



MINDY BAUNDERS/retail photographer

Dennie Buot (above) helps a member of the group with a costume change. Other members of the group (at left) perform the Moslem Suite or "Singkil", the dance of royalty.



Island legend, history portrayed

By Carol Anahid Azizian
staff writer

FOR MEMBERS of the Philippine Dance Group of Detroit, every dance they perform tells a story.

"We try to portray the evolution of Philippine culture through dance, song and costumes," explained Denisse S. Buot of Southfield. She has been the group's choreographer for the past six years.

"In our own way, we preserve the culture and heritage of our native country and foster better relations in our second home," she added.

Members of the group, all natives of the Philippines, performed New Year's Day in the Rotunda area of the state capital. The show followed Gov. James J. Blanchard's inaugural ceremony.

The 20-member troupe presented three numbers — the Moslem Suite, Bamboo dance and a Spanish dance — representative of the major influences on and historic periods in Philippine culture.

The Moslem Suite or Singkil, originating from Lanao del Sur, Mindanao, is a dance of royalty. It represents the strong Islamic influence on the culture of the Philippine's southern islands.

"Arab missionaries came by way of India to the Philippines (in the 14th century)," Buot said. "Since then, the area has remained Moslem."

Buot, who gives her students history lessons during dance rehearsals, tries to capture this part of Philippine life through the classic dance Singkil.

ACCORDING TO LEGEND, Singkil originated on

Princess Gandangan's wedding day. As the princess was walking through the woods, the divatas (a nymph or fairy) caused an earthquake to occur.

"The spirits (divatas) were testing the princess," Buot said. "If she could maneuver her way through the cracks in the earth, then she and the prince would be meant for each other."

This is symbolically represented in the dance as dancers wearing brightly colored Muslim costumes weave their way through crisscrossed bamboo poles on the dance floor. Their partners clap the poles together to the beat of a Middle Eastern melody.

The Bamboo Dance or Tinkling is the most famous dance from the Philippines, Buot said. The lively dance symbolizes farmers chasing away a crane-like bird which eats rice crops.

Dancers jump in and out of crisscrossed bamboo poles, similar to the ones farmers use to scare the bird away.

Another dance, La Jota Monecadenla, reveals the Spanish influence on Philippine culture. That influence dates from 1521 when Ferdinand Magellan landed on Cebu, opening the way for Spanish colonization in 1565. Spain's rule lasted 333 years, ending with the Spanish-American war.

Buot, who was born and raised on Cebu, said the group's "models" are members of the noted Philippine Dance Company. The company, which is subsidized by the government of the island nation, has performed all over the world.

While a student in the Philippines, Buot tried out for the company. But she quickly abandoned her dreams of becoming a dancer for a career as a phys-

ical education and folk dance teacher.

"I COULDN'T PURSUE it (a career as a professional dancer) because my father was very strict and didn't want me to travel," she said.

In 1973, Buot moved to the United States with her husband and started a small dance troupe with Filipino nurses and doctors at Mount Carmel Hospital. Her sister-in-law was a doctor there.

"We performed at the hospital's Christmas festival and for parties. But the group was disbanded because many of the nurses and doctors were transferred to other hospitals."

Two years later, Buot's daughter, then a student at Mercy College, organized a dance troupe with other students from Mercy, University of Detroit and Wayne State.

Buot choreographed dances and made costumes for that troupe. As those students gradually left the group, others joined. Younger brothers and sisters of the college students got in on the act, and the troupe's membership increased from 10 to 20.

Melisa Almada, a veteran member of the troupe, said she joined because "it's important to promote our culture."

"I recently became a citizen of the United States. I realized that there's a lot of different ethnic people here, and it's important for each of them to identify where they came from, preserve their customs and incorporate them with American life."

The group will perform next month at the University of Michigan and University of Windsor for a Chinese New Year celebration.



MINDY BAUNDERS/retail photographer

The Bamboo or "Tinkling" dance is symbolic of farmers chasing away birds that eat the crops.



