Pamina Devi
A Cambodian Magic Flute

Choreography & Direction,
Costume Design, Lyrics & Traditional Music Arrangements by
SOPHILINE CHEAM SHAPIRO

Scenic and Lighting Designs by
MARCUS DOSHI

Performed by
KHMER ARTS ENSEMBLE

Produced by
KHMER ARTS ACADEMY
John Shapiro, Executive Director

in collaboration with
Amrita Performing Arts
Fred Frumberg, Executive Director

Commissioned by
New Crowned Hope, Vienna, Austria
Peter Sellars, Artistic Director
Executive Producer, Wiener Festwochen, Vienna

Touring General Manager
Lisa Booth Management, Inc.
Deirdre Valente

World Premiere: December 8, 2006, Schloss Schönbrunn, Vienna, Austria
USA premiere: September 27, 2007, Phillips Center, University of Florida Performing Arts, Gainesville

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the Max & Victoria Dreyfus Foundation; Spunk Fund, Inc.; and the Doris Duke Fund for Dance of the
National Dance Project, a program administered by the New England Foundation for the Arts with funding
from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and the Ford
Foundation. A Creative Capital Project.

Running time: 1 hour and 20 minutes (without intermission)
Pamina Devi: A Cambodian Magic Flute

**Cast**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Actor/Cast Member</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pamina Devi (Pamina)</td>
<td>Ms. Pumtheara Chenda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preah Chhapoan (Tamino)</td>
<td>Ms. Kong Bonich</td>
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<td>Sayon Reachny (Queen of the Night)</td>
<td>Ms. Sam Sathya</td>
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<td>Preah Arun Tipadey (Sorastro)</td>
<td>Ms. Chao Socheata</td>
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<td>Noreak (Papageno)</td>
<td>Ms. Sao Phirom</td>
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<td>Thornea (Monastatos)</td>
<td>Ms. Kong Bonich</td>
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<td>Krut (Garuda)</td>
<td>Ms. Sot Sovanndy</td>
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<td>Nory (Papagena)</td>
<td>Ms. Khut Sothavy</td>
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<td>Baksei (Birds)</td>
<td>Ms. Khut Sothavy</td>
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<td>Ms. Mot Pharan</td>
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<td>Ms. Um Sreyvan</td>
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<td>Sayon Reachny Seney</td>
<td>Ms. Chan Sopheap</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ms. Sam Ratha</td>
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<td>Ms. Sin Sotheary</td>
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<td>Preah Arun Tipadey Seney (Devotees)</td>
<td>Ms. Lim Chanboramy</td>
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<td>Ms. Long Chantheary</td>
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<td>Ms. Nong Sophanmay</td>
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<td>Ms. Noun Kaza</td>
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<td>Ms. Rin Sreyleak</td>
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<td>Ms. Sao Somaly</td>
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<td>Ms. Sot Sovanndy</td>
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**Vocalists**

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Cheam Chantopheas</td>
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<td>Mr. Meas Sambo</td>
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<td>Ms. Chhorn Niboran</td>
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<td>Ms. Sim Chanmoly</td>
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**Musicians**

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Chum Kong</td>
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<td>Mr. Nol Kol</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr. Sac Sothea</td>
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<td>Mr. Nil Sinoeun</td>
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<td>Mr. Ros Sokun</td>
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<td>Mr. Som Vanna</td>
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**Dresser**

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<th>Actor</th>
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<td>Ms. Peng Yom</td>
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**Instrumentation**

Roneat ek (high-pitched xylophone), gong thom (low-pitched circle gong), gong touch (high-pitched circle gong), gong (standing gong), sampho (double-headed drum), skor thom (twin standing drums), sralai thom (low-pitched oboe), sralai touch (high-pitched oboe).

*A note about Cambodia Names: When written or spoken, a person’s family name precedes their first name. Too, the honorific is associated with a person’s first name - e.g. Sam Sathya: Sam is the surname, and Ms. Sathya is the proper form of address.*
Synopsis

*Pamina Devi* is performed in Khmer with English surtitles.

