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JOURNAL

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by RUBEN NEPALES
Inquirer.net

Pinoy orchestra's debut is hot-ticket event



AJPress Photo by Joe Cobilla

LOS ANGELES—For the cultural and social cognoscenti or just plain music lovers among the Filipinos living in Southern California, all roads tomorrow evening, May 17, lead to the Saban Theatre in Beverly Hills, where the first Filipino symphony orchestra outside the Philippines makes its historic debut.

It promises to be an exciting gala night. Bob Shroder, the Cavite-born and -raised musical director and conductor of the Filipino-American Symphony Orchestra (FASO), told us that the orchestra has grown from the original plan of 40 to 45 to about 60 members. It will be an unprecedented moment—a theater stage in the US brimming with 61 Pinoy musicians, from talented teenagers to accomplished veterans, who will play Filipino classics, pop and Broadway gems, and classical music.

"I'm very, very excited," enthused singer Joey Albert, who's one of the guest performers (the others are Stephanie Reese and Pete Avendaño). She wrote via email, "I'm looking forward to finally being able to sing my hit songs with a full orchestra. But, I'm more excited for Bob, who's a dear friend. This has been his longtime dream. Someone as dedicated to Filipino music like Bob deserves an opportunity like this."

Bold decision

"Any philanthropic endeavor is always a bold decision," Joey declared about Bob's undertaking, especially in these tough economic times. "I applaud Roger and Cora Oriol for creating Faso. This most uplifting event will make every Filipino-American proud."

The Oriols, who are outstanding leaders of the Fil-Am community, are the publishers of *Asian Journal* and *Balibayan Magazine*, a glossy new magazine distributed in the US and the Philippines.

The singer told us, "I will be performing three OPM tunes and two English songs, including a most unconventional surprise number, originally arranged by Louie Ocampo for a string quartet. I'm looking forward to a most uplifting evening filled with pride in Filipino artistry and the oneness in art and soul of Fil-Am artists."

Having worked with Bob before, Joey knows that the orchestra is in good hands. "Bob is one of the most dedicated and disciplined musicians I know," she shared. "Both his music and life are inspiring. His quest for musical fulfillment is no different from his successful quest for his father. Both were guided by an invincible sense of determination and dedication. This is how Bob found his father, as well as his dream concert."

"I pray that this does become a permanent institution," Joey said of FASO. "We've all seen good orchestras come and

go in the Philippines, shattered by economic, political and personal conflicts. I hope that everybody has finally learned that pride and ego do nothing but destroy good and beautiful things—and that, to make a good thing last, everybody has to truly come together and make sacrifices for the bigger cause. This is one Filipino artistic endeavor I pray will stay."

Unity and pride

Tagumpay "Pi" de Leon, son of National Artist Felipe Padilla de Leon and Iluminada Mendoza, an accom-

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