

THE FILIPINO E-MAGAZINE IN EUROPE

# Roots & wings

CULTURE PEOPLE PLACES

*-on this issue-*

RYAN ARBILO

LEA VED

EXPLORING LONDON

THE EUROPINOY CONCERT

*July of 2018*

# Dear Kababayans



**We at  
Roots&Wings  
warmly welcome  
you to this Summer  
issue brimming with  
awesomely inspiring  
stories about Euro-Pinoys.**

For the last nine years, we have inspired, strengthened and built bridges of friendship and understanding through articles and stories about our fellow kababayans, through cultural, artistic, travel and diplomatic achievements and activities.

We know that being at the right place at the right time has helped many of us arrive and thrive at where we are now. But some of us has this Passion and this Perseverance (P&P) that takes us even farther and even higher as the articles in this issue can prove.

Let us take a look at Lea Ved, Prima ballerina. To be able to leap and soar joyfully in mid-air is something many of us would wish to do. But Lea has spent years and years of practice and dedication in this field. Armed with loads of stamina and P&P she showed us it can be done! A thousand thanks to Lea for sharing with us her inspirational story and we take our hats off for Ivey for once again taking time out of her busy schedule to share such wonderful gift of writing.

Then there is Ryan Arbilo, who against all odds, managed to cross the border between the Impossible and Possible, armed with courage and lots of P&P. Indeed, his journey is epic. We raise our glasses to Agnes for an amazing article. Wow!

Enjoy Betsy von Atzigen's two articles from Switzerland. About how Swiss-Pinoys' celebrated Philippine Independence Day. Incomparable. Many thanks Betsy for sharing this wonderful event with us. We are happy and grateful for the marvellous interview with His Honorable Philippine Ambassador to Switzerland, Denis Yap Lepatan. Again, a lot of P&P is involved here! Cheers!

Someone said - "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of Life". Reading Lorna Real's travelogue, makes us wish to visit London again and again. Definitely, we will never get tired of London. And as for Life? The journey goes on..

We thank all our writers, whose generosity and untiring love of writing keeps the fire burning for our magazine. Let us never get tired of sharing great inspirational stories with our kababayans!

We Euro-Pinoys are growing in number. Let us take my own personal example. In the early 80's when I first arrived in Europe, I arrived as one person. With my three children and their immediate families, we are now seven and growing. Then my three sisters, original Euro-Pinoys and their immediate families, we are on our way to being 30.

Together our communities can be stronger! But perhaps we need to reach out even more, to work effectively together, to support each other, to be helpful and kind to one another?

Have a super splendid summer!

*Rachel Hansen*  
Editor-in-Chief & Founder

# the team



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Roots&Wings Filipino Magazine in Europe



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RYAN ARBILO

# DECODING THE CHICKEN HANDS

words by Agnes Pedrosa Marelid | Abu Dhabi  
photos by Ryan Arbilo | Paris

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*A couple of weeks ago, I read an article at The Filipino Times newspaper in Dubai about Filipino overseas workers getting more and more irritated with families back home in the Philippines who complain particularly about the ‘pasalubong’ or presents they get.*

Some families back home wanted more and expected more, their insatiable needs and expensive demands do not equate to how little pay Filipinos abroad are earning. One can only wish that they took a good look at Ryan Arbilo’s photographs. It is a series of photographs showing damaged and disfigured hands of Filipinas working in affluent homes in Paris. The black and white photographs entitled “Chicken Hands” speak for themselves. One photograph alone could produce a muffled cry within us as it depicts a stark reality of women’s plight and sacrifices while working abroad.

The diaspora of Filipino women, the arduous physical labor, the separation from loved ones, the loneliness, the homesickness, the

maltreatment and sometimes, constant hiding from authorities for those who are undocumented immigrants – these are just few of the stories that Ryan Arbilo would hear from Filipinas he meets in Paris in the bus, in the train and in their workplaces. One significant encounter was when he noticed the unusually disfigured hand of a lady he met in the bus. They do not look like normal hands anymore, much more as claw-like fingers. “Ate, napano yang mga kamay mo?” (*What happened to your hands*), Ryan asked a Filipina cleaner he met in a bus in Paris. “Sa kakatrabaho?” (*From too much work*), the Filipina replied. Ryan noticed the hands were bruised, too. Just by looking at the woman’s hands, Ryan could feel her pain during those years of hard labor. He was crying



inside as he knows what it takes to work as a cleaner.

Ryan arrived in Paris in 2004 to be with his mother and immediately started working by helping his mother clean homes, it was a good source of income. Ryan admits to being clumsy and is not an ideal house cleaner as he has broken a few too many crystal glasses. Assertive and hardworking, Ryan is used to hard work back in the Philippines so he is akin to finding ways to survive, he even worked as an apprentice at Teng Roma's salon in Manila and was able to use those skills working as a hairdresser in Paris. In between jobs, Ryan was able to save and had enough money to purchase a very simple Sony digital camera. He immersed himself into learning the art of taking pictures

from DVD tutorials, magazines and any help he could get until he was able to upgrade his camera to a DSLR Canon 5D. One couldn't resist Paris with its splendid architecture, tree-lined boulevards and historical landmarks but Ryan was more interested and captivated with the subliminal. He was drawn to capturing images of people. So when he saw those claw-like hands that closely resembled chicken feet, he asked the Filipina lady if he could photograph them. He asked several other women who clean homes if he could photograph their hands. A striking similarity emerged from those photographs, most of them truly had worn out, bent and crooked hands and some even have wounds, rashes and burns. Ryan was inspired by a series of arresting and thought proving



photographs exhibited in Paris by an American artist, Richard Avedon. This was exactly what Ryan wanted – to create something that would stir discussions. The series of pictures that Ryan took gave birth to the collection of portraits of women entitled “Chicken Hands”.

