I'm Dennis and I am the Assistant Director of our Center for Community Engagement here at Suffolk.

And I'm really excited to introduce a couple of folks from one of our community partners, called Cambodian Living Arts. So, it's my pleasure to introduce Arn, who is the founder and Sokhorn, who is the Head of Arts Development. I'll just give a brief intro on the work that we do, how we got connected to CLA and then I'll turn it over to you folks for the rest. But we were connected to the Cambodian Living Arts through a few folks at Suffolk. Professor Roberto Dominguez, who actually teaches a course called Conflict and Development, that co-exists with some of the programs we do in the winter with students. And Liz Keating, who is the co-founder of the Cambridge Cambodia School Project, which is one of the partners we work with every January during our Alternative Winter Break program. And Arn has previously spoken at Suffolk as well. He was in-person on campus back in 2018. And today he'll share more about his incredible personal story, the organization, and the great work that they're doing. But this is really an opportunity for us. We thought it was a great opportunity to bring in a community partner that does work in Cambodia since we haven't been able to typically run the programs that we do, and we haven't been able to travel and bring students back to Cambodia for the first time in four years due to COVID. So, we're really excited and grateful.
that you've all taken the time to be here with us today. And I'll turn it over to you folks now.

Okay. Thank you. And I'm very happy today that we have Sokhorn joining me. Now,

you can see the logo behind her. That's beautiful. I really liked it.

I am maybe 25,000 miles away, and at least we have this technology that we can meet. I'm sorry,

I cannot go there this year and I'm sorry, you cannot come to Cambodia this year, but we are

still working the best we can through the arts to heal ourselves and to prepare for you to come when

things will be behind us in the near future. I was so lucky also to be invited as you may

remember 2018, I was there at the classroom at your school to talk about Cambodian Living Arts

and also a book that just came out a few years, called Never Fall Down. It is about my life story.

But today I would love to also thank you for the school for your interest in Cambodia and also

inviting me, inviting us to come and share a little bit of our story. And I would start

with a flute, which I always do. I will play a song for you. Music helped me a lot when I'm down

and depressed, and I hope it helps you at least during this time.

A very short bamboo flute, but I’m sorry to say that this short song...

Khmer Rouge forced me to play this propaganda song. Additionally, in Cambodia would use this

flute to play a melody, a better, better sound of music, music for love, music for soothing.

But during the Khmer Rouge, they were abolished. No more traditional music, no more love. So, I
00:05:29 was forced to play. In fact, I started during the Khmer Rouge time in 1975 in the death camp, which

00:05:41 music saved my life, literally. I just realized this just

00:05:48 more recently, I played something like on dulcimer, many strings, you hit it with the

00:05:56 two bamboo sticks. And I was forced to play this particular song.

00:06:04 You can tell it's their evolutionary song, a faster tune and you wouldn't want to hear

00:06:14 the lyrics. Most lyric of the song, mostly kill, blood, kill those who do not work, but kill those

00:06:25 who do not respect Pol Pot. And they didn't call him Pol Pot, they called him Anka. Anka refers to

00:06:35 him, to Pol Pot. Kill those who betray him. And it's all bloody, bloody and fast beat song.

00:06:44 They used particularly to brainwash people, all people, especially children like myself.

00:06:55 I was about 11 when the Khmer Rouge took over Cambodia in 1975. I was separated from my family

00:07:07 and I was forced to live in that camp where they converted a Buddhist temple into a killing camp.

00:07:17 We were supposed to work there. The children were about 700 of us were

00:07:23 forced to live there and to die there. And in the middle of it, the Khmer Rouge would kill

00:07:29 people at that temple three or four times a day. And we were forced to live there,

00:07:35 and work and die there. We were not prisoners, but we were forced also to watch

00:07:41 the killing. And many times, I personally was forced to

00:07:48 do things that I wouldn't normally want to do in my life. Besides, I was also forced to

00:08:00 be in a music group in the middle of this hell.

00:08:08 They brought an old man. The first old man, I didn't even know his name.
White hair, around 70 something years old, and then to teach us about few weeks, four or five of us to play music. And there were a group of dancers. We were given more food than other people. And during the time, those children, half of them, if they didn't die by the Khmer Rouge killing, half of us were starved to death. So only a few years in that temple, we were only probably 70 of us left. And I was one of the lucky ones. And I think because I was playing music for them, and the skill... They killed the old man after two weeks that he taught us and they killed two or three boys because they were too slow to learn the instruments. And I was really lucky that I have the skill, and I was faster than those children. They brought another old man, Master Mike. This time, I was able to really become close to Master Mike. He became like my father and we helped each other to survive. He lied to the Khmer Rouge. I lied to the Khmer Rouge that we need each other's more time to really learn this. When the masters taught us to play and we got the skill, we get better playing for the Khmer Rouge, they would kill the master. I knew that. And the master knew that. So, we lied to the Khmer Rouge. And lying is also a cause of death. If they found out that we lied, we wouldn't survive, both of us. After the four years of the camp, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, some people think that they came and raided Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge. Even before the Khmer Rouge, many, many Cambodians died, especially artists died in the countryside because of the B-52 that
were dropped in Cambodia by Americans, by us. I'm American too. I'm Cambodian American. So

I don't know what to say sometime, just I say us dropping bombs in Cambodia. In our country,

the art, the traditional music was passed on by one to one. It's an oral teaching.

