

Tibetan Modern Dances & Khaita at the British Museum

Date : June 25, 2019



On the 31st of March, a group of five Khaita dancers and two dancers from the London Tibetan Community took part in the 'Faiths in Tune Festival' held at the British Museum, London. For our Khaita dancers, it was the second time we had participated in this annual event. Last year, a joyful collaboration between Khaita dancers from Dzamling Gar and Shang Shung UK produced a wonderful and very successful performance, whereas this year we organised it on a local level.

In January 2019 we were invited by the 'Faiths in Tune' organisers to perform Khaita dances at the Festival again. With the show taking place in March, this left just over two months to prepare everything which seemed like a very short time to arrange all the dances and rehearse together. Initially, on hearing that the Khaita dancers from Dzamling Gar would not be participating in the Festival in 2019 it felt a little discouraging, since there are very few dancers in London. And like in

any big city, everyone is constantly busy with taking care of his or her everyday survival... so I really thought it would not be possible to go ahead. But then after sitting and considering the idea for a while, I started to think that it would really be a shame to miss the opportunity. The British Museum is such a prestigious venue... so where is a better place to promote Khaita dances? Would this opportunity ever happen again?

I remembered how happy Rinpoche was after last year's Khaita performance at the British Museum. I also remembered my idea from the previous year about involving dancers from the London Tibetan Community with whom we had already established a close connection. Then after having shared and discussed the idea with Svetlana, Julia Lawless of Shang Shung UK and Tenzin Phakdon (an experienced Tibetan dance performer), we decided to go for it! Soon after Tomy confirmed his participation; Anna managed to get a visa and come to London; Phuntsok from the Tibetan Community also joined and Wojciech was our last minute saviour.

It was a delightful collaboration where everybody from our group actively participated in every aspect and Lekdanling was the perfect place to train. On the day of the event, everything went smoothly and our Tibetan costumes looked so colourful and beautiful set against the backdrop of the magnificent British Museum great hall. The [video of the live show](#) that was streamed via the Shang Shung UK Facebook page reached over 62 thousand views within a matter of days! In addition there were over 800 shares and about 700 positive comments, mainly from grateful members of the Tibetan Community from all over the world.

To cover the costs we managed to fundraise from individuals locally, Shang Shung UK also provided some help and thanks to the initiative and support of the Dzamling Gar cafeteria, we managed to produce and fund a short video of the performance that will be available soon ([Shangshunguk link](#)). Additionally, some of the money that was collected was donated to support the development of Tibetan Dance within the Tibetan Community in London. Heartfelt thanks to everyone who offered their support both financially and through their collaboration. It truly felt like we were spreading Rinpoche's vision and activity. It was a great opportunity and such a blessing!

Maciek Sikora



Dancers Comments:

Tenzin Phakdon

“It was an unforgettable experience to perform at the British Museum with Khaita dancers. I was amazed at the hard work and determination of the Khaita dancers. Also it was my pleasure to share my knowledge and experience about Tibetan music and dance with such enthusiastic dancers such as the Khaita dancers.

To perform at the British Museum is a great platform to show and highlight our unique Tibetan culture and music with so many people around the world and we had a great reaction from the audience during our performance. It has been hit by more than 62 thousand viewers on social media and received so many beautiful comments. So here I would like to express my gratitude to Choegyal Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche la, the Shang Shung Institute and the Khaita dancers in helping to keep Tibetan Culture alive”.

Wojciech Torczynski

“The Chupa: Isn't it cool to wear a chupa? Yes it is – totally, not only for the sake of performing Tibetan dances. Chupas could be a daily outfit of first choice for practical reasons. They can be

worn in multiple configurations, naturally balancing elegance, freedom of movement and warmth. Shortly after our show in the museum the fire alarm went off and everyone was evacuated outside into circa 10°C ambient temperature. Thanks to our fantastic Tibetan friends we had these original chupas on, so we could upgrade them to the long-robe spring/autumn version and withstand the 'severe' weather conditions with dignity and in comfort, until the security guards would let us in again!

Feelings: The very last minutes before the performance are usually rich in adrenaline because the attention of the audience and our own expectations bring about anxious thoughts and stress before we start to dance. Relaxation is easy when we are in contact with our body and breathing. Working together for a public show becomes a good occasion to observe and train our ability to relax in a stressful situation with or without physical movement. Both are more likely to happen when we take things less personally and this depends on our viewpoint. Note that one of the ideas behind 'Khaita' is to be present in movement and from there to spread harmony around. And indeed whilst dancing during the show there was both presence and relaxation in movement, accompanied by a sensation of broad communication. It was like a stream of 'tashi delegs' with sincere and unfiltered feeling toward all people dancing and those standing around ... as if there was no better way (than dancing) to express good wishes and happiness. All of this was shared within the team and with the audience at the same time. There was some unity in it. It is not the first time that some of the audience confirmed this sensation in their feedback after the show. Wonderful experience! We can say that Khaita really works :)"

Phuntsok Dhondup

"Performing the art of Tibetan dance in the British Museum with the Khaita dancers was an incredible experience. I was deeply inspired to see very committed Khaita dancers and most importantly, joyfully people across different nationalities come together to carry out the great visionary project introduced by Choegyal Namkha Norbu Rinpoche. It was a great honour to learn many things from fantastic dancers / choreographers such as Phakdon, Svetlana, and Tomy etc. "



