

PHILIPPINE DANCE

The diversity of dances from the peoples of the Philippines, which are manifested in different dynamics and forms, grew out of the various contexts and experiences of the people. Many of the dances of the people from the mountains recall the sculptured heights and the brave birds of the air. Such are the festival, courtship, and war dances of the Cordillera groups. The dances of the people who live by the sea undulate like the waters and fishes, seemingly unbound by time and space. An example is the *pangalay* of the Sama which is danced languidly on the ground, or precariously on bamboo poles. The dances from the lowlands spring directly from solid ground and are often gamesome and indulge in much embellishment or ornamentation—with hand movements in the *kumintang*, with lighted glasses in the *pandanggo sa ilaw*, and with bamboo castanets in many a regional variety of the *jota*.

The variety further reflects the cultural differences that obtain in the various parts of the country, from north to south, in islands and islets, from ancestral places to new towns and cities. Even among the majority of the Christianized citizens, there are distinct strains that reflect regional customs, traditions, and languages. Add to that the Muslim population of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, and to that, some 50 other ethnolinguistic groups or tribes, who comprise a good percentage of the total population.

All these peoples of the Philippines have had various influences—Indian, Chinese, Indochinese, Indonesian, Malay, Spanish, and American. These are reflected in the purposes and forms, the music and the movements, the props and the costumes of their dances. All these dances, however, may be considered Filipino, not only in looks, but more importantly, because of the process in and by which the people dance or acquire a dance. For a dance is not simply adopted; it absorbs and showcases the traits of the people, even as it serves to express their own experiences and aspirations. As a Chinese saying goes, a nation is typified by its dances.

The Ethnic Tradition

Many of the ethnic tribes have been in the Philippines for many millennia. Their survival through years of colonial invasions has been due to their hardy industry, as witnessed by the rice terraces of the Cordilleras, or to their indomitable spirit, as exemplified by the desire for political independence of the Muslims in the south. Their spirit for survival has also been inspired and strengthened by animistic beliefs and shamanistic leadership. Close and familiar as the people were with their environment which to them possessed mysteries and potencies that had to be courted or propitiated, the people created rituals and incantations to the divine Bathala or Laon, to the *diwata* or spirits of the mountains, rivers or trees, or to the *anito* or spirits of ancestors who may either curse or bless their descendants.

In the north, the *mambunong* or *katalonan*, and in the south, the *balyan* or *babaylan*, took on priestly duties offering rituals to assure a good harvest, to cure the sick or to ensure success in war. Many a rite was meant to get in touch with the spiritual world that is related to the psychic resources and needs of the people—like the *pagdiwata* of Palawan which involves offerings during a festival to solicit a good harvest; the *lapal* among the Subanon which is meant to communicate with the diwata of the forest; the *dugso* among the Higaonon which is a thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest, the birth of a male child or for victory in war; the *cañao* in the Cordilleras where a chicken, pig, or carabao may be sacrificed; and the *sanghiyang*, the ritual dance over fire in Alfonso, Cavite.

With zestful spontaneity and resourcefulness, the ethnic Filipinos continue to express themselves directly, and with unrestrained humor and easy joyfulness at game or at work. As a consequence, many a task is turned into dances of communal fun. The rice culture is replete with dances of seeding, planting, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, and pounding. The Isneg of the north mime the same process with a bamboo pole as prop and add an enacted lullaby. The Bagobo of the south also imitate rice or corn planting. Fetching water among the Kalinga maidens becomes a stylized display of skill in balancing pots on their heads, a singular feat for a people living in the varied terrain of the mountains.

Those close to the sea enact fishing—with a net in *pasigin* in Aklan, and in *mangingisda*, or with handheld fishtraps in *pandanggo sa bulig*, the last two from Bocaue, Bulacan; with a spear in *agpanikop* among the Manobo, and in *tawti* among the Sama and Tausug; and with bare hands in *kin-naras* in Ilocos. To signal the shore to the fisherfolk at night, the dance *oasioas* is dexterous in flinging to and fro lighted glasses wrapped in large kerchiefs, which create a twinkling constellation of grace. There are many more occupational dances on cotton beating, spinning, weaving, basket making, pot making, broom making, and even gold panning as in the *pabirik* from Bicol.