If the master died, the whole culture died. And what’s left for us to learn about ourselves?

I was forced by the Khmer Rouge as of 1979 to... They give us gun, they took my instruments away and I was a child soldier for about a year. And then I escaped into the jungle by myself following mountain for food. We walked probably a few hundred miles from where I lived to the border of Thailand, where I was forced also to live along the border. I was lucky at all to survive in the jungle and to survive the war.

And then we learned how to shoot a gun. The Khmer Rouge just placed guns and trucked us out and fought against the Vietnamese that had more experience and more skill than we do.

And then I met in the camp, it was my last leg, I weigh about 30 pounds. I was probably 14 years old now. And I met a white man and they called him American, with his sport car coming to the camp.

And he's literally stepped on me when I was in the camp, but many children were drowning in the camp and starving to death. And they ended up putting us in the refrigerator. They had a house that,

because it couldn't bury most of the dead on time. So, Peter stepped on me, literally. He was like 400 pounds. He's a football player also. And they called him American. And I don't know,
I caught his attention and he stepped on me literally. He picked me up from the ground and everything was history after that. I was helped by him. In 1980, I arrived in New Hampshire, which is close to where you live now. And the next day he took me to a shopping mall, shopping for clothing. And the next day he took me to the high school, White Mountains Regional High School, where it was a total, total different world for me.

In the camp, they told me, "You are lucky to go to America. There's a lot of money there. Everything you wish for, it will fall from the sky for you." So I ended up giving all my clothing. I have only flip-flop and my shorts and coming to America.

And I had a feeling that when I was put in the hallway, I remember when the bell rung and all white kids coming out from classes, and all like noise coming out like bees. And already, they were stunned by seeing me on the hallway. I was stunned by seeing them, like so many of them. I felt outnumbered by these all white kids. There were no black, there were no Hispanic, there were not Asian, there were not people who looked like me.

So some of them run past me and they hit me in the head already. They were noisy. So I felt troubled already. I knew that I had to find a way to live there and to survive there.

And again, I was instructed to go to classes, and eventually, I had a lot of fights with those kids. And they called me monkey and I didn't know the word when I went to a dictionary and tried to find the word. They said, "Go back where you belong to." I was confused and really, I was in a really
deep depression. I couldn't speak the language. That was why I resorted to fight. That's all I knew. And if I had a gun, that would be very dangerous because I know nothing else, but to shoot. If they make fun of me and laugh at me and hit me in the head like that, in Cambodia, there's no way they'd survive. I'd shoot them. That's all I knew how, and I was really in a deep depression.

And my dad knew that, he felt that. Peter knew that. So, he asked me to really talk to them about what I went through in Cambodia. And when I began, again, eventually starting to play, it helped me a lot. I controlled myself very much. And Peter told me that, "You have to share this story with them. Otherwise, you will not survive here. You survived the jungle of Cambodia, but you will not survive the jungle you've entered."

That's what he assured me. And I took it, but eventually I started liking it because Peter was right. I thought that the American kid wouldn't want to listen to me and to my story and to what I'd gone through in my life in Cambodia, they don't care. They probably wouldn't care because all they cared about, ice cream and go to the mall and kissing and all of this.

But I was wrong. When I shared the first time, second time, and the third time, many of them really taken it to their heart and I began to raise not only awareness about my life, and I felt better about living among them. And they accepted me also, but also, I started raising money and I knew that someday, I would come back Cambodia.
00:17:51 to face my past. And I came back in the 90s while I was in first year, second year in college,

00:18:02 where I went to Brown. Jimmy Carter wrote me a recommendation to go to Brown University.

00:18:08 I just talked to Dennis about Jimmy Carter. He had something to do with Habitat for Humanity, but

00:18:18 also in the past, he also helped much with the big organization we know called Amnesty International,

00:18:30 where I also began to get involved in different kinds of activity in America,

00:18:37 made me much better person, and I was able to hear about

00:18:42 other people's story and suffering all around the world, not only Cambodians.

00:18:46 I felt much better by the request of Jimmy Carter for me to be a peace speaker for Amnesty

00:18:57 International. He liked it so much that everyone liked it, that I was involved and sharing my

00:19:04 story. I probably was the first Cambodian who came out and sharing my story like this in English,

00:19:12 even though I couldn't speak English really well like what I'm even doing now. I'm not that well,

00:19:19 because I was so emotional in sharing my story, but I ended up being a peace speaker for amnesty

00:19:29 international. And so, he said, "Arn, would you go to college?" I said, "Yes." So, he wrote me a

00:19:38 recommendation. He said, "This could help you to go to Brown University where I attended.

