

THEATER

Revival of the Filipino musical

The "sarsuela," a popular form of entertainment during the Spanish era in the Philippines and which had gained a distinct Filipino flavor, is currently enjoying a renaissance.

The sarsuela (Filipino for "zarzuela"), a kind of play interspersed with songs and dances, differs from the opera in that it is heavy with dialogue. The songs take up or fill in some parts of the story. Its form corresponds more or less to the operetta or the Broadway musical.

When the sarsuela was introduced here in the early part of the 19th century, it had a very limited audience. By the end of the 19th century, Filipino composers and writers were already turning out sarsuelas in Tagalog, the main basis of the Philippine national language. The most prolific among them, and who in fact has been called the Father of Filipino drama, was Severino Reyes, better known by his pseudonym of Lola Basayang.

Filipino audiences whose tastes had been confined to the moro-moro (a morality play) found the sarsuela, with its catchy songs and varied plot, much more entertaining. In time, no town fiesta was complete without the sarsuela to highlight the celebrations. And the sarsuela became a distinct Filipino theater form, in both theme and treatment.

The sarsuela remained popular up to the early 1930s. After that, it sank gradually into oblivion, a casualty perhaps of the socio-technological revolution.

In 1971, recognizing the growing trend to draw from Filipino cultural heritage, a group of prominent businessmen and civic leaders formed the



Scene from 'Ang Prinsesa,' presented last Sunday at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Zarzuela Foundation of the Philippines. It is a non-stock, non-profit corporation concerned with reviving interest in and appreciation for the zarzuela.

For its initial project, the Zarzuela Foundation produced, jointly with Pacifica Cultural Productions, Inc., the celebrated sarsuela "Walang Sugat," by Severino Reyes and Professor Fulgencio Tolentino. The year it was written (1907) Walang Sugat played before huge crowds in more than a hundred performances throughout Luzon and the Visayas. Last year—or 65 years later—a gala premiere marked its revival, at the three-year-old Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) on Roxas Boulevard. Since then, Walang Sugat has had a long series of presentations at the CCP, the Rizal Park and the country's big au-

ditoriums.

Another sarsuela masterpiece, "Ana Maria," also by Severino Reyes with music by Antonio J. Molina, was presented last Wednesday and Thursday at the Little Theater of the Cultural Center. "Ana Maria," a two-act drama which depicts marriage, Filipino style, was first presented in 1919 to a fully-packed house in old Manila's Zorilla Theater. As revived by the UP College of Music Voice Department and the Zarzuela Foundation, Ana Maria includes a pintakasi (cock-fight) scene complete with cries of "Sa pula! Sa Puti!"

"Ang Prinsesa," a munting sarsuela written by Palanca Award-winner Julian Dacanay Jr. and composed by Dean Lucrecia Kasilag was presented for the first time last Sunday at the Little Theater of the CCP. Ang

Prinsesa (The Princess) revolves around the question of Muslim-Christian unity. Delaneta, the Muslim princess represents confused and wounded youth finding its way from a world of conflict to one of peace and harmony in the new Philippine society.

The one-act munting sarsuela was commissioned by the CCP Workshops in Music Education. It was produced by the Workshop in Operetta and Sarsuela Writing and Production, one of four simultaneous workshops sponsored by the CCP in an effort to develop relevant materials for Philippine music education programs. Last Sunday's presentation, which had as its main feature, "Ang Prinsesa," was the culminating activity of the Music Education Workshop '73.

BOOKS

Something of the occult

THE MORNING OF THE MAGICIANS
By Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier
Translated from the French by Rollo Myers
A Mayflower paperback

This book was, and is, a bestseller. It was previously published in England as *The Dawn of Magic*.

This book is like a volume that contains three parts. Each separate part has something different to say. The first says that our earth was once inhabited by super-intelligent creatures who came from other planets. They came here by flying space ships; then after a very long reign they mysteriously vanished—probably because of a nuclear war.

The second is a strange and frightening account of Germany during the Nazi period. The reader who is familiar with the writings of the Theosophical Society such as the books of Geoffrey Hodson, will find similarities in the beliefs of Hitler and the "prophet" Hans Horbiger. This is not surprising, as the Theosophists, the Nazis, and other occult groups have said that

their theories are derived from ancient sources and from occult mythology.

In the Nazi theory there were benevolent giants who inhabited the earth before the humans. The moon fell down from the sky three times and in the 1930's the moon was going to fall again. The Aryan race was the only people that would survive, there was going to be an age of fire and ice, and the Nazis were entrusted with the task of breeding a new kind of human being.

Its third section is about how we should develop the science of parapsychology.

This book says that modern man is trying to get where ancient men (their survivors, the so-called primitive peoples) now are, with their knowledge of magic: but the difference is that modern man is employing the machine. The authors give the example of the analogic computer which solves problems. Since this book was first published, the taking of mind-bending drugs, to expand the consciousness, has become popular. The two authors perhaps anticipated this trend.

The two authors tell their readers that their material has not been well organized, neither are they sure that everything that they report is true, and all they want to do is to stimulate further research along the lines that they have been going. This is what saves the book: their attitude of not taking themselves too seriously.

However, one cannot deny that this book is fascinating. It fires the imagination. Creative artists find it exciting (For example: it offers the idea

that man did not really originate on this planet. That we are now perfecting our flying machines in readiness for the time when we can go back to where we came from.)

After a first reading, the mind reels from the impact, similar to a first contact with one of those wild theosophical books; the writers are so convincing. No doubt, stories and essays could be inspired by such ideas—as they have been, take for example, Henry Miller. But later, after the hypnotic prose has begun to wear off, one begins to question.

One goes to other sources to compare them with what the theosophists and other magicians say. The giants are mentioned in the Old Testament. There is more explanation in "The Hidden Knowledge: Personal from Herbert Armstrong," Plain Truth, March 1973. In this article and others Armstrong explains why it is that certain places in the earth look as if there had been a terrible war. "Originally this world was populated with angels—not humans. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth' (Genesis 1:1).

"The Hebrew words in which Moses originally wrote that sentence imply a perfect creation—not one in chaos and confusion, as described in the second verse. Many scriptures in other parts of the Bible reveal great world-shaking events that occurred between the time of the first and second verses of Genesis one."

The author continues: "There was worldwide peace on earth for sometime after the earth was first created,

because the government of God was being administered here then. For how long a duration is not revealed. It could have been millions of years. In any event it lasted until about 6,000 years ago." He mentions the archangel who was appointed to administer God's government over the earth, and quotes Isaiah 14:12-15 to tell what happened: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"

"This super archangel who became Satan," continues the author, "led one-third of all the angels—the whole earth's population—in his war of aggression.... As a result of this colossal mutiny... a physical destruction put this whole earth into chaos and darkness."

Here is the reason why traces of a war can be seen.

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." (Genesis 1:2)

What happened next is described in Psalm 104:30 "thou renewest the face of the earth."

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3).

The authors of *The Morning of the Magicians* say that the earth is in its quaternary period. The next catastrophe to happen to the world, they say, will be the moon (the present moon is the fourth to have been attracted to the earth, the previous three having blown up in the long history of this planet earth) crashing into the earth and blowing it to kingdom come.

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