The Bayanihan story spans forty-three years of performances all over the world. It had its early roots in the Filipiniana Folk Music and Dance Committee of the Philippine Women's University (PWU). But it was not until 1957 that the PWU Bayanihan Folk Arts Center and its performing arm, the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company were founded by Dr. Helena Z Benitez to pursue the following objectives: to conduct researches in ethnic rites, tribal folklore and regional folk ways; to collect indigenous art forms as expressed in music, dance, literature, arts and crafts; to distill and transform these cultural traditions into theatrical presentations; and to promote international understanding through cultural exchange and performances abroad.

The company takes its name from the ancient Filipino tradition of Bayanihan, which signifies working together for the common good. It is this spirit of togetherness that bonded parents, teachers, researchers, technicians, dancers and musicians, working as one in a common effort to achieve the objectives of the company.

As a civic response to a government appeal for a cultural program for the country’s participation in the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair, Bayanihan mounted a production called “Glimpses of Philippine Culture through Music and Dance”, which proved to be “the sensation of the Fair”. It was featured in Ed Sullivan’s TV program on the highlights of the Fair and beamed coast-to-coast in the United States.

A year later the noted impresario Sol Hurok signed up Bayanihan for his annual International Dance Festival. Opening at the Winter Garden Theater on October 13, 1959, Bayanihan's Broadway debut was accorded unanimous critical acclaim by New York critics - a feat which earned the Company the affectionate title “Cinderella of Dance Theater.”

Critics were particularly impressed by the dancers' skill, grace, and joie de vivre as well as by the Company's success in the transference of indigenous dance and music traditions from their ancient origins in the countryside to the confines of the stage without sacrificing authenticity.

Said Walter Terry of the *New York Herald Tribune*: “Bayanihan is one of the newest examples of an ethnic dance culture which has gone beyond simple preservation (important as that is), and into creative growth.”

In a second review, he lavished praise on “the genius of Lucrecia Reyes Urtula, the choreographer, who ranks with Russia's Igor Moiseyev, Mexico's Amalia Hernandez and our own Agnes de Mille in the brilliant translating of ethnic dance forms into theatrical terms. While preserving authenticity of step and of regional colors, Mrs. Urtula has devised designs of incredible originality, visual beauty and excitement.

Initial success in Brussels and Broadway paved the way for numerous invitations from top impresarios of the world. From 1958 to date Bayanihan has mounted 15 international tours and over a hundred brief tours to international events and festivals covering 55 countries on 5 continents.

The first Filipino group to perform on Broadway, Bayanihan also has the distinction of being the first non-American dance company to take to the stage at New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, as well as the first Philippine cultural group to perform in Russia, the People’s Republic of China and throughout South America.
As official Philippine representative at the first CIOFF World Folkloriada held in the Netherlands in 1996, Bayanihan was one of the top five performing arts groups chosen from among 70 national groups to give repeat performances at the close of the festival. In 1998 the Bayanihan embarked on a centennial tour of Europe commencing at the Lisboa World Expo, followed by performances in Monaco, Germany, France, Madrid and in 16 cities of the autonomous region of Galicia in Northwestern Spain.

Their most recent international conquest was the 54th Almond in Blossom festival and 44th International Folk Festival in Sicily, Italy last February 1 - 7, 1999. They won 1st prize in the traditional costumes category and the only Asian country that made it to the top four winners among 40 participating countries.

Other significant accolades include the Ramon Magsaysay Award for International Understanding which Bayanihan received in 1965; the Theatre des Nations Award (folk dance category) given in Paris in 1960; as well as the Program for Asian Projects (PAP) grant awarded twice to Bayanihan (1987, 1989) by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund/Ramon Magsaysay Foundation for the Company’s projects “Peace and Unity among ASEAN Nations through Dance and Music.”

A multi-awarded company, nationally and internationally, Bayanihan has awakened a new pride among Filipinos in their cultural heritage; preserved and added a new dimension to the country’s dance tradition, and has built for the country a rich reserve of international goodwill.

