

*September 11, 2018*

## 12th International Silent Film Festival Manila Featuring Die Kleine Veronika



The International Silent Film Festival was established in 2007 by the Goethe-Institut Philippinen, the Japan Foundation, Manila, and Instituto Cervantes that gave Manila audiences a one-of-a-kind viewing experience of watching silent films from the early decades of the 20th Century.

The first of its kind in Asia and on its 12th year running, the International Silent Film Festival Manila (ISFFM) was held last August 30 till September 2, 2018, at the SM Megamall Cinema 2. Here, different countries from all over the world showcase feature films accompanied by live musical performances from talented and modern Filipino musicians. This year's participants include the Philippines, Italy, France, Germany, Japan, USA, Spain, and Austria.

This event would not be possible without the collaboration of the Austrian Embassy along with cochlear implant provider, MED-EL Philippines and

Austrian company founded in Innsbruck, is an industry leader in implantable hearing solutions that has been advancing the technological and scientific foundation in the field of hearing implants.



A short description of what *Die Kleine Veronika* is all about.







Joe and I preparing for their performance. Everything one may expect from an electronic act is here — looping riffs, unexpected twists and vocals that stroke, smash, stomp, scream and kiss are ever present throughout their performance.



Ms. Zelfha Bombais, Cultural Attache for the Austrian Embassy as she says a few words for the opening remarks.



For more than 20 years now, MED-EL Philippines has aided deaf Filipinos, especially children, through their products and modern technology allowing people to live and thrive with sound and music.

Moments before the actual movie screening, a video featured individuals with cochlear implants was shown. It was during this presentation that I recognized one of the boys as the son of a friend of mine, Celine. I knew that Celine had a child with cochlear implants, but I never got the chance to ask her about her personal experience. After watching the clip, I wanted to learn more about these implants from a mom's point of view and asked Celine some questions that helped me understand how the device has changed her son's life, as well as her life as a mom. Celine shares, "As soon as we discovered that Santino was deaf through newborn hearing screening, cochlear implants was already an option. However, it was our surgeon and audiologists who wanted us to try hearing aids first. As first-time parents, we were apprehensive of the procedure, it was a very challenging time of our lives as parents, but we knew that we had to do something. Looking back and seeing him now, it was one of the best decisions we've ever made for our son. Santino was the youngest to be bilaterally implanted at 13 months old. His triumphant journey to hearing may be attributed to these factors: 1. Early detection 2. Immediate intervention and 3. Excellent family support. He is doing well now at Ateneo Junior High School and is often invited to forums, conferences, and seminars on hearing loss. I feel that Santino is like MED-EL's little ambassador as he advocates for himself and has always been proud to share and help all those with hearing loss." Celine adds, "He dreams of being the first commercial airline pilot with cochlear implants someday." Santino's story is truly an inspiration.





Santino proudly talks about his experience with cochlear implants and shares that even though he was too young to remember what it was like not to be able to hear, he is nonetheless grateful for the technology that allows him and other people to benefit from this invention.

Austria's contribution to this year's Silent Film Festival is the 1929 classic, *Die Kleine Veronika* or *The Little Veronika* directed by Robert Land. As silent films go, the absence of sound makes for a wanting viewing experience. This deficiency was satiated by the live musical performance of an avant-pop electronica solo project called Joe and I. Armed with a laptop, kalimba, bells, shakers, and a melodica, Joe Mejias churns out melodies that sing in the elaborate contrapuntal accompaniment befitting the mood and feel of each moment in the film.

The story begins with scenic views of the Austrian Alps of Tyrol that later focuses on a small town bustling with countryfolk about the square. Here, two ladies meet, and one tells the other that she is awaiting her sister's invitation to bring her daughter Veronika to Vienna for Confirmation. The next scene opens as little Veronika is busy doing her daily routine until her mother receives a package containing a beautiful dress from wealthy sister, Rosie as well as an invitation for Veronika to visit the city. Overjoyed and excited, Veronika prepares for her wonderful trip ahead. Aunt Rosie picks up Veronika from the station and leads her around Vienna to her place. Upon entering the house, other women who live with Rosie meet Veronika and are in awe of her innocence. While Veronika admires the beautiful dresses and fine jewelry that surround her, she is unaware that her aunt actually works in a brothel.

the famous Viennese amusement park. There, they chance upon Franz working in a stall, who happens to be an old friend of Veronika from Tyrol. To Rosie's discomfort, they meet Ferdinand, one of her clients. While Rosie is with Ferdinand, Franz arrives showing Veronika around the park and gives her a heart-shaped token. The couple departs after some time, and Veronika is reunited with her aunt and Ferdinand, leaving Franz. All three then go dancing and meet other friends at a nightclub. Veronika unintentionally attracts a wealthy aristocrat who manages to intoxicate her. As the party departs, Veronika is separated from the group and spends the night with the aristocrat.

