



# THE CONTINUUM ASIA PROJECT

THE CAP IS A ONE-YEAR PROJECT OF THEATREWORKS THAT FOCUSES ON PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE COLLABORATION. BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF CAPACITY BUILDING, IT BRINGS TOGETHER ELDERS FROM THE RAMAYANA DANCE TRADITION OF LAOS, YOUTHS OF THE ANCIENT PALACE TOWN LUANG PRABANG AND ARTISTS OF ASIA.

**THEATREWORKS**





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## PROGRAMMES

### 01

## RETRIEVAL OF MEMORY

### The Revival of the Laotian Ramayana

In a historic revival on **November 8 & 9 2003**, the Royal Ballet Theatre (RBT), an independent Laos organisation of these youths and elders, assisted by TheatreWorks, will perform 3 episodes of the 9-episode Ramayana epic. This extensive retrieval of memory and remounting has been approved by the government to take place in front of the royal palace (now known as the Royal Palace Museum).

'Phralak Phralam' - the Laotian form of the Ramayana epic, used to be performed in front of the palace for the King in the 1960s by the young people of Luang Prabang. It was the largest event of community performance in Laos, binding the community together in a ritual of affirmation. Today, these young people are now the elders who are teaching the dance and music to the present youths who range from 10 - 18 years of age.

Since 2002, Theatreworks has worked to raise funds for RBT and has assisted on a host of issues including capacity building of the local administration and technical team, technicians, dancers, musicians; accountability; technical planning and artistic consultation. With a generous grant from The Rockefeller Foundation, this initial process has been to support the community spirit of the project as well as elders-core team of Laos experts, policy makers, artists.

### The Future

The key objectives are to encourage the retrieval and dissemination of cultural forms, memories and forgotten heritage, as well as to create a healthy and responsible relationship between the arts and tourism.

In the long run, the journey ahead will be to share with Luang Prabang an option of transforming this outdoor performance into an annual event. Perhaps, the high-quality remounting of a community cultural festival will sustain the town and the artists. At the same time, it will provide a foundation for the living education and transference of their dance, theatre, music and visual arts from one generation to another.





## PROGRAMMES

# 02

## DOCUMENTING THE NARRATIVES

### Capturing the Vernacular - Video Workshops with Youths of the Children's Cultural Centre, Luang Prabang

A project with the youths in documenting their everyday lives with videos. Youths at the Children's Cultural Centre in Luang Prabang were taught the basics of videoling and documenting by Asian filmmakers in a series of workshops. These culminated in a show-and-tell of the mini-documentaries created by the young Laotian participants, ranging from 1-minute short films to 10-minute documentaries.

Thus far, there have been three workshops led by **Wu Wen Guang** (Beijing) and **Angel Shaw** (New York City). With the renown chinese independent documentary maker, Wu, the youths began first with stills, 1 minute short films and 3 minute short films. This expanded into basic editing with two video cameras (rather than expensive editing equipment). By the second workshop with Wu, the young people had begun to tell stories centering on a main protagonist, someone from their everyday lives. Many chose to tell stories of strong women figures who held their families together, grandmothers, mothers, sisters and aunts. When Filipino-American Angel Shaw visited, she focussed even more on sound collection and the concept of the interview. She divided the students into working groups of three: the interviewer, the camera/sound person and another camera person to capture the environment surrounding the interview.

The last workshop will be with young TV documentary maker **Jason Lai** (Singapore) who will work with the youths to capture the revival of the Laotian Ramayana.





