Cultural Syncretism in Filipino Choral Music

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Abstract

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The music of the Philippines is a complex tapestry woven from the influences of Spanish and American colonialism on the cultural identity of modern Filipino composers and the choral music they write. More than a hybrid creation patching one cultural influence against another, Filipino culture embodies the idea of syncretism, which combines two or more cultures to create another entity. This study begins by providing a brief description of Philippine history and the music practices affected by it. Through the research of Philippine music history, Filipino vocal music has reflected an artistic amalgamation of Asian-Indigenous, Spanish, and American influences. This cultural syncretism is prevalent in Filipino choral music, a tradition spearheaded by the nationally-renowned choral group, the Philippine Madrigal Singers, and the plethora of composers emerging through the choir's mission of spreading cultural goodwill. This study focuses on the composers' perspective on creating Filipino music. Five selected Filipino and

Filipino-American composers expressed their cultural identity during interviews about their composition style and selected songs they have written. The composers interviewed for this study were Robin Estrada, Frederick Bayani Mabalot, Saunder Choi, Ily Matthew Maniano, and Matthew Lyon Hazzard. They each spoke about their Filipino identity and how they incorporated that awareness into their original music. This study then analyzes the similarities within their compositions about expressions or aspects of Filipino identity. Trends of cultural expression in Filipino choral music include showing reverence for Catholic traditions through the setting of sacred texts, setting secular texts in dual languages, combining musical elements of Asian and Western contemporary styles, and addressing emotional characteristics as a reaction to real-life experiences or events that have occurred in the Philippines. Filipino culture exists in a diaspora expanding across oceans, and composers choosing to write songs that echo their Filipino identity do so by engaging with varied musical cultures to create their art. This shows how syncretic Filipino culture has become.

Keywords: Filipino, music, choral, syncretism, cultural identity, Filipino composers.

To my parents: Ernie and Ching Fernandez,
who taught me about our Filipino heritage and constantly corrected my Tagalog.
Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat

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Glossary of Filipino Terms

Auit. Translates from the native word meaning "song." A vocal genre developed from mixing Indigenous vocal traditions from the epic with European conventions introduced by the Spanish.

Badiw. An Indigenous vocal form common in the northern regions of the Philippines. Utilizes a leader-chorus form during social ceremonies.

Balitaw. A secular folk song genre developed from mixing native practices with Spanish music conventions.

Chinoy. A colloquial nickname conjugated from Chinese and Pinoy

Filipino. The term to describe people of Philippine origin or descent

Igorot. A native word, meaning "mountaineer," used to describe the Indigenous peoples in the Cordillera Mountains of the northern Luzon region.

Ilustrados. Translated from the Spanish word meaning "enlightened ones" (Wikipedia), this group consisted of middle-class Filipinos educated in Spain during the late nineteenth century.

Kabutihan. Goodness

Kagandahan. Beauty

Kalayaan. Freedom

Kapwa. Shared identity with others

Karangalan. Dignity

Katarungan. Social justice

Katotohanan. Truth

Kulintang. A traditional Philippine instrument originating from the southern regions of the Philippines consisting of different-sized gongs made from iron or bronze.

Kumintang. An Indigenous ritual for warriors parting with their partners before going to battle

Kundiman. A folk song genre for solo voice, traditionally regarded as a love song and elevated to the status of art song in the early twentieth century by composer Nicanor Abelardo.

Lumad. Visayan word for “native” or “Indigenous”

Pabasa ng Pasyon. Tagalog for “reading of the Passion”

Pasko. Tagalog for “Christmas”

Pasyon. A sacred vocal genre developed from the Indigenous epic genre and the Christian tradition of chanting the Passion story of Jesus Christ.

Pinoy. A common and informal term of self-reference Filipinos use to describe anything related to the Philippines or Filipinos.

Rondalla. An instrumental ensemble consisting of Spanish plucked string instruments used in secular folk music.

Sarswela. A musical theater genre introduced by the Spanish in the nineteenth century

Chapter 1

Introduction

Growing up as a second-generation Filipino American has meant an unclarity of what culture is and how that shapes my life. As an American,[1] I have a set of behavioral norms and privileges, yet I also inherit a distinct set of cultural behaviors and expectations related to revering traditional Filipino values. My musical education has been rooted in Western classical conventions. While I have had an awareness of Filipino Indigenous and folk music, I would not have been able to hold any substantive conversation about it before authoring this dissertation.

My overarching intentions are to become more knowledgeable about the performance practice of Filipino choral music, to be able to teach about my cultural heritage, and, in turn, embody this cultural knowledge to shape my own identity further. As a choral music educator today, it is imperative to not only program music celebrating non-Western cultures but to be able to address cultural context as a part of the learning process. Addressing cultural context means taking the time to understand historical or cultural knowledge that may help inform the performance of a choral work. Reading and internet searching present only a sliver of the work. Culture bearers are a valuable resource for this situation, and they are necessary for enriching one's self-research into a musical culture.

I encountered two obstacles requiring research. One involved not knowing how to articulate what makes a piece of music "sound Filipino." The other obstacle required learning about the cultural context behind non-idiomatic Filipino music. I often got confused hearing

[1] Throughout this dissertation, I use the term "American" to refer to the United States, its government, and cultural values.

various Filipino choral arrangements. One Filipino song can sound (speaking in overly generalized terms) "Asian," yet another "Spanish," while another might sound like an American Pop ballad. Clarifying this distinction has meant researching the Philippines's history and learning how its music reflects the culture from any given era.

Background and Statement of the Problem

The music of the Philippines is a complex tapestry woven from the influences left by Spanish and American colonialism. Over time, Filipinos have had to assimilate to two separate Western cultures; however, native core values still exist at the root of Filipino culture as they weave foreign traditions with their own. What is not explicit is whether there is segregation amongst these cultural customs and how a Filipino choral composer chooses to express that in their music.

Although modern musical expression comes from Western idioms, the output of music reflects syncretism in Filipino culture and identity. First, let us define some concepts about culture. Cultural identity is a social construct defined by a shared system of verbal and non-verbal behaviors meaningful to the sense of belonging for a group of members "sharing traditions, heritage, language, religion, ancestry, and similar values and norms of appropriate behavior."[2] For example, the impact of Catholicism on family life shapes an aspect of Filipino cultural identity. Another example is Tagalog and English used in education and daily communication. Identity contains multiple facets—gender, age, spirituality, class, national origin, regional origin, and personal perception of identity[3] —many of which have impacted

[2] Mary Fong and Rueyling Chuang, eds., *Communicating Ethnic and Cultural Identity*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 6.

[3] Fong and Chuang, *Communicating Ethnic and Cultural Identity,* 19-34.

Filipino music. Folk music highlights the regional roots where the subtle differences in Mindanao, Visayan, and Luzon folk songs affect regional identity amongst Filipinos. The Oxford Dictionary defines syncretism as the "attempted union, or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices, especially in philosophy or religion."[4] Added rituals in the Catholic liturgical year are an example of syncretism in religious customs, as is the appropriation of American rock and hip-hop music to create the Filipino counterculture genre called *Pinoy* music.[5] Because of syncretism, Philippine music reflects ethnic and socio-cultural values.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to provide choral conductors and enthusiasts with a contextualized snapshot of what Filipino choral music looks like. The goal is to define the influences behind the Philippines' vocal music tradition and determine to what extent these influences play a role in Filipino choral tradition. After outlining these cultural aspects, the next goal is to determine whether current Filipino choral music mirrors the same syncretism as found in its cultural identity.

Research Questions

To grasp a better idea of the cultural context of Filipino choral music, the following questions guided this study:

1. What historical background helped develop Philippine musical tradition?
2. How does Filipino culture inform its choral music tradition?
3. In what ways does choral music reflect Filipino cultural identity?

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[4] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "syncretism," accessed April 24, 2022, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/196428?redirectedFrom=syncretism#eid.

[5] See Glossary of Terms. *Pinoy* is a slang word Filipinos call themselves. Lockard (1998) uses *pinoy music* as an attempt to define Philippine-style music as it related to the protesting during the 1986 People Power Revolution.

Need for the Study

Choral conductors should consider programming the works of Filipino composers. Just as with programming the music of any culture, choral conductors will benefit from obtaining contextual information. With the material from this study, choral conductors will have more context to address the complexity behind Filipino composers' musical self-expression. This allows the Filipino community to gain exposure and representation in the greater choral field.

Survey of Literature

There are many resources describing the history of the Philippines, including the development of the nation through multiple eras of colonization. Research about the music of the Philippines flowered in the mid-twentieth century. The efforts to shape the nation's identity in the twentieth century explain why more research and documentation appeared. Newer still is seeing when choral music began to increase in popularity. We may have heard of the famous Filipino choral group, the Philippine Madrigal Singers, but the group's origins and role in representing Filipino culture may not be widely known. This literature review aims to research the historical background that helped develop Philippine musical culture. The research will use vocal and choral music as the lens to refine this topic on Filipino culture.

I gathered information using the University of Washington library databases and other internet search engines to find relevant sources about Philippine music history and education, Filipino culture related to music, and Philippine choral music. Although books have appeared in the bibliography, the COVID-19 pandemic limited the ability to obtain physical sources; therefore, much of the literature is from electronic articles from journals, dissertations, and websites. *Grove Music Online* helped provide general overviews of Philippine music. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) is a Philippine government-run website

containing numerous Filipino art and culture articles written by prominent academics. I also procured recent dissertations about assorted topics of Filipino vocal music, including the solo voice art song genre called *kundiman*,[6] liturgical music forms, and choral music.

José Maceda (1917–2004) was one of the leading scholars on pre-colonial, or Indigenous, music in the Philippines. He has published numerous articles for journals and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* that include overviews of Indigenous history and the musical instruments in this culture.[7] Ramon Santos (b. 1941), a student of Maceda, is the Philippines's foremost living musicologist on Filipino music. He also contributed to the New Grove Dictionary, the NCCA website about Indigenous vocal genres, and published a book of four essays on the "Classical Era" of Filipino music.[8] Corazon Dioquino is another author of journal articles and contributes to the NCCA with her overviews of the three main traditions of Philippine music—Indigenous, Spanish colonialism, and American influence.[9] She has also written a compilation guide on written material about the study of music in the Philippines, including an annotated survey of authors and publications.[10] Charles Griffith, Jr.'s 1924 article in

[6] See Glossary of Terms.

[7] José Maceda, "Introduction to Philippine Music," *World of Music* 20, no. 2 (1978): 78-81; José Maceda, Ramon Santos, et al., "Philippines (Republika ng Pilipinas)," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, 2013.

[8] Ramon Santos, "Constructing a National Identity Through Music," *Bulawan: Journal of Philippine Arts and Culture* 13, no. 2 (2003): 20-31; Ramon Santos, *Tunugan: Four Essays on Filipino Music*, (Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2005); Maceda, Santos, et al., "Philippines."

[9] Corazon Dioquino, "Music in the Philippines since 1898," National Commission for Culture and the Arts, accessed August 3, 2020, https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-the-arts-sca/music/music-in-the-philippines-since-1898/; Corazon Dioquino, "Music in the Post-Colonial Philippine Republic," National Commission for Culture and the Arts, accessed August 3, 2020, https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-the-arts-sca/music/music-in-the-post-colonial-philippine-republic/; Corazon Dioquino, "Philippine Music, A Historical Overview," National Commission for Culture and the Arts, accessed August 3, 2020, https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-the-arts-sca/music/philippine-music-a-historical-overview/.

[10] Corazon Dioquino, "Musicology in the Philippines." *Acta Musicologica*, no. 54 (1982): 124-147.

Music Supervisors' Journal is an early document describing three regions of folk music: the Muslim-influenced musical tradition in Southern Philippines, the Spanish-colonized music in the central and northern areas, and the non-Christian mountain tribes in the north.[11]

Adding to the research on pre-colonial and Spanish colonial music history is Irving's book about early Manila and the assimilation and reinterpretation of Spanish cultural music at the time.[12] William Summers has also published articles about colonial Manila. Rubio's 1964 article speaks about Spanish-influenced music, referring to that era of regional music as folk music.[13] Like Rubio, Santos differentiates that "folk music" refers to compositions tied to the Christian-dwelling regions. In contrast, the Indigenous traditions are the music found outside these regions.[14] Therefore, the term "folk" will encompass Spanish history in this study, while "traditional" will refer to Indigenous practice.

Antonio Hila's *Music in History, History in Music* describes the development of Filipino music during the time of the Philippine Revolution through American occupation and post-independence.[15] Hila starts his dialogue with colonial heritage, but his focus is on music during the Philippine Revolution and the era of musical nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century. Christi-Anne Castro's 2011 book, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation,* also mentions

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[11] Charles Griffith, Jr., "Folk Music in the Philippines," *Music Supervisors' Journal* 10, no. 4 (1924): 26, 28, 30, 62-64. This journal's name changed to *Music Educators Journal* in 1934.

[12] David Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[13] Hilarion Rubio, "Foreign Civilizations Reflected in Philippine Music," *Music Journal* 22, no. 2 (1964): 22, 46-49.

[14] Ramon Santos "Traditional Forms of Music." National Commission for Culture and the Arts, accessed August 3, 2020, https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-the-arts-sca/music/traditional-forms-of-music/

[15] Antonio Hila, *Music in History, History in Music.* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2004).

this nationalist period.[16] Her focus, however, is on the formation of a national identity post-independence, remarking on cultural efforts during the 1960s through the 1980s. From these sources, one learns that American musical practices influenced a "Classical" era of music where Filipino composers imitated Western music and a "Nationalist" era where composers integrated folk and traditional elements with Modern-era classical music to create a national identity.[17] Eliezer Yanson's dissertation, "Philippine Choral Music: A Conductor's Guide to Selected Works Composed Between 1900 and 2010," highlights choral composers from these eras with an added category describing an "eclectic" period of choral music writing.[18]

Arwin Tan's recent article surveys Philippine choral singing.[19] Other books focus on the choral music tradition in the Philippines, including a chapter from one called *Nineteenth-Century Choral Music*.[20] Two biographical books about the Philippine Madrigal Singers portray the cultural significance of its founding Choirmaster, Mrs. Andrea Ofilada Veneracion.[21] The dissertation of Jeremy Morada focuses on Indigenous practices incorporated into choral music (the author has not yet published his dissertation at the time I am authoring this dissertation). A few dissertations exist focusing on the *kundiman* vocal art song genre. One written by Michelle Nicolasora highlights its development from an Indigenous vocal form into a classical style art

[16] Christi-Anne Castro, *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[17] Castro, *Musical Renderings*; Hila, *Music in History, History in Music*; Santos, *Tunugan*.

[18] Eliezer Yanson, Jr., "Philippine Choral Music: A Conductor's Guide to Selected Works Composed Between 1900 and 2010," (DMA diss., University of South Carolina, 2010), ProQuest.

[19] Arwin Tan, "A Survey of the Choral Tradition in the Philippines," *Dirigo*, 2022.

[20] Walter Clark, "The Philippines, Latin America, and Spain," in *Nineteenth-Century Choral Music*, ed. Donna M. Grazia (New York: Routledge, 2013), 449-468.

[21] Marjorie Evasco, *A Life Shaped by Music: Andrea Ofilada Veneracion and the Philippine Madrigal Singers*, (Makati City, PH: Bookmark, 2001); Alfred DeVeyra, *MADZ: Almost Everything About the Philippine Madrigal Singers*, (Philippine Madrigal Singers, 2013).

song and the socio-cultural meanings behind performing kundiman.[22] One other dissertation focuses on the Indigenous epic form that incorporates chanting the passion story of Jesus Christ, called *pasyon*.[23]

Aside from providing overviews of Philippine music, the literature discussed assimilation and hybrid interpretations of pre-existing musical practices with foreign influences. Another trend in the literature highlighted various aspects that create a Filipino cultural identity. These themes involve the role of religion, educational shifts, nationalist feelings, and political protest. The most influential sources for these ideas are the books by Irving, Santos, Hila, and Castro. Evasco's book about the Philippine Madrigal Singers and Yanson's dissertation are essential resources for describing Filipino choral music. In this study, the interviews of current Filipino composers will address the state of contemporary Filipino choral music and its ties with cultural identity. The goal is to consider the existence of a syncretic expression of all influences in Philippine music.

Limitations of the Study

There are multiple facets encompassing the construct that is identity. Cultural identity is one of those facets, and it contains an array of characteristics. The cultural aspects within the scope of this research will include the historical makeup of the country and how it affects religion, education, language, and national pride. Factors not covered include the role of the family outside of religion, gender expectations, and economic contexts. The research focuses on

[22] Michelle Nicolasora, "Kundiman: A Musical and Socio-Cultural Exploration on the Development of the Philippine Art Song," (DMA diss., University of Memphis, 2014), ProQuest.

[23] Mary Arlene Chongson, "Pasyon and Holy Week: A Study of Music, Acculturation, and Local Catholicism in the Philippines," (PhD Diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2000), ProQuest. See Glossary of Terms.

vocal music over instrumental music or cultural dance, and, after discussing historical contexts, I intend to narrow the scope further by focusing on choral music.

As we will find out in Chapter 3, choral music flourished in the twentieth century after establishing a music educational system modeled after American institutions. Discussing the evolution of choral music in the Philippines will provide contextual means for this study. The abundance of Filipino folk song choral arrangements is worth noting, though only a fraction is accessible through American publishers. These arrangements show off the beauty of Filipino culture through folk and Indigenous songs; such arrangements are what I consider idiomatic Filipino music. However, we will concentrate on original contemporary music in circulation across the Filipino diaspora for this dissertation. In other words, we will look at non-idiomatic Filipino music and how these works convey cultural expression while not being an explicit representation of cultural heritage.

Therefore, to capture a current picture of how Filipino cultural identity presents itself in choral music, I have chosen to interview living composers stationed across the Philippines and the United States. These composers have varying ties to Filipino national identity, meaning that there is a range of citizenship from Philippine national to Filipino immigrant to American or dual citizenship. The composers suggested specific compositions that exemplify their Filipino identity in these interviews. These pieces are as follows:[24]

- Robin Estrada: *Awit sa Panginoon* and *Paghahandog*
- Frederick Bayani Mabalot: *Ubi Caritas et Amor* and *Stabat Mater*
- Saunder Choi: *Ang Tren* and *A Journey of Your Own*
- Matthew Lyon Hazzard: *a song for mama* and *Angele Dei*

[24] See Appendix for an annotated details for each work.

- Ily Matthew Maniano: *Daluyong* and *Passing Through*

Because these pieces are personal recommendations by the composers, this study will focus on the composers' expressions of cultural identity within these compositions.

Conclusion

The following chapter will provide an overview of Philippine history and its colonial turnover, supported by the research literature. It will also describe some vocal forms that have evolved due to the merging of cultures in the Spanish and American eras of occupation. Chapter 3 will expand on the syncretic ideas suggested in the literature exhibiting Philippine culture through vocal and choral music. Chapter 4 will introduce the composers interviewed for this study and include a summarization of their interviews. Since each composer gave examples of their original music explicitly tied to their Filipino identity, Chapter 5 will examine how they do so. We will also explore evidence of syncretism in these compositions. Chapter 6 will conclude this study by discussing the findings and suggesting ways for further research.

Chapter 2

History of the Philippines and Its Vocal Music

Introduction

Many Filipinos and others exposed to Filipino communities have perceived music and singing as synonymous with modern Filipino culture, whether this talent exists through choral music or in karaoke. Singing in the Philippines was prevalent before any Western interactions. Referencing the literature of this study, the focus of this chapter is to examine Philippine history through the lens of vocal music. This chapter will outline vocal forms and genres unique to Filipino music. Although the primary focus is on the voice, this research will mention instruments from time to time.

Before we get into an overview of Philippine vocal music, let us first understand some demographics and a brief history of the country. The Philippines is an archipelago consisting of over 7,100 islands in the Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia. There are seventy-seven provinces and sixteen regions; the primary areas are Luzon in the north, the central Visayan islands, and Mindanao in the south.[25] The religious makeup of the country includes Christianity in the Luzon lowlands and Visayas region, Islam in the southernmost part of Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan, and Indigenous beliefs that are prevalent in the mountain region of Luzon and Mindanao and Palawan.[26] The archipelago's proximity to Malaysia and China influenced its Indigenous culture and language: many indigenous words in the Filipino language come from Malay roots, and the

[25] Luzon is both the name of the largest island, and the name of the northern region of islands. The Visayan islands are also known as the Visayas. Mindanao, like Luzon, is the name of an island and the region of islands

[26] Dioquino, "Philippine Music, A Historical Overview."

bamboo and bronze instruments commonly used during the pre-colonial era of the Philippines have similarities to ancient Chinese instruments.[27]

A History of Colonization

The history of the Philippines involves a long stint of colonization. The arrival of Spanish explorers in the 1500s began the formation of the country we know today. Spanish culture dominated the Indigenous peoples since these explorers claimed the islands and named them after King Philip II of Spain in 1521. During this time, the term "Filipino" referred to "Spanish citizens of the Philippines,"[28] However, it has extended to describe any inhabitants of the Philippines, including those who converted to Christianity, the Spaniards who married the Indigenous, and their offspring. The Indigenous peoples and the Spanish were not the only inhabitants in the Philippines: Dutch, British, Indian, and Chinese people, among many others, were present due to Manila being a trading hub in the Pacific. Chinese residents settled in Manila celebrated their cultural customs tangentially with the Christianized population.[29]

The Spanish held their claim over the Philippines from 1521 to 1898, well over three hundred years. During this period of colonization, Filipinos lived as Spaniards, but they did not receive the same rights as Spaniards. Filipino men would travel to Spain for a liberal arts education. Filipino intellectuals, named the *Ilustrados*,[30] grew unhappy with Spanish monks abusing their power and creating social inequalities between Filipinos and Spaniards. In 1892,

[27] Griffith, Jr., "Folk Music in the Philippines," 26.

[28] Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint*, 32. Irving primarily used "Filipino" to refer to the Indigenous peoples of the Philippine islands.

[29] Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint*, 227.

[30] See Glossary of Terms. Jose Rizal (1861–1896), a national hero, was one of the most prominent figures of the Ilustrado class. His 1887 novel *Noli Me Tangere* him executed for sedition.

the Ilustrados started a secret society named Katipunan, gathering more people discouraged by social injustices. The Ilustrados would discreetly expose political and social class issues using the arts, literature, and music. The famous book *Noli Me Tangere* by José Rizal was an example of revolutionary material, which depicted the abuse of power by Catholic monks and a satirically idealized portrait of the essential Filipino lifestyle. "Maria Clara" —a character from the *Noli* caricaturing a perfect young Filipina—often describes dances and music exhibiting Spanish cultural influence.

The secret Katipunan Society could not remain a secret. The Spaniards inadvertently discovered its existence, which hastily started the Philippine Revolution in 1896, leading to two years' worth of hostilities.[31] This event is meaningful because the Philippines was the first Asian nation to successfully break away from colonial rule and declare itself an independent republic. It revealed the Filipino's struggle for freedom that became embedded into the fabric of their identity. However, the flag of the First Republic of the Philippines did not wave for long.

Meanwhile, the United States of America (US) supported Filipinos and Cubans in their struggle against Spanish rule—this was one of the causes of the Spanish-American War. American military interference helped the Philippine people declare independence from Spain. The Treaty of Paris in 1898 ended the Spanish-American War, which resulted in Spain ceding Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to become US commonwealths. At first, the Philippines did not accept the transfer of power to the Americans. The Philippine-American War started in 1899. It delineated the second phase of the Philippine Revolution, during which guerilla warfare

[31] Bernardita Reyes Churchill, "History of the Philippine Revolution," National Commission for Culture and the Arts, accessed August 3, 2020, https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-cultural-heritagesch/historical-research/history-of-the-philippine-revolution/.

resumed against the American military.[32] General Aguinaldo had been leading the revolution, but in 1901, American troops captured him, which led to his surrender and pledge of allegiance to the United States. Soon after, American culture quickly worked to erase Spanish culture to build up a Philippine governmental structure that would take the country toward true independence.

