

PASACAT

Since 1970 PASACAT has been lauded for preserving and promoting Asian Pacific culture thereby, enhancing cultural goodwill and understanding.

www.pasacat.org



The *Philippine American Cultural Troupe* was founded May 23, 1970. It's founding members were organizers of the 1969 Philippine Fiesta tribute to San Diego's 200th Anniversary. It was the catalyst that what would become PASACAT. Their goal was to build a Philippine cultural center. Their dream was realized through efforts of the **Mrs. Philippines Contest** held from 1971 to 1983 to purchase and payoff their building located at 102 E 16th Street.



Mother's Eve, May, 1971

L-R Bottom: Ely Aguilar, Antonia & Narcisco Ricasa, Paz Uro, Delfin & Purisima Labao, Sandra Adona, **2nd row:** Carolina Preclara, Maxine Cabrera, Anamaria Labao, Tess Labao, Erlene Fontanilla, Belen Alipio, Marites Burk, Pat Tulao; **3rd row:** Domingo Ricasa, Albert Sales, Romy Rayos; **Top row:** Anacleto Nanquil, Benardo Monzon, Gabriel Adona



PASACAT began performing for the House of the Philippines Lawn Program in June in 1970, celebrating Philippine Independence from Spain. PASACAT dancers in *Sakuting* a dance performed during the Christmas season.



Evening Tribune, June 21, 1971



PASACAT performs at the Holiday Festival at the San Diego Wild Animal Park, December, 1992.

(Continued)

Vernal, also a Philippine native dance teacher and dancer. About 2,000 persons saw the performance.

BECOME FORMAL GROUP

Because of the success of the Balboa Park performance, most of the dancers were formed into a formal group and incorporated into the Filipino Community Association of San Diego County. A series of public performances followed.

In the meantime, the Civic Association of Southern California, also revitalized its own dance troupe and since then has delighted many an audience.

Other organizations, which spread their own troupes were the Philippine American Cultural Society, a new organization, and the Royal Club, whose members originated from the Manila region of the island and their children.

POINTS TO PRIDE

What do the Filipino Americans who proudly think of their ancestral dances?

And Lillian, 17, whose specialty is the dance "Pandanggo sa Ilalanga" (Light) says cheerfully that it has made her more proud of her Filipino ancestry. "The dances are so different from those I learned in school and the I like," she added.

"They are fun and challenging," said Dominga Reyes, 15, who dances the fast "Maglalatik."

A more sophisticated tone was presented by Jay Elizaga, 17, who said that Philippine dances, because of their variety and color, "are exciting to the American eye." Jay's sister, Bernice, 16, a performer, said she has been dancing ever since she was 10 months old.

HELPS FRIENDSHIP

Members of the dance troupe sponsored by the Civic Association, and dancing Philippine native dances, but helped cement their friendship with each other. Ligaya Corvejo, 16, a teaching student, said "at first we didn't even like each other. Now we don't get away from each other."

Julieta Sacramento, 17, Miss Carle of 1970, said: "The Philippines used to be a foreign country to us. Now it's like home."

AND THEY'RE HAVING A BALL

Filipinos Learning Heritage Of Parents From Dances

By ERNESTO FLORES

Like other minority children born and reared in the United States today, Filipino youngsters are beginning to discover their parents' cultural heritage.

This is visibly true in San Diego where second or third generation American-born Filipinos have formed cultural groups, specializing in dancing and singing Philippine folk dances and songs.

There are no fewer than four groups performing at many Filipino-American functions and there is reason to believe that more will be organized.

Part Of The Island Scene

Mrs. Paz Uro Washe, a National City high school teacher, who has been teaching and performing Philippine native dance art for more than 20 years, said folk dances are part of the scene on the islands.

"They are a must in school and are shown in almost every public function of note. They are often staged like sports tournaments," she said.

According to Mrs. Washe, Philippine folk dances vary from area to area and they reflect the many cultures of the islands. Broadly, the

dances are classified into pre-Spanish or non-Christian, Spanish era, and rural dances of farmers and fishermen.

Difficult Even For Native

Because of the many kinds of native dances, mastering them is difficult even to a Filipino born and reared in the islands. This is doubly so to one who has spent his life in the United States.

"My technique is to teach them as many and as varied kinds of dances, starting from the simplest to the most complicated, thus giving them a kind of challenge," she said.

