

EL OBSERVADOR

Obama's Honor Latin Music

Celebrating culture, traditions of Hispanics

(AP) -- The White House became "La Casa Blanca" last week, celebrating Hispanic musical heritage with a South Lawn concert and such guests as Gloria Estefan, George Lopez, the Bachata music group Aventura, Jose Feliciano and more.

President Barack Obama said Latin music, while hard to define because it comes in so many forms — from salsa to merengue and Bachata to reggaeton — speaks to everyone in a language they can all understand.

"It moves us, and it tends to make us move a little bit ourselves," Obama said in brief remarks before the infectious rhythms began pulsating on the White House grounds. "In the end, what makes Latin music great is the same thing that's always made America great. The unique ability to celebrate our differences while creating something new."

"In Performance at the White House: Fiesta Latina" is the third in a music series launched by first lady Michelle Obama to celebrate various genres of music. Jazz and country music



Gloria Estefan celebrates Hispanic musical heritage during an Oct. 13 performance on the South Lawn of the White House. (AP Photo)

events, with workshop for music students, have been held. Classical music is on tap for Nov. 4.

The musical extravaganza came during the month dedi-

cated to celebrating the culture and traditions of Hispanics, the nation's largest minority group at 15 percent of the U.S. population, according to Census Bureau figures.

A large, white tent erected on the lawn was the setting for the musical performances. A see-through panel behind the stage afforded the nearly 400 guests, who sat at cocktail tables, views of the White House South Portico bathed in light.

Hosts Jimmy Smits, Eva Longoria Parker and Lopez joked that Obama is really Latino.

"He just doesn't know it," she said.

Added Lopez, as the audience laughed: "Lives in a house that's not his. ... Says he's gonna change and nobody believes him. Very Latino."

Obama proved what he said about the power of Latin music. He wiggled his hips and took a few turns on the dance floor with singer Thalia after she said: "Mr. President. With all due respect, will you dance with me?" He complied as she approached the table where he sat with Mrs. Obama and daughters Sasha and Malia.

Mrs. Obama moved in her seat, snapping her fingers to the music.

By the end of the concert, the First Family was on its feet, clapping to the beat. The family then went on stage to thank the performers. Mrs. Obama and Malia held hands and danced, while the Obama did the same with Sasha. Malia, then Sasha, also paired off with Sheila E. on the drums.

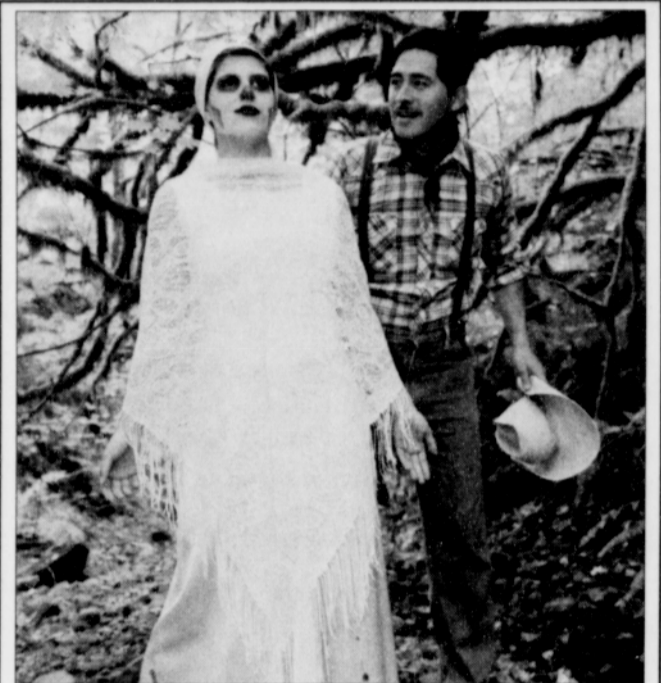


PHOTO BY KENNETH AARON

Miguel (Ozvaldo González) is reunited with his deceased wife Dorotea la Difunta (Nicole Virginia Accuardi) in Miracle Theatre Group's bilingual Day of the Dead celebration, "Canta y no llores" (Sing and Don't Cry). Shows are scheduled Oct. 30 through Nov. 15.

Celebrating Day of the Dead

Every fall, the dead are commemorated in a lively show of dance, music and theatre in Portland's longest-running Day of the Dead celebration.

This year, los muertos return singing old-time tunes that harken back to another era when times were tough and tradition was one of the few things folks could call their own.

In the middle of the Great Depression, at a camp near where workers are constructing Oregon's Timberline Lodge, five strangers arrive from different parts of the country in search of work and a place to call home.

Even as they must shed one way of life for another, and though they have lost everything they hold dear, optimism lives on. Funny and irreverent, *Canta y no llores* (Sing and Don't Cry) reminds us all that the only thing to fear — in life or death — is fear itself.

The original, bilingual production runs Oct. 30 through Nov. 5 at Milagro Theatre, 525 S.E. Stark St.

Admission is \$20 to \$22 depending on the date; and \$16 for students and seniors. Tickets can be purchased online from milagro.org; by calling 503-236-7253 or from the PDX Ticket Network box office at the Hollywood Theatre.

Leaders Summit Fights Hunger

The Clark County League of United Latin American Citizens and Tyson Foods were recently joined together to help ease the burden of hunger.

In celebration of the league's Latino Leaders Summit, Tyson Foods donated 15 tons of pro-

tein to the Oregon Food Bank serving Oregon and southwest Washington.

"Donations of poultry and other high protein foods are especially valuable as they allow us to provide our partner agencies with more healthy,

nutritious options," said Rachel Bristol, chief executive officer of the Oregon Food Bank. "This significant donation will help local agencies feed our many hungry neighbors in Oregon and Clark County during these difficult economic times."

Tyson Foods and the LULAC declared the donation as part of their 1 million pound, three-year commitment to fight hunger.

Oregon Food Bank is the hub of a statewide network of 20 regional food banks and 915 hunger-relief agencies.

Assault Weapons Ban Could Return

Addressing border security issues

(AP) -- The United States should reinstate a Clinton-era ban on assault weapons to prevent such guns from reaching Mexican drug cartels, former officials from both countries said in a new report.

The group, which includes two former U.S. ambassadors to Mexico, also said the U.S. should do more to stop the smuggling of firearms and ammunition into Mexico by stepping up investigations of gun dealers and more strictly regulating gun shows.

The Binational Task Force on the United States-Mexico Border listed the assault weapons ban as a step the U.S.

should take immediately to improve security in both countries. The 10-year ban expired in 2004.

U.S. and Mexican officials say drug cartels frequently use assault rifles, which are banned in Mexico but easily purchased in the United States.

Mexican President Felipe Calderon launched a nationwide crackdown on drug cartels when he took office in December 2006. The offensive has been met with unprecedented violence, leaving more than 13,800 people dead.

During his run for office, President Barack Obama promised to push to reinstate

the ban. He has since said he would rather enforce existing laws that make it illegal to send assault weapons across the border.

Other recommendations related to border security included restructuring Mexico's

law enforcement operations to create a counterpart to the U.S. Border Patrol, increasing U.S. assistance to Mexico to build up law enforcement and reducing demand for drugs in the United States through more treatment programs.

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