

“Voyadores” Dance Notation in the Promotion of Nagueño Culture

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Abstract –Technological advances pose a greater risk in the preservation of local culture where it gives a connection to the past in the identification of customs and traditions, social values, and beliefs. This is a qualitative study which analyzed dance performance and dance movement aligned in the preservation of cultural context. Respondents were purposively selected from known choreographers of the “voyadores” street dance during the yearly celebration of the Bicolandia’s patroness for two years. Delphi techniques like congregating questions among experts were used to gather data. Results revealed that dance performance has displayed distinct feature and movement characteristics that manifest regional beliefs, customs, and traditions through exquisite body language that displayed veneration, protection, and respect. It was further clarified that part of the dance creation process is the comprehensive planning with the school and LGU tourism as one of the In-charge of the event, distinct movements’ organization like movements identification commonly expressed like walking in a procession, clapping, chaining arm among men, compressed formation, crawling on top of the shoulder and heads of “voyadores”, storyline conceptualization, and capacitating dancers like enjoining them for creative concepts making voyadores nuances came into a dance pattern. Making “Voyadores” performance as a theme for literary and other performance art in school and LGU enhanced the promotion of Nagueño Culture. Also, dance notation intensifies the preservation of “voyadores” dance in the Region by replicating local performances utilizing notated manuscripts thus local culture is appraised and noted every time an audience observed “voyadores” dance performance. Likewise, the study can explore the interface meeting of dance notation manuscripts with the developed software for movement re-construction.

Keywords –Creation, Ethnography, Dance performance, Movement recording

INTRODUCTION

Dances enact a different form of historical productivity which reflects cultural heritage where portrays memory, history, and everyday practice through song, stylized gestures, and graceful images [1]. Its movement creation is grounded from the socio-political, economic, and environment of an individual in society. Although some agreed that dance was no longer conceived as performance but rather a way to de-stress from rigors of daily life [2] and brings out a therapeutic effect.

Dance making can involve and collaborate with other artists in integrating music, theatrical elements, multimedia, acrobatics, texts, storytelling, and other elements in a dance [3]. The process is useless if dance notation was not rightfully executed to preserve it. In the present generation, they would love to perform western-influenced like hip-hop dances, and creating body language in time to a piece of popular music for these can be easily accessed via YouTube. Even school events are well-themed westerns due to easy access to varied digital platforms. With this, expressions for the love of local culture has a diminishing effect and this is not well recognized by the new generation. Preservation of culture is at risk to be forgotten by the younger generation. The challenge of archiving local dance performance to uphold and propagate it is now put on hold. In the article XIV of the Philippine constitution, section 14 stated that the state shall foster the preservation, enrichment, and dynamic evolution of Filipino national culture, based on the principle of unity in diversity in a climate of free, artistic and intellectual expression [4].

The Philippines has a long history of Spanish colonization and the most lasting and most influential legacy left from the colonizers was Christianity [5]. The country is noted for talent producing individuals that acclaimed international awards in terms of theater, dance, and art. Numerous talented individuals are continuously replicating around.

The biggest and famous event in the country is in Bicolandia where the annual celebration of the feast of

our Lady of Peñafrancia takes place in the heart of Bicol-Naga City as it remains the pilgrimage center [6]-[7]. The celebration starts from the first day of novena offering as the image was translated from Basilica shrine to Cathedral. The procession is termed as "traslacion" where hundreds of male devotees (voyadores) carried the image and the highlight is the fluvial procession in the Naga River as it becomes the mark of a voyage back to the shrine (Basilica). This part was captured by the choreographers as they re-enact the scenario through street dance competition as the local government unit sponsored related activities that promote the intensification of the beliefs, traditions, and customs of Bicolanos.

This "voyadores" performance has been repeatedly performed by the different contingent from the schools, private organizations, and civic organizations in the municipality. Despite this annual celebration, no one ever initiated to notate the dance steps and creativity. A notation is useful for composing a dance as well as performing it [8]. Dance notation is a tool to preserve its cultural manifestation as well as incorporating technology in it making it compelling to be adapted by the young generation today.