For spiritual blessings, in defending themselves and their territories, for revenge or victory, the people created even more dances. In the dance *sagayan*, elaborate headdresses, the kris (a Muslim sword), and a shield underscore the bravery of the Maranao.

If work or war is imaginatively turned into dance, the surrounding animal life also easily lends itself to imitative dances that are both graphic and symbolic. After all, men, women, animals, plants, and the surroundings are one in nature.

A sense of playful communion is inherent in the dances imitating the squirrels among the Bilaan in the *kinugsik-kugsik*, the fish among the Yakan in *tahing baila*, the crab in *inalimango*, the snake in *culebra*, and the fireflies in *alitaptap*. As the Philippines is a bird country, it has a great number of dances depicting birds, including poultry. The *pabo* is an imitation of the turkey, the *itik-itik* of the duck,

the *kalapati* or *sinalampati* of doves, and, the most famous of them all, the tinkling of the *tikling* birds which farmers try to trap because they prey on the rice fields.

There are also a number of hawk dances—the *kinabua* among the Mandaya, the *man-manaok* among the Manobo, the *banog-banog* among the Bilaan, and the *binaylan* among the Higaonon. Dancers of the Kalinga courtship dance *salip* or the Bontoc *pinanyowan* look like swooping birds of the highlands.

Among certain groups, dance could also dramatize popular narratives. To the Maranao, for instance, a choreographed elaboration on the epic *Darangen* has the hero Bantugan pursuing a princess, Gandingan, during a supposed earthquake. Today, the *singkil* reenacts this scene in a climactic crescendo of clashing crisscrossed bamboos.

The Spanish Colonial Tradition

With the coming of the Spaniards and the spread of Christianity, the people transferred the object of their worship to the saints, though they did not completely abandon their native impulse and style. With many occasions to celebrate, like the feasts of the local patron saints, of the Virgin Mary, and Christ's birth, death and resurrection, Christianity turned native to a certain extent and became a vehicle for the Filipino way of spiritual and communal expression.

Folkloric expression adheres in the dance veneration of the Nuestra Señora de los Dolores in the *turumba* of Pakil, Laguna; in the *pandanggo* or fertility dance for the Nuestra Señora de Salambao, Santa Clara and San Pascual in Obando, Bulacan; in the worship of the Santo Niño in the *sinulog* in Bohol and Cebu; in the rhythmic movements of the *ati-ati* in Aklan and Cuyo; and in the *subli* for the Santa Cruz in Batangas.

Supposedly from Mexico is the dance called *pastores de belen* which is about the visit of the shepherds to the stable in Bethlehem. As it survives in Bicol and Cebu, the *pastores* is very secular in color and gaiety.

At the *salubong* which enacts the meeting of the sorrowful Mater Dolorosa and the Risen Christ very early on Easter morning, a child-angel lowered from a scaffold lifts the veil of sorrow from the image of the Holy Mother. Then the dance called *bate*, meaning "greeting," hails Christ's resurrection with flag waving, dancing, and music making. All these religious celebrations spring from indigenous practices that are now directed to Christian personages, objects, and beliefs.

As the Spanish government imposed itself on the people and the latter were proselytized into Christianity, the European way of life filtered down into the people's social and economic activities. In social functions, the French quadrille called *rigodon de honor* (or its subsequent American equivalent, *virginia*)

highlighted balls in ordinary towns and cities, as well as in the Malacañang Palace. These secular events completed the feast days, celebrated the trips of the galleons across the Pacific or welcomed a new governor general or bishop. Another social dance performed during weddings is the masкота where plates are set for gifts of money. This dance was adopted by the Ibanag of Cagayan and Isabela.