**Act I**

In the Realm of the Night, Sayon Reachny and her *seney* (devotees) dance happily with her daughter, Pamina Devi. They exit, leaving Pamina Devi dancing alone when the lecherous Thornea abducts her.

Sayon Reachny bitterly laments the loss of her daughter.

A *krut* (garuda bird) enters, chasing Preah Chhapoan. Before it can kill him, Sayon Reachny’s devotees rescue him.

Sayon Reachny tells Preah Chhapoan that she was happy to save him, but is sad that she was unable to save her own daughter. He promises to bring Pamina Devi home. Sayon Reachny gives him a portrait of Pamina Devi and the flute of compassion for protection. He falls in love with the portrait.

Along the way to the Realm of the Sun, Preah Chhapoan meets the bird catcher Noreak, who laments that he has no soul mate. Preah Chhapoan invites him to join his journey, saying they’ll both meet their true loves.

**Act II**

In the Realm of the Sun, Preah Arun Tipadey rules with logic and order. Thornea brings Pamina Devi before her father. Preah Arun Tipadey explains that he had her abducted for her own good and to protect her from her mother’s feminine influence. He commands Thornea to guard her.

Thornea tries to seduce Pamina Devi. When rebuffed, he imprisons her with magic. Preah Chhapoan plays his flute and entrances the guards. Noreak enters and frees Pamina Devi. He then introduces her to Preah Chhapoan and they fall in love. Before they can flee, they are caught and brought before Preah Arun Tipadey. The King decides that the prince is worthy of his daughter. But as a condition of marriage, he demands that Preah Chhapoan first undergo an initiation of silence. The guards take Preah Chhapoan and Noreak away.

Sayon Reachny visits Pamina Devi in the night and instructs her to kill her father. Pamina Devi refuses.

Pamina Devi runs to Preah Chhapoan for help, but he is too engaged in his initiation ritual to pay attention. She decides to leave him, transforming her mother’s dagger from a symbol of betrayal into a symbol of her own strength. Realizing his error, Preah Chhapoan follows after Pamina Devi.

Sayon Reachny and her devotees catch the two lovers and condemn them for failing to follow her orders. Preah Arun Tipadey enters with his devotees. The two armies engage in battle. Frustrated at being caught in other people’s conflicts, Noreak strikes the Gong of Consciousness; the battle freezes and dissipates.

Noreak, hopeless in his quest for love, frees his prized bird. The bird transforms into Nory, his soul mate. Finally, Pamina Devi and Preah Chhapoan, Noreak and Nory dance in circles. Each couple joins together as one. They zig-zag into their future, determined to survive the difficult path of compromise and consideration ahead.
About Pamina Devi

In 2003, Peter Sellars invited Sophiline Cheam Shapiro to create a new work for New Crowned Hope, a festival celebrating the 250th anniversary of Mozart’s birth to take place in Vienna in 2006, and suggested *The Magic Flute* to her. The result is *Pamina Devi* in which Cheam Shapiro turns one eye toward Mozart’s operatic exploration of enlightened change in the aftermath of the American and French Revolutions and another eye toward her own experience with ‘enlightened’ change and revolution, which came along with the cruelty and suffering inflicted by Cambodia’s brutal Khmer Rouge regime (1975–79), a devastating legacy that continues to haunt Cambodia today.

Working from within the conservative structures of classical Cambodian dance, Shapiro sets her piece in a mytho-poetic time and space and speaks through an elaborate vocabulary of refined gestures, jeweled garments and percussive music. But she also pushes the form through her use of unexpected formations, an expanded kinetic vocabulary, reconceived musical arrangements and instrumentation, and innovations in costuming and settings.

“I am a child of transformation. Having survived four radical regime changes, I view utopian ideas of societal and political transformation with caution.

