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## The Enduring Gift of Robert Garfi as to Southern Philippines

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## **The Enduring Gift of Robert Garfias to Southern Philippines**

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The Southern Philippines in 1966 when Robert Garfias conducted his research there was obviously different from what it is now. Most of the musicians and dancers who performed for his films and audio recordings are long gone. The same is true with regards to many old teachers and knowledgeable informants. The traditions practiced then have entered a remarkable new state of flux brought about twenty years ago when the Internet reached the Philippines, in 1994. A new world emerged populated by what Marc Prensky calls the “digital natives” referring to generations born in 1985 and beyond; they are comfortable and savvy with “things digital.” Members of the opposite are referred to as “the digital immigrants” (Prensky 2001).

In other words, two different but overlapping worlds have emerged. The old world is populated by older generations many of whom are computer illiterate: fascinated but at the same time intimidated by digital technology. Those who are compelled to adapt to and then embrace the modern systems, the “digital immigrants,” represent the overlap. As the new order emerges, the purveyors of old traditions are steadily decreasing in number. The traditions being still oral and therefore in a state of continuous change began to reflect the emerging new modern reality.

In 1966, Garfias teamed up with Bud Schultz and Jose Maceda to conduct filming in the Philippines. He led the team to the South, they filmed in provinces in Mindanao Island, namely, Lanao del Sur, Cotabato, Davao, Zamboanga; and then they ventured to the Island of Basilan and proceeded further to others in the Sulu Archipelago as far as the Palawan Island.

The original copy of the resulting films and analogue audio recordings was processed and archived at the Department of Ethnomusicology, University of Washington in Seattle. So were the team’s field logbooks. What is not included are all the related insightful anecdotal stories shared in classes, seminars and many potluck dinners variously held by the ethnomusicologists’ community of the University. With bias, I nostalgically refer to that early era of the Department as the vibrant old days.

### **Transmission**

Anything of diminishing value will disappear sooner or later. So, the question

central to the fate of the indigenous music of the Southern Philippines is whether or not the people still value it. The answer can be a “quick yes” and a “reluctant no.” It is yes to the bulk of the population belonging to older generations and residing mostly away from urban centers. The “no group” tends to be young, urbanized and heavily influenced by pandemic popular culture. This is the present reality caught in the dynamics and trappings of our fast changing world. The changes inevitably reflect to some degree the current performance and articulation of traditional folk arts as the present artists, especially the young, have been in search of relevancy in light of the unprecedented wide cultural contact, direct or vicarious, with the outside world.

Arts survive only if transmitted. Culture and civilization operate the same way. Historian Will Durant asserts that “Civilization is not something inborn or imperishable; it must be acquired by every generation, and any serious interruption in its financing or transmission may bring it to an end. Man differs from the beast only by education, which may be defined as the technique of transmitting civilization.” (Durant 1954: 5). The same idea about civilization applies to traditional music. Its survival depends upon transmission – the handing down from the old to the young. It begins from family-rearing, then education and all the other ways that make the tradition valuable enough for preservation.

Since time immemorial the music and dance of the South were efficiently transmitted because it was the only music that people had. The advent of the radio, the phonograph, movies and television made vicarious foreign entertainments available and attention to the primary and original music and all things traditional started to wobble. An eye-opener is the *karaoke* system, which is increasingly displacing the *kulintang* ensemble as a status symbol in many households.

If collective entertainment was a body of water, say a lake, the Internet made it wider, but shallower. That said, it should not be hard to imagine what it is like now with the viral addiction to digital gadgets and appliances. It is easy to see the growing disconnection from traditional way of life. Other factors that contributed to this outcome will be explained later.

The transmission of traditions is a cumulative process requiring exposure and experience. The experience might be vicarious or actual participation either as performer or audience. In our present world, exposure to foreign music and dance has expanded exponentially and the young generations explore with gusto the universe of what are available via all kinds of medium. Therefore, their time to be meaningfully exposed to and experience traditional music has considerably shrunk, for some to virtually none. The old equation for transmission has dramatically changed. The attention of the younger generations has become fragmented. The number of mentors who can bequeath fully the tradition is declining, while fewer students entail fewer practicing teachers. No student, no teaching.



