

WHITE GOLD

Sydney
Festival
2024

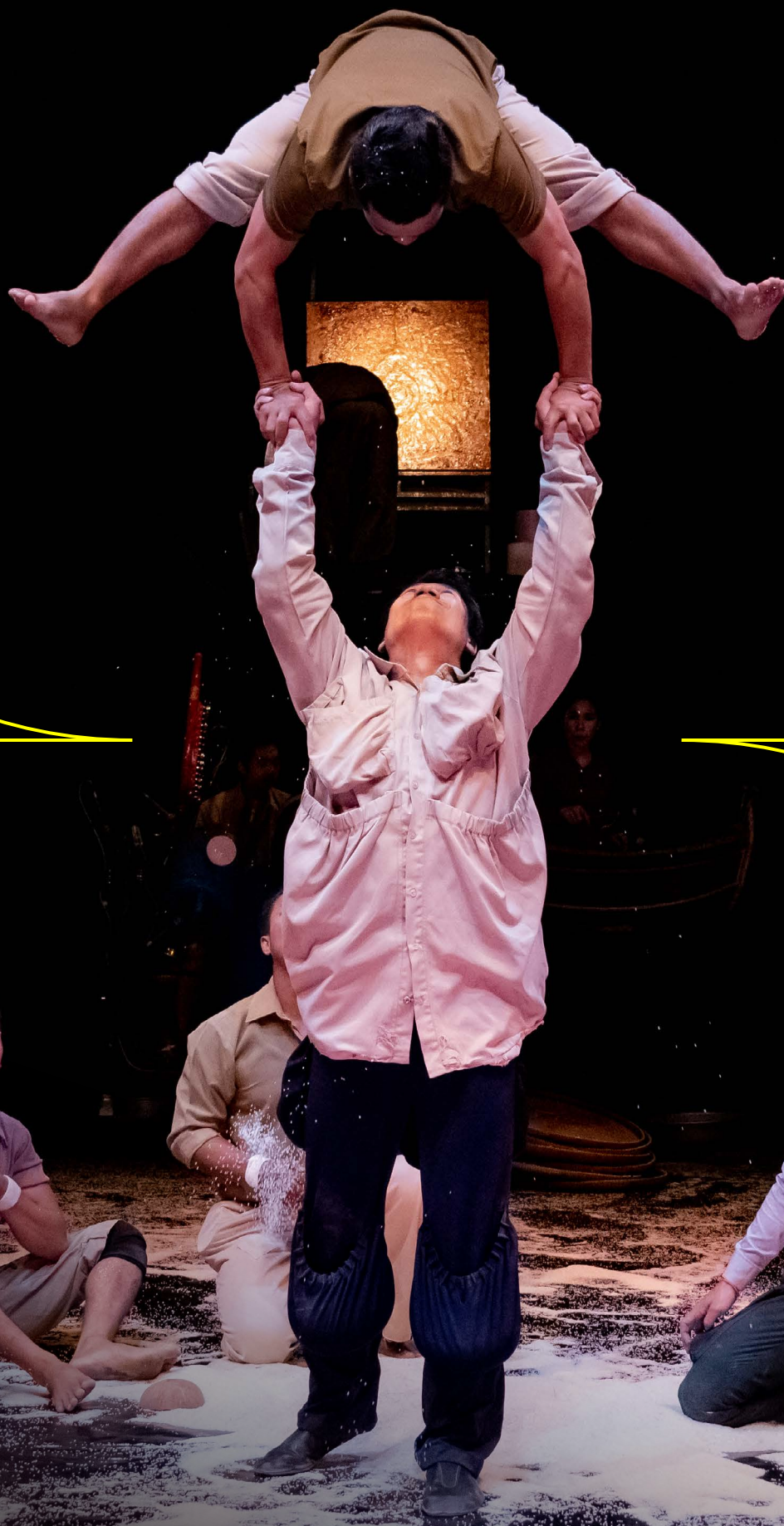


Photo by Ranuth Yun

WHITE GOLD

Phare, The Cambodian Circus
AUSTRALIAN EXCLUSIVE

Seymour Centre, York Theatre
9 - 21 January
65 mins (no interval)

CAST AND CREDITS

Stage Director Bonthoeun Houn

Assisted By Julien Clement, Agathe Olivie,
Molly Saudek

Artists

Sophea Chea

Sopheak Houn

Vanny Chhoerm

Viban Kong

Tida Kong

Kakada Kim

Sreynuth Oeurn

Musicians

Chantha Nong

Danit Dieb

Ratha Pov

Painter Sereysokun Heng

Original Soundtrack Chantha Nong

Costumes Dary Tha

Set Design Chhaiya Oum

Light Designer Mano Sun

Stage Manager Souviert Choeun

Sound Engineer Mona Nhoy

ABOUT THE SHOW

The Story of Our Hero and His Father

Our tale unfolds with the central character, a hero guided by his father's wisdom. This caring and nurturing environment that his father creates is intended to be a sanctuary for his son – a place where he can grow and thrive without limitations. However, the young man knowingly chooses to disrupt this harmonious existence, embarking on a quest to confront the world and embrace suffering willingly. In response to his son's defiance, the father projects his inner turmoil and disappointment onto an image of Buddha's head, symbolising the rupture of balance and a disruption in his inner equilibrium. Rather than holding his son back, the father recognises the futility of opposition. He accepts his son's journey and serves as a guide, steering him away from the pitfalls of human passions and negative emotions. This guidance takes shape through a series of paintings, each designed to convey profound messages.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CREATORS

White Gold pays tribute to a fundamental element of Cambodian culture: rice. Rice, often considered the lifeblood of Cambodia, is a staple food, essential for the survival of countless people. It's more than sustenance; it's a symbol of nature's abundance shared within the community. Yet, as they delved deeper into their exploration, they discovered that rice had multiple layers of significance. It played a vital role in sacred Buddhist ceremonies, symbolising not just a source of sustenance but also a representation of wealth shared among the people. However, it was also a tool of world trade, exposing a stark contradiction: the exploitation of farmers for the sake of capitalistic gain. This glaring contradiction became the focal point of their research. They embarked on a reflection journey, pondering which circus technique could best encapsulate their story and provide a creative perspective on this theme.

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The concept of a teeterboard, symbolising a mortar and pestle used to grind rice, stood out immediately. It served as a metaphor for Taylorism, a system that often used and broke workers' bodies in pursuit of market-driven objectives. Paintings emerged as a potent tool to visualise the tensions between concepts like Harmony, Tradition and Community, juxtaposed with Selfishness, Greed, and Materialism. Months were spent experimenting with various visual ideas and accessories, with frequent walks through rice fields providing inspiration and setting goals for the performance.

PHARE: A CIRCUS WITH PURPOSE

Phare is not your typical circus; it's a captivating blend of artistry and purpose that beckons theatre enthusiasts and travelers to its nightly performances under the Big Top in Siem Reap, nestled near the enchanting temples of Angkor. The troupe comprises 60 talented artists who are all graduates of Phare Ponleu Selpak, boasting diverse talents in acrobatics, music and painting. What makes Phare Circus truly extraordinary is the unwavering commitment of its performers, many of whom have experienced the very challenges addressed in their shows. From economic hardships and discrimination to domestic violence, civil war trauma, cultural clashes, power abuse and even mystical beliefs – these artists draw from their life experiences to evoke genuine emotions in their audience. Phare is a testament to unyielding optimism and resilience in the face of adversity, a celebration of the human spirit triumphing over negativity.

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