

HARANA

A Recital Project by
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Introduction

What is *harana*? Harana in a literal translation is basically to serenade. But this does not mean in the classical sense of a serenade piece, but the act itself of serenading. *Harana* has been an integral part of the Filipino culture, but no one really knows how it came to be or who specifically started it.

Existing before the colonial days of the Philippines, *harana* was a form of courtship for a man to woo a woman by singing or playing love songs outside her window. With the conquest of Spain which brought in Western music and instruments, the harana evolved to a man serenading alone with a guitar or with a group of friends playing various instruments. But a pure Filipino of courting has always been in the evening - the inbetween of night and day.

Harana came with a set of protocols, a code of conduct, and a specific style of music.

In the modern era, especially by the late 20th century, harana died out until it only became a fancy notion or a romantic theme found only in *telenovelas* and other form of drama. Despite the romanticization of it, courtship is still highly valued that is still in play in the Philippine culture today.

Purpose of Research

To know more about my cultural heritage, to find out how *harana* came to be, and to apply what I learn into my recital project.

To research on this topic, I first delved into how much I, as a Filipino, know about harana. Later on, I delved into how much I knew about harana, but from a classical musician's point of view - the musical forms, the history of it, the repertoire of the culture. How does it link to classical music, and if there is a connection at all. I perused various books, as before a culture can be made, one has to know the changes that caused it.

Lastly, I read books by local Filipino authors and discovered the links of harana and music in general and their ties to nationalism.

Results

From way before the Spanish came to conquer the island nation, the Philippines had been passing down oral traditions and romantic epics through song. And as the *conquistadors* occupied the nation, they brought in Western music and other customs that bled into the traditional Filipino life. Through the years, Filipinos would continue to celebrate life-cycles, occupational, and social events with a blend of Asian and Western style in music and dance. Life-cycle songs include lullabies, songs of love, nuptial songs, songs of death, and songs of burial.

Harana is an umbrella term for the form of courtship during the Spanish colonial days, although the tradition itself was given no name and predates to pre-colonial times. The music is rooted in the Mexican-Spanish tradition and is based on the rhythmic pattern of the *habanera*. It died down around the 1950s - The time when the digital age began, as well as the troubles and the beginnings of revolutions and wars. But in the old days, the way to court a woman was through song.

Men were rarely turned down as it was an act of bravery to sing of one's intentions and affections under her window, hoping she would open the shutters and accept his declaration. But it was not only the lady that the courter had to face, but her parents as well, as the parents were the ones who would decide whether to accept him inside their home or not. If they were accepted, the *haranista* or *haranistas* (professional musicians who were hired for the specific occasion), would once again delve into song.

There are 4 steps that are to be taken in a *harana* courtship. The first is the *panawagan* or the introduction. The haranista would select a set of songs for the first step, songs that introduces himself to her and politely asking her to open her window. Some songs are *Dungawin Mo Hirang (Open the Window, Beloved)*, *Natutulog Ka Na Ba, Sinta? (Are You Asleep, My Love?)*

and *Kay Lungkot Nitong Hating Gabi (How Sad This Midnight Is)* and many more. The woman would wait after the second song to open the window. Sometimes, she may not respond and if the haransita was persistent, the singing would go on until the break of dawn.

The *panawag* is deemed successful if she opens the window and the haranista is invited inside the house. Under the watchful eyes of her parents, he would start the *pagtatapat* (the proposal). This is where the man declares his admiration for the woman and her beauty and virtues. Some of the songs are *Ibig Kong Magtapat Sa Iyo Paraluman (I wish to propose to you, my muse)*, *Lihim ng Pagibig (My Secret Love)*, etc.

Panagutan (Response) is when the lady being serenaded to, replies back to the courter in song. If she is unsure, she may sing *Ang Tangi Kong Pagibig (My Only True Love)*, where the first line goes “*Ang tangi kong pagibig ay minsang lamanga*” (*True love for me is rare*). If she accepts, she will sing the song *Maala-ala Mo Kaya* with the lyrics, “*O kay sarap mabuhay, lalo na’t may lambingan*” (*Oh how sweet it is to live, more so in the presence of love and affection*).

With each reply, the haranista would have a reply in turn. If rejected, he would sing either *Ako’y Isa Na Ngayong Sawi (I Am Now Brokenheart)* or *Pusong Wasak (Shredded Heart)*. If accepted, he would simply join the woman in singing *Maala-ala Mo Kaya* as it is a song originally made for a duet. The singing would go late into the night, an enjoyment one would feel is similar to the setting of a *karaoke* where everyone and anyone would sing songs and various ballades.

The courting ends with a song of farewell (*Pamaalam*) as the haranista ends the night. Songs like *Winawakan Ko (I Hereby End It)* and *Bakit Di Kita Maiwan (Why Do I Find It Hard To Leave You)* are some examples as the haranista leaves into the night. Unlike other harana songs that are in 4/4, *Pamaalam* songs are sometimes in 3/4 and ten to sound more folk like.

Despite the stereotype of all Filipinos being able to sing, some are unable to do so and instead, hire professional musicians called haranistas to sing for them. Haranistas can sing, compose, and serenade their own songs, sometimes doing it on the spot. With their beautiful voices, they also sing in community festivals and events like parties and weddings.

While there are surviving harana songs, a majority of those songs are lost in time as they were passed down by family and oral traditions. Because of that, harana began to die out, with the age of technology and urban businesses speeding up the process. With the harana songs being hereditary, they are forgotten as they die with the last generation of haranistas.

