

# SHERMAN OAKS SUN

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**SUNDIAL**  
Community CALENDAR

## Community

### Fashion Square Holiday Events

Santa is available for photos through Dec. 24. 14006 Riverside Drive.

### Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Council

Meets second Mon. of each month. 6:30pm. Next meeting, January 8. Sherman Oaks Elementary School Library, 14755 Greenleaf St. (818) 503-2399. www.shermanoakscnc.org.

### Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association Community Meeting

Meets the third Wed. of every month. 6:30pm social, 7:30pm meeting. Next meeting, January 17. Sunkist building, 14130 Riverside Drive. (818) 377-4590. www.sohainfo.com. Past meetings webcast at www.la36.org.

### Forro For All at Skirball

Rob Curto's Forro for All is the third concert in the series "Compressing the World," showcasing the accordion across cultures and musical styles. The New York-based band plays a unique style of dance music from Northeast Brazil. Debuts Jan. 11, 8pm. \$30 General, \$25 Skirball members, \$20 full-time students. 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd. (866) 468-3399 or www.ticketweb.com for tickets.

### Campo de Cahuenga

A re-enactment of the signing of the Articles of Capitulation at Campo de Cahuenga. The event will feature fiesta dancers, firing of the Howitzer Cannon, a tour of the archeological dig and more. Jan. 14, 1-2:15pm. 3919 Lankershim Blvd.

**Studio City Library Distinguished Speakers' Series**  
New Orleans Times-Picayune sports writer Josh Peter will discuss his new book "Fried Twinkies, Buckle Bunnies & Bull Riders" which details the year he spent on the Professional Bull Rider's Tour. Jan. 22, 7pm. 12511 Moorpark Street, Studio City. (818) 755-7873

### Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) Course

Ethics and Open Government Training for Neighborhood Councils available online and at workshops throughout Dec. The course fulfills all requirements set out in AB1234, which requires local agency officials to complete two hours of ethics training on specific topics no later than December 31. Visit www.lacityneighborhoods.com.

### The Encino-Oaks Republican Women's Federated Luncheon

Monthly luncheons held on the second Wed. of each month at the Sportsmen's Lodge. Bring friends for lunch, meeting, speakers, and networking. Call Maria at (818) 501-3898

### San Fernando Valley Art Club

Club meets the first Tuesday of each month. 6:30pm, refreshments are served, 7pm program.

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# A musical family legacy continues

*Jeannine Wagner-Gallardo conducts the holiday chorale at St. Francis de Sales*

BY LYNN MILLS

At a 10 a.m. mass on an Advent Sunday at St. Francis de Sales church in Sherman Oaks, the 40-strong choir in the rear loft blends seamlessly into "Sanctus," a majestic, haunting Gregorian chant ("Sanctus dominus deus sabaoth...hosanna in excelsis").

All eyes are on the priest at the altar, but a few children steal a glance back to the choir loft, where the conductor who prepares the singers weekly now conducts them with subtle arm movements in front of the congregation.

What they probably don't know is that she's Jeannine Wagner-Gallardo, conductor of the legendary Roger Wagner Chorale (a twenty member professional choral group founded by her father, Roger Wagner, in 1947), and her own choral group, the Wagner Ensemble.

Those parishioners who do know Wagner-Gallardo may not be aware that the Cho-



Jeannine Wagner-Gallardo with the St. Francis de Sales holiday chorale.

rale recently sang on two cuts of Christina Aguilera's current bestselling cd, "Back to Basics." Or that in the 60s (as she'll tell you with a playful grin) she sang with the Roger Wagner Chorale when they backed up Pink Floyd at the legendary Fillmore in San Francisco. The audience of hardcore rock and rollers demanded an encore from the Chorale.

"We did the 'Ave Maria Victoria' — and everybody loved it!" laughs Wagner-Gallardo.

While the term "chorale" refers to a specific kind of hymn singing, choral music does include secular along with the sacred, and her career has been surprisingly eclectic.

"You couldn't talk about choral music without having

sacred music included in the discussion," she says.

Google her name and a variety of projects surface — from "Quilting an American Christmas" (her first cd conducting the Roger Wagner Chorale) to "City of Evil" by heavy metal band Avenged Sevenfold (she supplied boy sopranos for one cut). Wagner-Gallardo has both sung and conducted choirs for some sixty television and film scores (including many for John Williams). She even worked in front of the camera in the feature films "Spyhard" and "Hook."

While Wagner-Gallardo has toured all over the world as a soloist, chorister, and conductor with the Roger Wagner Chorale (including a stint as chorus master and assistant

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## Fire fighter burn victim goes home

BY ANA KACZMAREK

Family members and fire fighters flanked Fire Captain Larry Davis as he was discharged from the Grossman Burn Center at the Sherman Oaks Hospital on December 14 after undergoing treatment for the burns he sustained during a residential structure fire.

The 45-year-old from the Apple Valley Fire District suffered third degree burns to 24 percent of his body, including his fingers, hands, wrists, arms and legs when he encountered an obstruction while exiting a fire on October 9.

"It's an amazing recovery," said Dr. Richard Grossman, the plastic surgeon who founded the center. Grossman said Davis had undergone 16 surgeries in the past two months, including amputations and reconstructions, but that his prognosis was "very good."

"I'm grateful to my fellow fire fighters for making a speedy entry and getting me out of the building or I wouldn't be here today," said Davis, whose scalp was still healing from the burns. "It seems like a long time when you're on fire, but they were there within seconds."

Division Chief Michael Malloy, who has known Davis for 20 years, was present to show his support. His son sustained minor burns during the same fire. "This is the first time in Apple Valley history that we've had something like this happen," Malloy said. "I hope he'll [Davis] be back to work in whatever capacity he can."

