

La Semana Cubana - Week of Cuban Culture

When: Dec 1 - 6

Where: Las Positas College

The Las Positas Spanish Department, with the generous support of the Alameda County Arts Commission, the Las Positas Foundation, the Campus Change Network and BasicNecessities.org, will be celebrating the Week of the Cuban Culture- La Semana Cubana from December 1 to December 6. This week-long celebration will focus on the Cuban people, their history, art, dance, music and religions.

Catherine Suárez, Coordinator for the Foreign Language Department, and Luis Valverde, dance instructor at Las Positas College, are combining their efforts for the second year in a row to bring the cultural richness of our island neighbor to Las Positas and the Tri-Valley.

Art Director for La Semana Cubana, Rafael Aruzaga, will display his original art along with that of other Cuban artists. In addition, an altar dedicated to Oshun, one of the main female orisha, or goddesses, in the Santería religion, will be on display in the 2400 building.

Each afternoon will feature a different cultural event. Among these events are traditional Cuban drumming, a Rueda de Casino dance, salsa lessons, a Rumba demonstration and a percussion master class starting at 12:30

Cultural activities are slated for each evening starting at 7 o'clock. On Monday December 1 visitors can view Cuban art and meet the artists. On Tuesday, December 2, at 6 pm, the Las Positas Jazz Combo will perform, followed at 7 pm by a panel of native Cubans who will discuss the Cuban experience. On Wednesday the Afro-Cuban and Salsa Band Pellejo Seco will perform. Thursday, December 4, features Orquesta la Moderna Tradición. On Friday, December 5, Lara Greene, an ethnomusicology doctoral candidate at Florida State University and lecturer at Florida International University, will discuss Timba in a talk entitled "Timba, music of struggle, triumph and modernized tradition" Her talk is scheduled for Friday, December 5, at 7 p.m.

Timba, a popular Cuban musical genre is most often likened to salsa. It began to evolve in Cuba in the 1970s and has remained popular there. The music is a blend of styles, including nueva trova, latin jazz, disco, funk and hip hop. Since the 1990s, Miami, with its large Cuban-American population, has become the center of a thriving Timba scene.

Greene has researched and written about Cuban music for nearly a decade. She has presented papers on Cuban music and dance at conferences throughout the United States and is currently writing her dissertation on Timba in Miami at Florida State University. Her talk at Las Positas, which in addition to Cuban Culture Week is also a part of the campus Speaker Series, will take place thanks to support from the Campus Change Network, the Alameda County Arts Fund, the Las Positas Foundation, and BasicNecessities.org.

The culminating event is a Bembé Celebration on Saturday, December 6, beginning at 2 pm in the Student Center. The Bembé will feature live music, Afro Cuban dance, Cuban drum rhythms and traditional Cuban food.

All events are free to the public. Donations will be collected for Project Shoes and Socks, a program that provides new shoes and socks to school children in rural areas of Cuba.

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