

Yolocamba Ita makes you feel what they feel

by Geoff Martin

Politics through art. That was the means used by **Yolocamba Ita**, **Nancy White**, and **Four the Moment** this past Saturday evening at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium.

The use of music, literature or other art forms for political expression has always been a controversial issue. Should art and politics be kept separate?

Yolocamba Ita is an El Salvadoran folk group in exile consisting of five musicians, using traditional instruments such as marimbas, guitars, mandolins and traditional percussion instruments.

They have been touring Canada and Europe since 1980 for the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), the popular political coalition in El Salvador. Unfortunately, though not surprisingly, they will only be granted admission to the United States if they go back to El Salvador to pick up visas.

The group's purpose is to spread information about the situation in El Salvador through traditional

music, and also to raise money to support the revolution and the FDR.

Highlights of their set were **Homage to Monsignor Romero**, a song paying tribute to the late Archbishop of San Salvador, the **Wedding of the Campaneros**, which features an Arc Marimba, an indigenous musical instrument which has been suppressed for the last 50 years, and **Song to the Revolutionary Homeland**, a song of hope for the future.

The encore, which lasted for 20 minutes, relied heavily on audience participation through handclapping, whistling and dancing (imagine 800 people dancing in the Cohn Auditorium).

While very humorous, the participation was designed, in the group's words, as "a method by which people could feel what we feel, and express solidarity with our revolutionary struggle".

Musically, the members of Yolo are great. The music could be described as "good-timey" revolu-

tionary", that is, musically joyful and lyrically serious. They all sang harmonies, with spoken interjections.

Opening the show was **Four the Moment**, a local Halifax *capella* group consisting of Debbie Jones, Kim Bernard, Jackie Barkley, and Delvina Bernard. One of the highlights of their set and the entire show was the opening song **Biko**, about Stephen Biko, the Black South African activist-spokesperson who died in prison in South Africa under suspicious circumstances.

Nancy White and Doug Wilde, who play with the Toronto group **The Companeros**, followed **Four the Moment** with more of the same political themes. They performed songs about Oscar Romero, Victor Hara (the Chilean revolutionary poet who was murdered in the 1973 coup in that country), and a satirical piece critical of the large Canadian chartered banks. According to Dal Spanish professor John Kirk, who introduced the pair, White is a "returning prodigal daughter...as

she did an English degree here at Dal a few years ago." The outstanding aspects of White's performance were her powerful vocal style and satirical stage style.

The evening was presented by the Latin America Information Group, with assistance from Oxfam-Canada and the Archbishop of Halifax, James Hayes.



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