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Cultural Calendar: Folk Dancing Comes of Age

Antonio G. Manuud

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treasure that—but the fact that everyone here present is a Filipino. I am an American and am proud to be one, and would not have been surprised if Americans had come; but that so many Filipinos should show this much affection for us—that I am proud of.” “Incidentally,” he added, “none of these people have ever received any financial help from the Asia Foundation.”

The case of Mr. Reed is worth pondering by both America and the Philippines. American popularity is notoriously at a low ebb—in Europe, in Latin America, and even in Southeast Asia—and this, in spite of enormous amounts of American financial aid to these areas. The moral is obvious: friendship cannot be bought; it can only be won; and it will be won if America (and the Philippines too, for that matter) continue to send abroad such persons as Mr. and Mrs. John Reed.

Their secret? Extremely simple. They did not try to patronize us (as the “do-gooders” in the book mentioned above) nor did they live aloof from us (forming a “Golden Ghetto,” as the same book suggests); they simply took an interest in the Philippines and in things Philippine, and accepted us Filipinos as we are. They read up on Philippine history, kept abreast of current trends, toured the provinces (they visited thirty provinces), participated in *fiestas*, learned native songs and native dances, attended the concerts, the plays, the exhibitions. They were at home with the wealthy, the middle class, the poor; they made friends with painters, architects and musicians, with writers, editors, ambassadors, financiers, with labor and management, with student leaders and professors, with bishops and priests on the one hand and with atheists on the other.

The Asia Foundation deserves congratulations not only for generous financial assistance to worthy causes but also for the superior type of men that represent it.

M. A. B.

Cultural Calendar

Folk Dancing Comes of Age

THE Filipino folk dance, long the exclusive preserve of physical education instructors and anthropologists, has at last become “ac-

ceptable" to sophisticates and the populace alike, thanks to several university dance groups, and particularly to the imagination and daring of the *Bayanihan* of the Philippine Women's University. The Bayanihan Folk Arts Center Inc. is an organization affiliated with the PWU and devoted to the specific purpose of conducting organized research projects on Filipino culture. It sponsors regular presentations of indigenous art (music, costume, crafts, literature, the dance). Its dance group swept gracefully through three continents this spring and summer, receiving enthusiastic press notices everywhere, from Bangkok through Rome, Barcelona, Madrid, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Brussels and across the Atlantic through New York, Washington, San Francisco, Honolulu and finally back in Manila, where Rizal Basketball Stadium was packed at its two performances. (A third is being planned to raise funds for the Manila cathedral.) In Brussels, at the International Exposition, a clamorous crowd forced the scheduling of an extra performance in a bigger auditorium. The dancers were televised for major networks both in the United States (The Ed Sullivan Show) and the Soviet Union (Moscow TV). In America, they were compared to the Moiseyev Ballet, the group of Russian folk-dancers who had just taken New York by storm.

No small measure of the *Bayanihan's* success was due to the imaginative planning of the program which appropriately began with the more sombre, more ritualistic dances of our pagan past (and Mohammedan present), building up to a climax that finally exploded in a pyrotechnic display of nimbleness and exuberant joy in the dances of the Christian era. The only possible reaction to this is to stand up and cheer. Pilots of *Bayanihan's* success were three busy women: Miss Helena Z. Benitez, executive vice-president of the PWU, Mrs. Lucrecia Reyes Urtula, directress of the Bayanihan Folk Arts Center Inc., and Mrs. Leticia Perez de Guzman, coordinator of the Bayanihan International Project. The American impresario, Mr. Sol Hurok, has signed up the group for a series of performances in major American cities next year.

Equally competent as the *Bayanihan* is the Far Eastern University dance group, chosen by Universal-International Pictures Inc. to feature a series of folk dances in a travelogue on the Philippines. The Caltex Oil Company Inc., shooting their own length of film, also chose the same group of dancers. In Novem-

ber the group will perform at the FEU auditorium for the annual Faith and Culture project of the Catechetical Instruction League of the Ateneo de Manila.

But Filipino audiences are not interested only in Philippine folk dances. This was shown by the packed audiences that had fought their way into the UP auditorium to see the New York Ballet on August 8, 9 and 10.

"Spoliarium" comes Home

Juan Luna's celebrated painting of gladiators making their macabre exit from a Roman amphitheatre has in the last century alternated between hanging on the wall of some Spanish gallery and resting in some stockroom along with other paintings awaiting exhibition. A copy used to cover a wall at Malacañang but was destroyed during the Battle of Manila in 1944. The original has now arrived in Manila, a gift from the Spanish government. We hope a fitting home will be found for it.

