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SINING BAYAN presents
a play with music about the
Second-Wave Filipino immigrant
experience . . .



America opened her doors to the war bride
but unfriendly hearts forced her outside . . .

VISIONS OF A WARBRIDE

Sponsored by the UNION OF DEMOCRATIC FILIPINOS (KDP)

Berkeley High School West Campus Auditorium

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VISIONS OF A WARBRIDE

[EXCERPTS FROM SOUVENIR PROGRAM]

PROLOGUE: The marketplace of a small provincial town, the Philippines, 1945, a few weeks after liberation day...

Along with Claring, the people are hopeful to overcome the ruins of the war. But lurking in the background are the ills of the old social system, and the return of the U.S.

ACT I, Scene 1: Later that day, the home of Claring's Tio Luis...

Claring's mother, Naty, a widow, argues over Luis' marriage plans for Claring to Max, a Filipino G.I. from America. The arrival of Tony, a childhood sweetheart of Claring, complicates matters.

ACT I, Scene 2: A week later, again at Tio Luis' home...

Claring has agreed to the marriage arrangement, not for love—it is the hardships of Philippine society which compel her to accept Max's promise of a better life in America.

ACT II, Scene 1: Six months later in the U.S. at Claring's apartment in government housing...

Claring faces difficulties adjusting to her new life, but looks forward to the birth of her first child. Her loneliness lessens upon meeting Munding and Dolly Manihog, who invite them to join FACO (Filipino American Community of Oakland).

ACT II, Scene 2: Five months later, a FACO meeting at a church hall...

FACO members discuss issues concerning Filipinos in America. Roque, the club's president, is given a farewell. He symbolizes the old guard who built the Fil-Am community.

ACT II, Scene 3: 1949, two and a half years later, back at Claring's apartment...

Max and Claring now have two children. Their attempts to buy a house are confronted by discrimination.

INTERMISSION

ACT III, Scene 1: 1955, at the church hall...

Relying on Munding's rising influence as FACO president, Dolly expects to win the community's queen contest.

ACT III, Scene 2: 1960, the ladies powder room of Leamington Hotel...

When Munding's sister-in-law wins the contest, Claring and others react with mocking dissention.

ACT III, Scene 3: 1965, at the new FACO Hall...

Erning and Virgie, active FACO members, resort to the same vote-buying and cheating in order to defeat Manihog's daughter in the Teen-Queen contest. The situation erupts in a...!e&*!!

ACT IV, SCENE 1: 1968, a day in the life of Claring...

With the loss of Max, Claring becomes a single working mother.

ACT IV, Scene 2: Blue Shield Insurance Company, several months later...

Due to harsh working conditions, Claring and her co-workers debate pros and cons of building a union.

ACT IV, Scene 3: Claring's home, several months later...

Having stabilized her role as a worker, mother and breadwinner for the family, Claring once again faces the horrors of war—this time Vietnam.

EPILOGUE:

Lisa reflects on her mother's perseverance, political awareness and active struggle to overcome the hardships of an immigrant woman, a mother and a worker.

"WARBRIDES" SCRIPT EXCERPTS

PROLOGUE - in Music

1946 — the Philippines. Dawn in the marketplace of a small provincial town in Pangasinan. Vendors set up their stalls and greet one another, some still sleepy-eyed. Claring, an industrious 18-year old, displays her baskets of produce. When she steps away from her booth to take in the beautiful morning she is filled with happiness and sings.

CLARING: Life is reborn in the marketplace
 All o'er the land once more, human grace
 The end of war has re-opened our eyes
 Now we can start to live a new life.

I can see joy in the people I meet
But behind smiles are sad memories
Though pains of war may linger on
Now better days unfold with the dawn.

(Manong Pablo, a fisherman, enters.)

Look it's Pablo our neighbor
It's been such a long time
(to Pablo) How're your wife and your children
I hope everything is fine.

