

PUPPETS BEYOND BORDERS

RENCONTRE DE MARIONNETTES PUPPENSPIELER ÜBER GRENZEN

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CONTACT

Goethe-Institut Indonesia

Christiane Jekeli

Public Relations / SE-Asia, Australia, New Zealand

Tel.: +62 (0)21 235 502 08

Email: jekeli@jakarta.goethe.org

French Institute of Cambodia

Jerome Hivert

Public Relations

Tel. : +855 (0)23 213 124 /125

Email : jerome.hivert@institutfrancais-cambodge.com

PRESS RELEASE

The exceptional artistic exchange project "Puppets Beyond Borders" brings together puppeteers from Germany, France, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand in October and November 2011. The artists will engage in workshops in Chiangmai, Phnom Penh and Yangon, encountering each other's different stylistic, technical and contentual approaches to the art of puppetry. Together they will prepare performances in each city, weaving together their newly developed plays centering on the theme "Home". This initiative is promoted by the Goethe-Institut and the French Institutes of Cambodia and Myanmar in collaboration with Empty Space Chiangmai, the German Embassy in Yangon and the Meta House Phnom Penh.

Southeast Asia has a long-standing and very rich tradition in the art of puppetry. The forms of expression are as diverse as the countries themselves, reaching from the famous shadow plays to Vietnamese Water puppetry to wire- or stick-controlled marionettes. Within this context, the encounter of the Southeast Asian groups Htwe Oo (Myanmar), Makhampon Theatre Group (Thailand), a group of former students of the Theatre Department of the Royal University of Fine Arts (Cambodia) and further local artists with the German Theater Handgemenge and the French ensemble Les Rémouleurs promises to be a truly inspiring experience, opening up new perspectives on artistic production for all artists involved.

From October 16th until 30th 2011 the puppeteers meet for the initial workshop and two performances (28th & 29th October) at the Empty Space and the CMU Art Museum in Chiangmai. From there they travel to Phnom Penh (workshop November 1st - 3rd, performances November 4th & 5th) and Yangon (workshop November 7th-10th, performances November 11th & 12th), taking the art of puppetry truly beyond borders.

A Burmese/Cambodian film team will accompany the tour, producing a co-directed documentary about this very unique artistic exchange. The film is scheduled to be released in January 2012.

"Puppets Beyond Borders" is a joint initiative by the the French Institutes of Cambodia and Myanmar and the Goethe-Institut in collaboration with Empty Space Chiangmai, the German Embassy in Yangon and the Meta House Phnom Penh. This French-German collaboration is supported by the Elysée-Fund.

PROGRAMME

THAILAND – Chiangmai

October 16th-30th, 2011

Workshop

October 28th, 2011

Performance

19.00 hrs

Location

EMPTY SPACE CHIANGMAI
169 Moo 5 Ban Nongha, Numborluang
Sunpatong
Chiangmai

www.emptyspacechiangmai.info

Information

Admission Free

Reservation required at

CNX CONNECT

ratchanok.ketboonruang@gmail.com

Free transport is arranged

October 29th, 2011

Performance

19.00 hrs

Location

CMU Art Museum

Information

Admission 200 Baht

Reservation required at

CNX CONNECT

ratchanok.ketboonruang@gmail.com

CAMBODIA – Phnom Penh

November 1st-3rd, 2011 *Workshop*

November 4th&5th, 2011 *Performances*

Location Department of Performing Arts
Street 173
Phnom Penh

MYANMAR – Yangon

November 7th-10th, 2011 *Workshop*

November 11th&12th, 2011 *Performances*

Location French Institute of Myanmar
340 Pyay Road
Sanchaung Township
Yangon

Information **Admission Free**
Tel.: + 95 1 536 900
Email: info@ifb.net.mm

Representatives of the press are welcome to visit all workshops to observe the artistic exchange. One to one interviews including translation can be arranged with all participating artists.

