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## Nirmita composers workshop welcomes in new creative generation

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*Words by Dan Riley, photos by Ben Noel*

Cambodian-American composer Ung Chinary will lead a workshop in Siem Reap (<http://stuff-cambodia.com/?s=siem+reap&lang=en>) over the coming two weeks, in collaboration with Phnom Penh-based non-profit organisation Cambodian Living Arts (<http://www.cambodianlivingarts.org/>) and Siem Reap's Nirmita Composers Institute.

An opening ceremony will be held at Wat Bo this Sunday, and a concert at Memoire Siem Reap from 7pm on Saturday 23 July will conclude the course, showcasing works written by the faculty.

The program aims to spark new creativity in young composers from Cambodia and the wider Mekong region.

“This is the era where investing in 20-30 people, producing 200-300 pieces, could fuel even greater and more powerful creativity for the next generation,” said Chinary, who was born in Takeo province but moved to the US in 1964 to study clarinet, eventually gaining citizenship.

The 73-year-old holds the distinction of being the first American to win the coveted Grawemeyer Award for musical composition (in 1989) for his piece Inner Voices.

The Nirmita workshop will involve ten emerging composers and traditional musicians from Cambodia, two from the US, as well as mentors and composers from Laos and Myanmar.

Sessions will be held in creativity and technical skills, rehearsals, recordings, and performances, and will build from traditional musical forms, using them as the basis to create something new.

“It is not only the students who will learn – the faculty members I hope will also be inspired, and return to their universities and their own musical projects with new creativity and vitality,” added Chinary.

The composer, who is currently Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of San Diego, California, was in attendance at a press conference held at Le Grand Palais Boutique Hotel in Phnom Penh yesterday evening, along with faculty members, workshop participants and CLA representatives.

One of the local musicians, Yim Chanthy, gave a short performance at the conference.

“As a traditional musician, I always strive to learn more about creative ways of conveying music as a message to audiences, so I’m confident that this workshop will give me valuable lessons and practices,” said Chanthy.





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