

*Dari Akar ke Mekar*

**Studying Filipino Traditional Music Cultures  
and its Inspiration Towards  
Filipino Contemporary Composers**

**DeCoSEAS Visiting Fellowship 2024  
at the University of the Philippines Center for Ethnomusicology (UPCE)**

*By Gardika Gigih from Indonesia*

## *“Magandang Umaga!”*

Not forgetting the fact that El Niño was hitting parts of Southeast Asia and causing a heatwave, it was a sunny morning on Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, when I first arrived at the University of the Philippines Center for Ethnomusicology (UPCE) in Diliman, Quezon City. After walking for 30 minutes from my place of stay in the quiet neighborhood of Teachers Village—at least compared to the hustle and bustle of Metro Manila—I finally arrived here. As an independent institution initiated by Jose Maceda, UPCE is located in the new building complex of the UP College of Music<sup>1</sup>.

From the outside, through the glass wall, I can see books and various traditional instruments from bamboo, wood, gongs, etc., which are very captivating and resonating. Then, on the glass door, there is a written sign: “UP Center for Ethnomusicology, Library Archive, and Instrumentarium”. Not waiting for too long, with enthusiasm mixed with nervousness, I enter the UPCE for the first time.

In UPCE, I was greeted by my research supervisor, the director of UPCE, Dr. LaVerne David de la Peña, the former Executive Director of UPCE, the composer and National Artist, Dr. Ramon Pagayon Santos, and the team, Administrative Officer: Sol Maris Trinidad, Collections Manager: Roan May Opiso, Senior Library Aide: Jon-Philip Noveras, Archivist and Librarian: Grace Ann Buenaventura, Audio-Visual Conservator: David Dino Guadalupe, Junior Office Aides: Benedic Justine Velasco, Michael Dayon, and Jayvie Andaya and later with Junior Librarian Aide who responsible for instrumentarium James Dan Gazmin, Senior Research Aide: John Steven Verrosa and Student Assistant Jose Alfonso Ignacio Mirabueno<sup>2</sup>.

The atmosphere was very warm and full of enthusiasm. It feels like we’ve known each other for a long time. Then, the team also teach me a simple phrase in tagalog as a greetings, “Magandang umaga”, which mean “good morning” in English or “selamat pagi” in Indonesian. A good start for the next daily cultural encounter.

After the introduction and explanation from the team about UPCE, the history, the collections, and the facilities, Dr. Jose Maceda photo on the wall greeted me. He sit in front of a gong, agung and a traditional drum which later I know as sulibao, from the Ibaloi people in Benguet Province, northern part of the Philippines. With a light smile on his face, the

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<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the UPCE transferred to the second floor of the newly-constructed Jose Maceda Hall, annexed to the U.P. College of Music, Abelardo Hall in Diliman, Quezon City. The larger space houses the massive collection and provides a venue for researchers, scholars, archivists, and musicians to engage with the entire collection.

<sup>2</sup> <https://upethnom.com/about-us/>

shady but sharp gaze from his eyes with the googles feels like asking me, “Mabuhay, young man, what are you looking for?”

According to the official website of UPCE, <https://upethnom.com/> :

*The core holding of the Center is the Jose Maceda Collection, consisting of library and archive materials including sound recordings, field notes, video, film, still photographs, and other documentary items as well as musical instruments, and original music compositions that were put together by Dr. Maceda, his research staff and other scholars since 1953. Together with Dr. Maceda’s personal collections which were officially transferred and deposited at the U.P. Center for Ethnomusicology last September 22, 2005, the collection has recently been inscribed in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in August 2007, as an item of documentary heritage of exceptional value.*

*The name, “U.P. Center for Ethnomusicology”, is an outcome of its former appellation, the “U.P Ethnomusicology Archive”, established in June 1997 by the U.P Board of Regents, in recognition of Professor Jose Maceda’s visionary work and authorship of putting together an ethnomusicological collection of about 2500 hours of recorded music in open reels, cassette tapes, field notes, music transcriptions, song texts, photographs, music instruments, music compositions, personal files, about 2000 books and journals, all which he personally initiated and developed as a unified institutional resource for music research.*

As a young composer, after years of knowing and listening to the works of Filipino composers on several occasions in Indonesia, from the years of my composition study at Indonesian Institute of the Arts and after, I am so grateful to be able to study here as a DeCoSEAS Visiting Fellow 2024. “Maraming salamat po!, thank you very much”. My research titled “Dari Akar ke Mekar: Studying Filipino Traditional Music Cultures and its Inspiration Towards Filipino Contemporary Composers”<sup>3</sup>.

This study will be approached in several ways during three months research period in UPCE, including studies of compositions score and recording, field recording collections of Filipino traditional music, and supporting references regarding the compositions. Then also a crucial process: interviewing Filipino composers themselves during my stay here. During these interviews and discussions, I want to know more about the composers’ thoughts on their creative process, work, inspirations and ideas from Filipino cultures and vice versa, and the meaning of being a Filipino and Southeast Asian composer in the contemporary world and cultural discourses.

This is a broad topic to cover in such limited time, but hopefully I can manage this research and find something to articulate and share later. From the very first day, the atmosphere is very passionate, and of course I feel like I’m in the right place to learn, mainly in my wooden desk at the corner of UPCE, surrounded by thousands of archives, field notes, tape reels, scores, photos, etc., and the team of experts in the field.

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<sup>3</sup> Visit: <https://www.decoseas.org/news/announcing-decoseas-southeast-asia-visiting-fellows-2024/>



*With UPCE team. From left: Sol Maris Trinidad, Jon-Phillip Noveras, Roan May Opiso, David Dino Guadalupe, me, Grace Ann Buenaventura, and Professor Jose Maceda painting on the wall*



*With my research supervisor, Dr. LaVerne David de la Peña, The dean of the UP College of Music Dr. Ma. Patricia Silvestre , and Dr. Jocelyn Guadalupe from Music Education Department. Photo: Sol Maris Trinidad*



*UPCE Team Demonstrate Kalingga Gangsa Music from Coldillera to the UP students from different faculty*

## *“Marinig at Makita”*

### *Daily Encounter with The UPCE Collections and Finding Roadmap of Research*

Surrounded by thousand of archives, books, instruments, recordings of Filipino traditional music and contemporary compositions in UPCE feels like a child entering a candy store: this experience gives you pleasure and enthusiasm but can also give you the feeling of being lost like in the middle of the forest. Given the limited research time of DeCoSEAS Visiting Fellowship Program (3 months), I have to organize effectively, which collections are related to my research topic, and then how to arrange the various findings and plan this research structure.

I feel so grateful that Dr. Verne, my research supervisor, advised me to choose only one composition from each composer and mention one more point as consideration: choose the composition that is inspired by the fieldwork or related to the UPCE collections of Filipino traditional music. This advice really helped me arrange the roadmap of my research and made it more focused at the same time. Studying only one work from each composer is a really good decision to be able to learn and analyze it deeply.

After this step, I started to arrange the list of composers and their works. For example: “Pagsamba” (1968) or Ading (1978) by Jose Maceda; “Ba-DW Sa Ka-poon-an” (1987) by Dr. Ramon Santos, which was inspired by Badiw, a poetic-musical vocal expression from the Ibaloi community in the town of Kabayan, Benguet Province; “ñ(y)uma” (1982-1983) by Dr. LaVerne David de la Peña for choir, Javanese kendang, gong, and Chinese Pipa; “Patangis Buwaya” (2003) an ecological work by Dr. Jonas Baes inspired by his stay with the Iraya Mangyans people in Mindoro; “Paka’/frogs” (2018) an electroacoustic piece with the material of Manila frogs soundscape by Dr. Maria Christine Muyco; “Kantus: Tagabawa” for Orchestra by Josefino Chino Toledo; “Kun-di-kam-pa-na” a new work by Alexander John Villanueva inspired Filipino Kundiman song, and the list goes on.

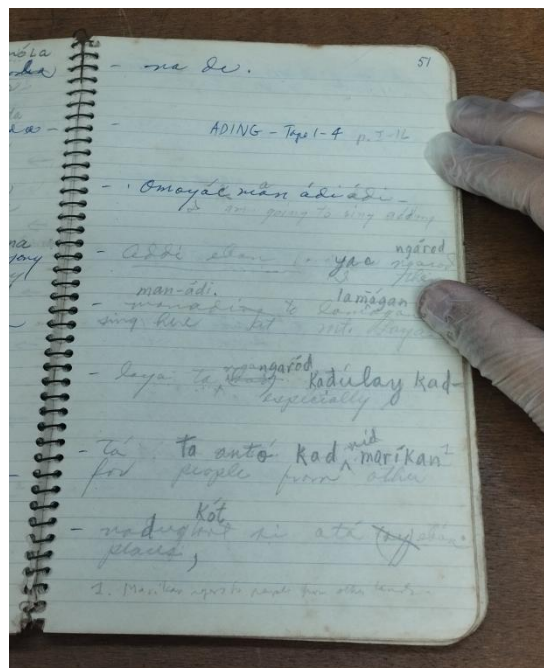
This step of choosing one composition from each composer also helps me analyze the score carefully and find related archives, field notes, recordings, and literature before interviewing each composer about their creative process, concept, and thought. This will be my method for studying each composers and their work.

For example, one day I started studying Ading (1978) by Jose Maceda for 100 instruments and 100 voices. The instruments for this composition consist of several types of Filipino bamboo and wood instruments, like batiwtiw (one string zither), pakung (bamboo buzzer), tagutog (bamboo scrapper), and bangibang (wood stick). Coincidentally, the score

of this composition is displayed on one side of the walls of UPCE, so that visitors can easily look at it if they are interested. Let's start by looking at the title, "Ading".

Ading is one form of ritual song of the Kalinga people in the Cordillera Mountain Range of the northern Philippines. It is usually sung by a man or woman in an opening ceremony, for example, greeting the guest and offering good wishes, or on other public occasions like a wedding. The UPCE team helped me find several recordings of Ading and also the transcription in Jose Maceda's notebook in 1964. I listened to several tracks of Ading, such as the song by Andres Banginan in a 1960 recording. It feels so special to listen to each recording of Ading and give attention to the wonderful voices, heartwarming melodies that are full of ornamentations, and wise words. Ading is a very creative form of vocal expression coming from the oral tradition in certain social settings.

Through his notebook, we can see that Maceda conducted an in-depth study of Ading from Kalinga as an ethnomusicologist, before finally creating his own composition as a personal, as well as communal expression sublimated in the participation of 100 voices and 100 instruments.



*Jose Maceda transcription of Ading recording Tape 1-4. From his notebook "Kalinga II 1964"*

After listening to the recording archives, I look for the "Ading" composition score by Jose Maceda and listen to its premiere recording at UP Diliman in 1978. The 100 bamboos and wood instruments create a mass of texture that sounds like a tropical forest, and then, in some parts, the 100 singers sang the Ading, whose melodies are likely inspired by

traditional Ading but not merely imitate it; only the spirit is still there!. Especially considering that traditional Ading usually sings by a soloist and creates intimate communication as a transmission of messages between the singer and the “audiences”, compared to the mass of 100 voices in Maceda’s compositions where the line between the storyteller and listeners become blurred and become an event for mass participation and reflections. Interestingly, the 100 voices sing just one line of melody and lyrics per group, not as a chorus in different harmonic settings as we usually listen in European choir. Dr. Verne, who also composed works for choirs, explained that Jose Maceda's artistic decision was a reaction to “Ading” in its natural essence. We can go further to learn about this creative realms of composition.

Reflecting about this, I remember the wonderful experience of witnessing the "Reba Ngada" ritual in Bajawa, Flores, Eastern Indonesia in 2021. Hundreds of members of the Ngada community danced in a circle and sang in honor of “Ubi”, cassava, or ube in Filipino, which were the food that saved their ancestors in the past during their journey on boat and come to this land. They sang repeatedly collectively, “ooo, ubiii...”, in one melodic line.

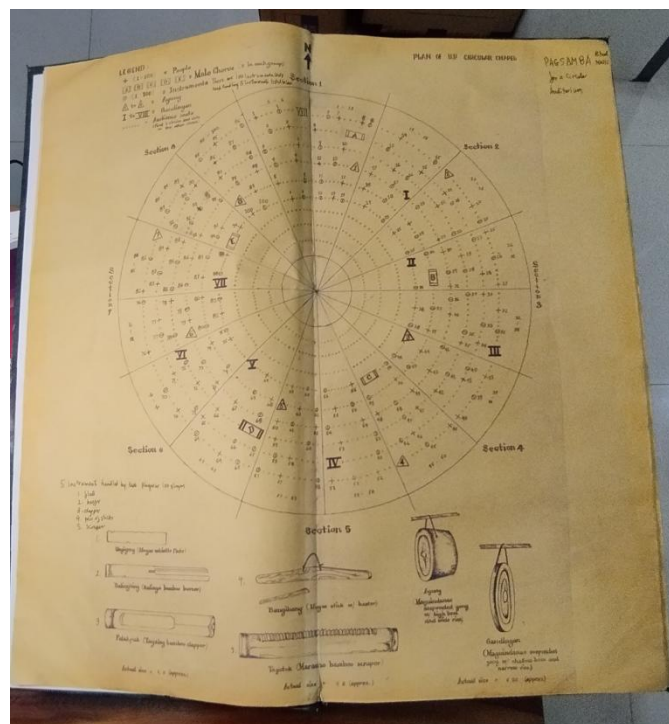
Jose Maceda created the structure of “Ading” composition in 29 minutes<sup>4</sup> and created the sound density of the instruments and voice parts by carefully organizing them as you can see the division of each group. This resembles the philosophy of Jose Maceda about society and mass sound, sense of community and divisions of labor, particularly in Filipino and Southeast Asian cultures, for example, the work situation in the rice field, or in ceremonies and rituals.