During World War II, in December 1941, just after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese army invaded the Philippines. Japanese occupation lasted about three years, from 1942 to 1945. Though there was a brief attempt at implementing Japanese culture in the Philippines during this occupation, musical traditions remained unchanged aside from banning specific musical works with highly political and seditious themes. American troops returned under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur to defeat the Japanese and regain control of the Philippines. The battle to retake Manila came at the cost of American forces bombing the historic Spanish district Intramuros, tragically destroying most of the music manuscripts from the nineteenth century.[33] Following World War II, the United States government granted the Philippines independence on July 4, 1946. Despite this, American culture still influenced Filipino society, and the American government continued to back politicians while maintaining military operations in the country.

Although the Philippines finally gained true independence, hundreds of years of foreign influences, especially that of American culture, continue to impact Philippine culture. Scholarly research began to illuminate the pre-colonial customs of the Indigenous peoples. We must

[32] Bernardita Reyes Churchill, "The Philippine-American War (1899-1902)," National Commission for Culture and the Arts, accessed August 4, 2020, https://ncca.gov.ph/about-ncca-3/subcommissions/subcommission-on-cultural-heritagesch/historical-research/the-philippine-american-war-1899-1902/.

[33] William Summers, "Listening for Historic Manila: Music and Rejoicing in an International City," *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture* 1 (1998): 206.

consider Indigenous practices, assumedly the foundational traditions of the Philippines, alongside colonial influences when looking at Filipino culture at large, vocal music included.

The following section will begin by describing the vocal traditions of the Indigenous peoples of the Philippines. Then we will see how those vocal traditions evolved with the influence of Spanish religion, leading to the development of a sacred choral tradition. Following that will be the effects of American authority over the Philippine commonwealth. The last section will highlight the political and cultural events post-independence and how they affected Philippine classical music.

Indigenous Vocal Practices

Pre-colonial indigenous Philippines consisted of over one hundred cultural-linguistic groups. After centuries of colonization, only ten to twenty percent of the country's population maintains their Indigenous culture to this day.[34] Sadly, that number is dwindling as modern society makes it increasingly complex for the Indigenous Peoples to live in traditional ways. Almost two-thirds of that ten to twenty percent reside in Mindanao's southern region. Muslims also live in the Mindanao region; thus, the Spaniards referred to this region as the *Moros* region, reminiscent of the Moors of Spain.[35] Despite the generalized term, there is a distinction between the Muslim culture and the Indigenous culture in the Mindanao region. The largest Indigenous group in the Mindanao region, called *Lumad*, practices neither the Islamic nor Christian faiths, yet they have musical practices slightly influenced by Muslim culture.[36] Lumad is simply a

[34] Maceda, Santos, et al., "Philippines."

[35] Oxford English Dictionary defines "Moor" as a member of a Muslim people of mixed Berber and Arab descent inhabiting north-western Africa (now mainly present-day Mauritania), who in the 8th cent. conquered Spain, accessed April 24, 2022, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/121965?rskey=EosP2I&result=2#eid.

[36] Maceda, Santos, et al., "Philippines."

Visayan word for "native" or "Indigenous." In the northern Philippines, the other third of the Indigenous population—referred to as *Igorot*, a native word for "mountaineer"—reside in the Cordillera Mountains of Luzon. Lastly, a small group of Indigenous people in the Visayas region holds three percent of the current Indigenous population.

The vocal practices of the Indigenous Peoples consist of various genres with different names across tribes. These songs have distinct or unique functional purposes, including work songs, prayer chants, songs for battle, mourning the dead, courtship, festivities, epics, and children's songs.

The Northern Region

In the northern region, the *badiw* is the main vocal form.[37] The badiw is a song form used for various ceremonies and occasions. One person is a designated leader singing a verse, and the community responds by repeating the last syllables of a line—like a call and response—which then the leader prepares to sing the following line. The leader and chorus sing in a relaxed, natural speaking style.[38] Griffith, Jr. described the music of the Igorot people: "General characteristics of Igorot music are: pentatonic scale, sudden leaps down an octave, curious catches in the voice which can be reproduced in our notation only by acciaccaturas, and accelerandos in tempo occurring at the same moment with decrescendos in tone."[39] Though this description was written in the 1920s, and more can be said now about indigenous traditions, it is

[37] Maceda, Santos, et al., "Philippines." See Glossary of Terms.

[38] Maceda, Santos, et al., "Philippines."

[39] Griffith, Jr., "Folk Music in the Philippines," 63. Keep in mind that this was the description of northern indigenous music written in 1924, which can be suspect with limited information stemming from a result of the period.

not surprising to find the pentatonic scale used in this style of music, as it is a standard tonal system in other parts of Asia.

The Southern Region

In the southern region, the Indigenous people produce vocal tones in two ways. One is a relaxed, natural style of singing. Second, songs influenced by Muslim culture use a tense, high-pitched style with melismatic phrases.[40] The epic is a common vocal form in Mindanao, consisting of one singer/storyteller who sings about heroes or gods, performing seated or lying down, as a means of entertainment lasting hours—or overnight on festive occasions.[41] This style of vocal storytelling remained popular during the Spanish occupation and evolved into a Christianized genre, which we will discuss later.

Although the Lumad people have a singing tradition, the southern Indigenous region is more known for its distinctive instrumental music accompanying dancing. It is worth mentioning the *kulintang* because it is a traditional instrument unique to the Philippines and has a place in defining Philippine national music.[42] Akin to the Javanese gamelan, the kulintang is an instrument of different-sized gongs made from iron or bronze. A kulintang ensemble consists of the players that play these gongs. Each player is responsible for playing a pattern simultaneously with the other kulintang players.

Spanish Colonization

The earliest documented arrival of Western explorers was in 1521. Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, serving under the Spanish court, arrived in Cebu, an island in the middle

[40] Maceda, Santos, et al., "Philippines."

[41] Maceda, Santos, et al., "Philippines."

[42] See Glossary of Terms.

region of the Philippines. As Magellan tried to establish a settlement there, Cebuano chief Lapu-Lapu fought and killed him and his troops. In 1571, Spanish conquistador Miguel Lopez de Legazpi established a settlement on Luzon, a settlement known as present-day Manila. Catholic monks traveled with the conquistador, and monks of other Catholic orders arrived with more incoming Spanish officials. The first religious order in the Philippines was the Franciscans, followed by the Jesuits, Dominicans, and the Augustinian Recollects.[43] Typical of colonization at the time, the Spaniards took over lands, and monks converted the Indigenous peoples to Catholicism, transforming native customs to fit within the Western religious culture.

While aiming to Christianize the Indigenous peoples, the early Spanish missionaries learned their language and customs but taught Spanish conventions centered around Catholicism. Spaniards documented the natives' affinity for singing as they heard various indigenous prayer chants and work songs. The monks eventually censored or modified these songs' texts and rituals so that they would fit within a Catholic framework.[44] They introduced the Order of the Mass and would give the traditional Homily in both Spanish and Tagalog. Eventually, Catholic tradition seeped into native daily life and spread across the islands.

When daylight is at its shortest of the year—the Winter Solstice, also known as the Advent season for Christianity—the Spanish monks modified the daily mass time to accommodate native farmers wishing to use as many daylight hours as possible. This led to an additional Filipino tradition called Simbang Gabi, a novena cycle of night masses leading to Christmas Day. With the ceremonial Mass, the congregation would sing hymns and carols.

[43] William Summers, "Manila," *Grove Music Online*, ed. Deane Root, 2001.

[44] Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint*, 76.

Eventually, Filipinos took to writing their own carols for *Pasko* in the Filipino language, though the music retains Western formats.[45]

Vocal Genres Altered for Religious Use

The new Western customs fascinated the Indigenous peoples, and as they learned European singing conventions and musical forms, they melded them with some of their vocal traditions. One result is a hybrid genre called *auit*,[46] which means "song." It modifies the indigenous story-telling epic vocal form and incorporates a more melodic and tonal line. The auit became an important compositional style that included religious texts for teaching Catholic values.

Another example of a Filipino-specific vocal genre is the *pasyon*, also known as *Pabasa or Pabasa ng pasyon*,[47] a three-day-long ritual consisting of epic chanting of the Passion story of Jesus Christ during Holy Week. Singers in pasyon chanting can perform them *a cappella* or accompanied by guitar. For pasyon singers, the epic storyteller leader sings, and the other participants respond through repetition. Because the chanting lasts multiple days, the lead role might shift while people take turns leading the pasyon chant. The Pabasa encompasses the tension and resolution between maintaining Indigenous culture and accepting Spanish Catholic teachings. As a result, it is a medium that expresses the syncretic nature of the lowland Filipino culture: people can come and go, gather, and socialize during this event. The popularity of this ritual extends outside of the church to this day, as the Pabasa can occur in a shopping mall or at

[45] *Pasko* is Tagalog for Christmas. The Filipino Christmas "season" begins as early as September and lasts into January. See Glossary of Terms.

[46] See Glossary of Terms. The *auit* spelling in Tagalog evolved to *awit* and currently encompasses a broader term for "song" that Filipinos use to refer to non-religious contexts (Irving 2010).

[47] *Pabasa ng Pasyon* translates to "reading of the Passion." See Glossary of Terms.

home with a small family gathering. Rather than being a formal religious rite, the pasyon incorporates an informal, social networking aspect.

Sacred Music Tradition

Since one of the methods used to convert the Indigenous peoples to Christianity was teaching Catholicism to the young—who would then go home to their families to teach them what they had learned—the Franciscan monks had trained boys in Gregorian chant and polyphony. In a choir school established in 1606 in Lumbang, Laguna, as many as four hundred boys were learning this style of sacred music.[48] By the 1650s, there was a profusion of skilled Filipino musicians comparable to musicians in Spain. In Manila, four different missionary orders established prominent boy choirs. The Colegio de Niños Tiples (School of Boy Sopranos) de la Santa Iglesia Catedral, founded in 1742 by the Archbishop of Manila, is the most well-known example.[49] This boy choir school trained its students in solfeggio, composition, organ, and other instruments used in sacred music and mass services. It became the most notable form of music education established during Spanish rule.[50]

Like Spain during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but unlike other European countries of the period, the music performed was in the *stile antico* tradition of polyphonic writing.[51] Sacred music genres such as motets, masses, and *villancicos* were examples of the

[48] Dioquino, "Music in the Post-Colonial Philippine Republic."

[49] Maceda, Santos, et al., "Philippines."

[50] Summers, "Listening for Historic Manila," 216.

[51] *Oxford Dictionary of Music* defines *stile antico* as "old style." Term to describe church music written after *c.*1600 in an archaic style, in imitation of Palestrina, by Soriano, Anerio, and Allegri, accessed April 25, 2022, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199578108.001.0001/acref-9780199578108-e-8708?rskey=TaSrp8&result=8596.

choral genres composed.[52] Filipinos eventually learned to write in this tradition, and the documented Filipino composers of this time were solely composers for the church. Filipino musicians, especially the cantors, became a part of the educated elite by the nineteenth century.[53] Filipino composers became more notable, though most of their compositions were destroyed during the World War II Intramuros attack. Marcelo Adonay (1848–1928) was best known as a sacred music composer in the Philippines during the nineteenth century, and some of his works survived.[54]

The Birth of Filipino Folk Song

Sacred music was not the only musical life during colonization. Filipino folk music heavily reflects the secular music traditions from Spain. Like the auit transforming out of Indigenous singing tradition, the *balitaw* is a specific type of secular folk song genre from native practices.[55] Balitaw are usually upbeat and performed during festivities, telling little stories about peasant life. The Spaniards also introduced dance forms and orchestral music to the natives. The *rondalla* ensemble emulates Spanish plucked string ensembles for dances such as the fandango, polka, and jota.[56] A rondalla ensemble is an instrumental group unique to Filipino folk music, and choral arrangements of folk songs will imitate the string accompaniment over a melody.

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[52] *Oxford Dictionary of Music* defines *villancico* as a 16th-century choral composition, like cantata, generally on subject of Christmas, for soloists, choir, and strings and/or organ, accessed April 25, 2022. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199578108.001.0001/acref-9780199578108-e-9526?rskey=DV2Gf0&result=9407.

[53] Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint*, 189.

[54] Clark, "The Philippines, Latin America, and Spain," 451.

[55] See Glossary of Terms.

[56] See Glossary of Terms.

Filipinos widely appreciated European opera and the *zarzuela*, a Spanish version of musical theater or operetta.[57]

Another folk song style is the ballad-like kundiman, mentioned earlier as a romantic love song genre, which eventually became the European equivalent of an art song in the twentieth century. There are two beliefs about the origin of the term kundiman. One thought is that it comes from the phrase "*kung hindi man*," poetically translated to "though I am not worthy," which is a text that came from early serenades.[58] Another interpretation is that it originates from a tribal ritual for warriors before going to battle, the *kumintang*.[59] In the kumintang, warriors would sing and dance with their significant others, potentially saying their goodbyes before going off to fight.[60] The evolution of the kundiman in the nineteenth century took on a specific form and performance style. It became akin to a popular ballad style, typically performed by men accompanied by guitar or piano to serenade a woman they wished to court. Though primarily viewed as love songs, the melancholy themes of kundiman songs sometimes carried a deeper meaning that was often rooted in expressions of sadness due to the oppressive Spanish government. The genre was always set in a triple meter with two sections: the first set in minor mode and the following section modulating to the parallel major.[61] When listening to these songs, the sad-sounding melodies and emotionally performed modulations draw the listener's attention.

[57] See Glossary of Terms. Much like how the Filipinos' adopted spelling of the passion modeled after the Spanish pronunciation of *pasion*, the Philippine spelling for the Spanish musical theater genre, zarzuela, became *sarswela*.
[58] Nicolasora, "Kundiman," 2.

[59] See Glossary of Terms.

[60] Nicolasora, "Kundiman," 3-4.

[61] Nicolasora, "Kundiman," 7.

People today deem Philippine folksong as the songs influenced by Spanish music. These include kundiman, lullabies, and songs accompanying dances such as the polka, paso doble, and fandango. Melodies are singable with structured phrasing. Musical elements typical of Spanish music, like the augmented second interval or a harmonic progression of parallel chords, also became prevalent in Filipino ballads.

American Occupation

Compared to the reign of the Spanish Empire, the American occupation in the Philippines was short—less than fifty years. Following the Philippine-American War, the United States held the Philippines intending to restructure its governmental system, including separating the Catholic church from state affairs. While Catholicism remains the predominant practiced religion in the Philippines, American Protestant missionaries arrived to break up Catholic control of religious beliefs. Emilio Aguinaldo, the revolutionary who ceded control to the Americans and became the first President of the Philippine Commonwealth, supported the Protestant movement. He appointed Gregorio Aglipay as the founder of the Philippine Independent Church in 1898. Aglipay saw the conflicts and discrimination that Filipino priests experienced from Spanish friars and created a church doctrine that still reflected Judeo-Christian tradition with a spirituality encompassing a relationship with God, community, and creation.[62] The religious freedom that the American government offered due to its Constitution resonated with the Philippine core value of *kalayaan* (freedom) and a more significant core value of *kapwa* (shared identity with others).[63] Other values shared with Protestant teaching include *katarungan* (social justice) and

[62] "Aglipayan Spirituality," Diocese of the Greater Manila Area, last modified May 8, 1998. https://www.dgma.ph/articles/resources/aglipayan-spirituality.html.

[63] Raymond (2008) defines *kapwa* as "fellowmen", though the meaning of *kapwa* goes deeper than that, as it pertains to otherness and sharing an identity where one must treat another with the equality that one would treat themselves. See Glossary of Terms.

karangalan (dignity).[64] Filipino composers adopted Protestant hymns and other biblical texts as they wrote for the church and school music books.

In addition to introducing Protestantism, the US government instituted a public-school education system. They set mandates removing Spanish colonialism and Filipino Indigenous culture from the political infrastructure.[65] The mandated language for instruction was English. *The Progressive Music Series* by Silver-Burdett anchored the music education curriculum.[66] With this ubiquitous collection amongst American schools, Filipino children learned American patriotic songs, Protestant Christian hymns, and other children's songs in English. The US introduced band music and allowed the rondalla ensemble to remain a musical ensemble in schools. In 1908, the University of the Philippines (UP) was the first public institution for higher education. Hence the UP Conservatory of Music taught Western classical music to its first students.

Post-colonial Filipino culture lent itself to the appreciation of classical music. At the UP Conservatory, music students and composers studied Western European art music and started composing in those genres. The most talented students traveled to America on Fulbright Scholarships to earn degrees from prestigious schools in the US. Studying classical music showed the effects of Filipino culture assimilating American musical culture. Within the idioms of classical music, composers sought after "high art music" that still fit the Filipino identity. Nicanor Abelardo (1893–1934) was a composer known for elevating the kundiman to the

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[64] Joseph Raymond, "Colonial Apostles: A Discourse on Syncretism and the Early American Protestant Missions in the Philippines," *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* 8, no. 1 (2008): 45. See Glossary of Terms.

[65] Raul Navarro, "Ang Musika sa Pilipinas: Pagbuo ng Kolonyal na Polisi, 1898-1935," *Humanities Diliman* 2, no. 1 (2001): 51-52.

[66] Navarro, "Ang Musika sa Pilipinas," 54.

equivalent of European art song genres such as German *Lieder* and French *chansons*. The trend for propagating Filipino national identity in classical music gained traction once the Philippines became an autonomous commonwealth of the United States. Philippine President Manuel L. Quezon proclaimed Tagalog to be the basis for the national language of the Philippines, and the UP Conservatory of Music responded by encouraging students to study and compose music utilizing folksong, which "represents the essence of the nation."[67] Therefore, compositions of this time remained within conventional Western art forms and began to incorporate folk melodies or adapt Filipino instruments to play with the European style orchestra.

Apart from classical music, American movies and popular music also significantly impacted Filipino culture. Many composers ventured into writing Pop songs, ballads, and film scores. Miguel Velarde, Jr. (1913–1986) composed the kundiman love song *"Dahil Sa Iyo"* (Because of You) for the 1938 movie *Bituing Marikit*, which later gained international popularity in the 1960s. Velarde rejected a five-figure contract from an American artist to record "Dahil Sa Iyo" because the singer wanted to change the title to English, reasoning that he "wouldn't sell the identity we are trying hard to establish. The merits of the song is its identity."[68] This shows how Filipino artists created an art form that retained elements of their roots. Following independence, the expression of national identity through music blossomed.

Philippine Nationalism

After World War II and Filipino Independence, Filipino culture and music became freer to revive, explore, and experiment with a creative national identity. One notable composer was

[67] Hila, *Music in History, History in Music*, 63.

[68] Helen Samson, *Contemporary Filipino Composers: Biographical Interviews*, Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing Company (1976), 223.

Lucio San Pedro (1913–2002). He arranged a folk lullaby titled "*Sa Ugoy Ng Duyan"* (The Swing of the Cradle) into a choral movement of his 1956 symphonic composition *Suite Pastorale*. This musical material demonstrates the effort to incorporate traditional Filipino music into the classical realm.

Two other notable composers of the post-commonwealth era were Lucrecia Kasilag (1918–2008) and José Maceda, mentioned in the previous chapter as one of the leading scholars in Filipino music and the rediscovery of Indigenous music traditions. Kasilag experimented with combining Filipino Indigenous music with the Western orchestra. At the peak of her career in the 1960s, she wrote for various performing forces utilizing Philippine instruments, such as *"Felisiana"* for mixed voices and Asian instruments in 1965.[69] With Kasilag as a pioneer, the trend of reviving Indigenous musical practices within Classical music rose during the 1960s. Maceda also composed works utilizing native instruments and used Indigenous traditions melded with Modernist philosophies to break classical composition conventions. This amount of musical exploration and political effort to enhance the face of Filipino culture helped shape a Philippine national identity.

Ferdinand Marcos became President of the Philippines in 1965. His wife, Imelda, took charge of establishing what would be the cultural face of the Philippines. Imelda was known for having lavish tastes, as she famously owned three thousand pairs of shoes. With that taste for beauty, Imelda worked to develop Manila. Among her efforts, she was vital in establishing the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), founded in 1966. Her purpose was to promote and preserve "the best of Filipino arts and culture" with the values of *katotohanan, kagandahan,* and

[69] Samson, *Contemporary Filipino Composers*, 97. The use of "Asian" refers to Filipino Indigenous instruments, though they are categorized under a larger continental description.

kabutihan (truth, beauty, and goodness).[70] Imelda used the arts, including established dance troops and musical groups, to serve as diplomatic presentations of Filipino identity.

During this time, Andrea Ofilada Veneracion—professor and choral conductor—founded the UP Madrigal Singers in 1963. [71] Veneracion started this group to share her love of Italian madrigals. Imelda Marcos often used the UP Madrigal Singers to serve as cultural ambassadors by performing at dinners at Malacañang Palace. Because of this, ensemble norms included performing European choral repertoire and contemporary folksong choral arrangements of the time, showing off the best aspects of Filipino culture. The UP Madrigal Singers eventually dropped its ties with the University of the Philippines, leading to the ensemble's current name, The Philippine Madrigal Singers, when their status was promoted to be the national representative choir in the CCP. Having won top prizes in prestigious international competitions and continuously touring worldwide, the group maintains a world-renowned reputation.

Events Leading to the EDSA People Power Revolution

Despite efforts during the 1960s and 70s to shape Filipino culture and a definition of Filipino national identity, the 1970s and 80s were also a period of one of the most significant political moments in Philippine history. Rumors of a Communist Party insurgence threatened the Marcos' political power. Towards the end of Ferdinand's constitutional term as president—not surprisingly modeled after the US Constitution—he declared martial law in 1972, which extended his dictatorial power for fourteen more years. Marcos' tyrannical political power eventually strained the Filipino people. He remained a dictator until 1986, when the people could no longer withstand his profuse corruption.

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[70] "About Us: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas," Cultural Center of the Philippines, accessed March 2, 2022, https://culturalcenter.gov.ph/about-us/. See Glossary of Terms.

[71] Evasco, *A Life Shaped by Music*, 51.

Eleven years into martial law, by 1983, a group of military officials secretly gathered to investigate the corruption behind other officials receiving higher appointments or jumping ranks without merit. The Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) led this breakaway military group to pledge allegiance to the Philippine constitution rather than loyalty to the President.

In 1986, Marcos declared an impromptu election to prove that the Philippine people still wanted him to remain in office; however, the election's outcome found Ferdinand accused of fraud. The coalition of RAM members defected from Marcos, and they fortified themselves in their military base on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, or EDSA for short. The military sect still supporting Marcos drove tanks to the base, ready to use them if the leaders could not reach a peaceful negation. A neighboring monastery started praying, and people began protesting the egregious display of power. Radio stations played meaningful nationalist anthems, including the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) alma mater hymn, as a call for other military officials to support the RAM group. People on the streets sang protest songs, performed songs from revolution-themed sarswelas, offered flowers, and prayed during this People Power Revolution.

The People Power Revolution lasted for four days and was heavily televised. It concluded when Ferdinand Marcos finally stepped down from office. There was no bloodshed, and this event made an impression on the world as a nonviolent protest full of songs. Filipino singer-songwriter Jim Paredes wrote the song *"Handog ng Pilipino sa Mundo"* (Filipino Gift to the World) as an EDSA anthem in April 1986. Multiple celebrity singers recorded vocals on this track, modeled similarly to Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie's "We Are the World" from the year prior.

A second and third EDSA protest occurred in 2001. The first to remove President Joseph Estrada from office due to corruption and an impeachment trial, and the second, four months

later, following his arrest. However, these protests did not bear the same weight or significance as the first People Power Revolution.

Kundiman: From Folk Song to Protest Music

Kundiman portrayed a form of patriotism around the Philippine Revolution, where themes of love contained undertones of yearning for liberty and unrequited love being a symbol of longing for independence from Spanish oppression.[72] Aspects of Filipino identity influence its performance practice—reverence for women, prioritizing family, and religious devoutness—all enacting a dramatic history.[73] Because of this, Filipinos feel a sense of national pride when hearing or singing some kundiman.