The next day, Rosie discovers that Veronika is missing and reports her to the police. Inside the aristocrat's apartment, Veronika pledges her love for him and begins to plan a life around him as his little wife. He then gives Veronika money and sends her back to her aunt informing her that he will collect her there. Arriving in the brothel, Veronika soon realizes the ramifications of her actions as other women rebuke her. Aunt Rosie proceeds to tell Veronika not to breathe a word about this to her parents and sends her back to Tyrol. Veronika is broken.

Craven and dismayed, Veronika heads back to her parents, but as the train she's riding in halts to a stop, she descends from it and wanders around aimlessly. Franz, Veronika's friend who happens to be on the same train, rushes to stop her, chasing and calling her name. Veronika is unresponsive and just walks on until she reaches a river and attempts to commit suicide. Franz swims to her rescue, assuring her that whatever she has done is forgiven and professes his love for her.

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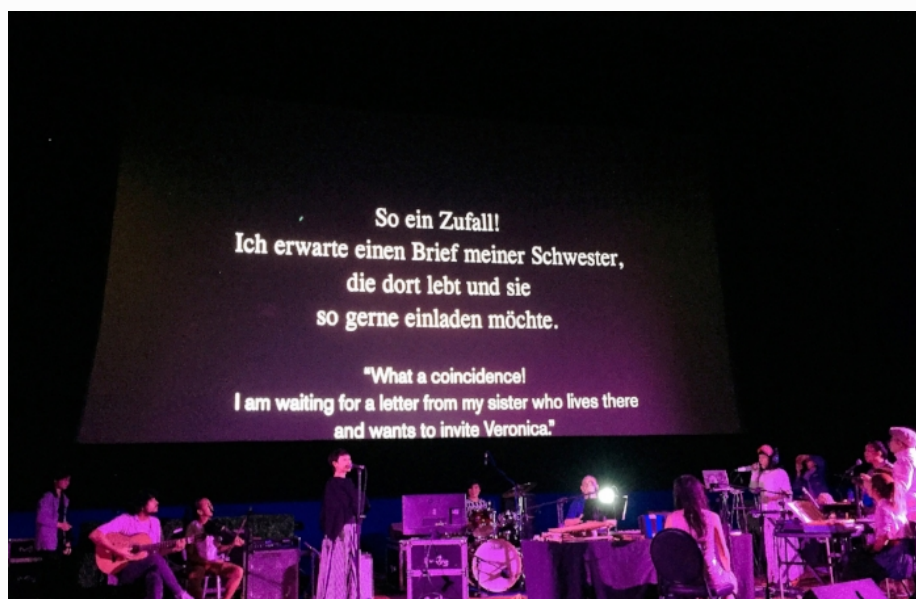




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Veronika's mother on the left talking about her daughter going to Vienna.



Nothing is lost in translation with German and English titles.



This is little Veronika as she prepares to face the day in Tyrol.

*Die Kleine Veronika* tells a tale of life's perceptions and misconceptions -- what seems glamorous, fun and exciting at first can sometimes turn out to be the exact opposite -- hard, painful and full of regret. Little Veronika is forced to learn this early on, she is forced to mature overnight in the most unfortunate of circumstances ... sadly, this still happens today.

We can all make a difference to help children in need, other "Little Veronikas" whose lives have been upturned due to illness, death, and misfortune in the family. Thankfully there are organizations that address these issues and have indeed made a difference in the lives of children and adults alike such as the Hearlife Foundation, Inc. The 12th International Silent Film Fest in collaboration with these organizations undoubtedly made the annual event an even greater cultural and educational project for the Austrian Embassy with human rights, particularly with children and persons with disabilities, as its focus. With the advancement of technology from MED-EL Philippines in conjunction with the Hearlife Foundation, Inc., now no Filipino has to endure a life of alienation and silence, bereft with sound.

