

'Mariachi-opera' singer kicks off SDCO's 'Summer Pops' season in Del Mar

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FOR THE NORTH COUNTY TIMES

San Diego Chamber Orchestra's Festival Pops 2001 kicks off Saturday with the heat of "Latin Fever." Juanita Newland-Ulloa, who forsook the world of opera for more exciting musical adventures, heads the list of performers in a program of mariachi and *ranchera* music.

Newland-Ulloa, in Oakland for a series of appearances, talked recently about her unusual career. The geography involved is impressive: She was born in the United States, then lived in Panama and Mexico City before attending Yale University. She has been studying and performing since age 4.

Her goal was a career in opera, for which she trained at Yale.

"I studied also with a private teacher, but after I started auditioning and performing, I couldn't make a living. I was semistarving. Realizing how long it was going to take to have a career as a mezzo-so-



Juanita Newland-Ulloa

prano forced me to think about what I wanted to do. I was fortunate to have a voice teacher who understood my situation, Jane Randolph in San Diego, who has taught and coached several singers."

Newland-Ulloa said that Randolph realized that her voice was not operatic in nature and was better in a different vocal genre.

"Latin Fever" — San Diego Chamber Orchestra Summer Pops 2001 with Juanita Newland-Ulloa

When: 8 p.m. Saturday; gates open 6:30 p.m., pre-concert entertainment at 7 p.m.

Where: Horse Arena, Del Mar Fairgrounds, Del Mar

Tickets: \$6 to \$85

Info: (888) 848-7326, Ext. 7; online at www.sdco.org

"That was when I decided to try mariachi, which has fascinated me since I was a child. I remember going to a restaurant and hearing mariachi for the first time. I fell in love with those men and their big booming voices," she said. "Very few women sang that kind of music, and those who did imitated the men. They hadn't changed, but I did. I sing mariachi songs in my full operatic range. I do them in traditional style as a mezzo, then throw in coloratura notes. I'm a coloratura mariachi."

The hybrid style has worked well for Newland-Ulloa. She has recorded a number of CDs, of which "Mujeres" received a Grammy

nomination as Best Latin Pop. She also has a series of CDs for use in schools to promote bilingual education.

"I have another coming out in September," she said. "And another for Rounder Records, with all the music by women composers. That's a big step in a culture that ignores women."

Newland-Ulloa performs some numbers in Spanish, others in English, reflecting her heritage. "My soul is Mexican," she said, "and my passion is Mexican. I love sharing these, especially in a place such as San Diego, where the countries are neighbors."

She will follow that pattern for her appearance with the 50-member San Diego Chamber Orchestra and a guest guitarist.

She will sing from a repertoire that includes "Crucifijo de Piedra," "Mil Besos," "Malaguena" and "Besame Mucho."

The concert program also features the Mariachi Campana Nevin, dancers from Jean Isaacs' San Diego Dance Theatre performing tango and

salsa dances, and the San Diego Chamber Orchestra, led by artistic director/conductor Donald Barra, performing Latin classical and pop music.

"Latin Fever" is the first concert in the orchestra's Festival Pops 2001 season. Up next on Aug. 11 is "Passport to the World" with 11-year-old violin prodigy Eugene Ugorski, tenor Daniel Hendrick, Teye Sa Thiosanne African Drum and Dance Company and the Liam Harney Irish Dance Company and music from Bizet's "Carmen" and Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Evita."

"Fascinating Rhythm," Aug. 25, features baritone Jubilant Sykes and pianist Cecil Lytle in a tribute to George Gershwin, Duke Ellington and Cole Porter.

The Festival Finale, "Hollywood U.S.A." on Sept. 8, features fireworks onstage and aloft. The Marine Band of San Diego, soprano N'kenge Simpson-Hoffman, tenor Robert MacNeil and bass Philip Larson will perform songs and music from films such as "Titanic," "Star Wars," "Gone With the Wind" and others.