

Evolving living traditions:

A Study of Contemporary Performing Arts in Cambodia During The Post-Khmer Rouge Period (1979-2015)

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Abstract

This study attempts to explore and to analyse a new trend of innovative works by performing artists in Cambodia. It focuses on contemporary performing arts in the Post-Khmer Rouge period (1979-2015), addressing two aspects: the revitalisation of the pre-existing tradition; and questions of creativity in arts. Dance and drama works such as “Khmeropédies II” and “Breaking the Silence” are significant examples to better understand how to keep tradition alive while evolving through creativity. Based on this two case studies, this dissertation demonstrate how Cambodian artists develop a new artistic language and approach, which reflect not only the link with the historical past of Cambodia but also the contemporary issues artists face in the current social, political and cultural context. Therefore, these examples show how revisiting traditional performing arts play a crucial role in re-inventing vocabularies of dance and theatre drama and allow for the expression of contemporary artistic identities.

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List of Abbreviations

ACC	: Asian Cultural Council
Amrita	: Amrita Performing Arts
ASEAN	: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
DC-Cam	: Documentation Centre of Cambodia
JFT	: Japan Funds-in-Trust
KR	: Khmer Rouge
MoCFA	: Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts
RUFA	: Royal University of Fine Arts
SSFA	: Secondary School of Fine Arts
UN	: United Nations
UNESCO	: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

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Introduction

This dissertation will focus on contemporary performing arts in Cambodia in the post-Khmer Rouge period (1979-2015), addressing two aspects in particular: the revitalisation of the existing tradition; and questions of creativity and innovation in the arts. I will investigate how contemporary arts are used by performing artists to reflect on the past in order to develop a new artistic form that expresses the sentiments of current society. In this work performing arts is referring to music, dance and theatre drama. The performing artists I am talking about are dancers, musicians and theatre actors who were vigorously trained in their respective traditional art forms at the state school namely Secondary School of Fine Arts (SSFA)¹ and Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA)² in Phnom Penh, the financial capital of the country. In order to assess the way in which this new artistic languages emerges I will analyse the work of artists whose reformative work combines elements of traditional Cambodian performing arts and global contemporary trends. More precisely, I will look at the works of the choreographer Emmanuèle Phuon and director Annemarie Prins whose work in dance and theatre proves significantly relevant for the questions I address here. I will demonstrate how these artists develop a new artistic language and approach, which reflect not only the link with the historical past of Cambodia but also reflect on the challenges issues artists face in the current social, political and cultural context.

In general, Cambodian society attributes a significant role to historical and cultural heritage since for years it has held in high regard notions of socio-cultural hierarchy in all its varied manifestations. I will argued that the artists discussed here challenge existing stereotypes by mixing elements of traditional Cambodian performing arts with international contemporary

¹ SSFA was separated from RUFA in 2007.

² RUFA was established in 1965 and re-open in 1980 after the Khmer Rouge regime.

trends and influences. Such is the case of Khmer classical dance (Royal Ballet) which in the past was dedicated exclusively for female dancers in the court.³ It was not until 1950s the monkey role was played by a man.⁴ The interact relation between men and women in court dancers in the palace is very strict. Likewise, the codes of male and female dance drama made their own specific rules which can not be blend. *Lakhaoan Khaol*, the male masked dance is an ancient form of an all male ensemble that perform only the Ramayana epic.⁵ In regard to the society, there are precise codes of conduct for man and woman that are still widely practise till the present day.

Further more, I will maintain that the work of contemporary artists reflect a search for a modern identity in the current context of globalisation. Contemporary artists are attempting to integrate traditional influences and create a vocabulary that is unique and that not only reflects the past but also communicates well with the younger generation, and provokes them into thinking and creating new works. From these emerges a new identity that is linked with the past. However, this visitation does not aim at an “authentic” exactly imitation of traditional way of performing but rather incorporates new elements to enrich a living culture.

In order to conduct this study, the method used in this thesis will be describing and analysing two case studies. The first case study consists of a dance performance entitled *Khmeropédies II*, choreographed by Emmanuèle Phuon in 2009. Born in Cambodia to migrant parents, Phuon reflects upon her Cambodian roots through a use of a multidisciplinary approach. Her works reflect her attempt to share with her fellow dancers an innovative look into tradition. In *Khmeropédies II*, she portrays the relationship between the master and the disciple in the

³ Phim and Thompson, *Dance in Cambodia*, 36.

⁴ Nut, ‘Lokhon Luang, the Cambodian Court Theatre’, 423.

⁵ Phim and Thompson, *Dance in Cambodia*, 54.

current age of technology. This piece revisits the classical dance in a playful choreographic exercise that challenges Khmer dance tradition. The second case study analyses a theatre play entitled *Breaking The Silence* written and directed by Annemarie Prins. The play describes the true story about testimonies and collective memories of the life of four young women during the time of atrocities by the KR regime. The director uses innovative acting techniques, inspired by the work of Bertolt Brecht, which she believes are “universal”, not the typical “western” style.⁶ This allows the characters to recall the bitter memory of their life stories and retell them to the audiences in a confrontational yet intimate way. This is an important piece of work to uncover in order for younger generations to understand a culture of silencing the horror of the genocide regime of the recent past. The director wishes to share a simple yet creative idea. Furthermore, this piece illuminates us on the power of theatre in social engagement by tackling the current issues in contemporary Cambodia.

The analysis of these two staged artworks will allow me to assess the extension to which contemporary artistic expressions manifest a renewed Cambodian identity. An identity which uses art to reflect upon daily life as well as traditional heritage illustrating the dialogue between tradition and innovation which is used in contemporary performing arts. To my knowledge, academic literature has provided very limited literature on this specific subject about Cambodia contemporary performing arts. Therefore, this thesis comes in to fill in this gap by providing an insight into the crucial importance that contemporary performing arts hold in contemporary Cambodia.

⁶ Personal conversation with the director and the dramaturge.

Historical Context of Cambodian Performing Arts

Cambodia is a country with a complex recent past with a fragile people with tortured memories. Two contradictory facts overshadow the country: in one hand the glorious Angkor temple and on the other hand the tragic Killing Fields⁷. The ancient Angkor civilisation (802-1431) was considered the mightiest kingdom in Southeast Asia in the 10th – 12th centuries, incorporating not only the modern territory of Cambodia, but also part of Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam⁸. (Figure 1). Historian Ben Kiernan labelled Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979) that intended to “Wiping the Slate Clean” in order to usher in a new era to declare Year Zero⁹. Subsequently, the regime’s extreme ideology of agrarian utopia had turned the nation into a giant charnel house. In the eyes of international and world media, Cambodia is still standing in between the images of the iconic beauty celestial *Apsara* (Figure 2) and the horror skull-map (Figure 3).

The 1991 Paris Peace Accords, enabled the UN peacekeepers to enter the country and organise the first democratic election in 1993. This restored the country to a monarchy regime under a constitutional parliament. After this, Cambodia begun the process of full integration of ASEAN nations in 1999. This was described by historian David Chandler as "Cambodia was at peace for the first time since the 1960s"¹⁰. After decades of isolation, Cambodia opens to free markets whilst emerging into a process of building democracy and freedom of expression. Despite a low budget, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts set out to rebuild the country rich cultures heritage. However, it faced the challenges of not only an insufficient for the task in hands but also other issues such as corruption and dysfunctional

⁷ Winter, ‘When Ancient Glory Meets Modern Tragedy: Angkor and the Khmer Rouge in Contemporary Tourism’, 37.