*Ading (1978) score. Jose Maceda composition for 100 instruments and 100 voices*

<sup>4</sup> Maceda created the structure of Ading by arrange the parts of voices and instruments in each minute. This resembles the influence of tape works in music concrete composition, as Maceda also worked with the Groupe de Recherches Musicales in Paris in 1958, where he encountered first hand experience of music concrète in Radio France, including with its pioneer, Pierre Schaeffer

The score consists only of two pages, compared to “Pagsamba” (1968) for 241 performers in which Maceda wrote each line of the voices and instruments very detailed on a giant piece of paper like the studio manuscript of an architect. Interestingly, after listening to both, the atmosphere is uniquely identical in terms of sound mass, drones, density, and the timbre and texture of bamboo, wood instruments, gongs, and voices. I listened to both recordings: the “Pagsamba” premiere at the UP Circular Chapel and “Ading” from the 1978 recording. At least this is my first impression of “Ading” before going to further analysis. It is very interesting process of research to go back and forth between learning the recording and field notes of Kalinga “Ading” and the composition of Jose Maceda.



*Pagsamba (1968) original score by Jose Maceda on giant size papers. Plan of UP Circular Chapel*

After studying “Pagsamba” and “Ading”, to have a deeper understanding of bamboo instruments, I decided to listen to several recordings from many ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines. Starting with the bamboo jaw harp, which spread across the Philippines and actually many parts of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. It has many names according to the ethnolinguistic groups, such as kubing in Maguindanao, kobing in Maranao, kolibau in Tingguian, aru-ding in Tagbanwa, kuribaw in Ibanag and Itawes, aribao in Isneg, aroding in Palawan, kulaing in Yakan, ulibaw in Kalinga, karombi in Toraja, yori in Kailinese, or Kulibaw. In Indonesia this instrument is called karinding in West Java, genggong in Bali, and many more.



The UPCE team helped me find several recordings of kubing from different communities. Kubing rhythm and articulation in each recording are very captivating to listen to. There are repetitions of the rhythm considering its percussive characteristic, but the sound of bamboo tongue resonance that is shaped by the oral cavity creates so many wonderful colors for our ears.



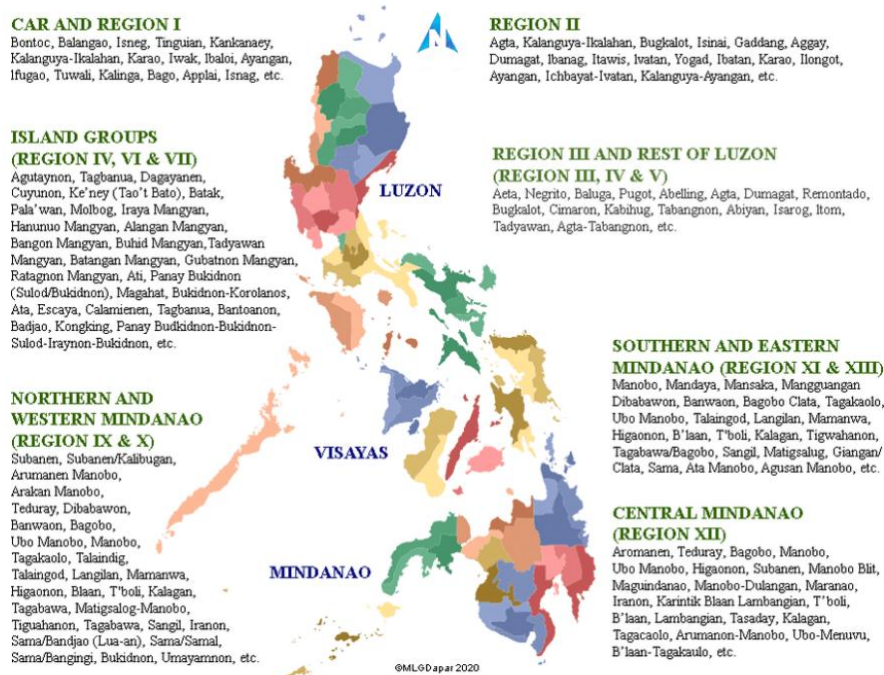
*Kubing, bamboo jaw harp. From the UPCE Instrumentarium Collection<sup>5</sup>*

Then, I continue to listen to the recordings of bamboo buzzers, or bungkaka. It is also called as avakao in Bontok, balingbing or ubbeng in Kalinga, pewpew in Ifugao, bilbil, pahinghing, pautaw in Isneg and Tingguian, pakkung in Ibaloi, and batiwtiw in Mindoro. Bungkaka, bamboo buzzer timbre is very unique, and I don't think it can be reproduced by other materials. As I remember, I spent one whole day in UPCE listening to these recordings of bamboo instruments and music. This recording archive listening experience really helped me to encounter and study the tradition of bamboo music from many ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines.

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<sup>5</sup> UPCE Instrumentarium has a collection of musical instruments including Philippine gongs & bamboos, and instruments of a wide variety of different makes from other Asian countries (Thailand, India, China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, etc.) as well as parts of Latin America and Africa.

Most of the instruments were collected though Dr. Jose Maceda's "An Ethnomusicological Survey of the Philippines", while some were donated as gifts during his travels. Recently acquired instruments were donated to the UPCE through workshops, new field work, and conferences and fora such as the Laón-Laón.



*The Philippines Ethnolinguistic group map*

According to the official website, “the UPCE’s audio collection is divided into two categories: published and unpublished. In the unpublished audio collection, there are 2,424 open reels, 191 cassettes and about 20 in digital audio formats containing field recordings of traditional music from about 87 ethnolinguistic groups in the Philippines, Asia and a small number from other continents. It is considered the heart of the UPCE collection because of its rarity and historical and cultural values”<sup>6</sup>.

David Dino, the Audio Visual (AV) Conservator who is responsible for digitizing all of the tape reel collection, told me that it took about three years, from 2008, to digitize all of these reels, and finally, the UPCE team was able to digitize nearly 99%, or only 1%, of the tape reels, which are impossible to digitize because of their awful physical condition. He also showed me the UPCE equipment for digitization from analog, tape reels.

<sup>6</sup> <https://upethnom.com/facilities/>



*UPCE Tape reels collections*

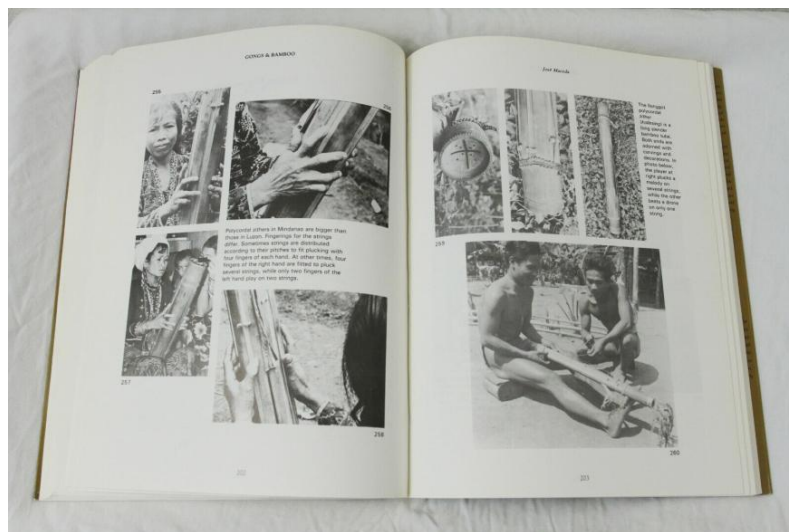


*David Dino Guadalupe, Audio-Visual Conservator explained the digitization process*

Now, we can listen to this precious recordings in digital format contain previous detailed information about year of recording, ethnolinguistic group, and collection number. For example, I listened to kubing “Kudya Ka-lim” with code MGD 4 1954, which means from the ethnolinguistic group Manguindanao, recorded in 1954. Then MNB 29 1970, Tracks 20 and 26, recording of “Kubing” in Manobo in 1970. Then IB 25 1976, recording of “Pakkung”, bamboo buzzer from Ibaloi community in 1976, or ISG 8 1968 Side B Track “Bamban”, “Pattang”, “Pautaw”, bamboo buzzer from Isneg community recorded in 1968.

While listening, I also saw the photographs of the instruments in the book “Gongs and Bamboo: A Panorama of Philippine Music Instruments” by Jose Maceda, which contain nearly 500 photographs, almost all taken in the field, showing details of making and playing

bamboo buzzers, jaw harps, zithers, percussion tubes, flutes, gongs, and other instruments. Maceda also wrote that the importance of these photographs is to help the reader see and understand comprehensively when the text alone is not enough to explain the “panorama of Philippine music instruments”. It feels like riding a time and space machine, witnessing the field work from decades ago. For a moment, I lost my sense of time and space on my wooden desk at UPCE, and it was like visiting each community from many part of the Philippines through their wonderful music (archives).



*“Gongs and Bamboo: A Panorama of Philippine Music Instruments” by Jose Maceda.*

*Publisher: University of the Philippines Press, 1998*

*Unravel the Past for Present and Futures*  
*Filipino Contemporary Composers Shaping Cultural Voices*  
*A Postcolonial Context*

*“Kapaligiran sa Paligid”*

*Jose Maceda’s Legacy: The Importance of Field Work*  
*and The Composer’s Creative Process*



*Jose Maceda with the local community during field work at Palawan in 1972. Collection of UPCE*

On the first week of my research fellowship, during one discussion, Dr. Verne, my research mentor, advised me to pay more attention to “field work” in order to have a deeper understanding of Filipino contemporary composers work. This advice left a lot of curiosity in my mind: Why is this so important? How about the process? What is the influence of field work on the creative process of the composers?, and the questions keep on going...

As an introduction to a deeper understanding of fieldwork topics, let’s see the following photograph: These are the tools of field recording used by Jose Maceda and his team, displayed at the UPCE for a workshop on April 23, 2024. From the left, there is the Nagra III tape recorder, produced by the Nagra Audio company

in Switzerland in 1957. Then, there is a portable video recorder, a Nikon analog camera, a condenser microphone, tape reels, and a heaphone. As an aparatus for fieldwork, we can compare all of these vintage tools to the advanced portable recording technology nowadays, and don't forget a small handy thing: a cellphone. Then, let's pay attention to the picture above, taken when Jose Maceda did a field recording in Palawan in 1972.



*Jose Maceda field work tools. The UPCE Collection.*

Since 1952, Jose Maceda has conducted field research throughout the Philippines, Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam, then eastern and western Africa, and Brazil. In addition to numerous recordings in the form of audio, photographs, and videos, he has also written extensively about the research for various publications. To understand the route of this giant work, we must consider that Jose Maceda, aside from his reputation as a prominent Filipino contemporary composer, is also an outstanding ethnomusicologist. In fact, Maceda “released” his first composition, “Ugma-Ugma,” for various Filipino and Asian traditional instruments in 1963, a decade after he started the field work.

Jose Maceda, born in Manila on January 31, 1917, started his music career as a pianist. He studied piano with Victorina Lobregat at the Academy of Music in Manila, and graduated in 1935. Considering the socio-cultural environment in Manila as the result of a hundred years of Spanish colonization, it was not unusual to have Western music education from an early age. Maceda also grew up in this circumstance. Because of his exceptional musical talent as a pianist, Maceda got a scholarship to study with the well-known French pianist, Alfred Cortot, at the École Normale de Musique de Paris from 1937–41.

In order to sharpen his talent as a pianist, Maceda decided to continue his studies in the USA and took private piano studies with E. Robert Schmitz in San Francisco from 1946–49. Then he moved to New York and took musicology studies at Queens College and Columbia University from 1950–52. This step will be the starting point of a crucial revolution on the Maceda artistic path, from a great pianist to an ethnomusicologist, then an avant-garde, contemporary Filipino composer.

On his research in 2017 about Maceda work, Aki Onda, a composer, sound artist, and curator from Japan wrote in Asian Art Archive in America website<sup>7</sup>:

*Especially at Columbia, he studied musicology with Paul Henry Lang, which helped Maceda to find a new interest in ethnomusicology and Filipino traditional music. He hadn't been interested in traditional music when living in the Philippines; he encountered it in New York and was mesmerized by this new discovery.*

*While he was staying in New York, he had an epiphany. He listened to the music of Edgard Varèse then visited his apartment on Sullivan Street in SoHo several times. Varèse was a French-born composer who emphasized timbre and rhythm and conceived of the idea of 'sound-masses' or 'mass structure.' He also incorporated electronically generated sounds and unmusical noises such as that of a siren. Maceda was shocked by the revolutionary ideas of Varèse's music, and that started to change Maceda's core values and aesthetics from mainstream European modern piano music to post-war avant-garde music from this new continent.*

*After his return to the Philippines in 1952, he started exploring the world of pre-Western or even pre-historic indigenous Filipino music as an ethnomusicologist and devoted himself for a decade to a series of fieldwork trips all over the countryside. Maceda had another epiphany when he listened to the sound of the bamboo Jew's harp in the island of Mindoro, and that completely transformed his interest in music from the West to the East, or Europe to Asia. Maceda wrote compositions featuring the sound of his favorite instrument, the Jew's harp, multiple times through his career.*

After studying musicology and having already started his field work, Jose Maceda decided to study anthropology at the University of Chicago and ethnomusicology at Indiana University in 1957–58 and at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1961–63, where he earned his PhD. He also worked with the Groupe de Recherches Musicales in Paris in

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.aaa-a.org/programs/on-jose-maceda-a-talk-by-aki-onda> . Aki Onda did research about Jose Maceda's work and legacy, for two months at the UPCE in 2017 with the grants from Asian Cultural Council.

