

# Flamenco guitarist Andres Vadin brings *Influencias* to the Lobero Theatre

By Jessica Haro / Special to VOICE

The Flamenco Arts Festival celebrates its 20th anniversary from September 26-29, 2019. Coinciding with National Hispanic Heritage Month, the Festival presents world-class artists from Spain and the U.S. and for four days these artists perform, teach, and lecture. This year's festivities include two live concerts, an award presentation, a flash mob, dance and music workshops, and an after party to celebrate. With its beautiful coastline, paseos, Spanish legacy, and passion for the performing arts, there is no better place for a flamenco festival than Santa Barbara, the American Riviera. Visit [www.flamencoarts.org](http://www.flamencoarts.org) for details.

**I**N 2000, THE FLAMENCO ARTS FESTIVAL OPENED with a concert by Cañadú. The ensemble's modern take on flamenco music was like nothing the Santa Barbara flamenco community had ever heard. That was a time when flamenco music was difficult to obtain in the United States. Imported CDs were sold out of the trunks of cars, and friends traded cassette tapes that were copies-of-copies of a CD a friend bought on a trip to Spain. Such a time must seem unimaginable to young flamenco fans who grew up streaming flamenco music online and discovering new artists on YouTube.

It is fitting, then, that this year's festival will open on September 26th with *Influencias*, a concert by The Andres Vadin Project that Vadin describes as "flamenco guitar the way I see it nowadays."

Vadin was born in Havana, Cuba, and studied guitar at the Guillermo Tomas and Amadeo Roldan Conservatory of Music from age eleven through 18. The curriculum focused on classical music, but included pieces from other countries, such as Argentine tango and Venezuelan music.

"Cuba is a place that is very cultural, so you have influences from everywhere," Vadin says.

Vadin discovered flamenco during secondary school through a Paco de Lucia album, and after graduation he took it upon himself to learn flamenco guitar. "I was playing only classical guitar and I was interested in doing something else – something where I could explore the guitar more," he explains. "In classical guitar they don't use the same technique that they use in flamenco guitar. It's a completely different language."

He began using that language to compose much earlier than he'd anticipated. One of his first jobs was for the Havana-based flamenco company Aires. Early on in his tenure with the group they needed someone who could compose music, and Vadin's conservatory education made him the perfect candidate. "At that time I didn't have the technique really because I'd just come from playing classical, so it was hard work," Vadin admits.

Today, flamenco is the primary language Vadin uses as a guitarist. "You can express so many emotions," Vadin says of flamenco.

"It has the wild part from the street and the gypsies, but you also have an intellectual component. The technique is unique, and combining all those techniques allows you to explore the virtuosity of the instrument."

Vadin now lives in Los Angeles, and the music of *Influencias* reflects the influences that move has had on his music.

"Living in LA gives you the opportunity to collaborate with musicians from many different cultures, and also gives you an opportunity to express your art in front of many different audiences," says Vadin. "I've had the opportunity to play with people from Iran, Armenia, France, and Spain of course, and they always bring their own culture, their own style."

All of the artists featured in The Andres Vadin Project are people he met in Los Angeles, though all of them come from somewhere else. Vocalists Jose Cortes and Manuel Gutierrez are from Spain and both spent part of their childhood in France.

Back in 2000 the FAF presented a flamenco music group called Cañadú. They were the first music group to perform for the FAF and they were unknown in the U.S. at the time. But to this day people still talk about that show and the music that brought the audience to their feet. This will be another one of those unforgettable moments.

– **Vibiana Pizano**, President & Founder



Courtesy Photo

Andres Vadin, guitarist-composer, will perform on Thursday, September 26th

Diego Álvarez (percussion) is from Venezuela, Ioannis Goudelis (piano accordion) is from Greece, and Yosmel Montejo (bass) is a fellow Cuban.

"Flamenco guitar – even if you're not playing a certain palo [traditional branch of flamenco], but you're playing with the language of flamenco, that kind of phrasing will mix perfectly with these other cultures," Vadin explains. "It can easily mix with Cuban music or with some Arab influence or with jazz. So that's what the concert is about."

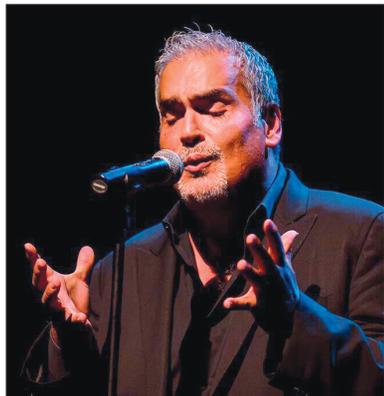
Featured pieces include a traditional Cuban bolero that Vadin arranged as a modern flamenco rumba, and a ballad that doesn't conform to a traditional flamenco structure, but is written in the language of flamenco guitar. *Influencias* is sure to challenge anyone whose idea of flamenco guitar begins and ends with the music of Sabicas.

"The music changes," says Vadin. "Everything changes."

The Flamenco Arts Festival has been instrumental in keeping Santa Barbara from falling behind in the evolving world of modern flamenco by bringing

innovative artists to local stages and offering master classes with flamenco's leading dancers and musicians. Now in its 20th anniversary season, the Flamenco Arts Festival is poised to continue that legacy beginning with the opening night performance of *Influencias*. The festival will continue with the inaugural presentation of the Alberto Pizano Award for the Arts to Luisa Triana, a full schedule of workshops for dancers and musicians of all levels, and the U.S. premiere of Eduardo Guerrero's *Faro*.

The Andres Vadin Project will perform *Influencias* at the Lobero Theater on Thursday, September 26th at 7:30pm. Ticketholders are invited to the opening night reception on the Lobero Esplanade at 6pm with wine tasting courtesy of Santa Barbara Winery. Vadin will be also teaching an introductory flamenco guitar workshop on Friday, September 27th from 7 to 8:30pm. For details, see [www.flamencoarts.org](http://www.flamencoarts.org).



Courtesy Photo

Jose Cortes, featured singer for the Andres Vadin Project



Photo by Will Austin

Manuel Gutierrez, featured dancer for the Andres Vadin Project



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# ANDRES VADIN PROJECT

Santa Barbara Debut of *INFLUENCIAS*

## 9.26.19 LOBERO



Photo by Sari Makki