

Effecting Dynamic Cultural Exchange Through the Performing Arts:

Three Case Studies of U.S. Exchanges with Asia

Festival of Indonesia In Performance (1990-1992)

Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia (2001)

Season of Cambodia (2013)

By

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Abstract

The concept of dynamic cultural exchange transcends the constraints of national and regional boundaries, histories, religions, and politics. It acknowledges, at once, the differences and commonalities of distinct cultures while recognizing the validity of each. The goal of effecting dynamic cultural exchange through the performing arts is not to produce a melting pot of exotic spectacles. Rather, it is to create a medium for human interaction and understanding through the preservation and presentation of distinct cultural performances. Both artists and audiences are integral to this exchange.

To encourage this relationship of artists and audiences without borders, the assembly of a transnational presentation team sourcing expertise in the cultural and presentation practices of each culture is fundamental to the realization of such projects. This paper identifies innovative practices for dynamic cultural exchange through the performing arts by way of a focused analysis of three cases of U.S. exchange with Asia: *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* (1990-1992), *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* (2001), and *Season of Cambodia* (2013).

Introduction. Accessing *Sbek Thom*

On January 12, 2017, a day marked by high winds and cold temperatures in my home-base of New York City, I found myself in Siem Reap, Cambodia, amidst a cultural delegation facilitated by Cambodian Living Arts (CLA), an organization dedicated to transforming the lives of individuals and communities through Cambodian arts (Season of Cambodia: “Mission”). It was balmy and warm when we arrived at Wat Bo temple complex after nightfall. Stepping off our modern, air-conditioned minibus in front of Wat Bo, the tranquil, open-air setting suppressed our conversations. High-backed chairs and reclining mats were strewn in front of a white projection screen roughly 30’ wide by 15’ high. A traditional Cambodian orchestra occupied the right side of the screen, and the musicians—a group of young Cambodian boys—sat next to their instruments, readying themselves to begin the performance. I opted for a reclining mat with a triangle of shiny, golden pillows to support my head and neck. I lay back, taking in the warm night air, the glow of the full moon, and the sound of hushed conversations in English and Khmer. The audience grew, as local townspeople and monks from the temple community joined our delegation on the dusty ground.

Two male performers emerged from behind the large screen, signaling the start of the performance. They welcomed us, both in Khmer and in English, and introduced a story from an episode of the Reamker, the Khmer version of the Ramayana. This story was to be performed through Cambodian shadow puppetry, *Sbek Thom*, a theatrical form with roots dating to the fifteenth century. Then, as invisible attendants ignited a large fire behind the screen, the orchestra began to play, and the performers initiated a blessing of the performance space. A narrator read the scripted episode, spoken in Khmer and projected onto the screen as

English supertitles, as the story was physically performed by way of six foot leather shadow puppets held high above the heads of the puppeteers, whose roles were highly choreographed. Time moved quickly. Before I knew it, an hour had passed and the performance had come to an end. At its conclusion, the orchestra continued to play and the puppeteers invited members of the audience to join them in the performance area to dance, informally and socially. Arn Chorn-Pond, a Cambodian-American musician and founder of CLA, pulled me up to dance.

As an observer of the shadow puppet performance, I felt comfortable, cloaked in the evening's darkness as a witness to culture, with no reciprocal social connection expected of me. However, when I joined the performance, I became acutely aware of my non-Cambodian being. My body did not know how to respond to the rhythms of the music. I did not move like the Cambodian performers around me, and I instinctively sensed a heightened respect and appreciation for the talent and skill of the performers, however simplistic their performance may have originally appeared. Our observer-American/performer-Cambodian distinctiveness dissolved and a different sense of human interaction developed. We danced together in the darkness to the tones of Cambodian instruments, by the heat of the fire, under the light of the full moon.

Recalling this experience now, back in New York City, I can remember the heat of the night and of the fire. I hear the voice of the monk who sat on the ground between me and Chorn-Pond and remember the warmth of their exchanges, even though it was clear they had not previously met. I remember the delight I felt when the fire was first lit and the stunning silhouette of the first leather shadow puppet as it was lifted to the back-lit screen. I remember feeling welcomed into a uniquely Cambodian fellowship that included the performers, the

audience, the monks, and the townspeople who were drawn to join the outdoor performance. Even more than the content of the performance, these sensory memories of Cambodian community linger at the forefront of my mind.

I left Wat Bo delighted by many aspects of the *Sbek Thom* performance, particularly the puppeteers' highly physical choreography and the Khmer music that accompanied it. However, I also left recognizing that I had not understood some of the deeper contexts and intentions of the performance. The artistry and fellowship of this performance was the flash point for my personal experience of a dynamic cultural exchange that compelled me to seek clarification of the historical and sacred intentions of the *Sbek Thom* performance practice. Upon my return to New York at the completion of the CLA delegation, I began my research. I learned that the ritual blessing embedded in the beginning of the Wat Bo performance was not a theatricalized version of a ceremonial act, as I had originally assumed. Rather, it was an authentic rendering of a historically sacred ritual—the *sampeah kru*—that is integral to the *Sbek Thom* as a devotional act, paying homage to divinities and ancestors (Phim 21). I also came to understand that my vague familiarity with the epic Reamker as an essential source of subject matter in Cambodian performance practices did not provide an adequate context for the particular episode that I witnessed at Wat Bo, nor for the characters portrayed. I had relied heavily on the projected English-language supertitles for context and clear narration. However, the supertitle translations from Khmer to English proved to be approximate and unclear. Ultimately, I stopped reading them to focus, instead, on the physical aspects of the production that required minimal contextualization or translation, including the mesmerizing fire and the impressive physicality of the puppeteers.

The potential for this performance to effect a dynamic cultural exchange between me and *Sbek Thom* was influenced equally by my preparation and the presenters' contextualization of the performance practice. As experts on the performance and cultural practices of Cambodia, the CLA staff and leadership shouldered the responsibility of making aspects of Cambodian performance practices accessible to an exclusively non-Cambodian delegation. CLA offered several points of entry for its delegates, including an optional workshop with the Wat Bo Shadow Puppet Theater on the morning of the performance. Concurrently, they provided a separate workshop on traditional Cambodian dance. I attended the dance workshop, thereby, missing an opportunity to participate in a relevant preparation for the evening *Sbek Thom* performance. Additionally, I joined the delegation on a CLA fellowship and stayed at a hotel with CLA staff, apart from the larger group of delegates who may have enjoyed discussions about *Sbek Thom* and other Cambodian cultural topics at casual gatherings at their hotel. These logistical considerations may have contributed to my limited understanding of the cultural context of the performance. Conversely, they also contributed to my personal desire to seek a post-performance contextualization of my Wat Bo experience.

As evidenced by my experience of *Sbek Thom* in Siem Reap, accessible points of entry are invaluable in fostering dynamic cultural exchange between performers and audiences of varying cultural backgrounds, as, per Alexander (227), "The ability to enjoy all art forms is enhanced by, or sometimes even requires, a familiarity of the conventions used in that form." Without contextual cues, culturally-specific performance practices may be misinterpreted or viewed as static demonstrations as opposed to opportunities for the dynamic exchange of cultural values and personal perspectives. Sociologist Wendy Griswold

elaborates on the possible pitfalls of such cultural misperceptions: “Cultural ignorance or misunderstanding, it seems, can lead to highly undesirable outcomes: lost business, interethnic tensions, or an inability to participate in either the comic or the transcendent moments in human experience” (2). Dynamic cultural exchange through the performing arts, like any form of cultural exchange, requires a commitment from both cultures to mutual respect, sustained mutual interest, and evolving understanding. Most essentially, the non-static nature of this exchange creates possibilities for increased breadth and depth of engagement over time and experience.

Chapter I. Attaining Knowledge and Dynamic Cultural Exchange

Presenters of the performing arts pay close attention to existing barriers to exchanging artistic expressions and cultural practices with their constituents.¹ Arts presenters, on both a local and national scale, research and consider economic and social concerns, such as ticket price, methods of communicating about and promoting the work to be presented, as well as generational and educational gaps. Presenting organizations apply for grants and raise money for organizational studies with the specific intent of revealing and confronting their unique barriers to the effective exchange of artistry and creative traditions. The results are integrated into barrier-busting strategic plans that influence programming decisions, marketing campaigns, and even building and venue design.

Presentations of culturally-specific performance within the United States must also address associated *cultural* barriers when presenting such work within an American performance context. Within the context of this thesis, “culturally-specific performance” refers to performance practices that are particular to a specific country or culture—performance practices in which cultural references are embedded, including but not limited to court, urban, folk, traditional, and contemporary forms. In this context, presenters wishing to present culturally-specific performance must address differences in customs and cultural norms within a performance context, varied approaches to artistic process and expression, and divergences in the development of the work and modes of presentation. Specific to the focus of this paper—*Festival of Indonesia In Performance, Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*, and *Season of Cambodia*—focus on culturally-specific performance practices from Asia,

¹ See examples such as the National Endowment for the Arts’ *When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance*, and Americans for the Arts’ *National Arts Index 2016: An Annual Measure of the Vitality of Arts and Culture in the United States: 2002-2013* and the Americans for the Arts’ *Local Index*, 2016.

making it relevant to consider their presentation as non-Western forms within an American presentation context.

Creating accessible points of entry by way of contextualization encourages engagement with culturally-specific aspects of performance. Language may prove to be a challenge in the presentation of text-based work, as I experienced with *Sbek Thom* in Siem Reap, and presenters must consider providing supertitles, simultaneous translation, or translated librettos to their audiences. Communicating an understanding of the geographical and cultural roots of a culturally-specific performance practice becomes prerequisite when presenting it outside of its original context. Conversely, communicating an understanding of U.S. customs and culture to the international touring artists is also essential to mutual exchange. Addressing these cultural barriers embodies the challenges and opportunities that present themselves in such interchanges.

In addition to artistic challenges, there are financial, bureaucratic, and ethical issues associated with the production of culturally-specific performance practices from abroad. These challenges include costs associated with international airfare and local housing, culturally-specific requirements for company management while touring, and legal and administrative fees linked to attaining passports and non-immigrant visas for international artists even though the artists' stays in the U.S. are of limited duration. Presenters must consider the appropriateness of presenting sacred and ceremonial performance practices, such as Cambodian *Smot* or Balinese *Rejang*, outside their cultural contexts and on an international stage. If determined appropriate, attention turns to the responsibility of contextualizing the art forms, as well as to communicating to audiences the customary expectations for observing them.

U.S.-based arts presenters wishing to present culturally-specific performance must have an awareness of the local and global sociopolitical conditions associated with its presentation, including the histories of cultures and peoples, their histories among nations, ever-changing geopolitical conditions, and the changing political administrations whose acts of governance may impose unexpected strictures on travel and immigration for artists and non-artists alike, (as we witness as of this writing the effects of an increased xenophobia within the American population). They must thoughtfully consider how to navigate these conditions in every aspect of the work, including developing clear curatorial perspectives, determining the way in which audiences will engage with the work, and acknowledging past and current sociopolitical climates both in the artists' home country and in the United States. Despite the complexities involved in their development, the presentation of culturally-specific performance practices can play an essential role in the ongoing dialogues of international relations, public diplomacy, cultural and educational exchange, and global understanding.

In *Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey*, a report commissioned by Americans for the Arts and published in 2009, Milton C. Cummings, a political scientist and an experienced diplomat, defines cultural diplomacy as “the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding” (1). *Cultural Diplomacy: The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy*,” a 2005 U.S. Department of State report to the Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, identifies cultural diplomacy as not only a contributor to government-initiated public diplomacy efforts but as the cornerstone of such efforts:

Cultural diplomacy is the linchpin of public diplomacy; for it is in cultural activities that a nation's idea of itself is best represented. And cultural diplomacy can enhance our national security in subtle, wide-ranging, and sustainable ways. Indeed history may record that America's cultural riches played no less a role than military action in shaping our international leadership, including the war on terror. For the values embedded in our artistic and intellectual traditions form a bulwark against the forces of darkness.² (1)

In each definition, the arts are presented as an essential means by which to develop sustained international relationships with nations and to promote understanding among them.

Cultural diplomacy and cultural exchange can be but are not always mutually exclusive practices. A definition of cultural exchange in relation to the previously defined cultural diplomacy is warranted within the context of this discussion. Merriam-Webster defines exchange as: “the act of giving or taking one thing in return for another” and defines culture as: “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time.” Therefore, cultural exchange can be defined as the sharing of aspects of culture, including but not limited to performance practices—traditional, folk, and contemporary—which are reflective of social, political, and historical perspectives. Cultural exchange initiatives are programs developed in order to foster cultural exchange.

Ted M.G. Tanen, an American Foreign Officer who dedicated 27 years of his career to leading Department of State-sponsored cultural exchange initiatives between the United States and foreign countries, notes that, whereas the majority of other nations in the world are influenced by the policies and economy of the United States, at least on a governmental level, “Too many Americans pay too little attention to any other country unless it is one that they already know, or unless there is threat of war or disaster that may mean the United

² See “Cultural Diplomacy: The Linchpin of Public Diplomacy”, Executive Summary.

States may send military or economic aid” (366). To demonstrate this point, a 2016 study conducted by the Council on Foreign Relations and the National Geographic Society, *What College-Aged Students Know About the World: A Survey on Global Literacy*, surveyed 1,200 college-educated Americans between the ages of 18 and 26 with questions on geography, U.S. foreign policy, recent international events, and economics. Of the 1,200 individuals surveyed, seventy-two percent indicated these topics are becoming more important to them; however, the following results to five discrete questions on the survey demonstrate the immediate need for expanding the global perspective of the American public:

1. Twenty-nine percent of those surveyed correctly identified Indonesia from amongst the options of Indonesia, India, South Africa, and Armenia as the country with the majority Muslim population (22).
2. Nineteen percent indicated they had been exposed to the topic of American foreign policy in a college course (29).
3. Thirty-four percent indicated they had been exposed to the topic of world religions in a college course (29).
4. Eighty-four percent indicated the Internet is the type of media they primarily use to learn about national and international issues (31).
5. Forty-three percent pointed to Facebook as the primary media platform and news source through which they access information about national and international issues (31).

The influence of increased reliance on technology and its correlation to the ways in which we build our social networks was examined in a 2009 study initiated by the Pew Research Center. The results of the study, “Social Isolation and New Technology,” revealed:

Compared to the relatively recent past, most Americans now have fewer people with whom they discuss important matters, and the diversity of people with whom they discuss these issues has declined. There is a wealth of scholarship to suggest that the implications of this trend for individuals and for American society are starkly negative. (Hampton et al. 55)

Cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts can serve to bridge the gap between the potential isolation of Internet-based communication and news sourcing and the demonstrated need of greater global awareness indicated by the results of the *What College-Aged Students Know About the World: A Survey on Global Literacy* survey. A live performing arts experience rooted in culturally-specific performance practices provides an audience with direct, interpersonal exposure to aspects of unique cultural practices and artistry. A live, interactive performing arts experience focused on the creative processes and cultural practices of other peoples and nations can play a vitally important role in the diplomatic integration of our nation into the global community. Per Cohen, “It is a commonplace that the age of European and American cultural domination is coming to an end; with inter-Asian cultural traffic on the increase, ‘global’ is no longer a surrogate for Western neo-imperialism” (354).

Internet and social media marketing of international performances reaches a broad demographic of the American audience, including the eighty-four percent and forty-three percent of U.S. college students who reported their primary international news sources to be the Internet and Facebook, respectively. Although ticket pricing for an international production may persist as a challenge, the presentation of international performance in the United States dramatically increases accessibility to a significant segment of the American audience for whom international travel is financially beyond personal reach. By making culturally-specific performances accessible to a broad American public via a wide variety of

presenting models, including festivals, university presenting programs, and world music presenters, for example, the performing arts serve as a viable vehicle for the promotion of transnational, interpersonal interaction.

In an era of unpredictable and waning federal support for the arts in the United States—both financially and in its commitment to public diplomacy—the onus of sustained and effective cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts shifts to presenters, producers, and arts organizations. To be positioned as a self-sustaining ecosystem having an influence on cultural diplomatic efforts, arts professionals must give consideration to how best to produce and present such exchange initiatives in America. By drawing on existing practices and strategies of cultural exchange initiatives, I posit the consideration of an innovative model, one capable of developing and sustaining dynamic cultural exchange, transferable to both transnational interactions and to the diverse populations within America's own borders.

Dynamic cultural exchange in the performing arts, as I define this concept, is a synergistic phenomenon ignited by creative initiatives that inspires effects beyond the immediate interactions or implications of the concept or performance. As such, the concept is cultural work that aims for long-term impact that audience members experience in a live, present moment that relies upon the past histories of peoples, nations, and cultures and that a multiplicity of communities value for its potential sustainability. In this sense, dynamic cultural exchange is not restricted solely to international exchange, but should be applied to any community of diverse cultures and should engender effects not only in the creative realm but also socially and politically.

In this thesis, I examine the conditions for dynamic cultural exchange of traditions and artistry through the performing arts, primarily within festival and touring structures in the

United States. I engage through the focused analysis of three case studies. Chronologically, these cases include: the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* (1990-1991), an eighteen-month, nation-wide performing arts festival featuring twelve music, dance, and drama groups from Indonesia; *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* (2001), a presentation of dance and music practices, both classical and folk, from Cambodia in a two-month tour of twelve U.S. cities; and *Season of Cambodia*, a two-month festival that presented the work of one-hundred and twenty-five Cambodian performers, filmmakers, and visual artists in thirty-four New York City venues in 2013. My research aims to reveal principles and strategies for the exchange of cultural practices and artistry through performing arts initiatives with cultural exchange goals. Through a study of curatorial perspectives and process; funding, organizational, and relationship structures; selection of artists and performance sites; and methods of contextualization, I aim to identify common and distinct practices among them and develop recommendations for innovative practices within this field.

