

THE MYSTICAL ARTS OF TIBET

A RICHARD GERE AND DREPUNG LOSELING PRODUCTION



SHOW TIME FOR TEACHERS

Welcome to Show Time,

a performing arts resource guide published for the CSB/SJU Fine Arts Education Series. This guide may be used before or after a performance of *The Mystical Arts of Tibet*.

Suggested activities in this issue include information and ideas for integrating the performance with several subject areas. Activities may be adapted to meet your classroom time and needs.

How May We Help You?

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The Mystical Arts of Tibet

A Brief History of Drepung Loseling

Drepung Loseling in Tibet

Drepung Monastery was established near Lhasa, Tibet in 1416 in order to preserve and transmit the ancient Buddhist arts and sciences. 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. It educated peoples not only from Tibet, but also from regions as far north as Siberia and Buriat of eastern Russia to the Himalayan kingdoms in North India, training them in the spiritual and philosophical traditions and in the various sacred performing arts. Drepung Loseling was especially close to the Dalai Lama incarnations; the Second Dalai Lama made his residence there in 1494, and subsequent incarnations maintained this link through the residence that he later built at Drepung, the Ganden Potrang.

One of Tibet’s most prestigious spiritual institutions, Loseling was particularly renowned for its tradition of multiphonic singing, in which each monk simultaneously intones three notes of a chord. Drepung maintained an extraordinary form of this rare skill, achieved through many years of training, and thus led the *Monlam Chenmo*, Tibet’s largest annual sacred music festival.

Drepung Loseling in India

Shortly after the Chinese communist invasion of Tibet in 1959, Drepung Loseling was closed. Most of its monks were either killed or put in concentration camps. Approximately 250 of the monks escaped the holocaust, walking over the Himalayas to India, where in 1969 they re-established a replica of their institution in the refugee camps of Karnataka State, India. There they work to preserve Drepung Loseling’s ancient heritage by continuing the traditional training program. News of Loseling’s existence has spread through Central Asia, and over the years many more young spiritual aspirants have fled Chinese-occupied Tibet and sought entrance into the monastery. 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.



Drepung Loseling in North America

In 1990 a group of individuals requested Drepung Loseling to establish its presence in the United States. As a result, Drepung Loseling Institute was formed in Atlanta, GA 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. For more information about the Loseling Institute, please visit www.drepung.org.

The Mystical Arts of Tibet

Sacred Music Sacred Dance for World Healing

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 the surrounding villages and nomadic tribes would assemble in the monastery's courtyard for the three or four days of sacred music and dance. The Mystical Arts of Tibet 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.

Tibetan sacred music and dance was not composed in a mundane manner. Rather, each piece was born centuries ago from a mystical visionary experience of a great saint or sage and has been transmitted from generation to generation in an unbroken oral legacy.

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. The Tibetans are the only culture on earth that cultivates this most extraordinary vocal ability. This tradition is also known as "overtone singing" because it is accomplished by means of learning to control the muscles of the vocal cavity and reshaping it while singing to make it accord with the natural overtones of the voice. In effect, the body is transformed into an efficient overtone amplifier. 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 Mystical Arts of Tibet: Sacred Music Sacred Dance performance comprises selections 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 Mystical Arts of Tibet

Background Information

What is the purpose of The Mystical Arts of Tibet tours?

Endorsed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and under the direct guidance of Drepung Loseling Monastery in India, the tours have three basic purposes: to make a contribution to world peace and healing through sacred art; to generate a greater awareness of the endangered Tibetan civilization; and to raise support for the Tibetan refugee community in India.

When did the tours begin?

In 1988-89 eight monks undertook Drepung Loseling's first world tour. Jointly sponsored by the Canada Tibet Friendship Society and Richard Gere of Tibet House, NY, and billed as "Sacred Music Sacred Dance for World Peace," the group performed their traditional monastic music and masked dances in 130 cities in North America and Europe. They were previewed and reviewed in hundreds of newspapers, and made numerous radio and television appearances. Wearing rich brocade costumes and playing 12-foot-long trumpets,



they were greeted by full houses wherever they went. Inspired by the success of this first visit to the West, the monastery agreed to continue sharing their sacred arts for world peace and healing. The tours have continued since then, with each touring group visiting more than 100 cities in the United States, as well as many in South and Central America, and often Europe and Asia.

Who are the artists, and where do they come from?

The artists are monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery, which has been re-established in exile in south India. The performers on The Mystical Arts of Tibet tour are not full-time professionals; rather they are genuine monks who are taking time off from their life-long devotion to contemplation and study to participate in the tour. These monk artists consider it an honor to be selected to represent their monastery and share their cultural traditions on the tour, hoping that they will be able to make some small contribution toward world peace and toward greater awareness of the Tibetan situation. At the end of each tour the monks return to Drepung Loseling Monastery to continue their vocation.

How are the monks selected?

