

## **Alternative Directions in Art Education and Dissemination of Traditional Arts in a Globalised Society**

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### **Abstract**

The new century bears witness to new developments in the consciousness of peoples around the world, following the colonial experience and the advent of modern education and technological advances. In postmodern discourse in which traditional practices have come to the fore in asserting identity on behalf of individual societies, the transmission of cultural art forms has become an imperative concern among peoples, countries and nations. It is also within this context that the empowerment of traditional artists has been regarded as a necessary tool in the preservation of one's cultural heritage. This paper discusses the multi-dimensional aspect of transmission and dissemination of traditional practices as part of a process of social evolution and the different participants in the process of learning and disseminating artistic forms of expression, as well as adopting indigenous knowledge in the functioning of contemporary society in Asia and other parts of the globe.

**Keywords** dissemination, empowerment, mentorship, indigenous, transmission

### **INTRODUCTION**

The advent of a new century is witnessing the development of a new global consciousness among peoples and societies. The plethora of cultural and historical traditions among societies all over the world offer different global perspectives, in which individual nations and societies, through the uniqueness of their cultures, ways of life and expressive heritage can contribute towards shaping a liberal and liberating world humanism.

In the last four centuries, the literate system of learning inherited from classical civilisations has been adopted as the principal medium in the transmission of human knowledge. Classrooms, books, lecture halls, libraries and now cyberspace technology, have created a monopoly in the dissemination of information, as well as in the scientific teaching and learning of various aspects of human life - the physical, metaphysical and forms of expressive action. At the same time, the aspect of promotion of traditional practices have also evolved in the contemporary consciousness as a means of balancing technology with humanism

and spirituality.

Marking the post-modern era in scientific and artistic inquiry, the twenty-first century opens new challenges to the artistic life around the globe in the study, learning and the promotion and dissemination of the arts as universal forms of human expression. One of these challenges is a departure from traditional norms of formalised teaching, to one that explores the variety of learning systems that have been in practice for hundreds of years in the different cultural communities all over the world. Even as we look in contrast to art education in the context of a predominantly western system of teaching, formal schools for classical arts have been in existence outside the purview of pedagogy developed in the west. These schools range in compass from academies to master-led studios and institutes, dealing with specific artistic skills, to newly established programmes that deal with the arts with different approaches and methodologies. In Indonesia, the Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI) offers full-scale curricula in Indonesian performing arts (*karawitan*) such as gamelan music, choreographic arts, live theatre and puppetry. The Department of Fine Arts in Thailand has a similar programme, while in China and Japan, schools for the different musical and theatrical genres such as the Peking opera, *nan guan*, *kabuki*, *kyogen* and *gagaku* are taught according to traditional training methods. Secondly, we are now experiencing the departure from the exclusivity of the different traditional practices, to one of sharing the experience with the outside world, not only through teaching but also through actual engagement.

The establishment of formal educational institutions in Southeast Asia, deriving mainly from the over-all literacy agenda of the colonial regimes, has been adopted as the principal instrument to develop professionally productive citizenries in the developing and modernising nation-states. With education as a potential tool in shaping a future paradigm for human existence, the tension between social and humanistic concerns on one hand and the goal of creating an efficient, industrialised society on the other, is now challenging the institutional agencies for teaching and learning in confronting the realities of social change (new notions of time and physical space, conduct, behaviour, taste and the valuation of things). Even this forum today is a manifestation of this concern where we reflect on modern education as a possible tool for regeneration of Asian cultural values.

In a recent study, concepts of pedagogy and modern education were investigated in the context of cultural transmission in modern times, with special focus on human resources vis-a-vis technological resources, as well as the natural integration of societal need with knowledge (practical and extra-practical) vis-à-vis the primacy of form, content and competence. In this study, cultural transmission was highlighted as the overriding issue, while pedagogy and education were looked upon for their intrinsic essentiality based on cultural habitus. As both evidenced by the collected data as well as by common knowledge, the elements of modern education show that its goal, as practiced in western civilisation, is not merely aimed at the acquisition of knowledge but also to utilise that knowledge to fulfil a new paradigm for human existence – social success and material productivity. On the other hand, traditional pedagogy trains practitioners to fulfil needs in the non-material world of rites whether they are of spiritual or secular significance.