The photographs captured the attention of Sylvana Lorenz, an influential French art dealer and writer who is in charge of Pierre Cardin communications. It wasn't long before Ryan Arbilo was offered to exhibit his collection at the Variety Theatre of Monaco in 2014 and later as the first Filipino artist to hold an exhibition at La Maison Européenne de la Photographie de Paris in 2016. Nine distinct photographs graced the walls of the gallery from the 7<sup>th</sup> of September to the end of October

in 2016. Nine images of Filipina women showing their hands catapulted Ryan Arbilo's rise to success not only as a photographer but a social justice much talked about hero. Ryan's frank approach to storytelling through photographs was spot on, he has opened awareness about the lives of Filipinos abroad and the sacrifices they have to go through to give their families back home a better life. Those very hands that were disfigured from years and years of cleaning homes in Paris have sent children to school in the Philippines and those very hands have fed families back home.

After photo exhibitions in Monaco and Paris, Ryan Arbilo's “Chicken Hands” were exhibited in Dubai and Manila. As an artist, Ryan is seemingly not boxed in as a photographer. His

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*It made me realize that Ryan did not just stumble into photography. He has the ability to look into a soul.*

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interests vary depending on inspirations he get. “I have a constant feeling to do something new, I have a passion for trying out new things and I see inspiration everywhere”, he shared when asked about what he plans to do after his recent success. At the moment, he is immersed into learning more about mosaic art, it is not hard to detect just by the giddiness of his voice that he is in love with art.

Today, Ryan works as an independent photographer and filmmaker. Once a year, he goes to the Cannes festival and join fellow artists and filmmakers. He works for Pierre Cardin as an official photographer and videographer. It has been a long journey but a fruitful one. Ryan bares his soul not only through his photographs but also by revealing his life story from his childhood in Calauan, Laguna as a child left by his mother to work in Paris. He recounted how difficult it was to live with his father who repeatedly beats him up. Among the siblings, he was singled out as his father’s target for abuse because he simply doesn’t fight back. Although Ryan’s childhood was harrowing and to this day still feels traumatizing, Ryan still projects an uncanny craft of being honest yet comical as he laughed about his adventures before making it to Paris. He hides nothing but reveals everything about his childhood in Laguna, his apprenticeship in Manila and his sojourn in Paris, including cleaning homes with honorable pride.

It made me realize that Ryan did not just stumble into photography. He has the ability to look into a soul. His photographs exude wretched souls of women separated from families and probably a reflection of his life, as well. Ryan chose a portrait of his mother and her worn out hands as part of the collection of Chicken Hands. He honors his mother’s sacrifices and draws inspiration from it. Whatever reasons Ryan has in making this collection, be it social justice or manifestations of self expression or pure inspiration, there is another calling louder than pity and that is perhaps, Ryan wanted us to see these women as modern day heroes rather than pitiful ones. Or perhaps, Ryan with his stark black and white photographs wanted to retain an unbiased interpretation that is honest, raw and poignant. The Philippine Statistics Office in 2016 has reported that women are now leading the Filipino diaspora comprising 53.6% of the total overseas Filipino workers (2.2 million). No mother wants to leave her children behind but the promise of a better income for the family outweighs more, even if it causes a woman to be vulnerable to abuse, hard labor and physical deformities just like some Filipina cleaners with bent and crooked fingers. Whatever attention it has earned, the photographic collection of Ryan Arbilo aptly called “Chicken Hands” never fails to bring up discussions on today’s prevalent issue on migration, women and labor.



68<sup>e</sup>  
 U N I  
 FILM D'OUVERTURE / OPENING FILM  
 MARCHÉ FERIALE 2015  
 KIRITJ CHATFIELD MADAGASCAR / 1975  
 GABRIEL MACHADO MONTANA / BÉLIERS  
 ROYOSH KUROKAWA KOSAME MO YAM / VERS L'AUTRE RIVE LANTIER LANTIERE JE SUIS UN SOLDAT / I AM A SOLDIER  
 GALBOR MAGARÉ SUDAN / SOLEIL DE FLORE BRILLANTE FEMME TRULIS  
 ROBERTO MINERVINI THE OTHER SIDE DARI MURRAY UN ETÀMM JIS / L'ÉTÉ DU JESSOUS  
 OH SEUNG-UK MU-ROE-HAN / THE SHAMELESS DAVID PABLOS LAS BLOOMAS / LES ÉLUES ISA PANAHANDI BAHÁ  
 CORNELIU PORUMBANU COMAN / LE TRÉSOR JIM LIND DUBOIS GRENDA ALAS HANÁ OHSU SU-SUN HADONNA  
 SURVINDER BIRAN CHAUTU HOOT APONATPONG SORASANTHARIL SAM TO BHOON HAN / CEMETERY OF SPLENDOR  
 R E G I S T R E D  
 ALICE WOODROW MARYLAND / DISORDER THOMAS SILLICE LANG  
 ANNÉES  
 OFFICIAL SELECTION  
 UN CERTAIN REGARD  
 CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

Ryan Arbilo at Cannes, France



# LEA VED

HONORING  
LIFE THROUGH  
THE ART OF  
DANCE

words by  
Ivee Blossom Hidvegi | Stockholm

*Lea Ved was as lithe and strong as an athlete as I watched her perform onstage at Lilla Scenen Dramaten.*

Her dance movements made me think that at a time of heightened consciousness around performing arts, her story has lured new audiences to the classical dance with a twist. The show ended on a standing ovation and I was honored to meet her after the show. She was still in a good mood and was telling me that this was her last show in Sweden. *"I am joining Netherland's Dance Theater in The Hague this August. Next year, I will tour with this company to Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Greece, Turkey, France, and even Gothenburg, Sweden. I am in for a new adventure, and I am very much looking forward to it."* I was just simply staring at her with awe.