**Figure 1** The oldest Cadar family photo (from left, Maimona, Damoao, Cadar, Berua, and Usopay; Cadar family photo, circa 1947).

Maranao *kulintang* music was handed to me the old way. I still remember the lullabies my mother sang to me (Figure 1). In Maranao culture up to these days children are not barred from witnessing, and even participating in public music making. That was the beginning of my own exposure to and experience of Maranao traditions. It was at first the osmosis process. Folklore and anecdotal musical adventures of uncles and kinsfolk influenced me as I learned to play the music.

It is quite a different story now among the present urbanized generations who, if they have any contact at all, go through a mostly vicarious process. Electronics took the place of lullaby singers. Nonetheless, print media, be it photographs or literature, audio recording, video or movies all factor in the process. The young do attend certain traditional festivals, pageants or social celebrations. All this adds to their exposure to traditional music, but is minuscule compared to their daily exposure to foreign or non-traditional music.

Transmission is experiential in varied degrees. Audio experience imparts some of that elusive, if inscrutable, knowledge about music but it is multiplied many fold when the physical manners that go with the sound are added. The experience becomes much more heightened. Which is why attending a live performance is a more profound experience than a vicarious one.

Let me digress a bit. There is the prescriptive anthropology that focuses on how people explain their culture; which is distinctly different from descriptive

anthropology that deals with actual practice; more often than not there is a discrepancy between the two. The prescriptive involves written or oral explanation; it is secondhand information.

Listening to recorded music depends on a description, the recordings, but is limited in effect as it is driven only by the sense of hearing and imagination. More powerful is the experience of viewing performance of music described with film or video because the viewer can hear and see everything, i.e., ambience, audience, reaction and the act of music making. The degree of osmosis varies within the spectrum of prescriptive and descriptive experience or exposure; but it is most powerful in film in the latter context. Imagine Taiko music set against a beautiful sunset as background. An audio recording can only convey the impact of sound as sound can. But a video or film captures the ambience and physical mannerisms idiomatic to the music and makes the experience much more profound. Even a seemingly ordinary instrument, for instance, a pair of Venezuelan maracas can steal the show with the player's complex hand movements. That is audiovisual.

This is another reason that Garfias' films and audio recordings are valuable. Of course, the ultimate act of transmission is by becoming a practitioner or purveyor.

Our knowledge of the past or lost civilizations remains incomplete as we rely on scholars who decipher and interpret fragmentary materials unearthed by archaeologists, or from surviving inscriptions on stones, clay tablets, old paper scrolls, sculptures, ceramic artifacts, carvings, paintings, folklore and mythology. Better records of the past disappeared due to their destruction by wars, natural catastrophe or the impermanence of materials on which they were recorded. But modern inventions have hopefully changed that, and seem to have solved many of the problems of recording knowledge.

Digital recordings are easily stored, replicated, distributed, accessible, retrievable and once uploaded into Cyberspace they will float in there, somewhere, in somebody's computer, for an indefinite length of time. I believe a great bulk of Garfias' work already resides in many digital storage sites. These may serve as time capsules for the generations beyond ours, if they seek clarifying "snapshots" how music was performed in the past.

Before I deal with another important facet of the subject, allow me to relate a sad personal experience. Prior to my journey to America in 1968, I spent one whole summer transliterating written, in Arabic alphabet, chapters of the Maranao Darangen song-epic into Roman alphabet. This research project was funded by Mindanao State University and all the notebooks I used, the one and only copy, mind you, were deposited at the archive of the University Research Center of Mindanao State University at its Marawi City campus. Then I went abroad (Figure 2). Shortly after I reached America a disgruntled minor employee of the Center torched the archive, thus, turning most of what was stored there into ash. To dust it



**Figure 2** Send-off gathering in Taraka for my trip to America. Photo by Josephus Daniels, 1968.

returned. The product of my work was all gone. It was so devastating that one of the devoted scholars working there, Federico Magdalena, left the Philippines for Hawaii, for good, in disgust.

