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**THE CENTER FOR TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND DANCE  
AND THE MANO A MANO ORGANIZING COMMITTEE  
IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY HOUSE  
INVITE YOU TO CELEBRATE A MEXICAN HOLIDAY TRADITION**

**PASTORELAS Y POSADAS  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2003  
12 NOON TO 9PM  
FREE & FOR ALL AGES**

The Center for Traditional Music Dance and the Mano a Mano Organizing Committee are proud to present *Pastorelas y Posadas* at the American Indian Community House near Astor Place on December 21<sup>st</sup>. This all-day Mexican holiday event includes crafts, music, foodways and a procession with song and dance which evokes the search for lodging (*posada*) of Mary and Joseph. One of the highlights of the evening will be a traditional Shepherd's Play or *Pastorela*, performed by *Los Niños del East Harlem*/East Harlem Folk Dance Company. The event culminates with a feast and the breaking of piñatas.

Traditionally, in Mexico the *Posadas* are celebrated over the nine days that proceed Christmas Eve. This New York celebration will take place over the course of one extraordinary day. The event is free and open to the public (except for the photo booth). Doors open at noon and families can drop by for the workshops (12-5:00pm), the *Posada* procession (6-7), or just show up for the *Pastorela* and party (7:30 – 9:00pm). A great way to get into the holiday spirit and learn how Mexicans celebrate this special time of year, *Pastorelas y Posadas* will be a tasty feast for the eyes and ears!

**THE WORKSHOPS**

In nine workshop sessions (running concurrently between 12 and 5), visitors can create piñatas or paper *flores de nochebuena* (poinsettia flowers). There will be sessions on making tamales and *ponche* (fruit punch) and families can learn the *villancicos*, traditional holiday songs. We will offer workshops on making *aguinaldos* (popular goody bags full of treats), *bastones* (shepherds' crooks), devils' horns and angels' halos. Participants will be serenaded with holiday music by the "Queen of Ranchera Music" Yolanda Leticia, and many others. Noted workshop leaders will include Aurelia Fernandez, Miguel Cossio, Guadalupe Ross and Margarita Larios.

**THE POSADA PROCESSION**

After the workshops, the singing procession will begin at 6pm. Led through the local streets between Astor Place and Washington Square Park by groups of Concheros and Azteca dancers and a costumed Mary and Joseph emulating the Christmas Eve journey. The participants will make several stops along the way before returning to the American Indian Community House.

## THE CELEBRATION

The celebration with food, song, drama and the breaking of piñatas begins at 7:30pm. *La Pastorela*, the traditional Shepherd's Play, will be performed by the acclaimed *Los Niños del East Harlem*/East Harlem Folk Dance Company. The play is a comic depiction of the battle of good and evil, in the context of the Shepherd's adoration of Jesus. Visitors can stop in at *Foto a-la-Mexicana*, and get their picture taken in the style of the *ambulante* photographers of Mexico, in front of a painted backdrop wearing traditional costumes! (Fee charged for photos.) The day's events will end with the breaking of piñatas and the sharing of treats.

**The Center for Traditional Music & Dance (CTMD)** now in its 35<sup>th</sup> year, builds cross cultural awareness by nurturing and preserving the performing arts traditions indigenous to New York City's immigrant and ethnic communities. A cornerstone of CTMD's mission is to present premier artists from the City's diverse cultural communities and to develop performance and educational programs for general and community audiences. Since its inception CTMD has produced over 500 concerts, a dozen recordings, and compiled an extensive archive of the traditional performing arts. CTMD sponsors Community Cultural Initiatives, multi-year programs of in-depth field research, documentation and presentation within particular ethnic communities, working closely with cultural activists, artists, educators, and community leaders to develop self-sustaining traditional arts programs within each community. Past initiatives have taken place in the Arab, Albanian, Dominican, Indo-Caribbean, West African, Former Soviet Jewish, and Filipino communities. There are current initiatives in the Mexican, Peruvian and Chinese communities.

