



MigARTion

December 18-19, 2018
Community Gathering,
Arts Dialogue and Exhibition
International Migrant's Day

MigARTion:

Community Dialogue & Exhibition

Content.....Pages

- About MigARTion.....2
- Facilitator bios.....3-5
- Images from the workshops.....6-7
- Paintings.....8-9
- Journal Archive.....10-16
- About Migrante BC.....17
- About the Rounhouse.....17
- About Co.ERASGA.....18
- Acknowledgements.....18

About MigARTion

Workshops - October 21- December 16

December 18th | Community Gathering and
Art Exhibition on International Migrants Day, 7-10pm

December 19th | Art Exhibition, 9am-4pm

in partnership with the Roundhouse Arts and
Community Centre

Co.ERASGA's current community outreach project MigARTion is a collaborative artistic undertaking between the company and Migrante BC, a grassroots organization for newcomer Filipino migrant workers and immigrants. Through workshops with professional artists in voice (Jeremiah Carag), theatre (Dennis Gupa), dance (Alvin Erasga Tolentino), and visual art (Bert Monterona), a committed group of migrant workers have come together to participate in up to 14 sessions of artistic creation to express their personal stories of migration through the fine and performing arts.

This process gives critical agency among the participants, allowing their distinct voices to emerge within a space and atmosphere of free will, joyous participation and critical public engagement. In this initiative, the artists and the migrant participants work together in exploring artistic practices and integrates critical and empathic discussions on personal history of migration, free access of arts and the migrants way of sharing, knowing and being.

Project Facilitators:

Alvin Erasga Tolentino | Dance

Dennis Gupa | Theatre

Bert Monterona | Visual Art

Jeremiah Carag | Music

Yasuhiro Okada | Photographer/Videographer

Lara Maestro | Archivist

Erie Maestro | Project Consultant

Christopher Sorio | Project Consultant

Co.ERASGA and Migrante BC would like to acknowledge that MigARTion takes place on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

Facilitators



Alvin Erasga Tolentino
Dance

Vancouver's very own, Alvin Erasga Tolentino's work has spanned three decades interpreting, creating and contributing contemporary dance in Canada and Internationally. He founded Co.ERASGA in 2000 and since then has brought full-length memorable works as; *SOLA, Bato/Stone, OrientTik/Portrait, Field, BodyGlass* with Toronto's Peter Chin, *Paradise/Paradis with French noise music Emmanuel Maily, ADAMEVE-Man/Woman, Shadow Machine, EXpose* with Uruguayan-Martin Inthamousu, *Shifting Geography* with Germany's Rafaele Giovanolla, *Unwrapping Culture* with revered Thai dancer Pichet Klunchun and his most recent ensemble work *Collected Traces and Still Here*. An accomplished international dance artist whose body of works has reflected identity, gender, interculturalism and cross-cultural collaboration that reached four continents. His touring engagements and cross cultural collaboration has taken him and Co.ERASGA to over 60 diverse cities and in countries as France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, Philippines, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Thailand, Uruguay and across Canada. In 2010 he received Vancouver's Mayor Arts Award for his contribution to the Performing Arts in Dance. He was recently awarded the Pan Asian Award for Arts Contribution by EXploreAsian Vancouver. Tolentino continues to expand his cultural work globally, utilizing dance as a source of empowering and generating creativity in the lives of people through social reflection and connection.



Dennis D. Gupa
Theatre

Dennis is a theatre director and a PhD in Applied Theatre (Candidate) at the University of Victoria. Some of his current works are *Murupuro/The Island of Constellations* (UVIC Theatre Department), *Mai Đào* (SEACHS), *Bacchae 2.1 & I am Not A Laughing Man* (UBC Theatre and Film Dept.) and *COLONIAL* (Co.ERASGA). His doctoral project deals on the impact of climate change in precarious sea coast communities and how indigenous ways of knowing can inform contemporary applied theatre as a critical-empathic process and agentive practice of performance making. He received a scholarship from the Indonesian government to study theatre and traditional mask dance at Bandung's Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia. The Asian Cultural Council's awarded him a fellowship to undertake a director-in-residence program in New York City in 2011. Dennis has an MFA Directing (Theatre) degree from University of British Columbia and MA Theatre at University of the Philippines. In 2016 he was selected as the laureate of the Dwight Conquergood Award of the Performance Studies international (PSi) in Melbourne, Australia and in 2017 he received the Ada Slight Drama in Education Award. Dennis is a Vanier Scholar.

