Photo Source: *Front Elevation Plan of Archt. Juan Arellano*

ON THE WINGS OF SONG

“Developing a Conservation Management Plan and Feasibility Study for the Manila Metropolitan Theater”

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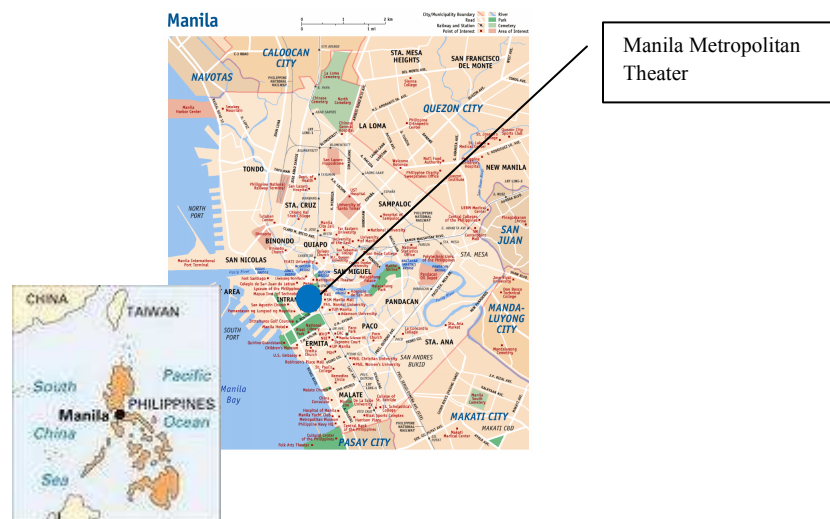
I. Introduction

The Manila Metropolitan Theater is one of the grandest buildings built during the American Colonial Period (1901-1940) and it is the greatest contribution of Filipinos in the world of Art Deco. It is a beautiful jewel of modernistic architecture, the synthesis that came out of local Filipino forms and the international Art Deco style that was famous during that era.

The theater launched the life works of Philippine National Artists in architecture, visual arts, music, dance and literature, who dominated Philippine cultural history. It was relegated to obsolescence after the structural damage of the Second World War and the meteoric popularity of television, movies and the contemporary cyberspace media.

The Philippine government has prioritized the theater’s restoration because of its prominence as an imposing landmark with high aesthetic and architectural significance in the heart of Manila city. This two part study develops the conservation management plan and the feasibility study to make the theater operational and conserve the meaning of the theater for future generations.

II. The Theater: Context and Condition



The MET as it is fondly called is one of Manila's outstanding landmarks situated in a lot area of 7, 633.10 square meters in the northern end of the Mehan Garden (1994, Buenaventura). It is bounded in the north by the Quezon Bridge, in the north east by the LRT Central Station, in the east by the Manila City Hall, in the west by the Manila Park and Ride terminal and in the north west by the MacArthur Bridge. Its location is part of the Parian area during the Spanish Colonial period; hence, its very site is undoubtedly significant. The early 1920's excavation of O.H Beyer has already proven that true as that archeological excavation yielded noteworthy cultural materials from the 15th – 16th Centuries.



Photo Sources: <http://superpasyal.blogspot.com/2006/07/manila-metropolitan-theatre.html>
<http://www.clarkfield-ww2.com/manila/metro.theater>

According to its architect, Juan Arellano, the structure was inspired by the phrase “on the wings of song”. True enough, its façade attests well to that statement. It is topped by a segmental arch, each segment defined by tapering pinnacles that resembles oriental stupas, two identical wings, each bordered horizontally by a frieze with stylized shell patterns with their inner rounded corners radiant with tile mosaic in Javanese patterns framing the main façade. As well, a magnificent stained glass window with stylized floral pattern of green, blue, purple and yellow serves as the focal point of the Met's façade. Below this glass window is the main entrance, divided into three bays that are each shaded with stylized canopies. The rough textured exterior walls in soft pastel colors compliment the structures grandiose well. Bas reliefs and stylized sculptures appear as added accents to the Met's façade.