During the People Power Revolution, one of the most well-known nationalistic protest songs was "Bayan Ko," a revolutionary kundiman originally composed in 1928 by Constancio de Guzman with text by José Corazón de Jesús (1894–1932). Even today, "Bayan Ko" is a revered anthem of the Filipino people apart from the official Philippine national anthem, "Lupang Hinirang." It represents elements of national and cultural identity. The first section in the minor key talks about the country of the Philippines as though it were a woman whose tenderness and beauty attracted foreigners, which led to suffering. The second section musically switches to the parallel major key—as expected in the kundiman form—and references the freedom of a bird to fly. Still, it will cry if encaged (*"Ibon mang may laying lumipad, kulungin mo at umiiyak"*/ Even a bird has the freedom to fly, encage it, and it will cry).[74] The song took on a more substantial meaning of protest in 1986. During EDSA I, people sang "Bayan Ko" with a slight lyric change:

[72] Castro, *Musical Renderings*, 181.

[73] Nicolasora, "Kundiman," 96-98.

[74] Ernesto Fernandez. A poetic translation was provided by the author's father.

instead of *"kulungin mo at umiiyak,"* the alternate lyric is *"kulungin mo at pumipiglas"* (encage it and it will struggle to escape).[75] This shows the protesting stance conveyed through an anthem of the Filipino people.

Conclusion

Apart from the political trauma of the time, the choral trends headed by Veneracion, Kasilag, and Maceda continued to blossom throughout the 1970s and 80s. As Maceda's student, Ramon Santos also perpetuated the idea of incorporating Indigenous music practices as a Modernist expression of Western music. The use of traditional instruments in compositions and the eventual vocal imitation of such instruments became more common in contemporary choral music.

I have discussed how some aspects of Filipino identity have affected the musical identity of the Philippines. The facet of cultural identity on religion plays a role in the type of choral music that exists. Three centuries of Catholicism intermixed with Indigenous beliefs created a plethora of Pasko carols and the pasyon community tradition sung before Easter. Since the arrival of the American government, the Protestant presence also led to an increase in the composition of hymns. The American-style educational system exposed more Filipinos to Western music, which spurred a rise of composers and artists wanting to make their country known on a global scale. The historical oppression inflicted upon the Philippines has often been an inspiration for Filipino arts and music. Early movements for nationalism and creating that national identity after gaining independence had composers and ethnomusicologists seeking to preserve pre-colonial Indigenous musical practices and other folk music and incorporate that cultural heritage into their contemporary styles. Therefore, Filipinos value studying Western

[75] Hila, *Music in History, History in Music*, 32.

classical music. Its leaders nurture students to develop skills such as sight-reading and vocal and compositional techniques to produce art that still maintains Filipino identity.

Understanding the main points of Philippine history and how they affect musical practices are essential when evaluating the cultural context behind Filipino contemporary choral compositions. Filipino choral arrangements display a wide range of influences because of these three cultural eras: Pre-colonial, Spanish colonial, and American commonwealth influence. A fourth nationalist era—formed by mixing Filipino culture with Modernism—shows the syncretic nature of Philippine musical practice. The next chapter will further discuss the choral tradition that bloomed in the Philippines in the wake of the Philippine Madrigal Singers.

Chapter 3

Syncretism in the Choral Music Tradition

Introduction

Development of the choral tradition in the Philippines adopted the American choral style while perpetuating its own Filipino identity. This chapter will briefly review the initial stages of Philippine choral music as reflected by the cultural influences discussed in Chapter 2. Following that is a description of the choir that helped define modern choral music, the Philippine Madrigal Singers. This ensemble played a role in expressing a Filipino identity and became a role model for all other choral groups in the nation. Through their example and the composers that came from their legacy, we will see the representation of a syncretic Filipino choral identity.

European Tradition to Ethnomusicology

How do Filipino history and culture inform choral music? As mentioned in the previous chapter, American cultural assertion sparked the development of a booming choral arts tradition in the Philippines. This tradition started by imitating the European tradition. The earliest Filipino composers fortified their Spanish-influenced music education by studying contemporary Western European art music. Composers grew familiar with Western compositional styles, and they applied their knowledge to create patriotic hymns and music for their own educational music book, *The Philippine Music Series*.[76] Considered the "Classical Era" of Filipino music, artistic trends emphasized expressing Filipino culture through Western idioms.

[76] Hila, *Music in History, History in Music*, 62. *The Philippine Music Series,* later called *The Philippine Progressive Music Series* published by Silver-Burdett (1950), was a textbook used from 1914 to 1940 with Philippine folk songs with lyrics in English and other American songs.

Consequential with the boom of creating a national identity incorporating Filipino folk elements into European musical idioms, choral music trends involved the arrangement of folk songs. In these arrangements, one voice part typically carried the melody while the remaining voices provided harmonic accompaniment, as though imitating instrumentals using "hum" or "loo" syllables. One composer who wrote in this style was Lucio San Pedro, introduced earlier with his arrangement of *Sa Ugoy ng Duyan* as a work of Philippine nationalism through classical music. Other composers of this trend included Felipe Padilla de Leon (1912–1992) and Priscilla Magdamo (b. 1932).[77] Researching into folk music already syncretized with Spanish customs became the musical heritage that would differentiate Filipino music from Western European art music.

The avant-garde style of musical composition in the 1960s and 70s allowed for more experimentation in portraying Filipino culture through modern contemporary choral music. With this era came the emphasis on using Indigenous practices to create modern music. Maceda and Santos were very engrossed in this style and passed their teachings on to current composers such as Nilo Alcala and Robin Estrada. Chanting and vocal glissandos became a part of the choral vocabulary of this style, along with aleatoric techniques and speech singing. These forms of Filipino cultural identity come from the composers who wish to preserve Indigenous and folk practices and incorporate their cultural heritage into a Westernized society.

The Philippine Madrigal Singers

The Philippine Madrigal Singers represent cultural syncretism through their origins and performance practice. Andrea Ofilada Veneracion, the choir's founder, studied at UP and was a

[77] Yanson, "Philippine Choral Music," 18-23.

Fulbright Scholar who attained her master's degree in 1962 from the University of Indiana, Bloomington.[78] While studying in Indiana, she sang in a madrigal choir and was fascinated with the madrigal style. She organized an ensemble of UP faculty members to sing madrigals during their lunch breaks. This choir of sixteen members debuted their first concert in 1963; in their program was Hilarion Rubio's *Pinagkawing-kawing*, a Tagalog original composition written in the madrigal idiom.[79] The UP Madrigal Singers also performed their first concert seated in a semi-circle, which is now their unique trait. This origin story shows the recontextualization of an old Italian genre for Filipino music performance syncretized for this ensemble's character and ownership.

Veneracion's approach to vocal pedagogy is also syncretic. *Bel Canto* singing is a more recent practice in the Philippines compared to western countries. Before this Western singing style, tonal production for Filipino tribe songs and religious chants tended to be brighter and more forward-placed. Veneracion taught the Madrigal Singers their distinctive choral sound. She applied her knowledge of *bel canto* singing and vocal resonance to manipulate the natural speech resonances in the Tagalog language.[80] This awarded the choir flexibility of vocal styles appropriate for their diverse concert repertoire.

The Philippine Madrigal Singers perform with various tonal colors through their sequenced concert program structure in their vocal production. Works from the European canon typically appear within the first half of their concerts—sacred music, madrigals, and similar genres belong here. Contemporary pieces also fit in this category. Their first concert featured a

[78] Evasco, *A Life Shaped by Music*.

[79] Evasco, *A Life Shaped by Music*, 51.

[80] Evasco, *A Life Shaped by Music*, 67.

work by Ramon Santos, which inspired other Filipino composers to write new madrigal-like compositions.[81] Along with contemporary Filipino songs, the desire to compose for the Philippine Madrigal Singers led to a proliferation of folk song choral arrangements, which hold a place in the middle of the concert program. This is a chance to display their culture and heritage. Therefore, innovative arrangements apply word painting techniques or onomatopoeic syllables to imitate instrumental accompaniment, with the intent to impress listeners with the splendor of Filipino folk songs. The Philippine Madrigal Singers' legacy involves sending out goodwill as cultural representatives for the nation, and concert themes often advocated messages of love, hope, light, and joy.[82] The program's mood also turns towards lighter fare that pleases audiences. Ballad and Pop music arrangements tend to close concerts, consisting of songs that entertain and show relevancy to their audience. With a program structure following this arc, Filipino repertoire seamlessly weaves with Western repertoire.

To summarize Veneracion's work, she admired the canon of small choral works and believed in preserving Filipino musical heritage. The Philippine Madrigal Singers exhibit a syncretic vocal language by giving equal attention to singing both styles. They were able to highlight their abilities on numerous world tours and serve as the nation's resident choral group in the Cultural Center of the Philippines and at Malacañang Palace. Veneracion received the National Artist for Music title in 1999, and she continues to serve as an advocate for choral music and preserving Asian heritage. Mark Carpio carries on the legacy with the Philippine Madrigal Singers as successor to the Choirmaster.

[81] Evasco, *A Life Shaped by Music*, 52.

[82] Saunder Choi, interview by author, Seattle, February 1, 2022.

The Upsurge of Other Philippine Choirs and Composers

Another belief Veneracion held was to nurture her singers and composers so they may venture out to form their own choirs and share their works throughout the nation and around the world. The growth of the choral tradition in the Philippines is due to her advocacy in the choral field. It appears through the rise of choral ensembles in universities, the proliferation of choral festivals and competitions, and the establishment of national choral organizations such as the Philippine Choral Directors Association and the Madz Schola Cantorum.[83] Competitive Filipino choirs with the Philippine Madrigal Singers include the UP Singing Ambassadors, the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Singers, Ateneo de Manila College Glee Club, San Miguel Master Chorale,[84] and many more. These top ensembles have achieved national and international acclaim by winning competitions such as the Choral Grand Prix and the World Choir Games. Veneracion initiated the National Music Competitions for Young Artists (NAMCYA) in 1973 to encourage Filipino youth to exercise their musical talents in instrumental playing, singing, and composition of Indigenous and folk traditions.[85] The promotion of the choral arts in the Philippines and its assertion on a global scale allows for the acceptance of an art form expressing a Filipino-Western musicality.

Many composers received their career starts through the Philippine Madrigal Singers. Veneracion and later Carpio were always open to singing the arrangements of the young composers who sang in the group.[86] Ramon Santos and Fabian Obispo were among the first

[83] Tan, "A Survey of the Choral Tradition in the Philippines."

[84] The San Miguel Master Chorale was the Philippines' first professional choir not affiliated with a university. Established in 2001, the San Miguel Corporation backed this chorus and the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra to help enrich the arts, but they disbanded both ensembles in 2007.

[85] Tan, "A Survey of the Choral Tradition in the Philippines."

[86] DeVeyra, *MADZ,* 363.

composers to contribute music for this ensemble; their compositions employed techniques from the madrigal genre to shape the ongoing choral trends practiced by the composers who followed them.[87] Notable composers and arrangers of this fashion include Francisco Feliciano, Josefino "Chino" Toledo, Eudenice Palaruan, Anna Tabita Abeleda-Piquero, and Nilo Alcala. Other well-known composers, though not an alum of the Philippine Madrigal Singers, include George Hernandez, Joel Navarro, and Fidel Calalang, Jr. A new generation of rising choral composers include Calalang Jr. along with Saunder Choi and Ily Matthew Maniano. Their works follow the tradition that came before them while allowing them to integrate new techniques and formulate more unique contemporary trends in choral music.

Ryan Cayabyab, 2018 National Artist of the Philippines for Music

Ryan Cayabyab (b. 1954) is a famous composer and conductor whose choral music remains highly performed and revered amongst the newer generation of Filipino composers. The 1990s and 2000s marked the height of his popularity. From 1989 to 1995, he formed the vocal group Smokey Mountain to sing ironically uplifting songs emphasizing the impoverished urban and rural lifestyles existent in the Philippines. From 2001 to 2007, he was director of the San Miguel Master Chorale and wrote choral-orchestral works for professional performance. Cayabyab's music is part of an "eclectic stream" of choral compositional styles in the Philippines, including sacred music, folksong arrangements, popular top chart arrangements, and film music.[88] His compositions show how he has syncretized the influences from his travels with the Philippine Madrigal Singers into his writing style.

[87] Evasco, *A Life Shaped by Music*, 53.

[88] Yanson, *"Philippine Choral Music*," 47.

Conclusion

The evolution of choral tradition in the Philippines reflects a syncretism of various cultural contexts. Thanks to previous Spanish conventions before American influence, choral singing only had a place in the church. Nevertheless, partaking in an American choral education morphed the choral field into what it is today. Composers exhibit a wide range of styles involving film scoring, mass settings, folk arranging, and complex original compositions featuring modern iterations of Indigenous elements.

Because of the precedent set by the Philippine Madrigal Singers, its members have had opportunities to share their culture and receive from other cultures through their world tours. These experiences affected the singers and composers who went out to conduct and compose for other choirs. They use a diverse understanding of history and culture to create their own music. The result is a blooming choral tradition stemming from the work of Andrea Ofilada Veneracion, rooted in Filipino cultural heritage.

This abridged overview of Philippine choral history helps initiate our next dive into present-day trends. With a diaspora spanning different regions, it will be interesting to see a more modern representation of Filipino culture. The next chapter will introduce the qualitative portion of this study, with an introduction to selected Filipino composers active within the last twenty years.

Chapter 4

Current Composers on Expressing Identity Through Music

Introduction

We can address the following question after considering what we know about Philippine history and how music has reflected its culture. How does the choral music of current Filipino composers reflect their cultural identity? To capture a glimpse into what an expression of Filipino cultural identity looks like today, I interviewed a varied selection of Filipino-identifying composers. Five composers received the same set of questions about their identity as a Filipino and how they express that aspect of their identity in their music, listed in the Methodology section. The diversity of these composers was considered to gather multiple perspectives on what it means to compose as a Filipino musical artist. This chapter will feature a brief biography of each composer accompanied by a summary of their responses.[89] It will then highlight common threads amongst the composers' replies and categorize them into themes regarding sacred music, language, and the insertion of non-Western elements into a choral setting.

Methodology

Each composer was given the option to interview via ZOOM or email exchange. Since one composer happened to be in Seattle, that interview occurred in person. Three of the other four composers chose to meet with me via ZOOM, and the fifth chose to communicate from the Philippines via email.

[89] Each composer gave permission to record their interviews. This portion of the study has been deemed appropriate by the Institutional Review Board of the UW Human Subjects Division.

A core set of questions were provided to each composer, as follows:

- How would you describe your identity as a Filipino? For example, are you born in the Philippines, a second-generation/child of immigrants, etc.?
- Describe your Filipino identity as a musician—as a student, performer, teacher, or composer. Talk about your musical education.
- What choral pieces have you composed, and why or what led you to compose them?
- Do you intentionally express your Filipino identity throughout your career? In what ways?
- Philippine history, at least in terms of music, is primarily divided into three parts: pre-colonial Indigenous, Spanish colonization, and American colonization/influence. How do you think this history affects Filipino choral music writing? Do you resonate with any of these times in particular? How do you think music is currently affected by these times?
- Do you incorporate any of this historical or current Filipino-ness in your music? How?

An additional question was asked of the composers who grew up in the Philippines:

- Did you sing in a university in the Philippines? Tell me about that experience, especially if you were expected to perform as a cultural ambassador.

Follow-up questions naturally occurred in the organic conversation and some interactive discourse.

Four of the five composers were born in the Philippines; the fifth composer is American-born and biracial. One composer is currently active in Manila. Three composers immigrated to

the United States from the Philippines to live in various cities on the West Coast—Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle areas. One composer has experience working in Australia and Denmark that affected his outlook on self-identity. Three composers have experience singing in Philippine nationally acclaimed choral groups such as the Ateneo College Glee Club and the Philippine Madrigal Singers.

Robin Estrada

Dr. Robin Estrada currently resides in the Bay Area of Northern California. Born and raised in Metropolitan Manila, Quezon City, Estrada attended a private Catholic school and received piano instruction at age six. Estrada sang in the Ateneo College Glee Club at the Ateneo de Manila University while obtaining a degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. Estrada decided to switch to becoming a music composition major and enrolled in the University of Philippines Conservatory of Music. Estrada moved to the United States to continue studying composition at the San Francisco Conservatory and the University of California, Berkeley, earning a Ph.D. in music composition. Estrada provided a biographical description: "Robin Estrada ranks among the bold and innovative talents in Philippine composition today. Melding western forms with Southeast Asian musical styles that accentuate the finesse and fire of the region's cultural diversity, Estrada's works evoke a unique sound that brings Asia to the world of contemporary art music."[90] Awards and accolades include the 2015 Hoefer Commissioning Prize from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the Eisner Award in music composition, the Nicola di Lorenzo Prize from UC Berkeley, and the I Concurso Coral de Ateneo Musica Nova Award. Estrada was the composer-in-residence for the San Francisco Choral Artists and had works performed by Volti, the International Orange Chorale of San Francisco, UC Berkeley Chamber Singers,

[90] Robin Estrada, biography provided by the composer.

Ateneo Chamber Singers, Australian Chamber Choir, and other choral groups. Estrada's choral works are available upon personal request.

Expression of Filipino Identity as a Musician and Composer

Estrada stayed connected with music while studying business at Ateneo de Manila University by joining the Ateneo College Glee Club, one of the nationally renowned choral groups in the Philippines, like the Philippine Madrigal Singers. Estrada's interest in studying music started there, which led to the composition degree attained from the University of the Philippines. Prominent ethnomusicologists and composers were there, including Maceda, Santos, and Estrada's mentor, "Chino" Toledo. Studying at UP opened Estrada's view of incorporating Filipino tradition into contemporary music. Research on Indigenous music led by Maceda fascinated Estrada, which inspired the versatility of vocal production. Estrada likes writing choral music because the singing style involves more than the European classical style—referred to as bel canto singing. There is a chant style plus the ability to create percussive, onomatopoeic sounds with the voice. With folk and indigenous singing, vocal production is chest voice dominant with a bright, forward tone. Estrada consciously writes for this style of singing when composing.

Estrada's choral works have mostly been settings of Tagalog text from the Filipino Bible. Other works have used different regional dialects, and Estrada has written one piece in Hebrew and one piece in English. Estrada prefers the Filipino language due to its versatile nature of being syllabically percussive or melodically lyrical. There are two reasons why Estrada sets religious texts. The first is the convenience of dealing with public domain writings and not having to receive permission to use or change texts. The second is that Estrada views poetry as a different art form, with a set meter, which should not be altered in the ways Estrada tends to compose.

Setting poetry does not suit Estrada's compositional "attitude," attributing it to "a Dadaist kind of mentality."[91] Estrada also prefers to write original music rather than create folksong arrangements. Estrada considers the sounds of the words, including the alliteration of syllables, agogic stress, and accents when looking at the text. This text treatment follows closer to indigenous singing and music-making while retaining a Western compositional format.

When asked about musical influences related to Philippine music history, Estrada reflected that history had affected choral music through an era of contemporary Filipino music, which brings forth the notion of mixing indigeneity with modernity. Maceda was at the forefront of this movement, challenging Western musical tradition by breaking conformities of meter and melody. Following the modernist philosophies of Maceda, Estrada likes to experiment with creating texture through rhythm or thinking of sound texture as the melody rather than relying on a lyrical series of pitches on the musical staff. Estrada has also written pieces in a hocketed style attributed to the Kalinga Indigenous tradition; however, the rhythmic hocketing is apparent by interspersing syllables of words across voice parts. Rather than merely include elements of indigeneity in classical music, there is an attempt to highlight ritualistic forms.

Estrada mentioned two works that explicitly express Filipino culture. *Awit sa Panginoon* (Song for the Lord) combines Western and Indigenous traditions by writing for two distinct types of chanting and alluding to the mumble-like prayer that happens at church when people asynchronously pray. Another piece, *Paghahandog* (Dedication), focuses on "texture rather than melody."[92] Each word's sibilant and plosive consonants create a soundscape, and the syllabic stresses generate the concept of high and low pitch inflections, which we will see cases of in

[91] Robin Estrada, interview by author, Seattle, January 18, 2022.

[92] Estrada, interview by author.

Chapter 5. These are examples of Estrada's compositional techniques developed from the idea of emphasizing Filipino culture.

Because Estrada had sung in a prominent Filipino choral group, the Ateneo College Glee Club, I had asked about the experience singing in that choir. Estrada mentioned the genres of music that the group performed in the 1980s and 90s, which included Indigenous and Spanish-inspired folk song arrangements. The formulaic concert programming started with Western classical pieces, transitioned to African American gospel or spirituals, then to indigenous rhythmic arrangements, melodic folk music, and a finale of popular songs. If we recall from chapter three, this program structure is like the concert format of the Philippine Madrigal Singers. Estrada befriended Philippine Madrigal Singers members at the University of Philippines and formed an impromptu chamber group named Auit to perform contemporary works by living Asian composers.

Frederick Bayani Mabalot

Dr. Frederick Bayani Mabalot is a first-generation Filipino American currently based in Bellingham, Washington. He grew up in Gapan, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, a one to two-hour drive away from Manila. He immigrated to the United States at age fifteen, living in Southern California. He worked with Morten Lauridsen as a Loyola Marymount University Choir singer. The experience inspired him to explore composing vocal and choral music. Mabalot obtained a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from California State University, Northridge. Afterward, he completed graduate studies in composition at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music in Sydney, Australia.[93] He

[93] Frederick Mabalot, "About the Composer," Dr. Frederic Bayani Mabalot, D.M.A. Composer and Conductor, last modified 2021, https://www.frederickbmabalot.com/about-the-composer.

holds a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree in Choral Conducting from the University of Washington and has remained in northern Washington. Walton Music Publications has recently published Mabalot's setting of *Ubi Caritas et Amor*.

Expression of Filipino Identity as a Musician and Composer

Mabalot described his identity as having two phases. Wanting to assimilate to American culture when immigrating to the United States, he and his family hid much of their Filipino behaviors, including not speaking Tagalog at home and practicing English without an accent. His identity as an immigrant came with recognizing implicit biases based upon physical appearances during his youth. Mabalot used to refer to himself as an "American composer and conductor,"[94] mainly when he studied in Australia and Denmark. His recent decision to explicitly identify as a Filipino American composer came to fruition to represent part of the Filipino community lacking representation in this field. Mabalot's actions as a Filipino American composer and conductor involve conversations about the awareness of cultural identity and having to respect others.

Mabalot has worked for the Catholic church since he was twelve years old. This immersion in a religious culture influenced his sense of spirituality, which is evident in his works. He did not have much access to classical music in the Philippines, so his first exposure to choral music was not until he sang in college. Lauridsen's *Lux Aeterna* significantly impacted Mabalot's compositional language, which he emulated in his first composition, *O Magnum Mysterium*. He asserted that he attempted to convey the culmination of his immigrant experience by drawing from Lauridsen's music and listening to the choral sounds of Filipino groups such as the Philippine Madrigal Singers and the UST Singers. A composition that conveys a different facet of Mabalot's immigrant experience is *Stabat Mater*, which he wrote while living in

[94] Frederick Bayani Mabalot, interview by author, Seattle, January 25, 2022.

Copenhagen. It represents when he felt his identity as a Filipino American adapted to the European avant-garde style.

Mabalot's perception of Philippine music history focused on European and American influence. He noted that it is very evident in church music, but folksongs also retain elements of colonization. He mentioned the Spanish impact on kundiman, a folksong genre often chorally arranged. In addition to that, recent compositions by his contemporaries embrace an American sound.

I asked him whether any changes in his compositional style have incorporated his current perception of his Filipino identity. Although Mabalot learned composition in western-influenced schools, thus developing a westernized musical language, he believes that the Filipino element of his music comes from his very identity as a Filipino. He prefers not to explicitly incorporate Filipino musical elements so that people refrain from categorizing his music as "multicultural." This topic raised an important concept of social awareness for him as he stated, "I think that having my *Ubi Caritas* in a program of a diverse programming—the fact that I am a Filipino composer should be enough for someone to say, 'I programmed a Filipino composer,' and this is his musical language. It paints. It conveys the influences that have molded him to create these sounds, and this is true to his experience as an immigrant."[95] He also describes his works as expressing an emotionalism or sentimentality, which he hears when listening to Filipino choral groups and believes to be a common thread amongst the compositions of his contemporaries.

Regarding his next commission project, Mabalot is considering how he plans to stay engaged with his identity as a Filipino composer. He feels that he is more in tune with his

[95] Mabalot, interview by author.

cultural identity and that it will mold how he expresses himself through his music. By doing so, Mabalot aims to help represent the Filipino community.

