



**FOREWORD**  
**By His Majesty**  
**Preah Bat Samdech Preah Boromneath**  
**NORODOM SIHAMONI**  
**KING of CAMBODIA**

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Since ascending Cambodia's throne, it has been my sacred honour to faithfully serve all Cambodian people, and to offer my blessings and support to our nation's rich cultural and artistic traditions.

It was therefore with great emotion that I first witnessed a special troupe of young dancers and musicians in 2009. There, in the Chanchhaya Hall of Dance -the Moon Pavilion of the Royal Palace- these children from humble villages made the glories of our shared Cambodian heritage come alive for me.

Indeed, these true "Children of Angkor" learned their art within the UNESCO World Heritage site, practicing in a simple wooden *sala* near the temple of Banteay Srei. It was there the Nginn Karet Foundation founded the NKFC Preah Ream Buppha Devi Conservatoire, a school under Royal Patronage devoted to dance, music and traditional crafts. It has been my great pleasure to follow their progress over the years.

By virtue of dedication, these rural children have naturally come to embody the spirituality, history and cultural legacy of our ancestors. While it sometimes seems that their talent flows from the land itself, this unique school cultivates discipline by including spirituality and meditation in its arts programs. The students are making excellent use of this purity and devotion.

The troupe is reviving rare classical and folk repertoires for respectful audiences. During ceremonies honouring Late His Majesty the King Father, they presented a special dance ritual - a soothing blessing appreciated by Her Majesty the Queen Mother and myself. Their most important performances, however, are for the gods themselves. This is the only troupe in our land specializing in Sacred Dance Rituals to respect and re-sanctify the holy sites of our oldest temples. From Banteay Chhmar to Angkor to Preah Vihear to Wat Phou, the troupe has performed 16 purifying rituals at Khmer temples as a sign of devotion.

But even while respecting ancient traditions, they innovate and evolve - sometimes by returning to ideas that have long been forgotten. The troupe makes their own simple costumes, devoid of the glittering sequins and gaudy faux jewellery that modern audiences associate with this formerly spiritual art. These dancers create their own ornaments and adornments from natural materials: fruits, fibres, wood, leaves and flowers. The Conservatoire is now training a full female orchestra, like those portrayed on the stone walls of the Bayon.