1958, where he encountered first-hand experience of music concrète on Radio France, including with its pioneer, Pierre Schaeffer.

All of these personal and social circumstances shape the creative path of Jose Maceda, both as an ethnomusicologist and as a contemporary composer. These two disciplines influence and are related to each other in Jose Maceda's work and will influence the younger generation of Filipino composers, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists later. We can find another example of the blending of these two disciplines in the work of Hungarian composer, pianist, and ethnomusicologist Béla Bartók. In 2019, I visited the Bela Bartok memorial house in Budapest and saw many photographs, instruments, and other things that Bartok collected during the decades of his field work in many areas, like the Carpathian Basin that connected Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Later, I also visited the Budapest Music Center to see many archives of Bela Bartok's fieldwork and his composition scores.

One interesting point to reflect on about Jose Maceda's legacy is that, in fact, he never taught composition. In the UP College of Music, Professor Maceda taught the students the subjects of ethnomusicology, musicology, and piano. To have a deeper understanding of this trajectory, we also must trace back to his study background, as mentioned earlier. He never actually studied composition in a formal institution but did so through experience and practice, first as a pianist who performed many works by European composers, then through his extensive interactions with various avant-garde composers such as Iannis Xenakis, Edgar Varese, Toru Takemitsu, Yuji Takahashi, Chou Wen-chung, Pierre Schaeffer, and many more. But again, his creative process is inseparable connection between ethnomusicological and compositional practice, reflecting his position as both an ethnomusicologist and a composer.

According to Dr. Ramon Santos, Maceda's influence on the younger Filipino contemporary composers, including himself, is not only focused on composition technique but also on a more comprehensive philosophical way of thinking, artistic vision, environmental and social consciousness, and, as mentioned before, field work. During his time in UP, Jose Maceda also likes to recommend and invite colleagues and students to do fieldwork in many regions of the Philippines and meet the local communities.

For example, in 1987, after Dr. Ramon Santos ten-year deanship at the UP College of Music, Jose Maceda recommended that he do field work in the Ibaloi community, in the town of Kabayan, Benguet Province. Previously, Ramon Santos studied music composition and conducting at the University of the Philippines Diliman in 1965 before continuing his master at Indiana University in 1969 and his Ph.D. at the State University of New York at



Buffalo in 1972, both in music composition. This fieldwork in Kabayan opens a new creative path for Dr. Santos as he composes “Ba-DW Sa Ka-poon-an” (1987) for 3 groups of singers, stones, wooden and bamboo percussions, and ching.

This piece was inspired by Badiw, a poetic-musical vocal expression from the Ibaloi community in the town of Kabayan, Benguet Province, Cordillera, in the northern part of the Philippines. During the interview on April 18, 2024, Dr. Santos said that he composed this piece after 11 days of field work there. He was lucky to be able to participate in the feast and ritual of the Ibaloi, honoring the sacred mummies that returned to the community after years of display for tourists. During this moment, he also learned Badiw singing as part of the ritual.



*Dr. Ramon Santos dancing during his fieldwork with the Ibaloi community in the town of Kabayan, Benguet Province in 1987.*

On separate occasions, Dr. Verne also told the interesting fact that he and Jonas Baes learned about Jose Maceda's composition by helping him transcribe the score manuscript back then, when they were still students here. This precious experience, alongside with various discussions with Maceda, and the initiatives to do field work had a tremendous impact on this generation of composers. Dr. Verne often mentions this creative sphere of Filipino contemporary composers as “hardware” and “software.” In a simple explanation, hardware is about the composition theory and techniques, or the skill of craftsmanship. The very important thing is the software; it's all about the philosophy, concept, cultural consciousness and message of the composer's work. Further he said that the composers find this “software” in Filipino culture.

Another important initiative by Jose Maceda is the institutionalization of the Asian Music Program here, related to his vision of Pan-Asia and Southeast Asian music and putting Filipino music in a broader cultural discourse. Here the musicology students can study the music of the Kulintang ensemble from Manguindanao, Kalingga gongs and bamboo music from the Cordillera, the Koto ensemble from Japan, the Javanese Gamelan ensemble, and many more.



*The UP Tugma students rehearsed Javanese Gamelan gendhing, "Mugi Rahayu"*

Dr. Ramon Santos, in the interview, also told a lot of stories about this program, including the interesting moment when Maceda and he convinced the UP council that Ben Pangosbani, initially a janitor here, should be the first lecturer of Kalinga music because he is from Kalinga and an excellent cultural bearer regarding his talent and knowledge in his tradition. Ramon Santos, with a big laugh, remembered this moment when they told the university council, "We will withdraw this appointment if anyone of you can teach!"

I feel so lucky to be able to witness all of these diverse musical activities at the UP College of Music, in addition to my daily activity of working with the archive in the UPCE Collection. During my first period of research, the UP Tugma students had a weekly rehearsal for their concert, "Buwan Ang Tanglaw" (Moon Gazing Concert), on April 23, 2024, at the National Science Complex Amphitheater, UP Diliman. With Dr. Verne de la Pena as artistic director, UP Tugma students will perform a multicultural list of repertoires, including Kalinga Gangsa Ensemble, Manguindanao Kulintang Ensemble, Javanese Gamelan Ensemble, Rondalla Ensemble, and Japanese Koto Ensemble. There will also be a guest performer from Mahasarakham University Cultural Group from Kham Rieng, Thailand, and Guru Jina Rajkumari Ensemble from Assam, India.

On May 5, there will be a 50-year restaging of Jose Maceda's "Atmosphere," or "Ugnayan" (1974), led by artistic director, sound artist, curator, and former UPCE collections manager, Dayang Yraola. All of these programs are part of "Pamamahagi at Pamamalagi" (Distribution and Accommodation): UP Diliman Arts and Culture Festival 2024. Here, these living musical spheres are interrelated with each other and create decades of cultural dialectic and discourse.



*UP Tugma student ensemble rehearse Kalinga Gangsa music and dance from Cordillera*



*"Buwan at Tanglaw" (Moon Gazing Concert), on April 23, 2024, at the National Science Complex Amphitheater, UP Diliman*

*“Paglikha ng mga Tunog”*  
*Stories of Filipino Contemporary Composers Works*  
*which Inspired by Filipino Traditional Music Cultures*

**Unravel the Past for Present and Future**

**A Postcolonial Context**

In an essay from 1966 titled “Elements of New Music in Southeast Asia”, Maceda wrote his reflection of the traditional music sphere in rural Southeast Asia, before expressed his thought process as seeing this as an inspiration and source of new music elements in the modern sphere:

*In village Southeast Asia, people live in rural surrounding exposed to nature-- its flora, fauna, the physical elements, sounds and spirits inhabiting this surrounding-- which influence the people's live and their music. The musical instruments-- made of bamboo, parts of plants and trees, animal skins, shells, horns, and other material-- as well as sounds of these instruments, the musical forms of songs are a reflection of this physical environment. All this music is played in connection with village life varying from recreational affairs to religious rituals.*

*In modern Southeast Asia, all this village music can be made the basis of a new musical expression, using the same musical instruments, but with certain changes of application.*

By reading this essay in depth, we can find Jose Maceda's efforts to find a creative path both as an ethnomusicologist who carries out in-depth studies of traditional music in rural Southeast Asia, and as a contemporary composer - related to the notion of cultural identity of music in this region, in what so called as modern era. Although during this fellowship I could not find a reference regarding the nationalistic view of Jose Maceda, and in fact, he always had the tendency to put Filipino music culture in a broader context, in Southeast Asia and Pan-Asia, we may ask a question regarding his tireless effort: “Why?”

Considering that this topic will be a challenging one to understand, I interviewed my research supervisor, Dr. Verne, and also Dr. Ramon Santos on separate occasions about a thing: “Why and what circumstances made Maceda did all of this initiative?”. During our conversation, Dr. Verne mentioned that Maceda grew up in a dynamic part of Filipino history as a young nation after a very long history of Spanish and then US colonization. Then,

somehow, the Philippines are one of the most westernized countries in Southeast Asia, including the fact that western music education is not unusual here. These circumstances also shaped a crucial revolution on the Maceda artistic path, from a great pianist to an ethnomusicologist, then an avant-garde, contemporary Filipino composer.

As a young composer who came from Indonesia, a country in Southeast Asia that also experienced a long history of colonialism, from Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese occupation in different eras, I find that Maceda's essay resonates, and somehow makes me remember about a big debate of intellectuals, politicians, and cultural figures during 30's in per-independence Indonesia.

This event which is repeatedly written on our educational history books is called "Polemik Kebudayaan." This great polemic began when the young litterateur and cultural thinker Sultan Takdir Alisjahbana (STA) published an article entitled "Menuju Masyarakat dan Kebudayaan Baru: Indonesia-Prae Indonesia," or "Towards a New Society and Culture: Indonesia-Prae Indonesia," in a famous avant-garde literary magazine, Pujangga Baru, in 1935. Here, STA expressed his thought that Indonesia must learn from the west, the critical thinking process, research, individualism, materialism, and technology in order to be a developed modern country to face global competition.

He wrote sharply his famous statement in Indonesian, "*Dan sekarang tiba waktunya mengarahkan pandangan kita ke Barat,*" which means "And now it is time to turn our eyes to the West." "*Jiwa yang melahirkan Borobudur yang luhur itu tidak ada sangkut pautnya dengan semangat menyala-nyala dalam dada para penganjur cita-cita keindonesiaan dalam abad kedua puluh ini.*", "*The soul that created the great Borobudur had nothing to do with the passion burning in the chests of the proponents of Indonesian ideals in the twentieth century.*" Further, he also mentions that the belief in mysticism in nature in our collective society is an obstacle to this progress.

The statement of STA invited heated debate and somehow started a polarity, famously known as Barat versus Timur, West versus East. On the contrary, among them are writer and journalist Sanusi Pane, cultural activist and educator Ki Hadjar Dewantoro, who will be the first Minister of National Education after the independence of the Republic of Indonesia. In an essay entitled 'Mengembalikan Keboedajaan Kita' (Returning Our Culture), as a respond to STA, Sanusi Pane argues that Indonesian culture is oriented towards Eastern culture which prioritizes spiritual life, feelings, mutual cooperation, mutual help, and Indonesian people must not forget the history of their own culture.

I will not make any further commentary about this almost century-long debate in the history of Indonesia as a nation since the proclamation of independence on 17 August 1945, but I think somehow this spirit of in-depth thinking and reflections about cultural identity in a postcolonial context also resonates with the spirit of Jose Maceda and the younger generation of Filipino contemporary composers.

On his book, “Four Asian Contemporary Composers, The Influence of Tradition in Their Works”, composer and Filipino National Artist, Fransisco F. Feliciano wrote:

*In this “post-colonial” period in Philippines history, wherein the great majority of the Filipino people brought up in a western musical tradition are actively engaged in the search of their “roots”, the ancient musical tradition of pre-Hispanic times promises to be the link to their ancient past. Jose Maceda’s compositions represent these efforts to find a form of musical expression which is new and modern yet in the Filipino spirit, related to a South-east Asian philosophy and thinking<sup>8</sup>.*

Related to Fransisco Feliciano, Dr. Ramon Santos told me during an interview<sup>9</sup>:

*But you know, in Indonesia, you don’t have this problem. Because the Philippines has been colonized, well of course you also has been colonized, but you keep your tradition intact. The colonizers did not touch your tradition. What the Spaniard did was to erased our traditions. That’s why we are now beginning to unravel our past, you know. From Jose Maceda, me, and the younger generations.*

Let us think back to the Jose Maceda essay. It was obvious that Maceda wanted to find a synthesis of the past and modernity with the spirit of postcolonialism, even before this term become a trend as nowadays. As someone who really studied well about Western music culture, including the avant-garde and contemporary composition worlds, Maceda wants to find inspiration from the music traditions of rural communities in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. Maceda envisioned grasping its essence and spirit through his decades fieldwork as an ethnomusicologist, as evidenced by his famous anecdotes and reflections regarding creativity in music cultures in Southeast Asia: “What has all this got to do with coconut and rice?”.

This vision can be referred to as “hardware” and “software” in the creative process of Filipino composers, as Dr. Verne told me during our conversation in his office. As

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<sup>8</sup> Fransisco F. Feliciano, “Four Asian Contemporary Composers, The Influence of Tradition in Their Works”, page 81-82. Quezon City: New Day Publishers. 1983

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Dr. Ramon Santos in his office in UPCE, 22 April 2024

mentioned earlier, in a simple explanation, hardware is about composition theory and techniques, or the skill of craftsmanship. This could be from everywhere, including western composition technique and concept, or from Southeast Asian culture, where Maceda found the concepts of “Drone” and “Melody,” which he explains in detail in his book. The very important thing is the software; it's all about the philosophy, concept, cultural consciousness, and message of the composer's work. Further, he said that the composers find this “software” in Filipino culture.