ENSEMBLES & PIECES

CAMBODIA

Royal University of Fine Arts – Theatre Department

The Shadow Theatre is a sacred art form in Cambodia. Large, highly detailed leather puppets are placed behind a white screen and their movements are highlighted by shadow. It's one of the oldest traditional forms of theater in Cambodia; it can be traced back to the Angkor period as seen on temple inscriptions. The puppets are not articulated, they are cut in great detail in buffalo skin. The artist who makes the puppets has to wear white clothes when he cuts the leather, and he has to finish his work in one day, not more.

Even after the show, the ritual continues: the puppets, which are not used for the show, are conserved in a particularly manufactured cupboard, which always needs to be placed facing the sunrise. An Chheaheng, Keo Dorivan, Sinn Samy, Pok Sarann are the four Cambodian puppeteers, who take part in the "Puppets Beyond Borders" project. They have all studied puppetry at the Theatre Department of the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, where they learned this century-old tradition of Shadow Theatre from its Masters. Their work represents the Cambodian puppets art at its best.

The Piece

A homeless guy asks for hospitality to a peasant that agrees to his request. As a guest in the home unknown to him, he carefully observes every detail inside. When gently asked by his host to leave, he refuses and the two bear their dispute before the village chief, who asks whom the home belongs to. The unwelcomed guest is able to describe every detail of the house, while the real owner only has a very loose knowledge of his home, as details have become so ordinary and familiar to him. The village chief is convinced by the stranger, but the owner brings case before the king.

Same questions, same answers. But the king asks one last question: How many stilts are in the house?

The owner is the only one to know, because when he built the house with his own hands, he had to carefully plant each stilt into the damp ground.

The King gives back the house to its true owner, putting the homeless guy in jail...

FRANCE

Les Rémouleurs

The ensemble Les Rémouleurs was founded in 1983 and has developed into one of the most innovative puppet and shadow theatre groups in France. The group, which is comprised of puppeteers and comedians coming from street theatre, has made it a habit to transport their work not only to theatres but also to rather unexpected spaces – bars, farms, libraries or even churches – in order to reach out to an audience that might usually not find its way into a theatre. They are aiming to explore new artistic fields for puppetry, using texts from contemporary theatre, literature or science, while at the same time re-discovering old traditions.

The Piece

Looking through the walls of an old Parisian building, just as if it was transparent, the piece explores what makes a home a home, wherever one is in the world – intimacy, hospitality, secret, tranquillity, shelter. At the end, a baby is born at home, and leaves home to discover the world. Home is home, only if you leave it to come back some day.

GERMANY

Theater Handgemenge

Unlike other fringe theatre ensembles, which consist of regular members, the Theater Handgemenge more closely resembles a loose association of artists who come together in different constellations to put on theatre productions. The heart of the group is formed by the three artists Peter Müller, Pierre Schäfer and Anette Wurbs, all graduates from the renowned Ernst Busch Theatre Academy in Berlin, where they specialised in puppet theatre. Their co-productions with various theatres and fringe groups in Berlin and beyond are regular guests at international festivals.

The Piece: Kasper – A German Piece

The German Punch is getting worked up in his own tradition. With his very unique lack of respect towards conventions and taboos, he has taken his own and his Gretel's faith in his wooden hands over the years. But the devil continues to be a skilful seducer and the might of evil has an effect on the Punch – who is only human in the end. Whether eventually the Punch's wit and jest succeed is a question that needs to be answered anew everyday.

MYANMAR

Htwe Oo Myanmar

Puppet theatre is one of the oldest art forms in Myanmar, having already entertained its ancient kings. The group Htwe Oo Myanmar tries to honour this century-old tradition in their work, sticking to long-established Burmese tales, characters, techniques and aesthetics. A unique approach is their strict gender-based division of the puppeteers, allowing male puppet characters to be guided only by male puppeteers and vice-versa, striving for utmost authenticity in the expressions of the puppets.

