

Madrid Theatre Developing into a Cultural Epicenter

Story by Ryon Harms
Staff Writer

Denise Leader Stoeber, general manager of the Madrid Theatre in Canoga Park, is in the process of establishing the Madrid Theatre as a cultural epicenter for Valley residents.

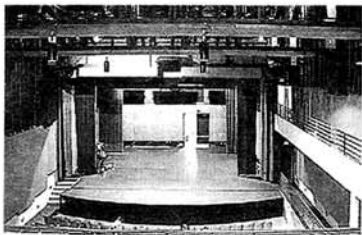
"Every opportunity that we have to use the theatre, to bring in a different group of people, we take that opportunity," said an enthusiastic Stoeber. Stoeber was brought in by the Valley Cultural Center to establish a venue to serve the Valley's cultural needs. Since last July, Stoeber has managed to showcase the area's talent on a weekly basis.

Half of the Madrid's funding comes from LA Cultural Affairs and the other half from rentals. "There are very few city-funded theatres. The city only owns four facilities. They are increasingly trying to create public/private partnerships," said Stoeber.

"We are busy all the time. We have things coming around every weekend. Before they only had one or two shows a month. Every weekend now they are booked," touted Stoeber, then added, "We have very professional things and things community oriented."

Using a variety of advertising methods to reach the local community, including direct mailing, the Madrid has increased their attendance ten fold. And while they have yet to make a profit, they are at least breaking even. But despite their monetary struggles, they have experienced more than a few "special evenings."

"We had a fantastic jazz evening last month," recalled Stoeber. "We had two young groups come in. Actually it is a series we are trying to put together called 'Tomorrow's Jazz Giants.' Right before the show somebody pulled the fire alarm, and as a result, the sound system went off. It's a safety thing. We didn't know how to turn it back on and we were running around," continued Stoeber. "So what I did was open up the concessions. The whole thing turned into a party. The two headliners went on to play acoustically for about a half hour and then finally, we discovered how to turn it back on and they finished their set. The whole experience



The upper deck view from the Madrid Theatre



The Madrid also exhibits local artists

was absolutely wonderful. Everybody had a great time. Only one person left, because their ride came to pick them up. It was a terrific feeling in the space."

Their amenable theatre space can hold events varying between shows like the recent East Indian senior citizen's talent show, and world-class actors like Bob Kingdom.

What has been most difficult for Stoeber is getting a greater portion of the community involved. "A lot of people don't know that they are allowed to come into the theatre," said Stoeber.

"A lot of Hispanic people think that the theatre is only for white people. And then I was at the car repair and told the lady there that I work at the Madrid and she said, 'Oh, I thought that the Madrid was only for Latinos.' We have a perception gap that we have to bridge." Stoeber plans to present more programming for the Latino populations, while including the rest of the community as well.

Stoeber is particularly excited about the Adam del Monte Sextet, which is set to kick off 2004. "Heralded as a flamenco guitarist with 'mind boggling control over dynamics and tone,' Adam del Monte defies physics with his romantic playing, rich techniques, and bountiful expression," said a Madrid representative. Formally educated as a classical guitarist, del Monte first appeared on the American scene with a memorable debut performance at the "Guitar Foundation of America's 1996 Festival in St. Louis."

Subsequently, he placed first in the 1997 Stotsenberg International Classical Guitar Competition. While classically trained, the Israeli-born del Monte spent much of his childhood absorbing the flamenco tradition. "As a child, I lived with Gypsies in Sacromonte in Granada, Spain," explains del Monte. "I grew up in Germany but every summer my parents would leave me with a Gypsy family while they went on holiday." A master guitarist who gracefully integrates fine classical technique with the emotional beauty of the flamenco tradition, del Monte spent as many years studying with his native Spanish teachers as he did at Manchester's Royal Northern College of Music in England.

Opposite Adam will be Laila del Monte, who is of Sephardic-Spanish descent, started dancing at the age of six, primarily tzigane (Romanian Gypsy Dancing). She started performing as a child and at the age of ten danced at the Theatre des Champs Elysees, Paris. She was raised in Paris and Spain. Flamenco as an art form first came into her consciousness when as a child she was in Sevilla and danced tzigane in a cave for flamenco gypsy musicians. They were amazed at the similarity of "spirit" between the flamenco and tzigane and encouraged her to pursue flamenco dancing.

The Adam del Monte Sextet looks to be yet another promising milestone for the Madrid Theatre. The concerts will be held on January 23 and 24, 2004 at 8 p.m. at the Madrid Theatre located at 21622 Sherman Way, Canoga Park, CA 91303. Tickets are \$20 and \$25 for general admission, and \$17.50 for students and seniors. Free parking is located in city parking lots surrounding the theatre.



Laila and Adam del Monte