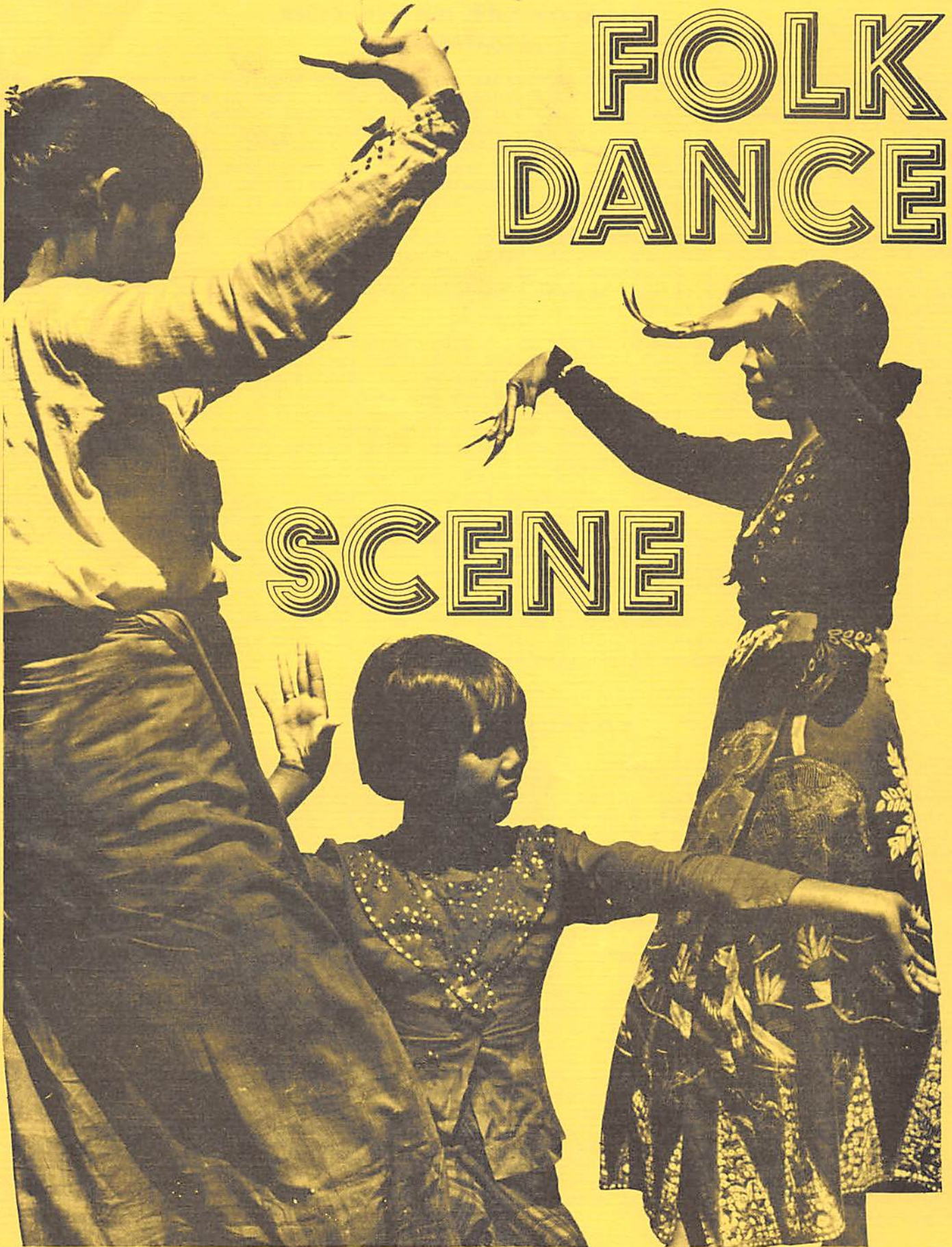


Muslim Women's Dance - Zamboanga - Mindanao

FOLK DANCE

SCENE



DECEMBER 1973
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

CLUB OF THE MONTH CLUB SARDARABAD

The Armenian General Benevolent Union Sardarabad Dance Ensemble acquired its present name early in 1973, although it has been in existence since early in 1971. Then it was known as the AGBU Armenian Dance Ensemble, and had been inspired in its organization by the February 1971 performance in Los Angeles of the Antranig Song and Dance Ensemble of New York. Mr. Adam Aivazian, who was the Southern California Executive Secretary of the AGBU at the time, encouraged the Union's Intermediates to invite Mr. Sarkis Paskalian, the performing arts director of the National AGBU, to start a dance group in Los Angeles. This invitation was quickly accepted and the club was organized immediately upon Mr. Paskalian's arrival in town.

