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3-6-2024

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United Filipino Club Goes All Out for 30th Anniversary Barrio Show

Caleb Stipkovits, Volunteer Reporter

Sounds of music and laughter were heard from all corners of the Campion Ballroom the second of March. On the stage, performers danced, sang and acted before hundreds of parents and students as smells of delicious food wafted through the audience. These were some of the defining characteristics of the United Filipino Club's (UFC) 30th annual Barrio Fiesta.

Barrio is one of the most beloved traditions at Seattle U. The show has withstood the test of time, even having a virtual show during the COVID-19

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pandemic. This year's seven-hour show was packed with attendees as over 450 tickets were sold in just two weeks. The theme of this year's Barrio was "Salinlahi," meaning generations and prosperity.

Barrio Co-Chairs Lizy Richey, a third-year nursing major, and Ben Ebolobo, a second-year nursing major, were the two UFC members largely in charge of planning the event. The two planners were aided by 15 total committees, including food, decorations and choreography.

According to Richey, planning the event was a long and intricate process. She noted that preparing for Barrio begins in June so that the entire club has plenty of time to organize everything.

"We had to account for almost anything you could possibly think of when planning an event," Richey said. "Ben and I first started with figuring out our theme, dances, skit plot and committee chairs, and then made a calendar of all the other logistics we needed to plan out."

This year's Barrio didn't just draw in high attendance numbers, but high participation numbers as well. Richey said that in her first year, there were about 25 performers for the whole show. This year, there were almost 90.

One area of performance that saw a surge in participation numbers were the dances. The show had a vast arrangement of dances including but not limited to traditional tinikling and bulaklakan pieces. But perhaps the most successful dance was the "Beginning Modern" piece, which was the biggest dance in Barrio history.

Second-year Computer Science Major Lauren Ebia was the choreographer for the record-breaking piece.

"Given that I had such a fun and uplifting experience participating in the Barrio last year, I wanted to encapsulate and pass on that same feeling to [the dancers] this year," Ebia said. "My main goal and priority was to ensure my dancers felt confident no matter their dance experience [and that they] were having fun with my piece."

Barrio was not without a selection of delicious Filipino foods. The menu this year included lumpia, pancit palabok and mango sago. UFC members and volunteers did the cooking while members of Chi Theta Psi, Seattle U's Filipino fraternity, served the food.

Second-Year Political Science Major Jacob Caddali helped prepare the food for this year's event.

"For about a week we were cooking at the C-Street kitchen. We would roll lumpia, we would make the filling, we would chop up green beans… Ellisa [Baraan], Jomi [Ruiz], and Daryl [Serquinia] did a really good job at [planning] that," Caddali said.

The show also had several skits that featured comedy, a love story and the importance of learning to love one's culture. According to Caddali, the skit took the entire school year to plan and rehearse.

"For the whole quarter leading up to Barrio, we would have an hour and a half long practice every week, and we'd go over scenes," Caddali said. "[During] rehearsal, we would be there all the way up to 12:30 [a.m.] trying to get the lines down."

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This was Hailey Neri's, second-year business economics major, first Barrio. Neri was involved with many aspects of the show as she served as a public relations co-chair as well as having sang and danced.

"This was my first Barrio to participate in, and I loved every aspect of it," Neri said. "Though it was very grueling being part of four dances, I got to make various connections with people who I never got the chance to talk to along with deepening other friendships that I already had."

As the show came to an end, a series of tribute videos honoring the class of '24 UFC members concluded Barrio. This marked an extremely successful show for the club, who emphasized the importance of going all-out for their 30th-anniversary show.

"Ben and I wanted to really emphasize the 30th anniversary because there has been so much growth and traditions held in the past 30 years," Richey said. "After COVID, we had to figure out so many logistics of Barrio, and having the Filipino Alumni Chapter brought back this year helped us in planning and executing Barrio."

This year's success of Barrio has allowed several UFC members to reflect upon the importance of the club and the event.

"My favorite part was hearing the crowd's response to the whole production. I especially enjoyed when the crowd got super excited for the last dance of Barrio… The support and love from the crowd is something I will forever play through my head and cherish," Richey added.

UFC certainly delivered a show worthy of Barrio's 30-year history. Although the next show is an entire year away, there is a lot for the Seattle U community to look forward to.