

Gyuto Monks

Saturday, March 16, 2002, 8 pm
Zellerbach Hall

Tonight's performance will be performed with intermission.

Cal Performances thanks the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
and the Zellerbach Family Fund for their generous support.

Cal Performances receives additional funding from the National Endowment for the Arts,
a federal agency that supports the visual, literary, and performing arts to benefit all Americans,
and the California Arts Council, a state agency.

Golden Libation Offering
to the Combined Deities of All Tantras
All the Archetype Deities of the four classes of Tantras are here invoked,
and the golden libation is offered to them.
The aim is to please them and encourage their support for the Dharma practice of all beings.

Vajra Master Initiation
from the Yamantaka Tantra
In any Unexcelled Yoga Tantra, such as that of Yamantaka, the Conqueror of Death,
the Vase initiation empowers the practitioner with the quintessential energy of the Body of all Buddhas.
It is the foundation of all Tantric practice. During this chant, the initiate is given permission
to visualize himself as Vajradhara Buddha, the Archetype of all Tantric Buddhas.
The seeds are planted in the mind for the blossoming of universal love and compassion.
The ritual looks forward specifically to the time of the initiate's attainment of mastery of the Tantras,
when he will become a Vajra Master in his own right and initiate new disciples into the path.

Offering to the Protector Mahakala
The Protector Mahakala is a fierce manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion.
As Protector of the Dharma, Mahakala safeguards the lives and well-being of those who practice the Dharma path,
assisting their progress toward enlightenment. This offering ritual invites Mahakala, pleases him,
reminds him of his vow to protect the Dharma, and thanks him for his constant vigilance.

Song of Praise of Mahakala
This melody of praise delights Mahakala, pleasing him and encouraging our own inner determination,
our intense resolve to promote the positive and overcome the negative.

Contributions in support of Gyuto Tantric University may be sent in care of:
The Society for Gyuto Sacred Arts, PO Box 358, San Rafael, CA 94915.

Meyer Sound, a Berkeley-based leader in high-technology loudspeakers for live sound, is proud to be a sponsor of the Gyuto Monks' 2002 United States tour. The tour marks the debut of the company's new M2D Compact Curvilinear Array Loudspeaker, an advanced hybrid system that builds upon classical principles of curved-line sources to deliver extremely even, balanced sound across the entire audience seating area. The Gyuto Monks system incorporates Meyer's RMS™ (Remote Monitoring System), which allows

the sound engineers to continuously monitor all of the loudspeakers over a network from a centralized computer. The tour also employs the company's SIM@ System II, a computer-based measurement instrument that uses the sounds of the human voice and musical instruments as a test signal, enabling the engineers to electronically improve concert hall acoustics and unobtrusively adjust for changes in air temperature and humidity that otherwise would alter the sound quality.

Thanks to McCune Audio Video Lighting of San Francisco for supplying additional equipment.

In 1987, tensions between Tibetans and Chinese increased dramatically, and a new flood of refugees emerged into India and Nepal. Many young men wanted to become Gyuto monks. To accommodate this demand, a more central monastery was constructed in Dharmasala (seat of the Dalai Lama and location of the largest community of Tibetans in exile), in which 300 new monks could be trained in their sacred arts and sciences. To raise funds for that monastery, they have come to the United States to perform for Western audiences, to share the unique splendor of Tibetan culture, and to bless the entire planet. His Holiness the Dalai Lama commented on the nature of these performances:

Some people may ask, "Why are they performing publicly what should be esoteric rites?" Perhaps these people feel that secret teachings should not be turned into a theatrical spectacle. But they needn't be concerned. The secret interior path and its processes are things that the ordinary eye cannot perceive. What is seen outside is totally different. Based on their inner achievement, the Yogis can unfold energies that benefit the entire country, such as in ceremonies that consecrate images and icons, exorcise negative forces, prevent natural disasters and epidemics, and uplift the spirit of the times. Thus, from a certain point of view, these ceremonies have a great benefit for the whole society, though there is a valid point in reserving certain ceremonies from public performance. Those performed here resemble those traditionally done by popular request all over Tibet.

It is important to remember that these chants are not designed as entertainment, but as prayer—venerable vehicles of enlightenment for all sentient beings. Further, because of the limitations of the medium, those selections presented are only small parts of rituals that may take two days or more to perform in full.

