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# MUSIC AS COMMUNICATION: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY ON RHETORIC IN MUSICAL COMPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE

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## Biographical Sketch

**Leoncio Peralta Olobia** is currently pursuing a degree in Doctor of Communication from the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU). He has a degree in Master of Distance Education from UPOU and Bachelor of Science in Economics (Dean's List) from the University of the Philippines Diliman.

Apart from his teaching profession, Leoncio works as in international pianist at Hotel Taikanso in Matsushima, Japan, where he has served as a resident pianist for more than five years. Whenever he is at home in Tacloban City, Philippines, he holds concerts while teaching at the Leyte Normal University.

He has publications in peer-reviewed, international journals with topics ranging from communication, education, and music.

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To my family, for all the love and support extended to me, I am forever grateful.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Leonilo Lauzon Olobia Sr. and Conchita Peralta Olobia.

Likewise, this masterpiece is shared with my family.

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## ABSTRACT

I analyzed rhetoric through the confluence of performer-music-audience (ethos-logos-pathos) using performances comprising works of other artists and my original compositions viewed through autoethnographic lens. Data came from recollection and reflection on past musical performances alongside interviews with mentors, co-artists, and the audience.

Results indicated that rhetoric patterns of meanings as energy forms are created and shared by an individual through entrainment, association, identity formation, feminism, silence, and spirituality in various connections formed consciously or unconsciously in communication practice as espoused in the proposed Constellation Rhetorical Theory.

The concepts identified extend the persuasive character of classical rhetoric of Aristotle comprising *ethos, logos,* and *pathos.* In performer-music-audience analysis, individuals value meanings in communication as energy forms circulating in the environment that when absorbed, patterns develop and meanings seek new levels. When not absorbed, meanings remain suspended until they find themselves in consciousness and feelings of individuals.

Because of the infinite power of music in communicating my emotions and thoughts through sound utterance or in music's infinite power to elucidate musical nuances, these energy forms are everlasting themes guiding through my performance in unique ways. Indeed, musical performance is a perfect language in communicating profundities, in exhuming deep layers of meanings, in affecting others with clusters of understanding meanings or even beyond.



**KEY WORDS:** Performer-Music-Audience, Ethos-Pathos-Logos, Entrainment, Meaning, Persuasion, Transcendental Energy

# Chapter I

# INTRODUCTION

## Background of the Study

The philosopher Aristotle explained 2500 years ago that music is mimetic or imitative (Worth, 1997). This statement illuminates an important role of music as a form of communication that is imitative of emotions (Worth, 1997). Likewise, communication as a form of language that is constitutive and reflexive, is a ritual practice within a cultural context. As a discipline, music is also characterized with the study of structure and logic serving as foundation for effective communication when well-understood.

Prior to the Renaissance, the study of music was valued mostly as a theoretical, mathematical discipline, placed as a subject alongside arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy as part of the quadrivium (Rome, 2019), a medieval university curriculum involving “mathematical arts” of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music (Google, n.d.).

In *musica mundana* as theoretical form of music study, it comprised numerical analysis of intervals and harmony, esteemed as holding the fundamental harmonies of God’s creation (Rome, 2019). Much later, instrumental music as music without words began to surface in German Baroque music that specified conventions in counterpoints as musical ornamentations that highlighted voices in a web of intricate interaction.

This study focused on the rhetorical aspects of communication practice in a musical performance with the main objective of persuading a listening audience.

According to Aristotle's *Classical Rhetorical Theory,* there are three ways in which persuasion is accomplished, the idea being that it is an art of persuasion: *ethos, logos, and pathos* (Cothran, 2011).

- *Ethos* refers to the character of the speaker. It espouses credibility or ethical appeal, and the speaker's/author's authority.
- *Logos* refers to the logic used to support a claim.
- *Pathos* refers to the emotions of the audience. When we are trying to convince or persuade the audience with our speech, what reactions will they elicit, among other

For a speech to be persuasive to an audience, *ethos, logos and pathos* must be properly used.

The three concepts of rhetoric may be parallel to the elements of musical discourse, namely: the *performer, music, and audience* woven together to form a rhetorical discourse as a musical oration.

On the whole, the three perspectives of music performance can articulate persuasion: 1) from a performer's perspective, music oration is gleaned in nuances of body gestures and facial expressions as physical manifestations of rhetoric; 2) from the perspective of structure, persuasion is grounded on understanding the elements music that the audience can understand and relate to in order to be convinced; 3) from audience's perspective, convincing listeners to a musical performance is based on how they are transformed by the message, how their beliefs are changed, how subtleties of musical sound elevate their emotions, or how music creates memory of experience.

Based on the surveyed literature, knowledge gaps were identified including inadequate analysis on rhetoric of a musical performance such as the inability to

explain exhaustively the interrelationship between *performer, music, and audience* in a single research; lack of exploration on the emotional connection and absorption of silence as manifestations of persuasion residing within the audience; perceived lack of analysis on the elements of music in a musical structure affecting rhetoric; and no explanation on the effect of good communication to good performance as persuasive communication. Lastly, there have been few discussions on rhetoric from the performance of instrumental sound without lyrics.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study pondered on the art of persuasion through musical persuasion.

Using autoethnography, I explored, analyzed and reflected upon rhetorical aspects of my music, namely: me as the performer, my music, and the audience that result in persuasion from a listening audience, and I explored on the relationship between performance and good communication.

The study analyzed and reflected upon rhetorical aspects (ethos, logos, pathos) of communication as a performance and explored on the relationship between performance outcome and good communication. In the process and in the end-term, the goal was to explore how a musical performance was actually a communication phenomenon.

## Statement of the Problem

How does a rhetoric study contribute to the understanding of a musical performance as a communication phenomenon?

Research Questions:

I. What are the ethics involved and how do these ensure being a good performer (performer)?

II. What are the forms of logos and how do these make my music good (music)?

III. What are the elements of pathos and how do these ensure a good engagement with the audience (audience)?

IV. How do these three rhetorical elements interact for persuasive musical performance?

V. How does a persuasive musical performance translate into rhetorical communication?

## Significance of the Study

I am an active musician who concertizes, composes and arranges music. Using autoethnography as an approach to inquiry could draw on experiential knowledge and insightful reflections drawn from memory, from interviews, and from journals enriching overall performance.

The study could also help reconcile my musical and my communication personas such that being a musician would seamlessly merge with being a communicator.

The study explored on my musical gift as a performance artist that would make me more connected with my listeners, more mature and sensitive to their reactions spontaneously felt during a musical performance.

## Scope and Limitations of the Study

Three major limitations were addressed by this autoethnography. First, ideas generated from this autoethnography were not generalizable considering the nature of the study being grounded on my personal insights and experiences. Corollary to

this idea was that although the author used various sources of data other than self-reflections, the study was limited to autoethnography as an individual study, not as a collaborative autoethnography for the reason that analysis of data was done by the author, not by anyone else.

Narratives of this autoethnography centered on my own self using my own voice as I related to the culture specifically with the listening audience in mind. Thus, the object of the study was the rhetorical discourse as musical discourse within performances. The subjective dimension constituted reflections and insights of my communicative practice in a performance setting. These were very personal and interpretive accounts not reflecting upon experiences, contexts, or realities of other musicians.

Second, rhetorical analysis did not include songs with lyrics but mainly focused on musical sound as the essential direction of this autoethnographic study. Hence, this study explored on instrumental sound only, without lyrics, where the latter would usually form the basis for discourse. As such, deciphering on the musical structure as grammar and logic in music together with interpreting a given musical structure by the performer and how it was communicated and perceived by the audience in order to persuade formed part of the core of this autoethnographic study. It was also noted that the audience only heard sound utterance, thus, its persuasive character was illuminated through connection, rapport, and emotional attachment with the sound and the whole musical experience of the listening audience.

Third, the study dwelt on musical dialogue as a rhetorical exercise, not an oratorical speech as it is not as area of expertise of the author.

This autoethnography was limited to my personal narratives and reflections of performers of known works and my original compositions. As such, the theory generated was an outcome of this analytical autoethnography analyzing the vignettes as rich data.

## Chapter II

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter explains the related literature based on the overarching theme of music as communication. The first part explores studies that are grouped according to six traditions of Communication Theory by Craig (1999) that directly or indirectly inform them. The purpose of surveying empirical studies in each of the traditions is to gain a deeper understanding of the communication field that will guide in underpinning the subject of this study. The second part focuses on the chosen theoretical tradition, Rhetorical Tradition, and its theoretical assumptions. Related studies on music underpinned by the Classical Rhetorical Theory are then discussed and analyzed, specifically on the roles of the performer, the music, and the audience of the music.

### Music Studies Under Traditions of Communication Theory

The studies reviewed here fall under the communication traditions of cybernetics, socio-psychological, socio-cultural, semiotics, critical, and phenomenological. The purpose of conducting literature study on each of the seven traditions of communication was to draw insights from empirical findings that would form the basis for research exploration.

### Cybernetics Tradition

Cybernetics tradition theorizes communication as information processing and explains how all kinds of complex systems, whether living or nonliving, macro or micro, are able to function, and why they often malfunction (Craig, 1999).

A study on the relationship between emotion and music production quality process through skin conductance response (SCR), galvanic skin response (GSR) and other physiological measures to explain emotional response to music revealed that between critical and non-critical listeners, the former's music production quality had different emotional response against non-critical listeners (Ronan, Reiss & Gunes, 2018). It was also found out that having a high level of mix engineering mattered in emotional context of music listening.

In this study, emotional response to music was explained through physiological measures including heart or pulse rate, galvanic skin response, respiration or breathing rate and facial electromyography (Ronan, Reiss & Gunes, 2018) signifying a feedback mechanism between music production quality and response.

Indeed, communication grounded on cybernetics tradition highlights information processing through physiological measures in order explain emotional response to music stimulus. Although emotion is normally within the domain of intersubjective meaning and interpretation, the study explained it in a different manner, not based on passionate features of emotion but rather in terms of its physiological features.

As a form of transmission, communication in music forms a feedback mechanism that is directly applied in instantaneous performance where a performer draws energy from the audience, such energy based on feedback from loud cheer, clap, and other forms of appreciative behavior. Even still, factors like stress can get in the way of information absorption.

**Socio-cultural Tradition**

In this tradition, communication is theorized as the (re)production of social order. Communication is typically theorized as a symbolic process that produces and reproduces shared sociocultural patterns (Craig, 1999).

A study on intercultural communication through music highlighted that world music with diverse, collaborative and participatory characteristics can help its participants to be more interculturally competent through the process of appreciating, learning, practicing and performing music of distinctive cultures introduced by one another (Chen, 2017). Using Community of Practice (CoP) theory, the study emphasized integration through intercultural communication based on a case study called Warwick World Music Group and its annual concert, Warwick Fused to explain the shared understanding in a musical setting.

What is interesting in this study is that the use of Community of Practice as a form of knowledge management signifies a community of musicians engulfed in a social learning experience with various members contributing to knowledge formation. In this dialogue, interactive communication provides the impetus for new knowledge and the process is emergent.

In another study, sociocultural learning of popular and jazz music in CoP was part of secondary vocational music education in a Finnish conservatory (Virkkula, 2015). Through workshops with a professional musician, students had the opportunity for learning and developing musicianship on many levels (Virkkula, 2015).

Furthermore, increased collaboration among musicians proved to be critical in honing musical talents signifying a community of learning.

**Semiotic Tradition**

In the semiotic tradition, communication is typically theorized as intersubjective mediation by signs. Communication theorized in this way explains and cultivates the use of language and other sign systems to mediate between different perspectives (Craig, 1999).

A study underpinned by semiotic tradition discussed that “in order for music to communicate and have meaning there must be people involved, and that perceived surface differences between musical works cannot have any significance without an understanding of how music relates to the emotions, both in its creation and its use and understanding” (Blacking, 1973).

The study clearly indicates the importance of intersubjectivity of meanings that apply to a person’s understanding and signification of the musical sound as individually perceived rather than socially constructed. However, Blacking (1973) suggested that the meanings can only be similar if listeners share the same cultural experiences and that the intended meanings transmitted by the sound producer match with those interpretations of the listeners.In effect, shared experiences account for shared understanding in a cultural context.

This concept is further discussed in social semiotics where musical genres are used widely to distinguish between musical forms, as much of the meaning attributed to the genre may come from the social group which attaches itself to the genre as from the internal aspects of the music itself (Hodge & Kress, 1988). Examples include rock music catering to a social group associated with activist advocacy, classical music attached to an elite group in the society, among others.

Finally, semiotic tradition as communication of intersubjective meanings mediated by sign accounts for music as a language of communication. However,

while both have specific signs and symbols that have meanings attached (music notation and syllables for language), music cannot be considered a sign because it does not have:

> *"A recognizable identity… (or)… stand for an extraneous reality, which it obviously does not… it is unique and, in this sense, unidentifiable, and it stands for nothing but itself, referring to nothing but its own experienced reality" (Orlov in Steiner (1981:1:35).*

Following the argument, music is ripped of its symbolic meaning because it does not resemble what it signifies. While it presents a radical view, an audacious one at that, deep layers of meanings are exhumed and illuminated in listening or performing music. For instance, musical dynamics like softness (piano) or loudness (forte) of sound are not abstract symbols but interpreted differently by composers and performers. Individually induced emotional attachment and cultural context play a role in articulating and understanding the sound produced. This is where communication becomes relevant in transmission of meanings both determined individually and culturally.

Having said, this study points semiotics of music as something beyond the signal, and that context has a strong influence on music's meaning, and that analysis of codes as well as competences can be incorporated into adapted versions of established communication models to clarify how the meanings are generated (Inskip, MacFarlane & Rafferty, 2008).

Another study on semiotic communication based on music video analysis of "Goodbye Christmas", by LAY and "Universe" by EXO, affirmed that semiotics approach on both music videos consists of Denotation, Connotation, and Myth

based on Barthes' Theory (Sagimin & Sari, 2020). Fiske (1990) pointed out the connotation theory of Barthes, when the meaning of a sign is influenced by the feeling or emotion and cultural values of the interpreter. The meaning is established by customs in the Following the argument, music is ripped of its symbolic meaning because it does not resemble what it signifies. While it presents a radical view, an audacious one at that, deep layers of meanings are exhumed and illuminated in listening or performing music. For instance, musical dynamics like softness (piano) or loudness (forte) of sound are not abstract symbols but interpreted differently by composers and performers. Individually induced emotional attachment and cultural context play a role in articulating and understanding the sound produced. This is where communication becomes relevant in transmission of meanings both determined individually and culturally.

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inside the camera. The object of an image of a photograph and abstract values may be associated with a resultant picture which is a matter of connotation. Finally, myth is a folklore genre associated with sacred narratives about god and heroes in society (Sagimin & Sari, 2020). In semiotics, myth is a metaphor that relates to signs and beliefs in society.

The importance of the study lies in semiotic understanding through deciphering messages of the signs such as expression, gestures and the connotative implication which points to emotional connection with the songs. Mythical meanings are likewise induced through cultural beliefs of the people. The intertwining of the three components forms the basis for communicative interaction in semiotic approach.

As a final note to this analysis, the resolution to communication problem in semiotic approach is to provide a common language, a common sign that will thread common understanding amidst intersubjectivity. True enough in musical language, the signs are social constructs that envelope meanings and justifications. Within the musical world, the signs can aptly be called paradigms of sound.

