



CULTURALLY SPEAKING

The monthly newsletter of the Earth Cultures Project of Educational Communications

MESSAGE FROM NANCY PEARLMAN, Executive Director of Educational Communications

March 2012



CHANTS, MUSIC AND THEATER

Two friends recently invited me to some exceptional performances of music and

drama. The music, religious Gregorian chants and organ music, is moving, and as in any musical concert, can be enjoyed regardless of your faith. The setting and the historical nature of the songs is a treat in itself. And the play about famous black women is significant even if you are not black or a woman because it reflects American culture and people who achieved so much against so many odds. These are highly recommended programs if you enjoy choral music, organ playing, or drama. Los Angeles offers so many undiscovered gems.

At St. James' in the City, an Anglican/Episcopalian Church at 3903 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90010 (near Normandie), the choir sings beautiful hymns dating back hundreds of years accompanied by a one hundred-year old organ. In the stunning Gothic-style building (worth a visit just to see the stained glass windows and high vaulted ceiling), the "Solemn Evensong" (conducted once a month) creates a meditative atmosphere. Even if you are not religious, you can enjoy this service that has been sung daily in England since the sixteenth century. About two minutes of the hour-long program is recitation from some lines in the Bible but other than that, you can sit back and enjoy the Choir singing prayers, Psalms, canticles, responses, and other music. This is a service in which much of the music is sung by the Choir to classical and often elaborate settings dating from the time of the English Reformation (and earlier) to

THREE HOLIDAYS

by Preston Ashbourne



There are three happy holidays this March that all relate to, or may relate to, Persia/Iran.

There is NoRouz, which is the Persian New Year. It's a holiday that predates Islam and either originated with Zoroastrianism or predates that too. NoRouz means New Day and is the Vernal Equinox. It starts this year at 10pm on March 19. On the Tuesday night (the eve of Wednesday) prior to No Rouz people jump over bonfires to purify themselves for the new year. (Hmm, sounds pretty Celtic to me!)

Also there is Purim, the holiday that celebrates foiling Haman's plan to exterminate the Jews of Persia. He was a minister of King Ahasueros (who may have been Xerxes or maybe Artaxerxes II). The king had taken Esther (also named Hadassah) to be queen, not knowing she was Jewish. Through her and her uncle Mordecai's bravery and cleverness the bad guy's plot was foiled and he was hanged. Good riddance! Purim is celebrated with carnivals, eating sweets, and "formal" readings of the biblical Book of Esther. I say "formal" because they can be rather raucous. Whenever Haman's name is read people yell, stamp their feet, or twirl Groggers (noisemakers) to drown out the name of the evil doer. Ironically, the typical sweet thing eaten on Purim is called Hamantaschen (in Yiddish) which means "Haman's Pockets". The name may be derived from "montaschen" which is poppyseed pockets. The book of Esther is unique in the Bible in that it has no mention of God, and the hero(ine) is a woman of beauty and courage. Besides, the book is a good story!

Oh yeah, the third holiday. Why, 'tis St Paddy's Day of course. A holiday that honors the Briton called Padraig in Irish who pretty much single handedly brought monotheism to pagan Ireland about 16 centuries ago. Nowadays, especially in the US, it's all leprechauns, green beer, and Erin go Bragh, but my Irish teacher told me that in Ireland they just celebrated by sticking a shamrock (three leafed clover representing the Trinity) in their lapels and having dinner at Grandma's.

How do I plan to tie Ireland to Persia? The Gaelic name for Ireland is "Eire" which has as its dative form "Eirinn" and genitive "Eireann" whence the poetic name "Erin" which just may be the same word as "Aryan" and "Iran". After all, the Celts and the Indo Iranians are branches of the huge Indo-European language family, even though today they are thousands of miles apart!



Corner Your Memories

first-hand stories from our community



NO ROUZ

by Assieh La Mora

I just celebrated my birthday on February 17th. Back home in Iran, my birthday is on the 28th day of the month called "Bahman" in the Iranian calendar, two days before the end of the month. The following month is "Esfand," the last month of the Iranian calendar year, which begins on February 20 and lasts until March 19.