To the credit of the late Mamitua Saber who headed the Center, they regrouped and were able to do repeat research out of which emerged the publication of the Maranao epic with English translation, in limited copies. It is not the complete epic but it is the major work and the first serious attempt. Copies of the book are now rare. The National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka has one and I was fortunate to have read it during my stay in Osaka in 2011. I took notes of pages with the idea of writing an article on music as depicted or prescribed in the Epic.

That said, I think we can already see the significance of the work of Garfias. However, his work has more facets than that.

### **Unintended Products of a Vision**

The work under discussion is the vision of a visionary. What made it so is a trademark of how Garfias chaired the Ethnomusicology Department. To illustrate: he invited me to the University of Washington to teach applied Maranao *kulintang* music and I came in September 1968 (Figure 3). I was so taken by it that I ended up switching my field of study from fisheries to ethnomusicology. At the





**Figure 3** Teaching *kulintang* at the applied music ensemble room, Department of Ethnomusicology, University of Washington. Photo by James O. Sneddon, 1968.

University I witnessed the years of editing done on his films. During the years that followed many articles about the Southern Philippines were written and published. In fact Garfias and I once coauthored one (Garfias and Cadar 1996); Terada Yoshitaka wrote his master's thesis (Terada 1983). Related works have been done by other ethnomusicologists.

More fieldwork was undertaken, resulting in theses and dissertations, long-play discs, compact discs, VHS video recordings, and films. Countless hands-on classes, seminars, forums, symposia, lecture-demonstrations, workshops and public performances, feature concerts were held, all inspired by the work of Garfias.

He envisioned the documentary for scholastic purposes. The role of native resident artists in the Department to teach applied, hands-on, ethnic music serves as a mere tool in studying oral traditions that quite often defy conventional Western analysis. Many attributes of non-Western music can be felt, but cannot be satisfactorily explained or transcribed. It is a Sufistic approach for the ethnomusicologist to experience firsthand the nature of music in order to understand it better. The performance of the music outside the school came as mere collateral to, or natural effect of, the formal study.

## The Mindanao Kulintang Ensemble

Although it was not the original intention of Garfias, performance of the music took on a life of its own in furthering the understanding, dissemination, appreciation and preservation of the traditions. Elsewhere I wrote an article about the journey of the music (Cadar 1996). I believe that the emergence of a growing number of *kulintang* groups locally and abroad directly or indirectly goes back to that genesis.

At the University of Washington I taught Maranao *kulintang* for a number of years while enrolled in graduate school (Figure 4). When the time came to prepare for my doctoral examinations, I stopped teaching. That was when I suggested and prepared supporting documents to bring in Danongan Kalanduyan to teach Magindanaon (Maguindanaon) *kulintang*. He arrived in 1976.

Over many years we managed to have a makeshift group that intermittently performed the music or gave lecture-demonstrations within the Pacific Northwest (Figure 5). Later we expanded to performing in both the East and West Coasts of America. Invariably the group involved the initiative of Terada Yoshitaka or me, and often both. Colleagues and students namely Scott Scholz and Robert Antolin, to mention just two, would complete the ensemble. We did lecture-demonstrations, hands-on workshops and performed in various festivals, radio interviews, screening



**Figure 4** Robert Garfias playing the low *agong*, and the author on the *kolintang* at a wedding reception. Otto family photo, 1970.





**Figure 5** Performance at McNeil Island Penitentiary (from left, Charlotte Farr, the author, and Helen Hughes). Photo courtesy: McNeil Island Penitentiary, circa 1970.

of a movie, and other social functions.

It was sometime in 1991 when Terada suggested that we should found the Mindanao Kulintang Ensemble. He resided then in Seattle and later moved back to Kobe, Japan; by then I had moved to New York City, Kalanduyan to San Francisco. In spite of our being physically scattered, we founded the Mindanao Kulintang Ensemble with the lofty goal of “concertizing” the music for the Western stage. It was an attempt to elevate the folk arts into feature concerts with the mantra of performing as close to authentic traditions as possible. We aimed to entertain and educate, a balance that can be quite challenging to attain consistently in light of the temperament and comfort zone of the primarily Western and Westernized audience. To complete the ensemble we recruited members, namely, Scott Scholz who lived in Seattle, Elizabeth Reyes in Oakland, and Daniel Giray in San Francisco. Our repertoire was based on collective knowledge, and guidance from the work of Garfias.

