

# 62nd Street FORUM

"Where ideas flourish"

NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER

Volume Num 2

Published by the NY 62nd Street Forum

April, 2007

## New Issues for Past Lectures - Bandurria

*The terrific reception for the past couple of 62nd Forum events has prompted us to formalize the recent lectures in an attractive and more permanent format.*

*The first newsletter, published in 2003, covered the Forum's activities up to the third lecture. It was issued in hardcopy black & white.*

*This 2nd volume will follow the format of the first, featuring the write-ups of the lectures, with pictures, and commentary. However, it will be issued solely in PDF form, with it's consistent and printable layout. And this time, pictures will be in color. As more newsletters are issued, the other earlier lectures will be covered, but not necessarily in chronological order.*

Editor

-----OOO-----

Lecture XXXI  
March 18, 2007  
by Johnny Reyes

Michael Dadap, world-famous classical guitar virtuoso from the Sugbuanon-speaking region of the Philippines, is talented -- and popular. When the head count of those who indicated they would like to listen to Mike speak passed 20, I got nervous and asked Amador whether there was a maximum limit to his brownstone's capacity. As he often does, our host evaded the question and replied simply, "Impressive! Mike is a crowd drawer." Interpreting this as *carte blanche*, I eagerly fielded the subsequent RSVP's with a Come-One-Come-All message. The old record for attendance was 23 -- during Tony Oposa's talk on "Marine Biodiversity in the Philippines" in October 2006 -- but at that time we were augmented by a large group of Sigma Deltans. Now, there were potentially 35 attendees. For Plan B, we could always declare the evening standing-room-only.

On Sunday March 18 itself, at the appointed time of 6:30 Amador and Gloria's place was packed, and buzzing with anticipation. Jane Orendain's three foreign guests did not materialize, but as



As there were no good pictures from the March 18 lecture, here are earlier photos that visually describe a typical 62nd Forum event. Above photo shows the back section of Amador's first floor where furniture can be moved around to fit the occasion. Often times, the area is cleared for a dance or play demo. Bottom photo shows another important aspect of the forum: the gustatory. Here, Chit Inciong, Cora Custodio and Lisa Gil partake of the potluck. Left photo is Michael Dadap at Exhibition Hall of the newly opened Negros Oriental Convention Center in Dumaguete where the 2nd International Rondalla festival was held mid February. Flanking Michael is a concert type bandurria he designed. This festival inspired the 62nd Forum group to request Michael to give his lecture.

usual she had already made herself useful and organized a team of furniture movers so that the speaker could be positioned at the north end of the living room, by the French windows. A lot of newcomers were present: the Ledesma sisters from Rockland County NY, Bambi and Pinky (she had attended once before, during the evening of "Turbulence" in September 2004), and their friend Yasmin. The only one missing was Bopeep, sister #3, who was in the Philippines. Yasmin said she is a rondalla member -- a promising development.

Another newcomer was Frank Jimenez, a former seminarian who outed and then moved on to La Salle -- where he received a fine college education (this was long before Taft became co-ed).

Since he currently lives in West Orange NJ, he knows many of the 62nd Street Forum members and was easily at home with the crowd. More newcomers: the notorious raider and ipo-ipo Bert Peronilla, his wife Mary Ann, and his antique violin (with which he hoped to perform a duet with Mike Dadap before the night was over). The couple brought along Mary Ann's sister, Grace Montelibano. Then there was Matt Geraghty, jazz bassist, who was dragged in by his friend, 62nd Street Forum regular John Entrada -- unfortunately, Mark could stay only until 7:30. The only one missing was Michael Dadap.