Thinking of my Iranian birthday, I had a flashback to my childhood. I felt that I was missing something... It took a little while, but suddenly I was back in time, growing up in Tehran. I remembered that almost every year on my birthday, we had very heavy snow. The white carpet of snow covered all the roads, streets, rooftops, trees... and because of living at the foot of the mountains, everything looked crisp, clean and beautiful.

Soon after my birthday, throughout the month of Esfand, the last month of winter, the beautiful white winter would gradually leave and take us to the beautiful spring arrival. A few days after I had my good old delicious white birthday cake, we would begin preparations for a wonderful celebration: "NoRouz" (New Day), the Iranian New Year, which coincides with the beginning of Spring, an ancient tradition celebrating life.

New Year in Iran is celebrated on the spring equinox and that is how its exact time is determined. So the celebration falls on a different hour of the day each year. In the month of Esfand, families are busy with plenty of activities in preparation for NoRouz, from spring cleaning to buying new clothes for the new year and other rituals and ceremonies. This celebration goes back 3000 years, and it's a tradition of the Zoroastrian belief system which used to be the religion of Ancient Persia (old Iran).

The most important celebration begins the last Tuesday night of the old year and

continues until day thirteen of the new year. On that Tuesday night, or "Chahar Shanbe Souri," everybody gathers around bonfires and right at sunset they jump over the fires and chant: "Oh fire, all my sickness and weakness for you in return for your warmth, beauty and health." This ritual represents cleansing of the mind and body, and the onset of the new year with enlightenment, health and happiness.

At the time of the spring equinox, the beginning of NoRouz, families come together around the table of "Haft Seen" (Seven S's), wearing new clothes and waiting for "Amoo NoRouz," our version of Santa Claus, to arrive.

We also put a goldfish in a bowl, colored eggs, and nice decorative things like mirrors, coins and candles on the table.

Once the New Year is announced on radio or TV, after all the hugs and kisses, the time for sweets and gifts arrives. In our

"**Haft Seen**" is an arrangement of seven specific items beginning with letter "S" in the Farsi language, representing Health, Wealth and Love. These items usually consist of:

- SEEB (apple)**
symbolizing health
- SEER (garlic)**
medicine, and taking away evil and illness
- SAMANO (a sweet paste made with sprouted wheat)**
for good crops in the planting season
- SENJED (the dried fruit of the Oleaster tree)**
symbolizing love
- SOMAG (sumac berries)**
symbolizing the color of sunlight
- SERKEH (vinegar)**
for good health in old age
- SONBOL (hyacinth flowers)**
representing the coming of spring
- and last but not least,
SABZEH (sprouted wheat or barley)
symbolizing rebirth.

tradition the gift is always money fresh out of the mint. We, as kids, had a blast, eating all the special New Year sweets and collecting coins and colorful paper money. In Iran, paper money had different colors depending on its value. We either had guests over, or we went visiting others, being guests ourselves. The joy and excitement of guessing how much money we were going to collect during the thirteen days of celebration was so wonderful. Yet we also had to manage a large quantity of homework from school during the long holidays. That was the only downside to the celebrations.

On the thirteenth day of spring, the last day of celebrations, families would pack their bags and go to the countryside for a picnic. On this day people tossed out the Sabzeh (sprouted wheat), from the Haft Seen to the running water of a river, brook, or stream. This represented throwing all the evils to the water to be washed away to far away distances. All the bad of the last year is gone and your New Year begins with a new and fresh body and mind.

I have great memories from all the No Rouz that I celebrated in Iran...the innocent excitement of the celebration of life, the smell of brand new money, and maybe, on my birthday, I was just missing to be a child again!

NoRouz Mobarak

Lots of Love
assieh "La Mora"



Corner Your Memories

first-hand stories from our community

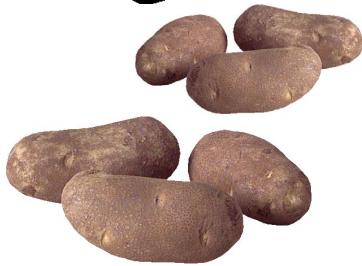
is a periodic column in the Culturally Speaking newsletter focusing on memories and stories of members of our multi-cultural community. We invite you to send us your story for possible inclusion in the newsletter.

culturallyspeaking
@earthculturesproject.org

Now, go to the **Corner**
and try to remember!