Saunder Choi

Saunder Choi is a Filipino composer currently based in Los Angeles, California. He was born in Manila, Philippines, and grew up in Filipino Chinese culture with ancestry from China's Fujian province. He got his major break in composition by winning the National Music Competition for Young Artists (NAMCYA) in the folk song arrangement category. Choi sang with the Philippine Madrigal Singers after this competition. He obtained a degree from De La Salle University in Manila and moved to Boston for a composition degree from Berklee College of Music and later from the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music. Other awards he has achieved include winning the 2017 Indianapolis Symphonic Choir Carol Commission competition and first prize in the 2014 American Prize for Choral Composition, student division.[96] Santa Barbara Music Publishing, See-A-Dot Music Publishing, earthsongs, MusicSpoke, and MuzikSea have published Choi's works. His discography is on his website, www.saunderchoi.com.

Expression of Filipino Identity as a Musician and Composer

Although Choi was born and raised in the Philippines, his ethnicity is third-generation Chinese. His cultural identity is a classic syncretism of Chinese and Filipino, nicknamed *Chinoy*, a conjugation of Chinese and Pinoy. He described Chinoy culture as distinct, though not separate, from Filipino culture. He remarked that there is an existence of traditional Chinese values incorporated into his daily life. Choi used religion as an example, explaining that the

[96] Saunder Choi, "Biography," Saunder Choi – Composer, Conductor and Tenor: Official Website, last modified 2021, https://www.saunderchoi.com/bio/.

Filipino Chinese practice Buddhism and Catholicism simultaneously—he was celebrating the Lunar New Year and honoring his late grandfather at the time of this interview. He feels that his identity takes on even more "multiplicity" from living in the United States.[97]

He started writing songs as early as the sixth grade and arranged music for his high school choir. As mentioned earlier, Choi won the NAMCYA folk arranging competition. He was eighteen years old when he wrote an arrangement of a Pangasinan folk song *Malinak Lay Labi* (Calm is the Night). Mark Carpio, Choirmaster of the Philippine Madrigal Singers, was a judge in this competition who approached Choi to audition for the group. Choi did the audition, got in, sang with the Philippine Madrigal Singers for five years, and wrote music for them. He considers his time with this choir to be a lifelong influence on his musical career, despite leaving the group ten years ago to pursue his composition studies in the United States.

Due to the award-winning reputation of the ensemble, the Philippine Madrigal Singers expected Choi and all its members to be a representative of the Philippines. Singers ingrained the idea of acting as cultural ambassadors into their behaviors, which even affected the clothes they wore. Choi pointed out a difference between American concert programming versus Philippine programming. While there has been a trend to include social justice music in the United States, the music the Philippine Madrigal Singers sang excluded political themes. Any themes for advocacy were about universal concepts like love, hope, light, and joy. The choral group represented the Philippines by performing works consisting of non-controversial aspects of the culture. Choi's cognizance of advocacy and social issues developed since he moved to the United States, influencing his more recent compositions.

[97] Saunder Choi, interview by author, Seattle, February 1, 2022.

Choi has an adequate understanding of Philippine music history, emphasizing that most choral music comes from the Christian sacred custom attributed to Spanish influence or American popular songs. He talked about Indigenous traditions that have been appearing in Philippine choral music. He observed, "a lot of the liturgical choral music from the Philippines are homophonic, but a lot of the other arrangements or choral compositions that are not sacred or not Christian sacred…are actually polyphonic."[98] He also drew attention to the plethora of Christmas choral music existing in the Philippine canon.

Choi writes a diverse array of choral music, including Filipino and Chinese folk music, sacred music, and songs about social issues such as immigration, LGBTQIA+, and racial inequality. Choi continues to develop his place in the American circuit amongst colleagues like Dale Trumbore, Sydney Guillaume, and Jake Runestad. A newer work of his, *A Journey of Your Own*, culminates his Filipino and American journey by collaborating with poets from both countries. He still connects with Philippine music by setting Filipino poetry, but he has recently thought about contributing to the Southeast Asian choral community. He is interested in their approach to vocal pedagogy and the polyphony obtained through vocally imitating instruments. He mentioned some of his works that incorporate this style of creating polyphony by imitating Asian instrumentation,[99] including *Ang Tren*. Regarding the "multiplicity" of his cultural identity, *A Journey of Your Own* is a prime example.

[98] Choi, interview by author.

[99] The "Asian" musical elements are generally referred to as those which come from the East and Southeast Asian diaspora, which will be used throughout the dissertation when referring to music. When there is a need to indicate a specific region, I will specify East versus Southeast Asia.

Matthew Lyon Hazzard

Matthew Lyon Hazzard is a Filipino-American composer, conductor, and singer currently based in Houston, Texas, for his DMA in Choral Conducting at the University of Houston. His mother is from the Philippines, and his father is Caucasian American. Hazzard identifies with his Filipino heritage, and he has lived in the Philippines for over a year during his childhood. When living in North Carolina, he attended East Carolina University and obtained a Bachelor of Music in Composition and Master of Arts in Teaching. Hazzard earned a second graduate degree, the Master of Music in Choral Conducting, from the Bob Cole Conservatory at California State University, Long Beach. He has won many awards, the most recent being the winner of the 2017 American Choral Directors Association Raymond W. Brock Student Composition Competition.[100] He is self-published; one would find his works through his website, www.lyonhazzard.com, or through JW Pepper. He has also been published through G. Schirmer.

Expression of Filipino Identity as a Musician and Composer

Being the son of a Filipino immigrant and a White American, Hazzard has a biracial American-born identity that allows him a different racial experience than other composers while still honoring Filipino culture. He views his cultural identity as a specific set of experiences other Filipino Americans might relate to. At age seven, he and his family moved to the Philippines for two years, where he lived in an affluent area of Metro Manila and attended the private Catholic school, De la Salle Zobel. Catholicism played a substantial role in his family life—his grandmother constantly expressed devout faith and ingrained it into his Filipino consciousness.

Hazzard's interest in singing started at the Ayala Alabang Country Club and Sunday church services. Hazzard continued singing when he returned to the United States, which led him

[100] Matthew Lyon Hazzard, "Bio," Matthew Lyon Hazzard: Composer & Conductor, last modified 2022, https://lyonhazzard.com/about/.

to study music in higher education institutions in North Carolina, California, and Texas. He claims that his limited exposure to Filipino musical culture only involves church music and singing karaoke. Therefore, his composition style is not particularly informed by folk songs or Indigenous music traditions. Though he believes that his Filipino American heritage is a core trait of his self-identity, he admits that his musical expression stays within Western constructs. American choral music, pop music, and jazz music influenced his writing style most. Over the fourteen years he has been composing, two of his earlier works exhibited his family culture and having been raised in a Filipino Catholic household. One piece is *a song for mama*, dedicated to his late grandmother, and the other is *Angele Dei*, a prayer he often chanted with his mother.

The desire to express any aspect of Hazzard's life connecting with his emotions or thoughts has become his impetus for composing. The love for his partner influences his current writing as he has been setting his partner's poetry, which "articulates some kind of emotion that's profound."[101] Hazzard's process for text selection involves allowing himself to understand and embody the text. Once he does that, he finds the musical ideas that convey the message.

Because Hazzard does not know much about Philippine music history, he could not speak much about Filipino elements in choral music. He mentioned that there might be a difference in his music if he knew how to fluently speak Tagalog since he observed that many Filipino composers would use that language. His time in the Philippines reflected an American lifestyle; therefore, he can attest to the American influence on Filipino culture.

Ily Matthew Maniano

Ily Matthew Maniano was born, raised, and currently based in the Philippines. He studied at the UP College of Music in Music Education and was a member of the Philippine Madrigal

[101] Matthew Lyon Hazzard, interview by author, Seattle, February 2, 2022.

Singers. Maniano remains a resident arranger and composer for the Philippines Madrigal Singers, Male Ensemble Philippines, and the Manila Chamber Singers. He has traveled as a guest speaker, instructor, and adjudicator in many workshops in various countries such as Singapore, Canada, and United Arab Emirates. He also offers an online choral writing workshop called "Opus." Grammy award-winning groups have performed his works. He released an album in 2018 titled *EUPOHONOS: The Choral Works of Ily Matthew Maniano*.[102] His compositions are available for purchase through his official website, www.ilymatthewmaniano.com. Pricing includes international currency conversions according to region.

Expression of Filipino Identity as a Musician and Composer

Maniano discovered his musical talent after graduating high school. He originally started as a visual art major in college, but exposure to choral music led him to become a music education major at the University of the Philippines. He sang with the Manila Chamber Singers during his early years of college, touring around Asia for goodwill concerts and competitions with this group. The turning point leading Maniano to study music came when he saw the Philippine Madrigal Singers in a show. He felt the desire to join that unique choir that sings while seated, which he did in 2008, during his last year as a student.

Maniano performed and toured with the Philippine Madrigal Singers for nine years, and he stated that the experience created opportunities and helped shape his current career path. His most significant takeaway from performing was establishing friendships worldwide while being ready to share Filipino culture with others. He started composing in 2012, writing music for the Philippine Madrigal Singers. He shares what he has learned through clinics and workshops held

[102] Ily Matthew Maniano, "Composer, Arranger," Ily Matthew Maniano Composer: Official Website, last modified 2020, https://www.ilymatthewmaniano.com/about.

in various countries. Maniano also utilizes video conferencing applications like ZOOM, with which he teaches his choral writing class.

Maniano has been composing for ten years, with a portfolio consisting of over forty original works and over eighty arrangements. Memorable life experiences and current historic events inspire many of his compositions. *EUPHONOS* features his favorite pieces from 2012 until 2018. He plans to release another album containing his compositions during the COVID-19 pandemic years. Throughout his music, Maniano tends to incorporate traditional or indigenous material, whether from text, historical events, musical patterns, or a way of singing. There are times when he writes in what he refers to as Western-style—a style that includes program music, twentieth century, and avant-garde music—to suggest that a non-western composer "can sound western too."[103]

Conscious of his Filipino identity, Maniano is proud to be someone who elevates the perception of Filipinos through music. From his world travels, he has encountered European ambassadors who only thought of Filipinos as exported labor but changed their views after hearing the Philippine Madrigal Singers perform with a high caliber of musicality. Maniano values the history and development of Philippine music, as he believes that it helps to portray and share Filipino culture globally. He likes to balance the tonalities provided by Filipino and Western art music, hoping that his works are more versatile than simply being "Asian-sounding."[104] Two songs he mentioned that do this were *Daluyong* and *Passing Through*.

[103] Ily Matthew Maniano, email from the composer, February 17, 2022.

[104] Ily Matthew Maniano, email from the composer, February 20, 2022.

Conclusion

These composers each hold a unique perspective on what Filipino cultural identity means to them. Gathering from their remarks about their music, they focus on various facets of Filipino culture. Their focus is on expressing their identity through music, not having their identity define their music. Although each composer has their own compositional style, their dialogue has a few commonalities. One finding involves the notion that sacred music is paramount to Filipino culture. Four of the five composers mention Catholicism, church music, or sacred choral music. Interestingly, in some conversations, the attribution to Spanish origins blurs with American influence when referring to the homophonic texture seen in this genre. Another finding is that language plays a role in their musical expression, typically the mixture of Tagalog with English or Latin with English in sacred pieces. Even Hazzard, a native English-speaking composer, tied the Tagalog language with his Filipino heritage and noted its incorporation into one of his songs. A third finding, shared amongst three composers, involves explicitly integrating pre-colonial and Asian musical techniques into their choral vocabulary. Since each composer referenced some of their works during these interviews, it deems pertinent to explore how their perspectives appear through these songs. Chapter 5 will expand on these findings, showing examples provided by the composers of the syncretic nature of their works.

Chapter 5

Filipino Cultural Expression in Contemporary Choral Music

Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the five Filipino composers—who form the study's centerpiece—through their stories regarding their cultural identity and compositional philosophies. This chapter looks at examples of their choral compositions, categorized by the similar ways they have chosen to express Filipino characteristics in their music. As mentioned before, each composer talked about specific works that represent their identity even though these works are not an idiomatic representation of Filipino culture, listed again as follows:[105]

- Robin Estrada: *Awit sa Panginoon* and *Paghahandog*
- Frederick Bayani Mabalot: *Ubi Caritas et Amor* and *Stabat Mater*
- Saunder Choi: *Ang Tren* and *A Journey of Your Own*
- Matthew Lyon Hazzard: *a song for mama* and *Angele Dei*
- Ily Matthew Maniano: *Daluyong* and *Passing Through*

Again, these selected pieces are not meant to be an exhaustive survey of each composer's abilities or compositional style. The works chosen for this study are all choral compositions written within the last twenty years and are primarily *a cappella*. The exceptions to the unaccompanied music are Mabalot's works *Ubi Caritas et Amor* and *Stabat Mater,* which he wrote for piano accompaniment and orchestra, respectively.

[105] See Appendix for annotations of each selected work.

As Chapter 4 eludes, this chapter will highlight two ways that the composers' perception of Filipino identity manifests in their music: textual matters arising from their upbringing and musical matters embedded in their compositions relating to their cultural identity. This chapter will show musical examples of 1) religious sacred text and reverence for Catholic tradition as a characteristic of Filipino identity, 2) language choice by way of its treatment and additions, and 3) the mixture of Asian and Western contemporary musical styles. Much of the analysis is my interpretation of the works, and I will indicate when the intentions stated by the composers came from them directly. I will also highlight similarities across compositions in a fourth category that addresses emotional characteristics of the Filipino condition and the Western techniques used to communicate them.

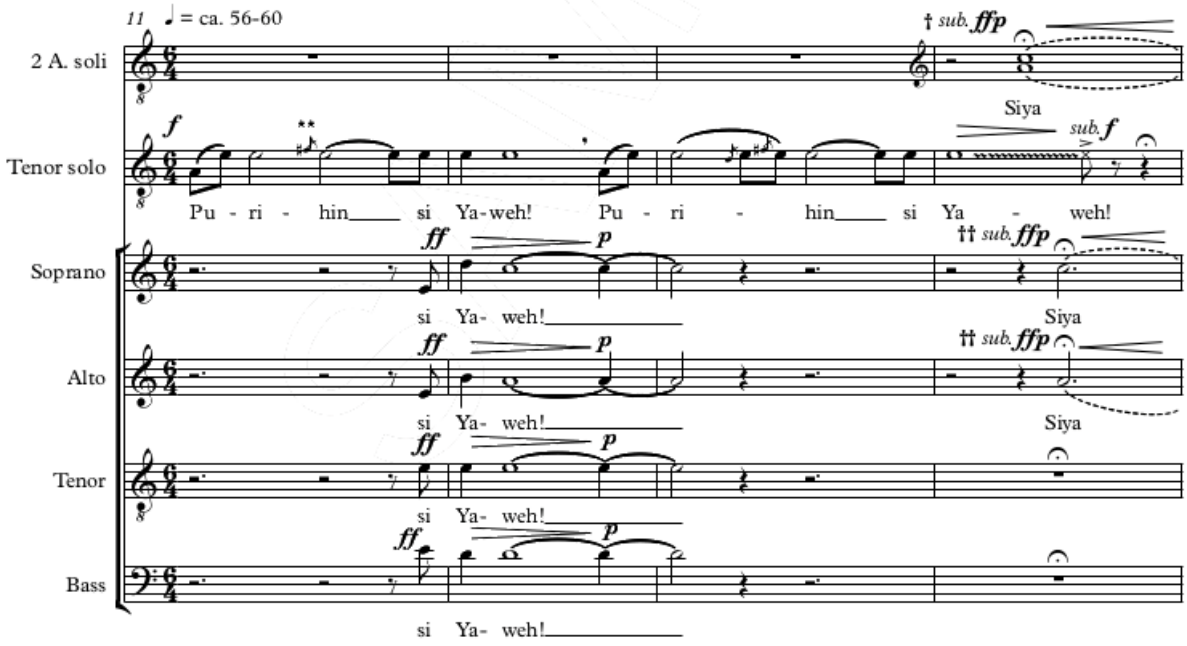
Reverence for Catholic Tradition

A common aspect related to Filipino identity is the influence of Catholicism and acknowledging that these composers use spiritual texts as lyrical inspiration for their compositions. All five composers have written music using psalms, antiphons, and other prayers. While they have also composed songs using text from the Ordinary of the mass, they did not mention any composition of this genre; therefore, this discussion will not include those pieces. We will examine the suggested works: Estrada's *Awit sa Panginoon* (Song for the Lord), Mabalot's *Ubi Caritas et Amor*, Mabalot's *Stabat Mater*, and Hazzard's *Angele Dei* and *a song for mama*.

There is complexity and syncretism when expressing religious faith as part of the Filipino identity. In addition to utilizing sacred texts, these composers draw from ancient Catholic musical traditions, such as plainchant, and they emulate such traditions within their works. Estrada's piece, *Awit sa Panginoon*, uses a Tagalog translation of Psalm 30: 1–6. Two alto

soloists sing the opening verses in the style of the pasyon—a process we will discuss in further detail later. Following that opening section, lasting ten measures, a tenor soloist intones the word *"Purihin"* (Praise) before the rest of the choir enters with *"si Yaweh!"* (The Lord!), as shown in figure 1:

Figure 1. Robin Estrada, *Awit sa Panginoon*, mm. 11–14.[106]



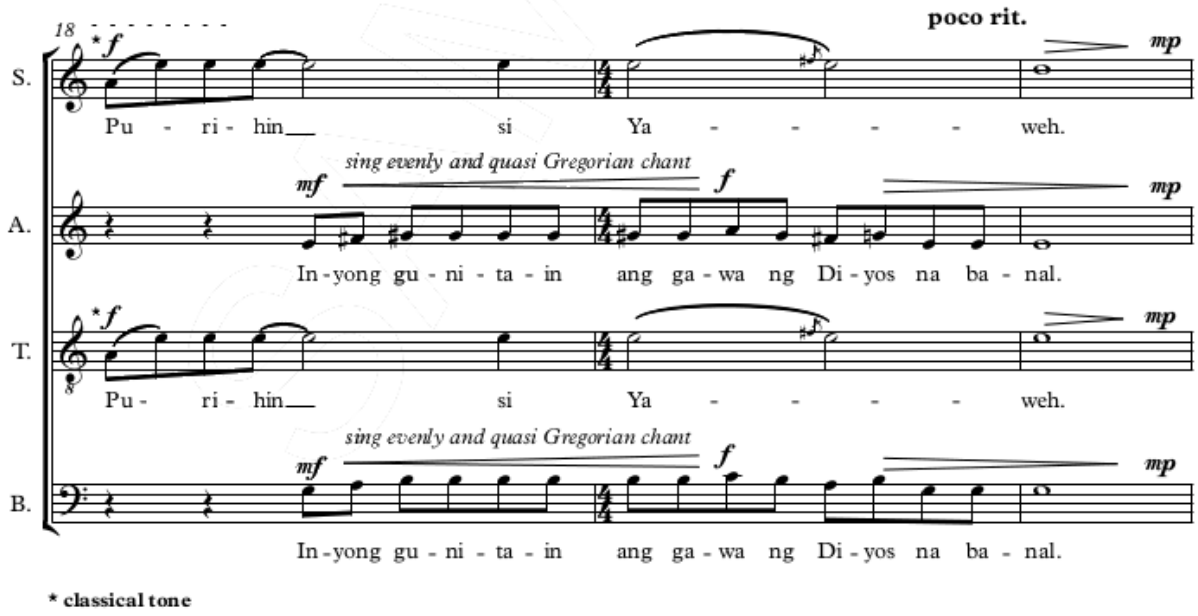
Estrada intended this to impersonate the "Gloria" movement of the mass,[107] where a traditional incipit involves a solo "*Gloria in excelsis Deo*" preceding a choral response of the remaining prayer; however, it retains the call and response element found in indigenous song forms. This is an example of melding religious traditions used by Filipinos with the sacred traditions of Western European Catholics.

[106] Robin Estrada, *Awit sa Panginoon* (Robin Estrada, 2000), 1-8.

[107] Robin Estrada, interview by author, Seattle, January 18, 2022.

With the composer indicating to use two different vocal singing styles at specified times,[108] there is also instruction in measures fifteen through thirty-one to "sing evenly and quasi-Gregorian chant." We see this at measure eighteen, as illustrated in figure 2. The melodic contour is stepwise, likening this to a Gregorian plainchant melody.

Figure 2. Robin Estrada, *Awit sa Panginoon*, mm. 18–20.[109]



This section also contains the instruction for the singers to use the classical bel canto style of singing instead of the stylized tone that preceded. It shows the composer differentiating vocal styles: Filipino traditional singing, Western classical technique, and quasi-Gregorian chant within that classical frameset. Through the varied tonal productions and the melodic writing

[108] Estrada, *Awit sa Panginoon*, 2. The composer notes in the score two types of vocal tones required for performing the work: "a) classical tone – classical, Western, bel canto sound; and b) stylized tone – full-throated, slightly nasal and slightly pressed sound."

[109] Estrada, *Awit sa Panginoon*, 4.

emulating traditional chant in an otherwise modern work, we see the interplay of distinctive styles reflected in this song.

Mabalot's *Ubi Caritas et Amor* is a dynamically emotional piece with a lot of going back and forth between *piano* and *forte* singing. He included a program note at the beginning of the score, mentioning that he composed the piece for "the forgotten ones, those in devastating poverty."[110] Mabalot spoke about his mindset when writing the song:

> When you have experienced or witnessed poverty to that degree and not only want to highlight the word "experience" because I was part of that society and experienced it. It does something to the human spirit. It does something to my psychology as a composer, you know. So, the sort of wide range in vocal intervals, you know, you got the octave, and it's the voices sitting high up there. For me, it's trying to imbue the, as I can access, the full expression of this relief from poverty, you know? Which is so connected to my Filipino-ness.[111]

He felt that this text conveyed the need for charity in these situations. The text of *Ubi Caritas et Amor* comes from the Latin antiphon for Maundy Thursday. Structurally, there are three major sections and five areas with *forte* dynamics. Each passage building up to *forte* lasts longer than the previous. The thematic phrase "*ubi caritas et amor*" (Where there is charity and love) is a softly sung phrase that builds dynamically after multiple iterations, and the concluding line "*Deus ibi est*" (God is there) resolves in a *forte* dynamic.

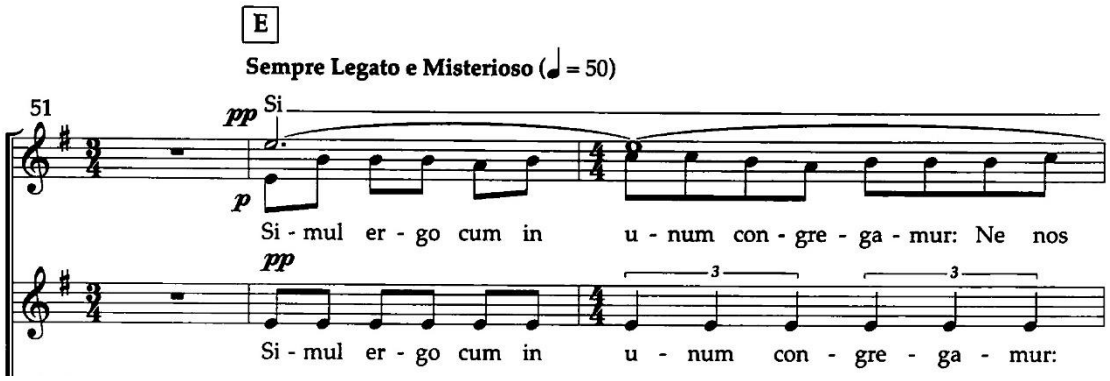
The only section without a loud dynamic occurs in the middle of the song, at reh. **E**. Mabalot highlights this passage by adding one measure of rest before entering a pianissimo dynamic, as shown in figure 3. Preceding this pause, the choir sings at a *fortissimo* with a

[110] Frederick Bayani Mabalot, *Ubi Caritas et Amor* (GIA Publications, Inc., 2021), 2.

