

International Cultural Festival in New York City put together by FFWPU families

Marivir R. Montebon
February 26, 2017



New York City – Last Sunday, February 26, I had the wonderful chance to see the artistic side of the diverse cultures that fuel New York’s economy in an international cultural festival put together by families of the World Family Federation of World Peace and Unification. The family and community event took place in the city’s heart, on 43rd Street and 5th Avenue with the theme Forgive, Love, and Unite.

Filipino-American Jennifer Theriot (daughter of Joy Theriot) donning the Japanese kimono which was offered by the Japanese American community for the audience to try on during the festival.

Joy Theriot, Filipino leader and recruitment director of the Unification Theological Seminary, had text messaged the night before if I could, or my daughter Nikki, dance the subli (a Philippine religious Catholic dance with animist origins) as a Philippine presentation to the program.

I laughed out loud and begged off, because dancing is just not our gift. But boy, I was eager to come to the fest that Sunday afternoon and be one with the celebration. Rev. Edner Pierre-Louis (UTS'04), in his inspirational message, emphasized that united and loving families are the core to a happy and prosperous society. The festival, which was hosted by Tina Fields Zelada and Rafael Sanchez, was truly uplifting in these challenging times and indeed a time well-spent for me. Diversity is New York’s strength and it has always celebrated this unique character.

Music teacher and choir master Robert E. Hall swept everyone off their feet as he sang a beautiful Latino love song in the early part of the show. The Kay Pachac Ecuadorian Folk Dance was a spectacular burst of raw energy and color unique to Ecuadorian ethnic tradition mixed with Andalusian and Spanish influence.

The foot work and grace of the Peruvian Marinera dance stunned everyone in the audience, and for sure, many wished they could sway and glide like the dancing duo. With roots on the Spanish fandango, African zamacueca, and indigenous couple dances, the Marinera dance, Peru's national dance, portrays a couple's flirtatious pursuit.

Fernando de Sousa played a nostalgic love song on the violin and the Japanese choir sang a song of gratitude. The Matryoshka (literally meaning Russian nesting doll) Russian choir sang a vibrant Russian folk song that sent everyone clapping in glee to their tune.

My Filipina friends led by Joy Theriot, along with beauty titlist Mrs. Philippines America 2013 Cherry Marmes Smyth, Shirley Harris, Jennifer Theriot, and Hazel Bahian, gracefully and cheerfully danced the subli.

There were mime artists who portrayed the life in faith in a comical manner and the lovely Marina Falconi rendered an Argentinian song.

The dinner was a smorgasbord of international cuisine. I had rice (of course) with Italian shell pasta in olive oil, the Spanish pulled pork adobo, and a blueberry pie. The night ended with people excited with bingo game. Only a lucky few had shouted to win bingo! For my part, I shouted mabuhay, arigato, thank you, merci, salamat for the diversity that is New York.