



CULTURALLY SPEAKING

The monthly newsletter of the Earth Cultures Project of Educational Communications

May 2011

MESSAGE FROM NANCY PEARLMAN



MAY

The Celtic, Druid, and British May Day celebrations in honor of Spring are being celebrated in the United States and the United Kingdom. While Soviet-era May Day celebrations focused on the worker and elsewhere in the world May 1 is a day to honor labor, the Anglo, Scotch, Welsh, and Irish and Americans still enjoy the festival of Spring in the first of May. Make your own maypole with colorful ribbons and circle around to get a festive design. (To do it best, all even numbers go one way and all odd the other. You alternate going over and under each other as the two groups travel in opposite direction. It is really simple but generally gets totally messed up because someone forgets if they are over or under. Play some favorite music and have a great time).

In southern California, the best place to get a flavor of "old England" is the Renaissance Pleasure Faire which is held on Saturdays and Sundays throughout April until May 22. It is held at the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area in Irwindale, California, from 10 AM to 7 PM. For information, call (626) 969-4750 or go to www.RenFair.com. There are many booths of hand-crafted items, lots of delicious food, and reenactments of jousting and other games and court activities along with fun events and music for young and old. I remember over forty-five years ago when it was just developing and held in the Santa Monica Mountains. Anyone who showed up in costume was admitted free and revelers and exhibitors would camp out overnight. Now, of course, everyone pays an entrance fee but it is still a good deal.

Throughout the country, different volunteer groups have folk dance festivals. The "Folk Dance Scene" Newsletter has some great listings. Maybe next year we can get to British Columbia, Canada, and be able to report on the Salt Spring Island Folk Dance Festival. Reserve now by emailing Rosemarie@keough-art.com.

End of April is a great time in Los Angeles to attend the annual Book Festival, this year held at USC on April 30 and May 1. Authors speak and autograph books and hundreds of publishers have tables with their latest publications. The children's corner also has storytelling and activities. Or go to UCLA on May 13, 14, and 15 for the Festival of World Music. Or from May 25 to 29 go to Senegal, Africa, for the Africa Travel Association Conference.

Don't forget to join in on the Cinco de Mayo celebrations. May 5 was the day that the Mexicans defeated the French in 1862. The rest of the war they lost the battles and the French ruled Mexico for a while. The festivities are bigger here in the United States than in Mexico and there are many free street celebrations. (Mexican Independence Day is celebrated in September).

A different kind of cultural experience is the Annual Insect Fair at the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum. This year on May 14 and 15, there will be lots of displays and opportunities to buy your beetles, butterflies, and other bugs. Not only educational but entertaining as well.

"Green" symposia continue throughout May even though April is considered Earth Month. All sorts of ecological conferences are being held. San Diego will host the H2O Conference May 24-26. But there are many more; just call me for some more details, (310) 559-9160.

*Nancy Pearlman, Executive Director
Educational Communications*

MAYDAY IN ESTONIA



Sunlight, flowers, and dancing around the maypole to celebrate the beginning of the bright half of the year. That's Mayday, right? Yes, as far as it goes. But there's a darker side to the holiday. For many north European cultures, the holiday starts on the eve of May 1st, which is of course April 30th. This is a holiday called Walpurgisnacht in German and Volbriöö in Estonian. The night of Saint Walpurga, an English missionary to the Germans. As usual, modern religion covers up old pagan ways, and the eve of Mayday was given over to witches just like Halloween! In Estonia, people dress up like witches even now on Volbriöö and wander the streets. This forms an introduction to Kevadpüha "Spring Day" (Mayday). You have to come through the darkness to appreciate the light, so Happy Mayday!



*contributed by
Preston Ashbourne*

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.



WORDS FROM LIANA'S WORLD

Contributed by
Liana Hovhannessian

And You Thought Pumps Were Painful!

Beauty equals *painstaking* work and practice. These words have been heard by many women over several generations. Beauty is what you make sacrifices for, to end up with a perfect look that will either make you feel important or save you from ridicule, laughter, or imprisonment by society, something the women of China endured from the mid-10th century to 1912. The form of beauty Chinese women had to endure is called foot binding. The term used for these tiny feet is known as "Lotus feet," and the shoes they wore are called "Lotus shoes."

