

Contact: Elaine Merguerian or Juan Machado
pr@asiasociety.org; +1-212-327-9271

Myanmar Troupe Shwe Man Thabin to Perform at Asia Society New York
U.S. premiere of one of Myanmar's most beloved performing troupes on April 10-11

NEW YORK, March 24, 2015 — Asia Society announces the U.S. premiere of **Shwe Man Thabin**, one of Myanmar's most beloved traditional performing arts troupes, in two performances on April 10-11. Eighteen musicians and dancers from the 75-member company will travel from Myanmar to the U.S. for a rare international appearance.

The highly stylized *Zat Pwe* is a widely popular part of village pagoda celebrations, and is typically performed as an all-night cabaret with dancers, actors, comedians and singers accompanied by a live drum and gong ensemble known as the *Hsaing Wang*. The company will present an abridged 90-minute *Zat Pwe*, offering a glimpse into an extraordinary art form which remains little known outside its native land.



(Rachel Cooper/Asia Society)

Percussive, melodic, and dizzyingly fast, Myanmar music has its own nearly manic timing which offers the listener an exhilarating tease, defying expectations of symmetry or steady tempo, and matched in exuberant action in the dance. The dancers are elaborately decked out with flowered headdresses, pearl chokers, floral garlands and long silk costumes with sequined threads. The dance, with sharply angled limbs, is elegantly smooth at times and wildly acrobatic at others, imitating the movements of a marionette and ending in a daredevil slapstick collapse.

Heirs to an artistic lineage that stretches back through the centuries, the Shwe Man Thabin troupe weaves contemporary and traditional themes into their performances, including rock music, social commentary and the Jataka tales of the previous births of the Buddha. The members of Shwe Man Thabin are a living link to Myanmar's rich past, yet also ensure that court and popular folk traditions will also be an integral component of Myanmar's future.

Asia Society has been deeply engaged with Myanmar for years on arts and culture as well as policy issues. In 1975, the Asia Society hosted a rare performance of dance and music by the Myanmar National Theater Company. It was almost 30 years until another full Myanmar ensemble performed in New York City. In 2003, Asia Society presented a 19-piece group led by dancer **U Win Maung** and master musician **Kyaw Kyaw Naing**, one of the world's leading practitioners of Myanmar music.

The Shwe Man Thabin performances are part of *Myanmar's Moment*, a programming series built around the groundbreaking Asia Society Museum exhibition [*Buddhist Art of Myanmar*](#), which runs from February 10 to May 10, 2015, in New York City.

Music and Dance from Myanmar: Shwe Man Thabin Zat Pwe

Pre-performance lecture at 7pm

Asia Society (725 Park Avenue, New York, NY)

Friday, April 10 at 8pm and Saturday, April 11 at 8pm

\$30 non-members; \$26 students/seniors; \$22 members; tickets at AsiaSociety.org/NYC

Workshop with Shwe Man Thabin Zat Pwe

Asia Society (725 Park Avenue, New York, NY)

Sunday, April 12 at 11am

\$15 non-members; \$12 students/seniors; \$10 members; tickets at AsiaSociety.org/NYC

About the Asia Society

Asia Society is the leading educational organization dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and strengthening partnerships among peoples, leaders and institutions of Asia and the United States in a global context. Across the fields of arts, business, culture, education, and policy, the Society provides insight, generates ideas, and promotes collaboration to address present challenges and create a shared future. Founded in 1956 by John D. Rockefeller 3rd, Asia Society is a nonpartisan, nonprofit institution with headquarters in New York and centers in Hong Kong, Houston, Los Angeles, Manila, Mumbai, San Francisco, Seoul, Shanghai, Sydney, and Washington, DC. (<http://www.asiasociety.org>)

###