00:19:43 And now my daughter, Amy Carter, is there now. So please help watch her out for me."

00:19:51 That's why I ended up at Brown where at one or two years, I ended up helping to start
Big Brother Big Sister in the other side of town, where many Cambodians have settled in Providence.

And then I transferred to Providence College. Then in the '90, I pay ride right to Cambodia. For the first time when I went to Battambang, where I used to live in the camp, where I was forced to live, it was 23 years, I couldn't find anyone alive then. But then later on, I found a few members of my far relatives alive, all my close, immediate relatives were killed or starved to death, including my little brother and little sister. And the reason they were targeted by the Khmer Rouge, now I found out that they were artists. Most of my family owned an opera company. They were artists, they were singers, they were actors and my dad and my mom, that was their cause of death.

And then I found out that 90% of all the artists died during the time. So I felt like, "Wow, what really happened to us during the Khmer Rouge?"

And there I was on the street. I found Master Mike after 23 years, my second master. I never thought he would survive at all. He looked at me and 23 years, certainly I saw him smiling and he still recognizes me and he called my name. And he came, he hugged, I saw him smiling, but the tears running down his cheek. And he said, "Where have you been?"

I said, "America." I don't think he knows where America is, but I said, "I was rescued." And then he said, "I do not want to..." He was cutting hair on the street for the Khmer Rouge and that most of the masters of musician, I don't know why there's a common theme that most of the masters, their second job is they know how to cut hair.
But then after I met Master Mike, I began to start to think about... He said, "I don't want to
die a drunk." I can smell alcohol from his mouth. So, it saddened me so much that
I know that he's now becoming an alcoholic. And then I found more master on the street of Phnom
Penh few years later and that's how I started Cambodian Living Art matching master to students.
And our first step is to restore and revive also to transmit the art form that they know how,
and like my family know how to these young people, just immediate fix. We start from the scratch. So
I'm happy. And my dream was to have young people now in my country find out about their
past, their glorious past. Then my dream was to have many, many children in Cambodia play
music instead of carrying guns like I did, and to have music in their life before they die,
and to have the whole generations of artists start helping each other through music.
And the power of music, we can have a discussion later on after I play another piece of music for
you. This one would be much soothing additional music that you would like. But this dream of mine
for the next generation, I want to transfer this. I want to introduce you to Sokhorn,
who she's part of my big dream, also of having a new family for myself. She's one of my outstanding
new generation of friends. She's an artist leader, speaking English better than me
and organizing much better than anybody can do around the world. And she's learned from doing,
and we have many of Sokhorn now around Cambodia. And I would like to have Sokhorn tell you about
what we do now with Cambodian Living Arts after 15 years of this work. Sokhorn, please

share with us and share with our friends in America about the work that we do, please.

[Sokhorn Yon] Hello, everyone. My name is Sokhorn and I’m managing Arm’s development programs. Thanks so

much, Arn, for sharing a very touching story and thanks to Suffolk University for having me to join

Arn and also having CLA as an overall. But I think before I begin with my quoting of what CLA is doing, maybe I will ask Phacdey, my colleague, to help play a video of our work first and we will go directly to the presentation. Please, Phacdey.

[Phacdey Phary] Thank you.

[Video Narrator] Cambodian Living Arts is an organization that has always known arts and cultural expression are vital to the future of Cambodia.

We believe that the arts are at the heart of vibrant and peaceful societies.

We started our work in 1998, when our founder, Arn Chorn-Pond,

returned to Cambodia after being a refugee in America. Arn saw that the arts which had saved his life during the years of the Khmer Rouge were in danger of dying out

and found Cambodia's remaining master artists living in poverty.

For our first decade, we worked to protect and revive traditional performing arts.

Music, dance, theater, puppetry, all of these and more were at risk of being forgotten.

We supported master artists and set up classes where they could pass on their skills and their knowledge to young students in their communities, all over the country. As the situation of Cambodia
changed, and the arts continued to grow from strength to strength, our work developed too.

As well as supporting the master artists, we needed to work with the next generation.

Students were growing up and needed to be able to make a living in the arts.

We began to offer scholarships and we created performances and festivals from which artists could earn enough income to continue their involvement in the arts.

Artists are the ones who will make culture and arts flourish and have meaning for Cambodian society. Our role is evolving once again. We worked to provide opportunities, experiences, and inspiration to those artists. This means they can travel, create new work and start their own projects. We want to inspire young people to keep connected to Cambodia's cultural heritage and to express themselves through the arts. We will continue working to grow audiences for performing arts. We want to build links between arts communities, both within Cambodia and with our neighbors around Asia.

[Chorn-Pond] My secret wish was that for every child in Cambodia to carry musical instruments, dance, sing, happy together, not to carry guns like I did. And I wish that for the world too.

Can we do that? I think we can. We started here already from a small and now we're pretty big.