As the Armenian Dance Ensemble began its regular schedule of rehearsals, Miss Gia Aivazian was appointed residing dance director, and she was assisted by her brother, Adam. By early summer, the dance ensemble had progressed so thoroughly that it was able to make its first major stage appearance on July 3 at the National Convention banquet of the AGBU at the Beverly Hilton before an audience of over 1,200.

In the following year, Miss Isabel Kassabian, a group member and a student of dance at Cal State Fullerton, was called upon to take charge in the instruction after an extensive training course in Toronto with Mr. Paskalian and his dance group. She is a modern dance major, and is completing her dance education at UCLA. Since she has been directing the ensemble, it has been learning many of the intricate and beautiful choreographies of Mr. Paskalian. During that time, there have been several other important performances. Perhaps that which most California folk dancers will remember is the one near the close of the concert at the Folk Dance Federation's 1973 Statewide in San Diego.

Several months ago, Mr. Paskalian returned to Los Angeles, and has been working with Sardarabad on rehearsals very intensively - three sessions per week. With some new material and performers he created a revised showing for two performances which were held in mid-November of this year, in co-concert with the Pro-Komitas Choral Society, in Pasadena and in Fresno. There were a series of twelve dances, based on Armenian folklore, and all costumed in authentic, rich regalia, specially sent out from the AGBU Center in New York for the occasion.

Sardarabad Ensemble is in its third year as a member group of the Folk Dance Federation, South, and meets twice weekly - when not on its special three-a-week crash program - at the church hall on Hyperion Blvd., and at Silver Lake Recreation Hall.

* * * * *

COSTUME CORNER

The Spanish rule in the Philippines first began to have an effect on Philippine dress in the early 18th century. At that time, the trousers and shirt of the man's costume, and a blouse with tight sleeves and a wide collar, and the long skirt of the woman's costume began to be seen.



By 1860, the man's costume had developed even more in the direction of western dress and the shirt of today had come into its own. This shirt, called the Barong Tagalog, has long sleeves, an open neckline, embroidery down the front, and is worn outside the trousers. It is made of a sheer, delicate fabric called "jusi" (pronounced "hoo-si") which is woven either from pure silk or from a mixture of silk and other fibers, such as those of the pineapple or banana families.

The woman's costume, by 1860, had developed a fuller skirt, a sheerer blouse with full sleeves, and the wide collar had become a separate piece called a "pañuelo", but it was not until after 1870 that the very full skirt and train came into being. The "Maria Clara" dress of this period (as pictured above in the Ace Smith photo) was named for and worn by the sweetheart of a Philippine national hero. Maria Clara represented beauty, charm and culture. Her dress consisted of a full length heavy silk skirt made of gores of alternating colors, with a train. It was topped by a sheer blouse with full sleeves, a pañuelo to form the broad sloping collar effect, and a pendant hanging by a black velvet ribbon around the neck. The blouse and pañuelo are also made of jusi.

- - Alice Gabrielson - -

* * * * *

SPECIAL ITEMS

PHILIPPINE FOLK DANCES

Bernardo T. Pedere

Filipinos are a dancing and music-loving people. Singing and dancing are among their most favorite pastimes. Any social gathering is conspicuously incomplete without the lilting melody of native ballads and the spirited steps of folk dances as they entertain themselves while perhaps enjoying a round of local drink or wine. Through this community expression, they reveal a true and typical Filipino spirit.

