

00:00:02 [Dennis Harkins] I'm Dennis and I am the Assistant Director of our Center for Community Engagement here at Suffolk.

00:00:10 And I'm really excited to introduce a couple of folks from one of our community partners,

00:00:19 called Cambodian Living Arts. So, it's my pleasure to introduce Arn, who is the founder

00:00:27 and Sokhorn, who is the Head of Arts Development. I'll just give a brief intro on

00:00:38 the work that we do, how we got connected to CLA and then I'll turn it over to you

00:00:45 folks for the rest. But we were connected to the Cambodian Living Arts through a few folks

00:00:57 at Suffolk. Professor Roberto Dominguez, who actually teaches a course called Conflict and

00:01:04 Development, that co-exists with some of the programs we do in the winter with students.

00:01:13 And Liz Keating, who is the co-founder of the Cambridge Cambodia School Project, which is one of

00:01:20 the partners we work with every January during our Alternative Winter Break program.

00:01:26 And Arn has previously spoken at Suffolk as well. He was in-person on campus back in 2018.

00:01:34 And today he'll share more about his incredible personal story, the organization, and the great

00:01:45 work that they're doing. But this is really an opportunity for us. We thought it was a great

00:01:50 opportunity to bring in a community partner that does work in Cambodia since we haven't been able

00:01:57 to typically run the programs that we do, and we haven't been able to travel and bring students

00:02:05 back to Cambodia for the first time in four years due to COVID. So, we're really excited and grateful

00:02:13 that you've all taken the time to be here with us today. And I'll turn it over to you folks now.

00:02:21 [Arn Chorn-Pond] Okay. Thank you. And I'm very happy today that we have Sokhorn joining me. Now,

00:02:28 you can see the logo behind her. That's beautiful. I really liked it.

00:02:35 I am maybe 25,000 miles away, and at least we have this technology that we can meet. I'm sorry,

00:02:47 I cannot go there this year and I'm sorry, you cannot come to Cambodia this year, but we are

00:02:54 still working the best we can through the arts to heal ourselves and to prepare for you to come when

00:03:02 things will be behind us in the near future. I was so lucky also to be invited as you may

00:03:09 remember 2018, I was there at the classroom at your school to talk about Cambodian Living Arts

00:03:20 and also a book that just came out a few years, called Never Fall Down. It is about my life story.

00:03:30 But today I would love to also thank you for the school for your interest in Cambodia and also

00:03:39 inviting me, inviting us to come and share a little bit of our story. And I would start

00:03:49 with a flute, which I always do. I will play a song for you. Music helped me a lot when I'm down

00:04:03 and depressed, and I hope it helps you at least during this time.

00:04:48 A very short bamboo flute, but I'm sorry to say that this short song...

00:05:02 Khmer Rouge forced me to play this propaganda song. Additionally, in Cambodia would use this

00:05:13 flute to play a melody, a better, better sound of music, music for love, music for soothing.

00:05:22 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.

00:08:13 White hair, around 70 something years old, and then to teach us about few weeks,

00:08:20 four or five of us to play music. And there were a group of dancers.

00:08:29 We were given more food than other people. And during the time, those children, half of them,

00:08:39 if they didn't die by the Khmer Rouge killing, half of us were starved to death.

00:08:48 So only a few years in that temple, we were only probably 70 of us left.

00:08:55 And I was one of the lucky ones. And I think because I was playing

00:09:03 music for them, and the skill... They killed the old man after two weeks that he taught

00:09:10 us and they killed two or three boys because they were too slow to learn the instruments.

00:09:18 And I was really lucky that I have the skill, and I was faster than those children.

00:09:23 They brought another old man, Master Mike. This time, I was able to really become close to Master

00:09:32 Mike. He became like my father and we helped each other to survive. He lied to the Khmer

00:09:39 Rouge. I lied to the Khmer Rouge that we need each other's more time to really learn this.

00:09:49 When the masters taught us to play and we got the skill, we get better playing for the Khmer Rouge,

00:09:59 they would kill the master. I knew that. And the master knew that. So, we lied to the Khmer Rouge.

00:10:07 And lying is also a cause of death. If they found out that we lied, we wouldn't survive, both of us.

