

IRA Report: Chicana/o Studies Performance and Theatrics Series
June 20, 2012

The Chicano/a Studies program spearheaded the sponsorship of the two part **Chicana/o Studies Performance and Theatrics Lecture Series**" in the Spring of 2011. Other sponsoring programs involved in the planning of this series were the Center for Community Engagement, History, and Performing Arts. Specifically, the people directly involved were Jose Alamillo, Frank Barajas, Catherine Burris, Chanda Cunningham-Spence, Mary Devins, Pilar Pacheco, Luda Popenhagen, and Melissa Stith. Professors Burris and Popenhagen lent their Performing Arts expertise regarding the logistical requirements for the first part of the series that featured director Luis Valdez. The central goal of the series was to continue the education of the university and service area to the culture and history of people of Mexican origins by way of the performing arts.

The first event of the series, titled "From the roots: The Flowering of Teatro Campesino," featured a lecture by Mr. Valdez on the evening of March 15 in Salon A. It was estimated that some 500 people were in attendance. Mr. Valdez spoke for over an hour on his upbringing in California as a child of migrant parents that served as the foundation for the flowering of his company *Teatro Campesino*. The comedy troupe *Chicano Secret Service* opened for Mr. Valdez's lecture. Susan Carrasco, Tomas Carrasco, and Elias Serna of the troupe performed 5 brief acts in 50 minutes that dealt with the educational experience of Chicana/o students from kindergarten to the university.

The next morning Mr. Valdez conducted a 3 hour performing arts workshop to 30 faculty and students of the programs of Chicana/o Studies, History, and the Performing Arts.

For the second part of the series, María Elena Gaítan on the evening of April 7 presented a program titled "The Adventures of Connie Chancla." Ms. Gaítan was accompanied by musicians Willie Herrón and Xiuy Velos of Los Vex Pistols and local singer Ixya Herrera. Ms. Gaítan produced a slide show of the touchstone historical events of Chicanas/os in the Americas. The presentation was choreographed to the music of Ms. Gaítan, who is a cellist, the music of Los Vex Pistos, and song of Ms. Herrera. A standing-room audience within the Malibu 100 lecture hall demanded an encore performance at the program's end.

Both events touched upon the goals and objectives of the courses taught by Professors Jose Alamillo, Frank Barajas, and the faculty of Communications, the Performing Arts, and others. As the series was also sponsored by the Center for Community Engagement, the series was successful in attracting the attendance of K-12 educators and students and community members from throughout Ventura County.