MUST BE MARCH!



Have a good (or bad)
food memory, recipe
or restaurant?

Write to us (200 words
or less) at:

[culturallyspeaking@
earthculturesproj.org](mailto:culturallyspeaking@earthculturesproj.org)

You may see it published!

As always,
don't forget the hungry.

Go to

www.freerice.com

Play a free game and rice
will be donated to those
who need it!

FreeRice is a non-profit
website run by the
United Nations
World Food Programme.

CHANTS, MUSIC AND THEATER

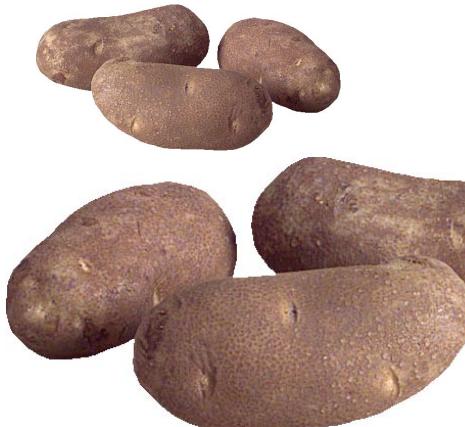
by Nancy Pearlman
continued from page 1, column 1

the present day and the texts of the songs are often from the Book of Common Prayer. There is a half-hour break with free refreshments in the Parish Hall before an hour-long organ concert. The program I enjoyed included music from Johann Sebastian Bach, Felix Mendelssohn, Leo Sowerby, Herbert Howells, Charles Tournemire, and Maruic Durufle. They bring the keyboard down to the center of the floor so you can see the organist skillfully play the tunes. The David John Falconer Memorial Organ in the church was originally built in 1911 for St. Paul's Pro-Cathedral. In 1995 it was rebuilt and in 2000 and 2005 new "divisions" were installed. More history and specification of the organ is at www.SaintJamesLA.org.

There is a "Great Music at Saint James" series which on April 15 at 4:30 will feature the Choir of Canterbury Cathedral in the United Kingdom. Canterbury Cathedral is a World Heritage Site and one of the oldest and most famous structures in England. Its Choir sings daily services

as well as touring. On the fourth Sunday of the month at St. James in Los Angeles is the Compline Service. April 22 at 7:30 PM Schola Cantorum

of Saint James is scheduled. Drawn from the most contemplative of the monastic offices begun in the Middle Ages, this choral service, bathed in



incense, offers music from Gregorian Chant and early polyphone to the contemporary music of modern mystics. It is an offering of thanksgiving and a plea for peace. What made it exceptional to me was the fact that the men sang in the back so you could simply sit in a beautiful space by candlelight and feel moved by lovely songs surrounding you. The church offers their services (albeit to me, music concerts) free of charge, although there is a basket for a free-will offering.

Theater/Theatre presented an original one-woman show created and performed by Sandy Brown called "Oh, Yes She Did! from Slave-Ship to Space-Ship: Black Women Pioneers of America." While featured in honor of February's Black History Month, the show will return in April and should be a must-see for anyone interested in seeing an extremely talented actress portray important figures in everyone's life. She blended drama, humor, music, dance, and multi-media to capture the unique roles, talents, and accomplishments of Phyllis Wheatley (the first female published poet while still a slave), Harriet Tubman (anti-slavery advocate), Angela Davis (political activist and professor), Rosa Parks (a leader of the modern civil rights movement), Shirley Chisholm (first woman to run for President in a major political office), Diana Ross (singer), Dr. Mae Jemison (astronaut), Madame C. J. Walker (self-made millionaire), Josephine Baker (entertainer and war spy) and many others.

HAPPY TIBETAN NEW YEAR - February 22 to March 8 - 15 Days of Miracles

LOSAR TASHI DELEK

Water Dragon Year 2139



SOME UPCOMING EVENTS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



ANITA AND THE YANKS

Anita and the Yanks broke into the Celtic rock music scene in 2008 and have built an impressive fan base in and around the Los Angeles area. Lead singer, guitarist Anita Mansfield and Bryan Dobbs mandolin player started out as a duo and they picked up Ryan Dean (drums) Damon Stout (bass) and Pat D'Arcy (uilleann pipes) along the way, featuring special guests Rachel Grace and Chris Loken on violin.

