

KOMEDI

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A **komedi** is a film that aims to make people laugh. In the komedi film, characters are placed in a series of ludicrous situations to incite laughter from the viewers. There are three types of komedi: the **romantic**, the **slapstick**, and the **social satire**.

The romantic comedy is a love story with its complement of humor, music, and songs. Its plot usually consists of a series of amorous situations focusing on mistaken identity, chance encounters, and use of disguises. The romantic comedy tradition in Filipino cinema is traced to Vicente Salumbides's first silent film, *Miracles of Love*, 1925. The hero, a young doctor, falls in love with the picture of a coed on a magazine cover. He seeks her out at her family home and is mistaken for a domestic servant applying for a job. After a series of funny incidents, the doctor and coed fall in love and elope, bringing the entire household after them on a merry chase before they finally wind up before a justice of the peace to get married. Another silent film in this genre is *Ang Tatlong Hambog* (The Three Braggarts), 1926. Three men courting the same girl show up for a date. One arrives in his flashy car, another shows up in a *calesa* (horse-drawn carriage), and the third one makes his appearance astride a carabao. In the end, the girl chooses the farm boy, showing the period's preference for country life. The couple later indulge in the "first kiss" in Philippine movies.

Other examples of the romantic comedy are the Carmen Rosales–Oscar Moreno tandem in *Si, Si, Señorito* (Yes, Yes, My Lord), 1947; the Pancho Magalona–Tita Duran comedy *Buhay Pilipino* (Filipino Life), 1952; the Nida Blanca–Nestor de Villa starrers *Waray-Waray*, 1954, *Handang Matodas* (Ready to Die), 1956, and *My Serenade*, 1961; and the Gloria Romero–Luis Gonzales romantic comedies *Despatsadora* (Saleslady), 1955, and *Vacacionista* (The Tourist), 1956.

The earliest recorded Filipino slapstick comedy was *Enchong, Ang Medicong Laway* (Enchong, The Spit Doctor), 1915. Both a comedy and a commentary on the medical profession, it reflects the superstitions of rural folk, who have more faith in quack doctors than in men of science. In the slapstick comedy film, one source of laughter is a person's psychological or physical defect. Susan Roces is an incurable chatterbox in *Susanang Daldal* (Susan the Chatterbox), 1962. Matutina of the *John en Marsha* series has a shrill, high-pitched voice. More often, the defect is physical, as in the case of the

toothless Chichay or Rene Requiastas, the cross-eyed Pablo Virtuoso, the big-mouthed Carding of the Reycard Duet, the bag-eyed Doro de los Ojos, the toothpick-thin Palito, the dour-faced Billy "Surot" Vizcarra, the bald Pugo and Togo, or the "thin-and-fat" Bayani and Soto.

In *Tansan vs Tarsan*, 1963, Dolphy, pitted against Vic Vargas, is pitifully asthmatic. The source of laughter in slapstick comedy can also come from uncouth manners and boorish behavior of well-meaning characters. Efen Reyes's unwillingness to take a bath makes him the laughingstock of society in *Pedro Penduko*, 1954.

In another form of slapstick comedy, the characters featured are considered an "abnormal" object of fun because they go against the predominant views of society. Dolphy in *Jack and Jill*, 1954, Roderick Paulate in *Kumander Gringa* (Commander Gringa), 1987, and Joey de Leon in *Barbie*, 1989, portray homosexual or effeminate characters.

Still another form of slapstick derives from toilet humor, as seen in some films of Tito, Vic and Joey, including *The Long Ranger*, 1989, with Rene Requiastas, where the characters make fun of excretory functions.



Nestor de Villa and Nida Blanca in F.H. Constantino's *My Serenade*, 1961 (Mike de Leon Collection)



Manilyn Reynes and Gina Alajar, left, and Roderick Paulate and Elizabeth Oropesa, right
in Soxie Topacio's *Ded Na si Lolo*, 2009 (Cesar Hernando Collection)

Some of the early *bodabil* stage artists rose to fame as masters of slapstick in the Filipino comedy film. Even before the Pacific War, comedians Pugo and Togo already starred in their own film, *Ang Utos ng Hari Hindi Mababale* (A King's Command Is Final), 1941.

The postwar period saw Lopito becoming a full star in *Kenkoy*, 1950, while Tolindoy and Chichay came into their own as *Gorio at Tekla* (Gorio and Tekla), 1953. Other comedians did not have star-billing status but their unforgettable performances have lived on in their films. Gregorio Ticman was outstanding as the *sabungero* (cockfight aficionado) in *Texas: Ang Manok na Nagsasalita* (Texas: The Talking Rooster), 1952, who gambled away his wife and children's future and later became the picture of contrition, and as the tough military sergeant who made a man out of Fred Montilla in *Bondying*, 1954.