Anna Stemasova

“It was unique in it’s own way, the first show collaborating with the Tibetan Community UK. It was grandiose! Regarding my personal experience, it was the first time I have participated in a public show with Khaita and Tibetan modern dances together, especially in such a place as the British Museum. In the short time that we had, I learned a lot from Tenzin and without any doubt from every single person in the group. My overall experience was this was a wonderful collaboration: the moment when people from different countries possessing different point of views are united by one cause. You can see the result of our union on the video directly. Something incredible was born and caused a big resonance all over the world. You can observe how it touched and inspired people. Even today, many people are still writing words of Thankfulness and Gratefulness. This is something inspiring and strengthens our hope of creating something even more grandiose in the future!”

Tomy Edgar

“I came into the preparation for this performance with little expectations or preconceptions about the final results. Everyone who worked on this project, myself included, had many other daily obligations that we needed to dedicate the majority of our time and energy to, so we had very little

time to put things in order before the show. Regardless of these obstacles, I was amazed at the ease and efficiency in which we all collaborated together. What is important to point out is that this was the first time that we were producing a show together with Tibetan dancers. During the very few training sessions that we had, everything seemed to flow perfectly.

When the performance date arrived, all was relaxed and free of tensions. The performance went beautifully. After the show, we immediately began receiving positive feedback from the audience, from those who were present, but mainly from those watching the online streaming video, which reached 62k views! Comments poured in, especially from Tibetan communities from all around the world. They were so grateful to us for the performance and many spoke of how inspired and motivated they were to get more involved in promoting their culture. I was really moved by this and it reminded me of something that Rinpoche had once said in the pool of Gadeling one summer where he spoke of plans to collaborate with Tibetan artists. Now I am finally realizing how meaningful these few words that he spoke on this sunny and casual pool day are.

I feel that this experience with the performance at the British Museum reawakened the importance of Khaitya in me and made me more aware of the rich possibilities that these joyful dances can bring to us all and the world.

Many thanks to all the people that helped make this performance a reality and a very special thank you to Svetlana and Maciek for dedicating so much of their time and effort. Without them this show never would have happened. Immense gratitude also to Tenzin and Phuntsok. Thank you both so much for working so openly with us and sharing your knowledge to bring this project to fruition. I have a good feeling that these collaborations will continue well into the future.

Of course, it goes without saying that none of this would have been possible without the vision of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. I am eternally grateful to him for introducing me to this path.

Em A Ho”

Svetlana Vajnina

“To find the right words to describe my experience regarding our show in the British Museum feels almost impossible to me.

As everything in our world, it was a process containing difficulties, problems and many obstacles. Despite all of that, Maciek had such a faith in this project and inspired me with it, even more when I found out that he had already talked to Tenzin about it, and that the seeds for this project were already planted by him last year.

Meeting Tenzin is a wonderful and happy memory. I had heard and seen wonderful things about her, as Maciek, Lena Dumcheva and Shang Shung UK had already established a good relationship with her, her husband Ngawang Lodup and the Tibetan Community UK. Initially I did not know how we would collaborate and join forces in this project.

And as everywhere mistakes happened, but this wonderful feeling of flow and collaboration with Tenzin, Phuntsok and every other participant in the show was a wonder. We didn't have much time, but working with our circumstances something beautiful was born. Maciek, Tenzin, Tomy, Anna, Phuntsok, Wojciech and me, every single person with a different background, culture, ideas – we united – there was no boss, every single person contributed his own capacities, so in collaboration this event could happen.

Some years ago, on one afternoon in Merigar in the pool, our Rinpoche was talking to Tomy and myself, saying that one day we will learn from and collaborate with Tibetan Dancers and Singers. These words inspired us and gave us strength regarding this event.

I have learned so much from Tenzin. I could see that through Khaita, we can also inspire Tibetans with their own culture, also reversed, we got interested in their sharing of their culture and experience. There was true joy around and in the training. Wojciech came only in the last two days, though it felt he made the group complete with his very special humour and smartness. As for the dances we had to find a way how to join Tibetan modern Dances and Khaita, and we have united them during Arog Khampa song meaning Khampa friend. It was symbolic for us.

I understand there are many different opinions regarding our event. Our goal was to make this collaboration happen and to reach out and inspire others, especially Tibetans. And we did it. For the future we learn from our magic experience and mistakes, so new and beautiful things can be born that are even more wonderful!

In deep gratitude to our Rinpoche Namkhai Norbu, his vision, having given us this precious gift. “



Lobsang Yeshi

Thanks for advertising our culture,dancing is nice

Choe Tsam

Wow! Really wonderful thank you very much on behalf of Tibetans

Tenzin Thardoe

Thanks for showing that there is country called Tibet

Ragshul Ngawang Topgyal

Very nice..When I saw that..I missing so much my homeland..Thank you

Yangchen Tsang

Wonderful dance..proud of u guys..thank you for interesting in Tibetan traditional dance, good job..

Sonam Dorjee

Thanks for keeping and promoting rich Tibetan culture and dances

Tenzin Palden

Amazing and well done Pakdon and team. Tibetan songs getting the much needed appreciation.