

PCGNY honors Jose Garcia Villa

Written by Philippine Consulate General - New York
Saturday, 03 November 2018 13:23



Topmost: Admirers of the National Artist for Literature, Jose Garcia Villa, pose for a souvenir photo with Consul General Claro S. Cristobal, Luis H. Francia and some of the relatives of Villa. Bottom (from left to right) Consul General Cristobal opens the event with his own reading of Villa's poem; Stefano Ortiz, and Jack Lynch read excerpts of Villa's poems. □ (Photos by NYPCG)

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***“First, a poem must be magical,
Then musical as a seagull.
It must be a brightness moving
And hold secret a bird’s flowering
It must be slender as a bell,
And it must hold fire as well”***

And so it was that Consul General Claro S. Cristobal recited one of the most beautiful lines of poetry by Philippine National Artist for Literature, Jose Garcia Villa, during a night of poetry held on Oct. 24, 2018 at the Philippine Center, in celebration of the Filipino-American History Month.

“And it is thanks to literary geniuses, such as Jose Garcia Villa — who has revolutionized poetry through his ‘comma poems’ and ‘reverse consonance’ rhyme scheme — that we continue to be invigorated in both mind and soul,” stated the consul general during his welcome remarks.

During this night of poetry, Luis H. Francia, professor of Hunter College and New York University, who learned poetry in workshops with Villa at Greenwich Village, gave a brief lecture about the “Pope of Greenwich Village.”

He narrated how Villa disliked the use of the word “so” at all costs.

Francia also remembers Villa discouraging the reading of fiction, as it confuses the poet, and rather urging his students to be single-minded and faithful to their own views.

Francia further learned from Villa that in poetry, meaning was in a sense an enemy, and that it is not the purpose of poetry, stressing that in poetry, language shapes the meaning.

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He also stated that lyric poetry was what Villa favored, as his poems were written not with ideas but with words.

Another important principle that he mentioned was Villa's pleasure principle, citing that a good poem entices the reader to be receptive to the inner poem.

Elda Rotor, Vice President & Publisher at Penguin Classics, introduced Villa's book, *Doveglion: Collected Poems*, which was published by Penguin Random House in 2008 for the Centennial of Jose Garcia Villa's birth.

She recalled how a postcard, showing a photograph of a group of literary artists in the 1940's, which included Villa, has fascinated her entire career.

Rotor shared that until 2017 only eight percent of the children's books reviewed were authored by Asian-American author, and added that the children and young adult books are more progressive than adult book industry, making it very rare to have Asian-American literary authors, much less poets, published.

She stressed that it is remarkable that there was a Filipino poet who thrived in various literary circles more than 75 years ago, as represented by Villa, who was also considered twice for the Pulitzer's prize.

She applauded the Filipino and Asian-American scholars and writers who have worked to keep Villa's works relevant.

She urged the support of Filipino writers to preserve the rich artistic literary history of the Philippines.

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Stefano Ortiz, a new graduate of New School where Villa taught from 1964 to 1973; and Jack Lynch, professor, emeritus of City of New York and was a student of Villa, both read an excerpt from Doveglion: Collected Poems.

Lance Villa, son of Villa, was invited to the event.

He sent his three cousins to represent the family to the event namely, Misses Mila Villanueva, Mary Villanueva and Maria Cohen.

The night ended with the audience being serenaded with Kudiman songs by soprano Joy Abalon Tamayo accompanied by guitarist Chaitanya Sangco Tamayo, both of whom are graduates of the UP College of Music.