

# Martin Nievera in 'Vocal Soup'

## with Susan Anton, Clint Holmes and Domenick Allen, June 19-21 at Suncoast Casino in Las Vegas

by RENE VILLAROMAN  
AJPress

Concert King Martin Nievera, who last starred in a Las Vegas show at Flamingo Hotel with singer Lani Misalucha, will be performing with established Las Vegas star performers Susan Anton, Clint Holmes and Domenick Allen next month. Asian Journal's community and the arts writer Rene Villaroman tracked Martin Nievera down in Manila and initiated an e-mail interview. The following are excerpts from that exchange:

**AJ:** When will this concert happen and what is the venue?

**M:** This first time ever foursome, Clint Holmes, Domenick Allen, Susan Anton and yours truly, Martin Nievera, called, *Vocal Soup*, will be at the Suncoast Hotel and Casino on June 19, 20 and 21 at 8 pm. For tickets Call (702) 636-7075 or log on to www.suncoastcasino.com

**AJ:** Who is producing this show?

**MN:** This three-night concert is hotel produced and not by any independent or Filipino producer. The producer is the Suncoast Hotel and Casino.

**AJ:** How do you feel about this new gig, after a long hiatus from Vegas?

**MN:** Feels great to be part of the Las Vegas entertainment industry again, but what feels even better than that is being chosen to be part of this group in the first place. There are so many great and more popular singers in the Entertainment Capitol of the World so to be hand-picked by a Las Vegas headliner like Mr. Clint Holmes is truly an honor. I will share the stage with a man who owned the strip when he was a headliner over at the Harrah's hotel and casino for about 3 years straight until he decided to concentrate on an off Broadway show he wrote himself entitled, *J.A.M.* or, *Just Another Man*. It's beautiful story set to original music written by Clint about his parents; his mom a white opera singer from London England and his dad a black jazz singer and their struggles living through prejudice, war and broken dreams. I have idolized Clint my whole life as an entertainer on the strip, but what I didn't realize is that it was not just his obvious gift switching musical genres in a snap of a finger while moving across the stage that got me to be a, "Holmes boy." It was his humility and class that stole my heart away. And what an entertainer! He is complete as complete can be. He kinda reminds me of a Gary Valenciano mixed together with a Martin Nievera. You'll see... Clint has many feathers in his cap, but I am sure he would agree with me that the feather that stands the tallest would be his discoverer Bill Cosby. Or maybe the time he got a standing ovation from Frank Sinatra himself. The stories Clint tells and the friend he has made through his musical journey will make your jaw drop. I should know because mine is still dragging on the carpet. It was Clint Holmes who conceptualized, *Vocal Soup*, and all the ingredients in it. He told me his number one requirement was that the people he chooses have to be nice people. I am still wondering who backed out when I got his call. All jokes aside I am thrilled to be the only Filipino in this *Vocal Soup* mix and I hope to represent us to the best of my ability. I love Clint Holmes very much and my respect for what he stands for is forever.

**AJ:** How well do you know Domenick Allen of Foreigner?

**MN:** I have always been a huge fan of the rock band, *Foreigner*, and to sing harmonies and original songs written and arranged by a member of that legendary band will be more than just fun; it will be a total re-learning experience. Being the former lead singer for Foreigner one would think Domenick Allen is all about rock and screaming guitar solos, but what I have learned is he is much more than that. In fact if you were to ask me I would tell you he just dabbles in rock, because his knowledge of music and history of music is unmatched by anyone I know. His vocal range is from, "skyscraper high," to, "knocking on heaven's door high." He switches from Sinatra swing to Crosby Stills and Nash and Young faster than most people drive. Oh, and he can play any musical instrument ever created while frosting cream cheese on a bagel. Kaya mo yan? My hope is that his musicality will rub off on me. With all of the above mentioned, the best thing about this rocker is he is the nicest guy you will ever meet. Ever! His values and life's passion never collide. When I grow up I wanna be just like him

**AJ:** Tell us about your first meeting with bombshell Susan Anton.

**MN:** I sit closest to this bombshell beauty during every rehearsal. My fondest memory of Susan would be my first meeting with her. The first thing she ever told me was, "hey you really are short!" so with that our friendship started. Now for more reason than what is obvious, I so look up to her. I have never met a true life Hollywood actress let alone a Hollywood superstar. Her list of credits run off any bio sheet or resume, but what I love most about Susan is that even though her list of accolades is a mile long she remains unaffected and still very true to her craft. She is the ideas girl and the first to raise her hand to say, "May I make a suggestion?" and more often than not she always has the best ones. (Ok, second to Clint) She has a beautiful soul and Clint and Domenick will agree with me when I say, "Susan has always been and will always be one

hot mama!" We all look forward to share the stage with her, but more excited to share the dressing room.

