

All praises for FASO

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performance.

May 17 was an unprecedented date for the Fil-Am community. Roger and Cora Oriol, together with Lito Cruz, were being congratulated by one and all for having the vision and the passion to form America's first Fil-Am symphony orchestra. Maestro Bob Shroder and his over 50-member orchestra truly gave a most outstanding performance proving to the world that the Filipino is truly world-class in its musical and artistic ability. Adding to the majestic performance of FASO was the superb singing of Joey Albert, Stephanie Reese, Pete Avendano and Kit Navarro, plus the unbelievable power and grace of Ruby Karen. No one came out of the theatre who wasn't totally impressed and proud to be a Filipino.

The people who trooped to the Saban Theatre to watch the Filipino American Symphony Orchestra gala concert were all one in heaping praises for the evening's historical performance. Here are some special quotes from some special people:

"The concert more than met my expectations. They truly make us

proud to be a Filipino. They've given added honor again to the Filipino American community here in Southern California. Not only in Southern California but throughout the United States because they are the first and only Filipino American Symphony Orchestra. So, I encourage everyone to come and support their future performances. It's a treat. Invite your friends here in the US to come and witness their great performance." - Philippine Consul General Mary Jo Aragon, Los Angeles Consulate

"This is so phenomenal. I just think it's about time we have this. I'm so proud to be a part of this evening." - Jennifer Paz, formerly of Miss Saigon

"It was great and I'm so happy and proud that Roger and Cora had the FASO to show the world and the rest of the US that we have it too and to make use of our local talents and not have to import talents from the Philippines to do things here in the US." -- Celia Defato, Kultura Philippines Folk Arts

"The orchestra was amazing. This one is specifically special because it's really showing the culture of the Philippines. I've

never seen anything like it. I've seen people cry in the event. It's so emotional. I'm organizing an event with the Los Angeles mayor to get exposure for this orchestra. This is an amazing event." -- Hogan Lee, Asian Professional Exchange

"I think this is the best thing the Filipinos have ever done and I'd like to say congratulations to Roger and Cora because I think this is going to be a nostalgic but very historical event." -- Eddie Sotiangco, Chairman, Sotiangco Group of Companies

"The concert is awesome. It's outstanding and right now, I'm speechless. FASO, you guys are like off the charts right now. I mean that!" -- Edsel Godwin Sotiangco

"This is fantastic. You made history. You made the Filipino community very, very proud. This is immeasurable. Great show!" -- Errol Santos, Business Development Consultant, Hollywood Presbyterian Center

"It's amazing how Filipinos are coming out and showing what we're really made of. It's so exciting. Filipinos are starting to show their talents and making it known to the rest of the world." -- Rich

Cabael, CEO, VuQo Inc

"Very passionate. Very exciting. First of many, I hope." -- David Benoit, Composer, Pianist, Conductor

"This is actually the first time I'm watching an orchestra and I'm actually speechless. It's just a very exciting thing. I love it." -- R. Santos, Los Angeles

"I think it's awesome. It's really, really nice." -- Mary Ann Pagsibigan-Pimenta, Bander Law Firm

"We enjoyed it very much. Very good work!" -- Dan Manuel/ Glen Treibitz, Hollywood Piano

"I'm so happy this evening. Dreams really do come true, you know. Roger and Lito, congratulations! We keep doing big things for the Filipino. Yay!" -- Cecile Ramos, president of Historic Filipinotown Neighborhood Council

"I think it's been an amazing performance. It's a pride and a pleasure to watch so many talented people of all ages perform. It's so great to be here." -- Catherine Banales, Los Angeles County Music Center

"Quite exciting! Hopefully, there'll be many, many more concerts to see." -- John Claude Gummoe, The Cascades. ■



TAKBONG PANGARAP UPDATE. Joy Rojas the first Southeast Asian woman to run across the United States recently sprinted her way through the California-Nevada border and is now on her way to Utah. Her next stop: Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey towards New York City where she expects to cross the finish line at the Philippine Consulate on Fifth Avenue on September 8. Of her 120 days, 100 of them will be spent running while the 20 days are designated rest days in between.

Pinay to run across America

EAGLE ROCK—DON'T call her Forrest Gump. Yet. A small crowd gathered at the Eagle Rock mall to wish Joy Rojas a happy birthday and a safe trip to the US on foot.

Rojas began her journey to being the first Filipina to run across America last Sunday, May 10. Rojas is running from Eagle Rock to New York City.

Rojas from Manila was the first woman to run across the Philippines in 2005.

The 44-year-old journalist said that this adventure, which she calls "Takbong Pangarap" or "dream run" has been a lifelong dream.