Mrs. Washe's technique was tested during the 200th Anniversary celebration of San Diego when the Filipino community was asked to give a public performance of native dances at the Organ Pavilion of Balboa Park.

No fewer than 25 dances were presented by the community during the two-hour show — ranging from the slow-moving "Singkil," a royal Filipino Muslim dance, to the lively "Tinikling," the dance of the birds, and "Maglalatik" an all-male dance using coconut shells strapped to the body for castanets.

Among the main features of the show were dances performed by Mrs. Washe and Dr. Bill

(Continued on b-7, Col. 8)

The San Diego Union

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, WEDNESDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 18, 1970



Basic movements of three kinds of Philippine folk dances are demonstrated by local Filipino-American youngsters, from left, Joy Elizaga, Dominga Reyes, Berna Elizaga, Vic Concepcion, and Marita Labra.

San Diego Union
November 18, 1970

PRESERVING CULTURES

Dancer's dream comes true in Filipino troupe

By Margaret Magat
Phoenix Staff Writer

IN 1983, Ana Cabato took her place among 49 other young Filipino dancers in Balboa Park to celebrate the city of San Diego. The city was celebrating its 100th anniversary, and as a tribute, the Filipino community choreographed a three-hour cultural extravaganza. Using popular folk dances, colorful native costumes and stylized movements, the 49 young men and women wove tales that depicted the life in the provinces and islands of the Philippines.

Little did Cabato dream that this first Philippine exchange would turn into a full-fledged performing company. Scheduled to perform in December at the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art in La Jolla, the 26-year-old Philippine American Society and Cultural Arts Troup (PASACAT) is a dream come true for her and many Filipino-Americans, said Cabato, now PASACAT's executive director.

The company has 73 members, 34 children in the junior group and 39 adults for the senior group. They range from 5 to 49 years of age, Cabato said. Each Wednesday, three classes — from beginning to advanced — train the members to performance level.

She looks back and shakes her head in amazement.

"We've come a long way," Cabato said, smiling. "And PASACAT is still in my blood. Through its performances, it made me proud of my heritage," said Cabato, who was born in the United States. "I'm glad to be a Filipino."

The Philippines has a truly varied history that lends to its diverse culture. The 7,641 scattered Pacific islands that make up the archipelago were already inhabited when Magellan "discovered" them in 1521. By 1565, Spain claimed the islands as its territory. Spaniards ruled the island nation for more than 300 years until the Spanish-American War, after which the United States took Spain's place in the Philippines. The country obtained independence in 1946 after World War II.

San Diego County has about 30,000 Filipinos — a very mixed community, Cabato said. PASACAT helps people understand and ap-



Ana Cabato, executive director of PASACAT, left, with costume designer Jaji Ramirez Castro, the group's junior division choreographer

preciate differences while contributing a strong sense of culture to the San Diego melting pot, she added.

PASACAT explores all this rich history and diversities in their dances, from the country "harusa" (down) to Ilocano-influenced Minidances to the Castilian dances with cantantes popular during the Spanish era. Not to be forgotten are the dances from the many indigenous tribes found in mountain regions and other lesser areas widely scattered throughout the Philippines.

The origin of the dances can be traced back to the 1000s and even beyond, Cabato said. Tribal dances of today evolved from the ancient rituals mountain tribes performed to pray for harvest, or reverence used to wish a young couple a happy and prosperous life.

Country dances can be traced to the times when "barrio" people took a break from planting rice in the paddies to dance and celebrate their joy in the abundance of life. Ordinary objects such as glass jars set to be important props in depicting skill in dan-

ce like "Binaman," in which performers maintain grace while stirring oil their sticks to balance glasses of wine on their heads and palms. Day-to-day tasks such as planting rice become a celebration in "Magasin," which literally translates to "planting."

The Spaniards brought European influences and ideas in the 16th century through their teachings, clothing and way of life. Palla, jota, landango, mazurka and the waltz were adopted and integrated by Filipinos into their dances. *Please see DANCERS D-1, Col. 1*

DANCERS

Continued From D-1

cers native dances. In the folk dance "Jota Pandereta," costars play a role but Philippine bamboo replaces the usual ivory Castilian castanets.

