
 International Film Circuit, Inc.

presents

WORDS OF MY PERFECT TEACHER

An (ir)reverent portrait of
Dzongsar Khyentse Norbu Rinpoche

a film by Lesley Ann Patten

Featuring
Bernardo Bertolucci and Steven Seagal
And music by
Sting

produced by Lesley Ann Patten for **ZIJI Film & Television Ltd.**, and
Kent Martin for **The National Film Board of Canada**

Canada - Color - 103 min - 35mm - Digital Surround Sound

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A film by Lesley Ann Patten

Synopsis

From the streets of London and New York to the World Cup in Germany to the mystical mountain kingdom of Bhutan, *Words of My Perfect Teacher* follows three students on a quest for spiritual enlightenment. Buddhism teaches that to walk the path toward true enlightenment you must have a teacher. These students are ready to be taught the path, there is only one small snag: their teacher.

Meet Dzongsar Khyentse Norbu Rinpoche. He may be one of the world's most eminent Buddhist teachers, but it's a job description he slyly rejects at every turn. A citizen of the world and as fascinated by soccer and filmmaking, Dzongsar Khyentse constantly confounds all attempts at easy categorization.

Taking its title from the writings of 13th-century Tibetan Lama Patrul Rinpoche, the film's point of view is inspired by Buddhist philosophy — which says that we can't really change human behavior until we learn to deal with our mind. The mind is the starting point of all suffering and the source of closed hearts and entrenched views. Dzongsar Khyentse teaches by defying easy definition, forcing his students to turn inward and confront their own expectations and desires.

When filmmaker Lesley Ann Patten informed Dzongsar Khyentse that she wished to make a film about him, he performed a “mo” or spiritual divination, to predict the outcome. The result he reported: “barely enough grass to feed a goat for half a day.” Patten sets out to make a film about her teacher, but he quickly turns the tables on her, and the film becomes part of the filmmaker's own quest for spiritual growth. *Words of My Perfect Teacher* lets us share this quest as we accompany Patten on a delightful and intimate adventure.

Featuring appearances by Bernardo Bertolucci and Steven Seagal. Filmed in the UK, Bhutan, Canada, the US, and the World Cup playoffs in Germany. Set to a world beat with music by Sting, Tara Slone & Joy Drop, Steve Tibbets, U.Man.Tek, Kunga 19, and others. *Words of My Perfect Teacher* is for those who wish they'd met Yoda or Merlin, and long for the opportunity to engage with a teacher who defies convention.

Cast of Characters

The Teachers

Dzongsar Khyentse Norbu Rinpoche – Born in the remote mountains of Bhutan in 1961, Dzongsar Khyentse was recognized at the age of seven to be the third incarnation (*tulku*) of nineteenth-century master Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. “Rinpoche,” an appellation of his station, literally means “precious jewel.” A son of Bhutanese nobility and third in line from the Dalai Lama, obsessed with soccer and the cinema, he is also Bhutan’s first filmmaker, consulting on Bertolucci’s *Little Buddha* in 1993 and going on to write and direct 1999’s *The Cup* and 2004’s *Travelers and Magicians*. Norbu is not your stereotypical Buddhist teacher, by turns sincere and playfully enigmatic.

Steven Seagal – Actor, martial artist, teacher, activist and practicing Buddhist, Steven Seagal surprised the world when he revealed in 1997 that he had been recognized as the reincarnation (*tulku*) of the treasure revealer Chungdrag Dorje of Palyul Monastery. “One of the great marks of a great teacher,” he says, “is, in fact, nobody knows for sure if he’s an idiot or a great master.”

Bernardo Bertolucci The internationally renowned filmmaker, whose credits include *Last Tango In Paris*, *The Last Emperor*, *The Conformist* and *The Dreamers*. In 1993, Bertolucci recruited Dzongsar Khyentse to provide spiritual advice and consultation on the set of the film *Little Buddha*, introducing him to the world of filmmaking. Here, Bertolucci reflects on his experiences with Norbu, and on the nature of Buddhism itself.

Gesar Mukpo Recognized at the age of three as the reincarnation (*tulku*) of Sechen Kongtrul Rinpoche. Seen in the film as more interested in playing basketball and driving a sports car than in pursuing enlightenment, he is something of an apostate. In the film, he declares that he is selling his title on Ebay, for an opening bid of \$25,000.

