

“SAMUT-SAMOT-SIMUT-SIMOT” (Cobwebs and Flying Ants) by Norma Hennessy

The Festival state of South Australia has once again treated audiences last October and November with an array of outstanding local, interstate and international art and culture-productions under the annual Adelaide-based Oz Asia Festival. With a spectacular program of more than 435 activities and featuring its most impressive visual arts yet to date, Oz Asia Festival 2018, acclaimed as Australia’s most daring arts festival, has come a long way since its 2007 beginnings. Initially set up as an avenue to showcase traditional works from across the region, the festival has long evolved far beyond that.

Previous years saw a parade of sensational local, interstate and international talents catering to the ever continuing demand and expectation for excellence and variety from resident and visiting audiences.

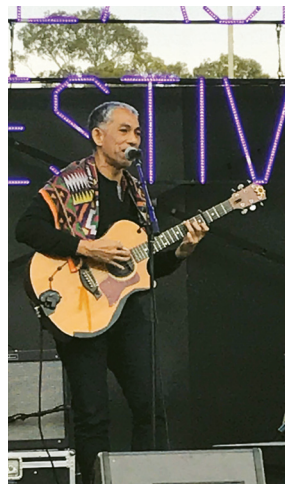
This year, Adelaide Oz Asia’s outdoor hub was a favourite festival highlight and a crowd drawer. Set up along the bank of the River Torrens where many a grand performance has been staged and marveled at before, the outdoor hub named this year as ‘Lucky Dumpling market’ propelled into centerstage outstanding international talents that rendered numbers of Asian flavor. The performances were sensational and can only be described in superlatives. Among the select international artists and musicians who were invited to perform was Philippines’ multi-awarded music icon, Joey Ayala whose unique style of music was a grand surprise.

JOEY AYALA ON SPOTLIGHT AT THE ADELAIDE’S 2018 OZ ASIA FESTIVAL

Joey Ayala was invited to perform in this year’s Oz Asia Festival by the new set of festival organizers who were faced by the challenge of surpassing the previous versions of this annual event. He arrived in Adelaide on November 2 with three members of his 6-member band “Joey Ayala at Ang Bagong Lumad”. With him were Julian Sandini Cruz, bass player; Renato Simon Tenga Santos, drummer and wife Maria Jessie Ayala, the team’s technical direc-



Joe3y Ayala



Joey Ayala onstage.



Joey Ayala with wife Jessie and drummer Renato.



Joey Ayala with Renato, Eleanor, Sabrina, Jessie, Julian and Norma.



Joey Ayala, Filipino community with Consul Johnson.

tor. (The other members who stayed behind were Malou Matute, Kulintang player and Tapatari Tarungoy, percussionist).

They were accompanied by officials from the

Philippine Department of Tourism - Sydney, Eleonor Palima and Sabrina Roces de Guzman.

Chatting casually over a cup of coffee at the hotel

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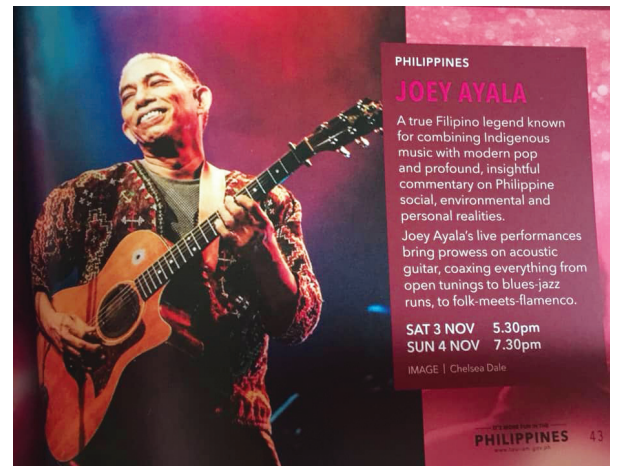
Walang Hanggang Paalam (Never Ending Farewell) By Lourdes Dueñas-Blinco

This Joey Ayala classic has haunted me ever since I got introduced to it during the 1988 Philippine Educational Theatre Association (PETA) dance and theatre movement workshop I attended that summer. It followed me through the years as I continued to meet and then say goodbye to many people and different stages of my life. □

Fast forward to my Australian adventure and I had the song on CD packed with me. Technology marched on. Joey and his “Walang Hanggang Paalam” moved on to my Ipod playlist. But then, every time I heard it, I would find myself stopping whatever I was doing and begin moving to the song. Now, in my Philippine past life as a stage director and choral & poem recitation/ declamation/oration coach, I had visualised a lot of choreography and had students perform them. On one occasion, I even dreamed about hand movements for a choral recitation I was directing. I reckon “Walang Hanggang Paalam” was subconsciously prodding me to go back to that lost chapter when thinking of stage movements was my breakfast, lunch and dinner. And this year, the opportunity presented itself! □

To celebrate Ethnic Radyo Pilipino’s 40th anniversary last September, I was again tasked to conceptualise the show. “Walang Hanggang Paalam” became our opening number to start telling the story of Ethnic Radyo Pilipino, Inc. where I have been a volunteer broadcaster since 2010. “Walang Hanggang Paalam” was the perfect song to represent the pain of leaving one’s homeland and migrating to another country. Inang Bayan (Motherland) and Juan de la Cruz (Filipino citizen) endlessly saying goodbye to each other. No one to do it so it had to be me if I wanted my imagination to finally see reality. Moreover, a partner in creative crime and a kindred soul, Ben Hur Winter, stepped in to help stitch the movement drama together. The planets had aligned and they didn’t stop there. □

Little did I know that fate was cooking something more. On the first week of November, the singer and songwriter himself flew to Adelaide as one of the featured artists in the OzAsia Festival outdoor concert se-



ries. Needless to say, I was so excited to see the singer behind my favourite song. When we arrived at the Lucky Dumpling Market concert area by the River Torrens, Joey and his band were already preparing on stage. We waved our little Philippine flags to get their attention and when they did, Celia Guillermo, ERPI president, approached Joey and shamelessly asked him if Ben Hur and I could perform our movement drama when he sings “Walang Hanggang Paalam”. No worries, he instantly and gladly said yes. So was this why this heart-rending song haunted me for three decades? O-M-G. Our first attempt on Saturday, November 3, was a surprise as I personally didn’t expect that Joey Ayala would agree to have us perform with him. I was thrilled, nervous and unprepared. Forgot some steps since we didn’t have time to review. But dang! It was the Joey Ayala singing live! Hah! □

We came back to watch him on Sunday night despite the rain (of all days in spring!). I would have been contented to watch and listen to him once more. Then came the time for his signature song. He called for the dancers to do it again! I was reluctant. I was already happy with Saturday but who was I to resist such rare offering from the Universe? So off to the front again, under the rain! I could feel Joey’s magnificent voice and magical guitar strings clutching my heart while the wet, soggy grass clung to my trembling feet trying very hard not to slip or forget the steps again. I did not. Before I knew it, the song I love so much was over and then, Joey was bidding us farewell. Paalam na naman. □

Walang Hanggang Paalam. Who would have thought? But then another song says, “A dream is a wish your heart makes”. Now I’m wishing I was a trained dancer...□□

For the video of our second performance, you may go to <https://youtu.be/tmUCBxYoRmc>