

## Sounds of the Sacred

Donna De Lory plus Jai Uttal with Omar Faruk Tekberek

John Anson Ford Amphitheater

May 8, 2004

By Adam Skolnick

Amidst the gloaming, hundreds filtered into the intimate Ford Theater tucked against the Hollywood Hills. The stage was adorned with Tibetan art, and sheltered by a verdant canopy of palms, pines and cypress. Though, not as jaw dropping impressive as the Bowl, the Ford Theatre is a landmark venue, and on this night was graced by an up-and-coming *kirtan* maven and a well-known chant artist.

It's not often that the opening act steals a show, but that was arguably the case here. Donna De Lory has a definite pop appeal, remains true to the spirit of *kirtan* and her music is refreshingly personal. She played harmonium and sang, and her band – Cameron Stone on cello, Quinn on percussion and guitarist James Harrah - complimented her perfectly. A creative tension drives De Lory's work. Acoustic instrumentation grounds her music, while her passionate voice transcends the traditional confines of folk and *kirtan*. This interplay has produced an original and captivating sound that recalls Sarah McLaughlin and Enya. She glided through *Ma Durga* and *Om Namah Shivaya*, traditional *mantras* tinged in her own distinctive style, and she brought the house down with her rendition of Joseph Arthur's *In The Sun*.

Jai Uttal has a bigger name, a bigger band and a bigger sound. His Pagan Love Orchestra included tabla, keyboards, bass, drums, percussion, four back-up singers, a dancer and the great Sufi musician, Omar Faruk Tekberek on flute. Jai sang and played harmonium and his eclectic set included traditional Hindu *mantras* – one with a reggae rhythm, a Hebrew prayer, and a cover of the Beatles' *Tomorrow Never Knows*. Uttal's best moments came when Tekberek's flute accompanied Uttal's powerful tenor as the band laid back or when Tekberek let his voice go in spontaneous wails. Area *vinyasa* goddess, Shiva Rea, even joined the group on stage with her sticky mat for a spontaneous yoga workout. Her *asana* as ballet performance was unique, and added to Uttal's loose, carnival like approach to the evening that the audience appreciated. But bigger is not always better, and, if you ask me, this was De Lory's night.