Chapter II. Social and Historical Context

The first entry in this section, “Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government,” outlines the trajectory of cultural diplomacy efforts by the United States government between the 1930s and today. This overview reveals the relationship of the performing arts to cultural diplomacy efforts by the United States government and also considers the reasoning behind such initiatives. Were they/are they initiated with goals of developing ongoing cultural exchange and mutual understanding among nations or were they/are they initiated as efforts to propagandize an “ideal” American way of life to an international community? It examines the United States government’s approach to representing American values and ideals abroad and considers its process of identifying artists and performance practices in order to accomplish associated goals. The U.S. government has placed priority on utilizing American performing arts and artists as tools for building diplomatic relationships with foreign governments and peoples, yet this stands in contrast to a history of limited federal funding and inconsistent government support for the arts in the United States.

This exploration provides segue into the second entry in this section, “Representation of Culture,” a discussion of challenges associated with determining how cultural aspects of a people may be represented within the context of cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts, organized by both American and foreign non-governmental entities. Here, the perspective shifts from an exploration of the United States government exporting American performance practices abroad to presenting culturally-specific performance practices in the United States, either as U.S. imports facilitated by American arts practitioners or as foreign exports brought to the United States by international entities. The third entry in

this section, “Relational Positioning,” acknowledges the complex political, social, and cultural histories of Indonesia and Cambodia—both independently and in relation to the United States and to their global positioning—and considers how these factors influence representation and the presentation of related performance practices within the United States. The final entry, “Advancements in Technology and Accessibility,” addresses advancements in methods of communication and information sharing spanning the three decades in which *Festival of Indonesia In Performance; Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*; and *Season of Cambodia* were conceived, planned, and executed.

Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government

Cummings' 2009 report summarizes cultural diplomacy efforts initiated by the United States government between the 1930s and the early 2000s:

Active involvement in – and funding for – cultural diplomacy programs by the federal government has most often been stimulated by a perceived foreign threat or crisis. The Nazi threat really got the United States started in the business of cultural diplomacy. World War II expanded involvement still further, and the Cold War with the Soviet Union enlarged many of these activities even more. (12)

To this point, the United States' first formally-initiated governmental cultural diplomacy efforts in the 1930s were spawned by an "increase in anti-American propaganda in Latin America on the part of both the Communists and the Axis powers" (Prevots 19). In 1938, the Division of Cultural Relations (DCR) was established within the U.S. Department of State for the purposes of creating Latin American exchange programs. Between 1940 and 1946, Nelson A. Rockefeller served as the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA), a new position within the U.S. Department of State, one that tasked him with developing short-term, immediate impact exchange initiatives in Latin America to supplement the long-term initiatives developed by the DCR (Prevots 19). In 1941, Rockefeller worked with Lincoln Kirstein and George Balanchine to assemble an American ballet company, the American Ballet Caravan, to travel to and perform in Latin America with a goal of demonstrating American prowess in the arts and dispelling stereotypes of Americans as cultureless capitalists depicted in anti-American propaganda efforts (Prevots 19).

Following World War II, American political concerns turned toward promoting the advantages of a "Free World" and diminishing the features of Soviet totalitarianism, thus combatting the threat of communism to America's economic and political dominance in global society:

The Cold War was not merely a series of military alliances and violent confrontations, but a concerted campaign to promote the “American way of life” throughout the world. Central to this effort was the celebration of “freedom,” ostensibly the quality that most fully distinguished American society from the Soviet foe. (Foner 2)

To this end, the State Department organized and funded two performing arts festivals in Berlin in 1951 and 1952 featuring American artists, “to demonstrate the high standards of American performing arts achievements and, by implication, to refute Nazi and Communist propaganda clichés of American cultural insensibility and sterility” (Prevots 20).

In 1953, in response to increased diplomatic efforts by the Soviet Union following Joseph Stalin’s death, the government established the United States Information Agency (USIA) with the intent to “understand, inform, and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad” (USIA 5). In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the President’s Emergency Fund for International Affairs, for which Congress appropriated more than two million U.S. dollars to allow the State Department to arrange presentations of American dance, theater, music, and sports events abroad; Congress additionally appropriated funds to the USIA to publicize the events. In *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War*, Naima Prevots identifies Eisenhower’s emergency program as “a weapon in the Cold War to make the United States more competitive with the Soviet Union and to persuade undecided or left-leaning countries that the American way of life was superior to Soviet communism” (135).

Between 1954 and 1961, the Eisenhower administration sponsored international tours by prominent American artists and performance companies. An inaugural tour by the José Limón Company to Latin America was followed by more than one hundred others to

destinations across the globe. An emphasis on the sponsorship of international tours by African American artists in the 1950s and 1960—Louis Armstrong, Dizzie Gillespie, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the Howard University Choir, a production of *Porgy and Bess*—demonstrates the U.S. government’s use of cultural diplomacy to “counteract negative publicity about American race relations” (Foner 5). During the Cold War in the late 1950s, U.S. diplomatic efforts involving the performing arts evolved into Soviet-American exchange initiatives. In 1958, the Moiseyev Dance Company, a folk dance company from Moscow, Russia, embarked on a U.S. tour and in 1959, the Bolshoi Ballet performed in the United States (Prevots 71). In response, the State Department sponsored a tour of the American Ballet Theater to the Soviet Union in 1960, followed by an eight-week tour of the USSR by the New York City Ballet in 1962, and a tour of the Robert Joffrey Ballet to the Soviet Union in 1963 (Prevots 81, 87).

In 1958, legislation was approved for the development of a National Cultural Center in Washington, D.C., an effort that resulted in the design and building of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. By 1959, government-sponsored cultural diplomacy programs were so extensive that President Eisenhower established the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Relations, known today as the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act, creating the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The NEA was established as “the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities” (United States National Endowment for the Arts). The validity and

appropriateness of the NEA and its position in the U.S. government has been questioned in the decades following its establishment, most notably during the “Culture Wars” of 1989, when Senator Jesse Helms and Senator Alphonse D’Amato scrutinized the funding policies of the agency, identifying the work of four independent artists funded by the NEA as controversial and unworthy of federal support.

The focus of government-sponsored cultural diplomacy shifted yet again following the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. In his 2009 report, Cummings states, “These horrifying events, America’s response to this new challenge, and later, the war in Iraq raised a whole set of new issues relating to the U.S. government’s cultural diplomacy, particularly its dealings with the Arab world” (12). Some of this shift can be seen in an examination of present-day government-sponsored cultural diplomacy programs.

Today, the ECA facilitates cultural diplomacy programs focused on exporting American performance practices abroad, as well as importing international performance practices to the United States. Current cultural diplomacy programs sponsored by the State Department include *CenterStage*, a program in its third year, that invites international artists to the United States for month-long tours in music, theater, and dance; *DanceMotion USA*, a program in its sixth year, which identifies three to four U.S.-based dance companies annually to represent the United States on month-long tours abroad; and *OneBeat*, a program also in its sixth year, which hosts international musicians in the United States for month-long residencies with American musicians collaboratively writing, producing, and performing original music. In each initiative, the Department of State identifies the countries and cultures involved in each of these programs, including determining the countries from which artists are invited to come to the United States and determining the destinations of American artists

traveling abroad to represent the United States. Although not exclusively so, many exchanges initiated by these programs focus on Arab nations and Muslim regions, as well as artists and art forms of Arab and Muslim descent.

In the case of *DanceMotion USA*, the U.S. Department of State provides American dance companies with funding to tour abroad to establish or bolster their international reputations and to serve as American cultural ambassadors. The State Department partners with the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), which facilitates the program and manages the State Department-issued budget. The Department of State determines the countries to which the U.S.-based dance companies travel and works with their partners at BAM to dictate the focus of the exchange that takes place. According to the ECA's *Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI)* for 2017, *DanceMotion USA* exchanges are expected to yield the following outcomes:

1. Foreign workshop participants will further their understanding of American society and the American dance community, and increase their knowledge of dance repertoire and dance technique;
2. Younger overseas audiences from underserved communities will expand their interactions with American artists and deepen their understanding of American society;
3. The selected American and overseas *DanceMotion* schools, companies or non-profit organizations will engage local arts and educational organizations and communities through unique collaborative program activities and the culminating final project component;

4. American communities and students will further their skills and knowledge of dance and social practice through unique collaborative workshops presented jointly by the pairs of dancers and dance teachers;
5. American and overseas dance schools, companies or non-profit organizations will expand their discussions, lecture demonstrations, and media events to address the role of dance in cultural diplomacy, promoting awareness of social issues and/or fostering mutual understanding between the U.S. and other countries;
6. The pairs of U.S. and overseas dance schools and companies will build partnerships that could be sustained beyond the FY2017 cycle of *DanceMotion USA* and continue to illustrate and further policy issues through dance; and
7. A final culminating community engagement project that will further the impact and multiplier effect of the exchange program (POGI).

Across *DanceMotion USA*'s six-year history, each selected dance company participated in a single tour with repeat visits to countries happening only in rare occurrences (Croft 209-210). The program's principal focus on facilitating engagement and exchange abroad and its lesser focus of sharing the experience within communities in America inherently limits widespread first-hand effect on the public of the United States. However, American audiences are provided with a secondary influence from this global exchange by way of *DanceMotion USA*'s website and social media presence, maintained by BAM. Of note is *DanceMotion USA*'s blog, which features eye-witness accounts, written and photographic, of international activity posted by dancers involved in the tours. *DanceMotion USA* also coordinates opportunities for Americans to interact directly with the dance companies while they are on tour, including live-streamed video sessions of workshops or

other tour activity hosted by the company's artistic director or choreographer. Additionally, participating in the program has had significant influence on the individual choreographers and dancers themselves, and, according to Croft (16-17), this influence has sometimes manifested as notable references in choreographies created following their tour experience. In this case, when viewing performances of these influenced choreographies in the United States, American audiences gain secondary value from the cultural exchange initiative.

Whereas today, *DanceMotion USA* initiatives focus solely on the export of American dance companies, between 2012 and 2014, the State Department invited international artists involved in *DanceMotion USA* initiatives abroad to continue their exchange with American dance companies in the United States and to perform together at BAM. These collaborations included: Trey McIntyre Project (USA) and the Korea National Contemporary Dance Company (South Korea) in 2012; Brenda Angiel Aerial Dance Company (Argentina) and Doug Varone and Dancers (USA) in 2013; and David Dorfman Dance (USA) and Korhan Basaran Company (Turkey) in 2014.

As, according to the State Department, "it is in cultural activities that a nation's idea of itself is best represented" (United States Department of State 1), Department of State-sponsored cultural diplomacy programs deserve examination as models of performing arts initiatives with cultural exchange goals, particularly surrounding issues of national cultural identity and representation. The State Department's perspective on representation raises the question of the perspective from which a national identity is defined and represented. In other words, the idea of an "official" national identity and how that identity is "best represented." In his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," cultural theorist Stuart Hall problematizes defining identity as official or unchanging, stating, "Identity is not as transparent or

unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete” (392). In *Dancers as Diplomats: American Choreography in Cultural Exchange*, Clare Croft expands on the notion of representing one’s nationality on an international stage for the purposes of cultural diplomacy specifically through the *DanceMotion USA* program:

When people become aware of being marked as “official” Americans, how then do multiple layers of representation – of the nation, various communities, and the individual – either serve the construction of American identity or fall outside of that identity[...]? First, the very constitution of the category of “official” Americanness implies that something exists beyond that officially recognized national identity – an excess that the government cannot fully control. Second, it is the dancers’ movement between that “official” identity and what lies beyond it that we see how the arts help us to recognize that national identity, especially American identity, is always in process. (8-9)

The American dance companies participating in *DanceMotion USA* exchanges are encouraged in some ways to restrict the voice they carry while traveling. As Croft notes, “When *DanceMotion* companies traveled to Washington for pre-tour briefings in 2010, many dancers reported that State Department desk officers gave them specific instructions to avoid all political conversations while abroad” (20). This prompts some questions: What values are these American dance companies expected to represent abroad? What exactly does it mean to represent America in an official diplomatic capacity? What types of conversations are considered politics-neutral for agents of cultural diplomacy when abroad? In the instance of *DanceMotion USA*, establishing the parameters of an American identity does not come about through a reciprocal dialogue between the U.S. Department of State and the artists involved in the representation itself. Rather, an American “identity” is shaped by the U.S. Department of State for purposes of a government-based diplomatic agenda and imposed on the dancers

representing America abroad. Thus, it is the U.S. government's perspective of the "nation's idea of itself" that is intended to be projected outwardly on these tours.

It is important to recognize that the cultural exchange initiatives analyzed in this paper—*Festival of Indonesia In Performance, Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*, and *Season of Cambodia*—were not sponsored, facilitated, or funded by the U.S. Department of State. In contrast to the public arts funding and relationship models of some countries, including most in mainland Europe, where most cultural activities are subsidized by the state, arts and culture ventures in the United States are primarily supported by foundation and private funding sources (Kozymka 80). In fact, in 2016, federal arts-related appropriations to the NEA accounted for only .003 percent of the federal budget (Bump).

This economic model demands public-private partnerships or entirely private funding for artistic endeavors in the United States and places the onus of value making on artists, presenters, producers, and arts organizations. As a result, fundraising is a role arts professionals in the United States must be willing to assume. While this adds a layer of burden to the facilitating of artistic projects in the United States, it positions privately organized cultural exchange programs to contribute significantly to diplomatic efforts while maintaining a level of neutrality or distance from the government. In turn, cultural diplomacy becomes an effort in which we are all active players: "American cultural policy is made at the federal, state and local level and the ecosystem represents multiple collaborations between the government, academia, civil society, foundations and the private sector" (Fullman 4). From this perspective, arts professionals in the United States, either working

independently or through connection with institutions, have the opportunity and responsibility to contribute to efforts of cultural diplomacy and to foster relationships and mutual understanding among diverse communities through the arts.

Representation of Culture

Clarifying which cultural perspective is desired to be represented abroad and which goals are to result from this representation is as essential to performance practices being exported from the United States as it is to the process of importing performance practices into the United States. Also of relevance is recognizing the impetus of such initiatives as either an import of culturally-specific performances by American producers or an export of such practices initiated by individuals from their country of origin.

Festival of Indonesia In Performance was initiated by an Indonesian organization seeking to demonstrate aspects of their culture in the United States; *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* was an import of Cambodian performance practices to the United States by American producers; and *Season of Cambodia* was a project of initiated by a Cambodian organization to introduce the breadth of Cambodian performance practices on an international stage: New York City. While each initiative approached cultural representation in accordance with their individual missions and goals, I contend that they all reflected the core values of dynamic cultural exchange in the performing arts, sharing an aim of sustaining long-term impact in a multiplicity of communities and recognizing the importance of contextualizing their culturally-specific performance practices within an American performance context. The questions at the heart of developing successful strategies for dynamic cultural exchange are: what do the performance practices of a particular people, community, nation, or state reveal about a society and what methods best facilitate exchange with the people, community, nation, or state of another society with different cultural values and expressions? Before I confront these questions, I first reflect on the components by which a society might be defined.

What comprises the society of Indonesia, defined by the Dutch explorers as a country, with its six thousand inhabited and one thousand permanently settled islands? These islands are inhabited by hundreds of ethnic groups speaking more than seven hundred languages. What constitutes the society of Cambodia, a nation governed as a French protectorate for over one hundred years, devastated by civil genocide followed by Vietnamese occupation, and now functioning as an independent democracy? How also is the society of the United States defined, an immigrant nation of fifty states founded on the principles of freedom and democracy and driven by individualism, industry, and capitalism? Here lies the challenge of representing incredibly diverse and complicated societies without diminishing the intricacies of their many historical dimensions and nuances. Stuart Hall articulates this difficulty in his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”: “There can be few political statements which so eloquently testify to the complexities entailed in the process of trying to represent a diverse people with a diverse history through a single, hegemonic ‘identity’” (235). Not to deny the complex histories of societies, lineage, and evolution of culture, the focus must shift to representing distinctly identified aspects of a culture, rather than seeking an elusive or untenable definition of societal identity. Attempting to define a singular cultural identity for any one of these nations—Indonesia, Cambodia, and the United States—denies the characteristic diversity of each.

Inherent in the mission of cultural exchange initiatives is the desire to share cultural information between distinct societies. Performance has the power to serve as a vehicle for this exchange because “art contains information about society” (Alexander 21). Art has the capacity to reveal cultural beliefs and traditions and to produce cultural reflections on historical, social, and political narratives. The performing arts—including but not limited to

traditional, folk, and contemporary performance practices—are uniquely positioned to stimulate dynamic cultural exchange by enabling face-to-face, people-to-people connections through physical demonstrations of artistic customs.

Representing a Southeast Asian nation for the purposes of cultural exchange through the performing arts is a challenging undertaking. However, approaching this work with the intention of considering its presentation in the United States adds another layer of complexity. Alexander states, “Art never stands alone, but must be understood in relationship to the people who consume it. Specifically, the meanings people take from art, and the type of art that they choose to consume, are based on their backgrounds and their social networks” (181). In other words, when presenting cultural aspects of one society within the context of another society, these aspects tend to be defined in relation to each other rather than as stand-alone traditions.

Societal differences inform expectations regarding the value of performance-based art forms, how and where they should be presented, and the direct relationship, if any, between the performer and the observer. Cultural sensitivity is paramount here, as in the example of Cambodian *Smot*, a chanted form of poetry that tells stories about the life of the Buddha or Khmer stories that teach religious principles. Presenting a devotional, ceremonial-based art form such as *Smot* under the same conditions as American jazz standards, for instance, has the potential to “reduce something precious and sacred to a mere commodity and in so doing decimates the cultural heritage” (Griswold 6).

Relational Positioning

The storied histories of Indonesia and Cambodia are subject matter for volumes devoted to world history, world cultures and world religions. The relative youth of the current day nations of Indonesia (1949) and of Cambodia (1953) is a political understatement of the centuries-old cultural roots of each of these peoples and geographies. Conversely, with the single exception of Native Americans, the U.S. (1776) is an immigrant people whose diasporic cultural roots in North America hale from diverse geographies outside the U.S. borders. This dramatic difference in cultural perspective requires a measured approach in the presentation of culturally-specific performance. Furthermore, the colonial past of Indonesia and Cambodia—the Dutch in Indonesia and the French in Cambodia—as well as the United States’ more recent political relationships with these nations highlight the complexity of achieving a dynamic cultural exchange through the performing arts presentation.

