

The Philippine STAR

Arts and Culture

Banaue in excelsis!

KRIPOTKIN By Alfred A. Yuson

Publication Date: [Monday, April 30, 2007]



We're all glad she came back when she did, early this April. And that within the same month, there she was, rendering a concert at an ideal venue, for nothing less than a noble cause, that of family and art.

These times any mention of Banaue either still calls to mind that street (and area) in Quezon

City where one picks up cheap automotive spare parts, or raises a brow half-condemning the Ifugao nation for having allowed the killing of a Peace Corps volunteer. Well, that had really been in Battad, but Banaue was the end stop for the public route for the unfortunate lady. Oh, and there was that largely forgettable movie of that place-name title, where the diminutive Nora Aunor bared her teats under long thick tresses.

Banaue. Who would name their child such? Perhaps only a homesick Filipino couple stranded in Beijing during Marcos' martial law years — passionate lovers of country who had to endure the bittersweet experience of exile for very long years, even as they learned inexhaustibly from a new world that had been ancient.

Mario and Alma Micalat named their first daughter Maningning, in Tagalog meaning "shining, scintillating, splendid, lustrous ..." They traveled inside vast China, and must have seen rice terraces where they were first carved, and which reminded them of the nobility of their own forebears, or at least those in Northern Luzon's Cordilleras. They named their second child Banaue.

Both girls grew up to be excellent artists. Maningning left us some years back, and yet has remained as the fount of a continuing cause for art and the written word, for she had been both painter and poet. Today the Maningning Micalat Art Foundation stages a yearly contest that alternates between painting and poetry.

Banaue Miclat grew to be an actor and performer, albeit tentatively in the shadow of a precocious older sister she lovingly called "Ate." Two years ago she left for the US, where she has just earned a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in Acting from City University of New York's Brooklyn College.

Upon her return a few weeks ago, readily did Banaue agree to the idea of showcasing her vocal prowess in a benefit concert to help raise funds for the foundation in her Ate's name.

Last Wednesday, April 25, quite a crowd of extended family and friends gathered at the Church of the Risen Lord in UP Diliman to share in Banaue's blessings. And did they ever; were they ever. I wish I could have interviewed music impresario Pablo Tariman after the show, and gleaned an authoritative set of quotes from him, as to the featured singer's outstanding performance.

For that was how I found it, but then again as layman I am also beholden to friendship with the Miclats. Yet again, others who had paid a thousand pesos for a ticket were all in praise for the 50-minute performance of 13 operatic arias, kundimans and West End theater showstoppers.

Banaue was backstopped, nay, aided and abetted, by pianist Mary Anne Espina and tenor Dondi Ong, with whom she did a couple of duets. Oh what a wonderful evening. All our fine memories of how UP Diliman can assemble a fine bunch of people in pleasant communion were revived, revived.

Here was a scene so removed from the rest of chaotic country and fractious nation. Even as politics swarmed like a plague outside, all over our islands, here in Diliman's momentary Camelot, in a Protestant church whose A-frame sanctified a blessed spot, we all enjoyed an evening of excellent music and good, godly vibes.

Banaue began mesmerizing us with Maalaala Mo Kaya by Constancio de Guzman, and followed that up with Puccini's O Mio Babbino Caro, Verdi's Saper Vorreste, and Massenet's Gavotte.

For the fifth piece (How come when it's the classics it seems inappropriate to refer to it as a number? Kahit gig din naman, a. Tell us, Pablo.), out came the young but already accomplished tenor Dondi Ong, himself a product of UP Diliman.

Why, only recently he had regaled intimate writers' company at a joint birthday celebration, honoring Karina Bolasco and Erlinda Panlilio, hosted by the latter. And yes, Charlson Ong (who claims relations, which facts deny) and I for one had essayed duets with him. Obviously, Dondi Ong was none the worse for wear after that occasion.

He sang with Banaue; oh, lovely: Verdi's Parigi, O Cara. Then Banaue left him solo onstage, er, rather, on the altar, and Dondi thrilled us further with Nicanor Abelardo's Bituing Marikit, then a stirring Nessun Dorma. The last was preceded by a charming explication of the Turandot episode where the city of Beijing is ordered by the princess to stay awake all night until someone finds out the riddle-me name of a stranger of a prince.

Bravo, Dondi.

Banaue came back to sing Puccini's Signore, Ascolta and Quando Me'n Vo, Johann Strauss' Mein Herr Marquis, and Verdi's Ave Maria, before her partner came out again for their last duet and penultimate number, er, piece: Claude-Michel Schonberg's Last Night of the World.

For the final cut, take, entry, rendition, cover — ahh, exaltation! — Banaue did Andrew Lloyd Webber's Music of the Night. Her dad Mario, with whom I was competing taking digital pictures from the front pew, sidled up and whispered impishly: "Di ba pang-lalake 'yan?" "Oo nga, naka-maskara pa."

But it was no phantom entertainment that night; it was real, it was live in the flesh, it was goose-pimplly excellent. And the applause couldn't have been capped by a better occasion than a raffle draw of paintings donated by artists Arturo Dacayo, Michael Kao, Wilbert Wee, Egai Fernandez, Nestor Vinluan, Pablo Baens Santos, Alfredo Liongoren and Manuel Baldemor. Eight lucky patrons took home good memories and fine art. But not before they partook of cocktails and a buffet dinner on the CRL's garden.

Banaue in Concert: Great Painters in a Raffle will benefit the Maningning Miclat Art Foundation, which will in turn pass on the rewards to three young poets who will win the trilingual poetry competition (in Filipino, Chinese and English).

An all-around performer, the lovely, 27-year-old Banaue has been an actress, singer and dancer who has had the good fortune of mentorship from topnotch UP professors and directors Antonio Mabesa, Alexander Cortez and José Estrella. She has appeared in dramatic plays, such as Palasyo ni Valentin, Blood Wedding, St. Louis Loves Dem Filipinos, The Trial/Ang Paglilitis, and Divinas Palabras. She also played the character Huling in Lav Diaz's multi-awarded film, Ebolusyon ng Pamilyang Pilipino.

Five years ago, she sang in Tokyo and Hirosaki in Japan, where she joined an international cast in the play Indian Summer directed by Koji Hasegawa and sponsored by Japan Foundation.

While an MFA student in New York, her membership in the Vangelina Theater boosted her talent as a dancer. She had earlier

trained with the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Dance Group. She also performed as a lyric soprano in the following productions: East Meets West with Philip Glass, Memoirs of a Geisha, Tokyo Scope, C.A.R.O.U.S.E.L., Bleu, Blanc, Rouge and Hanae Mori: A Paris-Tokyo Love Affair.

She has had vocal training under Judylee Vivier, and later under Robert A. Carpenter, as well as in Masters classes under F. Murray Abraham, Ruth Maleczech, Agnieszka Holland, Andrew Wade (RSC), Dee Cannon (Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts), and Vernon Morris (Shakespeare). Banaue qualified for a stint at the famed Metropolitan Opera, New York, in productions of Faust, La Boheme, Don Carlo, I Puritani and La Traviata.

At 27, Banaue Miclat continues to distinguish herself onstage. The world's her own, from an altar in Diliman to the hearts of family, friends, and soon, countless fans.

(Check her out at www.banauemiclat.com — and the literary contest she has generously helped out at www.maningning.com)

[Print](#) | [Back to top](#)

Copyright© philstar.com

All rights reserved