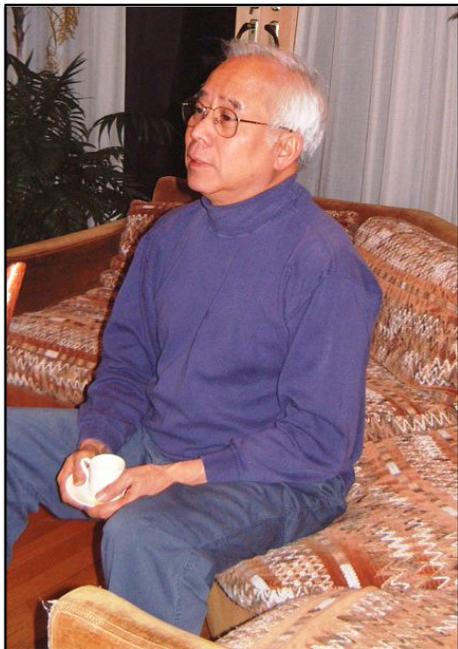
Nora dela Serna, another Forum regular, arrived half an hour late, as she had advised beforehand she would. When told

the speaker was still not around, she smiled and said, "Why -- didn't you know? Michael is always late." While we were waiting for the scheduled speaker to arrive, Amador conjured up a few impromptu numbers:

1. A surprise appearance by famous writer and UP alumna Ninotchka Rosca, who read to us an episode from her forthcoming novel, "Undocumented." As you can guess from the title, it's about the pathetic circumstances in the U.S. of an illegal immigrant woman from the Philippines. In the excerpt, the Filipina nanny is made to wait at her masters' house while the couple stay out late -- she misses the last train home before her only day off. To make matters worse, she gets swindled out of an hour's overtime pay as a result of the switchback from daylight-saving time, which was scheduled to happen that night, and which her employers were quick to take advantage of. In reply to a question, Ninotchka confirmed that movie arrangements were being discussed.

2. A brief speech by smartly-dressed Bert Florentino, very recent (Philippine) Presidential Awardee on Literature, who came with his wife Eva. Amador asked how he felt about accepting an award from a President he didn't like. Bert replied he hadn't even physically received it yet, because he was being invited to fly to Malacanang -- at his own expense.

3. A talk by Amador himself on his latest hobby: "Sculpting with Mathematics." He



Host Amador Muriel listening raptly in one of the earlier lectures, always ready to lead on the discussions should they start going astray.

had observed that generating equations graphically in three dimensions produces interesting shapes. But unless one can create a 3-D hologram, one can only see a two-dimensional image on a computer screen. What Amador had been doing was to construct physical models of the most beautiful mathematical figures, using sticks glued or tied together. At first glance, his toys looked like the bird cages sold at Quiapo, but a closer examination inside the outer box frames revealed intricate and fascinating forms which showed different facets from every viewing angle. Amador said he knows someone who can convert his wooden sculptures into durable and pretty metal -- possibly the start of a profitable marketing business.

Still no sign of Mike Dadap. Matt already had to leave earlier. Meanwhile, the audience happily attacked the Yellow Tail shiraz (brought by Carlos and Arlene Esguerra) and the sushi; cheeses; leche flan; ginataan; etc. (contributed by various people). Hey, wasn't there another musician in the house? Bert Peronilla was persuaded to perform a violin solo, something he'd only done in the shower before. So out came his precious instrument, which he'd bought from Prof. Julio Tapales more than 50 years ago, and bow met strings.

Before Bert could start with his third piece, Mike Dadap arrived at last, with an entourage of two ladies from the Ma-Yi Theater Company (dalawang babayi na taga Ma-Yi): Lyca Benitez-Brown and Myrna Anover. While Mike was unpacking and organizing all the bandurrias he had brought, Lyca invited everyone to patronize and support Ma-Yi productions (commercial break).

Michael had prepared a list of some 25 questions, which he distributed at the start of his talk, intended to stimulate the audience's interest and provide a self-test on how much we knew about the bandurria. Then he intended to demolish the myths and sort out our knowledge of this underrated musical instrument.

The gist of Michael's talk follows:

-- The bandurria is a relative of the mandolin, lute, bandola, etc., which originated in Southern Europe more than a thousand years ago. During the Middle Ages, the Spanish bandurria started out with 3 strings, which became 4 during the Renaissance. The bandurria surged in popularity in the Baroque period, when the strings were increased to 10 (5 pairs). The modern Spanish bandurria has 12 strings (6 pairs). Other members of the immediate bandurria family are the laud

contralto, the laud tenor, the laudon, and the laud contrabajo.

