

FUNFARE

by RICARDO F. LO
Phlstar.com

**Stephanie Reese:
The Standing Ovation Queen**

IN the royalty-crazy world of local showbiz, there are kings and queens, princes and princesses such as Concert King, Concert Queen, Pop Prince, Pop Princess, *Teleserye* Prince, *Teleserye* Princess, King and Queen of Television, Queen of Intrigues (you know who she was, don't you?), and even Denial Kings (*marami sila!*) and Denial Queens (*kasing-dami!*).

And then there's Stephanie Reese, Standing Ovation Queen (you'll know why by and by).

So when Stephanie sang a few songs (one of them from *Phantom of the Opera*, *Ikaw* and *Chaka Laka Boom Boom*, her own composition) to kick off her presscon last Thursday at La Fontana (in Greenhills, San Juan City), Tempo's Nestor Cuartero half-jokingly asked Stephanie, "Shouldn't we stand up to give you an advance standing ovation?"

Even without being asked to, the movie press did give Stephanie a standing ovation for her voice that's so powerful you couldn't imagine it coming from a wisp of a lady only 5'1" tall and weighing maybe not even 100 lbs. Stephanie sang so effortlessly that when she hit high notes, even when her voice gradually rose like a tidal wave, she didn't break into an ear-splitting (Ouch!!!) scream like most local singers do.

I need not tell you why's called Standing Ovation Queen, a monicker she earned from fans, industry insiders and celebrities in the US who have heard and seen her perform — they said, like Barbra Streisand, Bette Midler and Sarah Brightman put together — with her diverse repertoire of Broadway, opera, ballads, pop, kundiman and, yes, even hip-hop.

That's the same entrancing voice that won for Stephanie the role of Kim in the German version of *Miss Saigon* which she did for one year in 1999 in Stuttgart and, later, starring roles in Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (in Germany, as Esmeralda), *The King and I* (London, as Princess Tuptim) and *Master Class* (Los Angeles, as Sophia and Sharon).

Based in LA with her family, Stephanie (part-Chinese, part-Irish, part-Japanese, part-American and mostly-Filipino, her mother surnamed Roco being a Bicolana from Camalig, Albay) is here to do a concert called *I Am Stephanie Reese* on Oct. 2, 8 pm at the Music Museum (with Audie Gemora as guest together with Argentinian dance sensation Sergio Viglini), the same show she's mounting at the Carnegie Hall in New York proceeds from which she's donating to the Gawad Kalinga Foundation. "I want to build a village for 30 poor Filipino families," she said.



You will see why Stephanie is called that when you watch her concert at the Music Museum on Oct. 2.

I Am Stephanie Reese was first staged in Teatrino (also in Greenhills, San Juan City) last May. It was a sold-out. In both Music Museum and Carnegie Hall, she's including in her repertoire four OPMs (*Ikaw* one of them, also including *Dahil Sa'yo*) and a song in German from *Miss Saigon*. She's the first Fil-Am to perform in Carnegie Hall; two other Filipino artists, Lea Salonga and Regine Velasquez, have performed in the same venue). Stephanie has released two albums, *The Voice* and *Stephanie Reese at Her Best*, with a new one coming up in time for her Oct. 2 concert.

Asked if singing in German didn't distract her from internalizing her role, Stephanie admitted, "Yes, it was frustrating in some ways but I managed very well. Germans emphasize the same parts of a sentence, such as when they say *Ich liebe dich*. It means 'I love you' which we English-speaking people can say straight from the heart. So I had to memorize the language complete with the inflections."

She speaks very little Filipino and is trying **PAGE 7**

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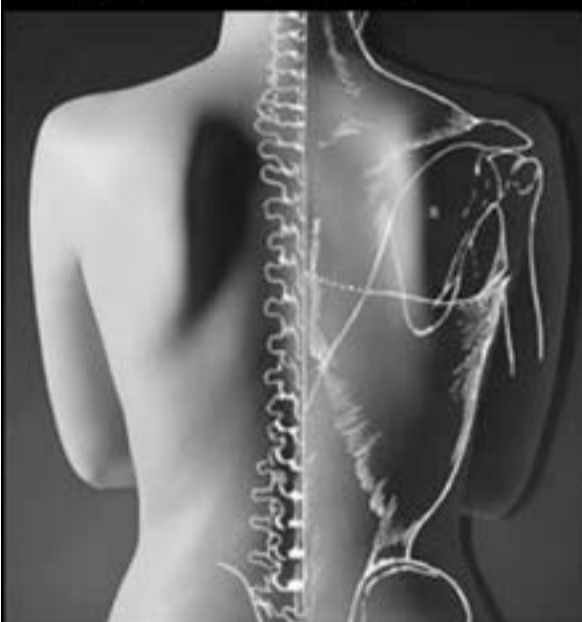
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