

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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CHICAGO (*jGLi*) – The post 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary birth celebration  
of Jose Rizal in Chicago  
continues.

Rizal's novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, will be interpreted in a musical on Saturday, May 26, at 7 p.m. and Sunday, May 27, at 3 p.m. at Harris Theater at 205 East Randolph Drive, Chicago, IL, 60601 (Telephone 312.334.7777).

According to Princess Emraida Kiram, advisor of the

international premiere of the rare masterpiece of Felipe de Leon's opera, there are six Filipino actors, who will be playing the leading roles but she could not yet provide the names.

Ms. Kiram said, the costumes will be period pieces, not authentically (old), but authentic in the sense that research was done to depict the dresses and outfits of the era.

Chicago-based international artist Willie Buhay researched and designed the costume for authenticity.

KGB Productions and da Corneto Opera will present the American premiere of the opera *Noli Me Tangere* that recounts the struggles of Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra y Magsalin, who returns to the Philippines after seven years of academic studies in Europe. He plans to wed his betrothed Maria Clara and fulfill his father's dream of opening a school to pave the way for his country's progress through education.

But Mr. Ibarra is thwarted by the notorious and influential Padre Damaso, creating a dramatic storyline of unrequited love, betrayal and revenge. The music is beautiful and melodic and the story one of many twists and turns including a mad scene --and a first in opera – a crocodile attack.

## RIZAL'S NOVEL

The opera is based on the novel *Noli Me Tangere* by Philippine national hero Dr. José Rizal. A Filipino nationalist and medical doctor, Rizal conceived of the idea of writing the novel after reading Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Published in Spanish in Berlin in 1887, the novel exposes the ills of society, the oppression of Spanish rule and atrocities committed in the name of the Church. Viewed as a subversive for his belief in Philippine self-government, Rizal was executed by the Spaniards in 1896.

His execution is cited as one of the causes of the Philippine Revolution and his execution on December 30 (Philippine time) is marked annually as Rizal Day, a national Philippine holiday. The Filipino American Council of Greater Chicago's headquarter in Lakeview is named after him as well as a monument that was built in front of Weiss Memorial Hospital along the picturesque landscape in Lakeshore Drive.

Sung in Tagalog with English supertitles, the performance will run approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes, including one intermission.

Tickets are priced at \$35, \$50, \$75, \$90 and may be purchased online, by phone or at the box office.

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According to Estrella Alamar of the Filipino American Historical Society of Chicago, by punching the promo code, FAHSC, ticket buyer will get a discount and will show support for FAHSC. There is seating for 1,500. Harris

Theatre

website is

[www.harristheaterchicago.org](http://www.harristheaterchicago.org)

Only last September, another Rizal-inspired play, “Rizal’s Sweet Stranger, Untold Stories of Josephine Bracken, The Musical,” was also presented at Chicago’s north side at St. Scholastica Academy Theater as part of the birth sesquicentennial of Dr. Rizal. It played to a full house.

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The *Noli Me Tangere*, the Opera, was initially written by Felipe Leon, a Philippine national artist in music, for the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Rizal in 1961.

It was premiered and produced by the Music Promotion Foundation of the Philippines in 1957 and re-staged in 1987 to commemorate the centennial of the publication of the "Noli" by the Cultural Center of the Philippines. ###



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