Other dances popular during the Spanish period were European dances like the minuet locally known as *minueto*; the cachucha called *katsutsa* locally; fandango popularly called *pandanggo*; the jota; the polka; the mazurka; the valse known as balse; the schottische locally called escotis; and even the zapateado, locally called *pateado*. All of these underwent regional transformation in the colony, as is evident in the variations of the jota from northern Cagayan to the southern provinces. As they became localized, these dances gained regional characteristics, adapting bamboo, coconut or shell castanets, scented handkerchiefs, *paypay* (native fans), Ilocano kumintang gestures, etc. Musical accompaniment was also indigenized through a variety of native instruments. Dances about love, courtship, and marriage abound in the islands. In these dances many devices used are really ploys—a blanket, a scarf, a handkerchief, a fan, a hat, and even a plate or a drinking glass. Traditionally, the female dancer is meant to be modest and undemonstrative; thus, these ploys help in the subterfuge. The male dancer is expected to be aggressive, resourceful, naughty even. Among the Tagalog, kerchiefs are used for *alcamfor* (a scent) and in the *sayaw sa pag-ibig*. Fans are flirtation props in the *cariñosa* and the *putritos*, as hats are in the *pandanggo sa sambalilo*. In Bohol, a boy offers a saucer in the *pingan-pingan pino*.

In the Zambales *sinambali* and the Bicol *pantomina*, coins are showered on a wedding couple. There is even a dance between a male and a female, spurned by their respective beloveds, who luckily find each other in the *timawa* from Capiz or among the guerilla fighters in the *voluntario* from Iloilo. A classic wedding dance is the *habanera botoleña* from Zambales, an elegant transformation of a dance from Cuba.

Amid all this acculturation, the Filipinos were not always passive and pacific. Throughout the Spanish period, the people especially the Islamized or mountain groups, staged sporadic rebellions against the colonial authorities. This is reflected in the very popular play *komedya* or *moro-moro* where the Christians and Moors engage in choreographed fighting called the *batalla*. Similarly, the dance *palo-palo* with cane sticks of Ivana, Batanes and the *maglalatik* with coconut shells (*latik* is extracted from coconut meat) of Biñan, Laguna are choreographed equivalents of the komedya's *batalla*. Today these dances display the men's agility, a contest between two camps costumed in different colors.

In the 1930s, there was one woman who was determined to save the Filipino folk dances from the incursions of the Americans and the Jazz Age. Francisca Reyes-Aquino (then Tolentino) went out into the field and recorded her researches on Philippine dances. Her efforts were supported by Jorge Bocobo,

then president of the University of the Philippines, who encouraged and supported her to enlarge and intensify her collection. In this, she was helped by composer Antonino Buenaventura and husband-photographer Ramon Tolentino.

The multifarious and far-reaching results of her efforts include: the establishment of folk song and dance troupes that multiplied especially in the 1950s; the publication of her researches in the Philippines and in the United States that amounted to several volumes; and the encouragement of further regional researches that followed in her wake. All these researches also provided materials for the physical education program in the Philippines. Ultimately, Philippine dances won fervent local adherents among public school teachers and gained international recognition through several troupes that have now reached almost all corners of the world.

Among the troupes that continued Reyes-Aquino's work and that reached out to the world are the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company (that first attracted world attention at the Brussels Universal Exposition in 1958) and its Folk Arts Center at the Philippine Women's University; the Philippine Baranggay Folk Dance Troupe, formerly based at the Philippine Normal College (now University); the Leyte Kalipayan Dance Company; the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group; and a great number of university- and school-based ensembles. Today the Philippine Folk Dance Society protects and extends Reyes-Aquino's efforts not only through their research but through annual workshops.

The American Colonial and Contemporary Traditions

In the late 19th century, the wave of liberalism from Europe fanned nationalist sentiments among Filipinos, and launched the formation of reformist groups like the La Liga Filipina and revolutionary groups like the Katipunan. Unfortunately, as Filipinos were about to claim victory over Spain, the Spanish-American War in Cuba spread to Asia, specifically to the Philippines.

