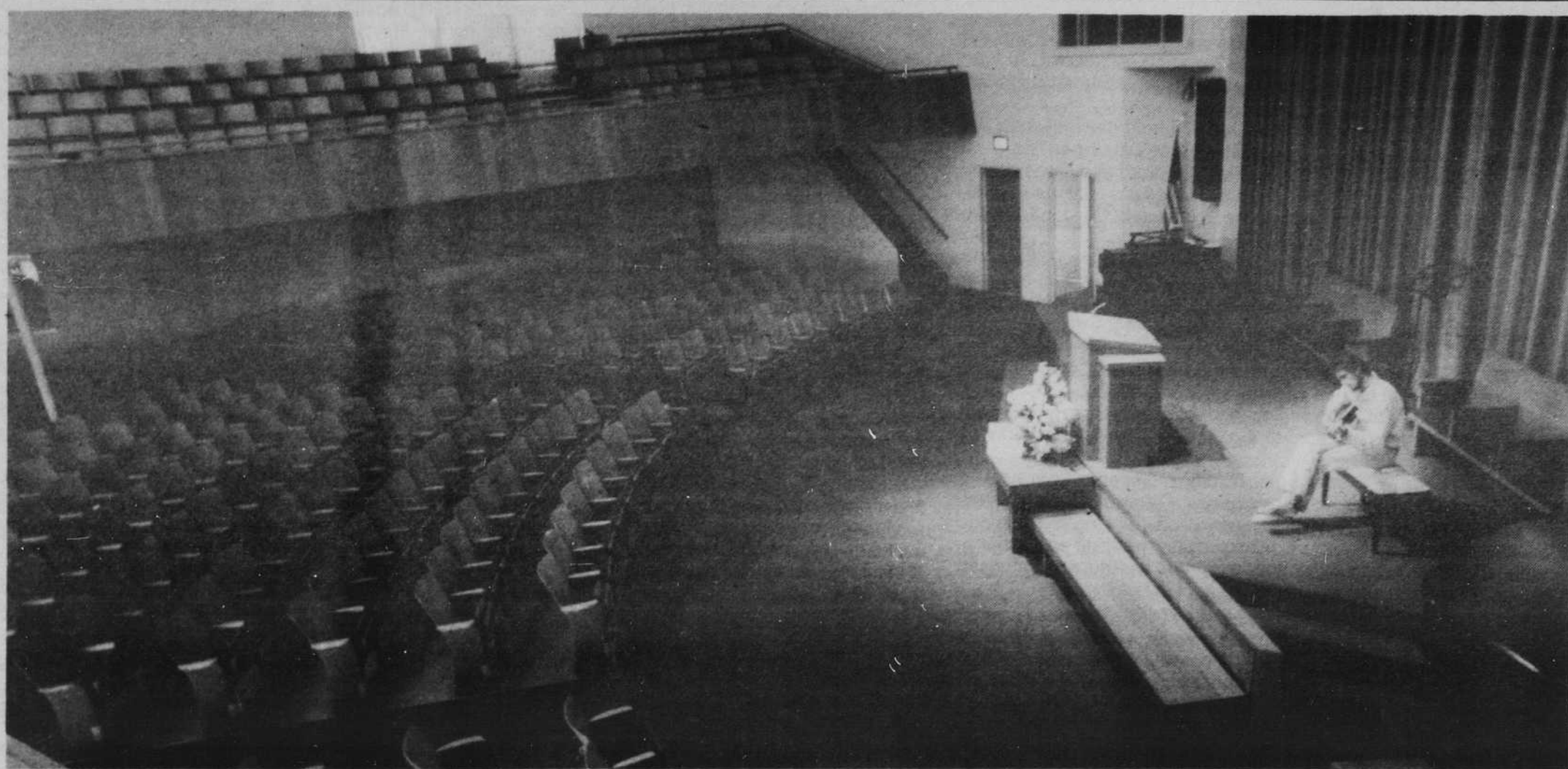


Surface and Symbol

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Formerly the Willamette Christian Center this hall is now the Lane County Civic Center. See Kevin Harden's story on 6B for more details.

