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Documentary On Moroccan Music To Premiere At The Chicago Cultural Center

The Casablanca Committee of the Chicago Sister Cities International Program will host the American premiere of "The Music of Morocco and the Cycles of Life," a documentary film by DePaul University music faculty member Victoria Vorreiter. The event, a fundraiser for the Casablanca Committee, includes a photo exhibition, also by Vorreiter, titled Tea in the Sahara, as well as a reception and remarks by the filmmaker. It will be held February 13 at 5:30 p.m. in G.A.R. Hall, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St. The cost is \$50 and proceeds will support exchanges between Chicago and Casablanca in the areas of culture, education, medicine, environment, technology, social services and economic development. For tickets and information, please call 312-742-5320.

The 50-minute documentary explores the unique connection between life passages and the ancient music of Morocco. Each phase of life is marked by musical ritual, from the birthing rites for a Berber baby to the Muslim recitation at an elder's funeral, from ancient Arabic lullabies to adolescent initiation ceremonies, from day-to-day chanting in physical labor to religious prayer. Not only does the film expose viewers to the extraordinary music of Morocco, but because of music's role in every aspect of life viewers also witness Moroccans up close as they celebrate in their homes, fields and places of worship. Through these intimate scenes the mundane becomes universal and moving.

"Everywhere I traveled in Morocco I experienced a people who extended extraordinary kindness and hospitality, a people who want the same things in life that we all want—well being, love and peace," said Vorreiter. "We must begin to hear our universal chord."

The film is even more poignant in the wake of Sept. 11, she said. "It not only shows the transformational power of music but also puts a human face on the people of a Muslim country. We come to know our similarities rather than our differences."

Vorreiter made her first trek to the North African nation in 1998 to do DePaul graduate studies at Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech. She has traveled alone to Morocco five more times in the last three years to collect footage and immerse herself in the music and lives of Moroccans.

"I was drawn to Morocco because it is at a major crossroads—culturally, historically and socially," she said "The music is incredibly rich and diverse, reflecting the mixture of Berber, Islamic, Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan African cultures. My goal was to capture this indigenous music and share it with others before it disappears."

Vorreiter's inspirational mentor for the project was Paul Bowles, the author of "The Sheltering Sky," later made into a film by Bernardo Bertolucci. Bowles made field recordings of Moroccan music for the Library of Congress in the 1960s. Vorreiter met Bowles three times at his Tangiers home to discuss her project before the expatriate writer died in 1999. Vorreiter has dedicated her documentary to Bowles.

Vorreiter is a violinist and instructor specializing in the Suzuki Method. For more than 20 years she has taught in music schools and universities in England, France and the United States. She is presently a member of the faculty of the School of Music at DePaul University in Chicago. Vorreiter is a freelance artist and author and illustrator of several children's books as well as a forthcoming book of essays on music, education, and early childhood development titled "The Song Within the Gentle Heart."

"The Music of Morocco and the Cycles of Life" is made possible in part by grants from the Illinois Humanities Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Illinois General Assembly, the Ford Fund, Royal Air Maroc, the National Moroccan Tourist Office and a Chicago Community Trust anonymous donor.

Chicago and Casablanca have been sister cities since 1982. Chicago's other sister and friendship cities include: Accra, Ghana; Athens, Greece; Birmingham, England; Durban, South Africa; Galway, Ireland;

Gothenburg, Sweden; Hamburg, Germany; Kyiv, Ukraine; Lucerne, Switzerland; Mexico City, Mexico; Milan, Italy; Moscow, Russia; Osaka, Japan; Paris, France; Petach Tikva, Israel; Prague, Czech Republic; Shanghai and Shenyang, China; Toronto, Canada; Vilnius, Lithuania; and Warsaw, Poland.

The Chicago Sister Cities International Program is dedicated to promoting economic, educational and cultural exchanges between Chicago and its 22 Sister Cities. For more information about the Chicago Sister Cities International Program, please call (312) 744-8074 or visit www.chicagosistercities.org.

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