

Holiday Traditions and a Surging Downtown

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DTLA - In recent weeks, people from across Los Angeles have been coming to Downtown for a collection of holiday-oriented activities. Thousands have tried ice skating at either Pershing Square or L.A. Live. Others are enjoying the Yule-flavored concerts at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Some are heading to the Los Angeles Theatre Center for an annual production of a Christmas-themed comedy. Then there's the latest addition, a new version of George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, which had six performances at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

Put these and other options together and you might think it's a pleasant collection of holiday offerings. But if you step back and consider them through the scope of history, they blossom into something truly impressive. Even if it's not a Christmas miracle, the choices and traditions now available in Downtown border on miraculous.

People who recently arrived in the community may roll their eyes at the assertion. But anyone who spent time here in the 1990s would recognize how surprising the multitude of offerings is. The roster of current holiday options and traditions exemplifies the evolution Downtown Los

Angeles has enjoyed since the residential revolution began in 2000.

The overall change didn't happen by accident, and the progress has proceeded in fits and starts, growing from the transformation of a few outdated office buildings into housing at the turn of the millennium, to the current unprecedented number of glass-and-steel high-rises under construction in multiple neighborhoods. A decade ago the opening of the Ralphs supermarket was greeted as a game-changer. Today no one can imagine Downtown without that store, or the Target, the Whole Foods and many other name-brand retailers.

The presence of new holiday traditions adds to the momentum. For more than a decade Downtown has supported not one, but two outdoor winter ice rinks. It's now common to see couples or families drive into the community and wobble unsteadily on the ice, then to follow their skate with a meal or other activity nearby.

Similarly, the L.A. Phil has established a holiday tradition with its Deck the Hall series, which this week includes performances by the all-male choral group Chanticleer and two sing-along screenings of *White Christmas*. The Historic Core's LATC is building its own tradition with *The Latina Christmas Special*, now in its third year.

Then there's the new Miami City Ballet production of *The Nutcracker*, co-commissioned by the Music Center. This marked the first time in five years that a *Nutcracker* had been staged at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, and Music Center President and CEO Rachel Moore is smartly trying to spark a new tradition, knowing that major cultural centers around the country mount a *Nutcracker* each holiday season. She reasons that Los Angeles can and should do the same.

A Lively New Nutcracker Debuts in Downtown

These options join other longstanding traditions, such as the L.A. County Holiday Celebration that has taken place on Christmas Eve at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion for nearly six decades.

Taken individually, any of these options are a fun experience. Taken together, they give more evidence to the idea of a surging Downtown.

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