

Calendar

All the Leaves Were Brown

Music of the Californias

The earliest music on the program is from the cathedrals of old Mexico. In the 17th Century, Spaniards composed the scores, which lay forgotten in storage until recently. The Spaniards meant for the tunes to be sung; Brent Dutton, a San Diego tuba player, is the first person to have arranged the pieces for brass.

Music from the missions is another part of the all-California program to be premiered this week by Dutton and the rest of Westwind Brass. Featuring the music of both Baja and Alta, the quintet will play not one note of the Beach Boys.

LOCAL EVENTS

Try, instead, the music from the Gold Rush period. The miners weren't

too busy for music? Too tired? Too depressed if they hadn't hit a vein? Barry Toombs, the group's executive director and its French horn player, says no.

"San Francisco was a pretty big cultural center by then. Many Europeans, along with people from the East, had settled there, bringing their culture with them. Some music came by way of traveling bands, whose leaders were from the old country." One of these band leaders was Joseph Gungl, a Hungarian, who wrote "Railroad Gallop" in 1869 to commemorate the completion of the transcontinental railroad. "It's a 'novelty piece,'" says Toombs, who arranged it for the performance. "The music

emulates a train trip. The piece starts out slow as the train pulls out of the station, gathering speed as it climbs a hill, then slows down again as the train reaches its destination."

Toombs has also arranged a medley of 20th-century songs that celebrate the state. They include "California, Here I Come," cowritten by Al Jolson (born Asa Yoelson in Lithuania), and "California Dreamin'" by John and Michelle Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas. Michelle was the Californian (from Long Beach), not John, who was born in South Carolina. It was she, not he, who was homesick on such a winter's day in New York, where the couple met and wrote the song before moving west together.

The name Rafael Mendez may not be familiar to many of us, but Toombs says brass musicians revere the virtuoso trumpeter who made famous two numbers that Westwind Brass will play. They are "La Virgen de la Macarena" and "Las Bodas de Luíz Alonzo." Born in Mexico in 1906, Mendez moved to the United States in the 1930s to play with bands like Rudy Valle's. "For many years after that, he was involved with the film industry. He did over 500 hours of movie music for MGM — things such as *Flying Down to Rio* and *The Bullfighter and the Lady*. Our trombone player, Richard Gordon, got a chance to hear him play at Santana High School when he was growing up, because Mendez was the type of musician who did a lot of educational programs."



Westwind Brass

Gordon arranged the tribute to California trumpeter Herb Alpert, who was born in Los Angeles in 1935. "Richard picked some personal favorites," says Toombs, including "The Lonely Bull" and "Tijuana Taxi." (Toombs mimics the taxi horn on the latter.) "Some of the guys in the group — we grew up hearing Alpert," says Toombs, who is in his 40s. Looking at the album covers were memorable moments of their youth, too — "especially the one that showed the lady covered in whipped cream." That was created for Alpert's *Whipped Cream and Other Delights*, a conceptual album of songs with food themes, released in 1965, including the Grammy-winning "A Taste of Honey."

"Even now some rap artists are sampling Alpert's stuff," says Toombs. "I was watching MTV and heard some of the old Tijuana Brass numbers. It was an interesting retro touch."

Alpert has another claim to music fame, as cofounder of A&M Records, says Toombs. (The A is for Alpert; the M is for his partner, Jerry Moss.) In the 1960s, A&M signed Carole King and Joe Cocker, among others, significantly influencing the sound of the era.

A Hollywood section of the program was inevitable, says Toombs. "So much movie music has been written

in the last 80 years." But the group found it difficult to choose music that would be meaningful as well as universally appealing. Finally, they decided to do Disney, enlisting the help of Bruce Donnelly, a San Diegan who works as an arranger for the studio. "We thought, 'He'll know how to do that Disney sound, and he'll know the best tunes.'"

In the end, they chose 13 different ones. "When You Wish Upon a Star," two from *Mary Poppins*, all the way up to "A Friend Like Me" from *Beauty and the Beast*, says Toombs. They're put together in a single piece that lasts nearly ten minutes and is the final selection on the compact disc of the *Music of the Californias* that the quintet has just released.

