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# swedish bulletin

YOUR INSIDER'S GUIDE TO SWEDEN, STOCKHOLM & GOTHENBURG

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# INTERVIEW

Irene Zoe Alameda, Director of the Instituto Cervantes in Stockholm since September 2009, was born in Madrid in 1974. She is a writer, film director and PhD in Comparative Literature from Columbia University (USA). A woman from the 21st Century, she is courageous, innovative, believes in teamwork and seeks consensus.

TEXT: ANTONIO VELA PHOTO: CERVANTES INSTITUTE

**D**irector Alameda has learnt much but wants to learn much more – she knows that she must keep learning. And she looks at life from the perspective that it does not matter much what you have already done, but what you still plan to do ahead.

She is serving at Instituto Cervantes, one of the most important and valued Spanish public institutions for culture and language all over the world, with more than 70 centres operating successfully in the five continents.

- What is the Instituto Cervantes? What are its values and aims?

The Instituto Cervantes is a public Institution founded by Spain in 1991 whose aim is to promote the Spanish language and Spanish and Latin American culture. We are aware of the importance of our language as one of the languages with the highest number of speakers in the world today. It is an important medium for communication and mutual exchange of culture and humanistic values.

- When was the Instituto opened in Sweden? What would you highlight from the Instituto at Stockholm?

The Instituto Cervantes of Stockholm was inaugurated on 19 April 2005 by the Prince Felipe, Princess of Asturias and Princess Victoria. During these first years we have carefully studied the Swedish society. The experience we had gleaned from other countries could not be imported to Sweden and the Nordic countries in general. Spanish and Latin American cultures don't share many roots with Scandinavian countries. The very name of "Cervantes" does not mean much for the Swedish audience, although it is the name of the most important author of the European Novel (Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote's author, is widely regarded as the father of Modern Novel). I think it is now when we are getting to know Swedish society better that we feel ready to offer a more understandable version of ourselves.

- How do Swedes live the experience of learning Spanish at the Instituto Cervantes?

We gain students every day, and for a country where people are used to studying languages in the context of public



**Instituto Cervantes**

education, we have an impressive number of students. I think that what our students value more is that coming to the Instituto is like visiting a Spanish speaking country for a few hours. Our audience can find here not only the best qualified professors of Spanish as a foreign language, but also a great and updated Library with bilingual personnel and a good bunch of cultural activities: we have a Film Forum, performances, exhibitions, and we receive the visit of the best authors, historians and artists every week. Joining the Instituto Cervantes is enjoying a complete cultural experience.

- What are the challenges of the Instituto Cervantes for the 21st Century?

Now that the numbers are with us (we are more than 400 million speakers all over the world) we need to focus on quality. The challenge now consists of turning Spanish into a language chosen to transmit complex contents: it is already a literary language, but we need it also to be a language for science and for international relations. Many of our speakers should be as literate in Spanish as they are in English. For example, in Sweden there is a huge number of teachers of Spanish, but their expertise in the language itself is very poor. So we need to focus now more in the quality of Spanish, both learnt and taught.

To study Spanish in their courses people can register at the website, or in person at the Instituto. If you need a level test you have to go to the centre. You can book date and time by phone. To become a member of the library, the recommendation is to go there directly and then you can take books, music and movies at same time.

ACTIVITY & PLACE	DATE
Copla cycle :Documentary film "Las cosas del querer") Instituto Cervantes	April 12th
Reading circle Instituto Cervantes	April 15th and 29th / May 13th and 27th / June 10th
Spanish FilmFestival Rio Cinema	April 16th to 23rd
Culture-night "Non Stop Spanish Cinema" Instituto Cervantes	April 24th
Film-club: "A través de mis ojos" Instituto Cervantes.	April 26th to June 14th
Exhibition: "A través de mis ojos" Instituto Cervantes	May 20th to June 30th
Performance Ana Laguna Moderna Dance Teatern	May 5th
Talk regarding Bicentenary of the Independence . Instituto Cervantes	May 17th
Ancient Music Festival Tyska Kyrkan (Germa Church) Gamla Stan	June 13th

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Germany, Stuttgart



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