Facilitators



Bert Monterona
Visual Art

Bert is an artist, educator and cultural worker doing designing, illustrations, painting, murals, sculpture, and installations. He is a recipient of the Western Australia Department of the Arts and Australia Council for the Arts Grants, University of Western Australia School of Architecture and Fine Arts Residency Grant, Asian Artists Awards of Vermont Studio Centre and Freeman Foundation, U.S.A., 2007 Winner of the International Mural Festival and Competition in Manitoba, Canada and won the 2009 Artist in Residence Program and Mural Project of the Leigh Square Community Arts Village, City of Port Coquitlam as part of the Necklace Public Art project, an inter-municipal collaboration of 10 municipalities in Metro Vancouver, BC.

The founder and main visual arts facilitator of the Philippine Artists Network for Community Integrative Transformation of Migrante BC in Vancouver. As an artist-educator, he has organized art workshops in schools and communities, for skills development, art-as-therapy and peace-building. He has recently exhibited his Tapestry paintings in France as a guest artist during the GRAND BAZ ART International art festival in Gisors, France.



Jeremiah Carag
Music

Jeremiah Mari Gan Carag is a classically trained singer and actor in opera and musical theatre. Born and raised in Manila, he is now based in Vancouver where he finished his undergraduate studies in Opera Performance at the University of British Columbia under the tutelage of renowned artists James Patrick Raftery and Peter Barcza. Past artistic credits include Puck in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (UBC Opera), Corey in *Chatman's Choir Practice* (World Premiere) and Roger Davis in *Rent* (UBC Suite Style Musical). He is also an educator passionate about adult learning and community engagement. He is currently finishing his Master of Education at UBC while working as a Learning Initiatives Coordinator with the university.

Facilitators



Lara Maestro
Archivist

Lara Maestro is a Master of Archival Studies and Library and Information Studies candidate at the iSchool at UBC, and a member of Migrante BC, Gabriela BC and Sulong UBC. Coming from a Sociology background, she is drawn to topics in information studies that look at how social structures and power dynamics work through information in ways that either reproduce or challenge existing systems of inequality. As someone particularly interested in community and participatory archives, she is excited to be working with MigARTion in a capacity where she can support communities working together for collective memory creation and storytelling.



Yasuhiro Okada
Photographer/Videographer

Born in Hokkaido, Japan, Yasuhiro Okada received his Master's Degree in Digital Content Management from Digital Hollywood University in Tokyo. He has worked as a video artist for Sony Music and Columbia Records in Tokyo, Japan. He is an awardee of the Nikon Photography Award in 2011 for portrait work.

He continues as a freelance photographer and video-filmmaker in Vancouver.

Workshops In Progress

photos by Yasuhiro Okada



Workshops In Progress continued



Paintings by Migrant Workers
led by Bert Monterona



**Migrant Workers'
Dignity Association
group work**
Workers Solidarity
Acrylic on canvas, 88cm
x 122cm, 2018

Lory Riego
O, Dreams
Acrylic on canvas,
88cm x 122cm,
2018



Alda de Aza,
*The Story of My Life and
Migration in Canada*
Acrylic on Canvas,
88cm x 122cm, 2018

Paintings by Migrant Workers continued

Bert Monterona

*No to Human
and Labour Trafficking*

Acrylic on canvas,
88cm x 122cm, 2018



Marjorie Cayabas
My Story of Migration
Acrylic on canvas,
62cm x 82cm, 2018

Mylene Maranoc

*My Home, My Life and
My Works*

Acrylic on canvas,
88cm x 122cm, 2018



Home is Where the He(ART) is: The Beginning by Lara Maestro

It's an overcast, slightly damp Vancouver day in August and a group of migrant workers, organizers, activists, and artists have gathered at a house on Fraser Street. The group is a mix of Filipino and Latino participants, many from Migrante BC, a grassroots organization advocating for the rights of Filipino migrant workers and immigrants, and the Migrant Workers' Dignity Association (MWDA), a non-profit organization providing support for Latino farm workers. The house, also known as Bahay Migrante (Filipino for "Migrant House") is hosting the first orientation of the MigARTion project.