The Met has a seating capacity of 1670 after its original 1930's completion which was later increased to 1709 after its 1978 restoration. It reached its peak during the Japanese Occupation where it became a Japanese propaganda center where major cultural activities were held. The 1945 Battle of Manila left the Met in ruins as it was not spared from the heavy bombing of the American armed forces. The roof was completely obliterated while the walls withstood the shelling and bombing.

After its declaration in 1973 as a National Landmark PD 260, it was reconstructed and reopened to the public in 1978. The theatre was consequently closed down in 1996 following a dispute of its ownership and management between the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and the City of Manila. This dispute was finally resolved in 2000 with the ownership granted to GSIS and with the City of Manila as the manager. In 2002, funding for the restoration of the Met was started and in 2004 a tripartite agreement among GSIS, City government of Manila and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) was signed which formally started a work action plan for the restoration of the theatre.

The west wing rehabilitation of the theatre as a satellite office of the GSIS was completed in 2003. However, as the GSIS does not have the mandate to restore the theater for cultural purposes, the restoration work was held for the succeeding years. The actual restoration work was started in 2007, beginning with the repair of the theatre's roof and the second phase that includes utility systems work is already on going.

However, since the restoration has recently started, a large part of the Met's building structure is still in poor condition as evidenced in the Theater's Damage Assessment Schedule for 200 Rooms with badly damaged roof, broken glass windows, detached doors, quickly deteriorating wooden floors and other parts slowly but continually disintegrating. The long damaged, if not entirely open, roofing has led to water leakage, seepage and flooding in most areas of the theatre. Moisture and humidity have bred termites and other insects all over the interior which contributes greatly to its fast deterioration. Lastly, heavy pollution due to choked traffic directly in front of the structure lead to the accumulation of thick soot on the exterior walls and decorations of the building.

With the recent changing of leadership bringing Mayor Alfredo Lim at the helm of the City of Manila, the Met has renewed hope of finally being renovated and revived to its old glory.

III. Statement of Significance



Photo Source: <http://estanli.net/blog/2005/12/02/manila-metropolitan-theatre>

The Metropolitan Theater of Manila is culturally significant as the only existing art deco building in its scale and integrity in Asia. Based on documentary evidence, its aesthetic, historical, social and cultural values demonstrate high levels of significance. Aesthetically, vestiges of exterior and interior elements exhibiting "Filipinized style of ornamentation" show Filipino artistry at its best. The magnificence of the ingenious art deco elements seen throughout the building are done on a grand scale. Unique and rare elements, albeit now worn-out, may also be seen throughout the building's fabric. The sculptures and paintings done by prominent artists only add to the opulence and artistry of the edifice.

It has been found to be historically significant having connections with historical figures and events. National Artists and foremost designers have figured prominently in

the life of the building, namely Juan Arellano, Arcadio Arellano, Fernando Amorsolo, Antonio Buenaventura, and Nicanor Abelardo.

Culturally, as the country's first "national theatre" it was a hub of cultural and artistic performances and visual arts showcases. It became not only a venue for these events, but a prestigious launch pad for talent, as the country's foremost artists premiered their performances at the Met.

Socially, with the Met's varied offerings during the peak of its operations, it became a venue that had meaning for people from all social classes. It was where high government officials, foreign dignitaries and members of the elite patronized serious cultural fare and social events. The middle-brow or the masses frequented the Met with offerings of vaudeville, musical comedy, movies and like. Students, too, had a place at the Met to witness school plays, graduation recitals and oath-taking ceremonies.

With these elements encapsulated in the history and spirit of the edifice, the Metropolitan Theater is clearly culturally significant and worthy of lifelong conservation for the enjoyment of this generation and the next.

IV. Plans and Proposals

As books and volumes of studies and investigations have already established the significance of the Manila Metropolitan Theater, this section of the study focused on the current status of the Met's renovation, issues, as well as plans for its future use.

Interviews were conducted on representatives of the building's stakeholders – Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), the City of Manila and the National Historical Institute (NHI).

Status of the Reconstruction:

With the P50M grant by the Office of the President through the NCCA already fully released to the City of Manila, roof construction of the Met has been undertaken. The roof repair was meant to be done in three phases, timed with the release of funds. At this point, the work is now nearing its completion. The roof repair was a priority because the constant rains have continuously aggravated the extent of damage inside the theater. Mayor Lim intends that the theater will be operational by December 2008. The city plans to use the Met for some cultural programs and shows which they have lined up. And for this, work has already begun on the stage inside the auditorium. The Mayor intends to revive the Met primarily reverting it back to its original use.