Although the role of these schools is equally significant in modern-day art education, this paper shall focus on the transmission, pedagogy and learning of oral traditions of non-literate societies, especially those found in village cultures under the context of adopting indigenous knowledge in the functioning of contemporary society. The issue of validating the role of indigenous knowledge in the field of present day pedagogy in a way mirrors the larger issue of empowering indigenous peoples and communities as direct participants in the development of new social and political structures. The issue departs from the concept of modernisation based on various models of development - from the colonial and neo-colonial paradigms of technology transfer, to the Marxist and neo-Marxist systems of resource distribution, which in their top-to-bottom procedural prescription, have both marginalised, if not totally ignored, the potential contributions of indigenous knowledge to the social equilibrium of present-day society (Sillitoe, 1998). The dynamics of globalisation draws its essence from the materiality of human production, creating new valuations of both the tangible and intangible modalities and mechanisms of expressive practices. The commercialisation of traditional arts has become an imperative in the modernising landscape all over Southeast Asia. As the prime emblem of cultural uniqueness and exoticism, traditional art forms have become a productive source in attracting western market to come and contribute to the economic growth of different nation-states.

The foregoing discussion therefore intends to highlight the interconnections and parameters that need to be considered and perhaps put in place between the different participants and the different motivations in the process of learning and disseminating artistic forms of expression in Asia. Furthermore, it shall attempt to propound on the idea that the teaching, transmission, dissemination and promotion of the arts is part of a process of social evolution in which different cultural practices survive or evolve according to a community's cultural canons, as well as decisions and responses to change.

## **NEW PARADIGMS IN ART EDUCATION**

The concept of incorporating indigenous knowledge into the social mainstream, and vice versa, is not an easy proposition (Sillitoe, 1998). First, indigenous knowledge cannot be readily isolated from its social context without losing or vitiating its cultural significance, or in the case of an expressive practice, its aesthetic meaning. Indigenous knowledge is the product of interactions between society and its environment, concretised in a system of expressive practices that reflect modes of thinking and beliefs regarding relationships among members of a given society, as well as relationships between society and the physical and metaphysical worlds. This relationship is markedly holistic in the sense that if one of its components changes, the entire equilibrium is disturbed and a new paradigm needs to be ideated and put in place.

Second, the interface of different and often times conflicting artistic values needs to be carefully studied, whether such interface is possible at all or to what

degree interfacing is possible between cultural poles, in terms of theoretical knowledge, technique and the communicative values of art itself as both language and non-language (Kramer, 1996). On one hand, this particular issue becomes clearer if one were to view art education as a cultural practice by itself, representing the social evolution of teaching and learning in Western society. On the other hand, indigenous artistic knowledge and its transmission are not only particularly concerned about skills, literacy and the preservation of form and techniques of execution, but also the continuity and sustenance of tradition, the efficacy of the rites of passage that they reinforce or enhance, and the reaffirmation of one's cultural identity.

Third, the deliberate interfacing of two or more socially mediated and socially determined practices must undergo a process of accommodation and assimilation through a time-space that could span generations of stakeholders. Furthermore, the success of any scheme or strategy for this purpose can only succeed depending on the willingness of the systems and the direct participants to accept change and even initiate innovations from within, determining for themselves culturally acceptable limits to such innovations. As the traditional artists have joined the ranks of the professional community, the art forms themselves have undergone drastic changes in their aesthetic and intrinsic functional value. In today's musical discourses, the issues of political capital, power brokering and negotiation are topics often taken up in the academia and socio-cultural activist dialectics, all in reference to traditional musical productions vis-à-vis physical and material survival or the marginalisation of culture bearers.

Fourth, an effective process of interfacing can only come with an equal sharing of decisions as well as authority and power. While the process itself may need the element of inter-mediation or facilitation, such function, can be assumed by the cultural stakeholders themselves, who by their own personal ideation and initiative, have developed and pursued their own vision of interfacing in the context of cultural pluralism in contemporary society or cultural integration and development in a nation state. Moreover, since indigenous artistic knowledge is so connected to social and cultural structures, these very structures must serve as the principal areas of negotiation and interfacing, before a meaningful and lasting actualisation can take effect.