00:10:22 After the four years of the camp, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, some people

00:10:32 think that they came and raided Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge. Even before the Khmer Rouge,

00:10:42 many, many Cambodians died, especially artists died in the countryside because of the B-52 that

00:10:51 were dropped in Cambodia by Americans, by us. I'm American too. I'm Cambodian American. So

00:11:00 I don't know what to say sometime, just I say us dropping bombs in Cambodia. In our country,

00:11:10 the art, the traditional music was passed on by one to one. It's an oral teaching.

00:11:23 If the master died, the whole culture died. And what's left for us to learn about ourselves?

00:11:30 I was forced by the Khmer Rouge as of 1979 to... They give us gun, they took

00:11:41 my instruments away and I was a child soldier for about a year. And then I

00:11:48 escaped into the jungle by myself following mountain for food. We walked probably a few

00:11:56 hundred miles from where I lived to the border of Thailand, where I was forced also to live along

00:12:05 the border. I was lucky at all to survive in the jungle and to survive the war.

00:12:12 And then we learned how to shoot a gun. The Khmer Rouge just placed guns and trucked us out

00:12:23 and fought against the Vietnamese that had more experience and more skill than we do.

00:12:30 And then I met in the camp, it was my last leg, I weigh about 30 pounds. I was probably 14 years

00:12:39 old now. And I met a white man and they called him American, with his sport car coming to the camp.

00:12:46 And he's literally stepped on me when I was in the camp, but many children were drowning in the camp

00:12:56 and starving to death. And they ended up putting us in the refrigerator. They had a house that,

00:13:03 because it couldn't bury most of the dead on time. So, Peter stepped on me, literally. He was

00:13:09 like 400 pounds. He's a football player also. And they called him American. And I don't know,

00:13:18 I caught his attention and he stepped on me literally. He picked me up from the ground and

00:13:25 everything was history after that. I was helped by him. In 1980, I arrived in New Hampshire,

00:13:37 which is close to where you live now. And the next day he took me to a

00:13:44 shopping mall, shopping for clothing. And the next day he took me to the high school,

00:13:52 White Mountains Regional High School, where it was a total, total different world for me.

00:14:01 In the camp, they told me, "You are lucky to go to America. There's a lot of

00:14:07 money there. Everything you wish for, it will fall from the sky for you." So

00:14:17 I ended up giving all my clothing. I have only flip-flop and my shorts and coming to America.

00:14:26 And I had a feeling that when I was put in the hallway, I remember when the bell rung

00:14:39 and all white kids coming out from classes, and all like noise coming out like bees.

00:14:47 And already, they were stunned by seeing me on the hallway. I was stunned by seeing them,

00:14:54 like so many of them. I felt outnumbered by these all white kids. There were no black,

00:15:00 there were no Hispanic, there were not Asian, there were not people who looked like me.

00:15:05 So some of them run past me and they hit me in the head already. They were noisy. So

00:15:14 I felt troubled already. I knew that I had to find a way to live there and to survive there.

00:15:22 And again, I was instructed to go to classes, and eventually, I had a lot of fights with those kids.

00:15:33 And they called me monkey and I didn't know the word when I went to a dictionary and tried to find

00:15:38 the word. They said, "Go back where you belong to." I was confused and really, I was in a really

00:15:46 deep depression. I couldn't speak the language. That was why I resorted to fight. That's all I

00:15:54 knew. And if I had a gun, that would be very dangerous because I know nothing else, but to

00:16:00 shoot. If they make fun of me and laugh at me and hit me in the head like that, in Cambodia, there's

00:16:07 no way they'd survive. I'd shoot them. That's all I knew how, and I was really in a deep depression.

00:16:14 And my dad knew that, he felt that. Peter knew that. So, he asked me to really talk to them

00:16:22 about what I went through in Cambodia. And when I began, again, eventually starting to play

00:16:31 again to them, it helped me a lot. I controlled myself very much. And Peter told me that,

00:16:41 "You have to share this story with them. Otherwise, you will not survive here.

00:16:45 You survived the jungle of Cambodia, but you will not survive the jungle you've entered."

00:16:49 That's what he assured me. And I took it, but eventually I started liking it because

00:16:59 Peter was right. I thought that the American kid wouldn't want to listen to me and to my

00:17:06 story and to what I'd gone through in my life in Cambodia, they don't care. They probably wouldn't

00:17:13 care because all they cared about, ice cream and go to the mall and kissing and all of this.

