

## **Celebrate Khmer New Year with Rajana Society**

Judith van Praag

Every third Saturday of each month the staff of Wing Luke Asian Museum organizes a fun filled educational arts and crafts day for children and families.

On March 18, the focus will be on Khmer (Cambodian) art and culture. You're invited to come and celebrate the Khmer New Year with the "Rajana Society" a University of Washington based nonprofit student organization.

The program starts at 10 a.m. with welcome words, followed by a workshop in creation of a variety of puppets, masks and a storybook.

A performance of traditional folk and classic Khmer dances starts at 10:40 a.m. After a break (snacks are supplied), participants will learn traditional customs, such as how to greet people, as well as basic Khmer alphabet and phrases. The program ends around noon, after Khmer New Year Games and a Shadow Puppet Show.

The founders and members of Rajana Society promote and advance Khmer arts and entertainment by informing and educating the public. They reach out to the Khmer youths to gain involvement and hands-on experience with their culture.

Rajana Society provides resources, assistance and support to aspiring and practicing artists who demonstrate interests in Khmer arts and entertainment.

Membership of the Rajana Society consists of enrolled undergraduate and graduate students and Khmer members of the University faculty and staff. Associate memberships are available to members of the Khmer community and all individuals who believe

in and support the purpose of the organization.

The 1st Annual Spear Rajana Khmer Arts Summit, which took place in January of this year at the OMA Ethnic Cultural Center and Theatre at University of Washington, was a great success.

Those appearing at the Summit included Khmer creative minds such as Prach Ly, a Khmer American rap artist from Long Beach, CA.; Anita Yoeu Esquerra, a Khmer Muslim American editor from Chicago, IL. Mike Siv, a Khmer American filmmaker from San Francisco, CA.; The Second Language, a Tacoma-based rap trio and Memoriza, a Khmer American rap artist from Kelso, Wash. These artists and speakers introduced novel thoughts and presented issues and history in such a way that some visitors felt inspired to reopen the dialogue with their elders, or became aware of their own connection with the riches of the Khmer tradition and heritage.

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