



Calendar of Events

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'Splendor of the East 2013' lives up to billing as spectacular show

CAPA continues to receive rave comments

"Splendor of the East 2013" (SOE 2013) has lived up to its billing as a spectacular cultural show. But aside from its being a spectacle of sights and sound, it was also a magnificent theatrical work not unlike a major Broadway production.

The theater goers agreed: Several days after the staging of SOE 2013 on May 11, 2013 at the Ford Community and Performing Arts Center in Dearborn, rave comments continued to pour in on the Asian cultural event, which is a yearly fund-raising production of the Council of Asian Pacific Americans (CAPA).

CAPA President Robert Riparip and Production Manager Toni Martinez were swamped with emails congratulating them and the other CAPA officers on their excellent work.

Subtitled "Crossroads – Cultural Influences," the show presented dances depicting the age-old, time-honored eastern cultures brought to America by Asian migrants. It also featured dances that indicated the incorporation of the American culture into the eastern cultures.

SOE 2013 was off to a merry start with the opening act that paid tribute to American entertainment and "the arts of Broadway." With Filipina Fely Taghap-Villegas singing the song "All That Jazz," the dancers, wearing Broadway-like costumes, swung and spun in an ebullient, gaudy way.

Choreographed by Annabelle Cudilla, the dance performed by dancers led by Aimee Calasara reflected the indomitable Asian spirit that "In America – the Land of the Free – we can bring forth our own culture as Americans."

The second part was presented by the Troy Chinese Folk Dance Group. Choreographed by Janet Yang and Jane Cheng, the dance is in honor of "Mulan," a Chinese legendary hero whose war exploits were prominently mentioned in Chinese history. The dancers gave a peek into the revered original Chinese theater which is noted for terpsichorean talents of its dancers.

The third part provided a glimpse of the history of Taiwan when Formosa (the old name of Taiwan) was discovered by Portuguese sailors in 1554. Choreographed by Li-Hsuan Huang and Sharon Dow, the dance portrays the emergence of the Taiwanese "aborigines in the world of music and its influence." The dancers' green, shining costumes and their smiling faces portrayed happy, innocent natives welcoming foreigners to their beautiful country.



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The fourth part was about Philippines-Japan relations. The dance, choreographed by Annabelle Cudilla, portrayed the emotional separation of a Filipina girl from her mother, who was going to the land of cherry blossoms, to earn a living there "so she can provide a better future for her child." The mother and her child danced to the slow tune of "Hibik," an original Pilipino composition. This part was capped by the singing of Japanese song "Amagi Go'e" by Filipina singer Fely Taghap-Villegas with the special participation of Japanese Natsuko.

Then came the impressive performance by Japanese drummers Brian and Mayumi Sole who were amazing in their expert beating of a big taiko drum. In performing "Umi Nari" (Cry of the Sea), Brian and Mayumi appeared to pour out their pent-up emotions as they struck the drum hard and, at times, fast and furious. Their intensity and focus were palpable as they echoed with the drum the "Cry of the Sea," which was about the "flowing emotions we leave behind and irreplaceable memories like the roaring cry of the sea."

Next came a wondrous combination of colorful costumes and flowing movements. In performing the "Plum," choreographed by Chinese ladies Jianping Zeng and Susan Qu, the dancers paid tribute to the plum, the most popular blossom in China. The white and red costumes of the dancers conjured a spectacular sight greatly enhanced by the theater's spotlights. The dance is symbolic as the plum reflects the perseverance and resiliency of the Chinese people.

The Chinese group was followed by the Tagumpay Dance Ensemble of the Philippine American Community Center of Michigan (PACCM) who presented "Polynesia (Hawaii/Tahiti)." Choreographed by Annabelle Cudilla, the dance is a Maui Broadway excerpt from the musical "Ulalena." Wearing colorful, Polynesian costumes designed by Lulu Rodriguez, the dancers swung and spun as they paid homage to Hina, the lunar goddess in Hawaiian mythology. Hina became the wife of Tahitian God Ru. One scene surprised the Filipinos in the audience by the cameo participation of FILAMCCO President Ryan Rosario, who played the role of God Ru.

The PACCM presentation was made more memorable by the special participation of Gabrielle Angeles, a performer from Los Angeles, California, who mesmerized the audience with her scary aerial-dancing art. She did the aerial dance without a harness, and this made the audience fear for her safety. But Gabrielle appeared fearless as she climbed with her bare hands to a height of about 30 feet. In an interview after the show, she said she is a member of a circus troupe performing at various events and shows.

Then the "Untold Story" about the two Koreas came next. This number, performed by the Korean Cultural Dance Team, resonated the anguish caused by the Korean War that split Korea into North and South. The split resulted in the separation of many families.

