



City of Slidell

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mystical Experience Coming to Slidell

The City of Slidell is about to experience something mystical. It's an opportunity for a unique peek into another culture, when the city presents a cultural extravaganza: *Mystical Arts of Tibet*.

The event will include two opportunities for citizens of all ages to experience the Tibetan culture as presented by Tibetan Lamas from Drepung Loseling Monastery. The first is the creation of a Sand Mandala, which will take place Feb. 27 to March 3. The second is "Sacred Music, Sacred Dance," an elaborate presentation of music, dance, chanting and exquisite costumes on Friday, March 2, at 7 p.m. Both presentations will be in the Slidell Municipal Auditorium.

The city's Department of Cultural & Public Affairs is also working with local schools for a number of arts-in-education components in conjunction with this event, including field trips to the mandala, a daytime educational performance for students and mandala art projects.

The *Mystical Arts of Tibet* presentations are part of a world tour co-produced by Richard Gere Productions and Drepung Loseling Institute, and are endorsed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

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.

The artists are monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery, which has been reestablished in exile in south India. They are taking time off from their lifelong devotion of 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. They hope that they will be able to make some small contribution toward world peace and toward the greater awareness of the Tibetan situation.

The *Mystical Arts of Tibet* monks have performed in such prestigious venues as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, the National Mall in Washington, D.C., The United Nations, NY, the Herbst Theatre in San Francisco, and the Commonwealth Institute, London. They have also twice performed at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C.

MYSTICAL – ADD ONE

“We’re delighted to be able to bring this presentation to Slidell,” said Bergeron. “It’s such a wonderful opportunity for our community to interact with people from such a vastly different culture. It really is about bringing people from around the world closer together.”

For the creation of the Sand Mandala, the monks will utilize millions of grains of colored sand, each carefully placed within a four foot by four foot platform base. The process will be completed over the course of a five day period. It’s a tradition that dates back some 2,500 years. Visitors to the auditorium can watch the monks during the creation process beginning Tuesday, Feb. 27, from 3 to 7 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 28 and March 1, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday, March 2 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturday, March 3, from 9 to 11 a.m. The monks have generously donated their services for the creation of the sand mandala as their contribution to the city’s recovery efforts. Admission is free.

In conjunction with this event, the Slidell Art League Gallery will be hosting two special mandala workshops on Saturday, Feb. 3, from 9 to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 to 3 p.m. The public is invited to join an informative presentation by Sue Berger-deRada, R.N., L.M.T. Attendees will learn about the significance of mandalas, how many are found in nature, and will create their own mandalas during the workshop. Participation is free but space is limited, so pre-registration is required. To register, call 847-9458.

The gallery will also host a special mandala art exhibit, Feb. 26 to March 3. Everyone in the community is invited to submit a mandala for the exhibit. Submissions for the exhibit must be delivered to the Slidell Art League Gallery no later than Saturday, Feb. 24. The gallery is located upstairs in the historic Slidell Train Depot at 1827 Front St. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission is free.

“Our objective is to cover the walls, from floor to ceiling, with hundreds of mandalas,” says Laurie Manley, the Slidell Art League’s gallery coordinator. “We want professional artists and amateurs, children and adults, in any media, from crayons to colored pencils to paints. It can be framed or unframed—it’s about creating an energy that represents the entire community.”

The Sacred Music, Sacred Dance presentation will be held Friday, March 2, at 7 p.m. in the Slidell Municipal Auditorium. As with the Mandala, the performance comprises selections believed to generate energies conducive to world healing.

Robed in magnificent costumes and playing traditional Tibetan instruments, the Loseling monks will perform ancient temple music and dance. The entire performance lasts approximately two hours, with a 20-minute intermission. V.I.P. reserved seating is available for \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door; General admission seating is \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door.

On Saturday, March 3, at 1 p.m. during a special Mandala Closing Ceremony, the mandala will be dismantled to symbolize the impermanence of all that exists. The colored sands will be swept up and distributed in small bags to the closing ceremony guests. The monks and guests will then proceed to Bayou Bonfouca in Heritage Park, where the sand will be poured into the water, a tradition believed to release the sands’ healing energy into the world. VIP tickets (reserved in rows 1 through 7) are \$20 each. General admission tickets are available for \$10 each.

MYSTICAL – ADD TWO

“Following this event, we’re going to create a Pathway to Healing,” Bergeron said. “We’re inviting all of our citizens to help us line the streets from the auditorium to Heritage Park, and we encourage each to bring their own mandalas to hold up to create this visual pathway. It can be something they have created themselves, or they can go to our website at www.slidell.la.us and download our mandala template and color it in. Citizens will then join in the procession as it passes them.

“This is an opportunity for our citizens to come together in recognition of our continuing healing and our city’s rebirth. Our citizens are all still experiencing healing on so many levels—physical, emotional and spiritual,” Bergeron said. “Events such as these one can enhance that healing process. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that we encourage all to attend.”

The procession will begin immediately following the ceremony (at approximately 2:30 p.m.) Participation is free.

Tickets to both the “Sacred Music Sacred Dance” and Sand Mandala Closing Ceremony are available at the Mayor’s Office, in the municipal trailer complex on the corner of Bayou Lane and Pennsylvania Avenue, and at the city’s Department of Cultural & Public Affairs, currently operating in the Slidell Art League Gallery at 1827 Front St., upstairs in the train depot. Tickets are available on a first come, first served basis Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

All of the Mystical Arts of Tibet events are made possible through the generosity of corporate sponsors and individual donors, including Slidell Women’s Civic Club, Northshore Regional Medical Center, Whitney Bank, Living Magazine, Slidell Memorial Hospital, St. Tammany Arts Commission, CLECO Power LLC, Baker Sales Inc., Hampton Inn of Slidell, Northshore Harbor Center, Season’s Steak & Spirits, Baskin-Robbins/Coy and Donna Faucheux, Cross Gates Athletic Club, Mary and Eric DuBuisson, Kathryn & Company’s A Touch of Italy Café and Lowry-Dunham, Case & Vivien. The events are supported in part by funds from the Louisiana State Arts Council and the Louisiana Division of the Arts as administered by the St. Tammany Arts Commission/Department of Cultural and Governmental Affairs, St. Tammany Parish.

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