Imagine yourself three to eight years of age, the bones in your feet are broken and bent, then bound up with a wet cloth wrap which then shrinks and tightens as it dries. Around age eleven or so, your feet have not grown anymore than the full length of three inches long; and will not grow any bigger for the rest of your life. You have finally learned how to walk by now

and pain has become a daily routine, that will last forever. Not so glamorous is it?

Lotus feet were required of women who came from wealth or royalty in the early days of the tradition, but by the 1600's all Chinese women were obligated to do this agonizing procedure openly. Normal-sized feet were considered undesirable and ugly, and if a woman refused the binding of her feet she would be jailed. Lotus shoes were made to show off the tiny feet and wealth of a woman to attract a husband. Shoemakers prepared the shoe's frame but the women themselves designed the elaborate embroidery on their own shoes. The more sophisticated

the shoes were, the more highly a woman was considered in society. Within the embroidery was a resemblance of each girl or woman's personal situation through each pattern and design. Rose motifs signified a long life; bamboo was for good luck; and narcissus stood for renewal. They would also put not-so-subtle instructions, drawn out, to help them with their wedding night.

The purpose of this look was for the feet to continue the straight line of the leg all the way down to the floor, a continuation of the leg so to speak. The procedure was performed not by the mother but by a relative or a professional foot binder who would break and cover the child's feet to stunt the growth. The Chinese were worried that if the mother were in charge of the practice of her own daughter's foot binding, she would become merciful

and not wrap the bandages tight enough which would allow the feet to grow. A person not so attached to the girl would have less care for her. Even if a woman had six inch long feet, dishonor would become an issue. It was very important to get the job done correctly.

Why go to such extremes you

might wonder? Well Lotus feet were for the men's benefit. They liked the way a woman would sway, caused by trying to balance on her tiny feet. In reality, swaying meant the poor woman was in terrible pain and was trying to keep steady on her feet. There are a few Chinese women with Lotus feet still today who say what an inconvenience it is to have such petite feet. To the men from those days, women's miniature feet were considered the most erotic part of their body. The only time the Lotus feet were unwrapped was for bathing. In the homes of the Chinese people, the husband would display various Lotus shoes belonging to his wife around the house

to show off how tiny his wife's feet are. Many women owned up to one hundred or more Lotus shoes. The fashion of their shoes depended on what region they were from and the style of the time.

By 1912 China became a republic and foot binding discontinued throughout the land; it still was happening but not openly. In 1949, Chairman Mao and the communist party outlawed the ritual. Today foot binding is considered shameful to the Chinese who wish to forget this practice of dreadfulness. For us Westerners, many of us find the Lotus shoes beautiful and exotic; not so much for the pain involved with foot binding that these brave women had to endure, but we are interested in the art that was left behind in these gorgeous Lotus shoes. Today Lotus shoes are still made for the last Chinese women of the Lotus feet generation; and Lotus shoes are being made also to sell to tourists from all around the world. I encourage you to look these beautiful shoes up on the internet or in books. They are wonderful to look at and something every unique to see in real life if you have the chance. For all you ladies out there including me, just remember, the next time you go out in your favorite pair of high heels, just be thankful you have the feet to wear them!

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.

Educational Communications always needs volunteers in the office. If you are interested in volunteering please call Nancy at (310) 559-9160.

Visit the Earth Cultures Project website at www.earthculturesproject.org 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.



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. They were recently in Ireland touring with the Young Dubliners. See below for their May performance schedule.