**Critical Tradition**

In the critical tradition, communication is theorized as discursive reflection (Craig, 1999). Social justice can be restored when ideological distortions are recognized through communication practices that enable critical reflection (Apuke, 2018).

In the Philippines, a study explained the existence of kitsch (poor taste but with general appeal) in Philippine music as it catered to lower-class audience. For instance, the case of Eat Bulaga (favorite noontime show that appealed to the

general audience normally in the lower strata of society) was conceived as a diversion from the dictatorial government of Ferdinand Marcos in the same way as kundimans of the past, written and performed by local artists, were articulations of resistance against oppressive Spanish rule. In the study, Gabrillo (2018) revealed that the New Manila Sound subverted the proclamations and considerations of the upper-class elites on what amounts as legitimate and acceptable forms of Filipino culture. Interestingly, these “carnivalesque” celebrations have the ability to momentarily suspend the hierarchies of highly-stratified societies (Bakhtin, 1968).

Although the aforementioned study did not center on communication of music per se, its implied meanings punctuated by class issues such as discrimination, resistance, and impoverishment were well grounded on critical discourse that captured everyday life of ordinary Filipino people. Insistence upon kisch articulated in local language like baduy, jologs as poor taste eventually mirrored a struggle of the masses hidden in musical phrases with high entertainment value for the mass audience.

Indeed, such revelation was a powerful communication mechanism that was emphatically informed through the lyrics matched with danceable rhythmic pulse typical in novelty and protest songs, among others.

Aesthetics and critical theory are two areas that need discussion as music, being subjective in nature also has its objective dimensions from all the rules of harmony, acoustics, etc. (Bowie, 2012). The intertwining of subjectivity and objectivity elucidates a juxtaposition that remains vital in an ever-changing society. Music becomes important in the modern period because its meaning can be interpreted in very different ways, which are often influenced by issues in the society in which it was located (Bowie, 2012).

Having said, baduy, jologs as kisch elements are not to be dismayed at as they are powerful communication media for widespread dissemination of information.

Next to folksongs as cultural emblems, songs in kisch format have wide appeal, more like popular songs that feed into community consciousness, and the tendency to be replicated by many artists is astounding amidst seriousness of issues addressed by the lyrics. Such dichotomy of meanings creates a balance that music brings in communicating difficult issues.

**Phenomenological Tradition**

Phenomenological tradition is theorized as dialogue or experience of otherness (Craig, 1999). Within the tradition, an autoethnographic study on lived experience within multicultural setting revealed that multicultural education in music is a testament of a musician's identity forming his life story as an interconnected process (Netshinghe, 2012). The musician's lived experience as lifelong learning forms the foundation of musical training nourished through diverse cultural exchange. The autoethnographer lamented his nurtured trainings in Russia where he communicated with many different nationalities, played ensemble music and instructed students in high school strengthening his musical sensibility and personality as well.

In music therapy, phenomenology was used to investigate the lived experiences of music therapy who have established meaningful interpersonal relationships with adult clients with Profound Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities or PMD (Lee, 2014). The study revealed that clients experienced moments of joy and accomplishments, and two clients experienced moments of completion and

accomplishments together with music therapists, two music therapists experienced Moments of surprise (Lee, 2014). Music therapy was found to improve upon wellbeing and psychological health of clients and music therapists through meaningful moments.

Apart from music therapy, phenomenology was actively pursued in a study of a musical group put together to investigate the experience of music in a small group. The study found out that in a group setting, music helped promote self-awareness, shared meaning, and lasting change (Binkley & Paramanand, 2010). In communication, participants revealed that music facilitated communication, while others thought differently (Binkley & Paramanand, 2010). This different experience signified being alone while experiencing music, signifying its experience to be individual rather than group-oriented.

Interestingly, the study has some implications of music to facilitate or inhibit communication rather than music as strictly as a form of communication. Music construed as a tool in this case diminishes its communicative power when other participants of the study lamented being alone while listening to music. The latter implies music to be removed from nuances of interaction. However, the explanation is limited in a way that music has inner communicate power as a result of being alone where concentration is increased.

In this regard, autoethnographic study on authentic experience of music is one important way to express innermost sentiments of musical experience that dwells on musician's interaction with content either in print or audio experience.

## Rhetorical Tradition

According to the rhetorical tradition, communication is theorized as a practical art of discourse (Craig, 1999).

## Elements of Musical Rhetoric: Performer-Music-Audience

This section groups empirical studies based on the three elements of musical rhetoric: performer-music-audience.

## Performer

In a study on interpretation of music as an active behavior in a musical performance by a performer, musical notation forming structure allowed a performer to have considerable freedom in deciding how to interpret the music's content (Palmer, 2014). Interpretation refers to performers' individualistic modelling of a piece according to their own ideas or musical intention (Palmer, 2014). Differences in interpretation can account for why same musical score is performed differently by different performers or why the same performer may perform a piece differently on separate occasions.

The strength in the aforementioned study lies in the importance of interpretation as a rhetorical characteristic which is critical in persuading listeners. A performer imbued with cognitive structure that allows freedom to interpret a written score is engaged in communicative interaction between content and the performer that is dynamic, emergent and fluid as the performance unfolds. It is to be noted, as stated in the study, that interpretation is an individualistic modelling that even in ensemble playing, it remains the focus of musical understanding. In effect, each performer has intentions to convey: the communicative content in musical

performance including the performers' conceptual interpretation of the musical composition (Palmer, 2014). In effect, it is understandable to claim that interpretation highlights particular structural content (Clarke, 1987), and such content is analyzed and interpreted by a performer such that changes of composer's intent is an inevitable occurrence owing to artistic transformation of the musical structure.

Corollary to musical interpretation is the concept of timbre which refers to the character, texture, and color of a sound that defines it. (Dixon, 2018). It is the attitude that allows us to distinguish between sounds having the same perceptual duration, loudness, and pitch, such as two different musical instruments playing exactly the same note (Patil et al. 2012). In effect, sitting at a symphony hall with many instruments playing at the same time, listeners tend to absorb sound emanating from each of them; - such ability to recognize instruments is what is called as timbre.

The foregoing observation implies that the listening audience absorbs sound quality, yet, it is an urgent task for the music interpreter, the performer, to uncover distinct musical quality within a given sound that is not only based on innate sound coming from an instrument. Timbre is textural quality that is dictated by human interpretation of sound that manifests in body movement as in the case of articulating notes on the piano with circular movement, for instance, in order to achieve the right timbre as an interpretative rendering of the sound.

One of the critical aspects of musical performance concerns body movements just like the articulation of timbre or quality that can be a function of human body movement. Gellrich (1991) revealed the subtle interaction between posture, gesture, emotion, and meaning in musical performances for both performers and audiences. Likewise, music is "expressively shaped' by the performer's body. He asked

performers to execute short musical excerpts whilst performing motion curves; open movement, closed movement, and winding movement (Truslit, 1938 as cited by Rapp, 1993). Using the objective measurement of the acoustic signals achieved, he discovered that, whilst embodying different motion curves, differences were created in their musical products (Rapp, 1993).

In the case of pianists, highly skilled pianists move their fingers approximately three-to-four events ahead of time (Palmer & Dalla-Bella, 2004). Likewise, moment-to-moment finger action of pianists allows for modifications to be well-coordinated and well-articulated at such a great speed that changes rapidly with switching moods and tempos of piano pieces.

Indeed, physical gestures of performers affect musical interpretations and perceptions from the audience most notable in jazz performances where frequent nodding, flicking, or foot actions signify synergy between audience and performer. Rock concerts with lots of jumping and head banging are physical manifestations of intensive indulgence with music by both performers and audiences.

In exploring movement and collaboration and musical performance, empirical studies show: (1) motor programming studies that investigate how the body assembles a musical performance; (2) musical affect studies that explore expressivity and its communication through bodily means; (3) training studies explore techniques that use bodily movement and movement metaphors for the development of strategies to enhance physical, musical and expressive elements of performance; and (4) collaborative music – making studies, including co-performer interaction and performer-audience concerns, that explore ways in which bodily communication is used for the coordination of musical and extra-musical material (Davidson, 2009).

To this end, the importance of citing literature on physical aspects of musical performance is likened to an oratorical speech delivering a rhetorical message that involves bodily movements of the orator. Based on the foregoing discussions, performer-music-audience analysis and exploration pave the way for persuasive performance that is the main goal of any musical concert.

**Music**

The composition of music has essential elements, which define its structure: melody, harmony, rhythm, and dynamics (Sarbunan, 2020). In addition, four more elements are worth mentioning: tonality, timbre, texture, and form. Such elements as musical structure explored and analyzed in this study in the light of rhetorical understanding.

Melody is a successive line of single tones or pitches perceived as a unity (Sarbunan, 2020). It comprises range as the distance between the lowest and highest tones; shape as direction of melody; and movement as conjunct when it connects and disjunct when there are leaps of melodic lines. Harmony is the relation of notes and chords as they are played simultaneously. Rhythm refers to musical time (Sarbunan, 2020) and dynamics as the volume of music.

Texture in music refers to the number of instruments or voices that contribute to the overall density of the music. It also refers to the layers of sound in a piece of music, and these layers are named by their role within a piece of music (Juliajooya, 2021). There are four types of texture in music: monophony (single melodic line); polyphony as two or more simultaneous melodies; homophony as main melodic line with additional voices or parts at the same time that serve as a harmonic

accompaniment; and heterophony as multiple instruments play similar melodies, but the melody may vary slightly between each player (Huff, 2021).

Timbre in music refers to the unique sound quality of an instrument Tonality refers to the overall sound of the music. It asks questions like “Is the music pleasant sounding or not?”, or “is it written in a major or minor key,” among others. Form refers to the structure and organization of a musical composition or performance (Chase, 2021).

The following empirical studies focus on the elements of music that form the musical structure. Choosing the elements to explain structure is important in understanding rudiments of music theory.

Music influences human bodies. The body’s responses to music are both conscious and unconscious, involving entrainment with rhythm, hormonal and neurological reactions, and changes in mood, emotion, and pain perception (Clark & Tamplin, 2016). Likewise, rhythm in music is particularly influential as it mimics internal bodily rhythms, and is therefore an external cue that our brains readily recognize and respond (Zatorre et al. 2007).

The influence of music is dependent on intrinsic factors that connect you with the music personally (for example memories and associations with various parts of your life), and intrinsic elements within the music (such as rhythm, melody and harmony (North & Hargreaves, 2008). Generally, stimulative or energizing music includes fast tempo, wide pitch variation, and syncopated rhythms. In contrast, relaxing or sedative music has slow tempo, low melodic range and consistent rhythm (Zatorre et al, 2007).

The foregoing statements elucidate a powerful rhetorical impact of music to human bodies in terms of movements associated with rhythmic pulse that influence

mood, emotion. This persuasive effect to move a listening audience is testament of music's powerful connection not only in terms of auditory characteristic of music (melody) but also in terms of body reaction associated with rhythm that inspires movement. It will also be noted that movement from a listening audience can also be inspired by the performer's body gestures in a musical performance. This connection manifests in a flow, an interdependent relationship between performer and audience.

Another element worthy of discussion is melody. Melody is basically "the tune" which is also a series of pitches, or notes, that are organized to form a shape or pattern (White, n.d.). It is a linear sequence of notes that the listener hears as a single entity (McGuire, 2019). Thinking about melodies is like watching a scene in a movie or play. A good melody will capture and hold listener's attention. Songwriters and composers use melodies in music to tell stories and give audiences something to remember and connect with.

Clearly, melody is an important element of the musical structure. It is what people identify and locate certain emotions and experiences associate with them. In fact, the very reason rhythm, tempo, dynamics and all other elements provide a cohesive flow that impact upon a performer and a listening audience is because of the existence of a melody.

According to history, melody originated in singing – in what we can sing to. In the music of Bach, for instance, melodies in combination are called counterpoints (DeVoto, 2020) that weave together as a unified idea. He continues to explain that it is interesting to discuss that melody in Bach's music can be explained in terms of the different voices (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) that intertwine with themes and sub-themes alternating or superimposing between the different voices. This can be likened, he said, to a dialogue of four individuals talking together with different

emphasis, focus, inflections, among others. In the musical realm, counterpoints are musical dialogues that are grounded on single melodies that traverse within the structure. Finally, because melody is the foundation of musical expression, it is the wellspring of the human musical mind and feeling (DeVoto, 2020).

Related to melody is the element of harmony which occurs any time two or more differently pitched notes are played at the same time (McGuire, 2019). It is important to note that harmony in music theory generally refers to building chords, chord qualities and progressions (McGuire, 2019). In simple terms, harmony is simultaneous playing of melodies in an instrument like piano that builds chords. It cannot be created by human singing of a single person but can be built by a group of singers uttering different melodic lines altogether. It is in harmony's sonorous effect which puts weight on a piece's melodic utterance.

On a different note, harmony does not have to be particularly "harmonious", it may be quite dissonant, in fact. This characteristic of dissonant harmony is popular in 20th century music where melodies clash and devoid of "understanding" according to the rules of tonality. With that, the challenge of persuading a listening audience from discordant and dissonant harmonies can become exclusive to listeners who are exposed to such culture of experimentation.

Texture as an element in music provides depth in the musical sound giving us an overall sense of feel. In a study on the effect of sight- reading (reading music without preparation), errors in performance increased for passages that were more texturally complex, requiring two-handed versus one-handed performance, with some additional evidence that the relative simultaneity of note onsets (primarily simultaneous versus primarily successive) also influenced errors (Lewandowska & Schmuckler, 2019).

It will be noted that texture in music is exemplified by the number of notes that will articulate softness or roughness of the musical sound. As such, complexity in texture demands great sight-reading speed to manage everything in the score. Also, texture as quality of sound is intrinsically an interpretive quality that is not always present in any artist, whether seasoned or amateur. It takes a lot of experience, education, and deep understanding and interpretation of the music in order to traverse through the demands of executing a musical texture.

Tonality as the overall sound of music refers to the cognitive organization of tones around a central reference pitch. In a study on the effect of musical sight-reading to tonality, errors in performance increased for passages with lesser perceived psychological stability (i.e., minor and atonal passages) relative to greater perceived stability, for example, major passages (Lewandowska & Schmuckler, 2019).

Finally, form, as the overall plan or the 'big picture", is essentially the structure of a musical narrative.

A corpus study shows that a particular riff-based version of compound AABA form, with a specific style of buildup intro (Attas, 2015) and other characteristic features, is normative in mainstream style of the metal genre (Hudson, 2021). Riffs are "autoletic" (Buttler, 2014 from Hughes, 2003), naturally looping back to their own beginning (Hudson, 2015). Further, metal's AABA is not always verse-chorus form because some songs have only one section with lyrics. Generally speaking, compound AABA is a "rotational form". This implies a continuous imaging of the metal genre in advocating a unique form of musical structure.

Following the narratives of the different elements in music presented herein, musical logic is clearly laid out when all elements are interwoven together. While the

terms can be technical, every musician or listener can easily identify their presence with the enormous applications they hold.

**Music Structure**

Investigating on performance expression based on its different functions are equally important. For one, it provides clarity of the structural content of the music to the listener (Clarke, 1988; Drake & Palmer, 1993; Palmer, 1989; Todd, 1989). Thus, musical structure as rhetorical element provides logic in a given piece of music which must be understood by a performance artist alongside his or her ability to communicate persuasively to a listening audience and how audience impact should touch upon overall performance outcome are the main points of this study.