I want to quote Maceda’s interesting analogy from an interview with Radio Singapore in the early 80’s: “Composing is like writing an essay in musical ways”<sup>10</sup>, in other words, this is an awareness of Jose Maceda that Filipino contemporary composers need to shape their cultural voices by unraveling the past and create new statements. Did/are/will these effort always (be) succesful?, We can see these through the lens of experimentation.

Dr. Santos wrote on his wonderful book, “Tunugan: For Essays on Filipino Music”<sup>11</sup>, on a chapter “Jose Monserrat Maceda: Rebellion, Non-Conformity, and Alternatives” that Maceda revolution in Filipino, and in fact Southeast Asian and Asian music sphere is:

1. *The revaluation of music outside the Western musical sphere under the principles of cultural relativity & egalitarianism and*
2. *The reconceptualization of music in the context of modernity and as an expression of modern life.*

All of these “software”, which is philosophy, concept, cultural consciousness influence the next generations of the Filipino contemporary composers, to shape their voices in global cultural discourses.

In the next chapter, I will share interviews with Filipino contemporary composers about their works and creative processes, especially those inspired by Filipino traditional music cultures.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-l5sh2d6K0>

<sup>11</sup> Santos, Ramon, Ph. D. “Tunugan: Four Essays on Filipino Music”. The University of The Philippine Press. 2005

## *“Kwento ng Paglikha”*

### *The Composers Works*

**Ramon Pagayon Santos**

#### **“Ba-DW Sa Ka-poon-an” (1987)**

After three weeks of “staying” at the University of the Philippines Center for Ethnomusicology (UPCE) for the DeCoSEAS Visiting Fellowship, on Thursday, April 18, 2024, I interviewed Dr. Ramon Santos in his office. Its just across the UPCE and still in the same building, separated by a glass wall.

Dr. Santos, a great Filipino contemporary composer and National Artist of the Philippines, was born in Pasig, Manila, in February 1941. Entering the age of 83, he is still very active in composing, teaching, and doing research as an intellectual. Despite the physical condition, his intense energy as a great composer is enormous, and you can feel it through his presence. Then, whenever it comes to music and cultures, Dr. Santos will always speak passionately, and you could see the enthusiasm in his sharp gaze. But besides having a serious image as a composer and intellectual, Dr. Santos is also a very humorous person, and you will notice this warm side after having a conversation with him. Probably that’s why he has so many close friends everywhere, as UPCE team also told me.



*Dr. Santos show us his archives and drawings at UPCE Library, 15 April 2024*

Today, I am interviewing Dr. Santos about his work “Ba-DW Sa Ka-poon-an” (1987), which was inspired by Badiw, a poetic-musical vocal expression from the Ibaloi community



in the town of Kabayan, Benguet Province, Cordillera, northern part of the Philippines. Dr. Santos composed this piece after 11 days of field work there. He participated in the feast and the rituals for Ibaloi mummies, which returned to the community after years of display at the museum for tourists. In this special moments, Dr. Santos also learned Badiw singing as part of these rituals.

Back from the fieldwork, Dr. Santos then composed “Ba-DW Sa Ka-poon-an” for 3 groups of singers, stones, wooden and bamboo percussions, and ching, a small finger cymbal that is usually used in Cambodian and Thai theater and dance ensembles. “Ba-DW Sa Ka-poon-an” is a magical piece that combines the beautiful heterophonic vocal lines in contrast with the colorful timbre of the percussion part, for which he organized the rhythm very carefully, creating a mesmerizing interlocking. Dr. Santos also wrote the lyric, which contains 11 syllables for each sentence as a symbol of the 11 days of field work. Inspired by the Javanese Gong Ageng concept, he marks the cyclical structure after each sentence with the high-frequency, brilliant resonance sound of ching.



*“Ba-DW Sa Ka-poon-an” performance. UP College of Music, Diliman.  
Conducted by Alexander-John Villanueva*

## Interview with Dr. Ramon Pagayon Santos

UP Center for Ethnomusicology, 18 April 2024

**Gardika Gigih (GG):** Hello Dr. Santos. Can you tell the story of your fieldwork with the Ibaloi community?

**Ramon Pagayon Santos (RPS):** *Ya, I was doing independent research, but it was sanctioned by Jose Maceda. Maceda told me to go there to research.*

**GG** : Is this your first field work?

**RPS**: *I already did some research before but in Mount Banahaw. But this is my first field work under ethnomusicology. Ya, because I was the Dean here in 1978-1988, and after my deanship, I said, I want to go into ethnomusicology. So 88 my term would end, so 87 I went on fieldwork.*

**GG**: What is your experience there? Meet the Ibaloi community and their daily life

**RPS**: *Ya, they were very friendly (speaking with smiling). But I was quite lucky, because at that time, the mummies, you know mummies?... The return of the mummies (the ancestor mummies, from the museum back to the Ibaloi community), and that was my first day there!. So of course there was celebration, and the killing of the pigs, and then of course the singing of the Badiw, after the feast*

**GG**: So this is part of the feast ritual ya, to sang the Badiw?.

**RPS**: *Yes, yes. They have to sing the Badiw.*

**GG**: Then, this experience inspired you to compose “Ba-DW Sa Ka-poon-an”, in the same year?

**RPS**: *Yes, because I got a professorial chair then, so I compose that piece, but of course I was inspired by the whole experience among the Ibaloi, and you know, the piece itself, I compose the lyrics, the text, and instead of, the text of the (traditional) Badiw is 7 syllables per line. But I composed, my text, with eleven syllables perline, you know why? Because I was there for eleven days, ahaha...*

**GG**: Wow, ahaha, very interesting!. Then, the traditional Badiw is usually sing by the manbadiw, the male singer as a leader, then followed by the female group in the community.

**RPS**: *Yes, but this time, this is for chorus. You know, I don't imitate usually the form, but I just tried to get the spirit. The spirit of the whole performance. So my Badiw, this composition, is like a ritual too. It has three voices, you know, with the solo, and then the chorus, but I interspersed that. It's not like the Badiw, were there soloist, then the chorus, soloist, chorus... No!, I mashed, I intertwined the chorus and the solo parts. So, that's it. But you know, there is a gradual development before everything is done with stones, and then gradually the stones accumulate, and then there are also bamboo instruments, and then other instruments, ya. I did not copy, that's my composition, but what I want to capture is the spirit of the performance of the Badiw.*

**GG** : How audience respond your composition?

**RPS**: *This piece has been performed twice in Japan already, and they like it because the Japanese is also very ritualistic. Like that.*

**GG**: This is very interesting, that you choose the combination of the percussive parts, stones and bamboos instruments, to make the points in the contrast with the line melodies of the singers.

**RPS:** Yes!, and then I also included, you know, every line there is a kind of a Javanese Gong Ageng, but with ching, ya, ahaha. But I got it (the idea) from Indonesia, you know, (after) every phrase is, gooong, (on) eleven lines. So, after each line is sang, then there is ching. Ya, it's a cycle!

So I find the Indonesian concept as appropriate for this! Anyway, this is my own expressions, so I get all these influences from these different traditions and I come up with my own composition

**GG:** Yes. And also in the terms of rhythm and the interlocking of percussion parts, its very interesting. When I listened to the recording, I am very interested in the colour of stones, bamboos, and wood. Why you choose this timbre?

**RPS:** Well because these are the things that are used in traditional music. Bamboo, and wood, and then of course starting with the stone, because the stone is the basic element on earth. That's my own expression, coming from all these tradition that I love so much!

**GG:** my next question related to that. As a great Filipino composer, what is culture means for you, and then what is the role of composers in our culture and our communities?

**RPS:** Well... the composers has to express something of that spirit of their environment. And, this is what I get from my study in Indonesia, I did research in Indonesia.

**GG:** Oh, in which part?

**RPS:** Everywhere, because I had a grant from Asian Public Intellectual (API, in 2006-2007), and I made study of both Indonesia and Thailand on the contemporary pedagogy. So, I visited Bali, Surakarta, Jogja, I visited Bandung, what else...

Yaa, so there are now the Institut Seni Indonesia, ISI, and these are academies already, its no longer the traditional way of teaching right. That is what I did research on, on the modern ways of teaching, and that's why I know Rahayu Supanggah, Sumaryono, and all of these people.

**GG:** Yaa, Pak Panggah is a great Gamelan Composer

**RPS:** Yaa, oh I know him very well, we are very good friend.

**GG:** You also visited his house? (in Benowo, near Surakarta)

**RPS:** Yes, oh, ahaha, with the Gamelan!

**GG:** Yaa. So, the composers must reflect the spirit of the environment

**RPS:** I mean, you can see that this is not a Western composition,

**GG:** Sure, for sure!

**RPS:** Right!, ahahaha.

Just like Jose Maceda you know. What Maceda was projecting was not only the spirit, but the philosophy of our expression, you know, not only music, but the expressive tradition of

*Southeast Asia, just like him, he uses a lot of people, because of the community, the concept of community in our society*

**GG:** It's a long thought process ya. You studied with Dr. Jose Maceda back then?

**RPS:** *No. But you know, he was like my father, ahahah. I did not study with him, he was not teaching composition. He taught musicology, and ethnomusicology, and piano. He was a great pianist! But he did not teach composition, I taught composition, ahahah.*

**GG:** In the documentary by Jean-David Caillouët ("TINIG-TUNOG-AN: The Life & Works Of Ramon Pagayon Santos"), its very wonderful to learn about your composition and creative process, but also there is an interesting point that you said: now, it is like an intersetion between Western music culture education, or we can define our own?

**RPS:** *Yes! Just like how you teach your traditions now you know!, you have ISI (for example), and in Thailand it is quite different. They use the universities but they hire the masters from the villages. They hired them and they give them honorary bachelors degrees, honorary masters degrees, so that they can teach in the university*

**GG:** Like mama Aga (Agamayo Butocan in UP) for Kulintang ya?

**RPS:** *Ya, but Aga really studied education you know. But we have a lecturer, Ben Pangosbani, passed away already, he was a janitor, but he was a lecturer here!*

**GG:** Wow, what instrument?

**RPS:** *Kalingga! He was our first Kalingga lecturer. We (Dr. Ramon Santos and Dr. Jose Maceda) told the university council (to hired Ben Pangosbani). I said, "We're going to withdraw our appoinment if anyone of you can teach!", ahahaha.... But you know, in Indonesia, you don't have this problems. Because, the Philippines has been colonized you know, well of course you were also colonized, but you kept your tradition intact, the colonizer did not touch your traditions. What the Spaniard did was to erase our traditions, you see, that's why we are now beginning to unravel our past!*

**GG:** Also, that's the spirit of Jose Maceda, you, and the younger generation to unravel...

**RPS:** *Yes, right!.*

**GG:** So, one more question, what is your advice to young composers in Southeast Asia?

**RPS:** *Well, they must study our own tradition first, and get the spirit, and the philosophy and the concepts of why we have this expressive traditions. Why we express our self, and how we express our self, not in the Western way, you know. We can use the Western concept of composition yes, but the substances must be Southeast Asian!. Ok?*

**GG:** Yes, thank you very much Dr. Santos

**RPS:** *Our music is very rich!, you know, my goodness!*

## Reflections

Reflecting on this interview with Dr. Santos made me remember my conversation with Chinary Ung, a great Cambodian composer who has already resided, created work, and taught in the US for decades. We met in San Diego on June 4 last year with initiative from Lyn Hsieh, the program director of the Asian Cultural Council. I want to learn from Chinary about his works, philosophy, and vision as a prominent contemporary composer from Southeast Asia.

In late spring 2023, after several months of staying in winter New York for Asian Cultural Council Fellowship, my skin finally feels the warm sun in West Coast San Diego. This is the weather that makes me feel connected again with Southeast Asia, although the humidity and the surrounding is very different. Dr. Ung invited me to have lunch at his favorite Thai restaurant. It feels like nostalgia to Southeast Asia, he said. While ordering food he asked me "OK so please tell me what you want to discuss. I know from your previous email but please elaborate". I explained that I wanted to learn from him. First, discuss how he was inspired by the richness of Cambodian musical traditions and put them into contemporary works. Second, how can a composer from Southeast Asia determine a creative vision or direction in global art discourse? Prior to this encounter I had listened to his works such as "Aura" and "Rain of Tears" for chamber and orchestral music, which for me personally had a true Southeast Asian sensibility but were new and very personal at the same time.

"Oh wow, that's quite a big topic. But let's see what we can discuss and see the progress. But it's ok, I always like to talk about the big picture. Because technique (of composition) is a personal choice for me." "First, I must say that we, to be Asian composers means pain, a burden. Because we never know exactly where we should go. We have strong culture and traditions that inspire us. But then, to create new compositions, not only imitate or repeat the tradition is another big task. We must search for it in our lifetime, and hopefully can give contribution to our society. And for me now, it is not about myself, but bigger than that, how to share and inspire, especially to younger generation about our culture. But on the other side, there are so many possibilities, so many answers. We can try so many things. Let's create futuristic folk music!", he said again while laughing after a deep explanation and contemplation.