CONGRATULATIONS TO Millie Bennett, Longacre Elementary School principal, who recently was elected as vice president of the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association. We received numerous calls from Millie's friends and admirers reminding us of her honor. She has served on the state board of directors of the association for four years and also is a past president of the Oakland County Principals' Association. In 1979, she received the regional Outstanding Principal Award. Hats off, Millie.

SPEAKING OF REWARDS for a job well done, Farmington's Mike Hayes, a salesman for Bob Evans Farms Inc. recently won an all-expense paid trip to London for two as the top finisher in his division in the company's annual fall sales contest. A salesman in the Flint/Bay City area, he posted the largest sales volume in his division for Bob Evans Farms Sausage products during the 13-week contest. Sure must've been a lot of sausage.

SOCCER ALERT. You've got until Jan. 15 to sign up for the Farmington Soccer Club. Those interested register through the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation office on Eleven Mile and Orchard Lake Road. Current players will receive their registration cards through the mail.

TV CELEBRITIES will abound over at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College through April. Tickets to see the series of speakers are \$1 for students and \$3 for the general public. The lectures will begin at 8 p.m. in the Fine Arts Building. Among those to speak will be: Bob Kress, weatherman on Feb. 10; Erik Smith, reporter on March 10; Rich Fisher, anchorman on March 24 and Jim Herrington, speaker and analyst on April 13. The series will kick off with an appearance by Tom Locicero, an Emmy Award winning producer, writer and director. He will speak on Jan. 17.

A THEATER PARTY is scheduled by the Solo Flight Singles for Jan. 15 to see South Pacific, starring Mimi Gaynor and Rossano Brazzi. A live theater organ overture and intermission concert is included in the program. Solo Flight Singles will meet in the Redford Theater Lobby, Lahser and Grand River at 7 p.m. Tickets at the door are \$2. On Jan. 18 the singles group will meet at 8 p.m. in Temple Beth El, 7400 Telegraph at 14 Mile, to see hypnotist Jack Weiner. He will aid audiences in remembering such occasions as your first date, graduations and will talk about how to stop smoking and control your weight. Singles over 35 years

are invited. Cost is \$3 for members and \$5 for guests.

TODD KAMSTRA knows his soccer. The Farmington resident recently was named the most valuable player on the Hope College team. He shared the honor with colleague Al Crothers from Wheaton, Ill. Congratulations Todd, keep up the good work.

THESPIAN ALERT. The Actors Alliance Theatre Company is holding auditions for Marat/Sade by Peter Weiss, which is scheduled to open on March 4. Men and women from 12 to 92 are needed for this large cast show. The auditions will be Jan. 15 at 2:30 p.m. and Jan. 16 at 1 p.m. Actors will be asked to read from the script and submit a picture and resume. To arrange an appointment for an audition call Helen Lanese or Jeff Nahan at 642-1326, from 2-5 p.m.

SOME REALLY INTERESTING courses are being offered for those extra-talented students, from kindergarten through 12th grade over at the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College. Persons interested should call the campus at 471-7595 or 471-7567. The classes will begin at the end of January. Among the offerings are cartooning, computer programming, mime and clowning, building your own radio, extending your mathematical world, exploring the world of TV and radio advertising, space adventure, speed reading and intermediate theater. Courses are designed to enrich the school experiences of students who wish to pursue their intellectual and creative talents.

IF YOU'RE UNABLE TO MAKE IT to OCC, you can always head on over to the Gibson School for the Gifted which also is offering classes for persons 4 through 13 years old. These classes will start on Feb. 28. Among the classes they offer are Dungeons and Dragons, astronomy, puppetry, cooking, exploring the sciences, math, art and computers. Information may be obtained by calling Pamela Baker at 349-8389.

APPLICATIONS ARE BEING accepted for Michigan's Outstanding Young American state competition for 1983. Competition will be at the Plymouth Hilton on June 10, 11 and 12. Applications can be garnished by writing to Outstanding Young American Inc. P.O. Box 8333, Pensacola, Florida 32503. A self-addressed stamped envelope should be included with the written request. The winner of the state competition will be awarded a \$1,000 cash award and a college scholarship.

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