Lea Ved was born in Anaheim, California on April 9, 1991. She has a Filipino mom named Elizabeth Salas Ved, and her dad, Jitendra Gokaldas Ved, is from India. Lea was exposed to the Filipino culture as she was growing up from the food, language, songs, dance, and even going to church. When I asked her if she speaks Tagalog, *"My mom did not teach me Tagalog, and I always wish she did."* she answered. *"Whenever I hear people speak Tagalog here in Europe or anywhere in the world, actually, I feel like they are family. I have been to the Philippines twice, and hope to return again soon. My mom's parents and five brothers and sisters*

*all live in California, and we all grew up together. Otherwise, I have also met many of aunts, uncles, and cousins who still live in the Philippines."*

Lea was a diligent student during her school years; a straight A student, academically ambitious, loved science and math, and was part of the Science Olympiad for seven years but dance had always been an after school activity up until Lea went to a ballet summer program at Boston Ballet when she was sixteen. That was the first time she was surrounded by dancers of the same age, who were already building their lives around dance. *"It was all new to me, these ideas. I was interested in so many things, and wanted to go to Medical School to become a doctor - but ultimately, I recognized in myself a passion for dancing, a curiosity for my capacities through this craft, that was insatiable,"* she recalled. At the age of eighteen, she was accepted to different college institutions that offered academic scholarships but she was also accepted into *The Juilliard School*, who is a world leader in performing arts education. *"I felt it was an opportunity I just couldn't pass and I figured that my academic ambitions could always come after a dance career,"* Lea said. *"Attending this conservatory laid out substantial groundwork for the blooming of my professional career. I am so thankful,"* she added.

When she finished school, Lea worked for *RUBBERBANDance Group* for three years in Montreal, Canada. Then she auditioned for



*To this day, I  
am so aware of  
both the body's  
strength and  
fragility.*

*Royal Swedish Ballet as part of a larger 'audition tour', going around Germany, Switzerland, and Holland to find a job in Europe and was accepted. When I asked her if she has a personal favorite from all the shows she did, she replied, "In September last year, I had the opportunity to dance the role of Julia in Mats Ek's rendition of 'Julia and Romeo'. This show was so rich and so special - a story of such depth and relevance, as Mats adapted the story to present day tragedies. It was a time where I had such a full feeling that I was able to experience my biggest dreams on stage. To dance the passionate, full-hearted role of Julia was a true gift."*

*I also asked her how she handled criticisms, "I do not think often of critics. I believe every work of art naturally provokes an opinion, a reaction, a response, and this is subjective to the viewer, whether pulled towards positivity or negativity. I am most in tune with my own self critic - if I perform with authenticity, integrity, and presence," she answered.*

*More than a year ago, she partially tore her Lisfranc ligament of her left foot during a show. Her hidden reserves of courage and resilience were tested when she found out that she has a 2-mm gap between two of the key bones of her foot and it was serious and debilitating. "I felt defeated when I heard the doctor tell me I wouldn't last a year as a professional dancer with this injury, with or without surgery. However, there are other kinds of health professionals, doctors, opinions out there, that do advocate for the natural practice of healing if given proper time, attention, and care. These*



*professionals encouraged me, and reminded me that the body, in all its mystery, is miraculous, and can heal before surgery, or other extreme procedures are even considered. To this day, I am so aware of both the body's strength and fragility. That whole experience was a reminder to celebrate my body's capacities, and to nurture it along the way. I am so grateful to be able to dance and move every day."*

*She often tells herself to 'honor this life'. "This gift I have been given to experience - I feel I must follow that which beckons me to my most fulfilled self; My best self in my greatest capacity; the self that can contribute the most to this world. I follow my heart. This has brought me to dance. It brought me to cultivate my craft, which*

*has further brought me to dimensions of this life and world full of connection, dialogue, and expression. It's so beautiful to be part of such a world."*

*Lea wanted to share to all the aspiring dancers, who wants to follow her footsteps, what her mentor told her once: "If you don't have to dance, don't. You either need to dance, or you don't. You either believe in yourself, or you don't. If there is something else out there that could make you happy, go for that. This profession - this life - is not worth it if you don't have passion for it. But if you cannot imagine a life without your art, without dancing, dive in. Keep working, take risks, show up, and stand strong within yourself for both success and failure."*



AMBASSADOR  
DENIS YAP LEPATAN

a first-person account by  
**Betsy Von Atzigen | St. Gallen**

# HAVE YOU MET HIM YET?

I thought arriving at the venue half hour ahead of schedule was Swiss enough. I stood corrected. He was more than Swiss. There he was in a crisp Barong Tagalog, smiling at the gate of the Philippine Embassy in Berne on that early chilly morning. It was my first view of the new Filipino Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein. We shook hands as he personally welcomed me to the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence.

That initial meeting with the Ambassador was *Kalayaan* personified: *freedom* from being late, *freedom* from being improperly dressed, *freedom* from anything *unFilipino*. He accorded the same warm welcome to a substantial flow of well-wishers, both *Pinoys* and foreigners. Then I thought to myself, the Chief of Mission stood at the gate to genuinely welcome his *kababayans* and guests ahead of time and it did speak volumes.

*His Excellency, Denis Yap Lepatan, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Switzerland with concurrent jurisdiction over the Principality of Liechtenstein is no stranger to Switzerland. For 13 years,*

*he was posted in Geneva as Deputy Permanent Representative of the Philippine Mission to the United Nations.*

*In Geneva, global hub for diplomacy, banking and headquarters of Europe's United Nations, Ambassador Lepatan mastered his craft in areas of international development policies and effective administrative management. He is known for his personal integrity and unblemished service in over 3 decades of Foreign Affairs postings in the Home Country, Geneva, New Delhi, Colombo, Rome, and now Berne.*

*Ambassador Lepatan is a recipient of the **Gawad Mabini Award**, with the Rank of *Dakilang Kamanong* (Grand Cross). As a person, he is well-respected among his colleagues who regard him as an excellent team player, a good planner, and a decisive leader. He is married to Maria Teresa Cariño Lepatan.*

It is always a stirring moment in the soul of either Filipino immigrant or migrant when standing in attention, hand on chest, look to the



*Ann Michelle Mondragon plays Filipino classics.*

Philippine Flag unfurl and raised to the lyrics of the *Pambansang Awit* and *Panunumpa ng Katapatan sa Watawat ng Pilipinas*.