[111] Frederick Bayani Mabalot, interview by author, Seattle, January 25, 2022.

crescendo and a fermata. Mabalot intended for the choir to sing the following section in a chant-like manner, drawing from the style of medieval chant.[112]

Figure 3. Frederick Bayani Mabalot, *Ubi Caritas et Amor*, mm. 51–53.[113]



The choral texture is sparse. We see the upper treble voice holding a pedal tone like a drone. At the same time, the composer gives the soprano two a chant-like melody that contrasts the opening melody and other variations seen throughout the work. The tenor part takes over the melody, followed by the bass part in isolation from the rest of the choir. This middle passage displays the impact of sacred chant on Catholic music. It gives the song a momentary solemn tone, which Mabalot concludes by adding a crescendo to the *forte* before the last section that he intended to emulate light and love.

The final example of using religious text is Hazzard's setting of the prayer *Angele Dei.* His childhood experience inspired this composition, and the song portrays how he honors his

[112] Frederick Bayani Mabalot, choral rehearsal, May 2019. I sang *Ubi Caritas et Amor* under Mabalot's direction for his doctoral recital. This was his instruction to the choir.

[113] Mabalot, *Ubi Caritas*, 9.

family and their cultural traditions. Hazzard admits to wanting to maintain an element of Catholic tradition when he set the piece:

> Every morning, my mom, on the way to school, or like, the way to church, we would say, "Angel of God, our guardian dear to whom God's love entrusts us here. Ever this day be at our side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen." So that prayer, I had no idea was like, a real prayer in Latin. Like "*Angele Dei, qui custos es mei*," and I was like, "What! Ah! I gotta set this," and so that I think is really, it's just like, the Catholic character.[114]

The context in the musical score notes, "It was a prayer of comfort and warmth, and we would recite it the only way we knew how: sing-song like and innocent."[115] The soprano line portrays this "sing-song like" melody while the lower voices function as harmonization and accompaniment. The second phrase features an oscillation between two pitches in the melody, C and B, which Hazzard eventually harmonizes in thirds. The melodic contour is playful as it skips up and down and oscillates. It conveys the child-like innocence that he attributes to this prayer and the relationship with his family.

Hazzard's *a song for mama* is an example of a piece in which, while the text is not an actual sacred text, it alludes to spirituality and faith. As previously mentioned, Hazzard holds a close reverence for his family. The song text contains his original poetry, written as a dedication to his ailing grandmother. Hazzard suggests his grandmother's Catholic faith with the line, "your faith so old fills this place with spirit bright."[116] The faith that is "so old" refers to a long-practiced Catholicism that is a part of his family's tradition, especially at his grandmother's age. Hazzard also briefly explains in his contextual notes at the beginning of his published score: "When I was young, she would call me her 'little pope'."[117] This context helps explain why

[114] Matthew Lyon Hazzard, interview by author, Seattle, February 2, 2022.

[115] Matthew Lyon Hazzard, *Angele Dei* (Matthew Lyon Hazzard, 2017), 2.

[116] Matthew Lyon Hazzard, *a song for mama* (Matthew Lyon Hazzard, 2009), 1-10.

[117] Hazzard, *song for mama*, 2.

Hazzard wrote the second verse, “Mama, I am still your son, your pope,” as the dynamic climax of the song. These allusions show the influence of the Catholic faith on the everyday life of most Filipinos.

As seen in Estrada, Mabalot, and Hazzard’s examples, syncretism as a part of the Filipino religious identity shows through their references to faith and quotations of Catholic tradition. Second, especially seen in Hazzard’s examples, there can be a strong connection between family and prayer. These works have represented the reverence for Catholic tradition and shown how Filipino culture has ingrained Catholicism beyond a direct statement of faith. The following section will show examples of language swapping in compositions.

Language Choice

Because there are over seventy provinces in the Philippines, there are at least just as many spoken dialects. The national language of the Philippines is Tagalog, which serves as a *lingua franca* and accepted dialect for all Filipinos throughout the islands. English is the formal language of instruction; therefore, those growing up in the Philippines are more likely to be naturally bilingual or even trilingual. All but one composer claims Tagalog as their first language while having the ability to speak English fluently—Hazzard only speaks English. This plays a role in the texts these composers choose to set into music. Choi and Maniano equally set texts in Tagalog and English. Estrada decided to write in Tagalog, while Mabalot used Latin texts. Hazzard set texts in English, except when Latin is a more appropriate expression for the religious character.

The way these composers integrate dual languages in their music is remarkable. In some cases, briefly using a second language emphasizes the message. In other cases, it shows how some composers think in both languages simultaneously. This section will look for instances

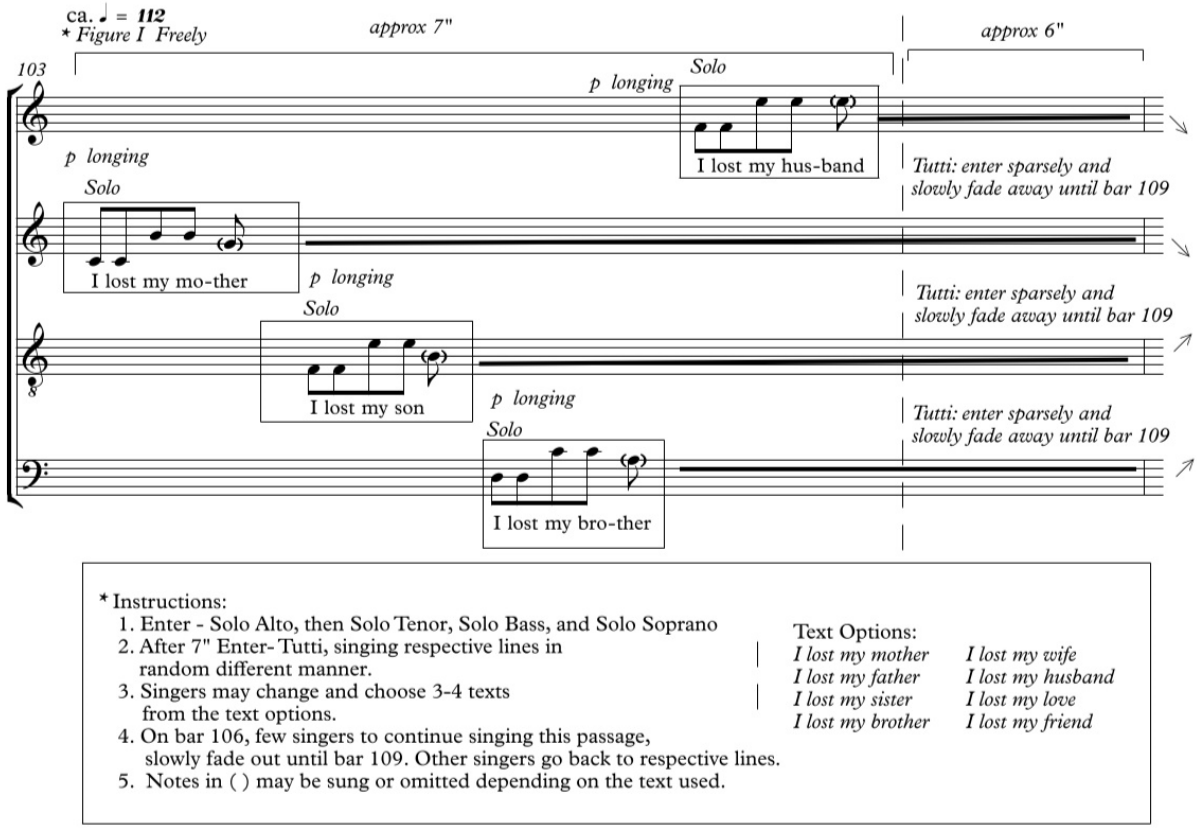
where different languages appear within one song and how each composer treats them. For this part of the discussion, the highlighted songs will be *Daluyong, a song for mama, A Journey of Your Own,* and *Stabat Mater*.

Maniano's *Daluyong* (Wave) is about the devastation of Typhoon Yolanda,[118] telling a story featuring the calm before the storm, the actual storm, and the aftermath and eventual reset that comes with the rising sun. *Daluyong* was composed in 2017 as a commission by the Cultural Center of the Philippines. It was the compulsory piece in the 2017 Andrea O. Veneracion International Choral Competition and Festival. Included in the published score are five stories of actual survivors from the storm to give the singers an amount of context and allow them to grasp an idea of the devastation in the Philippines during that time.

Another member of the Philippine Madrigal Singers, Joey Vargas, supplied the Tagalog text for *Daluyong.* Maniano does not limit the powerful message embedded in this piece with only Tagalog poetry. Toward a climactic end to the last verse, Maniano poignantly inserts a section of short sung phrases in English. Figure 4 shows this measure, during which singers enter sparsely over specified durations of time, selecting from the text options: "I lost my mother, I lost my father, I lost my sister," and more. Using English also allows non-Filipino audiences to connect deeper with the song in a more global sense. Any English speaker can then understand the sadness conveyed in that event.

[118] Typhoon Yolanda, also called "Haiyan," was the most massive storm recorded on landfall that devastated the central Visayas region of the Philippines in 2013.

Figure 4. Ily Matthew Maniano, *Daluyong*, m. 103.[119]

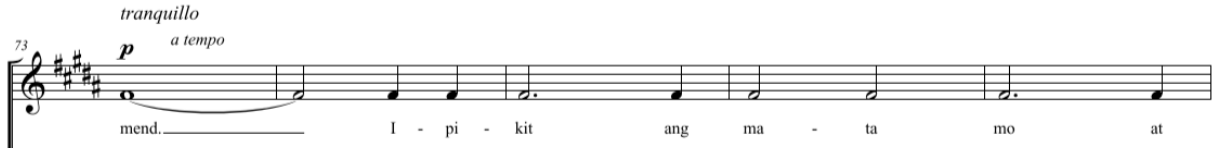


The treatment of language in these composers' works points toward powerful meaning. We see this in Hazzard's *a song for mama*, which, from measure seventy-four to the end (fig. 5), incorporates a single Tagalog line, translated from the original poem in English: "*ipikit ang mata mo at ipahinga ang ulo mo*" (close your eyes and rest your head).[120] Though Hazzard's first language is English, he saw it fit to honor his grandmother and the language of his cultural heritage.

[119] Ily Matthew Maniano, *Daluyong* (Manila: Ily Matthew Maniano Choral Work, 2017), 1-21.

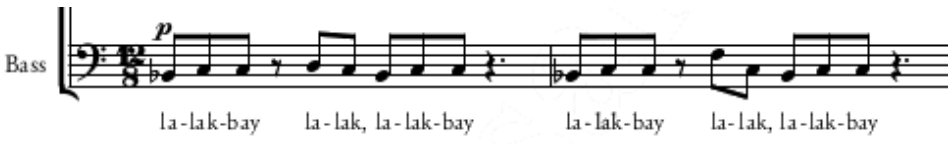
[120] Hazzard, interview by author. During his interview, Hazzard acknowledges that he did not use a more grammatically correct translation of the text to "make the vowels fit better."

Figure 5. Matthew Lyon Hazzard, *a song for mama*, mm. 73-77. Soprano line.[121]



Choi recently composed *A Journey of Your Own* to converge two communities he calls "home"[122] —what he had in Manila and what he currently has in Los Angeles—by commissioning a poet from both regions to provide text for this piece. Joey Vargas, the same poet for *Daluyong,* supplied a poem in Tagalog, while Brian Sonia-Wallace, a colleague from the University of Southern California, provided a poem in English. Choi opens the work with the basses singing a motif on the word "*lalakbay*," which means journey or travel (fig. 6):

Figure 6. Saunder Choi, *A Journey of Your Own*, m. 1–2. Opening motivic theme.[123]



He carries this motif throughout the song, binding the first verse in Tagalog with the second verse in English. Measure fifty-two, Rehearsal **C**, marks the entrance of the English lines, iterated first by the upper voices while the lower voices repeat like a Pop-style backup chorus.

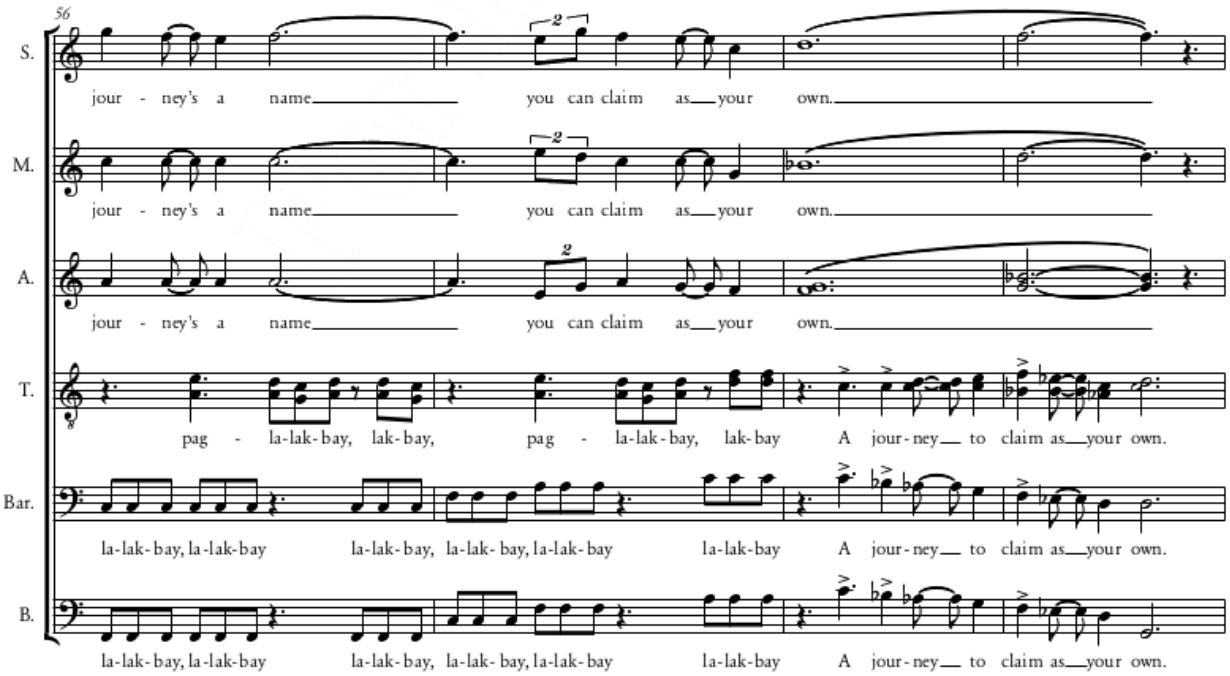
[121] Hazzard, *song for mama*, 9.

[122] Saunder Choi, interview by author, Seattle, February 1, 2022.

[123] Saunder Choi, *A Journey of Your Own* (Los Angeles, 2021), 1-23.

Figure 7 shows an excerpt from the second verse, where the Tagalog motif changes to arpeggiate a chord, harmonically adding texture underneath the English text.

Figure 7. Saunder Choi, *A Journey of Your Own*, mm. 56–59.[124]



The addition of the motif underscores the co-existence of these two languages—the two cultures part of Choi's identity. It symbolizes how he affirms a sense of belonging to both communities and how his Filipino roots remain a consistent drive in his life.

Mabalot employs a similar dual-language technique in his *Stabat Mater*. Also showing a musical expression of the influences from living in different countries, Mabalot equates this piece to his identity as a "Filipino living in Europe."[125] This chamber opera is also based on a

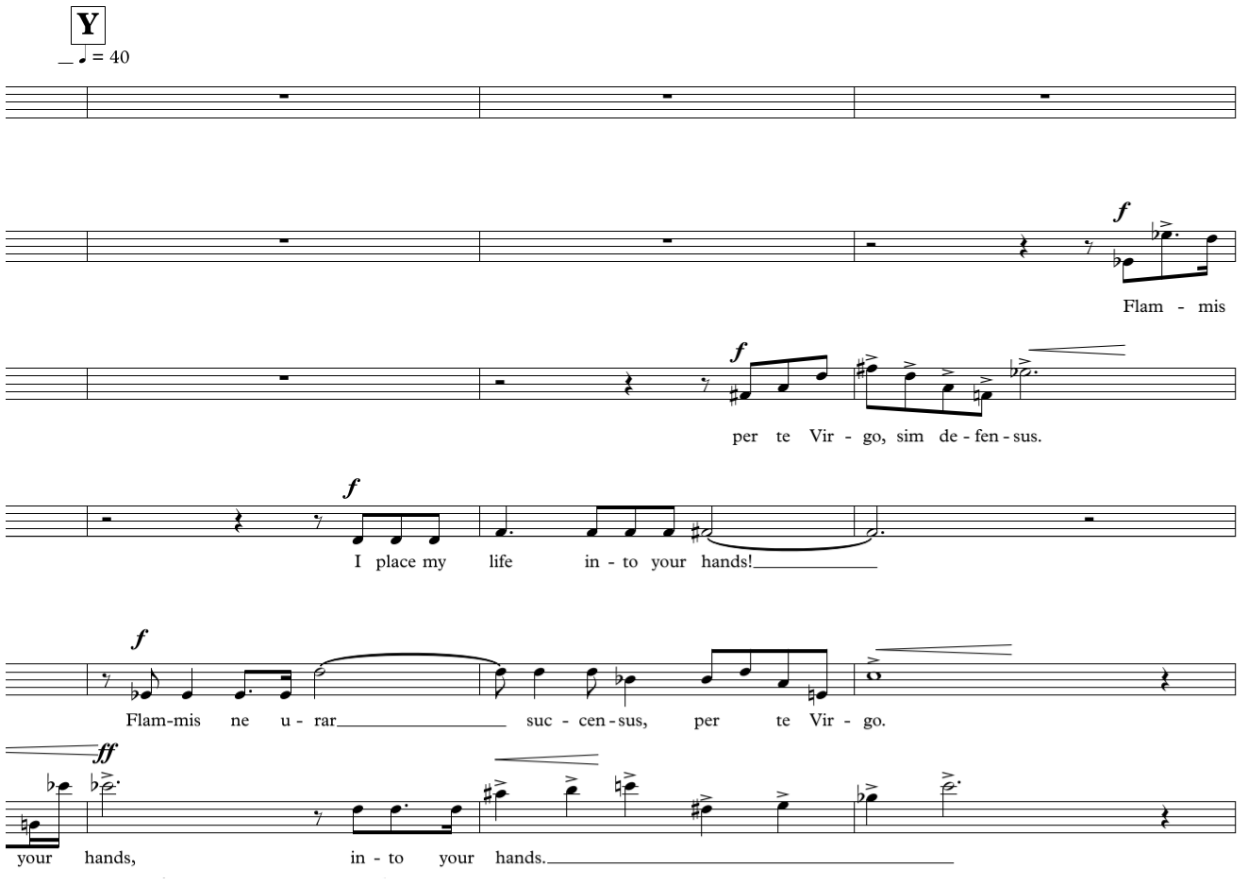
[124] Choi, *Journey of Your Own*, 11.

[125] Mabalot, interview by author.

sacred Latin text, coming from the sequence depicting the suffering of Mother Mary during the time of the Crucifixion. Although this work sets the full text of the Sequence in Latin, Mabalot inserts newly written lines in English in the eighth movement, titled "Sancta Mater." The words in this section are "Forgive me, American mother, for I greet you with two tears in my eyes!"[126] This poetry grants extra context before the Sequence passage, "*Sancta Mater, istud agas"* (Holy Mother, may you do this). Mabalot similarly writes movements ten and twelve with only English text— "How Everything Was Before" and "He Was Twenty-Three," respectively. In movement fourteen, however, Mabalot interweaves his original poetry with the Latin, "I Place My Life into Your Hands/*Flammis ne urar succesus*," as shown in figure 8. The English lines are not a translation of the Latin text, but they serve as a continuation of the previous verse, which was about the death of Christ. The polyphonic entrance of each voice part adds to the heightened sense of drama as though a conversation were happening. Using English in this case further amplifies the meaning of a text when someone is not fluent in that other language. Even though a translation can be readily available, the additional English lyrics help convey the piece's original message.

[126] Frederick Bayani Mabalot, *Stabat Mater* (2015), 1-94. Text is from p. 37.

Figure 8. Frederick Bayani Mabalot, *Stabat Mater*, mvmt 14, reh. **Y**.[127]



The multilingual nature of Filipino choral music extends beyond the lyrics that composers set. Interestingly, Choi, Estrada, and Maniano will write musical instructions in traditional Italian (such as dynamics and tempo markings) or English—even when setting Tagalog texts. Estrada supports this convention by explaining, "it's easier for Filipinos to read in English. Somehow. Because that is the mode of language, the mode of teaching, I mean, in the Philippines."[128] Since school instruction is in English and the University system teaches

[127] Frederick Bayani Mabalot, *Stabat Mater* (2015), 83.

[128] Robin Estrada, interview by author, Seattle, January 18, 2022.

European music theory and notation, it explains why these composers chose English to convey expressive instructions and the typical Italian expressions related to tempo or dynamics. We have seen the use of instructions given in English from Maniano's *Daluyong* at measure 103 from figure 4. Estrada also uses Italian musical terminology when indicating the *tempo libre* in *Awit sa Panginoon*, measure thirty-three, but adds footnoted instruction for the desired performance style in English. Then, at the end of the measure, the musical instruction is in English, "cut at conductor's signal." This shows the adoption of Western music conventions even when the composition illuminates Filipino identity.

A Mixture of Asian and Western Musical Styles

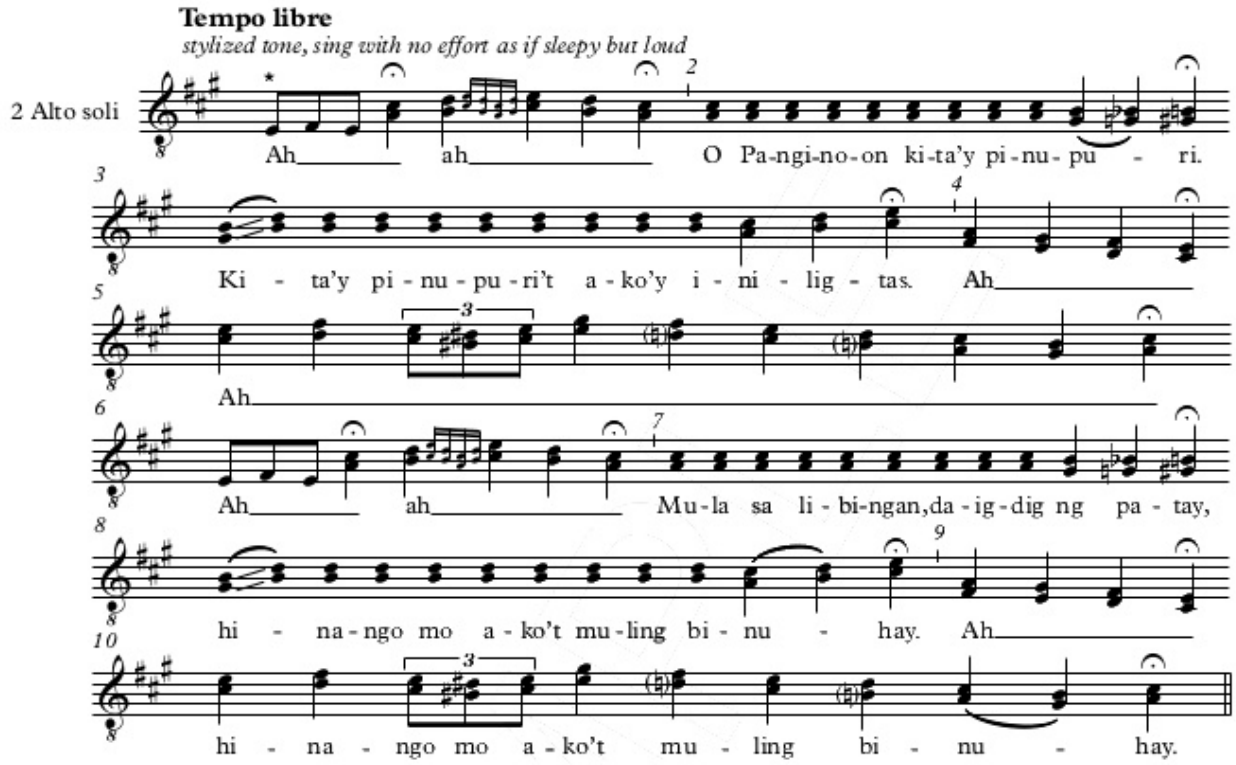
Yet another element makes these choral compositions represent a part of Filipino culture—how the composers have patched together and wove Filipino elements into Western musical contexts. Creating contemporary choral music for Filipino composers means that they can draw from Asian and American trends. We have seen brief examples of this from Estrada and Choi in previous sections. This section will look closer at cultural syncretism at work through these composers' pieces.

