

The 2nd Annual

REIT Asia Pacific  
Philippines Summit 2010

27 - 28 July | New World Hotel | Makati City, Philippines

STRENGTHENING. DEEPENING. SUSTAINING.



## Arts & Leisure

**Onstage by Juan Antonio Lanuza**  
By

# Full of energy

I attended the June 27 matinee performance at the Meralco Theater of Atlantis Productions' presentation of *Legally Blonde, The Musical*. This musical was based on the novel by Amanda Brown which was first made into a movie starring Reese Witherspoon. The book for the Broadway production of the adaptation of this novel was by Heather Hach; music and lyrics were by Laurence O'Keefe and Nell Benjamin.

The theater was fully packed with young and enthusiastic persons. The feeling was one of anticipation. They were rewarded with a performance that was pure energy. We have gotten used to a certain very high standard of productions by Atlantis, and this show exceeded that standard.

The show was a tremendous success. The crowd roared their approval after each number. Perhaps that was the reason you did not hear people chatting during the performance. The drive level of the performers was very high. It was obvious they had extensive rehearsals. Most of the musical numbers were done to perfection. The most surprising number was the one of Geneva Cruz singing and dancing while skipping rope and not losing her breath while doing this.

The plot is simple enough. Elle Woods, a sorority star, does not take no for an answer. When her boyfriend, Warner Huntington III, ends his relationship with her for someone else, she puts down the credit card, hits the books and sets out to go where no Delta Nu has gone before: Harvard Law School. Along the way she proves that being true to yourself never goes out of style.

Nikki Gil was a good choice as Elle Woods. She delivers her lines clearly and with the proper feeling, sings pleasantly and dances with the abandon of an excellent dancer, all this while showing that she is enjoying herself. Guji Lorenzana as Warner was also well cast. He has a good singing voice and diction, good presence and theatrical timing. Nyoy Volante as Emmet Forrest, a person she meets in Harvard and eventually falls in love with, though short, sings and dances very pleasantly. The best singing voice in the show was that of Jett Pangan as Professor Callahan. He was impressive with his booming baritone. Too bad nobody has thought of doing *Carousel, Show Boat, Oklahoma, Kiss Me Kate* or *Annie Get Your Gun*. He has the right voice for those plays.

Geneva Cruz was excellent as Brooke Wyndham. Who can top her skipping rope number? Another revelation in this play was Jinky Llamanzares as Paulette Bonafonte. She almost stole the show during her numbers. Cris Villongco was ever dependable as Vivienne Kensington, the socialite student who becomes Warner's girlfriend. Calvin Millado was a riot in the roles of Dewey and Kyle. See him and see why I mention this.

Others in short roles who were splendidly cast include Felix Rivera who was excellent in the "Serious" musical number and later as the man on trial for murder; Joel Trinidad in his roles as the father, Winthrop and a reporter; Kaich Tiuseco as the Judge and the store manager; and Jenny Jamora as Kate and Chutney.

Mio Infante's designs were he used books in almost every scene were very appropriate and more than functional. Cecile Martinez's delightful choreography entertained us and made us marvel at how well the performers were trained. The lighting was more than satisfying. In regards the sound, my personal preference would have been to have less treble and add a dash more of low notes since at moments those with high voices tended to sound a bit too shrill. I will forgive the static sounds and blanks and attribute that to birthing pains. The blanks could have been caused by some persons in audience texting or receiving texts during the performance in spite of being asked to turn off their cellular phones.

Musical director Beth Martin conducted the orchestra and most meticulously following the singers on stage.

The person who deserves the most credit is Chari Arespacochaga who directed this excellent production.

Congratulations to the director, cast and technical crew for a job well done. I recommend this show to you and your families. Run and buy your tickets as soon as possible. The show runs on weekends until July 18. Tickets are available at Atlantis Productions at 892-1078 or 840-1187 or TicketWorld at 891-9999. See you at the theater.

### WHAT'S ON IN SINGAPORE?

The Singapore Opera presents Mozart's *The Magic Flute* on July 23, 24, 26 and 27 at the Esplanade. It has an all-Asian cast: Kuta Murakami (Tamino), Nancy Yuen (Pamina), Song Kee Chang (Papageno), Tai Hsiao-Chyun (Queen of the Night) and Lemuel de la Cruz from the Philippines as Monostatos. Alice Farmham conducts. Tickets are available at Sistic (65-6348-5555) or through the Web site [www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg).