Studies on music rhetoric from the perspective of music structure have been conducted focusing on figures, for instance, (Nam, n.d.). In the music of Bach, such figures interact together in different voices (soprano, alto, tenor and bass) to form a musical dialogue (Nam, n.d.). Mozart's "Symphony no. 40 in G Minor" exemplifies a tricolon as "three parallel elements in the same length and series" likened to phrases like "Veni, vidi, virci" or "Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, Jingle All the Way" or even old 'knock knock jokes" which are based on this rhetorical devise (Nam, n.d.). Such parallelisms between speech and music exemplified a general application of rhetorical principles in musical compositions justifying that music "should talk." In fact, in early Baroque period, compositions were annotated minimally because the performer was expected to "fill in the blanks", a way of entrusting the musician to follow conventions prevalent during the time (Lie, 2021).

In explaining rhetoric as the art of persuasion or discourse, a study on musical rhetoric revealed that like figures of speech in oral discourse, musical

discourse can be deciphered by form and structure of a composition which can also result in a musical dialogue when figures interact (Nam, n.d.).

To illustrate, Nam (n.d.) explained a concept called tricolon, defined as a "three parallel elements of the same length occurring together in a series from Mozart's "Symphony no. 40 in G Minor" was likened to a famous quote from Julius Caesar: "Veni, vidi, vici", translated as "I came, I saw, I conquered."

A study on rhetorical music revealed that as a form of pervasive communication, songs are a rhetorical form with complex webs of layered textuality. Some discursive elements are found in the chorus and verses while non-discursive elements are present in the singer's voice and ensemble of instruments (Dewberry & Millen, 2014).

Interestingly, meanings evoked in songs have historical, social, political and commercial implications and they are not often glued to a particular melodic structure. Such musical structure is defined by musical grammar (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983) for example, keys, clef signs, staff – all these musical notations comprising a sheet music is connected together like a web as one would sing from beginning to end of a song with continuity. This is similar to a speech that is "punctuated by the necessary phrases, clauses, and complete sentences… (as cited in Sloane, 2001). But, evidently, music goes beyond notation and grammar. It is imperative to focus on "musical rhetoric", which includes both music and language (Duckels, 1968).

In a study on songs being chosen for political campaigns, Lerdahl & Jackendof (1983) revealed that that political songs run contrary to a candidate's advocacy to the point of highlighting negative aspect of their political identities (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983). In their study, answering to such disturbance, music

was treated as a rhetoric to explain the “music bite” and the affective nature of music.

What the foregoing study implies is that as rhetorical and symbolic communication, music has deep layers of structure and textuality that are akin to public speech where its affective element resembles a political candidate’s ability to convince an audience.

Similar to discursive speech that employs logical rules, the study likewise emphasizes musical structure as scientific rules to be followed (musical grammar) that impacts upon musical performance, listening, and score reading. Grammatical foundation in music as mental structure paves the way for communicative practice to be educative, logical, and scholarly (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983).

Such discursive stance can be uncomfortable for some musicians who are not theoretically equipped in music but plays so good in their chosen instrument, or sings magnificently. These performers dubbed with natural talent possess high commercial value, they are popular and occupy a good market of audience patronizing their music.

In a study on popular music by Rentfrow, Goldberg & Levitin (2011), it was revealed that preferences for music is affected by social and auditory characteristics of the music. This statement suggests that there are musical patterns that relatively remain the same for decades, penetrating the ears of wide audiences, hence, making them popular. These musical patterns like 4-beat ballad, rock, jazz, among others are so popular that they are learned even without going to school in music.

What is interesting about it is the idea that the same patterns learned in music theory class or learned by ear (oido) can receive accolade or the latter can go beyond the former. In this regard, the crucial role of communicating the message is

evidently felt in the growing popularity of “unschooled” talent. Hence, logic in music as rhetorical attribute is one thing to understand and delivering music to an audience will have many factors to consider apart from musical structure. In fact, the drama that unfolds in music as an effective domain also provides musical logic that guides a performance artist in deciphering meanings in music.

Historically speaking, Western music was predominantly vocal and composers were bound to follow rhetorical doctrines in writing compositions. Interrelationships between music and the spoken arts – artes dicendi (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic) were at once obvious and unclear (Wilson, n.d.). This notion runs contrary to rhetorical communication based on instrumental sound without words – the main source of discourse this study addresses.

In deepening analysis of rhetoric, empirical studies from various schools of classical music are necessary in order to effect upon persuasion in a musical performance.

**Baroque Rhetoric**

In the context of Johann Sebastian Bach as representing Baroque music at its highest point, rhetoric in music was often referred to as unemotional, abstract, ‘pure music’, music based on ‘pure musical form and development to be played without effect. It failed to recognize the philosophical and compositional concepts from which these works originated (Kloppers, 1984). Music served to instruct the listener (religious instruction in the case of church music) but relied on a long tradition of musical persuasion (Kloppers, 1984).

Another case of musical dialogue was illustrated in counterpoints of Bach’s music where distinct voices replicated from different singing voices (bass, tenor, alto,

and soprano) to form counterpoints that alternated between hands. In this case, musical dialogue constituted rhetorical expressions accentuated in *figuara suspirans* suggesting loud gesture of communication within interacting melodies.

In another study, Baroque music corresponded with a vogue for an emotionally-detached, objective performance style. The reasoning was that music that was so imbued with hidden symbolism and explicit meaning shouldn't be disturbed by the whims of a performer (Irons, 2014).

From the perspective of musical structure, musical rhetoric dealt with polyphony – that is, multiple independent voices being heard simultaneously. Rather than simply prioritizing harmony (which would lead to flat individual voices concerned only with matching the others), or polyphony (which would lead to a confusion of peaks and valleys as different voices rise and fall without regard for each other), it should be possible to realize each voice in a rhetorical way, while maintaining awareness for others. This can create some internal tension in the music, which should be embraced as a characteristic of a dialogue (Irons, 2014).

The foregoing paragraph clearly indicates that the structure of Baroque music is akin to a dialogue with interspersed, interwoven voices that form musical lines as communicative interactions. It is also to be noted that melody as an element of music is the foregrounding reason why such polyphonic voices exist.

**Classical Rhetoric**

A study on tonality revealed that there is a link between tonalities and the quality of their sound expressiveness considered "the golden axis around which revolves the musical aesthetics" (Schubart, 1983 as cited by Banciu, 2018). For

example, C major tonality is conceived as “pure”, G minor mirrors discontentment, malaise, the gnashing of teeth deterrence,… anger and disgust; E flat major is “the tone of love, of pious retreat, of the intimate conversations with God;” C minor is the “declaration of love” and D major signifies the “triumph” being appropriate “in the Hallelujah, in the battle cry, in the joy of victory.”

The importance of the study lies in the connection between musical chords and expressions of different emotions indicating that musical structure is not purely logical in character but exudes different levels of emotions based on tonality and chord pattern as the study reveals. Likewise, “figures” imitate feelings rather than the sounds of nature” (Banciu, 2018) which adds up to interconnectedness between structure and emotions in music.

**Romantic Rhetoric**

What’s new in the Romantic theories of music is the detachment of musical ideas and rhetoric forms from the intention to affect the listening: “The musical oration, a public event directed to the listener, has now become a philosophical discourse, a new private act that requires no audience, and probably functions better without any audience at all (Lethart, 2016).

Indeed, rhetoric during this period no longer served to persuade an audience but rather to satisfy an individual’s subjective, and emotional need. Away from objectivity of music in the Classical Period, Romantic School was characterized by subjectivity, and instrumental sound was a form of transcendence from the vocal tradition set by its predecessor. Instrumental music was the most demanding and mysterious, and thus the highest and most rewarding, a medium of artistic expression (Lethart, 2016).

Persuasion as rhetorical quality diminished its functioning role to convince an audience but was treated as an autonomous element that was self-referential. In other words, it was emotional expression that guided musicians in explaining truth and meanings in their musical works. In fact, Eduard Hanslik, an esteemed music critic believed that music is just the art of combining sounds, and the emotion is produced by the association of ideas, the expressive background resulting from the projection of the audience's moods.

**20th Century Rhetoric**

Rhetorical studies in the 20th century was characterized by democratization. The term democratization typically conjures images of a collapsing political regime moving toward democratic ideals and practices, thereby making the system more open and accessible (Wernecke, 2017). This emancipatory nature of discourse refined the meaning of 'rhetoric' as well as what it meant to study as an art. During this period, thinkers pondered on new ideas signifying freedom from the traditions of the past.

Moreover, the proliferation of digital technology has disseminated cultural awareness at a greater speed with Internet affordance. As a consequence of digital revolution, the advent of memes presented scholars of genre and rhetoric a new mode of communication to examine (Wernecke, 2017). The use of text, images, and memes articulated cultural and shared identity touching upon rhetorical discourse.

In music, the changing landscape of rhetorical emancipation has made composers and arrangers focus on dissonance, repetitive articulation of emphatic sound, imagery in music, randomness of musical thought in 'aeration' or dwelling upon silence as a performance piece where a performer would go up on stage and

invite listeners to absorb silence and sound from the concert hall as musical theme. In other words, the performer would simply open the instrument without playing any notes.

**Audience**

The term popular music describes all forms that are popular (Staff, 2021). The target audience for pop music tends to like pop-related media like TV shows and musical films (Staff, 2021). Thus, the youth is an active audience of this genre.

One of the striking characteristics that influence popular music as popular culture is the image it elucidates. Listening to pop music is associated with style, independence of thoughts and expressions (Staff, 2021).

In a related study, audiences want artists to share part of themselves, something authentic rather than something put on (Visconti, 2014). This is construed as emotional connection of the performer to the audience that makes a musical performance successful. However, considering an audience is not some kind of code saying that music should be consonant, or pleasing, or unchallenging, or that there's any reason why an experimental approach to music composition can't also be tempered by an awareness of what effect compositional choices might have on a Listener. There's great and accessible music reflected in every style and approach, and there's no way of thinking about music that can't be marvelous and communicative and successful in its own right (Visconti, 2014).

In the foregoing analysis, the argument of music's communicative property in itself is something that remains constant despite many efforts to effect upon persuasion. Artists who dwell on creative imagination have the artistic license to express freely messages regardless whether an audience is convinced or not.

Towards the end, it is only fitting to note Alfred Hitchcock, film director, who lamented that he never composed music for his films in a vacuum, but rather with a careful and shrewd understanding of how each creative decision helped to shape a different experience for the viewer (Visconti, 2014). In effect, it is the innermost thoughts and expressions of the viewer, the audience, as the most important dictum of musical expression.

**Theoretical Underpinning of the Study**

After analyzing studies under six theoretical traditions of communication theory, I pinned on Rhetoric as the most appropriate theoretical underpinning for this autoethnography. The Classical Rhetorical Theory of Aristotle is the overarching theoretical underpinning comprising the three elements of persuasion: ethos, logos, pathos in order to explore and analyze performer-music-audience interrelationship. According to Cothran (2011), these can be defined as follows:

- *Ethos* refers to the character of the speaker. It espouses credibility or ethical appeal, and the speaker's/author's authority.
- *Logos* refers to the logic used to support a claim.
- *Pathos* refers to the emotions of the audience. When we are trying to convince or persuade the audience with our speech, we consider how they feel, what reactions will they elicit, among others.

For a speech to be persuasive to an audience, ethos, logos, and pathos must be properly used. The three concepts of rhetoric are actually parallel to the elements of musical discourse, namely: the performer, music, and audience woven together to

form a rhetorical discourse as a musical oration. This will be explained more in the conceptual framework.

Also, note that I use persuasion and good communication interchangeably with the premise that if I am able to persuade or elicit reaction from my audience, then it means that I am being a good communicator as a musician.

Rhetoric is also embedded in the music analyzed. Baroque music can be analyzed using speaker, message and audience with three persuasive elements, namely: logos, pathos, and ethos. Romantic music is characterized by individual expression so that appeal to rhetoric is more personal rather than to persuade an audience. For instance, the music of Frederic Chopin, the poet of the piano, is filled with rubato lines that holds back tempo in order to deepen emotional expression and to articulate struggles of an artist.

For the modern age (20th Century Rhetoric), logos is present within electronic composition environments. It draws upon “New Rhetoric” or “Electric Rhetoric” extending beyond traditional views of Aristotle and Plato. In a wider perspective, music is an integral component of the human experience and is present in a myriad of social and cultural contexts across the globe (VanKooten, 2011).

## Chapter III

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

As mentioned earlier, the three concepts of rhetoric are actually parallel to the elements of musical discourse, namely: the performer, music, and audience woven together to form a rhetorical discourse as a musical oration. Ethos is parallel to the performer, logos to the music, specifically its structure, and pathos, to the audience and their reaction.

Persuasive performance is a confluence of the performer, the music, and the audience. And these elements are affected by persuasive elements (pathos, logos, ethos). How they interplay can be seen in Figure 1.

***Ethos (Performer).*** Ethos resides within the performer as a musical orator doing analytical interpretation of music, hence is considered as the authority. Ethos refers to my character as the musician, my credibility or ethical appeal, and my authority. Is my analytical interpretation of the musical sound truthful, thus, authoritative? My interpretation relates to how my music wants to be understood by the audience in such a way that it conforms to my values and intellect. This is an aspect of authority that will accentuate my competence of the music I am performing. Another interpretation is my own experience of the music that is deeply personal and devoid of any social signals to guide my performance. These interpretations are important as they center on the authoritative self as the performer, both aware of how the personal is situated in the cultural milieu, and vice-versa. My authority can also be evaluated by my performance.

Because it is a musical dialogue that engages the audience, ethos must be accepted by the audience in order to achieve persuasion. In other words, credibility and authority must match between the performer and audience.

***Logos (Music).*** Music has structure and grammar forming a unified logic. It constitutes deep structures such as form, figure, and harmonics as informed by music theory. Furthermore, musical dialogue as a discourse is explored through intricate interaction between melodies in counterpoints, through timbre resulting from thickness or thinness of chord patterns, through legato melodies construed as musical phrases, through chord intervals that accentuate certain musical voice of a given pattern, among others forming logos – all explanations are related to the elements of music.

In this study, I ponder on the elements of music as the musical structure comprising logos. As the musical framework, these eight elements are rudiments of musical theory, which are associated to the performer in terms of interpretation. For example, rhythm does not only reside in logos as unit of analysis but also relates to ethos articulated in a performer's expression defining credibility and authority. Likewise, harmony as a musical element is not only written on paper as structure, but it relates to ethos as well in terms of authenticity and uniqueness of expression, which again defines character perceived by a listening audience explaining logos.

Within discussions of the elements, corollary concepts of the musical structure such as counterpoint inserted as it relates to harmonic structure, which comes from melody. In another concept of the musical structure, timbre relates to tonality in quality of sound, legato enriches musical connection between melodies, and harmony builds on chord patterns, among others. Therefore, discussing the eight musical elements will also highlight other concepts comprising the structure of music as seen by the autoethnographer.

Next, the music I play is affected by the persuasive elements of logos. It appeals to logic and reasoning as explained in the Classical Rhetorical Theory. In a

musical discourse, the concept relates to how the eight elements define the structure which impact upon persuasion. Although logos is a term coined in the Classical Rhetorical Theory, it will be discussed throughout the different schools of classical music along with ethos and pathos in explaining performer-music-audience interrelationship giving rise to persuasion. In the final analysis, logos needs to be understood by the listening audience to make sense of the musical performance.

