**Nature and Background of Philippine Folk Dance**

The “Pearl of the Orient” boasts of a variety of Philippine folk dances. The Filipinos pay tributes and owe itself to cultural heritage. One way of showing such love and respect for the country gave birth to the development of Philippine ethnic folk dances. And there are several of these; namely, Binasuan, Sublian, Itik-itik, Tinikling, Maglalatik, Cariñosa etc.

Binasuan is a native dance of Pangasinan. This dance literally means “dancing with glasses.” The steps are executed with glasses filled with rice wine balanced on the head and the hands of the dancers. Danced to show balance and to reflect rural gaiety, Binasuan is performed usually in wedding ceremonies and occasions in the barangay. Sublian owes its meaning to native words “subsub” meaning to fall with the head and “bali” or broken. This meaning is reflected in the dance steps. The dancers move feebly and tortuously as if without vigor. This dance, however, traces its roots to Batangas where it was originally played as a ritual dance which evolved into a symbol of religious tradition performed during town fiestas. Itik-Itik is one of the Philippine folk dances which have an interesting origin. According to stories, a Filipina maiden-dancer of Surigao del Norte was asked to perform a native dance in one special occasion. She started to improvise new steps and imitate the courtship movements of a local species of duck known as “itik.” The spectators began to imitate her and that is how the dance came to be.

Tinikling is another Philippine folk dance that is inspired by an endemic bird called “tikling.” The steps of this dance are an imitation of the movements of a “tikling” bird that hops and escapes the traps set by hunters. Moving with poise and grace, the dancers skip in-between two bamboo poles that are held to pound rhythmically against each other. This dance is a specialty of Leyte.

Maglalatik is danced to mimic the early battle against Christians and Moros to win coconut meat or “latik” during the time of Spanish colonization. This is also performed to pay homage to the townsaint of Biñan, Laguna –San Isidro Labrador. This dance is divided into four parts: baligtaran, palipasan,paseo and escaramusa. This is performed by all-male dancers who wear blue pants to represent theChristians and red pant for the Moros. All dancers, however, have coconut shells mounted on their bodyparts.These aforementioned Philippine folk dances are ethnic in nature and origin. On the other hand,there are several Philippine folk dances that were influenced by some Western countries as some of these had colonized Philippines in the past. One such country is Spain. Some of the so-called “influenced” Philippine folk dances are the following: Pandango sa Ilaw, Cariñosa, Balitao and Rigodon.

To conclude, these folk dances whether ethnic in origin or not reflect the lively culture that the Filipinos have. These dances may be diverse but through these cultural forms, the Filipinos are unified and proud by way of having Philippine folk dances that are truly one of the bests in the world.

**Origin of Philippine Folk Dance**

According to Philippine legend, the first man and the first woman went up to the hill to make their first home. They begot many children and later became the ancestor of the diverse tribes.

Several beliefs became their way of life. when death struck, when lightning flashed in the sky, when thunder rumbled, the tribes were struck with fear. They thought that the gods were angry. To placate their deities, they offered sacrificial rites by way of fire and smoke in the belief that the smoke from fires they kind led their invocation heavenward.

When illness and pestilence befell the tribes, the people waited and chanted and dance long the night, so that the evil spell might be broken. When the earth caked from drought, they performed a dance of protiation so that the divine entities might take pity on them and send rain to their parched fields. And when the rains came and drenched the soil to assure a bountiful harvest, these children of the gods danced in the moonlight in joy and thanksgiving.

In the acts of imploring, concilliating and thanks to the gods, the people of these islands created dance to live forever in themselves, in their children and their children's children.

**Basic Steps inherent to Folk dance:**

The dance steps listed below are the fundamental or basic steps most commonly used in Philippine folk dances.

*CROSS STEP*

Music: ¾ time. Counts 1, 2, 3.

Step R (L) foot in second position (ct. 1), step or slide L

(R) foot sideward right (left) across the R (L) in front (cts. 2, 3).

Put the weight on the L (R) foot at the end of the slide on the third

count.

*BLEKING STEP*

Music: 2/4 time. Counts 1,2.

(1) Place the R (or L) heel in fourth in front (ct. 1), step R (L) close to L (R) foot in first position (ct. 2), or

(2) Place the R (L) heel in fourth in front (ct. 1), with a jump, reverse the position of the feet (ct. 2), that is, placing the L (R) heel in front and the R (L) in position taking the weight of the body.

*CHANGE STEP, TWO-STEP OR CATCH STEP.*

Music: 2/4 time. Counts 1, 2, or 1 and 2

Step R (L) foot forward (fourth in front) (ct. 1), step L (R) close to R (L) foot in third in rear or in first position (ct. and), step R (L) foot quickly in fourth in front (ct. 2).

This may be executed in any direction.

*CLOSE STEP*

Music: 2/4 time. Counts 1, 2.

(1) Step R (L) foot in fourth in front (ct. 1), close L (R) to R (L) foot in third in rear or in first position (ct. 2). This may be executed in any direction.

(2) Step R (L) foot in fourth in front (cts, 1, 2), close L (R) to R (L) foot third in rear or in first position (ct. 3). This may be executed in any direction.

(3) Step R (L) foot in fourth in front (ct. 1), close L (R) to R (L) foot third in rear or in first position (cts. 2, 3). This may be executed in any direction.

*CUT STEP*

Music: 2/4 time. Counts 1, 2.

Raise R (L) foot in fourth in front in preparation. Cut the L (R) backward with the R (L) foot, thus displacing it at the same time taking the weight of the body (ct. 1). This may be done forward and backward, diagonally forward and backward, and sideward right and

left. Take one cut for every count.

## Elements of Movements in Space

CENTERING: This is fundamental to your ability to dance well. This is maintaining a sense of your own body center that holds you together as you move. It allows you to move gracefully and freely.

GRAVITY: This is the force that holds you to the earth. It is a force you have to work with because it constantly inhibits movement.

BALANCE: Balance is concerned with more than balancing on one leg. Your aim is to achieve and constantly maintain an inner balance of the whole body.

POSTURE: To achieve this element you need to change your perception of your body, there is often a wide discrepancy between what feels right and what looks right.

GESTURE: Gesture involves using the body as an expressive instrument to communicate feelings and ideas in patterns of movement.

RHYTHM: Finding rhythm is largely a matter of paying attention. It is something everybody has, though, some people are not as aware or sensitive to it.

MOVING in SPACE: You need to be as aware of the space around you as a cat. You have to move with care and awareness, gauging the space.

BREATHING: Breathing is crucial to dance. Not only does it bring oxygen to the body but it also gives your movements fluency and harmony.