

International Dance Day Brings Joy to US and HK Dance Mandalas

World Dance Day Celebrated at Nritya Mandala Mahavihara in Portland

By Dr.Rabin Man Shakya



International Dance Day brought joy and enthusiasm to Charya dancers of Hong Kong Dance Mandal and US Dance Mandal. International Dance Day is being observed every year across the world on April 29. The International Dance Day was created and proclaimed by the Dance Committee of the International Theater Institute, the main partner for the performing arts of UNESCO.

The world-famous Day in field of dance and culture was jointly celebrated by Hong Kong Buddhist Studies Association and Nritya Mandala Mahavihara on Saturday, April 25, 2025.

Speaking briefly on the occasion, Prajwal Vajracharya emphasized the need for promoting and preserving ancient and esoteric Charya dances of the Tantric Vajrayana Buddhism.



Celebration of International Dance Day in Portland is an opportunity for Hong Kong Dance Mandal and US Dance Mandal to showcase various Charya dances on the stage and online, and to manifest significance of deity dances, Prajwal Guruji added.

The event dedicated to the World Dance Day kicked off with the Vajrasattva Vajra Dance online by Sangha members of the Hong Kong Dance Mandal. Vajrasattva is considered the essence of all the peaceful Buddha families. Vajrasattva is peaceful in appearance, white in color, with one face and two hands, seated in Vajra posture. The proper right hand holds an upright gold Vajra at the level of the heart. The left hand holds a Vajra handled bell turned up at the left hip. The Vajrasattva Vajra Dance was performed by Sing-ying Leung, Shira Chan, Patty Chan, Nora Ng, Mary Lau and Dickon Kong.

After that, Charya dance Rakta Ganesha was presented by Sangha member Joshua Proto at the Vihara. Lord Ganesha is not only a protector of Dharma practice and prosperity, but he is also a deity who removes obstacles and difficulties for all. The image of Rakta Ganesha is generally found along with Mahakala at the entrance of monasteries in the Kathmandu valley as a protective deity. He has an





elephant head, three eyes and ten arms. 'Rakta Ganesha' is a mask dance.

Next, Yogini Mandala Vajra Dance was offered by Sangha members of Hong Kong Dance Mandal online. Yogini Mandala is one of the traditional Charya dances which consists of deities Nairatma, Jagat Janani, Khadga Yogini, Vajra Yogini and Akash Yogini. The dance was performed by Tina Ho, Eliza My Lau, Saldon Wu, Lingling Lee and Eliza Lok-yee Lau.

Likewise, White Tara Mudra Zen Dance was demonstrated remotely by Hong Kong Sangha member Shira Chan. White Tara is the female Bodhisattva of compassionate activity, the supreme mother and collective manifestation of the enlightened activity of all the Buddhas. She is said to see all the sufferings and responds to requests for help. Her yogic method promotes health and extending one's lifespan.



To continue joyous occasion, Avalokiteshvara Mudra Zen Dance was displayed virtually by Hong Kong Sangha members Ada Ip, Barbara Li and Ayumi R. Cheng. Avalokiteshvara is a compassionate Bodhisattva who hears the cries of sentient



beings and who works tirelessly to help those who call upon his name.

Similarly, Charya dance Vajravarahi was rendered by Sangha member Anna Shustrova at the Vihara. Vajravarahi is one of the most important female deity who protects Newar temple and buildings. She is red in color and stands on a reclining body of Bhairava in

dancing posture. She holds a Kartri in her right hand on level of her head and holds a Kapala filled with blood in her left. The deity carries a Khatvanga stick surmounted by three skulls. She wears a garland of fifty severed heads and various gold ornaments.