**Mano a Mano Organizing Committee**, brought together by CTMD for its Community Cultural Initiative in the Mexican Community, consists of nine members who bring a range of perspectives on the Mexican and Mexican American experience. Their mission is: to promote cultural interchange and mutual understanding between Mexican and Mexican American communities and the general population in the New York area through presentations, educational programs and technical assistance; to keep alive the ever-changing cultural expressions of Mexican and Mexican American artists in all areas of creative pursuit, including music, dance, the visual and verbal arts and ritual; and to empower the Mexican community living in the New York area. The Committee is proud to have staged events at the Haft Auditorium of the Fashion Institute of Technology and The Taller Boricua Gallery, and to have collaborated on presentations at the American Museum of Natural History, Lincoln Center Out of Doors and the Greenwich Village Halloween Parade. The Mano a Mano Committee and CTMD founded the Mariachi Academy of New York in 2002, the first school of its kind in the Northeast.

**The American Indian Community House (AICH)** is a not-for-profit organization serving the health, social service, and cultural needs of Native Americans residing in New York City. Since its inception in 1969, AICH has grown into a multi-faceted social support agency and cultural center that serves the estimated 27,000 Native Americans in the five boroughs. They provide programs in job training and placement; health services referral; HIV referral and case management services; and counseling programs for alcoholism and substance use. AICH also sponsors programs in cultural enrichment through a performing arts program and the first permanent Native American gallery/museum in New York City.

**Major support** for this event was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts Heritage and Preservation Program and the Rockefeller Foundation. Additional funding was provided by the New York State Council on the Arts Folk Arts Program, a state agency, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and Con Edison. Additional support was provided by the Mexican Cultural Institute and Materials for the Arts, Materials for the Arts, a program of the New York City Departments of Cultural Affairs, Education and Sanitation.

***Posadas y Pastorelas* is wheelchair accessible.**

**Address and Directions:**

The American Indian Community House is located near Astor Place at 708 Broadway on the 8th floor.  
Subway: 6 to Astor Place; N, R to 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Buses: M1, M5, M6 to Waverly Place

**The artists and organizers are available for interviews. Photos are also available upon request.**

**For More Info:** contact Emily Socolov at the Center for Traditional Music & Dance @ 212-571-1555 x35 or [esocolov@ctmd.org](mailto:esocolov@ctmd.org), [www.ctmd.org](http://www.ctmd.org)

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**POSADAS** are popular Mexican celebrations which date back to the colonial period. They commemorate the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Traditionally, they take place at private homes over nine nights, culminating with the most important *posada* on Christmas Eve. The guests participate in an outdoor procession near the home while singing the special songs. Participants at the head of the procession carry clay figurines of Mary and Joseph known as *Los Peregrinos* (the pilgrims). After successfully requesting *posada* (lodging), the guests are joyfully admitted into the house and given *aguinaldos*, goody baskets containing fruits and candy. The celebration concludes with the breaking of piñatas. This custom is very popular in the urban Mexican communities throughout the New York area.

**PASTORELAS** are performed in Mexico during the Christmas season and have their roots in the early Christian theater of Europe in the middle ages. Mexican *pastorelas* – like other folk dramas - were introduced in Mexico by the colonizers with the goal of converting the indigenous population to Christianity. By Mexico's Independence, performing *pastorelas* was incorporated into the village tradition and the plays are performed seasonally through the present day. *Pastorelas* are characterized by innocence and candor in their depiction of the battle between good and evil. Their characters are naïve shepherds and their divine counterparts – angels and the three wise men vs. picaresque devils and demons. Their dialogs are spoken in rhyme.

**BIOGRAPHIES OF KEY ARTISTS - Photos Available on Request**

**Miguel Cossio** is a gifted visual artist as well as a writer, designer and director of dramatic pieces at festivals and other alternative venues. He is dedicated to sharing his knowledge of Mexican popular culture through lectures, workshops, and demonstrations with organizations throughout the New York and tri-state area. His areas of focus include puppet-making, mask-making, and the creation of altars and other ritual folk art used in Mexican celebrations. A resident of Westchester, he was born in the state of Guanajuato. His group *Los Mojados Desobligados* has performed *On How the Three Wise Men Got Lost in New York on Their Way to Bethlehem* at the inaugural Mano a Mano event, *Legends of the Popol Vuh* at the American Museum of Natural History and *Day of the Dead* at the National Museum of the American Indian. Mr. Cossio is a founding member of the Mano a Mano Organizing Committee.

