

# Music and sports of the Old World

SIXTH ANNUAL ASIAN AMERICAN FILM SERIES RETURNS TO ALHECAMA THEATRE

By Ted Mills,  
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## Sixth Annual Asian American Film Series

**When:** 7 p.m. Fridays, tonight through July 24

**Where:** Alhecama Theatre, 914 Santa Barbara St.

**Cost:** \$5 suggested donation, free for Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation members. Pre-film meals are \$8.

**Information:** 965-0093, sbthp.org

**A**lthough now known as the Presidio Neighborhood, the area between Anacapa and Santa Barbara streets along Canon Perdido used to be both a Chinatown and a Japanese town back in the pre-war era, with Jimmy's Oriental Gardens (now known as The Pickle Room) being the last remnant of that era. And for six years the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation has honored that heritage in several ways, their current one hosting the Asian American Film Series, three films over three Fridays, starting tonight.

Put together by a committee headed by Teresa Chin, the festival shares recent documentaries that illuminate the Asian-American experience, this year focusing on Filipino-, Chinese-, and Japanese-Americans.

"We make sure that all films are rated G and suitable for all families," says the Trust's Melissa Chatfield.

The films screen at the Alhecama Theatre, former home of the Ensemble Theatre Company, and the committee is offering an optional boxed meal of appropriate cuisine for each film: island food from L&L BBQ for "Harana," Madame Lu for "9 Man" and Japanese catering company Studio Nihon for "Life on Four Strings." (Boxed meals should be reserved in advanced.) A reception follows each film.

### THE FILMS

#### "Harana," today

Standing out in the street with a guitar and serenading a girl sounds very Spanish — what with Fiesta coming up, too — you'll have a good idea of the sounds of Harana, the Filipino tradition documented by Florante Aguilar. It's an art form that trickled down from the Spanish colonials to the Filipinos, but one that is fast disappearing. Asked what courting youths do now, one Harana singer guesses they're all texting each other. Mr. Aguilar came back to his home country after many years when his father died, and his documentary is partly a search for his father's roots and his generation. As the director travels



Courtesy photo

"Jake Shimabukuro: Life on Four Strings," the story of the Honolulu-born ukulele player, is a treat. Below, Florante Aguilar documents the traditional Filipino art form in "Harana."

the Philippines searching out the masters of the art, one feels the influence of ethnomusicological films like "Buena Vista Social Club." Filled with charming music and a non-tourist's eye for the country, "Harana" will please the romantics in the crowd. The evening concludes with a Q&A with Executive Producer Fides Enriquez.

#### "9 Man," July 17

A version of volleyball that rose in the segregated Chinatowns in America, 9 Man is played in the streets on unforgiving concrete and with slightly different rules. For one thing, each team must have at least six players of 100 percent Chinese descent on the court. Ursula Liang's film, which she funded through Kickstarter, sets out to explore the history of the game and its current under-the-radar status. Originally designed as a form of community-building that helped connect all of America's Chinatowns into Canada, the first tournament was organized in 1938. But like "Harana," the doc questions whether this is a bit of Chinese-American culture that might vanish. Ms. Liang's film also shows that whatever your heritage is, playing sports on the streets of



Photo courtesy haranathemovie.com

New York is rough, hilarious, and very competitive.

#### "Jake Shimabukuro: Life on Four Strings," July 24

The man who made the ukulele cool again, Jake Shimabukuro is well known to Santa Barbarans, having performed at Campbell Hall and other venues. Tadashi Na-

kamura introduces viewers to the Honolulu-born artist and through interviews shows how he rose to fame and navigated family, touring and being enormously popular. If you don't know Jake, you're in for a treat especially with his version of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps." The Santa Barbara Ukulele Club will perform live.