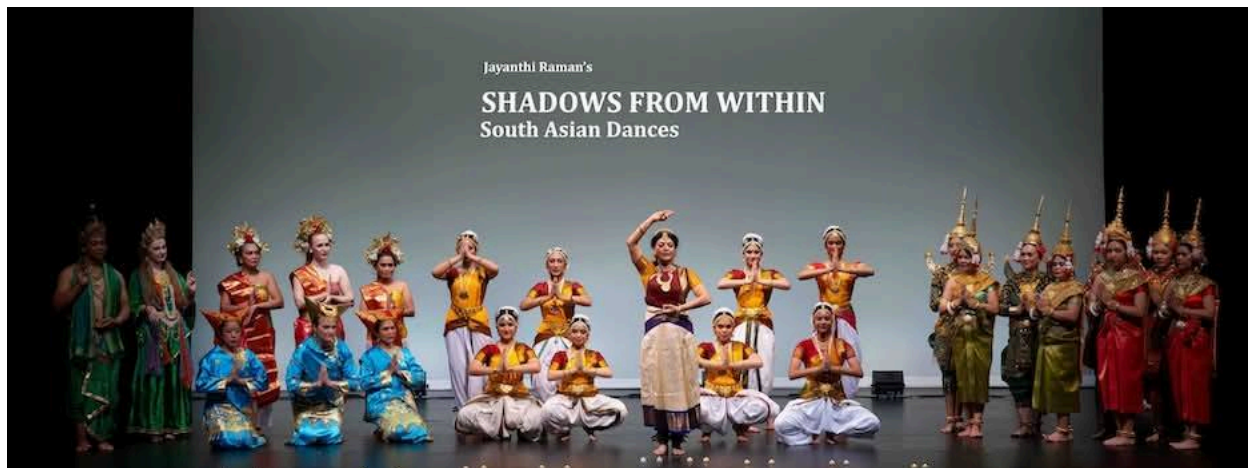
The International Dance Day event came to an end with a new Charya dance 'Yuthok Yonten Gonpo' which was presented by Prajwal Vajracharya at the Vihara. The Charya giti for new Charya dance was composed by Prajwal Guruji himself. When Prajwal Guruji beautifully rendered 'Yuthok Yonten Gonpo' Charya dance, it looked like two Buddhist lineages - Tibetan and Newar - met together. Yuthok Yonten Gonpo is revered as the father of Traditional Tibetan Medicine. He holds the stem of an Utpala flower representing Tara in

his right hand and the stem of lotus in his left representing Avalokiteshvara. He is portrayed wearing layman's robes tied with a red sash, indicating his status as a non-monastic Tantric practitioner (ngakpa).

Yuthok Yonten Gonpo choreographed by Guruji Prajwal Vajracharya while Charya giti for the Charya dances was vocalized by Joshua Proto.

The International Dance Day event at Portland Baha.

Dance Mandal Performs Charya Nrityas at 'Shadows From Within' Event in Portland



Prajwal Vajracharya together with Sangha member Anna Shustrova performed ancient and esoteric Newar Buddhist Charya dances at an event 'Shadows From Within' organized at Winningstad Theater in Portland on Saturday, April 19, 2025.



'Shadows From Within' is a collaborative collection of South and South East Asian dances from Nepal, Cambodia, Indonesia and India presented seamlessly for the first time in Portland.

Altogether, 25 highly talented dancers from Nepal, Cambodia, Indonesia and India presented historic, classical and medieval dances from their respective countries.

The Winningstad Theater in Portland was full of enthusiastic and diverse audience, and the cultural event enthralled the global audience with the enchanting, vibrant and colorful collective dance production featuring diverse dances from South and South East Asia.

Charya Nritya Dance is a unique Newar Buddhist Nepali tradition dating back over a thousand years that uses the physical body as a vehicle for liberating the mind.

By uniting movement, visualization and awareness, the Charya dancers emulate and embody the qualities of the variety of Buddhist deities - male and female, wrathful and peaceful - and genuinely express those enlightened qualities through one's own body, speech, mind and activities.

'Amoghasiddhi and Arya Tara Charya Dance' was put on the stage at the Winningstad Theater by Prajwal Vajracharya and

Anna Shustrova. In what appeared to be an amazing and astonishing performance, Charya dance duo Guruji Prajwal and his student Anna during the Nritya have gone into a meditative state and let their bodies flow in movements with incredible hand and finger mudras.

The Goddess Arya Tara and transcendent Buddha Amoghasiddhi are both green in color and as partners create perfect all-accomplishing activity that benefits sentient beings. The feminine energy of foundational wisdom and the male-energy of skillful means dance and interact in mutual recognition, respect and harmony.

