

Komedya: St. Denis' Philippine Theater in the US

Authors : Nenita Pambid Domingo

Abstract : The komedya otherwise known as moro-moro or pretending to be Moors, is a traditional Filipino play in the vernacular adapted from the Spanish comedia de capa y espada. It was used by Spanish colonizers in the Philippines, circa 1766 to evangelize and strengthen the faith of Indios or Filipino natives to Christianity. Unlike the Moros y Cristianos festival held all over Spain celebrating the Reconquista from the 8th to the 15th century, the Philippine Moro-Moro or Komedya is a romance between a Muslim and a Christian and the battles between Christians and Moros, where the Moros are always defeated and the Muslim prince is converted to the Christian faith and marries the Christian princess at the end of the play. For over 200 years, the komedya has been part of the Filipinos' life and has been dubbed by some Philippine scholars as the Philippine's national theater. Until now postings of performances in different parts of the Philippines in different Philippine languages are uploaded at youtube. In the US, "San Dionisio sa America (SDA)," an organization of natives from Barrio San Dionisio, Parañaque, Philippines has been performing the komedya for the past 16 years during their town's fiesta, in honor of the barrio's patron saints St Denis of Paris, France and Saint Joseph whom the devotees fondly call "Tata Dune" and "Tata Hosep". The komedya performed in the US is infused with modern elements in the production and content, but retain the basic form in verse and the stylized war dance, marches, and singsong delivery of lines. Most of the Celebras or town fiestas and komedya performances are held at The Barnsdall Art Park and Gallery Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles. The presentation will focus on the linguistic and content analysis of the Tagalog verses in the 2010 komedya entitled Mga Prinsesa ng Cordova (The Princesses of Cordova) publicized as a modern komedya. The presentation will also touch on the healing function of the language and performance that is part of the town's religious festivities. It will also look into the aesthetics of the production, audience reception, participation of the sponsors, producers called Hermana/Hermano Mayor, the performers who are a mix of Filipinos from the Philippines and Filipino-Americans who are starting to lose the Tagalog language and the non-Filipino participants, as well as the general audience who are from Parañaque and those not from Parañaque, who come to witness the event and enjoy the festivities.

Keywords : devotion, diaspora nationalism, komedya, st. denis of Paris, France, traditional Philippine theater

Conference Title : ICLLL 2018 : International Conference on Languages, Literature and Linguistics

Conference Location : Vienna, Austria

Conference Dates : June 14-15, 2018