⁸ Chandler, A History of Cambodia, 35.

⁹ Kiernan, The Pol Pot Regime.

¹⁰ Chandler, A History of Cambodia, 292.

government system. Until 2014 under the assistance and guideline of UNESCO, the country has not successfully produced a National Policy for Culture¹¹ which was envisaged for national cultural preservation and development in order to take part in socio-economic development. Despite the mandates of preservation and development of culture, the cultural policy does open space to new creativity and innovation for strengthening national identity. Since after the fall of the KR, the few survivors master artists set their main agenda to transmit knowledge to younger generation.

This work of great effort and commitment resulted in 2003 UNESCO proclamation of Khmer Classical Dance (Royal Ballet) and in 2005, the same status were awarded to the *Sbek Thom*, Khmer Shadow Theatre as the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Adding to it, the grandeur of *Angkor* and Temple of *Preah Vihear* was awarded in 1992 and 2008 respectively as the World Heritage Site. Such recognition has proof that arts and cultures are essential elements to rebuild this small war torn county to restore peace and harmony as well claim their world stage. Cambodia has more than twenty forms of performing arts across dance, theatre, music and circus arts.¹² After the destruction by the KR, it is critical for the government to set priority for preservation and revitalisation of the traditional forms, despite this impossible mission always under funded.

Straightaway following the fall of the KR in 1979, the Cambodian newly formed government prioritised in revitalisation of traditional arts and performing arts, which lasted until today. Under the direction of Chheng Phon¹³, the then Minister of Propaganda, Culture and

¹¹ Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, National Policy for Culture.

¹² Kravel, *Khmer Dances*, 36.

¹³ He is regarded as the father restoration of Khmer culture after the Khmer Rouge regime. He was awarded the Grand Prize of the 8th Fukuoka Prize, 1997

Information¹⁴, he put on radio appeals and gather merely 10% of dancers and actors who survived the slaughter to come forward to revive their culture from scratch.¹⁵ In the subsequent year, to quickly achieve the goal, national festivals were initiated to strengthening the performing arts by assembling professional and amateur artists for capacity rehabilitation.¹⁶ Those surviving masters vigorously trained young artists which promoted the re-birth of a range of performing genres: dance, dance drama, theatre drama, circus art, shadow puppets theatres and masked male dance drama. These decades of devotion on revitalisation have brought the Cambodian pre-existing tradition to today somewhat survival.

Case study 1- Khmeropédies II

‘The new generation of Cambodian dancers has many vocabularies to choose from, to explore, to integrate, and to inform the next incarnation of their rare and beautiful country. [...] The classical form will always die and reborn, recovered and re-imagined. This is life itself.’¹⁷

Peter Sellars,

A renowned theatre and festival director

Khmeropédies is a series of experimental contemporary work choreographed by Emmanuèle Phuon, a Khmer French dance artist who lives in Brussels and New York. For this she collaborated with Amrita Performing Arts, a non-profit arts organisation based in Phnom Penh which has produced her works. From the age of five, Phuon trained in Khmer classical dance at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. In 1975, at the age of nine, she was fortunate to

¹⁴ In 1993 this Ministry split into Ministry of Information, and Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts.

¹⁵ Turnbull, ‘A Burned-out Theatre: The State of Cambodian’s Performing Arts’, 133.

¹⁶ Chheng, ‘The Relation between the Past, the Present and the Future of Khmer Culture and Arts’.

¹⁷ Burridge and Frumberg, *Beyond the Apsara*, x.

flee the city just before the Khmer Rouge took over Cambodia. At the age of seventeen, she graduated from the Conservatoire National de Danse in France, where she became well versed in Ballet, Jazz and modern dance. Benefitting from strong support from her mother, Yvette Pierpaoli¹⁸ who believed passion was more important than anything else to make her daughter live a full life. In an interview she said that her mother was a big influence in her life, giving her the example of someone who live her life with integrity and who could put other people's interests in front of her own.

Phuon then moved to New York, where she initiated her professional dancing career. She has toured worldwide and worked with internationally renowned dancers and choreographers across the globe. This allowed her to gain multidisciplinary skills and experiences in her career that she wants to share with her Cambodian dancers. She wanted to teach them and learn from them, giving her support and at the same time tracing her Cambodian roots. Phuon began in 2007 working in Brussels with a Khmer¹⁹ traditional dancer to create a solo piece called *Khmeropédies I*, where she sought to deconstruct the role of *Apsara*, the celestial nymph symbolised Khmer classical court dance. She experimented with the elements of rage and ugliness, which are in contradiction to the normal viewpoints of beauty and femininity in Cambodian culture. Later, in 2009, she received a grant from Asian Cultural Council (ACC)²⁰ to start develop *Khmeropédies II*, which aims to inspire Cambodian dancers to explore new concept on how to keep the tradition alive and evolving through creativity.

¹⁸ She is French, a human rights activist who lived in Cambodia and worked in refugee camp around the world. She was dedicated in a novel 'The Constant Gardener' by John le Carré.

¹⁹ 'Khmer' refers to the majority ethnic of Cambodia and for the national language, officially, the term 'Khmer' and 'Cambodian' is interchangeable at equal value.

²⁰ A grant body working to advance international respect and understanding between people and cultures through transformative cultural exchange. ACC has provided significant support to Cambodia in the cultural sector.

This case study will focus on *Khmeropedis II*. I will discuss and analyse the stage performance so that readers can feel as if they are watching the dance show themselves. It is important to give some context to the members of the audiences because they are about to see and experience something new, something they have never seen before, which set a new task for both for the spectators and the dancers. The work of Emmanuèle Phuon does not focus on the revival of classical dance or the preservation of traditional performing arts. On the contrary, she aims to develop creativity and encourages the dancers to push beyond their limit by learning new techniques and concept. As Damrhung argued it is important to lay the groundwork for the restoration of tradition but also be critical and open up new roles for Cambodian dancers, so that they can remain interact with the dance world.²¹ This is a revisiting of traditional Khmer dance using Western modern ideas of choreography, infusing changes in rhythm, space and in structure. There is no chronological story line rather an introducing of the personality of the dancers as the principle focus of the dance story itself. Yet the choreographer remain faithful to the tradition by keeping the vocabulary of the original dance form because it is the result of the exacting training of the dancers that defines them as Cambodian. These dancers were well trained in the respective classical skills and also had opportunity to explore international contemporary artistic styles through choreography workshops and exchange platforms provided by Amrita Performing Arts, which has worked to assist artists since 2003.²² The choreographer started the process by observing and holding discussions with the artists in order to get to know them and eventually help them to think and get to know themselves. The dancers tried experimenting with their respective roles, dance playfully and responding to Western music, then adding elements of Western ballet and contemporary dance. Phuon makes use of her intimate relationship with the dancers to make them feel comfortable and relax, have fun and open to

²¹ Damrhung, 'Cambodians Dancing Beyond Borders: Three Contemporary Examples', 83.