## PROGRAMMES

# 03

## THE FLYING CIRCUS PROJECT 2003

### The Mekong Diaries

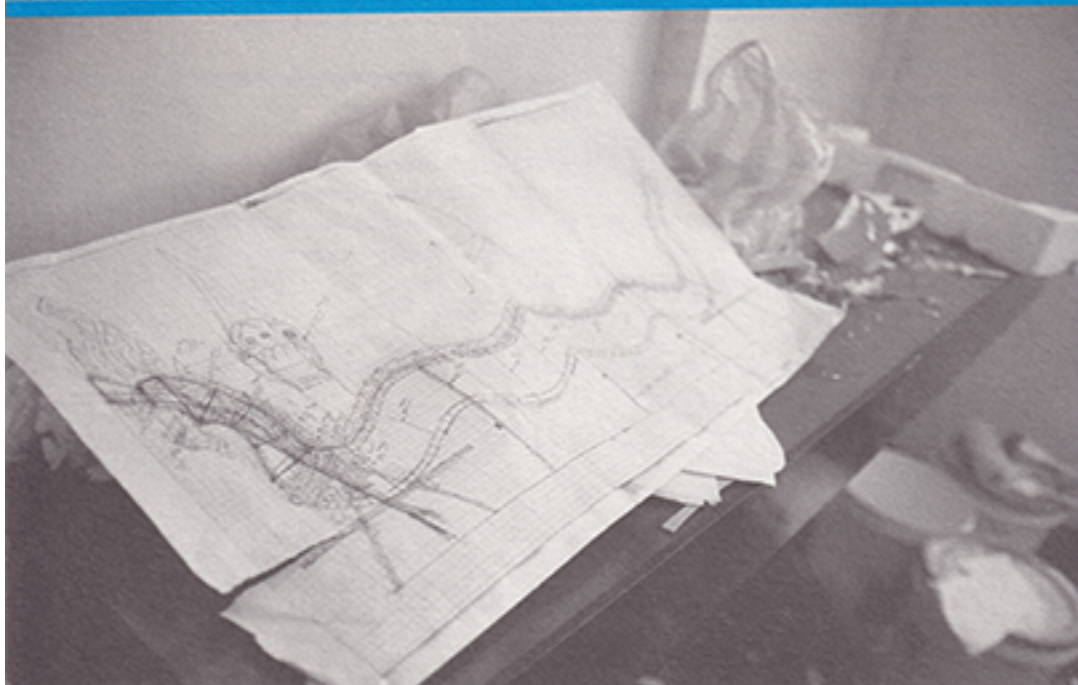
The fourth edition of Theatreworks' Flying Circus Project (which started in 1996). A series of visiting Asian artists workshops with the local community.

This included documentary video, contemporary dance, contemporary theatre focussing on women's lives in Luang Prabang, Kathakali, Javanese and Thai mask dance, Filipino educational theatre/theatre for young people, contemporary music.

This will culminate in a series of performance presentations and a documentation exhibition by the youths and the Asian artists on **10 & 11 November 2003** in Luang Prabang.

Theatreworks decided this year to move the Flying Circus centre away from Singapore in an experiment of global and local. Over the past 10 months, artists from various Southeast Asian countries were provided with opportunities to identify interface sites with the town, working with the people to create shared experiences. Conversely, through these series of workshops, local youths gain knowledge of a world outside Luang Prabang, other modes of thinking and expressing and ultimately access to other contemporary and traditional Asian cultures. This is juxtaposed with parallel narratives in Laotian people's culture.

In order to create a certain depth of experience, the Asian artists had the opportunity to visit Luang Prabang twice. The first visit was usually short, mainly to survey the situation in the town and to meet its community. The second visit was longer and usually the project was built up in a continuous stay of three weeks.





## GOING BEYOND

What would happen to CAP after the year? Would the local community continue with the process and the work started with the Asian artists? Will the local community continue to engage with the aims set out for Documenting the Narratives for instance? Who will be and should anyone from the local community be tasked to continue leading this? How do we ensure continuity of interface?

*"We probably need more than a year to fully ensure some kind of sustainability of the project."*

*"We will need to establish a system of sustainability within the local community itself."*

*"We will have to identify key individuals from the various segments of the community as possible leaders to take over our roles in facilitating the on-going process of cultural documentation and heritage reflection. This will allow for a greater sense of empowerment within the local community. We've to think about how we can erase our footprints even as we work with them. We cannot and must not determine what and how they should think about their own tradition."*

*"We must also be acutely aware that culture and tradition is not static. Even without our presence, the local community and the cultural landscape will be evolving with the external and environmental factors."*

*"We can provide space for comparison. We can raise questions and hopefully expose the local community to other possibilities. They will have to make the decision what to do and which direction to take for their own future."*



## CREDITS

### THEATREWORKS

Conceived & curated  
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Deputy Director, Dept of Information and Culture, Luang Prabang  
Mr Bounkkong Khotitao

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Mr Sisavath Nhlatchay



**PARTICIPATING ARTISTS FOR THE FLYING CIRCUS & THE MEKONG DIARIES**

**Wen Hui**  
*Choreographer and dancer from Beijing*

**Mugiyono Kasido**  
*Javanese mask dancer, contemporary dancer and choreographer from Solo*

**Cecilia Arriola a.k.a Geejay**  
*Educational theatre artist and activist from Davao City*

**Pichet Klunhoun**  
*Thai mask dancer, contemporary dancer and choreographer from Bangkok*

**Wu Wenguang**  
*Beijing documentary filmmaker from Beijing*

**Maya Rao**  
*Kathakali performer and contemporary actress, New Delhi*

**Angel Shaw**  
*Documentary film-maker from New York City-Manila*

**Wu Shih Wen**  
*Contemporary theatre actress from Taipei working in ritual theatre, movement and song*

**Jason Lai**  
*TV documentary maker, Singapore*

**I Wayan Sadra**  
*Gamelan and Contemporary Composer, music director, musician from Solo*

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