



# people

www.latinola.com

LatinoLA esta muy hot!

[Home](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Forum](#)

[A & E](#)

[Comunidad](#)

[Hollywood](#)

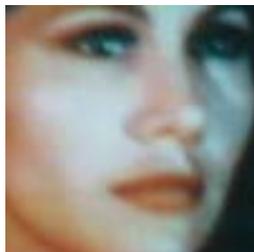
[People](#)

[?Expr?sate!](#)

[Careers](#)

[Add a Story](#)

[Add an Event](#)



## No Time to Waste

*Filmmaker Yazmin Ortiz premieres her short film at LALIFF, among other things*

By Natalie Stoddard

Yazmin Ortiz's newest film "El Baile" made its world premiere at the Egyptian Theater at the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival. "El Baile" is the story of a little girl who finds a dark secret through the magic and passion of flamenco, the secret being sexual abuse. "I wanted to write this story about child abuse given the number of victims I met while researching the subject," Ortiz said.

Shot in beautiful and startling black and white and color imagery by Ortiz herself and, when on camera (Ortiz also stars in the film) by some of her film school colleague, "El Baile" takes the viewer to an intimate view of the world of flamenco and how it can be used to recall memories of abuse.

"I came up with the idea of

Google™

Web  latinola.com

Search





mixing the very tough subject of child abuse with dance while trying to develop a script at a screenwriting class at film school," states Ortiz. "I know 'El Baile' is not your typical commercial subject but I have come to understand that some films have a unique style, especially when there is a unique market for them. But the audience at my premiere was primarily the type that will go to commercial films and they embraced the film and understood it. That was very encouraging, particularly given the fact that I am a Dogma 95 follower. We broke too many of the rules of the movement to get the Dogma 95 certificate so we were forced to adapt the concept to a more liberal Dogma 95 and I decided to create our own L.A. movement based on Lars Vons Trier and renamed it Dogma L.A. - or how a story that has to be told will be made against all odds."

"El Baile" has a long history with the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival. The short script was one of the 20 finalists from a whooping 360 scripts submitted by Latino screenwriters nationwide for LALIFF's very first Writers Competition in 2002, getting Ortiz in the competition where Ortiz's created her new feature "Redemption." Although "Redemption" did not win the writing competition, "El Baile" won major time this year by

making its premiere at the very exclusive (and number one Latino festival in the world with audiences of 1500 a night) to a standing room-only theater audience and introduced by film and TV star (as well as the festival's co-founder with Marlina Dermer) Edward James Olmos himself.

"The best part of finishing 'El Baile' was bringing consciousness to an audience regarding this extraordinary subject matter," says Ortiz. "Children are a priority in my themes and subjects like child abuse need to be brought out to the public light in order to deal with them."

Ortiz was particularly pleased to be premiering at the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival. "LALIFF and I have had an on-going history," she says, "I find the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival to be generous and supportive to filmmakers, with enthusiastic and committed programmers and audiences. LALIFF is a Latino filmmaker's dream film festival."

Ortiz is no stranger to the industry. She began her career in her native San Juan, Puerto Rico at the young age of 5 studying ballet and folkloric dance before transitioning to musical theater and making her stage debut at the age of 14. She then started

studying everything from Classical Greek to Spanish Classical Theater to Shakespeare with Puerto Rico's most coveted acting theater - Victoria Espinoza. At age 12 she started working as a model/actress and by 16 began college where she obtained degrees in Communications/ Literature/as well as Film Production, graduating from schools such as UCLA, LACC, as well as Cal State Northridge.

At Cal State where studied her Masters, she was selected to present her thesis "Dogma L.A. the New Millennium New Wave of Filmmaking" to state regents, informing them in new techniques of High Definition Cinematography (a subject that she has studied devotedly and the medium for the short film she finished co-directing two weeks ago) as well as alternative ways of exhibition and distribution.

Before starting to write, direct, shoot and edit her own films, Ortiz was a studio/TV executive with a career as a publicist and marketer for several entertainment companies as well as a major studio where she learned the business side of the movie industry. "I am amazed at how many of my colleagues don't study more the business side," Ortiz observed.

But according to Ortiz, her happiest moment as a

performer so far was when renowned director Franco Zeffirelli handpicked her to play the part of the symbolic "bride" at the L.A. Opera production of Pagliacci in the company of now-friend Placido Domingo. "It was one of the happiest moments of my life. To have Franco Zeffirelli as my boss and Placido as my co-worker - it was a magical moment," Ortiz comments. She also was a featured dancer in the syndicated television show Soul Train and had small roles in "every dance movie in town" as well as theatrical productions at the Bilingual Foundation for the Arts, Los Angeles Theater Center and this year at the Mark Taper Forum Annex. "Although I love and will always act, there is incredible power of writing and directing, so I hope to do both."

Ortiz doesn't stop with her narrative fiction work (she has done seven other shorts). She also started the nonprofit Films For A Purpose with her mentor and adoptive father C. Bernard Jackson -- the now deceased Inner City Cultural Center's director -- and has been making documentary shorts for the underserved with nothing but in-kind donations from the community. Her seven documentary shorts range from studies on the homeless, to child abuse, and victims of the war. Her work in the nonprofit world also extends to the youth. Ortiz also was an instrumental

advisor at Assemblymember Marco Firebaugh's First Southeast High School Film Festival last year.

Ortiz received the prestigious 2000 Women In Film Lucy Award at the organization's annual Lucy Awards; as well as a UCLA Professor of Military Science Superior Achievement Award (Ortiz is also a military officer), Latin Business Foundation Award, Frank Chin and Leadership in Business Awards, and is a Cal State, Northridge fellow. In 2001 she was also selected by the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture (NALAC) in a nationwide search for artists to represent the filmmaking discipline at their Leadership Institute.

Ortiz is now producing her first feature film, a story set in the 80's war in Nicaragua to be directed by British director Alex Cox of "Repo Man" and "Sid and Nancy" fame.

Tired from her festival running, tomorrow Ortiz will teach a master class in filmmaking to inner city high school students at her alma mater UCLA. Ortiz says "There is no time to waste. Our children need us every day. My adoptive father and mentor always said you must give back to the community."