

## **Narumol (Kop) Thammapruxsa**

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Born in Bangkok, Thailand, “Kop” is a performer, director, cultural worker, and social art activist. In 1995, she was introduced to community-based artwork by dancer/choreographer **Amie Dowling** at the Leprosy Rehabilitation and New Life Center in Chiang Mai. Since then Kop’s focus has been on using theatre and creative dance as a tool for social activism.

In 1996 she co-founded the “**International WOW Company**” with Josh Fox, which emphasized intercultural exchange through dance and theatre and brought together theatre artists from Taiwan, U.S.A, Japan and Indonesia. Working as performer and producer, she developed several productions which re-interpreted classical literature in modern contexts such as imperialism, consumerism and women’s rights in Asia.

Kop was selected by the Japan Foundation to perform in the Japan-Thailand collaborative theatre project “**AKAONI**” with acclaimed Japanese director **Noda Hideki** at the Setagaya Public Theatre, Tokyo in 1997 and 1999, and Bangkok in 1998. The last production was performed at Bunkamura Theatre, Tokyo in 2003.

For several years she has been involved with the Tibetan independence movement and in 1998 she co-produced “**World Artists for Tibet**”, an event in Bangkok aimed at raising awareness of Tibet’s social-political situation through art. In addition, she conceived and produced the “**Penpa Tsering**” concert for Tibet, and continues to write about human rights and Tibetan independence issues for the Bangkok magazine, “**Pajarayasarn**”.

In 1999 she was awarded a fellowship by the **Asian Cultural Council** to observe, study, and participate in theatre and dance in the United States. Later that year she was one of twenty-six top international artists selected for the **Asia Pacific Performance Exchange (APPEX)** residency at UCLA.

In the summer of 2000 Kop received a grant from “Arts Network Asia, Singapore” to conduct research and direct a performance piece “**Women Warrior Tales**” in Indonesia. In November 2000, she participated in the Conference for Asian Women and Theatre in the Philippines, and again in Japan where she presents the results of her “**Women Warrior Tales**” project in January 2001. In December of 2000 she co-produced “**The World Festival of Sacred Music**”, inspired by the vision of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and organized by Tibet House which brought together over a hundred musicians from ten countries to perform in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

She was one of the 13 international women artists who participated in “**Womanifesto Workshop 2001**” at Sri Saket, Thailand. This workshop focused on initiating dialogues with rural communities, particularly on the position of women and the wealth of knowledge that has been handed down from generation to generation.

In August 2002, she joined the “**Asia Meets Asia**” intercultural collaborative performance in Tokyo along with 16 emerging artists.

During 2002-2004, Kop served as a curator at the Chiang Mai University Art Museum, Chiang Mai, Thailand. As curator, she brought together 16 artists from Asia and Diaspora artists from America to work on the Dance Theatre Workshop, New York’s “**Mekong Project**” which is a process-based artist residency supported by the Rockefeller Foundation in March 2003. The second residency was held in Cambodia in November 2004. She also coordinated numerous workshops, performances,

exhibitions, and festivals. For example, “**Art Against War,**” and **natural building** (adobe home construction) workshops.

From February 2003 to March 2005, through support from the Setagaya Foundation and Japan Foundation, Kop is selected to participate along with 16 theatre director / writers in the 3-year “**Asian Contemporary Theatre Collaboration Project**” held by the Setagaya Public Theatre in Tokyo which end with the performance entitled “**Hotel Grand Asia.**”

For many years, she writes for the **Pacarayasara** magazine focusing on performing arts and Tibet’s independent issues. She coordinated for the “**Kita Kanay,**” an exchange program between Thai-Cambodia-Indonesia musicians, and “**Shadow Puppetry Exchange**” between Cambodia and Indonesia. Both projects are funded by Art Network Asia (ANA) in 2004.

Kop end the year 2005 by facilitating the National Puppetry of Laos for the PETA Mekong project (staged at PETA Theatre Center, the Philippines) and directed a children theatre for Baan Rom Srail home for children with HIV/Aids, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

She has received an invitation from the Arts Development Association of Taiwan (ADAT) to teach storytelling workshop and direct a theatre piece “**He-Me-She-It**” in Taipei and Khaoshung for the **Little Festival** in May-June 2005. The same script was performed in English version in the Vergin Labfest 2007 under direction of Jaime Del Mundo in Manila, the Philippines.

After working with seven female performers for one month for cultivating the past stories of women and aboriginal people of Taiwan, Kop's script “**Sound of the Ocean**” was staged in Taiwan by the well-known Khao Hsiung based Spring Wind Theatre group in November 2006. Kop participated as co-writer and performer for the Necessary Stage, Singapore's “**Mobile**”. This is a Thai – Philippines – Japan - Singapore Collaboration in 2005-2006 focused on migration issues in South East Asia. “**Mobile**” performed at the Singapore Art Festival 2006 and The Actor Studio in Malaysia. This play was staged again at the Setagaya Public Theatre, Tokyo in March 2007.

In an academic field, starting as an a fellow from the Asian Public Intellectuals (API), Kop conducted a research under the topic “**Artist and Their Roles in Creating a Living City**” in Japan and Indonesia for one year in 2008. Her MA degree research on “**Building Culture of Peace through Aikido**” received an award by Faculty of Humanity, Chiang Mai University for ‘Best Independent Study 2012’. This study was presented at The First ASEAN Plus Three Graduate Research Congress (AGRC 2012) in Chiang Mai, Thailand. In June 2012, Kop presented her recent paper on “**Understanding “the Others” through Cultural Development: The case of Intercultural Theatre Collaboration in South East Asia**” in Recife, Brazil as part of the Fifth South-South Summer Institute, Rethinking Development: Global and Regional Alternatives for the Development in the South.

Currently, Kop is a Ph.D. student on Peacebuilding program at the Department of Peace Studies, Payap University. With a scholarship from Osaka University, Kop conducted a research in Japan from September 2012 – March 2013 on the topic “**Healing the Past – Working toward the Future: The Roles of Creative Approaches in Reconciliation and Peace Building (2012)**”. This research explores the roles of creative approaches particularly as related to theatre and peace museum in two aspects. First, the process of healing of the past in order to lead to reconciliation, and second, moving toward the future through peace building. This scholarship is part of the Student Exchange Program, Japan University Consortium for Peace and Human Security in Asia (JUC-PAHSA) 2012.

Kop is now working on a mask theatre performance ‘The Demon Hero,’ which explores a story of an unusual demon, Sukhahajara who sacrifices himself for peace. This performance will be staged at Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC) this September.