²² Greenspan, 'What the Body Remembers', 41–42.

new knowledge. She encourages them to think, learn and reflect on their arts form. This approach is very different indeed from what the dancers are used to when working with their elder masters. The typical relationship with their master is very much a one-way mode whereas in contemporary form the focus shifts to sharing the learning process where each contributes in equal value. This process encourages the dancers to take the initiative and be proactive, to be open-minded, self-confidence and to cultivate critical thinking. This kind of learning process is considered as contemporary and the result of Western influence. However, it is very important for the Cambodian younger generation to be engaged in this in order to be able to catch up with this modern technology world. And that is why I argue that once creativity and innovation come to inspire and govern the young people, they will start to ask question such as how can their art form serve their community? How can they preserve and modernise their culture? How do they learn to live and work beyond borders today? This is not only affects the artists and their artworks but also affects the audience's way of thinking. Young Cambodian artists embrace creative innovation out of necessity as well as desire to integrate into the changing world they are living in. As Damrhung asserted that these artists are the trailblazers in learning capacity to work beyond the socio-political boundaries of their country.²³

One of the distinctive features of *Khmeropédies II* lies on the absence of use of stage props. Throughout the performance none of the dancers wears a crowns, jewellery or glittering costumes which are common in traditional dance. I think this is- although to the outsider, the profane, it may well not appear so - an important first step towards getting Cambodian dancers to realise that wearing normal clothes on stage is widely accepted. In Khmer culture, costumes and props – the whole paraphernalia of crowns, ornate masks and jewellery – are

²³ Damrhung, 'Cambodians Dancing Beyond Borders: Three Contemporary Examples', 83–84.

vital element of the theatre forms and plays a crucial role in performance, particularly in Khmer classical dance. For example, the colour of the costumes can identify the each character role. The mask and crown are the soul and spirit of each character and master spirit of the role, which each respective dancer venerates as god or goddess. This evidence is seen in the *Sampeah Kru* ceremony (homage to teacher spirits) where every artist worships these costumes, masks and crowns.²⁴ Before the dancer take the stage the teacher need to put on the mask or crow and pronounce a blessing. However, as Phuon is moving away from this narrative, she does not incorporating these elements. Instead, the dancers wear t-shirts and peasant pants in order to enable the viewers to focus on their body movements, which communicate non-religious aspect of life. In *Khmeropédies II*, I see the choreographer features the life of struggle and the daily issues of the artists, showing the audience the social, political human side of the tradition. Phuon considered that the use of traditional props would distract the viewer from the message of the piece. One of a significant task of the classical royal court dance was to perform a special sacred ritual to pray for the kingdom. During the performance, it is believed that the spirit of the gods is ritually possessed by the dancers and they become the ‘divine messenger’, hence, once the dance was concluded, the wishes of the king and the kingdom would be granted.²⁵

Phuon explains that the title *Khmeropédies* is a combination of the words Khmer and, *Gymnopédie*, an obvious reference to the musical pieces by the eccentric French composer Erik Satie.²⁶ Therefore, *Khmeropédies* can be understood to mean “an exercise in Khmer style”.²⁷ *Khmeropédies II* portrays the intimate relationship between a master and her

²⁴ Cravath, *Earth in Flower*, 427.

²⁵ Burridge, ‘Royal Dance of Cambodia - Revival and Preservation’, 5.

²⁶ The *Gymnopédie* were composed in 1888 in three parts and Phuon aims to make *Khmeropédies* in three parts too, to enable her to trace deeper in reconnecting her roots.

²⁷ Personal conversation with the choreographer

disciples. The choreographer shows a close observation of the daily routine of attitudes and behaviours throughout the traditional training session. She worked with four classical dancers, one male and three females, who trained diligently for over ten years before they mastered their own technical skills. The performance starts with the projection of a range of slideshow images depicting dance training classes, graceful body and hands gestures, the making costumes and dressing of dancers, to give a context, a form where it comes, to the dance show. Once the stage is blackout, we hear a narrative voice which indirectly hints to the audience that there is going to be something different from a typical Khmer classical dance. In the first scene, at the central stage, a solo dancer appears out of the dimness in the shape of dance-master, Sathya, who executes the graceful movements of classical dance gestures. She is wearing a black, slim-fit t-shirt and purple peasant pants, an informal practice dress. In this way, she dance silently to no music, using her elegant smooth, sinuous movements, curving hands and body to narrate the dance story to her audience. Sathya executes in its detailed and refine complexity the fluid gestures of the dance that has existed for over a thousand years, the *Apsara*, symbolised beauty mother to all Khmer. In Cambodian culture, the iconic Khmer “supermodel” is a celestial dancer whose task is to transmit the prayers from people and the king to the gods.²⁸

The next scene has three dancers enter, students arrive for class. The two girls are Kethya and Belle, and Sopheap is the monkey dancer. Then the master starts teaching her class. This scene allows the audience to understand the core elements of warm-up exercises in the Khmer classical dance, showing that to attain a refined, flexible curvy body at the maximum level it is necessary to practice painful exercises continuously for over a decade.²⁹ Showing the normal routine of students - arriving, in class, greeting their teacher and beginning to

²⁸ Cravath, *Earth in Flower*, 65.

²⁹ Krael, Khmer Dances.

practise – won't be staged as part of the a show. Here, the choreographer's intention is to share with her Cambodian counterparts the beauty that lies in the daily attitudes, the "raw material" which lies hidden behind the finished product. In this way, she re-directs the attention of the viewer from the beauty of the finished performance to the beauty of the act of practising and rehearsing in itself. The warm-up exercises leads on to a sequence in which all students and the teacher try to practise a combination of gestures. This combination aims to construct a narrative in dance while the sound of a piano playing Western classical music is heard. Phuon wants to experiment to see whether the Khmer classical dance vocabularies can response to Western classical music, and the experience has, if I may be subjective, a graceful outcome.

Then, the lighting fades to black. Ultimately, the dancers responds to the music takes an oneiric form, a dream or, rather, nightmare, a memory of the dark past flits through life. At that moment, Kethya makes a physical posture, bending and laying her face against the thigh of Sopheap. (Figure 4) However, the expression of an intimate and intense emotional inner world is frequent in contemporary dance. The following scene shows the three women count and dance, attempting to find unison, an ensemble. Stage right, Sopheap is shown practising his monkey role. At this moment, the choreography has divided the stage into two parts, which allows the audience to see simultaneously the different roles and techniques of both male and female dancer. Sopheap is well verse in the monkey role. He demonstrates different steps, movements, and gestures that the monkey character possesses. In this scene, he amuses the audience by imitating a real monkey, comically waddling, scrabbling and jumping around the stage. He also shows the different kinds of monkey roles by displaying acrobatic moves, hopping and swaying, speaking and turning somersaults in order to narrate to the audience his daily practice routine and show how exhausted he is. In this way, he conveys to the audience

the idea that the female dancers have an easier job since they make small movements with easy and beauty. However, he keeps switching from one monkey character to another finely and comically without jeopardising the overall harmony of the performance. In so doing the choreographer create a scene for the public to pay attention to the simple daily practice of the monkey dancer, which such demonstration will not be shown on stage in the traditional choreography. There is a pedagogy here, the very “backstage” being revealed.

In *Khmeropédies II*, the monkey roleplay is a crucial element in shedding light on the interplay between tradition and innovation in the work of Phuon. For the dancer playing the monkey role the experience differs greatly from a more traditional approach. This approach to this role allows for greater interaction with the audience owing to the absence of the use of the conventional mask in the traditional performance. Therefore, the dancer can see the audience and vice versa. This experience allows for the search for an identity between the monkey mask and himself as a dancer. The question that seems to emerge is whether it is the power of the mask that enables the dancer to perform the monkey role or whether it is the vigorous training of the form give him the power to perform the role. I happen to know Sopheap himself has gone through this process. This is question of self-identity that the younger generation is exploring right now.