Future Use of the theatre:

Most of the recent studies for the Met have suggested reverting the building back to its original use. The study figured the Met as "a theater, with a costume museum or a museum for the performing arts. All businesses that will be allowed in the Met should be supplementary and complementary to the use of the theater."

The need for further studies on the Met's existing design was raised. "Met needs a thorough study of its existing design and to convert it to the most practical and safe materials and installation and the load because what is required is the safety of its users if

it is to be retained as a theater.” In its reconstruction, it was more important to be practical than being a purist.

Plans and Issues:

Funding remains to be the major issue in the reconstruction of the Met theater. This daunting task is now on the shoulders of the City of Manila, who shall manage the building for 25 years by virtue of the usufruct arrangement enclosed in the tripartite agreement between GSIS, NCCA and the City of Manila. However, there are no specific programs, as of yet, for fundraising activities for the building.

V. Conservation Policy

General Conservation Policy

In line with the values of significance of the Met, the conservation policy of the place should concentrate in improving and developing the aesthetic, cultural, historic and social significance values. The conservation of the place should be practiced on the basis of respect on the fabric, contents, setting and original use.

The process of conservation should be properly documented and recorded through photographic evidence, plans and analysis of descriptions using appropriate professional advice. This involves research, assessment, community participation and management, and maintenance by developing a committee in charge of conservation.

The conservation of the Metropolitan Theater should also respond to the stakeholders’ vision of a developing community. The preservation and protection of the significance should be able to preserve the sustainability of the place and its future use.

The most significant value of the Met is the aesthetic value because it is considered to be the best example of Philippine art deco design. The cultural, historic and social values follow the aesthetic value in its level of relevance.

In view of the above, all significant aesthetic elements and its fabric should be respected through common conservation processes. Common processes of conservation such as restoration, preservation, reconstruction and adaptation are defined based on the Burra Charter.

The Met should reflect in the exterior the appearance of the original 1928 design and within the interiors, the 1978 design and space planning. The extent of the conservation work to be done on the building fabric must involve the least possible physical intervention.

Conservation works should retain all of the identified and significant attributes of the place and improve and recover those that have been lost. It should identify and take into consideration all aspects of significance without unwarranted emphasis on any value at the expense of others (Burra Charter).

The conservation policy should also recognize the need to address the objectives of the Conservation Management Plan by developing strategies and action plans in order for these goals to be achievable. Long term goals are to be attained from five to ten years and medium term goals should be met in two to four years while short term plans should be achieved within a year.

The conservation of the Metropolitan Theater should be undertaken by the proposed Metropolitan Theater Conservation Management Committee tasked to carry out the different conservation works of the place.

VI. Conservation Strategy

The Metropolitan Theater Conservation Management Committee

Through a formal agreement, it is proposed that this committee be created by the three government units tasked to oversee the theatre. The Metropolitan Theater Conservation Management Committee will operate under the office of the City of Manila as its manager and the GSIS and NCCA as its immediate consultants.

Functions and Responsibilities:

1. Advises the three government units and reports building updates, status of resources, or any other element of the theater.
2. Directly oversees the preservation and protection of the required resources in the conservation of the theater.
3. Coordinates with the City of Manila on matters pertaining to conservation with required reports to the GSIS and consultations to the NCCA.
4. Coordinates with the NCCA, especially with the NHI and the National Museum, in matters of interventions and alterations to the building fabric and context.
5. Directly oversees the implementation of the Conservation Management Plan.
6. The committee may make regulations, specifically or generally, for the purpose of conservation and enhancement of the building and its specific elements, including its context.
7. Identify and conduct inventory of the theater's resources.
8. Recommend resources for conservation and/or preservation.
9. Monitor resources for conservation, restoration, rehabilitation, maintenance, interpretation
10. Prescribe conditions to be observed in granting permission for maintenance and renovations.
11. To regulate or prohibit activities that may directly or indirectly affect the conservation of the building fabric.
12. Prescribe conditions and procedures for application for any work or repair with respect to the significance of the building.
13. To provide for such other measures as necessary or of expedient nature to ensure the conservation of the theater and its sound and continuous operation and function.
14. Promote, regulate and carry out exhibitions or publications that contribute to the theater's conservation.
15. To prescribe conditions and restrictions to the public for access.

