

## L.A. Jewish Symphony Program Explains the Sephardic-Latino Connection

Orchestra members teach Jewish and Mexican children to understand their cultural connection and celebrate their similarities through music.

By **Corinne DeVries** November 18, 2010

---

The Los Angeles Jewish Symphony's annual education concert, "Patchwork of Cultures: The Sephardic-Latino Connection," takes place on Nov. 29 at Valley Beth Shalom Synagogue in Encino. The concert is part of an education program that allows 4th, 5th and 6th graders to explore the connection between the Sephardic Judaism and Latino cultures.

"The whole idea is to build this bridge of familiarity," said 51-year-old director and founder of the orchestra, Noreen Green, of Encino. "We as Jews have a history of persecution. I think it's important to reach out to Hispanics using music. Music is the perfect way to reach out to other people."

This is the sixth year the orchestra has taught the course to Valley public schools and private Jewish day schools, including Valley Beth Shalom in Encino. The program is funded by grants and donations.

During the workshops, students learn about the historical similarities between Sephardic Jews and Latinos. Sephardic Jews originated in Spain and Portugal and speak Ladino, a language derived from Castilian Spanish, Hebrew, Turkish, Greek and Arabic. Both Mexicans and Jews also have a history of persecution as well.

As the students explore the music, traditions and history of both cultures, they create their own compositions by writing a story, drawing pictures and adding lyrics about their family histories. They also listen to Sephardic folksongs and Flamenco music to compare the sounds they hear.

"The kids love the classes," said Tamar Raff, Director of Judaic Studies at Valley Beth Shalom Day School. "It's really enriching the curriculum and they're looking forward to the concert."

The concert will feature Cantor Marcelo Gindlin of the Malibu Jewish Center and Synagogue. The students' artwork will also be on display, and together they will dance the Mexican Hat Dance, sing along to the music and enjoy the live orchestra.

"There's something special about crossing the cultural boundaries and breaking them down to show kids that we are all connected," said 29-year-old clarinet player and workshop instructor Robby Elfman. "Even our religions intertwine."