Indonesia

Positioned along the major Asian trade routes, the islands that now comprise the nation of Indonesia became dynamic hubs of trade and cultural interface. Animism was indigenous to the islands, but prior to the first century, Hinduism and Buddhism arrived from India and the Asian mainland. By the seventh century, Islam, the majority religion in modern-day Indonesia, arrived by way of Muslim traders from the Arabian Peninsula. These religious traditions took hold to various degrees from island region to island region as did cultural traditions of dance and music.

Driven by the economics of the spice trade, Dutch occupation of these islands, then known as the Dutch East Indies, was established in the early nineteenth century and remained in place until 1942, with a brief interruption by British occupation from 1811 to 1816, known

as the British interregnum (Cohen xviii). During World War II, the Japanese occupied the islands from 1942-1945 leaving a profound Japanese impact on the local arts.

“Developments, including the differentiation made between ‘Western’ and ‘Asian’ art, the yoking of art to propaganda, inter-arts collaborations, training and ‘upgrading’ of performers, local and national bureaus for the arts, and cultural policies, were in Indonesia to stay” (Cohen xviii).

On August 17, 1945, two days after the Japanese surrendered in the Pacific, Indonesia proclaimed its independence from the Dutch. Appeasing independent factions, His Excellency Dr. HC. Ir. Sukarno became the first president of the Republic of Indonesia, leading the Indonesian National Revolution. At this time, Sukarno led a nationalist movement to adopt Bahasa Indonesia, one of the more than 300 languages spoken throughout the islands, as the national language and he adopted the national slogan of the new nation of Indonesia: *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) (Ver Berkmoes 720). Four years later, in 1949, with pressure from the United Nations, the Netherlands officially recognized Indonesia’s independence on December 27, 1949.

The Republic of Indonesia joined a growing number of new states in Asia and Africa that achieved autonomy or outright independence from their European colonial rulers between 1945 and 1960, a process of decolonization that coincided with the onset of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States (Office of the Historian, “Decolonization”). Throughout this time, both the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in tactics to entice newly independent nations to align either against or with communism, respectively. Following the Bandung Conference in 1955, Indonesia’s President Sukarno was a prominent figure in the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM),

a group of organized nations who did not wish to align formally during the Cold War with either the Western nations or with the Soviet bloc (Munro).

Despite its official non-aligned political status, by 1965, Indonesia had witnessed the development of “the world’s largest communist party in a non-communist country” (Cribb 133). An attempted coup in Jakarta in October 1965, in which six senior Indonesian army generals were kidnapped and killed, triggered a genocide in Indonesia in which approximately 500,000 members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and its affiliated organizations were massacred (Cribb 133-134). There are strong indications that United States embassy officials or the CIA contributed to the genocide in Indonesia in 1965-1966 by supplying the Indonesian army with the names of some 5,000 PKI leaders who were to be “removed from political circulation” (Cribb 135). Following this political scandal, Sukarno’s general, Suharto assumed the power of the presidential position and began a new era of government and social control, which he called the “New Order”.

In “Making a Difference Through the Arts: Strengthening America’s Links with Asian Muslim Communities,” Cooper and Levin describe the cultural landscape in relation to these major political movements:

After independence, Indonesians, led by President Sukarno (1945–1965), found that artistic traditions not only were a powerful component of local identity, but also spoke to an emerging national consciousness. Beginning in the 1950s, the traditional performing arts were called on to represent the country both internationally and domestically. Under President Suharto (1967–1998), performances and exhibitions needed official permission in order to be presented and were scrutinized to be sure they did not breach local religious or cultural mores...After three decades of authoritarian rule, there was an almost giddy rush toward democracy. A rash of new political parties formed, some based on religion; independent organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), many focused on artistic pursuits, sprang up. The Suharto-era stranglehold on public expression, in which newspapers were closed, theater productions banned, and cartoonists, poets, and puppet masters jailed, gave way to a plethora of new ventures in art, theater, publishing, and radio. Indonesian culture quickly decentralized, both by law and by popular demand. (50-51)

Indonesia's economy suffered greatly during the Asian currency crisis of 1997, resulting in increased unemployment and a decreased standard of living for Indonesians. This caused civil unrest and eventual rioting, as well as Suharno's resignation in 1998. After several years of transition following Suharno's resignation, Indonesia's first direct popular vote election was held in 2004. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) was elected president.

Indonesian's clearly appreciated the stability and non-confrontational style of SBY's presidency, and his successful handling of the economy, for they re-elected him in 2009 with over sixty percent of the vote. Interestingly, neither religion nor ethnicity played a major part in determining how people voted, suggesting that Indonesians valued democracy, peace, and economic progress above sectarian or religious issues. (Ver Berkmoes 719)

Cambodia

The Khmer Empire of Angkor dominated much of mainland Southeast Asia between the ninth century and the early fifteenth century. Yasodharapura, the capital city of Angkor, was established near Siem Reap, its temples and walled cities housing approximately one million people. Angkor Wat, built in the twelfth century as a monument to Vishnu, the Hindu Protector of Creation, is perhaps the most iconic symbol of the Khmer Empire. Angkor Wat serves a relic demonstrating the importance of arts and culture to the Khmer people:

Khmer civilization reached its peak during the Angkor period, from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries when great monuments were built, with elaborate carvings depicting myths, gods and aspects of daily life. The carvings of musical ensembles on bas-reliefs are nearly identical to the ensembles performing in Cambodia today, where virtually every village in Cambodia possesses a musical ensemble. (Sam)

By the thirteenth century, most Cambodians had converted from Hinduism to Theravada Buddhism, a religion which ninety-five percent of the modern-day Khmer population practices. In the fourteenth century, many Theravada kingdoms broke away from the Khmer Empire initiating a period of decline for Angkor known as the Middle Period.

Between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, Angkor engaged in frequent wars with Thailand and the Cambodian territory in the Mekong Delta was expropriated by Vietnam.

Beginning in 1863 and until 1953 (interrupted by a Japanese occupation during World War II), the French governed Cambodia as a protectorate, establishing towns, roads and institutions, and providing stability to support a developing economy. According to David Chandler, a scholar of Cambodian history, while under French rule:

The Khmer elite was treated well and French policies had a relatively light impact on the population, while improvements in infrastructure strengthened the economy and brought Cambodia to the edges of the developed world. France's greatest contribution to Cambodia was probably its restoration of the temples at Yasodharapura. French scholars deciphered Angkorean inscriptions and rebuilt many of the temples, providing Cambodians with a glorious, precisely dated past that had been largely forgotten.

In 1941, the French crowned Prince Norodom Sihanouk king of Cambodia and, starting in 1952, King Sihanouk led a movement for Cambodian independence. In 1953, Cambodia won its independence from France and, Chandler notes, “entered a short period of peace and prosperity which many older Khmer now look back on as a golden age.” In 1955, King Sihanouk abdicated the throne to become a full-time politician, forming his own party, *Sangkum Reastr Niyum*, which won several elections, unopposed.

During the Vietnam War (1955-1975), the United States aligned with South Vietnam in its resistance against North Vietnam and its communist allies, and, in 1968, the United States launched bombing campaigns to disrupt Communist supply bases located in Cambodia. In 1970, the National Assembly voted to unseat Sihanouk allowing a pro-American government to rise to power. This power transfer led to a Cambodian Civil war, leading to years of conflict and heavy bombing between U.S.-backed forces and Communist forces. In 1975, following nearly a decade of war, followers of the Communist Party of

Kampuchea, known as the Khmer Rouge, assumed power in Cambodia. Led by Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge regime aimed to eliminate the existing social order. Between 1975 and 1979, “close to two million people perished from starvation, disease, forced labor, torture, and execution. The singular massacre of artists over those four years left all the arts severely crippled” (Phim 11).

In 1979, Vietnam invaded Cambodia, forcing the Khmer Rouge from power and establishing a protectorate that remained in place for ten years, the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (Chandler). In 1989, with significant pressure from the international community, the Vietnamese withdrew from Cambodia, and in 1991, the United Nations appointed a “Transitional Authority” to supervise the transition of power to the people of Cambodia, repatriating three-hundred thousand Cambodians from Thailand and preparing the country for general elections. Elections were held in 1993 and, with a win by the royalists, King Sihanouk was reelected. In 2004, King Sihanouk retired and his son, Norodom Sihamoni, assumed the throne. The Cambodian People’s Party, led by Hun Sen, the former foreign minister of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea, is the current ruling political party in Cambodia.

Relational Positioning in Practice

To stage Indonesian and Cambodian performance practices responsibly in the United States, the organizers of *Festival of Indonesia In Performance; Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*; and *Season of Cambodia* needed to engage with the broad historical perspective of Western influence on Indonesia and Cambodia and with the state of U.S.-Indonesia and U.S.-Cambodia relations as dictated by political, social, and cultural policies and actions throughout the previous seventy-five years. This perspective influenced how each initiative

presented culturally-specific performance practices within their global, national, and local contexts. “Far from keeping aloof from other nations, therefore, it is national liberation which leads the nation to play its part on the stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows” (Fanon 52).

The development and execution of these cultural exchange initiatives exemplifies the desire of Indonesian and Cambodian artists to share their performance practices, and thus their self-defined sense of cultural identity, with the United States. In performing their unique artistry and cultural values via an international platform, these nations have demonstrated their sovereignty and independence in relation to the past, the present, and the foreseeable future. In order to pursue international presentation and attention, each of the cultural exchange initiatives required the establishment of transnational networks and sustained binational relationships, supporting communication among artists, scholars, producers, presenters, and funders. The initiatives also required organized efforts to introduce culturally-specific performance practices to unfamiliar American audiences.

In the mid-twentieth century, academic programs in ethnomusicology and dance ethnology were established at U.S. institutions including University of California at Los Angeles (Ethnic Arts program and Institute of Ethnomusicology) and Wesleyan University (World Music program), formalizing the study of non-Western performance traditions from an ethnographic perspective. Faculty and students of programs such as these, including their founders Alma Hawkins, Mantle Hood, and Robert E. Brown, had longstanding histories of scholarship and cultural exchange with Asia and Asian performance practices, among other nations and cultures. While not exclusively, programs such as these provided a foundation for the development of cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts in the United

States. Many of the individuals involved in *Festival of Indonesia In Performance, Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*, and *Season of Cambodia* maintained relationships to such academic programs, either as students or as faculty.

Advancements in Technology and Accessibility

Festival of Indonesia In Performance; *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*; and *Season of Cambodia* facilitated cultural exchange among disparate and sometimes geographically distant groups. The diversity of their approaches was due, in large part, to significant advances in technology across the three decades from 1900 through the mid-2010s. Situating each initiative within the context of time, technological resources, and methods of information sharing is relevant to their case study assessment.

In the late 1980s, *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* organizers in the United States and Indonesia primarily communicated with each other via land line telephones and fax machines. Organizers traveled throughout Indonesia with large, heavy video cameras and recorders to secure video footage of performance practices, duplicated the magnetic video tapes, and mailed copies of them to presenters across the United States. Some of these video tapes were played on VCRs and monitors in presenters' lobbies leading up to the live performances (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016). Press was distributed in print form by way of newspapers and magazines.

By the 2000s, when *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* was being planned, the popularity of personal computers was on the rise and more than half of American adults were Internet users (Perrin 2). Email and cellular phone technology became methods of communication to a limited extent, not having reached the current level of technological sophistication or cost-efficiency. Digital camera technology made taking and editing high quality photographs easier and more affordable than in previous decades. Internet-based platforms such as Myspace and Facebook were launched, encouraging virtual connections among people across

the globe, and YouTube was founded, creating a cost-free virtual video repository where anyone, anywhere, could share digital video imagery with broad audiences.

In the 2010s, during the planning and execution of *Season of Cambodia*, advances in the design and capability of portable computing devices and mobile phone technologies with high-speed Internet connections made domestic and international communication relatively inexpensive and accessible to Americans and Cambodians. Mobile phones, equipped with digital cameras capable of capturing still images, moving images, and applications to share images and videos broadly, sometimes even in a live streaming capacity, grew in their ubiquity. Energy and resources now focused on digital media campaigns, blogs, online press, and social media platforms for personal and professional use. Additionally, web-based applications such as Skype and WhatsApp allowed for free or low-cost international video calls, telephone calls, and text-based messaging services.

In some ways, these advances in technology have narrowed the distance between isolated geographic locations by providing accessibility for individuals in different time zones and across international borders to interact, bypassing the costs associated with travel and expensive long-distance telephone calls and, increasingly, even transcending practical cultural boundaries such as language. The Internet and information technology have changed the ways in which research is conducted and information is shared. Instead of relying solely on books and photographic and filmic archives in libraries, keyword search accesses unlimited, instantaneous filtered results delivered to the point of greatest potential utility, namely the “smart” phone, laptop computer, or a controlling app[plication]. Advances in technology contribute to greater accessibility of information across all borders, although, as some argue, not without geopolitical risks such as the spreading of national imperialism.

The media imperialism thesis suggests that when first world countries, and especially the United States, export their cultural products to the rest of the world, especially to the third world, indigenous art, both folk and popular, is threatened and replaced by foreign products. This leads to an unfortunate homogenization of the world's art forms (Alexander 161-162).

In the context of this study, homogenization is synonymous with globalization, which Alexander defines,

Globalization refers to the increasing interconnections among the nations of the world, growing world trade, the dissemination of cultural products and the sharing of cultural ideas, links among peoples of the world forged through international travel and through reciprocal communications media (telegraphs, telephones, facsimiles, and the Internet), and the rise of transnational organizations (like the United Nations or the World Trade Organization) and multi-national corporations.” (157)

In response to theories of homogenization or globalization, Édouard Glissant proposes that by establishing associations with other cultures and by understanding the positionality of one's own culture relationship to another culture, aspects of culture can meld together to create something novel, a process he calls “creolization” (Glissant 81-89).

Creolization, in turn, creates dynamic interactions between cultures, preserving the diversity of the original cultures, without one objectifying or taking dominance over the other.

Glissant's theory of creolization bears similar resemblance to the goal of producing dynamic cultural exchange within a performance context. The objective is to create an exchange that is more than the sum of its parts through open and informed transcultural interaction, fostering an environment of reciprocity where individuals' cultural values are shared and respected. Glissant's theory discourages the establishment of an unequal subject-object relationship and a one-sided cultural consumerism.

Glissant's notion of creolization harkens to Nederveen Pieterse's discussion of hybridization:

Hybridization is an antidote to the cultural differentialism of racial and nationalist doctrines because it takes as its point of departure precisely those experiences that have been banished, marginalized, tabooed in cultural differentialism. It subverts nationalism because it privileges border crossing. It subverts identity politics such as ethnic or other claims to purity and authenticity because it starts out from the fuzziness of boundaries. If modernity stands for an ethos of order and neat separation by tight boundaries, hybridization reflects a postmodern sensibility of cut 'n' mix, transgression, subversion. (57)

Thus, the *inclusivity* of cultural exchange through the arts could potentially counter-balance the *exclusivity* of nationalism and isolationism fostered by a history of American political and economic dominance and the current threat of domestic and international terrorism.

Chapter III. Case Studies

Parameters of Assessment

While sharing a common focus on performance practices originating in Southeast Asia, the following case studies demonstrate three varied models of cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts in the United States. Planning and production periods for these projects spanned nearly three decades, crossing multiple administrations of the U.S. government and its approach to public diplomacy. Advancements in technology have changed the way and rate at which people of all nations communicate and access information.

I develop and consider each case through the lens of its curatorial perspectives and process, namely, its funding, organizational, and relationship structures; selection of artists and performance sites; and methods of contextualizing performances to reveal their approaches to representing international artists and culturally-specific performance practices within the borders of the United States.

Festival of Indonesia In Performance (1990-1992)

Indonesia: thirteen thousand islands, large and small, scattered over thousands of square miles of ocean and three time zones, lying on both sides of the equator between Australia and Southeast Asia, peopled by hundreds of ethnic groups speaking as many languages – hot, humid, crowded, gentle, smiling, fragrant.

—Vartoogian (32)

Background

Due to its size, population, and diversity of ethnic groups, the breadth of performance practices in Indonesia is great, ranging from classical court dances, to popular and folk forms, to contemporary and experimental performance practices:

With some 300 ethnic groups, each with its own culture, language, and artistic traditions, Indonesia is diverse—arguably more culturally varied, some academics have pointed out, than the United States. Beyond ethnicity, there are divisions among rural and urban populations, adherents of different religions, members of different social and economic classes, and generations. While the arts practiced in rural villages tend to be based on traditional forms, in urban settings, contemporary and traditional arts live side by side. (Cooper and Levin 51)

Festival of Indonesia In Performance's programming reflected the diversity of Indonesia's population and performance practices. The festival represented court arts such as the *Wayang Wong*, the *Bedhaya*, the *Beksan Golek* and the *Wayang Kulit*; and forms derived from ritual practices such as *Cak!*, “a dance-drama taken from the classical Hindu story of good and evil, the Ramayana” and *Legong Keraton*, “a Balinese court dance of divine nymphs in heaven”; as well as contemporary programs titled *New Music Indonesia* featuring “Indonesia's foremost composers and musicians” and *Modern Indonesian Theater* featuring contemporary author and theater director, Putu Wijaya (Cooper et al. 3).

Dr. Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, Indonesia's former Foreign Minister and chair of the Yayasan Nusantara Jaya, a private foundation in Indonesia, initiated *Festival of Indonesia*. Having witnessed the success of a similar initiative—the *Festival of India* in 1985-1986,

which coordinated more than 800 performance, visual art, film, and craft events in 150 cities across 44 states in the United States—Kusumaatmadja wanted to pursue a similar amount of exposure for Indonesia in America (Tanen 369). A major goal of the *Festival of Indonesia* was to expand existing knowledge about arts from Indonesia, developing what Americans might already know (Festival of Indonesia, *First Performing Arts Meeting: Minutes*, 25-26 March 1988, 3). Although not an official government project of either Indonesia or the United States, both governments endorsed the *Festival of Indonesia*.

