The Mystical Arts of Tibet

PERFORMED BY TIBETAN LAMAS FROM DREPUNG LOSELING MONASTERY

A Drepung Loseling Production

The Mystical Arts of Tibet • 1781 Dresden Drive • Atlanta, GA 30319
Phone: 404-982-6437 • Fax: 404-982-6435 • E-mail: mystical@drepung.org
Website: www.MysticalArtsofTibet.org
Tibetan Buddhist culture has a distinctive contribution to make to the world’s precious common heritage. I feel sure that Drepung Loseling Monastery’s Mystical Arts of Tibet tours will deepen the appreciation of our culture. It is my hope that everyone witnessing these events may find in them inspiration and understanding that in some way contribute to their own inner peace.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

The Mystical Arts of Tibet tours, put together by Drepung Loseling Productions, have accomplished extraordinary things, not only in America but also around the world. The production by the monk artists of Drepung Loseling Monastery is both highly professional and beautiful, and expresses the purity and sophistication of the Tibetan sacred performing arts. I am deeply honored to be associated with it.

Richard Gere

The Conservancy for Tibetan Art & Culture is immensely pleased with its association with The Mystical Arts of Tibet. In January 2002 the Drepung Loseling monks created a highly complex sand mandala and performed daily chants for world peace and healing at the Smithsonian’s Sackler Gallery of Art. More than 45,000 visitors attended. They also performed Sacred Music Sacred Dance for World Healing at our sold-out event at the historic Lincoln Theatre in Washington, D.C. The Mystical Arts of Tibet provides a level of authenticity and professionalism, combined with a spontaneous warmth and audience connection, that is unmatched.

Greg Kruglak
Chairman
Conservancy for Tibetan Art & Culture
Dear friends,

As the director of The Mystical Arts of Tibet, I am amazed by the ever-increasing fascination in the West for Tibet and its ancient cultural traditions. In particular, Tibet’s unique legacy of mystical arts seems to appeal to people from all walks of life, spanning the boundaries of age, race, gender, and ethnic affiliation.

The Mystical Arts of Tibet is a world tour endorsed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to promote world peace and healing by sharing Tibet’s rich and authentic sacred performing and visual arts with modern audiences. The tours offer a rare opportunity to witness one of the world’s most ancient sacred traditions presented by a group of monk artists for whom these traditions are a way of life. Audiences are always delighted to learn that they are witnessing genuine classical sacred arts that have been performed over millennia.

From the very beginning The Mystical Arts of Tibet tours by the Drepung Loseling monks have enjoyed an overwhelming reception across North and South America, as well as in Europe. I am delighted to see that this interest is only getting stronger with each successive year. Perhaps it is due to the timeless nature of these Tibetan arts, and the spirit of universal values they inspire, that The Mystical Arts of Tibet tours continue to capture the imagination of the West. One of our presenters once said, “You guys have become something of a Cirque du Soleil of the Tibetan mystical art world. Everyone wants to see you, and see you again.”

Hundreds of comments of this nature convey the sheer delight and appreciation of our audiences and compel us to continue to share Tibet’s enchanting and powerful art forms.

This brochure and the enclosed CD-ROM will introduce the four principal activities offered by our monk artists on The Mystical Arts of Tibet tours:

- Sacred Music Sacred Dance for World Healing
- Mandala Sand Painting
- Photo Exhibit
- Educational/Outreach Programs

I invite you to review these materials, and to consider bringing one or more of these extraordinary events to your community. In the end, it is what we gain from our diverse cultures that makes us a greater and more enlightened people. Our hope is to contribute to this ideal.

Geshe Lobsang Tenzin, Ph.D.
Director
The Mystical Arts of Tibet
In recent years *The Mystical Arts of Tibet: Sacred Music Sacred Dance for World Healing*, with the famed multiphonic singers of Drepung Loseling Monastery, has taken the world by storm. It has been presented in venues large and small, from Carnegie Hall to community college theaters, in all 50 U.S. states, as well as a number of countries in South America, Europe and Asia. The list of our past hosts includes universities, colleges, museums, civic centers, theaters, opera houses and churches. Here are some highlights of past accomplishments:

- Two of the CDs by the Loseling multiphonic singers, *Sacred Tibetan Temple Music* and *Sacred Tibetan Chants*, achieved Top 10 listings on the US New Age charts. Music from their CDs was featured on the Golden Globe-nominated soundtrack of the motion picture *Seven Years in Tibet*.