-- Filipino musicians, with a penchant for innovation, modified the bandurria and increased the strings further to 14 (in a 3-3-3-2-2-1 pattern).

-- But unlike in Europe where the instrument is accorded due respect and concert-quality music is written for and performed on it, in the Philippines the bandurria is looked down upon. Those who do play it are entertainers, not artists. If a person who can't even read notes is capable of plucking strings with a regular beat, puede na siyang pang-musiko sa fiesta, and that's as far as the bandurria goes.

-- Philippine bandurrias are sold to tourists, who don't play them but merely display them on their living room walls as decoration. Because the items go cheap, the manufacturers don't bother with quality, but simply mass-produce pretty objects that look like bandurrias. Mike showed us examples: the fret spacing was irregular -- you might even say random. When you buy a bandurria, Mike said you should insist on structural quality: the distance between frets must decrease progressively as the pitch increases, and the chords must be playable -- i.e., with enough room for one's fingers to hold the correct string (or group of strings) down without affecting the adjacent strings. (Especially important if your fingers are not as long and fine as Mike's.) Hopefully, you will influence the Philippine bandurria cottage industry to produce better-quality products.

-- The instrument also deserves more respect. The rondalla (of which the bandurria is the star performer) should be on center stage, not playing background music hidden behind a curtain. Mike is doing his part by training music teachers to inspire talented students and impart the correct techniques to them.

But we really didn't come to hear Michael speak. We came to hear him play. When his talk seemed over, I asked if he could give a demonstration. Mike replied that none of the bandurrias he had with him worked right. It was obvious the Philippine bandurria was not an instrument he was comfortable with, and he did not want to give a sub-par (by his standards) performance. Yasmin saved the situation by volunteering to play one of the bandurrias available, if Mike would accompany her on his classical guitar. Out came Mike's favorite instrument, and soon the two were producing beautiful music. With Yasmin merely playing the notes of the (do re mi) scale and Mike providing the harmonics, it sounded like

they were performing a classical piece. If you saw the movie "Amadeus," you will recall that upstart Mozart took a simple tune composed by National Artist Salieri and completely transformed it by adding overtones when he played it, something only a virtuoso artist could perform on the spot. (Salieri of course was green with envy.)

Then Mike Dadap played two solo pieces on his classical guitar, one Filipino and the other European. Our wish was fulfilled -- we forgot about the bandurria. Mike sitting at center stage and his guitar were one harmonious whole, and it was sheer pleasure to watch and listen. (John Entrada recorded this part on his videocam.)

Following is a list of those who were present:

1. Michael Dadap;
- 2,3. Amador & Gloria Muriel;
- 4,5. Bert & Eva Florentino;
6. Marie Luarca-Reyes;
7. Mayu Gonzales;
- 8,9. Carlos & Arlene Esguerra;
10. Jane Orendain;
- 11,12. Javher & Pilar Advani;
13. Nora dela Serna;
14. Pinky Ledesma-Salgado;
15. Bambi Ledesma;
16. Yasmin Yabyabin;
17. Frank Jimenez;
- 18,19. Bert & Mary Ann Peronilla;
20. Grace Montelibano;
21. John Entrada;
22. Matt Geraghty (left early);
23. Rebecca Magbag;
24. Ninotchka Rosca;
25. Lyca Benitez-Brown;
26. Myrna Anover;
- 27,28. Johnny & Mila Reyes

-----000-----



Johnny Reyes in one of his earlier lectures: on petrochemicals, while better half Mila listens.

*Much of content in the previous newsletter was plucked from internet email exchanges, and this issue is no exception. Here's one from Michael expounding on his views on Philippine folk music. We had earlier met in Dumaguete and I had written up a short report on the Rodalla Festival there.*

Dear Danny,

Its great to be back in the 62nd Forum Loop again. Thank you for forwarding me your letters from Dumaguete. I could not have given a better, clearer, and most informative account than you did. Daghang salamat. Most importantly, I was truly overjoyed to see you both in Dumaguete. I wanted to stay longer but one can only do so much. (If you have any problem with the bandurria please let me know and I will personally bring it to the maker if necessary. Sometimes the wood can change due to weather conditions.)

