

## 'Sabor Y Salsa' - A sizzling Latin experience

Lila Downs and Eddie Palmieri perform Latin and world sounds in Dearborn



Oscar-nominee Lila Downs sings eclectic Mexican and other roots music. She performed authentic Mexican music in the movie 'Frida.'

BY LANA WONG  
STAFF WRITER

Searching for something different? The sounds of Mexico blended with Afro-Caribbean and Chilean rhythms and jazz piano can be heard Wednesday, March 19, at the Ford Center for Performing Arts in Dearborn.

Lila Downs - a new, strong force in roots music - opens the show. You might recognize Downs' face, and voice, from the movie *Frida* where she can be seen singing to actor Selma Hayek. You can also watch Downs perform at the Oscars on Sunday, March 23. Her mesmerizing operatic trained voice mixes Mexican and Mayan tunes with blues, folk and jazz. Later, Latin jazz pianist, composer, band leader Eddie Palmieri, known as the 'Sun of Latin Music,' will perform with his new band La Perfecta II. Palmieri introduced thrusting trombones to Afro-Caribbean rhythms more than 40 years ago.

### SINGING STORIES

Downs' career has skyrocketed from performances in small Latino clubs to the Oscars. Her background is interesting; she's also an anthropologist.

"We spent years performing in clubs throughout Mexico," Downs said. "I loved that feeling and now we're bringing that spirit to the stage. I feel something when I sing roots music that I didn't experience when I performed opera. In these songs I'm singing stories that I feel need to come out."

### IF YOU GO

**What:** 'Sabor Y Salsa: A Sizzling Latin Experience' with Eddie Palmieri, La Perfecta II and Lila Downs

**When:** Doors open 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 19

**Where:** Ford Center for Performing Arts on Michigan Avenue at Greenfield, Dearborn

**Cost:** Tickets \$15, call (313) 843-2844 or (313) 943-2354. For more information, call (313) 842-7010.

Downs honors her mixed heritage through music. Her mom is Oaxaca Indian - which is where she, and the artist Frida, embraced the tradition of wearing their long black hair in braids wrapped on top of the head. Her father is Anglo-American and she bridges those cultures with an eclectic sound. Equally important to the music, Downs said, is the ability to entertain. Her tribal Mexican clothing has sex appeal. She sings life is hard, but should be appreciated, and about equality, crying women and the sea.

"We have a Latin sound," Downs said of her band that includes her husband. "We are evolving and include North African and South American rhythms. Our band members are from different areas of the world, Chile, Mexico. The music has hard

bass rhythms that have wonderful male energy. I like that edge to the music."

Her band includes drums, percussion, saxophone, harp, violin and ethnic folk instruments. Still, the North African hard edge doesn't erase soulfulness, and sometimes heart-breaking lyrics. Downs sings about the hardships of Mayans and women in the Mayan language, and English.

### JAZZY LATIN

Pianist/composer Palmieri burst out of New York's Palladium Ballroom onto the world stage in the 1960s with *La Perfecta*. After spending 40 years developing Afro-Caribbean music and organizing the Latin Jazz Grammy, he's back to his roots with *La Perfecta*. He'll perform early salsa, cha-cha, and instrumental mambo.

Palmieri is known for his energy. *La Perfecta*'s music often reaches points of climax with polyrhythms and Yoruba religious rites derived from slaves living on Caribbean islands.

"Eddie is a legend," Downs said. "It is going to be honor to sing at this show. My whole band has been very lucky, we've worked very hard and know we are blessed with this gift of song."

The show, produced by the New Detroit and the Arab Community Center for Economic Social Services, is part of the Concert of Colors series. Co-sponsors include Madonna University's Office of Multicultural Affairs. Proceeds benefit Latin charities.

lana@homecomm.net | (248) 901-2572

## 'Midnight's Children' has humor, keen sense of history

BY HUGH GALLAGHER  
STAFF WRITER

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a major theatrical event. Its importance as a cultural collaboration transcends its value as drama.

Yet, though flawed and occasionally tedious, *Midnight's Children* is still strong theater encompassing a dizzying sweep of 20th century history and world cultural influences.

The Royal Shakespeare Company production, which concludes a five-day run at the University of Michigan's Power Center for the Performing Arts at 1:30 this afternoon, is a dramatization of Rushdie's epic tragicomic novel that won Britain's prestigious Booker literary prize. Rushdie, working with Simon Reade and director Tim Supple, has worked to condense the novel's epic propor-

tions into a workable, time-restricted theatrical form.

The resulting work has humor and a keen sense for history and rich cultural allusions. But the plot is often confusing, the theatrical effects sometimes create more confusion than excitement and at three hours running time, the production plays over long. But in a metaphor of the play, what a rich clutter it is.

