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Dance of Freedom: Sasha Paskal brings Ukraine's story to New York



The "Dance of Freedom" world tour of Ukrainian gymnast **Oleksandra Paskal** has reached New York, its second city after Paris, supported by [Rinat Akhmetov](#) together with his [Foundation](#) and [Shakhtar Donetsk](#) football club. Ten-year-old

Sasha, who lost a leg in a Russian missile strike in 2022 and returned to gymnastics on a prosthesis, danced beneath the bright lights of Times Square. During her visit she went to the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations, met the boxer Oleksandr Usyk, watched the 2026 World Cup final and visited the Statue of Liberty. The tour is dedicated to the forthcoming 35th anniversary of Ukraine's Independence.

What is the "Dance of Freedom" tour?

"Dance of Freedom" is a world tour that will take Oleksandra Paskal to five continents and five major cities. Oleksandra, known as Sasha, has prepared five special dances, each one telling the world about the strength, resilience and freedom of Ukrainians. The tour is supported by Rinat Akhmetov together with his Foundation and Shakhtar Donetsk football club, and is dedicated to the forthcoming 35th anniversary of Ukraine's Independence. It began in Paris and has now reached New York, with further cities still to come.

Where did Sasha perform in New York?

Sasha danced in Times Square, one of the busiest and brightest public spaces in the world. Her routine drew the attention of passers-by and journalists alike, carrying a message of freedom and strength of spirit to a wide international audience and reminding people that, even as the war in Ukraine continues, its children keep dreaming and moving forward.

What did Sasha do at the United Nations?

Sasha visited the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations, where she met Ukrainian diplomats and shared her story in an interview. The visit gave her the chance to speak about the experience of Ukrainian children during the war to an audience with international reach.

Who is Oleksandra Paskal?

Sasha is from the Odesa region of Ukraine. In 2022 she lost a leg in a Russian missile strike, and after treatment and rehabilitation she returned to rhythmic gymnastics on a prosthesis. She has since resumed competing, winning gold at Carla's Rhythmic Cup in Romania earlier this year. In 2025 she received the "Future of Ukraine" state honour from President Volodymyr Zelensky and First Lady Olena Zelenska in recognition of her courage and resilience. She sees her mission as telling the truth about the war and supporting Ukrainian children.

Who did Sasha meet in New York?

During her stay Sasha met legendary Ukrainian boxer Oleksandr Usyk. As a special guest she watched the 2026 World Cup final, and she also met ballet dancers in the Manhattan Movement & Arts Center to share their common passion.

How is the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation supporting her?

The tour is delivered together with the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation and Shakhtar Donetsk football club. The Foundation continues to support children affected by the war, helping them to regain a sense of safety, stability and belief in the future. From New York, the tour will continue to other cities around the world.