**Aurelia Fernandez Marure** was born in Alpuyecá, Morelos, a small town near Cuernavaca, and grew up in the states of Morelos and Guerrero (Iguala and Acapulco). She learned traditional paper arts, including piñata-making, *papel picado* (paper cutting), and the art of making paper flowers in her childhood home as part of the elaborate preparation for annual village festivals. She also specializes in traditional cooking

and folkloric dance. She has lived in Yonkers for almost 20 years and is an accomplished workshop leader, community activist and director of a traditional dance company called *Los Chinelos*. She was a founder of the *Alma de Mexico* festival in Yonkers, and has presented at the Brooklyn Children's Museum, American Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of the American Indian and Casa Puebla and countless venues for children, families and adults. She is a member of the Mano a Mano Organizing Committee.

**Margarita Larios** is from Atlixco, Puebla. She migrated to New York thirty years ago with her six children and is a proud exponent of the culinary traditions taught to her by her grandmother and mother. These three generations of women worked side by side in the market, selling fruit and vegetables, flowers, chiles and herbs. She is expert on all aspects of traditional Mexican cooking and has frequently catered cultural events. She has given food workshops on chiles and traditional herbs, their uses in cooking and in curative processes. An active member of the Nativity Church in Lower Manhattan, Ms. Larios has presented at the American Indian Community House and the Union Settlement Association in Manhattan and at the Rutherford Multicultural Festival in New Jersey.

**Yolanda Leticia** was born in Jalapa, Veracruz and began her singing career at the age of nine in school productions. She was featured in festivals throughout Veracruz and became a popular singer on local radio and television stations. Her professional career began when she won the *ranchera* singing competition on Channel 4 TV in Mexico and relocated to Puebla in 1989. Here she became a regular on *Feria Internacional de Puebla* opposite Cucho Sanchez and media attention has been growing every since. Since her arrival in New York, Yolanda has been named *Embajadora de la Canción Mexicana* (Ambassador of Mexican Song) by the Mexican Consulate of New York. She teaches voice at the Mariachi Academy of New York. Her wide repertory includes many Mexican holiday songs which she will share at this event. Yolanda Leticia is a founding member of the Mano a Mano Organizing Committee.

**Guadalupe Ross** is a professional soprano with over twelve years of experience. She performs opera, *zarzuela* and art song in Spanish, Nahuatl, Italian, French and German. She is a native of Mexico City and studied at the National Conservatory of Music in Mexico, the Institute of Sacred Music in Rome and the Center for Opera Performance in New York City. In Mexico, Ms. Ross has worked with *La Ruta de los Dioses*, which focuses on the culture of Ancient Mexico and the *Orquesta Tipica de México*. She has been honored as a soloist to sing in a mass offered by Pope John Paul II in Mexico and in honor of Dolores Huerta at the Franklin & Eleanor Roosevelt Institute. She performs in the vocal quartet *Hermanos Ross* with her brothers. Ms. Ross is a teacher at the Mariachi Academy of New York and the Harbor Conservatory for the Performing Arts (both in New York City) and has performed with Mano a Mano at the American Museum of Natural History and other venues.

**Los Niños del East Harlem/East Harlem Folk Dance Company** was founded in New York City in 2000 by Nancy Minor of Puebla with Alfredo Ortega and his daughter Cecilia, both of Veracruz, as Artistic Directors. This folkloric dance troupe is comprised of twenty children between the ages of 4 and 13 (and the children's parents have also founded their own dance troupe). The group has performed at the Thalia Spanish Theatre, Queen Theatre in the Park, La Guardia Community College and the City College of New York. They perform Mexican regional and pre-Colombian dance and are committed to integrating live music – as played by troupe members - into their dance performance.

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