The performing arts component of the *Festival of Indonesia*, the *In Performance* program, was one aspect of the much larger festival. Initially intended to be a year-long festival of music, dance, and drama performances representing the breadth and expanse of performing arts traditions from Indonesia, the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* ultimately spanned a period of eighteen months from late August 1990 through early February 1992. In part, but not exclusively, the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* programming was intended to further enrich and highlight the themes established in visual art exhibitions initiated by the *Festival of Indonesia*: “Sculpture of Indonesia,” “The Courts Arts of Java,” “Beyond the Java Sea,” and “Modern Indonesian Art: Three Generations of Tradition and Change, 1945-1990” (Gillitt 176). The performances presented as part of *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* demonstrated process-based aspects of Indonesian culture not otherwise revealed through visual art exhibitions.

In total, three hundred and twenty Indonesian artists performed as part of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program, represented in twelve touring programs ranging from the sixty-four member *Court Art of Java from the Kraton of Yogyakarta*, to the youthful company of *Children of Bali*, to a *Music and Dance of Sumatra: Aceh and Minangkabau*

program, which was awarded a prestigious New York Dance and Performance award in 1991 (Cooper 12). Performances took place in major metropolitan cities including Washington, D.C., New York, New York, Los Angeles, California, and Boston, Massachusetts, and were also staged in less frequented cities including Iowa City, Iowa, Tucson, Arizona, and West Lafayette, Indiana. Performance venues ranged from a two thousand and seven hundred seat concert hall in the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in the nation's capital; to a one hundred and seventy-five seat recital hall at the University of Maryland, College Park; to the outdoor Los Angeles County Arboretum as part of the 1990 Los Angeles Festival, which accommodated ten thousand audience members over the course of ten performances.

Integral to *Festival of Indonesia In Performance*'s success was equitable bi-national contributions to nearly every aspect of the festival's planning and execution. Work in Indonesia began first, led by Sardono W. Kusumo, an Indonesian choreographer and dancer, assuming an artistic director role. Sardono oversaw the establishment of several working groups in dance, theater, music, and literature, made up of prominent Indonesian artists working in each field. As such, Indonesian artists were an essential part of every aspect of the curatorial process.

Subsequently, *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* planning began in the United States with a convening in San Francisco in March 1988, coinciding with the annual Association for Asian Studies conference. At the request of *Festival of Indonesia* organizers, Ralph Samuelson, Associate Director of the Asian Cultural Council, chaired the meeting of prominent artists, producers, and scholars, including Indonesians living in the United States and Americans; all the participants had sustained relationships with Indonesia and expertise in the presentation of its performance practices in the United States. Representatives of the

Festival of Indonesia Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the *Festival of Indonesia* were also present. In a letter of invitation to the convening, Samuelson wrote, “The *Festival* intends to bring the unique and special beauty of both traditional and contemporary Indonesian performing art forms to the attention of the American public and to educate Americans about these forms and the cultural values that lie behind them.” He outlined the goal of the convening as follows: “to draw on the special insight and expertise of these individuals – to solicit ideas, suggestions, and advice – to guide the *Festival of Indonesia* organizers as they begin to develop a performing arts concept for the *Festival*” (Samuelson). Major curatorial considerations were identified at the initial convening in the United States.

Curatorial Perspectives and Process

One of the foremost curatorial concerns of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program was to represent a wide range of Indonesian artistry without “Indonesianizing” the work by mixing several different traditions together for the sake of inclusion. *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* organizers were not interested in compiling a “best of” or “Indonesia in review”, as it would not accomplish the mission of the festival: to actively dispel American stereotypes of a singular Indonesia, most often connected with the islands of Java and Bali (Festival of Indonesia, *First Performing Arts Meeting: Minutes, 25-26 March 1988*; see Appendix C). To accomplish this mission, a comprehensive view of Indonesian society needed to be represented through its performing arts practices, including regional forms from lesser known islands.

Festival of Indonesia In Performance approached this challenge in several ways. First, the working groups and advisory committees in Indonesia and the United States were strategically comprised of a balance of perspectives, including academic and artistic; urban

and rural; and traditional and contemporary (Festival of Indonesia, *First Performing Arts Meeting: Minutes*, 25-26 March 1988, 5). Second, selection was approached with an intimate knowledge of the art forms of Indonesia and an acknowledgement that, while a comprehensive perspective of traditions was important, total balance may not be possible because some ethnic groups have many forms whereas others have none (Festival of Indonesia, *First Performing Arts Meeting: Minutes*, 25-26 March 1988, 7). Finally, the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* organizing committee worked with the organizers of the larger *Festival of Indonesia* to be sure that regional art forms not represented in the performance festival would be represented in other aspects of *Festival of Indonesia's* programming (Festival of Indonesia, *First Performing Arts Meeting: Minutes*, 25-26 March 1988, 13-15).

Maintaining an Indonesian perspective on the way in which the artists and practices were represented in the United States surfaced as a curatorial goal of both the Indonesian and American advisory committees. This goal was approached by prioritizing the agency of the performing artists involved in the festival, as well as their involvement in conversations and decisions regarding performance selection (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016). Meanwhile in Indonesia, Kusumaatmadja was concerned that there be enough of an American perspective to make likely a favorable reception by an American audience (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016). Of equal concern, the Indonesian government was apprehensive that Indonesians would be misperceived if American audiences viewed the performances out of context or by an uninformed audience (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016).

One other major curatorial consideration was how the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program would tie into the goals of the larger *Festival of Indonesia* (Festival of Indonesia, *First Performing Arts Meeting: Minutes*, 25-26 March 1988, 14-15). To this end, *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* organizers consulted regularly with the organizers of the larger festival, and the organizing committee considered programming that was thematically in line with *Festival of Indonesia* visual art exhibitions, namely, court traditions (*Court of Java from the Kraton of Yogyakarta*), children (*Children of Bali*), contemporary performance practices (*New Music Indonesia*), and Islam (*Music and Dance of Sumatra: Aceh and Minangkabau*).

Since *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* was structured as a nationwide festival, an individual could not experience first-hand the full expanse of the performing arts programming presented without traveling around the United States across the span of eighteen months. In 1990, information sharing via technology was not as advanced as it is today, and opportunities to disseminate performance footage and press coverage to a global community were not as immediate. However, *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* brought multiple performance groups to cities like Los Angeles, New York City, the San Francisco Bay Area, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Boston, Atlanta, Iowa City, Rochester (New York), and Madison (Wisconsin), which allowed for a concentrated experience of festival programming. Essentially, these cities hosted mini-festivals within the *In Performance* festival, situated within the overall *Festival of Indonesia*.

Funding, Organizational, and Relationship Structures

The *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program's primary organizers were Indonesian, Indonesian-American, and American artists and practitioners with deep

knowledge of and experience with Indonesian performance practices. Therefore, when I employ “organizers” within the context of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program, I mean equally “organizing artists.” Organizers and performing artists involved in *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* worked closely together on many aspects of the program and shared agency by way of a *musyawarah*³ consensus decision-making process.

In addition to identifying the primary curatorial concerns and addressing the principal objectives of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program, the San Francisco convening resulted in recommendations for the organization concerning the relationship between the Indonesian festival organizers and their U.S. counterparts. Participants of the San Francisco convening determined that a performing arts coordinator should be hired in the United States to oversee programming and venues for performances, represent and facilitate an American presence in the selection of performers and performance practices, establish timelines for major goals of the program, and oversee tour arrangements including tour staffing, general management, outreach arrangements, and development of contextual materials (Festival of Indonesia, *First Performing Arts Meeting: Minutes*, 25-26 March 1988, 9). Rachel Cooper, an American dance ethnologist and arts administrator who had participated in the U.S. convening and who had lived and studied in Indonesia for many years, was hired by the *Festival of Indonesia* to fill this role. Cooper hired Amna S. Kusumo, a Jakarta-based arts administrator, as the performing arts coordinator in Indonesia. This structure, according to Cooper, established a dynamic of trust between the Indonesian and American organizers. “I was respected and trusted to have the American perspective because I am American. Amna was respected and trusted to have the Indonesian perspective because

³ See Kawamura, Koichi. “Consensus and Democracy in Indonesia: Musyawarah-Mufakat Revisited.” Institute for Developing Economies, 2011.

she is Indonesian. Some things Amna was allowed to say because she was Indonesian, but if I had said it, I would have come across as colonial and vice versa” (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016). The core group of convening participants became the U.S. Performing Arts Advisory Committee to the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program.

Emphasizing the Indonesian “working together” principle, *kerjasama*⁴, the performing arts coordinators, along with the advisory committees in both the United States and Indonesia, worked closely to develop the scope of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program within its budgetary parameters (Festival of Indonesia, *First Performing Arts Meeting: Minutes*, 25-26 March 1988, 10). After six months of foundation building and preliminary planning, Cooper hired Lisa Booth and Deirdre Valente of Lisa Booth Management as the general managers for the program. Along with Cooper, Booth and Valente were responsible for communicating with presenters and booking performances. Following an advance trip to Indonesia led by Cooper, Booth and Valente made recommendations of sites for specific performances based on their intimate knowledge of venues across the United States and their deep relationship with American presenters and festivals.

The *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program in the United States was funded in large part and equal measure by the Ford Foundation (Jakarta Office), a private humanitarian foundation headquartered in New York City, and ARCO, an American oil company with operations in both the United States and Indonesia. Additional support, was provided by other U.S.-based organizations, including the Asian Cultural Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Financial contributions from U.S. funders amounted to

⁴ Indonesian “*kerjasama*” translates to “cooperation” in English.

approximately half of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* budget. Indonesian sources accounted for the other half and paid for rehearsal expenses in Indonesia, production expenses including instruments, costumes, and sets, international airfares for each of the three hundred and twenty Indonesians who traveled to the United States, and packing and international shipping costs for “more than ten tons of freight” (Cooper 21). Sources of Indonesian support included local governors and entities in regions from which artists were selected; Panitia Parean Kebudayaan Indonesia Amerika Serikat (KIAS), the Indonesian organization established to create the *Festival of Indonesia*; and Garuda Indonesia Airlines, which provided international airfare between Indonesia and the United States for participants of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program. U.S.-based presenters were responsible for costs associated with hosting the artists and presenting performances at their venues, including local housing and transportation, technical and production costs, arrangement of audience services, and venue-specific marketing and promotion costs.

Programmatic and operations decisions for *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* were made to align with the program’s goal of paying for itself and not contributing to an overall deficit (Booth and Valente, Personal interview, 26 January 2017). A key strategy for working within the budget was to balance some of the more obscure programs on the tour, such as the contemporary theater programming, with more popular programs, such as the *Court Art of Java from the Kraton of Yogyakarta*, for which presenters paid higher fees. Deirdre Valente recalled, “This strategy enabled us to place artists in the best venues for their work” (Booth and Valente, Personal interview, 26 January 2017).

Selection of Artists and Performance Sites

U.S. and Indonesian organizers and coordinators established criteria for the selection of artists and performance sites (Cooper 11):

1. A commitment to bringing artists who represented the vigor and soul of Indonesia's performing arts in work of the finest artistry;
2. A commitment to authenticity, namely, to present work by its leading practitioners, fully produced and to avoid pastiche ("greatest hits") programs linking disparate forms;
3. A commitment to maintaining the integrity of each form in individual programs while presenting work from as many different cultures and ethnic backgrounds as possible;
4. A commitment to bringing both traditional and contemporary work, including work that reflected the influence from courts, villages, and urban centers; and
5. A commitment to providing programs beyond the formal stage presentation of performances and to develop educational programs and opportunities for Indonesians and Americans to meet and exchange ideas and experiences.

Festival of Indonesia In Performance organizers were careful to identify appropriate venues for performances so as not to detract from the original intention and integrity of the work, paying careful attention to the presentation of staged rituals outside their indigenous context. Performance practices were selected with a variety of performance settings in mind—a large concert hall, a medium-sized hall, a small experimental space, and outdoor spaces. Consideration was given to existing relationships between Indonesian artists and institutions and American presenting institutions, as well as to existing networks in the United States. Preview openings of the *Court Art of Java from the Kraton of Yogyakarta* and

Children of Bali were part of Peter Sellars and Judith Mitoma's 1990 Los Angeles Festival, which was coordinated to coincide with the 1990 Dance Critics Association Conference; *Dayak of East Kalimantan: Music and Dance of the Rainforest* took place within the larger context of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival (Indonesia: Forest, Field and Sea) in June and July 1991; and *Bali: Cak! and Legong* was presented in Charleston, South Carolina in June 1991 as part of the Spoleto Festival USA.

Methods of Contextualization

The organizers and coordinators involved in the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program were personally invested in and familiar with Indonesian culture. Although they had deep knowledge of both the country and its performance practices, most American presenters and potential audiences did not. In general, and certainly in comparison to 2017, attaining and distributing high-quality photographic and audiovisual information about the artists and performance practices was challenging. The festival was organized between 1988 and 1990, a period when personal computers were used for data storage and preparing correspondence but were not yet networked for interconnected, global communication. Websites and online videos were virtually nonexistent. Whereas today, even cellular phones are equipped with high-quality cameras, in the late 1980s, professional grade photographs and videos were less attainable. Indonesia's size and terrain contributed to the difficulties involved in capturing media. The broad diversity of the artists and works being presented as part of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program added to the challenges. "Indonesia is not a 'one-size-fits-all' photograph" (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016).

The *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* team took several measures to develop a strong contextual base for the performances. In part, they traveled to and within Indonesia on

multiple occasions to meet with artists personally and to obtain high-quality photographs and video footage by inviting members of the American press (including dance critics from *Dance Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Boston Globe*), U.S. presenters (Nigel Redden of Spoleto Festival USA, Joseph Melillo of BAM, and Peter Sellars and Judy Mitoma of the Los Angeles Festival), and professional photographers (Jack and Linda Vartoogian) on advance trips to Indonesia led by Cooper. The purpose of these advance trips was not to “shop” for performances to bring to the United States; rather, the resulting written materials, photographs, and video footage were used to introduce the work to potential presenters based in the United States and to market and promote this work (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016). The presenters returned from Indonesia with a better sense of the technical and contextual requirements of the work that they were slated to present and with an improved ability to share their experiences in Indonesia with their fellow presenters and colleagues in the United States.

Cooper and *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* general managers Booth and Valente worked closely to produce written contextual materials for the program. The National Endowment for the Humanities commissioned a series of booklets, called “Aspects of Indonesian Culture,” that were distributed to presenters, the press, and audience members. The series, authored by academics but written for laypeople, focused on Indonesian dance, music, cinema, puppetry, literature, and modern drama. Additionally, extensive program notes by ethnomusicologist Marc Perlman were commissioned for each production. Perlman’s notes provided background on Indonesian culture and, in some cases, relevant translations related to the presentations. These commissioned program notes on Indonesian performance practices expanded upon existing resources and practices developed by

academic institutions such as Wesleyan University's programs in World Music and Ethnomusicology (where Perlman received his Ph.D.), and UCLA's Department of Ethnomusicology, as well as cultural institutions like Asia Society. Cooper, Booth, and Valente assisted presenters with writing their press releases, employing strategies to help presenters and their audiences connect to work that was largely unfamiliar to them. Each individual artistic group was positioned within its specific context and then, beyond that, positioned in relation to similar, more familiar artists or art forms (Booth and Valente, Personal interview, 26 January 2017).

The educational component of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* was a priority for its organizers (Festival of Indonesia, *First Performing Arts Meeting: Minutes*, 25-26 March 1988, 11-12). Artists led traditional Indonesian dance, music, and theater workshops and lecture-demonstrations with local American students and audience members. Students from UCLA created a study guide for performances on campus. The young *Children of Bali* performers exchanged performance traditions with young Mexican American performers in Los Angeles in an afternoon workshop in Balinese *Kecak* followed by a performance of Mexican American dance (Cooper 6). *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* also coordinated a professional training program for Indonesian theater technicians, introducing them to technical protocols and equipment used in Western theater and teaching them how to draw, read, and interpret a light plot and how to develop and write a technical specifications document (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016). Additionally, Cooper wrote and published a booklet on international arts management that was translated into Indonesian and distributed to young Indonesian arts administrators.

Concurrent with working to match artists with venues and develop contextual information to serve both presenters and audiences, Cooper, Kusumo, Booth, and Valente considered the practical needs and cultural aspects of U.S. tours by artists who, in most cases, had never traveled to or performed their work in North America. First, these artists needed to attain passports and, subsequently, visas to the United States prior to travel. A company manager joined each tour, and an Indonesian-English translator was always present as well. Written personalized travel guides in Indonesian were prepared and provided to artists to explain the cultural customs of the United States in advance of their travel, including a description of American money, the greenness of which was a source of confusion to the artists when compared with the multi-colored currency of Indonesia (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016). At most tour stops, the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* team organized meals for the artists cooked by local Indonesian women's auxiliary groups and served communally in the style of meals in Indonesia (Booth and Valente, Personal interview, 26 January 2017). Individual tour budgets and travel schedules accounted for time off and time to experience something "American." Artists were taken to Disneyland, the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus, and the Statue of Liberty by way of the Staten Island Ferry.

Stan Pressner served as the production manager for the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program. He also joined Cooper for an advance trip to Indonesia. In an article about the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program, Christine Temin, an art critic who was on the same advance trip, noted Pressner and Cooper's interactions with the Indonesian artists:

His prepared speech about the American attention span became a standing joke among the critics. Some sophisticated Indonesians didn't need the speech. Well aware that Americans are accustomed to a Sesame Street pace in their entertainment, they themselves suggested slashing their art into segments so short they'd be meaningless. Pressner and Cooper had to persuade them to have faith in their art, that Americans weren't all *that* restless. Other Indonesians did need coaxing to get their programs down to two hours, and to them Pressner gave his "You know those Americans..." talk. (Temin 54-56)

Later in the same article, Pressner said, in relation to the artists, "We must not impose our sensibilities on their work. We must emphasize *their* priorities" (Temin 54-56).