Divisions:

1. Finance and Resources
2. Management and Staffing
3. Research and Conservation
4. Records and Archives

5. Maintenance and Repair
6. Education and Training
7. Technical Division
 - a. Allied Engineering
 - b. Architectural and Interiors

Regulations that the Committee may make:

1. Specifying conditions to be observed by the implementing (maintenance and repair division) office in granting permission for maintenance and renovations.
2. Regulating or prohibiting activities in and around the theatre that will contribute to its conservation.
3. Stipulating conditions and procedures for application for any work or repair with respect to the cultural significance of the building.
4. Providing for other such measures as necessary or of convenient nature to ensure the conservation of the theatre.
5. Promoting, regulating and carrying out of exhibitions or publications relating to the theatre.
6. Setting down conditions and restrictions to the public for access

CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN

	ACTIVITY	1-2 YEARS	2-5 YEARS	5 + YEARS
1. ADMINISTRATION	1.1 Establish legal legitimacy for conservation management	✓		
	1.2 Create a project management team that will oversee the MET restoration project	✓		
	1.3 Establish Building Management Office with clear legal and organizational authority		✓	
	1.4 Create the Metropolitan Theater Conservation Management Committee		✓	
	1.5 Clearly organized management system in place with active participation of the lead agencies, the government officials, the conservation and heritage groups, and the general public			✓
	1.6 Maintain and reinforce the Metropolitan Theatre Conservation Management Committee to meet the needs from jump – starting the theatre through to its operation.			✓
2. INFRASTRUCTURE	1.1 Inventory of the existing fabric	✓		
	1.2 Retrofit the most critical building elements such as the roofing to prevent further damage that will be caused by water seepage and flooding	✓		
	1.3 Develop and prepare an appropriate Conservation Management Plan		✓	
	1.4 Begin restoration work in accordance with the approved plans and the Conservation Management Plan		✓	
	1.5 Start a traffic restructuring plan for the Lawton area; provide ample detours and alternate routes to minimize the traffic flow in the area as much as possible.			✓
	1.6 Achieve an aesthetically and functionally restored MET Building			✓
3. MAINTENANCE	1.1 Develop appropriate Building Maintenance Plan that is in accordance with the conservation plan/guidelines	✓		
	1.2 Begin training of technical persons that will be involved in the maintenance of the Metropolitan Theatre	✓		
	1.3 Implement Building Maintenance Plan			
	1.4 Pool of trained technical persons that are highly aware of the proper maintenance of heritage structures such as the Metropolitan Theatre		✓	
	1.5 Develop appropriate Emergency Management Plan that considers all potential risks particularly natural and man-made disasters/hazards		✓	
	1.6 Well maintained, functionally and			✓

	aesthetically-sound Metropolitan Theatre and resilient from the identified potential disasters/hazards			
4. INTERPRETATION	<p>1.1 Provide Interpretation Panel with the statement of significance in the Grand Lobby of the Metropolitan Theatre</p> <p>1.2 Develop appropriate website of the Metropolitan Theatre which will feature programs, recent and future events, significance, history, restoration performed, and conservation programs</p> <p>1.3 Determine other forms of promotional plans and programs based on different target audience</p> <p>1.4 Significance of Metropolitan Theatre mainstreamed into MET administration and personnel, concerned/tie-up government and non-government agencies, schools, and the public</p> <p>1.5 Make Metropolitan Theatre a model or centre for heritage conservation and research</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>
5. FURTHER RESEARCH	<p>1.1 Data mining related to Metropolitan Theatre, its fabric and ornamentation, Philippine Art Nouveau, etc.</p> <p>1.2 Establish information exchanges between professionals and MET technical persons particularly on conservation, maintenance and other issues</p> <p>1.3 Carry-out research projects on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chemical composition of the fabric and condition - MET structural soundness - MET design elements and ornamentations <p>1.4 Establish system for ongoing data gathering</p> <p>1.5 Ongoing information exchange</p> <p>1.6 Metropolitan Theatre information clearinghouse for research community and others interested in the field</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>
6. CONSERVATION OF LANDSCAPE AND SETTING	<p>1.1 Develop a Landscape Management Guidelines as supplemental to the Conservation Management Plan</p> <p>1.2 Review of the Landscape Management Guidelines for possible adoption/creation as local ordinance by the City of Manila</p> <p>1.3 Well-preserved and maintained MET Building, Landscape, and view corridor</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>
7. RECORDS AND REPORTS	<p>1.1 Inventory of all the data related to MET</p> <p>1.2 Coordination with concerned agency regarding the management and safekeeping of records and reports and ways of accessing it</p> <p>1.3 Collating, arranging, and labelling of records and reports</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>		