***Pathos (Audience).*** The third element or persuasion is pathos, which relates to emotions residing in the listening audience. The audience is treated as the listening end of a musical dialogue that absorbs all the sound and silence emanating from the performer's performance. Thus, it is conceived as the listening public commensurate to a public speech where a listener pays attention to the nuances of speech and its presentation.

In a musical performance, pathos ascertains that the performer should be cognizant and sensitive to audience perception in order to achieve persuasion.

Likewise, in a musical dialogue, the audience sends signals to the performer through feedback (clapping, shouting, etc.), which can affect performance in an instantaneous manner making the two-way interaction critical in the success of overall performance. The interplay of interpretative performance resonates a characteristic quality of myself as the performer imbued with authority and credibility. On the other hand, another kind of interpretation relates to audience reactions to my performance which I cannot control. This is the part where audience's perceptive meanings emanate that should dictate how persuasive the performance is based on their own meanings, thus, asserting my authority and credibility.

**Relationship of Performer-Music-Audience**

*Pathos* is best exemplified in my spontaneous connection with the audience as I perform my music. Based on my interpretation of audience response to a musical episode, performance deepens as I listen, align, and grow with the sound. The idea is like every note is always a transcendence from the previous one since audience reactions are emergent patterns. To this end, audience perception accentuates persuasive performance through understanding of the interrelationship between *ethos, logos,* and *pathos* analyzed and explored with thick descriptions of fragments of memory that are grounded heavily on my personal experience as an active concert artist, along with data collected from various sources.

The three persuasive elements of *logos, pathos, and ethos* of Aristotle's *Classical Rhetorical Theory* are the overarching elements that weave through the vignettes and collected data from interviews with the idea that persuasion involves performer-music-audience interrelationship. I will be guided by my musical *Rhetoric* from Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th century, and my own personal rhetoric (Musician's rhetoric).

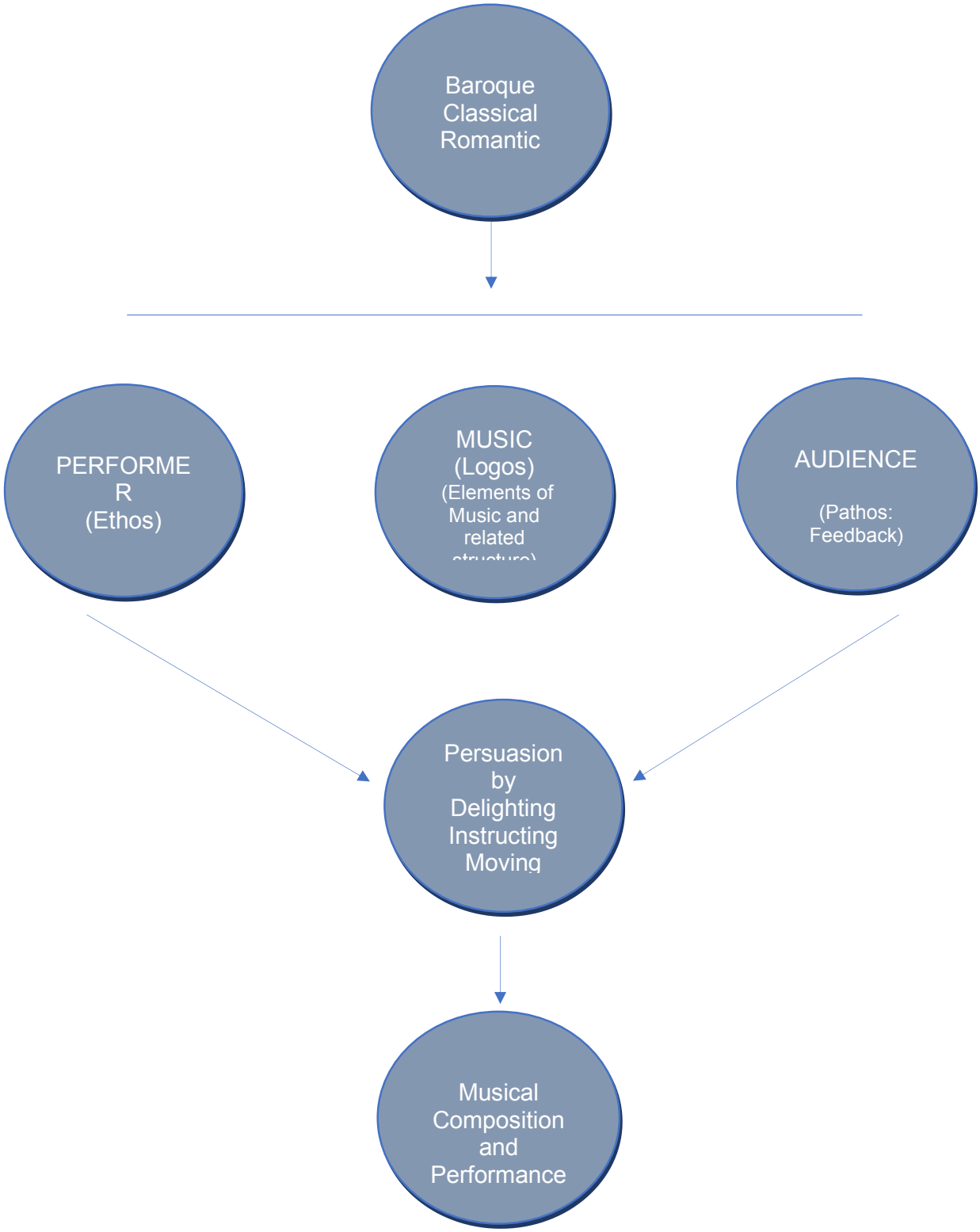


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

# Chapter IV

# METHODOLOGY

## Research Approach

This qualitative research used autoethnography as a self-reflexive process of inquiry.

Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze *(graphy)* personal experience *(auto)* in order to understand cultural experience *(ethno)* (Ellis, 2004; Jones, 2005). At the center of narratives is the *self* as situated in the cultural context it belongs.

This explorative study used autoethnography to explain inner thoughts of the researcher's experience in music with emphasis on its communicative practice.

Ponterro's (2005) scheme of paradigm, ontology, epistemology, axiology and rhetorical structure provided the philosophical framework of this autoethnography.

Ontologically speaking, this study is grounded on the autoethnographer's 'personal reality' to be a psychosocial construction with varying emphasis upon internality, externality, and personal agency, across the constructivism and social constructionism divide (cf. Young & Collin, 2004). In this regard, 'personal reality' was construed as 'personal truth' (cf. Young & Collin, 2004) following the autoethnographer's epiphanies of authentic experience and constructed insights from introspections.

From an epistemological standpoint, autoethnography is centered on "lived experience', subjectivity and meaning with relative contexts (Mcliveen, 2008).

Corollary to this is the idea of emergent knowledge coming from the Autoethnographer's narratives forming the author's phenomenological experience of the lived world. Interestingly, implicit knowledge as part of personal belief plays part

in the transformative learning of an individual. Schommer (2004) demonstrates 'how these beliefs may influence comprehension and cognition of academic tasks.

For axiology, autoethnography vows on transparent expression of values and personal concerns (Mcliveen, 2008) with such values surfacing in musical expressions based on choice and socio-cultural factors.

Situated in the Discourse of Understanding (Interpretive Modernism) that explains the knowing mind as an active contributor to the constitution of knowledge (Mumby, 1997), this autoethnography exemplified that knowledge produced was productive in understanding the lived experience of the autoethnographer. Moreover, dialectical tension that emanated in the Discourse of Understanding was construed in the creative tension between the knower (autoethnographer) and the object position of the known, the researched community (self and the surrounding culture).

**My Role as the Researcher**

My interest in music started at the age of seven when I first played the ukulele under my brother's guidance. He taught me how to play simple chord patterns which helped me build a repertoire of songs that I would later play for intimate audience. Later, I ventured into guitar-playing after my father bought a new guitar which deepened my interest in playing the instrument. I was keenly engrossed in learning new chords to accompany my songs making several attempts to change and re-structure musical lines to fit into musical ideas that spontaneously poured with each practice. Such spontaneity manifested in an uninterrupted musical fashion even if at times it sounded superfluous to my brothers' ears. Nonetheless, such unobstructed free-flowing of ideas paved the way for a robust indulgence into the world of creativity. With so much inspiration from childhood friends and family through intent

listening and imitation, my creative imagination deepened knowing there was always someone to share with my creative flow.

About a year after playing the guitar, my neighbor received a guest who turned out to be a piano teacher. My father heard the conversation and eagerly asked me if I wanted to try learning to play the piano. I was so apprehensive back then because my family did not own a piano and I thought it would be a big hindrance to my musical development. As my father was so excited and determined, I finally agreed to his request because it meant extra allowance for every piano lesson.

During my first session, I saw and heard a lady play a Filipino classic, *"Gaano Ko Ikaw Ka Mahal",* interpreted so effortlessly with her fingers gliding over the keys. I was glued to her expressive playing that I started singing the song in my head while she tickled the ivory keys. Looking back, I thought it was a powerful communication between me, the observer and listener, and with the pianist, the performer, mediated by the sound that echoed all over the studio which would be a nurturing experience, something to do over and over again. I even imagined how soothing it would be if I played the instrument at home with my family around listening

Because I did not own a piano, my brother drew a piano keyboard made from cardboard that I used to practice for finger familiarity and positioning. I also used electric fan keys to mimic finger action on the piano until the day when my father woke me up to tell me a new piano was going to be delivered that day.

Due to my persistent practice, I managed to do my first piano recital where I played *"Waltz of the Hour"* in front of my classmates, friends and family. Later on, I started playing songs learned from my own hearing only *(oido).* This self-taught

learning hastened my musical taste simply because I chose the songs I wanted to play, mostly popular music.

My first piano teacher was Mrs. Cornelia Penaranda. She taught me the rudiments of reading music. I was later transferred to Prof. Salud Larraga, Tacloban City's finest piano teacher, based on the recommendation from the former first lady, Imelda Romualdez Marcos, after hearing me play her favorite song, *"Feelings",* at a private party in Olot, Leyte, a luxurious beach resort that catered to special guests of the former First Lady. As a consistent full piano scholar of Prof. Larraga, I embarked on a strict program of classical pieces including music by Bach, Chopin, Grieg and Rachmaninoff, among others, for a series of piano recitals that involved many years of public exposure while receiving Full Piano Scholarship awards in each of these occasions.

Much later, I auditioned for a strings ensemble called *"Rosario Strings"* which brought me to the Caribbean, USA, and Europe as pianist of the group aboard Holland America Lines. After a brief exposure to ensemble playing, I went back to playing solo as Cocktail Pianist and Piano Intermissionist aboard Carnival Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean International altogether comprising 10 years of my musical career. During holidays from work, I played in many hotels in Manila such as the Manila Peninsula, Edsa Plaza Hotel, Philippine Westin Plaza, for weddings and corporate functions under *"Velvet Mood",* my steady group of musicians playing for various musical gigs.

In 2010, I was introduced to Prof. Augusto Espino of the University of the Philippines College of Music through a common friend who was kind enough to offer me piano lessons after a lot of convincing despite his hectic schedule. I presented a public recital at the Mini Hall of the College of Music in 2010 in a program of Chopin,

de Falla, Debussy, and Rheinhold together with my own transcription of Philippine folk songs titled *"Folk Sketches"* which my teacher asked to be included in the program.

While teaching Social Sciences at Leyte Normal University, I trained a musical group that I baptized *"MUZIK Harmonie"* with the support of the university president, Dr. Jude A. Duarte. As Musical Director, I was responsible for arranging songs, training young singers, among other directorial duties I was tasked to accomplish. The group performed locally and internationally under my command. Even as an Economics Instructor of the University of the Philippines Tacloban College, I still found time directing musical rehearsals and performances of a school theater that performed dramatic pieces with me in charge of providing mood-setting music.

My musical journey was always as emergent as it was when I started. When I became a resident pianist of Hotel Taikanso in Matsushima, Japan for many years, I expanded my repertoire to include Japanese songs, classics *(enka)* and J-pop to suit the different tastes of hotel guests. I also wrote original pieces and piano transcriptions of Waray-Waray folksongs (work in-progress) to make use of my time while working and vacationing in Japan.

In my hometown, Tacloban City, I have been busy giving piano concerts especially after I became a *"Sangyaw"* awardee in 2017 for excellence in music, a distinction given by the city government for exemplary performance in the field of music. During this pandemic, I conducted an online benefit concert for typhoon victims of Jipapad, Eastern Samar while stationed in Japan during a hotel lockdown in May 2020. After coming home in June 2020, I held a Christmas concert dubbed *"Carols for Ana Lyn",* in December 19, 2020, a concert for a cause to help finance a medical procedure for a friend.

Finally, to make sure I was giving back my musical gift, I decided to give piano lessons both in face-to-face and online mode. Currently I am teaching young students the rudiments of music while encouraging them to play classical music.

My musical journey is a continuous tale of indulgent communicative practice comprising musical interactions with fellow musicians, audiences, and with content of written musical score over the years of making music, managing a musical group and sketching my own compositions and transcriptions. A more detailed and comprehensive narrative of my musical journey is found in Appendix 1.

**Locale and Period**

This autoethnography was conducted in Tacloban City, Leyte, my home province. I gathered and analyzed data in a period of 5 months (from June – November 2021).

**Source of Data**

To facilitate understanding, selected performance pieces comprising music rhetoric from the different schools of classical music including original compositions of the author were selected. Pieces performed included the following (Table 1).

Table 1. Performance Pieces Played and Composed by the Author

| PERIOD | MUSIC PERFORMANCE | COMPOSER | ROLE OF MUSICIAN | DATES PERFORMED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baroque | *"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"* | Johann Sebastian Bach | Soloist | 1980, 1990, 2000 |
| Classical | *"Moonlight Sonata"(1st movement)* | Ludwig van Beethoven | Soloist | 2010 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Romantic | *"Etude in Ab Major, Op. 25, no. 1"* | Frederic Chopin | Soloist | 2010, 2017 |
| 20th century | *"Claire de Lune"* | Claude Debussy | Soloist | 2015 |
| Musician's Rhetoric | *"Hating Gabi" "Sayaw Fantasia" "Yolanda"* | Antonio Molina Leoncio P. Olobia | Soloist | 2016, 2017 2018 |

The choices highlight the transformation of rhetoric in the different schools of music which would culminate in a new wave of effective communication to be articulated in the original composition.

The musician's rhetoric involves my transformation: identity, or the cultural mirroring of vignettes in order to locate the personal within the cultural milieu.

As a Filipino artist imbued with musical heritage and traditions from years of experience, a performance of a Filipino classic by Antonio Molina: *"Hating Gabi"* was rendered in order to depict personal triumphs, and sensibilities as a Filipino artist.

Finally, to articulate my identity and cultural positioning of the author, I rendered a final performance of two original compositions, *"Sayaw Fantasia"* and *"Yolanda"* to encapsulate my creativity and sensitivity as an artist.

**Data Collection**

Data in this autoethnography constituted of personal stories, recollection of past experience in musical performance, and knowledge collected about the subject based on observation, theoretical inputs, and others. Likewise, to deepen analysis, I conducted unstructured interviews with fellow performance artists and music enthusiasts were sought along with the use of sheet music, video concerts, and photos in deepening analysis of this autoethnographic study.