MigARTion, envisioned by choreographer/dancer Alvin Erasga Tolentino of Co.ERASGA Dance Company and brought to life through a partnership with Migrante BC, a grassroots organization advocating for the rights of Filipino migrant workers and immigrants, and the Kensington Branch of the Vancouver Public Library, is a project which aims to engage migrant workers and their family members in the process of creative, collaborative and collective memory-making around their stories and common experiences of migration. With the help of visual artist Bert Monterona, vocal performer Jeremiah Mari Gan Carag, and theatre director Dennis D. Gupa, MigARTion hopes to use critical and empathic processes of artistic integration to create an atmosphere of free will, joyous participation and critical public engagement where participants can express their agency and creativity.

The walls of the small ground floor room of the building are lined with colourful painted canvases, and despite the coolness in the air the space is cozy with the warmth of the bodies in the room. Many of the paintings were created by members of the Philippine Artists Network for Community Integrative Transformation (PANCIT), an art collective led by Monterona, and they bear the influence of his mentorship. Being surrounded by the bold, rich vibrancy of Monterona's work as an individual and an educator helps the participants understand his approach to art. As part of the orientation Monterona and the other lead artists speak to the participants about their philosophies around their art forms, and lead short exercises to give the group a taste of



each discipline: "singing is like breathing," Carag informs the circle as he guides everyone in a deep breathing exercise, while Tolentino encourages the participants to close their eyes and feel how their bodies move while encouraging them to think about dance as a way to discover how to utilize their bodies as tools for expression.

The location for this first meeting is as auspicious one. Bahay Migrante was opened with much fanfare in late 2014 following the successful settlement of a class action lawsuit brought by 77 temporary foreign workers against Northland Properties Corp., owner of Denny's restaurants, for mistreatment and labour exploitation. As part of the settlement Denny's was required to make a donation to Migrante BC for their advocacy efforts in supporting the workers involved in the lawsuit, a donation that helped make the dream of a permanent community space for Filipino migrant workers a reality. The recognition that everything migrants are able to build for themselves and their families is the result of hard-won struggle is an experience that most of the people in the room share, and it is a recognition that informs the vision for everything that MigARTion will become in the following months.

The Privilege to Observe, the Power to Witness

Perhaps, however, we archivists need to be more self-conscious about the distinction, in our field, and in our work, between our many processes of archiving and our end product, the archive. Perhaps in such processes, we embed our own identity and our own collective memory and mythologies. – Terry Cook

Reflexivity is the researcher's own self-reflection in the meaning-making process – Margaret Kovach

To foreground the lens through which this journal is written it's necessary to briefly position myself in relation to the project, as someone inhabiting a role as both an insider and an outsider. As an observer I was able to witness the activities of the project as the weeks progressed, while at the same time being distanced from the act and experience of participation; as a settler to Canada who had the privilege of coming here as an immigrant I understood the ways in which my experiences of being a newcomer were different from participants who arrived as migrant workers, while at the same time seeing similarities in our experiences of culture shock, racism, and prejudice; and as a Filipina, like many of the participants, I related to the economic and social struggles that lead people to leave my country daily by the thousands, even though I had not shared their experiences of labour migration.

The feeling of being part of, yet separate from, the experiences taking place, is related to my roles outside this project as a researcher and nascent archivist. The work of both researchers and archivists is often assumed to take place from a position of distance that makes objective neutrality possible; my relationship to this project as both an insider and an outsider complicates that position. The result is a journal that is a subjective interpretation of the project as filtered through my experience, not only of the project itself but the totality of experiences that affect how I relate to the world: as an immigrant Filipina displaced by the tides of colonization from my native country, contemplating the notion of home as a settler on other peoples' Native land.

A Bridge Over Troubled Water

*Sail on silver girl
Sail on by
Your time has come to shine
All your dreams are on their way
See how they shine
Oh, if you need a friend
I'm sailing right behind
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind*



Marella Nanadiego, *A Mermaid Against the Tide*, Acrylic on canvas. 88cm x 122cm. 2018

Against a backdrop of dark blues and vibrant reds blending into ever brightening hues of turquoise blue, persimmon orange, and turmeric yellow, a figure of a mermaid holds up a teardrop-shaped pearl with one hand. Inside the pearl is a boat carrying two passengers, visible only as silhouettes.