The next Charya Nritya performed at the Winningstad Theater was 'Vajrasattva' and it was presented by Prajwal Guruji. The Charya Nritya 'Vajrasattva' is a part of broader Charya Nritya tradition in Nepal with a history going back to more than 1,000 years.

Vajrasattva means 'Adamantine Being' meaning pure, stainless, incapable of destruction or diminishment. Vajrasattva is identified with the ultimate, formless state of Buddhahood, and represents the essence of all the peaceful Buddha families.

Vajrasattva is peaceful in appearance, white in color, with one face and



two hands, seated in Vajra posture. His right hand holds an upright gold Vajra at the level of the heart, while his left hand holds a Vajra-handled bell turned up at the left hip.

This unique dance production 'Shadows From Within' was led by Portland's renowned performer, choreographer and master artist: Jayanthi Raman and her dancers performing classical dance of India.

Ragas on Rainy Season with Emphasis on Springtime Relevance Performed at Vihara



By Joshua Proto and Rabin Man Shakya

An Indian classical music concert featuring Portland's very own representative of Kirana Gharana - Michael Stirling - was organized at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihar in Portland on Friday, April 25, 2025.

Michael Stirling, the lead vocal artist was joined again by multi-instrumentalist and Tabla maestro Josse Jaffe. Similarly, Lucy



Stirling and Joshua Proto also accompanied Michael Stirling on Tambura and with voice. This was their first concert of 2025 at the Portland Baha.

Before the Hindustani classical music kicked off, Michael gave a brief announcement regarding the theme of the concert, namely that the audience

was to experience a series of Ragas associated with the rainy season, with an emphasis on their springtime relevance: Ragas Megha, Miyan Ki Malhar and Nath Malhar.

The first performance began with Alaap in Raga Megha. The note by note unfolding of this rainy season reflected the atmosphere of Portland's springtime showers perfectly. As Michael's voice artfully and gently strung together the Svar alongside Josh and Lucy's Tambura accompaniments, the audience responded as if they were in the presence of rolling rainy nimbus.

Following the Alaap was a short Drut composition depicting the story of Lord Krishna overcoming the venomous Naga Kaliya by dancing on his head. Alongside Joss's eloquent Tabla playing, the audience





was painted an illustrative picture through the timeless sound of this Krishna epic.

Following Raga Megha was Raga Miyan Ki Malhar, a pensive evening Raga known to capture the feeling of dark storm clouds, strong winds and peals of thunder. Specifically, this is accomplished through the display of both Komal and natural Nishad, and the crooked shape of Miyan Ki Malhar's ascending scale among.

Once again, Michael demonstrated a technical and emotional embodiment of the Alaap that changed the atmosphere. Both Vilambit and Drut compositions were displayed as well with Joss's excellent Tabla accompaniment.

Finally, there was a brief composition of Raga Nath Malhar, a unique treasure of the Kirana Gharana coming from Pandit Pran Nath to Terry Riley and then to Michael Stirling. This playful and medium tempo Drut composition delighted the audience as it depicts the arrival of spring along with the backdrop of rain showers and singing frogs. There were over 35 attendees and each one expressed their gratitude to Michael, Joss, Lucy and Joshua for their artistic display and also expressed gratitude to Prajwal Vajracharya, Teya Vajracharya for hosting this musical offering at Nritya Mandala Mahavihara.

Meanwhile, writing on his social media platform on



Saturday, April 26, 2025, Michael said: "Oceanic gratitude to all who came out to our offering of Indian classical music last evening at Dance Mandal/Nritya Mandala Mahavihara. Deep appreciation to Prajwal Vajracharya for hosting us and creating such an extraordinary space for us to create in and feeding us after. You are great person and we love you. And we loved baby Dewa being part of the crew."



