

# Arts & Entertainment

A weekly guide to music, theater, art, movies and more, edited by Rebecca Wallace

## Face the MUSIC and DANCE



NOW IN ITS FOURTH YEAR, WORLD MUSIC DAY  
ADDS TANGO, FLAMENCO AND OTHER DANCERS

by Rebecca Wallace

It's hard to take opera seriously when someone's playing a kazoo in your ear.

That's one of the biggest challenges Claude Ezran faces each year in organizing World Music Day: making sure the performers don't overlap, acoustically. There are only so many corners and plazas and sidewalks in downtown Palo Alto where musicians can play without being too close to each other.

So this June 17, with the free outdoor event in its fourth year, it's stretching out again: geographically (adding a few blocks), numerically (adding a few performers, up to about 54 from 48), and creatively. This year, it's not just about the music. Folkloric dance groups have also been invited. Acts will perform in various sessions between 3 and 7:30 p.m.

"Every year we try to see what else can we do, how can we raise the bar," Ezran said.

The East Palo Alto group Raices de Mexico, which gives dance classes and performances, is joining the program this year. The Greene Academy will contribute Irish dancing; George Nicol will teach and show off Argentine tango; and Arte Flamenco will stomp on the avenue. Nachda Punjab & Balle Balle Bhangra Boys contribute Punjabi folk dances.

As in years past, the musical program is also a veritable United Nations. Performers will include: the VL Trio, playing Cuban and Puerto Rican music; French folk groups Les Campagnards and Side By Side; Yiddish klezmer ensemble Hot Kugel; T-Rosemond playing Haitian sounds; Singing Wood Marimba bringing music from Zimbabwe; and Blues Kazoo playing American folk and ragtime.

Classical players include Palo Alto violinist and violist Be'eri Moalem, opera singer Catherine Vincenti, the youthful Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra and the Quark String Quartet. Pop and rock performers include Hero's Last Mission, Sisters In Crime, Ashley Mendez and Pete Kelso and his Ragadelic Orchestra.

Three bands will play King Plaza: the T Clemente rock 'n' roll band, acoustic folk-rock group Acoustic Son, and the Latin-music band Tribal Heat.

Last year, the city closed University Avenue to cars for the first time during World Music Day, and that will happen again.

"We have so many people that you can't leave



Pop and folk singer Catherine Rose Smith, above; the classical Divisa Ensemble, right; the folk-dancing troupe Nachda Punjab, below.



Pete Kelso rocking out at last year's World Music Day in downtown Palo Alto.

University Avenue open. There's not enough room on the sidewalks," Ezran said. He estimated that about 21,000 people attended last year, approximately double the 2010 count.

Ezran started the event in 2009, inspired by the many World Music Days that have fanned out all over the globe since the original affair began in France in 1982. The philosophy is to provide, well, a world of music: free to the public, with musicians donating their performances.

The original goal was to have World Music Day happen on the longest day of the year, the summer solstice. In Palo Alto, the event is on the closest Sunday to the solstice, which also happens to be Father's Day.

Since Ezran founded the event, it has grown from his grassroots celebration to a festival in which the city has become "a wonderful partner," Ezran said. Palo Alto waives fees on permits, prints marketing programs and contributes some staff time. Ezran remains executive director, with seven or eight regular volunteers helping him, and more on the day to hand out programs.

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### World Music Day

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Still, the event retains its basic focus: music for free. Sometimes other musicians show up on their own and play, which Ezran says doesn't bother him as long as they don't infringe on the other musicians. There aren't booths or T-shirt tables or other promotions. This year, an ice-cream company approached Ezran about handing out samples, but he said that would be too commercial. "It's not what we do."

Ezran, who chairs Palo Alto's Human Relations Commission, hails from France and takes great pleasure in seeing how the "Fête de la

Musique" has spread from his native country — and within it.

One year on World Music Day, he traveled to Paris and was pleasantly surprised to see that the festival had even taken hold in a terminal. "I landed at the airport and they were there, classical music." ■

**What:** The free outdoor World Music Day festival returns to downtown Palo Alto.

**Where:** More than 50 music and dance acts will perform outside, with University Avenue closed from High Street to Webster Street. Performers will also spread out south on Bryant and Ramona streets down to King Plaza at City Hall.

### More swinging and singing

Free summer concerts start up

by Rebecca Wallace

If you tried to combine elements of all the bands set to play at free outdoor concerts in Palo Alto and Stanford this summer, you wouldn't even get halfway before the stage would be full.

You'd have a boogie-woogie Hawaiian-Vivaldi-Motown ensemble with a wicked jazz drummer and a guy who sings like Mick Jagger and plays the piano with his feet. It's probably good that the concert is free. Fortunately, all these bands set their own show

