

SHOWBIZ & STYLE

JOURNAL

BACKSTORY

by LEA SALONGA
Inquirer.net

An evening with Asia America Symphony

OR... an evening with David Benoit.

My friends' jaws dropped when I broke the news that I would perform with him and the Asia America Symphony Orchestra. Actually, earlier, so did mine.

David is well known on our shores for a lot of his songs, two of which I've recorded: *When The Winter's Gone* and *Land of the Loving*. It was thanks to my recording the second song that this performance came about.

Mark Winkler, co-writer of *Land of the Loving*, heard my version on my MySpace page and told David. Conversations about a concert in Los Angeles with the Asia America Symphony followed, and voila!

We rehearsed the day before the show: once at David's house (we would end up doing a piano-and-vocal duet of *Land of the Loving* for one of three encores) and once at the Aratani/Japan America Theater with the orchestra. During the three or so hours at the venue, we went through most of my repertoire. I normally have my back to the orchestra; but for the rehearsal I needed to communicate with David, so I stood close to the conductor's podium.

Next day, I was brought to the theater by the family of one of the violinists. David had earlier discussed that he would do things in show order, more or less... the orchestral pieces first, then my music. Suited me fine. I holed up in the dressing room for a little bit to warm up. A couple of my friends were in the theater to watch the rehearsal, which was really sweet.

We went through the music that we were having a little

trouble with from the previous rehearsal, and then played things that we weren't able to visit at all. Notes were exchanged and given... markings made to denote cues, cut-offs and such.

Once rehearsal was over, I headed backstage to have a little dinner before the performance. My make-up guy then arrived, got set up and we were off and running.

I didn't watch the first half of the show, so I can't comment on it... a bit of a shame, since the orchestra played Leonard Bernstein's *Symphonic Dances* from *West Side Story*.

My set started at around 9 pm and ended an hour or so later. The room had gotten dry over the course of the day, and I noticed its effect on my voice. My instrument felt strange and sticky, despite my consuming copious amounts of water during the show, but oh well... such is life! On the whole, though, I was very happy with how everything turned out.

As fantastic as it always is singing with an orchestra of this size, my personal highlight was performing *Land of the Loving* with David on the piano. That made me very happy.

My sincerest thanks to David Benoit, to everyone at Asia America Symphony Orchestra, to Gerard Salonga (for sending some of your and your team's most beautiful orchestrations, which received numerous compliments) and everyone that came to the Aratani to see the show. I do hope I get invited back!

In the Big Apple

Right now I'm in New York, enjoying some visiting time with friends. Arriving Sunday night, I



David Benoit and Lea Salonga with the Asia America Symphony

AJ Press Photo by Andy Tecson

felt a rush through my body upon sighting the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, and the rest of that famous skyline. I arrived at my friend's apartment past 11... thankfully she had some food for me. Another

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