## **POINTS OF INTERSECTION IN ART EDUCATION AND DISSEMINATION OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE**

The extent by which indigenous peoples have gone beyond traditional ethnic boundaries has resulted in a variety of social conditions (obtaining in Southeast Asia as well as other parts in the world today) contributing significantly to the issue as well as the process of transmitting and promoting indigenous musical knowledge. Recent events, observations, studies, projects and experiments, have resulted in the unfolding of several models in the context of cultural interfacing as well as intra and inter-cultural music teaching. In the following models, the cultural interfacing comes in different degrees of participation from both the indigenous culture and the

institutional structures of mainstream society. Moreover, the indigenous culture practitioner provides the knowledge and the artistic elements in the transmission and dissemination process. On the other hand, the existing social institutions from the government and the civic sectors provide the initiative and infrastructure by which transmission and dissemination of indigenous artistic knowledge can be carried out as a contemporary cultural practice.

### **Models of Artistic Interfacing**

a) The first model is called ‘school for living traditions’, a new learning programme that is in the process of being institutionalised by the Philippine government through the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). As a component of the award for National Living Treasures (Gawad Manlilikhang Bayan - GAMABA), the concept of School for Living Traditions is intended to enable the Master Artist to transfer traditional artistic skills to the younger generation within one’s cultural community. As of today, five master musicians have been given the title of GAMABA: an epic chanter from Panay-Bukidnon, a Maguindanao *kutyapiq* (2-string lute) player, as well as master musicians from the Kalinga, Yakan and Palawan ethnic communities (National Commission, 2000). At the same time, the NCCA also supports outstanding village artists who can initiate their own schools for living traditions. One such school is the Cordillera Music Research Center of Mr. Benicio Sokkong (Figure 1). Benicio was formerly engaged at the UP College of Music to teach Kalinga instruments such as the nose flute, the lip-valley flute, the *gangsá* (flat gongs) and several types of bamboo percussion. Benicio also developed his skill in the making of Kalinga musical instruments such as flutes, the Jew’s harp, zithers and a variety of bamboo idiophones. Considered as a leading exponent of Kalinga music and dance, Benicio Sokkong was awarded a grant to initiate a school for living traditions. Today, the school is situated in the mountain capital of Baguio City in Benguet province in Northern Luzon. The school has a ‘faculty’ of several individual artists from other related ethnic traditions in the Cordilleras - Bontoc, Ifugao, Kankana-ey, Ibaloi. The school is open to non-Kalinga or non-Cordillera native, and offers short term live-in, immersion programmes in Cordillera traditional life and musical arts. What is unique about this programme is that enrollees stay in village-like surroundings and are given ‘lessons’ in singing or instrumental playing in simulated village events or everyday occasion. Teaching sessions are not bound by time limitations. Watches and time pieces are not allowed. The sequence of activities is guided only by the everyday life cycle of a village resident, including trips to the field or participation in actual community festivity, including the butchering of sacrificial animals for rituals. The students are also taught the art of instrument making, including the indigenous knowledge of the natural environment from which materials for these instruments are derived.



**Figure 1** The Cordillera Music Research Center developed by Benicio Sokkong.

A similar effort has been done in North Sumatra, although the programme officially lasted for only two years of implementation, it spurred the local communities to establish teaching programmes especially of the musical traditions that are endangered to disappear for lack of incentives and interest on the part of the young generation. I refer here to the Revitalization Program on the musics of North Sumatra, as spearheaded by the couple Rithuani Hutajulu and Irwansya Harahap. They were able to get a two-year grant from the Ford Foundation in order to set up a programme of instruction on five different musical traditions in North Sumatra: The Karo Batak, Simalungun, the Pakpak, Toba Batak and the Parmalin. They identified the instructors and selected interested young people to compose the core schools where instructions were given to the youth on a regular basis (Figure 2). Several factors were especially taken into consideration: the proximity of the pupils to their teachers, the place where the instructions were held, and the experience of the teachers. This was monitored by a team who reported regularly to Rita and Irwansya, and later the whole project was evaluated by a foreign expert.

In local regions in Africa, centres have been formed to train performers and grouped them into ensembles. They are taught as performers who will perform their different music and dance numbers for audiences in their localities as well as other places in the country and even abroad, as representatives of their governments. Their artistic activities have been extracted from the usual social function and have been reconfigured for entertainment (Stone, 1998). In Ghana, the National Dance Company was established, where a team of master drummers as well as other musicians were asked to demonstrate, teach and perform for the members of the company, who consisted mostly of young men and women who have displayed their skills in dance (Nketia, 1998). These centres can also facilitate the creative activities of its members like innovating musical instruments or creating new choreographic formations and movements, together with their inherent meanings and social significance.



