

# Randy Gener wins 2008 Nathan Award Fil-Am editor calls his award a 'validation'

by MOMAR G. VISAYA/ AJPress

**N**EW YORK—Randy Gener was preparing for his traditional turkey recipe for Thanksgiving last year when the phone rang. It was a representative from Cornell University telling him that he had won the prestigious George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism.

Every year, the heads of the English departments of Cornell, Princeton and Yale universities select an American writer “who has written the best piece of drama criticism during the theatrical year (July 1 to June 30), whether it is an article, an essay, treatise or book” to win this award.

Gener, a senior editor of *American Theatre Magazine*, was flabbergasted. He is the first Filipino-American winner of this award.

This is the 50<sup>th</sup> year of Nathan Award and it is considered the highest accolade in the United States for dramatic criticism.

When George Jean Nathan provided for it in his will, he explained that it was his “object and desire to encourage and assist in developing the art of drama criticism and the stimulation of intelligent playgoing.”

Gener called his mother to share the good news, and she was very happy. “I actually called my boyfriend, but he was busy. Then I called my mom, and she picked up. Then, I went out and bought my turkey,” Gener said.

The following day, he ran around Central Park, which he usually does depending on his mood. “I was thinking, ‘My God, I won an award,’ and when I got back at the end of my route, I was like, ‘Oh, sh\*t, what am I gonna do next? What am I going to write about next?’ and I had no answer so I ran one more time and followed the entire same route,” Gener shared.

“It means a certain validation for the kind of writing that I do and a lovely recognition from the field,” Gener said of his award, which comes with a \$10,000 prize, making it the richest, as well as one of the most distinguished in the American theater.

Ellis Hanson, Chair of the Cornell English Department, will present the award to Gener on March 9 at the Kalayaan Hall (Freedom Hall) of the Philippine Center in New York City. Gener’s immediate family will be flying from California and Nevada to join him as they celebrate his victory.

Gener, who calls himself an editor who writes, joins an elite roster of individuals who have won this award since its inception in 1959. Among the previous awardees are Harvey Scott McMillin, Jr., a professor of English at Cornell who died unexpectedly March 2007 and was posthumously given the Nathan award in 2007 for his book *The Musical as Drama*; Charles Isherwood and Walter Kerr, *New York Times* drama critics; Harold Clurman, and Stanley Kauffmann.

The Nathan Award Committee was particularly impressed by Gener’s writing for *American Theatre Magazine* and his citation read, “He has used that venue and others to draw our attention to largely ignored voices and visions on the international theatrical scene, to the work of Filipino-American playwright Jessica Hagedorn, to a small but lively

Tennessee Williams Festival in Provincetown, and to the future of theatrical criticism itself in essays that wed critical intelligence with a beat reporter’s love of the telling and unruly fact.”

The citation continues, “In one piece, Gener argues that, at its best, criticism is ‘a cultural asset, one of the bases on which democracy and community are built.’ He fulfills that lofty goal by implicitly reminding us of how much that is excellent in theater here and abroad is ignored by a critical fraternity which, during this age of globalization, seems more parochial than ever.”

Jim O’Quinn, editor-in-chief of *American Theatre Magazine*, remarked, “Randy Gener has been a tremendous asset to American Theatre ever since he was selected as a Jerome Foundation Affiliated Writer back in 1995–96, and especially since he joined the staff full-time in 2002. His command of any number of theatrical subjects—from international exchange to the vagaries of arts



Photo by Jovie Calma Santos



Photo by Rivka Katvan

journalism and criticism—is unequalled among his contemporaries.”

Gener began his stint with *American Theatre Magazine* back in 1995 when he was chosen as one of the Jerome Foundation fellows. Prior to that, he was a critic and a writer at the *Village Voice*. It was pretty memorable for him because the first article he ever wrote there made it to the magazine’s cover.

Gener also won a 2003 *New York Times* critic fellowship at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center’s National Critics Institute; grants from the Foundation of the American Theatre Critics Association, the Ford Foundation, and the Trust for Mutual Understanding; and a *Filipinas Magazine* Arts and Culture Prize. He was also a

member of the theater alliances NoPassport and Theater Without Borders.

Winning the Nathan Award is the most recent accolade in Gener’s distinguished career.