Perhaps the most rewarding among its achievements is the fact that Bayanihan’s example encouraged the growth of numerous folk dance companies in the country, some of which have been organized by former Bayanihan dancers. Beyond the Philippines, the company has also inspired other countries to exploit their own folk material for international presentation. Among these is Mexico, whose folkloric ballet group formed after Bayanihan’s first performance there now gives the company lively competition.

In 2000 by an act of Congress Bayanihan was officially designated the National Folk Dance Company of the Philippines. Bayanihan continues to strive for artistic excellence and creative innovation.

Following another heralded Coast-to-Coast American tour in 2001, recent activities have included performances in Spain, England and Holland in 2004, and performances at the Universal Forum on Culture in Barcelona and a gala engagement at the Hotel de Paris in Monte-Carlo. In August 2004 the company participated in the Third World Folkloriada in Budapest, Hungary, and was selected by the city of Athens to perform at the Olympic’s Cultural Olympiad.

**DR. HELENA Z BENITEZ**

**Founder**

Dr. Helena Z Benitez, one of the most remarkable women of the Philippines, is one of the continuing motivating forces behind the Bayanihan Philippine National Dance Company. She originally provided Bayanihan with an institutional base in her Philippine Women’s University, the First University in Asia founded by the Asians, where Bayanihan started to gain renown while perfecting its craft and repertoire in the 1950s. In the half century since then, and after Bayanihan gained its own independent footing and identity, she has continued to be its foremost patron and promoter even as she pursued her career as life-long educator and made her mark in other fields of endeavor. She served in the Philippine legislature as Senator and Member of Parliament for more than a decade. She was elected head of not one but two United Nations bodies, the first Filipino to become chairperson of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and first and only woman President of the UN Environment Programme.
She has served as member of the executive board of the International Association of Universities and chair of the Southeast Asian Council of the International Association of University Presidents. She has served as ambassador of the Philippines and headed Philippine delegations to many international conferences including the UN Habitat Conference in Vancouver. She is the only person to have served on the Board of Trustees of Bayanihan continuously throughout its existence. She currently serves as Chairperson of the Philippine Women’s University System and of the Bayanihan.

**DR. LUCRECIA R. KASILAG**  
President & Music Director

Renowned for her dual titles as National Artist for Music and the “First Lady of Philippine Music”, not to mention her roles as President and Music Director of Bayanihan, Dr. Lucrecia R. Kasilag is a pioneer in researching indigenous ethnic music and blending it with Western musical approaches. Her work in uniting the sounds of ancient ethnic instruments with Western music stands in a class of its own. An internationally acclaimed composer, she is also a highly accomplished educator, cultural entrepreneur, researcher, lecturer and writer. Aside from Bayanihan, she is also active in various other organizations including the Young Artists Foundation, the League of Filipino Composers, the Federation of Asian Cultural Promotion and the Asian Composers League, the latter of which has designated her its honorary chairman. In 1993, Dr. Kasilag was honored to be elected one among five honorary members of the UNESCO International Music Council. In 1995, she won the 4th ASEAN Achievement Award granted by Singapore’s ASEAN Business Forum for outstanding contributions to the performing arts.

**SUZIE MOYA BENITEZ**  
Executive Director

Ms. Benitez completed her Liberal Arts major in Foreign Service from the Assumption College, an exclusive girls’ school in Manila. She completed a Masters degree in Public Administration from the University of the Philippines and a Masters degree in Strategic Business Economics from the University of Asia and the Pacific. She completed the program for development Managers from the Asian Institute of Management under a Rockefeller Brothers grant. She is also a professional lecturer on Corporate Image, Social graces, Business etiquette & Leadership skills. Ms. Benitez traveled around the world as a Bayanihan dancer and a Karilagan model from late 60’s until 1977. Before joining the Bayanihan in 1996, Ms. Benitez has had extensive experience in PR, Sales and Marketing, Human Resource Development and Administration. She was the first female Vehicle Sales Manager among Toyota’s dealership in Manila. She is a professional image consultant for two leading banks in Manila and a government financial corporation. She is also the Head of PERFORM (Personality Enrichment and Character Formation) at the Assumption College and Director of Special Events and Special Program at the Philippine Women's University. As Executive Director for Bayanihan she spearheaded the group's efforts for government recognition. In 1998 the 10th Congress of the Philippines enacted Republic Act 8626 declaring the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company as the Philippine National Folk Dance Company. Subsequently, the President of the Philippines issued Proclamation 138 declaring May 27 of every year as a National Day to commemorate and propagate the Bayanihan spirit. She is married to businessman (also a former Bayanihan dancer) Noel Benitez and they are blessed with three children: Marco, Marielle and Martino Anton.
ISABEL A. SANTOS
Artistic Director & Costume Director