Looking again at *Awit sa Panginoon*, we can see one example of a single song quoting traditional music. Estrada quoted the style of a pasyon performance before going on with original work.[129] The opening of the piece imitates the genre, which is the tradition of singing and chanting the Passion story. Figure 9 shows this style in the opening measures. Estrada writes this opening with no meter, the measures delineated by the ends of phrases. As expected in the repetitive nature of the pasyon, the singing from measures six through ten is a repeat of the first five measures. Like notating chant, words and syllables sung quickly and freely have no stems.

[129] Estrada, interview by author.

Estrada adds stems to syllables that should have a pitch duration as a guide for western-informed musicians. Overall, there is enough context given to the singers to grasp an idea of how to sing like a pasyon singer through the lens of Western musical notation.

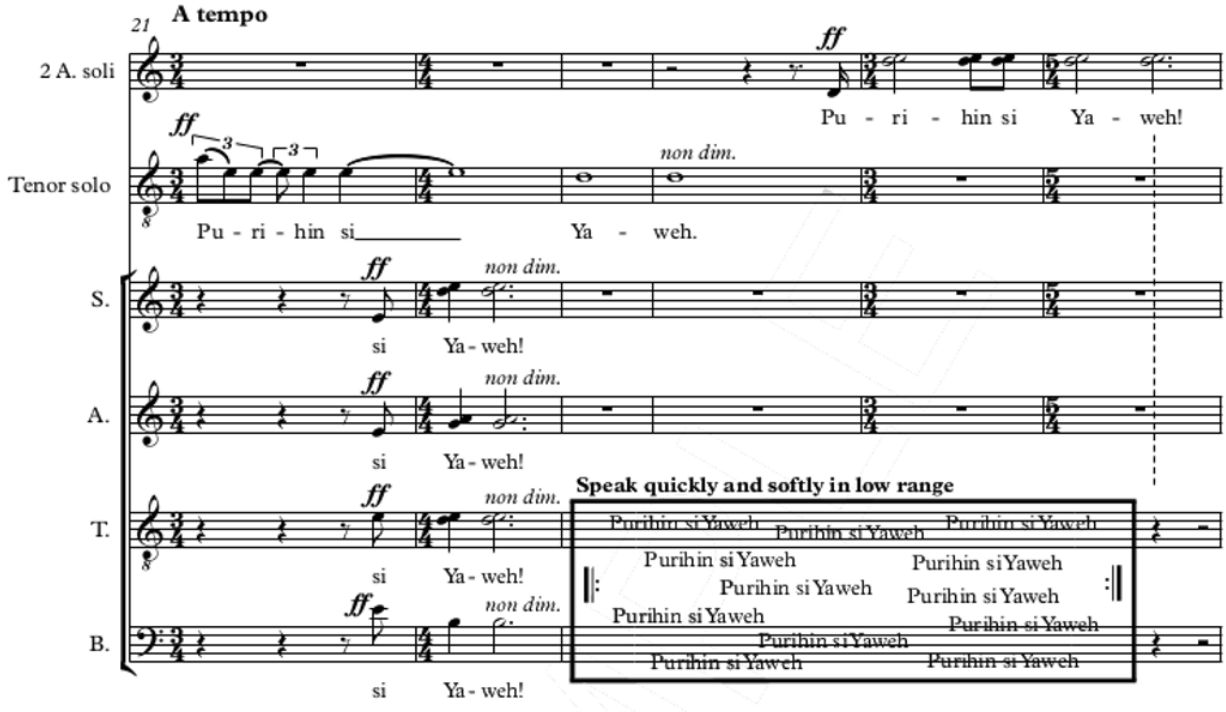
Figure 9. Robin Estrada, *Awit sa Panginoon*, mm. 1–10.[130]



After the exposition of the piece, Estrada breaks the sense of traditional music appropriation with avant-garde compositional techniques. The choir enters in full contemporary style—with mixed meters, spoken text over sung notes, and cluster chords. Figure 10 shows this style in measures twenty-one through twenty-six:

[130] Estrada, *Awit sa Panginoon*, 3. The star above the first note indicates an alternate transposition of this passage, written a minor third higher, included on the last page of the score.

Figure 10. Robin Estrada, *Awit sa Panginoon*, mm. 21–26.[131]



While the soloists are singing, the tenors and basses repeatedly speak the phrase "purihin si Yaweh" (praise the Lord). Estrada mentioned that the inspiration behind writing in this way is an attribution to a past mentor, José Maceda: "He has these philosophies that talks about texture as melody, or rhythm as texture, or things like that. And I said that's fascinating, and I tried to incorporate that in my music."[132] We see the "texture as melody" in this section, as there is no given pitch. In Estrada's music, these philosophies transcend the separation of Indigenous practice versus traditional choral music, resulting in a syncretic musical expression.

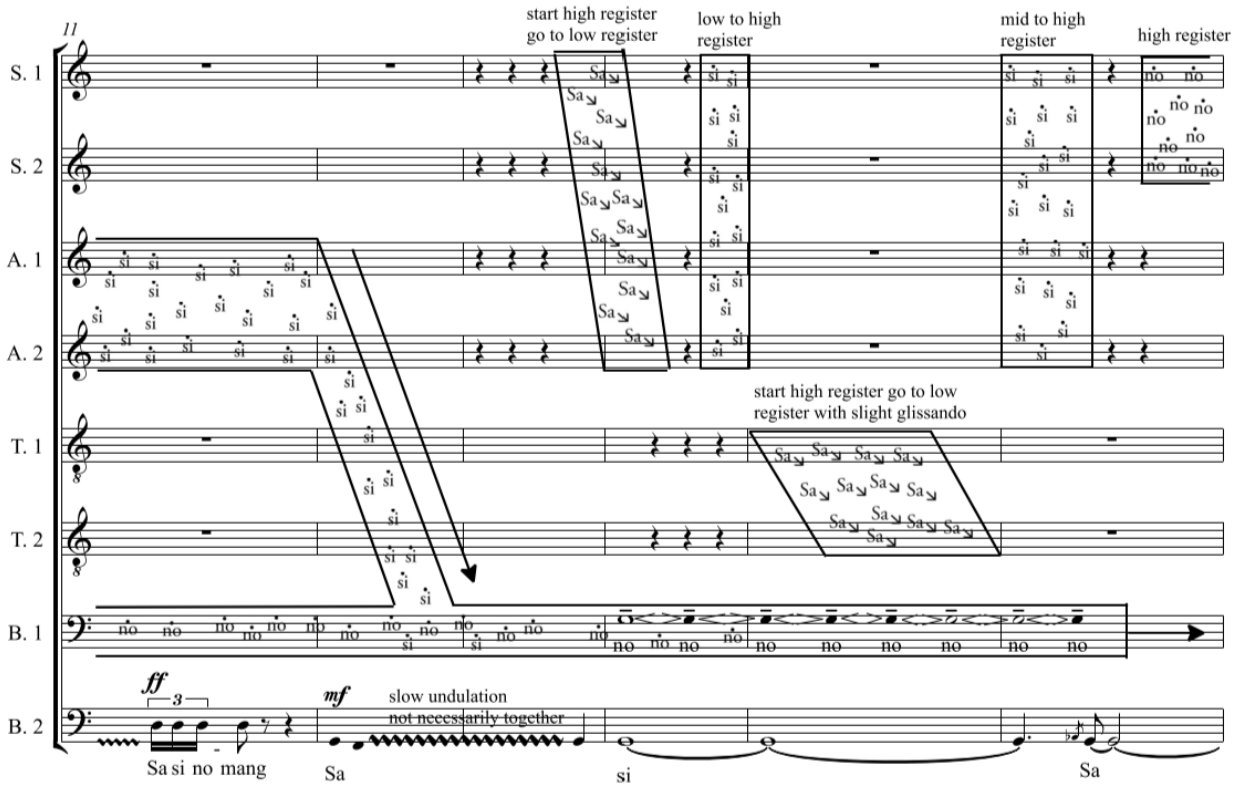
Estrada further exemplifies these philosophies in contemporary composition through *Paghahandog* (Dedication). The alliterations and assonances in the text— *"Sa sinomang*

[131] Estrada, *Awit sa Panginoon*, 5.

[132] Estrada, interview by author.

nakikinig / Nakakarinig / Naririnig" (To whoever is listening / Who can listen / Who can be heard)—drive Estrada's inspiration for this work. Estrada creates "melody through texture" by deconstructing individual syllables of the poetry and having the choir speak each syllable in different voice registers. As stated by the composer, "I like it, because of the s sound *sa sinomang*, and then you have the k sound *nakakarinig* and then the r…so I said, that's a good text that I can use for doing soundscapes."[133] Figure 11 shows the deconstructed text "*sa sino*," an illustration of melody without an assigned pitch, demonstrating a choral texture:

Figure 11. Robin Estrada, *Paghahandog*, mm. 11–16. Choral texture as melody.[134]



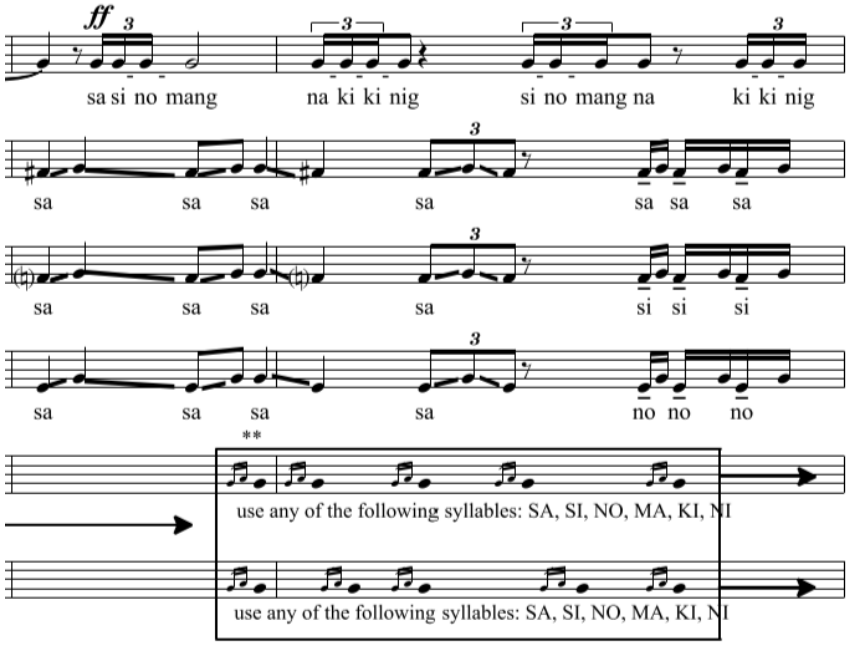
[133] Estrada, interview by author.

[134] Robin Estrada, *Paghahandog* (Robin Estrada, 2010), 1-20.

The overall effect from measures nine through sixteen is to hear "sa-si" from the upper voices while the baritone line iterates "no," which combines to form "sa sino" (to whom). In measure thirteen, the soprano voices speak the "sa" syllable from a high to low register, which transitions to the altos continuing that musical thought. The tonal parts of this song center on the pitch G, as identified in the bass parts; however, the non-rhythmic undulation on G and F adds an extra texture to the pedal tone.

Estrada also incorporates an Indigenous ritual technique involving an overlay of patterns that form an ostinato. The overlay of patterns is typical in Filipino traditional music, seen primarily in kulintang music, a genre mentioned in chapter two for its cultural significance despite its instrumental character. The following example (fig. 12) depicts layered rhythmic patterns: the soprano one part carrying a static motive, while the soprano two and both alto parts have a different oscillating motif:

Figure 12. Robin Estrada, *Paghahandog*, mm. 83–84.[135]

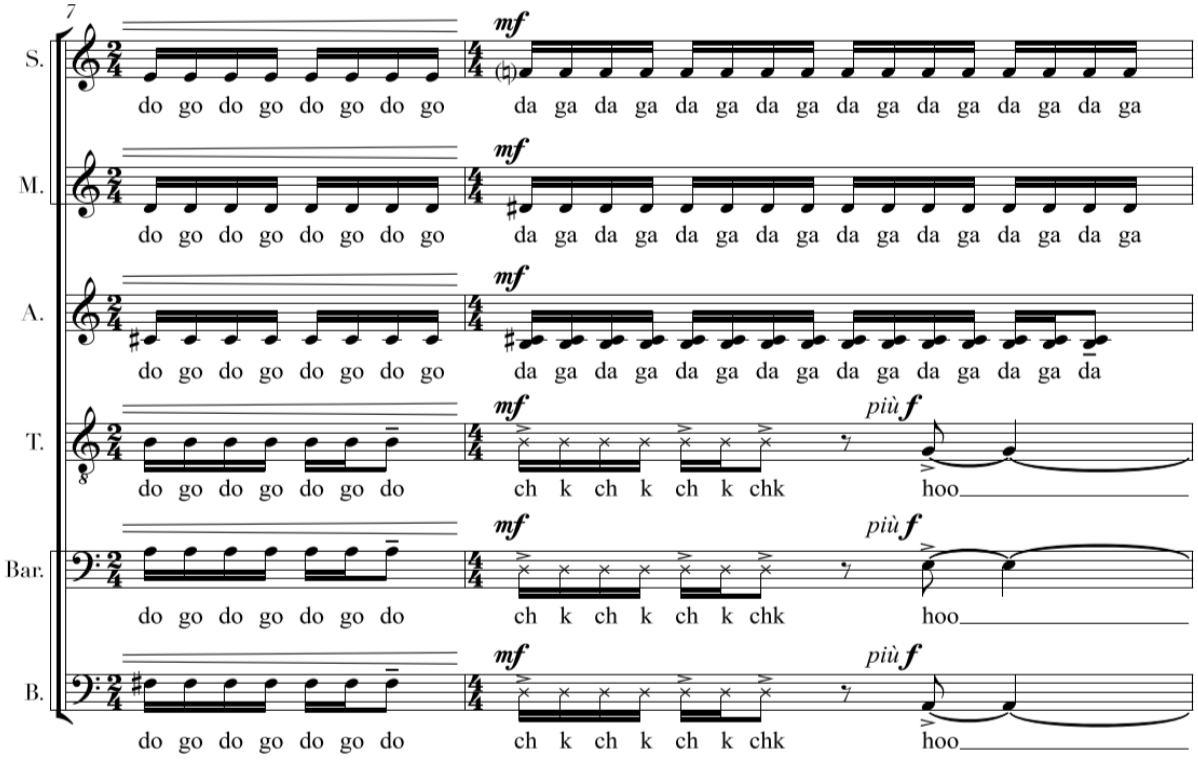


[135] Estrada, *Paghahandog*, 14.

Paired with that is an aleatoric motive—a technique that relies on the performer choosing when to enter and the pattern's duration—creating an ostinato. We can see this in the tenor voice at measure eighty-four. The ornamented pitch using the syllables "Sa-Si-No-Ma-Ki-Ni" disregards the rhythmic patterns. The three-part texture of this passage illustrates the idea of layering patterns like in Indigenous music while still being a Western compositional technique.

Drawing from sound layering and employing non-Western tonality, we can see another example of syncretism in Filipino choral music through Choi's *Ang Tren*. A technique often seen in contemporary style vocal music, Choi applies "onomatopoeic sounds" in repetitive and metrical patterns for imagery.[136] Figure 13 shows this in the opening, with the entrance of an emulated train whistle sound in measure eight:

Figure 13. Saunder Choi, *Ang Tren*, mm. 7–8.[137]



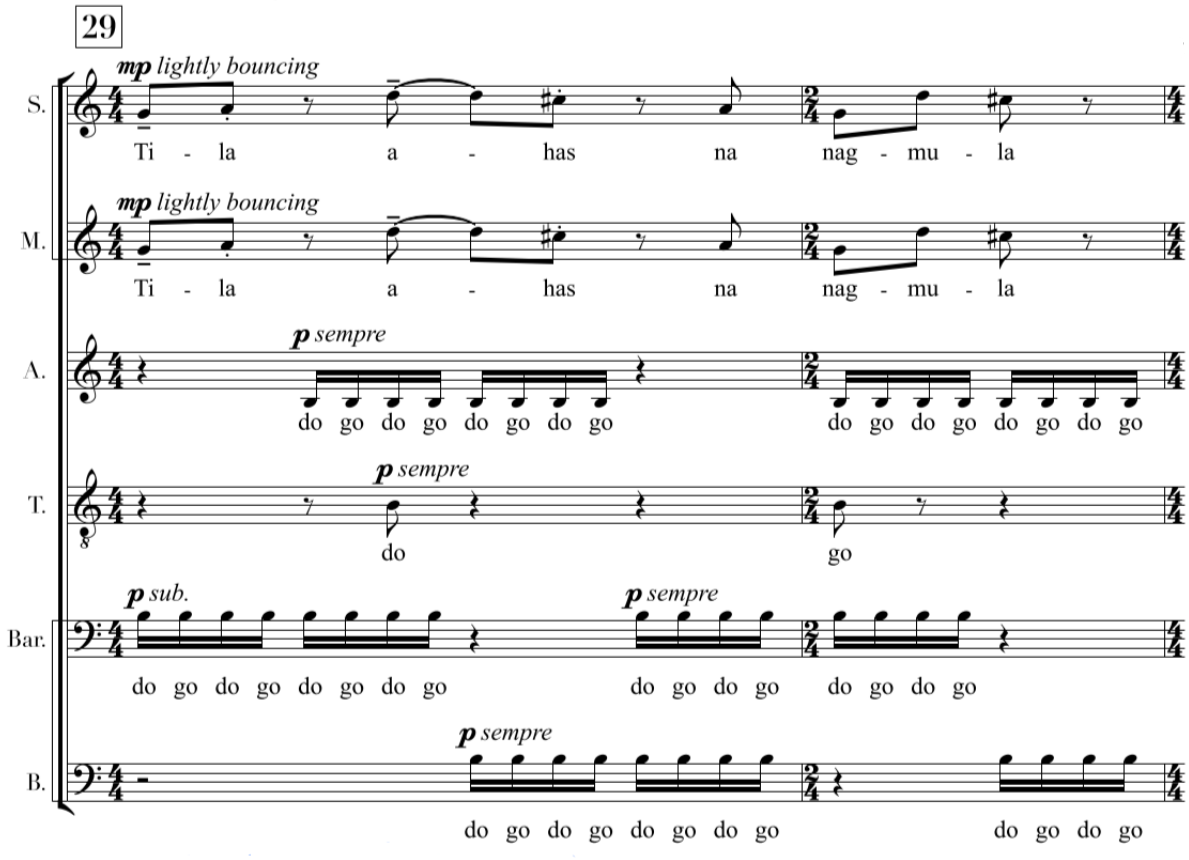
[136] Choi, interview by author.

[137] Saunder Choi, *Ang Tren* (See-A-Dot Music Publishing, Inc., 2021), 1-35.

The meters change throughout the piece, yet rhythmic groupings keep to a quarter note pulse. The harmonies build upon the single pitch, B, eventually creating chord clusters.

The entrance of the poetry strays from lyrical, diatonic phrases. The melody is motivic, with disjointed contours, and features the Lydian mode on G. Choi introduces this melodic theme in measure twenty-nine (fig. 14). The sopranos and mezzo-sopranos sing the opening text, translated as "like a snake coming from its barracks, its den."

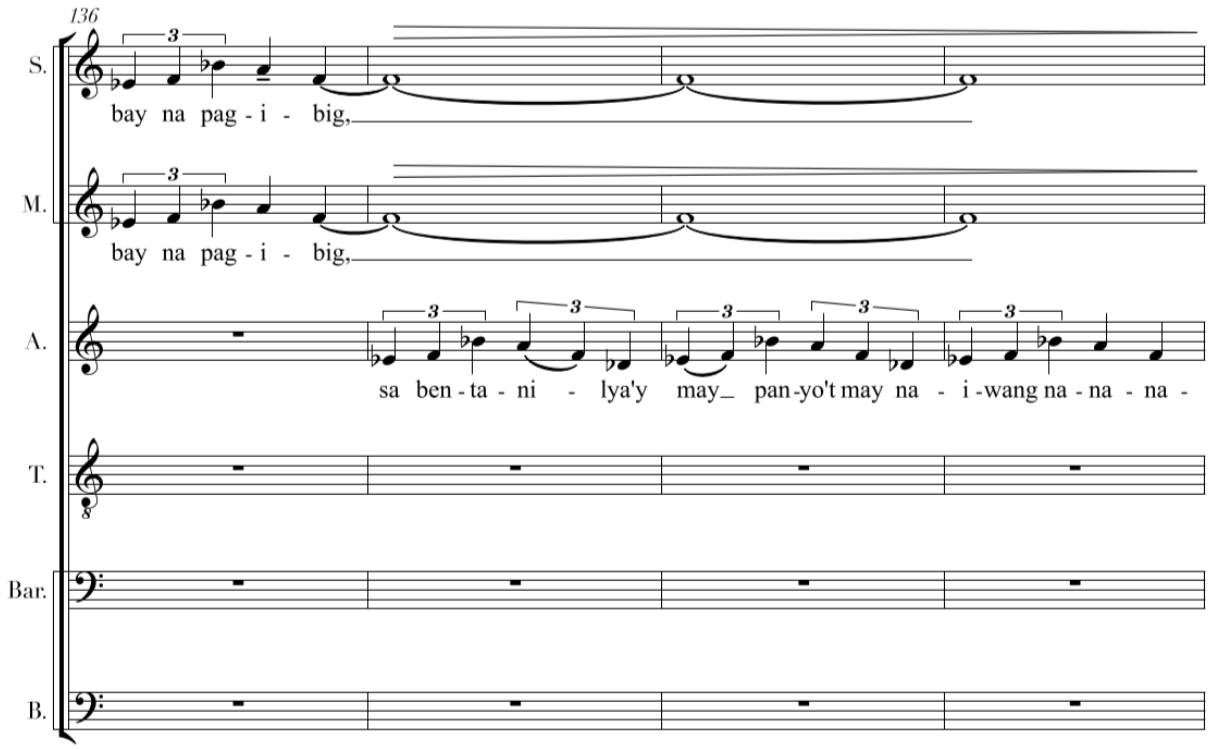
Figure 14. Saunder Choi, *Ang Tren*, mm. 29–30.[138]



[138] Choi, *Ang Tren*, 8.

