

THE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATUS OF TRADITIONAL DANCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

These are my islands, all 7,107 of them, inhabited by over a hundred tribes speaking more than 175 languages.

Lying in the periphery of the ancient trade routes of the East, the Philippines was heir to neighboring Asian influences. Today, dominant imprints of 333 years of Spanish domination, 45 years of American intrusion and over three years of Japanese subjugation still linger in our islands, coloring the different aspects of our lives.

Despite the gain and brunt of modernization, globalization and technological progress, we still have pockets of indigenous tribes that live in the ways of their forefathers in our virginal forests and mountains.

Therefore, in the context of our history, the Philippines has always faced a herculean task of preserving and protecting a range of wondrous diversity in our dance heritage.

The following measures are undertaken by the Philippines to ensure the protection and development of Philippine Traditional Dances.

From the Philippine Government

National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)

Republic Act 7356 created the NCCA in 1990 from an existing 1987 Executive Order. The mandate provisions that are related to our concerns are:

- Formulate policies for the development of culture and the arts
- Administer the National Endowment Fund for Culture and the Arts
- Develop and promote the Filipino national culture and arts
- Preserve Filipino national heritage

In line with its mandate, NCCA formulates national policies for arts and culture, coordinates with government and non-government agencies for the implementation of national policies and provides assistance for the implementation of policies on culture and the arts.

NCCA National Dance Committee - NCCA has a thirteen-member National Dance Committee that implements the NCCA mandate through dance. They meet on a regular basis to discuss project proposals, issues, problems and status of the national sectors of dance. Research, publications, performances, workshops, international and national travel grants and festival prizes form the bulk of project proposals. The three-year membership in the Committee is electoral in nature, on a regional basis with sectoral representation.. The dance sectors are traditional, classic, contemporary and ballroom with a majority of traditional dance representation for this term.

NCCA ordained the celebration of National Arts Month and National Dance Day which are marked with nation-wide performances, exhibits, conferences and workshops. This year, in celebration of National Arts Month, Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim initiated a family- oriented "Sining at Kaunlaran" featuring performances of

traditional dances and songs by the students of Manila's public elementary and high school students. Very positively received, performances are held along Manila Bay with our famous sunset as setting.

School of Living Tradition - In the spirit of the UNESCO edict, NCCA implemented the School of Living Traditions Project in 2003. The schools aim to transmit in living form intangible skills and techniques to the young. Culture bearers of an ethno-linguistic group, in oral, practical and non-formal sessions train the young in the pure form of their art. The learners are expected to eventually take the place of the elders to continue expanding and developing frontiers of specialization in the community. The project requires the identification of the culture bearer, commitment of the learners and an NCCA coordinator, who makes sure that learning takes place and submits an evaluation report at the end of the project. The maximum grant is P200,000 which covers the honoraria of the culture specialist, the coordinator, the stipend for the learners and the cost of the required materials. The time frame of the grant spans from 6 months to 2 years. Participation ranges from 16-70 persons. In addition to dance, fabric and mat weaving, pottery, basketry, making of instruments and weapons are requested for. The majority of the requests come from Northern Luzon and Mindanao.

Among the individuals who antedated the NCCA School for Living Tradition is multi-awarded dancer, scholar, choreographer and writer Ligaya Fernando Amilbansa who conducts Pangalay lessons in her home. She welcomes all who are interested in learning the intricacies of Pangalay and the related dances of the Sulu Archipelago. Today, she feels her protégées are ready to take her place. She founded and directed the Tambuli Cultural Group. In 2007, she organized an international conference on the conservation of Pangalay. She is ready to release a revised edition of her 1983 book "Pangalay," The revised edition will present updated data, photographs and instructional materials on Pangalay exercises and dances. She is soon to leave for UCLA to conduct a ten week workshop of "Pangalay" in UCLA.

Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP)

Executive Order No.30 in 1966 created CCP with the purpose of promoting and preserving Filipino arts and culture. CCP nurtures and promotes artistic excellence, Filipino aesthetics, identity, and positive cultural values towards a humanistic global society.