Each dance has a tale full of symbols and meaning. For example, in "Singit," a Muslim princess walks through a forest made perilous by lawless pirates on a jolt on her. Despite terrors in the earth symbolized by the clanking of bamboo poles, she walks unafraid, accompanied by her attendants, with head held high and each step precise in an imaginary minefield of danger. Elaborate costumes, warrior-dancers join a prince make "Singit" an exciting dance of royalty.

Nine-year-old Ryan Navarin, who is U.S. born, is glad to be part of the troupe.

"I learn about the Philippines," he said. "I also joined because my mom is in it and to make friends and learn new things."

His cousin Cynthia Navarin, 12, said, "It's fun. Learning these dances

is interesting because I get to learn more about the Philippines and it makes me want to go back and stay."

Through weekly classes and performances, those who were born and grew up in the Philippines rediscover their love and learn to appreciate more the traditions and ways that are too quickly forgotten. For the ones who were born here, it is a chance to be exposed to the rich heritage of the homeland.

The group performs 30 to 40 times a year for various civic, social and educational organizations around California, Nevada and Arizona. Past venues include the Shrine Auditorium, UCSD, Lyceum Theatre, University of Nevada and recently, the military department in Arizona.

The choreographer for the junior division is Jaji Ramirez Castro, a former member of the Philippine Bayanhon dance company. She was with the elite company for 13 years, and went on two world tours in the early '80s.

One of the dances she performed was "Thinking," a dance in which performers jump between thick bamboo sticks being rapidly opened

and closed. The trick is to jump quickly in and out of the two poles, to avoid being "caught." Agility and speed along with grace are the distinctive features of this dance.

Castro also had an heir specialty in "Vinta," in which one danced on top of bamboo poles held by other dancers.

Each Wednesday, she teaches an average of 15 to 20 children in several hour-long classes.

George Fagan is director of the senior division. A veteran of dance theater and music from Honolulu, he performed regularly in Waikiki shows for eight years, then later formed his own company, Manilla, which toured Japan.

Ragas also undertook three sepa-

rate field studies of the mountain provinces in Luzon, the Mindanao region, Basilan and Jolo islands in the Philippines. Armed with knowledge of ethnic music and dance, Ragas joined PASACAT in 1981.

The company aims to give its mostly U.S.-born members a strong sense of cultural awareness and to help them forge new friendships and create bonds, Cabato said.

PASACAT is really a family-oriented company, Cabato said. "When parents support their kids, it becomes a family event, and you're taking care of basics, the home base."

The enthusiastic response PASACAT gets from its audience ensures its success.

At a time when there was much news on Filipino gangs, Margaret Magat, an intern wanted to write something positive about Filipinos and submitted this article to the San Diego Tribune, September 18, 1990

currents Weekend

Friday
January 7, 2005
E
The San Diego
Union Tribune



Pasacat dancers Laurence Lector (foreground), Matthew Portugal (right) and Arthur DeLeon (left). Photo: Steve Fisher

MAKING STRIDES

Dance empowers performers in San Diego's Nations Festival

By Janice Steinberg

You've just gotta glide some times," says Laurence Lector of the dances he performs with Pasacat Asian/Pacific Arts Company. "There's no putting your own masculinity on it and making it your own, you've just got to be graceful...

You've got to get over yourself." Getting past his stereotype of masculinity isn't the only thing that's changed for the 23-year-old Lector since he started dancing three years ago.

"If you'd met me then, I wouldn't be sitting here looking you in the eye and talking to you. I'd be looking somewhere

else and not talking at all," says Lector, sitting in the costume and instrument filled prep room at Pasacat's National City studio. "The confidence in oneself just shows up."

He's earned his new-found assurance through dancing for hundreds of people — as he'll do when Pasacat performs at

► FESTIVAL CONTINUED FROM E1

Filipino dance embraces islands' diverse cultures

The 12th annual Nations of San Diego International Dance Festival at UCSD's Mandeville Auditorium. Since the festival's start in 1993, Pasacat has performed every year.

Lector has also gained confidence from the physical discipline of dance itself.

"My posture was so bad, because a guy's posture is always slumped up and trying to get that 'I'm a man' appearance," he says, touching his shoulders. "In dance, they teach you how to carry yourself with your chin in the air and chest out and walking straight. As soon as that changes, you have a totally different feeling about yourself."