“Yet on a personal level I have found transformation to be a way of transcending the crippling circumstances that all that societal turmoil leaves in its wake. In the aftermath of Pol Pot’s Killing Fields, I transformed myself from a child with a distended belly and head lice into a celestial nymph by studying, performing and entering the magic and mythology of the thousand-year-old art of classical dance. Within a few years, I, along with a whole new generation of artists, was touring my country and the world, reminding everyone that Cambodia is the heir to more enduring legacies than auto-genocide. A decade later, having exhausted the opportunities available to me in Cambodia, I immigrated to the USA, where I studied and explored and transformed myself from a standard-bearing performer into a choreographer who infuses a venerable form with new ideas and who turns a traditional tool of the powerful into a vehicle for personal interpretation. Now I have returned to Cambodia, well-spring of my life’s work.

“In some ways, I feel like a lotus shoot that has struggled through mud and murky water to emerge above the surface where it blossoms in sunlight. I find a personal resonance in Pamina’s tortuous journey, which, like mine, allows her to overcome betrayals and transforms her into someone who transcends the darkness from which she is born.” – Sophiline Cheam Shapiro

Cambodia and Cambodian Dance

Background & Context

Classical dance is Cambodia’s most enduring performing art form – a living testimony of a potent and significant cultural heritage. Originally a vehicle for worship in the temples of ancient Angkor, this world-renowned and highly stylized aesthetic is a repository of history and belief. Transferred from generation to generation, it is a form primarily set on women and remains a powerful source of identity, rebirth and vitality today.

In the 20th century, Cambodia’s classical performance forms were under extreme stress, first as one of the few instruments of indigenous power under colonial rule, then as a despised scapegoat of the brutal Khmer Rouge regime of the late 1970’s, and then as a pawn in the civil war of the 1980s.

During the Khmer Rouge era (1975–1979) classical dance was banned. Though estimates vary, as many as 2 million Cambodians died during this brief period. Alongside the country’s intellectuals, artisans and teachers, as many as 90 percent of the dance’s practitioners perished from disease, overwork, starvation and slaughter.
In the immediate aftermath of this devastation, a small number of survivors returned to Phnom Penh to eagerly train a new generation of performers that was soon touring the country and abroad. This was a bold declaration that Cambodian culture would be known for more enduring legacies than auto-genocide.

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians fled war and poverty for teeming refugee camps along the Thai border. Under the ad hoc leadership of surviving teachers, dancers and musicians there, each camp formed a dance troupe (or troupes) and performances became an important part of camp life. When Cambodian refugees were resettled abroad, these new practitioners formed dance troupes in their adopted communities. Dance that until recently had been performed rarely outside royal palace walls now became a powerful expression for all Cambodians as they sought to embrace the positive aspects of their culture and affirm and transmit their identity.

During the 1980s and much of the 1990s, the form’s greatest focus was on reconstruction and preservation. A new generation of dancers was trained in Cambodia and important repertory revived.

Political and economic instability continued in Cambodia until the early 1990’s with the signing of the UN Peace Accords. But armed insurgents continued to plague Cambodia until the death of Pol Pot, the notorious leader of the Khmer Rouge, in 1998.

Following democratic elections in 1993, Cambodia began to emerge from more than two decades of war and cultural and political isolation. As a result, dancers and musicians from Cambodia were once again free to share the rich and ancient performing arts forms with the entire world. During this same period, some overseas Cambodian artists returned to their homeland to help infuse venerable forms with new ideas and new energy. This post-KR generation of artists began to push the boundaries of conservation toward creation. One of these artists, Cambodian-American Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, has since led troupes in groundbreaking new works in classical dance – Sampletechak/Othello – which toured to the Hong Kong Arts Festival, to the USA, and to the Venice Biennale in 2003, Seasons of Migration which toured to major USA venues in 2005, and now, Pamina Devi, which premiered in Vienna in 2006.