For hundreds of years past, even before the influx of western colonization, the early Filipinos exploited dancing as a mode of expression. There was always an occasion to express their sentiments and feelings - perhaps in the form of thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest, as an offering to the gods in supplication for the recovery of a sick member of the family, as thanks for the birth of a child, as ceremonials in preparation for battle, victory, love, marriage, or death. They set to dance and music the many milestones in the drama of their everyday existence.

The repertoire of Philippine folk dance is as varied as its diverse cultural beginnings. The dance fabric reflects a fine kaleidoscopic charm of both the exotic and refined cultures of the many races that helped mold it into the Philippine culture and social life. Strong religious veneration, a legacy of the Spanish era, plays a vital role in creating this climate through the year-round colorful observances of a town or barrio fiesta celebrated in honor of local patron saints. Festivals of this sort can go for days, rich with their traditional practices. Through these gay spectacles one may see a vivid panorama of the lives of a proud, happy, and contented people.

Philippine folk dances markedly show a beautiful blending of the native and foreign cultures. It is unquestionable that foreigners who came to our shores left imprints on our cultural patterns, most particularly in the field of folk dance. Steps and styling speak of the flavor garnished from those influences European characteristics are very pronounced. Common to the Philippine folk dances are the ingredients adapted from the Spaniards as in the Jotas, Habaneras, Pandanggos, Kuratsas, and Paso Doble; from the Americans and Frenchmen, the quadrilles; from the Germans, the "Redoba" from the island of Mindoro, and the "Escotis" from Capiz province, the latter having borrowed its name from the European schottische; the haunting Chinese rhythm in the music of "Sakuting" and "Binislakan" dances; the Javanese, Hindu-Arabic and Indo-Malayan pageantry, color and mysticism of the Muslim dances of the southern Philippines. The basic native step patterns may be the same as their foreign origin, yet the Philippine dances developed and evolved a unique quality peculiarly Filipino.



Customs and traditions lend themselves to the character of most folk dances, particularly the courtship and wedding dances. According to Mrs. Francisca Reyes Aquino, "As a people, we (Filipinos) have conservative tastes insofar as the relationship between man and maid in love or other social amenities is concerned, conservative in the sense that we are shy and secretive. Love, in the traditional Filipino way, is always expressed at arms length." Dance formations are commonly longways, with partners standing about six feet apart. There is hardly any body contact at all. It has been further noted that in the old days a woman would not allow direct contact with her partner while dancing. If it was necessary that partners were to hold hands, she would extend one end of her fan for him to hold onto or the man covered his hand with his handkerchief. It is a social shock and many regarded it repulsive to find a woman readily accepting a suitor. Western culture introduced social ballroom dancing, but usually it has been performed with hyper-extended arms for what may be technically termed open ballroom dance position.

In spite of the geographical isolation and the obvious ethnic cultural diversity, dances around the over 7,000-island archipelago are homogenous in their steps and expressions. These apparently have been handed down from generation to generation through communal and tribal rites and practices. Decidedly, there may be slight modifications and the dances may take certain forms of embellishments indigenous to the regions, yet the synthesis of folk elements are ever present. This is true with the sway balance steps, the most common dance pattern in Philippine folk dances. The tribal dances of the people of the mountain provinces in northern Luzon and the dances of the Muslims in the southern island of Mindanao and the adjacent Sulu archipelago are among those that almost completely stayed unsullied. The Muslim tribes fiercely resisted any kind of Western domination. Dances of the lowland Christians and the rice-growing people, particularly those found in the Visayas and Tagalog regions, demonstrate a strong Castilian air and other foreign influence.

Philippine folk dances have peculiar characteristics in origin, content, and form. Mrs. Aquino classified them according to geographical extent of origin - national or local; accord-

Continued on next page.

PHILIPPINE DANCES (Continued)



ing to nature - occupational, ceremonial, courtship, wedding, festival, war, comic and game dances; according to speed of movements - fast, moderate, slow, combination of slow and fast; according to formation - longways, quadrille, and set; according to distinguishing features - dances with songs, dances with the use of equipment or implements, dances with combined rhythms, and old ballroom dances.