"For some strange reason I was dreaming of running across the United States, and now I'm here so there must be a reason why I'm here," said Rojas, who is donating proceeds from the run to the anti-tuberculosis program in the Philippines and the Philippines Heart Center. "You know so you just have to go for it. Not everybody has this privilege of being able to do this so just go for it."

And she's going for it. For the next four months, she'll be running an average of one marathon a day.

During the three thousand mile trek, she'll encounter elevation that can go as high as 8,000-feet and weather that may reach over 100 degrees.

Takbong Pangarap Events Director Chuck Crisanto said that only 200 people have successfully ran across the US.

"Well the difficulty can be compared to climbing Mt. Everest. Climbing the top is 8 kilometers vertical, running across the US is 5,000 kilometers horizontal," said Crisanto. "When Joy completes this run, she'll not only be the first Filipina to accomplish this but also the first Southeast Asian woman."

Seasoned marathon runner Joe Matias says even ultra runners aren't willing to do what Rojas is doing.

"It takes a different breed of people to do something like this," said Joe Matias, who is helping coordinate runners nationwide to pace with Rojas along the way. "It's mind-boggling...but I think she can do it. She just needs support along the way."

Rojas knows her run is difficult. She admits of not being the most talented runner in the world.

But she said her biggest attribute is her stubbornness to finish a project.

Her first stop will be Las Vegas. Crisanto said that it would take about two weeks.

To follow Joy Rojas or donate to the cause, visit www.thepoc.net/index.php/Takbong-Pangarap/ (Joseph Pimentel)

Charice makes single debut...

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first single in her forthcoming debut album being produced by her musical mentor, David Foster.

It is actually a cover version of a composition by Diane Warren (who also wrote Aerosmith's *I Don't Want To Miss a Thing*; Celine Dion's *Because You Loved Me*; and Toni Braxton's *Unbreak My Heart*).

Oprah show
The 16-year-old Charice first sang the song on America's highest-rating TV show *Oprah* only on Monday—the day it was also released as a digital download.

On the Amazon Bestsellers chart, *Note to God* ranks behind the Black Eyed Peas's *Boom Boom Pow* but has overtaken Lady GaGa's *Poker Face*, Miley Cyrus' *The Climb*, Taylor Swift's *Love Story*, Beyoncé's *Halo*, and Coldplay's *Viva La Vida*.

On the iTunes chart, Charice's single is ahead of Eminem's *Beautiful*.

Charice was again featured in a high-profile show on May 9 at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, where she performed with Foster in a tribute concert for Celine Dion.

June 12 celebration
On May 24, Charice will make her second appearance as a guest on the Italian musical variety show *Ti lascio una canzone (Leavin' You a Song)*. Its producers reportedly insisted that she return after having sung in the program's season premiere in April.

She comes home to Manila on June 8 to participate in the Philippine Independence Day celebrations on June 12. She flies back to the United States on June 13 to finish recording her album.

Charice's local music label, Star Records, has released her second Philippine album, *My Inspiration*, which features original compositions by Filipino songwriters and a cover of Helen Reddy's *You and Me Against the World*—in which she duets with her mother Racquel, who informally trained her to become a singer.

My Inspiration has likewise landed at No. 2 on the best-selling local albums chart of Odyssey Music & Video, a nationwide record store chain.

Charice is scheduled to have a major concert on June 27 at SMX Convention Center beside SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City. ■

Filipino receives...

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given to former Defense Secretary William Cohen, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, astronaut John Glenn, and President George Bush Sr.

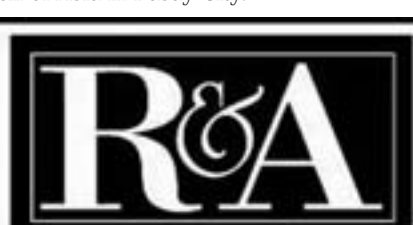
A native of Angeles City, Pampanga, the 40-year-old Navy chief petty officer was in his senior year taking up Business Administration at the Holy Angel University when he applied to join the US Navy. He was then an active member of the school's swimming, badminton, and tennis varsity teams.

His family owned an office machine and equipment business. He thought he had a promising career ahead of him. But fate would lead him on to greater things he never imagined.

"I initially didn't want to leave because I wanted to work so that my parents could take a break," Balingit said. "And I didn't want to be away from Menchie, my girlfriend of seven years." His girlfriend attended the same university in Angeles City.

But his father told him that he should explore his options and suggested that he enlist in the US Navy for better professional and financial development.

Despite his trepidations, Balingit left the country in May 1991. He describes that point in his life as a "blessing in disguise" because Mt. Pinatubo erupted a month later, or shortly after he left for the States. It caused several businesses to close down, including his family's. His wife, then pregnant with their child, and his relatives moved to neighboring Sta. Ana town and went back later after the eruption. In July, the child was born. It was a girl. ■



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