For each Mystical Arts of Tibet tour, which lasts for about 15 months, the monastery selects a group of monks who together represent the full range of skills necessary to execute the activities of the tour. The monastery also selects a senior lama to lead the tour; this lama assumes responsibility for guiding the continued spiritual development of the monks while they are away from the monastery. In addition, the head lama gives lectures and workshops on a variety of topics relating to Tibetan philosophy, psychology, meditation and culture.

To compose a group with the requisite skills, the monastery selects at least two monks from a small group of chantmasters. The chantmasters are experts in the form of multiphonic chanting for which Drepung Loseling is renowned. A special emphasis is placed on selecting monks who are particularly skilled in ritual masked dances, and several masters of the art of the Mandala Sand Painting. Other monks are chosen for their talent in playing the traditional Tibetan musical instruments, such as the 10-foot-long *dung-chen* horns and the *gyaling* trumpets. Because the group consists of only nine artists, most of the monks on the tour are multi-talented and fill more than one role.



The Program

(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) *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 *drak-po*, 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 link) levels. Their movements symbolize the joy and freedom of seeing reality in its nakedness.

(3) *Taksal*: Intense Encounters of the Third Degree

A demonstration of the tradition of Tibetan monastic inquiry. Two monks engage one another in a process leading to the deeper levels and implications of spiritual experience, thus enhancing the mind of enlightenment.

(4) *Sengey Garcham*: The Snow Lion Dance

In Tibet the snow lion symbolized the fearless and elegant quality of the enlightened mind. 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.

(5) *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.

(6) *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.

(7) *Sangsol 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.

Program is subject to change



The Mystical Arts of Tibet



Mandala Sand Painting

Mandala is a Sanskrit word meaning sacred cosmogram. These cosmograms can be created in various media, such as watercolor on canvas, wood carvings, and so forth. However, the most spectacular and enduringly popular are those made from colored sand. From all the artistic traditions of Tantric Buddhism, that of painting with colored sand ranks as one of the most unique and exquisite. In Tibetan, the art is called *dul-tson-kyil-khor*, which literally means “mandala of colored powders.” As with the sand painting tradition as a whole, mandalas have their roots in the Tantric legacy of Buddhist India, extending back some 2,500 years.

The mandalas are used as tools for reconsecrating the earth and healing its inhabitants. They are formed of a traditionally prescribed iconography that includes geometric shapes and a multitude of ancient spiritual symbols. The mandala is a formal geometric pattern showing the floor plan of a sacred mansion. In general all mandalas have outer, inner and secret meanings. On the outer level they represent the world in its divine form; on the inner level they represent a map by which the ordinary human mind is transformed into enlightened mind; and on the secret level they depict the primordially perfect balance of the subtle energies of the body and the clear light dimension of the mind. The creation of a sand painting is said to effect purification and healing on these three levels.

To construct the mandala, millions of grains of sand are painstakingly laid into place on a flat platform over a period of days or weeks. When finished, the mandala is destroyed to symbolize the impermanence of all that exists, and the colored sands are swept up and poured into a nearby river or stream where the waters carry the healing energies throughout the world.

The actual construction of the mandala begins with the drawing of the design on the base or *tekpu*. The artists measure out and draw the architectural lines using a straight-edged ruler, compass and white pencil. Once the diagram is laid out, the colored sand is applied to the mandala through the end of a metal funnel. The funnel is filled with colored sand and is then rasped in order to release a fine stream of sand. The artists begin at the center of the mandala and work outward.

The most common substance used in the creation of *dul-tson-kyil-khor* is colored sands. Other popular substances are powdered flowers, herbs or grains; and also powdered and colored stone. In ancient times powdered precious and semi-precious gems were also used. Thus lapis lazuli would be used for the blues, red coral for the reds and so forth.



The cone-shaped metal funnels or *chak-pur*, are used to pour the sand onto the canvas. The metal rods are run along the *chak-pur* to cause vibrations that result in the sand flowing like liquid.



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 Bhaishajya 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.

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 offered to create mandala sand paintings for New York and Washington in the wake of the September 11 tragedies, the monks 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 Akshobhya (The Unshakable Victor) for Washington, D.C. Both of these mandalas are used in times of great stress and danger. Organized in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution, these events were dedicated to the healing and protection of America. The monks were deeply moved by the profound statements of gratitude and emotional comfort expressed by so many of the people who attended. It was a great honor for them to have been able to help in these difficult times.



The Mystical Arts of Tibet

Mandala Sand Painting Construction Process

The monks would be at St. John's University from January 29, 2007 till February 3, 2007.

The following schedule of events are open to the public.

Opening Ceremony- Monday, January 29

4:00 pm at SJU Art Center

The monks begin by consecrating the site of the Mandala Sand Painting with approximately 30 minutes of chants, music, and mantra recitation.

Drawing of the Lines- Monday, January 29

4:30 pm at SJU Art Center

After the Opening Ceremony the monks start drawing the line design for the mandala. This is tedious and exacting work that takes about three hours to complete.

Mandala Construction- SJU Art Center

Throughout the residency, the monks pour millions of grains of sand into place over a period of days, using traditional metal funnels called *chak-pur*. The finished mandala is approximately 4' x 4' in size.