"And then there's the deeper issue of identity, of the sense that comes from 'embracing' your culture in your spine and legs and feet."

"You do the dances over and over again, you get into the costumes, you get into the music, and you think, 'Hey, this is what it feels like to be a Filipino,'" says Lector.

His Navy father and nurse mother, both Filipino natives, met in Florida. Lector was born in South Florida and moved to San Diego when his father was stationed here in 1968. (Now retired from the Navy, his father is a stevedecker at North Island.)

Several years ago, he joined the folk choir at St. Rita's Catholic Church. The choir director, Anacrista Labiao Cabato, is also Pasacat's executive director. She encouraged him to get involved in Pasacat — which included not only dancing but also singing and playing instruments.

"The best just takes you into the spirit," says Lector, who graduated from Morse High School and now attends San Diego State University. "It inspires you. It touches all your senses because they bring in Filipino food, too. So we just have the culture under this roof."

Filipino dance embraces a broad swath of styles, reflecting the Philippine Islands' history as a major trade and cultural crossroads. Spanish colonizers brought European social dance, Asian Modern styles came from Hindu, Arabic and Mus-



Choreographer Laurence Lector: "You do the dances over and over again... and you think, 'Hey, this is what it feels like to be a Filipino,'" says Lector. Photo: Steve Fisher

"The challenging part of being a Filipino dancer is the costume changes... 20 costumes changes out of 25 dances."

ANACRISTA LABIAO CABATO
Pasacat executive director

liman cultures, and indigenous forms identified to create costumes worn. Each item has distinctive ornaments — for instance, the percussive balancing of Asian styles — and elaborate costumes, from flowing Spanish gowns with petticoats to layers of vividly colored Asian garb with intricate and artfully draped sashes.

"The challenging part of being a Filipino dancer is the costume changes," says Cabato, who started with Pasacat as a performer. "When you do a full show, you've got 20 costume changes out of 25 dances."

In this year's Nations of San Diego festival, Pasacat will feature dances from the highlands of Mindanao (second largest of the Philippines' more than 7,000 islands), including a dance that comes from a woman's celebration.

"If you look closely," Cabato says, "the women have their lips pressed together

and prodded out, because they're imitating women of that region who suck on betel nut."

Another dance, in which the men imitate dogs, is drawn from the repertoire of Bayanistas, the premier dance group in the Philippines. Pasacat's choreographer, Raj Ramirez Castro, a former Bayanista dancer, and a high point for Lector was when Bayanistas invited Pasacat to the Philippines to study with them in 2002. He had traveled there previously with his family, but from the exposure to dance, "we were just so inspired."

Lector started not taking one class a week at Pasacat. Now, if a big show is coming up, he may attend three nights a week and perform on the weekend. He also teaches a part of Pasacat's outreach to high schools. That's how with them.

"You build a family here, you build a spirit here," he says of the company, where he calls older adults "auntie" and "uncle" and younger members "sis" (sister) and "kayo" (brother).

"This is my second home."

Janice Steinberg is a San Diego arts editor.

PASACAT was in the first 1992 *Nations of San Diego Dance Festival* produced by the San Diego Dance Alliance.

PASACAT is featured in the *San Diego Union Tribune* January 7, 2005.



Berna Elizaga poses in *Singkil* as PASACAT President, Paz Uro looks on with representative from the *Klee Wyk Society* of what was then the *Museum of Man* now *The Museum of Us*.



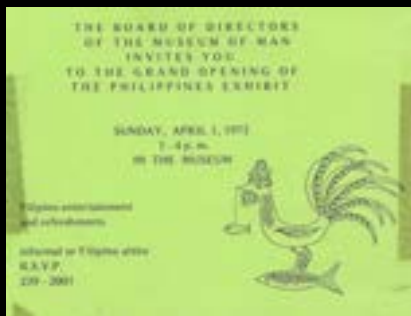
Since 1975, the **Extravaganza** Concert has been the main production of PASACAT garnering rave reviews from **San Diego Union Tribune** Dance Critics. A cast of 35 dancers and musicians undergo a grueling rehearsal schedule for a 90-minute concert held biennially. New repertoire is introduced as they stage new works from the field making the Extravaganza the pinnacle of PASACAT's identity & artistry.



