



December 2011

MESSAGE FROM NANCY PEARLMAN, Executive Director of Educational Communications



THE WINTER SOLSTICE



While most cultures have various holidays associated with their different religious beliefs and have special days to celebrate their societies' and nations' momentous events, almost every group of people in one way or another recognizes the Winter Solstice. In the Northern Hemisphere, the Winter Solstice is the shortest day of the year, December 21 or 22, and in the Southern Hemisphere it is June 20 or 21, but in December they celebrate their longest day of the year. Because these days mark a major change of seasons, they have been acknowledged around the world. The winter solstice occurs exactly when the axial tilt of a planet's polar hemisphere is farthest away from the star that it orbits.

Back in the late 1980s, I did a documentary on the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation Area and Rim of the Valley Corridor. I had the unique opportunity to travel to a restricted site on the old Rockydyne missile testing property in the Santa Susana Mountains and was the first to videotape for our video program the special Chumash rock art marking the winter solstice. In a sandstone cave with a hole/window was a circular design that had the light from the distant mountain peaks hit exactly on the special spot that the Chumash had painted to designate this special day. In essence, it was their calendar. A re-creation of this rock art was featured at the Southwest Museum but I am not sure if it is still there.

Pantheism, an ancient religious/spiritual belief that all is one and that nature is sacred, has long celebrated the solstices and the fall equinoxes (when the days

and nights are equal). Nature-based belief systems honor the rhythms found in our natural world. It may be beneficial for all of us to consider looking to the outdoor environment to see how the world changes according to the light and dark of the day, the rain, the winds, and the sun that affect the growing seasons and how we feel. And we may want to bring back some ancient customs and practices that recognize our connection to nature.

Even as far back as Stonehenge are elements connected to this event such as having the Great Trilithon erected outwards from the center of the monument, i. e. its smooth flat face was turned towards the midwinter Sun. In Greek mythology, the gods and goddesses met on the winter and summer solstice and that is the only time that Hades, whose domain was the underworld, was permitted to enter Mount Olympus; Saturnalia or Chronia was a major public festival. The Romans made the festival Brumalia and spent a month drinking and having merry activities. Some of the names of the festivals, special days, and important figures for different cultures include: Beiwe Festival of the Saami, an indigenous people of Finland, Sweden, and Norway, to honor their sun-goddess of fertility and sanity. There is the Chawmos of the Kalash of Pakistan focusing on purification rituals. Christmas or Christ's Mass is celebrated by Christians globally. The birth of Jesus Christ is observed on December 25 which was the Roman winter solstice upon the establishment of the Julian Calendar. Zoroastrians, especially in Persia, have the Deygan Festival dedicated to Ahura Mazda or God. The Dongzhi Festival of East Asian cultures (Japanese, Korean,

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HABARI GANI?



What American holiday in December has its terminology in Swahili (an East African language)? Have you heard of Kwanzaa? The full name of this African-American celebration of culture is "Matunda ya Kwanza" which means "first fruits". It was created long, long ago (in 1966) by Ron Everett, now known as Dr Maulana Karenga. (He added an extra "a" to kwanza, probably to reflect an accurate pronunciation: Kwan zah rather than kwan zuh.) He used Swahili because as a lingua franca it became a pan-african mode of communication and he didn't want Kwanzaa to be tribal.

Kwanzaa runs from 12/26 to 1/1, that is, the week between Christmas and New Year. Like for Chanukah, one lights a candelabrum called in this case, a Kinara. It has seven candles. Children are given gifts like books and there is feasting.

To greet someone on a day of Kwanzaa, you ask: "Habari Gani" which means "What's the News?"

The person being greeted responds with the name of the Principle discussed on that day. There are seven principles, one for each day of the week, collectively called "nguzo saba", "seven principles".

These principles are:

1. UMOJA = unity
2. KUJICHAGULIA = self-determination
3. UJIMA = collective work
4. UJAMAA = family
5. NIA = purpose
6. KUUMBA = creativity
7. IMANI = faith



A nice set of principles, isn't it? But if you can't remember all this Swahili, just greet people with "JOYOUS KWANZAA"

*contributed by
Preston Ashbourne*



TRAVELING TASTEBUDS

- *
PIE
COOKIES
LAMB WITH MINT
SPECIAL JELLO SALAD
PASTA FOR THE VEGETARIANS
JOY
JOY
JOY

Have a good (or bad) food memory, recipe or restaurant? Write to us (200 words or less) earthculturesproject@yahoo.com You may see it published!

During this season and 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.

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 - 4 PM
December 4 (full band)
January 15 (full band)
202 Newport Center Drive
Newport Beach, CA

IRELAND'S 32
9:30 PM - 1:30 AM (full band)
December 30
13721 Burbank Blvd
Van Nuys, CA 91401

FINN MC COOL'S
9:30- 1:30 AM
February 3 (full band)
2702 Main St
Santa Monica, CA 90405

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 below for upcoming shows.

Free! and open to the public. Check with venue to confirm dates & times

Dec 10 "International Holidays", Julian Dixon Library 2:00pm
4975 Overland Ave, Culver City 90230 (310) 559-1676

www.gypsyfolkensemble.com

THE WINTER SOLSTICE by Nancy Pearlman
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Vietnamese, and Chinese) and Mahayana Buddhist faiths is extremely important as it is traced back to the yin and yang philosophy of balance and harmony in the cosmos. There is a debate whether the Jewish festival of Hanukkah is a winter solstice holiday as it is not religiously based (it commemorates the rededication of the Holy Temple, the Second Temple, in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt of the 2nd Century BCE) and the Jewish calendar is neither solar nor lunar in nature but it does occur around this time. Since there are so many different festivals and cultures to describe, here are some more that you can further research on your own: Inti Raymi of the Inca in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador; Junkanoo, John Canoe, and Dzon'ku 'Nu of West Africa origins in the Bahamas,



Jamaica, and 19th century North Carolina and Virginia of the United States; Karachun and Koldea, Sviatki, and Dazh Boh by the Ancient Slavic; Rozhanitsa Feast and Khorovod in Russia and the Ukraine; La an Dreoilin or Wren day for the Celtic, Irish, Welsh, and Manx; Lenaea for Ancient and Hellenistic Greece; Lohri in India; Lucia or Feast of St. Lucy for the Swedes, Eastern Orthodox and Scandinavian Lutheran; Makara Sankranti for the Hindu of India and Nepal; Maruaroa o Takurua for the Maori of New Zealand; and Soyol for the Zuni and Hopi of North America. Even in Antarctica, the Midwinter is marked by researchers as a change their duty. And to celebrate our modern diversity, just enjoy this special time.



The Los Angeles Estonian House will hold its annual Christmas Fair on December 3, 2011. Experience Estonian food and culture. It runs a few hours beginning at 11am. Best to get there early.

1306 W. 24th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90007

call (323) 732-4362 for more info

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/

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

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

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