

## **Addenda for *Huwaran/Hulmahan Atbp.*** *Johven Velasco*

**Editor's note:** *The following articles were forwarded by Ed Instrella, manager of the two performers discussed by Johven Velasco. They were not found among Velasco's paper or digital files, and arrived too late for the publication of Huwaran/Hulmahan Atbp. in 2009. The project coordinator, Ellen Ongkeko-Marfil, and I (as editor) were assured that these articles were some of Velasco's favorites. We decided to keep them in reserve in case a reprint of the book becomes feasible. Past Velasco's tenth death anniversary in 2017, that likelihood might be a long way off. So meanwhile here the pieces are. Since the articles on Cherry Pie Picache were atypically short, and since they seemed to make sense as a diptych, that is how they are presented here. (JD)*

### **Allan Paule: Touching Both Ends**

In *Masahista*, Allan Paule plays a gay romance novelist who is an occasional client in a massage parlor that fronts for male prostitution. Along with Coco Martin who plays the title role, Paule takes a lead role in Brillante Mendoza's directorial debut, the entry that won the Golden Leopard for Best Film in Video at the recently concluded Locarno Film Festival in Switzerland.

On the set of the movie, co-actor Jaclyn Jose kidded him: "O, Allan malayo nang tinakbo ng career mo. Dati ikaw ang nagsi-service, ngayon ikaw na ang binibigyan ng service," chuckled Jane, who has remained one of Allan's closest friends in the business. To this observation, Allan retorted: "Oo nga, pareho tayo. Dati ikaw ang nagsi-service sa mga lalake, ngayon nanay ka na ng isang bagets na nagsi-service sa mga lalake din!" And both had a hearty laugh.

Jaclyn was also on the set with Allan in his first film, *Macho Dancer* by the master filmmaker and National Artist Lino Brocka. That was fifteen years ago, in 1990, and Allan would now admit in recollection that Jaclyn was his big crush at that time and for a few more years thereafter. After all, it was she who gave him his first screen kiss – aside from Daniel Fernando – and the first to give him the experience of his first bed scene in a movie. Both of them played the roles of amoral youths engaged in the flesh trade for lack of other opportunities in life. Now, both have families and kids of their own.

Allan Paule was introduced to local movies by Brocka as an ingénue, by virtue of his tender age and innocent looks, just as the film master did with two of his other earlier protégés: Christopher de Leon in *Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang* and Bembol Roco in *Tatlo, Dalawa, Isa* and then *Maynila: Sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag*. Unlike the two, however, Allan was a new breed of film ingénue.

In the first place, the ingénue was originally a stock character in literature and theater, a young girl of innocent ways and predisposition despite the fact that she moves about in a corrupt adult society. She was Leslie Caron in the musicals *Lili* (1953) and *Gigi* (1958), who both preserved their pristine incorruptibility despite their milieu. In the passing of years, the ingénue became more transgressive, in the title characters of Elia Kazan's *Baby Doll* (1956, played by Carroll Baker) and Stanley Kubrick's *Lolita* (1962, played by Sue Lyon), who were now more appropriately called "nymphetts." In local cinema, where the Caron prototype was portrayed by the likes of Susan

Roces in *Mga Ligaw na Butaklak* (1959), the second mold was made flesh by Alma Moreno in the almost similarly titled *Ligaw na Butaklak* (1976). Subsequently, in postmodern times, where most boundaries started to blur, when voyeuristic focus shifted from the stripped bold actress to the disrobed stud on the big screen, the prototype included the male film actor. Locally, Allan Paulo in *Macho Dancer* best exemplified the new figure of the ingénue – an amoral male ingénue, since he participated in the rituals of a corrupt adult society as a male striptease dancer and prostitute, and yet seemingly kept his innocent face and naïve disposition.

Well, not for long, for Paule himself grew up as an actor. Initially reputed to be the least of the Brocka protégés in the acting department, Paule has lately taken the notice of even his detractors and critics as an actor of no mean talent as well. Of course, his development as an actor was a long and difficult uphill climb. Perhaps the initial role that he took somehow had him typecast, at a time when his physical maturity was fast setting in and with such roles becoming more limited and limiting. Perhaps his discoverer died too early and left him and his career floundering. It was a wise career move to make him do theater forthwith. In fact, he became a regular member of the actors' studio of the Tanghalang Pilipino of the Cultural Center of the Philippines, attending acting classes and appearing on stage in one production after another or sometimes simultaneously.

There he honed his craft under the tutelage of respected theater artist Nonon Padilla. There he got to play a variety of roles, big and small, in both traditional and contemporary theater styles. There, too, he got the necessary discipline and attitude toward the craft of acting. In hindsight, his stint in theater did him well. Most important for him with respect to his attitude toward his job, he learned in theater that there are no small roles, only small actors. That made him accept certain realities in his chosen field, even at times when one's career is not going great guns or when the years that followed an auspicious start were relatively leaner and lackluster.

