

**CAMBODIA / MUSIC
WORLD PREMIERE**



BANGSOKOL: A REQUIEM FOR CAMBODIA

Nearly four decades after the fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge, the first major symphonic work to commemorate the atrocities of the late 1970s has emerged.

Bangsokol: A Requiem For Cambodia is an extraordinary new work spanning song, film, dance and voice and is the first orchestral performance that address the traumas that occurred in Cambodia. It marks a first time collaboration between Oscar-nominated film director **Rithy Panh** and lauded composer **Him Sophy** - both survivors of the Khmer Rouge and now at the forefront of Cambodia's cultural renaissance.

In the 1970s, more than two million Cambodians were murdered and saw an entire generation of Cambodian artists torn from the world, but in the years since, a growing community has formed to bring new expression to a culture still devastated by those unimaginable events.

By incorporating elements of the Western Requiem form into a Buddhist Cambodian context, **Bangsokol: A Requiem for Cambodia** recruits the the Taipei Philharmonic Chamber Choir, a local orchestra and traditional Khmer vocalists and

instruments—ancient harps, flutes, and the xylophone-like *roneat plueh* to mourn the atrocities inflicted by the Khmer Rouge. Grammy-nominated conductor Andrew Cyr (Artistic Director, Metropolis Ensemble) leads the Musical Direction.

The libretto is structured on a Cambodian Buddhist liturgy for healing the sick and offering merit to the dead, known in Pali as pamsukula (pronounced in Khmer as bangsokol, giving the show its title) and is written by Buddhist scholar, **Trent Walker**.

Melbourne Festival Artistic Director **Jonathan Holloway** said: *“In a year when we are trying to see the big picture and look at the greatest histories that human kind has been involved in, we need to look at the unresolved episodes. There has never before been a large scale requiem marking Cambodia in the 1970s and the Killing Fields. Rithy Panh’s moving film and an incredible musical score and ritualistic dance performance promise to achieve what the greatest requiems can do.”*

Rithy Panh creates a stunning visual projection to accompany the performance, which will include archival footage of the regime's brutal neglect of basic human rights.

With stage direction by Melbourne Festival's Associate Director Gideon Obarzanek, they create an unprecedented work that transforms tragedy into hope and carves out a new space in which to heal - innately Cambodian but relatable to audiences everywhere, **Bangsokol: A Requiem For Cambodia** urges us to express our scars from the past in order to forge a new path forward.

Him Sophy is a Cambodian composer whose study of music was interrupted when the Khmer Rouge civil war broke out and it was not until the fall of the regime that Sophy was able to resume his music studies in 1981. In 1985, he received a scholarship to study music composition in Moscow, Russia, and spent the next 14 years there, obtaining a PhD in Composition in 1998. Sophy's other major work includes *Memory From Darkness*, which he wrote in 1990, inspired by his own life and the atrocities he witnessed during the Khmer Rouge era.

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MEDIA RELEASE

4—22
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Rithy Panh is the first Cambodian filmmaker ever to be nominated for an Oscar for *The Missing Picture* in 2013. In the same year he received the Jury Prize at “Un Certain Regard” at the Cannes Festival. He also directed *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*, for which he was awarded the prestigious Albert Londres Prize.

Arts Centre Melbourne Hamer Hall

Fri 13 & Sat 14 Oct

7.30pm

1 hr 5 mins, no interval

A Reserve \$79 / \$69

B Reserve \$69 / \$59

Under 30s \$30

www.festival.melbourne

Arts Centre Melbourne 1300 182 183

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