Other phrases use a whole tone scale or different pentatonic scales, which Asian tonal systems use more frequently. The final verse of poetry is an instance where we see a pentatonic scale. The text translation is "And the train dragged away a wandering love, by a window was seen a handkerchief of a deserted and grieving soul."[139] This phrase conveys the social commentary about commuter life in the Philippines during the 1920s, and Choi emphasizes this by briefly taking away the train sounds provided by the lower voices. He also changes the melodic pattern by setting it with quarter note triplets, as shown in figure 15:

Figure 15. Saunder Choi, *Ang Tren*, mm. 136–139. Pentatonic melody.[140]



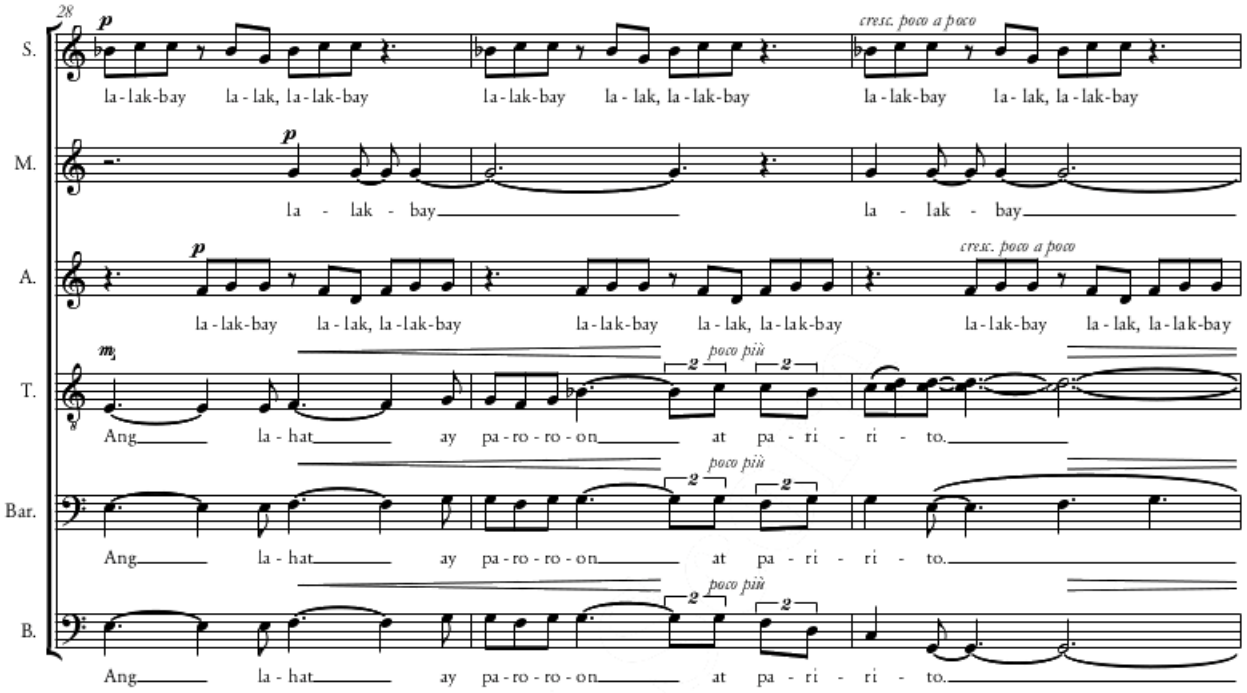
[139] Ernesto Fernandez. The author's father provided a poetic translation.

[140] Choi, *Ang Tren*, 33.

Choi manages to use the tonal vocabularies from Asian and Western styles and create a soundscape that emphasizes the poetry. Both styles weave together to a point where it is difficult to pull one away from the other. It becomes melded together while still maintaining tonality. With that, he also emphasizes the syncretic nature of Filipino identity.

The compositional techniques in *A Journey of Your Own* also combine Filipino tradition with American choral style. It uses interlocking patterns symbolizing the Filipino style juxtaposed by Morten Lauridsen-like harmonic cluster chords representing the style Choi learned while studying composition in America. Measure twenty-eight through thirty depicts three separate motifs in the treble voices that enter on different beats of each measure (fig. 16):

Figure 16. Saunder Choi, *A Journey of Your Own*, mm. 28–30. Juxtaposed writing styles.[141]

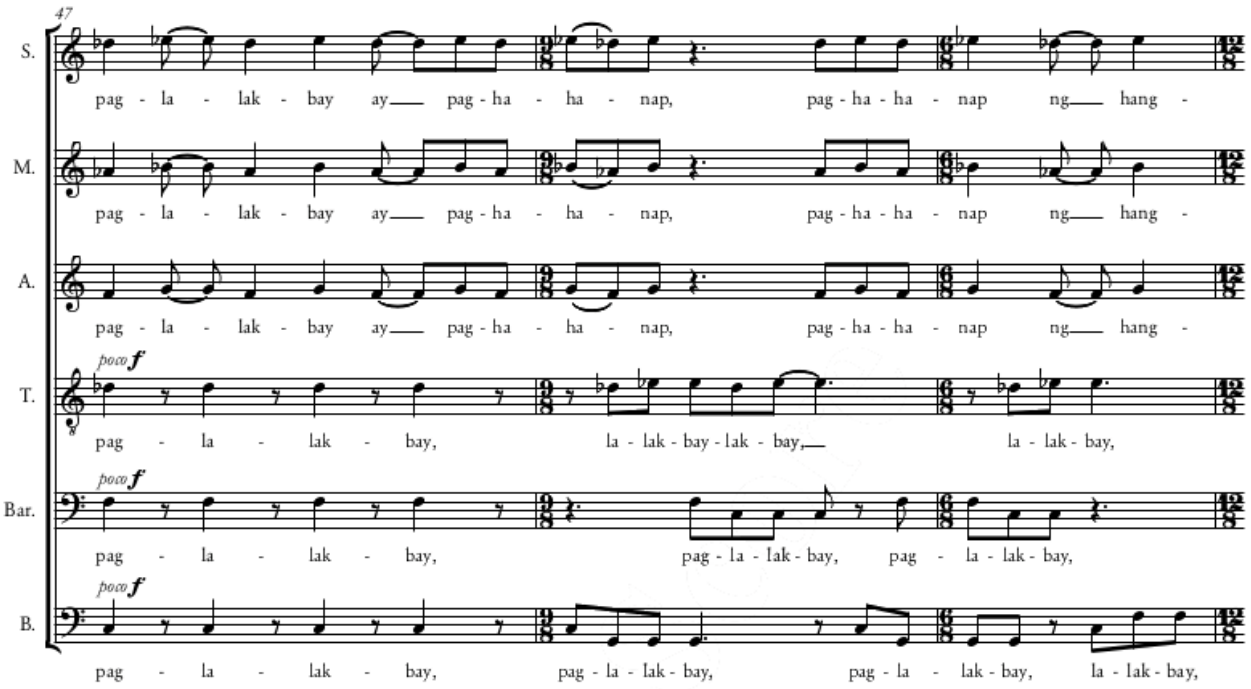


[141] Choi, *Journey of Your Own*, 7.

The lower voices introduce the Tagalog text under the treble ostinato, and the tenor melody outlines a pentatonic scale. Once again, we see Choi incorporating this scale to represent his relationship with a greater region of Asian music.

Choi inserts a choral progression reminiscent of Spanish-style music in the same section of Tagalog text. The song is in C major, but at measure forty-seven (fig. 17), Choi injects D-flat to E-flat parallel chords that lead to a pedal on the dominant G major.

Figure 17. Saunder Choi, *A Journey of Your Own*, mm. 47–49.[142]

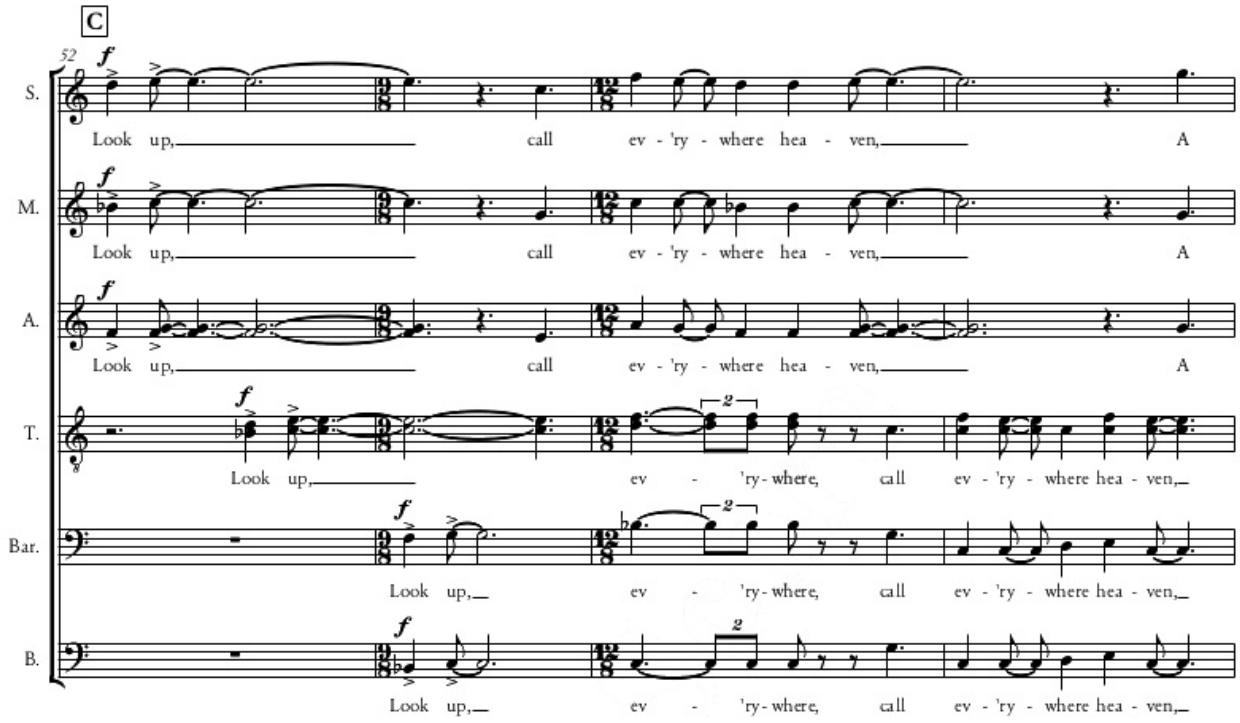


This passage serves as ornamentation on C, a style of harmonic progression commonly heard in Spanish classical music. The following section resolves back to C major with the entrance of the

[142] Choi, *Journey of Your Own*, 10.

English poetry at reh. **C**, shown in figure 18. The writing style also changes to represent a more American style, displaying a homophonic and dense choral texture with chord inversions. When looking at the overall form of this song, we see the first section employing Indigenous and Asian-inspired musical constructs. The interjection of a "Spanish-like" chord progression nods to Spain's influence on Filipino music. Then, the second section shifts to an American choral style, representing the composer's transition from living in the Philippines to the United States.

Figure 18. Saunder Choi, *A Journey of Your Own*, reh. **C**.[143]



Estrada and Choi's music are strong examples of the syncretic nature of Filipino music. Estrada quoted the pasyon before transitioning to original writing in *Awit sa Panginoon.* Estrada also utilized avant-garde techniques to highlight Indigenous-inspired philosophies in

[143] Choi, *Journey of Your Own*, 11.

Paghahandog. Choi encompassed his sense of belonging to Asian, Filipino, and American communities using onomatopoeic sounds, non-diatonic melody, interlocking motives, and juxtaposing Eastern and Western styles of choral writing. The following section will address compositional similarities found when analyzing the treatment of emotional characteristics within specific works.

Similarities Addressing Emotional Character

Since Filipino culture developed from the syncretism of dominant Western cultures, it is fitting to address the emotional characteristics that play into the concept of overcoming hardship. Another similarity that these composers share is that, in their suggested works, they have written a piece as a tribute to other Filipinos or a song that speaks to the strong spirit Filipinos have historically carried in the face of adversity. Drawing back to Mabalot wishing to express "relief from poverty," as he did in *Ubi Caritas et Amor*, works like these, he believes, have a "common thread of sentimentality."[144] Writing songs with specific people or a group of people in mind can be emotional. The way a composer conveys these emotions musically affects the intentions of the singers who perform the works and the audience who listen to them.

Let us look again at Hazzard's *a song for mama.* Hazzard spoke about this song that expresses love for his grandmother while he spent time living in the Philippines as a child:

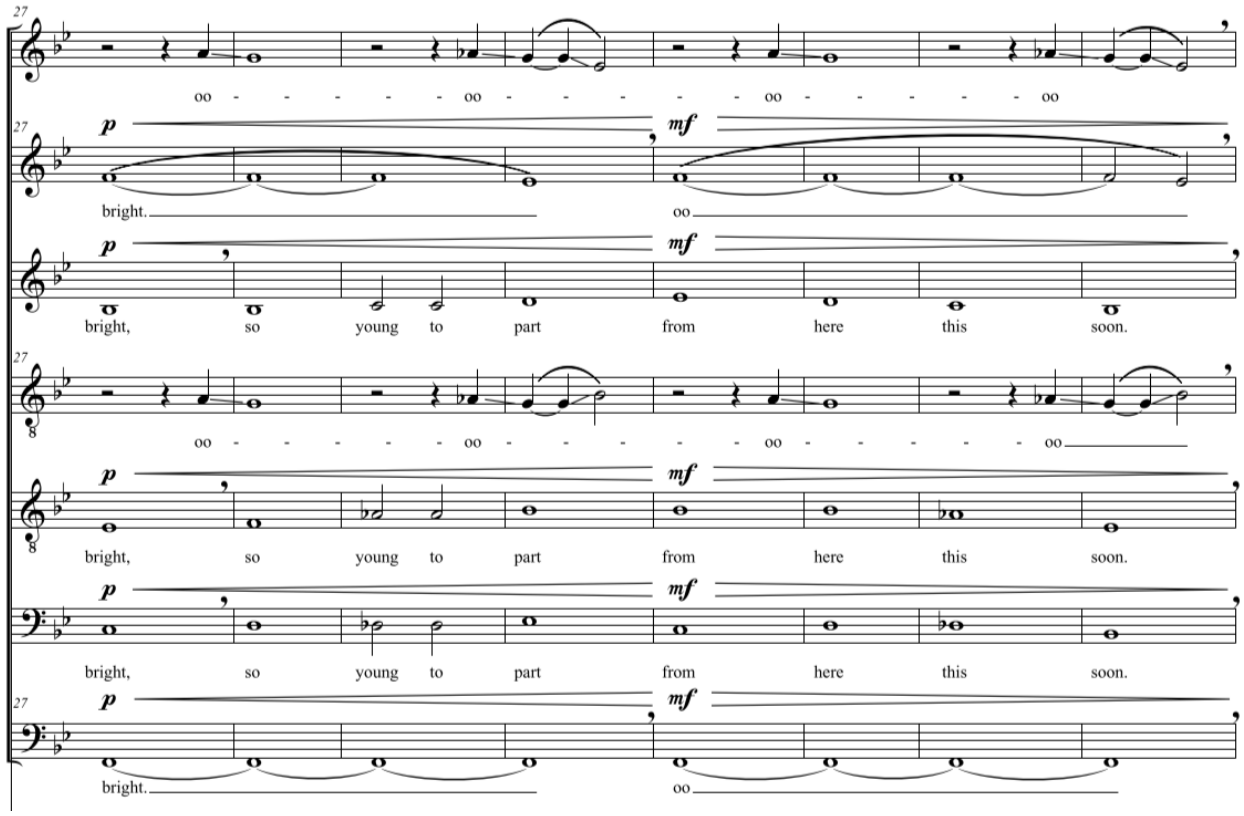
> She was who we lived with when we lived in the Philippines, we lived at Mama's place. She wasn't feeling well, she was feeling really sick, and we really worried, and so I wrote the song, and it actually ends with a line in Tagalog, because I just wanted to say something that was like just. I don't know, it felt right…I think it's actually a little bit more translated, but it just fits. The vowels worked better than I think the traditional way, like the actual way that a Filipino person would say it. So that piece, I had written for Mama, and I had written that line because I wanted to express my love to her.[145]

[144] Mabalot, interview by author.

[145] Hazzard, interview by author.

Musically, Hazzard composes moments that emphasize his tribute. While the prior section displays four staves, Hazzard expands the choral texture by allotting one stave per voice divisi during measures twenty-seven through thirty-four: Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, Bass 1, and Bass 2—seven individual parts total (fig. 19). This is the largest divisi in the piece and contains three different textures in this passage.

Figure 19. Matthew Lyon Hazzard, *a song for mama*, mm. 27–34.[146]



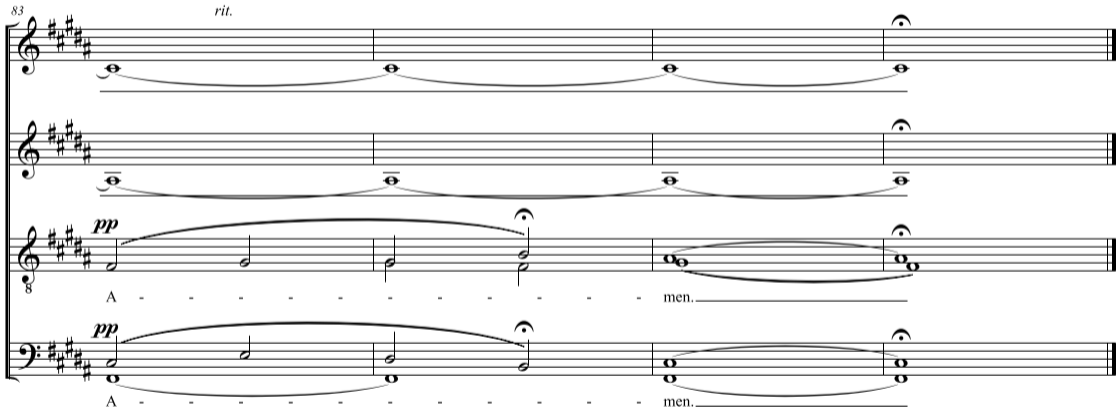
This passage is the most plaintive part of the song. First, the alto, second tenor, and first bass parts carry the melody as a trio, singing the phrase "So young to part from here, this soon."

[146] Hazzard, *song for mama*, 5.

Second, there is a pedal tone in the soprano two and bass two lines. They drone in octaves on F, except for the soprano two that resolves into an E every fourth measure against the bass's F. The third texture found in this passage is a sighing motif, sung by the first soprano and first tenor parts. The intentional portamento slide between pitches paints an image of sadness and clinging to the time left with this person.

Contrastingly, measures sixty-three through sixty-five contain the dynamic high point of the text "mama I am still your pope." Before this point, the song only reached a *mezzo forte* volume. Then the dynamic increases to *forte,* building over a crescendo to *fortissimo*. After that dynamic display of wrought emotional grief, the piece gradually quiets down until the ending line in Tagalog (close your eyes and rest your head), and the choral texture thins out to a soprano and alto unison drone during the last word, "Amen" (fig. 20). The treble pedal note on C# creates a sense of a final resting place, representing Hazzard's grandmother laying to rest.

Figure 20. Matthew Lyon Hazzard, *a song for mama*, mm. 83-end.[147]



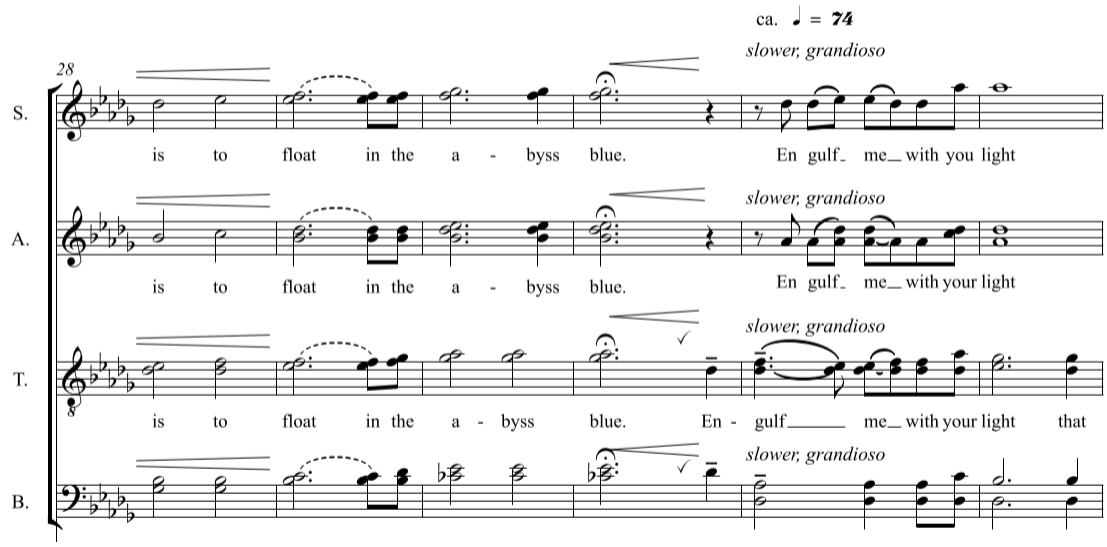
[147] Hazzard, *song for mama*, 10.

When Maniano wrote *Passing Through* in 2014, he set the text of another fellow member of the Philippine Madrigal Singers, Celedonia Franco. The poem channels the feelings derived from the thought of having to leave this group where members feel a strong attachment long after departure. Maniano wrote the music specifically for the Philippine Madrigal Singers and its Choirmaster, Mark Carpio. Maniano described the song in his own words: "Passing Through talks about unexpectedly finding someone special but in the end has to leave, allowing oneself to be moved by the joy and sorrow of significant relationships we encounter in this world. [sic] Text was written by a fellow Madz Alumnus. It was a gift for the choir when I had to continue to another journey."[148]

Although the work looks like a simple, homophonic hymn at first, the song follows an arched structure showing the emotional rise and fall of sending someone off. The music builds dynamically into a climactic moment more than halfway through the song before resolving to a peaceful end. During the build-up into the song's climax, measures twenty-eight through thirty-five, the chord texture thickens with tone clusters into a nine-part harmony at measure thirty that crescendos on a cadenced fermata (fig. 21). The passage has a glorious feeling when the text arrives at "engulf me with your light," in measure thirty-two, and all sopranos are singing high As.

[148] Ily Matthew Maniano, email from the composer, February 17, 2022. Madz is the affectionate nickname for the Philippine Madrigal Singers.

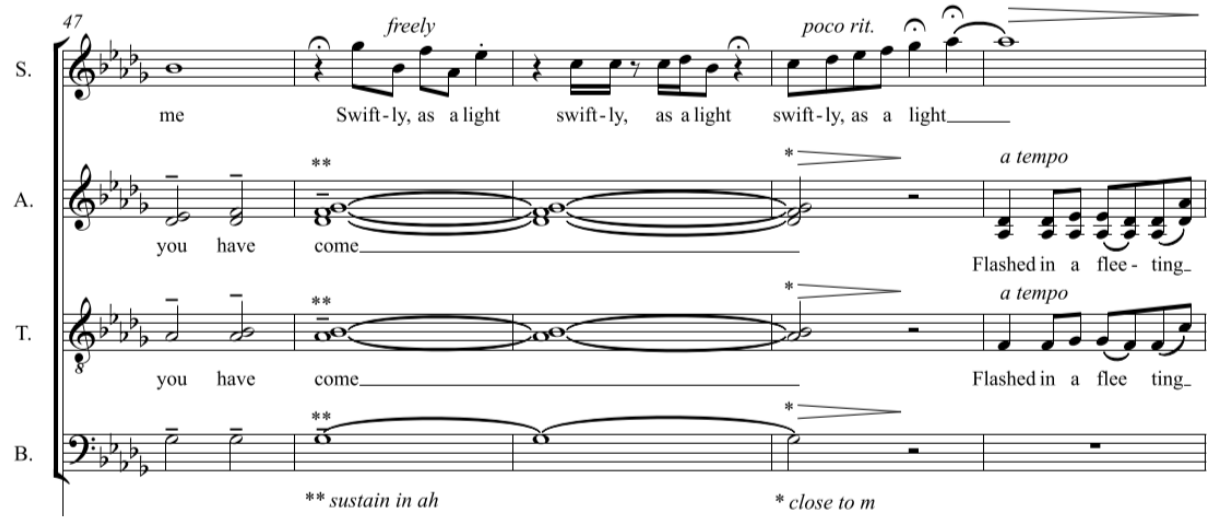
Figure 21. Ily Matthew Maniano, *Passing Through*, mm. 28–33.[149]



The final tribute to a departing member is the soprano solo at measure forty-four, "You have come to me swiftly, as a light." During this solo, the choir sings sustained chords at a *piano* dynamic. The soloist has an instruction to sing freely, singing a melody that ascends to one final high A (fig. 22). The sustained A acts as a beacon of light in the piece, symbolizing the essence of the Philippine Madrigal Singers and why its members are in a tight community with each other.

[149] Ily Matthew Maniano, *Passing Through* (Manila: Ily Matthew Maniano Choral Work, 2014), 1-7.