The USA is home to more than 175,000 Cambodians, the largest population of self-identified Khmer outside of Southeast Asia. Among this group are a number of world-recognized artists. Ease of travel, communications technologies and the need to share scarce resources have combined to create a new cultural paradigm. Cambodia’s contemporary performing arts are now made and shared across national borders, combining living traditions with contemporary concerns, forms and methods.

Of Roles and their Players

Cambodian classical dance is generally performed by women who trace their art to carvings of celestial dancers on temples dating back 1,000 years to a time when what is now Cambodia was the center of the vast Angkorian Empire, and to stone inscriptions which pre-date those carvings. The dancers fashioned in stone were depicted in the heavens, dancing for the gods. Their earthly counterparts - dancers of the Kingdom of Cambodia - have for centuries been linked both to religious beliefs and the monarchy.

Cambodian dances of this tradition are populated with princes and princesses, male and female deities, giants (sometimes evil but also wise) and monkeys (often good-hearted). The characters in Cheam Shapiro’s Pamina Devi embody two of four archetypes: neang (female), nearong (male). Cheam Shapiro also revives a masked character – the Krut – or Garuda bird, for the first time in 50 years.

Kinetically, neang play out Cambodia’s complex and formal vocabulary of gestures and movements with the highest degree of refinement and grace. Nearong are a bit more open in their stance and arm placement.

Costumes for all are elaborate affairs made of silks, woven through by hand with silver and gold threads, sequined and bejeweled and complemented by gold arm bands, headaddresses, anklets and bracelets. Costumes provide important clues to gender. Males wear pantaloons (kben) rather than skirts and feature epaulets on their shoulders.
Who's Who

**Sophiline Cheam Shapiro** is a choreographer, dancer, vocalist and educator whose original works have infused the venerable Cambodian classical form with new ideas and energy. Her choreography includes *Samntechak* (2000), *The Glass Box* (2002) and *Seasons of Migration* (2005), which she has set on Cambodia's finest performing artists and toured to three continents. Notable venues include Cal Performances, the Hong Kong Arts Festival, New York's Joyce Theater and the Venice Biennale. *Pamina Devi* had its world premiere at Vienna's New Crowned Hope Festival (2006) and tours the USA and Europe during the 2007-08 season. Her next project, a collaboration with composer Chinary Ung for the Los Angeles Master Chorale, will premiere at Walt Disney Concert Hall in November 2008. Among her essays is "Songs My Enemies Taught Me," published in *Children of Cambodia's Killing Fields: Memoirs by Survivors*, compiled by Dith Pran, edited by Kim DePaul (1997, Yale University Press). Cheam Shapiro has received numerous honors, including Creative Capital, Durfee, Guggenheim and Irvine Dance Fellowships, as well as the 2006 Nikkei Asia Prize for Culture.

Cheam Shapiro was a member of the first generation to graduate from the Royal University of Fine Arts after the fall of Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge regime and was a member of the faculty there from 1988 to 1991. She studied all three major roles for women (*neang, nearong* and *yeak*), which is rare. With RUFA’s ensemble, she toured India, the Soviet Union, the USA and Vietnam. She immigrated to Southern California in 1991. Shapiro studied dance ethnology at UCLA on undergraduate and graduate levels and now teaches and lectures internationally. She is co-founder and Artistic Director of the Khmer Arts Academy based in Long Beach, CA and Takhmao, Cambodia.

**Chao Socheata** (Preah Arun Tipadey) is a principal dancer with the Khmer Arts Ensemble who studied classical dance at Phnom Penh’s National School of Fine Arts.

**Chum Kong** (Musician) studied classical music at Phnom Penh’s Royal Palace in the early 1960s and performed there until 1975. In the 1980s, he was part of an ensemble at the Site 2 Refugee Camp in Thailand and, after being repatriated, joined the faculty at the Royal University of Fine Arts. More recently, he had the opportunity to study contemporary music in the Philippines. In addition to his work with the Khmer Arts Ensemble, he teaches music in a village on Koh Arey Ksat, an island in the Mekong River, where he lives.