00:17:20 But I was wrong. When I shared the first time, second time, and the third time, many of them

00:17:29 really taken it to their heart and I began to raise not only awareness about my life,

00:17:37 and I felt better about living among them. And they accepted me

00:17:42 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

00:19:57 Big Brother Big Sister in the other side of town, where many Cambodians have settled in Providence.

00:20:05 And then I transferred to Providence College. Then

00:20:08 in the '90, I pay ride right to Cambodia. For the first time when I went to Battambang,

00:20:16 where I used to live in the camp, where I was forced to live, it was 23 years,

00:20:23 I couldn't find anyone alive then. But then later on, I found a few members of my

00:20:31 far relatives alive, all my close, immediate relatives were killed or starved to death,

00:20:44 including my little brother and little sister. And the reason they were targeted by the Khmer Rouge,

00:20:49 now I found out that they were artists. Most of my family owned an opera company. They were artists,

00:20:55 they were singers, they were actors and my dad and my mom, that was their cause of death.

00:21:04 And then I found out that 90% of all the artists died during the time.

00:21:10 So I felt like, "Wow, what really happened to us during the Khmer Rouge?"

00:21:16 And there I was on the street. I found Master Mike after 23 years, my second master.

00:21:26 I never thought he would survive at all. He looked at me and 23 years, certainly I saw

00:21:35 him smiling and he still recognizes me and he called my name. And he came, he hugged,

00:21:41 I saw him smiling, but the tears running down his cheek. And he said, "Where have you been?"

00:21:48 I said, "America." I don't think he knows where America is, but I said, "I was rescued." And

00:21:56 then he said, "I do not want to..." He was cutting hair on the street for the

00:22:03 ex-Khmer Rouge and that most of the masters of musician, I don't know why there's a common

00:22:13 theme that most of the masters, their second job is they know how to cut hair.

00:22:23 But then after I met Master Mike, I began to start to think about... He said, "I don't want to

00:22:34 die a drunk." I can smell alcohol from his mouth. So, it saddened me so much that

00:22:45 I know that he's now becoming an alcoholic. And then I found more master on the street of Phnom

00:22:53 Penh few years later and that's how I started Cambodian Living Art matching master to students.

00:23:01 And our first step is to restore and revive also to transmit the art form that they know how,

00:23:12 and like my family know how to these young people, just immediate fix. We start from the scratch. So

00:23:23 I'm happy. And my dream was to have young people now in my country find out about their

00:23:28 past, their glorious past. Then my dream was to have many, many children in Cambodia play

00:23:38 music instead of carrying guns like I did, and to have music in their life before they die,

00:23:44 and to have the whole generations of artists start helping each other through music.

00:23:51 And the power of music, we can have a discussion later on after I play another piece of music for

00:23:59 you. This one would be much soothing additional music that you would like. But this dream of mine

00:24:07 for the next generation, I want to transfer this. I want to introduce you to Sokhorn,

00:24:13 who she's part of my big dream, also of having a new family for myself. She's one of my outstanding

00:24:24 new generation of friends. She's an artist leader, speaking English better than me

00:24:32 and organizing much better than anybody can do around the world. And she's learned from doing,

00:24:40 and we have many of Sokhorn now around Cambodia. And I would like to have Sokhorn tell you about

00:24:48 what we do now with Cambodian Living Arts after 15 years of this work. Sokhorn, please

00:24:56 share with us and share with our friends in America about the work that we do, please.

00:25:05 [Sokhorn Yon] Hello, everyone. My name is Sokhorn and I'm managing Arn's development programs.

Thanks so

00:25:12 much, Arn, for sharing a very touching story and thanks to Suffolk University for having me to join

00:25:19 Arn and also having CLA as an overall. But I think before I begin with my quoting of

00:25:26 what CLA is doing, maybe I will ask Phacdey, my colleague, to help play a video of

00:25:30 our work first and we will go directly to the presentation. Please, Phacdey.

00:25:36 [Phacdey Phary] Thank you.

00:25:50 [Video Narrator] Cambodian Living Arts is an organization that has always known

00:25:54 arts and cultural expression are vital to the future of Cambodia.

00:25:58 We believe that the arts are at the heart of vibrant and peaceful societies.

00:26:07 We started our work in 1998, when our founder, Arn Chorn-Pond,

00:26:11 returned to Cambodia after being a refugee in America. Arn saw that the arts which had

00:26:17 saved his life during the years of the Khmer Rouge were in danger of dying out

00:26:21 and found Cambodia's remaining master artists living in poverty.