**Figure 2** Pakpak children learning from the master.

It is also in these centres where the idiosyncrasies of performance can be taught even out of their original context. One example is the concept of the ‘musical word’ of the drums from Sub-Saharan Africa, which embody a ‘cultural essence’ and speaks with different messages that is linked to a social system or class, to a particular being, to a ritual, or to a specific extra-musical act (Kululuka, 2013).

In these three examples, the interfacing is achieved between the traditional way of learning the structural mechanisms of practice through participation in actual village activities and the ‘artificiated’ training and educating of community members of the same racial or ethnic backgrounds. However, this modernised procedure still stems from the knowledge of master artists who had learned the traditions in the natural or indigenous way of knowledge transfer.

b) A second model is a recent experiment that is closely related to the schools for living traditions, except that the initiative and concept come from outside the cultural boundaries of the indigenous community. In the Summer of 1999, the NCCA supported a project that brought some twenty student composers, music educators and researchers together with some music faculty of the University of the Philippines College of Music, to Davao City, to learn pre-selected musical traditions from two ethnic communities - the Bagobo Diangan and the Kalagan tribes. From the Bagobo Diangan group, two cousins were contracted to teach in the programme: both with a title of Chief – Datu Malandoy Munoy (Figure 3) and Datu Maximo Gabao, who is also one of the deputy mayors of the city. Today, Munoy and Gabao have evolved their own repertoires that include folk tunes and even modern pop songs. They have taught their siblings some of the playing techniques and the dances that are integral into the performance practice, and have virtually organised them into a troupe that could instantly perform for visitors, academic researchers, and tourism establishments.



**Figure 3** Malandoy Munoy teaching students at the Eagle's Park in Davao City.

On the other hand, the teacher from the Kalagan tribe is also a deputy mayor by the name of Rogelio Sumawang. The three principal mentors have organised their own family troupes, who perform for local festivals and tourism events, as well as participate in national cultural events that are held in Manila and other places outside Davao City. The family members serve as resource artists in demonstrating specific skills in instrumental and dance performances.

In this particular model, the musical interfacing were successfully realised through the common and shared experiences by the various participants - the cultural 'outsiders' who conceived and implemented the project based on years of scientific studies of traditional music cultures as well as training in music education; and the cultural 'insiders' who have adopted some conventions of music making outside traditional norms. These include a 'modernised' repertoire of current tunes and folksongs, audience-oriented performances, a concept of theatre, costuming and choreography.

c) A third model is one that was begun by Endo Suanda (Figure 4) of Bandung, wherein he introduced new teaching materials based on modern technology in the teaching of the arts to high school students. Targeting the apathy of the youth towards traditional cultural practices, he launched the LPSN (Lembaga Pendidikan Seni Nusantara) with the vision of not only revitalising knowledge and appreciation for the arts, but also the pride on one's cultural heritage, among the young generation. He concretised this vision by producing books, monographs on cultural objects including musical instruments, masks, textiles, etc., as well as audio visual materials such as DVDs (Figure 5), to facilitate familiarity with the art objects, their use as well as significance. He mobilised a staff to give workshops to teachers, encouraging them to conduct their own researches which he published in a magazine entitled *Agung*. This massive effort was intended to give the students a wider view of culture in that the materials consisted not only Asian artistic objects but also artefacts from around the world.



**Figure 4** Endo Suanda, founder of Lembaga Pendidikan Seni Nusantara (LPSN).



**Figure 5** DVDs produced by Lembaga Pendidikan Seni Nusantara (LPSN).

This approach to the learning of traditional practices is intended to make the modern students aware of the myriads of praxis of different ethnic communities in the four corners of the globe. The materials have been the product of researches and are disseminated using modern technological devices. The thrust of this initiative is not to imitate the traditional cultures but to invent new ways of replicating them, using new and accessible materials, and eventually appreciate the diverse ways of expressing culture.

d) The fourth model is a form of mentorship in orally transmitted music that is being carried out in the context of a modern system of art education. The principal example is a programme of teaching music from representative musical cultures in the Philippine done at the University of the Philippines College of Music. Begun some fifty years ago, the Conservatory hired and appointed village artists as Special Lecturers to teach Kalinga music from the North and Maguindanao. music from the South. Because the music was extremely new to both conservatory faculty and students, the artists were given a free hand in designing their own teaching strategy and methodology, in determining the course content and repertoire, as well as in devising a system of learning evaluation at the end of the course. The conditions obtaining during the initial implementation may constitute what one may consider as a 'shot in the dark'.