Flora Purim opens 'new' Civic Center

By BOB WEBB
Of the Emerald

It's happened before. Back in the early 60s Americans enjoyed a brief flirtation with the seductive sounds of Brazil. American jazz artists like Stan Getz and Herbie Mann fueled the fascination by bringing to light performers and composers like Astrud Gilberto and Antonio Carlos Jobim.

It's happening again. The catalyst this time is Brazilian songstress Flora Purim. She will appear in concert Friday night at 7:30 and 10 p.m. The concerts will take place in Eugene's newest performance facility, the Lane County Civic Center (see below and the article on concert halls elsewhere in this issue for more information on the Center).

Purim (now managed by Ken Fritz and Dennis Turner, who handle George Benson) and her circle of musical compatriots — her husband Aírto Moreira, friends Milton Nascimento and Hermeto Pascoal — are playing an increasingly large role in determining the direction of American jazz in the 70s. With Purim's first Warner Bros. release, *Nothing Will Be As It Was... Tomorrow*, many have begun to call her one of the more innovative vocalists of the decade. Record World magazine named her Top Female Jazz artist in 1975 and 1976.

Flora Purim grew up in Rio de Janeiro. Her Brazilian mother and Romanian-born father were amateur classical musicians who also harbored a fondness for jazz. The music of Erroll Garner, Miles Davis, Billie Holiday and Dinah Washington joined the African-styled rhythms of Brazilian street music as influences in Purim's formative years. She took up with the then avant-

garde sounds of bossa-nova and became an established singer in her native country.

Arriving in the U.S. in 1968 she first studied drama in Los Angeles, where she learned about voice projection. She later moved to New York, getting important assignments there with Duke Pearson, Stan Getz and Gil Evans. A key moment for Purim came when she was invited by keyboardist Chick Corea to join his original Return to Forever group. Husband Aírto, whose reputation had spread as a result of his work with Miles Davis, also joined up with Corea.

Purim changed her whole concept of singing in Corea's band. She began to reevaluate traditional forms of pop singing, shifting her voice from a concentration on words to an emphasis on singing whatever sounds it took to communicate more freely with her audience. By the time her two years with Corea ended, she was on her way toward perfecting a vocal style that falls somewhere between scatting and vocalese.

It's a difficult technique to describe. Her six octave range can run breakneck from laughter to tears in a span of a few bars. The emotional level of her commitment is always at fever pitch. Cashbox magazine has this to say: "Flora Purim's vocal style will be as influential in the Seventies as Billie Holiday's was in the Forties and early Fifties."

The critical raves started pouring in with her first record for Milestone, *Butterfly Dreams*, arranged by Return to Forever bassist Stanley Clarke. She placed first in the Downbeat poll, only to repeat the feat the next year with *Stories to Tell*. Riding the crest of a major breakthrough, Purim's timetable was interrupted in 1974 by an 18

month spell in California's Terminal Island prison following a cocaine bust.

Despite that setback, Purim came back with *Open Your Eyes, You Can Fly* in 1975. A combination of thundering rhythms and Purim's intense vocal imagination, the album boosted her reknown to new sectors of the music audience.

While her compositional orientation may rest clearly in the jazz sphere, her treatment of almost any song gives it appeal beyond the jazz world. Such was the case with *Nothing Will Be As It Was... Tomorrow*, a disarming work highlighting Purim at her most exuberant. Produced by percussionist Leon "Ndugu" Chanler, the album features the music of George Duke, Ndugu, Patrice Rushen, Al McKay and Ernie Watts. See Mark Rowe's review of this album elsewhere in this issue.

Opening each show is Upepo, a Northwestern latin jazz group.

The place where these folks will be performing is a converted church, which was designed not only for clarity of visual line, but also for clarity in acoustics. The proof, of course, will be Friday night, but on the basis of a quick tour (including a tape played over the house system) the place sounded very good. All sight lines are good, the top row of the balcony is only a rough 100 feet from the stage. All of the 750 seats, give or take a folding chair or two, are padded and comfortable with decent leg room between the aisles. Because it is a nice house, and the new owners want to keep it that way, there will be no smoking or drinking on the premises.

Tickets for the show are \$5.50 in advance and \$6.50 at the door. Outlets are Everybody's Records, House of Records, Chrystalship and the Sun Shop.