

Seasons Of Migration
An Odyssey of Transformation

featuring dancers and musicians of the Royal University of Fine Arts/Phnom Penh

Friday, April 29, 2005, 8pm

Zellerbach Hall

Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, *director and choreographer*

John Shapiro, Khmer Arts Academy, *producer*

Clifton Taylor, *production and lighting design*

The Company

Chamroeun Samphors, Chen Chan Soda, Chumvan Sodhachivy, Heung Pech, Hun Pen,
Khieu Sotheavy, Koy Sina, Meas Phirum, Moung Danida, Prum Mary, Sam Limsothea, Sam Sathya,
Sam Savin, Thong Kim Ann, Vuth Chanmoly, Yann Sophy, Yann Viphearun

Musicians

Seang Ngornly, *roneat ek*

Ep Theary, *roneat thong*

Se Phalla, *gong thom*

San Kim Suar, *gong tuch*

Pum Bun Chanrath, *skar thom*

Chem Sok, *sampho*

Nol Kol, *sralai*

Vocalists

Doung Marey, Sim Chanmoly

Dressers

Menh Kossony, Pen Sok Huon

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PROGRAM

Ream Eyso and Moni Mekhala

Soth Sam On, Menh Kossony and Pen Sok Huon, *restaging*
Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, *director*

This dance drama is meant to invoke fertility and the relationship between water (Moni Mekhala), sun (Ream Eyso) and earth (Vorachhun). It describes the origin of rain and the creation of thunder and lightning. The first three of the four scenes we are presenting here have never before been performed in the United States. In fact, these scenes have not been performed publicly since the 1960s.

Scene 1. Moni Mekhala and Vorachhun are dancing among the divinities.

Scene 2. In a jealous rage over Moni Mekhala's jeweled ball, the demon Ream Eyso spots Vorachhun flying over his territory. He attacks Moni Mekhala's ally and kills him.

Scene 3. Ream Eyso enters and searches among the divinities for Moni Mekhala.

Scene 4. Ream Eyso finds Moni Mekhala and throws his ax at her. When it lands, it makes thunder. Moni Mekhala tosses her jewel in the air, making lightning and blinding her rival. She escapes unharmed.

Cast

<i>Moni Mekhal</i>	Sam Sathya
<i>Ream Eyso</i>	Thong Kim Ann and Koy Sina
<i>Vorachhun</i>	Chamroeun Samphors

<i>Neang (female divinities)</i>	Chen Chan Soda, Heung Pech, Prum Mary, Sam Savin, Yann Viphearun, Yann Sophy
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<i>Nearong (male divinities)</i>	Chumvan Sodhachivy, Khieu Sotheavy, Meas Phirum, Moung Danida, Sam Limsothea, Vuth Chanmoly
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INTERMISSION

Seasons Of Migration

Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, *choreography, lyrics and arrangement of traditional music*

Section 1: Euphoria

As the divinities arrive on earth, they are full of excitement. Everything around them seems wonderful and exotic. They move about the human world like soldiers marching off to war, full of barely contained enthusiasm and unrealistic expectations.

<i>Neang</i>	Chen Chan Soda, Heung Pech, Prum Mary, Sam Savin, Yan Viphearun
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<i>Nearong</i>	Chamroeun Samphors, Khieu Sotheavy, Meas Phirum, Moung Danida, Sam Limsothea
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Section 2: Rejection

After a while, the exoticism of earth wears off, and the divinities find themselves withdrawing from their new surroundings. This section portrays the mythological serpent Neang Neak as she becomes uncomfortably aware of her tail, which follows her wherever she goes, and makes her different.

Out of frustration, she tries to tear it off. But she cannot, for it is part of her.

Neang Neak Sam Sathya

Section 3: Adjustment

When the divinities finally grow tired of being angry at the world around them, they begin to venture out into it. The choreography of this section is based on the interplay of shadow and light or past and future. Neang Amari, who represents the Spirit of the Present, eagerly tries to avoid her shadow by moving toward the light. When this fails, she comes to understand that her shadow and light (past and future) are equal parts of who she is and that she can only move forward with both.