Then, back and forth, I remember a quote from Dr. Ramon Santos in the documentary by Jean-David Caillouët "TINIG-TUNOG-AN: The Life & Works Of Ramon Pagayon Santos": **"You can experiments with the aesthetic!"**

## Dr. LaVerne David de la Peña

### “Si Suan, Si Suan” in collaboration with Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio

During this fellowship, I often have conversations with my research supervisor, Dr. LaVerne David de la Peña. He is the Director of the UP Center for Ethnomusicology, a composer, an ethnomusicologist who graduated from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, and a lecturer here. Influenced by his study background as a composer and ethnomusicologist who often reads various musical and cultural phenomena, Dr. Verne often told a lot about the landscape of Filipino contemporary composers with very articulate and fascinating storytelling. Starting from Dr. Jose Maceda, Dr. Ramon Santos, his generation, the younger generation, and so on. Stories from the philosophical aspects, inspirations, creations, and also the anecdotes, sometimes funny stories, based on his experiences. Such as, his experience decades ago as an undergraduate student here, helping Dr. Jose Maceda to transcript the gigantic compositions scores, an encounter of learning composition by experience, before continuing to study master in composition under Dr. Ramon Santos.



*Dr. LaVerne David de la Peña. Photo from The UP College of Music (CMu), during the launching of two books about Philippine music and culture on May 25 2018, at the lobby of CMu's new library, the Maceda Hall*

I studied several works of Dr. Verne by looking at the scores in UPCE library and also listening to or watching the performance recordings, such as “Pagmumuni” for the Children's Choir, “Tugmaan” for the UP Tugma Kulintang ensemble, “ñ(y)uma” (1982–1983) for the choir, Javanese kendang, gong, and Chinese Pipa, and “Si Suan, Si Suan” for the vocalist-performer, and percussionist. Especially this latest work, “Si Suan, Si Suan,” in collaboration with playwright and puppeteer Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio, feels very Filipino

and Southeast Asian in spirit and expressions. You can see the recording of the fascinating performance of this piece during Manila Composers Lab 2019 on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q45JcStWq4>.



**"Si Suan, Si Suan"**

*recorded during the Manila Composer Lab. March 27th 2019.*

*By Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio. Music: Verne dela Peña*

*Pauline Therese Arejola: singer & puppeteer. Jacques Rivas Dufort: percussion*

*Camera & Sound: Jean-David Caillouërt & David Dino Guadalupe*

It is very interesting to discuss this fascinating performative collaborative work. Based on the story by Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio about a child character named 'Si Suan', Dr. Verne composed a situation where the musicians-performer can explore with vocals, puppets, gestures, actions, and percussions. What is the detailed explanation? Who is Suan? What is the message and reflections of this performance?

Let's read the transcript of the interview with Dr. Verne, where he explains his ideas, his creative process with the stories and the musicians, his reflection and thought on postcoloniality through music and performance art creation, and so on. This interview took place on June 24, 2024, during the PASEA Symposium in Iloilo City.

## **Interview with Dr. LaVerne David de la Peña**

**Iloilo City, 24 June 2024**

**Gardika Gigih (GG):** Hello Dr. Verne

**Dr. Verne de la Peña (VP) :** Hello, hello Gardika

**GG:** Can you tell the collaboration process with Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio for “Si Suan, Si Suan”?

**VP:** *O, Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio, she was a playwright, a poet, but em, she founded a childrens theatre. So in the university we have a lots of theatre but she was the only one to put up the childrens theatre. And the childrens theatre she wanted to do, was based on Asian Theatre, so Asian Puppetry like Wayang Kulit, Wayang Golek, and the Thai version, Japanese, and so on.*

*During that time, around the 70's and 80's, when you say entertainment for children, or education for children was “Sesame Street”, you know that, ahahah, so very Western, and then she wanted to counteract that.*

*Anyway, I became a member of that troop (childrens theatre by Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio), when I was a student, and I was the music director for the troop.*

*By the time I was going to graduate in my undergraduate composition, bachelors, so I was trying to put together a repertoar of my works, and I needed one more, I needed a theatre piece, so then, I ask her, do you have any work? So I came across her work “Si Suan, Si Suan”. It's actually based on a local Filipino stories, series of stories, and its Juan. She just made it Suan, so its kind of sounding more Asian than Juan which is very Spanish. But the story is Juan Tamad, which is the Lazy Juan. So it is a series of short stories about how Juan is so lazy, he would do crazy things, like in the story for example he was asked to buy several pots. So because he was so lazy carying all of it, he put a hole inside the pots and he tight it together (with rope) like a whole, so the its easy. Things like that.*

*So she has a series of that, but because it's educational, the usual character is Juan tamad, the lazy Juan, has always been like the representation of the Filipinos, like, why are Filipinos poor, because Juan is tamad, Filipino Juan is lazy, because that's the colonizer said: “oh they are lazy, they lay around, and so on...”. Why, it's the tropic right!, ahahah, and (if) you understand agriculture, yaa you plant, and then you wait for the harvest, ahahah.*

*Anyway, so that's the typical caricature, or image of Juan, and Juan is the typical Filipinos, and he is tamad, he is lazy. But to counteract that, Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio created another character, Juan Masipag, the Industrious Juan, and they are like siblings, so one is the lazy one, and one is the industrious and wise one. But of course the lazy one is like the clown that does all of the funny things, and so on.*

*Anyway, I saw it, but it was just a poem probably so it's not a play yet. So I decided maybe we can do like this, maybe just one puppeteer, and the puppeteer would manipulate both characters, so there are two characters, no actually three. The siblings, Juan Tamad, and Juan Masipag, and the mother. So the puppeteer is the mother but also the voice of the two Juans, and the narrator also sometimes she steps out and narrates. So quite complex role for a singer. And then, I wanted it minimalist, you know, something that we can travel, put up on stage and like that. So all we needed was a small table, and two puppets, that's all, and a drum!. So I accompanied everything by the drum, the kendhang or anything any kendhang similar instruments (percussion), em, and the music itself, is kind of like, you can say it's like the balungan, cantus firmus. So, you have the balungan, kind of melodic formula, but it has to be flexible enough, so the singer can adjust, stretch, so its like that you know. But the balungan is there, and the balungan is, this is kind of like Schoenberg, ahahah, so one balungan for Juan Tamad, and the inversion of that is the balungan for Juan Masipag. So it's the same thing but inversion, but of course, the Juan Tamad, the Lazy Juan is slow, but the industrious, hardworking and smart Juan is fast (tempo and rhythm). So, that's all, and everything else is very lousely scored, I hope you can see the score, there is pitch head, there is note head, but no rhythm sometimes, or maybe in some section the rhythm would be spesified, but it has to be very flexible, and then of course, this has to be done with a director.*



*So the first director was Ben Ramos, when we first did it. Because, you know, the music should be flexible, its not like an opera, or ballet when you have the music and pre-set, and the you do everything according to the music. This one you could do according to the story, to the actions, and the music has to adjust in time with that. So its that flexible, and then the drum have certain parts of written, and many, most parts are just improvised, reacting, just like the kendhang in Wayang Golek or Wayang Kulit (performance).*

**GG:** How was the dramaturgy aspect of the stories affect the way you composed?

*VP: No, the composition is really very bare, its just like I told you its like balungan (Javanese concept of nuclear theme/melody as a guidance for all pengrawit, gamelan musicians). Sometimes the rhythm is preset, sometimes is really up to the singer, to the story, up to actions (of characters). So its barely, its like... When you compose, and I was thinking about that, you don't necessarily compose the notes, the melody, and so on, but you compose the situation. So it's a situation I composed, the situation of one performer, two characters, the performer changing her voice because she has to, so that's the point there. The composition itself is very minimal. I do have the score, you know, but it has to be memorized, (then) you can go away from the score, and so on. So its spoken rhythm, the rhythm is based on speaking accent.*

**GG:** related to that, how was the collaboration process with the musicians because they (Pauline Therese Arejola: singer & puppeteer Jacques Rivas Dufort: percussion) did a fantastic performance!

*VP: ya, the one you saw is the more recent version after thirty or so years, ahahah, so because when we were in college, it was simple but very demanding. We only have singer who can do it, and she has to be a very good singer and a very good puppeteer too right, and act. You know, to be a good puppeteer must first be a good actress or actor right?, because you have to transfer you acting to the object (puppets). So if you're a bad actor in the first place, its gonna be a bad performance.*

*So we had a one person, I wrote it for her, and she was very good, but then she graduated, and went on, and had the job, so we tried it with another singer but of course it did not work out. So it was just there, nobody else could do it. But when I was already, recently three, or four years ago, Jonas Baes said, "let's do that!" (for Manila Composers Lab 2019). He can not forget that ("Si Suan, Si Suan").*

*Ok, I'll sit down with the singer, opera singer but willing to do contemporary work, and then there are real drummer not me as a percussionist, so Jacques is the perfect drummer for that. And the singer was Pauline Therese Arejola (member of Ripieno Ensemble for Manila Composers Lab), we worked on it, it wasn't that long she got the idea right away, and then she, probably the biggest part for there is leaning how to manipulate the puppets and memorizing. And the director was the daughter of Amelia Lapeña-Bonifacio, Amihan Bonifacio-Ramolete, and she was then the Dean of College of Arts and Letters, but she is familiar with the work, and because we were there together when we are in college, so she did that.*

**GG:** Alright, and then, once again about the instrumentation, its very effective in terms of the composition to convey the message (story). Can you emphasize mor on this, the vocal and percussion, kendhang combination?

**VP:** *The singer and the percussion again, you compose the idea, the percussion is here, the function is to accompany some parts, because there are part that the character is dancing or walking, but then also to accentuate the action. So that's all, I could have chosen although its one percussion its (sounds like) many percussions right?. but it was really minimalist, its just drum, that's all!... Oh, and also, I specifically said, although the percussion is just an accompanist, his character has to be there too. So he will interact with the singer, and sometimes throw in comments too, ahahah. Just like Wayang Kulit, right?*

*So it's not like a film, or a movie, or TV Show, or a cartoon show where everything was perfectly done, and this one is, you're not to hide anything. You can see there is a puppeteer, you can see the drummer, you can see that this is not real people (characters) but somehow, the success there is if you are able to bring your audience so they suspend their disbelief, so they are watching there and they are not saying "oh, that's just a puppet", but they engaged in that. So I don't know if we were able to achieve that level yet, it will take more time and ansamble between the performers, but at least they got the idea.*

*And again, the function of the music, what is the music for, and what is composition you know, those are the things that I was playing around with.*

*Composition does not mean writing all the notes, writing all the rest and silences, and the rhythm, but composition maybe in a sense: the situation, you compose the situation, and the music does not predominate, right?*

*The music is just part of the entire thing: part of the text, and the actions, and the dramaturgy, and all of that. And, so, its like, by extension, the composer is diminished. You are not the romantic who did everything, but it's in fact you remove that thing. They could done it themselves!, ahaha,*

**GG:** Its very Southeast Asian ya, ahaha

**VP:** Ya, ya

**GG:** Then, actually, in many of your works, its strongly related to vocal music, can you explain, why? And also in the context of vocal and choir music in the Philippines,

**VP:** *O, of course, I grew up in that environment, I should know, singing is very important in our culture. But also for another reason: when I was a young composer, like that, trying to be decolonial, but at the same time not wanting to appropriate things, and so for example deciding on what instrument to use could be very difficult, right?, Do I use gamelan instruments, isn't that appropriation?, if I use the conventional Western instruments, then what for? Ahahah. So just, voice is safe, voice is, you know, you don't have to worry about, of course you have to worry about what kind of music are you asking the voice to sing, but the voice is the voice. So, I don't have to worry about where is these materials or instruments coming from?, What it is function... at least then, that was what I was thinking... and so, the drum is just the drum, I did not specify what kind of the drum it should be.*

**GG:** Then, this is the last question. What is your reflection and message for the Filipino and Southeast Asian young composers?

**VP:** *You know I think, em, the composers, until now are still stuck with the Western approach to composition. I thought we were passed that but now its still ongoing were everything is according, you know, its almost the same type of sound everyday the same avantgarde... still, I still encounter that new music, right, and very particular you see the scores, either that or the other ends before was the chance music which is not fashionable anymore, nobody does chance music anymore, but everything has to comeback to the technology of writing, and*

*very detail, and all of that. Somehow that doesn't appeal to me anymore. I think it's the idea of working with performers, and you know, not imposing necessarily your expressive ideas on them because you are the composer, but here you can write something that the performers can built on... to contribute to that music...*

*So that what comes out is not entirely the composers product, but it's a collaborative process. But I just provided the situation. This is the situation, this is the minimal description, the kind of, how the music will go, but then, you have to do something about it, right?*

**GG:** Ya, because in Southeast Asia, it's really performative yaa

**VP:** *Yaa!, performative and collaborative. Its like a workshop instead of a rehearsal, ahaha, necessarily, right?*

*So, the composition is not a work that is permanent. That's it. It has to change, it has to grow everytime, and it has to adjust to the context. For example, if they perform for a specific group of school children, maybe the approach would be a little different, maybe there would be jokes, maybe there would be interacting with the children.. If its for more international audience then it has to be adjusted too. That's the point!. Its not a fixed work, it's a work that continues to evolve or grow, you know, just like Ramayana!, ahahaha.*

## Dr. Jonas Baes

### “Patangis Buwaya” (2003)

In September 2016, 25 musicians and composers from around Indonesia gathered in Fort Rotterdam, Makassar, Sulawesi for a workshop titled “Musik Baru, Bunyi Selingkung” (New Music, Surrounding Sounds). This workshop is a part of the Indonesia 8<sup>th</sup> Art Summit and was led by a Filipino contemporary composer and ethnomusicologist, Dr. Jonas Baes, and assisted by Indonesian electronic music composer, Otto Sidharta.

