

## London Primary children enjoy ancient Himalayan epic

This Summer, an exciting cross-cultural project took place in London and the Himalayas. In this special news report, storyteller and teacher, Tansy Troy, tells us about KINSHIP in Zanskar 2013 while Year 3 pupil, Helen Thorne, describes Phase One of the project.

In June 2013, a new project, KINSHIP in Zanskar 2013, was launched over five full creative days in two London Primary schools (Our Lady of Victories, Kensington and Chelsea, and Primrose Hill Primary School, Camden). Native Zanskari and public speaker, Tansin Norbu, storyteller and teacher, Tansy Troy, trumpeter, Hannah Bishop, flautist, Chelsea Cowen, organist, Fenella Fairbairn, and saxophonist, Samuel Rapley, brought to musical life the Himalayan epic of *King Gesar of Ling* for four classes of Year 2 and 3 children and their teachers. These workshops formed Phase One of the project: Phase Two took place at high altitude with Primary children in the remote Indian Himalayan kingdom of Zanskar during July and August 2013 and Phase Three, back in London, will see the same London Primary classes performing the epic tale to their parents and fellow students.

Tansin Norbu grew up in the Zanskari village of Testa (over 14,000 feet) with elders and grandparents singing him the ancient myth of *King Gesar of Ling* through the eight-month Winters. So when his teacher/story-teller wife, Tansy Troy, suggested adapting the tale to share with London schoolchildren before taking it on tour in the company of musicians from London's Royal Academy of Music, the scene was set for a musical, educational adventure, the like of

which had never been witnessed before.

Every workshop, packed with activity to follow the musical storytelling (mask- and jewellery-

translated, told and sung in native Zanskari and puppet horses would be replaced by four beautiful pack horses which would carry the team's luggage plus baskets of instruments to



*Flying like a bird with Tansy Troy and pupils of Primrose Hill Primary School*

making, composing music for Zanskari flora and fauna, quizzes, slide-shows and lots of singing and dancing) proved more exhilarating than even the excited team had anticipated. The children of both Our Lady and Primrose Hill seemed gripped by the ancient tales and were transported – in imagination at least – to Zanskar which some sources cite as the original land of Ling.

After the final workshop, with days left to pack, the team felt they were flying with the wings of a mythical garuda bird: once high in the Himalayas, the tale and songs would be

leave with the children of Zanskar. We all hoped that a snow lion or dragon might even put in a guest appearance once we reached that long-awaited land of Ling!

### About the author

Storyteller and teacher, **Tansy Troy**, is the Founder of KINSHIP, a small UK-based charity comprising artists, teachers, musicians and play practitioners who passionately believe in empowering children all over the world through creative play.

[www.kinship.org.uk](http://www.kinship.org.uk)

## King Gesar of Ling

I remember the story of King Gesar as a tale that brings earth and heaven together with a strong storyline, brilliant songs that fit perfectly with enchanted realms, trees and every good thing you can think of. The storyteller's voice made clear, snow-white magic erupt in the Middle Hall. I believe every pupil in the hall was mesmerised with every burst of story. All the music chosen to accompany was truly delightful. All the time, new imaginative things occurred with a burst of new light (literally!) – I remember clearly streams of fireworks at the words, 'Rule the land of Ling'. The picture of a magical storyteller with streamers at her sides was eye-popping and mind-boggling! The audience was stunned with the creativity of the music teacher and storyteller, Tansy!!!

The workshops were made in two very clever stages:

1. Tansy and Tamzin told us of Zanskar, a tiny country near Tibet and India. The country had beautiful flowers and we focussed on where Tansin came from... a town in the mountains! He told us about his school – under a willow tree. After some interesting minutes, Tansy gave us choices of things to make:

- a horse puppet
- a dragon puppet
- a magical bird called a garuda
- a tiger mask

All these amazing animals helped King Gesar

on his mythical quest.

2. This workshop was more musical. In our Zanskar topic groups, the table leader took the name of an animal out of a hat. The animals and main leaders were the following:

- snow leopard – Chelsea
- yak – Hannah
- yarikan – Tansy
- fox – Fenella

We made a composition using our animal's own interesting personal characteristics.

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