The Piece: Mwaa

they will be a not so rich husband and a (pregnant) wife....., and maybe a son
there could be zogyi, the magician, (knowledge) advising to acquire more power.
there will be a journey on a big ship, earning money, seeing the world.

There will be good income

there should be a demon, creating danger and ...

there could be storm... and a near thinking of the ship

there should be a moment of thank you and thoughts....

there should the god of wisdom, advising to consider

there will be a coming home, to the wife and the son

there will be a new born baby.

there should be a hermit,

giving a thought

There will be the puppets, mother and father and son

And the conclusion.....

The play "Mwaa" is about the connection of love between parents and children. It is a connection that begins even before birth. For the baby in the womb, his own growing must also bring a mounting awareness of his family. No baby discovers about the love of his family after he is born.

THAILAND

The Makhampom Theater Group

The Makhampom Theatre Group was formed in 1981, less as a company of artists, than as a group of activists. Makhampom always followed a community-oriented, educative “grassroot” - approach to theatre, it was fundamentally an experiment in theatre within a NGO movement striving for progressive social and political change. The group formed as “an ad-hoc group of teachers, journalists, actors, and dancers” and most volunteers joined with the socio-political objectives of the NGO movement. This combination of a ‘loosely-defined’ concept of ‘community theatre’ and the oppositional ideology of the NGO movement is the basis for Makhampom’s identity as a unique organisation in the Thai socio-cultural lexicon.

The Piece: 3 seasons house

The atmosphere at home can change like the seasons.

The summer is like a warm, hot lover, so many emotions, that when boiling up, they start to interfere with each other.

The cold of the winter resembles an alignment from home, a cooling relationship. At the same time it is a season of freedom.

A rainy season at home brings stormy emotions and fighting, which on the one hand conveys more understanding to relationships, and a more profound love can be developed. On the other hand, it can unsettle ties which have long been tightened.

But it is these 3 seasons that make us love home.

PARTNERS

Empty Space Chiang Mai

Empty Space Chiangmai (ESC), built in 1998, is an independently run and financed international Center for Arts Education, Theater and Performance, Ceramics, and Asian Puppetry. Further it provides workshops in Sustainability, Northern Thai traditional performance art, and is a yearly home for the Long Island University Global College Program. ESC has been supported by Asian Cultural Council, (ACC), Open Society (OSI), Gitameit Music Center Yangon, Chiangmai University, Center for Media, Arts and Design, Goethe-Institut, Institut Français and numerous individuals supporters.

French Institute

Succeeding to Cultures France, the French Institute, based in Paris, is the operator of the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs for the promotion of language and French culture abroad. The French Institute unites under its brand a network of 130 cultural institutions around the world. In Cambodia and Myanmar, the French Institutes implement the cultural and linguistic cooperation of the Embassy of France.

German Embassy in Myanmar

The Embassy represents Germany in Myanmar and promotes the political, economic, cultural and academic relations between both countries. The Embassy also offers consular protection to German nationals.

Goethe-Institut

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institution operational worldwide. It promotes the study of German abroad and encourages international cultural exchange. The Goethe-Institut also fosters knowledge about Germany by providing information on its culture, society and politics. With its network of 150 Goethe-Instituts, numerous Goethe Centres, cultural societies, reading rooms and exam and language learning centres in 93 countries it has played a central role in the cultural and educational policies of Germany for 60 years.

Meta House Phnom Penh

In 2007 German filmmaker Nico Mesterharm and his Cambodian team opened Phnom Penh's META HOUSE in association with the International Academy at the Free University of Berlin. Cambodia's first art/communication/media center holds an ample art exhibition space and an open-air media lounge offering an excellent space for artists-in-residence and visiting artists to interact. META HOUSE actively supports Cambodian artists and promotes the development of contemporary art in Cambodia through local and international exhibitions, workshops, community-based projects, artist exchange programs and by fostering links with South East Asian and international universities, galleries, curators, non-governmental and governmental organizations.