00:26:34 For our first decade, we worked to protect and revive traditional performing arts.

00:26:39 Music, dance, theater, puppetry, all of these and more were at risk of being forgotten.

00:26:50 We supported master artists and set up classes where they could pass on their skills and their

00:26:54 knowledge to young students in their communities, all over the country. As the situation of Cambodia

00:27:07 changed, and the arts continued to grow from strength to strength, our work developed too.

00:27:13 As well as supporting the master artists, we needed to work with the next generation.

00:27:19 Students were growing up and needed to be able to make a living in the arts.

00:27:23 We began to offer scholarships and we created performances and festivals from

00:27:28 which artists could earn enough income to continue their involvement in the arts.

00:27:39 Artists are the ones who will make culture and arts flourish and have meaning for Cambodian

00:27:43 society. Our role is evolving once again. We worked to provide opportunities, experiences,

00:27:50 and inspiration to those artists. This means they can travel, create new work and start their own

00:27:56 projects. We want to inspire young people to keep connected to Cambodia's cultural heritage

00:28:02 and to express themselves through the arts. We will continue working to grow

00:28:06 audiences for performing arts. We want to build links between arts communities,

00:28:12 both within Cambodia and with our neighbors around Asia.

00:28:19 [Chorn-Pond] My secret wish was that for every child in Cambodia to carry musical instruments, dance,

00:28:28 sing, happy together, not to carry guns like I did. And I wish that for the world too.

00:28:37 Can we do that? I think we can. We started here already from a small and now we're pretty big.

00:28:43 We can do at each country and post-conflict nation can use this as an example. We would

00:28:49 love to share this, what works with the art and with the culture with the post-conflict

00:28:55 nation or not post-conflict nation around the world. It's happening. So, join us. Thank you.

00:29:19 [Yon] Thank you so much, Phacdey, and everyone for paying attention to the video.

00:29:23 So, I would like to ask my colleague, Phacdey, again, to help play with this presentation as it

00:29:30 has some problems with technical, so Phacdey will assist me on that. Next slide, please, Phacdey.

00:29:49 The next slide, please.

00:29:51 Okay. I think some of you might have known this already before I tour you guys through the whole

00:29:58 journey of what CLA's doing. I think it's also good to look at the context of Cambodia,

00:30:04 which set the foundation for the arts in here, as well as why CLA started

00:30:09 our work at the beginning in 1998. So actually, Cambodia is quite well known. So

00:30:17 the Anka and the notorious Khmer Rouge, which rather than it rich and diverse,

00:30:24 intangible cultural heritage. If we look at how those artistic intangible cultural heritage is

00:30:34 archiving, we call it as a carving on the stone or existing in the memories of people, which the

00:30:41 later, the existing in memory of people really reflect the fragility of the older ambition.

00:30:48 From 1975 to 1979, when the Khmer Rouge came into power, destroyed the country,

00:30:58 infrastructure condition, and the people, and as Arn has mentioned earlier,

00:31:04 estimated around 90% of Cambodian artists have been killed.

00:31:11 And then in 1993, and with the international existence, UN at the time in 1993,

00:31:22 with other international assistant, as a peace recovering process, as well as to end

00:31:27 the civil war in the country, Cambodia started to have its first national elections in 1993,

00:31:35 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.

00:33:47 And then also, Arn start to realize that he must do something in order to heal his pain from

00:33:55 inside and as well as to restore the Cambodian arts and culture, seeing the damages that is

00:34:02 destroyed by the Khmer Rouge raging at the time. Once again, Arn and his friend kept coming back

00:34:11 and forth to Cambodia with his little money that he has fundraised with his friend in the United

00:34:18 States. And at the time, most of the masters lived in slum area and wandering in poverty.

00:34:28 And so, yep, that is how Arn started opening Cambodian traditional performing art classes.

00:34:36 The context that the classes is opening at the time, it's like one village,

00:34:40 one class, either in the open space or inside the master's house.

00:34:45 And sometime the master just gathers his relative, her grandson or great granddaughter

00:34:54 for all to join the art class or sometime they are calling for the nearby community.