We wanted to do national performance tours and financing was the only remaining major obstacle to overcome. Robert Garfias, Lorraine Sakata, and friends at the National Endowments for the Arts came to our rescue with grants to jumpstart the solicitation of support from the various community organizations for which we planned to perform. Finally, the Mindanao Kulintang Ensemble was able to blaze a trail with three major national performance tours within the United States (Figures 6 and 7).



**Figure 6** The author playing *kulintang* at a concert at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. Photo by Saunder, 1995.



**Figure 7** Daniel Giray walking through the audience playing *babandil*. The concert was graced by guests of honor representing countries with gong cultures. Photo courtesy: Mindanao Kulintang Ensemble, 1995.

Terada's move back to Japan was a blessing in disguise. He was able to arrange for the Mindanao Kulintang Ensemble's repeated performances in Japan. In 1997 we had two radio interviews at FM Cocolo radio station, Osaka; a concert at the Osaka Prefectural Library Lighty Hall, Keihanna Plaza Hall, Keihanna, and the National Museum of Ethnology where we also held a hands-on workshop.

As fate would have it, after this first Japan performance tour, Danongan Kalanduyan decided to leave the group by the year 2000. Without him we had a concert in California. I was at that time a visiting associate professor at the Department of Ethnomusicology, University of California, Los Angeles. We also managed to give a lecture-demonstration-workshop at the class taught by Garfias at the Department of Anthropology, University of California, Irvine.

In 2002, Terada and I, with the participation of the Panganay Ensemble, the first all Japanese *kulintang* ensemble in Japan, gave a concert forum at Hep Hall, downtown Osaka. In the same year we had a major multimedia concert, *Manta Gowani*, at Haft Auditorium, Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. Patrick Tamayo joined to complete the team.

The year 2003 was quite eventful. We had a week-long performance tour in the state of Maine. The tour was named "East Meets West: Mindanao Kulintang



**Figure 8** Performance tour in Maine. From left, Daniel Giray, Scott Scholz, the author, and Masanobu Ikemiya. Photo courtesy Mindanao Kulintang Ensemble, 2003.

Ensemble and Masanobu Ikemiya” as it was a joint performance with concert pianist Masanobu Ikemiya (Figure 8). The second CD of the MKE, *Manta Gowani*, was unveiled on August 23.

Then we were invited to return to Osaka to assist in the commemoration of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)-Japan Friendship Year 2003, sponsored by the Cultural Agency of the Japanese government. There was an adjunct symposium, *Questioning Authenticity: Southeast Asian Performing Arts and Issues of Cultural Identity*, held on October 23–24, 2003 at the National Museum of Ethnology. I contributed a paper, “Transmission of Maranao kolintang music” (Cadar 2007).

For the performance component, my sister Maimona Cadar-Mudag joined us as a special guest artist. With her we gave a concert at the Museum and another held at the AcrosFukuoka Complex, in Fukuoka (Figures 9 and 10). An article on the performance appeared on a Fukuoka daily newspaper the next day; we had a total of six hands-on workshops one of which was shown by the NHK (national public TV) on its news broadcasts.

Equally significant is that Terada and I managed to conduct filming in Mindanao, in 2002 and 2008.



Figure 9 MKE rehearsal in Fukuoka, Japan. Photo by Salic C. Mudag, 2003.



**Figure 10** Robert Garfias conversing with Maimona Cadar-Mudag and the author at the National Museum of Ethnology. Photo by Salic C. Mudag, 2003.