Art Exhibits

In Manila, the more lively exhibits by local painters are usually featured in Mrs. Lyd Arguilla's Philippine Art Gallery (PAG) or Manuel A. Rodriguez's Contemporary Arts Gallery (CAG). Both are in a section of town which cannot quite decide whether it wants to be Greenwich Village or Fifth Avenue. Art enthusiasts often meet in these two galleries for their more significant exhibits.

At the PAG last quarter were exhibited the most recent works of a group of painters that include Zóbel, Manansala, Ocampo, Luz and Navarro. At the CAG Mary Pillsbury, former president of the Lakewood Art League in Cleveland, Ohio, exhibited her Philippine paintings. This was followed by one featuring "The Primitives," a group of young painters who also write (Leonidas V. Benesa, Andrés Cristobal Cruz, Hilario S. Francia Jr., Jesús T. Peralta and Emmanuel S. Torres). A "Second Anniversary Exhibit" and another show displaying the works of "the Bacolod group" ended the quarter's schedule. At press time, the CAG is displaying a one-woman show, that of Miss Florencia Mota.

Mrs. Purita K. Ledesma, former vice-president of the Art Association of the Philippines (AAP) was elected president succeeding Leonidas V. Benesa who is now in Laos. Mrs. Ledesma has

plans for an exhibit of Philippine religious art in early December to coincide with the consecration of the reconstructed Manila cathedral. Mr. Napoleon Abueva, sculptor, has been named chairman of this exhibit which seeks to display all the religious paintings of the major Filipino painters as well as sculpture, architectural design, chalices, obstensores and ciboria made by Filipino craftsmen. In February of 1959 the AAP will hold its twelfth annual exhibit. The AAP also announces through Mrs. Ledesma that it will offer a purse of ₱1000 for the best art criticism published in 1959. (It seems conceded that if a prize had been given in 1958 it would have gone without a doubt to Fernando Zobel's "Philippine Colonial Sculpture" in the August issue of PHILIPPINE STUDIES.)

Theatre

Manila in the past few months has experienced a rash of theatre guilds. Among them: the "Filipino Thespians Guild," "Playhouse 13," the "Manila Theatre Octet" and (the latest) "Random Playhouse."

The Filipino Thespians Guild will present (for the first time anywhere) *The Phantom Empire* of Father Henry L. Irwin S.J. of the Ateneo de Manila. Playhouse 13 is casting Bernard Shaw's *Joan of Arc*, and has invited stage veterans Lamberto V. Avellana and Narciso Pimentel to speak before the guild's members. The Manila Theatre Octet will present a reading of T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* to a private audience in late October. The Random Playhouse is still in the planning stage.

Meanwhile, the Manila Theatre Guild after a successful week-long run of the problem play *Time Limit* in late September, now has *Roar Like a Dove* on the boards. Penmouth Playhouse presented *The Diary of Anne Frank* before an audience that gave Georgianna Powell repeated curtain calls. The group intends to present *Look Homeward, Angel* next. The Arena Theatre put out a slightly altered version of Nick Joaquin's durable *Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*.

Literature

In literature the outstanding events were the annual Palanca Awards (for English and Tagalog short stories and English and

Tagalog one-act plays) and the publication abroad (by MacDowell and Obolensky Inc.) of *The Collected Poems of José García Villa*.

Film

Possibly the finest moving picture to come out of Spain is Chamartin's *Marcelino Pan y Vino*, which was shown at the Holiday theatre. Sponsored by the Spanish Embassy, the premiere was well attended by members of the diplomatic corps and the hierarchy. The irresistible charm of child star Pablito Calvo drew viewers to the Holiday for two months (since 7 August), save a six-day interruption.

University of the Philippines

The University of the Philippines, founded in 1908, celebrates its golden jubilee this year. Continuous art exhibits have been held on campus since June, featuring the works of successful alumni in the plastic arts (e.g., Abueva, Castañeda, Miranda).

Varia

Under the direction of India's P.C. Mandyopadhyay, an exhibit on "Energy and its Transformation" was on display at the Institute of Science and Technology on Herran street from mid-September to October 12 sponsored by UNESCO.

Two debates were held between the University of the Philippines and the Ateneo de Manila on the controversial Rodrigo Bill on overstaying Chinese. The first debate was held at Loyola Heights, with the Ateneo defending the Bill, U.P. attacking it. The second was held at Diliman with the sides reversed. The Ateneo won both debates.

Among the most outstanding events of the year were the Magsaysay Awards and the musical performances. But of these we shall speak in the next issue.

ANTONIO G. MANUUD