Fri May 6 5-9PM (full band)
Paddy O's 20320 So. Western Ave.
Torrance, CA 90501

Fri May 13 7-10PM (trio)
Novel Cafe: 1713 E. Colorado Blvd
Pasadena, CA 91106

Sun May 15 2-4PM (full band)
Muldoons: 202 Newport Center
Drive Newport Bch, CA 92660

Fri May 27 7-10PM (trio)
Novel Cafe: 1713 E. Colorado Blvd
Pasadena, CA 91106

www.anitaandtheyanks.com

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 dances every **Friday, Saturday and Sunday** at:

El Cid
4212 Sunset Bl, Los Angeles
(323) 668-0318

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
Casablanca Restaurant
6030 Paseo del Norte
Carlsbad, CA. 92008
(760) 603-9672
7:30 pm to 9:30 pm
Belly Dancing and Folk Dancing

First, Second and Fourth Wednesday of the month
Tonya's Original Belly Dance Showcase
Khoury's Restaurant
110 N. Marina Dr.
Long Beach, CA. 90803
(in Alamitos Bay Landing) Long Beach Marina 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm
Belly Dancing and Folk Dancing,
Tony and Atlantis (562) 598-6800

Third Thursday, ev. other month
Tango Del Rey
3567 Del Rey St.
San Diego, CA. 92109
(858) 794-2687 (858) 794-2687
8:30 pm to 11:30 pm with featured and guest belly dancers and Frank Lazzaro and Dave Dhillon

<http://dantzrecords.com>

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longest-running
multicultural song
and dance company in
their 2010/2011 tour**

www.duq.edu/tamburitzaans

Mon May 16 Fontana
Fontana High School Auditorium 7:00 PM
Dr. Wayne Ruble 909.823.4366

Sat May 21 Anaheim
Servite High School 3:00 PM
Don Knapp 714.832.7555
Steven Kopko 714.996.4313
www.annunciationbyzantine.org/tamburitzaans.html

Sun May 22 Los Angeles
St. Anthony's Croatian Catholic Church Center 3:00 PM
626.445.5900

Mon May 23 San Diego
Joan B. Kroc Theatre 7:30 PM
Mr. & Mrs. Virgil Barbat 858.273.8203

more upcoming events on next page

UPCOMING EVENTS (continued from previous page)**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.

Library Shows Free! and open to the public

May 4 "Cinco de Mayo Celebration"

Chet Holifield Library – 5pm 1060 S. Greenwood Ave, Montebello 90640

May 5 "Cinco de Mayo Celebration"

West LA Regional Library – 4:15pm 11360 Santa Monica Bl, LA 90025

May 19 "One World, Many Stories"

Rio-Soliz Library – 4pm 2820 Jourdan St, Oxnard 93036

June 9 "One World, Many Stories"

Grandview Library – 3pm 1535 5th St., Glendale 91201

June 11 "Polynesian"

Live Oak Library – 3:30pm 4153 E. Live Oak Ave., Arcadia 91006

June 15 "One World, Many Stories"

Miraleste Library – 11:30 am
29089 Palos Verdes Drive East, Palos Verdes Peninsula 90274

June 15 "Polynesian"

California City Library – 4pm 9507 California City Bl., California City 93505

June 18 "Polynesian"

Clifton Brakensiek Library – 2pm 9945 E. Flower St, Bellflower 90706

June 23 "One World, Many Stories"

Malaga Cove Plaza Library – 3pm
2400 Via Campesina, Palos Verdes Estates 90274

June 25 "One World, Many Stories"

Claremont Library – 2pm 208 N. Harvard Ave, Claremont 91711

June 28 "One World, Many Stories"

Peninsula Center Library – 3pm 701 Silver Spur Rd., Rolling Hills Estates 90274

June 28 "One World, Many Stories"

New Hope Library – 4pm 122 N. Newhope St., Santa Ana 92703

June 28 "One World, Many Stories"

Santa Ana Main Library – 6:30pm 26 Civic Center Plaza, Santa Ana 92701

June 30 "One World, Many Stories"

Woodcrest Library – 4pm 1340 W. 106th St., Los Angeles 90044

You can also see the Gypsy Folk Ensemble in Fontana on June 18
at the

"Art in the Park" cultural festival, 1pm.
Southridge Park, 14501 Live Oak Av., Fontana, CA 92337

www.gypsyfolkensemble.com

LINKS OF INTEREST**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>

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/>

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

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Support the Arts & Education!