Davis called his healing "miraculous" and expressed praise for Dr.

Grossman and his staff, as

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**WAGNER-GALLARDO** from page 1  
conductor of "Carmen" for the Sakai City Opera), she has also spent a decade and a half conducting the St. Francis de Sales adult and children's choirs.

"I have to tell you the best acoustics are here," she says. "I feel so lucky to have the choir I do here and the support of the pastor, and to have the acoustics to work with." Of the children's choir, she says, "They are always refreshing, always challenging. To see such quick growth is so inspiring."

Wagner-Gallardo's French-born father, Roger Wagner, got his start conducting church choirs and singing with the

tle in Westwood, and at the age of 25 she joined the Roger Wagner Chorale as a mezzo-soprano.

Wagner-Gallardo started conducting when she was a student at Marymount College, where her father was professor of music. "I had to take over for him when he would have to be away for some reason," she recalls.

"[He'd say] 'Take it, Jeannine. Jeannine can do it.'" From there she became the assistant conductor for the Los Angeles Master Chorale (also founded by her father) for their performances with the L.A. Philharmonic, in charge of rehearsing the group when her father was on tour.



Wagner Ensemble.

MGM chorus. He went on to cut 87 records in his lifetime. "He was larger than life," Wagner says of her father. His tastes were varied—ranging from the B Minor Mass of Bach to Stephen Foster and Appalachian folk songs. Although the Roger Wagner Chorale had regular performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and worked with great composers such as Stravinsky, they weren't above backing up the likes of the British rock group Procol Harum at the Hollywood Bowl in the late 60s.

As a child growing up in Hollywood, Wagner-Gallardo remembers some of the impressive musicians coming to the family's home in Hollywood. Her father's madrigal group, which was the start for the Roger Wagner Chorale, included a number of people who would reach their own fame, including Marni Nixon and Marilyn Horne.

"My father used to tell me that Stravinsky came to the door one day, but I don't remember that," she says.

The oldest of three children, Wagner-Gallardo was the one to follow in her father's footsteps. As a toddler, she watched her father composing at the piano, and became so intrigued she started lessons at 3 1/2 years old. "And then they discovered I had perfect pitch and so the path was very clear," she says.

At that time, every city had choral groups and she started singing in the Los Angeles City Children's Choir. Wagner-Gallardo also sang in the church choirs her father conducted at St. Joseph's church downtown and St. Paul the Apos-

"I would prepare the group and be responsible for them to be ready for the conductor to work with when he'd come in," she says. Conductors at that time included Zubin Mehta and Eugene Ormandy, among other luminaries.

Despite her father's encouragement, she says she found being Roger Wagner's daughter was sometimes difficult. "I felt I really had to be the best. If I was going to be a singer in his group, I couldn't have it said about me that I was chosen because of favoritism, so I had to prove I was the best one."

In 1992, she took over the Roger Wagner Chorale, a group of twenty singers, pianist, and bass player, continuing her father's tradition.

"I hope I have that same concept of sound and same concept of musicality," explains Wagner-Gallardo. "I'm a different person, so I can't be exactly the same, [but] my brother, when he first heard me conduct after my father had died, said he cried because he thought he would never hear that sound again."

"[My father] was really impassioned about his music making. His music always had affect," says Wagner-Gallardo.

"I hope if there are two things that I got from his tutelage, one was the wonderful sense of line and the cohesive sound and the second thing is the understanding of the words, the emotional meaning of the music," she continues. "Sometimes I hear performances that are really wonderful in executing what's on the page, but they don't get me emotionally, and I

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**WAGNER-GALLARDO** from page 14  
miss that. I always want my performances to have that."

The Wagner Ensemble (which she founded in 1993) is a community-based group of 28 singers who perform in the Los Angeles area. Together with the St. Francis de Sales choir and a 16-piece orchestra, they gave a moving performance of the Fauré Requiem to a full house at the church for a special evening performance on All Soul's Day.

Wagner-Gallardo says that it was the first time she had conducted the work since her father's death in 1992. "This one was one of my favorites, and one of my dad's favorites. It was one that was played at his funeral, so it was a long time before I could listen to it again. So it had a lot of emotional meaning for me."



The Faure concert at St. Francis de Sales.

Aside from the music business, Wagner-Gallardo taught music at Cal Arts for five years and was a junior high teacher for about 10 years, teaching a wide variety of subjects, including English, German, geography, math, and, of course, the overflow music classes. She's a strong believer in music education and says she is sorry to see music programs (as well as art and sports) cut in public schools.

"It's not about making them musicians when they grow up. It's about giving them something they can do for the rest of their lives that gives them joy, and feeling empowered to do that. The people in my ensemble, a few are professionals, but most of them are there just because they love to do it. And the church choir, they're there because they love to do it."

One of her pet peeves is people who say they can't sing. "I say, 'No that's not true. Everybody can sing.'" She says all it takes is practice. "Not everybody can be an opera star, not everybody can have the lead in a Broadway musical, but everybody can sing."

"They don't have that notion about playing tennis -- 'Oh I can't play tennis.' Well, you can if you take lessons and if you learn how to do it. Somehow singing ... it's like this mysterious thing. It's a very personal, very individualized, emotional thing to sing. And I think no one should deprive themselves of it." \*

The St. Francis de Sales Children's Choir will be featured at the Family Christmas Mass at 3 pm on Christmas Eve; the St. Francis de Sales adult choir performs at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve and at all 10 a.m. masses. For event information for the Roger Wagner Chorale and Wagner Ensemble, check out [www.rogerwagnerchorale.com/](http://www.rogerwagnerchorale.com/) and [www.wagnerensemble.com/](http://www.wagnerensemble.com/).

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