

Global warbling

L.A. plays host to weeks-long celebration of world music, culture

By Fred Shuster, Music Writer

For the next two weeks, performers from around the globe will descend on Los Angeles to celebrate the idea that music can transcend borders of all kinds - linguistic, national, cultural, racial and religious.

It happens under the 2005 World Festival of Sacred Music banner, and L.A.'s third festival of its kind in seven years once again brings great diversity to an already diverse region.

From Tuvan throat singers to Korean, Thai and Latin artists, plus musicians from the Los Angeles area, the 16-day series is the perfect blueprint for a journey around the world.

"Ideally, people will be exposed to something they didn't know they liked," said festival director Judy Mitoma. "We hope people encounter something that speaks to them and expands their notion of who and what we are as a city. It's hard to promote 43 events at the same time, but we urge people to simply pick something they've never seen or heard before and check it out."



The festival opens under the harvest moon during the fall equinox with a fund-raising concert Saturday at UCLA Sunset Canyon Recreation Center Outdoor Amphitheatre, where seven international groups perform, including entries from Ghana, Siberia, Mexico City and Korea.

Appearing that night and again on Sunday in a free show at North Hollywood's Wat Thai Temple is the family-oriented Hun Lakorn Lek Puppet Theatre Troupe, in which 10 classically trained Thai puppeteers and Khon (mask play) dancers work with puppets to produce lifelike human movements and personalities.

"It's one of the most fascinating, entertaining art performances I've ever seen," said Dr. Marc Brodsky, an assistant clinical professor at the UCLA Center for East-West Medicine and longtime fan of the puppet troupe, who will introduce the ensemble at both area shows Saturday and Sunday. "The humanlike qualities of the puppets are haunting, and the stories of good-over-evil are appealing for people of all ages."

Another promising event is Sunday afternoon's "Sounds and Visions of the Dreamtime," a multimedia presentation of music, stories and images of aboriginal art, utilizing field recordings gathered in the Australian bush. The matinee at the Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza also features local pop-devotional singer-songwriter Donna De Lory.

Dreamtime is that part of aboriginal culture that explains the origins and history of the land and its people. Aborigines have the longest continuous cultural history of any group on Earth, dating back, some say, 65,000 years.

"It is the story of things that happened, how the universe came to be, how we human beings were created and how the creator intended humans to function here," said aboriginal elder and artist Yidumduma Bill Harney, a didgeridoo master, painter, storyteller and historian who performs Sunday. "It is our culture."

The World Festival of Sacred Music comes to a close Oct. 2 with "Honoring the Sea," a free music and art event at the water's edge on Santa Monica Beach. That day, 300 artists will present sacred traditions from five world-culture lineages in ceremonial offerings to the sea.

"Through the festival, we hope each person can go beyond what's familiar and explore the potential of interfaith and intercultural collaboration," Mitoma said.

2005 WORLD FESTIVAL OF SACRED MUSIC

What: Encompassing 43 events over 16 days, the world-music festival accents peace and understanding through the sounds and arts of Siberia, the Czech Republic, Korea, Thailand, Mexico and elsewhere.

Where: Venues citywide, including Madrid Theatre, John Anson Ford Amphitheatre and Skirball Cultural Center.

When: Saturday through Oct. 2.

Tickets: Many, but not all, events are free. Call (310) 825-0507; festivalofsacredmusic.org.

HUN LAKORN LEK PUPPET THEATRE TROUPE

Where: UCLA Sunset Canyon Recreation Center Outdoor Amphitheatre, 111 DeNeve Drive, Los Angeles (Saturday); Wat Thai Temple,

12909 Cantara St., North Hollywood (Sunday).

When: 5 p.m. Saturday; 4 p.m. Sunday.

Tickets: \$15 to \$35, children under 5 free (Saturday); free Sunday. Call (310) 825-2101; festivalofsacredmusic.org.

SOUNDS AND VISIONS OF THE DREAMTIME & DONNA DE LORY

Where: Thousand Oaks Civic Center, 2100 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks.

When: 2:30 p.m. Sunday.

Tickets: \$31. Call (805) 449-2787; festivalofsacredmusic.org.

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