

Silent Temples, Songful Hearts: Traditional Music of Cambodia



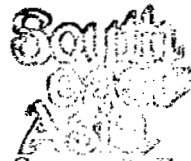
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Sam Sam-Ang // Patricia Shehan Campbell

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Sam-Ang Sam
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World Music Press

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Traditional Music of Cambodia**

by
**Sam-Ang Sam
Patricia Shehan Campbell**

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About the Authors

Sam-Ang Sam, Ph.D. is one of the very few remaining Khmer master artists who are alive and able to practice and teach their traditions. He was born in Krakor, in Pursat province. He showed a strong interest in music from early childhood, and was enrolled in formal studies of traditional Khmer music at age 14 when he entered the University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in the early 1960's, obtaining instrumental instruction from Masters Yim Sem, Yim Saing, Sek Ouch, and Long Samreth. He also had vocal training provided by Mistress Ham Nam and Master Ros Lom. During his two-year residency in Siem Reap province, Sam-Ang Sam learned the *sralai* (quadruple-reed shawm), now his principal instrument, from Master Thoeung and Master Chhuon.

Sam-Ang Sam graduated with the degree of Diplôme des Arts and Baccalauréat des Arts in 1970 and 1973 respectively from the University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh. In 1974 he was awarded a fellowship by the Cambodian Government to further his study in Western Music Composition at the University of the Philippines, under the guidance of Eliseo Pajaro and Ramon Santos. While at the University of the Philippines, he also had his first exposure to ethnomusicology while attending classes on Philippine music offered by Jose Maceda. From there he came to the United States in 1977 and continued his study at Connecticut College where he received both the BA and MA degrees in Music Composition under the tutelage of Chinary Ung, Noel Zahler and Arthur Welwood. Sam-Ang Sam then enrolled at Wesleyan University and received his Ph.D. degree in Ethnomusicology.

He is a scholar on Khmer music, and with his wife, dancer Chan Moly Sam, has jointly written two books on Khmer music and dance published by the Khmer Studies Institute. He has performed on a number of sound recordings on the labels of the Khmer Studies Institute, Cambodian Business Corporation International, World Music Institute, and the Center for the Study of Khmer Culture. He has performed in Asia, Europe, and the United States, including the White House in 1985.

In recognition of his dedication to the preservation and maintenance of Khmer culture and scholarship, Sam-Ang Sam has received several awards and grants, including the Arts and Culture preservation Award, Social Science Research Council grants, National Endowment for the Arts grants, the Ford Foundation/Asian Cultural Council grants, and the Middletown Commission on the Arts Grant. He frequently travels to Cambodian communities throughout North America to perform traditional music for dances, festivals, and various ceremonies requiring particular music. He is currently Artist-in-Residence at the University of Washington.



Patricia Shehan Campbell, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of Music and Chair of Music Education at the University of Washington. She received her Ph.D. in music education with a concentration in ethnomusicology from Kent State University, where she studied South Indian mridangam and Karnatic vocal techniques with Ramnad V. Raghavan, played in the Thai Ensemble and studied Laotian kaen with Terry Miller and Jaremchai Chonpairot. Her interest in world music has taken her as a student, researcher and clinician to Bulgaria, Hungary, India, Japan, China and Australia. Dr. Campbell is a consultant on music in early and middle childhood, multicultural music education, and the use of movement as a pedagogical tool. She is author of numerous publications that blend ethnomusicological and educational issues, including *Lessons from the World* (1991), *Sounds of the World: Music of Eastern Europe* (1989) and *Sounds of the World: Music of Southeast Asia* (1986). She co-authored *From Rice Paddies and Temple Yards: Traditional Music of Vietnam* (with Phong Nguyen, 1990) and *Multicultural Perspectives in Music Education* (with William M. Anderson, 1989). She served as a consultant for the NEA-funded project that studied Laotian resettlement in the U.S. resulting in the film *Silk Sarongs and City Streets*. She is an active member of the College Music Society, the International Society for Music Education, The Dalcroze Society of America, the Organization of Kodaly Educators, the American Orff-Schulwerk Association and the Society for Ethnomusicology (chair of the Education Committee and a member of the SEM Council). She also serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Research in Music Education* of the Music Educators National Conference.



Forward

From the perspective of a society inclined to cut funding to the arts at the drop of a budget, it is difficult to understand why the Khmer value their arts so highly. For the typical American community, the arts are the first area cut during a fiscal crisis; in Cambodia they were the first aspects of culture to be restored after liberation from the Khmer Rouge in 1979. Music, song, and dance for the Khmer are not merely pleasant diversions which have a place only after all other needs have been filled; they have a near-sacred status and constitute a major component of Khmer identity.

During a week-long visit to Cambodia in late 1988, I had the privilege of observing dancers and musicians from the University of Fine Arts perform in a former dance pavilion at the palace in Phnom Penh. Most performers were young; a few older masters had survived the holocaust. This performance was not something that could be taken for granted. It represented a part of the rebirth of the Khmer culture from the ashes of death and destruction wrought by the radical Khmer Rouge, who had sought to obliterate Khmer culture; they nearly succeeded. In many ways this restoration precedes the physical rebuilding of the country. Evidently that sacred link with the collective spirit of the Khmer people is so strongly expressed through music and dance that these arts must be rebuilt before material things are given any attention.

Dr. Sam-Ang Sam, co-author of this book, together with his wife and daughters, have been the leading figures in the United States seeking to keep Khmer music and dance alive. They have taught and performed widely and written about their arts. They have encouraged older musicians who came as refugees to keep performing and with them have given many performances. These efforts to make Khmer music known to the younger generation are of the utmost importance. Being Cambodian-American means keeping the best of the old culture and adopting the best of the new. Considering the importance of the arts to Khmer identity, this book has the added significance of helping young Cambodian-Americans understand who they are and where they came from.

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Center for the Study of World Musics
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