The victory that the Filipinos won against the Spaniards was snatched by the Americans. The superior force of the Americans finally won in 1901, and the American cultural influence commenced in full intensity together with the political takeover.

There was no question about the fervor of Filipino resistance to America in the first decades of this century, but the material and cultural enticements of America, with their allure and comfort, had a persuasive beat and insidious rhythm.

The need for entertainment of the American soldiers and civil servants was served by the influx of performers from the West. Ironically, this included the Minstrels in which whites masqueraded as blacks. The Afro-Cuban culture that had not spared the white Americans (despite their racial prejudice) was brought to the colony. The tango, rhumba, samba, paso doble, mambo, cha-cha, and later, the limbo, were among the dances from the Caribbean America performed by Filipinos from the 1930s to the 1970s.

In the pre-World War II era, American rhythm came with the upbeat, swing, and frenzy of the new dances, among them the cakewalk, fox-trot, charleston, big apple, one-step, and slow drag. One monumental center for these dances was the Santa Ana Cabaret, a huge ballroom that showcased these importations. Other cabarets were spawned in other towns and cities. The 1950s increased the speed and heightened the dynamics of dance. The boogie woogie swung coolly on with complicated configurations and gyrations. Inhibition was abandoned in the rock 'n' roll which featured somersaults and other ballroom acrobatics. Dances came and went in the 1960s and the 1970s, like the mashed potato, twist, boogaloo, bossa nova, frug, pachanga, watusi, and hustle. In the 1960s, *Dance Time with Chito* (Feliciano) was a popular television show which taught many of these dances. In the 1980s free expression dominated the disco scene.

As these social dances swept the scene at the turn of the century, they were featured in a new theater form which had songs and dances, the *sarswela* or musical comedy, which was shown at the Teatro Zorrilla, Teatro Filipino, Teatro Paz, or Teatro Libertad, among others. The *sarswela*'s leading ladies included Eulalia "Lalyang" Hernandez, Praxedes "Yeyeng" Fernandez, Patrocinio Tagaroma (famous for her tango and can-can), and her daughter Patrocinio Carvajal, who was described by the poet Flavio Cano Zaragosa as "Diosa de Baile" (Goddess of the Dance).

After the *sarswela*, the vaudeville, known locally as *bodabil* or "stage show," brought in the fast-paced slickness of Broadway or the French or English music hall. Singing stars from Atang de la Rama to Katy de la Cruz stood beside dancers and comedians at the Manila Grand Opera House on Rizal Avenue or Clover Theater in Santa Cruz. A famous tap dancer was Bayani Casimiro, called "the Fred Astaire of the Philippines."

Along with the buck-and-wing, clog and tap dancing in the *bodabil* came the phenomenal skirt dance. A famous exponent of the last was the visiting Ada Delroy, who was billed as "the world's greatest dancer" at the Zorrilla. Skirt dancing was in fact the style of Louie Fuller, now considered the American modern dance pioneer, who was the toast of Europe and a contemporary of Isadora Duncan.

In the second decade of the century, American popular dances were followed by European classical ballet. A number of juvenile groups like the Lilliputians, a Japanese group, and Imperial Russian Circus presented the first "ballet" performances in Manila at the turn of the century. A Paul Nijinsky (no relation to Vaslav and Bronislava), who claimed descent from the Imperial Russian Ballet in St. Petersburg, came to perform at the Manila Hotel for the Belgian Red Cross in 1915 and 1916. A more inspiring and sustained influence, however, was the visit of the most famous dancer of all time, Anna Pavlova, in 1922 at the Manila Grand Opera House. Pavlova toured the world extensively, including all of Asia and

Australia. She was later followed by Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin immediately after World War II, and subsequently by Mia Slavenska, Alexandra Danilova, and Frederic Franklin. Danilova returned in 1955 (when ballet was banned by the Catholic Church) with Mocelyn Larkin, Roman Jasinsky, and Michael Maule.