	1.4 Review of the Conservation Management Plan particularly regarding issues and concerns affecting records and reports		✓	
	1.5 Well-maintained records and reports and accessible to the general public			✓
8. USE	1.1 Initial Listing of Policies and Guidelines regarding the use of the building	✓		
	1.2 Creation and dissemination of the policies and guidelines to all the concerned individual and agencies	✓		
	1.3 Building use assessment and review		✓	
	1.4 Adaptable and resilient MET Building			✓

VII. Feasibility Study: Metropolitan Theater as a Mixed Use Cultural Space

A. Introduction

This part of the study evaluates the overall feasibility of Manila Metropolitan Theater as a Mixed Use Cultural Space and determines the financial requirements that the project entails.

B. Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. Conduct a survey within the vicinity of the MET to understand the needs and wants of the people surrounding the area and how they can support it.
2. Consult the tripartite committee regarding the inputs and feedback of the restoration and management of the MET.
3. Consult the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) and similar theater institutions in putting up a sustainable facility for the people.
4. Determine adaptive reuse of the entire interior and exterior of the MET.
5. Conduct a financial projection on the operation of the Metropolitan Theater as a Mixed Use Cultural Space.

C. Methodology

The project follows the following sequence:

1. Data Gathering
 - a. Survey Questionnaire
 - b. Interview
 - c. Consultations
 - d. Archival research
2. Systematizing / Compiling of Data
3. Project Development
4. Feasibility of the Project

D. Data Results and Analysis

The data gathering was undertaken through survey form. Questions regarding the restoration of the MET and its end use were formulated into a survey that could be answered in 5-10 minutes. These forms were distributed to groups of people located within the vicinity of the building and stakeholders of the MET. Two kinds of survey were released: Group 1 composed of 50 respondents from general client universities and families in the area and Group 2 composed of 40 respondents from the tripartite group (Manila City Hall, NCCA, GSIS) and consultation from the CCP (See Sample Survey Forms).

A profile of Group 1 respondents showed mostly female aged 20-25 years and regular jeepney commuters around the Theater. With regards to interest, many preferred watching movies and going to malls. Most of them are familiar with the MET as a theater and cultural center. They are attracted to the MET because of its history and architecture. And they want the MET to be a cultural center for the masses where theater productions and concerts can be staged. They would like the MET to be complemented by restaurants, bookstores, movie houses and museums. In terms of management, government support is preferred but it is emphasized that the MET must find innovative ways in terms of development strategies and better business advertisements.

The profile of Group 2 is similar to the first with respondents composed mostly of female aged 20-25 years and mostly jeepney commuters. Many have not visited the MET because it is located in the choke point of the city and it had been closed for some time. A big percentage desires the renovation of the MET with additional space uses like a convention center, a museum, a language school, offices for cultural organizations, performing arts school, and library. Commercial spaces servicing food, information, education and entertainment are encouraged. As stakeholders of the MET, they can help the marketing and promotions of the programs. The MET has remained a beautiful memory because of the architecture and the performances but the traffic, security and neglect have made the place unbearable.

The results indicate the desire of the general public and the stakeholders to restore the Metropolitan Theater to its original use complemented by other cultural space uses like museum, library, restaurants, school, souvenir shops and cultural offices.