Migration is movement. Like the silhouetted figures on this boat, migrants travel distances great and small for opportunity. Often what they find is hardship. Labour conditions and systemic barriers to resources and stability make the lives and livelihoods of migrant workers precarious and vulnerable to violence and oppression.

Constrained by circumstance, many migrant workers endure indignities in order to survive, and it is within these circumstances that strategies of resilience are bred. All migration stories are stories of struggle, survival, and resilience.

In the initial discussions of how the different art forms would flow into and inform each other to create a unified vision, the discussion would return to themes of movement, travel, and crossing boundaries, whether they be geographical, physical, or interpersonal. Monterona conceived of the idea of vessel carrying passengers over water, symbolizing not only the beginning of the migrant's journey, but also the beginning of the workshop series, moving the participants through each session; it is the motif of travelling across boundaries that connects the workshops to each other and gives the project its cohesion.



~ ~ ~

**“You Enjoy, and Then You Discover Yourself:” The Therapeutic and Social Functions of Painting
October 21, 27, 28**

The basement of Bahay Migrante is a bustle of people, paintings, and art supplies. It is the first day of the painting workshop and the participants are just beginning to put their ideas to canvas. Some of the participants have painted before as members of the PANCIT art collective, while others are completely new to the practice of painting. Bert Monterona, the lead artist for the painting sessions, moves from person to person, by turns giving advice or physically lending a hand to a painting on request of the participant. For Monterona, painting is truly a collaborative act: he works

with each participant to shape their ideas as they discuss what they want to paint, he helps them pinpoint the elements they should include to express their ideas visually, and in many cases he works on the canvas with each artist to assist them with blending colour, drawing outlines, or adding finishing touches.

A perfect example of the collaborative art-making process is the painting created by the workers and activists from the Migrant Workers' Dignity Association (MWDA). The story of the painting was conceived of collectively (a bridge of spanned hands representing the unity and solidarity of migrant workers in tearing down the walls built by fascism and capitalist exploitation), as the guidance of each MWDA member determined the path Monterona's hand took in bringing it to life.

Monterona describes himself as an artist, an art educator and a cultural activist. He sees art as a therapeutic experience that can elicit psychological and emotional responses that have the potential to heal those who take part in it. Of painting, he says, “You enjoy, and then you discover yourself.” At the same time, visual art has a social function, in that it can prompt an awakening of consciousness for the viewer or provide an opening for discussion and conversation. This aspect of art is “all about using art as a tool for information and education. It's more on advocacy rather than art for art's sake, just exhibiting it as a masterpiece or just a creation. I'm more particular on: what would be the issue that can be projected on your canvas? And what will be the rule to the people when they are looking on it? It should be a piece or an item to ignite ideas, so that they can start talking about any issues about migration, about social justice, about political issues, [or] economic.”

For migrant workers painting can bring together the therapeutic and the social. The success of PANCIT, for example, is in large part due to the community that has been created by the participants when they meet each week to paint together. PANCIT inspired Monterona to think about using painting in the MigARTion project to foster a sense of belonging and homecoming for migrant workers, who can feel lonely, isolated, and very far from home: “It [gave] us an idea, more ideas about how we can use art to new immigrants who are still looking for that kind of belongingness, like the sense of belonging ... you're always seeking or looking for where you belong. It's hard for migrants to feel that they are at home, so [art gives a] sense of belonging, to make you feel you're home.”

That sense of home is what participants are in the process of creating, both individually and collectively. Most of the paintings explore some concept of home. For some participants this involves painting objects that remind them of home, such as the ripe jackfruit that always reminds Alda of her father, while others instead choose to represent actual scenes from home, like Siony's painting of her cat riding the *kalabaw* (water buffalo) on a farm in the Philippines. For others their paintings are more aspirational, such as Lorie's painting of the dream house she'd like to build in the Philippines. At the same time that they are painting what home means to each of them, they are together creating a feeling of home within a sense of community belonging.