Born in the predominantly Muslim province of Lanao del Sur in the southern Philippines, Ms. Santos has lived and traveled throughout the country and has thus become familiar with a variety of native costumes. As Costume Director for Bayanihan since 1957, she has designed numerous costumes based on her research on ethnic dress across the archipelago. A recipient of the City of Manila Cultural Award for costume design in dance, Ms. Santos recently co-authored the 1996 book entitled *Helena Z Benitez, Bayanihan and the Filipino, A Trilogy for Culture*. Formerly Costume Director for the Folk Arts Theatre and Cultural Consultant at the Office of the President of the Philippines from 1974 to 1986, she holds a bachelor's degree from the Philippine Women's University (PWU) and a master's degree in English from Fordham University in New York. Her early career was spent as Public Relations and Information Director at PWU and Bayanihan from 1953 to 1959. Recently Ms. Santos received the Francisca T. Benitez award from the Philippine Women's University, her alma mater, “for her significant contribution to the nurturing of the Filipino spirit and identity through her accomplishments in the arts, particularly of theatrical costuming, that captured the intrinsic and enduring beauty of Philippine costume”.

ALFREDO Q. GOMEZ, JR.
Lighting Designer & Technical Director

Alfredo Q. Gomez, Jr. has served as Lighting Designer and Technical Director for the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company since 1987. He began his career as an instructor and facilitator for the basic theatre lighting workshop at the prestigious Cultural Center of the Philippines and later went on to be Lighting designer and Technical Director for a host of well known institutions including the Philippine Ballet Theater, Tanghalang Filipino of the CCFI, The Bayanihan Philippine National Dance Company, Ballet Philippines and the Gantimpala Theatre Foundation at the Metropolitan Theatre. A 1978 AB Broadcast Communication graduate of the College of Mass Communication at the University of the Philippines, he completed graduate studies in theatre at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and specialized lighting design for film and television.

FERDINAND B. JOSE
Dance Director

Ferdinand Jose joined the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company in 1976 and has toured the world extensively with the group. Major works for which has choreographed and designed include Tribulink (1996), Klasika (1997) and more recently, Kabayanihan Saludo, Bayanihan's salute to the nation's centennial celebration of its independence. Since 1982 he has played a focal role on Bayanihan's research and program development teams and was made Acting Dance Director and Administrative Director for the company in 1995. Mr. Jose has studied traditional folk dance both locally and internationally, and has taken many courses on improvisation and composition for modern dance. He was honored to be chosen as a recipient of a study grant, under the Rockefeller Brothers Fund administered by the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation, for development managers at the well known Asian Institute of Management based in Manila.
MELITO S. VALE CRUZ
Deputy Music Director

A member of Bayanihan since 1975, Melito Vale Cruz currently serves not only as Deputy Music Director but also as Assistant Dance Director, Videographer, Office Manager and Officer-in-charge of the audio-visual department at the company. His many awards include the 1994 outstanding Cavitaire accolade. A graduate of Management and Marketing, he has toured the world extensively with Bayanihan and in 1992-93 was an ASEAN exchange dance instructor based in Singapore. His other interests include short film production for dance, video production for dance and voice studies. Melito was a member of the Philippine Madrigal Singers from 1980 to 1986.