**Personal Narratives**

*Personal narratives* are stories about authors who view themselves as the *phenomenon* and write evocative narratives specially focused on their academic, research, and personal lives (e.g., Berry, 2007; Goodall, 2006; Poulos, 2008; Tillman 2009). From the perspective of this study, personal narratives were construed as fragments of my personal experience in musical performances in the past signifying that such narratives were not necessarily complete as they depended on memory recollection to be aided by videos, photographs, and other sources. Because vignettes were juxtaposed with theoretical lenses to justify depth of understanding, I used analytic autoethnography for the research.

**Personal Stories and Recollections**

*Personal stories and recollections* were my reflective insights drawn from my experience of musical performances. Vignettes formed part as facets of personal experience as retrieved from memory. They comprised my early piano recitals, later concerts, works and arrangements written down as musical scores. Thus, memory recollection was aided by retrieved photographs, videos, and journals of various musical undertakings.

***Interactive Interviews***

This autoethnographic study used interactive interviews in order to provide an "in-depth and intimate understanding of people's experiences with emotionally charged and sensitive topics" (Ellis, Kiesenger & Tillman-Heal, 1997. P.121). This method was very helpful in gaining different perspectives of music communication from fellow artists and listeners in the light of understanding discourse in a musical dialogue. The strength of autoethnography is locating the personal to the cultural as

exemplified in the performer-audience relationship. For example, interviews with fellow artists represented the author's relationship with the cultural milieu mirroring on performance narratives. It is in this exploration where musical dialogue as rhetorical exercise set a discursive tone in their accounts on performing, reading sheet music and communicating with the audience. The interview process was unstructured without pre-designed questions which facilitated smooth and uninterrupted discussion between artists.

During this pandemic when face-to-face meetings were discouraged, interviews were done through *Messenger,* zoom meetings and other digital applications. Likewise, I used group chat on Facebook for a more interactive discussion of topics with the author and research participants.

***Music sheet***

Rhetorical communication is understood terms of musical grammar which provides the structure and logic in a musical score. In this method, sheet music was analyzed using elements in musical dialogue such as melody, counterpoints, harmonics, among others, as rhetorical attributes based on the Classical Rhetorical Theory.

***Photographs, Videos, Journals, and Others***

These aid in the storytelling process the same way that a sheet music does. Apart from that, musical dialogue is explored in terms of how I, the performer communicates through body language, and sound intensification, or its counterpart, and how the audience responds in terms of clapping, silence, standing ovation, and other forms of appreciation as rhetorical gestures.

**Data Analysis**

This autoethnographic study used analytic autoethnography as a self-reflexive process of inquiry. Analytic autoethnography refers to research in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as a member in published texts, and (3) committed to developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena (Anderson, 2006).

Next, this methodology adhered to the rigors of scientific research as opposed to evocative autoethnography which mainly centers on emotional stories to explain personal and social issues. However, in some instances, I did evocative storytelling considering that autoethnography is a reflexive exercise.

Table 2. Collection of Data for Each Objective of the Study

| OBJECTIVES | DATA GATHERED | METHODS |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Components of a good performer? | **Ethos**<br>• My character as the musician, my credibility or ethical appeal, and my authority.<br>• My interpretation of the musical sound is truthful, thus, authoritative.<br>• My interpretation on to how I want my music to be understood by the audience in such a way that it conforms to my values and intellect.<br>• My own experience of the music that is deeply personal and devoid of any social signals to guide my performance.<br><br>**Performance**<br>Physical gestures – poise, body movements-hand direction, facial expression | • Personal stories and recollections (e.g., fragments of past experience in performance)<br>• Interviews with fellow artists (conversations, discussions with like-minded people, sharing of experiences as gauge for performance quality)<br>• Reflections on mistakes and shortcomings from past performances serving as benchmark for performance improvement<br>• Video performances showing articulation of *timbre* through body movements<br>• Narratives from my piano teacher |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2. Components of good music? | **Logos**<br>Music's structure and grammar forming a unified logic:<br>• deep structures in terms of the eight elements of music (melody, harmony, timbre, texture, tonality, dynamics, rhythm, tempo<br>• logos - musical grammar, logic, and overall structure comprising the eight elements of music | • Music sheets (for the interpretation and analysis of musical score in terms of structure, logic and figure)<br>• Personal assessment through reflective listening while performing<br>• Emotional contentment of the performer towards own performance |
| 3. Components of good audience to performance? | **Pathos**<br>These are emotions residing in the listening audience; spontaneous connection with the audience as I perform my music. This is audience reaction to my performance that I cannot control.<br><br>Audience feedback (clapping, shouting, foot action, etc.) in an instantaneous manner making a two-way interaction<br>• Audience responses, reactions as indicators of persuasion<br>• Connection, rapport, emotional attachment to the sound and overall musical experience | • Interview with fellow artists to exchange ideas on audience perception<br>• Conversations with the audience focusing on impact and persuasion; thick descriptions of feedback from the audience<br>• Physical gesture of liking through clapping, tapping, foot action, or silence among the audience<br><br>Personal observations and narratives of:<br>• eye contact between performer and audience<br>• body movements in musical rendering of sound |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4. Interactions of the three rhetorical elements to persuade audience | **Persuasiveness of the musical performance**<br><br>Identity, cultural mirroring of musician's original performances and transformations of musical expressions beyond rhetoric | • Impacts on the audience (rapport, emotional attachment)<br><br>Thick descriptions of narratives on the interrelationship among performer, music and audience plus ethos, logos, and pathos grounded heavily on my personal experience as an active concert artist, alongside other data collected from various sources.<br><br>Realizations, transformations of musician's character including identity formation, and the relationship with culture as outcomes of persuasion. |

**Reflexivity, Validity and Reliability**

Reflexivity in autoethnography accounts for individual reflections of the auto ethnographer. Truth as an articulation of the author's sincerity and honesty in telling the story is understood according to the reader's ability to relate to the story or in the nearness of experience to a reader's own experience. For instance, the value of narration should constitute reader's perception of validity to such truth based on personal investigation.

In espousing reliability, autoethnography dwells upon credibility of the author in reporting personal accounts, such credibility constitutes truth perceived to vary depending on mood and willingness to indulge in the creative process of recollection. From the point of view of the reader, reliability centers on relevance of the story according to the reader's perceptions.

Autoethnography is not so much about forcing the idea of how true or fictional the story should be based on standard criteria of what is true or not. The

methodology's validity is the author's rendering of what is truth at his disposal. This is not something that science dwells upon. The meanings are important to the author and the readers have the indulgence to empathize or sympathize such dimensions of reality believed to be multiple and heavily subjective.

**Ethical Considerations**

Due to the inherent subjectivity of autoethnography placing the self at the center of inquiry, vulnerability of the author as a result of exposing personal stories is almost inevitable in a reflective exercise. Generally speaking, autoethnographers not only implicate themselves with their work, but also close, intimate others (Adams, 2006 Etherington, 2007; Trahan, 2009). Such relational ethics are concerns that need to be pondered in placing the self in a cultural context.

As such, anonymity of interview respondents was strictly observed as stipulated in the consent form. At no point did I expose the real names of participants which would make them uneasy and any information shared was dealt with confidentiality.

## Chapter V

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter V has three major parts. Part 1 discusses my rhetorical analysis in the different historical periods in Western music, namely: Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th century in the light of personal experience. I will share my reflections and vignettes of my communicative practice through various musical performances.

Part 2 expounds on the rhetorical elements (ethos-logos-pathos or the confluence of the *performer-music-audience*) of my autoethnography on performance and composition. Performance includes my musical events such as piano recitals, concerts, gigs, guest appearances, and performance lectures covering another artist's work. Composition, on the other hand, includes these same musical events but featuring my original compositions and transcriptions.

Part 3 details the theoretical proposition I am forwarding showing musical performance as a communication phenomenon.

Data come from personal experiences and narratives from different sources of information, to wit: interviews with fellow musicians and audience, my piano teachers, perceptive analysis of video concerts, and selected readings and articles from the Internet. The narratives are shared as one story in extended essay format.

### Part 1. Autoethnography on Rhetoric in Western Music

This chapter discusses my rhetorical analysis or autoethnography on performance and composition. As mentioned earlier, performance includes my musical events such as piano recitals, concerts, gigs, guest appearances, and performances covering another artist's work. Composition, on the other hand, includes these same musical events but featuring my original compositions and transcriptions.

**Baroque Rhetoric**

In one occasion my father invited me to play *"Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring"* by Johann Sebastian Bach in church as suggested by my piano teacher. During the performance, I was glued on reminding myself the importance of articulating long melodic lines in triplets written in G major which had to be executed smoothly in *legato* like flowing water. To ensure tonal connectivity, my fingers stayed on the keys up until the phrase ended before I moved on to the next, punctuated by a slight raising of the right hand to connote the end the phrase. Using the piano, my performance of *"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"* was characterized by emotionality with different sound qualities achieved through controlled touch.

The next section of the piece, rich in lyrical tones with thick harmonic chords, moved vertically while the melody was suspended on top. This made me analyze critically my playing ensuring that the melody was more prominent in the midst of thick chords underneath. As such, contrasting dynamics between *mezzo forte* (medium loud) was accompanied simultaneously by *piano* (soft), dependent on the amount of pressure I exerted on the fingers.

Regularity in rhythmic pattern was clearly pronounced in the bass part which moved along each triplet, sometimes mixed with chords that enriched *timbre.* As I was playing the dialogic transitions between long melodic passages and thick chordal structures, I felt like I was singing as a soloist while accompanied with a choir.

During this time, clearer articulation through finger action was sought with round tones coming out from my round movement of the fingers which indicated

continuity. Moreover, my arm stretched farther out on the side indicating a wider scope of conquest especially on certain emphatic lines.

In the listening end, the audience seated on pews quietly absorbed the music in a reverential manner with some closing their eyes in meditation while others just stared at me. I thought my playing aided their spiritual journey, accompanying their prayer with cycles of emotions while my music was echoing through the walls of the church deepening their communion with God. What was striking in this spiritual journey was that I, too, was one with the audience in their prayer. Such spiritual rapport was relieving and the dialogic air I felt between me, the audience, and to a reverential force, God, was a continuous flow.

Along with my spiritual journey, I played with minimal body movements. Instead, I focused on the delicate touch of the triplets making sure I was not overplaying or disfiguring other passages. However, even with *legato* feeling of connection, I articulated a sense of independence in my left-hand expressions.

When I was done with *"First Lessons in Bach",* my teacher introduced me to *"Two and Three-Part of Inventions"* by Bach, signaling a more thoughtful analysis of Baroque music. During a school event, I played *"Invention no.15 in B minor",* the last cycle of the three-part inventions. Amazed with the contrapuntal nature of the piece with three voices weaving between right and left hand added with inner notes in-between, it was a labyrinth that glided swiftly with rising tensions, deepening temperaments enriched with color tonality especially that the piece was written in a "minor" key, imbued with all nuances of heavy and dark emotions. The music seemed unending especially between the dialogic interactions in counterpoints which to me sounded like human chattering.

Once again, my interpretation of the piece was characterized with courage and determination to execute the details perfectly. Realizing that I was glued with every note articulation, it became easy to communicate the message to the audience and the feedback I got was a stunning silence, yet another indication of absorption of the sound reverberating through the walls. The whole experience simulated a didactic lecture with me as the teacher preaching and instructing important information to the listening public. However, in the midst of compliance to the manuscript, it dawned on me that the original score I played had no dynamics and tempo indications that signified my freedom to interpret the score. Thus, even with the confines of Baroque playing, I internalized the notion of ornamentation by placing accents on different sections, thinking *legato* while some notes had to be played *staccato*, and distributing melodic emphasis according to how I felt.

Surprisingly, a friend in the audience approached me right after I got off from stage and had these words to say:

> *"Your playing felt like I was walking leisurely at the park.*
> *Especially with the inner movements, they reminded me of little*
> *steps I used to make when I was a child."*

The pinnacle of my Baroque playing happened when I studied *"Preludes and Fugues"* by Bach where my teacher chose specific studies meant for performance. One of the chosen studies was titled *"Prelude and Fugue no. 2 in C minor"* from Well-Tempered Clavier, Bk 1, which I played during a piano concert. The prelude is structured with pulsating bass interspersed with intricate inner voices in 16$^{th}$ notes that has an effect of a pendulum clock swaying from left to right. According to Hemmerle (2021), the inner voices are more static and to be treated like an exercise compared to the same prelude in Well-Tempered Clavier, Bk II which is more

dynamic and considered full-fledged piece of music. In fact, C minor key for both preludes are considered to be more somber and melancholy in interpretation, spiritual and pianistic rather than bringing out liveliness into the music (Hemmerle, 2021).

However, after listening to different interpretations of the prelude under study in my compact disc collection, I noticed that it was played fast and almost furious until an abrupt arpeggio chord in Cmaj7 was reached halting the musical tapestry, followed by recitatives on the right hand while holding the chord on the left, until presto (fast) once again swept the coda with equally distant, rapid $16^{th}$ notes until a gradual slowing down wrapped up the prelude. I remember controlling my speed in the beginning so I could justify the difference between presto and allegro keeping in mind static pulse from measure to measure with my hands close to the keys.

The fugue, in three voices with leaping musical lines alternating between left and right hand had *marcato* (accentuation) sections between verses. With extended phrases, the art of fugal playing was the apex of contrapuntal playing with polyphonic voices layered in the score which had to be explicitly enunciated. For my part, I had to bring out individual voices as continuous lines by switching finger pressure to denote a louder melody and a softer accompaniment. Moreover, perfect execution was made possible through fingers clawed together like a crab where only the fingertips touched the keys. Hands were raised rather than flattened on the keys clustering notes like small groupings. Treated as a form of etude, my performance was mechanical, devoid of emotional articulation and speed was its performative quality. Over all, baroque music hastened my skills in critical analysis and transforming such analysis through performance became a personal triumph.

**Classical Rhetoric**

I have never played music in the Classical Period in any public performance. It was not until I studied under Prof. Espino when I was introduced to “Moonlight Sonata” by Beethoven in preparation for my second solo recital. Moved by the surreal melodies of the first movement marked adagio *sustenuto* (slow and sustained), I decided to study the whole sonata to my teacher’s delight. During rehearsals, I would change mood and interpretation which naturally affected how I approached the first movement. Even with ostinato triplets (repeating triplets) to be construed as soft, flowing accompaniment underneath melodies on top, still I was beset with my altered senses in visualizing triplets because I did not want them to sound too flat, regular or almost forgotten. It was my changing moods that led to erroneous rendering of such delicate structure oftentimes halting my playing in order to reflect upon the whole idea of repetitive triplets only to find out that their dreamlike effect in relaxed state was to bring out melodic lines on top. My teacher had these words to say about such interpretation:

> *“Moonlight Sonata” is a piece from the Classical period. It should not be too romanticized although Beethoven was caught in between Classical and Romantic periods, but still, his music encapsulates classical form of regularity in rhythmic flow.”*

Following such guidance, I shifted my consciousness to objectivity, fluidity, and regularity making sure I was not too engrossed in holding notes beyond their value or putting too much emotion on areas that needed logical interpretation as dictated by the score.

In terms of form, the first movement followed the standard structure of exposition, development, recapitulation and coda intricately woven together with notions of improvisation running through my mind as I explored. During my final

rehearsal, I noticed some altered body response especially on hand position like a "feeling of drop" in articulating octave chords in the left hand at the beginning section, which to me, were deep melodies in the bass register. As my playing progressed, I noticed a sense of gentle swaying with circular movements in my right arm with a feeling of subtlety and somberness. The movement was written using soft sound and some mezzo forte sections but no more than that so I had to respond to the technical demands.

