

April 26, 1995 REDWOOD CITY ALMANAC

# Raices de Mexico's folk dances captivating

A MOMENT OF SILENCE WAS OBSERVED in memory of the Oklahoma disaster victims just before the start of *Raices de Mexico's* "Journey through Mexico III" at the Fox Theatre in Redwood City this past Saturday evening.

The production, funded in part by the Redwood City Civic Cultural Commission, was the 15th year for the group and its third year at the Fox. They were joined this year by the dance troupe of "Alma de Mexico" from South San Francisco, for a musical journey through the region of Tabasco.

From the very beginning until the end of the program, the dancers transported the audience, through a series of folklore dances, into seven different parts of Mexico, in perfect precision.

The costumes became a swirling kaleidoscope of color as the dancers moved about the stage tapping their feet with simple, but fast-moving dance steps denoting the particular mood and culture of the area:

**Veracruz**, the Republic's largest port on the eastern coast of Mexico. The music there has a hint of African and Caribbean rhythms, with flamenco characteristics.

**Chiapas**, located in southeast Mexico—the name comes from the word "Chiapan", also called "Teochiapan".

**Oaxaca**, along the Pacific Ocean to the south, is home to 15 different ethnic groups, the oldest thought to be the Huaves. The dance in this region develops to the chords of the marimba.

Once again, the audience is transported to **Chiapas**—and this was one of the most enjoyable of all dances during the evening. It emphasized one of the dances of the Chole Indians, "El Alcaraban" whose name and dance steps are taken from the long-shanked bird the Alcaraban. Watching this couple perform, one could picture the courtship of the birds—the male following the female with small skipping steps, while the female resists by flirting and at the same time, keeping at a distance from the male.

From there, travel to **Jalisco** in the central-west part of Mexico, whose capital is Guadalajara, the second largest city in Mexico, the land of the charros, chinas and mariachis, the symbol of Mexican nationality. Singer **Adriana Marmolejo** belted out songs with a backdrop of mariachas and fiesta songs, capturing the soul of Mexico.

When the audience gets to **Tabasco**, they are treated to a staccato-sounding dance, with heel-to-toe striking of feet in perfect precision. Singer **Maria Calderon** had a magnificent voice which filled the whole theater as the Raices group danced the "El Tigre" and La Cana Brava.

**Michoacan**, the northern region of the Uruapan Mountains. Michoacan's cultural tradition evolved from the Purepecha culture, the most representative of all ethnic groups which inhabited the region during the pre-Hispanic period. Laughter filled the theater as the stage was suddenly filled with dancers performing Los Viejitos (Dance of the Old Men). The dancers entered in stumbling, faltering steps, each carrying a cane. The dance is dedicated to the God of the Old Fire **Huehuetotl**, identified with the father of the Gods, known for his inseparable cane similar to the ones used by the dancers.

The finale, performed by the entire cast, was a brilliant array of costumes and movement, in the region of **Sinaloa**, a long, narrow state along the Gulf of California and the Pacific Ocean, and one of the chief agricultural states in Mexico.

Choreography for the evening was by Maestro Martin Cruz Barajas; technical direction by Matias Varela; Program coordinator was Maria Elena Pacheco Varela; costumes by Columba Castaneda; and children's director, Andrea Masterson. There is no age limit for the dancers and the group welcomes young and old alike.

All in all, it was a wonderful experience, full of colorful music and costumes!

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## Redington, Saye picked for culture body

Oliver J. Redington this week was appointed by City Council to his third consecutive four-year term of the Redwood City Civic Culture Commission.

Following the vote, Janet Steinfeld called "unprecedented character assassination" a particular instance of opposition to Meri's appointment to the City

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**Mission Hospice Spring Forum** will feature June Lamb in a presentation on "Self Esteem & health" on Wednesday, May 3, 12 noon to 2 p.m., at Church of the Holy Cross, 900 Alameda at Ralston, in Belmont.