In fact, if we looked at the map, Sulawesi and the Islands of the Philippines are quite near, like side by side in a line, but the different nationalities made us sometimes feel there is a great gap between our neighbors. Probably in the past, there were more connections between us by the islands and the sea. I was also attending this workshop, and it was a wonderful time when we can spend time together in collective music creation with two works by Jonas Baes, “Banwa”, and “Patangis Buwaya” (2003). Through these two works, Jonas Baes shares his field work experience within Iraya-Mangyan community in Mindoro Island, and his visions of contemporary music compositions that are based on or inspired by the sense of community and environment particularly in the Philippines and also in Southeast Asia. This is a spirit that resonates in us despite our particular cultural backgrounds, from Sulawesi, Sumatra, Papua, Java, Kalimantan, Maluku, and so on. Through sonic expressions, representing traditions, through music composition, we have a vivid dialogue and reflections. It was a magical moment through sounds and performance.



*Jonas Baes led “Patangis Buwaya” workshop in Makassar, September 2016. With musicians, from the left, Daeng Basri Baharuddin from Makassar played Chinese flute - Bawu, Nurkholis from Padangpanjang played Saluang, Hamrin Samad from Makassar played DIY instrument from PVC, and Victor Nicolae Ciobanu from Rumania played Kaval. It’s a multicultural ensemble that met here*

This workshop still resonates in my mind. So during this DeCoSEAS fellowship, I really want to have further conversation with Jonas Baes about his work, "Patangis Buwaya", the stories, the creative process, and the message of this very socio-environmental work based on his experience with Iraya-Mangyan people in Mindoro Island.

## Interview with Dr. Jonas Baes

UP College of Music Library, 14 June 2024

**Jonas Baes (JB):** *Ya, actually I started working as a researcher with the Iraya-Mangyan in 1982, nineteen years before I composed "Patangis Buwaya". The greatest impact of working with them, and in fact I was advised by Jose Maceda, saying "maybe they don't have any culture (tradition) anymore", was that very fact. This is a community whose culture is in the verge of dying, dying because of issues regarding their ancestral land (in Mindoro Island). There were big companies who were also very interested in their land, in their mountain, particularly mining companies and logging companies, and aside from that, the intrusion of lowlanders, very influential elite lowlanders who took parts of their land for their own. They were deceived, and through some corrupt government and civil mechanism, those people were able to stole land from them, their ancestral land.*

*The first day I was with the Iraya-Mangyan in 1982, this is about February I think, together with Verne de la Peña. It was the open day, very introduction to them, there was this man called Ka-Horhe, I remember him very well, and he was carrying a cadastral map, map of land, saying to this social worker, social organizer who was our contact, and telling him that this very influential family is taking part of his land. They were able to devise a corrupt system by which they can say, this is legally ours. They put fake maps and all that stuff.*

*So that was my introduction to their life, and if this amounts to the lost of music, I became very interested, not only because of music, but because of the impact of the outside on this community tells me a lot about music... because music is about the way of life!, and if their way of life is threatened, their music is threatened also.*

*That was my initial experience, and through the years, from 1982 to 1987 I keep coming back to the Iraya-Mangyan every year, maybe a month, two months, maybe three weeks, depending on how much money I had. I had no funding. But I keep recording, I keep talking to people, and that was how I became very closely engage. I was in fact an adopted son of the community, and they gave me a ritual name, apparently this is a tradition of giving ritual names to protect from spirits. So, my ritual name is Pagsamboranay, because one time I had this, you know I am a Catholic and my mother to keep me safe on travels she gave me this rosary, and one time they saw me with this rosary and they said, oh we have that, that's the Pagsamboranay!. So they called me Pagsamboranay. Before, they called me Tagamaynila, not Tagalog because I was not a bad person. Tagalog is a bad person for them, so before they call me Tagamaynila, later on they called me my name, and then I have a ritual name Pagsamboranay, it protects me actually. It's from a chant called the Marayal, and its come a line called pangsamboranay.... means, beads that I hold, protect us from the evil that comes from outside into our village, banwa. Banwa is village.*

**GG:** from the title "Patangis Buwaya" (the crocodile is weeping), is already contain a reflection of nature, about the ecology and the community, can you tell about this story?

**JB:** Is it the same in Indonesian (language)?

**GG:** Yes, similar. We have “buaya menangis”

**JB:** So in Iraya Mangyan (language) is “Patangis Buwaya”. Its actually the story of the legendary figure, Ali Tawu, the first man. Ali Tawu is the great hunter, and he was the first Irayan, created by the God Apo Iraya they called, and Apo Iraya is like the great creator.

“Patangis Buwaya” comes from the story of great Iraya man, Alitawu, who was given a wife, Diyaga, so their seed can flourish, like Adam and Eve. But there is the evil who is the counter-creation, his name is Baleyayasun. He has been lurking around the couple. Alitawu is a great hunter, he goes out to the field that he hunts and he comes back and feed his wife and they are having children already, Danawang and Dasingu, who were theirselves hunters. And the most important being that comes with Alitawu is his dog, Idu.

Baleyayasun has been seing Diaga because she is very beautiful. When Alitawu was hunting in the forest, Baleyayasun kidnaped Diyaga and rapes her, and some said she was killed by Baleyayasun because she doesn’t like to stop shouting, or because of the disgrace they said that she hang herself.

So apparently she died, and Alitawu was in the mountain. But it was the birds and the bees, Maburway, who told him that something has happened to Diyaga so he rushes back with Idu and his two children, and when they come to their house, Diyaga was nowhere. And then I think it was Maburway who told him that there is the evil who kidnapped his wife and killed her. So he was full of anguish and anger. He said, “I am going to kill that evil”. So he called his dog Idu with his whistle, a very very sad and angry sound, heard all over the island they said that even the crocodile were weeping.

So, eventually, Idu comes over, they were able to hunt down Baleyayasun, they get into the great fight, he was able to kill Baleyayasun but he was also wounded, and so he died in the river. Some say that people can still see a stone figure of Diyaga, who was hanging herself and they can also see a great footstep of Alitawu and his peer when he was hunting, and they were like several old people said, I saw those things near mount. I wasn’t able to see the footstep, we couldn’t find it.

Eventually so Alitawu died and it was his two children who flourished, intermarried other Mangyan group, and the Iraya flourished from there.

That’s the story of “Patangis Buwaya”. Its also used as a metaphor for people who play the flute (Iraya-Mangyan), so they said if your flute playing is beautiful, perfect, it can make makes the crocodiles weeps. So for them, any beautiful flute playing is Patangis Buwaya. So I took that idea from that story.

**GG:** So what is the parallelism of the story with the message to convey with your piece?

**JB:** Yes, that’s a good question. So in 2003, this is like years after right, I just got the news that this village where I did my research - Agutayan, many people there, had to leave behind their ancestral land, because their life were being threatened by military and paramilitary people. Because some years before that, was this, I think some company, mining, who wanted to get part of their land because of their mining project. For long time they were asking the Iraya-Mangyan, either to sell their land. And they don’t like because, they said, our ancesters are buried there. We weren’t give you our land.

So, what happened was, there was an operation allegedly to look for communist guerillas. Of course they couldn’t find any of those, but they stay there and then the people was threatened. There were cases of murder and torture, all that. So because of their fear, many people in the village had to leave behind their land. Then they were helped by a church group

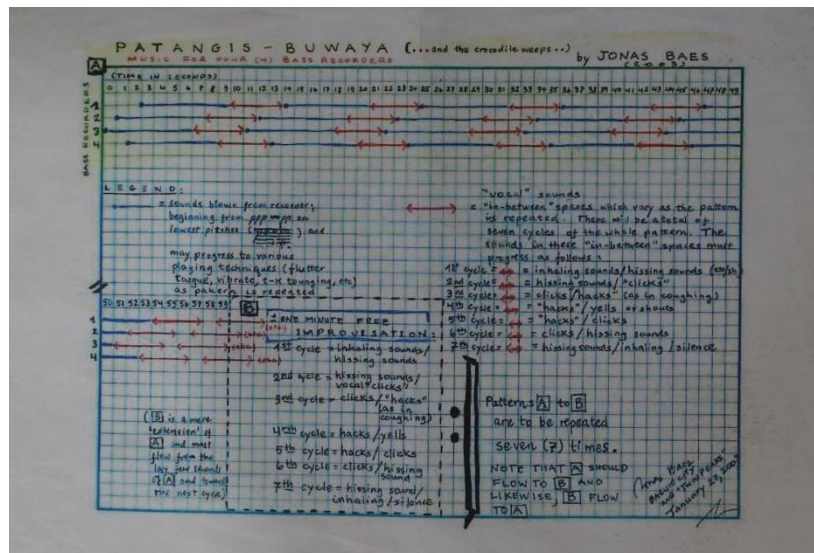
*to take refuge outside the island of Mindoro, to another province in Southern Tagalog, Cavite, and there, they were housed in a refugee camp. And when I got the news, they were already in the refugee camp, maybe less than a year, I got it in 2003, they were already there in November or December 2002. I was so surprised when I got there, and many of the people I saw there, I knew them when they were children in 1987, 1986... It was very sad, they tell me all the stories that were happening there.*

*It just so happened that time, my CD on Iraya-Mangyan music, have you seen that?, "Nostalgia in a Deluded Rainforest" was published. In fact there is different story to that, because I didn't want to published the recordings, but Steven Feld, this American ethnomusicologist, we were in a conference in 2001, and he convince me to publish the recording because they will get deteriorated with the cassettes and all that, just save the music!, their treasures. So then I was able to published it. Not knowing that it was meant to be something different, to be a gift also. So, I didn't know what to do with the CD because everytime I put it on sale, I was thinking, "oh, I am selling them, I am selling theirs", but here, in this very refugee camp, I saw that they needed some form of livelihood. They were making all this beads, plastic beads, Pagsamboranay but from plastic (now) and selling them to the people who were visited their refugee camp, so I thought that, "I'll give you all the CD's", well I left some copies for me at home, and for friends, but I gave them essentially two boxes of the CD's, its about a thousand five hundred copies of the CD's. And I said, "I give this to you, and you sell it, its your music", and they were so surprised that there is the CD's, and there is the pictures of people they knew, they were lived, Anguel Anyas who is on the cover, and we spent one whole afternoon just listening to the CD, and all the stories came out, the stories of this guy, that guy, this is sang here, and it was such a very beautiful experience, and that this old Iraya-Mangyan, I think he still alive, he told me came to me and said "thank you very much for taking care of our songs, and returning them to us". That was a very different kind of gesture, return, return in the form of CD, and its part of their livelihood now, they can earn from it, their community, because they are so depressed, they couldn't plant, they couldn't go to the mountain, they are slash-and-burn agriculturist and now they were put in this little space and that's what happened, and then through that, the stories of Alitawu came out and the Patangis Buwaya (again) and all that stuff, so we just assumed that what happened to you is just like what happened with Alitawu whos wife was raped, now your land is being raped. Then the two things they ask from me, of course the CD, and the other one is "can you tell other people about our story?". And when they said that to me, the first that came to mind was I can only tell the story through a musical work. Thus the "Patangis Buwaya" was created.*

*I was thinking something along that line when I was in the mountain in January, I started visiting them on February up to May, I was short of led to that. This can be about the Iraya-Mangyan, the indigenous people, their mountains, the exploitation of development aggresion, the exploitation of gigantic multinational companies whose interest in the Philippines is for cheaper material and cheap labour. Our place in the global political economy as a third world nation where is no industry of its own and whose been exploited by the first world in that sense. So, can be story of that! And it can also tell this particular story of this particular group of people, the Iraya-Mangyan who are in an out of the way place in the mountains and yet they are beared the impact of this development aggresion and the global political economy, so I said this very work will be a statement! So that was how I started composing it.*

*I premiered it in September 2003 in Japan during Asian Composers League (ACL), in the temple (Denzuin Temple, Tokyo). Beautiful temple, and there was rain.*

**GG:** Ya, so actually the original score is for four kontrabass recorder ya?



"Patangis Buwaya" score by Jonas Baes, 2003. UPCE Collection

**JB:** Yaa, because the specific group that was available to perform in that festival (ACL) was a recorder quartet, they are German and Dutch, Malle Symen Quartet. They came there for the festival, and there was an invitation from the Japan Federation of Composers that we write for the quartet. I said, "I have a piece!", so then I volunteered that. So we formulated for them, and it was a very beautiful process, it was a workshop, the rehearsal was like a workshop. I was telling them, "so this is the narrative, we tell the story through the structure", and they did a very beautiful job. We spent the whole afternoon creating the music together, and I keep guiding them with the narrative, weeping, and all that stuff... So, that was the original performance.

And then after that, I thought of : what if there other places with other ensembles of other instruments,

**GG:** and cultures...

**JB:** and cultures!, that have the same stories. So, when it was rendered in Yogya (Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival), it wasn't a very good performance because I wasn't there. I was in Budapest doing another performance, and it was a very good performance in Budapest it's a flute quartet, they got the narrative too. Apparently there was always the thing that I need that, so first I said it has to be flexible, its like a chameleon you know?. The colour will change according to its environment. And second, it has to tell the story, which might insight people also to reflect on the story to be like their story, it happened in Makassar! There were so many stories about exploitation and land, when we were talking about that. And then, the third is that it has to use instruments that are available in the locality. And there was another that's missing, the original performance had rain around. It was raining, if you listen very closely to the (video) premiere in the temple, you will hear the litle sound of rain. I said, "that can be people!".

