

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

From Hamlet to Bayanihan

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Philippine Studies vol. 8, no. 2 (1960): 393—395

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

Unless the restrictions which have recently been heaped on the book trade are lifted, bookselling in the Philippines will, perhaps, not die; but it will settle down into being insipid run-of-the-mill peddling instead of evolving into the imaginative art which it is meant to be and, in a modern country, must become.

JOAQUIN PO

From Hamlet to Bayanihan

By a fortunate coincidence, New York and Washington theatergoers were treated to the best of England's Old Vic and the Philippines' Bayanihan Companies within the short space of ten months. Although it may be presumptuous at this early date to compare the fledgling Bayanihan Dance Troupe with the more than a century old traditions of *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* at the Old Vic, still the reviews and comments of the theater-hardened New York and Washington critics augured well for the future of the Bayanihan group and the Philippine theater in general.

Comparisons between the Old Vic and the Bayanihan are inevitable. Both companies were at Brussels last year, and both toured the United States under the aegis of S. Hurok, who has continued to make the best in the foreign theater available to American audiences. Both companies, too, are in a sense national theater companies, and they represent a serious attempt at presenting and communicating what is best in their native cultures. England, of course, has Shakespeare, and it will be a fortunate Philippines indeed that comes even close to matching in any media the poetry or drama of the Bard of Avon. With such riches to work on the Old Vic has a running start on any competitors. The Old Vic, too, has a history that dates from 1818, and in recent years it has had the advantage of the direction of men like Ralph Richardson, John Burrell and Laurence Olivier. The present company has the experienced skill of John Neville, Barbara Jefford and Laurence Harvey in a tradition of acting that goes back almost a hundred and fifty years.

Matched against this sort of ivy-clad history the Bayanihan Company has little to offer in the way either of tradition or experience. The earliest origins of the Bayanihan can be traced back no more than five years, and most of the company have had relatively little experience in the theater. But young as it is, the Bayanihan yielded not at all to the Old Vic in the caliber of the performance it pre-

sented in its New York debut. It was indeed unusual to find the New York and Washington critics so unanimously outspoken in their praise of the Bayanihan. And the very inexperience, newness and freshness of the Philippine group was what appeared most striking to the staid old critics of the big city. Proof of this was their immediate response to the "air of innocence" of these Filipinos and the "captivating, enchanting" freshness of their "genuinely friendly, untheatrical smiles." The reaction of these traditionally hard-headed critics, so universal in approval as it was, gave good indications that the Brussels triumph and the conquest of Europe by the Bayanihan troupe was the result of much more than just clever publicity.

Such a reception within the charmed circle just beyond Broadway and 42nd Street is doubly encouraging for the future of the Philippine theater. It is encouraging, too, to literateurs both here and in Manila that the Bayanihan represents a step along the right path towards a genuinely national theater. It may be true, as some have pointed out, that the Philippines cannot point to anything like the ethnic classical dance of India or of Spain, but the very value of the Philippine contribution to world culture lies in the successful amalgamation of the diverse elements that have influenced the Islands over the centuries. Philippine culture, like its American counterpart, is a mixture of many elements. The Bayanihan has rightly and skillfully highlighted not any one individual element, but the fusion of them all. The result, though it may reflect many influences, emerges as distinctly Filipino.

John Martin in the *New York Times* asked a legitimate question during the troupe's second week at New York's Winter Garden: "Where has Philippine culture been all this time?" The answer to reviewer Martin's question, of course, is that Philippine culture has been right here among us all the time. All that was needed was the touch of a sympathetic hand to gather up the many elements into an artistic whole. Martin himself pointed out that the present program of the Bayanihan showed "infiltrations from everywhere you can think of, except possibly the Aleutians and the Hebrides," but it emerged as entirely Philippine in character and individuality. More than 7000 islands and almost as many racial strains make for much diversity in geographical and ethnic influences. But just because Philippine culture is composite it is not for that reason less national. The amalgam and the end product of any serious attempt at portraying these various elements can and should remain uniquely and beautifully Filipino.

The establishment of a national theater, or a national literature for that matter, is highly desirable for the Philippines, just as it was for Ireland, for example, at the beginning of this century. But to be truly national a literature must represent the Philippines and Philippine culture exactly as it is. It cannot be passively imitative,

nor can it trade the best elements of a 500-year-old tradition for the deceptive will-o'-the-wisp of *avant-garde* popularity.

It is certainly not too soon to say that the surprising success of the Bayanihan rests squarely upon this one fact—that under the sensitive direction of Lucrecia Reyes Urtula and with the capable assistance of Lucrecia R. Kasilag, Isabel A. Santos, Rodrigo Perez III and José Lardizábal, the group has successfully and artistically presented the fusion of the many traditional elements that go to make up Philippine culture. A national theater or a national literature must present accurately what the nation has been and is. The plaudits of the Broadway critics is proof enough that the Bayanihan has done just that. It is a beginning. We look for similar ventures in the other arts in the near future. To quote John Martin once again from his vantage point on Broadway: "From now on we shall all look at the Philippines with new eyes."

JOSEPH A. GALDON

Human Relations In Industry

The techniques of labor-management relations and the terms used to describe them are now part of our everyday vocabulary. The union contract, collective bargaining, vacations with pay, fringe benefits, etc., all these enter the stage at one point or another in the drama of modern industry. But far more important than the techniques employed, or the laws passed, is the spirit or outlook which dominates the protagonists of the action. In a very different connection, a famous author once wrote, "I still think it is more important for a landlady to know the philosophy of life of her prospective tenant than it is to know his income." Similarly, far more important than proficiency in the techniques of public relations is the philosophy of life behind the men who sit at the bargaining table, whether they represent management or labor. Sound moral principles animated by a Christian philosophy of social justice can alone lay the foundation of an enduring and harmonious management-labor relationship. In the final analysis good public relations are good human relations.

Costly labor disputes, pickets, strikes—all these have causes. To understand them correctly we must understand the factors present in our industrial scene. They can be reduced to three: 1) the historical evolution of big business in the Philippines; 2) the particular psychology of our people; 3) the rapid organization of labor.

Until a few years ago, the average business unit was small and so was the investment therein. A typical business was owned by one man or one family, who employed a few others to help them. Owner and