

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

One Historic, Musical Moment

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(romantic songs). The opera and pop numbers were provided by three contemporary Fil-Am singers and a Filipino-Canadian singer – Stephanie Reese, Pete Avendano, Kit Navarro and Joey Albert.

Fil-Ams interviewed for their impressions by Asian Journal had a singular thread: the FASO's debut

performance is impressive and it deserves seconds. "I think that they (FASO) can pull in a larger audience," offers John Mina, who is one of the directors of the Jazz Society of the Philippines, USA (JazzPhil). "How about the Hollywood Bowl next time." Rex Sampaga, Mina's co-director at JazzPhil is equally impressed,

saying "FASO is quite amazing in this concert." Grace Walker of Glendale's Commission on the Status of Women is already dreaming of a moonlit night concert at the Hollywood Bowl.

Opera singer Stephanie Reese, fresh from a five-month singing stint in the Philippines, did a turnaround and sang Filipino songs for the first time. And for someone who did not speak Tagalog at all, Ms. Reese did a very fine job, not missing a word; and her American accent made her Tagalog songs sound even more endearing to the concertgoers.

"I was more nervous this time," admits Reese, who came in from abroad barely a few days before the concert. "I wanted to show the other half of my music; that I really love Filipino culture. I feel so honored to be a part of this event that is celebrating our roots," she told Asian Journal.

Marikit (Kit) Navarro who played Jasmin, and Pete Avendano, who played Karim, in Dr. Ramon

Sison-Geluz's highly acclaimed opera, *Karim and Jasmin*, breezed through their numbers with amazing virtuosity.

FASO had a few challenges as well. It is composed of musicians with different levels of musicianship, according to Bob Shroder, who agreed to talk to this writer immediately following the concert. "We are not like the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra," Shroder tells Asian Journal. He said that FASO is basically a volunteer symphony orchestra. Some of the members are college students, and some are part time musicians who cannot commit to a weekly rehearsal schedule.

"I think everybody did an excellent job by wholeheartedly giving their best musicianship," Shroder said. "This concert is phenomenal because there is no gap between the orchestra and the audience. We are totally connected, and we are always reaching out, right from the beginning."

"From the time we played *Star Spangled Banner*, we hit our strides. We were playing what they (audience) crave, and apparently

what they were hearing were the songs that they liked," Shroder opined.

FASO played mostly classical ballets, opening with a Tchaikovsky composition. Then played compositions by legendary Filipino composer Lucio San Pedro, and a medley of Filipino *kundimans* (romantic songs) inspired by American composer Bernard Greene; a segment from the popular opera, *Phantom of the Opera* with an added visual layer provided by an aerial dancer that interpreted the music with dance movements while hanging twenty feet high from the ceiling.

"This is a great start," comments seasoned producer Ted Benito. He said, however, that he had

not watched a concert where the conductor also played the role of master of ceremonies. "To hear our music as lushly played is absolutely phenomenal. But there is room for improvement," Benito said.

"I cried after the first number," attests Becca Godinez-Miranda. "I cried after the second and third numbers. It is well worth the effort. Bravo!" Jazz pianist and composer David Benoit – whose career as a smooth jazz musician bloomed after a Manila concert in the late 70s – was agog. "I am really impressed by how they delivered the music," he told Asian Journal. "I like their (FASO's) music; it's like being in Manila again." ■

Pinoy poet to receive Italy's top prize

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Chicago in 1970. He served UP in various capacities, as secretary of the university, secretary of the Board of Regents, vice president for academic affairs, while teach-

ing English, comparative literature and creative writing. Abad co-founded the Philippine Literary Arts Council (PLAC), which published Caracoa, a poetry journal in English.

Among his many books of poetry and critical essays are *Fugitive Emphasis* (1973), his first book of poetry; *In Another Light* (poems and critical essays, 1976); *A Formal Approach to Lyric Poetry* (critical theory, 1978); *The Space Between* (poems and critical essays, 1985); *Poems and Parables* (1988); *Index to Filipino Poetry in English, 1905-1950* (with Edna Zapanta Manlapaz, 1988) and *State of Play* (letter-essays and parables, 1990). He edited landmark anthologies of Filipino poetry in English, among them *Man of Earth* (1989), *A Native Clearing* (1993) and *A Habit of Shores: Filipino Poetry and Verse from English, '60s to the '90s* (1999).

The work for he has been cited in *In Ordinary Time: Poems, Parables, Poetics* (2004), his own selection of his poems and parables from 1973 to 2003. Ten each of these are arranged under six themes which suggest, generally, a possible terrain of signification: Things ("each thing's special signature"), Words ("not meaning but meaningfulness"), Self ("the imagination, the self's primary activity, creates our humanity"), Love ("the self's deepest moral sense"). (*Philstar.com*)

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