

Meet Cherish Garcia who has turned street boys into ballet dancers

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Cherish Garcia is the daughter of my cool Tito Greg.

I first met her around 2003 during a casual dinner they hosted for '80s New Wave band Lotus Eaters at home.

Of course I will never forget her!

Though we're not close, I've kept up to date with Cherish's life through social media. I found out she was a ballerina through her username [@hungryballerina](#). I also found out she's been doing a lot of good with her talent.

For one, she has helped change the lives of less privileged boys by teaching them ballet and keeping them off the streets through Don Bosco's [Tuloy Foundation](#).

Tuloy Foundation isn't an orphanage but a place for street children to stay. There, they are offered more than just a roof over their heads and shirts on their backs. They are also schooled in sports and the arts. Ballet is just one of the avenues they can explore.

Cherish first heard about Tuloy Foundation from Tito Greg, who knows Fr. Rocky Evangelista, while her sister also volunteers for Tuloy Foundation in Alabang.

Seven years ago, Cherish, a former dancer and owner of [Academy One Music & Ballet Center](#) took in her first batch of ballet scholars from Tuloy Foundation.



Cherish with John Edmar Sumera at White Lodge Ballet School in Richmond, England, 2015

One of them is John Edmar Sumera, son of a single mom—a seamstress-turned-pedicab driver. His mother sent him to Tuloy Foundation because she couldn't support him anymore.

Benedict Sabularse was sent to the foundation by his grandmother, who wanted to keep him out of trouble.



Benedict Sabularse

In September, the two teenagers will be going abroad to study.

Benedict, 17, will be on a one-year scholarship to [Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Danse de Marseille](#) in France while Edmar will be a scholar at [The Hamburg Ballet School](#) in Germany for two years.

The two boys received other offers from schools abroad after competing in the [Prix de Lausanne](#). Edmar also received scholarship offers from the Royal Swedish Ballet School, Royal Winnipeg Ballet School, New Zealand School of Dance, North Carolina School of the Arts and Central School of Ballet in London. Benedict received another offer from the North Carolina School of the Arts.



Benedict Sabularse at the competition

For me, what is so special about the success of Edmar and Benedict is not that they are underprivileged but that they only started ballet three years ago. We know that the world's best ballet dancers start at the ages of five or six.

“These two boys are gifted. I knew it from the first time they auditioned. Edmar has a natural dancer’s body with nice legs and feet and Benedict has always had this magnetism and energy in his dancing. It is unusual to have that kind of trajectory or accomplishment in three years,” said Cherish.



Benedict Sabularse at Prix de Lausanne

Currently, Cherish teaches 22 students from Tuloy Foundation, including Edmar and Benedict.

Because of ballet, Edmar and Benedict have had the chance to travel and study abroad. Their dream is to be part of the American Ballet Theatre and teach kids in the Philippines maybe 10 years from now as their way of giving back.

“My dream is for them to join a big ballet company in Europe or the US. Now that both boys will be leaving in September to study in well-known ballet schools I think they are getting closer to this dream,” said Cherish.



Cherish and the boys at Pineapple Studios, London

By teaching boys how to dance, Cherish hopes to erase archaic stereotypes about boys who are into ballet. Edmar and Benedict are heterosexual. In fact, I read an article somewhere that Cherish tries to keep them away from girls so they can concentrate on dancing.

“I think it’s a misconception that ballet is effeminate and therefore male dancers are gay. In my school for example, out of all the boys who studied there (Tuloy Foundation), I have had probably one who was gay. I think people who are not in ballet are still ignorant about it. To begin with, boys don’t wear tutus or pink tights and toe shoes. Their movements are very athletic and masculine. Imagine having to carry at least 90 lbs. (average weight of small ballerina) over your head and show no effort?”

Cherish thinks male dancers need more than just grace and talent. They also need to rely on technique and learn how to do movements that push their bodies to the limit without showing effort.

Tuloy Foundation is accepting donations. Thanks to Philippine Airlines, the boys were able to fly to Switzerland to compete in the Prix de Lausanne. Watch their journey in this video.

If you would like to help more children like Edmar and Benedict succeed, please contact Tuloy Foundation at projdev1@tuloyfoundation.org.

To know more, go to <https://www.tuloyfoundation.org/>.