The study is a stepping ladder in making "Voyadores" dance performance known to all globally making it a gateway to attract investors to live in Naga City. With the strong foundation of tourism goal, this could bring improvement on how Bicolanos live life to the fullest with a protected and cared culture.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is focused on the evaluation of cultural framing of the dance behaviors in the performance of "Voyadores" Street Dance. Specifically, it sought to determine the cultural manifestation in the "Voyadores" Street Dance performance, identify the dance creation process, and outline the idea of aligning the dance performance into the school policy and local government unit tourism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a qualitative study where it utilized purposive sampling for it enjoined the 10 dance experts within the City and Camarines Sur to engage in the study. Five among the ten experts are doctorate holders by which physical education as a specialized area employed in government and private institutions and with 12 to 15 years of teaching experience on their expertise. While six of them are Masteral Degree holders with physical education and music as

specialization presently working in private, government and one has her fitness organization in the City and with 10 to 13 years of teaching their specialized field. These experts have spent years of doing choreographic endeavors of various festivals in the region, have worked as cultural coordinators at the same time academically aligned to their passion. The Delphi Technique is part of the research technique that is also known as an 'interactive survey', which involves dialogue with the respondents [9]. The researcher has requested the experts' permission to be engaged in the study and take part to answer some questions in a schedule that is suited to them. They were informed that their dance groups will be observed during their performance as part of this study. A letter request was sent to the Department of Education (MAPEH), and some private schools in the City considered as top 5 "voyadores" street dance performers year 2019 informing them that their choreographers were invited to be engaged in the study.

Questionnaires were validated by the three experts in the field. They gave their opinion about whether the question is essential, useful, or irrelevant to measuring the construct under study. A revision was conducted to improve rational validity. Pilot testing and initial validation among intended respondents were conducted. Survey questions were composed of cultural manifestation, creation processes, and alignment of the performance

Direct observation among the respondents was conducted to cross-validate the data gathered from the questionnaires in the agreed time and place one at a time (Delphi). A thematic approach was employed as a basis for the interpretation of data gathered. The study has adopted the six-phase guide framework (Braun & Clarke's, 2006) in data analysis [10] such as becoming familiar with the data, generation of initial codes, search for themes, review, define and write up.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

"Voyadores" street dance performance year 2019 was sponsored and organized by the Local Government Unit of Naga City, Camarines Sur, Philippines. Based on the direct observation and data gathered from the experts, the following were evaluated:

Cultural Manifestation

When Spanish missionaries penetrated the islands of Luzon, many were evangelized and

baptized [11]. This was the beginning of the act of religious worship practices like street processions, fluvial processions, and even novena recitations. The researcher has summarized the themes as discussed by the respondents during the interview;

Respondents' Common Answers for Cultural Manifestation of Dance Movements:

Avenue for artistic movement expression out of belief, customs & traditions.

Portraying the people's way of life through movements, costumes inherent to their place of origin.

Avenue for expressive gestures of regional belief, customs and traditions.

Festival in Naga City reflects the history of colonization under the Spanish and Americans and most significantly the continuous cultural adaptation by the so-called folk-Catholicism in this largely Roman Catholic nation [12]. This not merely reflects history and religion but it harnessed contemporary culture flows that generate and strengthen the sense of both normative and spontaneous community. There were two distinctive reasons for this event such as the religious practice of local people and performativity/competitive events like "voyadores" street dance as reflected in table 1. The festival served as an avenue for artistic movement expression and these movements were the basis of the people's beliefs, customs, and traditions. Another portrayal of people's way of life can be observed in the costumes, gestures, and body language so it reflects regional aspirations.

Dance Movements Creation Process

The movement has a particular genre it tried to display such as tribal, contemporary, and folkloric. Choreographers are the ones who create, organize the dance theme, and the ones who plan the elements to perform as well as the elements of music into it. Below is the table that presents processes in dance creation employed by the respondents;

Respondents' Common Answers for Dance Movement Creation Process:

Plan out for the list of movement or body expression which can be turned out into artistic movement.

Request for the full support of the admin from planning, implementation, to production.

Initiate for the dancers' selection suited for the "voyadores" performance.

Think of a storyline that is in accord with the culture, beliefs, & traditions of people of the place.

Application of dance organization, processes/skills, a learning process, pre-performance process/skills.

Gather dancers for a session & establish group dynamics & team building before the dance session.

Conceptualizing movements are part of the so-called choreographic cognition which refers to the cognitive and mental processes involved in constructing and refining movement material to create a work of art [13]. Presented in table 2 are the processes of dance creation where at first planning is crucial. Identification of the most repetitive movement was then given metaphorical interpretations as well as the genre a choreographer wanted to explore. Dance production entails collaborative endeavor, not just the choreographer itself but cooperation and support of administration, or organization. Conceptualization of materials, such as costumes, props, and related effects in the dance production served as a forceful weight for an impact in the finalization of production which needs to include in the budgetary plan.