So it developed some years later, about six or five years later perhaps, maybe the audience can also take part, I give them little instruments like flutes, so I experimented on that in 2008 in Kuala Lumpur when I was in the university, I had an experimental performance, and then I made a fully performance in 2009 also in Kuala Lumpur. Before that in 2008 there was a group of Australian musicians who were performing the "Patangis Buwaya in a museum and they were going around the space and people were following them. I said, there has to be sound that would represent the people and so I thought giving them flutes, giving them stones, all that stuff...



**GG:** So it become a participatory performance..

**JB:** *Yes!, and become a whole community who become the forest, and who in the story of Alitawu, became the birds, and the bees. So we create a forest of sounds! That's what they said in California (during the performance there), we create the forest of sounds.*

**GG:** Allright. So before I jump to the question about the structure, may I ask your impressions about the Iraya-Mangyan music?

**JB:** *They are very beautiful and very structured. They are in seven.*

**GG:** Oh really?!

**JB:** *Ya, hehehe, so that's why this is like the Iguai, "Patangis Buwaya" is patterned after the Iguai, with the gravitation on the fourth. (then Jonas Baes started to hum an Iguai song of Iraya-Mangyan... and pointing the accent in fourth. Then he show the structure in the score inspired by this). If you look at this, its one, two, three, four, the heaviest is in four. (They) hacks and yell (the Iguai), there in the four, its like a palindromic.*

**GG:** So in the score, you create the cycle structure of seven, and between every phrase, there is spaces for improvisation, like lick, hissing sounds, coughing, shouting, etc. How you came up with this idea?

**JB:** *They are actually from the sounds I hear when they're telling the stories, like "ck, ck", or "ehhmm, ehmm", and I took this sounds to be the musical sounds in a way when they were singing an Iguai with ... (again Jonaes Baes sang an Iguai song, and demonstrate the sounds of hissing, coughing, in a natural gesture). Things like those I experienced in the performance, which apparently to me are very significant in the sense that they're part of the very notion of a performance!. I am performing, I like talking to you, and I feel like coughing, I will coughing, and then I will continue my song...*

**GG:** Its very natural yaa

**JB:** *Its very natural in that sense, yes!, ahahah, and they would swing their body when they sing the Iguai, or the Marayaw which I was not allowed to watch because its very violent spiritual ritual, like (shouting painfully) "aarrghh, aaaar, arrgwhh" I can hear it from a far, they don't allow me to see it. You stay there, please don't see it. But yaa, "aarrghh, aaaar, arrgwhh", a spirit battle, between the good and the bad spirit. Its gravitate to that kind of spiritual battle as well, so its like a cleansing. The "Patangis Buwaya" is like a cleansing.*

**GG:** Its like a chatarsis

**JB:** *Yes, chatartic. And its usually very violent in the middle (Patangis Buwaya composition), and then within the narrative you can see the flow of the narratives, the rape and the killing of Diyaga, and the anguish of Alitawu, and then it ends with the forest itself, crying, weeping with Alitawu*

**GG:** Because you also create this structure, begin with very soft sounds, and then its like a climax, and then it become soft again

**JB:** Yes but its very natural, it's a narrative. And the projection is that, later on people will perform Patangis Buwaya and say, we don't need the score, because we know the story, and we can create a story out of the story. Which happened in Makassar, which happened in Vietnam, they don't know how to read notes or anything, or many performances, even with the German group Hand werk, here in 2019. There was a performance in 2021 in Freiburg, no in 2017 there was a performance in this little 'keller' (cellar or basement), it was so cramped, so they made an open performance in the garden in 2021 and it was much better because the people were able to move around and they were able to give away so it became another forest. In California, that happened too, the first performance there was 2013, they had a stage, they had a hundred of performers - audiences, and then they did it again in 2019 in a garden. I think there is an issue about Trump notion of the foreign influx, so it was became a very community performance. And I think the space itself defines the nature of the performance. The last performance, last year, was in a church in Nurnberg, were there about 70 or 80 people and they gave away this bamboo flutes, bamboo birds whistle, and it became a short of a church thing. So it defined according to the space itself. So, its really like a chameleon. I counted how many performance since 2003, and I counted about 28 performances up to last year. It has its own socio political life. I think I am keeping my promise to the Iraya-Mangyan community that I will tell the world about their stories. The people will remember their story, and Patangis Buwaya is a very good way to telling the story.

**GG:** So this composition is like a socio-narrative ya?

**JB:** Yes, precisely. In Makassar, it was in a tortured chamber (of Fort Rotterdam), remember?, and before that they were telling the story about this commercial company who created this instrument because, there was a local industry who made this lute, kulcapi (pakacaping) for the kids to learn this in the school, but this commercial company, I will not mention the name, took over and start to sold their stuff and now the people were not using this backyard industry of the Bugis. And this story came out when we talked about Patangis Buwaya, because of the issue of gigantic commercial firms coming in to take over

**GG:** So, from this composition, it become like a conversation ya

**JB:** Ya, it is a conversation. It is an invitation tells the story, which is also invitation others to tell the stories. It's a dialogue, so its fascinating to hear all those. That was in Makassar, in Vietnam, I told you about this religious short of conflict, and all of that stuff... Because people still having the spiritual life at the back of their houses which apparently fronted upon by the socialist government. In Budapest, Hungary it was performed during the time when Bella Bartok's body was repatriated for the first time after the second world war, from the US. Because he was banned by the socialist government. So, again its about power and all that stuff and Patangis Buwaya was there to tell about another group of people who is suffering because of the powerful state and all that stuff... And somehow, even if these are sad stories, I fulfilled in a way that this is able to invoke people to tell their own stories. These are stories of people that other people will hear, should hear, so that they know that there are other people who have the same story or who are in the same level of stories being exploited, being marginalized, being rundown by the development aggresion.

**GG:** As a Filipino contemporary composer, what is the importance to learn about the traditional music and cultures?

**JB:** *Em, to me, its not just the tradition, but its about the impact of modernity to tradition. Tradition is tradition, and people are creating channels by which tradition can be highlighted, of course I find that rather problematic if the state of crisis are not accounted for, the state of crisis of people, are not accounted for..*

**GG:** Actually, your dissertation is also about this topic ya... (“Modes of Appropriation in Philippine Indigenous Music: The Politics of the Production of 'Cultural Difference” - University of the Philippines Diliman, 2004)

**JB:** *Yaa, its about the modes of appropriation and all that stuff, and the state of crisis. In that I was sad about that dissertation because there was one chapter I want to include but I wasn't allowed to include it. This is about the Dumagat people who lost their music, who lost everything. Small community of Dumagat, like two families and the head of one family was shoot down by the military. It actually inspired a piece I called “Inayta”, I heard this weeping. I don't know if you ever heard that on YouTube. This weeping things and because it was a story of this woman who lost her husband who was assassinated, and with her seven children they had to escaped the military section and they are placed in Rizal who was housed in the same refugee camp as Iraya-Mangyan, so I got to meet them too, the Dumagat.*

**GG:** So it was a fast changing landscape in the time of Jose Maceda start the field work

**JB:** *Ya, my biggest problem with Maceda's research paradigm was that he talks of cultures as if they are isolated. And I have always told him about my problem with that, while it was good, it was necessary steps towards understanding, but don't just stop there, because his assumption is that, oh this is isolated people so you could go there... but its no longer like that. How do you take it to account the development aggresion for example, or even from the 1950's, 1960's, the biggest logging and mining companies were already very interested in our landscape, in our mountains, and what was the impact for people, what about the people who are encroaching on their land, the lowlanders and all that stuff. He never mention about that and I found its very problematic. When he published his book called “Manual of Field Research”, the bigges problem I had with that after maybe about a year after I went to the Iraya-Mangyan, there is nothing in the book that says about marginality, about exploitation, about ancestral domain problems. It was a big problem for me to use the book, because the asumption there was like these people were little isolated places and somehow the Iraya-Mangyan who I was very interested at that time did not fit the kind of culture he was describing. Because this people has lost their land, have lost their way of life, and lost the music in the sense, okay, so that was the big problem I had, and I told him that, and he acknowledge my questions although he doesn't answer it.*

**GG:** It should be the fast changing in decades ya, the way of modernity...

**JB:** *Precisely. When I was thinking about “Patangis Buwaya”, because one of the greatest work (by Jose Maceda) for me actually is “Ading” (1978). There is no other work that is greater than that for me, but I had to talk to the piece with “Patangis Buwaya”. I had to ask the composition “Ading”, a question with composition. What about this? So in a way, this is in dialogue with “Ading”, a great work, and I always thought of my compositions as dialogues with pieces by Maceda who I admired so much!. So the “Basbasan” (1983) is the dialogue with “Pagsamba” (1968), the “Pagtawag” is the dialogue with “Udlot-Udlot” (1975), and many other works. And later on it was not only Maceda, I was also dialoguing with Mattias Spahlinger's compositions lately the “Virtual Implosion” (2022) is the dialogue with*

the piece "in dem ganzen ocean von empfindungen eine welle absondern, sie anhalten" (1985)

**GG:** Both is your teachers

**JB:** *Yaa, my teacher. I talk to them with music, I talk to their music with my music. My question with the "Ading" is that, it was performed in 1978, and I was an activist. That very year, a great hero of the Kalinga, Macli-ing Dulag was murdered by the Marcos regime because he was defending his ancestral land. He didn't allow this great mining company to encroached into their land, they do want to sell it, so they murdered him... I never thought this is a tribute to Macli-ing Dulag, but somehow he came to mind when Maceda compose the "Ading". At the very same time, the people in Kalimantan were suffering about this logging trucks, and they were sleep in the road because the didn't want to allow these logging trucks, but again my question is why "Patangis Buwaya" is in dialogue with "Ading" is that, which I did so many years after, is that: "so where are these people?"*

**GG:** "Ading" is like a homage ya?

**JB:** *Ya, actually the idea of a machine made of people rather than machines, than technology. It's a question of the overused of technology, it's a question of how people, human effort is taken over by machines. But the biggest problem about that notion again, which Maceda would have taken from perhaps Jacques Attali (French economic and social theorist) or other people, was that, there was already this problem of surplus labour in the Philippines, because there were too much workforce, too many labourers, and there was nothing to absorb the workforce. There were no industries, and later on they had to resort to exporting labour, OFW (Overseas Filipino Labour), and all that stuff, which was happened years later. So that wasn't in the mind of "Ading". It was just fascinated with the notion, ok we have people instead of machines, and the more people the better. But there was this reality of the surplus labour. It's a very beautiful piece of music that warranted many questions from me. So in the course of thinking and thinking, in 2003, that was the last year of Maceda's life, and we were continue retalking about "Ading" and all that stuff. Durkheimian models, he wasn't aware of, but its very Durkheimian model: the idea of a mechanical solidarity, people doing the same thing but there are many of them, as opposed to the machine, which is organic solidarity that each little section has its function, and when I told him about the theory, he was so fascinated with it. He ordered the book of Durkheim (French sociologist), "The Division of Labour in Society" (1893). And then I said, I have this work which will try to ask question about that, and I was already thinking of this. It was just sad that he already very weak that he couldn't come to the premiere in Japan. But he heard the recording of the premiere. My composition are dialogues with Maceda and Spahlinger*

**GG:** but in the article "A Concept of Time in - a Music of Southeast Asia" (1986) that Jose Maceda wrote, the last paragraph is about the human machine and equilibrium of nature...

**JB:** *Yes but thats very Durkheimian again! and I find that rather problematic because it doesnt speak of power, which is a part of the reality of human endeavor. Power!, so who runs the machine?. It talks about the machine and equilibrium (of nature) but who runs it? There is this unseen panopticon of power that runs it and its not acknowledged. Thats why, what I was trying to invoke here is that there is this narrative of a people who bore the impact of development aggresion. A machice that is run by a gigantic force from the outside who wants to exploite what they see here in the inside, and push the people aside!.*

**GG:** Its a different narratives that the indigenous people is live in their own space, their environment, and they keep their tradition alive. But actually, maybe the history always repeated

**JB:** *Yaa, and the government projects of a creating these villages, I find that very problematic because it doesnt inform of the real or the state of crisis which actually are the realities. There are many peoples in Mindanao (Southern part of the Philippines) lost their land, there are many peoples in Mindoro they are trying to off and on, even in the north, and still the development agression is still there! Gigantic multinational corporation who have freehand with the mining act of 1995, a freehand into the mining resources of the country in the name of foreign invesment. That is the big problem!*

**GG:** That we must realize

**JB:** *We must realize, we must realize that what we are celebrating we should be anxious about. This unadressed state of crisis of indigenous people*

**GG:** The next question probably related to that. So in your opinion, what is your reflection and your message to the young generation of Southeast Asian composers, and what we must convey about?