- The Loseling Monks enjoyed the rare honor of representing Tibet’s sacred performing arts in July 2003 in the *Cultural Olympiad of Greece 2001-2004*, a 10-day pre-Olympic celebration of World Sacred Music and Dance.

- The Loseling monks represented Tibet twice, in 2000 and 2002, at The Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Washington, D.C. Their performance of the *Monlam Chenmo* chants was the highlight of the 2000 Festival, *Tibetan Culture Beyond the Land of Snows*, which received more than 1.5 million visitors.

- The Loseling Monks were a top feature at *Sunrise of Compassion*, the United Nations’ first global event celebrating The Year of the Mountain, held at the summit of Mount Fuji, Japan.

- On previous tours the monks have shared the stage with Philip Glass, Kitaro, Paul Simon, Sheryl Crow, Michael Stipe, Patti Smith, Natalie Merchant, the Beastie Boys, and many others.
Notes and Quotes from Press and Presenters

Comments from the Press

“...remarkable...the music and the dance invoke sacred ecstasy...”
   - The New York Times

“...fascinating and entertaining...”
   - Chicago Tribune

“...primordial pool of sound that you feel as much as hear.”
   - San Francisco Chronicle

“...playful...stately...intriguing...”
   - Los Angeles Times

Comments from Presenters

“The program is always powerful and expertly presented, and the coordination is seamless. I would recommend this group to anyone.”
   R. S. Kennedy, Deputy Director, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

“...so well constructed and so accessible to a Western audience.”
   T. Olbrich, Consulting Producer, Southern Oregon Program Board

“...successful far beyond what anyone imagined possible.”
   Dr. S. Paulk, Instructor of Religion & Humanities, Oskaloosa-Walton Community College

“...the most valuable program we have presented in the last five years.”
   J. Zarr, USU Director, University of California, Fresno
Ancient societies throughout the world conceived that ritual performance of sacred music and dance at auspicious times establishes communication with the higher powers of good and brings about healing on environmental, social and personal levels. In Tibet, whenever a monastery celebrated a spiritual festival, people from surrounding villages and nomadic tribes would assemble in the monastery’s courtyard for the three or four days of sacred music and dance. The present lama tour is designed as a development of this tradition. The presentation has been streamlined in such a way as to maintain the essential integrity and purpose of each of the individual pieces in the celebration.

The Drepung Loseling monks are particularly renowned for their multiphonic chanting, known as zokkay (complete chord). Each of the main chantmasters simultaneously intones three notes, thus each individually creating a complete chord. Acclaimed author Dr. Huston Smith, who so wonderfully documented this Tibetan phenomenon in his film *The Mystic’s Journey: Requiem for a Faith*, referred to multiphonic chanting as “lifting the human spirit to the level of the gods.”

The Performance

The Mystical Arts of Tibet: Sacred Music Sacred Dance performance comprises nine pieces believed to generate energies conducive to world healing. Robed in magnificent costumes and playing traditional Tibetan instruments, the Loseling monks perform ancient temple music and dance for world healing. The entire performance lasts approximately two hours, including introductory comments and a 20 minute intermission.

Part One (50 minutes)

1) *Nyensen*: Invocation of the Forces of Goodness

In a tapestry of instrumental and vocal sounds, the monks invoke creative awareness within themselves and the audience. They enhance the spirit of goodness in the environment as a prelude to the performance of Sacred Music Sacred Dance.

2) *Tentru Yultru*: Purifying the Environment and its Inhabitants

Chanting in the multiphonic tradition, the monks hold up a mirror and draw into it the reflection of the world and its living beings. They then purify these through sound and meditation, as symbolized by the act of pouring waters from a sacred wisdom vase over the mirror. Traditionally this piece was performed whenever an environmental, social or individual healing was required.

