

MH-99-07-FN

See also: MH-99-07-CS
MH-99-07-M

Thursday August 26, 1999 Fieldnotes

Accompanied H. Mark Smith and intern Nan Clark to Lowell. The Angkor Youth Dance Troupe performed for an hour in Boarding House Park – part of a Free Children's Corner Series taking place this. The Angkor Dance Troupe is funded by Youth Reach.

Ruth Page, Angkor's general manager, did the presenting – very thorough. Various age groups performed 10 dances. I took photos of the following folk and classical dances:

Monkey Dance

Butterfly Dance

Coconut Dance

The Golden Mermaid (classical dance)

Pestle Dance

Fishing Dance – using bamboo baskets and bell-shaped fishing traps

The last piece featured the Chai Yum, a Camodian drum. A master artist living in Connecticut was brought to Lowell this summer specifically to teach the Chai Yum to the troupe. This is a perfect example of the type of cross-state apprenticeship we have applied to NEA for.

Ruth informed the audience that one in three school children in Lowell are Cambodian. Arn Chorn Pond gave these statistics on Cambodian population/settlement patterns:

Lowell: 30,000 Cambodian

Chelsea, Lynn, Revere: 15,000

Providence: 10,000

Fall River: 5,000

Worcester: 1,000

After the performance we headed over to the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (CMAA) to meet with Lorraine, Youth Services Director and Arn Chorn Pond, Asst Youth Services Asst Director, a case worker and a student.

Arn Chorn Pond and Lorraine had just come from a naturalization ceremony, at which Arn Chorn had delivered an impassioned speech.

Arn Chorn Pond, orphaned during the war, came over to this country as a 14-year old. (He is now 33) He is a singer (both popular contemporary music and traditional songs, traditional flute player, and is generally passionate about Cambodian traditional arts. He introduced us to a master Chai Yum player who he has been working with recently.

He spoke of being 10 years old in Cambodia, and having five days with a master khim player (dulcimer-like instrument played with bamboo sticks.) The master was then killed by the Khmer Rouge. "Mercifully, they didn't ask me to kill him."

Arn Chorn said he'd been invited by the king last year to come and locate master musicians/artists who are still living in Cambodia. (90% of the country's artists had been systematically killed by the Khmer Rouge.) He is slated to go back this November to continue this work. The same work could be done here among refugee populations. Mentioned that a German ethnomusicologist had made field recordings in Cambodia in 1969. Much is lost.

Arn said he would put someone involved with the delegation in touch with me. He also said I could come back and meet with him and several master artists in the near future.