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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

" A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything, and the value of nothing. "

Oscar Wilde

Respectful mood marks Buddhist wedding

About 1,500 guests in Halifax for royal union

By HOLLY FRAUGHTON

The Cunard Event Centre on the Halifax waterfront had a busy opening weekend, as almost 1,500 people gathered from around the globe to witness the marriage of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and Princess Tseyang Palmo.

The mood in the centre was solemn during the ceremony, as guests at the royal wedding attempted to maintain a sense of decorum and respect Tibetan and Buddhist traditions.

Guests were asked to bow as they entered the centre, passing by the incense in the inner court that is meant to evoke an elevated sense of well-being.

At the beginning of the ceremony, Richard Reoch, president of Shambhala International, said the marriage represents a sense of spiritual unity.

"It is also more than a wedding, in that it represents the historic coming together of two of the great streams of wisdom and practice," he said.

Sakyong Rinpoche is the eldest son of Trungpa Rinpoche, the founder of Shambhala Buddhism. His marriage to the princess represents a significant linking of lineages for Buddhists around the world.

With chamber music flowing through the hall, the bride and groom were led in separately and guided up the stairs to kneel on the throne of the main shrine, which was covered in red, white, orange and blue fabric.

The princess wore a chuba, a Tibetan garment of embroidered white silk, with her black hair in a single plait.

Lady Diana, the wife of the groom's late father, presided over the ceremony, performing purification ceremonies and blessing the couples' union.

The bride smiled shyly as Sakyong Rinpoche recited his vows, and the couple finally exchanged rings. Shortly after, Tibetan dignitaries quietly recited prayers and threw rice.

Helen Bonzi, who has been a member of the Shambhala community for over 20 years, helped organize the centre.

She said "armies of people" were involved in preparation for the big day.

The bride's family members came from Tibet to join in the celebrations, and Ms. Bonzi said other members of the Shambhala community came from as far away as Europe and Chile.



Shambhala Buddhist spiritual leader Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche places a wedding ring on the finger of his bride, Tseyang Palmo, during the ceremony in Halifax on Saturday. About 1,500 guests were on hand at the Cunard Event Centre on the Halifax Waterfront to witness the union. (PETER PARSONS / Herald Staff)



About 1,500 guests were on hand for the wedding of Shambhala Buddhist spiritual leader Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and Tibetan Princess Tseyang Palmo in Halifax on Saturday. (Peter Parsons / Staff)

Lt.-Gov. Myra Freeman and her husband also attended the ceremony Saturday, and joined guests in offering katas — ceremonial white scarves — to the happy couple.

The centre itself has undergone a dramatic transformation since Wednesday morning, when setup for the wedding began.

Joudi Westman helped co-ordinate the setup of the space.

She was a bit nervous when they began decorating, because there was still some construction going on in the brand-new centre.

But she is very happy with the end result. "It was beautiful. Sitting and watching it, I kept thinking how much Trungpa Rinpoche would have enjoyed this," Ms. Westman said.

The bride and groom were married in a civil service in Colorado last summer, and Ms. Bonzi said they will eventually have a third "less westernized" wedding for the bride's side of the family in India.

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