The debate over the preservation and development of art forms is an ongoing one, and tradition, notwithstanding what some imagine, keeps changing. The evolution in classical dance is not just starting just now with this generation. There is a significant evolution in Khmer classical dance in the middle of the twentieth century under the patronage of the Queen Sisowath Kossomak,³⁰ mother of king Norodom Sihanouk.³¹ In face Khmer classical

³⁰ 1955 crowned as Her Majesty the Queen with her spouse Norodom Suramarit ascended the throne.

dance has a very long tradition over a thousand years, as evidence in an ancient inscription of 611 CE, the first instance of the Khmer language carved in stone. According to Cambodian tradition, there are four main types of character in Khmer classical dance, the prince or male role, the princess or female role, the giant or demon role and the monkey role. The classical form performs mainly the Reamker story, the Khmer version of Indian Ramayana epic, and other mythical tales. The Pin Peat³² music ensemble accompanies the dance with chorus singers to provide the narrative line to the dance, as the dancers do not speak, using solely their graceful postures and movements to embody the story. As a court tradition, all the roles were played by female dancers, men were forbidden in the palace ensemble. When Queen Kossamak took control of the court ensemble in 1950s, seeing changes as inevitable circumstances, she, along with the court dance masters, took the initiative in making some major changes, including having the monkey role replaced by a male dancer and also allow female dancers, for the first time in history, to live outside the royal palace.³³ This changes occurred because the Queen was able to envision the future development of the art forms and how essential it was to make the tradition alive.

In the next segment of the show Kethya and Belle play female and male roles, dancing for a short while to the classical Pin Peat music in which they express the emotions of the graceful princess and prince characters in the classical repertoire. Paying attention stage left is the dance master, Sathya has slipped away while her mobile phone is ringing. This reflects yet another aspect of the daily concerns of the artist's life. Most of the artists are civil servants earning miserably low salaries from the Ministry of Culture. To survive in Cambodia as a dancer, teacher and performer, you need to do multiple job, teaching at school, performing in

³¹ Nut, 'Lokhon Luang, the Cambodian Court Theatre', 423.

³² Khmer classical orchestra predominantly percussion instruments

³³ Nut, 'Lokhon Luang, the Cambodian Court Theatre', 425.

a restaurant, given private dance lesson and doing some other business in order to be able to support their family. This is the power of contemporary approach that provides the freedom to reflect on and response to reality on stage, to address the social economic and political environment of the society that we are living in. In this same scene, while the master is gone, the three students took the liberty being playful and perform the trio-dance to Western music, exaggerating and distorting their respective classical movements, trying some Western ballet steps as they conceive them, and having fun amongst themselves. The next moment, Sopheap initiates a duet with Kethya, bidding to deconstruct a classical scene of the monkey general Hanuman and the mermaid goddess of the sea. (Figure 5) However, they are using their imagination, not follow their traditional knowledge but instead carrying out playful movements using elements of ballet and contemporary to create their own dream and enjoy. Later, Kethya and Belle tried out their new creative improvisation. During this duo the female dancers question the role of the dance master. They do so by playing her role, imitating the teacher in order to analyse why the teacher was so means to them, perhaps she want us all to learn harder, say Kethya. Here, a beautiful dialogue about being a female classical dancer versus being herself and do what she please in her quest for freedom takes place. They show to each other a piece of new creation they are working on. This takes place only when they are alone, in their own space. Suddenly the master returns and is shocked to see what her students are doing and tears them off a strip.

Reflecting, the main argument I want to make here is that the gap and misunderstanding between the master and the students is key for culture development. The master is very defensive because she has the responsibility to transmit her knowledge, the knowledge which she received from her elder teachers. She fears that if the younger students do not pay careful attention, the millennial tradition will be lost. However, she forgets that the tradition needs to

live and evolve constantly. This is the breaking link between the master and the disciples that need to repairs.³⁴ The students are trying to search for what is good for them in the environment they are living. They want to rediscover the tradition and refresh it with influence which allow them to co-exist in modern society. As Frumberg argues the worries came from the misunderstood notion that creativity and innovation conflict with tradition instead the two parts continue to evolve and co-exist with each other.³⁵

In the next scene, we see the three young dancers practising their exercises but dance to the hip-hop music while at the other corner of the stage, the dancemaster stay faithful to her sinuous classical postures. The image of this scene implies Frumberg's argument is valid and I confirm my support. Before the class end, the master reminds the students of their role and duty to uphold and respect traditional culture. This scene illustrates the ongoing conversation between tradition and issues of modernity in contemporary Cambodia. The piece ends with a meditative solo dance to Western music. Sathya dances, tiptoes like a ballerina, taking inspiration from Fokine's Dying Swan,³⁶ while keeping her classical hands postures. However the audience can still clearly see elements of Khmer classical dance in her movements and that she telling Cambodian story, not a Western narrative. This piece of work has been very well received by both local Cambodian and international audience. *Khmeropédies II* having been presented in Phnom Pneh in 2009 (Figure 6) and later in India, Singapore and Hong Kong and touring to the Unites States.³⁷

This project and the work of Phuon has brought new inspiration among young artists and become an important reference for the future exploration among them. This coming together

³⁴ Diamond, *Communities of Imagination*, 126.

³⁵ Frumberg, 'Beyond Revival and Preservation: Contemporary Dance in Cambodia', 149.

³⁶ Email interview with Emmanuèle Phuon, the choreographer, 18 July 2016

³⁷ See detail info. at Amrita webpage <http://amritaperformingarts.org>

of West and East provides the basis not only for artists to do further research but also provoke the audience to ask question and bring curiosity to bear on Cambodian traditional culture. As Damrhung states, it is important not only to preserve the traditional art forms but also to reassure the vitality of the traditions by creating new work rooted in the arts that remain relevant and meaningful to both the artists and the audiences, both locally and globally.³⁸ I strongly believe that creativity and innovation will not only strengthen traditional culture but also make the tradition alive, striking out in a new direction in the modern world.

Case study 2- Breaking the Silence

'The Khmer Rouge killed many artists and intentionally indoctrinated Cambodian culture, arts and way of life. But they failed to eliminate the artistry of the Cambodian people because it is in our blood.'

Youk Chhang³⁹

Director of the Documentation Centre of Cambodia

I have chosen this work for my case study not only because of my involvement in this production or because the play took a special place in my heart but mainly because I believe this is a new piece of innovative work in Cambodian contemporary theatre while remaining faithful to the Khmer storytelling tradition. The director uses simple technique to address the fraught, haunting and nightmarish memories of the Cambodian people yet finds the right balance to turn it into a piece of theatre. There are only four actresses, a narrator/singer, a dancer and a musician. Traditional Cambodian traumatic theatre scarcely has less than two

³⁸ Damrhung, 'Cambodians Dancing Beyond Borders: Three Contemporary Examples', 68–69.

³⁹ Chhang, 'Searching for the Truth'.

dozen people on stage. The play used minimal sets and props, made of local recycled objects, to concentrate the impact of the play. The idea was to create the feeling of the countryside.

Breaking the Silence was written and directed by the well-known Dutch theatre director, Annemarie Prins and assisted by her dramaturge Nan van Houte. The play was produced by Amrita Performing Arts, with research assistance from the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam). Amrita invited Prins, aged 73, to teach a playwriting workshop at RUFA in Phnom Penh in 2005. She is still very active in theatre production, focuses on social and human aspects of life.