FINN MC COOL'S IRISH PUB

Tue, Mar 6 (duo) 8 - 11:30 PM

Fri, Jun 1 10 PM - 1:30 AM

2702 Main St
Santa Monica, CA 90405

IRELAND'S 32

Fri, Mar 2 9:30 PM - 1:30 AM

13721 Burbank Blvd
Van Nuys, CA 91401

MULDOONS PUB

Sun, Mar 4 2 PM - 4 PM

Sun, Apr 22 2 PM - 4 PM
202 Newport Center Drive
Newport Beach, CA

LA IRISH FAIR MUSIC FESTIVAL

10 AM - 6 PM

Sat, Mar 10 and Sun, Mar 11

601 W. McKinley Ave
Pomona, CA 91768

www.anitaandtheyanks.com

PADDY O'S

Fri, Mar 16 5:30 PM - 9:00 PM

20320 South Western Avenue
Torrance, CA 90501

TILTED KILT 2 PM - 5 PM

Sat, Mar 17 ST. PATRICKS DAY!

6575 E. PCH, Long Beach, CA

IRISH TIMES 9:30 PM - 1 AM

Sat, Mar 17 ST. PATRICKS DAY!

3267 Motor Ave, LA, CA 90034

TAM O'SHANTER

Fri, Mar 23 8:00 PM - 11:00 PM

2980 Los Feliz Blvd,
Los Angeles, CA 90039

THE FORD AMPHITHEATRE

Sun, Sep 16

2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East,
LA, CA 90068



ASSIEH LAMORA

Assieh was born and raised in Iran. She started her Flamenco dance training at early age in Los Angeles and later in Spain at Amor de Dios Flamenco Dance Academy in Madrid with master teachers like; La Tati, Ciro, Carmela Greco, La Truco, Manolete and in Sevilla at Manolo Marin Dance Academy. She has also studied under private training of Angelita Vargas and Pepa Montes. She teaches at Gypsy Camp near Motor and National in Los Angeles. Call for class schedule: (310) 558-0746.

AUTRY NATIONAL CENTER

NATIVE VOICES AT THE AUTRY

America's leading Native American Theatre Company presents

"Walking on Turtle Island" and
"Ghostlands of an Urban NDN"

March 1-18

See website for details.

www.theautry.org



JOHN BILEZIKJIAN

John Bilezikjian is "America's Oud Virtuoso." Mr. Bilezikjian may be the most prominent Oudist of his generation. He is a master Oudist who has elevated this instrument to the concert stage as well as continues to perform as a folk musician. He has performed for some 51 years on this ancient eleven stringed Persian fretless instrument dating back some 2,000 years. The Oud is performed with an eagle's quill. See below for John's performance schedule.

Regular events:

First Tuesday of the Month

7:30 PM to 9:30 PM

Casablanca Restaurant

6030 Paseo del Norte

Carlsbad, CA. 92008

(760) 603-9672 Belly Dancing
and Folk Dancing

Third Thursday Every other Month

8:30 PM to 11:30 PM

Tango Del Rey

3567 Del Rey St.

San Diego, CA. 92109

(858) 794-2687

With featured and guest belly dancers and Frank Lazzaro and Dave Dhillon

<http://dantzrecords.com>

Always check with venues to confirm dates, times, and locations.

MORE UPCOMING EVENTS SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

THE G2 GALLERY

Nature & Wildlife Photography

*Supporting Art
&
the Environment*

1503 Abbot Kinney Blvd.
Venice, CA 90291

EXHIBITS

Ansel Adams

February 21 - May 13

Thomas D. Mangelsen

January 16 - April 1

Jeff Crandell

Febryary 21 - April 1

Cheryl Medow

April 3 - May 13

Usually free, some charge for
special events. See website for
details.

www.theG2gallery.com



GYPSY FOLK ENSEMBLE

The Gypsy Folk Ensemble is an ethnic and folk dance performing company based in Los Angeles, California which was formed in 1978 to preserve, perform and teach traditional folk dances from countries around the world. See website below for workshops and assemblies available.