**Figure 11** The author's sister Maimona being documented playing her entire repertoire.

On behalf of my people I must thank the Museum for funding the field trips. I also must acknowledge and thank Tagami Hitoshi and his team who volunteered to film the entire *kulintang* repertoire of my sister when she performed it at the Museum in 2003. Maimona, accompanied by the MKE, played fifty pieces. Three cameras were employed to give a front overview, a front close-up and an upper Maimona's left shoulder. Out of the footage Tagami Hitoshi (National Museum of Ethnology) ingeniously edited a multi-track dynamic DVD: the viewer can switch from camera to camera at any point of the music by a remote control (Figure 11). We hope that this innovation will eventually be integrated into the Maranao Kulintang Ensemble permanent display at the Museum.

### **The Pervasive Internet and Social Media**

By no means do I claim expertise on this topic but I can nevertheless feel how pervasive the Internet has become, and how much it is now a part of the daily life of many. I do not understand how my people manage to pay for it. It is easy to see that consumers of the Internet and its social media are mostly urbanized and belonging to the younger generations.

Also, it is not an isolated phenomenon that in the Philippines more and more people move to urban areas for various reasons, although essentially economic. It is more evident in the Southern Philippines where many people left their rural hometowns and emigrated to urban centers or abroad as refugees from armed conflict. This is a diaspora considering that in certain villages in Lanao del Sur only an estimated 15 percent of its original population chose to remain; at times some barrios became virtually ghost towns.

These factors have added to a growing interruption in the transmission of indigenous traditions. One eye opener is that a significant number of the children born and raised in exile do not speak their native dialects or language. There is an unmistakable disconnect from their traditional heritage.

The Filipinos are very social or amiable to begin with and the social media seemingly offer a wider ground to be more so. For this reason I see a need to connect or reconnect with them through the Internet. I have a hope that we can counter the disconnect.

Doing so will require finding ways to go around obstacles inherent in the nature of what we may call the Internet beast. Firstly, a recent survey says that among the seven member nations of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) the Philippines has garnered the lowly distinction of having the slowest Internet speed service in addition to being expensive (Santos 2014).

The cut-throat competition for attention in the Internet is driven by the speed of streaming signals for viewing or uploading. Most people tend to bypass postings



that take too much time. The appeal of brevity is perhaps one reason why Twitter and the like became so popular, in contrast to lengthy postings. For instance, for video clips we now have the twenty second version that plays right away as soon as it appears on the screen in contrast to the slightly longer YouTube that requires negotiating its booby-trapped sites.

I do not see all this as enough reason to give up on social media. There is wisdom in the saying “If you can’t lick them, join them.” The disconnected young generation spends a disproportionate chunk of their attention there daily. They are there! And they are the generation that must save the traditions from a deadly interruption.

Some Internet surfers do want to know and reclaim their traditions. In his column, syndicated columnist Frank Bruni explains, “It [the Internet] has enormous upsides, and may be for the best. *No single, potentially alienating cultural dogma holds sway*. A person can find an individual lens and language through which his or her world comes alive.” (Bruni 2014, emphasis by the author). Documentaries or educational materials in the Internet have a market in ready, albeit limited, numbers of customers.

## **Effect / Counter Effect**

I advocate the posting of documentary films in any form, short or long. I have been posting some select videos of the Mindanao Kulintang Ensemble concerts in part because of its positive immediate impact on the people when they see outsiders competently performing and appreciating *kulintang* music.

I have limited viewers but growing in number. I have posted whole concerts via Vimeo because it has no constraints on length, and unlike YouTube, Vimeo allows deletion. But the main hurdle is the slowness of Internet in the Philippines. Most cell phones and similar small gadgets cannot stream video with decent resolution. It takes a laptop or desktop computer and time to watch my videos, usually accomplished best with the technique of pausing first then streaming in the whole cut before hitting the play button. Although few and far between my viewers might be, one upside is that it identifies the people who are serious and interested in their indigenous heritage. Photos and written messages are easily viewed through mobile devices, which is why I post plenty of cultural pictures to share.

Recently I posted at Facebook images and literature about the film produced by the National Museum of Ethnology, *The Maranao Culture at Home and in Diaspora* which won The Best Longer Film award at the 2013 International Folk Music Film Festival held in Nepal. I have received requests to post the film but I can only explain that the technical requirements for this are not in place as yet.