**Kong Bonich** (Preah Chhoapoen) is a principal dancer with the Khmer Arts Ensemble who studied classical dance at Phnom Penh’s National School of Fine Arts.

**Peng Yom** (Dresser) began her classical dance training at Cambodia’s Royal Palace in the 1950s and toured throughout the world with the Palace ensemble. She is a specialist in the *yeak* (demon) and male-role characters. After the Khmer Rouge era, she joined the faculty of the National School of Fine Arts, where she taught until her retirement in 2006. In addition, she spent several years teaching with the Lowell, Massachusetts, based Angkor Dance Troupe.

**Pumtheara Chenda** (Pamina Devi) studied classical dance at the National School of Fine Arts and the Royal University of Fine Arts, where she earned a B.A. in 2006. In addition to her work with the Khmer Arts Ensemble, she has acted in Randal Douc’s play *Les hommes désertés* in Orléans, France, and in Phnom Penh. She is the daughter of prominent musician and composer Yun Theara.

**Ros Sokun** (Musician) studied and performed classical music at Phnom Penh’s Royal Palace in the 1960s and 1970s. After 1979, he joined the Ministry of Culture’s Department of Performing Arts.

**Sam Sathya** (Sayon Reachny) began formal training as a classical dancer in the early 1980’s, but had her first exposure to performance during the Khmer Rouge’s revolutionary rule (1975-1979). As a little girl it was her task to light the lamps that would illuminate the performance area of the troupes that danced and sang of the glory of the revolution. Hailed as the finest dancer of her generation, her roles include
Neang Seda (Princess Sita) in the *Reamker*, Cambodia's version of the Ramayana epic, and Moni Mekhala, goddess of the sea, maintaining a lineage from her own renowned teachers, Chea Samy (who passed away in 1994) and Menh Kossony. She has also created and/or performed lead roles in Cheam Shapiro’s *Samritechak*, *The Glass Box* and *Seasons of Migration*. Sam Sathya, has toured throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, and teaches at the National School of Fine Arts.

Sao Phiriom (Noreak) is a principal with the Khmer Arts Ensemble who studied classical dance at Phnom Penh’s National School of Fine Arts.

Sok Sokhan (Thornea) graduated from the National School of Fine Arts in 1997. In addition to her work with the Khmer Arts Ensemble, she has her own video production company and is currently studying for a B.A. at the National University of Management in Phnom Penh.

Marcus Doshi (Scenic & Lighting Designer) creates work for theatre, opera & dance as well as collaborating with artists & architects on a wide array of non-theatrical ventures. His work has been seen internationally in Edinburgh, London, Castres, Amsterdam, Vienna, Chennai, Mumbai, & Venice (Sophiline Cheam Shapiro’s *Samritechak*). In the US, he has collaborated with a range of producing institutions & artists including Florentine Opera, Virginia Opera, Lincoln Center Festival, Hartford Stage, Chicago Shakespeare, and Seattle Rep. He is an Associate Artist of the Civilians and a Company Member of Moving Theatre. In the art world, Marcus has designed the lighting for KARAOKE ICE and the exhibition lighting for the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum’s 2006 Design Triennial: DESIGN LIFENOW. He is the recipient of the 2003-05 NEA/TCG CDP. He holds degrees from Wabash College and the Yale School of Drama. Further documentation of his work can be found at www.marcusdoshi.com.

Robert W. Henderson, Jr. (Technical Director) is a New York based Lighting Designer. Recent credits include *Mary’s Wedding* directed by Tazewell Thompson; *The Laramie Project, Jekyll & Hyde, Man of La Mancha* – all at Theatre Three where he is Resident Lighting Designer; *Afghan Women*, a new play by William Mastrosimone; *Lady from the Sea, Phase C*; and the 2005 Christmas windows at Barney’s New York. Recent Associate/Assistant Design credits include Terry O’ Reilly’s *Violet Fire* at BAM and the Belgrade National Theatre; Sarah Michelson’s European Tour of *Shadowmann*; and Tazewell Thompson’s *Constant Star*. Robert received his MFA from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts Department of Design. He received his BFA from University of Florida’s Department of Theatre and Dance.

