

## ECHOs of the Past

Between Jan. 23 and March 13, audiences from Anchorage to Boston will have an opportunity to witness a rare collaboration of widely divergent Native cultures singing, dancing and acting with the annual **ECHO Performing Arts Festival**.

ECHO (Education through Cultural & Historic Organizations) was officially launched in 2001 as a joint project of a handful of museums and tribal entities. Today, it is composed of the **Peabody Essex Museum** of Salem, Massachusetts; the **Alaska Native Heritage Center** of Anchorage; the **Inupiat Heritage Center** of Barrow, Alaska; the **Bishop Museum** of Honolulu; the **New Bedford Oceanarium** and **New Bedford Whaling Museum** of New Bedford, Massachusetts; and the **Mississippi Band of Choctaw**

**Indians**. The nonprofit provides teacher education programs, technology training, student internships and sharing of museum collections, as well as operating an impressive Web site. But, its most visible and far-reaching project has been the group's Performing Arts Festival, which is seen by some 25,000 people a year.

The festival has metamorphosed since its launch in 2001, notes producer **Steven Alvarez** (Mescalero Apache/Yaqui/Athabaskan); this year it will consist of six performers who will present

traditional stories, songs and dances mixed with contemporary performing techniques and tools. Directing the shows will be **Peter Rockford Espiritu**. Some of the acts in the 45-minute show find performers of different cultures mixing elements of their people into a blended whole—for instance, the recitation and enactment of a traditional Wampanoag story from Massachusetts will be accompanied by percussion and singing by a Native Hawaiian.

"I think audiences will find it very compelling," notes Alvarez (see p. 15, Sep/Oct 2008 issue). "They are a celebration of cultural elements that are common to Indigenous cultures, and people in general. These are contemporary pieces but based on traditional forms. They reveal that Native cultures are alive and thriving, and that we continue to evolve and grow. We see them as a means of teaching, sharing and intergenerational learning."

The public performance series will kick off on Jan. 23 at the Alaska Native Heritage Center and Barrow on Jan. 28. It then travels to Honolulu on Feb. 13; Philadelphia, Mississippi on Feb. 23; and Oxford, Mississippi on Feb. 25. Next up are shows at PEM in Salem, Massachusetts on March 6, and the Boston Children's Museum and Brown University on March 7. It wraps up with performances in New Bedford on March 11 and at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum on March 13. Almost every stop also includes at least one performance for school groups of 400 kids or more. The school performances are free; the institutional performances are free with museum admission.

The group's Web site has curriculum materials to help teachers prepare their classes for the performances, and activities and materials to access following the performances. For additional details on the festival or ECHO in general, visit [www.echospace.org](http://www.echospace.org)



BRIAN ADAMS

From left: ECHO 2010 performers Curtis "Buck" Willis (Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians); Ani Lokomaika'i Lipscomb (Native Hawaiian) of the Bishop Museum; Annawon Weeden (Mashpee Wampanoag) of the Peabody Essex Museum; Allison Akootchook Warden (Inupiat) of the Inupiat Heritage Center; Stephen Blanchett (Yup'ik/Inuit/African-American) of the Alaska Native Heritage Center; and José Manuel Vinagre (Portuguese-American) of the New Bedford ECHO Project.

## ELSEWHERE

Don't miss the 18<sup>th</sup> annual **NATIVE AMERICAN ARTS FESTIVAL**, Jan. 9-10, Scout Park, in Litchfield Park, AZ, with some 150 invited artists presenting a wide range of arts and crafts, as well as art demonstrations, storytellers, Native foods and performers. Headliners include Arvel Bird and band, Montee Sinquah, hoop dancer Tony Duncan, musician Allenroy Paquin, Clarence Clearwater and Mac Lopez. Admission: \$8 adults, \$5 for seniors (56 years and up); children under 13 are free. 623/935-9040 or [www.litchfield-park.org](http://www.litchfield-park.org)

Drop by the 8<sup>th</sup> annual presentation of **NATIVE TRAILS**, noon-1:30 p.m. most Thursdays and Sundays from Jan. 21 to April 10, Scottsdale Center Civic Mall, Arizona, for a series of free musical and dance performances, along with fine arts and crafts presented by various Arizona tribes. [www.ScottsdaleNativeTrails.com](http://www.ScottsdaleNativeTrails.com)

Step lively to the 7<sup>th</sup> annual **RED PAINT POW WOW AND INDIAN MARKET**, Jan. 22-24, Silver City, NM, which includes some 40 arts and craft vendors selling handmade goods, demonstration dancing on Jan. 23, and a competitive powwow on Jan. 23-24. The highly regarded event was founded by and is directed by Joe Saenz (Warm Springs Apache). Admission Jan. 22 is free; on Jan. 23-24 it is \$8 for adults, \$5 for seniors and children under 12. 575/534-1379 or [www.redpaintpowwow.net](http://www.redpaintpowwow.net)

Spend a day at the **COLORADO & TEXAS INDIAN MARKETS**, Jan. 22-24 and March 26-28, respectively, both founded and organized by Randy and Paula Wilkerson. The 29<sup>th</sup> annual Colorado show is at the Merchandise Mart in Denver; the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Texas event is at the Arlington Convention Center. The artists include Native and non-Natives working in Western, wildlife and other genres in many media, plus an impressive array of performing artists. The Colorado event will include the band Brule, the Robert Mirabal Experience, Arvel Bird, the Ehecatl Aztec Dancers, the American Indian Dance Show, dancers Lowery Begay and Petur Redbird, actress and musician Irene Bedard, Holly Dunn, actor Steve Revis, and the South American group Ancient Winds. There will also be a Navajo weaving market and Native food court. Most will also be present at the Texas show. Admission is \$10 adults, children under 13 free. 972/398-0052 or [www.indianmarket.net](http://www.indianmarket.net)

Enjoy the **SPIRIT OF OUR MUSIC FESTIVAL**, Jan. 28 at 7 p.m., Heart of the Beast Theater, Minneapolis, presented by the First Nations Composer Initiative as a benefit for the notable nonprofit group Common Ground. Headlining is flautist R. Carlos Nakai, with cellist Dawn Avery, guitarist Mitch Walking Elk and the Hok-a-Hey and Oshkii Giizhik Singers. Master of Ceremonies is Martha Fasthorse. General admission is \$35; a VIP ticket (\$100) includes a post-event reception. Tickets at the Minneapolis Indian Center (612/874-7766) or Northland Visions (612/872-0390). General inquiries: 651/251-2812

Celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> annual **KAWENA PUKUI PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL**, Feb. 13, Bishop Museum grounds, Honolulu, HI. The event will include a performance of the ECHO group (see feature), as well as more