The second movement in allegretto (with excitement and brisk) was a departure from melancholy in the first movement. This was more rigid yet playful in character and different chord textures demanded listening to nuances of varying textures. To me, the second movement had more to say about objectivity, directness and vitality in performance including clarity of articulation. My listening audience (my teacher) was delighted how much I transformed from the previous movement paying attention to delicate transitions between episodes.

In terms of form, the second movement was written as minuetto with trio in Db major as opposed to C# minor in the first movement. With the feeling of a waltz, I noticed some dance-like movements in my body with short leaps especially in the trio section where octave melodies were literally jumping from high to low registers. Interestingly, the trio was written on the same key as the *minuetto* which was more of a convenience for me.

The third movement in *presto agitato* was a powerful musical exhibition filled with ferocious temperament that was difficult to sustain from beginning to end not only in terms of technique but in emotional depth as well. Going back to its C# minor key, long arpeggios with strong *sforzando* (sudden emphasis), heavily accented and massive in sound were the core of the movement's narrative. It felt like a chariot

race, an adrenalin rush with every 16th note running like wildfire. For my part, I managed to conquer the technical change by playing the movement in comfortable speed.

Although the marking was *presto agitato,* I had to make sure my fingers were not bleeding just to be able to meet expectations. It was at this moment where I realized the secret to successful interpretation of the last movement was to have a personal goal that was to be executed based on daily practice that developed finger muscles resulting in fluid articulation of rapid notes.

Overall, the whole sonata in not the usual fast, slow, and fast form because it starts slow, fairly fast, and with a very fast ending, built on cycles of temperaments from somber state to ferocity in the end. Building intensity and indulgence were key properties of persuasive interpretation that guided my playing. I had to make sure that despite tension and anxiety built in the score, my interpretation was emancipatory, without hesitation, and with conviction.

The next classical piece I performed was *"Sonata in G Major, K. 283"* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. It was this piece that really opened my mind to the wonderful world of classical music with its precise, well-balanced melodies that tend to be clear-cut, without hesitation controlled exhibition. Although I realized that Mozart has always been known to use flamboyant scales and arpeggios, I thought he had a clear design on what kind of music he wanted for a particular piece. In terms of harmony, this sonata had minimalist harmony, I must say, mostly confined to diatonic harmonies in thirds. This was again done in keeping the lively spirit of the first and last movements marked *allegro* and *presto* respectively. With regards to texture, *timbre* and tonality, the magic of articulating a certain quality in classical music as light and fluid but very clear and objective with marked phrase endings,

among others are well designed in the sonata. In my performance, I thought lightness was to be interpreted according to my mood as an artist. With the changing episodes or sub- themes within a larger movement, my different interpretations should also be reflected in the lightness or heaviness of my touch which would now highlight specific textures. Along with timbre as unique to each instrument, the pianoforte was an articulation of Mozart's quality of clear sound and even touch. It was a technique to be developed thoroughly, not an overnight dream.

In doing so, I sat perfectly positioned on the piano with a sense of dignity and resoluteness and my finger action was detailed, well-positioned knowing that classical music was filled with procedures to be followed. Yet, even with controlled touch and movement, my powerful emotions guided my playing. I wanted Mozart to blend in with my personality. I wanted to be in communion with the music I was playing, and with that, I envisioned the sonata as a form of graceful lamentation in the form of a dance most especially in the beginning section where I could envisage a woman swaying to the music with her voluptuous body conquering the stage. Such dance-like rhythm and lively tempo meant that the music was perfect for body movements, something to be acted upon, not merely confined for listening. Also, precise rhythmic flow was largely felt throughout the sonata except in the second movement in "Andante", with lyrical passages having harmonies distributed between left and right hands. In here, it was like a dialogue between two voices with each one articulating a message and the other responding. But unlike in Baroque music that characterized independent voices, classical music exemplified in this sonata seemed to have connected melodies and harmonies moving about in the same direction in terms of sound utterance. Another way of saying it as that classical music was linear at least from what I observed in the sonata. Then, dynamics was clearly defined with

soft tones as usually echoing an earlier melodic passage. Such rhetorical device of repetition was very exciting to portray because nuance of soft and loud temperaments had to be well addressed as a technical challenge.

**Romantic Rhetoric**

I became madly in love with Romantic pieces when Chopin was included in my repertoire especially after visiting his museum in Poland. Moved by the rich tonality and lyrical melodies with so many songs taken from his works like *"No Other Love"* from "Etude no. 3 in E major, *Op. 10,* and *"To Love Again"* from *"Nocturne in Eb major,* among others, I studied *"Military Polonaise in A major"* for a national competition in music called *Timpalakan,* hosted by the Boy Scouts of the Philippines when I was in junior high school. I won second place as the representative of Region 8 at the national level competition held in Metro Manila.

During the entire journey of the competition from division, provincial, regional up to the national level, I played the polonaise differently for some reasons. For one, the freedom I enjoyed in interpretation broadened my imagination. Although the piece has regular military cadence sounding like gunfire in thick A major chords in $16^{th}$ notes with top melodies in succession at the first measure, normally played with determination, objectivity and regularity with long fingers, I had the leeway to expand the horizon using "stretching" technique while in some instances I played with regular rhythm as written in the score. Also, the piece has so many sectional repetitions that allowed me to create variations in my approach to playing notably at the single melodic lines in the first two bars in D major in the middle section, consistent with ¾ polonaise tempo that made my fingers dive deep into the keys so the notes could be heard clearly in spite of the thick chords dancing on the left hand in pompous, rhythmic polonaise. In playing Chopin, it was always a mantra to dwell on intricate

sound experience through different intensification of musical dynamics. As such, the softest tones were moving in gradual volume as musical lines developed. Moreover, dynamics indications in the polonaise were stretching from mezzo forte to forte indicating movement of sound expanding in range and magnitude.

As a young pianist then, I executed the piece with utmost vigor like a commander-in-chief imbued with authority and dominion to conquer his musical subjects but made sure the notes created a unified ensemble with broad arms stretching and the body tilting to the right occasionally in unison with the melody. Also, I noticed that Romantic music had more elaborate and dramatic rendering of harmonies that spoke of inner emotions and sparked creative imagination from the narratives of the sound. It was like telling my own story within the musical experience. This also proved thickness of harmonies through massive chords which created expansive sound altogether. Rhythmically, I felt the individual character of my sound was reflected in the changing rhythmic patterns - so dynamic and intensifying as in the case of the polonaise I played. In terms of timbre, along with piano, other musical instruments were also used as concert instruments signifying multiplicity of timbre with each one highlighting unique quality. With piano, deeper nuances of sound quality emerged as a result of virtuosity displayed. It was like saying that to be able to be musical, one needed to know how to properly execute.

In the different competition levels, establishing audience rapport was quite unique for each venue. For example, I noticed that audiences in the province were more involved in showing appreciation through clapping, nodding and even rising from their seats especially at the end of my playing while audiences at the San Miguel Auditorium in Manila were more reserved with minimal gestures. This

feedback made me restless as I thought the judges were also feeling the same reservation or rejection.

Another highlight of playing Romantic music was the experience I had with *"Etude in Ab major, Op. 25, no. 2* which I performed during the *"Sangyaw Awards Night".* During the event, Excellence Award in Music was bestowed upon me by the City of Tacloban for exemplary contribution in the field of music. The etude focuses on the floating of a melodic line above a fluttering cushion of arpeggios recognized as a form of musical poetry (Hiroshima, 2021).

Challenged by the huge surrounding noise from mall shoppers at Robinson's Place, articulating the melodies in the 5$^{th}$ finger with light arpeggios in the middle emulating sound from the harp (Aeolian harp) was an extremely difficult task to endure. Luckily, spectators became silent as I progressed with my sweeping narrative between measures. Next, rubato lines accorded me more freedom to speed up or slow down according to how I felt. Incidentally, there were moments of adrenalin rush that accelerated my playing then I would slow down in *retallando* with the feeling of fading away in oblivion. Lastly, technique in playing soft melodies amidst arpeggios can be achieved through *bakal (*steel) technique, a phrase coined by my piano teacher, Prof. Agosto Espino of the UP College of Music, which I applied by hardening fingertips like a steel in order to achieve brilliance in sound woven delicately with inner passages.

Following transformation of musical sensibilities in the Romantic period, its rhetoric centered on individual expression, emotional attachment with music, and a broad range of performer's interpretations that defined his personal character as opposed to the rigidities of the Classical period. Persuasion was self-driven and for self-aggrandizement through narrative explorations of the human soul. Thus, the

performer was no longer focused on audience attention, but, was more confined to his inner struggles, pains and triumphs.

**20th Century Rhetoric**

Ever since I was a child I had been listening to the music of Claude Debussy along with my constant listening to Chopin's melodic pieces. One of the magical moments in Debussy's music was my performance of *"Claire de Lune".* As an impressionistic piece, I was moved by the surreal sound, from the lightness of tonality with the most delicate soft tones especially in the beginning section in Db major. As a performer, I articulated each chord and melody with utmost precision with a light texture. Its dreamy character manifested in my controlled touch with my hand so close to the piano keys avoiding any hint of accentuation that would ruin the surreal effect. My arms were almost close to the body forming a deep connection from my head, arms down to the feet with foot pedals aligning to the overall effect.

As a representative of impressionism, *"Claire de Lune"* is rich with visual images of sound with different colors like a painting displaying various colors. It was this magical rendering of images that was central to my impressions with various tonalities creating different *timbres* with dynamics especially in the fluidity of interconnected notes comprising delicate *piano* and *pianissimo* passages.

In the middle section with *animato* indications, there was a feeling of movement of the piece expressed through body reactions that flowed with melodic movements accompanied by arpeggios in the left hand creating a wave of sound emulations of water image. The overall pentatonic structure of chords and melodies created a unified logic of impressionism in music that was not present in Romantic literature. This paradigm shift affected my character as I also shifted my performance stance with visual imaginations, creative impulses that enhanced colors of the

sound, not in the sense of emotional attachment characteristic of Romantic music but more in creating impressions, images, and representations.

The next piece I played was *"Ballade"* by Debussy for my opening number, in the lounge, which turned out to be a good preparation for later pieces. It seemed that silence in the lounge jived with the quietness that exuded from the piece with so many piano and pianissimo passages. The lyrical lines at the top of the melodic structure was thickened by gentle arpeggios mostly in thirds performed in the left hand and carried over by the right hand so intricately woven to form a uniform phrase. With clear melodies articulated brilliantly, soft textures of the accompaniment swept through the entire piece with nuances eloquently phrased.

In articulating delicate passages, my wrist action was so light, gentle and fluid like soft waves on the ocean avoiding as much as possible tensions and rigidities in articulation.

In the middle of my musical narrative of Ballade, guests stood near the piano listening intently to my playing while some took a seat listening quietly at a distance. Trying to stay focused in my playing, I decided not to look at them but rather focused my eyes on my finger and hand movements which later proved to be rewarding. After playing the piece, I heard someone utter these lines:

> *"Only a trained musician can play so delicately music by Debussy. You see, technique is learned with patient practice that is guided by a trainer."*

I chanced upon the music of John Cage, an American composer, during my Humanities I in UP Diliman. Intrigued by the audacity and vulgarity of his expressions, I thought his music was the most revolting and obnoxious form so despicable that it was not making sense at all.

But, after listening to the lecture of my professor, I was convinced that his music was speaking a lot in the midst of silence. The following image is the sheet music of his composition, *4'33",* with all the musical symbols such as dynamics, rests, repetitions, metronome speed without one thing that is the most important message: notes to play.

Watching the piece performed by William Marx on YouTube made me appreciate and understand nuances of such intriguing composition. In the performance, William stood up on stage dressed in a penguin suit, took a bow then sat on the piano bench while the audience was clapping. He opened the sheet music then started his long silence, in other words he did not play a single note on the piano.

Why? Because there were no notes written down, only musical symbols.

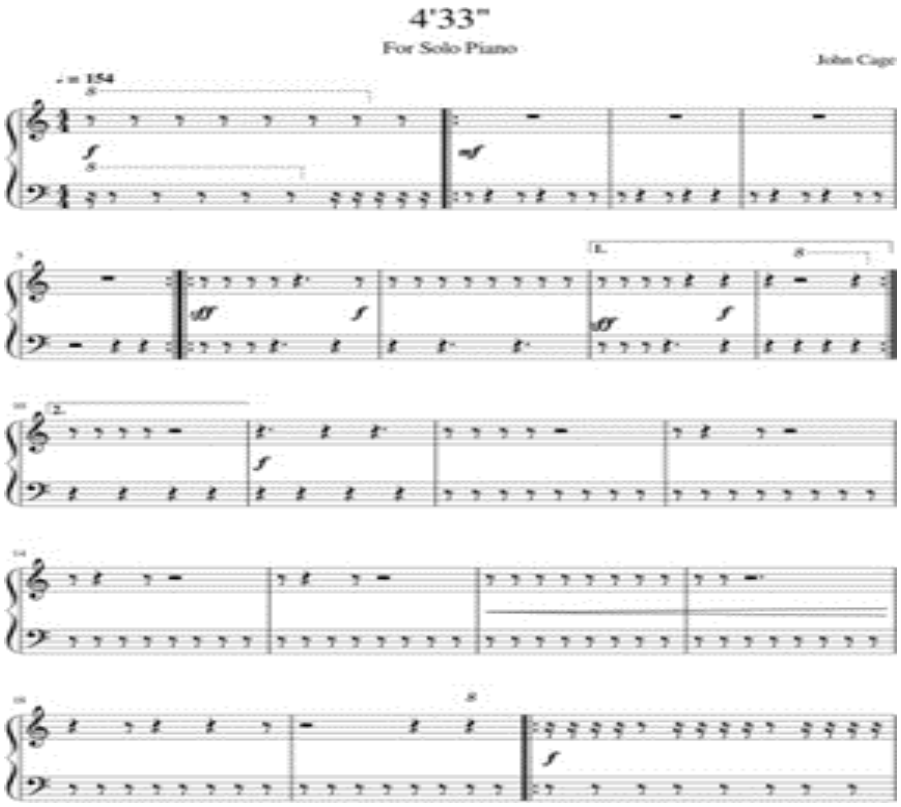


Figure 2. 4'33"

What was music, then? It was the whole experience of watching including the sound from human coughing, occasional noise in the concert hall and just about anything.

Realizing the power of silence, it became a moment of reflection to dwell upon distance between notes, to acknowledge that brief pause in music is a sacrosanct space to be recognized, and to develop a keen awareness of surrounding elements affecting performance silence.

Much later, I watched a piano recital at the Abelardo Hall, UP College of Music so mesmerized by a student recitalist's rendition of *"Suggestions Diabolique"* by Sergei Prokofiev. His percussive way of playing coupled with strong *marcato* accents created a pounding effect literally piercing deep in my ears. In the beginning, I was a little bit resentful but when depth of diabolical dissonance started running wild, I could not rest comfortably in my seat.