00:35:03 So, it's important and also effecting to note that at the time, since like one, from

00:35:12 miles, marketing, I'm in a relationship and networking and the time is quite an

00:35:18 effective marketing for the master to gather all the people within the community to join

00:35:24 the classes. And, yep. And so, this is how CLA at the end of the day, we ended up with 16 master

00:35:31 and 15 assistant teachers, who were formally the first generation for student of the master. And

00:35:40 we opened more than 10 to ascertain traditional performing art classes across the provinces with

00:35:47 300 students as the first generation of students. This is just the very, very initial record.

00:35:54 And one thing I also want to emphasize is that, I think next slide, you will see how

00:35:59 CLA work has involved, or actually you have some sense already from the previous video.

00:36:06 Despite the evolution of CLA works, the Master RP ask the core of CLA meaning that CLA will

00:36:15 take care of them for the rest of their life, from pension, medical care, contingency fund,

00:36:22 and so on. And we have started with 16 master and currently there are only eight

00:36:30 remaining within CLA's program because some are aging, some are getting older and older now.

00:36:38 Next slide, please, Phacdey. Because of the first decade of our work is really, really dedicated to

00:36:48 reviving Cambodian traditional performing arts and also to COVID changes, so CLA extended our works.

00:37:00 As the context of Cambodian has changed,

00:37:07 the new generation of artists began to emerge. For example, the student on the art team who

00:37:12 will have invested on the first decade, so CLA started to provide scholarship fellowships

00:37:19 program and also professional development while creating job opportunity for them.

00:37:26 And as part of supporting the transformative environment, CLA also involve and engage in

00:37:35 cultural policy advocacy. And also, we also support the development of the culture and

00:37:41 art education in the public school as well while expanding and building Cambodian audiences. And

00:37:52 for your information, throughout my presentation, I used the term

00:37:56 Cambodian intangible cultural heritage instead of Khmer ethnicity because we want to reflect

00:38:04 Cambodian as a whole that the arts and culture belongs to everyone, not just Khmer ethnicity.

00:38:10 Khmer is the majority in Cambodia for example, maybe we just make up around 90% of the Cambodian

00:38:16 population. And we the very recent word of our work from 2017, one of our aim is to give

00:38:26 the artists the resources to start telling their story at contemporary out of Cambodia.

00:38:32 Next slide, please, Phacdey.

00:38:39 I think, once again from the beginning until now, it's about the context that has evolved.

00:38:46 And this is the context of performing arts that did CLA to what we are doing now. If

00:38:51 we look at into the performing art sector or the art ecosystem in Cambodia, there is a lack

00:38:57 of public funding to professional performing, a few contemporary performing arts companies and

00:39:05 also, sometimes sensitive political context. Yeah, I think you got one already political censorship.

00:39:13 And also, because the leg of the inconsistent access of the art education at early age,

00:39:21 most of the audience, especially the young ones, tend to come to the mindset that the art

00:39:25 is free and it's really, really challenging to get them to pay for the ticket of professional show.

00:39:33 So, another of our job is to work on building a paying audience.

00:39:40 Despite these challenging contexts, we can see that there are still a lot of talents

00:39:47 within the country of Cambodia. And as part of art development program, actually the program that I'm

00:39:54 managing, we provide some support. We provide small grant, including

00:40:01 small project grant or mobility grant, we provide funding for commissions or residency.

00:40:09 We create open calls for new work, workshop on the right thing or writing

00:40:16 and what the one that is really important is also because the artist create a lot of work already so

00:40:22 we also provide a platform for the artists to present their creativity and also talent.
And

00:40:32 one of the platforms as an example isn't the cultural season, which I will

00:40:39 guide you a little bit deeper into the next slide. Phacdey, please next slide.

00:40:49 So, what is cultural season? Cultural season is a two months programming lasting from two to

00:40:56 three a month. And the season is rated around the stem of identity with an annual system of

00:41:05 exploring, expressing and creating or recreating identity. There is mostly a question why CLA we

00:41:14 start to look into this theme. The theme of identity once again, if you look into the

00:41:20 content. I mean Cambodian context, Cambodian has developed a lot recently including immigration,

00:41:29 globalization, and also at the same time there is an emerging expression of contemporary art

00:41:36 and creative expression of the LGBT community.

00:41:40 So, they asked a lot of questions around this issue. For example, some people might

00:41:47 view this emerging expression as the threat to the pure Cambodian identity and other may ask

00:41:56 if the definition of Cambodian identity should remain the same, or it should be extended.