**The Gypsy Folk Ensemble will be performing and teaching
Russian dances at Kidspace Museum in Pasadena
on March 6, 2012 at 6pm.**

This is a free family night during the hours of 4-8pm.

www.kidspacemuseum.org

Directions to Kidspace

Kidspace is located at 480 N. Arroyo Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91103, at the west end of Brookside Park near the Rose Bowl stadium. The museum occupies the buildings that formerly housed the Fannie Morrison Horticultural Center.

Free parking is available in Lot I, next to the west end of Brookside Park near the Rose Bowl.

www.gypsyfolkensemble.com

Always check with venues to confirm dates, times, and locations.



VOX FEMINA

Vox Femina Los Angeles presents

FROM SHAKESPEARE TO SHAMROCKS

a spring concert joining the
English & Irish in Song

Zipper Concert Hall
Colburn School of Music
200 S. Grand Ave, LA, 90012

St. Patrick's Day,
March 17, 2012

8 PM.
Tickets \$25-30 during presale
\$35 at the door

www.voxfeminala.org

LINKS OF INTEREST
(see below for clickable links if viewing on the webpage)

MUSEUMS

The Autry National Center
www.theautry.org

Bowers Museum
www.bowers.org

Craft & Folk Art Museum
www.cafam.org

The Getty
www.getty.edu

Metropolitan Museum of Art
(search the database for works of art,
costumes & more)
www.metmuseum.org/works_of_art/

Museum of Latin American Art
www.molaa.org

Museum of Tolerance
www.museumoftolerance.com

Pacific Asia Museum
www.pacificasiamuseum.org

ONGOING ACTIVITIES IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA

Current Cultural Happenings Around Los Angeles
groups.yahoo.com/group/caltechfolkdance

Olvera Street in Los Angeles
http://olvera-street.com

Folkworks (click on "calendar")
www.folkworks.org/

FOLK DANCE & FOLK MUSIC INFORMATION

Dick Oakes' Folk Dance Pages
www.phantomranch.net/folkdanc/folkdanc.htm

Folkways (ethnic music)
www.folkways.si.edu/index.aspx

ARC Music (ethnic music CDs)
www.arcmusic.co.uk

ARTS AND CULTURES

Smithsonian Magazine Arts & Cultures
www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture

Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
www.folklife.si.edu/

BBC - Holidays Around the World and so much more!
www.bbc.co.uk/nature/humanplanetexplorer/events_and_festivals

Pulse of the Planet
www.pulseplanet.com

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

BYKI
Free language software downloads
www.byki.com/

FREELANG
Free bilingual dictionary downloads
www.freelang.net/

FOR KIDS

Yahoo's site for kids to learn about the world's countries
www.kids.yahoo.com/reference/world-factbook

CHILDREN'S BOOKS BY DK PUBLISHING
www.us.dk.com

Complete Flags of the World
My World, My Story:
Life Stories from Teens from Around the World
Homes Around the World
Children Just Like Me
A Life Like Mine

CHILDREN'S MUSEUMS
<http://kidspacemuseum.org>

(These links are for reference only and are not necessarily endorsed by Educational Communications)

ABOUT THE EARTH CULTURES PROJECT

Earth Cultures is one of the projects of Educational Communications, a non-profit 501(c)(3), tax-exempt organization founded in 1958, dedicated to improving the quality of life on this planet. The organization produces documentaries and works with several performing groups and individuals through its Earth Cultures Project to promote cultural awareness and provide education through the arts.

DONATION & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Your donation will help bring the arts back to education under the Earth Cultures Project, or help fund other projects of Educational Communications. Volunteers are always needed in the office. If you are interested in volunteering please call (310) 559-9160.



This is *Culturally Speaking*, the monthly newsletter of the Earth Cultures Project, one of Educational Communications' many projects focusing on "Education through the Arts." Educational Communications is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Volunteers and donations are always appreciated.

EARTH CULTURES PROJECT

www.earthculturesproject.org

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Support the Arts & Education!