Public Performance-Friday, February 2 at 8:00 pm and Saturday, February 3 at 2:00 pm

Both performances will be held at the Stephen B. Humphrey Theater at St. John's University.

Tickets are available for purchase on the Fine Arts Programming website: www.csbsju.edu/finearts

Mandala Completion/Closing Ceremony- Saturday, February 3 4:30 pm at SJU Art Center

The monks conclude their creation of the Mandala with its consecration. In some cities, several thousand guests have attended the colorful Closing Ceremony.

Dismantling the Mandala- SJU Art Center

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.

Dispersal of the Sand- SJU Art Center

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.



VOCABULARY

Chak-pur~ Cone-shaped metal funnel through which the sand is poured

Cosmogram~ Flat geometric figure depicting a cosmology (Greek for study of the universe)

Dul-tson-kyil-khor~ Literally means “mandala of colored powders”

Dung-chen~ A 10-foot-long horn used as a Tibetan musical instrument

Gyaling~ Tibetan trumpet

Mandala~ Sanskrit word meaning *sacred cosmogram*

Monlam Chenmo~ Tibet’s largest annual sacred music festival

Multiphonic chanting~ When a monk simultaneously intones three notes of a chord

Overtone singing~ A tradition in which monks learn to control the muscles of the vocal cavity

Sanskrit~ A classical language of India, a liturgical language of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism

Tekpu~ The base design for the construction of the mandala

Zokkay~ Multiphonic chanting

USEFUL TIBETAN PHRASES

Hello~ Tashi deleg

Thank you~ Thug je che

Good morning~ Nga dro de leg

How are you?~ Kheh rahng ku su de bo yin peh?

I’m fine~ La yin ngah sug po de bo yin

Would you like tea?~ Sol ja cho gey

Would you like something to eat?~ Khey rang chig cho gey

Would you like to go out?~ Chee log-la peb gey

Sorry~ Gong dhak

Yes~ La re

No~ La ma re

Ok~ La so

Good bye (if you’re going)~ Gah leh shoo

Good bye (if you’re staying behind)~ Kah leh pe

See you later~ Jeh yong

See you tonight~ Dho gong jeh yong

See you tomorrow~ Sahng nyi jeh yong

Good night~ Sim jah nahng go

RESOURCES

Their music has been featured on the Golden Globe-nominated soundtrack of *Seven Years in Tibet* (Columbia), starring Brad Pitt, and they performed with Philip Glass in the live presentation of his award-winning score from the Martin Scorsese film *Kundun* (Disney). Two of their five CDs, *Tibetan Sacred Temple Music* (Shining Star Productions) and *Sacred Tibetan Chants* (Music and Arts Program of America) have achieved a top-10 listing on the US and Canadian New Age charts.

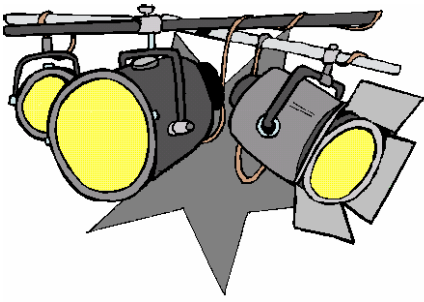
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THEATER ETIQUETTE

Each year, thousands of teachers, students, bus drivers, and parents take part in CSB/SJU's Fine Arts Education Series. Please review the **LOOKING and LISTENING** information below with your students to help make your theater experience the best it can be.

LOOKING and LISTENING

Attending a live performance of *The Mystical Arts of Tibet* will be interesting and enjoyable for everyone if you remember to...

- ~watch for facial expressions to help you understand what the performers are feeling.
- ~listen in order to understand the meanings of the songs
- ~listen in order to understand the communication between the performers

The performers in *The Mystical Arts of Tibet* need help from you, the audience. You are an important part of the play. Being an audience member in a theater is different from watching a movie or television show. The performers are in the same room with you and are affected by what you do. To do their best, the performers need you to watch and listen closely. Audience members also depend on your quiet attention during the performance so that they can enjoy their theater experience as well.

Please review the **PROCEDURES** information below to help your theater visit go smoothly.

PROCEDURES

- ~Please bring a minimum of one adult chaperone for every fifteen students.
- ~Please remind chaperones that the theater etiquette they model speaks volumes to your students.
- ~Prepare your students to enter the theater in single file in order of seating.
- ~Position your chaperones to maximize adult supervision of your group.
- ~Please wait until your whole group is seated before making trips to the rest room. Then students may go in small groups with the teacher's permission. Younger students making trips to the rest room will need to be chaperoned.
- ~The theater is a food, gum, drink, radio, camera, tape, and video recorder free zone!
- ~Please leave inappropriate behaviors behind when visiting the theater.
- ~Please remain seated following the performance. Your group will be dismissed from the theater by a Fine Arts Programming staff member.

Enjoy The Mystical Arts of Tibet!

This study guide was adapted from material provided by *The Mystical Arts of Tibet*, and designed by *Alison Guessou CSB '08*.