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FROM THE FRONT PAGE

'FASO' ROCKS LA

PAGE A1 ◀
galog at all, Ms. Reese did a very fine job, not missing a word; and her American accent made her Tagalog songs sound even more endearing to the concertgoers.
"I was more nervous this time," admits Reese, who came in from abroad barely a few days before the concert. "I wanted to show the other half of my music; that I really love Filipino culture. I

feel so honored to be a part of this event that is celebrating our roots," she told Asian Journal.
Marikit (Kit) Navarro who played Jazmin, and Pete Avendano, who played Karim, in Dr. Ramon Sison-Geluz's highly acclaimed opera, *Karim and Jasmin*, breezed through their numbers with amazing virtuosity.
FASO had a few challenges as well. It is composed of musicians

with different levels of musicianship, according to Bob Shroder, who agreed to talk to this writer immediately following the concert. "We are not like the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra," Shroder tells Asian Journal. He said that FASO is basically a volunteer symphony orchestra. Some of the members are college students, and some are part time musicians who cannot commit to a weekly rehearsal schedule.

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"I think everybody did an excellent job by wholeheartedly giving their best musicianship," Shroder said. "This concert is phenomenal because there is no gap between the orchestra and the audience. We are totally connected, and we are always reaching out, right from the beginning."

"From the time we played *Star Spangled Banner*, we hit our strides. We were playing what they (audience) crave, and apparently what they were hearing were the songs that they liked," Shroder opined.

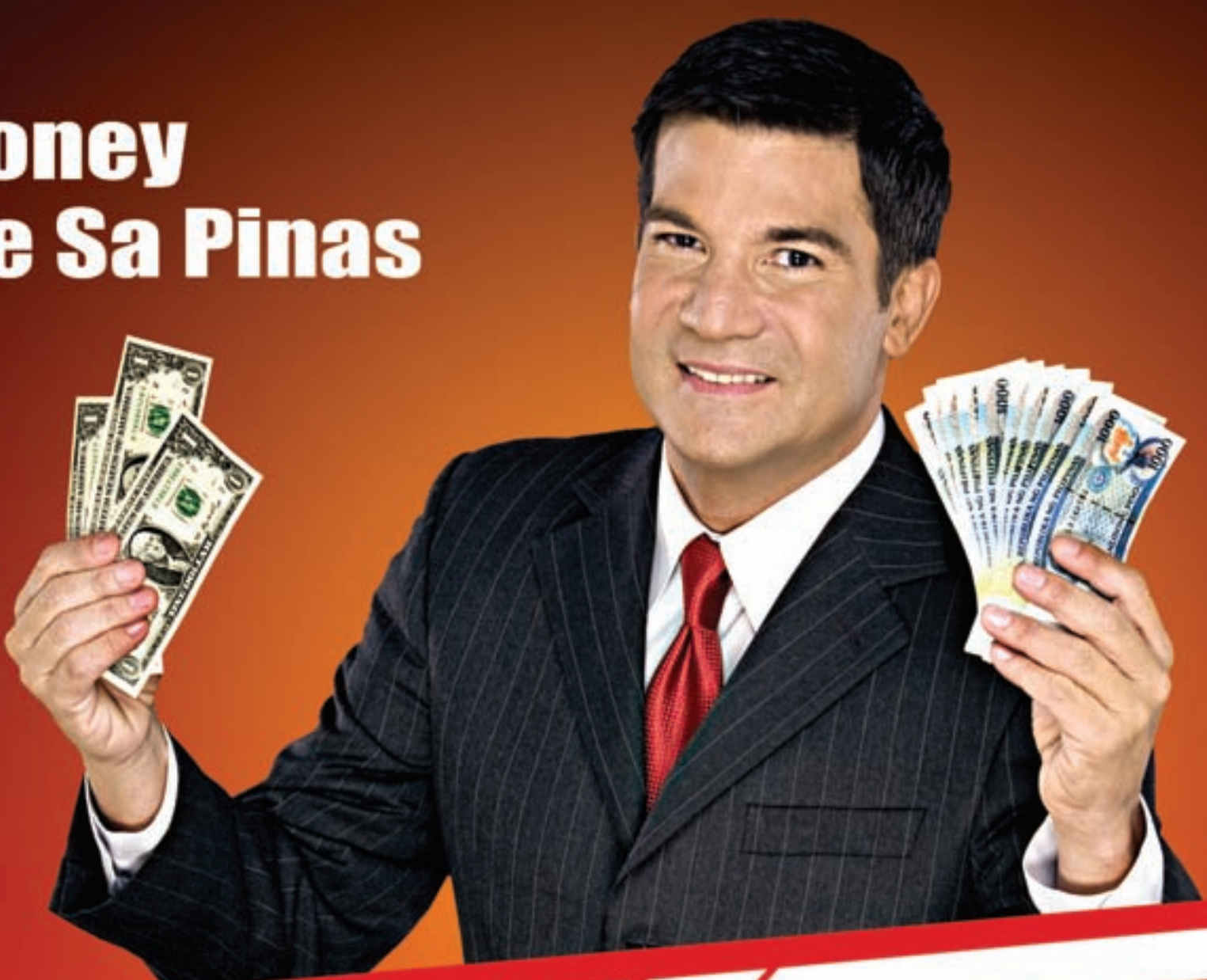
FASO played mostly classical ballets, opening with a Tchaikovsky composition. Then played compositions by legendary Filipino composer Lucio San Pedro, and a medley of Filipino *kundimans* (romantic songs) inspired by American composer Bernard Greene; a segment from the popular opera, *Phantom of the Opera* with an added visual layer provided by an aerial dancer that interpreted the music with dance movements while hanging twenty feet high from the ceiling.

"This is a great start," comments seasoned producer Ted Benito. He said, however, that he had not watched a concert where the conductor also played the role of master of ceremonies. "To hear our music as lushly played is absolutely phenomenal. But there is room for improvement," Benito said.

"I cried after the first number," attests Becca Godinez-Miranda. "I cried after the second and third numbers. It is well worth the effort. Bravo!" Jazz pianist and composer David Benoit – whose career as a smooth jazz musician bloomed after a Manila concert in the late 70s – was agog. "I am really impressed by how they delivered the music," he told Asian Journal. "I like their (FASO's) music; it's like being in Manila again." ■

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