

A Pearl of a Singer

Perla Batalla brings her sublime voice to World Theater One voice. Two languages. Many traditions.



That's what will be on display when Grammy nominated vocalist and composer Perla Batalla returns to California State University, Monterey Bay's World Theater on May 6 as the Performing Arts Series concludes for the 2009-10 season. Showtime is 7:30 p.m.

No newcomer to the area, Batalla performed on the Seaside campus in 2005 and in 2003, and is back by popular demand. In 2005, the World Theater's Presenting Series co-commissioned her "Gracias a la Vida" album and produced a DVD of her on stage.

Batalla was born in Los Angeles, where her father, a musician, owned a popular Spanish-language record store. The music she heard there influenced her profoundly.

She first gained international attention as a backup singer for Leonard Cohen. Some years later, Cohen encouraged her to embark on a solo career. She re-

leased her debut album in 1994. The critics loved it, calling her singing "sublime" and her talent "stunning." "Mestiza" followed in 1998, and "Heaven and Earth" in 2000.

The Spanish-language classics she heard growing up are featured on her fourth album, "Discoteca Batalla," recorded in 2002 as a tribute to her parents' record shop. Since its release, it has consistently appeared on "best of" lists throughout the country. In 2004, Batalla was invited by the Kennedy Center to perform songs from the album as artist in residence.

A year later, her Grammy-nominated tribute to Cohen, "Bird on the Wire," was praised by Sing Out magazine as "beautifully conceived and executed."

"'Bird on the Wire' was something I felt I had to do," she told a newspaper in San Rafael. "I feel so connected to Leonard's music. I feel it's a part of me, a part that's very deep."

She honors her roots and exposes young audiences to the beauty of music and the Spanish language through her outreach efforts in some of the poorest communities in the United States. In 2008, she received the U.N.-commissioned Earth Charter Award for extraordinary devotion to social and economic justice. That work makes her a good fit for the World Theater.

"Each year, the World Theater hosts a production commemorating Cinco de Mayo," said theater director Joe Cardinali. "Besides presenting an evening of memorable music and song, Perla Batalla's performance follows our mission to educate and enlighten our campus and local communities through diverse entertainment and performances," Cardinali said.

"We are so pleased to have Perla return to the World Theater stage. She's the ultimate professional and a pleasure to work with," Cardinali said.

Tickets range from \$10 to \$40 and can be purchased by calling the World Theater box office at (831) 582-4580 or online at csumb.edu/worldtheater. The World Theater offers a buy-one, get-one-free promotion for the first 100 tickets sold to this performance.

The Otter Bay Restaurant, located in the building adjacent to the theater, is offering a special pre-show menu for this performance. Call 582-4580 for details.

The World Theater is located on Sixth Avenue on the CSUMB campus. Driving directions and a campus map are available at CSUMB.edu/map.

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