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Cambodian Apsara Dance

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Apsara Dance AKA Robam Tep Apsara (Khmer: របាំទេពសប្បុរស) is a famous Cambodia Royal Ballet which is widely seen around Cambodia and other countries such as Thailand, Laos and United States of America. The performance is best known and first introduced to foreign countries during the 1960s as The Khmer Royal Ballet along with Robam Tep Monorom. The first royal ballerina ever was Norodom Bopha Devi, a daughter of Norodom Sihanouk.

The Apsara Dance is particularly inspired by the style from around one thousand Apsara statues in Angkor Wat.

History

The Origin

Apsara Dance is one of two major forms of Khmer dancing and incorporates parts of the other much older traditional or popular dancing, which has its roots in animism and primitive magic with Hindu forms introduced during the time of Indian influence beginning in the 1st century due the dance is in turn drew its inspiration from the mythological court of the gods and from its celestial dancers, the Apsaras. However, the dance took on its own unique form adding movements and meaning, during the reigns of Jayavarman II and Jayavarman VII as well as the foundation of Angkor era. By the 13th century, the dance received a Khmer identity rather than Indian, unlike any other dance form in the world. It got a soft movement and a loudly traditional khmer music during its performance. In that era, Apsara dance only found to be dance for the notable class like the King.

No any notes to be announced for the first apsara ballerina during Angkor time but estimates are that there were 3,000 apasara dancers in the 12th Century court of King Jayavarman VII. Between the 12th and the 15th centuries, Apsara dance portrayed a highly blooming until the Thais sacked Angkor in the fifteenth century with took a troupe of dancers back home with them as the decline of Cambodia Royal Ballet. However, The beautiful and wonderful not deal to be lost according to Thousand of Apsaras already represent an important motif in the stone bas-reliefs of the Angkorian temples in Cambodia.

From Centuries to Centuries, The ancient dance never seem to perform again in public but refer an unbroken tradition to the dance practiced in the courts of the Angkorian monarchs, Dance still acted by Khmer people set at important part of the Khmer angkor era such as Siem Reap, Surin Province (Now in Thailand) but with different styles due to unsurely knowledge for the original dance which Surin people performs apsara dance in a little fast movement and sustain with Thai-Laos musical.

The Modern

In 1940s, Queen Sisowath Kosamak Naryrath, the wife of King Norodom Suramarit was set an invitation to Sothearath primary school, seeing the school mistress prepared a inspiration angkor apsara dance which is performed by young school in the paper apsara costume includes Crown, Sampot and Flower, all dealed from Apsara in Angkor Wat. The Queen got the idea to re-create the dance and leaded her first grand daughter, Princess Norodom Bopha Devi, a daughter of Norodom Sihanouk to become a first public apsara ever. The Princess started practicing the dance since she was 5 years old and danced apsara for first time during King Norodom Sihanouk's work.

, In 1967, The fine-boned young princess, clad in silk and glittering jewels, performed beneath the stars on the open pavilion within the palace walls, accompanied by the Royal dance troupe and the "pinpeat" orchestra: Gongs, drums, xylophones, horns and stringed instruments. Selected by her grandmother, Queen Sisowath Monivong Kossomak Neary Rath Vattana, to become a dancer when she was only a baby. She toured the world as the "white Apsara" or principal dancer of the classical Cambodian ballet – a stunningly graceful, 2000-year-old blend of sinuous hand gestures and sinuous body movements, all deep with meaning. Responsible for its rebirth, she became the symbol of classical Khmer dancing, dormant since the 15th century, when the glory of Angkor faded and with it the Khmer cultural dominance of Southeast Asia. In reviving the classical dance, Queen Kossomak and Princess Buppha Devi brought the dance not only to the world but also –for the first time- to the Cambodian people. In the past, the classical dance was the Royal dance, performed only before Royalty to commemorate their dynastic ancestors and to honor the gods. This is the new wave for Apsara dance but the new traditional dance took a quiet different style from Apsara of Angkor Wat includeds Clothes, Crown, style etc and developed a new style again and again until now. Especially, The new Apsara Dance is exactly performed all in public and everywhere not only for king like before.