The village artists were never trained in western music and did not have the ability to read and write music notation;

- 1) They were tasked to teach conservatory students with a purely western music background;
- 2) The music that they were to teach were totally unfamiliar with their students;
- 3) None of the students belonged to any of the artists' ethnic culture and vice versa.
- 4) The village artists did not have college degrees (at the time of their hiring)
- 5) This was the first time that indigenous musical knowledge was introduced as an area of serious study in a formal music institution of higher learning.

After some years of implementation, the concept of a graduated course sequencing as well as the idea of a formalised teaching methodology was slowly developed by the artists themselves.

One of the main issues that modern classroom education in the field of traditional arts has created is the diminished impact of orality in the learning process. For this reason, a working compromise seems to have been reached by using the written and notated pages and whiteboards to introduce new materials, towards the ultimate commitment of these materials to memory. Aga Mayo Butocan (Figure 6) invented a notation system that would facilitate the learning of a non-literate musical system by literate note-reading musicians (Figure 7). Facilitating this process is the course of practical classroom work, no matter how limited in time allotment, which consists of repetitive playing and the eventual teaching of the art of improvisation.



Figure 6 Aga Mayo Butocan teaching kulintang to students.

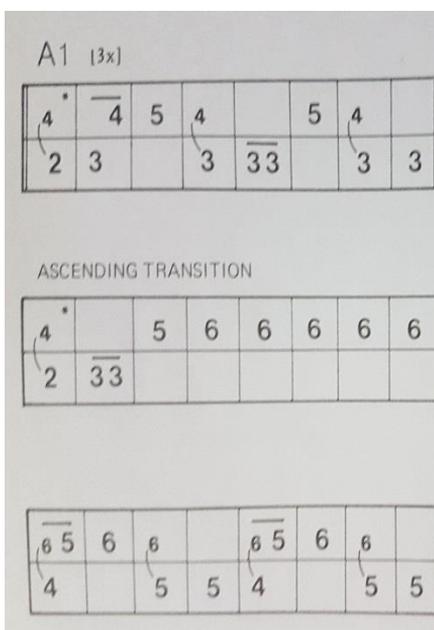


Figure 7 Kulintang notation as created by Aga Mayo Butocan.

Another main characteristic of traditional pedagogy being incorporated in modern art education is the element of communal learning. In a semi-ideal, if not ideal condition, team teaching has already been institutionalised especially in Indonesia, where the main *karawitan* instrument, the gamelan, requires different

levels of expertise on the members of the ensemble. The students also rotate playing the different instruments so that by the time the course is finished, the student shall have mastered all the instruments in the ensemble.

While composition is a fairly recent development in traditional arts education in the last 40 years, its methodology of learning wisely veers away from its individualised mooring in western practice. Instead, it derives elements and modalities characteristic of oral transmission and communal interaction between elders and disciples, most art institutes implement in Indonesia today. The process of putting up the final production on the part of the graduating students continues to apply techniques of community interface, as putting together all the performing forces of dancers, actor, musicians, etc., not to mention the individual leaders – composer, choreographer, stage director, stage designer, into the final production. The final recital of a graduating student is performed not in the school but in the village, where the final evaluators are the masters themselves.

The concept of mentorship as a regular feature of a modern school of music gradually gaining ground in Asia, especially in countries where orally transmitted music are being practiced. In Yunnan, China, the Arts Department of the Nationalities Institute in Kunming, is opening a music programme that revolves in part around the participation of village artists in the general curriculum. The Royal University of Fine Arts in Cambodia has also put in place a mentorship programme with an initial teaching and facilitating force of some 140 artists of various musical expertise.

