

Long Island Traditions

NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org
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Hispanic Heritage Month Programs

September 15 – October 15 is designated as National Hispanic Heritage Month by the United States government. To recognize the cultural heritage of Long Island Latino residents, we are sponsoring several programs and workshops during the fall. All are welcome to attend these free events, made possible from grants from the NY State Council on the Arts.

October 17: Paraguayan Dance and Peruvian traditional music

On Sunday, October 17 beginning at 1:30 pm we will be hosting a program on traditional Paraguayan Dance featuring Panamabi Vera, led by master dancer and costume maker Berta Gauto. They perform a variety of dances including the well known “Bottle Dance”, in costumes hand-made by Berta. The program will continue with a performance by Theo Torres and Vientos del Sur, a master Peruvian composer and musician, accompanied by an ensemble which plays traditional acoustic instruments including the famed zamponas or Peruvian pan pipes.



Panamabi Vera will be performing at the Middle Country Library on October 17 followed by a workshop on October 24th at Long Island Traditions.

The program will take place at the Middle Country Library, located at 575 Middle Country Road, Selden, NY 11784. For information call (631) 585-9393. The program is free.

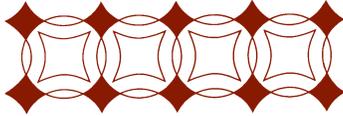
October 24: Latino Artist Workshop & Dance Program

There are many master Latino artists, musicians and dancers on Long Island. In order to assist them the NY Folklore Society and Long Island Traditions are hosting a workshop addressing working with young audiences, in both school settings and for general audiences. Beginning at 10 am, the workshop will be led by master Puerto Rican Bomba y Plena leaders Julia and Juan Guitterez of Los Pleneros de la 21. The workshop is free but reservations are required.

After the artist workshop there will be a hands-on program on traditional Paraguayan dance led by Berta Gauto. This will begin at 1:30 and is also free and open to anyone. To reserve your spots please call us at (516) 767-8803 by October 21st. The October 24th programs will take place here at Long Island Traditions’ offices, located at 382 Main Street, Port Washington.

December 12: Peruvian Dance Program

Concluding our Latino series will be a dance performance and workshop by Peru Andino, led by Peter Apaza of Glen Head (see accompanying article). This free program will take place at the East Meadow Library at 2 pm. The program will begin with a performance of traditional dances from the Andean region of Peru, where Peter was born. After the performance you will be able to take a mini class. Don’t miss this special performance. The library is located at 1886 Front Street, East Meadow. For information and directions call (516) 794-2570. ■



Long Island Traditions Inc.

Dedicated to the documentation and preservation of Long Island's living cultural heritage.

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LI Traditions is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization registered with the NY State Board of Charities.

For more information call: (516) 767-8803, fax: (516) 767-8805, write to us at: 382 Main St., Port Washington, NY 11050
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Featured Artist: Peter Apaza, Peruvian Dance Master

By Gabrielle Hamilton, Center for Traditional Music and Dance

Editors Note: Peru Andino, led by Peter Apaza, will be performing on December 12 at the East Meadow Library, at 2 pm. The concert is free and open to the public. For reservations call (516) 794-2570 x 218 and mention that you are a member of Long Island Traditions. The following article is based on an interview conducted by Nancy Solomon, executive director of Long Island Traditions, and Gabrielle Hamilton, folklorist at the Center for Traditional Music and Dance.

Peter Apaza was born in the city of Puno, in the southern region of Puno, Peru. He brought his traditional music with him to the US and later founded Peru Andino with his sister, Rosa Volida. Peru Andino has an extensive repertoire of 30 dances and an extensive collection of traditional costume dresses.

Growing up in Peru

Peter grew up listening to his father play guitar, *quena* (wooden flute) and *bombo* (Andean bass drum). His mother was a singer of traditional Spanish and Quechua tunes. Peter is one of six children, all of whom grew to be artists, all learning at home with family members.

