

DIVAS 4 DIVAS plus Martin Nievera... Wow!



As the news quickly spread about the hugely successful Divas 4 Divas concert that thrilled the jam-packed crowd at the Big Dome in Manila last Dec. 6, it raised hopes and expectations of the four performers' individual loving fans here in US that they too could experience this wonderful show first-hand.

The 4 Divas' American fans will soon get their wish, as this most impressive and ground-breaking production that took nearly 5 years to plan is finally happening!

The date is April 3, 2009, Sunday, at 7pm and the venue is at the San Jose State University, Event Center. Four of the Philippines' top divas: Pop Diva Kuh Ledesma, Divine Diva Zsa Zsa Padilla, Concert Queen Pops Fernandez, and Asia's Songbird Regine Velasquez will temporarily shed their individual titles and simply present themselves as the "4 Divas" with one common goal: Unity and to celebrate friendship, music, and everything beautiful. Together on the same stage for DIVAS 4 DIVAS, for the first time in the US, all four of the Philippines' greatest performers will share one stage for one incredible performance. To add to an already electrifying night, they will be joined by a very special guest performer, the concert King himself, Martin Nievera.



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GETTING TO KNOW FASO

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO
AJPress

CECILIA COO CRUZ

'Let's support each other.'

"We Filipinos should help each other. *Dapat magtulungan tayo.* We should be proud of each other's successes. That's why I encourage everyone in the FilAm community to go to the gala concert of the first FilAm Symphony Orchestra. Let's support each other," said Cecilia Coo Cruz, the concert mistress and violinist of the FASO gala concert on May 16 at the Wilshire Theatre in Beverly Hills.

Born in 1976 in the Philippines, Cecile comes from a family of musicians. Her mother, Corazon Arevalo Coo, is a pianist who has been teaching piano lessons to aspiring musicians for decades now. Cecile and her two brothers are all graduates of the Philippine High School for the Arts in UP Los Baños and took up Music in UP Diliman. The eldest, Jonathan Coo, is a pianist in New York with a Masters degree in Music while the younger brother, Victor Coo, is a cellist in Michigan.

Even in her teens, Cecile has already been immersed in the world of music. In 1988, at the age of 12, she won in the National Music Competition for Young Artists. She was a winner in the National Music Competition for Young Artists in the Philippines and was the recipient of the 1994 Outstanding Artist award. Cecile has been a member of the Philippine Youth Orchestra from the time she was 17 till she immigrated to the States at 25.

In 2001, Cecile graduated from the University of the Philippines with a Bachelor in Music degree, majoring in violin. After graduation, Cecile followed her family into the US. She got a Performer's Certificate in violin from La Sierra University, Riverside before taking up her Masters of Music, major in violin, at the Andrews University in Michigan. Armed with her Masters degree, Cecile went back to California in 2004. She married a Hispanic, Timothy Cruz, with whom she now has a daughter.

Cecile has been busy teaching violin,

played the violin for recording sessions with various artists for their music CDs, for movie theme songs and for entertainment shows in TV. She also uses her God-given talent for God's glory by serving as Assistant Music Leader at the Eagle Rock Presbyterian Church and Assistant Music Minister at the White Memorial Church.

Cecile articulated her excitement about the formation of FASO. "My musician friend, Bochok Molina, was the one who informed me about the plan to form the first Filipino American Symphony Orchestra. I attended the initial meeting where we brainstormed on how to do it. I was excited *kasi nga kasi* first FilAm orchestra *ito eh.* It's time *mapakita natin sa ating mga kababayan na meron tayong ganito*, an orchestra of our own, in LA," said Cecile.

While there are many Filipino musicians in America, it hasn't been easy for them to establish their careers immediately. Cecile expounded on this in the interview with Asian Journal. "*Iba ang culture dito sa States. Ang laki-laki ng US.* It takes time for you to get contacts, grow your network and get established. When I left the Philippines, I was already established as a musician. We have a small music community in the Philippines. *Kasi in the Philippines, most musicians come from UP, UST, or St. Scholastica.* So even while studying Music in UP, I was already establishing my career- teaching violin, doing gigs, recording for albums, movies and commercials. When I got here, *wala akong kilala* and the country is so big. It took time for me to get contacts and prove myself," Cecile said.

The concert mistress' chamber experience, playing the violin, has been quite extensive.

She was with the UP String Quartet and various ensembles (1994-2001), with the Pundaquit Chamber Players (1996-2000), the Sinnett Quartet in Andrews University (2003-2004), the Andrews University Chamber Players (2002-2004), the Renaissance Trio (2006- present) and the White Memorial String Ensemble (May 2008- present).



The award-winning violinist was also a member of the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, Manila Youth Symphony Orchestra II, the La Sierra Orchestra and the Andrews University Symphony Orchestra.

As concert mistress, Cecile plays a major role in the upcoming FASO gala concert. Concert masters have the biggest job next to the musical director. They are responsible for leading the first violin section, which is the largest section or sections of the orchestra.

Cecile makes the decisions regarding bowing and other technical details of violin playing for the violins, and sometimes all of the string players; and is in charge of leading the orchestra in tuning before concerts and rehearsals and other technical aspects of orchestra management. It is usually required that the concertmaster be the most skilled musician in the section, good at learning music quickly, counting and observing the conductor for the rest of the section to follow.

"I encourage everyone to buy tickets now to the FASO gala concert," Cecile said enthusiastically. "We at FASO are working really hard to give people a great performance that they will truly enjoy and remember for a long time. There are Broadway and Filipino classics and pop— *maganda ang repertoire! Mage-enjoy ang lahat,*" she added.

The inaugural concert of the Filipino American Symphony Orchestra at the Wilshire Theatre in Beverly Hills on May 16 will also feature well-known singers Joey Albert and Stephanie Reese. It truly promises to be an affair to celebrate and remember. For more information, call Andy Tecson at (213) 300-4870 or Bob Shroder at (818) 395-8936. ■



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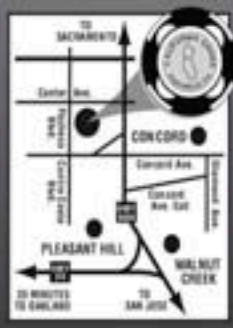
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