From the 1960s onwards, more troupes visited, like the Royal Ballets from London and Copenhagen, dancers from the Paris Opera and the rest of France, American companies like the San Francisco Ballet, the New York City Ballet, the American Ballet Theater, and others. Soviet dancers from Kirov, Bolshoi, Perm, and the folkloric ensembles—the German (ballet and modern dance), Spanish (Antonio, Luisillo), Israeli, Cuban, Venezuelan, Indian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Chinese, Taiwanese, Thai, Indonesian, and Malaysian.

Pavlova's own visit was followed by classes conducted by more Russian and English ballet instructors. Among these were Kay Williams, Katrina Makarova, Olga Dontsov, and Vladimir Bolsky. The most notable was Luva Adameit who claimed membership in the Pavlova company. She taught the first batch of significant ballet dancers who later turned to serious teaching and choreography. Among Adameit's students are Remedios de Oteyza, who is famous for her abstract (storyless) ballets choreographed to the concertos and rhapsodies of Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Rachmaninoff, and Gershwin; Rosalia Merino (later Santos) who, as a child prodigy, did the first fouettes (multiplied whip-turns) locally and later turned to modern dance; and Leonor Orosa (later Goquingco), noted for her folkloric ballets like *Filipinescas* and others with Filipino themes. These dancer-choreographers and their contemporaries started performing in the famous Manila Carnival and at the Metropolitan Theater. They developed into choreographers of the first rank among the first-generation ballet dancers.

Others of their class are Anita Kane, who was the first to tour the country extensively with her Kane (later Pamana) Ballet Company, and the American Ricardo Cassell who formed his Studio Dance Group. Aside from producing symphonic ballets and the Gershwin movie musical, *Lady Be Good*, Cassell was the first to produce *Giselle* in the Philippines, which starred Pacita Madrigal (later Warns) and Benjamin Villanueva Reyes.

After Madrigal, the famous "Giselles" were Maribel Aboitiz (with Eddie Elejar as her Albrecht, and also Siegfried, Prince Florimund, and Basilio), Felicitas Layag (later Radaic) and Maureen Tiongco (in the Kane production), Ester Rimpos, Maniya Barredo, Anna Villadolid, and Lisa Macuja. *Giselle* is the most often produced ballet classic in the Philippines—in Manila and even in Cebu City where it has been staged by Fe Sala-Villarica.

Anna Villadolid danced *Giselle* not only in Manila but also in Berlin and Munich. In Manila she danced it with Nonoy Froilan—the longest-lasting premier danseur of the country who also partnered Lisa Macuja in the same role. Macuja danced the role in the Soviet Republics and, even more often, Kitri in *Don Quixote*. Her

most renowned “Basilios” include the superstars Farouk Ruzimatov and Irek Mukhamedov, respectively of the Kirov (of which Macuja was a member for two years) and Bolshoi Ballet companies. Both Villadolid and Macuja have danced the lead roles in *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *The Nutcracker*. Villadolid also danced *Ondine* in Munich.

Maniya Barredo has danced most of the above roles too. She is prima ballerina of the Atlanta Ballet and formerly of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal. She was a coup at the international ballet festival in Cuba. But she danced her first double role of Odette-Odile in *Swan Lake* in Manila with Froilan. In Atlanta, she is often paired by one of the most notable Filipino male dancers, Nicolas Pacaña, who was also a principal dancer with Boston Ballet.

A close contemporary of Barredo is Tina Santos. She danced the role of Cinderella in Manila for the Ballet Federation of the Philippines, with her husband Gary Wahl as partner. In the San Francisco Ballet, an original Japanese ballet entitled *Shinju* (literally, “the opening of one’s heart” or “double suicide”) was created for her by its director Michael Smuin.

Other dancers who have made it to the front ranks abroad are Irene Sabas (the Philippines’ first Swanilda), Elizabeth Roxas (who is with Alvin Ailey’s American Dance Theater), Mary Anne Santamaria, Toni Lopez Gonzalez, Maiqui Mañosa, Mia Monica, Gina Mariano, and Yvonne Cutaran. After Pacaña, other male dancers who became premier danseurs and soloists abroad are Rey Dizon in Montreal, Manuel Molina in Caracas, Brando Miranda in Wellington, Augustus Damian in Munich and Lausanne, and Franklin Bobadilla in Heidelberg and Amsterdam.

