

“L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005”
ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES
(in alphabetical order)

Activities for Retarded Children and Adults (ARC) Handbell Choir

Dixie Henrikson, Director
North Hollywood
25 performers

The bell choir, founded in 1985 and comprised of developmentally disabled children and adults, has performed hundreds of times in a wide variety of venues including Anaheim Stadium, the Special Olympics opening ceremonies and several television shows. On “L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005” they play the seasonal classic “White Christmas.”

America Chinese Dance Association

Angela Lai, Artistic Director
San Gabriel
6 performers

America Chinese Dance Association was founded in 1988 in Southern California. The group is comprised of dance lovers who migrated from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and US-born Chinese Americans wishing to share in the understanding of traditional arts and culture through dance. “The Ribbon Dance,” which they perform on “L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005,” is a 1,500 year-old Chinese court dance from the Tang Dynasty.

Grandeza Mexicana Folk Ballet Company

Jose Vences, Director
Los Angeles 90044
34 performers

Grandeza Mexicana Folk Ballet Company was formed in 2003 to create ballets that present folk-based dance as a viable art form. With careful research, choreographic works are created utilizing regional music and dance to preserve the traditions and customs of Mexico's past and celebrate the present. The dances they perform on “L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005” - “Café Roma” and “El Circo” - evoke festivities in the northern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon, a region influenced by both the cowboy culture and Czech and Scottish settlers.

Inspirational Voices of Free!

Windy Barnes Farrell, Director
San Pedro
14 performers

Inspirational Voices of Free! was founded in 2001 by composer-performer Windy Barnes Farrell, a protégé of Stevie Wonder and Michael Bolton. The choir has performed at the House of Blues, numerous religious venues and visited China in 2004. Inspirational Voices of Free! chooses inspirational songs and is noted for rich, melodious voices that move the soul of the listener. In "L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005," Inspirational Voices of Free! performs Ms. Farrell's composition, "Pour You Out a Blessing."

Jubilant Voices of Holman United Methodist Church

Melida Skeete-Smith Director
Los Angeles 90018
27 performers

Jubilant Voices performs gospel music for Holman United Methodist Church on the third and fourth Sundays of each month; the services are broadcast on local LA radio station KJLH. Under Ms. Melida Skeete-Smith's direction, the choir claimed the first place title in the adult category in the 19th Annual McDonalds Gospelfest Competition held at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles in 2003. Their "L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005" selections include "Carol of the Bells" and a Christmas medley.

Mariachi Divas

Cynthia Shea-Carballo, Founder and Musical Director
Hacienda Heights
11 performers

Founded in 1999, the all-female Mariachi Divas are making big waves on the Los Angeles music scene. Mariachi Divas is a multi-cultural ensemble, made up of women musicians of Mexican, Cuban, Costa Rican, Panamanian, Japanese, Swiss and Anglo descent. Mariachi Divas has added instrumentation such as timbales, congas, bongos, cajón, tambora, percussion, tres, and flute to their traditional mariachi ensemble of guitarrón, vihuela, guitar, violins, and trumpets. In "L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005" they pay tribute to the great Celia Cruz with their arrangement of "La Vida es un Carnaval."

Cynthia Shea-Carballo, Director
Mayra Martinez, Vihuela and Vocals
Ileana Garcia, Lead Vocals and Percussion
Cynthia Marie Gonzalez, Vocals and Guitar
Suzanne Garcia, Violin and Vocals
Leticia Sierra, Violin and Vocals
Nelly Cortez, Gitarron and Vocals
Keiko Okamoto, Flute and Vocals
Mona Feda, Trumpet
Maria Villalobos, Timbales and Vocals
Nakeiltha Campbell, Congas and Cajon

Mariachi Sol de Mexico

Jose Hernandez, Director
South El Monte
13 performers

Jose Hernandez is a sixth generation mariachi who carries on a 125-year family tradition. Mariachi Sol de Mexico has recorded 10 CDs and became the first mariachi to be nominated for a Grammy. They have participated in more than 20 films; the most recent was *Seabiscuit*. They are among the premier mariachis in the world today. For the "L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005" they perform Jose Hernandez's virtuoso violin piece, "El Rey de la Huasteca."

Jose Hernandez, Director and Vocal Soloist
Jesse L. Hernandez, Guitar
Erick Hernandez, Violin
Mario A. Hernandez, Guitarron
Francisco J. Jaurequi, Vihuela
Hector Castro, Violin
Raul Cuellar, Violin
Art Gerst, Harp
Oscar Ortega, Violin
Fernando Ortiz, Trumpet
Fernando Moreno, Violin
Antonio Hernandez, Trumpet
Julio C. Hernandez-Salazar, Violin

Soldiers on Soul Patrol

Randy Quesada, Founder/Director
Tujungu
45 performers

Seven years ago founder/director Randy Quesada began sharing a different way of living with more than 75 kids from Verdugo Hills High, many of whom were deemed irreparable by counselors, teachers and even their own parents. A choir was formed, more than half of whose members had no singing experience. The music ranged from gospel to Latin and hip hop. In 2000 Soldiers on Soul Patrol won first place at The McDonald's GospelFest. Since then the choir has performed at events such as The American Teacher Awards on ABC, The Oscar de la Hoya Foundation, The Urban League Convention, and *The Fighting Temptations* (Beyonce, Cuba Gooding Jr.) premiere. It's mission is to share what this group could find nowhere else: a second chance. For "L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005" they sing "Joy," written by Randy Quesada.

Universal Dance Designs Kennedy Tap Company

Arlene Kennedy, Director
Los Angeles 90036
25 performers

Kennedy Tap Company is directed by master tapper Arlene Kennedy, whose school has produced more professional level tap dancers than any other in Los Angeles, dancers who have appeared in *Rockets*, *42nd Street*, *Black and Blue*, *Las Vegas Storms* and *Bring in 'Da Noise Bring 'Da Funk*. Their "LA Holiday Celebration 2005" selection, choreographed by Paul and Arlene Kennedy, is set to Duke Ellington's "It Don't Mean a Thing."

Vox Femina Los Angeles

Iris Irvine, Director
Culver City
28 performers

Founded in 1997, Vox Femina Los Angeles (VFLA) is a women's choral ensemble dedicated to the performance of quality choral literature with an emphasis on music by women composers. Through music, VFLA celebrates women and builds bridges within and beyond the lesbian and gay communities. VFLA has performed at more than 80 community events, released a compilation CD of live performances and has released its first in-studio CD entitled *Simply... Vox Femina Los Angeles*. For the "L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005" they sing two traditional songs: "Under the Holly Bough" and the gospel selection "Music Down in My Soul."

Yuval Ron Ensemble

Yuval Ron, Musical Director
Studio City
8 performers

The ensemble, made up of Muslim, Jewish and Christian musicians, brings together artists from Israel, Armenia, France and the USA to unite the musical traditions of the communities of the Middle East. On "L.A. Holiday Celebration 2005" the group performs a haunting traditional Jewish prayer for freedom from Yemen - "D'ror Yikra." The prayer was arranged by Israeli-born Yuval Ron, Rockefeller and NEA award-winning composer-performer, in response to violence in the Middle East.

Yuval Ron - oud, saz and musical director
Maya Haddi - voice
Yeghish Manukyan - clarinet
Jamie Papish - percussion
David Martinelli - percussion
Carolyne Aycaguer-Ron - harmonium
Virginie Alumyan - kanun
Guest dancer: Maya Karasso.