00:42:03 Thus, we have to divide it within Cambodia or we all can stay together in unity because once again

00:42:10 as I mentioned previously, Khmer ethnicity make up around 90% of Cambodian population while the other

00:42:21 10% including Cham, Vietnamese or indigenous community, so how could we live together? So

00:42:27 this question is not to be answered by CLA but CLA provide a platform for the artists

00:42:33 themselves to find the answers to those questions. So, the question is answer in term of

00:42:42 contemporary dance...or music. And if we look at the way that we frame the cultural season,

00:42:51 the cultural season is formatted into two. Part one,

00:42:57 performing arts program which doesn't aim not just to only present the talents and the

00:43:05 meaningful work of the artists, but we also have another part which is called contextual program.

00:43:10 Where we have interactive program like talk, conference or workshop by and from apps and

00:43:21 cultural practitioner and the audience especially the youngest one. Next slide please Phacdey.

00:43:34 And this is just a wrap up of the cultural season that we have just recently done last year in 2020

00:43:45 during the pandemic time. And actually, we are quite happy that CLA is able to serve

00:43:56 some artists to be able to continue work self from home. Because we have changing

00:44:04 some approach of our program for instance, from physical workshop but to an open call, where the

00:44:10 artist can stay at their own place and continue their own work. So, this is just a data that I

00:44:18 think if you have a question you can get to ask me for the next one. Next slide please Phacdey.

00:44:31 Despite the fact that CLA has evolved our work to creativity and expression,

00:44:38 but actually, we're supporting the continuity of Cambodia artistic heritage as one of us

00:44:45 ongoing aim. And also, we've done this as a way also to fight and also to keep the spirit of

00:44:55 where CLA are starting from. So, we provide some funding to an all-female percussionist

00:45:03 for... These are just some example to create the new traditional music.

00:45:07 We provide also some support as well to research project, to work and research on the rare

00:45:16 and indenture app for instance the first one with the all master it's about the...project...

00:45:26 And the second one it's a project by the commemorating music bus which is Arn is one of

00:45:33 the co-founder with the mission to research around music art form in the province and

00:45:39 their musical instrument is called Khim, is name of that instrument. Next slide please Phacdey.

00:45:52 I think that's all for what I would like to share, but I welcome for questions and I prefer the

00:46:01 approaching team for us to talk more and question actually, but before I'll be moving to the Q&A

00:46:07 part. I think Arn has one last special gift for all of us before starting the conversation.

00:46:17 [Chorn-Pond] Thank you, Sokhorn. Should I play another song now or after question.

00:46:23 I probably play the flute to close or is that a good idea to play the flute last?

00:46:30 [Yon] I think we would like to play-

00:46:32 [Chorn-Pond] Have a question now?

00:46:34 [Yon] We would like change the agenda, I say I'm fine with that, either way is fine actually.

00:46:38 [Chorn-Pond] How about you all? I play last and we say goodbye after I play,

00:46:43 yeah? Now open the conversation. People seem to nod their head. So that's good. So open to the

00:46:51 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

00:48:48 rediscover what the Khmer Magic Music Bus where we have the physical bus and what we would bring some

00:49:00 young masters to play traditional music for free in the remote, remote area in the mountain

00:49:10 for those who never, never seen. Like I wasn't and I've never seen here live music in their lives or

00:49:19 touch any instruments. So, we found Khim... She was talking about the Khim also being made by

00:49:26 bamboos to play you suck the instruments and it makes sound almost like harmonica, but it was

00:49:38 made my bamboo sound just like that. And many other instruments like the harp, the Cambodian

00:49:48 mouth harp. So those things that I... Now it's a little late night for me I'm really an old man

00:49:54 now I can't play many others. I need to spend my time fundraising instead of sacrificing my desire.

00:50:08 Yeah. Any other questions you guys?

00:50:18 [Shawn Newton] I have a comment, not a question. I had the opportunity to go to Cambodia a couple of years

00:50:25 ago as part of the programs that Adam, Dennis and Courtney and Yvette's office puts together.

00:50:33 And one of the things... I had just missed your talk when you had come to Suffolk, but they were

00:50:43 talking to me about it and they said, "Oh, there's his book, Never Fall Down, you need to read it."