**JB:** *Ya. I think what I see in the young composers in Southeast Asia is that they're caught within the unclave and the fascination of new music and its production, and all that stuff, and foreign ensembles coming here, being performed in Darmstadt, or whatever, which apparently is still good, why not, why not. But there are other things you should look around and so that the music you write really tells about us, our everyday life in Southeast Asia and also that we should not take Southeast Asia as a single harmonious unit. Its actually a very chaotic unit, its actually an economic unit, it's a bussiness structure. Its painful to see that Southeast Asian country are ruining each other, in that way like one country would sell the product with very very low price and the effect kills the product of another country, and all that stuff. We had that experience with rice, its weird that we are an agricultural economy but we had to import rice which apparently very painful because of this import liberalization, which apparently the government is also responsible for. Its funny how people in the so called third world are made to remain third world because they are the market, and I don't condone to that kind of things in Southeast Asia, all that stuff, to me is a big joke.*

*So for young people, use your brain, that's all I need to tell them!, ahaha. Use your brain and as they use their brains, they express music in that beautiful way. Of course it useless to be a composer if you don't have any talent of being a composer. So as you develop your skills as a composer, your technique as a composer, also develop your reflection of your environment, what is the things around you.*

**GG:** How about the Filipino (young) composer?

**JB:** *Ya, the same thing, Filipino composers, go beyond technique. Filipino people, composers are people, so be a person as much as we are composer. A person in the sense that you feel for your community, your nation, the majority of the people: the poor are always exploited, the poor are always used by big politicians. You have to be vigilant about those things*

**GG:** ya, thank you, thank you so much!

**JB:** *Yaah!*

## Susie Ibarra Sky Islands (2024)

It was spring on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 in Greenwood Cemetery, New York, when we, the Rhythm in Nature Ensemble led by Susie Ibarra, played music together with bungkaka, the Filipino bamboo instruments and gangsa, the flat gong from Kalinga, mixed with electronic instruments, saxophone, kontrabass, and tap dance. We play the Tagitag interlocking rhythm pattern of Kalinga as an opening procession for the Susie Ibarra concert. In 6 PM, when the spring breeze is around Greenwood Cemetery, we play tagitag in a circle surrounded by hundreds of audience members. We were moving as Kalinga community dancing when they played gangsa, and suddenly the atmosphere around us is changing. It was a magical and wonderful collective sonic ritual experience.



Rhythm in Nature ensemble in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn New York, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2023. Led by Susie Ibarra.  
Photo by Jake Landau

Susie Ibarra is a Filipinx composer, percussionist, field recordist, researcher, and many more. She is literary doing so many things, from contemporary compositions and improvisation to learning nature rhythm from birds, insects, forest, and so on, and water recording from the Himalaya to the North Glaciers, and many more. I feel so lucky to be able to learn from her during my stay in New York as an Asian Cultural Council Fellow. And in fact, that was my first encounter playing Filipino traditional instruments and sonic expression inspired by Kalinga. Later, in September, Susie asked me to compose a piece as a part of her

concert with the Prism Saxophone Quartet in New York and New Jersey. The concert program consists of her composition with the quartet, "Procession Along the Aciga Tree," a new arrangement of Jose Maceda's work by Susie Ibarra, and my new piece, "Spring in New York." (Link: <https://www.arsnovaworkshop.org/programs/prism-quartet-susie-ibarra/> )

This year, Susie composed a new work, "Sky Islands," inspired by the distinct rainforest habitat of Luzon, Philippines. This work has been performed in Asia Society, New York, on July 18 and 20, 2024. You can see the excerpt of this work in Asia Society website or YouTube Channel. This is the description of the work from Asia Society website:

*Filipinx composer and percussionist **Susie Ibarra** was intrigued by the "sky islands" on the mountain tops of rainforests in her home region of Luzon, Philippines, home to the world's largest number of unique mammal species. In her latest musical work commissioned by Asia Society, Ibarra captures, through sound and sculpture, the beautiful and somewhat magical existence of sky islands.*

*Sky Islands combines the creation of new gong metal sculptures, which create a physical floating garden series of sounds, with a musical score to float the composition of Sky Islands onto the stage with the performers. The piece is composed for Ibarra's eight-piece music ensemble, including the **Extended Filipino Talking Gong Ensemble** with **Claire Chase** on flute, **Alex Peh** on piano and **Levy Lorenzo** and Susie Ibarra on percussion, joined by the four-member **Bergamot Quartet** comprising violinists **Ledah Finck** and **Sarah Thomas**, violist **Amy Huimei Tan** and cellist **Irène Han**.*

*Sky Islands takes inspiration from the musical traditions of Luzon's sky islands and represents the Montane Forest Ecosystem through a performative sonic installation. The piece explores Ibarra's percussion sound language in extended techniques for all players, featuring Philippine Northern style interlocking rhythms and melodies found in bamboo and gong and flute music of the Kalinga and Cordilleras Region in Luzon. Sky Islands is a musical call to action, highlighting Luzon's rainforests—an endangered region with 31 endemic species, including the Philippine Eagle, and a region that has both volcanic and non-volcanic mountains amidst diverse fauna—with the aim of connecting people to our fragile and beautiful ecosystems and draw awareness to changing climate and global community practices<sup>12</sup>.*

I was able to get a chance to interview Susie Ibarra about this fascinating, reflective and thought-provoking composition via Google Meet on Saturday, 6 July 2024. I was in Bali at that time during the wonderful and inspiring DeCoSEAS Workshop, together with all of the team members from Southeast Asia and Europe.

During more than one hour interview, Susie told a lot of stories, from her visions as an artist working with sounds and music, her perspective and inspiration of her homeland Filipino cultures and nature, her global thinking about community, and many more. It's always very inspiring to talk with her. I am still in the process of transcribing this while writing this section.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://asiasociety.org/new-york/events/sky-islands-susie-ibarra>

## Josefino Chino Toledo

### “Kantus: Tagabawa” for Orchestra (1999)

If we talk about the figure of Josefino Chino Toledo, there is a famous dual identity that cannot be separated: as composer and conductor. He is the music director of the University of the Philippines Symphony Orchestra (UPSO), Metro-Manila Concert Orchestra (MMCO), GRUPO 20/21 a modular music ensemble, and also has been invited as a guest conductor internationally in many music festivals and concerts.



*University of the Philippines Symphony Orchestra (UPSO) and Choir. Conducted by Josefino Chino Toledo.*

*For the concert “Pagdiriwang: Bayan at Pamantasan”, 14 June 2024 at UP Theater*

During this fellowship, I am quite lucky to witness the rehearsal and concert of UPSO and Choir when Chino Toledo conducted many repertoars from various composers, both foreign and Filipino. Toledo with the orchestra was rehearsing Ramon Santos' "Phenomenon," alongside the work of Puccini, Wagner, and Olivier Messiaen. His vision as UPSO Music Director to always present the Filipino composers works is a really valuable contribution to the musical ecosystem here. As a great conductor, Toledo is noted for premiering works of Filipino composers, such as San Pedro, Nicanor Abelardo, Ramon Santos, Maria Christine Muyco, and many more—from the late romantic to contemporary composers. His figure plays an important role in bringing the works of Filipino composers to the wider public.



In fact, I really want to interview Toledo as a conductor about his views and interpretations of the Filipino composers works and, of course, as a composer himself. However, during the fellowship period, I have not managed to find the right time. Dr. Verne introduced me to Chino Toledo when they had a discussion with Dr. Ramon Santos at the UPCE office. Later, Dr. Verne also told me about Toledo's orchestral work, "Kantus: Tagabawa". This piece was composed in 1999 after Toledo listened to a recording of a song among the Bagobo-Tagabawa at the UPCE. Bagobo-Tagabawa is an ethnolinguistic group in southern Philippines. Such an interesting story of creative process and inspiration.

Although I did not have the opportunity to interview Chino Toledo during my fellowship, I studied this composition score at the UP College of Music Library while listening to the recordings of the concerts. The score is handwritten. It's a fantastic and very colorful orchestra composition, and of course we must not doubt his strong connection to the orchestra as a composer-conductor. There is a main melody of the song that Toledo cultivates with many compositional techniques, delicate orchestration in the various orchestral palettes. He also uses various percussion elements as strong color accents in this work, as if reminding us of the *Agung* music and dance of the Bagobo-Tagabawa people. In the program notes, this composition is described as:

*The work was inspired by a song among the Bagobo-Tagabawa of southern Philippines-an old form of vocal expression punctuated by shouts from the listeners. Several qualities of this song were used throughout the piece - the melodic contour of the song as the basis for the entire shape and structure; its lyricism; and punctuative character. The work was premiered by the Hong Kong Sinfonietta last November 1999.*



*The Bagobo-Tagabawa community dancing and playing the agung, hanging gongs*

**Alexander John Villanueva**  
**“Kun-di-kam-pa-na” (2024)**

During this fellowship at UPCE, I was also able to meet a young composer in the same generation as me, Alexander John Villanueva, or we always called him AJ. AJ is a part-time lecturer here and currently finishing his PhD in music from the University of the Philippines College of Music, where he researches Filipino identity in new compositions. He is a promising young contemporary composers who already compose and working with many contemporary ensembles around the globe, including his recent residency with Ensemble Recherche in Freiburg Germany which he composed “Kun-di-kam-pa-na”. Actually, we met for the first time around 2010 at Yogyakarta Contemporary Music Festival, when I was still a composition student at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI).

“Kun-di-kam-pa-na”, this interesting title of composition, formed from two words: Kundiman, a folk/traditional Filipino love song, and Kampana, a church bell in Spanish. In fact, based on my experience, it’s pretty common to see and hear the sound of kampana in Manila as a part of Catholicism. Through this work, AJ wants to convey his critical thought process and message about Filipino identity related to postcoloniality. He sent me the score of these compositions and also the recording of the concert in Ensemblehaus Freiburg, Germany on 25 May 2024.

Opened by a layered recording of Filipino church bells as a playback part, AJ elaborates it with a very textural approach on woodwinds, piano, and string instruments performed lively by musicians from Ensemble Recherche. Then sometimes you can hear a blurred melody of a Kundiman by Francisco Santiago, which he quoted, elaborate, and processed with many compositional techniques. Blurred, as AJ describes to me when he reflects about the postcolonial identity complexities in the Philippines. In the score, AJ writes a description of this piece as:

*This piece explores the sound of the kampana, or the church bells merging with ideas on dualities of identity with the kampana as a socio-political-historical object reflecting years of colonialism from Spain where religion was their primary weapon. During the American occupation, kampanas became objects of reward by soldiers upon capturing certain Filipino towns and cities as churches were used as places of refuge by dissenting Filipinos. The use of the kampana is also to be pluralized as it would mean different events and situations in the life of a Filipino catholic, making the object a subject of layers of identity and memory. Kundiman, on the other hand, frames the post-colonial identity of the Filipino as a product of both Spanish and American occupation as it is also an object of different layers of identity and memory. In this piece, Kundiman by Francisco Santiago is used as a harmonic and poetic material as it reflects ideas of hopelessness and eventually hope.*

On Friday 19 April 2024, AJ deliver a presentation in “musikolokya”, a monthly musicology discussion in UP College of Music. His presentation titled “Dialoguing the present by singing the past: engaging complexities in Philippine contemporary composition through the lens of the Philippine Traditional Kundiman”.



*Alexander John Villanueva presentation in musikolokya at Museum UP College of Music*

One week after this presentation, I met AJ at the UP College of Music Library. We discuss for nearly two hours ranging to various topics, from Filipino contemporary composers works, his experience working with many international contemporary ensembles, music education, Jose Maceda's works and influence, his creative process and views, identity and postcoloniality as one of his main concerns in recent years, and many more. Because we are in the same generation, in fact he is one year older, I feel like interviewing and talking more freely with AJ.

During this discussion, AJ also mentioned that the situation now is quite different compared to Jose Maceda's time. Maceda was able to compose for hundreds of performers, musicians, or participatory audiences, from “Pagsamba” (1968), “Casette 100” (1971), “Udlot-Udlot” (1975), “Ading” (1978), and many more. AJ said that now it's quite difficult to do that kind of mass composition. So, that's why he became the artistic director of the Ripieno Ensemble which is mostly active for the Manila Composers Lab, or writes for many ensembles internationally. AJ mentioned this as one of his creative strategies as a Filipino young contemporary composer. He also added that his generation is quite different in the approach of creative inspiration and activities because they are no longer doing field work in many communities like Jose Maceda, Ramon Santos, and the next generation, Verne de la Peña, Jonas Baes, Josefino Chino Toledo, Maria Christine Muyco, and so on.

Itiluloy.....

To be continued

*Quezon City, Manila, the Philippines, April-July 2024*

“It is the task of man today to look for an attitude of mind and a course of action other than that which imprisons him in his own creations.”

Jose Monseratt Maceda

## *Composer – Researcher Biography*

### Gardika Gigih



*At the UPCE Instrumentarium*

Gardika Gigih (b.1990) is an Indonesian composer, pianist, and soundscape researcher. After studying composition at the Indonesian Institute of Arts, Gardika's interest in the intersection of music, society, and culture led him to pursue a Master's Degree in Cultural Anthropology. His works span numerous genres, from concerts to contemporary improvisation, film scoring, sound ethnography, and multicultural collaborations.

In 2019, Gardika received a fellowship from The Japan Foundation Asia Center to conduct soundscape research on cultural narratives in Southeast Asia and Japan. This research has been published in [www.lostinsound.art](http://www.lostinsound.art)

From January to June 2023, he stayed in New York as an Asian Cultural Council Fellow to study cultural diversity and multicultural collaboration in the New York music scene.

Last May at the British Library, his composition "Mimpi Owa: A Duet with Javanese Gibbons" won the "Sound of the Year Awards" for the Composed with Sound category, initiated by the BBC Radiophonic Institute and the Museum of Sounds. He is continuing to develop new compositions and electroacoustic works inspired by his global research.