

SOUNDS

Susie Hansen Stirs Big Band Flavor Into Salsa Music

■ The violinist and her seven-piece band will cater to the dance crowd by playing originals from her 'Solo Flight' CD.

By ZAN STEWART
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

It's hard not to be moved by violinist Susie Hansen's vibrant Latin-based sound. There's a compelling energy, a winsome sense of melody that grabs hold of a listener.

When she holds forth on Friday and Feb. 2 at New York West in Tarzana, Hansen offers mainly salsa, the sparkling dance music that grew out of Cuban *conjunto* and *charanga* styles, and includes a healthy dose of '40s and '50s big band sound.

In the violinist's version of salsa, she makes sure there are plenty of jazz solos; improvising is her *raison d'être*, she says.

"Soloing is . . . what's the word . . . is ecstasy. It's the reason I play music," says Hansen, who grew up in Chicago and is the daughter of James Hansen, a violinist with the Chicago Symphony.

"It's a spiritual experience, kind of like giving up control and getting into the energy of a song, being part of the song," says Hansen. "It's raw expression in the moment and it's the most exciting thing I do."

At New York West, Hansen's show features her seven-piece band delivering a repertoire of originals from her "Solo Flight" CD on Jazz Caliente Records as well as tunes by such Latin greats as Eddie Palmieri and Tito Puente. The program is designed for dancers, and the musician says the club is ideal, with a good dance floor and an intimate atmosphere.

"We played there last week and it was great. The whole club was dancing; and though we soloed a lot, nobody com-



LORI SHEPLER / Los Angeles Times

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plained," she reports.

Hansen works a good deal these days. Her music, she says, as much as her bank account, is the beneficiary. "When I can work enough so that the same people play with me, then we sound like a *band*, we play like a band, and that's gratifying."

■ Susie Hansen plays Friday and Feb. 2, 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., at New York West, 19540 Ventura Blvd., Tarzana. No cover, no minimum. Information: (818) 758-3900.