Following her first play,⁴⁰ she gained substantial knowledge of Cambodia's recent genocide history and the issues of trauma and healing. Moreover, her strong bond and intimate relationship with Cambodian theatre artists encouraged her to make a more political and socially engaged play. The production began research in 2007, the process taking two years, premiering in Phnom Penh in 2009 (Figure 7), touring numerous provinces across the country in 2010.⁴¹ As a member of the production team, I was in charge of the preliminary research data collection while acting as translator for the director and the dramaturge during the research interview trip to provinces. I was also responsible for overseeing the production and touring. The research team travelled to four provinces - Kandal, Takeo, Kampong Speu and Kampot - in order to conduct interviews with some two dozen people, Khmer Rouge (KR) victims and perpetrators alike, from a list provided by DC-Cam⁴². We brought the show back

⁴⁰ The workshop has resulted in her first play entitled '3 Years, 8 Months, and 20 Days', which premiered in 2006 in Phnom Penh and was toured to Singapore in 2007.

⁴¹ Amrita, 'Project Report: A New Cambodian Play, Breaking the Silence'.

⁴² DC-Cam has a large compiled list but we selected a few different categories to serve our purpose. Victims, prisoners, child soldiers, security and district cadres were selected for interview.

to most of the villages where we conducted interview and invited all of interviewees to see the show, of which they were grateful. After the capital premiere, we toured five provinces - Kandal, Takeo, Kampong Speu, Kampot and Kompong Cham – using a mobile stage, reaching out to over ten thousands of farmers and villagers (Figure 8).⁴³ This was accompanied by a post-performance discussion with students, peasants and villagers.⁴⁴ The show received overwhelming support from the villagers, with innumerable questions of all sort asked. Some young students asked why Khmer killed Khmer? Why does that monkey know everything about human beings during that time? Why does this play use plastic chairs like in the fish market? And a few elderly people get up to share their horrifying experiences of the regime. Abundant conversations could be heard after the show. This drama did thus contribute to opening up a silence-sundering dialogue among ordinary people who shared their personal stories in an effort to heal⁴⁵ the project thereby achieving its purpose.

“Breaking the Silence” is a narrative story about the testimonies and collective memories of four young women during the Pol Pot regime (1975-1979). The play is an example of a modern way of storytelling, not following the traditional narrative format of Khmer tales, which typically describes main characters from birth to death. Prins employs an innovative acting technique, inspired by the work of Bertolt Brecht.⁴⁶ In so doing she wished to share with Cambodian playwrights and teachers and students of the RUFA a new theatre-making technique and show the power of contemporary theatre to tackle issues in society and social engagement.

⁴³ The performance was on open stage and free of charge. Each show gathered a crowd between 500-1,000 people, and the provincial tours produced 18 shows in total.

⁴⁴ DC-Cam team facilitates the Q&A and distributes textbooks on history of Democracy of Kampuchea as part of the centre outreach activity.

⁴⁵ Duggan, ‘Feeling Performance, Remembering Trauma’, 45–47.

⁴⁶ Email conversation with the director between 5 August to 6 September 2016

The play is divided into seven scenes, with a prologue and an epilogue (Figure 9). The story reveals hatred, love, weakness and strengths of the characters as they deal with frightful memories. Prins adapted the personal stories collected during the research trips into a play. She chose stories that represented various themes such as survivor guilt, shame and isolation and opted to build characters that could be easily identified with by a general audience. The main texts in the play consisted of life stories of the four women during the KR regime when they were little girls. The characters express their feelings about the troubled relationships between survivors, victims and perpetrators of the genocide period. Through the use of emotional songs, poetry and dance movements the issues in the play are conveyed in a raw and innocent manner. It is a persuasive play that means to break the silence.⁴⁷

The mobile stage is built on a low platform, just above the ground level, in attempt to give intimate ambiance. The simple sets and sound effects are the first things to be noticed by the audience. The four female performers - Sokly, Sina, Sovanna and Theary – acted both the male and female characters throughout the play. They take up their positions in front of the audience, in line across the stage. Besides the actresses that play the main roles, there are also three male performers with whom they share the stage: Vutha is a narrator and singer, Tonh is a dancer and Sakona is a musician. All these seven performers remain on the stage for the entire duration of the play. There are no backstage entrances, just the main entrance through which the performers go on the stage during the prologue. The singer stays in the left corner of the stage throughout. He acts like a presenter at the onset of all scenes and assigns the roles to all four actresses. Tonh performs the monkey dance, keeping moving freely throughout the space. He embodies as a spirit who is fully aware of everything that is happening and

⁴⁷ Keo, “‘Breaking the Silence’ Confronts Cambodia’s Past Artistically’.

mimicks the women. Sakona sits behind Vutha on the left end of the stage. He keeps playing a varied range of traditional percussion and woodwind instruments, including his own invented drum set constructed out of prawn-crackers tins and kitchenware.

The overall set is discreet, mere white net-curtain drops hanging on both sides of the stage, and a white backdrop made of recycle rice sacks.⁴⁸ This forms a 'white box' through which the audience can see through (Figure 10). At the back of the stage lies an elevated narrow platform to feature the monkey dancer. Grass and rice plants is represented by green and yellow strips pasted across the platform. Finally, the floor of the stage is covered throughout with woven knitted rugs. The actresses sit on four different-coloured, low plastic stools, whilst the singer stands on a small, elevated square platform. The overall whiteness and plainness of the stage is simple but remarkable. The purpose being to induce peace and tranquillity, so that the horror of the main subject can be counterbalanced. The setting also conveys the feel of the countryside. The director has made the decision to use multiple bright colourful costumes for the performers, which stand in sharp contrast to the black uniform of the KR time, black being the only colour of the regime.⁴⁹ Such an aesthetic choice inspired her Cambodian counterparts to re-thinking and question the ways in which they look at reality whilst stimulating them to imagine alternative ways to represent it in contemporary theatre.⁵⁰

The play is made up of seven short tales which connect one scene to another whilst remaining faithful to the main themes of guilt and shame, which represent the fractured in current

⁴⁸ This is the first time that we have three young Cambodian visual artists work to design the theatre settings. Their works collaborated with a Dutch set design advisor.

⁴⁹ During the Khmer Rouge regime everyone dressed in black pyjamas uniform.

⁵⁰ Personal conversations with the cast (four ladies) who are teach theatre drama at the school.

