



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## “Forbidden Rhythms” show: When women break Cambodian traditional norms

*Medha, the first female drumming troupe in Cambodia,  
performs every evening  
at Bambu Stage, in Siem Reap*

Siem Reap, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Bambu Stage collaborates with Experience Cambodian Living Arts to propose the unique show “Forbidden Rhythms”, in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Every evening from Monday to Saturday at 8pm a ritual takes place at Bambu Stage, 1 hour of an intense performance like a ceremony of exorcism of social rules.

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### **Women power through music: a way to reach freedom**

In early 2017, seven women, from Chriv village in the countryside near Siem Reap, with experience in other traditional arts volunteered for training under Sous Sopheak, a traditional instrumentalist, organized by Cambodian Living Arts. They came up with the name Medha.

On this day, Medha came to life – which means the wisdom to move forward.

*"Medha represents for us leadership, that means everyone in the group must be strong, brave and never give up. When we are in group, we have many chances to improve all together. We are like a family now,"* tells one of the performers Chamroun Rittysokvanna.

### **"Forbidden Rhythms" defies gender domination: "We are Medha. We can play drums!"**

On stage, Medha is dancing and singing on the drums vibrations that electrifies the audience. This new and unique music show with original compositions and contemporary storytelling give a special understanding of Cambodian's traditions; choreographed by Jean-Baptiste Phou and composed by LY Vanthan.

"Forbidden Rhythms" presents the aspirations, experiences and relationships of young Cambodian women, through ancient art forms with a modern twist.

The performers are playing different types of drums, like the *sneng*, a type of horn, the gong and a pair of *skortob*, a type of Angkorian military instrument, normally reserved for males.

Wearing a non-gender costume with hard facial expressions – almost war-like – with smiles breaking out here and there, the artists aspire to change mentalities through their powerful and creative spectacle.

The political message is everywhere on stage, just by their presence, their attitude and their talent.

### **Bambu Stage's mission: providing awareness with engaged shows**

Siem Reap's cultural landscape is changing fast. The town embodies the tensions of the country's fast development; facing economic, social and environmental challenges.

Destination for locals and tourists, Bambu Stage carries a mission of awareness by considering that spectacles are not only about entertainment. It can change perception. By also thinking that every traveler has a responsibility; try to have a better understanding of the country.

All the shows proposed go in this direction, *"by creating a bigger understanding of the whole picture,"* says Nick Coffill, co-founder of Bambu Stage.



## INFORMATION:

SHOW FROM MONDAY TO SATURDAY  
AT 8PM



## ABOUT BAMBU STAGE

Founded in 2015, Bambu Stage is a hybrid intimate theatre, social enterprise, based in Siem Reap, Cambodia. More than just a theatrical production company, the venue offers a permanent cultural space and creative explorations of insider knowledge focusing on Khmer's arts and history. Only cultural venue in Siem Reap to have four different stages, Bambu Stage is constantly growing in order to propose a diversity of shows and experiences unlike any others in the town of the Angkor Temples. Every evening, the stages come to life in an authentic environment.

In mixed Khmer and English dialogue, Bambu Stage proposes old folk storytelling and modern-day drama. From poetic shadow puppets to energizing women drummers, dancers and singers, of the Medha troupe, this place creates artistic moments where ancestral traditions and contemporary aspirations embrace each other.

Bambu Stage is working to reach the goal to contribute to a sustainable arts sector working and living in Cambodia; by nurturing local talent in professional, technical, and artistic collaboration.

Website: [www.bambustage.com](http://www.bambustage.com)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BambuStage/>

## ABOUT EXPERIENCE CAMBODIAN LIVING ARTS (ECLA)

Experience Cambodian Living Arts (ECLA) is a branch of the NGO Cambodian Living Arts (CLA). ECLA creates sustainable and fairly paid jobs for artists and technicians, and give audiences an opportunity to experience quality, authentic Cambodian performing arts. They



also contribute to financially support CLA's other programs. We believe arts are at the heart of a vital society. We envision the arts and cultural expression as essential to a thriving future for Cambodia. CLA's mission is to be a catalyst in a vibrant arts sector, inspiring new generations.

Website: [www.experience.cambodianlivingarts.org](http://www.experience.cambodianlivingarts.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ExperienceCLA/>

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