

# GLOBAL EDUCATION CENTER

presents

## FESTIVALS OF LIGHT - DIVERSE TRADITIONS, COMMON THEMES

DECEMBER 14, 2019 @ 7:00 pm  
Father Ryan High School Center for the Arts  
700 Norwood Drive



[www.globaleducationcenter.org](http://www.globaleducationcenter.org)



Specialty plates



support the arts!

"For though my faith is not yours and your faith is not mine, if we are each free to light our own flame, together we can banish some of the darkness of the world."

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks



## **RETHINKING HOLIDAYS**

Holidays are important events in the lives of our children and families. Whether a holiday is celebrated in a quiet, reverent, spiritual way or in a festive, colorful, gleeful way, such celebrations reflect cultural values, family traditions and, often, religious customs. To ignore holidays altogether is to negate an important part of a child's or a family's heritage. To celebrate one holiday to such an extreme that all others seem trite and abnormal is ignoring the global and religiously diverse population of our communities. Our goal then as educators and community leaders is to explore the cultural, religious and familial traditions of our children and families so that we can create an inclusive atmosphere in which no child, individual or group feels either superior or left out - an atmosphere in which the give and take of sharing personal stories and traditions is natural and culturally sensitive.

## A detailed photograph of a traditional Shab-e Yalda table. The table is covered with a patterned cloth and is laden with various items. In the center, there are several slices of watermelon arranged in a circular pattern. To the left, a bowl of pomegranates is lit with small candles. In the foreground, a bowl of saffron rice (tahdig) is visible. To the right, a bowl of saffron rice is also present. A large, ornate lantern is lit, casting a warm glow. Several lit candles are placed around the table, including one in a glass holder and another in a metal holder. A small vase with yellow flowers is also on the table. The background is dark, making the lit items stand out. The text "SHAB-E YALDA" is written in large, bold, white letters at the top right of the image. At the bottom, there is a black banner with white text that reads "TAPPersia.com | Travel Around Persia" and "Credit: @FamazZolfaghari".