In addition to being the Senior Editor of *American Theatre Magazine*, he is a writer, critic, editor, playwright, visual artist and blogger based in New York City. He is the author of the plays *Love Seats for Virginia Woolf* and *What Remains of a Rembrandt Torn into Four Pieces*, among others, as well as scholarly essays, articles and reviews in *The Village Voice*, *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, *The Star Ledger*, *Time Out New York*, and other publications.

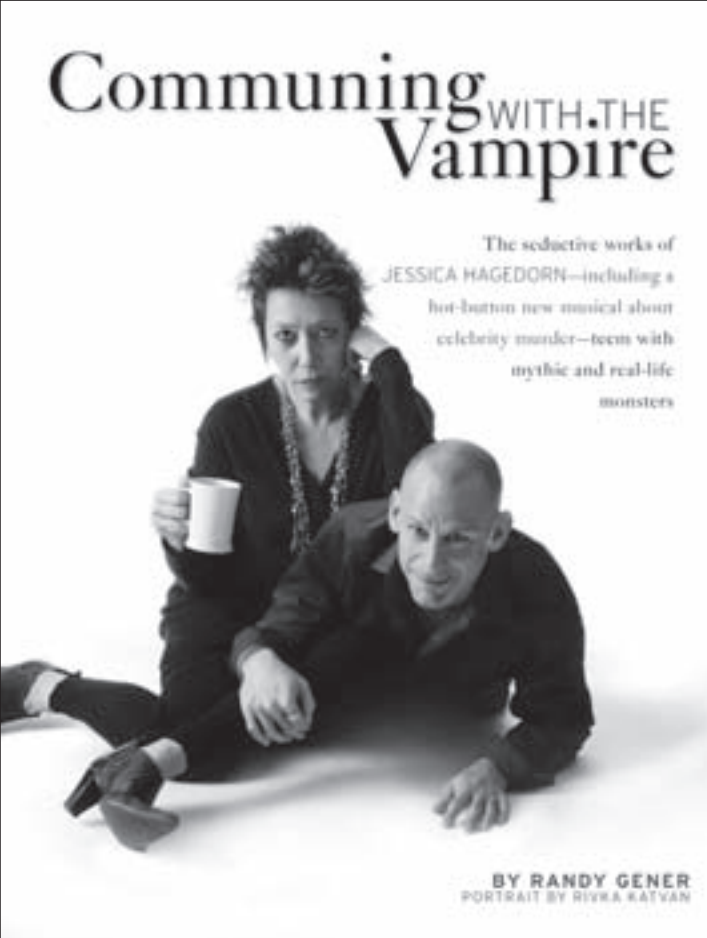
Additionally, he has worked as an editor of the Arts Institute/



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Theatre Institute of the Czech Republic’s newspaper *Prague Quadrennial Today* and as a freelance dramaturg for the Joseph Papp Public Theater, Roundabout Theatre Company, Pan Asian Repertory Theatre, and Denver Center Theatre Company. His floral installation *In the Garden of One World* (a collaboration with the Romanian scenic designer Nic Ularu) debuted in 2008 at La MaMa La Galleria. ■



## Young Professionals stage Gala...

PAGE 1 ◀

see the other side of the glamour and we see hunger and sickness,” Mendoza told the Asian Journal in an interview during the event.

Stewart agreed, “Actually, we do much more. We use our beauty, grace and intelligence to give back to the community.”

Members of the planning committee are thankful to everyone who attended and supported the fundraising event.

“These are hard times. Not a lot of people are able to help out the way they used to that’s why financial support is even more appreciated now,” Perlas said.

The gala’s planning committee consists of a diverse group of socially conscious young professionals who are employed in a variety of fields including finance, IT, government, law, healthcare, travel and real estate. Mr. Edward Ip of IUG Business Solutions serves as Chair.

The group came together to develop a unique event catering to New York’s growing population of civic-minded, high-earning Asian American Young Professionals. They chose to support the American Cancer Society Eastern Division Asian Initiatives Unit, which is a community-based organization serving over 10,000 clients a year, including more than 800 newly diagnosed cancer patients.

The event, held at the Taj Lounge in Manhattan had a networking reception, followed by a program, the awards presentation and auction. The organizers hope to make this gala an annual event. ■



Carl Perlas takes a moment to mingle with his guests: cousin Mary GERALYNN HIDALGO, brother Christian O’Neil and sister Patricia Perlas during the Gala for Hope event.

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