Peter's father worked as a civil servant for 32 years. He worked at the office in the morning and when he returned in the evenings he worked at the family farm. The Apaza family grew potatoes, and various grains such as quinoa, and kept animals such as lamb, chicken, ducks and guinea pigs. The family relied on the farm for meats from llama, alpaca and pork. Like his brothers and sisters, Peter helped with farming potatoes, quinoa and more.

Peter remembers that he began playing at 6 years old. He liked to dance but no one directly taught him to dance. He also taught himself guitar. After house parties, he simply picked up the guitar and other instruments left about the house and began to imitate his father, slowly picking out various tunes. Around the time he was 9 or 10 years old, his father called together the local kids and created an informal *zampoña* group, because all the children played a little bit at home. By the time he was 12 and 13 years he began singing and quickly became known throughout the area as a great singer. When he was 16 years old he took some basic music classes at the university but he never learned to read music. From the time he was 18 to 28 Peter would sing in Spanish and Quechua at concerts and clubs in Puno, including the Teatro Nacional in Lima. He was later known as the number one singer



The Diablada mask is one of many worn by Peru Andino, scheduled to perform on Dec. 12 at the East Meadow Public Library.

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in the city. He would mostly sing in Spanish because Quechua was not commercially viable. But at the young age of 28 Peter got sick and had to have his adenoids removed, and a bad operation damaged his singing voice.

Since there were a lot of people moving to Lima from that state of Puno, in 1964 Peter's father founded *Los Brizas de Titicaca* in Lima. Los Brizas, began as a club offering dance performances from southern Peru by amateur dancers, including his sister Rosa. These dancers did not rehearse, since they were performing the traditional dances that they danced at home in Puno. Peter was the director of Los Brizas in 1978-79; he was also singing and playing guitar there too.

In 1982, Peter completed university and since he didn't have a job opportunity to work as an engineer; he returned to Puno to teach in the high school, where he taught music and dance for three years. In 1984 his students placed first at a national dance competition in Lima. Peter saw this as an opportunity to get a visa to travel out of Peru. He went to the embassy in Lima and showed them his award and they granted him a visa.

Moving to the United States

Peter was interested in moving to the US in order to advance economically. "In Peru the professional situation was bad" for everyone, no matter if you are professional or not, a person's could not advance. "The rich person is a rich person for all time. The poor person is poor person for all time." While his parents agreed with his idea of coming to the US; his mother worried since she had no idea what life in the US was like. She had no exposure in Puno as there was no radio or TV. His mother had just a basic education, learning only to read. While Peter's father had a second grade education, he read everything [and educated himself] and was a mayor in Puno.

Peter's sister Rosa moved to Westbury, New York in c. 1981. When he first moved onto Long Island there were hardly any Spanish speakers, most people were either Italian or Irish.

He held a number of different jobs—at restaurants, hotels, factories, often working two or three jobs, seven days a week. He felt it wasn't easy in NY— there are so many services you have to pay for. He settled into a job with benefits as a window washer for Universal for five to six years and later at Konica lens until their plant closed. In 2006, he got his nursing-assistant certificate and has been working at the nursing home at St. Francis Hospital and also with private patients.

"Peru Andino is my life. Peru Andino is my everything."

Peter always dreamed about having his own group in Peru, but it was not possible. In 1990 Peter approached the pastor of a Glen Cove church and asked if he and his sister could perform. Rosa and Peter danced the *marinera Puneña*. The performance was a great success and the audience all congratulated them.

Afterwards, other people who lived nearby approached Peter and Rosa and they formed a small group of eight members. They practiced on Fridays and Saturdays outside at local parks and at St. Patrick's

parking lot. Their first performance was for Peruvian Independence Day in July 1990. They used a recording to perform the *marinera Puneña*. Later they got together a little band to perform with. Today the group includes 30 people, ages 14 to 45 years old. They perform in churches, cultural institutions, schools and parades in Glen Cove, Brentwood and other places. Most of the group members are Peruvians or Peruvian Americans and one or two are Americans.