At the same time that ballet was gaining a headway, the revolutionary modern dance broke into the Philippines. Delroy, who espoused the skirt dance, and dancers like her and Maud Allan, toured Asia along with the rest who called themselves “aesthetic dancers” in the fashion of the times and through the bodabil circuit.

In 1926, two founders of modern dance in America visited Manila with their troupe. Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn (of the Denishawn Company) toured Asia for nearly two years. They performed five times at the Manila Grand Opera House (where among the last great dancers to perform were Katherine Dunham and her troupe, and Luisillo and his Spanish dancers).

A great Filipino modern dancer, Manolo Rosado, later studied in Shawn’s school in Jacob’s Pillow, Massachusetts. Also an exponent of the Spanish dance, Rosado was a statuesque dancer who projected nobility and grandeur. He also became a star in Spanish ballets in Europe and Mexico. He started his training in modern dance in Manila with the Viennese Kaethe Hauser. Rosado was later followed by Ruben Nieto.

Another Viennese who made an important contribution to Philippine modern dance was Trudl Dubsky. She came to Manila and married the conductor of the Manila Symphony Orchestra, Dr. Herbert Zipper. She presented her dancers at the Metropolitan Theater as the Manila Ballet Moderne. Among her notable pupils are Remedios Piñon and Corazon Generoso (later Iñigo), former artistic director of the Far Eastern University, University of the East, and the University of the Philippines(UP) troupes. Ballet dancers like Oteyza, Villanueva-Reyes, Elejar, Chloe Cruz-Romulo, Joji Felix-Velarde, and others also danced for Dubsky.

Martha Graham visited in the 1950s and returned in the late 1970s. From the 1960s on, Jose Limon, Paul Taylor, Alvin Ailey, and their troupes also performed in the Philippines. Many more modern dancers came to perform, and some taught and choreographed, like Norman Walker, Pauline Koner, Garth Welch, Takako Asakawa, and Gray Veredon.

For a while Manolo Rosado and Rosalía Merino-Santos taught modern dance in studios and universities. It was Alice Reyes, however, who gave it the most acceptance at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) where modern dance spawned new choreographers in the vein and in modern ballets.

The Western forms of the ballet and modern dance did not long remain untouched by native inspiration, themes and styles, even as modern dance in the West was inspired by Oriental theater and dance. In Europe, Mary Wigman used the mask as in the Japanese *noh*. St. Denis and Shawn interpreted their own ideas about Oriental dancing, from the Middle to the Far East. Graham found Asian equivalents to her own discovered movements when she toured Asia.

From Adameit, orientalia of the inauthentic manner was merged with ballet forms—as happened during the romantic period in *La Bayadere*, *La Peri*, and later, in the innovations of Michel Fokine and Vaslav Nijinsky for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Adameit had her own *maria clara* and rural dances on pointes. The Hungarian exile Paul Szilard (now a New York impresario) formed the Philippine Art Theater which theatricalized Philippine folk dances. He also produced the *Sylvia* ballet in Manila.

With the spirit of revival and with the availability of folkloric materials because of the research made by Francisca Reyes-Aquino and her team in the 1930s, the ballet and modern dance theaters could not escape the influence of native themes and motifs. Anita Kane produced the first original Filipino full-length ballet, *Mariang Makiling*, 1939, whose music was commissioned from composer Ramon Tapales. She also used other Filipino themes in *Reconstruction Ballet* (based on her experiences during World War II), *Sweepstakes*, *Mutya ng Dagat* (Muse of the Sea), *Inulan sa Pista* (Rained-out Feast), *Aswang* (Vampire), and “The Seasons” in *Dularawan: Salakot na Ginto* (Image Play: The Golden Salakot).

