



FILIPINO-CANADIAN IN FOCUS:

Marc Generoso

Performer, Choreographer, Director, Producer



BY **EARL VON TAPIA**
Philippine Canadian Inquirer

SOONER OR later, we come to a point in our lives where we know the direction we want our lives to go.

For Marc Generoso, this happened through a series of events and experiences that, over time, culminated into him crafting the career he enjoys today as a dance teacher and choreographer, performer, director, and producer of dance shows and music videos. He wants to use his experience and his drive to combine dance with film to bring the genres to a whole new audience.

Marc didn't start off dancing though. His introduction to the performing world started in music.

"My dad put it upon me and my brothers to be musicians. That's how we got our musicality. We all started with the piano, and then my little brother got converted to drums, and my

stepsisters started playing the bass and doing vocals. We were basically tricked into becoming a family band by our parents," he said.

But his artistic path didn't end there. Through some fortunate circumstances, he ended up in a program that would foster his passion for the performing arts.

"Right at the start of high school, our mother put us into Ailanthus, a performing arts program run by the Bentall family in Vancouver. We did acting, circus performing, and improvisation."

"One fateful night, after a particularly stressful time with the family band, Lynda Bentall decided to sponsor a trip for me and my brother to Las Vegas for a week. We had two chaperones, we stayed at the Luxor, we could do anything we wanted! But of course, we were 14 so we couldn't do anything too crazy. However, we saw a show in the New York New York hotel called "Manhattan". It was

a breakdancing performance. That was the first time I saw dancing."

When they got back to Vancouver, they told Lynda that "we gotta have dance." And so the next semester, the Bentalls hired some breakdancers to teach some dance steps to the kids. Marc's passion for dance took off from there.

"They only really taught us how to do two steps, but from there I was so into it that I was just doing variations of those two moves. And then I also watched a lot of Michael Jackson," he said.

In grade 11, he transferred schools, and Marc decided to try his hand at leading.

"I started becoming a little more vocal, and I started asking people to dance. I was learning and teaching simultaneously. I would learn a dance move, and then teach it to others," he said.

It's almost a stereotype that Filipinos are good at dancing. When Marc represented Canada at the World Hip-Hop

Championships one year.

He was also teaching dance on the side, and directing his own performances. As time went on, he found that he liked doing that kind of stuff more and more.

"My greatest asset is my creative side. It's more than just being a dancer. I like being the director," he said.

For the past several years he has been teaching dance at the Harbour Dance Centre in Vancouver, one of the most respected dance companies in Western Canada. It was through Harbour Dance that he recently got an amazing opportunity, and that was to teach his craft on the international stage.

"I was directing and teaching a stage show on Vancouver Island, and I was being simultaneously referred to by the directors of Harbour Dance to teach this class in India. At first I thought it was a joke, that it was going to fall through. Because it's India. We were negotiating this past December, and shortly after, they said I was all set to go in June. It really didn't hit me until I was at the airport. Okay, I'm going to Mumbai," he said.

So for the summer Marc was teaching and leading dancers in India. He taught beginners and semi-pros alike, children and adults, as well as dance companies, and the experience left him invigorated to keep going.

Marc is back in Canada now, and according to him he is currently teaching several competitive dance groups at several studios. He also performs and choreographs occasionally. He's also working on his second full-hour stage show on Vancouver Island. On top of all that, he's attending school full-time at Capilano University in the Motion Picture Arts Program.

Marc hopes to use his experience being a dance director and his new skills with film to help bring both art forms to wider audiences.

"I teach competitive dance crews at several studios, and for some of the higher level performances, I re-adapt their live performances into music videos. So I get a film crew, and at the end of the year when their dance is refined, I write a little story to make it more of a short story, and then I will combine the dancing with some acting," he said.

"I'm trying to create something new in the industry which is to take used dance perfor-

mances and converting them into short dance movies, so the performers have something to hold on to," he added.

Marc can be considered a veteran in the dance industry, having just turned 30 a few weeks ago. He has some advice for people who want to pursue a path in the performing arts, whether that's as a dancer, choreographer, director, or any other aspect in any performing art.

He said that self doubt is "by far" the greatest challenge.

"As an artist, you go up and up, and you have such creativity and freedom. It's different than a typical job where you have that stability. With artistry, it fluctuates, it goes up and down. When it's up, you feel like you're on top of the world, but when you're down, it's up to you to garner the strength to pick it up again and have faith that it will go back up," he said.

He also has some specific advice for people who are thinking of getting into dance.

"There's two streams of thought. There's the commercial side, and there's the artistic side. For the commercial side, you're just going to be a dancer.

You don't get to think for yourself. You get to backup dance for Katy Perry, or Justin Bieber, or Chris Brown, but you don't get to have a say in what you do."

"And then there's being a creator, which is being your own boss, and directing and choreographing."

"Now if you want to be in the commercial world, then go to dance classes, go to workshops, get noticed, keep training, and if you have the right look, and energy, and aura, you will organically find your way."

"If you want to go the other side, the creating side, it's about harnessing your passion and your drive and your goals for dance."

And though the creative side may not be as glamorous, it can be just as rewarding.

"Everyone has different goals, and everyone has different dreams, and you can create a lot of opportunities for yourself outside of the commercial world, but you have to believe in yourself and you have to be strong," he said.

"Focus on the drive and why you do it, and things will come for you there. At least it did for me." ■



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