

# Long Island Traditions

## NEWSLETTER

www.longislandtraditions.org

Vol. 9 No. 4 Fall 2002

### Honoring Traditions

**O**n Sunday, October 27 LI Traditions will hold its 6th annual "Honoring Traditions" program. The program was created to recognize the many folk artists on Long Island who carry on the important everyday cultural traditions that make our region unique, as well as to educate the public on their significance in history and contemporary culture. A lively and entertaining afternoon is promised through performances by 2002 honorees including Rancho Juventude de Portugal, a Portuguese dance group from Mineola; Peruvian musician Theo Torres of Brentwood and his group Vientos del Sur; Bill Godwin and The Ink Spots, famed African American quartet; and Flo Sharkey and the Brookhaven Baymen's Association.

The event will take place at 2:00 PM on October 27 at the Landmark Theater, 232 Main Street, Port Washington. Tickets are \$15/individual, \$25/couple, and can be ordered directly from LI Traditions. Further information is available at [www.longislandtraditions.org](http://www.longislandtraditions.org).

Photo by Steve Gravano, 1999



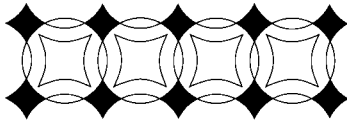
**Flo Sharkey and the Brookhaven Baymens Association will be among those honored at Honoring Traditions on October 27 at Landmark on Main Street.**

### LI Maritime Museum Programs

**L**ong Island Traditions and the LI Maritime Museum are co-sponsoring a series of afternoon lecture-demonstration programs during October/November that explore the history and tradition of our region. On Sunday, October 13th the theme is recreational traditions and will feature fishing rod maker Pete Ames, clamshell artist and welder Harry Saarinen and Jones Beach lifeguard Reggie Jones. On November 3rd the focus is on commercial fishing and will include baymen Lowell Ockers, Flo Sharkey, Bill Hamilton and Jim Rose. On November 10th duck hunters and decoy carvers will be on hand to demonstrate their artistic skills and examine the history of duck hunting on Long Island. All programs begin at 1pm. For more information call 631-HISTORY.

### Funding News

**L**ong Island Traditions is happy to announce that the Chapin Foundation, the Gilder Foundation and the D'Addario Foundation have provided funds for Long Island Traditions' ethnic folk arts programs in the Freeport and Brentwood School Districts. Elementary school students will have the opportunity to meet and hear such diverse groups and artists as Native American artist Ina McNeil of Hempstead, the Steel Sensation steelband, and Peruvian musician Theo Torres of Brentwood. In addition the NY Council for the Humanities is supporting a lecture-demonstration series at the LI Maritime Museum on maritime culture and traditions. We thank our sponsors for their support.



## 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, E-mail: litrad@i-2000.com or visit us on the web at: www.longislandtraditions.org

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## Ethnic Folk Arts Programs

Long Island Traditions is organizing a variety of afternoon and evening concerts that examine the cultural diversity of Long Island's ethnic communities. On November 10 Peruvian musician Theo Torres will be performing at the LI Museum in Stony Brook at 2pm. Torres' *Vientos del Sur* plays traditional Andean music on traditional percussion instruments including the zampoña (pan pipes), quena (bamboo flute), and charango (small guitar) composed by Torres.

On Saturday, December 7th renowned klezmer ensemble Kapelye will be performing at the Parrish Museum in Southampton at 7pm. Kapelye is a treasure among klezmer groups. The term *Klezmer* comes from the Hebrew-Aramaic component of Yiddish, and means literally "musical instruments." *Klezmer* music was traditionally played at Jewish weddings and other festive occasions, far from the religious music of the temple in Eastern Europe. Eventually it found its way to America during the Jewish emigration that began in the late 19th century and continued for generations thereafter. Kapelye is one of the first bands responsible for the renewal of interest in *klezmer* music world-wide. A reviewer for *The New York Times* wrote: "Of the many klezmer bands, the one that comes closest to the ideal is Kapelye." This ensemble is composed of Eric Berman (tuba), Ken Maltz (clarinet and vocals), and Peter Sokolow (keyboard and vocals). ■

## Passings: Reverend Raymond Haggood

On Saturday, August 10 gospel singer and educator Raymond Haggood passed away. Haggood was a member of the Gospel Elders, the New Zionaires and the Singing Ears. A composer, guitar player and singer, Haggood inspired hundreds of school students in Freeport and Huntington with his life history and songs of praise and struggle. Ray and The Gospel Elders were recognized at the 1997 Honoring Traditions program. He is survived by his wife Elizabeth and his children and grandchildren. We will miss him dearly and wish his family well. ■



The Ink Spots will be among those honored at Honoring Traditions on October 27 at Landmark on Main Street.

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# Immigrant Songs in Long Island

By Sydney Hutchinson

The immigrant experience has always been part of American life, from the Mayflower to the present time. Immigrants' trials and tribulations have inspired many works of literature, music and film, from *The Godfather* to *The Mambo Kings* to *The Joy Luck Club*. Such works of art can help people to deal with the realities of their situation, which oftentimes contrast with their original hopes and aspirations. Here in Long Island, where immigration has risen dramatically in recent years, three newcomers of diverse origins - one Salvadoran, one Dominican, and one Peruvian - have found unique ways to express thoughts on their new home and longing for their old one through song.

Carlos Flores came from Pasaquina, El Salvador to the United States in 1989. He lived in Washington, D.C. but fell in love with Long Island after visiting a brother. Since 1997 he has lived in Brentwood, where he composes and records a variety of Latin American musical styles from *corridos* (narrative ballads) to cumbia to bachata. Carlos's songs are often based on true stories, and immigration is a recurring theme.