~ ~ ~

**"As Easy as Breathing and Talking:"
Singing as a Cultural Lesson and Legacy
November 3, 4, 10, 11**

"Does everyone remember how a street vendor calls out for customers in the Philippines?" This is a question that Jeremiah Carag is asking the participants at the beginning of the singing workshop, as he tries to get them to start thinking about singing as a set of skills they're already familiar with. "They go '*Balut!* [fertilized duck eggs]' '*Taho!* [soy pudding]' They're projecting but they aren't straining their voices." For Carag it's important to emphasize that formal training, thought by many to be necessary to becoming a good vocalist, is overrated. Though classically trained in opera and musical theatre, Carag maintains that it was the cultural lessons he already carried with him from the Philippines that prepared him for his training and made him a better performer and vocalist. Oral traditions that emphasize the transmission of information through spoken epics, storytelling and songs have contributed to a culture where singing is a normal and established aspect of the everyday Filipino experience, from karaoke to office party performances.

Carag is a passionate, community-minded educator, and his teaching philosophy comes out in the activities he asks of the participants. Carag believes that "the best way to empower [students new to music] is to connect creating music with the most natural of acts," from breathing to speaking to singing. In addition to breathing, harmonizing, and rhythm exercises, a large part of the singing workshops is devoted to Master Classes, where each participant chooses a song they are comfortable with and that they think represents

their vocal style, which they then sing in front of the class. This allows each participant to show what they have learned about singing, to then sing in front of the class. This allows each participant to show what they have learned about singing, to take pride in the skills that they have, and gives all the participants an opportunity to teach and learn from each other. Erie, a children's librarian, shows the group a lullaby that she teaches parents as part of her Mother Goose classes for babies that incorporates English, Tagalog, Spanish, and modified sign language, while Siony uses her Master Class to sing *Usahay*, a Visayan love song.

Each Master Class is a lesson in community affirmation. Participants Liza and Cheka both mentioned how they feel like the group was a safe space to be yourself and not be afraid of making mistakes. Each instance of hesitation and shyness was met with messages of support, each moment of confidence was met with smiles, and the end of each song was met with applause. In one of the sessions with MWDA members in attendance, one participant, Alejandro, mentioned that he needed to be comfortable with people before singing in front of them, and though he didn't know many people in the room he was still able to do it.



At the end of every session Carag ends with a reflective exercise that asks each participant what they learned from the day. Each participant expressed being thankful for their experiences, with many conveying their gratitude at how the practice of learning to sing was made accessible, since formal training is usually out of reach due to cost and language barriers. Other participants were hopeful about the opportunity to use music as a way to show their culture, tell their stories, and get others to understand the situation and struggles of migrant workers.

One of the lasting takeaways from the music workshops was how the skills learned through singing are also skills that are useful in organizing and activism. Not only is singing a way of “getting messages out to get support” (Liza), but as participants Hessed and Alejandro both pointed out, learning to work together and supporting each other are valuable lessons in community work: “The underlying message is of people, workers, coming together to build something bigger than all of us put together.”

~ ~ ~

**“May Wika sa Katawan” / The Body has a Language: Theatre to Embody the Imagination
November 18, 24, 25**

“Arts is experiment,” says Dennis Gupa to the participants, by way of introduction into contemporary applied theatre, “We’ll play. It will release our stories.” In keeping with this exploratory approach, one of the first exercises Gupa uses to energize the participants to theatre is a game. When asked what the point of the game was, participants ventured that it was about “being alert,” “working together,” “not being ashamed or afraid,” “continuing even when mistakes happen,” “immediacy” – and Gupa nods. “This theatre that we are creating demands readiness,” he says, and with that the workshop begins.

Inspired by the idea of seafaring and the symbolic properties of water, Gupa is invested in the fluidity of creativity, letting go of control over the narrative process and allowing the group’s collective actions to determine the course of each activity. Throughout the three days of theatre Gupa asks the participants to examine their movements, behaviours, and feelings and mine them for stories, setting up the participants’ ownership over the process of knowledge production. Gupa wants participants to be conscious of their role as creators, asking them to think continuously about such questions as “what does theatre mean in our context? What are our aims and objectives?” In order to create theatre with the capacity to awaken others, it is first necessary to awaken ourselves; as he says, “theatre can agitate you, can make our sleeping minds awake.”

On the second day of the theatre workshop, Gupa asks the participants to play a game called “Pass Me Your Mask, translated into Filipino as “Nasaan ang iyong maskara, at ibigay mo sa akin” (where is your mask, and give it to me).