What brings abundant hope to the Filipino people on this momentous occasion is hearing their children's voices on the loud speaker and listening to them echo the words of national hero Dr. Jose Rizal: '*The youth is the hope of our future*' and that every Filipino child is a potential contributor towards the development of Philippine society. *Ann Michelle Mondragon*, a Filipino student and violinist stirred further with her performance of Philippine classics *Sampaguita*, *Usahay*, and *Ili-ili Tulog Anay*.

A filling breakfast followed. A delightful buffet of *sinangag*, *tocino*, *danggit*, *lugaw*, *kape barako*, *tsokolate*, *sapin sapin* at *iba pa* gathered Filipinos and friends together in small, comfortable circles. And for me, it was the best

time to catch the Ambassador for a casual, unscripted talk. Here, he spoke his views on a few issues:

**Ambassador Lepatan's best experience with Filipinos in Switzerland** "*is when there are gatherings. It is fun! I could see Filipinos interact very closely and it reminds me of the Philippines because we like to fiesta and we behave like in a fiesta.* "

**Priorities as Ambassador:** "*The first is to visit all the Filipino groups in Switzerland, then work on the economic relations with the country. There is work to do on the Philippine-Swiss free trade agreement and use it in order to expand relations. My third priority would be on the cultural side, which is to remind Filipinos of our heritage, and tradition*



*so that we could feel the Philippines even when away from our country.”*

**On the challenges of Filipinos living in this country:** *“Most Filipinos living in Switzerland are permanent residents and have acquired Swiss citizenship. Many have been here for quite some time, thirty-forty years and have adjusted to Swiss life. The problem really is how to deal with the rules and regulations set by local authorities.*

**How to help the undocumented?** *“As far as the Embassy is concerned, we treat everybody equally whether regular or irregular, documented or undocumented. They are Filipinos and we are duty-bound to provide them the services and documents they need. The problem really is how to deal with the local authorities*

*because they are the ones who set the rules and regulations.*

**The Ambassador’s message to the Filipinos across Switzerland,** Europe and globally on the occasion of the 120th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence: *“You heard the message of the children? We have to take care of our freedom, and make it grow, because after all, this is for our children to enjoy. As a senior citizen, the only thing I could think of is the youth and how I could help them. My time has passed. It’s for the youth. Let us help our country enjoy the benefits of our freedom. “*

With that, I thanked the Ambassador on this special occasion and wished him well.



## NEWS

# A Celebration of Heritage

with reports from  
**Betsy Von Atzigen | St. Gallen**

Filipinos are one great resilient race and culturally renowned merry-makers. Come rain, come snow, come shine the mood is hardly dampened when it comes to celebrations. Such is the unbeatable spirit of the Filipino. Laudable, admirable, incomparable, Filipinos stay flexible and ever willing to adapt, adjust, bear whatever comes, celebrate and fully belong to a heritage unique to Filipinos at home and in distant lands.

The Philippine's most significant date of June 12th, 1898 ushers back to the ancestral home of the first President General Emilio Aguinaldo

in Cavite. It was there that the Philippine national flag was formally unfurled during the Proclamation of the First Philippine Republic. The flag was sewn and flown in from Hongkong by 3 Filipinas **Marcela Marino de Agoncillo**, **Lorenza Agoncillo** and **Delfina Herbosa de Natividad**. The flag raising was accompanied by **La Marcha Filipina Magdalo**, now known as **Lupang Hinirang**.

120 years later, the event lives on and commemorated across the globe wherever Filipinos gather. Here in Switzerland, home to seventeen thousand Filipinos among nearly 9 million residents, the celebration continues. This alpine country is landlocked and therefore geographically antithetical to the Philippines' 7,107 islands but has made it easier for Filipinos gather in big numbers to pay tribute to the past and promote one's heritage.

The **European Network of Filipino Diaspora in Switzerland, ENFiD-Swiss**, had the honour



of hosting this year's Philippine Independence on 16 June in a fitting venue of Horgen, a large town along the south bank of Lake Zürich. The new Philippine Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, his Excellency **Ambassador Denis Yap Lepatan**, his gracious wife and diplomat **Mrs. Maria Teresa Cariño Lepatan** and Embassy Team in Berne graced the event. Filipino guests from neighbouring Austria, Germany and Brussels likewise supported the event.

Over sixty performers kept the audience entertained beginning with **Samuel Argota's** *Ang Bayan Ko* solo on the guitar. The show drew exciting applause for glamorous models in a Filipiniana Fashion show, donning Philippine costumes. The cutest of them all were Euro-Pinoy kids aged 4 -12 taking turns in showing off their native attire. **YENFiD**, short for **Youth of ENFiD**, aged 13-30 was a stand out in their cool interpretation of the Filipiniana. These are second and third generation European-Filipinos, some of whom may have only occasionally visited

the Philippines. Sincere recognition is given to *Filipina mothers* who within their power, keep the heritage intact.

Then a remarkable spectacle of a dozen attractive couples representing the **Samahang Pilipina Luzern** (SPL) joined by guest **Lenybeth Nayo** from Austria captured the audience in their colourful, flowing Filipiniana fineries. It was a magnificent show of themed designs from the regions of Luzon to Visayas and down south Mindanao, complete with props and accessories. What merited louder applause were the Swiss-European husbands and male partners of the models brandishing the Barong Tagalog. Kudos to ENFiD-Swiss PR Officer/Gratus Latinus **Maricar Morales** for organizing the Filipiniana segment.

The highlight of the event was the cultural dance competition by the **Kalingas of Switzerland** based in Berne, the **Mabuhay Dance Group** of Biel, Basel's **Swiss-Philippine Dance Group** and the **Visayan Dance Group**, Berne. All groups gave

their best performance in the areas of ingenious dance steps, costume design, music plus a touch of comedy and drama. And as in every contest, a winner comes out. The **Visayan Dance Group** led by **Maritess Jampen** bested the numbers with their Mindanao-inspired tribal dance called *Kadaltaho*. It is a beautifully, well-synchronized choreography which expressed celebration of harvest, thanksgiving, marriage and family. They received CHF 1000 as first prize cash incentive and will represent ENFiD-Swiss in the coming ENFiD-Europe Tala competition in Paris on 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2018.