Similar undertakings can be observed in other Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia. In the latter, as well as in nation states from other Asian and African regions, formal academies offering programmes in traditional arts have long included the teaching of non-literate traditions in their formal curricular offerings. It should be noted that in these countries, the process of interfacing may not need to overcome as wide an alienation gap as in the case of the highly westernised urban and lowland Filipinos, since these countries have managed to preserve their fundamental languages, as well as cultural and musical traditions, not withstanding their related histories of falling under the political yoke of foreign colonial powers. Whatever ‘development’ has taken place in their expressive cultures in response to modern global trends, has been tempered by a strong and time-tested indigenous heritage.

e) The fifth model of interfacing between indigenous and traditional artists and the contemporary communities and stakeholders is the idea of festivals, in which participation is not only confined to traditional artists and students, but also entire cities and towns. Many of these festivals have become commercially motivated events, luring tourists to partake of the celebration and in the process contribute to the economic well-being of the host community. While festivals have become the venue to promote traditional arts and culture, change in the integral essences of the traditional practices is inevitable, although one can say that the festivals themselves have become part of the extended traditional practices which are no longer the exclusive property of ethnic communities but by entire populations of cities, towns and countries. In the Philippines, the Kaamulan Festival held annually in Davao

brings together some 10 ethnic communities in the locality to show their different traditional arts, including textiles, food and performing arts. They parade along the main avenues in what is called 'street dancing' and then at a designated merging area, they present numbers which are newly choreographed in a display of colourful and spectacular pageantry.

In Africa, festivals are organised to assert their cultural emblems in music and dance to a larger number of people. In Tanzania, a festival among the Wagogo people of the town of Chamwino has been organised annually by the Department of Creative Arts of the University of Dar Es Salam, now led by Dr. Kedmon Mapana. After a three-day conference on African musical cultures at the University, the villages prepare their music and dance numbers that will be shown in the festival. While the participants belong to one ethnolinguistic group, their varied presentations, some newly composed and choreographed, are pitted against each other.

In Solo, the annual International Dance Day has been celebrated in massive exhibition of the traditional and contemporary dances of the Javanese community. In 2007, some 1000 dancers have been assembled from the different schools to participate in exhibiting a traditional dance (Figure 8). Today, the number of dancers have increased to around 6,000.

In these festivals, the traditional practices have been used and expanded into becoming mass experiential events. With the coming of mass culture, the materials for such events have been culled from customs and folklore, both ancient and modern, with the participation of various peoples from different cultures and ethnicities. In fact, these communal interactions have become traditions in themselves in the life of a modern society.



**Figure 8** 1000 dancers from Solo, Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

The above models of interfacing in the process of incorporating and integrating indigenous musical knowledge into the structural framework of modern art education and arts promotion, show various possibilities of expanding the idea of art pedagogy and dissemination in the context of sustaining cultural diversity in a global social environment. They also show that the process can only materialise and bear fruit if authority, judgement and power are equally shared by the purveyors of indigenous knowledge as well as the initiators of the process of dissemination and propagation of the different artistic expressions.

Looking at the larger issue of transmission, one may argue a theory of difference between interventional acculturation and evolutionary enculturation regarding the cultural history of Southeast Asian peoples in the last 500 years. Interventional acculturation brings about changes especially in traditional cultures through influences from the outside, whether it may be economic, political or religious. On the other hand, evolutionary enculturation refers to changes that the traditional culture bearers themselves incorporate in their practices from a process of selecting the emendations on their traditions, whether they may be structural or internally substantive. A closer study of their manifestations in the dynamics of modern education would reveal an open-ended view not only the highly complex transformative nature of cultural transmission, but also in the multi-dimensionality of the entire phenomenon. In the societal dynamics in today's traditional communities, individuals and institutions interact with extra-territorial influences and respond to the impact of change within the materiality, spirituality, aestheticity of human expressive practices. The variability of this interaction may be defined by the way individuals and institutions seek to, and resolve the tension obtaining from the confrontation between tradition and change in a globalised society.

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**Ramon Pagayon Santos** (b. 1941) initially trained in Composition and Conducting at the University of the Philippines, and earned his Master of Music (with distinction) and Ph.D. degrees at Indiana University and State University of New York at Buffalo, respectively. He was a full fellow at the Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt and a Visiting Scholar in Ethnomusicology at the University of Illinois. As composer, his works, which have been performed in Europe, the Americas and Asia, are conceived along concepts and aesthetic frameworks of Philippine and Southeast Asian artistic traditions. In the field of Musicology, he has undertaken researches not only in Philippine and Asian contemporary music, but also studied Javanese gamelan music and dance and nan guan, and engaged in continuing field studies of Philippine traditional music such as the musical repertoires of the Ibaloi, the Bagobo, Manobo, Mansaka, Bontoc, Yakan, and Boholano, as well as musics from South

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