



## NFC Graduate Performs in a Historic Cambodian American Rock Opera

*Ethan Bello*

Walking around in Phnom Penh lately, you won't be able to escape the giant posters on the streets, the extensive



media coverage and the ongoing coffee shop talk surrounding "Where

Elephants Weep", an original Khmer rock opera. It features an

international cast and an unprecedented investment in a very high quality production. The opera is

produced by Amrita Performing Arts, in association with Cambodian Living Arts. Their goal is to support the revival of

traditional Cambodian living arts, and inspire local artists to create new works that merge traditional Khmer elements,

such as music and dance, with contemporary styles to bring new life to ancient forms.

So it is amongst Canadian, American and French cast members that you find Dang Kosal (age 20), graduate of NFC, acting and performing in the hip hop, rap, and break dancing scenes as part of the guard trio.

Dang Kosal came to NFC in 2003 with his younger brother, Sopheak. NFC provided a place for him to live and develop his talents.

His energy and hard work paid off when he was chosen, amid strong competition, for a role in this epic performance.

A total of 32 NFC children were awed by the show, due to a donation of 20 tickets from the cast and the rest from a friend of NFC. Overwhelmed, they sat in complete silence, fascinated by the spectacular show and the presence of one of their own among the performers. As it ended, they rushed backstage to see the cast and production members, have a couple of words with them and feel some star quality, including that provided by our own rising star – Dang Kosal - who showed us all that there can be a new future for the children!



Dang Kosal stepping on the red carpet on premiere night

## Projects Abroad Volunteers' "Dirty Weekend" Leaves NFC a more Colorful Place!

*Ethan Bello*

The weekend of the 27th-28th of November, NFC's new location was taken over by a group of volunteers from Projects Abroad. Armed with scraping tools, paint brushes and rollers, the group renovated the outside yard and main gate, adding significantly to the ongoing improvements made since moving to the new location.



It was a lot of work removing the scaly old paint and scraping the moldy concrete. Afterwards many liters of paint were needed to saturate the thirsty walls.

With the kids' helping hands and enthusiastic presence, it was inevitable to combine work and play. Even the PA volunteer's got involved in an aggressive paint fight that left Claire's upper body looking like she was a recent initiate from a tribal ritual.

By the time the sun had set on the second day of work, the daunting mission had been accomplished and everyone gathered in the backyard to watch NFC's break dance team perform, celebrating the new and welcoming look given to the center.



## US Embassy Members Provide Traditional Thanksgiving Dinner for NFC Children

*Ethan Bello*

As an act of good will and sharing of an American tradition, the US Embassy in Phnom Penh hosted a Thanksgiving dinner at NFC on November 27th. The highlight of the menu was, of course, roasted turkeys, and the kids' responses were quite in favor of the three "big chickens" (as the kids called them).



The kids heard how the first Thanksgiving was a celebration of when the first Europeans, the Pilgrims, arrived in America and, only with the donations of food from the native Indians, were able to survive their first, harsh winter.

In America Thanksgiving is a time to share a bountiful meal with your family

and relatives and give thanks for food, family and friends that you have.

The children at NFC were happy to get familiarized with the American tradition, trying the many different foods, though some of them wondered - Where is the rice?

## **NFC Now Enjoys Full Time Internet Access!**

*Florent Zwiers*

After suffering with a single dial-up connection for years, NFC has finally upgraded to full time Internet access for all computers! We now have a 24/7 Internet connection, which is surprisingly stable (for Cambodia). For the first time the children can now explore the World Wide Web at NFC! For some of the children, this is their first direct experience with the Internet.



Vannak and Sakana mentioned that e-mail is a good way to keep in touch with previous volunteers. They, and many NFC children, have already used the opportunity to e-mail friends and previous volunteers.

Kosal mentioned that, apart from homework and e-mails, it's a nice way to follow the news. Several newspapers have websites. He mentioned "www.everyday.com" as a news website which allows him to keep track of global

events (many of which are taking place here in S.E. Asia).

Laluy says that the internet is nice, but has it has its downsides. It's good for doing research for homework, especially for the older children, but games and 'bad websites' are plentiful on the web. It doesn't seem to be a problem as of yet; but Laluy is afraid that once the novelty wears off, the computers will only be used for games.

From an administrative point of view, Chris Merritt is thankful for quick access to software updates for maintenance of the system. On the other hand, he anticipates challenges in administrating the children's use and access to such a wealth of information.

In any case, there is no doubt that finally having full time Internet brings new educational opportunities for the children.

## **NFC Receives Donations for Critical Computer Upgrades**

*Chris Merritt*

Within an hour of connecting all the computers to the Internet, a severe virus infected the 3 older computers (running Windows 2000) and could not be stopped by them. The only solution was to upgrade the 3 system units to ones that could run Windows XP. The upgrade became possible thanks to the kind donations by an NFC friend and from a group visiting from Habitat for Humanity UK.