National dances are those found throughout the islands and which have survived attempts at modifications, adulterations, and common distortions. Examples of these dances are among those introduced and popularized during the Spanish period like the Jotas, Pandanggos, Habaneras, Kuratsas, the Cariñosa, and the native Balitaw. On the other hand there are the local dances which are most typical and representative of a certain local-

ity. The people in nearly all the villages or barrios of the town of Bauan, province of Batangas, for example, dance the "Subli" in the month of May as a ceremonial worship dance in homage to the Holy Cross. This has become an age-old tradition in this singular province, originating some three hundred years ago.

Occupational dances cannot escape notice for their charm and local color. This type of dance depicts actions of certain occupations or industries. People living near the sea have dances and songs about fishing. "Oasioas", a spectacular folk dance from the coastal fishing towns of Lingayen (Pangasinan province on the island of Luzon), is a vivid picture of the fun and gaiety fishermen have as they signal to their companions at shore by flinging lighted oil lamps after a big catch. A successful fishing expedition becomes an occasion to imitate the sinuous movements and undulations of the fish in water as in the Muslim dance called "Tahing Baila". In regions where the coconut forms one of the major industries, dancers use coconut shells as equipment for rhythmic effect. A gay cycle of plowing, sowing, planting, harvesting, threshing, pounding, and winnowing rice is happily portrayed in the dances of the lowland Christians. Most of these rural occupational dances are colorful, graceful, lively, and care-free. They instinctively burst and exude with neighborliness and group spirit.

Courtship and wedding dances embody close adherence to customs and traditions. At a marriage celebration there is much feasting and merrymaking. Family members, relatives and friends congregate to give the newlyweds their best wishes. In a rural town or barrio, the affair can even turn into a huge community gathering. They sing and dance and the highlight of the day is when the bride and groom finally perform the wedding dance. This is supposed to be their last dance of bachelorhood. Usually it is spontaneous and there is no definite step pattern. Relatives of either side gather around the dancing couple, each one trying to outdo the other by seeing whose side pins the greater number of paper bills on the groom's outfit or the bride's gown. Guests participate by pinning bills also or by tossing coins into a handkerchief unfolded in the center of the dance floor. After the dance, they count the total donations and eventually hand them over to the couple together with a special blessing from the heads of both families. The object of all this is to start the couple toward economic independence in their new life together. Mrs. Aquino states that there are a variety of wedding dances, but everywhere the dance is performed for the purpose of collecting gifts, in money or in kind, for the newly married couple.

Dances classified according to their movements are determined by whether they are active, moderate, slow, or fast. Active dances are energetic, forceful, and fast. The "Tinikling", most famous of all Philippine folk dances, is a good example. The liveliness and accelerating tempo of this dance has made it almost always the climactic finale of any cultural show. Another rousing number is the vigorous and syncopated "Maglalatik". This is an all-male dance where performers wear a harness of coconut shells which they beat to a staccato rhythm as they perform a mock fight over 'latik', a coconut residue.

There are a good number of festival dances that show a combination of slow and fast movement. Widely known is the "Jota Moncadeña". The dramatic change of pace and mood throughout the dance is most noticeable. "Alcamfor" and "Habanera Botoleña" are other examples, too.

Other distinguishing features characterized in many Philippine folk dances are those performed with songs like the "Lubi-Lubi" (The Coconut Tree), and "Lawiswis Kawayan", (The Bamboo Tree). It is not uncommon, especially in the Visayan islands, to witness at a big dance celebration the native string orchestra extemporaneously organizing two groups of the best singers in the area to alternately sing for a couple dancing. This often gets to a high point where each singing group tries hard to outsmart the other by improvising lyrics to go with the musical accompaniment. The dancers themselves can get so carried away that a joust like this can extend for a long time, depending on the mood of the singers and musicians.

The Spaniards undoubtedly introduced the formal ballroom dances to the Philippines. In a sophisticated and formal gathering like the inauguration of a new president or high-ranking



PHILIPPINE DANCES (Continued)

government official, the ball is traditionally opened by the important dignitaries and their ladies dancing the famous Philippine quadrille, the "Rigodon de Honor". Paso Doble, Polka, Mazurka, and Balse are among the European dances that gained prominence among the Filipinos.

