



HOLLYWOOD

Search

Newsroom

Go!

General

- [Home](#)
- [Newsroom](#)
- [Casting Calls](#)
- [Films In Production](#)
- [Job Board](#)
- [Film Festivals](#)
- [Talent Directory](#)
- [Production Directory](#)
- [Script Network](#)
- [Film Schools](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Film Distribution](#)
- [Download Zone](#)
- [Latino Film Studies](#)

Community

- [Message Board](#)
- [Trivia](#)

Spanish Dictionary

Tuesday, September 30, 2003

'El Baile' Charms



LOS ANGELES, CA, -- Yazmin Ortiz's newest film "El Baile," which made its world premiere at the Egyptian Theater at the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival last month, continues to dance its way thru the festival circuit. "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 with victims of sexual abuse," 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 former film school colleagues, "El Baile" takes the viewer to an intimate conversation between the world of flamenco and how the passion and colors of it could bring about a repressed memory of abuse. "I came up with the idea of mixing the very tough subject of the sexual abuse of children with dance while developing a script at a screenwriting workshop. I know El Baile is not your typical commercial film but I have come to understand that some films have a unique style and that there can be a market for them. The audience at my premiere at LALIFF was primarily the type that will go to commercial films and even then they embraced the film and understood it. That was very encouraging, particularly given the fact that I am a Dogma 95 follower of Danish director Lars Von Triers, who is so often criticized for his rudimentary filmmaking style. Since broke so many of the rules of the Dogma 95 movement, we wouldn't qualify to get the Dogma 95 certificate so we were forced to adapt the concept to a more liberal Dogma 95 and we 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." states Ortiz.

"El Baile" has had a long history with the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival (LALIFF). The short script was one of the 20 finalists selected from a whopping 369 entries submitted by Latino screenwriters nationwide for LALIFF's very first Writers Competition in 2002. It was at this competition where Ortiz would write her new feature: "Redemption" presently in development. Although "Redemption" did not win the writing competition, El Baile's script was produced by Ortiz and won major time this year by having been selected to make its premiere at the festival's very exclusive Emerging Shorts Showcase at the biggest Latino festival in the world with audiences of up to 1500 a night.

The film's premiere was held at the Egyptian theater to standing room-only audience and was introduced by film and tv star (as well as the

YOUR ACCOUNT

Username Password [Register Here](#)[Forgot Password?](#)

festival's co-founder with Marlena Dermer) Edward James Olmos himself. "The best part of finishing "El Baile" was bringing conscience to the audience of this very important 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 is 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 Latino 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 Latin American folkloric dance before transitioning to musical theater and making her stage debut at the age of 14. It was then that she started studying everything from Classical Greek theater to Spanish Classical theater, to Shakespeare with Puerto Rico's most coveted acting theater - Victoria Espinoza.

At 12 she started working as a runway model/actress and by 16 she 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 off High Definition Cinematography (a subject that she has studied devotedly and the medium for the short film she finished co-directing weeks ago), as well as alternative ways of film 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 biz. "I am amazed at how many of my colleagues don't study more the business side of show business," Ortiz observed.

But according to Ortiz her happiest moment as a performer so far was when renowned director Franco Zeffirelli (Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Endless Love, Tea With Mussolini) handpicked her to play the part of the symbolic "bride" at the L.A. Opera's production of "Pagliacci" in the company of now friend, the supertenor 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 was also a featured dancer in the syndicated television show Soul Train and had small roles in "every dance movie in town." She has worked with directors Kenny Ortega, Michael Mann, Barry Levinson, and now mentor, Graeme Clifford (Frances, The Last Don), and actors Liam Neeson, Andy McDowell, Richard Gere, "and even Arnold, before he ran for Governor" among the many. She also worked in theatrical productions at the Bilingual Foundation for the Arts, Los Angeles Theater Center and this year at the Mark Taper Forum Annex production of Madrugada. "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 7 other shorts), she started the nonprofit Films For A Purpose with her mentor and "adoptive father" american master composer/director C. Bernard Jackson. The late Inner City Cultural Center's director - mentored her

career by helping her make documentaries for the underserved with nothing but "in-kind donations from the community." "Everyone in the city would help us with anything they could, even the likes of Danny De Vito who gave us a donation short ends from one of his films. It was nice to see this sense of community in Hollywood."

Her 7 documentary shorts range from the homeless, to child abuse, and victims of the war. One of her feature docudramas even had the participation of civil rights attorney Gloria Allred and former California Senator Art Torres and when finished is intended to air on public television stations throughout the country.

Ortiz's work in the nonprofit world also extends to the youth. She was also an instrumental advisor at Assemblymember Marco Firebaugh's First Southeast High School Film Festival last year.

In 2000 Ortiz was the recipient of the prestigious Women In Film's Lucy Award for accomplishments of emerging filmmakers in the community; as well as a UCLA Professor of Military Science Superior Achievement Award (Ortiz is also a U.S. Army officer), Latin Business Foundation Award, Frank Chin and Leadership in Business Awards, as well as 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 prestigious Leadership Institute.

Presently, the Puerto Rican filmmaker is producing her first narrative feature film - a story based in the 80's war in Nicaragua with co-producer and friend Kamala Lopez. "Since the moment Kamala pitched me the story and I read the script I fell in love with it. It is a story that must be told so we are going to make the film even if with volunteers. It wouldn't be the first time, Ortiz points out.

Exhausted from her festival, postproduction and development running, this Summer Ortiz took time to teach a film master class to inner city and immigrant high school students at a special program at her alma mater UCLA. Ortiz says "There is no time to waste. Our children need us every day. My adoptive father and mentor Jack Jackson always said "you must give back to the community any way you can. This is my contribution."

Information about the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival screenings can be viewed at their Website at <http://www.latinofilm.org>