I am very happy that the International Festival had given the bandurria and our rondalla ensembles great exposure for all Pilipinos at home and abroad. I hope this will continue. There is still a lot to do to improve our ensembles. The International Festival is a great start but what could be more significant is when we spread our advocacy (like what you are doing now) to promote our culture through the music of bandurria ensembles. I truly appreciate everything you have done.

My job is simply to rally and ask support from my colleagues, friends as well as to all classically or music conservatory trained professional musicians to give our folk instruments a chance to become prominent in major concert stages. I dream someday that the bandurria will be a part of the curriculum in our music conservatories. Unless classical musicians with great stature will rally side by side to help promote the improvement of our folk instruments, solo and ensemble performances, and compositions, I am afraid that we will have a hard and long campaign to cultivate and educate Filipino audiences in appreciating high level concert performances by Filipino folk instrumentalists.

As proven by our own Kwerdas, the Russian, and Israeli groups, (they are conservatory trained musicians) the plucked instrument thus belongs to the main arena of sophisticated and highly educated concert audiences. Our great disadvantage for now is that we are ignoring the proper instrumental training for our children in the elementary schools about the bandurria. I am embarrassed to admit that most of our kababayan's attitude towards the bandurria is rather low at this point in time. This is what truly inspired me to



The Philippine folk string ensemble: Bandurria, Octavina and Laud. Picture scanned from the book of Michael Dadap.

write the book "The Virtuoso Bandurria" hoping it will provide our teachers additional tools to teach our children the art of making beautiful music through the bandurria.

I simply can not accept that our children will be deprived to hear, enjoy and love the masterworks of great composers like Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and including our very own Abelardo, Molina, De Leons etc., just because they are economically challenged and have no access to good teachers and fine musical instruments. I believe that a well made and high quality bandurria is a great alternative. It is after all, very affordable and accessible to all Pilipinos. It is our treasure and a great testament to our rich cultural heritage.

I envision that in the near future, when all of us can work on the same page together, we will literally and figuratively pick the bandurria up from the streets and bring it to the concert halls. You and I and many others have seen it work. It gave us joy and I hope I am not being presumptuous to say that let us all together spread this joy to as many Filipinos we can reach out.

Yours, Michael

#### Editorial Box

Send in your ideas, comments, pictures, trivia to [ferngil@yahoo.com](mailto:ferngil@yahoo.com) for possible inclusion in the forthcoming issues.

*The membership of the email loop presently totals about 101. Those who have attended any of the lectures are automatically put into the roster if they have email, unless we fail to get their names and addresses. There always is the option for members to unsubscribe. Others are those who have sought membership and/or have been invited to join.*

*A listing of all members will be included in a future issue.*

*As the logo in the heading goes "where ideas flourish", the forum encourages avid discussion. Much of the exchanges develop a thread that often times leads to surprising conclusions. This attests to the bantering nature of many of it's members who have a great sense of humor.*

*Below is an excerpted example of such an exchange.*

*From John Entrada:*

After my wife Genevieve gave birth last month, she was itching to get back to her original figure, so she took to the exercise bike. While she was out of the gym nursing the baby, I found an old Honda alternator, hooked it up to the flywheel of the exercise bike, and hooked the alternator into a power inverter. I then plugged the television into the power inverter. Now, if she wants to watch television, she has to maintain a constant speed of at least 30 mph on the bike. Otherwise, the television will shut off.

Anyway, I'm working out a deal with the Chinese to install these contraptions in their prisons. They're hoping to put their political prisoners to work while also trying to manage the energy requirements of a rapidly growing economic superpower.

*From Carlos Esguerra:*

There is an article in today's (March 1) front page of the Wall Street Journal about a gym in Hongkong (California Fitness Health Club) that is already doing this. The gym had rigged up 13 machines, so that when all the machines are in use, they generate up to 300 watts, enough to power three 27-inch TV sets, five 60-watt light bulbs or several video iPods. They calculate if all the exercise machines are in use 10 hours a day for a year, they can save \$183 worth of electricity. They calculated it will take them 82 years to pay off the initial \$15,000 investment.