The influence of foreign films on local comedy pictures with slapstick cannot be discounted. Canuplin was the local version of Hollywood's Charlie Chaplin in the early 1930s, while Laurel and Hardy, and Abbott and Costello have spawned a number of thin-and-fat comedy duos from Bayani and Soto, Pugo and Togo, Pugak and Tugak, to Dolphy and Panchito. The Lone Ranger and his sidekick Tonto, or Tarzan and his chimpanzee Cheetah, have found their counterparts in Joey de Leon and Rene

Requistas or the Reycard Duet. The Three Stooges inspired the comedy trio of Tito, Vic and Joey who made a number of films before Tito Sotto broke away from the team to enter politics. Among their films are *Give Me Five*, 1985; *Horsey-Horsey*, 1985; *Send in the Clowns*, 1986; and *Shoot That Ball*, 1987.

Aside from the earlier comedians mentioned above, other notable comedians of recent vintage who use both wit and slapstick must be mentioned. Andrew E., Michael V., Bayani Agbayani, and Dennis Padilla are among the more popular comedians of the 1990s. Andrew E. gained popularity with his film *Humanap Ka ng Panget* (Find Someone Ugly), 1990. Michael V.'s films include *Manolo and Michelle Hapi Together*, 1994, and *Rubberman*, 1996. Bayani Agbayani and Dennis Padilla did supporting roles—Agbayani in films like *Pagdating ng Panahon* (When the Time Comes), 1998, and *'Di Puwedeng Hindi Puwede* (No Isn't Acceptable), 1999, and Padilla in *Ang Utol Kong Hoodlum* (My Hoodlum Brother), 1991, and *Mandurugas* (Thief), 1992.

In the 2000s, comediennes made comedy hits, like Ai-Ai de las Alas in *Tanging Ina* (The One and Only Mom), 2003, and Eugene Domingo in *Kimmy Dora*, 2009. Other known comediennes are Pokwang, who starred in *Super Inday and the Golden Bibe*, 2010, and *My Illegal Wife*, 2014, and



Tessie Quintana and Manuel Conde in *Juan Tamad Goes to Congress*, 1959 (Photo courtesy of Nene Urbano)

Rufa Mae Quinto who became famous for her role in *Booba*, 2001. Actors Vhong Navarro and Vice Ganda gained popularity with the films *Mr. Suave*, 2003, and *Praybeyt Benjamin*, 2011, respectively. Child actress Rhyzza Mae Dizon, who rose to prominence in 2012, starred in the film *My Little Bossings*, 2013, paired with child actor Bimby Yap.

Among the comedy films of this period are *Pera o Bayong* (Cash or Basket), 2000; *Pinay Pie*, 2003; *Bcuz of U, Okay Ka Fairy Ko: Enteng Kabisote, The Legend* (You're Okay, My Fairy: Enteng Kabisote, The Legend), *Lastikman* (Plastic Man), and *Otso Otso Pamela-mela Wan*, 2004; *D'Anothers* and *So Happy Together*, 2005; *Binibining K* (Miss K), *Manay Po!* (I Am Gay!), and *Mourning Girls*, 2006; *Agent X-44, Ang Cute ng Ina Mo* (Your Mother Is So Cute), *Angels, Apat Dapat, Dapat Apat* (It Must Be Four, Four Must It Be), *My Kuya's Wedding* (My Older Brother's Wedding), 2007; *Iskul Bukol 20 Years After: Ungasis and Escaleras Adventure*, 2008; *Ang Darling Kong Aswang* (My Darling Aswang), *BFF: Best Friends Forever, OMG (Oh My Girl)*, and *Status: Single*, 2009; *Father Jejemon* and *Mamarazzi*, 2010; *The Adventures of Purezza: Queen of the Riles* and *Pak! Pak! My Dr. Kwak!*, 2011; *Moron 5 and the Crying Lady, Boy Pick Up: The Movie, Kimmy Dora and the Temple of Kiyeme* (Kimmy Dora and the Temple of Nonsense), *D' Kilabots Pogi Brothers,*

Weh?! (The Notorious Handsome Brothers, Really?), and *Sisterakas*, 2012; *Coming Soon, Bromance: My Brother's Romance, Instant Mommy, Raketeros* (Racketeers), *Momzillas, Bingoleras*, and *My Little Bossings*, 2013; *The Amazing Praybeyt Benjamin* and *Moron 5.2: The Transformation*, 2014; *Espesyal Kopol* (Special Couple) and *Pamilyang Love Love* (Family Love Love), 2015.

The third type of comedy is the social satire, where humor is used in order to expose and criticize anomalies or abuses in society, whether economic, political, religious, or social. Manuel Conde's witty portrayal of the bumbling, stumbling, simple-minded folk hero Juan Tamad in the Juan Tamad series exemplifies social satire. These include *Si Juan Tamad* (Lazy Juan), 1947, *Juan Tamad Goes to Congress*, 1959, *Juan Tamad Goes to Society*, 1960, *Si Juan Tamad at si Juan Masipag sa Pulitikang Walang Hanggan* (Lazy Juan and Industrious Juan in Never-Ending Politics), 1963, *Juan Tamad Junior*, 1980, and *Juan Tamad*, 1993. His son Jun Urbano later picked up from where his father left off, with his own *Mongolian Barbecue*, 1991. Another film in this genre, which was popular in the early 1950s, was *Kuwentong Kutsero* (The Rig Driver's Tale). In recent years, *Ded Na si Lolo (Grandpa Is Dead)*, 2009, satirized the different local beliefs and superstitions about dying, wakes, and burials. ✨