More than 20 actors, many of them Asian, take on 40 roles carrying three generations of a Muslim Indian family through the dark tragedy of India's history. The story is literally told by one Saleem Sinai, born at the stroke of midnight Aug. 15, 1947, when India became independent of Great Britain. The story he weaves for the simple, lush Padma, is one of magical realism, fact and fancy mingling and colliding to give us a greater truth.

The story has elements of *The Prince and the Pauper*. India's Bollywood films, tall tales and docudrama, Sinai tells of his maternal grandfather with a huge and talented nose, his mother and her beautiful sisters growing up comfortably middle class while surrounded by poverty and endless warfare and about the tragic failure of four Indian.

Giant screens project newsreels from the beginnings of Gandhi's independence movement through Nehru's rise to power, the split with Pakistan, the fight for Bangladesh and the never-ending war over Kashmir. The screens also project Sinai's dreams, Bollywood scenes and other images. Special effects also help recreate battles and muscades.

The title refers to all the children born at the midnight hour of India's independence,

endowed with mystical powers and disturbingly alive in Sinai's dreams. This part of the story is never effectively dramatized and sometimes overwrought.

But the allusions and ideas are exciting. American popular tunes are sung by several characters, a suggestion of the power of American culture. The stress between India's Hindu and Muslim populations is a reflection of the tension now gripping the world at large.

The acting is uniformly excellent. Zubin Varla is on stage throughout as Saleem, distraught and torn like his nation. He plays school boy, young lover and prematurely old man at 29 with energy and conviction. Sameena

Zehra is amusing as the mother of fact Padma, a simple woman who loves Saleem. In a cast so large, there is a wealth of fine acting. Notable is Meneka Das as Anissa, Saleem's pampered, unhappy mother and Mala Gheda as his movie-star aunt, so in love with Western ways.

Rushdie was in attendance at Wednesday's performance in Ann Arbor.

The production is being presented by the University Muslim Society and UM in cooperation with Columbia University, where former UM President Lee Bollinger is now president. It will travel to New York City for performances at the Apollo Theater.

### ON STAGE

■ *Midnight's Children* - 1:30 p.m. Sunday, March 16

**Where:** Power Center for the Performing Arts, 121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor. \$30-\$60, (734) 764-2530, www.ums.org

Related event

■ "The Plays of the Royal Residency" - 7 p.m. Mondays through April 14, Modern Languages Building Auditorium 3. No registration required for public observation, call Pattie Rayl (734) 647-6771.

Paint Creek Center for the Arts  
presents

## For the Love of Art Car Hop

an event in celebration of the 1950s and its art

Saturday, April 12, 2003

7:30 pm to 11:30 pm

At Fox Volkswagen, 773 South Rochester Road

\$75 Friend • \$100 Patron

Call 248-651-4110  
for tickets and  
information

to benefit the  
Paint Creek Center for the Arts  
Building Fund



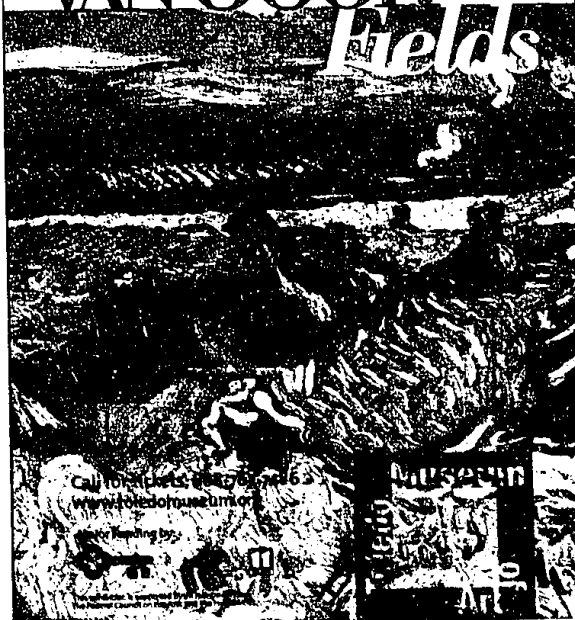
complimentary drinks  
a dinner dinner  
silent and  
live auction  
of artful items  
entertainment by  
"The Classics  
Band"

dance to  
1950s  
attire

ad sponsored by  
Observer & Eccentric  
Art & Leisure

February 23 - May 18, 2003

## VAN GOGH: Fields



Call for tickets: 248-651-4110  
www.museum.umich.edu

Presented by  
The University of Michigan Museum of Art

Museum

Art