Their repertoire includes 30 different dances and they frequently perform 6 or 7 of them at an event. Dances include: *marinera Puneña, diablada, morenada, tuntuna, tobas, cullada, saya, llamarada, negrillos, turkuy, and carnival de Arequipa*. Each year Peru Andino produces four shows, usually in Glen Cove, Westbury, Long Beach and Brentwood, renting the hall and creating their own publicity. With the money they raise at the show, they often buy new costume dresses. It took years to build up their collection of costume dresses. Rosa is the group's seamstress, creating half of the costumes they wear. Rosa learned dressmaking in Puno in school. Peter also does some sewing. They buy their supplies in Manhattan and typically one costume will take one week, with Rosa working on the dress on-and-off for three or four days.

Maintaining the group and beyond.....

Peter tries to remain flexible with his dancers as it is not easy for Peru Andino to keep thirty dancers in the group. Just getting one or two people together is difficult, but trying to coordinate 30 people is a real challenge. People have busy work schedules and some dancers have trouble getting out to Glen Cove. In some cases, Peter has to pick up dancers for rehearsal from as far away as Queens and then drops them off because the dancer doesn't have car and there is little public transportation out to Glen Cove. There are six core dancers that have stayed with Peter for more than ten years. But Peter says, "that's my passion" and "now we transfer [it] to other people". ■

Funding News

After a long summer in which the NY State Budget was finally resolved, we learned that we received several grants from the NY State Council on the Arts. These include two new grants which will help support our arts in education programs in the Freeport School District, and a program of traditional music and dance classes at the East Meadow and Mineola libraries. Stay tuned for details on these exciting programs.

In addition, LI Traditions was selected by the National Endowment for the Arts to develop partnership programs in the Freeport and North Shore School Districts for a series of ethnic folk arts programs focusing on Native American and Latino traditions. There will be a public program next spring as part of this initiative. Stay tuned for more information. ■

EVENTS OF INTEREST

PLEASE NOTE: If you have a Long Island concert or program that focuses on some aspect of traditional culture, drop us a line and we'll put it in our "Events of Interest" column. The deadline is the 1st of June, September, December and March.

Don't forget to visit our web site and our Facebook page for timely information.

- October 6: "Think British ... Speak Yiddish." Hofstra University Continuing Education. 10-11:30 a.m. The fee for the course is \$99. Introduces the study of Yiddish through operas by Gilbert and Sullivan. For information and to register call (516) 463-7200.
- October 16: Poetry workshop on Long Island Salt Marshes with poet Max Wheat and singer/songwriter Jerry Ahearn. 9:30 – 2. Theodore Roosevelt Nature Center Jones Beach State Park. To Register call (516) 679-7254.
- October 17: Paraguayan Dance and Peruvian Music. 1:30 pm. Free admission. Middle Country Library, 575 Middle Country Road, Selden, NY 11784 (631) 585-9393. For more information see accompanying article.
- October 24: Latino artist gathering at 10 am. 1:30 Paraguayan dance workshop. Free admission. Long Island Traditions, 382 Main Street, Port Washington. (516) 767-8803. RSVP by October 21.
- November 2-30: Russian Folk Tales art exhibit. Freeport Memorial Library. 144 W. Merrick Road, Freeport. (516) 379-3274. Artist reception Nov. 7 at 2:30 pm.
- December 4: Poetry workshop on Long Island's Winter Beach. 9:30 A.M.-2 P.M. Theodore Roosevelt Nature Center, Jones Beach State Park. To Register call (516) 679-7254.
- December 12: Peruvian Dance program with Peru Andino (See accompanying article). East Meadow Library, 2 pm. 1886 Front Street, East Meadow. For information and directions call (516) 794-2570.

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