

Culture Clash in Moraga?

By Sophie Braccini

On August 14, an angry crowd stormed into Amoroma, located in Moraga's Rheem Center, and started shouting at the first waitress they encountered, "You're promoting pornography in our community!" Never had the Italian restaurant witnessed such uproar and the waitress was at a complete loss. Michele Lavecchia, the owner of both Amoroma and the Rheem Theater, was able to calm the crowd.

The distressed individuals had been attending the Rheem Theater's French Night, held every second Tuesday of the month. Like its counterpart Italian Night, (the first Tuesday of each month), a different movie of French origin is screened. Both Italian and French Nights have become a mini-tradition at the theater, and include wine tasting, appetizers and a short description of the evening's movie. Lavecchia explained to the unhappy patrons of the arts, "The purpose is not to shock the audience or hurt their feelings; we research movies that are recent, have won international recognition and present artistic content."

The movie causing all the uproar was

"L'humanité", written and directed by Bruno Dumont, which won top awards at the 2000 Cannes International Film Festival. Dumont has a reputation for painting humans in their most desperate and primal states without the interference of moral judgment. "L'humanité" takes place in a village where the rape and murder of a young girl has just occurred. Some of the images are graphic and can shock an unprepared audience. Lavecchia's theater was full, but he noticed that about twenty people left at the beginning of the movie.

Following the uproar in the restaurant, Lavecchia considered canceling future French nights at the theater. Cultural differences between Europe and the United States might be too profound, he thought. Americans in general have a higher tolerance for violence and profanity, while the French seem to be more comfortable with nudity and sexuality. Fortunately for French Nights, most of the audience appeared to appreciate the movie.

The next edition of French Nights arrives on September 11th. The featured film will be a



Michele Lavecchia
in front of the Rheem Theater
Photo by Sophie Braccini

comedy, "Drôle de Félix," which portrays the quest of a young, HIV positive, North African homosexual man to find his father. His journey across the French countryside is beautifully filmed and the young man crosses paths with a fun group of characters. It is recommended that those who might be offended by the depiction of homosexual relationships seek alternate entertainment that evening.

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