The corrido "*Historia de un inmigrante / Story of an immigrant*," tells a specific story, that of a friend who tragically committed suicide after immigrating. Carlos states that the friend settled in Jamaica, Queens in 1970, and that his children are all American-born. But instead of offering further details of the tragedy, as many *corridistas* do, Carlos prefers to console the family by remembering positive qualities and noting, "*Hay cosas que están escritas / Y no pueden evitarse*" (Some things are written / And cannot be avoided). Other songs like "*Para tí, Salvador / For you, Salvador*" simply express longing for the homeland, pointing out that Salvadoran immigrants everywhere are united by such feelings. Carlos sings, "*De Miami, te pensamos / De California, te soñamos / De Chicago, te rezamos / Salvadoreños como hermanos*" (From Miami, we think of you / from California, we dream of you / from Chicago, we pray for you / Salvadorans as brothers).

Luis Cordero was born in Tenares, Dominican Republic and moved to Freeport in 1978. There he worked as a dishwasher and later as a cook, while playing both religious and popular music on nights and weekends. Luis found that composing songs helped him to deal with homesickness and adjust to life in this country; later he saw the songs could comfort other immigrants, as well.

"*Carta a mi padre / Letter to my father*" was written shortly after Luis's arrival here. Luis tells about his life in New York, including difficulties like not speaking English, the extreme cold, and hard work: "*Me encuentro aquí en Nueva York / Trabajando como buey / Solo me quieren tener / Lavando platos y ollas*" (I find myself here in New York / Working like an ox / They just want to have me / washing plates and pots). Although

he lives in a nice apartment, he comes home so tired all he can do is sleep. The chorus states, "*Padre, no es tan fácil / Vivir en Nueva York / Me voy a vivir contigo / Que allá yo vivo mejor*" (Father, it's not so easy / Living in New York / I'm leaving to be with you / Over there I live better).

A later work, "*Quisqueya*," takes its name from the Taíno Indian word for the Dominican Republic's island. Luis states that the song "*has a message for the person who comes here from Santo Domingo and is thinking about his homeland*." Luis notes with pride that he, like traditional merengue music, was born in the Cibao region: "*Soy un dominicano / Que en el Cibao nací / No olvido de mi tierra / Aunque no me encuentre allí*" (I'm a Dominican / born in the Cibao / I don't forget my land / even though I'm no longer there). Other lyrics describe the beauty of the island and its music, while the music reminds listeners of the good times had there.

Theo Torres is originally from Lima, Perú but moved to Long Island in 1984. Although he now owns his own home in Brentwood and is proud to be an American citizen, it was a struggle for him to reach his current position. He has never forgotten the loneliness and isolation of his first few years in the United States. In order to earn money to bring his family over, Theo worked long hours picking tomatoes and shining lamps at a factory but somehow still made the time to compose music.

"*Solo / Alone*," a cumbia, focuses on Theo's early years in Long Island, describing experiences common to many immigrants who work low-wage jobs: "*Los 7 días me fajo / 12 horas diarias o más / Sobretiempo no me pagan / Lo tomas o lo dejas*" (I work 7 days a week / 12 hours a day or more / They don't pay me overtime / you take it or you leave it). Theo describes how alone he felt having left his family behind in Peru and expresses the wish, "*Aunque haga buena plata / Me quisiera regresar*" (Even if I make good money here / I want to go home).

"*Por un sueño / For a dream*" concludes the story begun in "*Solo*," following the composer's journey from suffering to success. Of the arduous border crossing Theo made to enter the US, he sings, "*Cruzé fronteras primero / Hasta un río nadé / Y en un desierto compañero / Casi mi vida dejé*" (First I crossed borders / I even swam a river / And in a desert, my friend / I almost lost my life). He goes on to describe a loneliness made "*worse without knowing English*." But at the end

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# Immigrant Songs in Long Island continued

Theo offers hope. In spite of everything, he worked hard to achieve his dream: “*Que mucho se sufre /se llora, se añora / ¡Pero sí se puede! ¡Sí se logra!*” (How much one suffers / One cries, one hurts / But you can do it! You can succeed!).

Songs such as these are valuable not only for aesthetic reasons but because of what they teach the careful listener.

Fellow immigrants can identify with the struggles depicted and take comfort from the fact that they are not alone. Americans of all backgrounds can learn to understand the practical difficulties and the complex, ever-changing emotions of the immigrant experience. ■

## 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 October, January and April.

**Saturday, October 12** Irish musician Johnny B. Connolly and Aidan Brennan. 8pm, Searing-Roslyn United Methodist Church, 134 I. U. Willets Road, Albertson

**Sunday, October 13** Program on recreational maritime folk arts at LI Maritime Museum, 2pm. 86 West Avenue, West Sayville. Call 631-HISTORY for more information.

**Sunday, October 27** Honoring Traditions program. 2pm. Landmark on Main Street, 232 Main Street, Port Washington. Call 516-767-8803 for more information and see accompanying article.

**Sunday, November 3** Program on commercial fishing at LI Maritime Museum, 2pm. 86 West Avenue, West Sayville. Call 631-HISTORY for more information.

**Saturday, November 9** Scottish and Irish musician and composer Iona. 8pm, Searing-Roslyn United Methodist Church, 134 I. U. Willets Road, Albertson.

**Sunday, November 10** Program on traditional Peruvian music with Theo Torres at LI Museum, Route 25A, Stony Brook. 2pm. Call 631-751-0066 for more info.

**Saturday, December 14** Randall Bays Trio. 8pm, Searing-Roslyn United Methodist Church, 134 I. U. Willets Road, Albertson.

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382 Main Street  
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