Philippine folk dances have a unique process of nomenclature. Dances may derive their names from the steps used, like "Haplik", "Papuri", "Polka sa Nayon", and "Mazurka Boholana" to name a few. They may be named after persons, like "Panchita" and "Miligoy". Birds and animals are fascinating inspirations in many dances. There are the "Itik-Itik" (Duck), "Kalapati" (Dove), "Pabo" (Turkey), and "Tinolabong" (Cattle Egret). "Alcamfor" got its name from the aromatic camphor plant. "An Marol" is the Visayan term for the Sampaguita, the Philippines' national flower. It is a delicate, white, fragrant blossom and is a favorite for making garlands. From the Maranaw tribe in the province of Lanao on the island of Mindanao, every daughter of royal blood is expected to learn to dance the "Singkil", a highly intricate, show-stopping dance which takes its name from the bell-bracelet worn around the ankle.

Dances can also be identified after their places of origin like "Habanera Botoleña" which has its origin from the town of Botolan, province of Zambales. "Jota Moncadaña" came from the old people in the town of Moncada, province of Tarlac. "Pandanguiado Buraweño" is from the town of Burauen, island of Leyte. Folk dances also evolve their names from the combination of two dance steps, as in "Jotabal", a blending of jota and balse.

Step patterns, hand movements and general styling of Philippine folk dances differ from region to region. In places where living is abundant and carefree, the dances are exuberant. This is typical of dances from the Visayan, Tagalog, and the Bicol regions. In contrast, in places where life is less plentiful and money is scarce, the dances are sad, slow, and sometimes mournful. Even the "kumintang", a basic Filipino hand movement, reflects its personality. It is usually performed with fist half-closed. The Ilocos region dances are representative examples of this type.

Philippine folk dances were born to satisfy a deep longing for cultural expression. Their character and personality were molded from the geographical, historical, social, and religious temperament of the people.

* * * * *

Ed. note: Mr. Pedere is a former lead dancer in Leyte Filipiniana, a Philippine dance company. He is now living in Concord, California, and is a teacher and leader of Pittsburg Filipiniana in Northern California. This summer he made his first appearance at the California State University of San Diego Folk Dance Conference, where the lovely dances of his homeland proved immensely popular.

Photographs illustrating this article are through the courtesy of Mrs. Anne Steward of Philippine Travel in San Francisco. The two smaller ones on pages 5 and 6 are of a group of students at Mindanao State University. Two girls from the same University perform a Muslim women's dance at the top of page 7, and at the bottom, two women from the province of Zamboanga in the southern Philippines play a native percussion instrument.

* * * * *

SEEN ON THE SCENE

TREASURER'S BALL

As Treasurer of the Folk Dance Federation, South, it is my privilege to give recognition to the many people who contributed, making the 1973 Treasurer's Ball the marvellous success it was. Some contributors gave time and effort in the production of the event; others were generous in donations toward the door prizes and refreshments. They include the following individuals and clubs:

Eileen Bartold, Ed Feldman, Gerry Gordon, Marilyn Henderson, Mike Kamen, Elsa and Ralph Miller, Annette Needleman, Virginia Saar and Marsha Wiener, together with the members of their committees;

Anne Abeles, Beverly Barr, Josephine Civello, Betty Davidson, Isabel Dean, Bemí and Louis DeBus, John Filcich, Rod and Marilyn Henderson, Evelyn Lane, John K. Meyer, Ruth and Jesse Oser, Joan and Paul Pritchard, Charlotte and Lou Shapiro, John Skow, Leo Stowers, Elizabeth Ullrich and Vivian Woll - and, also, the Aman Ensemble, Garden Grove Folk Dancers, Hollywood Peasants, Laguna Folkdancers, Martinel Company and the Westwood Co-op Folk Dancers - for refreshments, gifts and cash contributions; and

Liberty Assembly and Los Rancheros for their wonderful exhibitions. . . and to all the individuals who comprised the tremendous crowd. Watch for it again next year, same place, on Nov. 9.

- - Morrie Lechtick - -

* * * * *