PABLO: Oh, well, things are alright
 But for one sad change
 Now my son is not here
 With us to share

As I cast my net past the river bend
Oh that painful thought
It strikes me again
That my son is gone
He took ill and died
For the mountains were not safe to hide.

CLARING: (Chorus)
 But the war is all over
 We must realize that now
 Don't just weep for the past
 We must climb out of it somehow
 Take each day as you will

And your life shall be filled
With the hope that yearns
Inside everyone of us.

(Claring's Cho (Uncle) Luis enters, cheerful and vigorous.)

Cho Luis: At last now I can farm my fallow fields
 No more Japanese to take all its yield
 And I hope some day
 That my crops will pay
 For a new plow, my hands they're so worn!

(Cho Luis spots someone in the crowd.)

Cho Luis: Oh no! There's Don Miguel!
 I thought he disappeared for good
 Will he recognize me
 If I bother not to look?
 I hope he will forget
 Those five years with no rent
 But my God if he does
 I'm lost in debt.

(Cho Luis hurries off as Don Miguel grandly strolls on.)

DON MIGUEL: I can finally walk my streets once more
 Now some townfolk here
 I've not seen before
 Should I see an old tenant in the crowd
 I will ask him if he's got my rent!

(He sees Cho Luis eluding him.)

DON MIGUEL: Is that Luis I see
 With his back turned away from me
 I can't wait 'til he pays for my land
 It was not for free!
 Ay, these peasants don't know
 That despite my neglect
 They still owe me the sum — five years in rent!

(Don Miguel hurries after Luis.)

(Enter Celia, a well-dressed young lady of the town)

CELIA: Now the war is past, I return to school
 Mother says I must or I'll be a fool

I would rather wed
Because school's a bore
Now I must go
Since there's no more war.

CLARING: Celia, she is so lucky
To have a chance to go to school
Now she'll learn to read
And to write, maybe English, too!
The pretty clothes and jewelry
That she wears
Have all of the boys glued in stares.

(Enter, San Jose, former town mayor and Japanese collaborator.)

MAYOR: See the people how they look viciously
I wish they'd forgive my dishonesty
But I had no choice
Befriending the enemy
Will they forget and re-elect me?

CLARING: Mister Mayor's the same
He has changed not the slightest bit
You can tell by his clothes
And the way that they try to fit
All he wants is the treasury
And this town to rule
He did well with the Japanese
But we're not fooled!

ALL: (Chorus)
But the war is all over
We must realize that now
Don't just weep for the past
We must climb out of it somehow
Take each day as we will
And our lives shall be filled
With the hope that yearns
Inside everyone of us!

(Three Filipino-American G.I.'s enter, swaggering with big friendly smiles. Max beams dreamy-eyed at Claring, Munding ogles Celia and Ernie flirts with another girl.)

MAX: Munding, I think I love that girl over there!

MUNDING: Max, I like the one
With Greta Garbo hair

MAX: And that Ernie, too.
 Sees one he adores

MAX/MUNDING/ERNIE: Yes, it's great to be back from the war!

CLARING: Look at them, how they flirt!
 All these Filipino G.I.'s
 They've been gone for so long
 So it's not such a big surprise
 But they think girls will go to them
 Left and right...

CELIA: If he asks for a date
 Well, I just might!

ALL: (Chorus, joyously)
 Yes, the war is all over
 We must realize that now
 Don't just weep for the past
 We must climb out of it somehow
 Take each day as we will
 And our lives shall be filled
 With the hope that yearns
 Inside everyone of us!

ACT I, SCENE 1: Later that evening in the yard outside the humble home of Claring's Cho Luis. A woman is crying quietly as the lights come up. It is Rosa, Claring's mother, who is wiping her tears and sighing with resignation over the cooking fire in the lean-to kitchen area. By contrast, Cho Luis excitedly paces back and forth, occasionally peering out into the dark with expectation.