Cambodian society. After the KR's fall in 1979, Cambodia became a society in which people lost their mutual trust and became self-centred. Pol Pot rule damaged social structure that tied people together, and today people often no longer wish to help one another.⁵¹ These seven scenes span the issues of the KR regime. The theme of the first scene concerns the separation of people, since during that period there was no sense of family allowed. Husband and wife were separated into different labour force, children were separated from their parents, and grandparents and adults forced to live separately in labour camp. During the regime, people were labelled as either 'old or based citizen' for local who lived in their villages before the fall of Phnom Penh, or a 'new or 17 April citizen' for people who had been evacuated from their home following the 17 April 1975 KR victory. The second scene remains connected to the previous one in depicting a KR nurse harbouring feelings of guilt for not having performed her duty well. On the other hand, the nurse claims, proclaims her innocence on the grounds that the circumstance did not allow her to do so. The daughter of the victim of the nurse's actions, having lost her innocent father, is shown to be in great distress and does not know what to do when facing the former ruthless nurse. Guilt is also the theme of scene three. Here, the KR cadres torture an innocent man. In order to defend himself he gives his interrogators a false answer, but the consequence of his false answer is the death of many people. Scene four is likewise still about guilt, however it also approaches love and loss. This scene has as its main character a woman who lost her husband, as well as her only son, to the revolutionary movement: her husband physically, killed by the KR; her son spiritually. Despite loving her son, she is unable to talk to him. Likewise, the son, who has devoted his life to the revolutionary cause in pursuit of dreamed-of peaceful and perfect society. Despite all his self-perceived good deeds he has lost his family and all but lose his life. The following scene, five, continues building upon the theme of culpability. It features a little girl who feels

⁵¹ Ledgerwood, Ebihara, and Mortland, 'Introduction'.

ashamed and guilty for being the only one in the family who survive the killing while she was the one who misconducted. Scene six is also related to guilty feeling. Three women feel shame and guilty for having abandoned their friend when she most needed them. Despite their young age, they knew a friend need them, but, for their own safety, they had to ignore her. The final scene sticks to this theme: a group of young people brainwashed and indoctrinated by the extreme KR eventually become implicated in a brutal regime in the hope of building a utopian egalitarian society.

We now look in a somewhat more detailed and analytical way at the scene, the first of which, ushers in a challenging and realistic scenario. This involves Akrak, who holds high authority in the district and can have someone imprisoned or executed as he pleases. Akarak interacts with three characters who represented victims of the regime and question him about the killing. Akarak responds by constantly denying his role and defends himself by saying, “no one was killed here” and “People just say those things. There is no evidence.”⁵² The tension of the scene mounts when Preal asks Akarak about the body of his father, who was murdered by Akarak during the time. In response, Akarak merely mouths oblique justifications before trying to leave. This scene is actually based on an interview conducted by Prins and van Houte with a former KR cadre. He was the former deputy head of district youth and the Kraing Ta Chan Re-Education Centre.⁵³ The scene suggests the typical personality of former KR cadres in their reacted and deviousness when asked about their past.⁵⁴ This story actually centres on a man who seeks revenge for the death of his father but is at the present trapped between Buddhist practice and personal agony.

⁵² Prins, *Breaking The Silence, A New Cambodian Play*, 8.

⁵³ Re-Education Centre in Khmer Rouge regime means detention center or prison. Kraing Ta Chan is one of the notorious prisons located in Takeo province, 80 km south of Phnom Penh. More than 17,000 people were killed.

⁵⁴ Quintiliani et al., ‘Facilitating Dialogue Between Cambodian American Survivors and Khmer Rouge Perpetrators’.

The play then switches to the scene which depicts the true life of Sina, who was ten years old at that time. Scene two portrays the dilemma of young children separated from their families, one child become a nurse, another witnesses her father's death in a local hospital. We learn the tragedy of the victim and the untold story of the perpetrator. Sina appears first on stage and tells her story, after which a nurse, now aged 48, appears to recount her own. The audience witnesses the tragic circumstances experienced by Sina whilst being made to understand the powerlessness of the nurse's position. The dilemma of the untrained nurse is stark: fearing for her own life, she is unable to give medicine, or food to her patients. This scene ends abruptly when Sokly, a third character, comes on stage asking both of them to resolve the matter. The two characters are now facing each other. Remorsefully, the nurse apologises to Sina, who states she is unable to handle the situation. This emotional moment shows the reality that coming to terms with such situations require much patience and time.⁵⁵ A sad reality, of course, is that to date no top KR leaders has expressed apologies, except for Duch⁵⁶ the former chief of the Tuol Sleng genocide prison, known as S-21⁵⁷ who offered his publicly during the tribunal.

The play continues telling the rest of the stories in vignettes and each scene featuring a different situation and combining various personal stories. Significantly, scene five shows the power of irony in conveying complex tragic emotions. Scene five is a monologue in which a woman aged 39 recounts her childhood. A hungry little girl steals from the family rice which is kept in a hidden jar. Despite finding out that her daughter is responsible for the theft, the

⁵⁵ Dao, 'Review of O. Vitandham (2005) *On the Wings of a White Horse*'.

⁵⁶ Duch real name is Kaing Guek Eav who oversaw the death of 15,000 people, was sentenced lifetime in prison for the crime against humanity.

⁵⁷ The code name 'S' for Santebal, and '21' for the walky-talky code name of a former prison chief.

mother tells no one. The guilty girl is also afraid to admit the theft. Afterwards, the girl survives but all her family members are slaughtered. The girl is now a grown-up doctor who repents for not admitting the theft to her mother. This whole monologue is simply presented in a comical way where Sokly steals the rice by tiptoeing while everyone were asleep in the middle of the night.

The director explained that she used innovative approach of Brechtian performance techniques, the play is not based on representing various actions realistically, rather it employs symbolism.⁵⁸ For example, in scene four, an actress walks in a circle in order to reach her destination. This is actually a representation of going to the market. However, no props or set are used to show a market. Noticeable, too, throughout the piece is that all the actresses played roles of both men and women. Generally, minimal emotions are shown while speaking, and no body movements are used for dramatise the speeches. Furthermore, the audience is directly addressed whenever Vutha or the actresses sing songs. Most of actresses' monologue-based speech is also focused on audience. Overall, the play is driven by heavy text, not by actions. Sakona played various instruments such as flute, xylophone, cymbals and drum to supply a background of traditional music, also using a small number of everyday objects for sound effects (Figure 11). The mixture of singing style and traditional music was designed to appeal to audiences which have little or no experience of new dramaturgy.⁵⁹ Likewise, because of the heavy text and distressful emotion involved in recounting bitter memories of the dark past, Tonh's monkey dance fulfils an important leaving role by augmenting the entertaining quotient. Tonh's comic role appeals strongly to children in the audience. The monkey also presents himself as an alter ego of the characters.

⁵⁸ Frimberger, "Some People Are Born Strange" A Brechtian Theatre Pedagogy as Philosophical Ethnography'.

⁵⁹ Whyte, 'Dramatic Dialogue'.

For example, in scene five, the monkey mimes the act of tiptoeing over the little girl who steals rice. He does not just show her actions but exaggerates them for comic effect. Of course, some critics may think it disrespectful to laugh at a very emotional scene, but I personally think the director made the right decision.

The performers employ various vocal devices. For instance, while actresses are telling the stories, Vutha, the narrator, addresses the audience in a dramatic style to show how KR cadre used a similar tone when controlling their populace. Vutha uses a harsh voice when allotting the actresses their roles because he wants to show the fierce control exerted by KR cadres. Furthermore, in scene seven, Vutha and Sina, as child soldiers, Khmer Rouge child soldiers, enthusiastically sing a revolutionary song, lending realism to the performance.

Each scene of the play shares the theme of guilt and shame, holding up a mirror to the collective memories of the harrowing past. The director of DC-Cam claimed that the play was the most powerful there had been since the regime collapsed in 1979. It is a play about Cambodian people, their suffering, anger, and courage to move on, no matter the circumstances. He wrote that ‘the soul is found in this play, *Breaking the Silence*.⁶⁰

Prins’s fervent wish was that this play should tour the country. It deal not only with history but also with the question of continuity.⁶¹ The main goal of the production was to find a way out of the silence of trauma by contributing to open dialogue as part of the process of reconciliation.

