

Chinary Ung is often associated with that group of Asian-born composers whose music incorporates aspects of eastern musical characteristics into a western classical music setting. Aside from specific cultural and generational distinctions, the principal difference between Ung's work and theirs is that for many years he was prevented from engaging directly with the source of his cultural heritage as his native country was being torn apart by the scourge of the Khmer Rouge. Indeed, as the people and culture of Cambodia were being systematically destroyed, Ung took it upon himself to rescue some facet of the traditional music he had known as a child, reconstituting Cambodian musical traditions through his performances on the *roneat-ek* – the Cambodian xylophone. This project reflects the qualities of responsibility and of hopefulness that are so strongly a part of Ung's personality.

Over the past fifty years Chinary Ung has developed a musical language that indicates an open ear toward the sounds of the East—Southeast Asia and his native Cambodia in particular—as well as the textures and instrumental practices of contemporary Western concert music. From the solo 'cello piece *Khse Buon*, to the Grawemeyer Award-winning *Inner Voices*, to the epic *Aura*, Ung's music is characterized by a vivid sound world with an intense emotional trajectory.

Ung's extensive orchestral catalog has been commissioned and performed by major orchestras throughout the United States and abroad, including those in Philadelphia, Louisville, Pittsburgh, Tokyo, Sydney, Basel, as well as the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the American Composers Orchestra. Boston Modern Orchestra Project released a recording of Ung's orchestral music in 2015. His work has been commissioned by the Meet the Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Ford, Koussevitsky, Joyce, and Barlow Foundations. In 2014 he was given the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Award by the New York- based Asian Cultural Council. In 2020 he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Ung's activities as a cultural leader demonstrate a profound sense of responsibility to a broader cultural and societal context. He has worked with numerous institutions and individuals who share his dedication toward preserving Cambodian culture and forging cultural exchanges between Asia and the West, such as The Asian Cultural Council. He was President of the Khmer Studies Institute in the U.S.A. between 1980-1985, and was an advisor for the Killing Fields Memorial and Cambodian Heritage Museum of Chicago and a member of the Cambodian-Thai cultural committee.

As an educator, Ung has taught courses in Southeast Asian music and he has instructed generations of young composers at several institutions in the United States, and through a series of residencies, in Asia as well. He is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Music at UC San Diego. He and his wife Susan direct the Nirmita Composers Institute, with the goal of providing compositional direction and opportunity to musicians from Southeast Asia.

Chinary Ung's compositions are published exclusively by Wise Music Classical, a division of Wise Music Group, and they are registered under BMI. For more information visit www.chinaryung.com.

-Adam Greene