Aunt Shirley Tarot card reader, intimate friend and adviser to Louise Rodd, whom she has known since she was 10 years old.

The Students

Lesley Ann Patten A Halifax-based writer and director, Patten has been a student of Buddhism for 20 years, and is a follower of Dzongsar Khyentse Norbu. A documentarian since 1990, this film marks her first on-screen presence in one of her own films.

Louise Rodd freelance Tarot card reader and disciple of Khyentse Norbu, whom she first met outside a movie theatre.

Luc Dierckx A professional ballet dancer turned computer geek, Luc finds himself spending 6 months as Dzongsar Khyentse’s “right hand man,” following him from London to Germany for the World Cup, only to feel himself left behind when Norbu returns to Bhutan. “If he’s so enlightened,” he says, “then why doesn’t he f---ing act like it?”

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With

Dzongsar Khyentse Norbu Rinpoche

Lesley Ann Patten

Louise Rodd

Luc Dierkx

Bernardo Bertolucci

Steven Seagal

Gesar Mukpo

Aunt Shirley

Crew

Director/Producer	Lesley Ann Patten
Producer	Kent Martin
Cinematographer	Kent Nason
Editor	Peter Giffen
Sound Recordists	Alex Salter Jane Porter
Line Producer	Angela De Nicola
Graphic Design	Ben Fong

Produced in association with:	Vision TV Radio-Canada
Produced with the participation of:	Canadian Television Fund Nova Scotia Film Development Corporation Rogers Telefund
Produced with the financial participation of:	Rogers Documentary Fund
Produced with the Assistance of:	The Nova Scotia Film Industry Tax Credit Canadian Film or Video Tax Credit
Training provided with the assistance of the Canada/Nova Scotia COOPERATION Agreement on Economic Diversification	

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The Filmmaker

Lesley Ann Patten - Producer/Director Born in America and based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Lesley Ann Patten began creating material for television in 1990. Her work has been broadcast internationally in Canada, the U.S., Europe and Asia. Patten's first documentary, "Loyalties," was declared one of "The Ten Best Documentaries of 2000" at the American Film Institute Festival. "Loyalties" also won The Canada Award. In 2001, Patten won a Gemini Award for Best Direction in a Documentary for her second film, *Voice Set Free*. In 1999, she founded her film company, ZIJI Film & Television, where she continues to produce projects within Canada and internationally. She recently completed the documentary "Regarding Cohen," the tale of Canadian immigration-rights activist M. Lee Cohen, and is now working as writer/director on two feature films, one to be filmed in Australia and the other in New Zealand, Scotland and Canada.

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Dzongsar Khyentse Norbu Rinpoche

Khyentse Norbu is one of the most important lamas in modern Tibetan Buddhism, acclaimed director of *The Cup* and *Travellers & Magicians*, and third in line to the Dalai Lama. As featured in the documentary film *Words Of My Perfect Teacher*, he is a charismatic, mischievous, and sly character who upsets all expectations of an eminent spiritual guru.

Norbu, or His Eminence Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, studied for twelve years with the Dalai Lama as one of his teachers. His rigorous classical training, non-secular approach, and passion for filmmaking make him one of the most provocative figures in Buddhism today.

Getting his start in film as a consultant to Bernardo Bertolucci during the making of *Little Buddha* in 1993, Norbu was developing *Travellers & Magicians* during the shooting of *Words Of My Perfect Teacher*. In addition to his filmmaking responsibilities, he is active in the preservation of Buddhist teaching around the world. He keeps a teaching schedule, and supervises the Dzongsar Monastery and retreat centers in Bhutan, and colleges in India and Bhutan. He has established centers in Australia, Canada, the United States and the Far East.

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Festivals and Awards

Vancouver International Film festival

Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival

Rhode Island International Film Festival

Winner, Best Foreign Film

WorldFest Houston International Film Festival

Winner, Silver Award – Best Feature Documentary

Woodstock Film festival, Woodstock New York

Vladivostok International Film festival

Festival De Rio – Rio De Janeiro International Film festival

Louis Vuitton Hawaii International Film Festival

FILMSTOCK International Film festival

Himalaya Film Festival

Jackson Hole Film festival

Phoenix Film Festival

Boulder International Film Series

The Tahoe/Reno International Film Festival

Cleveland International Film Festival

Tiburon International Film Festival

International Buddhist Film Festival

Sun Valley Spiritual Film Festival, Idaho