

Bodabil



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

During the Japanese occupation, film production in the country was at a standstill and Western movies were banned. The Filipinos were thus entertained by bodabil or the stage show, a form of entertainment in the Philippines which became popular during the Japanese period. Based on the French vaudeville, bodabil was a stage presentation featuring various forms: musical, comedy, and even magic acts, skits, monologues, and acrobatics, among others. Vaudeville acts were first introduced to the Philippines during the American occupation and were performed by visiting troupes.

These entertainers helped make jazz and blues popular in the country. This type of music was later on indigenized by Filipino performers, one of whom was Luis Borromeo, a Cebuano also known as Borromeo Lou. He had returned from America and Canada and introduced “ Classic-Jazz Music” in the country. It is said that he coined the term vod-a-vil, later known as bodabil. The stage shows, which began as intermission numbers in circuses or plays in local theaters, dealt with different topics including Philippine heroes, people, and way of life. Often, the themes of the stage shows were based on American models, but featured Philippine songs like kundimans as well. During the war years, bodabil also highlighted full length plays aside from the usual comedy and musical acts.

Moreover, the shows furtively expressed messages of encouragement for the people disheartened by the war. In 1941, 40 Manila theaters showed bodabil. Among the popularly known bodabil stars were Togo and Pugo, Bayani Casimiro, Dely Atay-Atayan, Chichay, Dolphy, Rogelio de la Rosa, Leopoldo Salcedo, and singers Katy de la Cruz and Atang de la Rama. Source: Tiongson, N. (ed.) CCP encyclopedia of Philippine art, vol. 7.

Manila : Cultural Center of the Philippines, 1994. Photo: Zorrilla Theater,

Manila (1917) (From the Retrato collection of the Filipinas Heritage Library)

<http://www.himig.com>.

[ph/features/39-bodabil](http://www.himig.com/ph/features/39-bodabil)