Guests from the United Kingdom, **Ajos Trust Dance and Company** performed Dance of the Saints. The group is led and inspired by *JJ Formento*, founder of Ajos Trust, a UK registered charity that provides scholarships to students from the village of Ajos in Quezon city, Philippines. The **Sponsors'** generous support has made it possible for ENFiD-Swiss to mobilize funds for its projects in Europe and the home country. Additionally, **Ms. Vivian Kiefer**, leader of the Swiss-Philippine Dance Group/ President of the Leaders' Club and **Dr. Fredy Dinkel** of Baselland were recognized for their efforts in securing grants for ENFiD's Bio-Gas Digester project in Miag-ao Iloilo, Philippines.

Job well done to ENFiD-Swiss leadership Team for organizing this memorable event, bringing together the Euro-Pinoy communities, in celebration of Filipino heritage. Mabuhay ang Pilipino! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!



## NEWS

# Europinoy Concert 2018

with reports from  
**Marthy Angue | Manila**



The European Union might have twenty-four official languages but its single Anthem, based on Beethoven’s Ode to Joy, is as potent an expression of the Union’s aspirations in Portugal as it is in Finland. This was the theme of the 2018 Europinoy Concert held at the Ruins in Makati’s bohemian Poblacion district, 30 May, 2018. Held by the European Union in the Philippines in collaboration with the Spanish Cultural organization Instituto Cervantes and the Manila Embassies of Austria and Sweden, the organization brought Filipino and European talents together for a night of music, creativity, and general relaxation.

The concert featured percussionist Stefan Löwenstein and DJ Michael Rattinger (Austria), guitarist Alex Alcaraz (Spain), violinist Jeanette

Kamphuis (Sweden), spoken-word poet Michellan Sarile-Alagao (pictured above left with husband Joel Alagao on guitar accompaniment,) percussionist Jean Paul Zialcita and DJ Bhutta B (Philippines). There was a raffle for lomo Instant cameras courtesy of Lomography Philippines as well as a tasting of the rising premium liquor brand Don Papa Rum.

“Through the concert,” notes EU Ambassador Franz Jessen on his message to the audience, “We want to bring the distinctive fusion of collaboration between and among European artists and musicians along with their Filipino counterparts.” Swedish Ambassador Harald Fries also expressed a hope that the event would go on to foster the use of music as a universal language connecting these cultures.



THE  
paper  
PROJECT

E AWISTA

E AWISTA

DA SEIN

DA SEIN

# The Paper Project: Creating Cards that Bring Greetings and Hope

words by **Michellan Alagao | Manila**

*In this fast-paced, digital world we live in, a greeting card seems like a thing of the past. But we would do well to carry this “artifact” into our present because it represents true things: an important memory. A milestone remembered. A handwritten message from a faraway friend. A card is often more than a card when you think about the sender, the receiver — and even the maker.*

*Greeting cards from The Paper Project highlight the most important thing about a card: people. Senders can choose from a wide range of cards which reflect their unique sense of humor, interests and other quirks. Those who receive one of their cards will enjoy the cute illustrations, wordplay and pop culture references. As for the makers, the Paper Project tagline says it best — each card contains a story of hope. Most of the company’s employees, particularly the card makers, are Filipino women from disadvantaged backgrounds who have escaped from and survived human trafficking, prostitution, or situations of abuse.*

*We were able to sit down with Ms. Tanya Aritao, the company’s Head of Operations, to ask a few questions about The Paper Project.*

***Hi Tanya! Thanks for making time for Roots and Wings Magazine. What can customers expect when they buy cards from The Paper Project?***

Customers can expect high quality products made with heart. We also have cards for every occasion, every season, and most emotions. Our Good Paper line of handmade and letterpress cards are quirky and funny. You will notice that we love food, puns and pop culture references.

Our work is carefully made by hand. Every card is made with handmade paper using locally sourced abaca fiber and is signed by the woman that made or prepared your card. Your purchase helps us provide employment for women that support their families.



The Paper Project's mission is to provide decent and consistent livelihood for survivors of oppression while maintaining sustainable company growth.

### *Where can our readers in Europe find your cards?*

Previously, they were in some specific stores in the UK, and now we hope to see our cards in retail stores in the UK, and the Netherlands as well, in the next few months.

We have also done customized Christmas cards for a company called Awista in Germany (for the years 2013, 2014, and 2015). So if you live near Dusseldorf and are one of their clients - you can expect a Christmas card from them that was made by us this year!

### *What are your plans for the next few years?*

We will continue to provide sustainable livelihood for women in the Philippines. We hope to expand our sales to more countries and more stores around the world so that we can continue on our mission to provide decent and safe employment for hundreds of women.