First Junior Dancers - 1984

The Junior PASACAT program was born in 1983 under the leadership of Cindy Macatantan, Kenneth Estigoy, and Uncle Bob Tuminting. Some 18 dancers performed at the first **Junior PASACAT Folk Dance Festival** in April, 1984 at the newly opened Educational Cultural Complex Theater.

The next Junior PASACAT Dance Concert was held in 1989 under the direction of Joji Ramirez Castro of Chula Vista.



Philippine troupe savvy and skilled

By ANNE MARIE WEIHS
DANCE CRITIC

Asian, Island and European influences blend beautifully in the traditional dance and music of the Philippines, if not so in the real-life culture.

San Diego's lively, growing Philippine community sets a lively atmosphere in Theatre East Saturday when PASACAT, a 40-member dance and music company, performed its annual extravaganza.

So much theatrical savvy went into this rich, well-paced program that PASACAT (the Philippine-American Society and Cultural Arts Troupe) seemed a touring professional company in all but name. The 40-over age young and fresh, yet skilled, well-to-do and eager to please, Resident choreographer Joy Ramirez Castro had the help of William Fongera as guest assistant director for the show. Both were for many years with the Philippines' national folk dance company, *Bansalan*.

The experience showed — in little things, like the steady flow of music between the five acts, and in larger ones, like the visual concept of the choreography. The entire stage space was always animated by formal groupings or moving blocks and associations.

The dancing concentrated in the program was also vivid and lively. The music drew from two sources — a peppy string orchestra called *Orchestra* and a percussion group playing drums, bamboo xylophones and hammer-like gongs like those in the Indonesian gamelan.

The company could use a half-dozen strong singers to back up the performers in several vocal numbers. The dancers had problems with pitch and projection, though not with dance style.

Each scene evoked an era, or place or aspect of the culture — tribal days, the Spanish colonization, the largest Mindanawan people, the country folk. The production was

Tuesday, November 1, 1994

PASACAT celebrates silver anniversary with sterling show

By EILEEN SONDAK

Twenty-five years and still going strong. Not many dance companies can make that statement.

National City-based PASACAT, a troupe dedicated to preserving the cultural heritage of the Philippines through dance, drama, music and song, is one of the fortunate few who did as the members do to celebrate their silver anniversary.

They put on a show, of course — a big show. The cultural extravaganza held Friday and Saturday at the Lyceum Theatre featured five elaborate acts of dances indigenous to the Philippines, all performed with live music and song. The program lasted well over 2½ hours and left the audience reeling from

MUSIC REVIEW

It featured a waltz, a rumba, a foxtrot, two ballads who come to bloom, and the stage musical costumes of their rivalry.

"Tagalog" was an incoherence in most of these folk legends are on stage, but it was also short and fun to watch because of the non-stop conviction of the performers, especially the unimpaired waltz.

Many Philippine dances send lines of dancers into waltzing motion, as if imitating the seas surrounding this island nation. The women move with an elegant glide and gracefully swirling arms, even while balancing rambles or multiple pots on their heads.

And clapping bamboo poles create rhythm as well as physical challenges for the dancers, thus symbolizing other perils of the place.

In the Mindanao section, a man and woman and several handmaidens climb onto such poles, they stand and balance while men raise them to the pole; the poised dancers standing on the poles seem to be riding the waves, leaving a

score, with side sails at shelter. It is a quite wonderful image combining staves from circus, theater, and dance.

The country folk — performed before a sea of super palms and a grass hat on waltz — was an exuberant cascade of innovations. A man and his wife play the coconut strapped to their back, like drums. And in the familiar, crowd-pleasing folk, dancers jump hot and light between the poles being clapped together sweetly at their feet.

Most in the hall were responded to this material as if they knew it by heart and wanted to see

culminated with a traditional festival. It was a vivid spectacle of sight and sound, with authentic costumes from the Philippines and dramatic scenes of colored light to add to the show.

"Voyage to Mindanao" was all glow in pump and pagentry. It included a royal courtship dance, with a serene, jewel-beckoned dancer carried atop large bamboo poles. Her entourage of colorful folk dancers and several large, silver banners made an eye-popping addition to the lavish stage pictures.

