

Arn CHORN-POND

Musician, Human Rights Activist, and Founder of Cambodian Living Arts



Born into a family of artists, Arn grew up in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime. Sent to a child labor camp and forced to play propaganda music during that period, he was later adopted by Reverend Peter Pond and moved to Vermont. After attending Brown University and graduating from Providence College, he returned to Cambodia on a mission to find the legacy of his family who were involved in Cambodian Opera, his music teacher from the time of the Khmer Rouge, and the stars of his early childhood. On this trip, the Cambodian Masters Performers Project, now Cambodian Living Arts, was born. Arn now lives outside of Phnom Penh and continues to work part-time on projects for Cambodian Living Arts.

Arn's talk will cover the following topics:

- **His personal story:** Arn will describe his childhood during the Khmer Rouge regime, and how music saved his life. His book, 'Never Fall Down', co-authored by Patricia McCormick, also shares this story.
- **The healing power of art:** A strong believer in the power of art to heal individuals and communities, Arn will talk about how the arts helped him to heal himself, and inspired him to help others to heal themselves.
- **Arts for transformation:** Arn will talk about the role of the arts in transforming society on a wider scale, especially in post-conflict contexts; and how the re-emergence of arts in Cambodia can be a model for other countries.

Cambodian Living Arts

Arn founded Cambodian Living Arts in 1998, and the organization initially focused on the preservation of endangered performing art forms and rituals. After the Khmer Rouge regime, 90% of Cambodia's artists did not survive and arts that had been transmitted between generations were in danger of being lost forever.

Over the past 2 decades, the work of CLA changed evolved in line with the development of Cambodia. They offer scholarships, fellowships, and other training opportunities; provide employment opportunities through regular performances and festivals, and create opportunities for international exchanges, research, and networking.

Looking forward, CLA will focus more on stimulating creativity and innovation in the arts sector. They will continue to build links between the arts sector in Cambodia and those of neighboring countries in Southeast Asia and further afield. They are also seeking to better integrate arts and culture into the Cambodian education system while also increasing performance opportunities for Cambodian artists.

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