— Jeanne Schinto

"Music of the Californias"
by Westwind Brass
Tuesday, September 24,
7:00 p.m.
San Diego Museum of Art,
Balboa Park
(Program will be repeated Sunday,
October 13, 2:00 p.m., at St. John
of the Cross Church in Lemon
Grove)
Cost: \$5-\$12
Info and tickets: 619-337-2848

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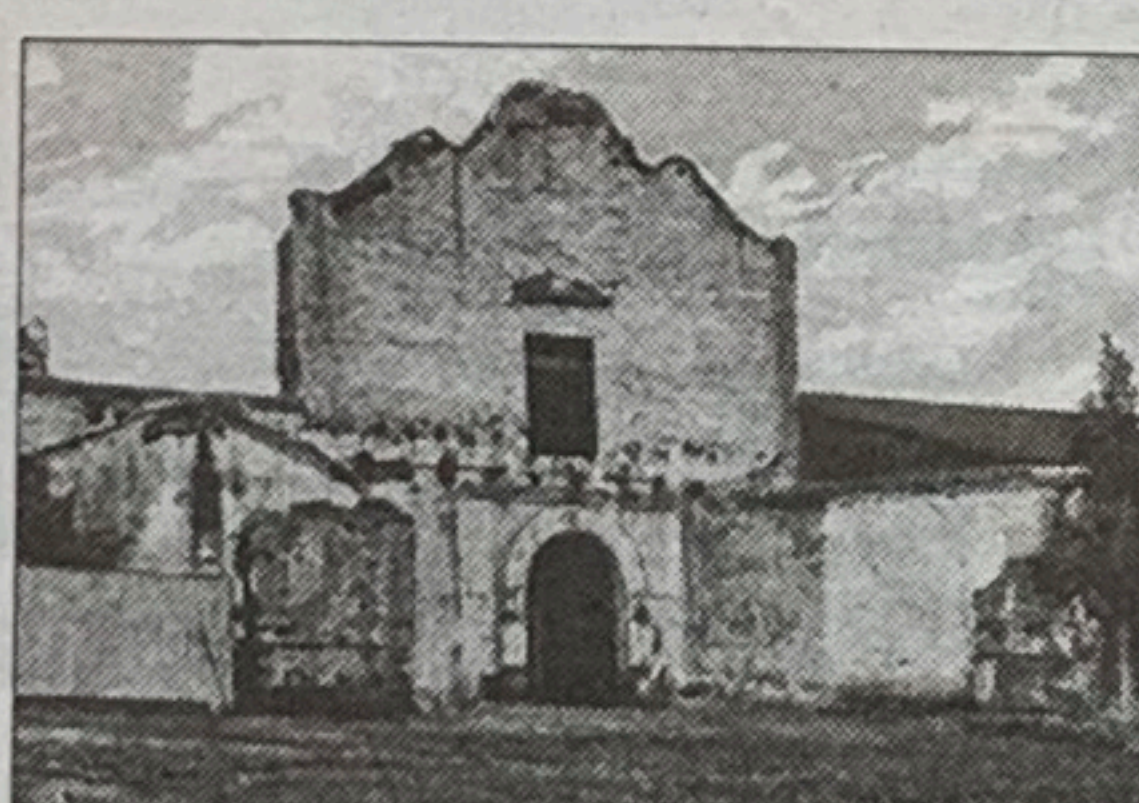
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Rafael Mendez



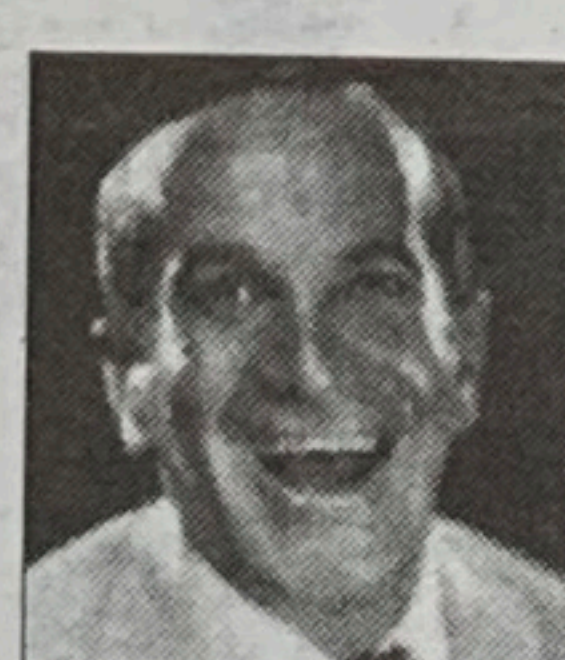
John and Michelle Phillips



San Diego Mission de Acalá



Beauty and the Beast



Al Jolson



Herb Alpert



Mary Poppins