Pressner was responsible for organizing the technical requirements of Indonesian artists into technical riders and equipment lists that U.S. presenters could understand. Along with lighting, sound, and stage plots, he included notes about Indonesian performance culture that Indonesian artists might take for granted but for which U.S. presenters and technicians would not have known to prepare. For example, it is a sign of disrespect to step over an instrument in Indonesia. American technicians had to be informed of this tradition so that they would not make this literal misstep when setting up sound equipment or running sound checks. Some of the Indonesian groups conducted pre-performance offerings and ceremonies, which are not common practices for American artists. Time was to be built into schedules to accommodate these aspects of Indonesian performance.

Assessment

A defining aspect of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program was the established partnership among Indonesian, Indonesian-American, and American artists, scholars, and arts professionals which resulted in shared agency and process-oriented involvement in all aspects of planning, curating, and implementing the festival. Indonesian artists determined the way in which Indonesian performance practices were represented in the United States through this festival. Neither the Indonesian government, nor the

Indonesian Ministry of Tourism, nor Americans displaying their expectations of what Indonesia played such a role. Many of the Indonesian artists had developed deep relationships with the United States—via exchange programs initiated by the Asian Cultural Council or with universities where many of them were students or on faculty prior to becoming involved with the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program. These relationships placed the organizers in a position of having personal familiarity with the historical, political, and social aspects of both Indonesia and the United States, and this allowed them to utilize existing networks and foundations to inform the development of the festival.

The art forms presented in the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program ranged from classical to folk to contemporary and performance practices from many regions of Indonesia were represented. A multi-city festival structure supported this diverse curatorial palette by involving U.S. cities with varied demographics and venues suitable for presenting a wide range of performance practices. By touring the country and by coordinating programming with other festivals and presenting initiatives, the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* festival facilitated a national movement to engage with Indonesian culture.

Bringing tour groups to the United States for multi-city tours maximized exposure of the artists and their performance practices to U.S. audiences. Rather than flying into one city, adjusting to the time zone, performing, and then flying back home, artists performing with the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* program often stayed in the United States for several weeks, traveling to different regions of the country, providing the artists an opportunity to experience diverse geographic conditions, weather, dialects, music, and other aspects of American culture.

Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia (2001)

In dance, it is the dancing and the dancers which constitute the archive assuring the perpetuation of tradition. This situation, where the performance and the archive of the tradition in many ways coincide, seems to lend itself at once to conservative and innovative possibilities of cultural transmission.

—Phim (9)

Background

Culture and performance, including music, theater, and dance, have been essential aspects of Cambodia's history and national identity for many centuries. From as early as AD 615, nearly all ancient Cambodian temples contained etchings of dancing figures or inscriptions detailing the role performers played in honoring the gods:

Contemporary dancers of the classical tradition are explicitly compared with *apsaras* (divinities representing femininity and dance), breathing life into their traditional postures and gestures. They are seen as precious repositories of Cambodia's past and as such, the guarantors of her future. (Phim 2)

Performance and dance in Cambodia were integral to formal royal and court ceremonies, but also played a vital role in the daily lives of the Khmer people and their communities (Phim 4). Formalized schools for the study of culture and the arts were established in Cambodia throughout the early and mid-twentieth century, including the *École des Arts Cambodgiens* established in Phnom Penh in 1918, which was later merged with the National Theatre School to form the Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA) in 1965. In the 1950s, the Conservatory of Performing Arts was established, later becoming the Department of Arts. In 1975, along with the forced termination of virtually all formal performance, both institutions were closed under the Khmer Rouge regime. Upon reopening in 1980, still amidst ongoing Cambodian-Vietnamese War, the cultural sector in Cambodia was faced with unthinkable

challenges, including mourning the loss of most of the country's artists, grieving for their loss of cultural heritage, and considering how to restore and rebuild that heritage:

The wars of the 1970s and 1980s took an incalculable toll on the performing arts. Virtually all ritual and formal performance, as the Khmer had known them, came to a standstill during the Khmer Rouge period from 1975-1979...the singular massacre of artists over those four years left all the arts severely crippled. Faced with the fragility of tradition which has always been transmitted from master to disciple through long periods of apprenticeship, dance practitioners have shown great courage in recreating and reinvigorating their art. (Phim 11)

Following the signing of the Comprehensive Cambodian Peace Agreement in Paris in 1991, which marked the official end of the Cambodian-Vietnamese War, a significant number of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) began humanitarian work in Cambodia. The focus of each organization differed, ranging from the environment, education, human rights, and poverty alleviation to restoration of the rich cultural history of Cambodia, including the preservation of its historic temples and revitalization of its art forms (Domashneva). At this same time, work was also underway to aid refugees and immigrants from Cambodia who had sought asylum in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s. One such arts-related initiative was the Refugee Arts Group, a Boston-based nonprofit organization that supported traditional arts cultural conservation programs within newly arrived refugee populations from Southeast Asian countries, including Cambodia. Another initiative, the Cambodian Artists Project (CAP), originated with Sam Miller while he was the executive director at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Becket, MA and continued its growth under his guidance as the director of NEFA.

Hosted at Jacob's Pillow in Becket, MA, CAP began as a residency program for Cambodian artists who had fled Cambodia in the 1970s and 1980s and had relocated to the United States. The residencies promoted interaction among the refugee and immigrant

artists—trained in their art forms in Cambodia prior to the Khmer Rouge—and other Cambodians who had settled in the Northeastern United States and who were struggling to maintain their Cambodian culture as part of their lives in the United States (Miller, Personal Interview, 19 November 2016; Booth and Valente, Personal Interview, 26 January 2017). The residencies and workshops provided the resources necessary for the re-creation and transference of the traditional art forms of their shared culture. In line with Jacob's Pillow's focus on dance, most of the artists invited to participate were dance artists, but musicians were also identified and included in the residencies, as dance and music are so often inextricably linked in the arts of Cambodia.

CAP grew rapidly in its first year, and Miller enlisted support from the Asian Cultural Council, led by Ralph Samuelson, to continue the project over the next several years. Samuelson connected Sam-Ang Sam, a Cambodian-American musician and ethnomusicologist, to the project as CAP's artistic project director. In this expansion, residencies were offered to artists from Cambodian-American communities outside the Northeast, including Long Beach, California, Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota, College Park, Maryland, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (New England Foundation for the Arts, *Proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation*, 2000, 3). The next step was to involve artists from Cambodia directly. In addition to Sam-Ang Sam's connection to artists in Cambodia, the Asian Cultural Council was working to re-establish faculty at RUFA. It was by way of this connection that Proeung Chhieng, a dance master and the director of RUFA, was invited to become involved with the CAP initiative. Moving forward, CAP and the Asian Cultural Council coordinated on two efforts in support of the initiative's mission, specifically, to connect artists working in Cambodia to American communities and to bring masters in

Cambodia back to RUFA with the goals of building capacity for Cambodian artists in Cambodia and developing a new generation of Cambodian artists (New England Foundation for the Arts, *Proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation*, 2000, 2).

Over the next five years, CAP and the Asian Cultural Council facilitated the transfer of traditional Cambodian art forms from Cambodian and Cambodian-American masters to Cambodian and Cambodian-American students, documenting the teaching, learning, and re-creating process along the way. Broader Cambodian and Cambodian-American communities shared the resulting documentation in the form of video tapes, increasing the reach of the exchange initiative and preserving the performance practices in an archival form (Miller, Personal interview, 19 November 2016).

In the late 1990s, The Royal Ballet of Cambodia toured to France, Switzerland, Italy, and Belgium (Riding). However, performances by Cambodian artists in America had not occurred since 1990, when many of the artists involved in a tour by the Cambodian Classical Dance Company defected to the United States following their performances (Butterfield). In 1998, Chhieng approached Miller, who, by then, had left *Jacob's Pillow* to become the director of NEFA, and Samuelson with the idea of planning a tour to the United States. With funding secured from the Rockefeller Foundation, Asian Cultural Council, NEFA's National Dance Project, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts, planning for the *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* tour began (New England Foundation for the Arts, *Cambodian Artists Project Executive Meeting: Minutes*, 17 April 2003).

The first phase in the development of the tour included a month-long residency program serving four major purposes: to bring master traditional Cambodian dancers and musicians in the United States together with their counterparts from RUFA to develop a

major production that would potentially tour within Cambodia and the United States in 2001; to provide an opportunity for Cambodian-Americans in four U.S. communities to engage in a series of week-long master artist residences and performances; to provide an opportunity for high-quality video and audio documentation of the residencies to support the development of interpretive materials and provide a cultural resource to Cambodian-American communities in the United States; and to provide a range of U.S. presenters with an opportunity to view and discuss Cambodian performance practices and to discuss and reach a consensus about the viability of a major U.S. tour (New England Foundation for the Arts, *Cambodian Artists Project Executive Meeting: Minutes*, 17 April 2003, 2). In September 2000, fourteen master artists from Cambodia traveled to the United States to participate in a creative residency at Jacob's Pillow followed by four community residencies in Lowell, Massachusetts, Portland, Maine, College Park, Maryland, and Long Beach, California. The creative residency at Jacob's Pillow culminated in a presenters' colloquium in which U.S. presenters were introduced to Cambodian dance and were assessed for their interest in a national tour. The response was positive, and development of the tour accelerated with this confirmed interest and commitment (New England Foundation for the Arts, *Cambodian Artists Project Executive Meeting: Minutes*, 17 April 2003, 2).

The *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* tour was a project spearheaded by a bi-national partnership between NEFA, the Asia Society, and Lisa Booth Management in the United States, and RUFA in Cambodia. The tour brought a group of forty-one highly-trained Cambodian artists to the United States for twenty-eight public performances in twelve U.S. cities in August and September 2001. The two-hour long production presented a variety of classical and folk dance and music from Cambodia in a single evening. The performance

included dance from the classical repertory (*Roban Apsara*), village-based performance traditions (*Roban Tunsong*), instrumental woodwinds (*Solo Opakar*), improvised procession (*Chhayam*), court dance-drama (*Roban Makar*), and classical dance-drama (*Reamker*).

Curatorial Perspectives and Process

Miller said, from a curatorial standpoint, “We designed the tour to re-contextualize the way audiences in the U.S. think about Cambodia,” He was referencing not only American audiences but also Cambodian-American audiences living in the United States that had been removed from or had not been exposed to the cultural legacies of their nation (Miller, Personal interview, 19 November 2016). Cooper comments on this same subject, saying, “It was important to instill and provide an opportunity for Cambodians to see their own arts—Cambodians in America, and for Cambodians in the country—to see that their work was respected” (Cooper, Personal interview, 18 December 2016). The integration of CAP artists and Cambodian-American communities into aspects of tour planning and development provided them an opportunity to recognize the development and progression of the restoration of Cambodian art forms and to build stronger international networks (Miller, Personal interview, 19 November 2016).

Other goals of the tour were to increase the value of the arts in Cambodia, to build capacity among the Cambodian artists, to empower them to make decisions about repertory and about how they wanted to be represented, and to define what success meant to them (Cooper, Personal interview, 18 December 2016; Booth and Valente, Personal interview, 26 January 2017). As was true in many aspects of life in Cambodia in the 1990s, the arts and culture sector needed more infrastructure, and there remained a need to develop sustainable systems of organizing and producing cultural work in addition to restoring and recreating the

performance practices. Supporting the development of the Cambodian cultural sector was an ambition of *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*, and the initiative's organizers devoted much attention to professional development opportunities for artists, technicians, and administrators before, during, and after the tour.

Funding, Organizational, and Relationship Structures

Led by Miller, NEFA served as the executive producer of the *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* tour and was responsible for oversight and development of the entire project, including fundraising (along with the Asian Cultural Council), determining budget allocations, and organizing and managing the tour's structure. Chhieng of RUFA was appointed as the artistic director of the tour to work closely with NEFA, other U.S. collaborators, and artists in Cambodia and in the United States to shape the production. The Asia Society in New York City and Lisa Booth Management served as co-producers for the tour. Cooper, who had joined the Asia Society in 1993 as the head of performing arts, was responsible for the development of educational, contextual, and marketing materials, as well as the project's website. Booth and Valente of Lisa Booth Management served as the general managers, securing bookings with U.S.-based presenters and planning the logistical aspects of touring the company to twelve cities across the United States. Fred Frumberg served as the production coordinator for the tour and Clifton Taylor was the production and lighting designer.

Although the curatorial process surrounding development of the *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* tour was bi-national, funding support for the project came exclusively from U.S.-based organizations. To raise awareness and interest in the project, potential U.S. funders, producers, and organizers were invited to join delegations to Cambodia led by Miller. The

government of Cambodia, represented by Her Royal Highness (HRH) Princess Norodom Buppha Devi, a formally trained classical dancer who was serving as Cambodia's Minister of Culture during this planning period, did not contribute financially to the tour, but was supportive of the idea and thought it important (Cooper, Personal interview, 18 December 2016).

Concurrent with the launch of a fundraising campaign for the tour budget, NEFA established the Fund for Cambodian Culture and approached fundraising for it along with securing funds for the tour itself (Miller, Personal interview, 19 November 2016). Tour-specific resources were requested from funders along with a request for additional resources for the Fund, earmarked for grant-making in Cambodia post-tour. Ultimately, money raised for the Fund for Cambodian Culture financed grants to junior faculty and recent graduates of RUFA for the development of new work in Cambodia and supported the donation of instruments, supplies, equipment, and infrastructure improvements at RUFA in Phnom Penh. NEFA solicited proposals for these grant opportunities and held proposal-writing workshops in Phnom Penh to assist candidates in the project and proposal development process (New England Foundation for the Arts, *Cambodian Artists Project Report to the Rockefeller Foundation*, 14 May 2004). This sustained support provided a foundation for growth and development of infrastructure for RUFA, the central hub of Cambodian arts education and art-making in the early 2000s.

Selection of Artists and Performance Sites

Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia's emphasis on bi-national input from both Cambodian artists and from U.S.-based producers stood in contrast to prior international tours by The Royal Ballet of Cambodia which included only court traditions. Valente recalls the challenge

of navigating the Cambodians' cultural expectations for hierarchical, top-down systems of organizing versus an American approach of collaborative openness and a "need to get things done. Cambodian art forms did not evolve out of the same approach as American art forms. They developed over several thousand years, and the result is very different from the work that arises out of work initiated in a 'get messy first' approach" (Booth and Valente, Personal interview, 26 January 2017).

Some of the decisions to determine which art forms to include in the production were made with practical considerations in mind. The company and associated freight (sets, instruments, costumes, etc.) needed to travel internationally between Cambodia and America and then also to twelve U.S. cities—sometimes by plane, sometimes by bus—all within a seven-week period. The production design needed to work technically within the parameters of each of the twelve venues and within the time allotted for load-in and strike at each tour stop. Practicality, however, was not the only consideration. The history and intention of the classical and folk dance and music forms and the presentation of those traditions in a way that reflected Cambodian tradition—not becoming overly staged or appearing exotic or primitive within the context of an American stage presentation—was important (Cooper, Personal interview, 18 December 2016).

The *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* tour itinerary was developed with three specific communities in mind (Miller, Personal interview, 23 February 2017). First, Cambodian-American communities were a priority, with performances and workshops at the Center for Cultural Exchange in Portland, Maine, Lowell Memorial Auditorium in Lowell, Massachusetts, and the Carpenter Center at California State University in Long Beach, California. Venues in the Cambodian-American communities had little funding available to

support the hosting and presentation of the tour. However, interaction between Cambodians and Cambodian-Americans was integral to the mission of the project, and the tour underwrote these performances by subsidizing performance fees and offering lower ticket prices for local community members (Miller, Personal interview, 19 November 2016; Booth and Valente, Personal interview, 26 January 2017). Second, performances staged in New York, New York (Joyce Theater) and Washington, D.C. (John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts) received both public and private financial support and broadcast news of the performance tour to a national platform. Finally, presenters with sustained relationships with Cambodia who had funding available through ongoing cultural programming were included, such as Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, UA Presents in Tucson, Arizona, the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, and Jacob's Pillow in Beckett, Massachusetts.

Methods of Contextualization

Cooper managed the development of contextual materials related to the production. “We knew from the beginning that we wanted to have a deep relationship to educational institutions, whether that was having kid’s programs or adult programs, and also really connect with the community—the Cambodian community” (Cooper, Personal interview, 18 December 2016). Toni Shapiro-Phim, a cultural anthropologist with a specialization in the arts and Southeast Asian cultures, and Khatharya Um, a professor of Southeast Asian studies at U.C. Berkeley with a focus in the fields of post-conflict and postcolonial nations, were engaged to create an educational guide, “*Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia: A Study Guide about Dance, Ecology, and History.*” Complete with lesson plans, teacher’s notes, activity suggestions, and brief essays on aspects of Cambodian culture and agriculture, this guide was

distributed to each of the host presenters on the tour who then distributed them to schools and educators within their communities (Cooper, Personal interview, 18 December 2016). The guide included contextual information about the art forms included in the *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* performance and highlighted aspects of Cambodian life depicted in the content of the performance, such as the reverence for water in Cambodian culture.

Cooper took a similar approach to the preparation and distribution of press and marketing materials related to the project to “provide as much background information to the press so that they could write about it and not be afraid of being wrong” (Cooper, Personal interview, 18 December 2016). This approach also allowed *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* to encourage presenters and press to highlight the cultural history of Cambodia, rather than focusing on its traumatically conflictual history. Members of the press, including writers from *The Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*, traveled to Cambodia in the year prior to the tour, which facilitated advance press coverage in the United States. Essays about Cambodian history and the place of art in society were made available on the *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* website, written by authors including Avi Black, David Chandler, Amitov Ghosh, Boreth Ly, Robert McLaughlin, Toni Shapiro-Phim, and Khatharya Um. Extensive program notes written by Valente with Shapiro-Phim, Sam-Ang Sam, and Cooper were distributed at each performance in both English and Khmer.