But that isn't the end of harana. It is not that harana was lost, but it has evolved into something more than courting. The central idea is still there - love. But now it isn't only about romantic love, but platonic and familial love as well.

The term harana in itself has been left behind in the past along with the romanticization of rural 20th century Philippines. But the serenading, the practice of singing praises and love to people special to you - that has never been lost. It has adapted to match with the modern world while keeping its cultural aspect and heritage.

Language

The Filipino language known today is a mixture of Tagalog, modified Spanish, and English words as the history of the country adapted to its occupiers and combined them. The harana is sung in pure Tagalog, one of the various languages of the islands of the Philippines. The harana is not to be confused with *kundiman*, another form of song in pure Tagalog, but it is more in the means of heartbreak and longing - a common form of songwriting popular in original Filipino songs today.

However, harana isn't only found in one area. It is a nationwide culture, so even if the language of the harana itself is modified to be sung in the local island or local area's language, it is still recognized as harana due to the context of the song. For example, a popular Ilocano harana is *Tenga Ti Baybay (Out in the Open Sea)*.

As it may seem that harana is only a culture that pictures a lone man with an instrument singing to a lady underneath her window, it is actually a social event. Serenading in rural Philippines was more on introducing himself in a gentlemanly fashion rather than a declaration of love. The most popular being a woman from the big city (like Manila) coming over, and the men would bring out their guitars to get a glimpse of the beauty. The courter can hire haranistas while at the same time, bring his *tropa at barkada (group of friends)* to accompany him as moral support.

Married couples can also serenade to their spouse in social gatherings, as it is common practice in the Philippines for people to sing to one another (or serenading to one's significant other).

History

Rich in culture and meaningful traditions, the Philippines' culture has been lost to the Western influences over time, especially of the Spanish that has occupied the country for around three centuries. With all the richness, one of the most popular (ergo, the most romanticized) of the Filipino culture is the harana.

The harana first gained popularity in the first part of the Spanish period, taking influence from Spanish folk music and the mariachi sounds of Mexico. Harana is also an abbreviation of "Habanera Filipina" as its rhythmic element came from the Spanish Habanera.

During the Spanish Colonization from 1521 - 1898, Spain brought in its Western influence of music. Then, the Filipinos modified it into *harana* and *kundiman*. Though similar, as it is dedicated to a woman, the Kundiman is used as a means to express one's love for country and longing for freedom (as the Spanish did not allow songs about patriotism).

As time passed by, America came in and brought its commercialization and the Western notion of romantic love. Commerce and capitalism brought in distractions from the calm pace of old Philippine life. Love depended more on passion and romance instead of nurture and strengthening of communal ties.

According to the Western take on love, most of the romance is before the union of marriage. In old Philippine life, the initial attraction is solidified when the courting is accepted and marriage is encouraged not only by two families, but by the whole community - and from there, the love and romance is cultivated through the years.

But due to 'modernization', the traditional Filipino sentiments of harana began to lose their foothold in people's hearts. The concept of 'freedom' in the era during 1898 when the Americans took over played a role in the Philippines' nationalism along with taking on several meanings.

Freedom meant less influence from the parents on the child's life decisions and the man courting the child would meet lesser obstacles. With the American standard education, this gave men and women more chances to be educated and mingle with the opposite sex - unlike the old days when it was more conservative and unmarried couples could not be alone together without a chaperon.

The American tradition asking a woman out on a date eroded the Filipino tradition of courtship in careful steps. Life moved faster, 'courtship' happened more quickly. And as skyscrapers and apartments rose, so did the serenading under her window lost meaning.

But despite modernization, the traditional courtship has not disappeared, it has only adapted to modern times.

Reflection

From what I have discovered, harana is a musical and romantic tradition that should be preserved and never forgotten. But unfortunately, that is what almost happened, as colonization and modernization interrupted and changed the way of living in the archipelago along with the destruction of a majority of culture deemed 'barbarous' in the eyes of the Christian Spanish.

Also, harana was never seriously considered a culture by researchers - as it was such an integral part of the way of life in the islands that it never gave itself any significance until now as Filipino researchers started looking more deeply into the roots of the Filipino during the pre-colonial days. Because research on it was so recent, the materials gathered for it are still scarce.

As I did my research, it gave me the inkling on the concept of musicians being haranistas: we play for our audience, introducing ourselves by our sounds, wooing the audience to listen by the expression of the melody, hoping for them to come back again.

Application

My pieces were written during the Romantic Era with the purpose of defining everyday life.

The Franck sonata was composed as a wedding gift for his violinist friend, Ysaye who in turn, played it on that day. It was something personal and given for a private function, with a sense of intimacy. Based on my personal interpretation of the piece, it starts off mellow and quite lyrical, similar to harana where the sun goes down and night starts to come up, with the world quieting down. Feelings grow more turbulent (in the second movement) just like how a haranista would feel as he courts the girl he likes. The third movement is more fantasy-like, the same as when the girl opens the window, thus accepting his feelings and he thinks it is just like a dream come true. The fourth movement is happy and joyful, in accordance to mutual feelings.

Though the Conus Violin Concerto is not gifted as a wedding piece, it is considered a romantic piece, for its melodies and sweet harmonies. In relation to harana, it is in terms of virtuosity. For haranistas, the better singer, the higher the chances for him to be accepted. The same can be applied to the piece, what with its challenging techniques and virtuosic passages in the music that impresses the audience and woos them.

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