CHO LUIS: Claring? Is that you Claring? I think she's here, Rosa! Ah, no — it's only the neighbor passing. Don't forget, Rosa, after supper make sure she changes into her nice dress — the one she wears to Church.

ROSA: Ay, if only her father was still alive.

CHO LUIS: Yes, but could he have arranged a better marriage for Claring than I have?!

ROSA: But Cuya Luis, I think that... I think she still has hopes for another.

CHO LUIS: (alarmed) Another? Who is he?!

ROSA: His name is Tony, a boy from our old home back in Tarlac.

LUIS: Humph — that boy who became a guerrilla and joined the underground? You said yourself, nobody has seen him after the war. He must have been killed.

ROSA: (makes the sign of the cross) He might still be alive. When we moved here to Pangasinan we hear no more news of our old neighbors and relatives there. Tony might still be alive.

LUIS: Say nothing to Claring of him. And she will forget him when she meets Maximo Castillo. A Pilipino G.I. from America — what a good catch!

ROSA: (sniffles) America — Ay, it's so far away. I will never see my daughter again! And Luis, we don't know much about him.

CHO LUIS: He's from America, he must be rich.

ROSA: But what if Claring goes to America with him and... (starts to wail) and finds out he already has a wife! You know how these soldiers are!

CHO LUIS: Ah, *tsmis* — gossip! Idle gossip.

ROSA: You don't know their customs in America.

CHO LUIS: Maximo is a bachelor and he doesn't even drink, smoke or gamble. And you, Rosa, are a penniless widow. But you can provide your daughter with a good marriage. And he might even help... uh, you know... help me pay the back rent to Don Miguel!

ROSA: So you marry off my daughter to a rich Americano so you can pay off the landlord?!

LUIS: No! Claring is ready for a husband. The war is over, it is time. And if the bridegroom's dowry can help me pay off the rent then good, too! I can keep the land and a roof over our heads. Don't be so ungrateful!

ROSA: I am grateful to you, Cuya Luis. I'm sorry.

LUIS: And later, maybe Maximo and Claring can help us buy back the land from Don Miguel. 'Sus (Jesus), just think my sister, Maximo might be good enough to think of Claring's education and send her back to school.

ROSA: Yes, but.. but *Cuya* Luis...

LUIS: What now?!

ROSA: She is only 18 years old and he is 42 — an old man!

CHO LUIS: And she will end up *matandang dalaga* -- an old maid -- if you stop my plans.

(A woman singing offstage)

Shhh! Here she comes. Don't worry, Rosa, Maximo looks only 30 — he has a baby face. You will see when he comes tonight! Uy — don't tell Claring his age.

CLARING: (entering) *Ka Opo* - I'm home! Good evening, Nanay. Good evening, Cho Luis. I sold everything at the market today!

CHO LUIS: Good girl, I'm so proud of you! You're very enterprising and I've never seen a girl as smart as you. Even though you only studied grade 6, you will go far in this world. You just need the right opportunities to come along! Right?

CLARING: Right, and first thing tomorrow, I'm gonna make some more *bagoong*. You know, I sold out. Everyone in the market says I make the best *bagoong* in Pangasinan.

CHO LUIS: Did you hear that, Rosa?! Your daughter makes the best fish sauce in Pangasinan!

ROSA: (weakly) That's good, Claring.

CLARING: *Nanay*, you look tired. You feel sick?

CHO LUIS: She looks fine.

ROSA: (forced) I'm fine.

CHO LUIS: Uh... tell us the news from the marketplace, Claring.

CLARING: (animated) Each day, more and more people return home from the war. And everyone is happy to see them. The Americanos' army trucks and jeeps race by the marketplace and make so much dust. And all the children laugh and run after them shouting: "Victory Joe! G.I. Joe!" Then the soldiers give them chewing gum and chocolate. Oh, that reminds me... (She pulls out some canned goods and small cartons.) Look!

CHO LUIS: Army rations?!

CLARING: Yes.