3) *Shanak Garcham*: Dance of the Black Hat Masters

This ancient dance for the elimination of negative energies and hindrances is in the style known as *drakpo*, or “wrathful.” The implements held by the dancers symbolize the transcendence of false ego-identification on the outer (environmental), inner (emotional), and secret (subtle body-mind) levels. Their movements symbolize the joy and freedom of seeing reality in its nakedness.
4) Taksal: Intense Encounters of the Third Degree
A stylized presentation of Tibetan monastic debate. Something between dance, sumo wrestling of the mind, and free-form avant-garde theater.

5) Senggey Garcham: The Snow Lion Dance
Sacred activities performed by human beings are believed to create a healthy and harmonious environment, where all beings, including animals, rejoice. The snow lion dance captures this spirit.

Part Two (40 minutes)

1) Durdak Garcham: Dance of the Skeleton Lords
To remind the world of the ephemeral nature of all things and of the liberating and balancing impact of an awareness of this reality, two monks appear as the forces of goodness manifested as Cemetery Lords. These are Dharmapalas, or “Protectors of Truth,” with the message to point the mind toward authentic being.

2) Dakzin Tsarchod: A Melody to Sever the Ego Syndrome
Descending in a lineage from Padampa Sanggay and the 11th-century female mystic Machik Labdon, this tradition of meditative music is considered among the most hauntingly beautiful to emanate from the Land of Snows. Its purpose is to release the mind from the ego-clinging habit.

3) Khadro Tenshug Garcham: Dance of the Celestial Travelers
Five dancers symbolizing the five elements and five wisdoms, together with three musicians, invoke the sounds and movements of the Celestial Travelers, the mystical beings from another world whose blessings strengthen the forces of life and light. These beings visit our world in times of stress and danger, bringing with them the creative energy that inspires harmony and peace.

4) Sangso Shijo: Auspicious Song for World Healing
The monks send forth the smoke of incense, which the wind carries into the 10 directions as a subliminal force invoking peace, harmony and the ways of creative living.
From all the artistic traditions of Tantric Buddhism, that of painting with colored sand ranks as one of the most unique and exquisite. The Mystical Arts of Tibet tours have been hosted by museums and university galleries large and small across the country and around the world to create mandala sand paintings as a dramatic and spectacular art form. Audience turnouts during the monks’ residencies have generally broken all previous attendance records at those institutions. Our monks usually require three to five days to complete a mandala, although simpler ones can be created in a single day, and more elaborate ones can take weeks.

Over the past 15 years The Mystical Arts of Tibet has had the honor of creating mandala sand paintings in hundreds of diverse venues, including the following:

- **Museums and Art Centers:** Field Museum, Chicago, IL; Canadian Museum of Civilization, Hull, Canada; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England; Scottsdale Center for the Arts, Scottsdale, AZ; Huntsville Museum of Art, Huntsville, AL.

- **Colleges and Universities:** Duke University, Durham, NC; UCLA, Los Angeles, CA; Spokane Community College, Spokane, WA; South Dakota State University, Brookings, SD; Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY; Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

- **Festivals:** Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Washington, D.C.; Seattle Children’s Festival, Seattle, WA; Spoleto Festival, Charleston, SC; Telluride Bluegrass Festival, Telluride, CO.

- **Government-Sponsored Venues:** New Mexico State Capitol Building, Santa Fe, NM; City of Kent, Kent, WA; Las Vegas Clark County Library, Las Vegas, NV.

- **Special Events:** Mandala Sand Paintings for the Healing and Protection of America in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 tragedies at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, New York, and Smithsonian’s Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Mandala Sand Painting in honor of the victims and survivors of the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing at City Arts Center, Oklahoma City, OK.
Notes and Quotes from Press and Presenters

Comments from the Press

“Extraordinarily beautiful...”
- The New York Times

“...a universal expression of the human subconscious... it transports you.”
- The Washington Post

“...beautiful works, cleansing works...and very rare to see.”
- Chicago Sun-Times

