



The One Christmas Concert I'm Glad I Didn't Miss

By: Weena Marasigan

If RST Productions were to promote a show with Pinoy mimes and proclaims that it will be as good as Cirque du Soleil, we would have supported them. That's how much the iPinoy.ca team believes in the combined passion of Ricky Tanpoco and Susan de Leon when it comes to delivering fine Filipino entertainment onstage. It would have been a good bonus if the show turned out to be great, as did "Ilang Tulog Pa Ba, The Only Christmas Concert You Shouldn't Miss."

Personally, I believe it didn't really feel like a concert at all. It seemed more like a Christmas get-together. The audience knew one another. Either they happened to be supporters of the producers, an invitee of the sponsors, a fan or family of one of the singers, or friends with a spectator who happens to be there, too. During the intermission when RST tastefully provided pastries and refreshments, it was not hard at all to mingle. Magkakakilala, eh. There was a strong sense of community. The quantity of the audience is not overwhelming, just as a RST did not intend for it to be overflowing. It was a *quality* crowd. One that applauded loudly and gave standing ovations appropriately. Shed sincere tears when touched by the songs. Also laughed at the funny. And like the Pinoys they mostly were, gave not just handshakes but embraces and kisses to the performers afterwards.

Why I started with a description of the audience and not with the review of the performance is because the essence of the show was all about the crowd. The performers gave their best to connect with their

respectably sized crowd in a venue that was not too small to be crowded but not too big to lose the intimacy. It was a nice comfortable hall where a shout of "Bravo!" resonated clear enough to be heard by any of the performers onstage, all of whom never failed to acknowledge praises with '...salamat po'. The singers talked with the crowd, kidded with them, roused emotions with each rendition and all throughout, eye contact was superbly observed.

Love was felt in the near 2-hour show. Gratitude was expressed to the crowd for attending. There was, of course, the artists' high appreciation of Ricky and Susan, their 'Daddy' and 'Mommy' who took care of them like cherished children during rehearsals and briefings and stuffed them with comfort food during get-togethers. The brother-sister respect and fidelity that the performers have for one another was so genuinely sweet and goeey, I thought I'd suffer a toothache.

Josie De Leon, Rico Callao, Clarissa Miranda and Leander Mendoza admitted lucky to be handpicked by RST for the shows. Zero ego. Now that was also another cause for applause. The singers were proud to be opening acts of APO and expressed how lucky they were to be top-billing their own show together. Each one seemed a fan of the other singer. And all of them are fans of Joshua Tamayo... their bunso, who displayed such mastery of the piano that he stole significant portions of the show. The new member of RST's mutual admiration club is Alex Cheung, a violinist who proved once again the RST has a knack for picking extraordinary talent.

It was worthwhile to hear the four singers in a repertoire of carefully selected songs. The list apparently was brainstormed well enough so that none strayed from the themes of peace and joy of giving during the season when the entire Christendom celebrates the birth of the Saviour. Honestly, though, it was during the solos and duets when I felt most rewarded by coming to the RBC Theatre of The Living Arts Centre in Mississauga last December 7. Rico's idol material voice reverberated well across the hall just after he said he missed his Mama ngayong Pasko. Josie was a glowing vision in her gown, vivacious with her pearly white skin and Diva wit plus a voice that, combined with her presence onstage, can definitely draw a crowd like Kuh Ledesma in her prime. As for Leander... well, what can I say? He was my hero for the night. Leander's 'Mary Did You Know' was my favourite goosebump inducing performance during the concert. Hello. His alone were 2 of my 4 standing ovations. And Clarissa, oh...my...goodness... she seemed to me lacking in wings with an angel's voice like that. Clarissa's 'O Holy Night' was delivered with such poignant perfection, that alone was worth paying for... I would pila outside amidst a blizzard to hear it again.

If I had wanted glitz and a high adrenalin show filled with stars and fireworks, better if I had spent more and got me a Spice Girls reunion concert ticket. But I had preferred a nice little show that was more meaningful than visually mesmerizing, one that left me feeling good rather than star-struck and in the end made me proud of supporting Pinoy local talent rather than foreign pageantry. I made I great choice.

I heard 'Ilang Tulog Pa Ba Ulit...' (or something like that) is being planned by RST in 2008. If you missed this one, I strongly suggest you don't cheat yourself of the part 2.



Merry Christmas