For the women that make up our team today, we hope that

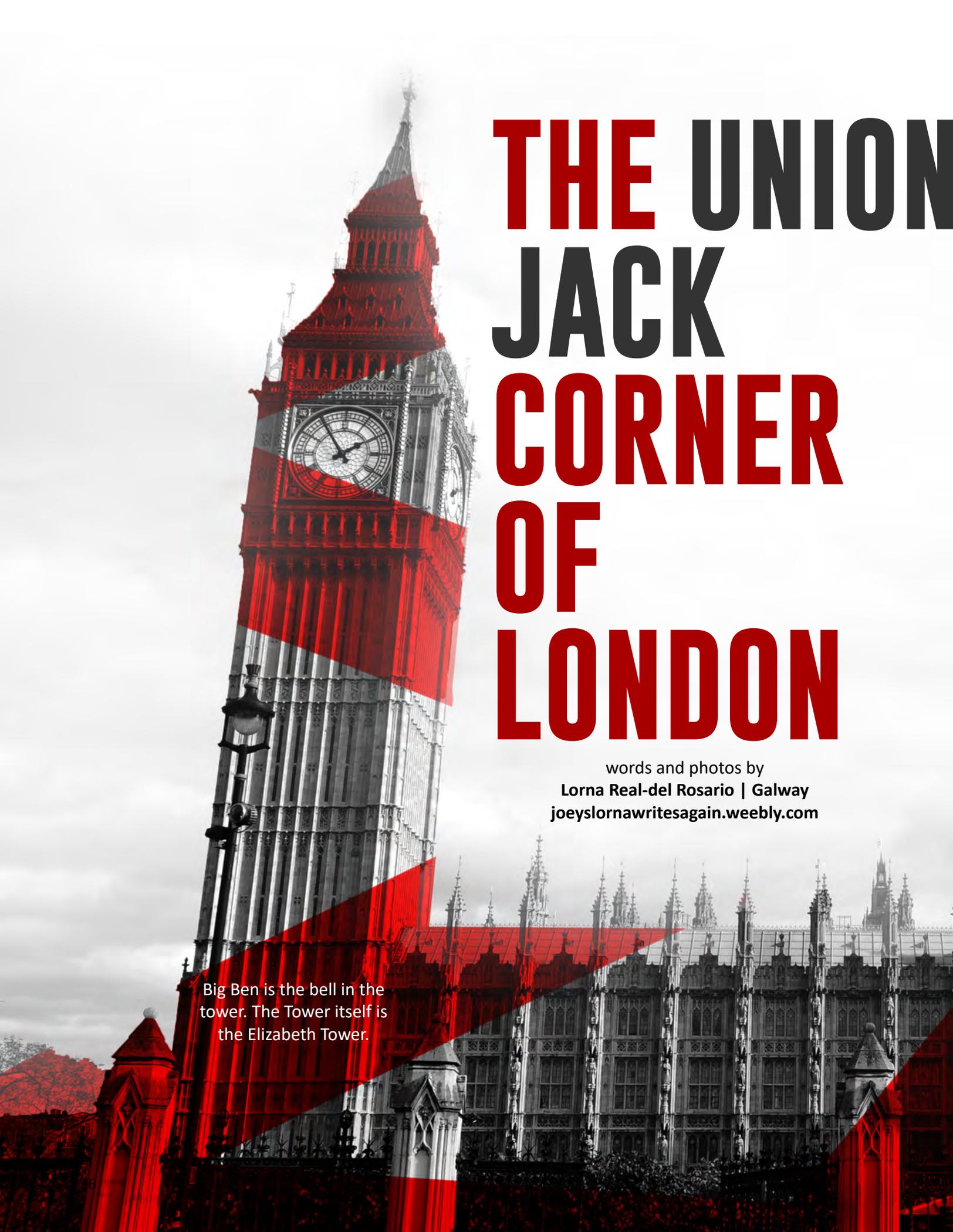
in the next few years they will continue to grow as individuals and as professionals. We hope to see more of our card makers continue their education, grow as leaders within our company or beyond, and become advocates for other survivors of oppression.

*In North America, the company has partnered with Good Paper, an American fair trade social business. The Paper Project is currently looking for more distributors or retail partners in Europe. Tanya herself was recently accepted for an MBA program in Oxford University and is currently raising funds through [www.gavagives.com/tanya-dreams-of-oxford](http://www.gavagives.com/tanya-dreams-of-oxford).*

*To learn more, you can visit [The Paper Project website](http://ThePaperProject.com), or find them on Facebook or Instagram. For orders and inquiries, please email at [info@paperprojectph.com](mailto:info@paperprojectph.com)*



The Paper Project make their own paper using locally sourced abaca fiber, which the cardmakers then use to create fair-trade, eco-friendly handmade cards.



# THE UNION JACK CORNER OF LONDON

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Big Ben is the bell in the tower. The Tower itself is the Elizabeth Tower.

# YOU CAN NEVER GO WRONG WITH LONDON. IT'S ONLY AROUND THE CORNER BUT IT HAS EVERYTHING ON OFFER. LET US TAKE YOU THERE!

## The Big Ben

When I was in USA for a work assignment in 2001, I frequented a shop named "Dollar Tree". Unknowingly, in one of my visits, I bought a metal-craft bronze Big Ben souvenir. After 13 years of owning it, I finally got to see the gigantic Big Ben in flesh! It was love at first sight; we did not seem to get enough of it. During our stay in London, we always ended up walking near the Big Ben, night and day.

The Big Ben is one of London's most resounding landmarks. You'll know that you have truly arrived in London when you see