CCP's programs that contribute to the preservation and development of Philippine traditional dance:

Resident Companies - Unique to CCP is their highly coveted Residency Program. Chosen by the CCP Board of Trustees, a resident company receives financial grant, free use of the venues, ticket publications and office space, in exchange for a prescribed number of performances. There are two traditional dance resident dance companies: Bayanihan National Philippine Dance Company and Ramon Obusan Folkloric Dance Company. The other resident companies are: Ballet Philippines, Philippine Ballet Theater, Philippine Madrigal Singers, Tanghalang Pilipino, Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, University of Santo Tomas Orchestra and the National Music Competition for Young Artists (NAMCYA) Dance is now part of the NAMCYA competition.

CCP Co-produced shows - Deserving individuals or companies are given free use of a CCP venue. This is a program that has been helpful to further develop newly-organized traditional dance groups.

Publications - The benchmark publication of CCP is the ten-volume "CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art," published in 1994 with Nicanor Tiongson as editor-in-chief. Volume I and II surveys Philippine Culture with valuable insights on dance within the hierarchy of Philippine culture. Music (Vol. VI) and Theater (Vol. VII) reassures the reader on the inherent and valuable relationship of dance to music and theater. Volume V consolidates a comprehensive exposition on the history, concepts, styles, structure, distinctions and status of Philippine Dance with detailed entries on our traditional dances.

Video Productions with Accompanying Monographs - "Sayaw," a 4-volume project of the then Artistic Director, Nicanor Tiongson focuses on essays on Philippine Dance. The accompanying videos, directed by National Artist Ramon Obusan won the 1990 Prix de Reportage and a special mention in the 1992 Gran Prix International Video-Dans .

The "Instructional Video on Asean Traditional Dances" was a 1994 Asean COCI Video project implemented by CCP. Six Asean member countries documented three traditional dances that were performed and directed for instructional purposes. The Philippine Section was directed by Corazon G. Inigo and the monograph was written by Steve Villaruz..The traditional dances filmed were "Habanera Botolena, Itik-Itik and Kzaduratan". The performing artists were members of the Bayanihan National Dance Company.

Among others, Bayanihan Philippine National Dance Company, Francisca Reyes Memorial Foundation, University of the Philippines Filipiniana Dance Group (SPAFA project) have produced instructional videos on the execution of Philippine fundamental dance steps and music. Recordings of rondalla and indigenous music are readily available in commercial outlets.

Dance Department – The Dance Department implements CCP dance projects. The Department provides consultancy, serves as a conduit for governmental and NGO projects, and holds a yearly well-attended "Pangalay" concert solely for the performance traditional dance..

Outreach Programs - The Outreach Division arranges out-of-town performances of requested artists and groups and vice-versa. Organizational and production workshops are implemented upon request. Many traditional dance artists in the remote areas have been "discovered" through this program and their treasure of dances in performance have elicited both wonder and admiration. These dances have been documented through video, some of which have been included in the repertoire of the various dance companies.

Documentation - Documentation of all CCP projects are undertaken by the Cultural Promotions Division. This Division, together with the Library and Museum offers exhaustive material on Philippine Traditional Dances.

Commisson on Higher Education and Department of Education

Since 1901, Philippine traditional dances are ensured of national continuity because they are integral to the physical education curriculum, which is required in the three levels of the Philippine educational system. No student can graduate from any of the

levels of education without passing physical education. In addition, an in-depth study of Philippine traditional dance is required in the Physical Education curriculum for teachers in all the levels of our educational system. The College of Music of the University of the Philippines recognizes the importance of traditional dances. Their dance program requires the study of Philippine traditional dance, despite its focus on the performance of classic and contemporary dance.

The Department of Education has advised school teachers to make use of teaching materials that exist in their communities which should mean the teaching of dances indigenous to a community. Antedating this advice is the teaching of "Subli" in Bauan, Batangas. This dance indigenous to the area was included in the physical education curriculum. Today, every school child in the area can dance the "Subli" with expertise and joy. During recess time, it is common for children, upon hearing the beat of the drum, to stop playing to immediately dance the "Subli". Yearly competitions are held in the children, school and community levels in the three classifications of "Subli". Valued performances by the elders of the different communities begin the competition.

The great majority of our traditional dance groups are school-based. Even the renowned groups have evolved from school participations and have kept their school identity and connections. The schools provide a constant source of talents, musical expertise, production guidance, facilities and possible funding. On the other hand, the schools benefit through a constant exposure of the school's name, which is usually carried by the dance group.

