

Enjoy the Festival All Year Long

by Jack Santino

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At the Renwick Gallery throughout the coming year, on a monthly basis, a series called "Living Celebrations" will be held in conjunction with the exhibit "Celebration: A World of Art and Ritual." Co-produced by the Renwick Gallery and the Office of Folklife Programs, the Celebration exhibit will continue through June, 1983. Brought together in the exhibit are objects from the Smithsonian's vast holdings, which are used in celebrations all over the world. Distinguished folklorists and anthropologists, including guest curator Dr. Victor Turner, conceived this exhibit as a presentation of the universal components of festivals, such as masks, costumes, musical instruments, and food. The objects are presented as parts of traditional celebrations of the milestones in social life, such as birth, marriage and death, and holidays associated with mid-winter, spring, the harvest, etc.

The program of Living Celebrations will help us to see these objects in their natural context, the way they were actually used. Based on the same philosophy as The Festival of American Folklife, perhaps best summed up by Secretary S. Dillon Ripley's exhortation to "take the instruments from their cases and let them sing," the program of Living Celebrations has been designed to complement the display of celebratory objects with celebratory events held in the Grand Salon of the Renwick Gallery. These celebrations are more than recreations; wherever possible we have arranged for groups to hold their regular celebratory events in the Renwick for the public to watch, learn, participate in, and enjoy.

The series began in March, with a St. Patrick's Day celebration on March 17th. Since then, we have featured Laotian and Cambodian New Year's festivals in April and a traditional Caribbean festival, called a Big Drum celebration in May.

On June 24, 25, and 26, in conjunction with the Festival of American Folklife, we will present traditional Eskimo music, dance, and story telling usually held to celebrate the end of the hunting season. Fifteen residents from St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, will be performing. Throughout the coming year, we will present an ancient monastic ceremony from India, performed partly in Sanskrit, a Mexican Day of the Dead, a Puerto Rican Saint's Day celebration and a Polish Christmas holiday, as well as many many others. You are cordially invited to join us.

