

Filipinos Serenade Their Underwater Kind - MabuhayRadio

Written by Joseph G. Lariosa

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By JOSEPH G. LARIOSA

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CHICAGO (jGLi) – Unbeknown to Filipino Kundiman singers, the natives of the Philippine deep must also be enjoying the whole time as their singing lasted during the hour-long concert.

The young Filipinos of musical minds residing in Chicago area had a reunion of sorts for the first time Sunday (Aug. 29) to get their fellow community members interested to visit, if not revisit, the Philippine Wild Reef at the Shedd Aquarium nestled on the edge of Lake Michigan at Chicago's southeast side.

After Consul General Leo M. Herrera-Lim thanked the Filipino concert performers for showcasing their musical talents and Bryan Schuetze, vice president planning and design of the Shedd Aquarium, who welcomed both the performers and concertgoers at the Shedd Aquarium, the performers started warbling Filipino songs to the delight of aquarium visitors, mostly Filipino community members.

The aquatic Philippine natives may not be hearing the Kundimans (love songs) being performed beside them because of the extra thick glass separating them but it was obvious the Philippine fishes swimming in the dark must be enjoying the gestures and the body languages of the performers.

In fact, in some still photos taken during their performance, the Philippine fishes appeared to be crowding behind the singers.

FISHES ATTRACTED BY PERFORMERS?

Paul Aquino, a baritone, was pleasantly surprised when told by this reporter that while his fellow musicians were singing, the fishes that are natives to the Philippines behind the glass must also be enjoying the sight of their concert as aquarium visitors crowded around them.

“Siguro enjoy din ang ating mga isda,” (Maybe the fishes are also enjoying) Mr. Aquino, a native of San Nicolas, Pangasinan in the Philippines, said, “habang kami ay kumakanta at tumutogtog.” (While we were singing and playing the band.)

Aside from Mr. Aquino, a cum laude Bachelor of Music graduate from the University of the Philippines, the other performers were Isidora Miranda, also a cum laude Bachelor of Music graduate from UP who completed her Masters degree in Violin Performance and Musicology at Western Illinois University; and Daven Taba, a tenor and pianist from Sto. Domingo, Nueva Ecija who recorded a song as part of the album, “The Road to M.A.S.”

They were joined by Chris Zamora, guitarist for award-winning singer and Hollywood actress Lisa Zane and songwriter and performer David Pomeranz, and a member of The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP); Jay Espano, actor in theater, film and television and 50 plays for Tanghalang Pilipino, Gantimpala Theater Foundations, etc.

The other performers were Olga Natividad, Filipino actress for Tanghalang Pilipino Theater Company of the Cultural Center of the Philippines and recently had a principal role for a PBS

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TV documentary, "From Du Sable to Obama: Chicago's Black Metropolis;" Emily Morales, soprano, a UP alumna, who last performed on Broadway with Tony-winning South Pacific Broadway Revival at the prestigious Lincoln Center Theater; and Rica Goldyn, soprano, a graduate of master of music Vocal Performance Program at Chicago-based North Park University and a graduate of University of the Philippines' College of Music, and has been a member of the Philippine Madrigal Singers.

INSPIRED BY APO ISLAND

The Philippine Wild Reef at Shedd Aquarium is home to hundreds of Philippine fish species that were imported from the Philippines in 2003. Among these species are Butterfly, Angel fish, Square Block Anthies, Whitetip and Blacktip sharks, Unicorn Tangs, Stingrays and Groupers (Lapu-Lapu).

Majority of them live in the Celebes Sea of the Pacific Ocean adjacent to the Philippines and Indonesia, considered the heart of the Coral Triangle.

The Wild Reef was patterned after Apo Island, a marine protected area (MPA) off Dumaguete City in Negros Islands in the Philippines, spearheaded by a recent Chicago visitor, Dr. Angel C. Alcala, a marine biologist and herpetologist.

About 40 years ago, fish population around Apo Islands was declining due to overfishing. Subsistence fishermen used destructive methods, such as dynamite blasting and cyanide poisoning, to get enough fish for their families. These practices severely damaged Apo's coral reefs, further depleting fish stocks. Eventually the waters surrounding the island were fished out. In 1974, Dr. Alcala (director of the marine laboratory at Silliman University in Dumaguete City) and Oslob municipality (Cebu) started a small marine sanctuary, the region's first, at uninhabited Sumilon Island (about 50 km from Apo). Dr. Alcala and some of his colleagues at

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Silliman University visited Apo Island in 1979 to explain how a marine sanctuary could help reverse the decline in their fishery.

When fishermen saw the marine sanctuary at Sumilon Island, teeming with fish, they started supporting the concept. At present, only three percent of the entire Philippine archipelago has MPA's. Dr. Alcala said ideal MPA's should cover 30 percent of the entire archipelago for Filipinos to have a sustainable fishing industry. (lariosa_jos@sbcglobal.net) # # #

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