Participation of Philippine traditional dance groups in the CIOFF, IOV, ITT and other international festivals have gained a worldwide information and admiration for the singular beauty and diversity of Philippine Dance. The success of the Philippine traditional dance groups has spurred further governmental and non-governmental support in research, production advancement and financial assistance.

Philippine High School for the Arts

The Philippine High School for the Arts was established by Imelda Marcos in 1977 on the slopes of our legend-filled Makiling mountain. It offers a full academic program which is conducted in the morning while the specialization in the arts program is held in the afternoons. A major in traditional dance is offered. Acceptance to the school is through academic examinations, skill proficiency and psychological stability. There are now 17 high schools for the arts which are under the supervision of the Department of Education. The Makiling School follows the academic requirements of the Department of Education but is under the umbrella of CCP. Soon to be implemented is the curriculum for the arts in the elementary level. The provision for the arts will be through experiencing the arts with concerned arts masters.

Department of Tourism (DOT)

Our traditional dances have always been an asset for Philippine participation in international expositions, world's fairs, Philippine Day Celebrations and promotional sales blitz of the Department of Tourism. This deep dependence of DOT on our traditional dances has led to the success of many DOT projects. On the local scene, DOT organizes annual festive events for regional presentation of traditional dances, cuisine, produce and promotion of tourism sites. The Walled City of Manila provides a very apt setting for the DOT events..

Philippine Congress

The Philippine Congress through Republic Act 8626 designated The Bayanihan Dance Company as the Philippine National Folk Dance Company with a yearly P5,000,000 grant.

From Non-Government Institutions

Regional Festivals

As of 2009, DOT lists 177 festivals held yearly in the Philippines. This is not an exhaustive list. By virtue of the local government code, tourism was one of the functions devolved to the LGU. These festivals may be competitive, religious, occupational or commemorative in nature, but the certainty is the inclusion of traditional dances, steps, gestures, formations, costumes, props and sets. The festivals feature a choreographed street dancing parade and a short, full scale thematic performance. Partial government support is usually granted to the festivals.. Aliwan, the most recent and sought after of the festivals sets a highly contested competition among the yearly winners of the regional festivals and awards a P1, 000,000 prize. Sinulog of Cebu held in mid-January, considered the matrix of all the festivals, venerates the child Jesus in a two-pronged competition: Sinulog-based and Sinulog free interpretation. Dinagyang of Iloilo likewise venerates the Child Jesus in a two day competition, Kasadyahan highlights community traditions and Dinagyang concentrates on precision dancing among Ati-simulated participants. Kadayawan in Davao celebrates when the fruits, vegetation and flowers are in peak production. Davao competitions are marked by impressive story telling. Davao is distinct in its competition for children. .

Philippine Folk Dance Society

The 30 year old Philippine Folk Dance Society was founded by National Artist, Francisca Reyes Aquino. A program of research is conducted by the members of the society, The researched materials are reviewed, taught and published in six "Sayaw" books with recorded music They have also published three volumes of "classic" Philippine folk dances. On the drawing board is a program to accredit traditional dance teachers based on curriculum vitae, written and practical examinations and teaching prowess.

Kaloob Philippines Music and Dance Ministry

Kaloob means gift. Kaloob recognizes that the greatest gifts of God to the Philippines are its music and dance and acknowledges that music and dance are gifts for worship and redemption. Their creed is "Ministry through Philippine Culture" thus the ministry has "Filipinized" church worship after exhaustive research in indigenous music and dance. The 15 year old Ministry has shared their practice and knowledge with consulting national and international ministries. In addition, Kaloob has a performing group that stages their researched material.. .