"Singit," one of the most thrilling dances in the Philippine repertoire, was part of the first act finale. It featured feet-footed women

Asian music troupe's exuberance glows again

By Anne Marie Weih
DANCE CRITIC

San Diego's Philippine-American community sponsors two dance and music troupes — the Philippine-American Society and Cultural Arts Troupe (PASACAT) and the Samahon Philippine Dance Company — both traditional as both accomplished. During its annual "Extravaganza" Saturday

night at the Lyceum Theatre downtown, the 30-member PASACAT added a few welcome surprises to its usual repertoire of regional dances.

There was more singing this year than in the past, all of it expert and heartfelt. One trio harmonized like a Spanish colonial version of the Andrews Sisters during the "Maria Clara" suite, named for the well-known novel, named for the well-known novel, named for the well-known novel.

And that phrase (it means "do not touch me") also made its way into the waltzing English lyric: "They Flew From Me" by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Surrey fame.

The "Maria Clara" suite ended with a fancy ostinato; women in sat in febrile skirts and men in diaphanous white shirts performed a flamenco-inspired couple dance, accompanying themselves on bamboo castanets.

For Westerners, the "Voyage to Mindanao" suite had greater excitement, based, as it was, on Islamic

DANCE REVIEW

stapings of primal rituals. A central male in lionlike circles a group of faintly prancing women balancing pots on their heads; one of them is dressed as a bride, then circled by a rafter fearsome mask continuously that prepares her for the ceremony.

The "Maria Clara" number, probably closer to authentic, featured Philippine versions of the quadrille, waltz and mambo. For culture mavens, the program notes suggested a further parallel to European art forms: Maria Clara, the notes said, was the fictional character in a popular Philippine story, "Noli Me Tangere."

The five-part program opened with a waltz called "Birth of a Nation," a tribute to the diverse peoples of the Philippines and those who laid the ground work for the country's drive for independence. It began, montajly, with *Makabato* by Maguindao, a contemporary piece based-in a Tagalog folk tale about a blighted and a lizard that give birth to the first couple who the Tagalog people.

Set to traditional percussive instruments and heightened by lighting that suggested early-morning glow, it opened with a young woman, dressed in feathered headwear and delicately manipulating feathered fans, fitting between a group

of

EILEEN SONDAK writes about dance for the Union-Tribune.

History kicks show into high gear

By Jennifer Payer
DANCE CRITIC

There was pagantry, patriotism and plenty of good, traditional Philippine dancing Saturday night at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido, where the Philippine-American Society and Cultural Arts Troupe performed its annual "Extravaganza."

The event always has a strong flavor of culture and community; this year's gala doubled as a centennial celebration of Philippine independence from Spanish rule. There were also some welcome contemporary touches, including smooth, last-paced choreography and atmospheric lighting, which gave the event everyday dance a decidedly theatrical flair.

The five-part program opened with a waltz called "Birth of a Nation," a tribute to the diverse peoples of the Philippines and those who laid the ground work for the country's drive for independence. It began, montajly, with *Makabato* by Maguindao, a contemporary piece based-in a Tagalog folk tale about a blighted and a lizard that give birth to the first couple who the Tagalog people.

Set to traditional percussive instruments and heightened by lighting that suggested early-morning glow, it opened with a young woman, dressed in feathered headwear and delicately manipulating feathered fans, fitting between a group

of

DANCE REVIEW

"Extravaganza '94: A Philippine Centennial Celebration" opened at 7 and 7:30 p.m. Sept. 26 at Chapman Performing Arts Center, Escondido High School, Escondido. Tickets \$9-\$15 (619) 477-3362.

Two sticks in imaginative lines across the stage. Guest choreographer Gregg Seisler gave a simple but elegant balletic movement by the first couple as they sprang to life.

Choreographer Joy Ramirez Castro's direction of the 90-minute program brought dancers from successive numbers onto the stage as each piece was wrapping up. Far from being distracting, this technique allowed for spontaneous interaction between dancers and kept things moving, even through some of the more static moments. Elements such as *Ako ay Pilipino*, which incorporated scenes of the sewing of the national flag, seemed unnecessary. And a procession of revolutionary leaders, would seem more at home at a street parade than on the concert stage.

The program's second part, "Fin del Siglo," recalled the legacy of Spanish rule through a series of waltz, and often grandly that, dances that drew on European forms such as the waltz, polka and

version of the popular *Jota Manilena*, whose driving beat was established by bamboo castanets.