Based on the direct observation, "voyadores" performances do not demand physical training in flexibility and techniques rather it performed all-natural movements as dancers depict the peoples' beliefs and traditions through dance. The second observation was dance performance has incorporated a story relative to the religious beliefs, spirituality, and socio-economic conditions.

Once the planned production has incorporated the storyline, movement/skills organizations were employed in preparation for the final launching of the performance. Direct supervision of "voyadores" performance entails the personal devotion of the choreographer to the belief and respect to the Patroness of Bicolandia. With their love for choreography, dancers were called for a session for team building and group dynamics to intensify camaraderie as it requires teamwork in the dance production.

Aligning a Dance Performance

Reflected in table 3 were the themes in aligning a "voyadores" dance performance. The identified event in Naga City subjected to the choreographic process is "Kamundagan" where it traced and remembered the historical evolution of Naga itself. Kamundagan is a Bicol term that simply means nativity- a month-long activity during December in celebration of the advent season. "Voyadores" festival served as an

entertainment form to attract investors and tourists that can contribute to the development of tourism making it a tool in acquiring quality living.

A choreographed piece of dance served as a masterpiece among artists. This considered as a display of creative and integrative leadership as they navigate, solicit, and incorporate the input of others to push through the totality of dance production [14]. It marked the most contribution of a choreographer to express non-verbal interpretation, creating imagery and vitality in physical performance. This spirituality drives Nagueño to live healthier and action that leads to an advocate to love the Naga River [15]. Performance art can be enhanced by producing presentations that show up local creative work that served as a throwback for the young generation to understand their roots. This theme collided with the city program SMILES which symbolizes Naga's goal in strengthening its position as a fast-growing progressive City in Bicol and in Southern Luzon. Each letter stands for S – see Naga (tourism), M – meet in Naga (meetings & conventions), I – invest in Naga (business friendliness & promotion), L-live in Naga (livable City/community as home), E- experience Naga (good governance & quality public service), and S – study in Naga (center of education in Bicol Region). With this project, it was foresighted that Naga City would be more captivating to attract more people to stay and live in the place.

Respondents' Common Answers for Aligning Dance Performance

Kamundagan celebration

Partnership & collaboration with the LGU tourism for dance showcase & production.

Voyadores festival is a form of entertainment that attracts foreign & domestic tourist to visit a place (Naga) eventually leading to the elevation of the Nagueño's quality of life.

Make voyadores performance a major topic for literary, visual & performing art.

Result of the study can be implemented in the PE classes in teaching dance.

Register work of art or have it copyright or patent.

Launching of literary [16], visual and performing art that includes "Voyadores" performance as a major theme is another way of aligning onto policy or guidelines for any cultural presentation. The result of the study can be implemented in PE classes' in particular teaching rhythm and dance that serve as an instructional tool. Likewise, intensification of dance

research and make creative work be copyright is the last data gathered from the experts. Most of the choreographers wanted to make their movement-creation be protected not to be imitated by anyone. Documentation of these creative works through a notation inspired by research would serve as a way to protect it from imitation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Data gathered revealed that dance performance of varied medium denotes cultural adaptation from one generation to the next generation. It continuously replicating with varying degrees of physical prowess based on the choreographers' physical preparation as well as the dancers themselves. The study has identified the main feature of the performance.

Based on the findings, "voyadores" choreographers are looking for full support of the school administration or local government unit for the sustainability of cultural adaptation. There is a need for a collaborative endeavor to enhance local performance art by inclusion in the regional curricula and the Local Government Unit (LGU) tourism policy. "Voyadores" performance should be notated to establish its perpetual and distinct characteristics. A distinct character should be established on its movements not just in the props and costumes. Once notated, an adaptation of its distinct characteristics could enhance the promotion of Nagueño Culture. Instructional material will be the output of notation as well as the integration of technology in the promotion and marketing of its uniqueness and features. It is recommended further, that a follow-up study focusing on the notation should be initiated.

The study has enjoined a limited sample size of experts wherein this cultural expression was initiated by the entire region. The larger sample size would have required for a result that can be well generalized. It is recommended that a further study be conducted using a bigger sample size with dancers to validate the initial study. The main focus of this research is the cultural framing, creation process, and placing this cultural endeavor in a proper perspective.

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