“...monks create something of amazing craftsmanship.”
- The Dallas Morning News

Comments from Presenters

“...a tremendous success...truly inspiring and drew record numbers...”
J. Price, Curator of Asian and Non-Western Art, Kimbell Art Museum

“...the largest crowd we have ever hosted....The residency with the Tibetan monks was a perfect tie in...”
N. Norman, Communication and Special Events Manager, Atlantic Center for the Arts

“I have been told by teachers who have been here for 30 years that it was the best event we ever staged.”
L. Brody, Event Coordinator, The Kent School

“...exceeded our wildest dreams!!!”
D. Ernst, Lange Trust & Sandusky Cultural Center
1. Opening Ceremony

The monks begin by consecrating the site of the mandala sand painting with approximately 30 minutes of chants, music, and mantra recitation. This event is visually and acoustically striking, drawing large audiences and enormous media attention.

2. Drawing of the Lines

Immediately after the Opening Ceremony the monks start drawing the line design for the mandala. This is very exacting work that takes about three hours to complete.

3. Mandala Construction

Throughout its creation, the monks pour millions of grains of sand from traditional metal funnels called chakpur. The finished mandala is approximately 5’ x 5’ in size, and generally requires three to five days of work.

As with the Buddhist tradition as a whole, sand painting has its roots in the tantric legacy of Buddhist India, extending back more than 20,000 years to the time preceding the migration of native North Americans from Central Asia. Thus we see similarities between the Buddhist arts and the sand painting traditions of the natives of the Southwestern United States, such as the Hopi and the Navajo.

There are hundreds of mandalas in the Tibetan tradition. On The Mystical Arts of Tibet tours, the lamas create many different types, including the mandalas of Bhaishjya Guru (“Medicine Buddha”), Amitayus (“The Buddha of Boundless Life”), Yamantaka (“The Opponent of Death”), and Avalokiteshvara (“The Buddha of Compassion”). Mandalas are created for the healing of living beings and the environment. The lamas consider our present age to be one of great need in this respect and therefore construct these mandalas wherever requested.
4. Mandala Completion

The monks conclude their creation of the mandala with a consecration ceremony. In some cities, several thousand guests have attended this closing ceremony. It is very colorful and of great interest to the media.

5. Dismantling the Mandala

During the closing ceremony, the monks dismantle the mandala, sweeping up the colored sands to symbolize the impermanence of all that exists. When requested, half of the sand is distributed to the audience as blessings for personal health and healing.

6. Dispersal of the Sand

The remaining sand is carried in a procession by the monks, accompanied by guests, to a flowing body of water. Here the sand is ceremonially poured into the water, thus dispersing the healing energies of the mandala throughout the world.

Every tantric system has its own mandala, each one symbolizing a particular existential and spiritual approach. For example, that of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara symbolizes compassion as a central focus of the spiritual experience; that of Manjushri takes wisdom as the central focus; and that of Vajrapani emphasizes the need for courage and strength in the quest for sacred knowledge.

When The Mystical Arts of Tibet was requested to create mandala sand paintings in New York and Washington in the wake of the September 11 tragedies, they approached His Holiness the Dalai Lama for blessing and advice. His Holiness recommended the mandala of Yamantaka ("The Opponent of Death") for New York and the mandala of Buddha Akshobya ("The Unshakable Victor") for Washington, D.C. Both of these mandalas are used in times of great stress and danger.
The traditional homeland of the Dalai Lamas, Tibet has produced one of the world’s most unique spiritual civilizations: reincarnate lamas and cities of monks; riverside farmers and grassland nomads; shaggy yaks and speedy horses; ancient temples and remote monasteries; exquisite watercolor paintings and enormous bronze statues; fertile river valleys and high-plateau desert moonscapes. This is the stuff of which the Tibetan dream is made.
Tibet: Magical Land of Spiritual Wonders is an exhibition of 21 stunning color images taken by some of the world’s foremost photographic artists. On loan from Tibet Image Bank, London, each image is 10” x 14” in size and is set in a 16” x 20” frame.

Images include the Potala Palace (home of the Dalai Lama), the Yumbu Lagang (Tibet’s first castle), the Jokhang (Tibet’s first temple), Samye (Tibet’s first monastery), as well as many other spiritually important and culturally significant subjects.