**AJ:** You were recently involved in a brouhaha regarding the singing of the Philippine National anthem. Has the brouhaha died yet? Was it good for your career?

**MN:** many say that good or bad news is good publicity. I disagree. I didn't ask for all this exposure. My only goal was to not let our champion down and to sing the National Anthem with all my heart and soul. My only fear was forgetting the lyrics. That's it. I, like so many, never knew or heard of any law that prohibits singing the anthem with all your heart and soul so I was truly and sincerely not prepared for what has been so blown out of proportion. I wish the lawmakers of our country were this passionate about more world changing matters.

**AJ:** What are you doing in Manila; are you doing some concerts there?

**MN:** I'm doing ASAP, finishing a new CD, planning a big concert in September and preparing for a series of Independence Day shows in London, England.

**AJ:** Please tell us when you are coming to the US to publicize this latest gig.

**MN:** Will be there only a few days before the show because of my London gigs.

**AJ:** Do you have new compositions that will be part of this show?

**MN:** Clint and

Domenick wrote a few originals for this show, one of which is the title cut of the show entitled, *Vocal Soup*. My one and only spot number is a medley of my hits. Most of the show will be all four of us on stage together. We even sing back up for each other. A new and friendlier concept untried by anyone on the strip, so far as I know.

**AJ:** Is this the big mainstream break that you were dreaming about?

**MN:** Every time I put one foot on any stage that is not in the Philippines could be that break.

**AJ:** How is your family doing?

**MN:** Family is great. All three boys are with me now in Las Vegas. It's a dream come true!

**AJ:** Will you be doing a big concert in Manila before doing this new show in Vegas?

**MN:** My next big concert in Manila will be on September 3 and 4 at the Araneta Coliseum. It's entitled, *AS1* for the first time in history, together on one stage, Gary Valenciano & Martin Nievera in concert! That is a whole other interview. Let's have some *Vocal Soup* first! ■



# 'Rizal is My President': the hero is in the heart

by ALTHEA LAUREN RICARDO  
AJPress Manila

If Dr. Jose Rizal was alive today, what would he say? How many times have we asked this question, in jest, in exasperation, in drunken stupor, in occasional, if not rare, nationalistic fervor? What, indeed, would our national hero say? And, while we're at it, what would those other heroes, those many men and women who sacrificed love and life for the sake of a better country, say?

Through the musical satire *Rizal is My President*, co-presented recently by the *Asian Journal* and *Balikbayan Magazine*, we get the delicious, eye-opening, heartwarming treat of an idea. Apolinario Mabini, Andres Bonifacio, Antonio Luna, Marcelo H. Del Pilar, Gabriela Silang, Tandang Sora, and Ninoy Aquino, they're all in that special place in heaven for the noble, and they are cooking up a campaign to send the noblest of them all back to lead the country they so love, the country they had dreamed and still dream, so much for—the same country that had, arguably, done nothing to lengthen their patriotic stay, their immense sacrifices notwithstanding.



"Rizal is My President", the book written by Napoleon Almonte, has been launched during the 17th Knights of Rizal International Assembly at Manila Hotel last February 28, 2009. Front (seated) from L to R: Napoleon Almonte, Author Rizal is My President Book; H.E. Ambassador Sir Hilario G. Davide, Jr., KGCR; standing from L to R: Sir Jose David Lapuz, KGCR; Sir Ambeth Ocampo, KCR, Chairman, National Historical Institute; Sir Virgilio R. Esguerra, KGCR, Supreme Commander-Knights of Rizal; Sir Rogelio M. Quiambao, KGCR, Chairman, 17th Knights of Rizal International Assembly and Lady Marisol Lopez, publisher.

We see The Marangals breaking into song and dance, even as they engage Rizal—dear, Rubik's cube-addicted, net-savvy, a little-bit-vain Pepe to them—in an impassioned debate on why he should run for president in the upcoming Philippine elections. Reluctant Rizal issues a heartfelt response: I already gave it my all. Isn't it enough that I gave up my life?

This time around, not even Ninoy can convince him the Filipino is worth dying for all over again. But Rizal's mother—or that tangible memory of her unconditional, nurturing love—can. And yes, the Filipino—in the body of a poor, wide-eyed boy who has had to do without his own loving OFW mother—can.

Rizal is My President is like the Filipino heart. It is at once desperate and hopeful, hilarious and scornful; there is love and light where others who do not understand would only expect there not to be. It captures the Filipino spirit. It is both fighting and surrendering; often on the verge of dying, but never really dead. There is song and dance and a mournful funeral scene. It laughs a little; it weeps just as much. And when you least expect it—like a little after Rizal and Ninoy, in their private little mutual admiration society, whip out treasured "pictures" of the other in a one-peso coin and a five hundred-peso bill, and then give rise to a new denomination—a life lesson hits home.

