

dancers from Bill T Jones' company. She was part of the ground-breaking all-female touring troupe Lilith Fair and on major festival bills including WOMAD and WOMADelaide. Audiences were fascinated by this serene, otherworldly figure with knee-length black hair and colourful *chuba* robe, by the CDs affixed with mandalas that, when played, spun their sacred geometries and – she fetches them to show me – the handheld prayer wheels containing the written 'om mani padme hung/hum' mantra of compassion, showering their blessings 360°.

In 2000 Lhamo moved to New York. In 2004 she established the One Drop of Kindness Foundation, with the intention of supporting Tibetans in Tibet. The charity has since broadened, sponsoring projects in the US, Nepal, India and, recently, a school in Liberia. Lhamo was on a fundraising tour of California when she connected with Alevizakis, a tribal trance aficionado

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who offered her rehearsal time in his serendipitously titled Little Buddha Studio. On the studio walls hung guitars, banjos and *ouds*, including the Turkish *cümbüş*; bells and hand drums; the Armenian *duduk* flute; a didgeridoo. All of which – along with found sounds from village life – Lhamo embraced.

“After I saw the instruments and felt the good energy from JonJon [Alevizakis], I knew I had to make an album there,” Lhamo says. Alevizakis channelled the groove and excitement of Middle Eastern and West African rhythms into a work that often saw Lhamo dancing as she created: “People picture her as this goddess,” says the affable producer via Zoom, “but she’s a dancer inside. There’s a real childlike playfulness to her. She’s a young spirit and a wise old spirit at the same time.”

“In artistic terms she’s incredibly open. She was like, ‘Just pick something and play what you feel,’” continues Alevizakis, who brought in musicians to jam, or added them later. “She feels it’s time to share the messages of different cultures and does not see herself as a world music artist but as a global ambassador doing her part to share her culture. If she had her way, we would have brought in a rapper.”

Of the seven tracks on *One Drop of Kindness* – all of which are sung in Tibetan – some were created on-the-fly around a prayer, a theme. Lhamo composed others, sometimes as she slept: “I have the music in my head, and when I wake it is there. Years ago, when I was making *Tibet Tibet*, I was told that I sleep-sing, that during the night I get up out of bed and sing!”

Her voice is even richer now, brimming with vibrational power. Here and there, she throat-sings, her deep overtones subtle but majestic. She holds the pure, sustained notes that have long had sound engineers shaking their heads: “What she does with a vocal wave is almost impossible,” says Alevizakis. “If I told my fellow engineers they wouldn’t believe me.”

Lhamo’s voice is not just her instrument. It is a force for healing, a means to foster compassion for all. Its lived authenticity, like its enchanting beauty, is a beacon for change.

At this, Lhamo nods. “Just one act of kindness can change a life.” A smile.

“It is that simple.” ♦

+ **ALBUM** *One Drop of Kindness* is reviewed this issue, p56

+ **LISTEN** ‘Sound Healing’ features on this issue’s covermount CD, track 12

**WIN**

We have two CD and two vinyl copies of *One Drop of Kindness* to give away. To enter, answer: When did Lhamo set up her foundation?

See p21 for competition rules

Dayong Zhao