This photo exhibit is primarily designed to complement the Mandala Sand Painting Exhibit, but it can also be shown independently.
Educational/Outreach Programs

Lectures

Lectures are approximately 45 minutes in length, followed by a question/answer period, and present the basic Buddhist perspectives on the issue under discussion. Our head lamas are highly qualified, and can speak on almost any subject within the world of Tibetan philosophy, psychology, meditation and culture. Below is a list of the most frequently requested topics:

- The Symbolism of the Sand Mandala
- The Ancient Art of Healing: The Tibetan Buddhist Approach
- The Psychology of Enlightenment
- Meditation: A Tool for Conscious Living
- A Lama’s Approach to Working with the Emotions
- Death and Dying: The Tibetan Tradition
- Opening the Heart: Arousing the Mind of Universal Kindness
- Beyond Ego: The Great Void and the Gateway to Freedom
- From Confusion to Enlightenment: Steps in Inner Evolution
- Tibet Today: The Story of a Diaspora

Workshops

Workshops are approximately three hours in length, and provide the opportunity for participants to intimately experiment with the ideas and techniques presented. Below is a list of the most frequently requested workshops:

- Basic Meditation Techniques for Health and Clarity
- Tibetan Meditations for Eliminating Stress and Anxiety
- Healing the Emotions
- Mantra, Movement, and Creative Imagination for Inner Transformation
- Sand Play: Discovering Your Inner Dynamic
- Making Your Own Windhorse (Flag with Auspicious Wishes for the Universe)

School Visits/College Colloquia

Our lamas are frequently requested to visit schools, from kindergarten through senior high. They are always delighted to interact with young people of all ages, and the delight seems to be mutual. Sometimes the monks do a mini-performance of 45 minutes or so for an entire school; on other occasions they visit individual classrooms for question and answer dialogues, multiphonic chant demonstrations, or any of a range of other activities. We are always willing to work with schools to meet their requirements.

The monks are also often requested to participate in college seminars and colloquia. As the head lama holds the Tibetan Buddhist equivalent of a Western Ph.D., he is well-qualified to speak to a wide range of departments, including philosophy, psychology, religion and anthropology.
Drepung Monastery was established near Lhasa, Tibet in 1416. It had four departments, of which Loseling, or “The Hermitage of the Radiant Mind,” was the largest, housing more than three-quarters of Drepung’s 10,000 to 15,000 monks. Drepung Loseling was especially close to the Dalai Lama incarnations; the Second Dalai Lama made his residence here in 1494, and subsequent incarnations maintained this link.

After the Chinese Communist invasion of Tibet in 1959 and the forced closure and destruction of its 6,500 monasteries, some 250 monks from Loseling managed to escape the holocaust and rebuild their institution in Karnataka State, South India. The traditional training program was thus preserved. Over the years many more young spiritual aspirants have fled Chinese-occupied Tibet and sought entrance into the monastery, thus helping to preserve their traditional culture. The number of monks presently in residence at the re-established Drepung Loseling has increased to more than 2,500. The monk artists for each of The Mystical Arts of Tibet tours are drawn from this talented community.

In 1990, a group of individuals requested Drepung Loseling to establish a presence in the United States. As a result, the Drepung Loseling Institute was formed in Atlanta in 1991 as the North American seat of the monastery. The Institute is academically affiliated with Emory University, with the objective of promoting trans-cultural understanding and scholarly exchange. This historic affiliation between two major institutions of learning was inaugurated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on May 12, 1998.
“...TRULY MEMORABLE....BROKE ALL PAST ATTENDANCE RECORDS FOR OUR MUSEUM.”
- Vidya Dehejia, The Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

“This has been the most valuable program we have presented in the last five years.”
- Joel Zarr, California State University, Fresno, CA

“Their presence is more than a show. It’s an experience of a lifetime for both presenters and audiences alike.”
- Jaime Thompson, Boise State University, Boise, ID

“...The best thing that has happened to this community for a long time.”
- Jan Eastman, Oregon Coast Council For The Arts, Newport, OR