



Ellen Jacobs Associates
611 Broadway Suite 403
New York, NY 10012 USA
T: 212.245.5100
F: 212.397.1102
ēja@ejassociates.org
www.ejassociates.org

For Immediate Release



Chinary Ung

Pichet Klunchun

Amna Kusumo

**ASIAN CULTURAL COUNCIL HONORS THREE
MAVERICKS — CHINARY UNG, PICHET KLUNCHUN,
AND AMNA KUSUMO — WITH A TOTAL OF \$150,000 AS
PART OF ACC’S 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

Three mavericks in their fields—Cambodian American composer Chinary Ung, Thai choreographer Pichet Klunchun, and Indonesian arts leader Amna Kusumo—were selected to receive the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Award for 2014. Marking the first time the prestigious honor is being given to three recipients in a single year, the money, \$150,000 total, will be divided among the trailblazing recipients with each receiving \$50,000. The award is given by the Asian Cultural Council, which is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary.

“We increased the number of honorees from one to three this year in honor of our 50th anniversary,” said Wendy O’Neill, chairman of ACC and great-niece of ACC founder John D. Rockefeller 3rd. “Each of the 2013/14 honorees has made a radical difference in their particular field. Through their work, sometimes in very challenging situations, each has widened and deepened the appreciation of Asian culture and art, which is the heart and soul of the Asian Cultural Council’s mission since its founding.”

For Cambodian American composer **Chinary Ung**, music is elemental. In the 1970’s, overwhelmed by the tragedy and upheaval in his native Cambodia, Mr. Ung temporarily abandoned his work as a composer to devote himself to helping Cambodian refugees. He worked with Cambodian communities in the U.S. to set up music and dance groups.

After the fall of the Khmer Rouge, Ung’s tireless work contributed to the revival of Cambodian performing arts and, eventually a series of seminal recordings of traditional Cambodian music on the Folkways label. When he returned to composing, he found his vision as an artist had changed radically. His music, which now integrated the intricate rhythmic, melodic, and philosophical principles of Cambodian and Southeast Asian music with experimental Western music, inspired award-winning compositions. His new approach to his music, which also inspired his teaching methods, was recognized by many honors, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, two Kennedy Center Prizes, and the prestigious Grawemeyer Award.

Ung has held faculty positions at numerous colleges, including the University of Pennsylvania, Connecticut College, and University of California, San Diego, where he is designated Distinguished Professor of Music.

Most recently, Mr. Ung initiated a roving Composers Institute in Asia that will introduce new understanding of composition and musical expression in Cambodia, Myanmar, and other parts of Southeast Asia.

Amna Kusumo's passion and determination helped change the artistic and cultural landscape in her native Indonesia. Through her work with the choreographer Sardono, along with other visionary artists and intellectuals, Ms. Kusumo helped unite an arts scene that had been made up of isolated communities scattered throughout the archipelago. She also introduced new ideas of arts management and resource sharing, which eventually brought Indonesian artists to a wider international playing field.

In the 1970's, she collaborated with the Jakarta Arts Council to create international programming and formulate policies to support the activities and development of the arts in Jakarta. Yayasan Kelola, which Ms. Kusumo founded in 1999, continues to organize workshops in festival and cultural institution management designed to promote cultural exchange and build artistic networks within Indonesia and abroad.

She played a central role in the programming of the Jakarta Arts Center, which houses a 2,500-seat, open-air theater, as well as a proscenium and an arena, making it the first performance facility of its kind in Southeast Asia. The Arts Center brought artists of international renown to its stage including Pina Bausch, Merce Cunningham, and Martha Graham.

From 1988 to 1991, she chaired the Production Board for the Festival of Indonesia in the United States, which introduced hundreds of Indonesian artists to American audiences through a two-year tour across the United States.

Although recognized as Thailand's foremost classical male dancer, as a choreographer, **Pichet Klunchun's** work challenges the traditional conventions of classicism by infusing it with contemporary forms.

Mr. Klunchun's discovery of contemporary dance, first in New York City and then at the American Dance Festival in Durham, NC – courtesy of a six-month ACC fellowship – radicalized his thinking and fueled his imagination. His natural curiosity drew him to Jerome Bel, one of France's most celebrated avant-garde choreographers. Together they created "Pichet Klunchun and myself," which was subsequently performed at Philadelphia Live Arts, Dance Theater Workshop in New York City, and at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Lee, MA. The duet went on to win the 2008 European Cultural Foundations's Princess Margriet Award for pushing the boundaries of an art form beyond national interest.

FIFTY YEARS: ABOUT THE ASIAN CULTURAL COUNCIL

Not only a cultural foundation, an entire cultural movement could be formed and shaped by one simple phrase: "I believe in the supreme worth of the individual." These words, a favorite motto of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., helped inspire his son, John D. Rockefeller III, to establish the Asian Cultural Program in 1963 with the purpose of supporting cultural exchange between Asia and the United States through grants made to extremely talented individuals for work in the visual and performing arts and for projects in the humanities.

Artists, scholars, and researchers of diverse origins and disciplines reaped the benefits of those first grants. The key to success for the ACC's unique program lay in carefully selecting those individuals, closely advising them, and providing them with a peerless level of personal and intensive programming.

As Mr. Rockefeller wrote in 1975 on the foundation's thirteenth anniversary: "The fostering of cultural relations can be a form of insurance for the future of this dangerous but

exciting world. Enhancing respect and admiration among peoples can go a long way in keeping the door open for ongoing communication and also be a rewarding experience for those involved on both sides.”

With over sixty percent of the world’s population presently living in Asia and the Asian economy expanding in unprecedented ways, the potential impact and reach of the Asian Cultural Council is even larger. Today, the ACC is the only organization in the world whose sole mission is to support cultural exchange between the United States and Asia and within the countries of Asia. Headquartered in New York City, the ACC maintains offices in Hong Kong and Tokyo, with partner foundations in Manila and Taipei. It is both a grant-making and grant-seeking organization, raising funding from corporate, foundation, and individual donors in both the United States and Asia.

Over 6,000 Asian and American artists, scholars, and specialists in the arts have benefited from the ACC in the past five decades. The organization currently awards approximately one hundred grants annually.

John D. Rockefeller III proved himself prescient when, 35 years ago, he said Americans “viewed international relations primarily in political and economic terms with comparatively little attention given to the cultural dimension.” The result, he wrote, “is that our world outlook has tended to be bound by our own culture instead of being broadened by a sensitivity to other cultures.” His words remain true today.

###