Awards

Order of the National Artist

This is the highest award that can be conferred to a Filipino artist. The first National Artist was named in 1972 with a less formal structure. Today's procedure is: nominations requiring the submission of the most impressive list of achievements for processing by CCP. The nominees are represented by CCP- appointed experts, who present the nominee's achievements to an assembly of peers. The peer's choices are presented to the combined jury of the NCCA commissioners and the CCP Board of Trustees, who make the final choices of the National Artists. The final list of choices is submitted to the President of the Philippines for confirmation. Proclamation and awarding takes place in Malacanang Palace with a recognition concert at the CCP. Prizes include an initial cash award, monthly cash award, medical care, place of honor in state functions, a ceremonial state wake at the CCP and burial in the Libingan ng Bayani. Our National Artists in Dance are: Francisca Reyes Aquino for " her pioneering work in the unexampled revival of the folk dances and songs and for devoting four and a half decades to the tedious collection and revival of folk dances and songs at a time when native culture was being overwhelmed by Western culture" Leonor Orosa Goquingco for" brilliant, pioneering efforts in the difficult art of choreography and for confronting the endless challenge of elevating Philippine Dance to high creative art."; Lucrecia Reyes Urtula for " her work which has preserved and added a new dimension to the country's dance tradition, building for the country a rich reserve of international goodwill"; Ramon Arevalo Obusan was awarded for "harnessing the potential of Philippine Dance. Today, he is unparalleled as he incessantly creates a reflection of ourselves, showing us who we are."

CCP Gawad Para sa Sining

The most prestigious of the CCP awards is the 32 year old Gawad CCP Para sa Sining. The award is bestowed to artists who have made significant contributions to their particular form or field. The different departments of CCP nominate candidates for the seven arts in conformance with the stipulated criteria. Experts from each field elaborate on the achievement of the candidates in addition to the presentation of each department head. The award for each art form is given to the candidate with the highest number of votes garnered from the CCP Board of Trustees, the department heads and the concerned expert. The list of awardees include artists from all the sectors of dance. This is a biennial award, the prizes are a commemorative necklace, a scroll of achievement and a cash award.

Araw ng Maynila Patnubay ng Sining at Kaunlaran

This award is given by the City of Manila and established by Mayor Antonio Villegas in 1963. The award recognizes individual or groups who have given their time, effort and talent to the revival, propagation, preservation and enrichment of Philippine arts and culture. To date 15 individuals and groups who have distinguished involvement in traditional dance have received the award.

Alab ng Haraya

The Alab ng Haraya is awarded by NCCA for yearly achievements. This is a biennial, multi-layered award that has given due accolade to traditional dance artists..

Gintong Bai

Gintong Bai is a commemorative NCCA Award conferred solely for women in the arts. . Two traditional dance artists have won this award.

Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM)

TOYM is awarded to young professionals (the award now includes women) who have made outstanding contributions in their field of endeavor. So far, only one author in traditional dance has won the award.

Aliw Awards

The Aliw Award from the Aliw Foundation are awards given to individuals or groups that have outstanding performance for the year. Five traditional dance groups have won this award..

Sayaw Bulawan Award

The Philippine Folk Dance Society celebrated its 50 years of country wide achievements with the commemorative Sayaw Bulawan Award. The recognition was awarded to traditional dance artists or groups that have greatly contributed to the preservation and advancement of Philippine folk dance.

Universities, schools, regions, provinces, NGOs likewise awards and recognizes achieving alumni or members with Outstanding Achievement or Lifetime Achievement Awards. Many traditional artists and practitioners have won these awards

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Developmental Concerns

Budget Allocation

A higher budget allotment from the national government to education would naturally filter down to help solve problems centering on the preservation and development of the status of our traditional dances. Educators and members of our Senate and Congress have been persistent in their efforts to effect this budget increase.

Time Allotment for The teaching of Dance in the Elementary and High School Curriculum

At present, Physical Education is combined with health, music and art.. In the Physical Education curriculum, traditional dances are taught in the fourth quarter of the year as one of the prescribed rhythmic activities. The thrust of the national physical education program is physical fitness. Filipinos are gifted with a natural flair for dance and music. Our dances are treasures that demand more governmental concern and attention. The time allotted to the perpetuation of our dances is so meager and limited. The dance community has long expressed concern over this and has tried and will continue to try to correct the situation.

Enhanced Media Exposure for Traditional Dance

An increase in print and film exposure for traditional dance activities would spur greater national interest on the merits of traditional dance.

Conclusion

Our paper concludes that our structural status and possibilities for the preservation and development of the status of traditional dance are in place. The Filipino artist is of a creative and persistent breed. This combination should be a potent force for optimism.

We thank the National Asean COCI and our host country, Myanmar for this precious opportunity to share and learn from each other, May this workshop serve as a challenge for us and for future traditional dance practitioners. May we continue to celebrate and perpetuate the passion and empowerment of a deep and lasting involvement in traditional dance.

Corazon G. Inigo