Migrant workers employ many masks to manage their emotions when they come here: excitement, loneliness, shock, worry. A mask can be used to conceal vulnerable emotions but, in this exercise the masks give the participants the opportunity to feel the heightened, elevated emotions that are never seen as appropriate in everyday life. Giving ‘face’ to emotions through masks and asking participants to negotiate with each other to release them requires the group to express vulnerability and build trust, which are necessary for the performance of their stories.

The third day of the workshop culminates in the staging of three tableaux, conceived of organically by each participant as they added themselves onto an existing paired pose. Before connecting to the tableau, the participants would discuss their different readings of it and how they would fit into the scene, with each pose contributing both phrases and movements to the unfolding story. Different moments revealed themselves: a domestic worker cleaning a house in Singapore, a family member in the Philippines thankful for remittances, a migrant worker seeking help, an immigration officer conducting an investigation, a woman comforting a crying baby. In completing the exercise, the participants were able to bring together the three objectives Gupa had for the workshop: that it be embodied, drawing from participants’ own memories; that it be experiential, asking participants to engage the body and the voice in performing their memories; and that it be experimental, open to exploration and play.

~ ~ ~

Painting Space: Dancing to Bring Out the Memory of the Body *December 1, 2, 8, 9*

It is the first dance session and the MigARTion participants are gathered in the meeting room at the Kensington branch of the Vancouver Public Library. Other than the mats set out on the floor there is little about the space that resembles a conventional dance studio, with wall-to-wall carpeting, no mirrors, and no barres. Most of the participants have little to no dance training, and yet by the time the session is over all of them will have contributed to two pieces of original choreography that they've all worked together to create.



There is a radical accessibility to choreographer and Co.ERASGA founder Alvin Tolentino's approach to teaching contemporary dance, which can often seem inaccessible and intimidating to inexperienced outsiders. Tolentino starts slowly with a gentle stretch before introducing the students to a brief warm-up involving travelling around the room and isolating different body parts. After guiding the participants through these exercises Tolentino arranges the participants in a circle facing each other. He starts by giving a movement for everyone else in the circle to mimic, instructing each participant to add a movement of their own until by the time they've reached the beginning of the circle again they have several eight-counts worth of choreography created entirely organically and collaboratively. Over the next few sessions this routine will serve as a basis for the group warm-up, developing the participants' capacity for muscle memory.

For the next piece, which will form the foundation for the presentation at the end-of-project community gathering, Tolentino likewise places ownership over the choreography on the students. "What do you think of when you hear the word 'migrant'?" he asks of the

participants arranged in a circle around him. Each person contributes the word that immediately comes to mind for them. Some people think of words that evoke the expectations and aspirations they had before they became a migrant worker ("better opportunity," "pag-asa" (hope), "adventure"), others recall the feelings they experienced when they actually arrived ("adjustment," "culture shock"). Still others associated the word with more personal connotations ("me").

Next, Tolentino gets the participants to come up with their ideas for what movement matches their word, asking them to partner up and teach their partner their action. Together each pair creates a discrete story with an entry and an exit that Tolentino stitches together to establish a cohesive series of related vignettes. Subsequent additions to the choreography result from prompts from Tolentino to try different formations, or think through different sensations: what does cold look like? What does the feeling of heaviness look like? How would you portray the emotion of helplessness?

Whenever the participants would seem to get too bogged down in what they thought they should look like, or when they were too self-consciously trying to create a feeling that wasn't authentic to their bodies, Tolentino would issue a gentle reminder: "Let the body move you. Don't think too much. This is about your body, listen to your body. Let your body tell the story. Let the emotion flow. The more you stop thinking the better it gets." This reminder is characteristic of Tolentino's teaching philosophy around guiding the participants through dance: listen to your body, not your head; let go and allow release to come naturally.

As the leader of the last workshop, Tolentino was able to draw upon the teachings of each preceding workshop, reminding participants of the lessons they had already learned while showing how those lessons could be built upon one another to inform each art form. Like Carag he encouraged participants to use their breath to give strength and sustainability to their movement; like Gupa he challenged participants to draw on their body memories to dictate their actions and impulses; and like Monterona he asked participants to think of their performance stage as a canvas through which they would paint the space with their bodies. Like visual arts, music, and theatre, dance relies on the creator having clarity about their vision, tapping into the emotional core behind their intended action and bringing it to life with all the tools at their disposal, whether that be canvas, voice, or body.