Another essential role that Cooper and the Asia Society played in *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* was to develop and host a website for the project, which expanded the project’s reach beyond the audiences attending the performances. The website hosted downloadable versions of press releases, study guides, program notes, links to essays, advance press articles, reviews of performances, and a complete listing of performers and venues

participating in the tour. Digital photographs posted by the Asia Society chronicled artists' experience while on tour. The Asia Society also developed a series of short learning videos featuring background information on Cambodian dance and music practices, as well as the *sampeah kru*, the blessing ceremony conducted prior to Cambodian performances (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016). These videos were distributed as a marketing, promotional, and educational tool on video tape to all presenters participating in the tour. The videos were also posted to the tour's website and were made accessible to a broader public as a result. The tour's website is still active today, in 2017, and serves as an archival repository for the project; however, it has not been further developed since the tour ended and, due to changing technology, links to videos and some press and contextual sources are no longer active.

Assessment

The established commitment of both CAP and the Asian Cultural Council to RUFA and to artists in Cambodia laid the groundwork for a necessarily high degree of trust between the U.S. partners of *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* and their Cambodian counterparts. This trust played a large role in the design of production elements. The tour's production and lighting designer, Clifton Taylor, made an advance trip to Cambodia to meet with the artists and discuss their needs. The scenic elements for the tour, however, were constructed in the United States, and lighting design relied on American lighting equipment. The Cambodian artists traveled to the United States without knowing what the production would look like. Valente notes, "For the classical work, we commissioned a painted floor that replicated the floor at the Royal Palace and it floated in space. I don't think that the dancers could have envisioned that scenario because they had no exposure to how other things had been staged.

But once they saw it, they recognized it as theirs” (Booth and Valente, Personal interview, 26 January 2017). A week-long technical and production residency at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, at the start of the tour allowed the complete company of dancers and musicians to rehearse under full technical conditions in preparation for the premiere performance at Wesleyan’s Center for the Arts on August 11, 2001. This technical residency was essential to bringing the production and artistic aspects of the tour together.

The *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* tour marked a significant milestone in the progression of exchange initiatives between Cambodia and the United States. However, the tour was not intended as a stand-alone or as an end point. The development of the tour was integrated into existing Cambodia/America exchange initiatives and was considered with a before, during, and after approach. This investment—both financially and in infrastructure development—also facilitated the development of the Phnom Penh-based Amrita Performing Arts, founded by Fred Frumberg in 2003, with a mission to “help revive and preserve the wide spectrum of Cambodia’s traditional performing arts through a program that emphasized national capacity building in all aspects of production management” (Amrita). The establishment of a production management company in Cambodia attests to the societal progression from a community consumed by conflict to one of innovation and investment in its own future.

Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia was able to shift from restoring and re-creating the performance practices of Cambodia to presenting that work outside Cambodia. It developed sustainable systems of organizing and producing cultural work in Cambodia and among the Cambodian diaspora and it maintained ongoing and reciprocal exchange among these communities and among its organizing partners throughout a 25-year period.

Season of Cambodia (2013)

Radical rupture in tradition itself created a powerful drive for restoration of loss. And, as we witness in the modern period, the movement for restoration creates new tradition out of the old.

—Phim (10)

Background

Programs such as the Asian Cultural Council’s work with RUFA, NEFA’s CAP and the *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* tour facilitated significant progress in the restoration and revitalization of the performing arts in Cambodia in the 1990s and 2000s. However, these programs did not constitute the entirety of cultural restoration work happening in Cambodia at the time. Other organizations dedicated to similar work were developing on paths that sometimes intersected. Arn Chorn-Pond founded one such organization, now known as Cambodian Living Arts (CLA).

Born 1966 in Battambang, Cambodia, Chorn-Pond was nine years old when the Khmer Rouge came to power in Cambodia. While interned at Wat Ek Phnom between 1975 and 1979, Khmer Rouge officers ordered Chorn-Pond to study traditional Khmer instruments under Yoeun Mek, a master of traditional Cambodian music forms. Chorn-Pond performed traditional music at gatherings of Khmer Rouge officials and, in so doing, avoided death under the Khmer Rouge regime (McPhillips). Upon his escape from Wat Ek Phnom at age thirteen, Chorn-Pond sought refuge in Sa Kaeo Refugee Camp in Thailand, where he met Peter Pond, a clergyman doing mission work with Cambodian orphans on the Cambodia-Thailand border (McPhillips). Pond adopted Chorn-Pond in 1980 and brought him to live in

New Hampshire in the United States. There, Chorn-Pond joined a growing community of refugee Cambodians.⁵

While engaging in humanitarian work in Cambodia in the mid-1990s, Chorn-Pond encountered his former master teacher Yoeun Mek, who was now living in poverty (Todd, Personal interview, 20 January 2017). Seeing Yoeun Mek in an impoverished state prompted Chorn-Pond to establish the Cambodian Master Performers Program (CMPP), which sought to support the continued artistic development and personal livelihood of master musicians who had survived the genocide in Cambodia. CMPP identified and brought together master musicians to recall their art forms and to introduce a generation of young Cambodian artists to the performance practices. This cross-generational activity contributed significantly to rebuilding aspects of previously vibrant Cambodian arts and culture (Todd, Personal interview, 20 January 2017).

Over the course of the next eleven years, CMPP supported sixteen master artists, eleven assistant teachers, and more than two-hundred arts students throughout Cambodia annually (Cambodian Living Arts). Not unlike the progression from *CAP* to *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* to the establishment of organizations like Amrita Performing Arts, as CMPP's work with individual Cambodian artists within specific communities assured the preservation of traditional art forms, the organization's goals evolved. In 2009, CMPP became CLA and in 2010, Phloeun Prim, a Cambodian-Canadian entrepreneur who was instrumental in establishing Artisans d'Angkor, a Cambodian company dedicated to the preservation of traditional Khmer skills in silk-making and stone and wood carving, was hired as CLA's first

⁵ According to the 2010 United States census, New England—and Lowell, Massachusetts, in particular—houses one of the largest Cambodian populations in the US, second only to Long Beach, California.

Executive Director. Under Prim’s leadership, CLA developed its first strategic plan and renewed its mission to reflect a shift in focus beyond the cultural preservation of Cambodian performance practices and toward the development and sustainability of artistic and creative careers for a younger generation of Cambodians (Cambodian Living Arts). Under Prim’s charismatic leadership, CLA’s programs have supported and engaged Cambodian artists and arts professionals on local, national, and global levels.

In 2013, in its largest-scale undertaking to date and with Prim at its helm, CLA commissioned and co-produced a festival of Cambodian arts, culture, and humanities—*Season of Cambodia*—which presented and engaged Cambodian artists within a major international cultural capital, New York City. Co-produced with Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center, a film center based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, *Season of Cambodia* was initiated with a mission to “illuminate and to advance Cambodian arts and culture, driving international support and attention to the creativity and diversity of cultural expressions in Cambodia today” (Season of Cambodia, “Mission”). In a statement about the festival, Prim says, “We hope these artists can inspire generations to come, and that Cambodia can inspire the world” (Season of Cambodia: A Living 4).

Season of Cambodia took place in New York City in April and May 2013. The festival served as an immersive experience for Cambodian artists in American culture and introduced New York audiences to traditional and contemporary aspects of Cambodia’s artistic community. Chorn-Pond notes, “We had about thirty art forms from twenty artistic organizations from Cambodia from visual art, to performance art, to music performed on rare instruments. Some of the artists had never, in their lifetimes, gotten out of their villages. To

perform in a place where the world is watching was a dream come true” (Chorn-Pond, Personal interview, 22 January 2017).

More than one hundred and twenty-five Cambodian artists participated in *Season of Cambodia*, hosted and presented by thirty-four New York cultural and academic institutions, including the Asia Society, the Rubin Museum of Art, BAM, the Joyce Theater, Mark Morris Dance Center, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Bronx Museum of Art, and Museum of Modern Art. The performances, films, and installations presented as part of *Season of Cambodia* were diverse, ranging from Wat Bo’s performance of the traditional art of *Sbek Thom* shadow puppetry at Brookfield Place to Amrita Performing Arts’ performance of *Khmeropédies III: Source/Primate*, a work of contemporary Cambodian choreography. Films included features addressing the terror and destruction of the Khmer Rouge reign in Cambodia in the mid- to late 1970s and the personal stories of resilience and recovery in the years that followed.

Curatorial Perspectives and Process

From a curatorial perspective, Prim, CLA, and *Season of Cambodia* organizers approached all planning and programming for *Season of Cambodia* with a mission of making a place for Cambodian artists on the world stage (Prim, Personal interview, 2 March 2017). As with *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*, *Season of Cambodia* organizers wanted Cambodia to be recognized for its great arts and culture rather than for the perceived or actual suffering or poverty of the country. In speaking of Cambodia’s place in a global artistic community, Chorn-Pond says, “My dream is to have the world know Cambodian art – not the killing fields or the bombs – but our artistic expression and the beautiful artists that we have here: the art for peace, for nature, and for healing. It’s a healing process for all of us. It’s a magic

medicine” (Chorn-Pond, Personal interview, 22 January 2017). This message was placed at the core of all aspects of the festival—the humanities, ritual and theater, dance, music, film, and visual arts—and, according to Prim, the festival organizers considered this message even more powerful than the artistic elements of the festival (Prim, Personal interview, 2 March 2017). That is not to say that production or artistic values were substandard—they were not—but the artistic programming of *Season of Cambodia* was a vehicle through which larger humanitarian goals were communicated to the international community, and CLA knew that Cambodian performing artists were ready to demonstrate their standing unequivocally (Prim, Personal interview, 2 March 2017).

The visual arts curators for *Season of Cambodia*, Leeza Ahmady, based in New York, and Erin Gleeson, based in Cambodia, involved prospective visual artists in the design of their residencies (Cambodian Living Arts. *Season of Cambodia Group Meeting: Minutes*, 3 May 2012, 3). With the artists’ needs in mind, *Season of Cambodia* focused on building two-month residencies for artists rather than on installing gallery shows. The “IN RESIDENCE” program served as a professional development opportunity and as a chance for young visual artists to experience the art and culture of New York City over the course of eight weeks, using the time to grow the networks they needed to take the next step in their careers (Rosenberg, Personal interview, 2 March 2017).

Funding, Organizational, and Relationship Structures

The idea for a CLA-initiated performance of Cambodian living arts in New York City began on a relatively modest scale. Initial plans included a benefit performance at a major venue (Carnegie Hall was on the short list) to bring world artists (such as Peter Gabriel, with whom Chorn-Pond had toured on the Reebok World Tour in 1988) together with Cambodian

artists (masters as well as the next generation of Cambodian artists) in a concert format (Burt, Personal interview, 19 January 2017; Park, Personal interview, 31 March 2017). The event was envisioned to introduce an international audience to the work of CLA, highlighting its role as a facilitator of cultural development in Cambodia and creating a project that integrated all the different disciplines with which CLA had been working and in which it had been investing since the mid-1990s (Burt, Personal interview, 19 January 2017). Over time, according to John Burt, CLA Founding Board Chair, the idea developed into a broader festival format, “because then we would simply be creating the container within which each organization or artist could shine on their own, which was always our goal” (Burt, Personal interview, 19 January 2017). Elena Park, who was the Marketing and Communications Director at the Metropolitan Opera in the mid-2000s, played a large role in the development of this idea. After traveling to Cambodia and being introduced to the work of CLA and the artists it fosters, Park urged Burt to “bring Cambodia to New York,” and the idea of bringing multiple artists and performances to New York in an effort to demonstrate the breadth and dynamism of Cambodian culture was born (Burt, Personal interview, 19 January 2017; Park, Personal interview, 31 March 2017). Park eventually served as the Senior Festival Advisor to *Season of Cambodia*.

Planning for the festival began with the formation of a Steering Committee of individuals with long-standing relationships to Cambodia, including Sam Miller, then President of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC); Rachel Cooper of the Asia Society; Cecily Cook and Ralph Samuelson of the Asian Cultural Council; Anne H. Bass, a major New York City-based philanthropist who was influential in bringing other philanthropists to the project; Darren Walker, who had recently transitioned from a position

with The Rockefeller Foundation to a position as President of the Ford Foundation; Elena Park, and John Burt. In addition to participation in other work with Cambodia, most the members of this core group had been involved in some aspect of planning or implementation for the *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* tour in 2001 and could offer insight into the presentation of Cambodian artists within an American context.

At that time, CLA was operating under the fiscal sponsorship of the Marion Institute and, as the scope of the aspirations for the festival grew, the Marion Institute and CLA board members became concerned that CLA was not equipped to handle the fiduciary responsibilities of producing the festival (Todd, Personal interview, 20 January 2017). The result was the formation of a separate operating entity, an LLC called Season of Cambodia, LLC (SOC). SOC hired, managed, and represented CLA and all the festival artists, curators, and collaborating organizations, in all operations and engagements with New York City venues and institutions. SOC did not have 501(c)(3) status in the United States, and as such, it engaged the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) as its fiscal sponsor. While this satisfied the immediate necessity of channeling fundraising efforts through a recognized nonprofit organization, this meant that all grant monies from major organizations such as the Ford Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, the Robert Sterling Clarke Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts were raised through NYFA and were subsequently transferred to SOC. While receiving funds directly could have provided CLA with an opportunity to establish its credibility with U.S. foundations, Burt recognized the positive aspects of operating under fiscal sponsorship, noting, “It gave a lot more freedom to the participating arts organizations to be part of a neutral umbrella that they were all kind of peers in. So, CLA became one of many players” (Burt, Personal interview, 19 January 2017).

Phnom Penh-based Prim was named the executive director of SOC, while still maintaining his position as Executive Director of CLA. New York-based SOC staff included John Burt, Chair; Elena Park, Senior Festival Advisor; Ellen Dennis, Festival Producer; Snug Harbor Productions, General Manager; Monika Jouvert, Development Director; Vanna Sann, Communications Director; and Robert William Henderson, Jr., Festival Production Manager. Additionally, Amrita Performing Arts was hired as the line producer for the festival because of its expertise in producing theatrical performance and for its deeply rooted connections with Cambodian artists. Staff expanded significantly in the months leading up to and including the festival and was led by Glenn Rosenberg, who served as a Chief of Staff, liaising between SOC, CLA, and all the many entities involved in the project. SOC did not identify an overall artistic director; however, Fred Frumberg, founder of Amrita Performing Arts and production coordinator for *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*, spearheaded the performing arts programming with Elena Park. Rithy Panh curated the film series, and Leeza Ahmady and Erin Gleeson curated the visual arts components.

Initial funding from the Asian Cultural Council, The Rockefeller Foundation via the NYC Cultural Innovation Fund, and the Ford Foundation provided travel stipends for New York City-based presenters and program officers to travel to Cambodia to meet with artists and see performances (Burt, Personal interview, 19 January 2017). Although *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* and *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* also invited presenters to Indonesia and Cambodia respectively, *Season of Cambodia*'s intentions differed from the others because their objective for these advance trips was for the presenters to determine, or curate, which artists or performances they wished to present in their venues in New York City (Prim, Personal interview, 2 March 2017).

Joseph Melillo, the Executive Producer at BAM, traveled to Cambodia on one of the first trips, led by Prim. Melillo attended an open rehearsal with members of The Royal Ballet of Cambodia in a studio at RUFA and selected the company as the group he wished to present at BAM during the festival. Selection of artists and productions by other New York City presenting organizations followed, and, as a result, New York City presenting organizations played a large role in the curation of the festival, establishing a co-production relationship between the presenters and SOC from an early stage. Around this same time, Prim had a fortuitous meeting in Cambodia with Kate Levin, the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, while she was traveling in Southeast Asia with her family. Burt notes, “Kate [Levin] was such an important ingredient to make sure that this was a New York City event because New York City had a really strong sense of ownership with this project” (Burt, Personal interview, 19 January 2017).

Aside from CLA’s initial financial investment in organizing the festival and its infrastructure, non-Cambodian sources provided all funding for *Season of Cambodia*. The U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh supported operational costs in Cambodia, and EVA Air, which is based in Cambodia but is a Taiwanese company, supported a portion of the international travel between Cambodia and the United States. Otherwise, funding sources included private American foundations and individual donors from the United States. This funding structure did not surprise Charley Todd, CLA Board President:

Prior to the Khmer Rouge, the performing arts were dependent on patronage – the patronage of the royal family and the patronage, to some degree, the wealthy and of the Ministry of Culture. That largely has not reconstituted itself. Any performance [in Cambodia] that’s part of the religious culture is still happening – part of ceremonies and weddings but investment in other forms, like The Royal Ballet, is lacking. (Todd, Personal interview, 20 January 2017)

Prim approached the Council of Ministry to ask for funding during the development of the festival and had some frank conversations about what receiving Cambodian government funding for the project, however minimal, would signify. Prim recounts the Ministry asking, “How much involvement do you want the government to have in this festival?” (Prim, Personal interview, 2 March 2017). Importantly, accepting financial support from the Ministry would have led to its involvement in program decisions. According to Prim, “If it was a government-run thing, we would have seen the coconut dancer and the peacock dance in the middle of Times Square, and they would be so happy with that” (Prim, Personal interview, 2 March 2017). Prim and SOC were committed to presenting a mix of programming as a reflection of the two recent decades of CLA’s dedication to the restoration and advancement of the arts in Cambodia. It was important that the festival include innovative contemporary arts alongside traditional classical works. Prim says, “It was the mixture of the art forms presented that made the program artistically interesting for New Yorkers” (Prim, Personal interview, 2 March 2017). This is an important distinction between the *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* and the *Season of Cambodia* initiatives, which took place more than a decade apart. The aesthetic shift from the exclusive presentation of traditional and folk art forms to the inclusion of contemporary artistic expressions as part of *Season of Cambodia* reveals the impact of sustained investment in the Cambodian cultural sector by programs including CAP (1990s), *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* (2001), CMMP (1990s/2000s), Amrita Performing Arts (2000s/2010s), and CLA (2000s/2010s).

