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World music on an 'impulse'

**By TOTEL DE JESUS**

World music, widely defined as a style attributed to a specific culture, usually non-Western, is locally associated with the sound of Grace Nono and groups like Kontra Gapi and Pinikpikan. In some circles, it could mean African nomads chanting with an ensemble of percussionists. Others think of the ethereal and electronic like Yanni and Enya.

A couple of years ago, then-Spanish ambassador to the Philippines Delfin Colome dreamed of redefining world music by bringing together young composer-musicians from select countries in Europe and Asia for a weeklong workshop. The aim is for each to be exposed to other musical art forms and instruments and, hopefully, influenced by them.

But before his plan materialized, he was reassigned to another country. He eventually served as director for the Singapore-based Asia Europe Foundation. The aim of the foundation is to build better mutual understanding between the peoples of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

"Last year we bumped into each other and he told me about his dream project," said Cultural Center of the Philippines president Nestor Jardin. "So I proposed the National Arts Center on Mount Makiling as the perfect venue. In that way, young Filipino musicians can also participate. He readily approved of it."

Thus, the result is the weeklong and ongoing First Asia-Europe Music Camp, which brings together 30 young musicians from select parts of Europe and Asia. The age bracket ranges from 17 to late 20s. The camp started a week ago and will be finished with a one-night-only performance called *I'mPULSE*.

"It's a very interesting workshop. I was there on the first two days, and I saw how eager the European participants were in hearing and learning how to play our indigenous instrument like the *kulintang* and *gamelan*. All the foreign participants know how to speak English, so there's no language barrier," Jardin added.

They are flutist Caroline Peeters (Belgium), composer Shen Ye (China), percussionist Anastasis Charalambides (Cyprus), violinist Tuuli Talvitie (Finland), trumpeter Tobias Haussig (Germany), violinist Ersebet Palojtay (Hungary), harp player Sile Denvir (Ireland), clarinetist Fausto Corner (Italy), *haegum* soloist Kim Ye Jin (Korea), double bassist Ignas Juzokas (Lithuania), cellist Piotr Mazurek (Poland), composer Goncalo Lourenco (Portugal), composer Americ Goh (Singapore),

percussionist Robert Oliveira (Spain) and pinai player Pattara Komkhum (Thailand), among others.

The Filipino participants are composer Nilo Alcalá, *kulintang* player Grace Bugayong and violinist Ivan Saraza.

On the first day, the participants were taught how to play the *gamelan* by Indonesian professor Dr. Rahayu Suppangah. The following days, the camp's artistic director Dr. Robert Casteels and associate artistic director Chino Toledo alternately gave lectures on composition. Noted music guru Aga Mayo Botocan talked about the indigenous Filipino instrument called *kulintang*. On Friday the participants were treated to a night of classic Filipino hymns via the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra's *Picturesque Philippines* under master conductor Oscar C. Yatco at the CCP.

On Saturday Bugayong discussed and showed how to play the nose flute, while Sile Denvir of Ireland gave introductory lessons on the Irish harp. Sunday they were brought to Las Piñas to experience the music of the famed Bamboo Organ.

It was not all lectures as the participants were also given opportunities to enjoy the National Art Center's recreational facilities like the swimming pool. Part of their socialization was a festive barbecue party.

On Monday morning they were treated to a Manila City tour.

Part of the weeklong series of lectures was for the participants to learn Filipino ethnic music. Bob Aves served as facilitator in an integrated session to study the ethnic pieces "Binalig," "Panangpit" and "Holdoyon Kuy Diwata."

For *I'mPULSE*, Aves and wife Grace Nono will perform these three pieces, with some of the participants as backup musicians.

"Each participant will have the chance to show his skills and new compositions in the culminating one-night concert. It's going to be a different show. As of now, I have no idea about how it is going to transpire but I'm sure it's a show I'm not going to miss. We're going to record the concert and, hopefully, we'll come up with a CD version," said Jardin.

Definitely, it's pure world music at its best.

• *I'mPULSE* will take place tonight at 7:30 at the CCP Little Theater. For inquiries: 832-1125.