⁶⁰ Chhang, ‘Searching for the Truth’, 2.

⁶¹ Prins, *Breaking The Silence, A New Cambodian Play*, 23.

Revival and Creativities

*‘The arts are a vital branch of culture and a country’s culture can be featured through the arts. The arts are the soul engineer and the heart doctor’.*⁶²

Sang Phorsda,

A classical dancer who discovered contemporary

The example in the case studies were not termination of this new path. Moving from the success of the previous two parts, Phuon, in the concluding *Khmeropédies III* (2011), worked with six male dancers to mine in greater depth the monkey dance. Phuon called it as a process that everyone learn from each other, they track the old path seeing how their ancestors created the monkey characters, just adding modern-day resources and scientific studies of primates. Sopheap, the monkey dancer in the previous piece, has now become assistant choreographer to Phuon. The young female dancers Kethya and Belle have struck out on this new route and become mature artists in contemporary work. They have created their own group and continue nurturing their younger contemporaries. Their work is well received and is already cultivating a fan base. Kethya become the first-ever Artistic Director of Amrita Performing Arts, and her recent solo piece *My Mothers and I* (2013), in which she explores relationship between her mother, her dance master and herself, has received local and international recognition. Sathya, the dance master, not merely provides support but also launches herself into collaboration with her students and shares the stage with them from time to time. She has figured out how art forms can be evolving.⁶³

⁶² Suon, ‘Artists Interviews and Biographies’, 191.

⁶³ Murgiyanto, ‘Searching for the Contemporary in the Tradition: Contemporary Indonesian Dance in Southeast Asia’, 218.

It is often said that the iconic *Apsara* dance belongs to a classical repertoire going back to the ancient Angkor civilisation. Yes, the *Apsara* is a classical dance form, however it is a contemporary interpretation inspired by the Angkor temple bas-reliefs choreographed in 1962 by Queen Sisowath Kossamak for her star-dancer granddaughter, Princess Buppha Devi.⁶⁴ Frumberg argues in similar vein that Khmer classical dance has always been evolving and that little of the old repertoire predate the colonial period.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the *Lakhaon Niyeay*, literally spoken theatre, what we know in the West as theatre, has become an important genre for Cambodia and is labelled 'National Theatre', but in fact it is a new theatre form, established only in the 1950s and heavily influenced by the French colonial power.⁶⁶ Another example would be the Rock'n Roll music, brought to Cambodia during the 1950s and 1960s.⁶⁷ Cambodian Rock'n Roll has become important heritage today, a new identity in Khmer music.⁶⁸

In our context, it is important also to mention the work by another acclaimed dance teacher and choreographer, Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, who has had a significant impact on contemporary artistic history.⁶⁹ In 2000, she revisited the classical by adapting Shakespeare's *Othello* in Khmer classical dance form. Her 2005 work *Seasons of Migration* used the classical idiom to address her personal immigrant experience.⁷⁰ And in 2006, to celebrate 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth, she was commissioned a new work entitled *Pamena Devi*, a retelling of *The Magic Flute*. She used classical dance vocabulary to interpret the

⁶⁴ Nut, 'Lokhon Luang, the Cambodian Court Theatre', 428.

⁶⁵ Frumberg, 'Beyond Revival and Preservation: Contemporary Dance in Cambodia', 148.

⁶⁶ Muan and Ly, *Cultures of Independence*, 65–71.

⁶⁷ See documentary film by John Pirozzi (2014) "Don't Think I've Forgotten: Cambodia's Lost Rock and Roll"

⁶⁸ Muan and Ly, *Cultures of Independence*, 197–99.

⁶⁹ Thompson and Prenowitz, 'Cambodian's Trails: Theatre, Justice and History Unfinished', 81.

⁷⁰ Shapiro-Phim, 'Cambodia's Seasons of Migration', 56.

Western story.⁷¹ Turnbull argues persuasively that Khmer classical dance vocabulary could be adapted to suit contemporary sensibility.⁷²

Conclusion

*'The US carpet-bombing Cambodia with B-52, our generation today
will carpeting the country with our music and cultures.'*⁷³

Arn Chorn-Pond, Founder of Cambodian Living Arts

Cambodia is growing apace as it joined ASEAN, whose motto is one vision, one identity and one community. What will artists contribute to this integrating process? Preservation versus innovation is a never-ending debate between the older and younger generations. The venerable masters fear the disruption of the heritage handed on to them by their ancestors while the younger artists wish to make arts alive rather than preserving them in a beautiful but rather stuffy museum case.

My hope is that the examples adduced sufficiently demonstrate my argument that revisiting traditional performing arts play a crucial role in reinventing vocabulary of contemporary dance and theatre. A pioneer of Indian contemporary dance, the choreographer Chandralekha, believes that there is no clear-cut division between tradition and modernity, they are not two

⁷¹ Damrhung, 'Cambodians Dancing Beyond Borders: Three Contemporary Examples', 76.

⁷² Turnbull, 'A Burned-out Theatre: The State of Cambodian's Performing Arts', 146.

⁷³ Music Saved My Live, TEDx talk at Warwick University, UK

separate entities. She believes Indian dance can be modern on its own terms without copying them from the West.⁷⁴ She has made renovation on Bharatnatyam, one of the oldest Indian classical dance styles, from religious and mythological roots in search of her own self. Damrhung echoes this when saying that, despite the foreign influence, contemporary dance or new art forms are not always Western or foreign. It is about evolving in a local tradition and developing it.⁷⁵

In conclusion, preserving the tradition is very important for Cambodians if they are to learn and understand their history and heritage, but it is also crucial that the younger generation address its ideas with creativity and innovation. Creative thinking and innovative work stimulates artists to think critically, to pay more heed to the political and social environment they are living in, and eventually to create their own work of art and better express their ideas, feelings and concern for their community, society and their beloved country and cultural legacy.

*'Dance has to move ahead in the world. [...] It needs new form. It needs to be liberated.'*⁷⁶

Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia

⁷⁴ Murgiyanto, 'Searching for the Contemporary in the Tradition: Contemporary Indonesian Dance in Southeast Asia', 216.

⁷⁵ Damrhung, 'From Preserving National Forms to Reviving Traditions for the World', 41.

⁷⁶ Heywood, *Cambodian Dance*, 134.

