

GETTING TO KNOW FASO

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO
AJPress

CECILIA COO CRUZ

'Let's support each other.'

"We Filipinos should help each other. *Dapat magtulungan tayo.* We should be proud of each other's successes.

That's why I encourage everyone in the FilAm community to go to the gala concert of the first FilAm Symphony Orchestra. Let's support each other," said Cecilia Coo Cruz, the concert mistress and violinist of the FASO gala concert on May 16 at the Wilshire Theatre in Beverly Hills.

Born in 1976 in the Philippines, Cecile comes from a family of musicians. Her mother, Corazon Arevalo Coo, is a pianist who has been teaching piano lessons to aspiring musicians for decades now. Cecile and her two brothers are all graduates of the Philippine High School for the Arts in UP Los Baños and took up Music in UP Diliman. The eldest, Jonathan Coo, is a pianist in New York with a Masters degree in Music while the younger brother, Victor Coo, is a cellist in Michigan.

Even in her teens, Cecile has already been immersed in the world of music. In 1988, at the age of 12, she won in the National Music Competition for Young Artists. She was a winner in the National Music Competition for Young Artists in the Philippines and was the recipient of the 1994 Outstanding Artist award. Cecile has been a member of the Philippine Youth Orchestra from the time she was 17 till she immigrated to the States at 25.

In 2001, Cecile graduated from the University of the Philippines with a Bachelor in Music degree, majoring in violin. After graduation, Cecile followed her family into the US. She got a Performer's Certificate in violin from La Sierra University, Riverside before taking up her Masters of Music, major in violin, at the Andrews University in Michigan. Armed with her Masters degree, Cecile went back to California in 2004. She married a Hispanic, Timothy Cruz, with whom she now has a daughter.

Cecile has been busy teaching violin, played the violin for recording sessions with various artists for their music CDs, for movie theme songs and for entertainment shows in TV. She also uses her God-given talent for God's glory by serving as Assistant Music Leader at the Eagle Rock Presbyterian Church and Assistant Music Minister at the White Memorial Church.

Cecile articulated her excitement about the formation of FASO. "My musician friend, Bochok Molina, was the one who informed me about the plan to form the first Filipino American Symphony Orchestra. I attended the initial meeting where we brainstormed on how to do it. I was excited *kasi nga kasi* first FilAm orchestra *ito eh*. It's time *mapakita natin sa ating mga kababayan na meron tayong ganito*, an orchestra of our own, in LA," said Cecile.

While there are many Filipino musicians in America, it hasn't been easy for them to establish their careers immediately. Cecile expounded on this in the interview with Asian Journal. "*Iba ang culture dito sa States. Ang laki-laki ng US.* It takes time for you to get contacts, grow your network and get established. When I left the Philip-



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pines, I was already established as a musician. We have a small music community in the Philippines. *Kasi* in the Philippines, most musicians come from UP, UST, or St. Scholastica. So even while studying Music in UP, I was already establishing my career- teaching violin, doing gigs, recording for albums, movies and commercials. When I got here, *wala akong kilala* and the country is so big. It took time for me to get contacts and prove myself," Cecile said.

The concert mistress' chamber experience, playing the violin, has been quite extensive.

She was with the UP String Quartet and various ensembles (1994-2001), with the Pundacquit Chamber Players (1996-2000), the Sinnett Quartet in Andrews University (2003-2004), the Andrews University Chamber Players (2002-2004), the Renaissance Trio (2006- present) and the White Memorial String Ensemble (May 2008- present).

The award-winning violinist was also a member of the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, Manila Youth Symphony Orchestra II, the La Sierra Orchestra and the Andrews University Symphony Orchestra.

As concert mistress, Cecile plays a major role in the upcoming FASO gala concert. Concert masters have the biggest job next to the musical director. They are responsible for leading the first violin section, which is the largest section or sections of the orchestra.

