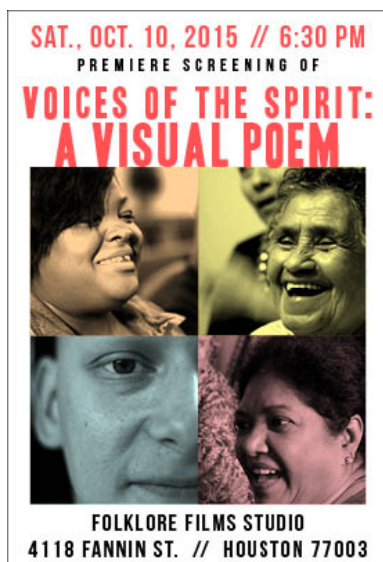


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**Folklore Films and Houston Arts Alliance Present**  
***Voices of the Spirit: A Visual Poem***  
*The Premiere of the Short Film on Saturday, October 10*



**HOUSTON, TX** – Folklore Films and Houston Arts Alliance’s Folklife + Traditional Arts program will present the premiere of the short film *Voices of the Spirit: A Visual Poem* on Saturday, October 10, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Folklore Films Studio, 4118 Fannin Street. The evening will feature two screenings of the short film (at 6:30 and 7:30 p.m.), punctuated by live music performed by the artists in the film with a reception and cross-pollination mixer.

This event is free and open to the public; space is limited, and RSVPs are required at [www.artful.ly/haa](http://www.artful.ly/haa).

The subject of this film is the 2015 *Voices of the Spirit V* concert, presented by HAA’s Folklife + Traditional Arts program in partnership with Asia Society Texas Center. Produced annually, *Voices* shines a light on Houston’s diverse cultural landscape through the devotional music of the city’s faith communities. Held April 26 and 26, 2015, at Asia Society Texas Center, *Voices of the Spirit V* featured The Cortez Family singing a cappella gospel; Cantor Daniel Mutlu performing

repertoire from the Golden Age of American Jewish religious music; Chandrakantha and David Courtney playing Hindustani songs; and a spectacular finale featuring the chinelos tradition of devotional dance by Chinelos de la familia Lopez with Banda Viento Morelense de los Hermanos Campos.

Although the *Voices of the Spirit V* concert is central to the film, *Voices of the Spirit: A Visual Poem* is neither a recap of the concert nor a documentary. Instead, it is a visual poem. “It moves from stanza to stanza rather than from chapter to chapter,” says filmmaker and Folklore Films artistic director Marlon Hall.

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“We don’t just unearth the celebrity of the artists, but their humanity as well. The narrative is in *their* voice. The music is *their* music” continues Hall. To create this visual poem, Hall, producer Danielle Fanfair and Technical Assistant Shelly Travis worked with the staff of the HAA Folklife program to interview each artist in a setting special to him/her or them. For instance, Cantor Mutlu was filmed in the sanctuary at Congregation Beth Israel. The Cortez family chose the church founded by their grandfather and still pastored by their uncle. The Courtneys and Senora Yasmirt Lopez invited them into their homes.

Parking is available in the Sear’s parking lot at Eagle and Fannin streets with the entrance through the glass doors on Fannin Street. For disabled access, contact Associate Producer Shelly Travis at 713.412.9886.

*Voices of the Spirit V* was made possible by the generosity of the National Endowment for the Arts and Houston Endowment. Folklore Films’ sponsors include HEB Family Foundation and Duke Leadership Education.

For more information, visit [houstonartsalliance.com\Folklife\Voices](http://houstonartsalliance.com\Folklife\Voices).

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### **About Folklore Films**

At Folklore Films, we are visual poets who tell better stories to our city about our city, one soul-stirring ode at a time. Traditional documentary films can move with the subject chronologically from one point to the next, like an arc from left to right. As Visual Poems, our films are not bound by a linear theme. Each movement of the films is called a stanza, and the goal of the films is to be less like a novel driven by chronological events on a line and more like a sonnet driven by our shapeless love for the subjects and the pain turned promise they express in the interviews.

We are all folkloric! Rather than highlight celebrity, we authenticate what is folkloric about all of humanity. This visual poem is called *Voices of the Spirit: A Visual Poem* and tells the story of *Voices of the Spirit V*, and the human folklore that brought it to life.