The Khmer Arts Ensemble is a 31-member independent classical dance and music troupe that specializes in the original choreography of its artistic director, Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, as well as rarely performed works from the classical canon. The Ensemble tours internationally and performs at its own breathtaking pavilion-style theater in Takhmao, Cambodia, outside of Phnom Penh. Its performing artists were all trained at Phnom Penh’s National School of Fine Arts (Cambodia’s official fine arts conservatory), the Royal University of Fine Arts and the Royal Palace. The troupe is a project of Khmer Arts Academy, which also houses a dance school and both amateur and professional companies in Long Beach, CA. Visit www.khmerartsacademy.org.

Amrita Performing Arts is an international performing arts production company based in Cambodia and California and founded and directed by Fred Frumberg. Derived from the Sanskrit word meaning ‘eternity’, Amrita works to sustain all forms of traditional Cambodian performing arts, increase capacity building in production management and administration, and promote and assist in creation of new works. Visit www.amritaperformingarts.org.

Lisa Booth Management (Deirdre Valente, Vice President) is a producing and management firm based in NYC specializing in contemporary performance. LBMI tours artists worldwide, produces US tours for artists from abroad, and initiates and manages special projects. Since 1983, LBMI programs have taken place in more than 300 cities in 30 countries on six continents. Current and upcoming projects include *Emily*, a new project by Michael Gordon and Ridge Theater, Ping Chong’s *Cathay*, Handspring Puppet Company (*Woyzeck on the Highveld* and a new work), Hip Hop Theater Festival, Spirit of Uganda, and Doug Varone and Dancers. LBMI co-produced *Dance: The Spirit of Cambodia* in 2001, toured Weyreap’s
Battle (Amrita Performing Arts) to London’s Barbican earlier this year, and has served as General Touring Manager for Khmer Arts Ensemble since 2004.

Pamina Devi 2007 USA Tour Credits

Technical Director                  Robert W. Henderson, Jr.
Company Manager                    Kang Rithisal
Assistant to the Director          Chum Chanveasna

Costume Makers
Kum Sokunthea, Mao Siha, Nou Chanmoly, Phal Saravudh, Proeung Sokcheat, Sim Chanmoly, Tim Samy

Program Notes
Deirdre Valente with Toni Shapiro-Phim and John Shapiro

Production Photos
John Shapiro, James Wasserman

Travel Arrangements
Road Rebel, San Diego, CA; PTM Travel, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Khmer Arts Academy
Sophiline Cheam Shapiro, Artistic Director
John Shapiro, Executive Director
Chheng Phon and Soth Sam On, advisors emeritus
Contact: info@khmerartsacademy.org, www.khmerartsacademy.org

Fall 2007 USA Tour Hosts: Phillips Center at University of Florida Performing Arts, Gainesville, FL (Sept 27); Memorial Hall, Carolina Performing Arts at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (Oct 5); The Joyce Theater, New York City (Oct 9-14); Power Center, University Musical Society, Ann Arbor MI (Oct 21 & 22); Kay Theatre, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at Maryland, College Park (Oct 25 & 26)

Special thanks to Peter Sellars, Diane Malecki and the staff of New Crowned Hope; Michael Blachly, Elizabeth Auer and the staff at University of Florida Performing Arts for hosting the USA technical preparations and premiere; Rebecca Blunk, Cecily Cook, Sean Elwood, Em Theay, Jane Forde, Marianne Gerschel, Ruby Lerner, Peter Lesnik, Pen Sok Huon, Pich Tum Kravel, Pok Sarann, Ralph Samuelson, Cecily Cook, Ros Kong, Sara R. Surrey, Karen Molleson.