



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Luang Prabang museum opens immersive and interactive exhibition showcasing traditional wind instruments and music in Laos.

Luang Prabang, LAO PDR (September 26, 2018) – TAEC’s newest special exhibition, “Voices of the Wind: Traditional Instruments in Laos” is now on display after more than two years of extensive research and documentation in remote regions of northern Laos led by Belgian ethnomusicologist and curator, Dr. Marie-Pierre Lissoir, and the TAEC research team.

A highly interactive and intimate exhibit, display spaces communicate three important contexts of instrumental practices: ritual, instrument-making, and courting. Through village scene re-creation, audio stations, and interactive video and photograph kiosks, visitors will enter a world rarely seen by the general public.

In Laos, music and musical instruments are a part of everyday life. For entertainment, courtship, or rituals, to banish loneliness, teach children, or communicate with the spirits, musical practices touch every member of a community during every part of the year. There is now a struggle and urgency to document these instruments from construction to playing as modernity takes over and replaces intimate settings and songs with amplifiers, microphones, and pre-recorded music. Music is the voice of a community, the voice of a country. A voice that is constantly evolving, like every human activity.

This exhibit also coincides with the recent UNESCO inscription of the music of the mouth organ or “*khaen*” on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This is the very first inscription for the country on the ICH list and a positive step forward for safeguarding the transmission of knowledge, skills, and meaning of this emblematic instrument for future generations.

TAEC would like to acknowledge the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation for making this critical research possible, and William Klausner for supporting the creation of the exhibition.

“Voice of the Wind: Traditional Instruments in Laos” will be on display until the Fall 2020.

Quotes:

From the Curator: *“Music can be explored in so many ways. There is the role of music in traditional ceremonies and celebrations, but also the crafting of instruments, playing techniques, and the decline of apprenticeship. Laos is particularly fascinating because many instruments are used to communicate, whether to pass a message through the mountains with the powerful sound of a leaf, or to express ones love with the discreet sound of the jaw harp. Speaking about music is speaking about life in Laos, its changes and challenges.”* – Dr. Marie-Pierre Lissoir

Hmong instrument maker and musician: *“There are so many people making qeej, but if I am the one who is able to help document the process of making it from the beginning to the end, then I hope my knowledge is able to inspire people not to let go of their culture and traditions, not to let go of your ancestors and family spirits... I want to leave this message behind for the future generation.”* – Mr. Neng Chue Vang

TAEC’s objectives of this exhibition:

- Demonstrate the diversity and similarities in musical practices among minority groups in Laos.
- Expose unexpected sounds and instruments to visitors in an innovative experiential space. The scenography of the exhibit and its use of different mediums will allow a deeper understanding of music and its techniques.
- Stimulate local and foreign visitor interest in Laos’ musical traditions and its importance to society through special events and outreach at the Centre.
- Highlight, document and safeguard endangered practices and instruments.

Please contact us for print quality images or more information about our work in Laos.

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Discover the people of Laos at the Traditional Arts & Ethnology Centre. TAEC is the only museum and learning centre in Laos dedicated to cultural diversity. The Centre is engaged in a broad range of museum and community engagement activities, reflecting its commitment to supporting living ethnic minority communities to preserve and promote their cultural heritage while looking towards the future. Located in Ban Khamyong, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, the museum and shop is open 9am until 6pm, closed Mondays. Admission is 25,000 Lao kip for adults, free for children under 12 and Lao citizens. The TAEC Boutique on the main road in Ban Vat Sene sells fair trade crafts made by ethnic groups. It is open from 9am – 9pm every day.

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