Neang Amari Hun Pen

Past (shadow) Heung Pech, Yann Sophy, Yann Viphearun,

Future (light) Chen Chan Soda, Prum Mary, Sam Savin

Section 4: Equilibrium

As the divinities adjust to life on earth, they gain a sense of balance in which they feel comfortable with who they are in this new place. The choreography for this section depicts the pre-Angkorian deity Harihara, who combines the attributes of Shiva and Vishnu – and that is why the dance is performed in pairs. Although little is known about Harihara, his creation seems to symbolize the middle path, which leads to harmony.

Harihara Khieu Sotheavy and Chamroeun Samphors
Sam Limsothea and Moug Danida
Chumvan Sodhachivy and Koy Sina
Vuth Chanmoly and Meas Phirum



PROGRAM NOTES

Following Cambodia's declaration of independence from France in 1953, the nation's arts experienced a lively period of invention and creativity. Even classical dance, an ancient and conservative art form, underwent a surge in energy and imagination. Many dances choreographed during that period now make up an important part of the classical form's canon.

I began my training in 1981 when what is now the Royal University of Fine Arts reopened after the overthrow of the bloody Khmer Rouge regime. With as many as nine out of ten master dancers dead or living overseas, the prevailing focus of that era was reconstruction. And thanks to the hard work of those surviving artists (Chea Samy, Soth Sam On, Em Theay, Ros Kong and many others), within a few years a whole new generation of classical dancers was performing and touring, reminding the world that Cambodian culture is known for far more enduring legacies than auto-genocide.

I now live in the United States but return to Cambodia frequently to conduct creative projects in dance. With classical dance once again strong and healthy, I hope we are entering another "golden era" of imagination and invention. And through the *Seasons of Migration* project and others, I hope to do my small part in helping to keep classical dance vital and connected to the living universe of arts and culture.

The Cambodian classical dance repertory is made up of numerous types of dances, including dance dramas and sacred dances. A third type neither tells a story nor invokes a spirit. Instead, it expresses a feeling or emotion, most typically

good wishes. *Seasons of Migration* is born out of this tradition. It is built on a foundation of four sections, with each section portraying a state of mind. Linked together, they describe a psychological transformation corresponding to the stages of culture shock. First described by the anthropologist Kalvero Oberg in 1954, culture shock is experienced by anyone who moves to a new place, whether from the city to the countryside or across the ocean. It involves a process of learning to be comfortable with who you are, no matter where you are.

Because classical dance is a highly-stylized form that portrays divine beings, I ask you to imagine that the divinities, who dance blissfully together in the heavens, have now come to earth for the first time to live among the humans. Through the language of classical dance, *Seasons of Migration* describes how they adjust to their new surroundings, much as I have been transformed by my experiences as an immigrant.

In this program, we also present the *Ream Eyso & Moni Mekhala* dance drama, one of the oldest and most important dances in the repertory. Though this two-hour dance drama has not been performed in its entirety for the public since the 1960s, it was reconstructed by senior artists at RUFA as part of the Rockefeller Foundation's Mentorship Program during the 1990s.

By juxtaposing *Moni Mekhala & Ream Eyso* and *Seasons of Migration*, I hope you will see how the new can emerge from the old and how the two can exist dynamically side-by-side.