Certain stimuli to reawakening do exist in the social media. Exposure to images and information about culture lead to more curiosity sooner or later, a process which may restore some lost value for the traditions to be preserved. Even the posting of amateurish videos by others, although most of them are brief, provides some small vicarious experience of musical life. Gradually this can lead to further curiosity.

## Mirror

What I find quite intriguing is the way that the exposure can act as a mirror. Those viewers who are native to a tradition by lineage but are disconnected from it get the feeling of incompleteness. If they are ignorant about traditional music which is part of their valued heritage, they will not feel complete until they reclaim it. The Internet holds the mirror for them to look at themselves.

Even more profound is, for example, a video of *kulintang* music being faithfully played, enjoyed and appreciated by outsiders. It instills pride and reawakening at the same time, in addition to giving a stronger feeling of incompleteness. One measure of success as a human being is the feeling of being complete. That is where my posts of MKE concerts aim to stir, be it merely an excerpt or whole concert. They can serve as a mirror: the viewers see in some posts that I am the only native musician in the group and in others I played either with my sister Maimona or with Kalanduyan. The rest of the players are of other nationalities or outside ethnic origins.

Another mirror of the kind I am talking about is when Terada and I played with the natives in my hometown. The mirror magnifies the beauty and value of the tradition. Wherever we conducted research there it became mandatory for Terada to play because the word was long out that there is a Japanese in town who can truly play every instrument of the ensemble. Somehow, it sometimes takes outsiders to point out effectively to the natives the beauty and value of the tradition. If they have lost it, they may search for it.

There is an interesting sign of the times in our urban life: the influence of Western style wedding! It has become vogue among my urbanized people, a development that is quite ironical because advocacy for return to religion has grown as counter to the decaying effects of urban life, but the styles they are borrowing from are that of the Christian West. Some of the borrowing can be pronouncedly so that nontraditional factors such as Western symphonies, procession, cutting of the wedding cake and ring gifting are used although alien to and at the expense of indigenous traditions.

In 2009 I had the opportunity to send a somewhat hidden message as a personal reaction to the trend. I had my own wedding and for the reception I insisted that



**Figure 12** Kolintang ensemble played during the author's nuptial reception in Cagayan de Oro City; the author and Steven Otto playing the pair of *agong*. Photo by Usopay Cadar, 2008.

the only music to be heard is live *kulintang*. The highlights of the music were played exclusively by my three sisters, myself, and former students of mine, featuring the repertoire of my mentor, who was my departed mother. Our audience was 90 percent Maranao. Our special guest player was Steven W. Otto, from Oregon, who played each instrument of the ensemble showcasing his skill and knowledge of the tradition. The hidden message there was that the tradition can also thrive in urban life. The impact and beauty of the performance were such that Abul Khayr Alonto, who now has replaced Nurullji Misuari as chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), spent a long conversation with Otto trying to clarify how the latter learned to play *kulintang* (Figure 12).

Worth repeating here is a more telling incident which Terada has already mentioned in his essay (Terada 2013). When we went to Baguio City to film *kulintang* music played by Maranaos in diaspora, the most important instrument *kulintang* requiring the standard set of eight gongs had only five. Their reason was that the missing three were sold to some pop or jazz musicians. Despite this problem, two musicians could still play abbreviated pieces on only five gongs. Then we found out they lacked two more competent musicians to complete the ensemble. At that point, Terada and I volunteered to fill in the gaps. Right after our participation, an old man, quite traditional, delivered a tirade ashamed of their shortcomings and his hanging punch line was to the effect of “What is this? We

will in the end have to go to Japan to learn our own *kulintang* music?” What a mirror for the Maranao to look at themselves.

I must mention one more thing here to complete the big picture and go back to the main topic. Terada gave a clear description of this in his aforementioned essay. In March 2013 he and I did a screening tour of the tentative edition of the award winning film *Maranao Culture at Home and in Diaspora*. We did public screening at three venues: (1) The University of the Philippines, Diliman Campus, Quezon City; (2) Barangay 647 of the Islamic Center in Quiapo, Manila; and (3) University of the Philippines, Baguio City. At the community setting of the Islamic Center, the people who attended, about two hundred of them, became a captive audience during the show and they stayed for the post-screening forum. As perhaps a sign of renewed interest and pride we immediately received oral invitations to come back and do more filming in their respective villages in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago.