We can do at each country and post-conflict nation can use this as an example. We would love to share this, what works with the art and with the culture with the post-conflict nation or not post-conflict nation around the world. It's happening. So, join us. Thank you.

[Yon] Thank you so much, Phacdey, and everyone for paying attention to the video.
So, I would like to ask my colleague, Phacdey, again, to help play with this presentation as it has some problems with technical, so Phacdey will assist me on that. Next slide, please, Phacdey.

The next slide, please.

Okay. I think some of you might have known this already before I tour you guys through the whole journey of what CLA's doing. I think it’s also good to look at the context of Cambodia, which set the foundation for the arts in here, as well as why CLA started our work at the beginning in 1998. So actually, Cambodia is quite well known. So the Anka and the notorious Khmer Rouge, which rather than it rich and diverse, intangible cultural heritage. If we look at how those artistic intangible cultural heritage is archiving, we call it as a carving on the stone or existing in the memories of people, which the later, the existing in memory of people really reflect the fragility of the older ambition.

From 1975 to 1979, when the Khmer Rouge came into power, destroyed the country, infrastructure condition, and the people, and as Arn has mentioned earlier, estimated around 90% of Cambodian artists have been killed. And then in 1993, and with the international existence, UN at the time in 1993, with other international assistant, as a peace recovering process, as well as to end the civil war in the country, Cambodia started to have its first national elections in 1993, as a way to end a civil war. And this is how we restart on our work to build this country. So, if
00:31:43 you look really at the picture of the Independence Monument, that fancy building, that hotel,

00:31:50 it also reflects that what the present or the reality now is actually totally different to what

00:31:59 it was like many, many years ago. It took four years to destroy the country, but it made a lot

00:32:07 of efforts to rebuild the country, its humanity, and especially its intangible cultural heritage,

00:32:14 which is in danger of getting to disappear. So, this is the overall context and

00:32:22 how...started as well as how CLA started in 1998. Next slide, please, Phacdey.

00:32:32 I think Arn has mentioned quite a lot about this already. So, the original goal of our first decade

00:32:40 is to revive the Cambodian traditional performing arts. So CLA was started in 1998 and actually the

00:32:49 story really begins when Arn came back to Cambodia around 1996, I believe so, because I have a civil-

00:32:59 [Chorn-Pond] Yes.

00:32:59 [Yon] Yeah. And to come to look for his surviving family who run an opera company in Battambang, but sadly

00:33:09 he realized that none of his family survived. But he happened to meet one of his music teachers who

00:33:19 taught him during the Khmer Rouge, the propaganda song at the time after more than 20 years of being

00:33:25 apart. So, at the time, Master Mike that Arn has met, he was running a barber shop, but he told

00:33:32 Arn that, with the remaining time of his life, he’d want to do something that is meaningful.

00:33:39 And then Arn, at the time realized that what he needed is to restart teaching his music.
And then also, Arn start to realize that he must do something in order to heal his pain from inside and as well as to restore the Cambodian arts and culture, seeing the damages that is destroyed by the Khmer Rouge raging at the time. Once again, Arn and his friend kept coming back and forth to Cambodia with his little money that he has fundraised with his friend in the United States. And at the time, most of the masters lived in slum area and wandering in poverty.

And so, yep, that is how Arn started opening Cambodian traditional performing art classes. The context that the classes is opening at the time, it's like one village, one class, either in the open space or inside the master's house. And sometime the master just gathers his relative, her grandson or great granddaughter for all to join the art class or sometime they are calling for the nearby community.

So, it's important and also effecting to note that at the time, since like one, from miles, marketing, I'm in a relationship and networking and the time is quite an effective marketing for the master to gather all the people within the community to join the classes. And, yep. And so, this is how CLA at the end of the day, we ended up with 16 master and 15 assistant teachers, who were formally the first generation for student of the master. And we opened more than 10 to ascertain traditional performing art classes across the provinces with 300 students as the first generation of students. This is just the very, very initial record. And one thing I also want to emphasize is that, I think next slide, you will see how
CLA work has involved, or actually you have some sense already from the previous video.

Despite the evolution of CLA works, the Master RP ask the core of CLA meaning that CLA will take care of them for the rest of their life, from pension, medical care, contingency fund,

and so on. And we have started with 16 master and currently there are only eight remaining within CLA's program because some are aging, some are getting older and older now.

Next slide, please, Phacdhey. Because of the first decade of our work is really, really dedicated to

reviving Cambodian traditional performing arts and also to COVID changes, so CLA extended our works.

As the context of Cambodian has changed,

the new generation of artists began to emerge. For example, the student on the art team who

will have invested on the first decade, so CLA started to provide scholarship fellowships

program and also professional development while creating job opportunity for them.

And as part of supporting the transformative environment, CLA also involve and engage in
cultural policy advocacy. And also, we also support the development of the culture and

art education in the public school as well while expanding and building Cambodian audiences. And

for your information, throughout my presentation, I used the term

Cambodian intangible cultural heritage instead of Khmer ethnicity because we want to reflect
Cambodian as a whole that the arts and culture belongs to everyone, not just Khmer ethnicity.