Despite not being funded by the Council of Ministry, the Ministry of Culture eventually became involved in vetting some of the planned programming for *Season of Cambodia*. Artists in Cambodia are often public servants, and many of the artists invited to

participate in *Season of Cambodia* were required to request authorization from the Ministry of Culture to travel to and perform in New York City (Prim, Personal interview, 2 March 2017). When the Ministry asked about the programming for *Season of Cambodia*, Prim leveraged the power of New York institutions in support of the relative powerlessness of Cambodian artists and said that the New York venues had determined the programming, not the artists or *Season of Cambodia* themselves (Prim, Personal interview, 2 March 2017). This satisfied the Ministry of Culture, excepting for the film programming, which received additional scrutiny.

A headlining film of *Season of Cambodia* was *A River Changes Course* by Kalyanee Mam. The description of the film reads:

Twice a year in Cambodia, the Tonle Sap River changes course, while the river of life flows in a perpetual cycle of death and rebirth and of creation and destruction. Working in an intimate, verité style, filmmaker Kalyanee Mam [Director of Photography for the Oscar-winning documentary *Inside Job*], spent two years in her native homeland following three young Cambodians struggling to overcome the crushing effects of deforestation, overfishing and overwhelming debt. A breathtaking and unprecedented journey from the remote, mountainous jungles and floating cities of the Cambodian countryside to the bustling garment factories of modern Phnom Penh, *A River Changes Course* traces a remarkable and devastatingly beautiful story of a country torn between the rural present and an ominous industrial future (*Season of Cambodia*).

The Cambodian government did not want negative representation, and perhaps the trigger that induced the government to censor the film was the film's insinuation that the government was allowing its citizens to suffer and was not doing enough to prevent the country from heading toward an "ominous industrial future." The sustained relationships between Prim and CLA with the Council of Ministry and the Ministry of Culture helped to resolve the issue, and the film screening of *Season of Cambodia* continued as planned.

Prim also approached the Ministry of Tourism for potential support. Although the Ministry did not support *Season of Cambodia* financially, it sent a team from the Department of Promotion and Tourism of Cambodia to New York during the festival. This team set up booths outside major performance sites, including BAM, to promote tourism to Cambodia.

Selection of Artists and Performance Sites

Season of Cambodia employed a presenter-driven method of artist selection.

According to Cambodian Living Arts' Project Evaluation of *Season of Cambodia*:

Prior to the festival, representatives from the presenting partners in New York were invited to Cambodia to visit, view, and select amongst various performing groups or artists. Selection was solely in the hands of these presenting partners and decisions made were based on the quality and potential of the performances and the New York presenters' own artistic directions and needs. (Nowaczyk 21)

Due to the substantial number and diversity of New York City presenters involved in *Season of Cambodia*, the festival offered a wide variety of Cambodian performance practices within a compressed period. *Season of Cambodia* presented traditional Cambodian performance practices through performances by master artists and through a new generation experimenting with new ideas and contemporary forms. In total, thirty-four New York City arts organizations presented work by Cambodian artists as part of *Season of Cambodia*, which signified an unprecedented effort by the arts community to cooperate in seeking a common goal. The Joyce Theater, a traditional proscenium dance venue, served as a home for Khmer Arts Ensemble's performance of Sophiline Cheam Shapiro's *A Bend in the River*; Le Poisson Rouge presented Dengue Fever, a rock band merging aspects of Cambodian pop and American Indie Rock; and the Film Society of Lincoln Center presented more than ten films at the Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center.

Ten visual artists participated in two-month-long residencies at institutions and galleries across the city, including LMCC’s Arts Center at Governors Island, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and Transparent Studio at Bose Pacia in Brooklyn. New York City’s dynamic arts and culture scene was a reason for the city’s appeal to *Season of Cambodia* organizers. Also, it was viewed as an international cultural capital, and, as Todd said, “If we’re going to do this and we’re going to try to make a mark that will have ripple effects around the world, let’s do it in the place that makes ripple effects” (Todd, Personal interview, 20 January 2017).

Methods of Contextualization

Season of Cambodia combined its focus on contextualization with its marketing and promotional efforts in a specific way. Each of the thirty-four presenting organizations presenting work as part of *Season of Cambodia* promoted the work as part of their venue-specific marketing and publicity materials. This meant that *Season of Cambodia* did not need to use its marketing and publicity budget to sell tickets. Instead, *Season of Cambodia* could focus its marketing and publicity on highlighting the festival and on speaking about the humanitarian aspects of its mission. Thus, each program received double publicity—publicity through the venue itself and then again through SOC promotion. HRH Princess Norodom Buppha Devi’s visit to New York with The Royal Ballet of Cambodia conveyed welcomed promotional attention by itself alone. She participated in press interviews, appeared publicly in a conversation with Peter Sellars at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and oversaw a master class with her dancers at the Mark Morris Dance Center.

Cambodian Living Arts designed and published a seventy-page program book (*Season of Cambodia: A Living*), including descriptions of all the productions, visual arts

residencies, and talks being presented as part of the festival. The book also provided contextual and educational information, including a brief history of Cambodia, biographies of principal artists, short histories of traditional art forms, and vibrant photographs of the artists and art featured as part of *Season of Cambodia*. It acknowledged each of the partner organizations involved in the festival and provided a listing of high-level donors and *Season of Cambodia* sponsors. It also included a two-page spread about the *Season of Cambodia* Arts Fellows program, which brought five Cambodian artists, art administrators, and development specialists to New York during the festival to participate in a series of professional development opportunities throughout New York City. The book did not include information about how or where to purchase tickets to the performances; it focused solely on the artistic and humanitarian aspects of the festival in such a manner as to be informative even for those not intending or not able to attend *Season of Cambodia* events. Cambodian Living Arts distributed the books to all venues participating in *Season of Cambodia* where they were made available to the public without cost.

Season of Cambodia artists provided additional contextual information within the framework of the performances themselves. For example, during his performance at the David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center, Chorn-Pond told the personal story of his friend and fellow performing musician, Savang. Chorn-Pond summarized his telling of this story in conversation with me in Phnom Penh on January 22, 2017: At the age of nine and in his home city in Cambodia, Savang was on a walk with his aunt, being carried in her arms, when a bomb was dropped from a plane and exploded next to them. Savang's aunt died instantly from the impact of the explosion and Savang's body and face was impaled with shrapnel, leaving his face misshapen. He was ostracized in his village for his appearance. He became

and remained very depressed, but then started to play musical instruments, including the Khim, like Chorn-Pond. This new interest helped to save his life. When I asked Chorn-Pond why he chose to tell this story in a performance context, Chorn-Pond responded:

Through stories you provide context for people to understand what we've been through and how we connect to each other in both good ways and bad ways – it's all part of us, it's all part of our history. Arts and culture remind us that we are not just performing thousand year old things. If we forget the arts, we forget our culture: we deny our identity – the whole identity, what it is to be a human being. (Chorn-Pond, Personal interview, 22 January 2017)

Assessment

SOC faced challenges due to its structure as a temporary organization in New York City. Although it had partnered with thirty-four arts institutions in New York City, SOC was not associated with any one particular organization and, absent such, encountered infrastructure issues such as needing to attain software to organize funding and development contacts, requiring short-term leases on office space, and having to develop and maintain smooth and accessible communication with an executive director based in Cambodia and a team of predominantly part-time staff members. Minutes from the initial planning sessions for *Season of Cambodia* reveal goals to involve artists across multiple platforms of the festival and to encourage interaction among artists beyond their individual performances and institutional connections (Cambodian Living Arts. *Season of Cambodia Group Meeting: Minutes*. 17 May 2012, 1). Ultimately, aside from the Cambodian Arts Fellows, this cross-collaborative effort did not come to fruition because resources of staffing, funding, and priority were allocated elsewhere.

SOC desired to engage the Cambodian-American community in a deep and sustained way. According to Todd, “There was a team of Cambodian-Americans in New York brought together around the *Season of Cambodia* to help promote it, help spread the word in

Cambodian communities, and then to help the volunteers for different events. They were quite active” (Todd, Personal interview, 20 January 2017). However, Chorn-Pond notes, following *Season of Cambodia*, “There was great interest from presenters and from the Cambodian-American community, but after that, it has been quiet for Cambodian-Americans. They take pride in their community. We have not followed up with that. So even here and in my community around America, we need to tap on what we have done with the *Season of Cambodia*” (Chorn-Pond, Personal interview, 22 January 2017).

While the aforementioned scenarios identify areas in which the *Season of Cambodia* initiative might be reimagined in future festival iterations, should any be developed, ultimately, the primary goal of *Season of Cambodia* was to establish CLA and Cambodian art forms on an international platform, not to establish SOC as an entity or even to maintain long-lasting relationships with New York City presenters or members of Cambodian-American communities. The goal of establishing CLA and Cambodian art forms on an international platform was accomplished, according to Prim, “*Season of Cambodia* really put CLA on the map as an organization, and built the trust that allowed us to be recognized internationally. Before, we were really a grass-roots Cambodian organization, but I think today, we’re seen differently because of *Season of Cambodia*” (Prim, Personal interview, 2 March 2017).

The trajectory of CLA’s work following *Season of Cambodia* in 2013 supports Prim’s claim. In January 2016, CLA organized and hosted *Vitality and Viability: Arts Ecosystem in Asia*, the third conference of ANCER, the Asia-Pacific Network for Cultural Education & Research, in Phnom Penh in partnership with Insitute français du Cambodge and LASALLE College of the Arts. In March 2016, CLA hosted the *Living Arts in Post-Conflict Contexts*

Forum: Practices, Partnerships, Possibilities in Phnom Penh in collaboration with the Salzburg Global Seminar and with sponsorship from the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development. In 2017, CLA initiated a 5-year pilot project in partnership with the Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport; its Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts; and UNESCO in which CLA will facilitate arts education programs in elementary and secondary schools across Cambodia. The program will officially begin at Sisowath High School in Phnom Penh in the 2017/2018 academic year and will integrate formal arts education into the school curriculum.

In addition to making an impact on the education system in Cambodia, Prim has his sights set on CLA's continued involvement as a leader in the cultural sector, not just in Cambodia but in the greater Mekong River region and Asia. A concrete example of this work was Prim's successful lobbying for Phnom Penh/Mekong River to be included as a City Hub for The Salzburg Global Forum for Young Cultural Innovators (YCI), "a ten-year project launched by Salzburg Global Seminar in 2014 to engage fifty of the world's most dynamic young creative change-makers every year" (Salzburg). As a City Hub, CLA will host cultural leaders from the Mekong River region annually until 2024 as part of the YCI program, establishing Phnom Penh as a city suitable for global exchange and further situates CLA on an international platform.

Lastly, CLA is continuing its support of Cambodian artists by commissioning a new production, *Bangsokol: A Requiem for Cambodia*, a major symphonic work by composer Him Sophy in collaboration with filmmaker Rithy Panh and librettist Trent Walker. The production will have its U.S. premiere at BAM in December 2017—a testament to an

ongoing relationship between CLA and BAM since *Season of Cambodia*—and is slated to premiere in Phnom Penh in January 2019, on the fortieth anniversary of the fall of the Khmer Rouge.

Chapter IV. Analysis of Models via Curatorial Principles

The preceding study of *Festival of Indonesia In Performance; Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*; and *Season of Cambodia* as independent models for dynamic cultural exchange in the performing arts has revealed principles and strategies for confronting the dominant challenges present in developing and executing cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts: representation and agency; historical, social, and political positioning; and advancements in technology as a means of transnational accessibility. In this section, although by no means exhaustively, I concentrate on five predominant curatorial principles associated with the cultural exchange goals of the initiatives examined in the preceding case studies, namely, working within festival and touring formats; establishing collaborative partnerships; defining success; sustaining relationships and identifying advocates; and creating value and viability. Here, I consider the models illuminated in the case studies collective and relative to each of these five curatorial principles. My effort is to reach recommendations applicable to innovative practices in the field.

Working Within Festival and Touring Formats

Initially, I ask whether the festival and multi-city touring formats selected for *Festival of Indonesia In Performance; Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*; and *Season of Cambodia* were the best vehicles for presenting the work. As discussed in the case studies, such formats allow organizers to amortize the costs associated with international travel across many performance sites and the time invested in the administrative and bureaucratic dimensions of visiting the United States, such as attaining passports and performance visas.

A festival structure in which a concentration of performance practices revolves around a particular theme—or in reference to the case studies examined in this paper,

performance practices from a particular culture or part of the world—multiple performances and performance practices are presented in relation to each other, in a concentrated period, and within a particular geographical location (or locations). This provides audiences with the opportunity to experience multiple performances and gain exposure to many aspects of the represented culture. From this perspective, I contend that even *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* would fall within a broad definition of “festival,” as supported by Tanen’s description of such an environment:

The program becomes a festival when it brings together many elements and concentrates them in given communities. It also becomes a festival if it utilizes a diplomatic approach, if it brings in officials from both governments. A program of this kind does not, of course, have to be called a festival. It is simply a major cultural presentation, a way of making a more-than-fleeting impression on a given group. It should tell something about a country’s past, present, and future. (369)

Within the context of this definition, festivals serve to provide artists and audiences with multiple frames of reference, placing individual performance practices within a broader cultural, historical, social, and political context. Although identified as a twelve city U.S. tour and not a festival in the traditional sense of the word, *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* combined traditional and folk dance and music on the same program. As such, the program supported a primary goal of contextualizing Cambodian performance practices by placing them in conversation with each other. In the case of *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*, the program was presented to a mix of Cambodian-American and non-Cambodian audiences, soliciting diverse examinations of the place of art in both Cambodian and American societies.

Festival of Indonesia In Performance and *Season of Cambodia* were festivals in a more traditional sense. *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* was a nation-wide festival that took place in more than twenty U.S. states and more than fifty distinct U.S. communities and was situated within the framework of a broader initiative focusing on the arts and culture of

Indonesia, *Festival of Indonesia*. Many U.S. cities hosted multiple performances as part of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance*, supporting mini-festivals within the nation-wide festival (Cooper 7). The *Season of Cambodia* festival was contained to a period of two months and was hosted by venues in New York City exclusively. Cambodian visual and performing artists were presented by thirty-four New York City presenting venues, catapulting Cambodian arts and CLA into a new realm of international stature.

Establishing Collaborative Partnerships

Festival of Indonesia In Performance was initiated by an Indonesian organization, was curated primarily by Indonesian artists, and was co-produced by Indonesian and American producers. *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* was the result of a sustained collaboration between American and Cambodian organizations, as well as Cambodian-American communities, and was curated bi-nationally. *Season of Cambodia* was commissioned and co-produced by Cambodian organizations who facilitated its curation by American presenters and was executed bi-nationally. While the nature of collaborative partnerships varied within these initiatives, each engaged advisory boards and organizing teams who were highly invested in either Indonesian or Cambodian performance practice and in American performance customs. As shown by these initiatives, a structure of bi-national organization facilitates transnational understanding and cooperation in ways that would be less efficient or, perhaps, even impossible without that collaboration.

In each case, organizers engaged in reciprocal conversations with artists about the representation of their performance practices, recognizing the limitations of what could be shared within the scope of each initiative. The initiatives' leaders were committed to long-range planning and relationship building and they maintained deep involvement with the

artistic communities before, during, and after the resulting tours and festivals. In each case, artists from Indonesia and Cambodia were, to varying degrees, directly involved in decisions regarding presentations in the United States.

Emphasizing mutual respect and supporting sustained exchange between cultures, these initiatives placed priority on bi-national, collaborative decision-making rather than on goals of large-scale commercial success, by adapting art forms to cater to what Americans might expect or desire as merely entertainment. Collectively, the initiatives pursued the presentation of high-quality artists and made every effort to present culturally-specific performance practices in the United States with integrity. To the extent to which it was controllable, the artists and practitioners of the art forms had agency of representation; it did not sit with the American audiences, American venues, or the producers. The overriding priority was of authenticity and quality, whether traditional or contemporary. Rather than seeking to control the ways in which the practices and artists were represented, the producers served as facilitators in dialogue with the artists, interpreting and managing their concerns in an effort to manifest the artists' desired representation of their own culture.

Understanding the artists' desired representation for their work was essential to the execution of these initiatives, as the organizers became cultural liaisons and translators, not only in a literal sense and from a curatorial perspective, but also in practical ways, such as when communicating about artists when booking and promoting performances. In each case, the producers were responsible for communicating nuanced messages to presenters, members of the press, and audiences. This required a sustained collaborative effort among the producers, artists, presenters, audiences, and press.

Defining Success

Mechanisms of measurable impact, such as attendance figures, ticket sales, and press coverage, are some of the baseline factors for determining the success of performance-based endeavors. As evidenced by a plethora of advance articles, listings, and reviews in major international news outlets for each of the initiatives, each of them received significant attention from the press. Ticket sales and attendance were strong in each instance as well, indicating support from the American performance-going community⁶. Less quantifiable, but equally important, are measures of success from an ideological perspective, including effects of the initiatives both in the United States and in the artists' home country and whether the goals set out in the initiatives' mission statements were fulfilled. When I asked Miller about the sometimes ambiguous concept of success, he responded, "If you define success from the start, it is easier to reach" (Miller, Personal interview, 19 November 2016).