CHO LUIS: I stood in line all morning for our rations! How did you get more?

CLARING: The soldiers — especially the Pilipino soldiers from America.

CHO LUIS: (aside to Rosa) That must have been Max. (louder) It sounds like your daughter has an admirer!

CLARING: (laughing) *Agi katawan* (my goodness), Cho Luis! I hope I never have a G.I. admirer from America.

ROSA: Yes, because many of them already have wives waiting for them back in America!

CLARING: You should see them in the town, 'nay — they walk around like this (imitates Munding's macho strutting). And when they give away their army rations to the people, they act like big shots. That's how they get girlfriends in every town where they go.

ROSA: (makes a sign of the cross) Ay, 'susmariosep!

CHO LUIS: Ay 'sus, don't believe everything you hear.

CLARING: (laughing) Yes, Cho Luis. But listen to this — and it's not just idle *tsmis*. The former mayor, Mr. San Jose has a stall in the market. His *querida* watches it for him. Do you know what they sell? Army rations! How do you think he got all those rations, uh? Hah — his excellency Mr. San Jose is now a black market crook!

CHO LUIS: Claring, be careful how you talk!

ROSA: It's no use, *Cuya*, she's been speaking her mind since she was a little girl.

CHO LUIS: *Hoy!* Don't talk about the Mayor like that in public. It's dangerous.

CLARING: You know what else? They say that in Manila, there is a list of names of all those who collaborated with the Japanese. They say that the Mayor's name is there. And all the collaborators on that *makapili* list must go to Manila to stand trial!

ROSA: *Aba* — but you will see — the judge and jury will be his *compadres*, relatives and business partners. People like San Jose will stay in Manila after their trial — to be representatives on the new National Assembly! It will be just like before the war.

CHO LUIS: Worry, worry, worry — that's all you do, Rosa!

ROSA: And don't you worry about the landlord?!

CLARING: Cho Luis, we'll help you with the back rent. You have been so good to

take us in after papa died. We'll do everything we can — won't we 'nay?

CHO LUIS: I am blessed with such a good niece. Claring, uh, sit down. I, uh, want to talk to you. Claring, ever since your papa died, I have tried to be like a father to you. And... uh... well, after we eat supper, why don't you put on your nice dress? We're having company.

CLARING: Who's coming?

CHO LUIS: You will see.

MAN'S VOICE: (offstage) *Ta opo!* (Good tidings)

CLARING: Someone's here already, Cho!

CHO LUIS: But he's too early!

(Out of the dark of the evening, a man has quietly entered. He appears tired and poorly dressed.)

TONY: Good evening to all of you.

CHO LUIS: You're not Max Castillo. Who are you?

TONY: (politely) Aling Rosa? *Kumusta po kayo?* (How are you) Claring, good evening. Don't you remember me?

CLARING: Tony!

ROSA: (overjoyed) Tony! *Ay, salamat! 'Susmariosep!* We thought you were dead! (embraces him) Cuya Luis, it's Tony from my husband's barrio in Tarlac. Tony, this is my brother, Mr. Luis Deogracias. We came to stay with him after Claring's father died.

TONY: Good evening, sir. (shakes his hand)

LUIS: Good evening.

(Tony is courteous, soft-spoken and modest.)

TONY: How are you, Claring?

CLARING: (shyly) Fine.

ROSA: (whispers to Luis) Maybe he has come to "court" Claring! (To Tony) Stay for supper, Tony. Stay the night, too. You've come so far. Claring, get him something to drink. *Ay, 'sus,* how's everyone back

home? How's your mother?

TONY: She is fine, Aling Rosa. She'll be glad to hear you are alive and safe, too.

CLARING: And your papa and brothers and sisters?

TONY: Well... something happened to Paula... and then...

ROSA: (makes the sign of the cross) *Agi katawan!* Your sister, Paula? What happened?

TONY: Dead, Aling Rosa.

ROSA: Dead? Oh, your poor mother and father.