Khmer is the majority in Cambodia for example, maybe we just make up around 90% of the Cambodian population. And we the very recent word of our work from 2017, one of our aim is to give the artists the resources to start telling their story at contemporary out of Cambodia.

Next slide, please, Phacdey.

I think, once again from the beginning until now, it's about the context that has evolved.

And this is the context of performing arts that did CLA to what we are doing now. If we look at into the performing art sector or the art ecosystem in Cambodia, there is a lack of public funding to professional performing, a few contemporary performing arts companies and also, sometimes sensitive political context. Yeah, I think you got one already political censorship.

And also, because the leg of the inconsistent access of the art education at early age, most of the audience, especially the young ones, tend to come to the mindset that the art is free and it's really, really challenging to get them to pay for the ticket of professional show.

So, another of our job is to work on building a paying audience.

Despite these challenging contexts, we can see that there are still a lot of talents within the country of Cambodia. And as part of art development program, actually the program that I'm managing, we provide some support. We provide small grant, including small project grant or mobility grant, we provide funding for commissions or residency.
We create open calls for new work, workshop on the right thing or writing and what the one that is really important is also because the artist create a lot of work already so we also provide a platform for the artists to present their creativity and also talent. And one of the platforms as an example isn’t the cultural season, which I will guide you a little bit deeper into the next slide. Phacdey, please next slide.

So, what is cultural season? Cultural season is a two months programming lasting from two to three a month. And the season is rated around the stem of identity with an annual system of exploring, expressing and creating or recreating identity. There is mostly a question why CLA we start to look into this theme. The theme of identity once again, if you look into the content. I mean Cambodian context, Cambodian has developed a lot recently including immigration, globalization, and also at the same time there is an emerging expression of contemporary art and creative expression of the LGBT community.

So, they asked a lot of questions around this issue. For example, some people might view this emerging expression as the threat to the pure Cambodian identity and other may ask if the definition of Cambodian identity should remain the same, or it should be extended. Thus, we have to divide it within Cambodia or we all can stay together in unity because once again as I mentioned previously, Khmer ethnicity make up around 90% of Cambodian population while the other
10% including Cham, Vietnamese or indigenous community, so how could we live together? So

this question is not to be answered by CLA but CLA provide a platform for the artists
themselves to find the answers to those questions. So, the question is answer in term of
contemporary dance...or music. And if we look at the way that we frame the cultural season,
the cultural season is formatted into two. Part one,

performing arts program which doesn't aim not just to only present the talents and the
meaningful work of the artists, but we also have another part which is called contextual program.
Where we have interactive program like talk, conference or workshop by and from apps and
cultural practitioner and the audience especially the youngest one. Next slide please Phacdey.

And this is just a wrap up of the cultural season that we have just recently done last year in 2020
during the pandemic time. And actually, we are quite happy that CLA is able to serve
some artists to be able to continue work self from home. Because we have changing
some approach of our program for instance, from physical workshop but to an open call, where the
artist can stay at their own place and continue their own work. So, this is just a data that I
think if you have a question you can get to ask me for the next one. Next slide please Phacdey.

Despite the fact that CLA has evolved our work to creativity and expression,
but actually, we're supporting the continuity of Cambodia artistic heritage as one of us
ongoing aim. And also, we've done this as a way also to fight and also to keep the spirit of
where CLA are starting from. So, we provide some funding to an all-female percussionist
for... These are just some example to create the new traditional music.
We provide also some support as well to research project, to work and research on the rare
and indenture app for instance the first one with the all master it's about the...project...
And the second one it's a project by the commemorating music bus which is Arn is one of
the co-founder with the mission to research around music art form in the province and
their musical instrument is called Khim, is name of that instrument. Next slide please Phacdey.
I think that's all for what I would like to share, but I welcome for questions and I prefer the
approaching team for us to talk more and question actually, but before I'll be moving to the Q&A
part. I think Arn has one last special gift for all of us before starting the conversation.
[Chorn-Pond] Thank you, Sokhorn. Should I play another song now or after question.
I probably play the flute to close or is that a good idea to play the flute last?
[Yon] I think we would like to play-
[Chorn-Pond] Have a question now?
We would like change the agenda, I say I’m fine with that, either way is fine actually.
How about you all? I play last and we say goodbye after I play,
yeah? Now open the conversation. People seem to nod their head. So that's good. So open to the
questions, thank you for your attention. And thank you, Sokhorn, for beautiful work you're doing.
00:47:02 I saw the on-screen English writing, who’s writing the on-screen writing, the school?

00:47:12 [Harkins] Zoom will do that, it just automatically picks up what we're talking about.

00:47:17 [Chorn-Pond] Oh, wow! Yeah. Yeah. I saw some familiar writing there because I don't think it listened to

00:47:26 Sokhorn well, so you can correct after you go back to correct. Sometimes-

00:47:31 [Harkins] Yeah. It's not accurate.

