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A newsletter documenting multicultural theatre and art in the Southland.
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(c) January 1992

'I have a dream today.'

--Martin Luther King, Jr., 8/28/63

Editor: Kat Avila

UCSD Dept. of Communication, 0503

La Jolla, CA 92093-0503

EDITOR'S NOTES

One of the nicest ways I know to start a new year is to bump into old friends. Comedy troupe Chicano Secret Service--Eduardo Lopez, Thomas Carrasco, and Elias Serna--were the closing act for UCSD MECHA's 3rd annual Chicano/Latino High School Conference on Sat., Jan. 11. With them was Danny de la Paz, an actor/director whom I haven't seen since May 1987, not since we did the premiere of Roy Conboy's Buscando America/Seeking America at Rancho Santiago College in Santa Ana. Danny played the Mexican feathered serpent god Quetzalcoatl who wakes up to find himself in modern-day California. The play is about Quetzalcoatl's evolution as he encounters multicultural America.

Danny has taken over directorial duties for Chicano Secret Service, and it will be interesting to see where this talented political trio goes under his tutelage. He has 17 years experience in the business. Look for Danny in the upcoming movie American Me--a co-venture between Universal Pictures and Edward J. Olmos production company--due out in March. American Me is the grim tale of a Mexican boy born in 1940s America who fatalistically becomes a juvenile delinquent and eventually joins the Mexican mafia.

Chicano Secret Service is scheduled next to perform at El Teatro Cometa's rehearsal space at 116 1/2 Amerige Ave. West in Fullerton on Fri. & Sat., Jan. 24 & 25, at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$7 each. Both Orange County performances are expected to sell out. Call for reservations at (714) 680-3691.

El Teatro Cometa has been at their current address for about a year. I spoke with Tony Bushala, a Lebanese-American drummer who has been providing rhythmical accompaniment for El Teatro Cometa for the past four years. He tells me Jaime Gomez started his troupe in 1979. With a core group of 7-8 players, El Teatro Cometa puts on grassroots performances to educate the Spanish-speaking community about issues such as health care, tobacco use, and AIDS.

El Teatro Cometa's space is conveniently located next to The Blue Wolf, a combination used bookstore/curio shop/espresso bar. There I chatted with the owner's mom who shared with me pictures taken in front of the store from their Winter Solstice celebration which featured a belly dancing college professor. (For Valentine's Day they're inviting people to bring sweets and their sweethearts for a potluck.) Later, we were joined by the owner of The Blue Wolf, Melissa Mack, a former anthropology student who established the store in 1987 in what was supposed to have been just a storage space. A visit to downtown Fullerton is well worth it for its concentration of used bookstores and antique shops all within walking distance of each other.

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Life has precisely the meaning that you choose to give it,
neither more nor less.

--Donald Richie on Akira Kurosawa's thesis in Ikiru
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Also, at L.A.'s Bilingual Foundation of the Arts, 421 North Avenue 19, Miguel Sabido's La Falsa Cronica de Juana la Loca (Juana, Mad Queen of Spain: A False Chronicle) previews Tues., Feb. 11, in Spanish/Tues., Feb. 18, in English. The director is Margarita Galban. And at San Diego Repertory Theatre, Abingdon Square (La Plaza Chica), written and directed by Maria Irene Fornes, runs till Sat., Feb. 8, in both English and Spanish.



If you're a laborer, you use your hands.

If you're an artisan, you use your head and your hands.

And if you're an artist, you use your heart, your head and your hands.

--Ivan Denton, woodcarver

FULLERTON MUSEUM CENTER

THE DAY OF THE DEAD: A CONSEQUENCE OF LIFE/

El Dia de los Muertos: Una Consecuencia de la Vida

Nov. 1-Jan. 5

"These objects, videos, and installations come together to create a sense of the color, the ceremony, and the exuberance of the Day of the Dead both here and in Mexico; to introduce a forgotten or unknown ritual to the Mexican-American community; and to honor a culture that produces a tradition so rich in devotion and art."

--Lynn LaBate, curator, Fullerton Museum Center, in FMC's 'The Day of the Dead' brochure

The Day of the Dead festival exhibit at the Fullerton Museum Center was part of a four-month-long Southland fiesta called 'Mexico: A Work of Art' which included not only art exhibits, but music, dancing, and films. At the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, there was the impressive and huge 'Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries' exhibition which ended Sun., Dec. 29. FMC's exhibit included the wonderfully creative and magical Linares' family papier-mache skulls, Jose Guadalupe Posada's amusingly wicked and political 'calaveras' (skulls, or skeletons) sketches, Lourdes Portillo and Susana Munoz's La Ofrenda: The Days of the Dead video, various intricate 'ofrendas' (altars), and mischievous 'calaveras' everywhere.

Miguel Linares
Skull (1978)

Felipe Linares
Mermaid (1990)



IMAGE
(c) 1987 by Alfred Ayala

WASPPA (The River Child)

The mythological Kappa is a six three-foot-tall creature who lives in the rivers of Japan. He is also called Kaweko, or River Child, and has the webbed limbs of a frog and a turtle body. On top of his head is a hollow spot filled with fluid so that the amphibious Kappa can keep his strength outside of water. When a person drowns, the Kappa is blamed. Sometimes a child will throw cucumbers into the water before swimming to pacify the Kappa who loves cucumbers.

Recommended reading: Ryunosuke Kikutagawa's Kappa, a satire about Japanese life set in Kappaland

