

Philippines Win 1st Place at International Dance Competition

The Philippine Performing Arts Company (PPAC) for the third consecutive year won First Place at the 5th Annual World Culture Folk Dance Competition at the Azalea International Folk Fair last March 6, 2010 in Valdosta, Georgia. There were more than seventeen countries who participated in this year's competition hoping to get the title from the Philippines as "champions" for the last two consecutive years in a row.

There were three categories in the competition this year. The "Youth Group" consisting of dancers up to 13 years of age. Then the "Adult Small Group" of no more than three performers and the "Adult Large Group" where the Philippines is holding the titles as "champions." The Indak Pambata (Children's Group) of Tampa with choreographer Amy Uy performed three numbers in the Youth Group namely, "Vinta," "Sayaw sa Bangko," and "Bakay-Salakot." Vinta won the 2nd place while Ballet Folklorico de Huehucoyotl won as first place. Then came the Small Adult Group where PPAC performed the skilled dance called "Binasuan" that won as 3rd place, again losing with Ballet Folklorico de Huehucoyotl who was dominating all the competition with more than 30 well groomed and fabulous costume dancers from Elgin, Illinois.

When the Adult Large Group came, PPAC opened the show with a breathtaking dance from Palawan called "Pagdiwata" the only group with live musical percussions and received a standing ovation from the audience and applause from the distinguished panel of judges who came from all over Florida and Georgia with credentials meant to judge professional dance companies. They were followed by a spectacular Mexican dance presented by the Ballet Folklorico de Huehucoyotl. Then the Philippines performed their second dance in the Large Group category from the Mountain Provinces of the Igorots called, "Kalinga Festival." Again, the precision and costumes of the dance impressed the judges and audience alike.

At the end of the day, when the winners were announced, Kalinga Festival coveted 4th place. the Mexican dancers won 3rd and 2nd and when the Philippines was announced as First Place, there was thunderous applause and screaming from the members and parents of PPAC, the Filipino community of Valdosta and Atlanta, Georgia. "This was the toughest year we have ever had. We never thought we would be beat Mexico. But we did, just like Pacman beat the Mexican boxer." said Joey Omila, choreographer and artistic director of the Philippine Performing Arts Company who was also a former member of the Bayanihan National Philippine Dance Company. "I am so proud of all my kids and I wished that the Tampa community was here to cheer them," added Joey Omila. All performers in all categories received a certificate of appreciation from the organizers and winners received cash prizes.



Cathy Uy and Melissa Barrido as Tagbanua priestesses in Pagdiwata from the island of Palawan, Philippines.