00:47:36 [Chorn-Pond] Sometime when I say ask in Cambodia, they don't pronounce the K. So, they say

00:47:43 as instead of ask. Yeah. So, you don't mind me and correct.

00:47:49 [Yon] I think [crosstalk].

00:47:51 [Harkins] I will make sure.

00:47:53 [Yon] Yeah.

00:47:53 [Chorn-Pond] Yeah. So, any questions, you guys? Are we good on time?

00:48:04 [Harkins] Oh CJ, go ahead.

00:48:06 [CJ Koch] Cool. Thank you both for coming here.

00:48:09 [Chorn-Pond] Thank you.

00:48:10 We're loving this.

00:48:11 [Yon] Thank you too.

00:48:13 [Koch] I want to listen to this. I just have a little bit more of a fun question.

00:48:16 Other than the flute, would there be an instrument you have, or would had

00:48:19 picked to play instead? Something you adore instead?

00:48:25 [Chorn-Pond] Yes. Yes. Many, many other instruments that I love for example the

00:48:32 xylophone. A Cambodian xylophone that made of bamboo and it just beautiful sound. The many

00:48:40 rare Cambodian instrument that I’ve never seen in my life now have just
rediscover what the Khmer Magic Music Bus where we have the physical bus and what we would bring some

young masters to play traditional music for free in the remote, remote area in the mountain

for those who never, never seen. Like I wasn't and I’ve never seen here live music in their lives or

touch any instruments. So, we found Khim... She was talking about the Khim also being made by

bamboos to play you suck the instruments and it makes sound almost like harmonica, but it was

made my bamboo sound just like that. And many other instruments like the harp, the Cambodian

mouth harp. So those things that I... Now it’s a little late night for me I'm really an old man

now I can't play many others. I need to spend my time fundraising instead of sacrificing my desire.

Yeah. Any other questions you guys?

I have a comment, not a question. I had the opportunity to go to Cambodia a couple of years

ago as part of the programs that Adam, Dennis and Courtney and Yvette's office puts together.

And one of the things... I had just missed your talk when you had come to Suffolk, but they were

talking to me about it and they said, "Oh, there’s his book, Never Fall Down, you need to read it."

I was like, "Okay." So, I bought the book and I have to say that it was extremely powerful-

[Chorn-Pond] Oh, wow. Wow.
00:50:54 [Newton] ... and it prepared me for the experience that we had in Cambodia. And in fact,

00:51:01 we gave the book to all the students who went on the trip,

00:51:05 and on our way back we all wrote personal notes and messages to one another, and it was very,

00:51:11 very powerful experience. And I appreciate the work that you all are doing Sokhorn and Arn and-

00:51:16 [Yon] Yeah. Thank you.

00:51:18 [Newton] ... thank you for sharing parts of yourself with the Suffolk University community. It's definitely

00:51:25 a memorable one, one that I'll never forget. I have things from Cambodia all over my house. So-

00:51:31 [Yon] Are you sure?

00:51:32 [Newton] Yeah. So, it was a special moment I just want to say, thank you.

00:51:37 [Chorn-Pond] Thank you. Thank you, Shawn.

00:51:39 [Yon] Thank you so much, Shawn, and actually it’s our honor that you allow us to

00:51:46 share our work on this platform too. It's such a meaningful experience too,

00:51:50 and especially for me for the first time to join with Arn and share our work here.

00:51:56 [Chorn-Pond] First time. That's good. Sokhorn you’re doing really well.

00:52:07 [Adam Westbrook] Thank you so much for coming and sharing your story. One of the things that we're

00:52:14 struggling within the United States right now is a question of the identity of our culture. And there's a lot

00:52:19 of tension between who belongs and who doesn’t belong. And I was really intrigued by the work

00:52:25 as you're talking about it Sokhorn Corn about the cultural season and about how you're really
00:52:31 trying to be inclusive. I'm just curious if you could talk a little bit more about how is that

00:52:37 going? Is there resistance to the work that you’re doing from other people? People generally are they

00:52:44 supportive of it? And yeah, I would love to hear a little bit more. And if you have any tips for how

00:52:50 we might be able to adopt some of the practices that you're doing here in the United States to

00:52:55 try to solve some of our cultural issues we're having here too.

00:53:02 [Yon] Actually, I might not really have a tip because actually I'm also doing the job, but at the same

00:53:08 time learning as well. And of course...Yeah, it’s resistant not mentioning about the issue

00:53:17 of identity yet like for me personally because I’m a post-conflict generation, but I'm dealing

00:53:22 with two generation of artists. One, those who are framed under the narratives of Khmer Rouge

00:53:28 and another one, the post-conflict generation which you two thirds of Cambodian population

00:53:36 right now, which is the young people of Cambodia who are creating work,

00:53:41 not really relevant to the Khmer Rouge story, but they really find the transformative role of

00:53:49 the arts as a way for social change. So, want it or not, there is a tension in between what

00:53:56 you mentioned Adam, this is Khmer, this is not Khmer, this is Cambodia, this is not Cambodian.

