

# GETTING TO KNOW FASO

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO  
AJPress

## ART OCDAMIA Playing the Cello

One of the core members of the Filipino American Symphony Orchestra (FASO) is cello player, Arthur Ocdamia. Better known as Art by his friends, he has over thirty years experience as a cello player and has been a member of five different orchestras in LA: the Cypress Pops Orchestra (since 1992), Bell Flower Symphony Orchestra (since 1993), La Mirada Symphony Orchestra (from 2000 to 2005), the South East Symphony Orchestra (since 2005) and the Filipino American Symphony Orchestra (FASO).

Art shares how he got started in this career as a cello player. "My father, Gelacio, became totally blind when he was 13 years old but he could play the piano, ouido lang. So, I guess there's some musical genes in our family. My mother, Angelita Lagonera, had a good voice and sang in church. When I was in high school, I told my parents I wanted to learn how to play the cello. We had a neighbor who was a good cello player, Amador Tamayo. I practically begged him to teach me. He did but after just a month, he left for Germany. He referred me to Herminia llano who was a cellist with the Philippine Philharmonics. I studied under her and she helped me get a scholarship in UP Diliman. After two years in UP, the department head of the Strings section, Sergio Esmilla, asked me if I wanted to join the Manila Symphony Orchestra. There, I was with Bob Shroder and Bochok Molina, who also played with me at the Philippine Youth Orchestra in UP Diliman. That was in 1980 and now, almost 30 years later, the three of us are together again, this time in LA..and forming FASO. Unbelievable!" relates Ocdamia.

After working five years with the Manila Symphony Orchestra, Art went to work for the Shangri-la Hotel in Singapore before he joined Holland American Lines. "I was one of the musicians on board. It was hard work, since we played three times a day, everyday, as the cruise ship went around the world. But that's where I met my first wife, Kathy, an American who was one of the passengers in 1988. We decided to get married in Las Vegas soon after that and lived in Anaheim," recalled Art.

Admitting that he could not support a family by just playing the cello, Art worked in a medical company for almost twenty years, the Pentax Medical Instruments. When the company closed down in 2007, Art studied medical back office work. He is also studying how to make a violin.

In 2001, his wife Kathy died of complications from diabetes. He has re-married; this time to a Bicolana, Margie Benitez.

Some years ago, Art saw a flyer of a Joey Albert concert, featuring his friend Bob Shroder as the conductor. He attended the concert and was happy to re-unite with Bob and also, Bochok Molina, who was likewise playing in the concert. Since then, they have been in touch.

"When Bob and Bochok told me about FASO, I was proud to join them. Even if the weekly rehearsals are done in LA which is quite far from OC where I live, I really make it a point to be here, coming as early as 5pm (for the 6:30pm practice). I don't mind waiting for quite a while for the practice to begin rather than be caught in traffic. It is an honor to be a part of FASO and I expect that the orchestra will be big someday," said Art. "I believe music is very important to life that's why I give it importance and value," he added.



# 'Zorro' Marred...

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The initial telecast also made poor use of its huge cast of young and veteran stars, led by Gutierrez. At first, his characterization of the young Zorro is interesting because he's so awkward. But his heart doesn't seem to be in this latest assignment, as he merely goes through the motions of being klutzy – and the charm of his initially gauche portrayal quickly curdles.

Most of his co-actors don't fare any better, coming up with hammy approximations of swarthy Spanish types. Some of them were so "over," that it was like watching a spoof –only, those actors were super-serious about what they were doing, so the broad humor that their hammy performances generated was decidedly inadvertent.

### Too polite

The actors playing the Filipino characters fared better, because they were performed less florid and wanton. Still, none of them came up with a particularly absorbing portrayal, so the new show's overall acting grade must be 'F' for frustrating.

On the other hand, the series' opening sequence was satisfyingly grand and visually exciting. It focused on the execution (by guillotine!) of a rebel priest – which, of course, the show's Masked Avenger tries to foil.

Everything was right about the "big scene" – except for the fact that the dozens of anti-Zorro soldiers on hand didn't attack our hero en masse, but politely chose to fight him one at a time.

How obliging! And, how unreal, thus souring up the believability of what would have been a really exciting buena-mano sequence.

The next time we caught Zorro, it was established that our young hero's wealthy parents had adopted him when he was a baby, so his search for his roots would hopefully add a richer layer to his character.

However, the second episode we watched was flawed by the usual "polite soldiers" problem: After he had been shot in the arm, Gutierrez's character was still able to make his getaway, because the soldiers chasing him were so inept and – well, polite.

And there was this really strange scene in which our young hero had just stolen a huge loaf of bread, saw a hungry adolescent, and gave the entire loaf to her. The loaf was so big that it could have fed six people, so why didn't they just share it?

The scene was supposed to show the protagonist's selflessness, but it had a contrary effect. We really wish that this production could pay more attention to believability, and stop throwing viewers' focus out of whack.

# Double trouble for Marian

At a recent media gathering for Blue Water Spa, Marian Rivera proudly told Ruses: "In spite of the intrigues, the companies I endorse have stood by me—like this spa, which is renewing my contract."

Barely a month later, Dollywood reported that Marian would soon be replaced by her screen partner Dingdong Dantes' ex-girlfriend Karylle as the spa's image model.

Popoy Caritativo, Marian's manager, insisted that the GMA 7 star wasn't dropped. "[We] decided not to renew the contract, which ends in May. We didn't agree with the company on several matters." And the K factor? "It's beyond our control who they pick," he said. (Inquirer.net)



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