TONY: It's only my poor mother now. My father died too, after Paula.

ROSA: *Ay, diyos ko!* They got sick — your sister and papa?

TONY: No, Aling Rosa, Paula was... (he looks carefully at Cho Luis) You know, she was in the underground. She was a courier.

ROSA: Yes.

TONY: They caught her, Aling Rosa. She was killed.

CHO LUIS: *Animal!* Those damn Japanese show no mercy.

TONY: Sir... it wasn't the Japanese...

ALL: Huh?! What?!

TONY: It was the USAFFE.

CLARING: The USAFFE? You mean the *Americanos*?!

CHO LUIS: No! How can that be? It must have been a mistake!

TONY: No, they knew what they were doing. And when they found out about Paula, they... they came and took my father away and killed him, too.

ROSA: *Ay, Diyos ko!*

CHO LUIS: (confused) Wait — you said the USAFFE? But the Americans are on our side!

TONY: (to Rosa) Your brother doesn't know... about back home?

ROSA: No, I never told him.

CHO LUIS: You never told me what? Look here, Tony, you were a guerrilla with the USAFFE, the U.S. Armed Forces, no? And your sister was a courier and the Japanese found her out — *Diyos ko*, this doesn't make sense. Who betrayed you?

(Tony, Claring and Rosa cautiously look at one another.)

ROSA: Cuya Luis, Tony did join the guerrillas but he was... he was with...

TONY: I was with our own Army, the Hukbalahap.

CHO LUIS: The... the Hukbalahap?!!

ROSA: In Tarlac, many men from our barrio joined the Hukbalahap. You know — the Huks.

CHO LUIS: I know what is the Hukbalahap! Communist bandits! And now I have one in my home! Please, you must go before someone sees you here. I never met a Huk, your reputations are no good! This is no good!

ROSA: Yes, the people in this part of Pangasinan, say the Huks are no good. But in Tarlac the people know it's not true. And in La Union and Pampanga, too. The Huks are good — like Tony.

LUIS: Then why did they threaten poor people like us during the war to give them food and supplies. They are bandits!

TONY: (passionately) That is propaganda from the big landlords and the Americanos!

CHO LUIS: The landlords and the Americanos? That's crazy!

TONY: No, Mr. Deogracias! Remember when the Japanese invaded, many of the big landlords ran away to Manila or they stayed and made deals — collaborated with the enemy, right? Then General MacArthur and the Americans retreated — they left, too. There were only people like us left to fight the Japanese. But now the Americans have returned, people are happy! And now the Americans bring back the big landlords!

LUIS: The Americanos are on our side.

TONY: Listen then, to the story of my comrade Diony and how he died, the story of his unit, squadron 77. When the Americans returned they promised

veterans benefits to all Pilipinos who stayed behind to fight — those who were there in the end to help defeat the Japanese. But after the fighting, the U.S. disarmed Diony's squadron, ordered them to dismantle. "Leave Manila, go back home," was their orders. Squadron 77 obeyed the Americanos but when they reached Bulacan, they were massacred.

CLARING: Massacred?! Why?!

ROSA: Ay, *diyos ko*.

TONY: There are other stories. Like my own squad. When the U.S. troops returned, my squad and other Hukbalahap units fought with them. Together we drove out the Japanese from Floridablanca Airfield. But after the battle, they turned their guns on us! And forced us to lay down our arms. In Pampanga the USAAFE raided the Hukbalahap headquarters. Huks and non-Huks were hunted down, arrested, tortured. There is more to tell, Mr. Deogracias! But it is enough for now.

CLARING: Tony, what will happen to you now? What will you do?

TONY: All Huk units are dismantled, the organization is scattered, so is the leadership. Most of us don't know what to do. And so, we go back to our life before the war — as tenant farmers. *Okinana!* For five years we fought the Japanese, sacrificed everything — but for what?! To pave the way back for the landlords!