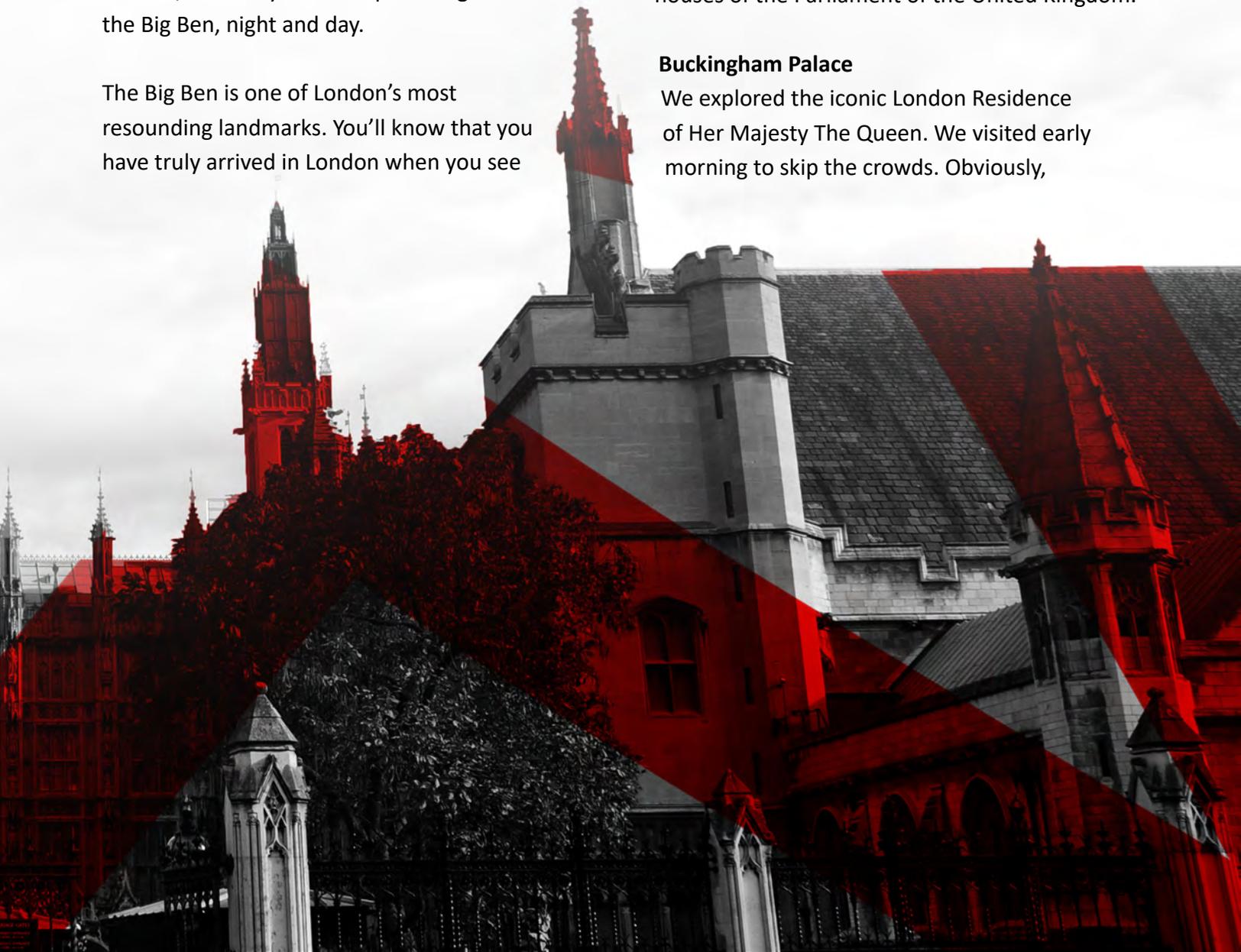
the Big Ben. It was featured in British films such as "Bridget Jones's Diary", "Notting Hill" and "Love Actually". The Big Ben was the name originally given to the largest of the clock tower's bells. Now, it's named as the Elizabeth Tower in honour of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee.

## Houses of Parliament

Next to the Big Ben is the Palace of Westminster, the official name of the Houses of Parliament. This is because it was the royal palace before the king moved to Whitehall Palace in 1529. Now the palace is the meeting place of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, the two houses of the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

## Buckingham Palace

We explored the iconic London Residence of Her Majesty The Queen. We visited early morning to skip the crowds. Obviously,



everyone had the same plan and it was already busy when we arrived at 8:00 AM. With its elegantly-designed facade, the palace, which is perhaps the city's most famous sight is truly "fit for a Queen". Buckingham Palace has served as the official London residence of the UK's sovereigns since 1837 and today is the administrative headquarters of the Monarch. It is used for the many official events and receptions held by The Queen.

### **London Bridge vs. Tower Bridge**

As we hopped on a London Night Bus Tour, we were beaming in anticipation. The bus will pass over London Bridge. We know by heart the nursery rhyme "London Bridge is falling down ..." and always consider London Bridge as a symbol of London. A mistake made over the world, confusing London Bridge and Tower Bridge. So, which one is which?

**London Bridge** – This is really just an ordinary bridge, sang in a song over and over as we were growing up.

**Tower Bridge** – Tower Bridge is clearly a more beautiful and stunning bridge than London Bridge. When you see the Tower Bridge, London always comes to mind.

### **Tower of London**

A short walk from the Tower Bridge is the Tower of London which has served as a fortress, palace, and prison. The Tower of London, officially Her Majesty's Royal Palace and Fortress of the Tower of London, is a historic castle located on the north bank of the River Thames in central London. It lies within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, separated from the eastern edge of the square mile of the City of London by the open space known as Tower Hill. It was founded towards the end of 1066 as part of the Norman Conquest of England.

We were there during the commemoration of the centenary of the outbreak of World War I. The area was installed with ceramic poppies.

### **Chinatown**

Asian food is comfort food for us. And Chinatown in London certainly has something to help us hit the spot. Luckily, Chinatown is a very popular neighborhood and it is very easy to get to. Get off at Leicester Square Tube station, walk for 3 minutes following the signs and you'll be on for a treat. We grabbed some siopao, dumplings, noodles and duck dishes for our dinner.



Buckingham Palace



Tower Bridge

### **Covent Garden**

Located in London's West End, Covent Garden is a must-see destination for anyone who enjoys shopping, theatre, restaurants, bars, history and culture. It is associated with the former fruit-and-vegetable market in the central square.

### **London Borough Market**

After strolling the banks of River Thames, we headed to this market for lunch. This is by far one of the best markets we've ever visited. A foodie haven with lots of stalls selling hot food, fruits & vegetables, olives, cheeses, meats, chocolates, coffees, breads and so much more. We walked around tasting a variety of things before deciding what we would buy. We made it a point not to eat before going!

The Market is located next to London Bridge station. If you're using the Tube, check the signs when choosing an exit.

### **Natural History Museum**

If you saw the movie *Night at the Museum* filmed in New York, you may remember Sue (the T-Rex). But did you know that Sue is also in the Natural History Museum in London? The 3rd installment of the movie *Night at the Museum - Secret of the Tomb* was filmed here. Since we had few hours to spare, we stopped by and snapped some photos.

On the outside, the museum with its Gothic and Romanesque-style architecture looked like a church. In a way, it's a cathedral, but of nature. There was a massive stretch of queue, but it moved so quick that 15 minutes later we were in. We were greeted by crowds especially near the dinosaur section where Sue is the main attraction. There were plenty of things to see, souvenir shops and restaurants.

### **The Admiralty Arch**

This marks one end of The Mall. Elegantly and

beautifully-crafted, King Edward VII dedicated the structure to his mother Queen Victoria. It is not just a passage way; it holds office spaces, residences, and a soon to open five-star hotel. We walked through the arch from Buckingham Palace.

