



**On Call**

by **Dr. Romulo Aromin, JR**

The rising epidemic of this vector-borne viral disease, transmitted by infected and very aggressive female mosquito, primarily daytime biters, is now causing alarm in the US. *A. aegypti*, accounting for most of the infections, can thrive in a pool of water. In the US, it is typically localized in Florida and along the Gulf Coast, where stagnant bodies of water are found. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first local outbreak, occurring only in the last week of July, was from this state. Upon exposure, it usually takes about two weeks before one feels sick, with mild flu-like symptoms of fever and malaise, joint pains, red eyes, a headache. A weakness of the muscles resulting in paralysis, Guillain-Barre Syndrome, can be triggered in small cases. A Zika infection usually confers long-term immunity such that re-infection is unlikely.

Travelers who are already infected can transmit the disease through mosquito bites. To a lesser extent, an infection can be had through sexual intercourse, even though the infected individual does not feel anything during the sexual act. The epidemic that has overwhelmed Brazil in a most inopportune Summer Olympics event will add to the spread of this disease across the globe. Almost close to 2,000 cases of Zika related microcephaly in Brazil have been reported, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). This infection is reminiscent of the avian virus, among viral illnesses, that had affected major countries and had

# ZIKA: WHEN AVOIDING EXPOSURE IS BEST

spread intercontinentally. The swath of spread was far and wide!

Of significant public health issue is the transmission from mother to fetus, during pregnancy or at birth. Zika causes congenital birth defects to include diminution of the head (microcephaly) with resultant developmental and cognitive impairment. It is staggering to think the burden that it can pose from a public health viewpoint. We are going to see a cohort of affected individuals whose health problems start at birth and onwards. Imagine the resulting impairments in cognitive functioning, custodial care and need for long term rehabilitation.

## EXTENT OF PROBLEM

As of this writing, there were only four reported cases in FL, but Puerto Rico is increasingly at its wits end in even containing the epidemic. According to CDC, about 41% of pregnant women with symptoms tested positive for the virus, whereas about 5% who do not feel sick tested positive. The spread is alarming that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that one in four people is likely to be infected by the year end.

## HOW TO PREVENT IT?

There is no vaccine for treatment. From a preventive level, avoiding mosquito bites entails steering away from breeding places. Use of window screens, nettings, long sleeve shirts, permethrin-treated protective gears (jackets, pants, boots) and repellants, purported to be safe in breastfeeding, can be very helpful and so are

protected and safer sex practices, to include condoms. Women in their childbearing age are encouraged to discuss with their physicians and consider the most effective birth control for them should they wish to avoid or delay pregnancy. For those infected, the waiting period is about eight weeks for women and about 6 months for men, before considering pregnancy.

If you are sick, consult with your doctor. Take acetaminophen and avoid aspirin before other febrile conditions, in particular, dengue, has been ruled out. This is so as aspirin can worsen any bleeding that may result from such infection.

“Diad onsublay “

An advisory from the CDC is a helpful resource: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>

Dr. Aromin is a physician based in Manhattan.

(This is meant as a general information; medical opinion is best left to your physician).



# Pulsong Gotham

By Castellanes GKN



Rogelio Peñaverde Jr

**A**s I have lived and worked in Manhattan for almost two decades now, my city continues to be a laboratory of a mélange of culture, of things tried and tested, those that have endured, on the cutting edge, and the full spectrum in between. In the order of ordinary events, local Pinoys go on with their usual schedules. But who are they? What do they do? How have they, in their own ways both knowingly and unknowingly, contributed to the Pinoy Culture in the greater New York, and elsewhere? My goal is to expose to a larger audience the finer pursuits and undertakings of our fellow kababayans, authentically Pinoy and yet putting their stamp on New York.

081016. Rose Bar at the Gramercy Park Hotel. Ian Schrager in design, in collaboration with Julian Schnabel's custom-inspired furniture. Gothic with lush velvets of deep saturated and dark hues, and walls adorned by a rotating display of 20<sup>th</sup> century art by masters including Warhol,

Haring, Prince, and Hirst, it is evocative of stage designs at the Metropolitan Opera. Befitting as the backdrop to meet Rogelio Peñaverde Jr, our bel canto opera tenor, who started his career in Manhattan, in the year 2007.