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Figure illustration



Figure 1: A map illustrating in red the Khmer Empire (Kambujadesa) at 900 CE.
(Credit: Wikipedia)

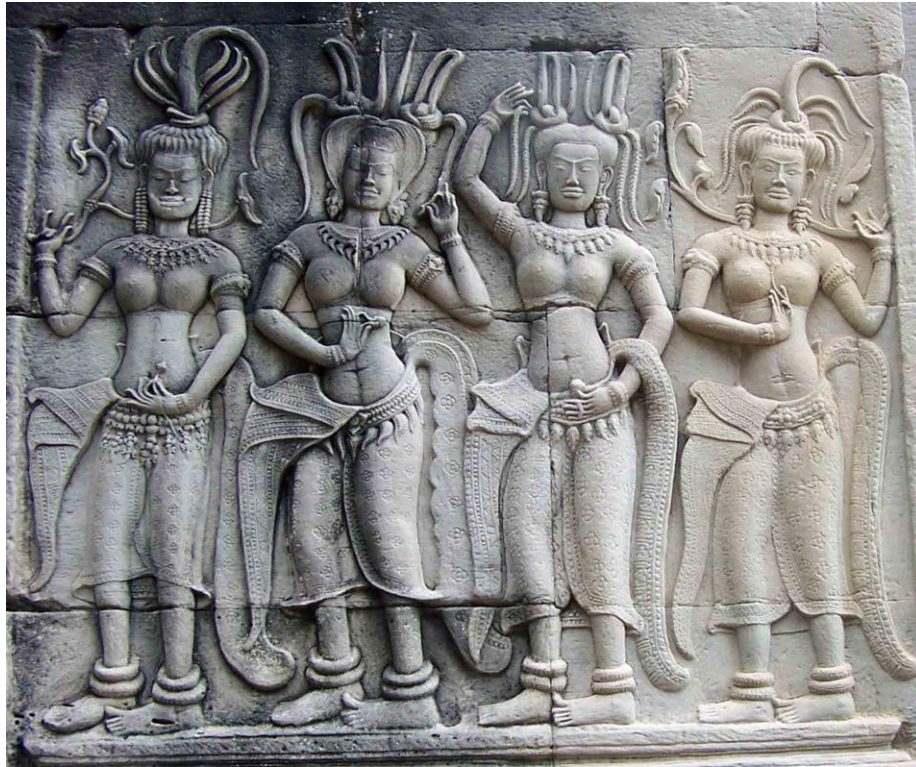


Figure 2: *Apsara* bas-relief at Angkor Wat. (Credit: Nhim Thira)

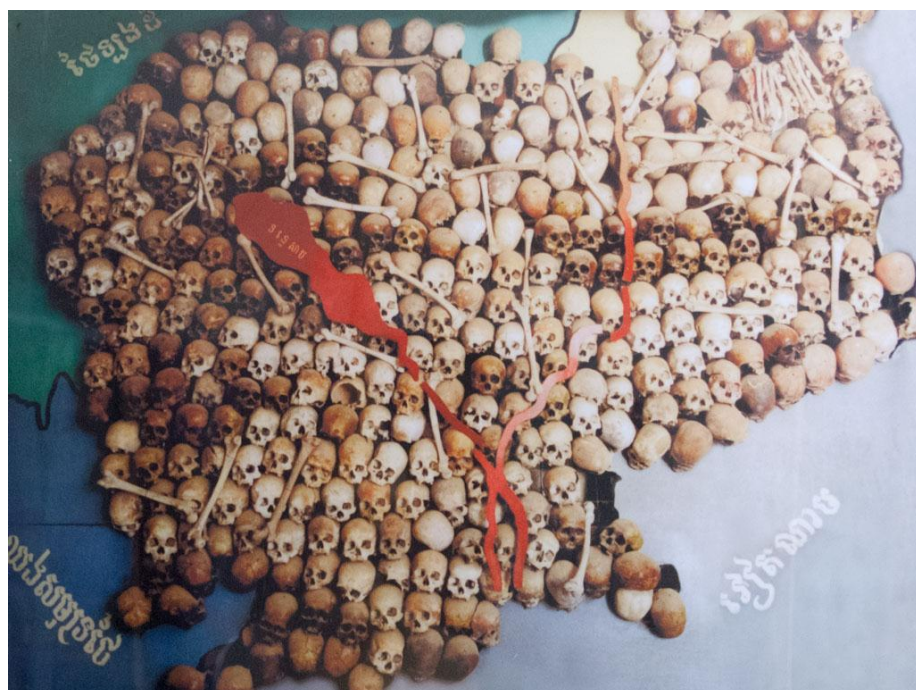


Figure 3: Map of Cambodian Genocide by skull (Credit: Wikipedia)



Figure 4: *Khmeropédies II*- Rehearsal at Amrita office in Phnom Penh (2009)
(Credit: Courtesy of Amrita)\



Figure 5: *Khmeropédies II*-
Premiere in Phnom Penh (2009)
(Credit: Jim Mizerski)

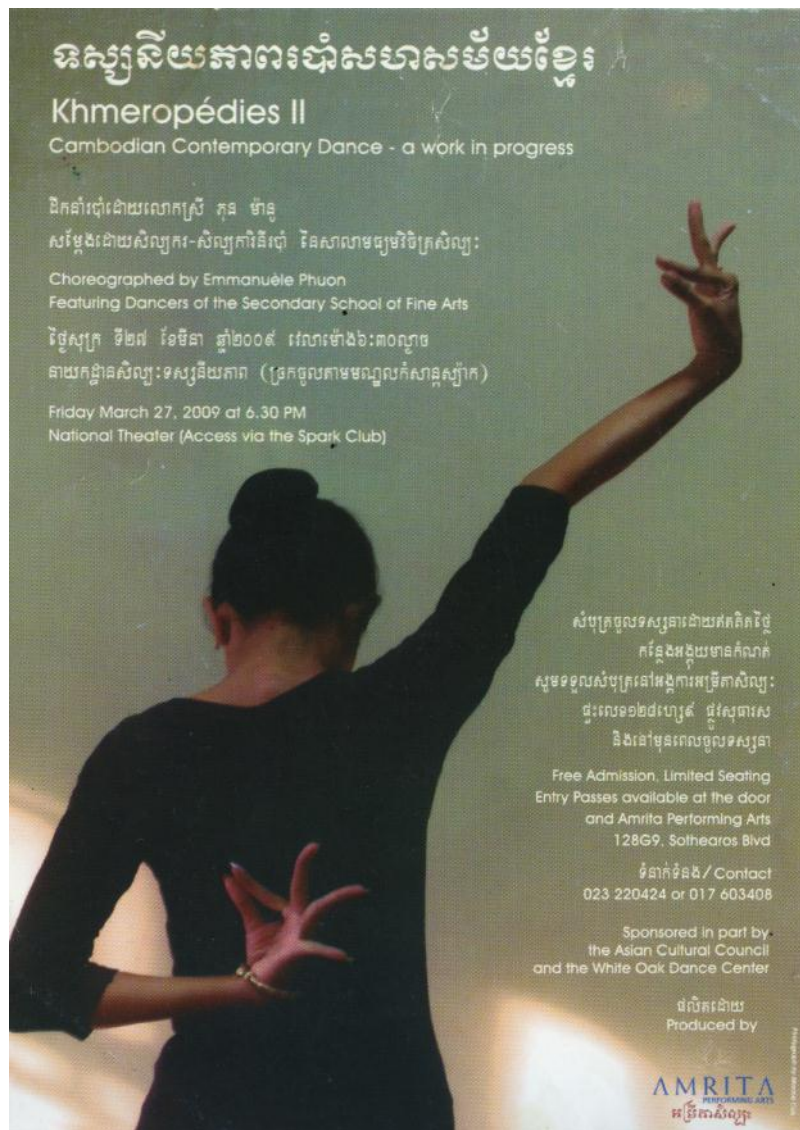


Figure 6: *Khmeropédies II*- Poster in Phnom Penh (2009)
(Credit: Courtesy of Manou Phuon)



Figure 8: *Breaking The Silence* – Mobile stage
(Credit: Jim Mizerski)



Figure 9: *Breaking The Silence* – Some scenes of the play
(Credit: Jim Mizerski)



Figure 10: *Breaking The Silence* – Mobile stage
(Credit: Jim Mizerski)



Figure 11: *Breaking The Silence* – Sakona plays for the scene
(Credit: Jim Mizerski)