



UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 12PM THURSDAY 13 JULY

POWERFUL NEW PIECE BY HIM SOPHY AND RITHY PANH

Bangsokol: A Requiem for Cambodia is on stages around the world in 2017

PHNOM PENH, 4 JULY 2017 - **Bangsokol: A Requiem for Cambodia**, is a groundbreaking new composition fusing music, voice, film and movement; and the first major symphonic work addressing the traumas of the late 1970s in Cambodia. Commissioned by Cambodian Living Arts, **Bangsokol** is the only collaboration yet between critically-acclaimed composer HIM Sophy and internationally-decorated film director Rithy PANH. It will premiere in Melbourne in October 2017, and travel to New York and Boston in December 2017. 2018 will see performances in Europe and Asia, and in 2019 it will return to Phnom Penh, in the 40th year since the fall of the Khmer Rouge.

Bangsokol: A Requiem for Cambodia blends traditional Cambodian music with the Western requiem form and elements from *bangsokol*, the ceremony that accompanies Buddhist funeral rites. HIM Sophy's score is performed by a six-piece ensemble of traditional Cambodian instrumentalists, a Western orchestra, soloists HIM Savy and CHHORN Sam Ath, and a chamber choir. Rithy PANH's film projections blend archive footage with surreal imagery, capturing defining moments from Cambodia's history. Together with stage performance by CHUMVAN 'Belle' Sodhachiv, **Bangsokol** is a truly immersive experience.

Bangsokol: A Requiem for Cambodia is the latest major production commissioned by Cambodian Living Arts. As well as being an important and meaningful story about conflict and healing, with resonance around the world, CLA hopes that **Bangsokol** will help draw global attention to the art being made in Cambodia today. An artistically complex and challenging piece, CLA is working to build capacity in Cambodia so that it can be performed here in 2019, including supporting the development of a Cambodian chamber orchestra. **Bangsokol** ends with a message of hope – that even after atrocities, the transmission of arts and culture is both possible and vital: a sentiment that has been at the heart of CLA's work since the beginning.

Phloeu PRIM, Executive Director of Cambodian Living Arts, said,

"I'm thrilled that CLA, as commissioner and executive producer, can help tell this vital – and today, exceptionally relevant – story from Cambodia. **Bangsokol** shows the resilience of Cambodian people – artistry remains alive despite a genocide and an attempt to eradicate our culture. **Bangsokol** offers that sense of healing, personal reconciliation, and renewed hope for the future, to Cambodians across generations living all over the world. I hope that those in other post-conflict nations will be inspired by this piece, and it can support their own healing, and the continued transmission of their cultures."

HIM Sophy said,

"When I composed the requiem I relived the feelings I had during the Khmer Rouge times. It was hell on earth. It is important for the requiem to be shown around the world so that everyone can see that tragedy is a shared experience. There is hope in creation. I always tell people, 'Remember, never forget. Protect the future from repeating the past.'"

Rithy PANH said,

"**Bangsokol** is a vital act of memory. It is an attempt to give dignity to the dead; to reconcile with our own past; to give a face and a name to the victims, to give their souls peace...Some have said that poetry after atrocity is not possible anymore, yet we need to have it. We must continue to create. We can't start mourning without knowing how, and part of knowing how is to accept something very painful, something unexplainable. This art may bring us answers, help us accept our pain and loss. Yet, it is more than an act of remembrance, it's an act of transmission and brings humanization. Something which the Khmer Rouge attempted to take away from us."

Bangsokol: A Requiem for Cambodia is a global collaboration centered in Cambodia, based on an original idea by CLA co-founder Charley TODD. The libretto was written by Trent WALKER, a scholar of Southeast Asian Buddhist music. Melbourne-based Gideon OBARZANEK, a director, playwright and choreographer, is Director of Staging. Music Director Andrew CYR is conductor of the orchestra, the New York-based Metropolis Ensemble. Cambodia's Amrita Performing Arts worked as line producer and company manager in Cambodia, and Bophana Center provided archival material and technical expertise. The producer is THE OFFICE performing arts + film. The Embassies of Australia and of the United States have provided invaluable support.

There will be a press conference with the creative team, including HIM Sophy and Rithy PANH; and Phloeu PRIM at **10.00-11.30am on Thursday 13 July**, at the Cambodian Living Arts Theater at the **National Museum of Cambodia**. To attend, or for any further enquiries, please email hermione@cambodianlivingarts.org or call [070 425 861](tel:070425861).

For full information and media resources, please visit www.bangsokol.cambodianlivingarts.org.



About Cambodian Living Arts

- Cambodian Living Arts was founded in 1998 by musician and human rights activist Arn CHORN-POND.
- Cambodian Living Arts' mission is to be a catalyst in a vibrant arts sector, inspiring new generations.
- CLA helps talented people to build and develop careers in the arts, through scholarships, fellowships, and support to troupes and individuals. CLA aims to promote creativity and innovation in the arts sector, and to build links with neighbors in the Greater Mekong region and further afield in Asia. CLA is also working to get more arts and culture education into Cambodian public schools, and to increase performance opportunities for Cambodian artists.

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