In the midst of his reflections, Rizal is haunted by his mother, the OFW mother, the motherland. All three incarnations have been held hostage at some point—wrongly accused, wrongly treated, wrongly judged—and yet all three just kept on giving, never asking for anything in return, except maybe steadfast love. "Tunay nga na maliban sa Diyos, ang ina ang lahat-lahat sa atin," he muses. Indeed, aside from God, it is our mother who is

everything to us.

For the love of his mother, of his motherland, of who and what had so generously poured into him every magnificent thing that he was, Rizal makes his decision: Like a superhero—I kid you not—he would fly back to his *patria adorada*, his *perla del mar de oriente*, *nuestro perdido Edén*, to meet that boy who, like many of us Filipinos, is clinging on to that seemingly impossible dream of a hero.

Rizal meets boy. Boy is terrified (and not to mention thinks he's a drug-crazed maniac who'd broken into his house). Rizal convinces boy. Boy begs Rizal to stay (and send those real power-drunk political maniacs away). Rizal, for all his self-awareness in his place in history, gently but firmly refuses an active role in another generation's story. I gave you my life, he seems to say instead, now use it to be your own hero.

It is at this point that musical morphs into mission, into movement. Rizal is My President is a project of the OCCI Fullness of Life Foundation, which seeks to awaken the leader in each and every Filipino. Based on the book *Rizal is My President*, 40 Leadership Tips from Jose Rizal by Napoleon Almonte, it was adapted for the stage by Joshua So and directed by PETA's Raffy Tejada. De La Salle University's Harlequin Guild students star in it, performing original, heart-stirring songs by Noel Cabangon.

The musical satire premiered early this May at Ateneo Loyola Heights. It will transfer before the end of the month to St. Scholastica's College Manila, and then move on to other schools and venues, spreading the news that, yes, he was shot dead by a firing squad in Bagumbayan, but Dr. Jose Rizal can stay alive in us in so many ways—forty to be exact.

The 40 leadership tips from the book figure prominently in the musical. Nearing its end, The Marangals fan out in the audience area, spreading pieces of papers bearing these tips to a noble, heroic life. Know your country. Rise above the heartbreak. Face the bullet. Know how to say goodbye.

Musical morphs into mission, into movement, and Rizal is alive. Now we know that, with the legacy of his life, you don't have to die to be a hero. These days, it is quite the opposite, actually. For this nation to soar, you have to love. So, you have to live.

Rizal is My President, the book, would soon be available in the United States ■

## TAKE FIVE

By MARINEL CRUZ  
Inquirer.net

# Behind the 'Miracle Boy'

THESE days, it's not unusual for child actor Zaijian Jaranilla to meet people who ask him to cure their illnesses with one touch.

The 7-year-old plays Santino, who has the ability to heal the sick and the disabled in the Kapamilya drama series, *May Bukas Pa*.

Santino is an orphan raised by a priest in a monastery in the fictional town Bagong Pag-asa. He finds a friend in the person of "Bro" (Jesus Christ), who helps him change the townsfolk's lives.

Zaijian finished first grade at the General Roxas Elementary School in Quezon City. He first appeared in commercials for McDonald's, Lactum and Tide. ABS-CBN bosses spotted him in an acting workshop and asked him to join the kiddie gag show *Goin' Bulilit*.

Following are excerpts of a recent chat with Zaijian.

**Are you aware that you're famous?**

*Hindi naman po masyado.*

**How can you tell that you're already popular?**

*Sasabihin po ni Papa sa akin.*

**How did May Bukas Pa**

**change your life?**

*Hindi na po ako nakakapunta sa malls. Hindi na rin po ako nakakapaglaro.*

**At school, do people get excited to see you?**

*Minsan po. Minsan lang po kasi ako pumasok.*

**What's your favorite subject?**

*English.*

**When people get excited and try to kiss you or pinch you, do you get angry?**

*Hindi naman po. Nagsasabi lang po ako ng aray.*

**You're turning 8 on Aug. 23. What's your birthday wish?**

*Zaijian Jaranilla*

*Toys po.*

**You were just 5 years old when your parents separated. How often do you see your mom?**

*Minsan lang po. Kapag Linggo, sa taping pumupunta po si Mama.*

**Do you have siblings?**

*Panganay po ako. Ang mga*



Inquirer.net photo

*kapatid ko po sina Zindjan (6) and Zynez (5)*

**Don't you feel bad that you don't have time for play anymore?**

*Minsan nakakapasyal din naman po ako. Dun sa SM North Edsa kapag may taping po. ■*