– *Sophiline Cheam Shapiro*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Sophiline Cheam Shapiro (*choreographer and director*) was a member of the first generation to graduate from the Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA) after the fall of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime. She studied all three major roles for women (*neang, nearong* and *yeak*), which is rare. She was a member of the dance faculty there from 1988 to 1991. With the RUFA ensemble she toured India, the Soviet Union, the US and Vietnam. In 1991, she immigrated to Southern California where she studied dance ethnology at UCLA and taught

classical dance in its world arts and cultures department. Among other awards, she has received a COLA Fellowship, a Durfee Foundation Master Musician Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship and an Irvine Fellowship in Dance. In April 2000, Shapiro premiered *Samritechak*, her concert-length classical dance interpretation of Shakespeare's *Othello*, in Phnom Penh; it has since been presented in the US, at the Venice Biennale and at the Hong Kong Arts Festival. A solo work, *The Glass Box*, which premiered in Los Angeles

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in 2002, toured to Cambodia and India in 2003 and was presented at the 2004 Bangkok Fringe Festival. At the invitation of Peter Sellars, she has been commissioned to create a new interpretation of *The Magic Flute* for New Crowned Hope, a city-wide festival in Vienna in 2006 celebrating the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth. She is co-founder and artistic director of the Khmer Arts Academy.

The **Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA)** is comprised of some of Cambodia's most accomplished dancers and musicians. Established in 1965 by then head of state Norodom Sihanouk, RUFA is the country's official conservatory of fine and performing arts, carrying on a tradition of master-apprentice training that dates back more than a thousand years. RUFA's colleges of archeology, architecture, plastic arts, music and choreographic arts issue undergraduate degrees. Its classical dance ensemble has toured extensively throughout Asia, Australia, Europe and North America, including tours of the US in 1971, 1990, 2001 and 2003, when it performed Ms. Shapiro's *Samritechak*.

Sam Sathya (*dancer*) a peer of Sophiline Cheam Shapiro's, began formal training as a classical dancer in the early 1980s. But she had her first exposure to performance during the years of the Khmer Rouge's revolutionary rule (1975-1979). As a little girl it was her task to light the lamps that would illuminate the performance area of the troupes that danced and sang of the glory of the revolution. Sam Sathya has been Cambodia's prima ballerina for more than a decade. Her roles have included Neang Seda (Princess Sita) in the *Reamker*, Cambodia's version of the Ramayana epic, and Moni Mekhala, goddess of the sea. She continues in this demanding and revered role, maintaining a lineage from her own renowned teachers, Chea Samy (who passed away in 1994) and Menh Kossony. She has also danced leading roles in Shapiro's *Samritechak* and *The Glass Box*. Sam Sathya, who has toured Asia, Europe, and the US numerous times, teaches at the Royal University of Fine Arts dance department.

Thong Kim Ann (*dancer*) is the deputy head of the classical dance section at the department of performing arts, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. Following in the footsteps of her mother,

master dancer Em Theay, she started her training in 1955 and specialized in the giant (*yeak*) and male (*nearong*) roles. Besides classical dance, she is knowledgeable in all-male masked dance and *ape* theatre (traditional musical theatre with mixed forms). She has toured to countries in Asia, Europe and the US to perform and participate in workshops.

Hun Pen (*dancer*) began her training in classical dance in 1990, specializing in the female role (*neang*). In 2003, she earned a BA in choreography from the Royal University of Fine Arts. She is a professional classical dancer, contemporary dancer, choreographer and modern theater actress. She was the Peace Youth Ambassador of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in 2000 and the student president of the faculty of choreographic arts in the academic year of 2001-02. She was also a special student at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, with support from the Asian Cultural Council. She has been involved in contemporary dance workshops in Malaysia and Indonesia and, during the last quarter of 2004, studied modern dance at the Cite International des Arts in Paris. She has toured extensively throughout Asia, Europe and the US.

Menh Kossony (*master teacher, stager and dresser*), a protégé of the late Chea Samy, was the only dancer allowed to perform the coveted role of Moni Mekhala during the 1960s, the last time the two-hour dance drama was performed in its entirety. She entered the Royal Palace for classical dance training in 1957 and became a dance teacher in 1968. After the Khmer Rouge's regime, she worked for the Department of Performing Arts as the head of classical dance section. In 1982 she became a dance teacher at the Royal University of Fine Arts. In 1993 she was the immediate assistant to the Minister of Culture and Fine Arts and became the Deputy Director General of Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. Her first tour was to China in 1968, and she has toured to many other countries, including the US in 1971 and 1990.

