

The other side of Joey Lina

by MARIDOL RANOA-BISMARCK
Philstar.com

MANILA—When former senator Joey Lina and this writer were still in our teens, we knew he'd end up not only a lawyer, but a leader as well. After all, he was president of the College Editors' Guild of the Philippines and editor of *The Collegian*, official school publication of the University of the Philippines.

Back then, more than two decades ago (ouch!), we never imagined he'd one day form one-third of The Singing Tenors made up of his friends, MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando and Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes. I never thought our next meeting would be on the set of GMA 7's *Celebrity Duets*, where he was to sing a duet of *One Moment in Time* with Fernando.

Before I could rub my eyes though, Lina approached me as if to say, "Yes, it's me, the one you read position papers with, the one you spent many weekends with plotting pooled editorials for fellow students to read."

How on earth did it all come to pass?

As it turns out, Lina's journey as a singer started when at the University of Sto. Tomas, where he was a member of the Glee Club until he dropped out because he had to buy his own uniform. Years after, Lina sang at a friend's wedding where Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonio Nachura was present. Impressed, Nachura asked Lina to sing at a family wedding soon after.

Not long after, Lina was at the Aliw Awards where he was supposed to be a presenter. While waiting for his turn, Lina asked the award-giving body's president, Alice Reyes, to do him a favor. Can he sing instead, so he could go home early because he hated staying up late?

Reyes' nod led to an impromptu spot number, which gave birth to a concert act with Reyes and Fernando, two of Lina's partners in what is now known as The Three Tenors.

As president of Manila Hotel, Lina, on a lark, took the microphone at the Tap Room, and thinking that it was still too early for the place to accept guests, sang a ballad or two. Lo and behold!

Hotel guests stopped in their tracks to listen. That's how

Lina hit upon the idea of coming up with a President's Hour, where he could open the Tap Room earlier than usual and sing to those who want to unwind with a laid-back ballad or two now and then.

Lest you get any ideas, Lina says pursuing a career as performer is the farthest from his mind.

"I use my singing to raise funds," he declares. "You can say for God and country."

His debut album, *Nagmamahal*, is a case in point. The album, which shows Lina's beloved Laguna Lake (he was former Laguna governor) in the background, is actually an inspirational CD Lite. The

seven songs speak of God's love, courage, pride of country and other values.

The song closest to the debuting recording artist's heart is his own take on *The Impossible Dream*.

"It's a song of hope, of encouragement. It urges us not to be quitters, but to fight 'til the end," Lina explains.

Yes, the former student activist has more windmills to fight, now that he is in a better position to do so. He is giving proceeds of *Nagmamahal* to Bayanihang Pilipino, a non-governmental

organization that promotes values formation, spiritual growth, financial literacy and livelihood education.

"God gave me a gift. So I will honor Him with this gift," he states. "It will be a big mistake if I don't acknowledge this gift from Him."

Already, Lina's gift is gaining acceptance, especially among OFWs, for whom he is dedicating the track *Nasaan Ka Man*. He reports that OFWs in Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Dubai have placed orders for *Nagmamahal*.

The signs are so encouraging, Lina is already planning a sophomore album, which will consist of eight more songs, soon. This time, the album will include his eldest son's compositions. And if *Nagmamahal* is a family affair (his daughter did the album cover and one track, *The Prayer*, features his children), the next one will be no different. The happily married father of six will see to that.

Decades after his student activist days, Joey Lina remains a crusader at heart. This time, the former campus journalist is battling negative values that threaten to tear the country's social fiber apart. It's an uphill climb, but at least, Joey is doing something about it. ■



Joey Lina

How Tita Muñoz kept her word

by BAYANI SAN DIEGO JR.
Inquirer.net

PLAYFULLY, she told the Inquirer in a 2006 interview that she could write quite an engrossing memoir—and the most colorful chapters would be about her love life.

Tita Muñoz was quick to add, however, that she would take to the grave all the names of her former loves. Like the true lady that she was, the illustrious star of stage and screen kept her word.

Colleagues agreed that Muñoz, who passed away at 82 on Black Saturday after a lingering illness, consistently personified elegance.

Critic Bienvenido Lumbera pointed out: "Her passing has left an unfillable void ... she was the last great embodiment of beauty and acting talent in the Filipino artistic universe."

RP's Elizabeth Taylor

Her screen persona—from her debut in Sampaguita Films' *Rosalinda* in 1952 to her last appearance in Star Cinema's *Madrasta* in 1996—was often equated with the aloof, unattainable mestiza. She was once dubbed "Elizabeth Taylor of the Philippines."

Filmmaker Elwood Perez, who directed Muñoz in *Island of Desire* in 1990, recounted: "She always had a delicacy of expression. Whenever I needed to cast a female character with grace, it had to be Tita."

Agreed filmmaker Joel Lamangan, who directed her in TV dramas: "She had an incomparable, luminous presence."

But Muñoz also had an eternally youthful and mischievous streak. After the publication in the Inquirer of one of her last interviews, she expressed elation over the title: "The country's first multimedia star."

Indeed, few could claim what Muñoz achieved in her five-decade career, having worked in radio, theater, TV and the movies.

She recounted that she and favorite co-star Ronald Remy also made history with local TV's first kissing scene in the 1960s. "I picked Ronald because he was always neat," she said.

The pioneering actress made several international movies with National Artists Gerry de Leon and Lamberto Avellana in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1990, she played Hong Kong actor Leslie Cheung's mother in Wong Kar-Wai's *Days of Being Wild*.

Theater troupe mentor

Today's generation may only know her for her TV and movie roles and as the aunt of actors Leandro and Carlo Muñoz, but the actress is best remembered as well for her immense contributions to Philippine theater.

(Boots Anson-Roa reported that two years ago, Muñoz, then a recovering stroke patient, was set to do readings of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Glass Menagerie* with Nestor U. Torre and Tommy Abuel. "But she had to back out," Roa said.)

In the 1970s, Muñoz relocated to Marawi City, to mentor the theater troupe *Sining Kambayoka*, at the Mindanao State University. She told the Inquirer: "They're very talented."

Related Sunnie Noel, *Kambayoka* executive director: "She was a mother to us all. She taught [us] how to meditate." For this, Muñoz was "labeled a witch," Noel recalled. "But she was unperturbed. Her meditation classes gave us an inner glow."

In the mid-1990s, Muñoz, recuperating from an earlier stroke, met comedienne Tiya Pusit in a hospital. Wanting to help, Tiya Pusit organized prayer and fund-raising activities, but Muñoz got irked, the comedian related: "She was adamant about staying independent." When she herself had a mild stroke in 2007, Tiya Pusit said, Muñoz called "to offer her love and prayers." ■

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