"Voyage to Mindanao" and "The Cordillera of Northern Luzon" offered vivid depictions of country life. The first, which incorporated dances from predominantly Muslim Mindanao island, featured brilliant costumes, elegant Asian-style movements and an exceptionally beautiful version of the popular Singit, the courtship legend of a prince and princess.

The dancers of Northern Luzon displayed the region's swifter style of dress and nature-based scribbles of bird dolls. The *Basawan*, from the Ilogos tribe, evoked a hawk prying on chicken. In one especially lively sequence, joint-clad men circled the stage, spitting and stamping their feet as they skillfully played brass gongs.

The final portion of the program got off to a shaky start, with a bold display of village rituals in a theatrical song-and-dance slot that included mock struggles over daily chores. But two dances that featured balancing acts, the *Pandang* (a five-Gondar and *Bayanan*, and the popular *Thinking bamboo* dance, added enough energy and theatricality to give the centennial celebration a proper flourish. Even a closing, kitschy version of "See You in Manila Philippines," sung with Tourist Board-style enthusiasm, didn't put a damper on the

show.

The dancing company of the Escondido Center for the Arts is a well-known organization of the Philippine-American Society and Cultural Arts Troupe. The company is a well-known organization of the Philippine-American Society and Cultural Arts Troupe. The company is a well-known organization of the Philippine-American Society and Cultural Arts Troupe.

THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

30 YEARS OF PRIDE

DANCE REVIEW

Packed house helps PASACAT celebrate

By Eileen Sondak

There was a major celebration for the 30th anniversary of the Philippine-American Society and Cultural Arts Troupe (PASACAT) Saturday night at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido. The event was a celebration of the group's 30th anniversary, featuring a variety of traditional and contemporary Philippine dances. The program was a celebration of the group's 30th anniversary, featuring a variety of traditional and contemporary Philippine dances. The program was a celebration of the group's 30th anniversary, featuring a variety of traditional and contemporary Philippine dances.



The dancer in the foreground is performing a traditional Philippine dance. He is wearing a white shirt and a dark skirt, and is holding a long wooden staff. The background shows other dancers and the stage.

PASACAT Graces - Super Bowl XXXII

1998 marked the Philippine Centennial - a great milestone in Philippine history and for many involved Filipinos, a once-in-a-lifetime experience. For the PASACAT Philippine Performing Arts Company, they have a double dose of once-in-a-lifetime experiences as participants of the Super Bowl XXXII pre-game show on January 25, 1998 at Qualcomm Stadium.

“PASACAT is the first Philippine dance group to share the Philippine culture before an audience of 68,000 and perform for Super Bowl festivities” an exhilarated Joji Ramirez-Castro proclaims. PASACAT proudly represented Filipino's in a tribute to California's diverse ethnic population. Forty-two PASACAT dancers performed a collage of dances from Mindanao to live musical presentations by Grammy Award winning artists, the *Fifth Dimension* and *Lee Greenwood* who sang *Proud to Be American*.

An overwhelmed Michelle Alvarez, 17, a Senior student at Marian High School, was mesmerized by the attendance, "I forgot where I was dancing after seeing the cheering crowd."

James Jabinal, 18, a PASACAT veteran of 4 years, just returned from Marine boot camp training. During his leave, he joined PASACAT and found himself star-struck by alternative rock star Jewell.

Actor, John Stamos, of *Full House* fame, performed with the Beach Boys and drew screaming teens who called out "hi Uncle Jesse!" Joyelle Cabato, 18, managed to obtain his autograph and with a gleam in her eyes said, "he was so friendly and handsome!"

Each participant received a complimentary pass to the NFL Experience, a pre-game sweatshirt and a Super Bowl XXXII cap. But more than the tangible items, the participants walked away with the memory of being a part of Super Bowl XXXII and in 1998, will provide them with two “once-in-a-lifetime experiences.”



