

# តៃយ៉ាំ Chhayam

*Chhayam* is one of the many traditional Khmer dance forms found in cities and villages throughout Cambodia. It is a light-hearted, animated, comedic dance combining percussive rhythms, exaggerated dance moves, raucous call and response singing, and improvisation. *Chhayam* drummers, dancers, and singers lead ceremonial processions which begin many of Cambodia's yearly celebrations including New Year in April and *Kathin* at the end of the rainy season, when people bring gifts to the monks at the temple compound.



*Chhayam* is composed of percussion instruments including long-drums (*sko chhayam*) which are brightly decorated with red, yellow, and green cloth, wooden clackers (*krab*), and handheld cymbals. *Chhayam* is a public dance and bystanders may spontaneously join the fun. Drummers usually stand in

one line at the back of the group with male dancers in front of them. Some of the dancers play the *krab* or cymbals while others clap. The drummers sing in a loud call and response style which can be nonsensical. Male dancers have comically painted faces or wear masks. They humorously flirt with the graceful female dancer who ignores their amorous actions, much to the delight of onlookers.