

22nd March 2007

Barbie Girl?

Dónal Thompson interviews Paola Lizares



Paola Lizares was one of our most popular and talented teachers. She left us last year to get married. *Weekly Letter* caught up with her in Australia for this interview.

You have travelled all your life. What is it with you?

Ask my mom and ask my husband! Only once did I myself decide to live in another place, and that was when I went to the University of Heidelberg to study for a year. The rest of my travelling was my mom's and, since last year, my husband's idea.

What are the good points about having globetrotted?

You become cosmopolitan. You learn languages. You learn to adapt to other cultures and to accept different ways of thinking. And you can show off!

And the bad?

People can get intimidated, especially when you're growing up. I had a hard time between the ages of 10 and 15. It's tough to be a teenager, and even tougher if you don't fit into the norm.

Are people very different in different places?

No, they aren't. In my opinion, the more you travel, the more similarities you see from place to place. Few things surprise you. The square in city X looks like the square in city Y. The food in country A is very similar to the food in country B. And, with people, it's just the same.

Tell us about Australia? Is it all strange animals and barbecues?

Barbecues (or 'barbies', as they are called here) are very common because of the warm weather. Where I live, there are barbecues on the esplanade, free for anyone to use. The last time my husband and I went out for a barbie, not only was I attacked by mosquitoes ('mossies') but I also heard something ruffling in the branches of the tree above me. I thought it was one of the very large bats that fly around at night. It turned out to be a possum, the marsupial version of a squirrel. You can see a picture of this mammal in the *Beginner's Weekly*.

Anyway, yes, there are some strange creatures here, who don't seem to be shy at all! But Australia is more than that. It's a continent full of friendly people!

Is it hard for a polyglot Filipina wife to understand a German husband?

Of course not. But it is obviously hard for a German husband to understand a polyglot Filipina wife!

What are you doing now?

Well, I'm volunteering for the Fraser Coast Cultural Festival, which will take place this weekend. I signed up as a volunteer, among other reasons because I thought it would be a great way to meet interesting people. And I was right!

Tell us about the festival.

I'm basically in charge of organising the Cultural Pavilion, where arts and crafts from different countries present on the Fraser Coast will be displayed. To organise this, I had to contact several embassies and consulates. I'm also in charge of the Parade of Nations, which will be a bit like the parades that you see at the inauguration of the Olympics, but on a much smaller scale. People will parade wearing their national costumes (except the Aborigines, who would have to appear naked or semi-naked). I would have liked to organise the International Cuisine area, but you can't do everything.

Where will you be in 5 years time? What will you be doing?

Typical job interview question! In 5 years' time I'll be the CEO of my own company, which will appear on the stock market. No, of course not. I doubt it! I'll be somewhere in Australia married to a neurologist or internist and with a toddler on my lap. Oh, and someone from the *Weekly Letter* will be visiting. I wonder who!