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Mandala Sand Painting by Tibetan Monks at IWU

October 3, 2006

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. - Tibetan monks will construct a mandala sand painting at Illinois Wesleyan University Oct. 24-27 in the John Wesley Powell Rotunda of The Ames Library, 1 Ames Plaza, in Bloomington.

The monks will also present a performance of sacred music and sacred dance in the new Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts, 107 E. Chestnut St., in Bloomington on October 27 at 8 p.m. Tickets can be purchased by visiting the Bloomington Center for Performing Arts' Web site at www.cityblm.org/bcd.



The performance will include the renowned multi-phonic chanting known as *zok-kay*, a technique in which a performer sings three notes simultaneously, thus creating a complete chord individually. The Tibetans are the only culture that cultivates this vocal ability, accomplished by 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. The music and dance performed is centuries old and has been passed down from generation to generation in the Drepung Loseling Monastery. Intricate costumes and traditional Tibetan instruments, such as the 10-foot long *dung-chen* horns and the *gyaling* trumpets, will complete the performance.

The *Mystical Arts of Tibet*, a Richard Gere and Drepung Loseling Production, is a world tour endorsed by the Dalai Lama and under the direct guidance of Drepung Loseling Monastery in India. The tour's purposes are to contribute 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. All the artists are monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery who are taking time off from their vocation to participate in the 15-month tour.

The monks will work six to eight hours per day in order to create the painting in four days. There will be an opening ceremony at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 24, as well as a closing ceremony at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 27, both in the John Wesley Powell Rotunda of The Ames Library, with instrumental and vocal music. Both ceremonies are free and open to the public. The sand painting itself will be a steady and quiet process, as the monks are used to a tranquil setting. CDs of the monks' chanting, Tibetan artifacts, jewelry and similar items will be for sale throughout the week as well in the rotunda.

The construction process is open for public observation at no charge, and will take place Tuesday, Oct. 24, from 12-10 p.m.; Wednesday and Thursday, Oct. 25 and 26, from 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; and Friday, Oct. 27, from 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Mandala sand painting is a process in which colored sand is meticulously laid onto a flat platform to form a painting. In Tibetan, this art is called *dul-tson-kyil-khor*, which translates to "mandala of colored powders." The mandala is used as a tool for reconsecrating the earth and healing its inhabitants. After painstakingly placing millions of grains of sand into place, they are swept away in a closing ceremony as a metaphor of the impermanence of life. The sand is then gathered and poured into a nearby river or stream where the monks believe the water will carry healing energies throughout the world.

The *Mystical Arts of Tibet* has been seen in dozens of museums, universities, festivals and art centers, including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York; the National Mall in Washington, D.C.; Duke University, Durham, N.C.; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England. The Loseling monks also created special sand mandalas and lead daily prayer ceremonies in New York and Washington in the aftermath of the September 11 tragedies.

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