



# CULTURALLY SPEAKING

The monthly newsletter of the Earth Cultures Project of Educational Communications

MESSAGE FROM NANCY PEARLMAN, Executive Director of Educational Communications

January 2012



## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

But this greeting is relevant almost every month of the year depending on whose calendar you are following.

Traditionally among most indigenous societies, the new year was at the Equinox (Spring or Fall depending on the hemisphere) because of the rebirth of plants and life after the winter dormancy. But cultures have adapted other dates in the past and even the present. The modern Christian calendar which is also used worldwide for business regardless whether a particular group has another calendar for other holidays and celebrations established January 1 for New Years. This date has no astronomical nor agricultural significance; it is purely arbitrary and has only been used by Western nations for about 400 years.

The Babylonians more than 4000 years ago observed the new year with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox. They enjoyed eleven days of festivities. The Romans continued to observe the new year in late March. The Catholic Church in Europe condemned the pagan festivities but soon adapted their own religious observances concurrently with many of the pagan celebrations (probably to encourage converts). New Years on January 1 is observed by them as the Feast of Christ's Circumcision.

The Jewish New Year, known as Rosh Hashanah, (meaning "head of the year") is always in September. It is the first of the High Holy Days which occur in the autumn. The date is the first two days of Tishrei, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. It is described in the Torah (the holy book) as a day of sounding

the Shofar (ram's horn). This is a time of reflection and of judgment. It is also a time to eat symbolic foods such as apples dipped in honey. It is a time that represents figuratively or literally the creation of the world/universe/humans. The Hebrew word is etymologically related to the Arabic Ras as-Sanah, the name chosen by Muslim lawmakers for the Islamic New Year, reflecting the common Semitic ancestry of both languages and traditions.

There are many Asian calendars that have their new year day celebrations in January, February, or March. I'll never forget my first trip to Thailand on Dec. 31, 1966-January 1, 1967, which was an incredible cacophony of sight and sound due to firecrackers and other noise making based on the believe that evil spirits will be frightened away. People wore masks and paraded in the streets and carried lanterns. The Chinese have major displays of fireworks and dragon dances, and the children receive red envelopes with money. I remember the Tet Offensive during the Vietnam War, named because it started on the Vietnamese Lunar New Year or Tet (Tet Nguyen Dan), usually the same day as the Chinese. These calendars are often lunisolar based.

Buddhists worldwide celebrate their new year called Veskha, sometimes informally called "Buddha's Birthday" but actually encompassing the birth, enlightenment (nirvana) and passing away (Parinirvana) of Gautama Buddha. In the Indian Subcontinent and other South East Asian countries the date as with the Hindus may be in April, May, or June based on the lunar and or solar calendars used. Hindus celebrate the new

## WHY JANUARY?



Let's begin the new year by wondering, why is the first month called January? The original Roman year had ten months which started with March. Ten months wasn't enough so two new ones were added before March. The first month was called IANVARIVS (V=U) after the god IANVS, the god of doorways. He was depicted with two faces looking both forwards and backwards, towards the future and the past. The second new month was called FEBRVARIVS from the word FEBRVVM "purification" which referred to a ritual FEBRVA held on 2/15. The old first month, MARTIVS (March) was named for Mars, the god of war, presumably because military campaigns couldn't get started until springtime.

Our Old English speaking ancestors (prior to 1066) used other names for the months: January was Wulf-Monath (wolf month), February was Kale-Monath (cabbage month) and March was Lent-Monath (lengthening month). The last one referring to lengthening days of spring and being the origin of the term Lent. Wouldn't it be fun to say your next appointment is on the twelfth of Cabbage?



contributed by  
Preston Ashbourne

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## TRAVELING TASTEBUDS

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

Write to us (200 words or less)  
[earthculturesproject@yahoo.com](mailto:earthculturesproject@yahoo.com)  
 You may see it published!

As always,  
**don't forget the hungry.**  
 Go to  
[www.freerice.com](http://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.

## 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.

## 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.

**MULDOONS** 2 PM  
**Sun, Jan 22** (full band)  
**Sun, Mar 4** (full band)  
 202 Newport Center Drive  
 Newport Beach, CA

**FINN MC COOL'S** 9:30 PM  
**Fri, Feb 3** (full band)  
 Fri, Jun 1  
 2702 Main St  
 Santa Monica, CA 90405

**TILTED KILT** 2 PM  
**Sat, Mar 17 St. Patrick's Day!**  
 6575 E. PCH, Long Beach, CA

**IRISH TIMES** 9:30 PM  
**Sat, Mar 17 St. Patrick's Day!**  
 3267 Motor Ave, LA, CA 90034

**THE FORD AMPHITHEATRE**  
**Sun, Sep 16**  
 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East,  
 LA, CA 90068

[www.anitaandtheyanks.com](http://www.anitaandtheyanks.com)



### 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.

**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.*

### 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.

[www.gypsyfolkensemble.com](http://www.gypsyfolkensemble.com)

**HAPPY NEW YEAR** by Nancy Pearlman  
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year in a spring festival that has all the expectations, apprehensions, hope, and joy of a new period of life woven into the events.

American culture has established many traditions. Almost every year my family has watched the Tournament of Roses Parade, which dates back to 1886. In the 1950s I recall my dad letting me sit on his shoulders to have a better view. The following year he became a little smarter and brought a step ladder for me. My palomino horse was in the parade without me (I couldn't afford the silver gear); I'm glad they let other costumes and horses in the parade now. In my college days I slept overnight on the street with friends or that is what I told my parents. I actually folk danced and partied the night away and caught some winks later in the day. Then in my environmental and political years I have been lucky to see it live from stores and offices along the route. I love the television presentation with the descriptions but nothing beats seeing the floats and bands and horses live. You can watch the floats being prepared with real flowers beforehand or go afterwards to the park to get a closer look. Football games is another tradition that other family members enjoy. And, of course, there are the resolutions. Who hasn't vowed to diet every year? Naturally there are plenty more.

As the new year bells are rung many sing the song "Auld Lang Syne" It was partially written by Robert Burns in the 1700s and first published after his death in 1796. It is an old Scottish tune that literally means "old long ago" or simply, "the good old days." And sometimes I long for those. Enjoy your celebrations.

### DONATION AND 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.

## LINKS OF INTEREST

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

### MUSEUMS

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

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

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

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

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

### ONGOING ACTIVITIES IN THE LOS ANGELES AREA

**Current Cultural Happenings  
Around Los Angeles**  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/caltechfolkdance>

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

**Folkworks** (click on "calendar")  
<http://www.folkworks.org/>

### FOLK DANCE & FOLK MUSIC INFORMATION

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

**Folkways** (ethnic music)  
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/index.aspx>

**ARC Music** (ethnic music CDs)  
<http://www.arcmusic.co.uk>

### ARTS AND CULTURES

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

**Smithsonian Center for Folklife  
and Cultural Heritage**  
<http://www.folklife.si.edu/>

**BBC - Holidays Around the  
World and so much more!**  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/humanplanetexplorer/events\\_and\\_festivals](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/humanplanetexplorer/events_and_festivals)

### FOREIGN LANGUAGES

**BYKI**  
Free language software downloads  
<http://www.byki.com/>

**FREELANG**  
Free bilingual dictionary downloads  
<http://www.freelang.net/>

(These links are for reference only and are not 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.

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

### EARTH CULTURES PROJECT

[www.earthculturesproject.org](http://www.earthculturesproject.org)

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