ROSA: Here, too, Tony some of the big landlords use the USAFFE troops to collect their back rent from poor farmers. Isn't it true, Luis?

CHO LUIS: Nobody wants to fight anymore. It's peacetime now. Rosa, it's late, what are you waiting for? Let's eat. Claring, help your mother.

(Luis waits until the women move to the kitchen out of earshot.)

CHO LUIS: You must go now. I don't know why you have come but...

TONY: Mr. Deogracias, please... I just came to visit my old friends.

CHO LUIS: Please go. We are expecting company... Uh, Claring's suitor — her future husband.

TONY: Future husband?!

CHO LUIS: His name is Maximo Castillo from America. A Pilipino G.I.

TONY: She loves him?

CHO LUIS: Uh... that is not important.

TONY: Please Mr. Deogracias, it is.

CHO LUIS: You are too late. My niece has already accepted him. See, she has all these gifts from him, all these Army rations. The wedding will be in a few days. And a big feast. Claring wants a better life. He can give it to her. He can send her back to school to finish her education.

TONY: *Okinana — the Americanos!*

TONY: Uh, you seem like a good boy, Tony. But you are like me, a poor tenant farmer. When I was married before I gave my wife nothing but a life of hardship. If you care about Claring please go. Don't try to ruin our plans.

TONY: ... Please give my goodbyes to Claring and her mother.

(Tony slowly picks up his knapsack and leaves, but after a few steps he turns back with a broken heart and bitterness.)

TONY: You are right, Mr. Deogracias. Men like you and me — tenant farmers — we having nothing to offer but hardship.

(Tony exits.)

CHO LUIS: (guiltily to himself) I'm sorry. (then relieved) Ay, Jesus-Mary-Joseph, thank you! Claring — don't forget to put on your nice dress, the one you wear to church on Sunday!

SYNOPSIS

ACT II, Scene 2:

Several nights later, the wedding preparations are full of music and merrymaking, as well as sad goodbyes.

ACT II:

A year later, 1947, Claring is pregnant and lives in government housing in the U.S. She is also very homesick and still uncomfortable with her new husband. They have their first fight and only after Max reveals the fears and sadness of his past and his dreams for the future does Claring forgive him.

When their 2 children are born Claring and Max find more meaning and harmony in their life together. They also start to enjoy active involvement in FACO, the local Filipino-American community organization and its activities ranging from social justice issues to beauty queen contests and raising funds for a community hall. Claring meets other warbrides including Dolly Mendoza, the domineering chairman of the FACO Ladies Committee and Dolly's husband, Munding who is on the fast track for the American Dream and the FACO presidency.

Several years later, Claring and Max are happily about to move into their own house. But the racial prejudice of the new neighbors prevents them from doing so. This provokes Claring and Max into an angry argument with each other. She swears to Americanize her children in order to protect them from future hostilities. But she is confused at what it will cost her very soul and this she realizes when she cannot bring herself to sing a Filipino lullaby to her daughter.

ACT III:

Years later, Claring and Max have become typical of the post-war Filipino-American: hard-working and devoted to their children. But they have also become the insulated American nuclear family. They have stopped attending FACO meetings and community events except for the annual beauty queen coronation. The coronation balls become the touchstone for Claring and the community for the next 10 years — the occasion to catch up on the news in one another's lives.

At the balls the news is generally good except for two disturbing developments. Everyone's children have developed "identity" problems. And the opportunistic Munding and Dolly control FACO with the iron hand of social tradition and "debt gratitude", namely, the *compadre* system and *utang na loob*. It is even said that they stuff the ballot box for the election as well as the annual beauty queen contest! Finally, FACO's women members rally to spearhead an angry opposition against the Mendozas' reign. And Claring can't help but join the fight.

Their efforts culminate in the coronation ball of 1966 — the most fiercely contested queen contest in FACO history. Inevitably, the event erupts into a brawl. The results are a comic spectacle with a sobering comment on the substance and direction of the Filipino community in America.