I realized at that point how intriguing it would be to go back to the areas where Garfias made his films and show the villagers what took place in 1966. If it happens, you can imagine the impact on villagers watching their long gone relatives playing and dancing. Those films, when posted in the Internet, might be



**Figure 13** MKE concert “Manta Gowani: Legend of Arimaonga” at Knox Center Theater, San Pablo City, California; Elizabeth Reyes and Patrick Tamayo dancing the Kapmalong-malong. Photo courtesy: MKE, 2006.

the first step toward that idea especially if and when the speed of Philippine Internet catches up with that of its neighbors and people can afford the cost of being online for the time required.

After the Japan tours the MKE had a concert at Knox Center Theater in San Pablo City (Figure 13), then a brief performance for the Sequoia Anthroposophical Society of Berkeley, followed by a one-week musical retreat in Parkdale, Oregon.

### **Ripple Effects on a Pond**

Do imagine all this as a ripple effect of Garfias' work. Over the years new performing groups emerged in different places. Osaka even had one in the Panganay ensemble. The footprints of Garfias' films as well as whatever Kalanduyan and I taught are noticeable in most of the new groups. Quite recently I noticed one of Garfias' films appearing in the Facebook accounts of certain performing groups. When that development is weighted, i.e., for every viewer of a post how many other people learned about it through word of mouth, it would be shortsighted and foolhardy to undervalue its significance.

Again, let us assume that the work of Garfias is the stone that was cast and created ripples in a pond. What appear as ripples are the works of his protégés. When those ripples reach back to the Southern Philippines, that process has to be considered a full circle. It happens quite often in vicarious ways, through the Internet, or written and recorded materials that are available in libraries and other sources. But still the most remarkable form is the example of Steven Otto playing the music at my wedding reception. Actually, the first time he did it was in 1972 while doing fieldwork in Mindanao. He became widely known as the American who plays the *kulintang*. He played with and for the natives of the villages of Taraka, Buribid and Romayas. Terada had also performed in the Maguindanaon region when he did fieldwork in 1993. Those are ripples coming back to the natives in different garb as the music was played competently by nonnatives from a land beyond-beyond. Full circle.

### **Exposure to Popular Culture**

Digital technology arrived like an unending tsunami that did not spare anyone, regardless of economic status. People, poor and rich, spend much time daily ogling the screen, be it of cell phone, mobile gadgets, laptop, desktop, television or movie. These days it is very hard to talk with anyone without their attention being interrupted by text messages or phone calls. With this seemingly runaway speed-oriented Digital Era we can only guess where humanity will end up. I have heard of laments about how the social equation and youth culture have been changed by

this digital technology addiction.

Another unmistakable effect is that they have become more and more visual or visually-oriented. The young generation particularly has become heavily influenced by rap and hip-hop music in part because of its spectacle. It has become common for them to do hand signaling when someone is taking a picture or video of them. It is particularly pervasive among young children.

Many Western type bands emerge and disband and reemerge to play a gamut of music ranging from pop to rap in native tongue, experimental fusion, nationalistic or protest folk, World music, or jazz styles.

What I find unsettling is that there are recurring incidents of a touring Maranao ensemble that performs traditional repertoires and breaks away from the standard conventional mannerism by borrowing from rap and hip-hop. For instance, the *dabakan* drummer will do acrobatics or some contortions while playing his drum. It is a behavior not allowed in prescribed tradition. But it shows how the musicians probably try to ride the spectacle and popularity of staged Western musical shows.