In India, 2,500 years ago, the Buddha realized enlightenment and founded the Buddhist teaching of freedom, love, and wisdom. Buddhism slowly spread all over Asia, coming to Tibet in the 7th century AD. It took a thousand years for its gentle ethics, sophisticated meditations, and profound scientific traditions to "tame" the wild energies of the Tibetan warriors. By the 15th century, Tibetan Buddhism had become the conservatory of the complete array of ancient knowledge, long lost to invasions and holocausts in outer Asia. Huge monastic universities were founded in Lhasa, and students came from all over Asia to cultivate enlightenment.

To preserve the most advanced and esoteric teachings, the Gyuto Tantric University was founded in 1474 by Jey Kunga Dondrub, a leading disciple of His Holiness The First Dalai Lama. The training in the monastery was based on the contemplations and rituals of the Guhyasamaja Tantra. The original crew of 32 monks lived and breathed the universe of this Tantra and its mandala of bliss-void-indivisible. From their practice of unexcelled yogas have emerged arts and sciences that are unique in the world.

In particular, a type of multiphonic chanting was developed, in which each monk sings a chord containing two or three tones simultaneously. This remarkable, transcendently beautiful sound is thought to arise only from the throat of a person who has realized selfless wisdom. This music emanates from samadhi (a trancelike state of pure consciousness, undisturbed by the polarities of life, experience, and thought) and is capable of communicating that samadhi to the listener.

The Gyuto Tantric University flourished from that time, invited by the citizens of Lhasa to occupy the Ramoche National Cathedral. Prior to 1959, their numbers increased to over 900. Their study consisted of contemplation and the practice of ritual arts: painting, sculpture (in metals, clay, and even yak butter), sewing, dancing, singing, healing. They were often invited in small groups all over Tibet, to perform their ceremonies to bless the land and people.

In 1949, the Chinese Communists invaded Tibet and began the systematic suppression of the Buddhist religion. Many monks were jailed or killed. After the Lhasa massacre in 1959, only 90 of the Gyuto monks could follow His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama into exile in India. There they reestablished their University of Tenzin Gang in Arunachal Pradesh, and initiated over 200 monks of the younger generation. The Gyuto Monks' current tour is their fourth visit to America since 1987.

Guhyasamaja Sang Wa Du Pa

During this contemplative recitation, the monks identify themselves with the divine Buddha form Guhyasamaja (Esoteric Communion). In focused visualization, they enter his sacred Mandala palace, where they become consecrated

as channels for his stream of life-giving blessings. Guhyasamaja manifests as a male and a female in union, to symbolize the union of selfless wisdom and blissful, energetic compassion. Their bodies have three faces, symbolizing their mastery of the spiritual nervous system, and six arms, symbolizing their outreach to benefit all beings. This chant is believed to have the power to exorcise delusion, lust, and hate, and transform them into creative wisdom.

Mahakala

Mahakala is the most important terrific protector of Tibetan Buddhism. He is black and six-armed. Though fierce in his trampling upon the evil spirits of delusion and greed, he is actually considered to be the agent of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, the angelic Bodhisattva of great compassion. Mahakala is frightening in appearance because his responsibility is to protect all beings from evil. In the Mahakala ceremony, the monks invite Mahakala to manifest himself before them, and make offerings to him. They praise him, evoking his virtuous qualities, and they commission him to safeguard Mother Gaia and all beings.

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When I think of the sound of the Gyuto Monks, I remember a quote from the Sufi musician and teacher Hazrat Inayat Khan:

There are different ways of listening to music. There is a technical state when a person who is developed in technique and has learned to appreciate better music, feels disturbed by a lower grade of music. But there is a spiritual way, which has nothing to do with technique. It is simply to tune oneself to the music; therefore the spiritual person does not worry about the grade of the music. No doubt, the better the music the more helpful it is to a spiritual person; but at the same time one must not forget there are lamas in Tibet who do their concentrations and meditations while moving a kind of rattle, the sound of which is not specially melodious. They cultivate thereby that sense which raises a person by the help of vibration to the higher planes. There is nothing better than music as a means for the upliftment of the soul.

Buddhist thought maintains that nothing lasts forever. Life is impermanent and ever-changing. This music represents life, and therefore is the sound that embodies the belief of impermanence. As the sound is produced from the breath of each monk, it lasts only for the moment and then is gone. Listen to the full range of the chord. Breathe deeply and let the sound wash over you. Feel it in your bones!

—Mickey Hart