00:50:47 I was like, "Okay." So, I bought the book and I have to say that it was extremely powerful-

00:50:53 [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 struggling

00:52:14 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

00:56:13 do this we have to understand the context, for example, one of the indigenous communities that

00:56:18 CLA have, we have commission, they are queer ethnicity who is living in central province.

00:56:24 For instance, they don't know my language because they are from indigenous people. So, for sure,

00:56:31 they totally couldn't write the application. They don't have access to internet. So, this is why you

00:56:38 should not rely on open call as just a way to reach out those people. So, one other tip that I

00:56:45 would suggest is that, to get the understanding of people of these differences I would say...

00:56:56 Or are diverse, provide a platform where everyone can come together, celebrate,

00:57:00 talk, and discuss and share instead of chatting, because this is what we have to

00:57:06 provide the most. And second thing, it's important to be mindful and be sensitive of the background

00:57:12 of people that we are approaching to bring them to create the work. Because what we have to be

00:57:20 mindful as well is that when we bring the apps and culture of one groups of people, for instance, the

00:57:28 example of those indigenous people on the stage, we try to maintain it's all simplicity as much

00:57:34 as we can. Because one thing we already needed is that we already somehow more or less already

00:57:39 decontextualize those people already. So, we try to maintain the artistic integrity as much as we can.

00:57:45 So, yeah. So, nominations, open core, and artistic mediator, those who can advise.

00:57:58 [Chorn-Pond] Big thing for me is I think if we all can agree

00:58:02 even the worst man or the worst president or the worst king if we can come agree together that

00:58:11 the power of music is transforming us; the power of music is no judgment. The power of music is

00:58:19 universal and put money on it, put money to support it. I think even for example,

00:58:29 yesterday we had a traditional Khmer dance in log. What the demonstrations against... They're

00:58:40 anti-Asian now. They were shooting, they were like you say.... So many people came out to low I see

00:58:51 it virtually. I saw it in one of my friends who were former gang members that I helped

00:58:58 15 years ago, from the street now performing for people. They loved him because he raps.

00:59:05 Rap is a universal. Rap started in America, right? From whoever, from someone that came '80s

00:59:14 that were put in jail. And where Becky Pangs wrote rap so people can really communicate through that.

00:59:29 But even traditional music traditional Khmer music will perform at the open space. Everybody

00:59:37 the white, the black, Hispanic now in law can appreciate that. They don't judge all this as a

00:59:43 bad art, this is a bad dance, you just provide money to build a platform in our community,

00:59:51 to have the arts of different art forms, different dance, different music,

00:59:56 to come together. People can appreciate that, even the first man that wanted to kill when

01:00:03 they hear the traditional song, they healed, they hear, they see the dance, people clap,

01:00:09 it will help their heart, to soften their heart. So, both.

01:00:12 I'm not anti-rap or I'm not anti any music right now, modern music mostly like hip hop, it's mostly

01:00:29 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.

01:02:46 Now I know many politicians in different places, in America

01:02:51 too, in our country too, knows the power of it that's why they don't give money.

01:02:58 They don't give the money to art, to education, because it gets you higher. It gets human when

01:03:07 we are educated, when we... Let me not get me into this, I'm getting so emotional about this

01:03:12 because I'm one of the victims of their games. I carry guns so they can make money out of my life.

01:03:20 That's the ultimate. And there many children around the world still being victims of this.

01:03:26 Prostitution, the same. People are making money out of this. Why can we give music? Why can we

01:03:34 allow people to perform to express the deep feeling as human beings, to reach a higher

01:03:42 goal, what we got to believe, want us to love each other. We have not crossed that. I think music art

01:03:51 can help us cross that, that's why they don't give money to that. I'm not sure what their plan is.

01:03:58 So, fundraise man, fundraise to get money to the art. And today

01:04:06 you decide to come for this conversation, I think is a fairly important for all of us. But in due to

01:04:17 share this conversation, not many people watch, so where are we going man in the world? Not allow to

01:04:27 suffer our Cambodia, but we should ask that question. Very dangerous situation we are

01:04:33 at now. And I know, we know that. Music art is the way to go. Anyone with more question?

01:04:55 How do we do about time? Phacdey, are we okay with time or we still have?

01:05:03 [Harkins] 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.

01:10:12 [Harkins] Good night. Thank you, Arn. Thank you, Sokhorn.

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.

01:11:40 [Yon] You too. Nice day.