



CULTURALLY SPEAKING

The monthly newsletter of the Earth Cultures Project of Educational Communications

MESSAGE FROM NANCY PEARLMAN

December 2010



When I moved to Los Angeles in my college days, I was thrilled and excited to be part of a very diverse community. As an anthropologist I still enjoy attending many ethnic events by groups that do not necessarily reflect my heritage. The welcoming atmosphere and the great performances by singers, musicians, and dancers encourages me to return year after year. Although it is not always possible to get to the same programs each year, I always keep it in the back of my mind for future social outings. Just these past few months I heard at these free events: singers from Spain doing traditional music at the G2 Gallery; Kenyans at the Skirball Cultural Center, a Cape Verde Singer from West Africa and a Brazilian Dance troupe at MacArthur Park; Bulgarian singers and musicians at the Getty Museum, Greek musicians and dancers at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral GreekFest; Egyptian Coptic hymns, classical East Indian Dance, and Sikh hymns at the Robertson Peace Picnic; and Yemenite, Israeli, Eastern European and American Jewish songs at a Yom Kippur Service. Then there were local dance companies performing Central Asian, Estonian, and Armenian dances at a Folk Art and Craft Museum mock Folk Wedding; Chinese, Armenian and Russian dances at the International Youth Music and Art Festival; and, of course, the traditional Lions Dance at the Chinese Moon Festival. Then there were the many national days where singers and dancers performed: Mongolia, Azerbaijan, Taiwan, and China. Sorry I missed the Macedonian New Year, the Japanese Festival, and many other community programs, but there is always next time.

Nancy Pearlman, Executive Director
Educational Communications

WINTER DREAMS



As an Italian child, I heard many times grandma exclaiming (with great relief, always) "Saint Lucy"! That didn't need explanations: obviously (as we all knew) she had found her glasses or purse, that she had lost but were just in front of her. Then I sure didn't know how these phenomena could be a curse of adult life... "Saint Lucy" was responsible for her (or any Italian) finally seeing what was in full sight... but somehow hidden, not processed from the brain: she is the beloved patron of sight, protector of the blind and the eyes in general. We celebrate her Fest on December 13, traditionally "the longest night of the year" and in fact Winter Solstice, according to the Julian Calendar. Lucy, a Christian martyr, is also patron of the Sicilian town of Syracuse... Southern Italy is filled with girls bearing her name in myriad versions: Lucia, Luce, Lucina, Lucilla, Lúcia, Luciana. I have at least one of each in my family, but my favorite version is Luce that literally means Light. Lucy is usually depicted with a pair of eyes in her hand: following different traditions they have been taken away from her torturers, given back by the Lord or she spontaneously sacrificed them. There was a painting of her, at my home, that I really liked it: those puzzling extra eyes suggested an extra vision, the inner sight of dreams... And in fact Lucy is said to have received help for healing her mother, in a dream. Curiously, the famous Neapolitan song "Santa Lucia", describing the enchanting sight of the bay from a particular hill, is sung (with a variety of lyrics) in all Scandinavian countries during the Festival of Lights, a big celebration held on December 13th, to honor Saint Lucy. Also encompassing elements of Halloween and Christmas, mostly referring to the struggle between light and darkness, so vivid in this moment of the year: Especially in regions where the daytime is very reduced, bringing up an ancestral fear of obscurity. The Festival restores hopes and faith that the sun, the warmth, the beautiful season will come back. Lucy, like a swallow, flies back and forth from South Sicily to North Norway, lightly but bravely, crossing winter skies.

contributed by
Toti O'Brien



'TIS THE SEASON —

to eat tamales! December 16th is the beginning of the nine days of Las Posadas, the Mexican holiday celebrating the search for the inn by Mary and Joseph. Every home in a neighborhood prepares for visits by peregrinos (pilgrims) who are turned away. One house has been prearranged to be the "Inn" where everyone winds up for a party with sweet tamales (stuffed with raisins or strawberries) and Piñatas.



On the last night, 12/24, the party may be at the church. **Feliz Navidad!**

*contributed by
Preston Ashbourne*

LINKS OF INTEREST

Bowers Museum
<http://www.bowers.org>

Craft & Folk Art Museum
<http://www.cafam.org>

Pacific Asia Museum
<http://www.pacificasiamuseum.org>

Museum of Latin American Art
<http://www.molaa.org>

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

Dick Oakes' Folk Dance Pages
<http://www.phantomranch.net/folkdanc/folkdanc.htm>

Cultural Happenings Around LA
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/caltechfolkdance>

Smithsonian Magazine
Arts & Cultures
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture>

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

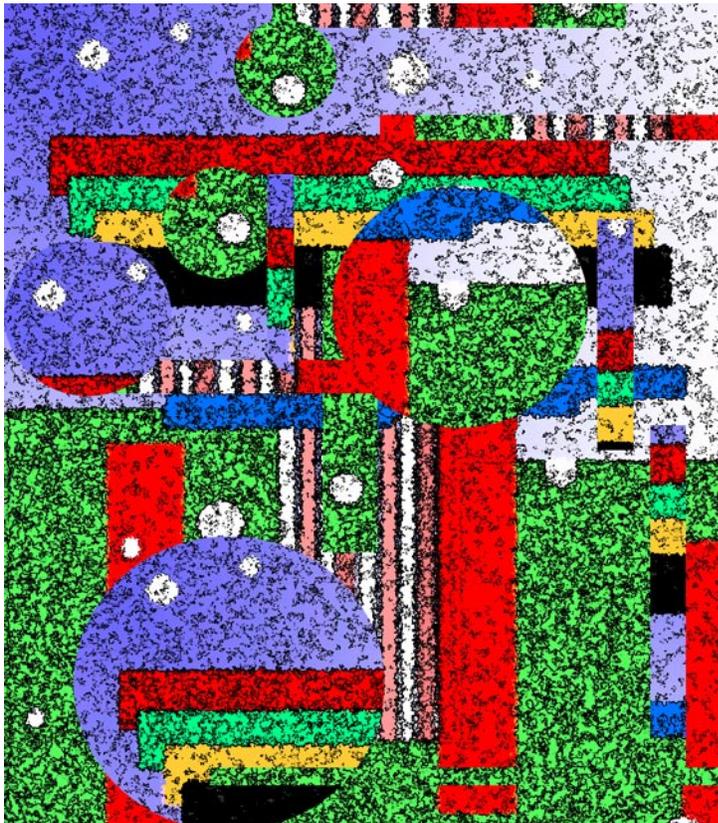
**ABOUT THE
EARTH CULTURES PROJECT**

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 education through the arts.

**VOLUNTEER AND DONATION
OPPORTUNITIES**

Volunteers are always needed in the office to help with phone calls and other tasks. If you are interested in volunteering please call Nancy at (310) 559-9160.

Visit the Earth Cultures Project website to find easy ways to donate to any of our projects. Use "goodsearch" to search the web as you always do, and a small percentage goes to the non-profit of your choice. Sign up for "eScrip" or "GoodShop." Spend as you would anyway and donate to your cause at the same time. We hope you'll choose Educational Communications in Los Angeles as your non-profit of choice. Your donation will help bring the arts back to education under the Earth Cultures Project, or help fund other projects of Educational Communications.



Celebrations of December by NH

**HAPPY DECEMBER
TO ALL!**

**EARTH CULTURES
PROJECT**

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