

BIOGRAPHIES OF ARTISTS

NEW CAMBODIAN ARTISTS

New Cambodian Artists (NCA) is a Cambodian contemporary dance company founded in 2012 by Artistic Director Bob Ruijzendaal, and now co-owned by company director Khon Sreyneang with three dancers: Khun Sreynoch, Kong Soengva, and Lai Ny.

NCA is a strong, young, and empowered all-female contemporary dance company—a dance troupe producing work with the intent to foster growth and understanding of contemporary Khmer expression. This is often done through the lens of the dancers' own experiences as they explore what it means to push the boundaries of contemporary expression, whilst honouring their deeply ingrained ties to artistic and social cultural roots. Their strong classical training and technique is evident in their performances, and it is important to the company to find an aesthetic that expresses the bridge between Cambodia's past and future that their generation represents.

The security that the young artists feel in their traditions is beginning to give them the freedom to experiment and create new work, and their pure passion and pride for what they do is bringing about a new chapter for Cambodian arts. Operating from their Black Box studio in Siem Reap, NCA's repertoire deals with social issues while maintaining a high artistic standard and unique style, fusing classical elements, pop culture, contemporary dance, and theatre.

NCA has performed in Cambodia, South Korea, Thailand, and Europe, for organisations such as UN Women, embassies, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Since February 2015, New Cambodian Artists has been registered with the Ministry of Fine Arts and Culture as Cambodia's first all-female dance company.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR – BOB RUIJZENDAAL

During a visit to Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh in June 2007, Bob met some young dancers, who upon hearing about his long-time experience as a theatre director in the Netherlands, asked him to come back to conduct a workshop. He did go back, and many visits followed, resulting in the creation of 10 pieces with dancers, most of whom now dance and choreograph for Amrita Performing Arts.

The offer to become Artistic Director of the Bambu Stage in Siem Reap made him decide to direct his attention to Siem Reap. When the Bambu Stage did not materialise then, Bob realised he had a big obligation to the talented young women that made such a difficult and radical choice in their lives: being the first (and until now, the only) contemporary dancers in Siem Reap. Bob decided to find a partner he could continue developing New Cambodian Artists (NCA) with. He found that partner in Khun Sreyneang, who is now the Company Manager of NCA.

COMPANY MANAGER – KHUN SREYNEANG

"I feel immense pride in New Cambodian Artists and my dream is that my people will accept our work and our vision to add layers and depth to our culture. I hope they can be proud of it and embrace it."

Sreyneang is the older sister of dancer Sreynuch, and similarly grew up in the shadows of Angkor Wat, working to earn money for school. After graduating from high school, Sreyneang worked in a hotel in Siem Reap. Through this she met her sponsor who is supporting her through university where she is studying business administration. While in

her foundation year at university, Sreyneang was offered the opportunity to work for New Cambodian Artists (NCA) as the Company Manager.

In her role Sreyneang is breaking new ground as there are no role models for her—a manager for a young female contemporary dance company is as unique as the company itself. Sreyneang's job involves constantly having to problem solve and requires dedication to the vision of NCA to make things work. Through the support of friends, family and the dancers, Sreyneang is guiding the company through its growth.

PERFORMER – KHUN SREYNUCH

Born in the Kampong Cham province in 1996, Sreynoch moved to Siem Reap in 1999. There are 10 people in her family, and as children they made money for school by selling fruit and souvenirs to tourists in Cambodia's famous temple, Angkor Wat. From 2007, Sreynoch studied Khmer dance at the Siem Reap School of Arts.

Since 2012, she has been a member of New Cambodian Artists, which gave her opportunities to perform in several countries and attend workshops. She had the opportunity to perform in Den Haag, the Netherlands, and take part in several workshops with Nederlands Dans Theatre and Korzo. She also visited Paris for an internship with renowned contemporary dancer Kaori Ito. After studying English, she recently started studying French at the Alliance Française.

PERFORMER – NY LAI

Born in 1997, as the middle child of nine siblings in a fatherless family, Ny Lai has been with New Cambodian Dancers (NCA) since 2016. She has worked very hard to catch up with the other dancers, whom she met at the Siem Reap School of Arts. Lai now performs at the same level as the other dancers and is a full member of NCA. She also studies English at university.