### WHAT'S ON IN MANILA?

- The third and last play of **Repertory Philippines'** season is Peter Shaffer's *Equus*, which Rep successfully did in 1976 at the Insular Life Theater in Makati and at the CCP Little Theater. Audie Gemora directs a cast consisting of Miguel Faustmann in the role originally played in the movie by Richard Burton; Marco Mañalac and Red Concepcion alternate in the role of the young man Alan Strang. Others in the cast include Jaime del Mundo, Roselyn Perez, Dido de la Paz and Tami Monsod. The play will be shown on July 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24 and 25, at Onstage in Greenbelt One. For details and tickets call Rep at 887-0710 and as for Marie Talay, or log on to [www.repertory.ph](http://www.repertory.ph), or call TicketWorld at 891-9999 or log on to [www.ticketworld.com.ph](http://www.ticketworld.com.ph).
- **Instituto Cervantes** (855 T.M. Kalaw St., Ermita, Manila) will screen *Apartado de Correos 1001* on July 3, 6 p.m. Free admission. For seat reservations, call 526-1445.
- **Kultura Filipino**, a glimpse of Philippine culture through traditional dances and songs, is presented every Tuesday and Thursday (buffet at 6 p.m. and performance at 7 p.m.) at Barbara's Restaurant, Intramuros, Manila. This costs P495 net per person. For reservations, call 527-4986, 527-4090 or 527-3893.
- **Philippine Opera Co.** brings back its production of Terence McNally's *Masterclass* (the story of soprano Maria Callas), once again starring Cherie Gil, for a limited run of 10 performances between July and August at the RCBC Theater. The shows are good for fund-raising purposes since during its successful run one year ago it was mostly filled up. For details call Philippine Opera Co. (15 Gardenia St., San Lorenzo Village, Makati) at 892-8786.
- The **Philippine Ballet Theater** (PBT) presents *Swan Lake* from July 1 to 3 at 8 p.m., and July 3 and 4 at 3

p.m. at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. For tickets and details call PBT at 632-8848 or log on to [www.philippineballettheatre.ph](http://www.philippineballettheatre.ph) or [www.culturalcenter.gov.com](http://www.culturalcenter.gov.com).

- On July 10, 8 p.m., at the Aliw Theater, **Ballet Manila** presents today's stars of the **Russian Ballet**. It features principal dancers of the Bolshoi Ballet, Mariinsky Ballet and Ukrainian National Ballet with Lisa Macuja-Elizalde and Ballet Manila dancers. Tickets are available at [tickets@ticketworld.com.ph](mailto:tickets@ticketworld.com.ph).
- **The Bayanihan Friday Special** is held every first Friday of the month from June to September at 6 p.m., at the Conrado Benitez Hall, Philippine Women's University, 1743 Taft Ave., Malate, Manila. For details call 526-8421.
- Concerts featuring pianist **Cecile Licad** and conductor Gerard Salonga with the **FILharmonika** will be held on July 2 and 3, 8 p.m., at the Philamlife Auditorium, UN Ave., Ermita, Manila. They will be interpreting De Falla's The Three Cornered Hat Suite for orchestra, his Noches en los Jardines de España for piano and orchestra, Sibelius' Finlandia for orchestra and Saint Saens' Piano Concerto No. 2. For tickets contact Alan at 535-5915 or 0918-347-3027.
- Choreographer Agnes Locsin explores the Filipino psyche with *Sayaw, Sabel* in an invitational performance on July 17 at the Ayala Museum followed by a National Tour to Laguna, Bacolod, Iloilo and Davao City. The show's concept was inspired by National Artist for Visual Arts Benedicto Cabrera (Bencab)'s iconic figure "Sabel," a major subject that recurs in his works through the decades, inspired by a real-life scavenger that he photographed and sketched in 1965. The "Sabel" image has become his vehicle for the transmission of intensely emotional moods.
- The **MCO Foundation** presents *Miracle in Rwanda* on July 17 and 18, 3 p.m., at the Insular Life Building Theater in Makati, with Leslie Lewis Sword, the author, performing all of the roles in this one-woman play. We are lucky to have this Off-Broadway play in Manila with the originator of the role. For tickets, contact the MCO Foundation at 750-0768, 0920-954-0053 or TicketWorld at 891-9999.
- **Virgin Labfest**, a festival of new plays (untried, untested, unpublished and unstaged) by emerging and well-known playwrights, directors and actors is ongoing until July 4 at the Tanghalang Huseng Batute (Studio Theater) of the CCP everyday with performances at 3 and 8 p.m. For details of shows and seat reservations, call 832-1125 local 1606 or 1607 or log on to [www.culturalcenter.gov.com](http://www.culturalcenter.gov.com).
- Original London Production by Cameron Mackintosh and The Really Useful Group bring Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* to the CCP with Lea Salonga playing the role of Grizabella for four weeks beginning July 24. I suggest you choose the performance you would like to attend and purchase your tickets soon. Tickets have been on sale since December and soon some performances may be sold out. For tickets call TicketWorld (891-9999) or visit [www.ticketworld.com.ph](http://www.ticketworld.com.ph).

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