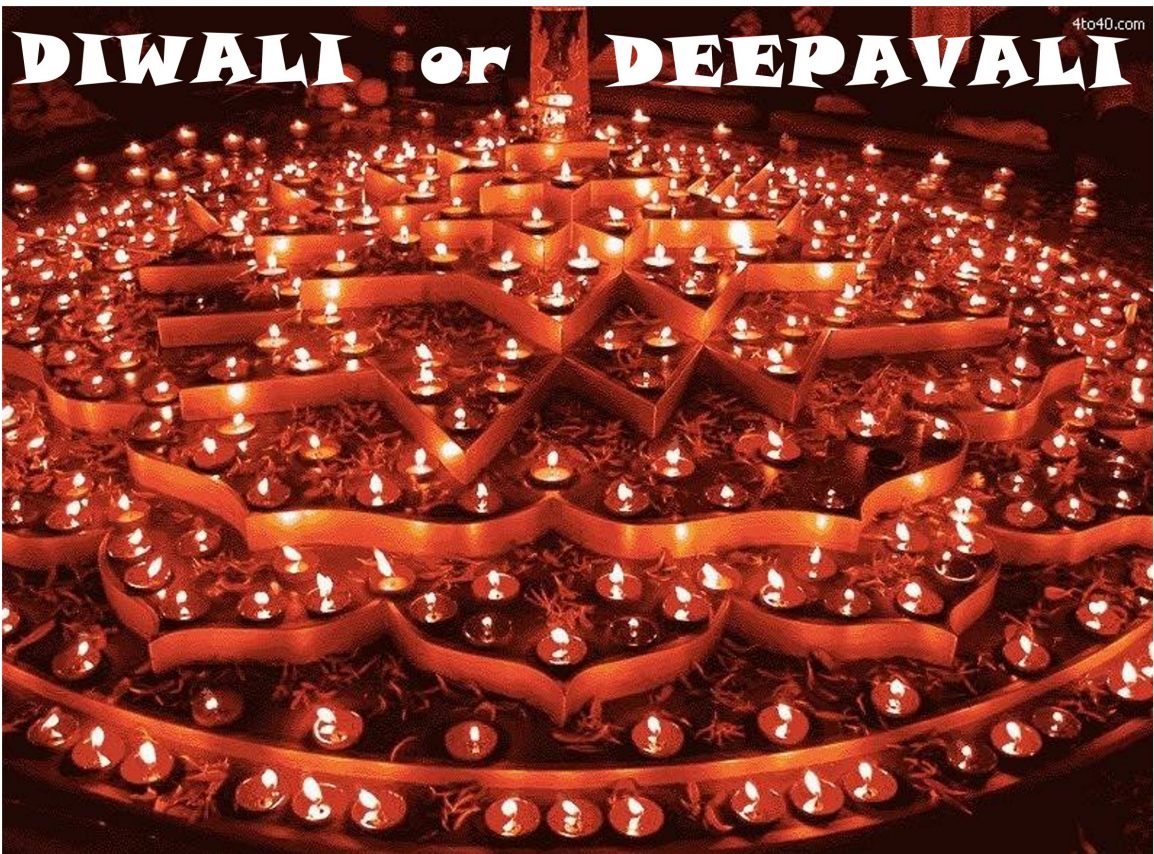
Credit: @FarnazZolfaghari

Since ancient times, more than 5000 years, the longest, darkest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere has been a night to celebrate with warmth, fire and candles, music, delicious food, and the last of the fruits from the summer. Watermelon, pomegranates, persimmons, nuts and other fruits, cover the table. Family and friends gather around to eat, laugh, tell stories and jokes, and recite ancient Persian mythology and beloved poetry by Hafez, dispelling the darkness of winter, and welcoming the return of the sun and longer days. Red is the color of Shab-e Yalda, evoking the crimson hues of dawn, and the glow of life. There is a saying in Farsi that goes something like this: *I wish you a long and happy life like Shab-e Yalda, sweet as watermelon and fruitful as pomegranates!*

## Performance by Travis Jarrell

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Diwali or Deepavali is a Hindu festival of lights that usually falls in late autumn on the eve of a new moon. In India, it is a national festival and holiday time that is celebrated in many different ways. Homes are decorated with beautiful Rangoli patterns and rows of lights, called diya, to welcome a visit by Lakshmi, the goddess of good fortune and prosperity. Families gather to share festive foods, especially sweets, and often celebrate with dancing and fireworks. Many families also celebrate the homecoming of Prince Rama and Sita from their fourteen-year exile by the evil king, Ravana. Diwali, or Deepavali, is a very festive time for Hindu families around the world as they honor Lakshmi and celebrate the victory of good over evil and light over darkness.

**Performance by students of Monica Cooley & Kala Nivedanam**

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Many Jewish families around the world celebrate their religious freedom through the celebration of Chanukah or Hanukkah. This glorious festival of lights, which often occurs in December, honors a miracle that occurred over 2000 years ago when the Jewish people were victorious over an invading monarch who tried to force them to give up their faith. The eight nights of Chanukah represent the eight nights for which a few drops of oil miraculously burned in the Eternal Light. Candles are lit each night for eight nights in the family hannukiah, or menorah, to celebrate this miracle and to honor the rededication of the temple or synagogue by the Jewish people. Families celebrate in many different ways, sharing Chanukah prayers as they kindle the lights each night, giving gifts to share their gratitude, eating special treats such as potato latkes and Chanukah gelt and playing games with dreidels, which are spinning tops that say *A great miracle happened here*.

**Performance by Nashville International Folk Dancers**



# Christmas - Advent

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The season of Advent represents anticipation of the arrival of Christmas and the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Candles are placed among a wreath of greenery, with one candle lit each Sunday leading up to Christmas. On Christmas Eve, many families light all four candles plus one in the center. For many Christians, Jesus represents the light of the world and everlasting Life, both of which are represented by the Advent candles and the wreath of evergreens. Christmas is celebrated by Christians around the world in many different ways. Some Christians prefer to honor only the spiritual aspects of Christmas and reject the more materialistic traditions. Others choose to celebrate in a festive and visible way with lights, trees, presents and parties. The Christmas season spans one month:

December 6 - St. Nicholas Day

December 12 - Santa Lucia Day

December 24 - Christmas Eve

December 25 - Christmas Day

January 6 - Three Kings Day or Twelfth Night

**Performances by Sangeetha Ekambaram & Alejandro Rivera & Students**





Las Posadas is one of many traditions for celebrating Christmas in Mexico. It lasts for nine days, from December 16 through 24, and celebrates the reenactment of Mary and Joseph's search for a safe haven to give birth to Baby Jesus. Posadas traditions include prayer and singing carols and visiting the homes of neighbors with cheerful music and songs for nine days, awaiting the arrival of His birth.

Another tradition is to sing La Rama from the 16th to the 24th of December, the same dates of Las Posadas, and consists of a group of singers who adorn the branch of a tree with candles, mandarins, paper and balloons for their evening procession. With tambourines and maracas they sing verses that make reference to the birth of the Child Jesus, going from house to house waiting in anticipation and showing gratitude with an "aguinaldo" (candies, fruits or money).

**Performance by AnaLi Ramirez and her Students**

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Ramadan is a special month of fasting and personal introspection for our neighbors who follow the path of Islam. This holy month is honored differently throughout the world, sometimes including the lighting of lanterns and candles, particularly at the close of Ramadan. Based on a lunar calendar, the holy month of Ramadan changes dates each year, beginning with the physical sighting of the new moon. During this holy period of fasting and nightly exploration of the Qur'an, able Muslims refrain from food, liquids and spousal sexual relations from sunrise until sunset. This time of personal sacrifice is designed to heighten self-discipline, self-restraint, a spirit of generosity and love of Allah (God). During the holy month, all thirty sections of the Qur'an are recited by a spiritual leader who has absorbed the entire holy text by heart in the original Arabic. The close of Ramadan is marked by a festive day of celebration known as the Eid al Fitr.