Influence at Home and Abroad

It was often the case that these initiatives brought artists together who would not have met or worked together otherwise. In addition, artists were exposed to aspects of their own culture (or cultures, as with Indonesia) with which they were previously unfamiliar. As an example, one hundred and twenty-five artists from all over Cambodia took part in *Season of Cambodia*, including master artists and a younger generation of Cambodian artists performing contemporary work influenced by ancient traditions. *Season of Cambodia*

⁶ One hundred and fifty-three public performances and another seventy-five cultural exchange and academic activities were attended by more than ninety thousand people during the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* (Cooper 5). More than nineteen thousand people attended *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* (Audience Figures) representing an average of eighty-four percent capacity across twenty-eight performances. More than fifty-four thousand people attended *Season of Cambodia* performances, representing an average capacity of eighty percent across all performances (Nowaczyk 14).

producer Ellen Dennis recalled a pre-festival meeting held in Cambodia for the participating artists, of which one hundred and twenty-three were present:

We made formal introductions of every artist and group—to wild cheers from all, the greatest applause going to Wat Bo from Siem Reap—and all our attending staff (John Burt, Phlouen Prim, the Amrita team, our Associate GM, and Vanna Sann.) Sal from Amrita and I ran the meeting together, and translated for each other, literally and culturally. We (mostly Vanna!) had created a fantastic slide presentation to NY theme songs, naturally. We shared photos of all the venues the artists would perform in; photos of their hotels, markets, and restaurants nearby, shops where the artists could find rice, photos of the rice cookers we put in all the rooms (critical), of our NY staff; maps of the cities, the subways; pointed out our offices; reviewed the schedule, talked about life in NY, maneuvering in the city, etc. and the “meaning” of the festival, or our thoughts about it. We did all we could to give the artists a feeling that they would not arrive as strangers, but as friends and family, and respected artists, assured that they would be well looked after, and to build a sense of festival. (Dennis, Personal email correspondence, 16 March 2017)

The facilitation of this pre-festival meeting demonstrates the significant effort *Season of Cambodia* made to build creative networks for Cambodian artists both at home and abroad. Bringing together artists from various strata of society with a variety of international performance experience and a diverse background of performance practices was integral to developing relationships among all parties involved in the initiative. It served to establish a sense of community for the purposes of representing Cambodian performance practices abroad and it developed kinship among Cambodian artists, encouraging sustained collaboration and connectedness.

Each of the initiatives received attention from the governments of both of their home countries and the United States. *Festival of Indonesia In Performance and Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* performed at the nation’s highest profile venue for the performing arts, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Indonesian Ambassador to the United States Abdul Rachman Ramly hosted the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* opening gala event at the Kennedy Center and *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* concluded its

tour there. In conjunction with an opening ceremony for the *Season of Cambodia* festival at the Rubin Museum of Art, New York City's Mayor Michael Bloomberg issued a proclamation naming April 13, 2013 as "*Season of Cambodia Day*." As noted earlier, HRH Princess Norodom Buppha Devi supported and participated in both *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* and *Season of Cambodia*.

Missions and Narratives

Although each varied in its structure, planning, and execution, the initiatives were strikingly similar in the relevance of the stories they told and the clarity of the voices that told them. *Season of Cambodia*'s mission furthered the humanitarian efforts of its parent organization, CLA. The aim of staging performances by Cambodian artists in the United States was to reveal the breadth of Cambodian art forms, to situate them on the world stage, and to spread a message that Cambodia's arts were as important a part of the nation's history as the conflict it had endured in the prior century.

In conversation about the importance of presenting Cambodian art forms abroad, Chhieng discussed a stereotype that he has observed non-Cambodians to hold in relation to Cambodians, in particular, that their bodies are Cambodian but their minds are Vietnamese (Chhieng, Personal interview, 19 January 2017). In other words, the perception that the Cambodian does not have a culture or a mind of its own and that the mind of the Cambodian has been occupied by outside influencers, like Vietnam, for so long that it has lost a sense of itself. For Chhieng, the *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* initiative provided an opportunity to dismiss this stereotype as a falsehood. He felt that *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* gave Cambodians the opportunity to "tell the advantages and disadvantages of being Cambodian through their bodies" (Chhieng, Personal interview, 19 January 2017).

The overriding narrative of the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* was to expose Americans to the diversity of cultures and performance practices in Indonesia and to develop and provide context for audience engagement with the practices and with the culture. In her 1992 report on the initiative, Cooper indicates that *Festival of Indonesia In Performance* accomplished this mission:

Distinguished for their artistry and authenticity, the groups' three hundred and twenty members presented the broadest range of Indonesia's performing arts ever to be assembled outside the archipelago, introducing American audiences and critics to one of the richest cultural mosaics found anywhere in the world. (Cooper 5)

Conversely, performing in the United States validated the traditional and contemporary Indonesian arts, as they gained recognition in the U.S. This recognition was an important discovery for Indonesians who were not in the arts world and lacked confidence in these forms.

This can be understood in one example from the Opera Batak tour presented as part of *Festival of Indonesia In Performance*. The assistant to the Governor in North Sumatra was not comfortable sending Zulkaidah Harahap, an older woman and accomplished artist, to America and felt that having beautiful young women would be more appropriate. When American producers fought to bring her, arguing that her artistry and knowledge of the form was superlative, he allowed her to come but wanted to see how she was received in person. He flew to California to attend the concert and was stunned by the standing ovation and cheers from the audience after her performance. Cooper recalled, "On his return to Sumatra he started supporting traditional artists because he had found that his traditions, in fact, communicated to the international audiences and were not something to be embarrassed by" (Personal interview, 17 November 2017).

Sustaining Relationships and Identifying Advocates

Artists and performance practices lie at the heart of cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts. However, alongside them are the arts professionals, scholars, and institutions who serve as advocates and guarantors for the responsible presentation of the work: those who are committed to the short-term and long-term success of the artists and the art, as well as to reciprocal exchanges among cultures—those advocates who are dedicated to sustaining an arts ecology of support for artists and for the arts themselves. U.S. presenters are among these advocates in the presentation of culturally-specific performance in the United States, as they commit to the presentation of culturally-specific performances within their presenting frameworks and are responsible for fostering the potential for dynamic cultural exchange within the context of their communities and audiences.

Advocates for *Festival of Indonesia In Performance*, *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia*, and *Season of Cambodia*—individuals and institutions alike—shared a deep desire to impart aspects of each country’s culture to the American public and they actively cultivated a similar desire among presenters, prospective audiences, and funders. Through their long-term investment in establishing relationships with cultural leaders in each of the countries involved, the advocates cultivated contexts of reciprocal trust, an essential ingredient to realizing dynamic cultural exchange. Comments by Miller and Cooper on this subject echo each other. Miller says, “It’s not transactional. It requires long gestation periods and trust. You can’t do work if there isn’t trust” (Miller, Personal interview, 19 November 2017). Cooper says, “It’s not just a transaction; it’s a relationship. You’re involved with people and

what they make and what they do, and they're committed to you at a very human level” (Cooper, Personal interview, 17 November 2016).

The trust established among the parties manifested as a shared responsibility for the development and communication of messages and as an acceptance of equal accountability for the outcomes of each initiative. These conditions fostered non-transactional relationships, as decisions were not approached with short-term goals or limited endgames; rather, they were made with the future of the performance practices, artists, producer/presenter, and artist/audience/community relationships in mind. They sought to introduce the American public to aspects of these cultures and to prompt consideration of how cultural characteristics of American, Indonesian, and Cambodian culture relate to each other and within global society. They sought to instill confidence in the artists and practitioners and to increase the visibility of local and global art forms.

Creating Value and Viability

Regardless of current politics and governance in the United States, producers developing and presenting work with cultural exchange goals play a role in the diplomatic efforts of their region and of the nation. Part of the responsibility for producing this work is to help sustain and ultimately increase its value for future generations so that the benefits of long-term investment can be realized. Value can be considered from the perspective of maintaining and transmitting cultural heritage but must be considered also from the perspective of financial viability as, “even under the best of circumstances, it is easier to raise money for events than for process” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 212). Cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts rarely prioritize “events;” rather, they prioritize the

exchange of cultural information and values through performance practices and by developing interpersonal relationships.

The quest for value making and viability in this field is not a new pursuit. In the past decade, it has surfaced repeatedly as a focus of international gatherings of arts professionals, such as the 2012 Salzburg Global Seminar, Public and Private Cultural Exchange-Based Diplomacy: New Models for the 21st Century, and in publications such as Margaret C. Ayers' *Promoting Public and Private Reinvestment in Cultural Exchange-Based Diplomacy* for the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation's 2010 Series on International Cultural Engagement and Dr. Joni Maya Cherbo's 2012 report *Re-Imagining Public and Private Roles in International Cultural Engagement for the 21st Century*. In her report, Cherbo provides her perspective on the decentralized nature of cultural exchange initiatives in the United States:

Despite their public stature, international cultural engagements are civil society weeds, sprouting up and nourished by NGOs, academic centers, commercial activities, and citizen diplomacy efforts. There is no over-arching strategy, no inter-agency coordination at the federal level or external organizing capability; no consistent funding, no information hub on international cultural engagement, and no educational or career path, outside of the Foreign Service, for becoming a "cultural ambassador." (Cherbo 1)

Absent a centralized global ministry of culture, Cherbo posits the establishment of a worldwide web-based information sharing system in an effort to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of cultural exchange initiatives both in the United States and internationally. In 2014, World Cultures Connect (WCC), an online social networking and information hub, was developed by Visiting Arts (U.K.), Librios (U.K.) and the Resource Center for Cultural Engagements, a U.S. organization of which Cherbo is the Executive Director. WCC is a free site where arts professionals—individual artists, arts organizations, countries, states, regions, cities, policy makers, embassies, and educators—are encouraged to communicate with each

other and to share resources related to cultural exchange such as funding opportunities, festivals, and immigration issues.

In her report, Cherbo lists WCC among cultural exchange initiatives employing a “new approach” to engaging in cultural exchange, an approach reflecting a “serious reassessment of the role of culture in addressing the new global challenges” (6). Components of the “new approach” include understanding host cultures prior to engagement, connecting with foreign publics rather than elites and foreign officials, listening to others’ stories rather than telling one’s own, creating innovative public and public/private partnerships, undertaking longer-term, two-way engagements and residencies that often include singing, dancing and creating together, and increasing the use of social media such as Facebook, texting, email, Twitter, YouTube postings, portals, etc. to broadcast and publicize such engagements (Cherbo 6).

Mention of Cherbo’s research and the resulting recommendations is included here not because of the newness of the ideas but because the impetus for this kind of central hub and “new approach” to developing such programs has been led by groups of private arts professionals and institutions in the field of arts presenting over many years and not by a centralized government. The three cases of this study clearly establish that especially now, in the latter half of the 2010s, there is a need to develop concerted and large-scale private efforts to sustain dynamic cultural exchange practices. The practices and strategies employed in the case studies examined in this paper, which took place between 1990 and 2013, are the very exemplars of the approaches that Cherbo asserts to be “new.” The verifiable success of each of the case studies demonstrates the effectiveness of these strategies relative to their

stated goals, notwithstanding that issues of value creation and financial viability for such programs remain to be solved for the development of future initiatives.

The viability of presenting culturally-specific performances in the United States is also influenced by other factors than financial. For example, international travel to the United States has become more difficult due to visa attainment restrictions implemented following the terror attacks of 9/11 and, more recently, immigration-related Executive Orders issued by President Donald J. Trump in 2017.⁷ As a result, presenters are placed in a precarious position, both financially and programmatically, when booking international artists. This risk has recently become reality for some presenters. An Executive Order issued by President Trump on January 27, 2017 imposed immediate restrictions on travel to the United States for citizens of seven countries including Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. Mohammad Reza Montazavi, a Tombak player, was scheduled to perform at The Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (EMPAC) in Troy, New York on March 3, 2017. Although based in Berlin, Montazavi is Iranian and his travel plans were affected by the immigration restrictions imposed by the Executive Order. In hindsight, Montazavi may have been able to travel, as within a week of its issuance, a federal judge placed a temporary restraining order on Trump's January 27th Executive Order, followed by a permanent injunction of the Order days later. In the end, EMPAC planned a "creative alternative" and screened a previously recorded video performance by Montazavi in lieu of the live performance. It is too early to predict how situations such as this will influence the sustainability of cultural exchange initiatives involving international artists. Will U.S. presenters be less inclined to book international

⁷ Executive Order: Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States, January 27, 2017 and Executive Order: Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States, March 6, 2017.

artists? Will international artists be less inclined to want to travel and perform in the United States? Will funders—American and otherwise—be less likely to fund cultural exchange initiatives?

The upshot is that initiatives for dynamic cultural exchange through the performing arts risk reduction from the American landscape unless efforts are made by a collective arts ecosystem—including artists, producers, presenters, scholars, audiences, and funders—to identify ways to demonstrate the value of these exchanges in both private and public forums. A primary way of accomplishing this is for each member of the ecosystem to take a more entrepreneurial stance in developing and maintaining long-term, transnational relationships. Promoting investment from all sectors—public, private, and corporate—and the culling of resources from dual or multiple cultural locales may be the only way to accomplish large-scale cultural exchange initiatives. While the initiatives examined in this thesis prioritized face-to-face engagement between individuals of *international* locales, a shift to promoting exchanges among more *localized* communities may be necessary, revising thereby the definition of cultural exchange to recognize the diversity that exists within our own U.S.-based local communities.

Another way of creating and communicating non-monetary value is to approach initiatives and associated archiving as cross-temporal and not static or set in time. For example, website development can be approached as a potential repository or archive for the work, not only from a performance and press coverage perspective, but as a record of the individuals involved in the work, the structures and models of the program, and of audience response and community impact. Web presence can be created as stand-alone interactive tools anticipating a festival or tour and can live on well beyond its closing performance.

Festival of Indonesia In Performance did not have an organized online presence, as the technology did not exist when the program was developed and executed. It did, however, distribute scholarly contextual materials about Indonesia and its cultural practices by way of booklets commissioned by the National Endowment for the Humanities. *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* integrated documentation efforts into their program mission, thereby archiving the rich traditions of Cambodia that are most often passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth and physical movement. The Asia Society created and hosted a website for the *Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* tour and the website remains live with materials available for viewing and download, but it has not been developed beyond the tour in 2001. *Season of Cambodia* utilized its website and social media platforms to promote and communicate about the festival, attaining more than one hundred thousand impressions on the *Season of Cambodia* website and over three hundred thousand impressions on Facebook (Nowaczyk 18).

A prime example of an initiative that considered the lasting impact of virtual connection as part of their agenda was *Muslim Voices: Arts & Ideas*, an initiative of BAM, the Asia Society, and NYU's Center for Dialogues, which took place in New York City in 2009. The complete festival spanned only nine days but its website remains a relevant and vibrant site, complete with high-quality multimedia of artists in performance; video interviews of artists' reflections on the festival and community members' stance of a variety of political and social issues surrounding culture; and a variety of scholarly resources inviting the visitor to learn more about Muslim culture. It is apparent to the user that its creators invested considerable time and money in this virtual aspect of the festival. Especially

important is its open-ended nature that will allow BAM, the Asia Society, and NYU's Center for Dialogues to develop a virtual space for ongoing dynamic cultural exchange.

Considering the developments in technology and advancements in communication since 1990, I would observe that commissioning video interviews and web-based content today is what commissioning program notes was for the *Festival of Indonesia In Performance*. The process of attaining the required digital footage may, in its own way, be as taxing as attaining its textual analog in 1990, but the broad distribution and accessibility of the finished product is easier to accomplish. Of course, resources, monetary and otherwise, dictate priorities and the cost of website development and its upkeep have been a prohibitive cost in these projects, which focused on live performance. However, giving attention to the archival aspect of curatorial models of exchange is an innovative approach to sustaining the values of cultural exchange while also extending the reach of the initiative's values beyond the communities in which the live performances take place. They can serve as digital teaching tools and provide longevity to the projects and their associated research. They may also serve to connect components of the ecosystem to each other, making connections among broader, more diverse communities.

Conclusion

Issues of cultural identity, understanding, and acceptance are at the heart of conflict and conversation in global society in 2017. In the United States, high profile politicians contribute to fears about the non-American, the outsider, and the immigrant. Daily news is inundated with demands for heightened border control and questions of citizenship. These political and social situations in the United States in the past year alone have highlighted this as a pervasive internal issue, not a distant international one. Yet, members of American society are often uninformed or misinformed about foreign relations and about the “global context in which they operate” (Council on Foreign Relations and the National Geographic Society). As demonstrated by the case studies examined in this paper,—*Festival of Indonesia In Performance, Dance, the Spirit of Cambodia* and *Season of Cambodia*—cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts, including those initiated privately and operating outside of the formal purview of a national government, can contribute to the development of mutual understanding and dynamic exchange among people from disparate cultures.

Developing and presenting dynamic cultural exchange among disparate communities is relevant, as is culling, developing, and deploying resources to support such initiatives. To develop viability and value, producers of cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts often assume the role of cultural diplomat, building relationships and seeking to deepen and sustain the effects and longevity of these programs. Developing systems to do this work relies on long-term commitment of time, staffing, and resources to build trust and reciprocal respect for both the process of creating and the presentation of culturally-specific performance. This deepening requires an awareness of the cultural constructs of borders and

boundaries established between societies, and requires careful dismantling of those constructs to reveal the commonalities we share culturally and as human beings.

This paper's case studies examined cultural exchange initiatives in the performing arts that took place over the past three decades, all three from Asia and in countries often described as "developing." These are specific components that are important when considering how to represent countries that may not have the financial resources to cover these kinds of projects on their own. An essential element in all three initiatives was the sense of equity and respect. While monetary contributions to the initiatives were not always equal bi-nationally, investment in relationships with the art and the artists were consistently equal, resulting in long-term mutual respect and bi-national appreciation.

Within this time span, advances in technology and information sharing have increased our awareness of global factors such as climate and political change. The advent of mobile phone technology, web-based communication applications, and the Internet has changed the way we communicate, the way we consume information, the way we interact within our own societies and with other cultures, and, certainly, the way we think and learn. These technological advances, while admirable for the accessibility to information they provide, are likely to mediate but do not substitute for the value of in-person, face-to-face exchanges and of programs that encourage interpersonal connection among individuals of disparate cultures, values that must be affirmed.

After returning from Cambodia in January 2017, I received a survey from CLA asking, "If you were to describe the mission or call to action of Cambodian Living Arts to a friend, what would you say it is?" My answer was:

In short, to identify and to nurture the potential in one another. To seek out the unique beauty in every person, in every situation, in every place, and use it to draw out the humanity in others. It isn't incidental that CLA's work is manifested through the arts, but humanity comes first.

To support the evolution of dynamic cultural exchange programs in the performing arts, this is what our collective approach to international presenting might become. Adopting an inclusive approach to cultural exchange that recognizes the importance of dynamic relationships across borders achieves a result greater than the sum of its parts: "I can change through exchange with the other, without losing or diluting my sense of self" (Glissant 81-89).

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