During Prokofiev's performance of his composition, he was denounced as an "extreme leftist", and a "bad boy of Russian music" (this wasn't meant as a background compliment, like in Russell Crow sense). Since then, however, *"Suggestions Diabolique"* has come to be regarded as a piano masterpiece, a foil for concert pianists everywhere (Chiu, 2011). In a conversation with a pianist, the following impressions were gathered:

> *"The piece overwhelms a listener's ears, gets confused with so many dissonant sounds articulated with high hand movements but actually, it is not so difficult to play as one may think."*

Another pianist said these words about the piece:

*"It is just another etude to play filled with drama and suspension." It is not the usual harmonic music with expressive melodies, rather it is off-balance, exciting and painful."*

*"It is fascinating to hear so many different rhythmic textures: from mysterious to extremely indulgent rhythmic pattern that requires technical prowess to execute."*

In another performance of Bartok's *"Makrokosmos",* I indulged in polyrhythmic possibilities that were literally difficult to manage with all the counting. Not only that, the immensity of complex movements heightened a sense of musical delirium that coincided with atonal sounds of the "Bulgarian Dance". My performance of *"Makrokosmos"* was filled with bravura as the dynamic tempo in switching meter, mostly off-balance filled with wondrous serendipity with every leap."

I could sense a great deal of boldness and ingenuity as felt in the experimental movement that made me want to play the piece with such bravura inspired by polymetric temperament sweeping through such that my feet were basically dancing already while playing.

With such wide imagination, I thought that abrupt changes in rhythm were thrilling especially after playing in performance level at the right tempo.

**Composition**

Throughout the years of playing music, I have written some compositions that depicted my personal character, taste, and identity.

In terms of character, it was known to me all along that I chose pieces that reflected my personality, or, at least, aspects of my personality. With deep exposure

to Romantic pieces, it seemed my emotions echoed through the musical narratives within each piece. Different levels of expression resonated freedom, a sense of emancipation from the rigidities of life. True enough, indeed, my music encapsulated a free spirit wandering around, capturing tones and emotions that would communicate with my inner being. Conversely, my ontological being would also transmit vibrations to the environment in different degrees and dimensions defining a sense of oneness, or at least, I thought so.

What was important to me was how I communicated my music that expressed my emotions more than anything else. Such vulnerability was engulfed with wonder that brought experimentations on timbre, for instance, that spoke of my inner soul. Even with borrowed form, my true sentiments manifested in the different textures of sound compartmentalizing certain mood and character as symbols of sincere expressions of emotions. In effect, what was written in the music sheet was not to be literally followed as I listened to my feelings.

With Romanticism occupying a lot of space in my musical influence, I cannot proceed with my original compositions without expounding on my Romantic sensibilities. For one, my performance of *"18th Variation from Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini",* piano solo version by Rachmaninoff, as an emancipatory gesture, was engulfed with liberating sentiments such as playing as if I have forgotten all the notes in my head and letting go of the moment. Freedom from rigidities in life ascribed to notions of freedom from 'structures' – such powerful revelations of meaningful experience were expressed in music that wanted to be released.

Doing some research on Rachmaninoff made me recognize that he was a Russian pianist and composer at the turn of the 20th century. Coming from a culture of strict compliance to a totalitarian regime at some point in history, his music

exemplified dark layers of emotions so beautifully expressed with wanton freedom, a kind of self-glorification. That made me think I could accept a sense of propriety, but at the same time, it could unravel a sense of self-longing that was unprovoked, illuminating, and convincing. Such powerful resonance would remain my testament of authentic music describing authentic character that no matter what form of government I was playing for, I was expressing myself and for myself.

In terms of taste, I was intrigued by the complicated structures of Baroque music, but, at the same time I enjoyed journeying through deep layers of intricate dialogues between melodies, countermelodies, counterpoints, among others. While struggling through, I would often resort to a sense of "high art" in playing Bach's music. It was not a feeling of rejection to the demands of the piece, rather, it was a nurturing feeling of understanding the structure, interpretation and delivery of sound that mattered.

In life, such musical taste engulfed with nuances of fear and anxiety created paradigms of adventure, a willingness to discover new feelings and ideas along the way. What was more profound to me was that most discoveries I encountered opened up new ways to understanding my sense of character. In my experience of playing *"Tocatta in G Major"* by Bach, for instance, I discovered the inner child in me, that stage in my life that was full of adventure and wonder expressed in the difficult passages of the piece's beginning section. Imbued with playful tones, I imagined a fantasy land where rules meant no rules but could only be achieved if juxtaposed with a sense of anxiety. Such duality of fear and excitement mirrored in the complex tonality of the toccata which addressed issues of conformity and freedom.

Corollary to the two themes of character and taste, my identity was rightfully conceived as a confluence of the two elements, character and taste. In addition, born

as a Gemini with “two hearts”, I realized my drifting sense of self was colorfully mounted in the different rhetorical figures comprising Baroque, Classical, Romantic and 20th century leaping in wondrous delight depending on the situation I was in.

In terms of influences from the Classical school, my deep sense of conformity to the rigors of conventions unleashed notions of stability in my character. It was a positive gesture of acceptance to such conventions that made me feel I was one with the community of artists that performed pieces with universal elements present. In other words, my interpretation of “Moonlight Sonata” was deeply attuned to the demands of the piece as written by Beethoven. However, certain nuances of individual interpretation surfaced exhibiting the idea, “notes and beyond”.

Throughout the years of my study in piano coupled with various experiences in performance, it was convenient to gather ideas that would ultimately shape my sense of rhetoric which incorporated various sensibilities forming my character and identity.

In my quest for self-discovery, I studied *kundiman* music as a personal endeavor because I did not learn it during my formal piano lessons. Perhaps one of the reasons was its inherently vocal nature or difficulty in finding sheet music. Nevertheless, with my initiative, I got a copy of *“Damdamin”* (Romance) by Francisco Buencamino from a friend who studied Music.

Inspired by its romantic melodies with implicit folk sensibilities built in the key of D major in *moderato* (moderate) tempo, the piece captured my romantic essence of emotionality and expressiveness in performance usually punctuated by holding notes in certain phrases that sometimes were not written in the piece. The term *hagod* signifying a sense of *rubato* feeling that prolonged sound beyond normal

value with all the necessary nuances were reflected in changing moods such as from *moderato* to *animato* (animated) that accelerated phrases then held back at some point. This required understanding of the musical structure coupled with an indulgent interpretation that was emotionally rich.

During my performance of *"Damdamin,"* the colossal chords in the beginning section were treated as horizontal melodies layering on top of each chord which could be treated as vertical articulations. In order to succeed, I sang the layered tones in my head while conquering chordal structures. The effect was a series of singing tones that sounded like me dwelling on personal intentions of wooing an imaginary girl. With this in mind, I proceeded the next sections with the same emotional punctuations heightened during *acellerando* moments mirroring adrenalin rush brought about by emotional intensity. Such was a feeling of climactic proportions that musically was astounding to hear. Of course, there were technical demands of *"Damdamin"* that had to be executed intricately clear. For example, arpeggios in the left hand were more than accompaniment to me as they had messages to tell: emotional rush highlighted as dialogue patterns in both left and right hand in some sections meant a sense of agreement between me and my imaginary girl filled with serendipity while quiet arpeggios in the left that emphasized melody in the right hand signified listening to the soulful telling of my girl's emotional state. Subdued and almost passive, the texture was wind-like, smooth and not imposing. However, it also carried the weight of sound in order to exude connectivity of melodic lines like a soliloquy.

In the midst of impassioned renderings, I was exalted in the dramatic melancholy of cascading melodies with rustles of light arpeggios in F minor that sounded like denouement in a musical play so fantastically woven with dialogic

chords doubling the melodic lines above. This created emphasis in sound accentuated by bravura 32nd chords reciprocated by the same temperament in the left in the preceding measures. Such tension was interpreted as rhetorical arguments between me and my imaginary girl depicted in chordal leaps in accelerating rhythm.

At the end of climactic tensions, an opening heart and mind restored the musical theme to its beginning moderato tempo with balance, rancor-free motions of my relaxed hands in placid mode.

With so much attachment to aesthetics in emotional rendering, I thought my performance echoed an emotional struggle of love in all its shades of impassioned vulnerability with resolute ending defining a moment of glorification and liberation that epitomized *kundiman* sentiment.

At some point in my career I became a Musical Director of MUZIK Harmonie, a singing group based in Leyte Normal University. During the group's first major concert in the school campus, I accompanied a *kundiman* entitled *"Pakiusap"* by Francisco Santiago, to a baritone singer of the group that had warm sound categorized as a tenor voice. It was his contest piece rendered during a regional singing competition among artists within state colleges and universities of the Philippines.

During my performance as accompanist, I realized that the piece was doubling the melodies of the baritone, a great challenge to replicate the singer's vocal stylings, pauses, phrasings, among others. Thus, my ear was glued to his musical utterances and in no time did I speed up or slow down beyond the singer's approval.

After playing my piano solo introduction, the main theme opened up in C minor with hidden *tenuto* that literally jived with the singer's interpretation. *Kundiman*

usually starts in a minor key with soulful melodies edifying emotional longingness and ends in a major key signifying triumph and delight.

True to its ornamental dialogic responses of the upper melodies positioned as inner counter-melodies in both right and left hands, the piece was a continuum of uninterrupted communication between melodies and counter-melodies in dramatic storytelling. In interpreting such delectation, my body was responding profusely with deep connection by way of gentle sways and occasional pauses. But the most striking to me was how much I associated the *kundiman* with a painful lamentation of my struggles as an individual and as a member of a nation with issues of sovereignty. As I proceeded with my playing, I could not help but recall from historical readings how Filipinos suffered from the oppressive structures of both Spanish and American regimes in the country. Three centuries or 333 years of Spanish colonization characterized by cultural displacement, bigotry, and loss of identity suddenly rushed through my veins most especially in the "minor key" of the opening section of *"Pakiusap,"* which would normally envelope dark and heavy emotions in musical sound. Such poignant elucidation of historical association unleashed a powerful force of music to conjure inner sentiments without the indulgence of lyrics to solidify a people's predicament, my predicament. In retrospect, my self-revelations formed collective consciousness as relayed to me by some members of the audience signifying a unified association of musical sound to experience located in the country's history.

A wise spectator of my performance told me the following words:

*"The music you just played made me cry over the suffering of our people which today are still felt. Our lost pride and dignity*

*continued to haunt Filipino natives even during the American regime and up to this day."*

Recently, I posted on Facebook my rendition of *"Bayan Ko"* (My Dear Country), composed by Constancio de Guzman which was dedicated to the late President Benigno Aquino III when he died last June 20, 2021. Stirred I with the hype, I turned to music in mourning the death of a leader. With so much passion poured into my video recording, I was, once again, catapulted to history with so much sadness in recalling sorrows and pains of my countrymen in both the Spanish and American occupations. The same association of music to memories of indignation punctuated in every melody I played on the keys. With indulgent *tenuto* as part of my dramatic narrative, I was consoled amid sadness and rage over unresolved expressions of liberation haunting me to this day.

However, with impervious mind, I began questioning the sincerity of the narrative of *"Bayan Ko"* in today's context. In a period of dismay and discontent, I thought that the dignity of the lyrics has been tarnished by political groups trying to capture attention from the masses with their quick wit in grandstanding. Resorting to emotional appeal just to win their hearts and minds was something untruthful and manipulative.

Sometime during these explorations, I ventured into composition in order to draw out personal convictions and musical notions that were not labelled to create impressions but simply to express my identity. A ticklish form of identity formation surfaced in my composition titled *"Dumagsa",* written in C major, inspired by *saronay* (small *kulintang*) that I learned how to play during a seminar-workshop conducted at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Although I have been humming the pentatonic

melodies of the piece for many years already, it was not until the workshop unfolded that I found the need to jot down my ideas.

The whole accompaniment was written in *ostinato*, so technically the right hand did all the embellishments, improvisations, and recapitulation towards the end. It was completely a relaxing feeling when I played *ostinato* lines in pianissimo in the first two bars until melodic lines resonated with themes and variations. With placid texture, it was almost like a passive performance, very reflective with inner resonance and not so demanding to the ear. As I played *"Dumagsa",* I envisioned a dense forest with chirping birds heard from a distant layered with soft wind blows touching upon the leaves creating soft rumblings. In the middle of everything was my voice reverberating through the forest with magnanimity in the signification of myself, my identity.

How would such piece explain my identity?

*"Dumagsa"* is a vernacular term in Waray-Waray language that means east wind. When I composed this piece, I had ideas about Oriental sound, something that expressed profound meanings of my Oriental identity characterized with politeness, calmness, and a sense of enlightenment so undisturbed. To me, it was my search for a quiet soul that absorbed everything and exuded silence in return.

As a Filipino artist, it was a joy to expound on ideas about self-preservation and identity formation that transcended to nature. The moment I played the melodies on the *saronay,* it felt like listening to the soft murmurs of the leaves in tranquility. Amidst complexity, I was perched on the idea of preserving natural entity without any hint of provocation life would sometimes offer. Unknowingly, I was exhuming the depths of my quiet being awakened in meditation.

To me, my adventures with nature revealed a sacrosanct place that was only known to me. With music, I was vulnerable to noise all around my country, hence, *"Dumagsa"* was the sole refuge to rescue my identity. With flourishing modes and stylings of cultural presentations brought about by globalization, my sense of self was at the mercy of getting lost amidst interconnectivity. In effect, melodies and harmonies of my composition were a form of rectitude to the wrongful noise around. I had to assert my authentic self, my sense of being a Filipino musician within the Asian community. Rallying for my pureness of heart for who I was, who I am, and who I will be, *"Dumagsa"* accentuated a powerful voice of acclimation. In effect, it was listening to the self that made sense.

Historically speaking, this composition became a musical production in Tacloban City bearing the same title where I played the piano with *ostinato* accompaniment and another musician played the melodies on the *saronay.* It was an indulgent fusion of East-West sentimentality but in my defense, it was a glorification of Oriental sound because of the melodic narratives I portrayed.

Another composition I fashioned, *"Sayaw Fantasia",* embodied parallel Oriental touch just like *"Dumagsa",* but this time, it was fast and dance-like in the first and final sections. With heavy accents, the piece highlighted a flamboyant character in me that was ready to binge given the right opportunity. Indeed, I was flying with uncontrollable speed so suspended that I lost track of musical gravity of some sort during my performance.

The piece was written to mirror my Gemini character of duality expressed in a flamboyant dance followed by surreal themes in the middle section that elaborated on impressionistic nuances. When I performed it for the first time in my concert dubbed, "Concert at the Mall", I was magically switching moods without hesitation as

if talking to two different persons with different emotions. Embroiled with dissonant articulations, my sense of enthusiasm to diabolical lines ushered a sense of vulnerability that I thought was bordering on insanity, or its approximation. It was in my vulnerability that brought me to new doors of unchartered territories. For instance, in the presto sub-section, I played with almost uncontrolled speed to emulate a ritualistic trance. Such heightened state could have been easily construed as disturbing decorum for someone not used to listening to madness in sound.

As I was communicating “musical destruction”, on some level I was also re-creating a new sound from the debris of madness. Indeed, my diabolical intentions became powerful affirmations of vulnerability and reconstruction so delicately intertwined that stories were ripped of any plot, that music was deprived of tonality and balance, that life breathed in madness.

Just before the turbulent, trance-like section, the *andante* section was the most surreal sound I have ever composed. In fact, I distinctly remember how structurally it was difficult to find coherent inner melodies. However, with my indulgent sense of getting lost in space, this section, had somewhat blissful resonance.