~ ~ ~

Culture, Collaboration, Communication, Confidence, Connection

In nature pearls are formed through a process of self-defence that begins when a small foreign object, such as a grain of sand, enters an oyster or other bivalve mollusk, like a mussel or clam. In order to protect itself the bivalve will cover the object with layer upon layer of a fluid called nacre, also known as mother-of-pearl. Eventually a pearl is formed.

Sometimes the migrant experience is like the foreign object, having to acclimate to a strange environment and facing the pressure to assimilate to the dictates of a new culture. As Gina, one of the participants mentioned during one of the theatre workshops, "being here [in Canada] is different" – you have to change your behaviour to adjust to Canadian norms and expectations, not "how you would act back home." At the same time the migrant experience can be like the pearl, creating defence mechanisms in order to protect yourself, like wearing different public masks in order to hide the emotions you feel from others. For Gina she noticed that she became "more sensitive" to the ways that Canadians reacted to her, leading her to act more reserved, "so people will take you seriously."

In theatre, says Gupa, there must be plot, conflict, and character. Drama arises from conflict, from the moments of hardship and tension. For migrant workers that conflict is heightened at the moment of arrival, and it is resolved through struggle. Describing the story they are trying to tell with their dance performance, Cristy and Liza both highlight how they had to adjust in order to adapt to their new environment. Though they experienced hardship as individuals, it was in facing it collectively that they were able to overcome it. Others in the group agree: "We conquered it, we found community," "we won." The story they are telling is not only about struggle, but also of transformation and triumph.

That transformation is evident through the journey each participant has taken over the course of MigARTion. Each individual

brought their unique experience to the project, but it was only through finding the similarities in those experiences and the collective embodiment and telling of those stories that the creation of something truly transformative became possible. It was only through finding the similarities in those experiences and the collective embodiment and telling of those stories that the creation of something truly transformative became possible.

Nearing the end of the workshop series the participants were asked to describe how they felt in one word: among the feelings of release, relief, and the promise of new friendships, were words like "confident," "happy," "joy," "love," and "free." What each participant had wanted to emphasize in expressing their stories was the truth of their lives as migrants, lives that include difficulty, vulnerability, precarity and conflict. What they came away with was action, belonging, community, and hope for change. Like the pearl, the potential for social transformation and beauty is borne out of struggle.

¹Terry Cook, "Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms," *Archival Science; Dordrecht* 13, no. 2–3 (2013): 97, <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/10.1007/s10502-012-9180-7>.

²Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, Reprint edition (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2010), 32.

³Migrante International, "SUMA 2015: Summing-up of the State of Migrants Under Aquino (2010-2015)," *Tinig Migrante*, July 17, 2015, 3, <https://migranteinternational.org/2015/07/17/tinig-migrante-july2015-suma-2015-summing-up-of-the-state-of-migrants-under-aquino-2010-2015/>.

About Migrante

Migrante BC is a progressive community-based organization of Filipino migrants and immigrants in British Columbia founded on September 14, 2008 to support and advance the rights and welfare of Filipino migrants and their families. Migrante BC believes that any meaningful work with Filipino migrants contributes to the struggle of the Filipino people for national freedom and democracy.

Migrante BC does not lose sight of the necessity of working towards one of the most basic rights which Filipinos share with those who have remained in the Philippines: the right to have decent work at home. Migrante BC takes the position that the migration of Filipinos abroad is a product of the extreme poverty and joblessness in the Philippines and that the commodification of Filipino labour is encouraged by the Philippine government's labour export program.

Migrante BC is a member of Migrante Canada, of Migrante International, the biggest organization of overseas Filipinos all over the world, and of the International Migrants Alliance (IMA).

Migrante BC marks its 10th year anniversary this year 2018.

Board

Erie Maestro	Alda de Aza
Christopher Sorio	Bert Monterona
Maria Infante	John Carolino
Cora Mojica	Avelina Vasquez
Teresita de Chavez	Jane Ordinario

About the Roundhouse

The mandate of the Roundhouse is twofold: to be a centre for community cultural development and a community source for recreational activities for all ages. We thrive on exploring issues, on taking risks, on being cutting edge. We strive to bring people together in new ways to explore what is important to them. Through stretching our boundaries and challenging our perceptions, we endeavour to build community and in our own way to make the world a better place. We invite you to join us.

