

## FACSPS Mobile Theater Worth Watching

*JP Paredes, Editor, Philippine Chronicle, Seattle, June 2001*

At times like these that I wish I had my youngest brother to help me out with crafting a review about a theater group. He's a movie/theater critic for the Manila Standard, a major broadsheet in the Philippines. He's not so much a writer, really, but more like a wordsmith who conjures clear and crisp pictures of the plot and the acting in a movie or play that one need not watch in order to know what it was all about. Anyway, let me try to critique "*Movie Artists*", a play written by the famed Wilfredo Ma. Guerrero, re-translated to English by Rufino Ignacio and presented at the Flag Pavillion in the Seattle Center as one of the highlights of the *Pagdiriwang* celebration last June 10. I am compelled to write this review because it touched a rare feeling in me that connects to my Filipino-ness, so to speak.

Here in the United States, we always pay traditional homage to our Filipino "arts and culture" through shows highlighting the best and beautiful in the Filipino through presentations of mostly music and visual arts but seldom through the genre of drama. Most of the time, we hungrily patronize the arts especially when they are imported direct from the Philippines and performed by well-known artists. "*Movie Artists*" is a different matter altogether. For one thing, we were witness to an "invasion" from the backwaters of Olympia... but wait, Olympia being the capital of Washington, it can hardly be called a hick town, of course. Anyway, we always seem to think of Seattle as the center of the universe but it took a small but dedicated group from Olympia to make me realize that we do have local Filipino talents worth watching and enjoying. Perhaps there is hope yet for us Seattleites.

The *Pagdiriwang* was stunning in a way because of the folk and tribal dances, and native songs but every year these seem to be the dish of the same art form. The dramatic group from Olympia, the FACSPS Mobile Theater, is a breath of fresh air. Ruffy Ignacio is also President of the Filipino American Community of South Puget Sound (FACSPS). Henceforth, the *Pagdiriwang* should feature this group to lend variety and excitement to the celebration for certainly every other play will be different, with the injection of culture lessons through plays.

The audience was surprised in many ways. It was totally unexpected for the spectators to be laughing all the way through the play which was masterfully performed by actors who could have been professionals except that they were really just dedicated volunteers.

Mr. Rufino Ignacio, an engineer and former Vice President of the Mindanao State University, can only be described as having a real love for cultural interchange because he found the time and energy to establish the mobile theater, aside from his full-time job as agency contract manager at the state's Department of Natural Resources.

It is not easy to organize a drama group. For starters, one needs a competent director, commitment from the actors to memorize and act their parts, and to spend hours practicing the piece. The demands of producing a play are much more challenging than folk dancing or choral singing and other performing arts, not to belittle the latter but to emphasize the dedication that one needs in order to perform even a relatively small one-act play. And so we encourage Ruffy to keep on with his work of bringing culture to the fore in theater arts. Take a bow, FACSPS Mobile Theater, Encore!