**Performance by Pegah Kadivar**



# KWANZAA



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KWANZAA is a cultural celebration that was started in 1966 by Professor Maulana Karenga. It is an African American holiday which celebrates family, community and culture. Celebrated from December 26 thru January 1, its origins are in the first harvest celebrations of Africa from which it takes its name. The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits" in ki-Swahili, one of the most widely spoken African languages. Throughout Kwanzaa, we focus on seven principles, called Nguzo Saba, by which we can live better lives and be better people. Candles are lit each night, shining brightly in the kinara, often accompanied by African music and dance. A Kwanzaa table also has an umoja, or unity, cup; a basket of fruit to represent the harvest; a woven mat placed under the kinara that represents our connection to our ancestors; and ears of corn called vibunzi that represents the children in our midst who will lead us with vision and hope.

**Performance by NYAMA Afro Latin Ensemble**

## **POEMS BY HAFIZ or HAFEZ**

### **Your Seed Pouch**

Lanterns  
Hang from the night sky  
So that your eye might draw  
One more image of love upon your silk canvas  
Before Sleep

Words from Him have reached you  
And tilled a golden field inside.

When all your desires are distilled  
You will cast just two votes:

To love more.  
And be happy.

Take the sounds from the mouth-flute of Hafiz  
And mix them into your seed pouch

And when the Moon says,  
"It is time to  
Plant,"

Why not dance,  
Dance  
and Sing?

### **The Thousand-Stringed Instrument**

The heart is  
The thousand-stringed instrument.

Our sadness and fear come from being  
Out of tune with love.

All day long God coaxes my lips  
to speak.

So that your tears will not stain  
His green dress.

It is not that the Friend is vain.  
It is just your life we care about.

Sometimes the Beloved  
Takes my pen in hand,  
For Hafiz is just a simple man.

The other day the Old One  
Wrote on the Tavern wall;

: "The heart is  
The thousand-stringed instrument

That can only be tuned with  
LOVE



## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Registering now for Spring Semester  
of Children's Classes at both locations

### **Annual Global Birthday Bash**

Saturday, February 1, 2020  
7:00 PM @ Father Ryan High School

### **Documentary Films**

River of Gold - January 18, 2020 - 4:30 pm\*  
The Infiltrators - February 22, 2020 - 4:30 pm  
Light from Light - March 7, 2020 - 4:30 pm  
Little Miss Westie - April 18, 2020 - 4:30 pm  
Dawnland - May 16, 2020 - 4:30 pm\*

\*Films from our Indigenous Film Series

All others are part of Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers

### **Global Cabaret & Reception for**

#### **Carlos Barbosa-Lima**

world-renowned guitarist who will be in residence at Global Education Center  
for three weeks

April 18, 2020 - 8:00 pm

### **Musica Nueva Concert**

April 24, 2020 - Time TBA - Ingram Hall @ Blair

featuring an original guitar concerto by Leo Brouwer played by Carlos  
Barbosa-Lima, co-commissioned by Global Education Center and Intersection  
Music with support from Center for Latin American Studies at Vanderbilt

### **Roots, Rhythm and Rhyme Year-End Showcase**

May 8, 2020 - 7:00 pm @  
Father Ryan High School

## **GLOBAL EDUCATION CENTER**

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## THE ARTS - A BRIDGE TO UNDERSTANDING

Over generations throughout the world's many cultures, the arts have endured as vital, vibrant and dynamic necessities in the human desire to express innate creativity and passion for Life and its many traditions and circumstances. The arts have proven themselves to be wonderful teaching tools in the education of our children, especially when introduced at the younger ages. The broad spectrum of the arts includes visual, tactile, auditory and kinetic modes of learning. The arts promote aesthetic awareness and emotional, intellectual and physical development. The participatory nature of using the arts in the classroom, in the community, and in our homes encourages interaction between children and the various mediums of diverse art forms as well as interaction with the various cultural and spiritual elements indigenous to artistic expression. As children are encouraged to express their innate passion and understanding for music, folk tales, literature, poetry, visual art, creative drama, and dance, they are also developing an awareness of and hopefully a respect for the similarities, the differences, and the personal preferences of cultural traditions throughout time. The arts stimulate children to appreciate the inherent beauty within themselves and within the world at large, promoting a global awareness and a respect for all of humanity. The arts have great unifying power as we explore the issues and emotions expressed throughout the ages by all cultures, including those that have no word for art - where art cannot be separated from daily life - where it is a constant expression of a culture's world view - where it is a reflection of human necessity.

To share the arts of the world with your children, registration is now open for Global Education Center's spring semester.

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