At present, Allan Paule is a respected film actor, perhaps not as big a star that other Brocka proteges like Christopher de Leon, Bembol Roco, and Phillip Salvador turned out to be, but he is nonetheless considered to be one of our better actors who appears both in film and in television.

His character in *Masahista* was not Allan's his first gay role. He did others earlier, such as in Carlitos Siguion-Reyna's *Ang Lalaki sa Buhay ni Selya* (1997) and in Maryo J. de las Reyes's *Sa Paraiso ni Efren* (1999), where he took significant critical notice and was a strong contender for Best Actor in several award-giving bodies. It is in countless television guestings that he is able to show more of his mettle as a performer, however. In *Masahista*, he gives a refreshing – if “chilling” – interpretation of the role of a massage parlor gay client, showing effeminate softness one moment and unraveling a mean streak the next. And he seems to be more relaxed now in daring scenes, even in his nude and graphic sex scenes with Coco Martin. Those who have seen Brillante Mendoza's second film, *Kaleldo*, where he is again one of the actors, attest that in the second film, he gives a more textured performance as the cuckolded husband of Angel Aquino. He does lightweight roles, too. In the forthcoming Metro Manila Film Festival entry of GMA Films, *Mulawin: The Movie*, he plays Temyong, Richard Gutierrez's surrogate father, a character not found in the original television version of the fantasy adventure.

Certainly, Allan Paule has gone a long way as a mature actor. And he has touched both ends.

## Cherry Pie Picache

### I. Projecting the Two Faces of Life

These days, Cherry Pie Picache shuttles between dramatic and comedy roles – and in both of these, she excels.

She has just won the Entertainment Press Golden Screen Award for Best Drama Actress for television, for playing the role of a self-sacrificing wife to a husband who is the kept man of a gay benefactor in an episode in *Maala-ala Mo Kaya*. In Regal Entertainment's entry to the current Metro Manila Film Festival, *Ako Legal Wife*, she plays the Visayan Chinese "lucky wife"; there she once again shows her comic flair and timing, a skill that won her a Gawad Urian Best Actress award for Seiko Films' Jeffrey Jeturian film *Bridal Shower* two seasons ago. True enough, she won another acting trophy as Best Supporting Actress for that role as a Binisaya Chinay during the MMFF's awards night.

Yet those who have seen previews of her latest film, *Kaleldo*, of maverick filmmaker Brillante Mendoza (of *Masahista* fame and notoriety) swear that she would have been a runaway winner if this independently produced film, that merited an "B" rating from the Cinema Evaluation Board, had been deemed "acceptable" to the organizers of the more commercially oriented MMFF that tends to prefer star-power draw and lightweight themes. In *Kaleldo* she plays the disfavored lesbian daughter of a resolutely patriarchal father played by Johnny Delgado. Some critics believe regard this as Pie's best performance ever, in a career made illustrious by several acting awards, whether in film or in television.

Although the film did not make it to the MMFF, the fact is that Cherry Pie has already come up with a performance-to-beat early for the incoming year.

Complimented for her versatility in acting, Pie remarked: "*Salamat naman kung ganun nga ang pagtingin ng iba, pero alam mo, di naman magkaibang-magkaiba at malayung-malayo ang dalawang iyon, e – komedi at drama*" she starts to reveal her "trade secret." "Both have to do with truth and sincerity. With believability. *Mapadrama o komedi pa yan, dapat nararamdamang totoo ng isang artista ang papel na ginagampanan niya. Kailangang naniniwala siya na nangyayari nga sa kanya ang mga sitwasyon ngayon. Ngayon mismo. Importante 'yon ha. Ngayon, hindi nung nakaraan o sa future pa. 'Yong iba ang tawag dyan e yun daw 'sense of urgency.' Pwera na lang kung nagre-reminisce siya. Pero kung iyong huli, dapat nagre-reminisce siya ngayon, mismo sa oras na sinasabi niya ang kanyang mga linya o iniisip niya o nararamdaman niya ang kung anuman,*" laughs Cherry Pie, as she realizes she has just given a short "lecture" on acting.

That is another thing, too. Pie never takes herself too seriously, whether in reel or real life. That accounts for the lightness that she exudes and evokes as a person, which is very important in comedy, or even in drama, that makes a performance natural and spontaneous.