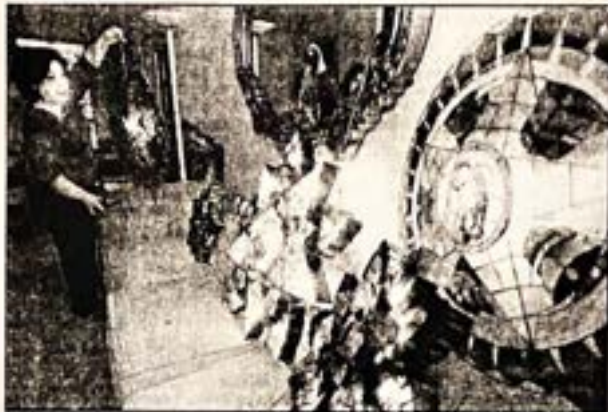
The *Bayanihan National Philippine Dance Company* celebrated their 45th Anniversary in 2002. Because of Joji Ramirez Castro's strong ties to Bayanihan, PASACAT was invited to perform with them at the *Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila*. It was a seamless performance and the Bayanihan alumni were impressed by PASACAT's artistry, skill and precision.

During the tour, eighteen dancers were transported in the Bayanihan van. They had the privilege of given workshops by Bayanihan and the *Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group*.

**"It is the pride of our culture.
It represents the fact that we are happy and loving families."**

DELFIN LABAO

Parols light the way to Philippine Christmas



CREDIT PASCUAL / Union Tribune

Getting ready: Anamaria Cabato, executive director of PASACAT Asian Pacific Arts Company, examines parols imported from the Philippines in preparation for the festival Saturday.

By Angela Lau, STAFF WRITER

Long past his childhood when colorful handmade, star-shaped Christmas lanterns were revered as delicate works of art, Delfin Labao now sees them as symbols of his cultural heritage.

"It is the pride of our culture," the 88-year-old Labao said as his daughter Anamaria Labao Cabato prepared for tomorrow's Philippine Parol Festival in San Diego.

"It represents the fact that we are happy and loving families," Labao said.

When the bamboo-framed lamps, known by Filipinos as parols, are hung outside local homes to welcome the arrival of Christmas, they also serve as reminders to younger American-born generations of their native culture, Labao said.

"We are competing with other cultures in this country," he said. "We've had problem after problem

Parol

A holiday tradition imported for the season

Continued from B-1

with the (younger generation's) behavior, attitude and beliefs. This will help them get to know the meaning of family better."

Parols are three-dimensional stars shaped by bamboo sticks and covered with sparkling garlands, paper or colorful seashells dyed in combinations of red, yellow, and green.

Derived from the Spanish word *luz*, which means a light or lamp, the lanterns will be on display tomorrow at St. Rita's School auditorium at Euclid Avenue and Churchward Street in Valencia Park.

The festival, from 1 to 5 p.m., will feature dances, parol making, tradi-

tional foods and games.

"When I visited the Philippines one Christmas, I remember how parols were proudly displayed in the front windows of homes," Anamaria Labao Cabato, organizer of the festival and executive director of a local Filipino dance group, PASACAT Asian Pacific Arts Company, said.

The star was chosen for the lantern's shape because it represents the Star of Bethlehem, Cabato said.

The lanterns come with tassels, which, according to folklore, were reminiscent of the tails of comets. Filipinos of old must have thought that the Star of Bethlehem was a comet, wrote author Maria Yotoko Choeengel in her book *PASKO! The Philippine Christmas*.

Traditionally, parols of various sizes were made of delicate paper glued onto frames. Made by families each Christmas, the candle-light lanterns hung in front of homes formed a lighted path that showed

the way to mass at dawn for farmers, Cabato said.

Today, paper is still used, although the lamps have to be repaired regularly because of wear and tear, Cabato said.

That's where seashells, picked along the Philippine shores, come to the rescue. Philippine manufacturers are dyeing the whitish shells into combinations of red, green and yellow and gluing them onto the frame. They are lined with blinking lights to create a deluxe version of the lamp, and are imported to San Diego by Filipino art stores, according to Cabato.

Local parol makers, such as Filipino-American artist Jose R. Morales Jr., who produces public art, also have created variations of the lantern by completely covering the frame with garlands, glitter bits, and by making parols into a top ornament for a Christmas tree.



**Ambassador of the Philippines
His Excellency Jose L. Cuisia graces
the 2011 Parol Festival**

PASACAT's first Parol Festival was held in 1997 at Bethune Elementary School in North Bay Terraces. It has since been held every December at St. Rita's School Auditorium, Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation and the Mingei Museum.

See PAROL on Page B-4