This was followed by India's "Bollywood" presented by the Nupur Academy of Dance. The first dance was "a traditional Indian folk style with the music score set in classical symphony that brings suspense, mystery and climax to the plot. Dressed in colorful costumes, the dancers showcased

the blending of traditional dances and new wave of jazz.

Then, the Tagumpay Dancers returned to the stage to portray the Spanish influence in Philippine culture. They danced the "La Jota" which still packs the fire and fury of the dance's Spanish version. The music shifted from slow to fast tempo which is typical of Spanish dances such as the flamenco, bolero and fandango. The dance was a creative work of choreographer Annabelle Cudilla.

The finale was highlighted by the singing by all the performers of "Let There Be Peace," with Fely Taghap-Villegas leading the singing.

'It is a matter of conquering your fears,' aerial dancer says

Filipina-American dancer Gabrielle Angeles is a diminutive woman, but she has a fearless heart that enables her to do extremely dangerous acts ordinary people won't dare try to do.

At the "Splendor of the East 2013" cultural event held on May 8, 2013 at the Ford Community and Performing Arts Center in Dearborn, Gabrielle was amazing as she mesmerized the audience with her risky aerial art.

Without harness tied to her, she pulled herself up to a height of about 35 feet with her bare hands repeatedly gripping a nylon cloth tied to a big steel ring attached to the stage's ceiling. Upon reaching the ring, she executed a risky maneuver with her lithe body slithering in and out of the ring.

Watching Gabrielle perform her unusual art, several members of the audience held their breath in suspense as they feared for her safety.



"It's a matter of conquering your fears and focusing on your strength to hold yourself," Gabrielle told the Filipino Star News in an interview held shortly after the show.

She was impressed when she saw for the first time an aerial dance at a circus show in Las Vegas, and right then and there, she told herself, "I would like to become an aerial dancer."

She pursued her dream, and for three years, she attended the Hollywood Aerial Arts School in Los Angeles, California where she mastered the difficult and risky art. She also learned how to subdue her fears about her safety while dancing in the air.

Gabrielle said that at one time, she injured herself while practicing, but this did not discourage her from perfecting her art. "I love doing it," she quipped.

She is a member of a group in Los Angeles that regularly stages circus-and-dance shows at different venues not only in California but all over the United States. At present, she is doing a "commercial for the Internet."

She is also an accountant at a non-profit based in Orange County, California where her family lives.

Her father, Ernesto Angeles, is a certified public accountant.

Her mother, Rosario Martinez, works at the Hoag Hospital in Orange County. She is a sister of Toni Martinez, Annabelle Cudilla and Lulu Rodriguez, who are all noted here in Michigan for their involvement in the dance art and production of theatrical shows. Rosario's family used to live here in Michigan.

APIA Vote-Michigan to honor Wilson, two others

Filipino-American James Wilson, chairman of CAPA's youth affairs committee, will be honored during the APIA Vote-Michigan's Third Annual Dinner which will be held in the evening of July 27, 2013 at the East Lake Chinese restaurant in Troy.

Wilson will be cited as "a rising star" for his outstanding work as volunteer teacher of the Filipino Youth Initiative (FYI), a program of the Philippine American Community Center of Michigan (PACCM).

In an email message, APIA Vote-Michigan President Theresa Tran stated that aside from Wilson, there will be two other individuals who will be honored at the event. They are Bangladesh American Public Affairs Committee Representative Sam Singh and Sarah Vang.

The keynote speaker will be Tuyet Le, executive director of the Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Chicago.

State gov't encouraging Asians to live in Michigan, Snyder says

Governor Rick Snyder said the state government is encouraging Asians to come to and live in Michigan.

The governor made the statement during a program that highlighted the celebration of Asian Heritage Month held last May 14 at the capitol in Lansing.

The celebration was hosted by the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (MAPAAC).

Meanwhile, Kiran Ahuja, executive director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI), who was the keynote speaker at the program, disclosed President Obama's programs aimed at

benefiting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs).

In his brief speech, Governor Snyder acknowledged the contributions of the Asian Americans to the development of Michigan. "Thank you so much for the good things you have been doing for the State of Michigan," he said.

He noted that hundreds of thousands of Michiganders are Asian Americans.

The governor said that the state government continues to push hard its program to create jobs for Michiganders and generate opportunities that enable small businesses to grow.

Snyder disclosed some projects that are expected to generate jobs. These include, he said, a plan of Consumer Energy to spend \$7 billion for projects in the next five years.

Snyder's speech was followed by the keynote address of White House official Kiran Ahuja, who came all the way from Washington, DC, to join the celebration.