00:54:02 So, one way that I'm dealing with this work I try to find someone. I will say like

00:54:09 artistic mediator, someone who is senior and high instructors to coordinate because that kind
00:54:15 of person is very well in terms of knowledge on what type of diplomatic language to talk to this

00:54:27 two generation. So, this is one of the reasons why we provide cultural season as a platform.

00:54:35 I think I forget to mention two of the value that we want to reflect our cultural season. One is one

00:54:40 cultural season is the platform of celebration of diversity. So, this is how we bring in into

00:54:47 different types of work generations and expression what I would say. And another one, what we want to

00:54:54 reflect is that, as you have seen already from the Khmer Rouge regime, until now the generation

00:55:00 has shifted a lot, the development context immigration globalization, and that's...

00:55:09 I think I forget what... Oh yeah, what we want to reflect also is that culture

00:55:15 keep evolving and not static. So, our program is really designed to fit into that value that we

00:55:22 would like to select. And another one is about the working... Not really the working style, but

00:55:32 like you mentioned, the issue of identity, so polarity, instability. One of the examples in

00:55:39 part of our commissioning is open for new work, there are two processes that we have doing.

00:55:46 One is the open call for general one. Those who find themselves easily access for example,

00:55:52 to an application feeling. But another one we did it through nomination process.

00:55:57 Especially to those who are matching alive or under privileged, but deserve this artistic merit.

00:56:05 So, there are two ways that we approach people of different race or ethnicity. Because totally to
do this we have to understand the context, for example, one of the indigenous communities that

CLA have, we have commission, they are queer ethnicity who is living in central province.

For instance, they don't know my language because they are from indigenous people. So, for sure,

they totally couldn't write the application. They don’t have access to internet. So, this is why you

should not rely on open call as just a way to reach out those people. So, one other tip that I

would suggest is that, to get the understanding of people of these differences I would say...

Or are diverse, provide a platform where everyone can come together, celebrate,

talk, and discuss and share instead of chatting, because this is what we have to

provide the most. And second thing, it's important to be mindful and be sensitive of the background

of people that we are approaching to bring them to create the work. Because what we have to be

mindful as well is that when we bring the apps and culture of one groups of people, for instance, the

example of those indigenous people on the stage, we try to maintain it's all simplicity as much

as we can. Because one thing we already needed is that we already somehow more or less already

decontextualize those people already. So, we try to maintain the artistic integrity as much as we can.

So, yeah. So, nominations, open core, and artistic mediator, those who can advise.

[Chorn-Pond] Big thing for me is I think if we all can agree

even the worst man or the worst president or the worst king if we can come agree together that
the power of music is transforming us; the power of music is no judgment. The power of music is universal and put money on it, put money to support it. I think even for example, yesterday we had a traditional Khmer dance in log. What the demonstrations against... They're anti-Asian now. They were shooting, they were like you say.... So many people came out to low I see it virtually. I saw it in one of my friends who were former gang members that I helped 15 years ago, from the street now performing for people. They loved him because he raps.

Rap is a universal. Rap started in America, right? From whoever, from someone that came '80s that were put in jail. And where Becky Pangs wrote rap so people can really communicate through that.

But even traditional music traditional Khmer music will perform at the open space. Everybody the white, the black, Hispanic now in law can appreciate that. They don't judge all this as a bad art, this is a bad dance, you just provide money to build a platform in our community, to have the arts of different art forms, different dance, different music, to come together. People can appreciate that, even the first man that wanted to kill when they hear the traditional song, they healed, they hear, they see the dance, people clap, it will help their heart, to soften their heart. So, both. I'm not anti-rap or I'm not anti any music right now, modern music mostly like hip hop, it's mostly selling products. I'm sad to say, but most of the tradition music in the past, in anywhere
01:00:36 in the world teaches us about environment, to be good to our parents, to say thank you to creators

01:00:46 of all things, whatever God we believe, and just to appreciate and be grateful and not take things

01:00:53 for granted. So that's what I love things from the past, but merely now they're getting young people

01:01:00 for example, hip pop or even rap, very few parties can be free from just selling crap.

01:01:08 Selling genre, very shallow, not deep enough. I'm not trying to have people listen to it and watch

01:01:15 it and reach a higher being, we cannot. So, the art is the only form in my opinion. If we put money

01:01:27 where our mouth is, not to put money in the bomb. Making the bomb and where are we going with that?

01:01:36 So just for them to act human with each other, one is to create fear and make people feel scared

01:01:48 from other countries. You say, I have more bombed and you are. So, waste of time and waste of money

01:01:57 and I'm sick of people arguing, wanting to be right all the time. But music and art are really

01:02:04 transformed and heals me personally, but if we all can agree that art is a medium, it's a platform

01:02:11 and it's a truth medium. So even the Khmer Rouge knows the power of art, they're using to brainwash

01:02:20 us. If they don't kill the artists, if they don't control the arts, the people will not go to them.