Though his parents are bankers, "Music has always been there because my parents are opera singers." He continued his voice tutoring as he completed his Master of Arts Degree in Communication and went on to work in advertising for a number of years. His vocal teacher, Judy Mendoza, whom he hailed as the "Kundiman queen," further encouraged him to apply for a scholarship at the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Conservatory of Music. He became a Merit Scholar and was trained by mentors Salvacion Dominguez, Gloria Coronel, and Dean Dr. Raul Sunico. It was with their encouragement that he pursued further training in the US.

"If you think that the Philippines is tough, try competing with Americans and Europeans, you know, in a field that should be theirs. Historically, it's their thing and for an Asian to come and say, I'm gonna sing opera now... " He stood his ground and claimed it. He was a Merit Scholar and finished a Master in Music Degree, Major in Voice, from the Manhattan School of Music. He also received numerous scholarships to help refine his talent.

As he further pursued his career, he was affronted by the palpable bias he encountered during auditions along ethnic grounds. He was also acknowledging of attempts made to remedy these problems within the arts community. Peñaverde describes the world of opera that speaks of ways that are universal. The commonality of the human experience; that of love for truth, justice, and romance and overcoming barriers as being shared by all, is transcendent, regardless of race. This conviction reminds him to continue breaking each barrier as he moves on. With classical opera as an art niche in itself, he found his support through a circle of friends in the field with whom he has met professionally and has grown to be his support system both artistically and personally.

He has appeared in about 24 works and had joined a number of companies including the New York City Opera, Caramoor International Music Festival, Bronx Opera Company, Taconic Opera, Liederkranz Opera Theater, Bel Cantanti Opera, DiCapo Opera, Tuscia Opera Festival in Italy, and the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

His last project was *!Figaro!* (90210), a new modified adaptation of the Mozart opera, in an off-Broadway production at the Duke at 42nd St. He was part of the ensemble and was an understudy for the lead role. With a comedic slant, it timely addressed issues of diversity and immigration. He found this work challenging as new works pose for interpretations in somewhat uncharted waters with the public response as the acid test. It had an additional run as a result of an overwhelmingly positive public nod. In a short visit to the Philippines in April, he joined his mentor and internationally renowned pianist, Dr. Raul Sunico, in a "Melodies & Memories," concert at the College of the Holy Spirit (CHS) in Manila. He is currently preparing for *Mathis de Maler* with the Garden State Opera.

As for his performance with the Filipino opera *Noli Me Tangere*, with its final debut at the Kennedy Theater in

Washington DC, in 2014, he was proud and humbled to have been a part of a new production that was performed to accolades. He was quick to acknowledge that creating such a new opera for an audience demands much more as failings are so much more remembered.

Penaverde realizes that Filipino singers offer a wealth of talents. Sadly, however, that such performances have still been below the radar that no distinct features define them, "What is his identity as a musician?" He shared a personal experience of not being able to answer when asked by a fellow musician (an American) on where to get copies of songs (*kundiman*) he had rendered. This is a loss that is bidirectional to both the Filipino artist and his audience. "We are missing, out and they're missing out." It is this motivation that propelled him, together with a group of friends, to produce a series on Great Filipino Composers.

The seminal offering centered on the classical and traditional music of Nicanor Abelardo. This year, the National Artist for Music for 1999 Ernani Cuenco, will be showcased. He was chosen for his prolific career in musical direction, composition, and education and more importantly, his successful bridging of the traditional and the modern. Of note was the composer's stamp in film scoring, along with Levi Celerio, well captured the language of general sentimentality that continues to resonate until today. Who will forget "Diligin mo ng Hamog ang Uhaw na Lupa," *Kalesa*, "Bato sa Buhangin," and "Gaano Kita Kamahal," Filipino love songs imbued with the spirit of *Kundiman*. The concert will be on September 27<sup>th</sup>, Saturday, at the Loreto Theater at the Sheen Center, 18 Bleeker St., New York, NY. Tickets are available at [www.sheencenter.org](http://www.sheencenter.org) for \$100 and \$45.

He looks forward to tackling the technical and artistic challenges of giving life to the arias of *Nemorino* ("Una furtiva lagrima," Gaetano Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amor* opera) and unsurprisingly, in doing novel works like *Rock of Ages*. He is introspective when asked to provide guidance to early career artists. "Try to know yourself as a musician, try to identify yourself and your passions." Essentially, the artist has to be free. You cannot sing being someone else." He is now bent on exploring other areas of the musical genre, production, composition, arrangement, and direction.

*Bellissimo!*

# A TRIBUTE TO ERNANI CUENCO

September 17 (Saturday)  
8:00pm  
Loreto Theater of the Sheen Center  
18 Bleeker Street New York, NY 10012