Cecile makes the decisions regarding bowing and other technical details of violin playing for the violins, and sometimes all of the string players; and is in charge of leading the orchestra in tuning before concerts and rehearsals and other technical aspects of orchestra management. It is usually required that the concertmaster be the most skilled musician in the section, good at learning music quickly, counting and observing the conductor for the rest of the section to follow.

"I encourage everyone to buy tickets now to the FASO gala concert," Cecile said enthusiastically. "We at FASO are working really hard to give people a great performance that they will truly enjoy and remember for a long time. There are Broadway and Filipino classics and pop --- *maganda ang repertoire! Mage-enjoy ang lahat*," she added.

The inaugural concert of the Filipino American Symphony Orchestra at the Wilshire Theatre in Beverly Hills on May 16 will also feature well-known singers Joey Albert and Stephanie Reese. It truly promises to be an affair to celebrate and remember. For more information, call Andy Tecson at (213) 300-4870 or Bob Shroder at (818) 395-8936. ■

Idol at Island Pacific

Pinoy folk rock idol Florante performs at the supermarket



They stood on stage and faced the judges who were praising and tearing apart their performance, much like the hit reality-TV show, *American Idol*. And the comments may have been just as candid and straightforward as Simon Cowell's.

"You're boring. I almost fell asleep," said Carla Montilla, one of the judges at the recently-held *Sing Like Florante Challenge* at Island Pacific Supermarket in Panorama City – a two-day affair that culminated in a mini-concert by no less than Pinoy folk rock sensation, Florante.

Kababayans were called upon to join the singing contest in which they had to perform any Florante song. Choices ranged from Florante hits: *Ako'y Pinoy*, *Handog*, *Si Tatang*, and so on. Five finalists were picked from the elimination round. They were judged according to voice quality (30%), stage presence (30%), Florante Factor (20%) and audience impact (20%).

The "Florante Factor" aspect of the criteria did not discourage the women to compete. And just as well, they showed up and brought it on for the panel of judges composed of representatives from the stores inside the Island. Montilla represented Monet Salon, one of the most popular beauty service chains in the Filipino community right now, owned and operated by Monet Lu. Bennie Espina owner of the Pinoy boutique Bene BEBE was the second judge and emulated the kind and thoughtful comments of Paula Abdul. And the third judge was Rene Gestupa, owner of Asiacion, who donated the grand prize.

Contestants signed up to win prizes that included sacks of rice and a brand new Magic Mic kit complete with chips. But at the end of the affair, whether they competed or just cheered on their friend; whether they won or lost the contest; everyone came home happy and entertained.

"We at Island Pacific are always thinking of ways to better serve our patrons. And we don't only mean fresh produce and seafood, a clean market and affordable prices; we want our *kababayans* to get the total Pinoy market experience here at Island Pacific. That's why we come up with free entertainment activities like this," said Tracy Lim, advertising manager of Island Pacific Supermarket.

The Kababayan Hall at Island Pacific in Panorama City has been the center of FREE entertainment events that include screening of *Ploning*, the Philippine's Official Entry to the Academy Awards which was also attended by Judy Ann Santos; concerts by one of Philippine's premiere hitmakers Marco Sison, one of Philippine show business' sexy personality Patricia Javier, ace Pinoy jazz artist Mon David, and an up and coming all-girl group called Asian Dolls; and a two-day food festival which featured cooking demos by renowned Chef Cecilia De Castro.

The Florante event was the most recent offering at Island. After the elimination round on Friday, the finalists were asked to come back the next day for the grand finals. And the whole shebang culminated in a mini concert by Florante in which he performed some of his classics – *Ako'y Pinoy*, *Bugtong*, and *Si Tatang*.

More projects are in line for March at Island Pacific Supermarket branches; but most especially in Panorama City. Watch out for a special appearance by Sarah Geronimo who will be stopping by to promote her concert this month. Also visiting in March are divas Pops Fernandez, Kuh Ledesma, Zsa Zsa Padilla and Regine Velasquez.*

*Advertising Supplement