01:02:28 The plan that they plan to kill will not go to them at all. That's the ultimate. That's

01:02:34 why they killed the ultimate. They talked about it with the artists, they know the artists has

01:02:39 this ultimate power through getting people together. Even the Khmer Rouge know that.
Now I know many politicians in different places, in America too, in our country too, knows the power of it that's why they don't give money. They don't give the money to art, to education, because it gets you higher. It gets human when we are educated, when we... Let me not get me into this, I'm getting so emotional about this because I'm one of the victims of their games. I carry guns so they can make money out of my life. That's the ultimate. And there many children around the world still being victims of this.

Prostitution, the same. People are making money out of this. Why can we give music? Why can we allow people to perform to express the deep feeling as human beings, to reach a higher goal, what we got to believe, want us to love each other. We have not crossed that. I think music art can help us cross that, that's why they don't give money to that. I'm not sure what their plan is.

So, fundraise man, fundraise to get money to the art. And today you decide to come for this conversation, I think is a fairly important for all of us. But in due to share this conversation, not many people watch, so where are we going man in the world? Not allow to suffer our Cambodia, but we should ask that question. Very dangerous situation we are at now. And I know, we know that. Music art is the way to go. Anyone with more question?

How do we do about time? Phacdey, are we okay with time or we still have?

We still have time. I know you wanted to end with-
01:05:08 [Chorn-Pond] Oh, play the flute. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. So, I want to tell you

01:05:14 that also through Amnesty International I realized that this particular song

01:05:22 in different countries we call it Bombay, which is one of my favorite lullabies. And there is lullaby

01:05:33 in every country I found out. When I played this more in Mount Galilee for the Palestinian people,

01:05:42 wow! They said, "Just so exactly sound like our lullaby or something." They picked me up and they

01:05:48 were so happy that I can play that. I said this is my lullaby from Cambodia, but music story and

01:05:59 sharing story is for us to be close to each other, to connect us in the higher level at a deeper

01:06:05 level. And I hope it help you during this time by hearing music. So, I do this for you and we close.

01:08:12 Thank you again for having us this year.

01:08:15 Thank you. We hope to see you in Cambodia in the future when things are behind us.

01:08:23 [Harkins] We hope to see you again very soon.

01:08:27 [Chorn-Pond] I miss my country. I miss America. I go there every year to do fundraising that's why I gave

01:08:34 up all the instruments I want to learn here, because I raise money to help my country and

01:08:43 to help others, also other country as well. I'm beyond Cambodia, I'm not helping Cambodia,

01:08:52 but I hope Cambodian Living Art could be a workable package like I said in post-conflict

01:08:58 nations. And it's working, it's working, it’s happening right now. So, I'm glad that I'm still
01:09:07 in touch with my country America, more so I wanted to be happier to know that most of our

01:09:15 funding is from America, helping Cambodian Living Arts. So, if he cannot fundraise in America where?

01:09:23 Where else in the world that we can do this?

01:09:26 So, we literally like what people told me from the camp, that America had everything and if you have

01:09:34 them care, whatever your dream, your dream it will be a reality. Probably only happened in America. I

01:09:43 still believe that. I still hold that strong. So, raise money brother and promote the art.

01:09:52 This is a weapon, very powerful weapons for us to lead where the future goes, not them all,

01:10:01 not the bombs, I guarantee you. So, thank you guys for all the attention.

01:10:08 Thank you. We sign up now. Good night. Good night, Dennis. Thank you again.


01:10:15 [Chorn-Pond] Thank you, Phacdey, for helping...with this.

01:10:20 [Harkins] Thank you, Phacdey.

01:10:25 [Yon] Oh, thank you. Let me just a quick note. Adam,

01:10:26 if you're interested in the question that you were just asking because in actually cultural season,

01:10:35 we have a component research as part of that, because we received a research grant from

01:10:39 changing the story which we decided to factor that influence the creative process and what influence

01:10:45 the young people of Cambodia now in creating the work. I can share it to you afterwards.

01:10:52 [Westbrook] Hey, it's great.

01:10:52 [Yon] And also, the same to CJ, in time of the instrument that you asked Arn, actually
01:11:01 for the mouth harp we've been working with the British Museum on archiving and researching on

01:11:07 that. And it's currently on our website also. It’s still on the British Museum database. Just in case

01:11:15 you need an access or information about your study or research, please feel free to reach out to us.

01:11:20 The same to Ken. We have all of those information store. And please stay

01:11:28 connected just in case you need to know other info, please feel free to contact us. Yeah.

01:11:35 [Harkins] We will thank you so much.

01:11:36 [Koch] Thank you.

01:11:37 [Yon] Thank you. Bye-Bye

01:11:38 [Harkins] Bye, have a goodnight.