. For example, *Samritechak*—her

Othello—acknowledges and apologizes for the horror of his deeds and begs for punishment, a pointed reference to the unrepentant surviving members of the Khmer Rouge leadership.

Among other awards, Ms. Shapiro has received a Durfee Foundation Master Musician Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship and an Irvine Fellowship in Dance, the latter which provided support for the development of *Seasons of Migration: An odyssey of transformation*. She currently resides in Long Beach, California, where she is the co-founder and artistic director of the Khmer Arts Academy, a performing arts organization dedicated to fostering the vitality of Cambodian arts and culture.

THE ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF FINE ARTS, PHNOM PEHN (RUFA)

The Royal University of Fine Arts, Cambodia's official conservatory of fine arts, was established in 1965 by King Norodom Sihanouk as part of a campaign to bring Cambodian classical arts to the wider world. RUFA serves as a teaching center and the home of many performance ensembles that include the country's best actors, dancers and musicians. RUFA's classical dance troupe has toured extensively, with visits to the United States in 1971, 1990, 2001, and most recently in 2003, when it performed Ms. Shapiro's *Samritechak*.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for *Seasons of Migration: An odyssey of transformation* on **Friday, April 29** at **8:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$24.00**, **\$36.00**, and **\$48.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu.

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Cal Performances' 2004/2005 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, April 29 at 11:00 a.m.

SCHOOLTIME PERFORMANCE

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Telegraph, Berkeley

Program: In a one-hour performance for school children, the music and dance ensemble from the Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh, will perform excerpts from *Seasons of Migration: An odyssey of transformation* and *Ream Eyso & Moni Mekhala* (The God of Thunder and the Goddess of Lightning).

Tickets: \$3.00 per student or adult chaperone, available in advance only through Cal Performances at (510) 642-1082. *SchoolTime* performances are open to students in grades 2 through 12 in Bay Area public and private schools. Supplemental study guides for the classroom are provided. For more information about the *SchoolTime* program, contact the *SchoolTime* coordinator at Cal Performances by email at eduprograms@calperfs.berkeley.edu, or by phone at (510) 642-0212.

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Friday, April 29 at 7:00 p.m.

SIGHTLINES

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Pre-performance talk by Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, choreographer and director of *Seasons of Migration: An odyssey of transformation*. *Sightlines* is a continuing program of pre- and post-performance discussions with Cal Performances' guest artists and scholars, designed to enrich the audience's experience. These events are free to ticketholders.

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Friday, April 29 at 8:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus

Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

World Stage

Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, choreographer

The Royal University of Fine Arts

Program:

Seasons of Migration: An odyssey of transformation

Ream Eyso & Moni Mekhala (The God of Thunder and the Goddess of Lightning)

Tickets: \$24.00, \$36.00, and \$48.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperfs.berkeley.edu; and at the door.