"*Sa komedi kasi ang lakas-lakas ng temptation for an actor to make patawa, di ba? Okay yon siguro for slapstick comedy or for the very physical ones. Pero most of the time, nakakatawa naman ang isang eksena dahil sa katawatawa ang isang sitwasyon, hindi dahil sa nagpapatawa*

ang mga characters. *Nakakatawa sila pero hindi nagpapatawa. 'Yun ang guideline ko. I just play my characters straight and truthfully – and with lightness and spontaneity. Hindi masyadong seryoso ang dating. Unless spoof o satire yan, ha, in which case talagang purposely ini-exaggerate mo, like in Bikini Open [dir. Jeffrey Jeturian, 2005], in many scenes,” she belabors her point.*

How about in drama? “*Basta feel mo. Alam, nyo na 'yon,*” Pie dismisses the question with a good laugh, guarding herself from giving another instant acting tip.

Of course, we know that for some actors, it comes with ease; for others, with much effort that often shows.

## II. Images in Conflict

Fresh from another acting award – Entertainment Press Golden Screen Award for television’s Best Drama Actress in a Single Performance – Cherry Pie Picache tackles another award-winning role in the Regal Entertainment production of Joel Lamangan’s *Ako Legal Wife: Mano Po 4?* This time it’s a comic role, and here Pie hopes to duplicate if not surpass her feat in *Bridal Shower*, where she got a Gawad Urian Best Actress Award from the country’s premier film critics’ group.

“Here I play the ‘lucky wife’ – the Visayan *tsina* with keen business sense, and for a Chinese husband, played by Jay Manalo, that is something! *Pero babaero talaga itong partner ko*, so I have to constantly compete with two other wives. *At alam mo no man*, competition is where a business-minded person thrives, *di ba?* First, there is the legal wife [Zsa Zsa Padilla] who has all the legitimate claims, and then the current flame [Rufa Mae Quinto], younger and sexier. So?...”

Is she as competitive in her private life as she plays on screen? “I am a go-getter, when I set my mind to achieve something, I do my best to get it. In business, I try to be hands-on most of the time because of a previous sad experience when I just left management in care of a business partner. And of course, as a mother *mas lalo na*. Definitely, I am driven. Does that make me competitive? Maybe so, in some ways. But never with my man or over my man!” She declares.

When it comes to romantic relationships, Pie claims she is different. “I am a contradiction of what I say or what I appear to be *pagdating diyan!*”

She elaborates: “Most of the time I take charge. *Ako ang nagmamando*. I have been trained that way in my growing-up years – to be independent and action-oriented, having been raised by a strong-willed single mom herself. I was allowed to commit mistakes, to trip and fall but to stand up promptly just as quickly. But i also drooled over romance novels in high school and early college! *Kaya nga* hopelessly romantic ako. I want my man to take charge, and I to simply obey,” she giggles. “Girl *na* girl, *ano?*”

She would gladly take the back seat for her man. Even give up her career for him and their would-be children. “But time has changed. *Hindi na ganon ngayon. Sa hirap ng buhay, hindi pupuwede 'yong pa-senyorita-senyorita na lang ngayon ang babae. At saka ang mga lalake ngayon*, they take their wives no longer as a subordinate partner, *kundi* co-equal. *Sa kaso ng iba,*

*okey lang sa lalake kung mas accomplished ang babae. Wala sa ego nila 'yon. In many ways, mas maganda, di ba? Kaya lang less opportunities to be girl-na-girl these days!*" She laughs aloud: happily or disappointedly? Both, possibly; part of her contradictions.

"My partner, the father of my son Anton, is as fiercely passionate as I am about what he believes in and what he wants in life. Between the two of us, it is he who is more of an artist [he was a film major from the University of the Philippines who later taught, aside from attending to his modest business in photography and in video post-production]. *Ako ang lumalabas na mas practical, mas concerned sa domestic and mundane affairs. His family kasi had always been well-off, so he does not have that sense of urgency the way that I do when it comes to running things. And [when it comes to those things,] I can be obsessive-compulsive. 'Yan ang complaint niya sa akin! So you still think I am the artist?'*" The laughter becomes lustier this time.

"Maybe I wouldn't have it any other way *din naman,*" she adds posthaste. "It's nice to have another artist around. That way, he understands what I do as perfectly as I understand the way he is."

Finally, she discloses an important trait: "*Selosa ako. I want my man only for myself. Hindi ako puwede niyang ipa-sharing-sharing katulad sa pelikula namin. Aba, pag nagkataon, mamimili siya.*"

Romantic or unromantic?

**(From the back cover of *Huwaran/Hulmahan Atbp.*: Johven Velasco was a lecturer [formerly instructor] at the University of the Philippines Film Institute. He had also taught at St. Scholastica's College and the College of St. Benilde, and had been a member of the Philippine Educational Theater Association since 1980. The teleplays he had written and directed won a handful of prizes, including the Star Awards for Television. Since his demise, a foundation was set up in his name, and several outstanding independent films were dedicated to his memory. He was also the recipient of posthumous awards from the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care, and the Parole and Probation Administration.)**