Even more of a Filipinist is Leonor Orosa-Goquingco who took native themes and

styles into dance theater. Her notable works include *Trend: Return to Native*, 1941; *Noli Dance Suite*, 1956, with its scenes from the novel *Noli me tangere* (Touch Me Not) by Jose Rizal; *The Magic Garden* adapted from a story by Nick Joaquin; and the full-evening suite, *Filipinescas: Philippine Life, Legend and Lore in Dance*. The last is a stylized merger of the ballet and the folk dance with the regional dances, tales, and traditions strung together in a storyline that lent the suite some unity.

Following this trend set earlier by Adameit, Szilard, Kane, and Orosa-Goquingco, many ballets were based on epics, legends, and customs. Dance Theater Philippines produced: *Katakata Sin Rajah Indarapatra* (Stories of Rajah Indarapatra) by composer Jose Maceda and choreographer Eddie Elejar; *Babae at Lalake* (Woman and Man) by Ramon Tapales and Julie Borromeo; *Kalingan* by Angel M. Peña and Julie Borromeo; *Nan-Pangkat* by Peña and Felicitas Layag-Radaic; *Tanan* (Elopement) by Juan Silos Jr. and Layag-Radaic; and *Zagalas de Manila* (Young Maidens of Manila) by Julio Nakpil and Borromeo. Hariraya Ballet Company created *Legend of the Sarimanok* by Bayani Mendoza de Leon, Reynaldo Alejandro, and Roberto Caballero, and *Ibong Adarna* (Adarna Bird) by Rodolfo Cornejo, Remedios de Oteyza, and Inday Gaston-Mañosa. Ballet Philippines (formerly the Alice Reyes and Modern Dance Company, later the CCP Dance Company) produced *Juru-Pakal* (The Enchanted Kris) by Jose Maceda and Eddie Elejar; *Kapinangan* by Lucrecia R. Kasilag and Elejar; *Tomaneg at Aniway* (Tomaneg and Aniway) by Jerry Dadap and Gener Caringal; *Mariang Makiling* by Ryan Cayabyab and Effie Nañas; *Legend of Paoay* by Eliseo M. Pajaro and Brando Miranda; and *Tales of the Manuvu* by Nonong Pederero, Bienvenido Lumbera, and Alice Reyes.

Native culture is also reflected in ballets that are based on fiction written by Filipino writers. One is the Muslim love story, “Mir-i-nisa” by Jose Garcia Villa, which was turned into ballet by Julie Borromeo and Felicitas Layag-Radaic to the music of Pajaro. The rivalry between two young men for the maiden Mir-i-nisa is fought in an underwater scene in Act II where pearls and fishes are featured. This fantasy scene, in contrast to the marches and ceremonies of the two other acts, attenuates the story because the heroine is nowhere to be found in this act. Still the ballet had its measure of success during the inaugural season of the CCP in 1969.

Another short story is “Summer Solstice “ by Nick Joaquin. It became a modern dance drama in *Amada*, choreographed by Alice Reyes to the music of Lucrecia R. Kasilag. Here, the domestic struggle between husband and wife, a *don* and *doña*, is depicted against the social setting of a ritual called *Tadtarin* which is held during the feast of Saint John the Baptist. Here, women for once assert their supremacy over men (and oppression) during the summer solstice. Joaquin’s “ May Day Eve ” has also been treated as dance many times: in *Noche Buena* (Christmas Eve Celebration) by Lucrecia R. Kasilag and Tony Fabella; *Anak-Bulan* (Moon Child) by Rosalina Abejo RVM and Lydia Madarang-Gaston; and *May Day Eve* by Eliseo M. Pajaro and Felicitas Layag-Radaic. Rizal’s character of Sisa has inspired a dance by Lucrecia R. Kasilag and Corazon Generoso-Iñigo, based on

a play by Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio.