Pen Sok Huon (*master teacher, stager and dresser*) was introduced by her grandmother to Queen Kosamak Nearyroth, and started her classical dance training in 1958 at the royal palace. Specializing in the male role (*nearong*), she became a star dancer by the time she was 14 and was famous for her portrayals of Vorachhun and Preah Leah

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(Lakshmana) in the *Reamker*. In 1968 she became a teacher. Her first international tours were in 1971 when she performed in Indonesia and the US. Since the reopening of the Royal University of Fine Arts, she has been working as a teacher of classical dance. She became the Head of the Classical Dance Section in 1985 and has been involved in numerous performances nationally and internationally. She has toured to more than fifteen countries, including tours of the US in 1971, 1990, 2001 and 2003.

Seang Ngorn Ly (*musician*) was born in Kandal Province in Central Cambodia in 1957. After graduating from high school, he enrolled at the Royal University of Fine Arts to study *roneat* (xylophone), but his studies were cut short by the Khmer Rouge takeover. He returned to the school in 1981 when it reopened and was awarded a certificate of art in classical music in 1982. He has been a resident musician with the school's dance department ever since, and has toured throughout Asia, Europe and North America.

Clifton Taylor (*production and lighting designer*) has created designs for Rambert Dance Company (London), American Ballet Theatre (New York City), the San Francisco Ballet, Sardono Dance Theatre (Indonesia), Scottish National Ballet, Les Grandes Ballets Canadiens, Ballet de Lorraine (France), Ballet Jazz de Montreal, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre (New York City), Maggio Danza (Italy), and the Ballet Company of Rio de Janeiro, among many others. Other work includes recent new dances by Lar Lubovitch, Elisa Monte, Jacquelyn Buglisi and Karole Armitage; he has also designed for Helgi Thomasson, Trey MacIntyre, Maria Benitez, Adam Hougland and Farruquito. His work has appeared on French National Television (*Arte*), PBS (*Great Performances*), and extensively on New York Public Television's *Metro Arts 13*. His theater and opera credits include *Frozen* (Broadway), *Opera de Nancy* (France), the American Conservatory Theater (San Francisco), the Dallas Theater Center, the Cleveland Playhouse (where he was resident lighting designer), the Irish Repertory, and MCC Theaters (New York City). In 2001 he designed the scenery, lighting and projections for the US tour *Dance: The Spirit of Cambodia*. Following that production, he was awarded a grant from the Asian Cultural Council to develop and teach a course in lighting design at the Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA) in

Phnom Penh. Mr. Taylor lives in New York City. **Fred Frumberg** (*production manager*) is the director of Phnom Penh-based AMRITA Performing Arts, a nonprofit organization that assists in the revival and preservation of Cambodian traditional performing arts, while also developing contemporary expressions in dance, theater and music. Prior to moving to Cambodia in 1997, Mr. Frumberg spent many years in numerous opera houses throughout the US and Europe, working with such prominent directors as Peter Sellars, Francesca Zambello and Deborah Warner. He was head of production for the Paris Opera from 1994 to 1997, and a staff stage director for the Netherlands Opera in the late '80s. Recent projects in the US include serving as production manager for two World Festivals of Sacred Music/ Los Angeles and as production coordinator and tour director for the *Art of Rice Traveling Theater*, both produced by UCLA's Center for Intercultural Performance.

Khmer Arts Academy (*producer*), based in Long Beach, California, is dedicated to fostering the vitality of Cambodian arts and culture. At once a global and local organization, it develops creative projects and produces international tours, often in association with professional artists in Cambodia, and it conducts training, performances and educational programs in the Cambodian American community. For more information, visit www.khmerartsacademy.com.

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