About Co.ERASGA

Founded by choreographer and dancer Alvin Erasga Tolentino in 2000, Co.ERASGA has a distinguished international reputation with its vision of hybrid dance, diversity and collaborations with other artistic practices and multimedia.

At the heart of Co.ERASGA is Artistic Director Alvin Erasga Tolentino, a Filipino-Canadian artist of remarkable commitment, talent and energy, whose diverse cultural background and heritage has been a driving force for much of the company's work. In addressing themes that reflect Tolentino's individuality, global awareness and ethnicity, Co.ERASGA exposes and explores issues of cultural identity, gender, hybridity, and promotes cross-cultural dialogue.

Staff

Alvin Erasga Tolentino
Artistic Director

Kayla De Vos
General Administrator

Christina Panis
Grant Writer

#1408-207 W Hastings St
Vancouver BC V6B 1H7

Board

Brigitte Potter-Mael, President
Jenea Peralejo, Treasurer
Lynn Farrales, Director
Carlo Sayo, Director
Nora Angeles, Director

www.companierasgadance.ca
info@companierasgadance.ca
604.687.6185

Acknowledgements

Co.ERASGA gratefully acknowledges its members, the generous individuals, businesses, and following funding bodies for their support: The Canada Council for the Arts, BC Arts Council, BC Gaming Commission, the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Foundation, Migrante BC, Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre and the Vancouver Public Library.

Copyright 2018 by Co.ERASGA, Migrante BC and the participants of MigARTion.

Co.ERASGA is a non-profit charitable arts organization.

We welcome your support.

Charitable Organizations Registration: 894061514RR0001

“The Migrant Manifesto”

We have been called many names. Illegals. Aliens. Guest Workers. Border crossers. Undesirables. Exiles. Criminals. Non-citizens. Terrorists. Thieves. Foreigners. Invaders. Undocumented.

Our voices converge on these principles:

1. We know that international connectivity is the reality that migrants have helped create, it is the place where we all reside. We understand that the quality of life of a person in a country is contingent on migrants' work. We identify as part of the engine of change.

2. We are all tied to more than one country. The multilaterally shaped phenomenon of migration cannot be solved unilaterally, or else it generates a vulnerable reality for migrants.

Implementing universal rights is essential. The right to be included belongs to everyone.

3. We have the right to move and the right to not be forced to move. We demand the same privileges as corporations and the international elite, as they have the freedom to travel and to establish themselves wherever they choose. We are all worthy of opportunity and the chance to progress. We all have the right to a better life.

4. We believe that the only law deserving of our respect is an unprejudiced law, one that protects everyone, everywhere. No exclusions. No exceptions. We condemn the criminalization of migrant lives.

5. We affirm that being a migrant does not mean belonging to a specific social class nor carrying a particular legal status. To be a migrant means to be an explorer; it means movement, this is our shared condition. Solidarity is our wealth.

6. We acknowledge that individual people with inalienable rights are the true barometer of civilization. We identify with the victories of the abolition of slavery,

the civil rights movement, the advancement of women's rights, and the rising achievements of the LGBTQ community. It is our urgent responsibility and our historical duty to make the rights of migrants the next triumph in the quest for human dignity. It is inevitable that the poor treatment of migrants today will be our dishonour tomorrow.

7. We assert the value of the human experience and the intellectual capacity that migrants bring with them as greatly as any labor they provide. We call for the respect of the cultural, social, technical, and political knowledge that migrants command.

8. We are convinced that the functionality of international borders should be re-imagined in the service of humanity.

9. We understand the need to revive the concept of the commons, of the earth as a space that everyone has the right to access and enjoy.

10. We witness how fear creates boundaries, how boundaries create hate and how hate only serves the oppressors. We understand that migrants and non-migrants are interconnected. When the rights of migrants are denied the rights of citizens are at risk.

Dignity has no nationality.

Immigrant Movement International
November 2011.

This document was created in collaboration with immigration academics, activists, politicians, and community members at a convening at the IM International headquarters in Corona, Queens on November 4th and 5th.

For more information visit:

<http://immigrant-movement.us/events>