A Latin inscription pays tribute to Queen Victoria where it says "ANNO DECIMO EDWARDI SEPTIMI REGIS VICTORIÆ REGINÆ CIVIS GRATISSIMI MDCCCX", which can be translated as "In the tenth year of the reign of King Edward VII, to Queen Victoria from a grateful nation, 1910".

### **Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral**

Westminster Abbey

The Abbey is an example of England's

ecclesiastic architecture; a feel of being taken back to medieval Europe. This Anglican Church is the heart and soul of Great Britain's spiritual life. It has played host to 26 royal weddings and 38 coronations and the final resting place for hundreds of Great Britain's legendary figures.

### **Westminster Cathedral**

We attended an early Sunday morning mass at this Cathedral. Not to be confused with the more famous Westminster Abbey, the Westminster

Cathedral is the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church in Britain. Its full formal name is the Cathedral Church of Westminster. The Cathedral was dedicated to The Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to his Blessed Mother, his Foster Father St Joseph and St Peter, his Vicar. The Cathedral with Byzantium architecture might lead you to think you were in Venice.



In the shadow of Westminster Abbey

### **West End Theater Land**

A theater lover? Welcome to London's WestEnd! From Miss Saigon, Mama Mia, Lion King, Wicked, Annie, Matilda ... name it, London has it! If you're looking to book last-minute London theater tickets, go to the stalls in Leicester Square. They offer half-price and

discounted theater tickets on the day of the show.

### **The Gherkin**

30 St Mary Axe is a skyscraper in London's primary financial district, the City of London. Much of the building is used for offices and residences. It is informally known as The Gherkin since it resembles a pickled cucumber in the center of London's skyline. More information: 13 things you didn't know about the Gherkin.

### Royal Albert Hall

The Royal Albert Hall is one of the world's most famous stages. Opened by Queen Victoria in 1871, the hall hosts more than 360 events a year, including classical music, jazz, world music, circus, rock, pop, opera, dance, comedy and tennis. The Hall was originally supposed to have been called the Central Hall of Arts and Sciences, but the name was changed to the Royal Albert Hall of Arts and Sciences by Queen Victoria upon laying the Hall's foundation stone in 1867, in memory of her husband consort, Prince Albert who had died six years earlier.

### 10 Downing Street

Say "Hello" to Prime Minister David Cameron. 10 Downing Street in London has one of the most photographed front doors in Britain. The famous black door, made with a bomb-proof metal and coated with a high-gloss paint is said to only open from the inside. The brass letterbox (3) is engraved with 'First Lord of the Treasury'. The 'Second Lord of the Treasury' is the Chancellor next door at No.11.

Since 1735, it has been both home and office to the Prime Minister of Great Britain. Important announcements have been made to the nation from here. Some of the most famous British political leaders have lived and worked in Number 10, including Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher.

### Paint them Red!

Q1. Can I still find a red telephone box?

A1. Sure, can! We spotted one on the other side of the river from the County Hall. It's near the Westminster Bridge, coming away from the Big Ben.

Q2. And the red double-decker bus ride?

A2. It was sweet!

### Celebrating at St. James Court (A Taj Hotel)

We stayed at St. James Court which was a great base to explore London with just few blocks away from Buckingham Palace and St. James' Park, walking distance



The Royal Albert Hall

from Westminster and Victoria Station and close to the West End. Our stay was fabulously grand, lived like a King and Queen in an executive suite complete with pillow menu and turn down service. The staff spoiled us with sweet treats to celebrate the occasion. Their breakfast selection was superb, always a great way to kick off our busy days.

### **D.I.Y. (Do It Yourself) Tips**

If you are planning a trip to London, you may find these tips helpful:

- Trip Duration: 4 Days
- London is a very tourist friendly city. You will never get lost! Maps are available in every corner's lamp post. City buses and tubes run frequently with only few minutes' interval. And even with that transport efficiency, they have defined pavements for your leisure walks.
- Majority of the attractions associated with London are in the City of Westminster. These include St. James's Palace, Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament, and 10 Downing Street. It may be worthwhile to stay in a hotel in this borough. We stayed at St. James Court. The closest tube stations are St. James Park and Victoria.
- Note that some Tube stations are closed during Sunday so check in advance.
- Ticket queues can be long at train stations and some ticket machines only accept small bills. Buy your tickets online and print them at home. Alternatively, you can claim them at the train station.
- Takeaway and sit-down meals are priced differently. Do check the menu before ordering.
- Fish and Chips is a staple, make sure you try it. We got ours at London Fish & Chips near

Covent Garden.

- We flew to London via Gatwick Airport. We used the National Rail to get to London Victoria Station. The ticket also served as "Day Ticket" that can be used at London City's public transport (buses & tubes), thereby saving us £9 for the day ticket cost.
- Listen to the train announcements as some trains may split. Yes! They can split. In our case for example, while heading back to Gatwick Airport, it was announced that carriages 1-4 were heading to Gatwick Airport, while carriages 5-8 were heading somewhere else. Had we not pay attention to the announcements, we could have missed our flights as we were in Carriage 8.
- Since we traveled via National Rail, we were able to avail of 2For1 London Attractions Ticket. Please visit DaysOutGuide UK to get 2FOR1 entry to over 150 top London attractions, restaurants, theaters, exhibitions and more!
- The UK's currency is the pound sterling (£ / GBP). You may hear people say "pee" rather than pence, as in 10p (10 pee). A pound is called a quid, a five-pound note is a fiver and a ten pound note a tenner.

### **Musings**

London with its openness and diverse culture is truly a heaven of impressive landmarks. I am always fascinated by stories about Kings & Queens, their palaces & castles; Prince & Princess and their happy-ever-afters. London and its Royal Family is the closest thing to my fairy tales. I would not mind going back to this beautiful city again in the future.

Thanks for reading... Until my next post ... safe travels!



Playing around with a classic red phone booth.

CULTURE PEOPLE PLACES

THE FILIPINO E-MAGAZINE IN EUROPE

# Roots & wings

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