One group tried it in urban setting, at a non-Maranao festival. The uninformed audience likes it while the a few attending Maranaos reacted with grunts and giggles. Probably intrigued by their experimental success they went back to Marawi City and did the same act. The reactions were mixed. The traditionalists showed disdain in contrast to the young generation who often start with laughter before saying "... but I liiike it!" It remains to be seen whether this will become a trend that will gain wide approval. In any case, I attribute the phenomenon to the visual influence of watching too many Western shows. The society has been thrown out of balance in trying to cope with and adapt to the changing environment. Because the world is in a state of flux, so is the music. To regain or establish a new balance is a struggle. The struggle is reflected in the arts. What will survive out of old traditions are components that have enduring value, with quality enough to be brought forward and find relevance in the emerging modern consciousness. The struggle of regaining balance requires awareness of priorities. Restoring value to traditions has to be one of them. Photos of a group of youth taking a lesson in *kulintang* recently posted on Facebook are a good example of this process.

## Conclusion

It is encouraging to know that at Maranao weddings, in diaspora, as for instance in the Middle East, *kulintang* music is played and invariably stands out as a profound experience for the nonnative invited guests of honor (Figure 14). Social media at first boosted the faddish imitation of Western wedding style as new status





**Figure 14** *Kolintang* ensemble played in diaspora: A nuptials in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (from left, unidentified player on the high *agong*, Maimona Cadar-Mudag on the *kolintang*, Edris Tamano on the low *agong*). Family photo, 2012.

symbol; but now, more and more, it has become a fusion of the two: Western music either live or recorded, and traditional mostly live. It helps in the process of “Know yourself, know your heritage.” The mirror will show that they have lost something of value. One does not search for something that has not been lost. Regaining what was lost might involve unlearning, i.e., realizing that Western concepts of music do not quite replace the indigenous ones. Then they will have to resort to the traditional system.

It can be argued that a world without the work of Garfias would not be doomed. But with it, in its own right, we have a hopeful unfolding world. The weight of his contribution is very significant. It has proved quite organic. It served as the seed that sprouted into a catalyst for the dynamic introduction of *kulintang* music studies and performances in the United States, Canada, Japan, Europe and the Middle East. The ripple effect of his work gained momentum and bounced back to the Southern Philippines in the form of inspiration and a reawakening of interest and instilled pride in the worthiness of traditional music and dance to this day.

This is not to say that all was smooth sailing. There were many obstacles and challenges to be overcome. It took a labor of love, dedication, cooperation and assistance from innumerable entities – institutions, social organizations, and patrons of the art – to make real what has been accomplished. It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. And in this case it took an international village to raise *kulintang* to its present status.

The enduring traditions of the Southern Philippines are like love. “Love delights to struggle with difficulties and strives the most hardily on the scantiest of soil,” says Washington Irving in his book *Tales of the Alhambra* (1992: 154). Garfias has expanded the soil upon which the traditions of the South can grow. For that reason, I cannot end this paper in good conscience without acknowledging Garfias as the Godfather of *kulintang* music in America.

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That said, behind the success of the Mindanao Kulintang Ensemble in all its major concerts is the genius, endeavor and generosity of Nora de la Serna, who shuns publicity. Without her contribution the Ensemble would not have gone this far.

I dread to think of the unknown if there were no unsung heroes, the participation and support of various entities, the movers-and-shakers, the funding institutions, sponsors, organizations that carried our music forward in directions beyond the intentions of what Garfias started. The reader has the option of bypassing this short section but I will be rolling in my grave if I failed to herein express my indebtedness to the entities listed below for their outstanding support and assistance for the various projects that ultimately led to this symposium. Datumanong Sarangani and Madid Sheik, Mindanao State University. Macapagal Camama, Marawi City. Muhammad Amer Guro sa Masiu, Taraka. General Amerodin T. Hamdag, Manila/Cagayan de Oro City. Salic Mudag, Saudi Arabia. All the Cadar families, Philippines. In the New York City area: Xavier and Maricar Tan, Rose Alcido, Rodolfo and Catherine Hermano, Aleli Alvarez, Behn Cervantes, Jorge Z. Ortoll, Patrick Guilfoyle, Cora and Mars Custodio, Icktoy Reyes, and William A. Cook. In Washington, D.C.: Arabella H. Driscoll Horowitz.

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