E. Financial Requirements

1. Construction Cost

Renovation cost of the structure including contingencies is estimated at Php35,000 per square meter. Total area to be renovated is estimated at 5,800 square meters.

COMPUTATION		
Renovation cost		Php 35,000.00/ sq.m.
Total Area sq.m.	x	5,800.00
Total Renovation Cost		Php 203,000,000.00

2. Operating Expense

Operating Expense of the project is computed at Php 500 per sq.m. per month which includes the cost of salaries, utilities, maintenance and depreciation cost of equipment and infrastructure.

An estimate of 4,200 square meters may be leased off as business and commercial space, including theater. Thus operating costs only accrue to the remaining total floor area, or approximately 1,600 square meters. The monthly dues of the theater operator and tenants will cover the operating expenses for the said areas. Operating costs will now be Php 800,000 per month or 9.6 Million per year.

COMPUTATION		
Operating cost		Php 500.00/sq.m.
Total Area	x	1,600.00 sq.m.
Total Operating Cost		Php 800,000.00

3. Income

The project will derive income solely from revenues from leasable spaces. This total to Php4,200,000 per month.

With a total leasable space of 4,200 sq.m, and a unit revenue of Php1,000 per square meter, the current rate for business and commercial spaces, the total revenue from leasable space amounts to Php 4,200,000 per month.

4. Revenue Less Operating Expense

COMPUTATION		
Total Revenue	Php4,200,000/month or 50,400,000/year	
Less:		
Total Operating Cost	Php 800,000/month or 9,600,000/year	
Value Added Tax	5,400,000/ year	
Income Tax	12,390,000/year	
	Total Php 23,010,000/ year	

The project will operate at a net gain of Php 23,010,00 per year, assuming that no loan was taken out to finance the renovation cost.

5. Taxation

The following are the tax liabilities of the project:

5.1 Income Tax

Incomes from the lease of the spaces are subject to income tax.

COMPUTATION		
Income from Lease		Php4,200,000 per month
	Or	50,400,000 per year
		÷ <u>1.12</u>
Gross income		45,000,000
Less: Allowable Deduction		
Operating Expenses, Etc.		<u>9,600,000</u>
Net Income		35,400,000
Tax rate		× 35%
INCOME TAX DUE		Php12,390,000

5.2 Value Added Tax

The actual gross receipts from the lease of the spaces are subject to 12 % value added tax. If the revenue from the lease is Php4,200,000 per month or Php50.4 M a year, the tax liability is Php 5,400,000 per year.

COMPUTATION		
Income from Lease		Php50,400,000 per month
		÷ <u>1.12</u>
Gross income		45,000,000
Tax Rate		× 12%
VAT Due		Php5,400,000/year

5.3 Real Property Tax

Since the property is owned by the government, it is exempted from paying real property tax.

6. Financing

Base on the above computations, it is apparent that financing and subsidizing is needed for the renovation cost of Php203 Million. Various possible sources of funding are suggested:

1. Fund allocation from the Senators and Congressmen of Manila
2. Additional funding from the National Commissions for Culture and the Arts
3. Joint marketing and promotional projects of the City of Manila Cultural and Tourism Affairs and sister cities all over the world
4. Fund raising programs of private corporations, foundations and individuals
5. Grants from heritage conservation and art deco international organizations
6. Special loan from private commercial banks

VIII. CONCLUSION

The Manila Metropolitan Theater is the most beautiful expression of Filipino creativity and ingenuity in Art Deco aesthetics and architecture. Built at a time when Manila was designed as the City Beautiful and the Philippines was titled the Pearl of the Orient, the theater was home to the artistic talents who eventually became the Philippines' National Artists in architecture, visual artist, music, literature and dance, a celebration of the best Filipino values.

After the ravage of the Second World War, the shift of entertainment and educational technology to movies and digital media, the rapid urbanization of the city, the Met was forgotten into oblivion. The concerted conservation efforts of the National and Manila city governments coupled by the support from culture, heritage and academic sectors of society, have once again focused the people's attention to the very high aesthetic and architectural significance of the Metropolitan Theater. Once again, it is envisioned to remind the Filipinos of their artistic achievements and inspire promising new generations of National Artists.

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X. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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