From history, the modern dance ***Itim Asu*** (The Onyx Wolf) depicts the assassination of Governor General Bustamante in the hands of priests in 1719. Based on an account wrongly attributed to Fr. Jose Burgos entitled ***La Loba Negra*** (The Black She-wolf) and a play by Virginia Moreno entitled ***The Onyx Wolf***, the dance is about a series of revenge-murders perpetrated by the governor's wife, Indio Juan, and his son. Choreography is by Alice Reyes with music by Alfredo Buenaventura. Reyes' other historical ballet is ***Rajah Sulayman***, also with music by Buenaventura. Basilio has a historical ballet, ***La Lampara*** (The Lamp) with music by Jerry Dadap, which depicts Jose Rizal's last hours in Fort Santiago when he foresees his execution and its implications as symbolized by a lamp. Still another historical ballet is ***Gabriela*** by Joey Ayala and Corazon Generoso-Iñigo, about the 18th-century Ilocano heroine who took over the rebellion after her husband Diego Silang was murdered. Also about a long-standing folk rebellion is ***Ang Babaylan*** (The Shaman), a dance drama by Edward Defensor choreographed by Basilio to the music of Taga-Aton and written in the tradition of the Visayan *composo* and ***Maragtas***. Inspired by contemporary history is ***Misa Filipina*** (Filipino Mass). The dance takes the traditional form of the Catholic Mass that is familiar to the people, to stylize the assassination of Benigno Aquino in 1983. The dance ritual (performed at the Manila Cathedral in 1984) merged a victimized Filipino "Man in White" with the more universal leadership of a priestly Christ figure. It ends with a eucharistlike scene that reaches out to the audience, the people. Choreography is by Basilio to the music of Ryan Cayabyab, sung by the UP Concert Chorus.

Merging contemporary events with a cosmological phenomenon is the modern dance ***Dabaw***. Taking off from the 1988 solar eclipse seen from Davao, the ballet depicts a monster swallowing up the sun. This darkness is made to parallel the violence that engulfs the Philippine south. On the whole, the eclipse symbolizes the violence that victimizes the Filipino people and society. Choreography is by Agnes Locsin to the music of Toto Gentic and scenario by Al Santos.

Contemporary, too, are the pulse and pictures of ***Limang Dipa*** (literally, Five Armstretches) choreographed by Tony Fabella to the music of Ryan Cayabyab, who recorded himself in different voices. It depicts the street scenes in a metropolis like Manila, and the Filipino romance and humor in a folksy but balletic style that reflects a contemporary eclecticism. Another example of the latter is Fabella's ***Ang Kasal*** (The Wedding) by Igor Stravinsky, translated by composer Ramon P. Santos into Tagalog. Originally about a Russian wedding (***Les Noces***), Stravinsky's wedding was reset among the Higaonon. The choreography harked back to the ritual resources of the theater that stem from the practice of the people in their natural setting.

This same approach was used by Denisa Reyes in ***For the Gods***, with music by Fabian Obispo, where the dugso ritual is transformed into a rite of passage for women. It drew from the ethnic dance a deep and mysterious spiritual dimension

and renewed this in a theatrical medium for the contemporary Filipino. Specifically, this dimension is about women who plumb the mystery of life and who bring life to earth and continue the advance of mankind. Later, Denisa Reyes took to a larger-scaled treatment of the Filipino psyche and experience in *Siete Dolores* (Seven Sorrows), again with Obispo and with libretto by Nicanor G. Tiongson.

Epilogue

Today the diversity of Filipino dances lives, among the ethnic groups whose cultures have not been completely Westernized, among the lowland Christian folk communities who comprise the majority of Filipinos, and among the heavily Westernized urbanites concentrated in Manila and other big cities.

Through time, the dance—whether this be the dugso and *binanog*, the *kuratsa* and the *sinulog*, the tango and the rock ‘n’ roll, *Filipinescas*, *Amada*, and *For the Gods*—has been a major form of expression from the Filipino people. Whether performed around the village hearth, the *ilustrado*’s sala, the peasant’s yard, the church plaza, the town’s streets, or the stage of an urban theater, dance has been and always will be the dynamic and living form by which the Filipinos define their identity and affirm themselves as a nation. • B.E.S. Villaruz

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