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Puppets Captivate Chinatown Audiences During Opening Weekend

By ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

(July 29, 2003) While many of the performers at the Chinatown Station captivated audiences with song and dance, twin brothers Sean and Patrick Johnson used puppets to convey a message of honesty to children in their show “Chen Ping and his Magic Ax.”



PHOTO BY ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

Scenes from a puppet show: The LA Puppet Professionals take the stage in Chinatown.

The brothers began their journey into puppetry about 13 years ago in their hometown of San Leandro. Only junior high school students at the time, the Johnsons gravitated toward the unique art form following the death of a childhood hero.

“We’re big fans of the Muppets,” Patrick said. “When Jim Henson passed away, it had a huge impact on us and so we started building sock puppets right then and there.”

Now, at 26, the two own their own business – The LA Puppet Professionals – and perform shows at public libraries, carnivals, elementary schools, the LA Zoo and other venues. The brothers were eager to participate in opening weekend because they had anticipated the operation of the line for some time.

“We’ve been hearing about the Gold Line forever,” said Sean. “We do a lot of shows in Pasadena and we would always see the test trains going by. It was really exciting to hear that we were going to be at this event. It’s neat to be part of LA history.”

Highland Park Station Receives Blessings in Song, Dance and Prayer

By FRANKLIN A. HOLMAN

(July 29, 2003)
Adorned with feathery headdresses that swayed with the movements of the traditional dance, members of Danza Tenochtitlan joined with a local minister to bless the opening of the Metro Gold Line's Highland Park station.



PHOTO BY FRANKLIN A. HOLMAN

"Danza Tenochtitlan" dancers perform a traditional song and dance to bless the opening of the Gold Line at Highland Park Station.

"We thank you, Lord, for the Gold Line and all the people that worked on it," said Bishop William Cruver of the Pillar of Fire Church.

Following the bishop's prayer, the Los Angeles Indigenous Peoples Alliance dancers began their blessing with drumbeats and incense.

As the drums beat grew louder, the group began to dance on the hot cement with their bare feet, slowly, then faster, keeping pace with the drum beat. Singers joined in, and the blessing continued as more dancers joined the celebration.

"The dance has been preserved for many generations, and it joins the people," LAIPA song and dance leader Sergio Ruiz said. "Today the dance is a blessing for the Metro Gold Line."

Rocking the Afternoon Away at Memorial Park

By LISA HUYNH

(July 29, 2003) Rex's Band rocked the afternoon away at the Memorial Park station, Saturday, with cool tunes from the '40s and '50s, as well as modern rock 'n roll.



PHOTO BY LISA HUYNH

Rex's Band played on at Memorial Park Station.

Their perfect harmony and undeniable chemistry got the audience of Metro Gold Line dancing and clapping to the beat.

"We're just looking to have a good time today," said band leader Rex Merriweather.

This 13-piece band, with its saxophones, trumpets, trombone, drums, bass and vocals, has been making beautiful music together for only a few months.

“It’s really hard to describe the feeling when I play music,” says Rex Merriweather. “There’s nothing else like it. When you’re creating and arranging music and making it your own, it’s such a thrill.”

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