A second-generation Indian American, Ahuja talked about the racial "challenges" she had faced while she was growing up in the Deep South. "As a child, you don't want to feel different," she said.

She said she had learned to love her Indian heritage when, at age 24, she went to India and immersed herself in the culture in which her parents had grown.

A lawyer, Ahuja said that her appointment as executive director of WHIAAPI is "a tremendous honor for me." She said that as one of the officials involved in the formulation of policies, she realizes that there is much "we need to learn" about the challenges facing AAPIs.



"It is important that we appreciate the growing diversity and demographics" of AAPIs," she emphasized.

She said that among the programs being undertaken by her office is about the plight of Filipino World War II veterans. She noted that the aging Filipino soldiers who fought side by side with the Americans during World War II "just want their services to be recognized" by the US government.

For serving as keynote speaker, Ahuja received a certificate of appreciation from MAPAAC Chairperson Sook Wilkinson.

In her opening remarks, Wilkinson also cited the importance of celebrating Asian American Heritage Month.

She said, "Today, we're here to honor, treasure and celebrate that heritage. We're here to pay tribute to the generations of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders before us."

She noted that "despite many challenges and struggles, they persevered and have enriched America's history and culture. They have contributed immensely to the arts, literature, science, sports, academia, medicine, military, and much more."

She thanked the MAPAAC commissioners for their efforts at helping MAPAAC fulfill its mandate.

Wilkinson also thanked Filipino-American girl Antoinette Joseph for singing the US National Anthem at the start of the program. She likewise thanked a group of Filipino ladies, who are members of the West Michigan Filipino-American Association, for performing a Philippine folk dance ("Itik-itik") that entertained the guests.

Wilkinson acknowledged the presence of representatives of the program sponsors, who included

Iqbal Singh of DTE Energy and Mamatha Chamarthi of CMS Energy.

The master of ceremonies was Fox 4 News reporter Roop Raj.

Kalayaan Picnic draws 3,000 revelers

The annual Kalayaan Picnic hosted by the Filipino-American Community Council (FILAMCCO) drew at least 3,000 people, living up to its billing as the biggest yearly Filipino-American event in Michigan.

This year's Kalayaan Picnic was held last June 8 at its usual venue, the Halmich Park in Warren.

Many of the picnic goers came from places as far as Grand Rapids and Monroe. Several came from nearby states.

The Halmich pavilion was so crowded with people that hundreds had to set up tables and tents outside the building and under the trees. The parking lot could not accommodate all vehicles, and many had to park their cars about a quarter mile from the pavilion.

In the pavilion, all the long tables were occupied and laden with potluck food of all kinds.

The revelers and their guests ate the crispy lechon (roasted pig) and other favorite Filipino dishes in wild abandon, disregarding doctor's warning against too much eating and ingesting too much cholesterol. Dr. Ernie Mac was busy for hours, chopping the donated lechon.

The picnic goers were also excited to partake food donated by Fuji Buffet owner Ricky Dong. Fuji's fried shrimps and fish, sushi of all kinds and white noodles placed in trays were gone some five minutes after these were placed on the table.

This year's picnic, which was in celebration of Philippine Independence Day, was made more memorable by a well-organized show.

The program opened with the traditional parade of colors and the introduction of the various organizations that joined the festivities.

This was followed by the impressive singing of the US and Philippine National Anthems by the Kapulungan ng mga Katolikong Pilipino sa Michigan (KKPM) children choir under the direction of Aris Macandog.

The invocation was led by Pastor Leo Abad, who implored God "to bless our activity today so that while we have fun, deep in our hearts, we are truly grateful to you for the spiritual and physical freedom we are enjoying."

FILAMCCO President Ryan Rosario thanked the sponsors, including DTE Energy which was represented by Iqbal Singh.

FILAMCCO Vice President Betsy Henry, who is the chairperson of the overall committee in charge of the celebration, welcomed the guests and the leaders of the various organizations participating in the festivities.

This was followed by the presentation of entertainment numbers. These included the rendition of "We Could Happen" by high school senior student Joanna Muriel de Vera; presentation of a Tahitian-Aparima dance by the PACCM Hula Dance Group; and a choral number by the Zion Choir.

The penultimate number, singing of the patriotic song "Ako ay Pilipino," was performed by students of Paaralang Pilipino. Listening to the song, many in the crowd felt a sense of Filipino pride and nationalism.



Council of Asian Pacific Americans

CAPA in Michigan

Diversity is our Strength

The finale was a dance excerpt from the recent Splendor of the East show. The performers were

talented members of the PACCM Performing Crew.

Please visit the website: www.capa-mi.org for more information
Public Relations/Media Contact, Pina Chhaya at pina@capa-mi.org
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