

SHOWBIZ & STYLE

JOURNAL

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

by RUBEN V. NEPALES
Inquirer.net

Filipino symphony orchestra born in LA



Just 15 minutes earlier on a recent Tuesday night, the room in the edifice owned by the Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA) was empty, except for a few Filipino youths learning hip-hop steps. Then, Filipino musicians of various ages started trickling in with their instruments, found chairs to sit on, and almost instantly, the place came alive with the sound of instruments being tuned. Arranged in semicircle rows around FASO's Kawit-born music director and conductor, Bob Shroder, the orchestra members first rehearsed *Lupang Hinirang*. Hearing our national anthem made us even more excited about the date, May 17, when the orchestra debuts in a historic gala concert at the Saban Theatre (formerly the Wilshire Theatre) in Beverly Hills.

Filipino symphony orchestra in the US. When Roger answered no, he and Lito decided right then and there to form one. The two men, along with Roger's wife, Cora, AJ co-publisher, Andy Tecson, AJ photographer, who's also a violin player, and Lito "Bochok" Molina, a violist, went into action.

Bochok suggested Bob Shroder as music director and conductor. Bob, who is as *Pinoy* as can be despite his foreign-sounding name (he was born in Cavite to an American father and Filipina mother), first played with the Philippine Youth Orchestra. With Bob signing up, the group met with other musicians—Nonoy Alsaybar, Cheryl Lopez and Cecile Coo-Cruz—to officially form FASO.

To think that the idea of the symphony orchestra started in a simple back-porch conversation between Roger Oriel, Asian Journal (AJ) publisher and CEO, and Lito Ocampo Cruz, AJ's editor-at-large and *Balikbayan* magazine editor-in-chief, less than a year ago. AJ is a widely circulated Filipino-American newspaper, with editions in Los Angeles, Orange County, Northern California, New York, New Jersey and Las Vegas.

We interviewed Bob as the musicians were walking in, most of them from work and school and from many parts of Southern California. Bob speaks Tagalog since he lived all his life in the Philippines until he im-

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LOS ANGELES—Inside a community center, along a street lined with *Pinoy* establishments, in an area known as Filipino town, history is being made.

The first ever Filipino symphony orchestra outside of the Philippines is rehearsing. Named the Filipino-American Symphony Orchestra (FASO), the project seemed too good to be true when we first heard about it. But, seeing and hearing the orchestra rehearse Antonino R. Buenaventura's *Mindanao Sketches* at the multipurpose room of the Temple Gateway Youth & Community Center, we were thrilled.

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