

Angkor Dance Troupe Newsletter

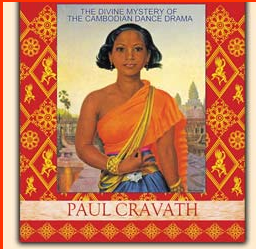
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Summer 2009

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BOOK REVIEW



Earth in Flower
*The Divine Mystery of the
Cambodian Dance Drama*, By
Paul Cravath
(Reviewed by Elaine
McKinnon, Angkor Board
Member)

Begin with the subtitle...focus on divine....and you will capture the essence of this extraordinary book. Here you will find a well-researched trove of information regarding all aspects of Cambodian dance: cultural background, religious significance, the royal connection, mythological foundation, ritual, music, choreography, staging, costuming, even makeup and fingernails. The book is scholarly, yet as easy to read as an old friend's face. This is

Message from the President. . . . As the new President of Angkor Dance Troupe, I welcome you to this edition of our newsletter. Our beloved President, Sophy Suon, recently retired from the Board for health reasons. Sophy has served the Troupe with great commitment of her time and resources, her clear thinking and gentle leadership. Her creativity ranged from instituting fabulous cooking classes to spearheading the Southeast Asian Women's Leadership Initiative, a new activity of the Troupe. Always available to represent the Troupe, supportive of all who work with the Troupe, Sophy will be missed greatly. But we know her heart is always with us!

We have many wonderful new programs that we want to share with you this year. Your support means so much to the Troupe, and, with every dollar you contribute, you are helping to preserve the culture and the dance of Cambodia. Your generosity helps us to pass the culture down to our next generation. Thank you, our many supporters, for all that you do.

Angkor is in a capacity-building phase that includes expanding and developing the Board, exploring alliances with other Cambodian organizations in Lowell, and working with Jericho Road consulting partners. We invite your application as a Board Member or volunteer.

Deborah Nelson, President

Ambassador Sichan Siv Keynote Speaker at Annual Fundraiser.



AMBASSADOR
SICHAN SIV,
distinguished
keynote speaker
at Angkor's April

more than a book...this is an historical document which will help to preserve the cultural treasure of Cambodian dance, an art form nearly extinguished during the tragedies of the 1970's.

I highly recommend this superb book to everyone. If you are familiar with Cambodian dance, your knowledge will be enriched greatly. If Cambodian dance is new to you, prepare yourself for a mystical and fascinating journey through time and space to learn about a divine form of artistic expression.

Published by DatASIA and available at

www.earthinflower.com

For more information about the author and the perilous journey to publication, visit the Angkor website www.angkordance.org.



fundraising event, has had a distinguished diplomatic

I. to r. V. Prak, C. Chea, B. Mai,

Ambassador, R. Phin, M. Veth

career, serving as White House Deputy Assistant for Public Liaison, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, and Ambassador to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. He also played a key role in the peace process in Cambodia in the early 1990s. A Cambodian by birth, forced to work in the Khmer Rouge labor camps, Ambassador Siv escaped from the killing fields in 1976, coming to the United States with \$2.00 in his pocket. His outstanding book "Golden Bones," tells the story of his unbelievable journey, from certain death halfway around the world in Cambodia, to the corridors of power of Washington, D.C.

Angkor Dance Troupe and the City of Lowell were honored by his presence and his contributions to our Cambodian New Year's Celebration and annual fundraiser.

Program Support Opportunity

The Ever-Popular Monkey Dance



As the economic crisis continues, Angkor Dance Troupe is seeking new ways to help support and maintain our programs. While we continue to apply for foundation funding and conduct paid performances to support our programs, we still face reduced revenue and higher

expenses. For example, the budget of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a major contributor to the Troupe, has been cut drastically by the legislature. The amount of funding for the coming year will be significantly less than in past years. The tradition of providing all programs for no cost is becoming less practicable. So, we are turning to you, friends and supporters of Angkor with a Program Support Opportunity for the coming year, beginning in September 2009.