Figure 22. Ily Matthew Maniano, *Passing Through*, mm. 47–51. Soprano solo.[150]

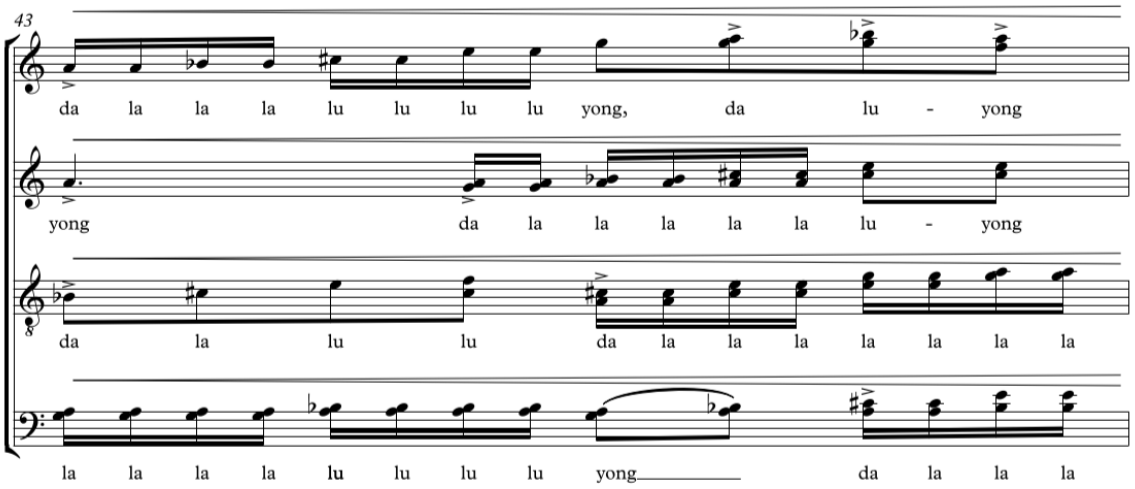


Since Maniano shared that he likes "writing about personal experiences,"[151] he felt compelled to create *Daluyong* as a tribute to the survivors of Typhoon Yolanda. Aside from including the survivor stories in the score and adding the English phrases mentioned earlier, Maniano generates musical tension through word painting. For example, "*daluyong*" means wave, and the choir sections trade off singing repeated eighth notes on two oscillating pitches (nearly quoting the *Jaws* movie theme). They sing single syllables "da-la-la-la" and "lu-lu-lu-lu" as the piece builds over a slow crescendo, and voices layer in octaves and tone clusters (fig. 23):

[150] Maniano, *Passing Through*, 6.

[151] Maniano, email from the composer.

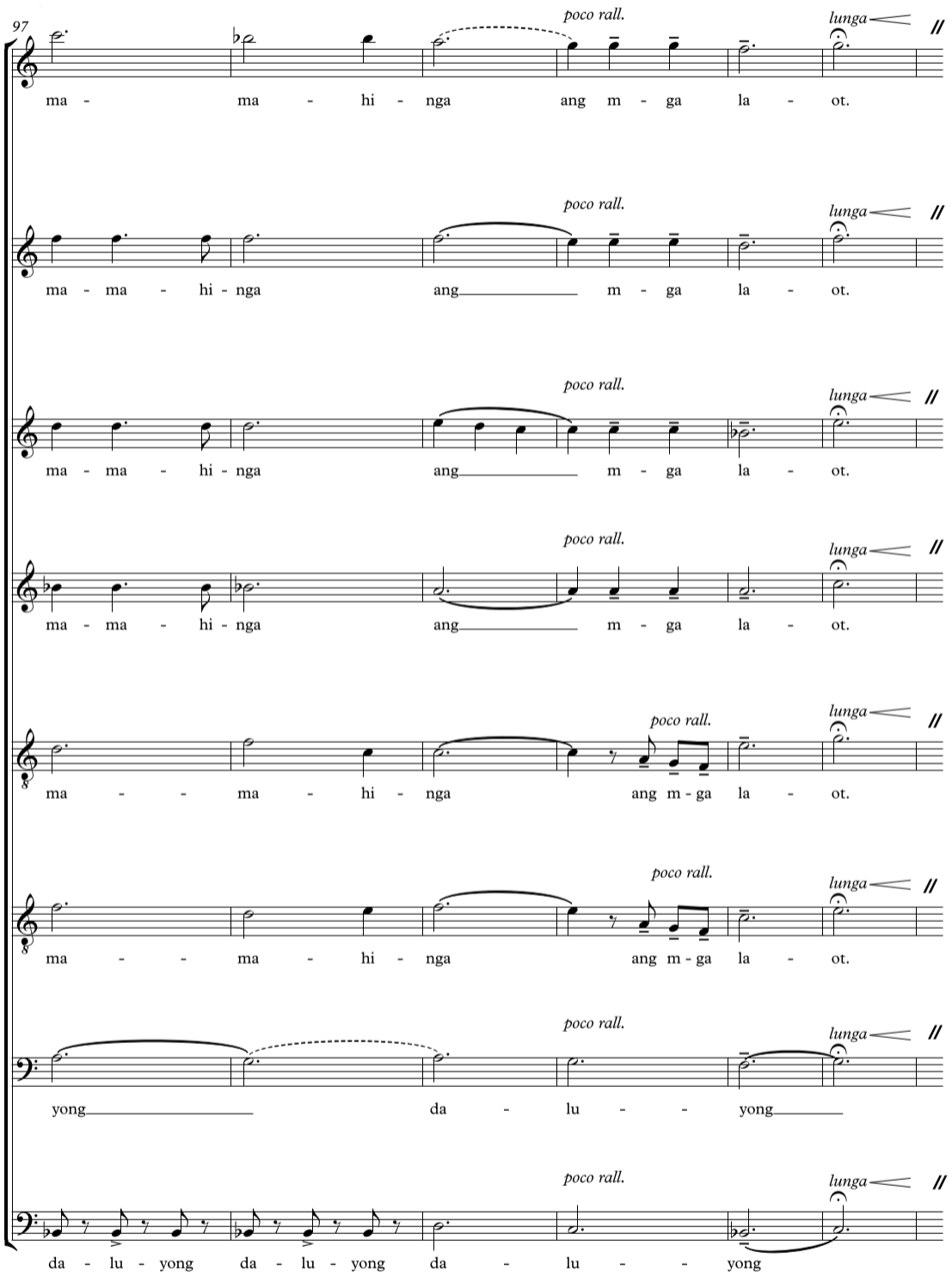
Figure 23. Ily Matthew Maniano, *Daluyong*, m. 43.[152]



Maniano also incorporates foot stomping into the piece to recreate the sound of crashing waves, though the example does not show it. To represent the aftermath of the storm section, Maniano divides the choir into eight individual staves on the score. There is a visual representation of destruction when seeing the deconstructed choral score. From the bottom up, each voice part layers a motif on the word "daluyong" until the final verse enters at measure seventy-nine, sung by the first sopranos, altos, and tenors. The choral texture reaches its widest expanse during measures ninety-seven through 102 (fig. 24). There is a four-octave difference between the bass two pitch and the soprano one, an even greater expanse than the climax of *Passing Through*. This passage stretches out with rallentando and lunga expressive markings finishing the phrase, then drops away after a grand pause, bringing in the poignant mini-phrases in English seen earlier.

[152] Maniano, *Daluyong*, 9.

Figure 24. Ily Matthew Maniano, *Daluyong*, mm. 97–102.[153]



[153] Maniano, *Daluyong*, 19.

This passage emulates the overwhelming destruction, like a tidal wave crashing on land. The tribute to the survivors becomes evident in the latter half of part three. At measure 104, a soprano soloist enters, singing "daluyong." The choir then enters, calmly singing the opening chords again, but on the final line of text. The soprano soloist, or a few first sopranos, sings high Gs in a descant melody. They represent the survivors, showing that adversity does not wash away their spirit. Like in *Passing Through,* Maniano uses a soprano soloist to emphasize the heart of the piece.

There is a trend forming related to how these composers write the ends of these pieces. We see it at the end of *a song for mama*, *Passing Through*, and *Daluyong.* The soprano acts as the final voice in these songs to honor the Filipinos included in the dedication. The sustained chords and repeated words sung by the choir until the dynamics wane represent the resilience of the Filipino spirit.

Conclusion

From these five composers, we see how Filipino culture influences their choral music. The intention behind each composition is personal for each composer. The decision to set sacred texts comes from their exposure to Catholicism. Their pieces reflect a religious devotion unique to Filipinos, as shown in *Awit sa Panginoon,* where Estrada quotes the pasyon performance style. When they compose sacred music or create a prayer setting, these composers have the privilege to use traditional Latin or use translations in both Tagalog and English. The bilingual nature of the vernacular in the Philippines is also evident in secular music composition, which is powerful whether inserting a second language sparingly like in *a song for mama* and *Daluyong* or equally combining text as in *A Journey of Your Own*. Poetry can be in Tagalog or English, but the means

of disseminating performance instructions in both sacred and secular genres will typically be in English.

Respecting family and paying tribute to those affected by adversity in the Philippines is a common theme in these composers' music. Referring again to Mabalot's observation of sentimentality through expansive choral texture and high tessitura writing, having the choristers sing over a wide vocal range and incorporating soprano solos helps convey the composers' emotions. Their compositions tell the stories of others, honoring them as Hazzard did in *a song for mama* and Maniano did for the Philippine Madrigal Singers in *Passing Through*. Their works also serve as a call for unity and strength, as do *Ubi Caritas* and *Daluyong*.

We have also seen a mixture of Western and Asian tonal structures. Estrada quoted two types of chant forms, one Western and one Filipino. As demonstrated by Estrada and Choi, American contemporary chord clusters meet Indigenous interlocking-patterns and Asian pentatonic scales. All these elements are a part of Filipino cultural heritage, and composers can access them in interchangeable ways, which brings about syncretism in Filipino choral music.

Each of these modern composers could apply the historical contexts of the Philippines and the United States to their music. Their writing style is dependent on their educational background and other musical influences. Those that studied music in the Philippines may consider more ideologies and insight into Filipino Indigenous and folk traditions; however, those that studied primarily in the United States or in other westernized countries will have a stronger inclination to express themselves in more westernized conventions. Two composers have been able to study composition in both the Philippines and the United States, allowing for a broader scope of the possibilities for composing choral music. The amount of exposure to non-Western sonorities influences the composer's musical language, such as what we found in the works of

composers like Choi and Estrada. Regardless of where they studied music composition, they adhered to the constructs of western musical notation and employed contemporary composition techniques.

We have also seen examples of how Filipino composers express their cultural heritage through choral music. We have touched upon moments of syncretism apparent in the music. The following chapter will discuss how syncretism applies to the Philippine choral arts.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Introduction

Research about Philippine history provided context for the evolution of Filipino choral music. While the art form itself is naturally a Western construct, composers have found ways to express their Filipino identity in this medium. This chapter contains a summary of the findings based on the snapshot of current composers' works and prior literature, along with a discussion of the results and the need for further study.

Summary of Findings

After examining the history of the Philippines and its culture, religion plays a role in how modern Filipino composers express their cultural identity. Catholicism's centuries-long dominance over Philippine culture has influenced native customs, resulting in unique religious traditions such as Simbang Gabi during Christmastime and Pabasa ng Pasyon during Holy Week. Though Catholicism is not the only religion existing in the Philippines, it is the predominant Christian denomination, and all five composers have some connection with it. The composers have used their religious upbringing as inspiration for their compositions. One way they have done so was by setting several types of sacred text. Their music may also contain elements of Catholic tradition. Despite choosing whether to write religious music, each composer has acknowledged the existence of the Catholic faith as a part of the culture.

Another part of Filipino culture deals with spoken languages. Since schools teach Tagalog and English simultaneously, using Tagalog and English in choral works correlates to the

continual use of both languages in daily life. This extends beyond using one sole language in an entire song. Pieces that set Tagalog texts will still use English to mark expressions or give performance instruction. Four out of the five composers have utilized dual-language texts in at least one of their song samples. The effect of using the other language was to highlight the message or theme of the song for audience understanding. As Tagalog and English feature Eastern and Western language melding, this leads to another point of amalgamation dealing with Eastern and Western styles of music.

From these samples of choral works, definite "Filipino" elements are not overtly apparent throughout each song. Unlike an arrangement of a folk song or an Indigenous song where the cultural aspect is prominent, these contemporary works reflect a non-idiomatic writing style. They are not meant to show off Filipino culture, though they each have a way of alluding to each composer's cultural identity. Though composers such as Estrada, Choi, and Maniano have outwardly quoted or employed Filipino or broader-Asian musical elements, they integrated them with many Western choral features. Preserving and expressing cultural heritage seems to be important to all these composers. Thus, the allusion to events related to the Philippines and its people is a part of defining their Filipino identity while using Western musical conventions.

Discussion

Portraying Filipino heritage is only one aspect of these composers' self-identity that motivates them to write music the way they do. Contemporary choral pieces pay homage to the composers' heritage, upbringing, and influences and reflect a unique and syncretic identity in modern society. Many musical forces reinforce these composers' backgrounds, ranging from religious beliefs to American music. When looking at what makes a particular song a part of

Filipino culture, we should acknowledge some factors contributing to the Filipino aspect of cultural identity.

A factor worth considering when creating Filipino music is that the composers in this discussion identify as Filipino in varied ways. They exemplify varied attachment toward representing the Philippines and its culture. Maniano and Choi have both been members of the Philippine Madrigal Singers, and their compositions reflect their ingrained expectation to behave as cultural ambassadors through their music. Alternatively, Mabalot and Hazzard have acquired most of their musical influences from the United States, and they express more Americanized representations of their cultural heritage. This means that Filipino culture exists in a diaspora expanding across oceans, and composers choosing to write songs that echo their Filipino identity do so by engaging with varied musical cultures to create their art. It shows how syncretic Filipino culture has become from incorporating various influences from Eastern and Western backgrounds.

Furthermore, another factor related to syncretic musical making is that each composer has a different educational background coming from various parts of the world. To recap composer training background: Maniano has only studied in the Philippines, with the Philippine Madrigal Singers serving as his springboard for compositional inspiration. Estrada received training from the ethnomusicological composers of the UP Conservatory of Music before moving to California for doctoral studies in modern composition. Choi wrote for the Philippine Madrigal Singers, like Maniano, but then moved to Boston and California for formal training in composition. Hazzard has only studied in the United States. Mabalot has performed as a singer in California and then traveled to Australia and later Denmark for training in composition. Based on the music samples in this study, one of the trends in contemporary Filipino music includes a

syncretic mixture of Tagalog and English across works. This trend reflects how the composer can identify with both languages. The positionality of each composer implies that they will have learned to implement diverse ways of expressing their cultural identity; they use all their backgrounds with cultural heritage to contribute to Filipino choral music.

What remains constant across these composers is an understanding of the essence of Filipino identity. Each of these composers recognizes the spirit of Filipino culture. This is evident through past culture's choral expressions, such as drawing from Indigenous traditions, as Estrada did in *Awit sa Panginoon,* or using early nationalist poetry, as Choi has done with *Ang Tren*. The connection to Filipino culture reveals itself in pieces that have sacred connotations since religious beliefs hold a strong relationship with Filipino identity. The way these composers feel inspired by Filipino experiences shows this spirit, whether through camaraderie, awareness of injustice, or alluding to what they have encountered through immigration from the Philippines. They identify with accepted norms of celebrating their heritage—caring for others as an uplifting of the self (*kapwa)* and bolstering goodwill through the connections they create with others.

Future Study

Further study on this topic involves surveying a more extensive discography of any one of these or other Filipino composers. By doing so, it could answer to what extent is a person's Filipino identity a part of their overall composition style and how much does the Filipino identity influence their music—by considering the texts they set, the number of folksongs they have arranged, or what other Filipino cultural and musical elements they incorporate into their works.

Additionally, it will be interesting to have a discourse on the dichotomy between what is Filipino versus Filipino-American and how choral music echoes that. For some of these

composers, the celebration of their Filipino identity has only recently come into their consciousness. Mabalot echoed the struggle by saying:

> You need to have an honest conversation with yourself on how you identify. Because if you are sort of wishy-washy—which I was—or lost, or confused in how you identify, in terms of, for lack of a better word, your ethnic or cultural or citizenship label, you're going to get lost because there's so many things coming at you.[154]

Having an immigrant mentality may have resulted in the erasure of identity to fit in better with American culture. It may have had an opposite effect, where the need to express Filipino identity becomes more highlighted with the awareness of cultural differences associated with living in the United States. Along similar lines, another question worth asking is how the discourse on syncretism changes for bi-racial composers, where Filipino is only half of their ethnic makeup.

Closing

Understanding the syncretism evident in Philippine music involves an awareness of the nation's relationship with Indigenous and colonial history. Chapter 2 surveyed the Philippines' pre-colonial, Spanish, and American historical influence on its musical culture. As far as describing the beginnings of the westernized conventions recognizable today, Spanish colonialism shaped early music practices in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries. During religious conversion, Filipinos adapted some of their native practices to blend in coexistence with Catholicism. The lengthy period of colonization formed today's concept of Filipino folk music, which include songs structured by dance forms and tonal melodies in the language of regional dialects. While American influence marked the era of a blooming choral tradition, research on Indigenous and folk music was at the forefront of defining national identity.

[154] Frederick Mabalot, interview by author, Seattle, January 25, 2022.

Influential Filipino people like Imelda Marcos, José Maceda, and Andrea Veneracion led the efforts to preserve and highlight Filipino culture.

Chapter 3 highlighted how the choral music tradition reflects cultural syncretism. We also discussed how Veneracion's legacy with the Philippine Madrigal Singers sparked a boom in university and professional-level choral ensembles that have won competitions and gained worldwide recognition. This choral tradition reflects Filipino culture through Indigenous, folk, and modern Western music. Filipino choirs tend to highlight all aspects of this cultural heritage through their concert programming. As a result, composers for these choirs can appropriate any of these elements in their works to represent this culture.

The remainder of the study focused on a selection of current Filipino composers to gauge the presence of syncretism in works representing their Filipino identity. Chapter 4 presented the stories of five composers and their awareness of cultural identity in their compositions. I asked them to prioritize speaking about the Filipino aspects of their choral works, which led to finding trends in their responses and analyzing their music. Chapter 5 offered an analysis of suggested songs, looking for ways these composers syncretize their Filipino and American cultural knowledge. We found that Indigenous and Eastern musical conventions lend themselves to a distinguishable juxtaposition against Western choral idioms, making the melding of the two a more pronounced expression of the Philippines' connectivity with Eastern and Western cultures. This connection heavily intertwines with each other. It is difficult to truly separate the styles without losing the integrity of the compositions or their messages, thus showing the presence of syncretism in contemporary Filipino choral music.

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Appendix

Annotated List of Choral Compositions

Composer: Saunder Choi (b. 1988)

Title: *Ang Tren* (The Train), from *Kathá: Three Poems by José Corazón de Jesús*, 2015

Voicing: SSATBB *a cappella*

Instruments: none

Publisher: See-A-Dot Publishing, Inc.; permission to use granted by composer and publisher

Duration: 4:50

Text: Poetry by José Corazón de Jesús (1896–1932)

Language: Tagalog

Notes: Commissioned by the Cultural Center of the Philippines for the 2015 Andrea O. Veneracion International Choral Festival
Poetry by Philippine nationalist poet, José Corazón de Jesús
Features onomatopoeic sounds emulating a train

Sample Online Performance: See-A-Dot Music Publishing YouTube channel
Performance by the University of Asia and the Pacific Chorale
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzX-75TncdY

Composer: Saunder Choi (b. 1988)

Title: *A Journey of Your Own*, 2021

Voicing: SSAATTBB *a cappella*

Instruments: none

Publisher: Not yet published; permission to use granted by composer

Duration: 5:00 approx.

Text: Poetry by Joey Vargas and Brian Sonia-Wallace

Language: Tagalog and English

Notes: Commissioned by the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Grant Gershon, Kiki and David Gindler Artistic Director
World premiere given at the Walt Disney Concert Hall on January 30, 2022
Collaboration with two poets to provide text

Sample Online Performance: Available soon

Composer: Robin Estrada (b. 1970)

Title: *Awit sa Panginoon* (Song for the Lord), 2000

Voicing: SATB div. *a cappella*, two alto soli, and tenor solo

Instruments: none

Publisher: Contact composer; permission to use granted by composer

Duration: 4:45

Text: Psalm 30:1-6

Language: Tagalog

Notes: Distinguished use of two vocal production tones: one in the style of Filipino pasyon singing, the other a Western classical tone
Score utilizes speech-singing and chanting that is unconventional in a choral score

Sample Online Performance: ACGCOfficial YouTube channel
Performance by Ateneo College Glee Club
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFnv460TEO4

Composer: Robin Estrada (b. 1970)

Title: *Paghahandog* (Dedication), 2010

Voicing: SSAATTBB *a cappella*

Instruments: none

Publisher: Contact composer; permission to use granted by composer

Duration: 9:20

Text: Poetry by Robin Estrada

Language: Tagalog

Notes: Commissioned by Volti, Robert Geary, Artistic Director
Contemporary and avant-garde choral writing

Sample Online Performance: From the album, *This Is What Happened.* By Volti
https://open.spotify.com/track/6l8whpSNXehhDvwnJJDW5e

Composer: Matthew Lyon Hazzard (b. 1989)

Title: *a song for mama*, 2009

Voicing: SSAATTBB *a cappella*

Instruments: none

Publisher: Contact composer; permission to use granted by composer

Duration: 5:00

Text: Poetry by Matthew Lyon Hazzard

Language: English, one phrase in Tagalog at the end of the song

Notes: Written as a dedication to the composer's grandmother

Sample Online Performance: Matthew Lyon Hazzard YouTube channel
Performance by the East Carolina University Choral Scholars
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LzdwiER1_E

Composer: Matthew Lyon Hazzard (b. 1989)

Title: *Angele Dei*, 2014

Voicing: SATB div., *a cappella*

Instruments: none

Publisher: Contact composer; permission to use granted by composer

Duration: 4:55

Text: Catholic prayer to the Guardian Angel. Prayer source: *Enchiridion of Indulgences*, (June 29, 1968)

Language: Latin

Notes: Winner of the 2014 William and Eleanor Greatbatch Endowed Choral Composition Prize

Sample Online Performance: Matthew Lyon Hazzard YouTube channel
Performance by the Houghton College Choir
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ns2bNPJsURE

Composer: Frederick Bayani Mabalot (b. 1977)

Title: *Stabat Mater*, 2015

Voicing: SSSMMB

Instruments: Strings, flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, tuba timpani, bass drum, tam-tam, and accordion

Publisher: Contact composer; permission to use granted by composer

Duration: Approx. 45:00

Text: Catholic Sequence and original text by Frederick Bayani Mabalot

Language: Latin and English

Notes: A chamber opera for solo voices: 3 sopranos, 2 mezzo-sopranos, and baritone

Sample Online Performance: The composer's website contains excerpts of the work
Performance by the Royal Danish Academy
https://www.frederickbmabalot.com/stabat-mater-a-chamber-opera

Composer: Frederick Bayani Mabalot (b. 1977)

Title: *Ubi Caritas et Amor*, 2008, revised 2021

Voicing: SATB div.

Instruments: piano

Publisher: Walton Music Corporation; permission to use granted by composer

Duration: 7:00

Text: Antiphon for Holy Thursday

Language: Latin

Notes: Written for the Sydney Conservatorium of Music Choirs, Neil McEwan, director

Sample Online Performance: UST Singers YouTube channel
Performance by the University of Santo Tomas Singers
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwS7OgIFjpQ

Composer: Ily Matthew Maniano (b. 1988)

Title: *Daluyong* (Wave), 2017

Voicing: SSAATTBB *a cappella*, soprano solo

Instruments: none

Publisher: Self-published. www.ilymatthewmaniano.com; permission to use granted by composer

Duration: 5:30

Text: Tagalog poetry by Joey Vargas

Language: Tagalog and English

Notes: Commissioned by the Cultural Center of the Philippines for the Andrea O. Veneracion International Choral Festival
Written for the victims of Typhoon Yolanda

Sample Online Performance: Ily Matthew Maniano YouTube channel
Performance by the Philippine Madrigal Singers
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-CMEyI_Rwso

Composer: Ily Matthew Maniano

Title: *Passing Through*

Voicing: SATB div., *a cappella*, soprano solo

Instruments: none

Publisher: Self-published. www.ilymatthewmaniano.com; permission to use granted by composer

Duration: 5:00

Text: Poetry by Celedonia Franco

Language: English

Notes: Written for the Philippine Madrigal Singers and Choirmaster Mark Carpio

Sample Online Performance: Aalexmedinaa YouTube channel
Performance by the Philippine Madrigal Singers
From *Euphonos: The Choral Works of Ily Matthew Maniano*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSoWerLo3pg