### **About Houston Arts Alliance**

Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a nonprofit, public-private initiative that invests in Houston’s arts and cultural sector, advances Houston’s reputation as an arts and culture destination, and works to elevate the quality of life for all Houstonians through arts and culture. As the city’s designated local arts agency, HAA provides programs and services for the arts and cultural sector and awards approximately 225 grants annually to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and individual artists. The Alliance is the custodian of the city’s art collection; takes permanent and temporary art to Houston’s public spaces; presents free Folklife + Traditional Arts programming; nurtures up-and-coming arts organizations through its capacity building programs; connects the business community with the arts; convenes the field as necessary, and provides the latest information and research on cultural policy, economic development and Houston’s folklife.

HAA's primary partner is the City of Houston. Approximately 55% of HAA's budget comes from Hotel Occupancy Tax and 30% from the City of Houston's Percent for Art Program, which supports commissions of new civic art projects as well as conservation of existing artworks. The remaining 15% of HAA's budget comes from private fundraising (grants/contributions/other revenue) for programs and special projects. HAA is committed to raising funds for only those projects and initiatives that the Arts Alliance is uniquely positioned to provide the community.

For more information, visit [houstonartsalliance.com](http://houstonartsalliance.com). For events in the region, visit [Artshound.com](http://Artshound.com).

## **About the Performers**

### **The Cortez Family**

The Cortez Family consists of five siblings who have been singing together for more than two decades. Brought up in their grandfather's church, Greater Faith Missionary Baptist Church in Acres Homes, this group of brothers and sisters continue a long tradition of gospel music in their family. Zacardi, Erin, Eric, Neesha and Erica began singing when they were three, five, seven and nine, respectively, and all are still singing today — as a group, solo and in several other configurations — in churches throughout Houston. They began as an a capella group and have graduated to a variety of styles.

### **Cantor Daniel Mutlu**

Cantor Mutlu is a first generation American born to Turkish parents. Raised in Worcester, Massachusetts, Cantor Mutlu fell in love with music during high school and went on to attend the New England Conservatory of Music. After serving as a cantorial soloist at Temple Emanuel of Worcester, Cantor Mutlu pursued a Master's Degree in Sacred Music at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City. In 2011, Cantor Mutlu was called to Houston and joined Beth Israel's senior clergy as only the second full-time Cantor in the congregation's 160-year history.

Cantor Mutlu has performed with many premier musical ensembles. He has sung at venues ranging from Lincoln Center to Minute Maid Park. An avid composer, Cantor Mutlu has premiered original works in Boston, Jerusalem, New York and Houston.

### **Chandrakantha and David Courtney**

Chandrakantha and David Courtney are a husband-and-wife team who have been involved in Indian music for decades. Based in Houston, they have taught and performed worldwide. They have produced recordings of and authored books on Hindustani and other Indian musical traditions.

Chandrakantha Courtney began to sing professionally as a child. She was a regular contributor to radio and television programs during and after her studies with many noted gurus. In 1977 she was an artist in the Om International troupe, which toured South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore and Mauritius. In 1978 she married David Courtney and moved with him to the United States. She has been teaching Indian classical vocal in the Houston area since then.

David Courtney has been performing on the tabla since 1972. He first studied pakhawaj (an ancient barrel shaped drum) under the famous Zakir Hussain at the Ali Akbar College of Music. He then moved to India and spent a number of years learning tabla under the late Ustad Shaik Dawood Khan of Hyderabad. He is also well versed in dilruba, and esraj. They are both prolific performers, producers, composers and authors. They are joined for this performance by Neha Gupta on vocal and tanpura and Masood Raoofi on tabla.

### **Chinelos de la familia Lopez with Banda Viento Morelense de los Hermanos Campos**

Chinelos de la familia Lopez with Banda Viento Morelense de los Hermanos Campos perform together on various occasions throughout the year, but especially so during the early December days that surround the feast day for the Virgin of Guadalupe. Both groups are family ensembles that draw on the traditions of

southern Mexico from which each family originates. In general, chineros are a troupe of colorfully costumed dancers that reveal a blending of indigenous and Catholic traditions. Their outfits spoof the fancy Europeanized manners of the Mexican elite, while simultaneously bearing beloved images of venerated holy personages from the Catholic world. They “dance” their devotion to these images.

Banda Viento Morelense de los Hermanos Campos plays a style of music popular throughout Mexico and based initially on the village brass bands that can be found throughout Southern and Central Mexico. They brought the music to Houston from their native Morelos and now perform regularly around the region, with and without the chineros. The two groups have been performing together for over fifteen years. Their special bond involves a shared repertoire of dance steps accompanied by a distinctive set of instrumental pieces that are traditionally associated with each other.