



A CONVERSATION WITH JOHN PAUL AND LINA BELTRAN

By Lisa Aviani

John Paul and Lina Beltran remember their first experience at the Lobero clearly. It was 1989 and they had just bought a weekend home in Santa Barbara. A friend invited the family to a magic show at the Lobero and they took their two eldest daughters.

John Paul remembers thinking, "What a jewel! It felt like one of the oldest places in California. Theatres that feel like that usually aren't welcoming to children and here was a theatre full of them!"

As people who have been going to the theatre all their lives — in New York, Houston, Los Angeles, and Europe — they were surprised and impressed. "This terrific place I will always associate with the girls," John Paul adds warmly.

Once the Lobero was on their radar, the Beltrons became regular patrons. They remember taking all three daughters to see Baryshnikov when he performed at the theatre as part of the White Oak Project. As youngsters, the girls found the program to be too avant-garde, but Lina remembers saying at the time, "You'll be glad you saw Baryshnikov one day!" And, sure enough, the girls still do mention that performance from time to time.

The same is true for Marcel Marceau; "You have to teach them,"

says Lina of the girls growing up with the theatre. "And now they love it." In 2006, the family saw jazz guitarist John Pizzarelli, despite their busy schedules as young adults.

Both John Paul and Lina share a soft-spoken elegance and admiration for one another, honed by 27 years of marriage. John Paul, born in Spain, moved to the U.S. at 14, attended college in Houston, and now owns his own apparel manufacturing company. Lina, whom he met and married in Houston, is Colombian by birth. She moved to the United States at 12, coincidentally the same year as her future husband.

Life in the Beltran home has always centered on the children: Cristina, a senior at the University of Pennsylvania; Monica, a senior at Laguna Blanca; and Carolina, a sophomore at Laguna Blanca.

"Our lives are really about our family," Lina explains. "In our early days in Santa Barbara, we lived in a small house and it was just us and three little girls during the weekends ... no soccer leagues, no birthday parties. It was a very special time."

In 1998, the family moved permanently to Santa Barbara. As the girls grew older, there was less time for family outings. John Paul says, "You have a period of about ten years when you can package them up and they are very pliable.

But once school demands and friendships start, scheduling becomes more difficult." Lina adds, with a touch of wistfulness, "We love our teenagers, but I still have moments, especially around Christmas, when I get nostalgic for those little girls."

The two of them, however, still find plenty of time for the theatre. "John Paul loves live performance of any kind," says Lina, making the Lobero a perfect destination. Though they do not relish the thought of an "empty nest," they do look forward to many trips to visit family in New York and Europe and the accompanying excursions to the theatre and the opera.

And although they may live elsewhere after the girls leave home, they always plan on having a house in Santa Barbara and attending shows at the Lobero. "It is a lovely place," says John Paul. "Parking is easy, there are great restaurants within walking distance, and there are world-class performers. Besides, there isn't a bad seat!" Adds Lina with a smile, "When Carolina graduates, we'll get season tickets again."