

# Flutist's concerts borrow from mix of cultures, styles

When I met flutist Viviana Guzmán, just before a concert last spring, she was living in a tiny yurt in Half Moon Bay. It seemed like an igloo — Sherpa-style.

Outside, it was brown-shingled and weathered by salt and wind. Inside, it was as fancy as a desert sheik's tent and lighted by a skylight. Handmade Andean blankets, weavings, leather work and pieces of antique saris painted it with color.



A popular musician who travels much of the year, Guzmán would return to the quiet beauty of her womb-like paradise that sits within 100 yards of the crashing Pacific.

The Dunn Mehler art gallery, just down Miramar Beach from the yurt, hosted the flute concert I attended. It was the second time she had performed there,

and the people wanted her back. Both times the concerts sold out.

"They loved it and want to know when we are going to do it again," said proprietor, Carl Mehler. "She is more than just a musician, she is a performer."

Wednesday at the San Jose Museum of Art, Guzmán will perform in the "Arts Alive!" concert series.

Her concert is a cultural and period mix. For "Hungarian Fantasy," written by 19th-century composer Franz Albert Doppler, Guzmán takes the basic melody and puts it in a Gypsy setting.

In "Ojos Azules," she infuses her Andean and Chilean background into the haunting Andes folk melody. Next, she plays a jazz interpretation of "Black Orpheus."

## IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

Guzmán performs Wednesday from 5 to 8 p.m. at the San Jose Museum of Art, 110 S. Market St., San Jose. Call (408) 294-2787 for information. She also performs Aug. 11 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Cinnebar Theater in Petaluma — call (707) 763-8920 — and Aug. 18 from 6 to 8 p.m. at a free concert on the beach at the Esplanade, Capitola Village, Capitola. Contact [www.viviana.org](http://www.viviana.org) for a schedule.

She plays several kinds of flutes from her collection of 50. Adding to the peaceful, sometimes mysterious tone of the music is an instrument many have not heard of called the didgeridoo.

It is played by a member of her accompanying acoustic "world music" Planet Flute Group.

The Australian aboriginal instrument's name mimics the syllables mouthed by a musician blowing into the 5- to 6½-foot instrument, made of eucalyptus hollowed by termites. It creates a low, ghostly sound.

Born in Chile, Guzmán spent her early years in Mountain View and Sunnyvale playing accordion at 6 years old and piano and clarinet by 11. When the clarinet seemed too heavy to lug from school, she switched to flute because her babysitter played one.

She graduated from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music and from Juilliard. She studied with famous flutists Jean-Pierre Rampal and James Galway and has performed at Carnegie Hall and at such music festivals as Banff, Alberta; Aspen, Colo.; Caramoor in Katonah, N.Y.; and Marlboro, Vt.

One of the treats of her concert is when she unleashes the filmy skirts and layers she wears to perform a very graceful and exotic belly dance.

"I don't know where it comes from," she said this week, "except my fascination with Middle Eastern music. So while I was at Juilliard, on the side as a hobby, I was taking belly dancing."

Performing in more than 80 concerts all over the world, including Russia, Egypt, Ireland, Senegal and Turkey, she is on the road 50 percent of the time. Coming home to the yurt, she said, was like "returning to the Earth."

But the yurt recently lost its musical tenant to romance.

Aboard Seabourne Cruise Lines' "Pride" while sailing from Rio de Janeiro to the Amazon and on to the Caribbean, she and artist Imre Covacs were married. The next month they wed again in a castle in Budapest in his native Hungary.

The couple now live in a cozy cottage down the oceanfront road from the languishing yurt.

Soon, she is off to Scotland and Iceland, taking her program which often features the aboriginal didgeridoo and a multicultural blending of the African *jimbe* (drum) and Chinese *ditze* (flute).

"My goal is a subliminal message of promoting peace and unity — celebrating, rather than criticizing differences," she said.



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Viviana Guzmán has 50 flutes, a few of which she plays in concert.