Michael further added in his Facebook post: "Here's a bit of documentation to share. Pranams to those artistes that supported me and the music we made together, including Joss Jaffe (Tabla), Lucy Stirling (Tambura) and Joshua Proto (Tambura and singing). Grateful to Robert McBride, Bhaskar Ganguly, Stormi

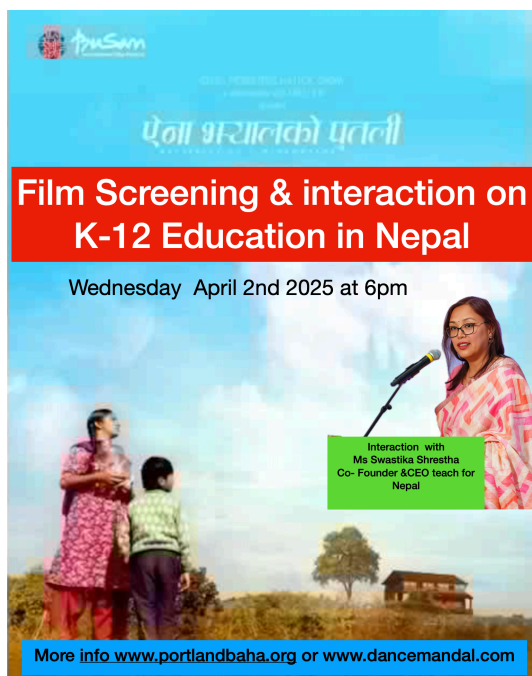
Hoebelheinrich and Josh for the images. For flowers, thank you, Shivani Joshi. Precious memories."

He went on saying in his Facebook remarks: "May all of you be blessed with good health and the most beautiful music. Ram Ram. Much appreciation for such high level group of listeners that joined in to make a magical and cosmic evening."

Michael Stirling is an instructor of Raga singing at Sun Gate Studio and adjunct faculty at Lewis & Clark College, Portland.

He is a singer of North Indian classical vocal music of the venerable Kirana Gharan. He is a disciple of the late Master of classical Indian Raga singing - Pandit Pran Nath (1918-1996) and a student of Nathji's senior disciple, the legendary composer/performer - Maestro Terry Riley.

Film Screening and Interaction on K-12 Education in Nepal Held at Vihara



A film screening and interaction on K-12 Education in Nepal was held at the Nritya Mandala Mahavihara in Portland on Wednesday, April 2, 2025.

Prajwal gave a brief introduction about Swastika Shrestha who is the CEO of 'Teach for Nepal' (TFN), a non-profit based in Kathmandu. Speaking on the occasion as a key-note speaker, Swastika Shrestha, co-founder and CEO of Teach for Nepal threw light on the cultural realities, students' access to education and TFN's impact on education.

Analyzing problems of school education in Nepal, Swastika said: "Poverty isn't the reason students drop out of school or

leave the country to work as low-paid laborers. Poverty is merely the pretext, not the cause for dropouts. The true cause is a failing public education system."

She further added: "Teach for Nepal believes in the possibility that we as a nation can ensure all children in Nepal will receive an excellent education and become leaders of our democracy, our economy, and our nation towards justice, peace and sustainability." Swastika's presentation also focused on reflections, realities and resilience of TFN fellows and students and their lived experience. At the end of the interaction, Swastika replied to queries of the Sangha members of the Vihara. A Nepali movie "Aina Jhyal Ko Putali" (Butterfly on a windowpane) was screened for the event participants at the Vihara.

The movie is a 2020 Nepali coming-of-age film written and directed by Sujit Bidari. It is also Nepal's submission for the 95th edition of the Academy Awards in the US.

Swastika has a Bachelors in Psychology from Olivet College in Michigan and a Masters Degree in Public Affairs with concentration in International Development from Cornell University. She has also worked as



civil affairs officer at the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and as development consultant for various organizations.



Meanwhile, expressing gratitude to Prajwal Guruji in the Facebook on April 3, Swastika wrote: "Extremely grateful to Prajwal Vajracharya who made Portland memorable and meaningful. I am in awe with his zeal for life-shifting seamlessly between his pursuits of Samsara and pursuits of Nirvana in a way they appear inseparable. What a great teaching."

She went on saying in the social media platform: "Grateful to everyone who made time to meet and shared advice and insights, and to those who joined us in our movie screening event."

Weekly Programs Continue

In April, as usual and as always, Dharani chanting was conducted once a week every Tuesday evening. Similarly, Sadhana practice and Buddha Bhajan singing practice were held on each Wednesday evening. Likewise, the practice of singing Charya giti was performed in the mornings every Friday, and once a month reciting of Naamsangiti chanting was also held on the Day of the Full Moon. All these programs were held on zoom. Everyone is welcome to take part at these programs on zoom, according to Prajwal Guruji