*From Danny Gil:*

It really all boils down to economics. Even the hybrid cars, if scrutinized under that criteria, turns out to be not such a good deal.

But as with environmentalism, one has to start somewhere.

*From John Entrada:*

Re: Pedal Power

That's fantastic. Shows that there's a market out there for my contraption. Now all I need is to contract with prison systems in countries that allow for prison labor.

*From Bert Peronilla:*

I ran a feasibility test for the input side on my Sears Lifestyler DT1000

which has roughly an 18" flywheel. I pedaled as fast as I could for 30 minutes and the best that I could do was 13 mph. Is it possible to just forget the inverter and get a TV which runs on 12-volt DC?

P.S. Using the concept of tandem bikes, is it also possible to have 50 bikes in tandem, say in a 5 x 10 arrangement to serve as a public bus where the passengers use muscle power to get the bus moving? I feel sorry for the bus driver if the bus is empty :-))

*More from Bert Peronilla after obviously looking at the economics involved:*

How about this scenario? A 50-seat tandem bike bus in Manhattan which will run for 8 hours a day and average 300 passengers per hour on a good day. Charge \$1.00 per passenger which is half of a regular bus fare. That will gross \$2,400.00 per day x 30 days = \$72,000.00 per month. Maybe the bike bus can be built for \$36,000.00? Payout will be 15 days, ignoring the time value of money which is probably acceptable since the payout period is very short.

*From Johnny Reyes:*

The transmission of Bert's 50-cycle bus can be designed for 4 speeds: cruising speed; overtaking speed; attack speed; and ramming speed. It will need a backward-facing seat at the front of the bus for the drummer with double hammers, and a wide aisle along the centerline with sufficient safety clearance for the man with the whip. Then the company can have a captive clientele.

*The clincher:*

In other words, my bus is also a dominatrix mobile? There will be less passengers, but we can charge \$50.00 per passenger instead of a dollar. Painfully. Bert P

-----000-----

*John Entrada emailed a week or so later:*

Here's the recording of "Gugma" as played by Michael Dadap. I'm still trying to figure out this Garageband software. Never used it before. So, the sound is a little hissy. Anyway:

<http://www.bananaheart.com/Gugma.mp3>

-----000-----

*There are three moderators in this YahooGroups loop: Johnny Reyes, Bert Peronilla, and yours truly. From Johnny comes this how-to email.*

Prime Moderator Danny Gil has just posted photos of previous 62nd Street Forum sessions on our website. To view them, follow these steps:

-- Go to the Yahoo log-in page and log in.  
-- Click on the little Yahoo above the big

red Yahoo at the upper left corner of the Yahoo Mail page.

- Click on Groups.
- Click on 62ndForum.
- Click on Photos.

Enjoy.

Regards. Johnny

-----000-----

## NEWS SECTION

*Host Amador Muriel continues his tour in Europe with Gloria. Excerpted emails :*

We're leaving for Geneva tomorrow. Geneva to complete my succession plan formalities. Paris to confer with a metal worker to convert my "La reve de Lissajous" into a metal mold. Back to Geneva to coordinate all my talks. So far the first lecture will be in Oldenburg, on 4 April, as I finalize plans for Lausanne, Zurich and Amsterdam. We bought a Eurailpass for the two of us for 15 days of travel between these cities. Might get another 15 days if necessary. Physics dominates my time.

I had a most difficult time getting a Schengen visa, and only until May! This is good penance to remind me of my roots, coming from a "terrorist" country. It was frustrating producing 3 months of bank data, hotel reservations, air tickets, insurance letters!

It is exciting in the turbulence field, in physics and in forex!

*For the information of those who recently joined the email loop, Amador has parlayed the predictive nature of his turbulence theory into financial trading, and for almost 2 years, has been running a mini hedge fund dealing in forex. Last year, he incorporated in Geneva. A number of us are investors for the past 6 quarters and can attest to the very respectable rate of return. Amador has traders in Switzerland, the Philippines and the US.*

-----000-----



At a party in Geneva November 2006 hosted by Egay (in stripped shirt) & wife -- members of the Geneva team; Amador & Gloria; and Danny & Lisa Gil (at each end) of the Philippine team.