A contribution of \$5.00 per week for 12 weeks will help to defray the cost of an instructor for that period of time. It will allow us to employ additional instructors and provide more personal instruction in the form of smaller classes. Smaller classes will help students focus more intensively on developing their skills and moving them along more quickly to performance level. As you know, students

Angkor Board

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**Many thanks to our
2008-2009 donors and
supporters . . .**

Amelia Peabody Foundation,
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Park,
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Council, National Park
Foundation
Lowell National Historical
Park,
**And the many individuals we
count as family.**

are thrilled, and their self-confidence increases, when they achieve the ability to participate in performances. They bring honor to themselves and their families, and to the art of Cambodian dance and tradition.

Please help us to keep Cambodian arts alive while strengthening our youth and the communities in which they live!

We are grateful for your support. Checks are payable to Angkor Dance Troupe and donations are tax deductible.

DANCING SILKS

Angkor Dance Troupe and the Silk Road Ensemble

In the spring of 2009, Angkor joined FirstWorks of Providence's Season of the Silk Road project. Our senior instructors travelled to 5 schools throughout Rhode Island, performing and teaching youth through hands-on educational workshops. They infused classical cultural forms with new life informed by contemporary dance, reflecting the fusion that characterized the Silk Road in times of antiquity, and that characterizes our global community today.

Angkor's Dancing Silks workshops began with demonstrations/lectures on the origins of Cambodian classical dance, its hand gestures and characters. It reviewed how the well-known Hindu epic drama (the Ramayana) evolved into the Cambodian Reamkar as it passed through trade routes, giving this ancient tradition uniquely indigenous, Khmer form. Simultaneously, dancers costumed in front of the crowd, using the 1000 year old Khmer techniques of folding and stitching each of the dancers into their silk costumes. Once costumed, the dancers performed three dances: the crowd-pleasing monkey dance began with characters that have been danced for millennia, and then the rhythms changed until the monkey-soldiers, still in character, were breakdancing, popping and introducing hip-hop into the cultural stream.

This example of cultural fusion served as a springboard for the Rhode Island students to work with Angkor's senior instructors, as well as their dance and music teachers, on their own creative responses to what they had seen and heard.

Angkor's contribution to the project was highly visible

and significant. Rhode Island newspapers covered the workshops and press-conference launch, giving our dancers and teachers center stage. Traveling today's trade routes of I-495 and I-95 brought Angkor Dance Troupe into the limelight, enriching the lives of students in our neighboring state.

(Lydia Breckon, our former Development Director, contributed to this article. She was also the liaison between FirstWorks and Angkor. Thank you, Lydia!)

Southeast Asian Women's Leadership Initiative (SEAWL)

A new Angkor program, the Southeast Asian Women's Leadership Initiative, was launched late in 2008, with a fundraising house party at the home of Linda Myers Tierney. Sophy Suon and her chef, E, provided a glamorous setting for a Cambodian dinner of unmatched deliciousness. The evening included a costuming demonstration and dances by Troupe dancers, pampering by nail and makeup specialists, and gift bags for donors. The event supported the first conference of the Initiative in January 2009. The focus of the conference was the world of work and entrepreneurship.

The goal of the Initiative is to open the inner doors of young women's minds, to allow them to peer into a future of multiple possibilities, a future that will be demonstrated by women who are active in the community and in the world of work.

Mission Statement:

Through the auspices of the Angkor Dance Troupe, the Southeast Asian Women's Leadership Initiative will facilitate, encourage and nurture positive self-esteem, success, and cultural harmony in girls and young women of our community, through the collaboration and mentorship of successful women who have achieved personal and professional success.

Please contact Linda Sou (978-337-6147) for more information and to get involved in the Initiative.

For more information about Angkor programs and how to get involved, please call 978-275-1823 or email Tim at timthou@yahoo.com or Rosalie at rosaliewil@gmail.com.

You may donate online at www.angkordance.org