To enrich my state of suspension, I literally moved my arms in very slow, synchronized gestures like performing slow *karate* movements that approximated oneness with nature of some sort. Throughout the episode I felt a sense of lightness like the wind blowing gently and my mind going to a meditative state.

Another thunderous musical composition I created was titled *“Yolanda”,* a sordid narrative of pain, struggle, redemption and resilience of the people of Tacloban City that bore the brunt of suffering from a super typhoon that claimed lives and property in unimaginable scale. Its imagery of water rushing in accompanied

with howling winds indicated an ominous malady as expressed in atonal arpeggios cascading in discordance. After such sordid explication, I played the haunting theme in A minor with profound sadness and a struggle to overcome uncertainty. With different cycles of emotions layering in complex textuality accentuated by a dramatic climax, the musical saga halted with a resolute *timbre* followed by a spiritual divination setting the mood in the next segment, which was taken from a religious hymn known to all Taclobanons.

In this section, I played reverently excerpts of the hymn of Sto. Nino while tears just poured instantaneously on the keys. With so much internalization, I played the melody and chords in soft but resolute manner.

Visualizing water surge, my musical prayer was interrupted once again with rapid scales and thick chordal patterns deepening a Romantic expressiveness in the tones that emerged. I ended the piece with a mysterious *accelerando* of *glissando* capturing an uncertain aftermath of the typhoon.

I imbibed the audience in my sordid narrative. I could feel tension in their eyes as they listened to every disturbing sound rushing through. I felt their stillness and soft wails the moment I played the Sto. Nino hymn. As someone later told to me, many had goosebumps with such a detailed narrative using sound only. It was a moving performance, an uninterrupted narrative of experience of struggle and pain during the typhoon *"Yolanda"* depicted dialectical tensions between sound and imagery, between myself and the surrounding milieu with conflicting signals of acceptance and rejection, the latter forming dark impressions imprinted in their faces as they recalled the surge that made me wonder if those where gestures of a successful performance albeit rather poignant. Such tension was evident in robust

loudness of sound I created in my composition envisaging a powerful storm in contrast to soft wails from victims struggling for survival.

In another personal story, I was saddened by the thought that when my mother died, she could not be with me for the rest of my life. Hence, I composed a piece titled *"Danza ni Nanay",* a sublime celebration of motherhood. Filled with gentleness, the walking tempo of *danza* epitomized femininity in its grandest gesture with a touch of *kundiman* expressed in thirds and sixths as nuanced ornaments in certain melodic sections. With soft tonal ambience, I dwelt in folkloric temperaments depicting mothers that raised family with affirmations of feminine power in a subdued manner.

I never thought music could perhaps express "feminine" tonality until I wrote *"Danza ni Nanay"* which was clearly portrayed in my gentle swaying of head as I played while pondering on such question as "was there a feminine sound?". Such realization would open up new ways of deciphering music structure that would elicit gender qualities.

In *"Sayaw Fantasia,"* which I discussed earlier, there were images of skirts flying about with castanets showcasing feminine ornamentations in a frenzied state called dance. Such realization indulged my sense of rhythmic synchronicity, paucity, regularity and hysteria which could happen during live performance.

During my continued search for identity, the grand narrative of emancipation through artistic experimentations defined myself even on the brink of defying conventions in some instances. One such composition I created was titled *"Etude in C Major",* a Western concept meaning "study" where I thought the title was significant as its content was more of a technical exercise on finger dexterity. But what was more intriguing was that I used a folksong titled *"Kuratsa",* a courtship

dance in Leyte and Samar, in order to explicate piano pedagogy using *Alberti* bass in classical form, popular in Mozart sonatas, while the right hand was playing melodies of the *"Kuratsa"* with some added ornamentations and classical nuances. In other words, I was playing a local folksong using classical elements. The effect was astoundingly classical that if someone played it without any knowledge of the folksong, it could easily be categorized as a European classical music.

Such transformation of a musical lore was a declaration of a deep-seated liberation in forming musical ideas, which depicted my background in classical music juxtaposed with local themes as something to be proud of. When I posted this piece on Facebook with me playing on the piano, it immediately drew attention from friends and fellow Waray-Warays from different parts of the globe. Ubiquity of social media has, indeed, created a huge audience with various sentiments aired. The following were some of the posted comments:

*"Nostalgic right at the very core."*

*"True Waraynon, indeed".*

*"Exciting to hear different interpretations".*

In a manner of speaking, yes, it was a unique experience both in writing and playing. In writing, I did not use a piano to arrange, develop, and organize themes as the folksong was known to me by heart. I took an empty music manuscript with my special Japanese pencil bought at Daiso in Sendai, Japan and started scribbling down notes after having my breakfast at McDonald's.

I did not want my piece to be an exact replica of *"Kuratsa"* so I called it an *"Etude in C Major"* to emphasize its technical qualities for piano pedagogy. Thus, it was termed as a transcription of some sort with lots of 16$^{th}$ notes executed in *allegro* tempo similar to Mozart's piano sonatas. In articulating the music, I used "high-

finger" technique during practice for clarity and evenness of sound that depended on touch. But, in actual performance, my fingers were close to the keys already signifying well-practiced finger articulation.

On top of all technical demands, I envisaged a local couple dancing to the piece but was interrupted with the speed of my playing that was almost impossible to dance with. Hence, I called it a dance to be listened to, not to dance to. Quite similar to Chopin waltzes that are generally meant for listening, I justified my *allegro* tempo as a pianistic journey in all its glamor.

In the final narrative of identity formation, I created musical transcriptions of some folksongs in Leyte and Samar, my place of locality, which were mostly identified from my grandparents' repertoire of bedtime lullabies. One such transcription, *"Di Ak Nahuhulop"* (I am not Disappointed) created a spectacle of a musical capriccio with playful leaps in distinct staccatos depicting dialogue between a man and a woman caught in a love duel. Because I wanted to re-create the folksong based on my sensitivity to traditional norms painted with nuances of modern-day fixtures, I explored on musical lilts and leaps with bravado and recapitulated the main theme in a modulated key in "Eb minor" with thick chords in extremely opposite motions, but I still managed to articulate folk character with my melodic accentuations. The ending sweep was a wave of tensed *arpeggios* in *accelerando* until a definitive ending with emphatic chords vociferously resonated throughout the concert venue.

Recently, I recorded my own rendition of *"Daw Sugad Hin Bukad"* (Like a Flower), another folksong in our region. I posted it on Facebook, which earned accolades I never thought would be overflowing. One of the reasons could be that the song was rarely heard in the repertoire of nostalgic songs, or perhaps, my

playing was passionate to their ears, or simply because it lifted up the spirit during these uncertain times brought by the pandemic.

Of all the reasons highlighted, the third one, “lifting up the spirit during these uncertain times brought by the pandemic”, stuck in my mind like no other thought.

In truth, my interpretation of the song was a tale of healing in a time of anxiety that changed my perspectives, ways, and priorities in life. It was a relief, at least for few minutes of my life while dwelling upon the healing sound, and the effect was so penetrating. Such healing ritual was a credo of spiritual rejuvenation of a lost sense of self, at least in my own perspective. It was at that moment where a rebirth of my soul echoed through every melody of the song, through my Rachmaninoff-inspired tonal textures that were begging for mercy, for survival in a virus-inflicted world.

With that, I indulged in emotional, tearful yet uplifting journey of knowing more about myself in great appreciation of simple joys and blessings in life devoid of complaints. Indeed, as a therapy, it was belief in spiritual divination that did not ask questions but accepted faith wholeheartedly, where music was at the center guiding my enlightened being. With that, my sense of emptiness was completeness in itself.

Finally, while themes of my compositions, arrangements and transcriptions bordered on personal narratives, still a whole part of my character mushroomed a vulnerable self that was willing to change for the sake of self-preservation and societal transformation.

In the years that followed, I became engrossed with music that echoed cries of indigenous groups in the country. It started during a visit to Butuan, Mindanao where I immersed in cultural activities such as listening to the plight of Butuan people in the face of modernization through instrumental renditions of powerful protest without the indulgence of musical lyrics to accentuate their predicament Instead, it

was a cheerful expression of a threatened voice through musical lamentations played on local gongs conjoined with guitar as women danced in synchrony to the musical showcase.

What was endearing about the performance was the immense spontaneity of artistic aura perfectly gleaned from dynamic hand and arm gestures of the gong musician that levelled up with every hammering movement and from the guitarist's emotional connection to the melodic lines created as he embraced his instrument like some inseparable entity. What I witnessed was an intense dialogue between two musicians with complex layers of expression, which I later found to be voices of indignation to the invasion of modernization in their locality.

Deciphering music's message made me wonder how such protestation unraveled through sound only without any form of utterance. Careful analysis made me dwell into depth of sound in terms of volume, texture and rhythmic dynamism as powerful elements in persuasive protest music. In terms of volume, the sheer magnitude of sound level protruded by the instruments highlighted communicative power similar to a public speech that was more emphatic when volume was loud simply because it was heard clearly.

In Butuan, different dynamics of volume emanating from gong and guitar elements revealed different notions of pain and uncertainty to the fading heritage of a cherished culture. The guitar's poignant melodies with strong vibrato were symbols of anxiety played with so much passion and the gongs' towering sound echoed a deep calling to the citizenry to rally behind cultural resistance brought about by modernization.

Corollary to volume was texture that added to the music's meaningful message.

Volume created visual images grounded on depth and lightness of tonality. For instance, light sound from the gong instrument encapsulated placid state, such calmness construed as quiet lamentation of people muted by the immensity of institutional structures the same way an onerously light texture from the guitar was not melancholy in romantic terms but more of an imminent danger looming ahead. Loudness, on the other hand, foregrounded a decrying moment of resistance accompanied by wailing in chant-like mode.

In terms of rhythmic movements, certainly the dance form in polyrhythmic accentuations provided entertainment with spectators engaged in the whole performance through imitation of dance steps bringing delight and profound resonance of indignation that intensified with the synergy of music, dance and emotions. In retrospect, rhythmic soaring heard from majestic gongs proved to be a resolute message with a high degree of approval.

The idea of venturing into ethnic-inspired music was my sense of involvement with a community theater that practically shared commonalities among members. We were theater enthusiasts inspiring each other with our own creative ideas that defined who we were as individuals then as social beings with responsibilities to the group and to the community. For my part, my role as the musical director came with responsibilities of overseeing rehearsals, providing music trainings and arranging songs for performance. I was also known to be the point person for anything musical. But what was also good about it was that outside of the group, I was just one of them. In other words, my role did not extend to anything beyond the scope of music-related activities. Being the musical director, it was almost like an innate impulse on their part that I performed my duties without question.

Because of such heavy responsibility, I saw to it that my functions reflected the goals, sentiments and values of our theater group more than my own personal convictions. At the end of the day, I was proud for who we were, and the music that we performed reflected my character and personality and also that of the cultural community where we belonged.

For instance, I was tasked to perform folksongs that expressed cultural heritage of the Waray-Waray group. In doing so, I researched a lot interviewing grandparents from different barangays, and asking them to perform songs they could remember that highlighted special occasions or ordinary events where singing or playing instrument was involved. From one of those I interviewed, I found out that there were special chant-like melodies performed by women performing birthing procedures in certain families during their time. Chanting intensified when the mother was ready to give birth, kind of like a trance that grew louder. Asked why such ritual was performed, I was told that its purpose was to draw out bad spirits that might be inhabiting inside the mother.

I was intrigued that such “exorcist” mentality was very much alive especially as the one performing it was not a priest but a local healer. To my delight, she gladly shared some melodies that she recalled. With a recorder on my palm, she performed a 5-minute musical oracle that seemed like an indulgent prayer that invoked spirits rather than drove them out.

One month later, our little theater group performed the chant echoed by the grandmother. During the performance, certain melodies were altered unintentionally because the performer felt something different, which prompted her to perform differently than what she had heard before. In the middle of such intense moment, I heard guitar strumming some chords that sounded in consonance with the chanting.

It was a magical moment that involved the audience as seen from their tapping, smiling and moving around in tune with the music around them.

After the performance, our theater group sat down and evaluated our artistic performance. One member aired out some surprising remarks like our sense of being Waray-Waray was not lost when we changed chanting melodies because we interpreted them our own way, although I still think we preserved what our grandmother possessed.

Even with all efforts to preserve group sensibility, at some point, I could not hold on to my personal values being sacrificed for the sake of the group. I could no longer bear to withstand criticisms of my performance because according to them, they no longer reflected group identity. This happened when one member argued that I was no longer following what has been discussed during the story conference. In my defense, I reasoned that I have to also assert my individuality because I was the one performing, not the grandmother.

In the final analysis, feminine power as epitomized in the grandmother's chanting narrative elevated a unique and emphatic musical sound uttered by a woman, an answer to an abnormally skewed musical performance towards masculine character, against a feminine form. In the utterance of a chanting sound, I deciphered its inner meaning and structure in terms of feminine quality apart from the obvious notion of the grandmother expressing those lines. While it was true that the sound was coming from her vocal chords, I could not help but dwell on the idea that I, the listener, had the final say on its femininity or indefinability whatsoever. It dawned on me that her way of relaying the chant could be different from what I heard. In other words, while in tantric mode, was she actually aware of her feminine

power expressed in the voice and in her body response, or was it just a matter of listener's perception?

Inspired by the wondrous impact of my experience in Butuan, I mounted a performance titled *"Kalahi",* an original piece performed with some participants in a workshop conducted by the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD) where I was invited as a resource speaker. The piece was a collaboration in many ways but I provided the musical thread in crafting popular melodic themes that were relatable to the audience. When I said relatable, I meant something that was easily absorbed and understood in order to be performed effortlessly. Indeed, after doing short rehearsals, the final performance was an emotional moment for each of them as I could feel how they related to the whole drama unfolding on stage.

The piece summed up themes of unity and progress in a time of difficulty. In effect, as composer and arranger, I transformed the message using rhetorical appeals such as tonal repetitions that did not only solidify affirmation but delightfully increased familiarity of sound. With such familiarity, profound messages were delivered forcefully in a manner so musical yet indirect. Such paradoxical motive of musical expression had to be embraced with openness especially in facing off the challenge of creating impact to a societal cause through mobilization of information. With the proliferation of digital platforms, dissemination has become an instinctive behavior and with music as language of expression, the grand narrative of dissemination has become more effortless.

Enjoying my freedom in production and dissemination of music, I became more active in such musical narratives that had cultural appeal and value aside from re-creating folksongs with new forms under the umbrella of preservation. One activity so meaningful to me was my exposure to a local shaman in deep meditation whom I

visited with a theater mentor. I had the simple task of listening to the silence in him and the surrounding milieu. Afraid that I might have been disturbing the ritual, I sat quietly with my eyes closed in an attempt to imbibe the energy so I could transform my own being in a way different from my normal stance.

In the stillness of my mind, in the quietness of intense, unobstructed listening, I heard voices from a distance growing by the second. These voices started as undefined rumblings in sporadic motion which seemed to come and go but became closer and louder when the wind blew against them. In keeping the spirit alive, I did not interrupt such moment, instead, I became one with it by mimicking what I heard. I remember I was chanting in an engaging manner attuned to the recitatives chanted by the shaman. The episode was kind of a spiritual partnership that evoked deep realizations in my musical thoughts. Moreover, transcendence of music was an idea that sound as musical attribute was a form of energy that was present elsewhere including air. It was always there since the dawn of creation. It was up to us to gather such energy. In effect music was not residing in human consciousness that one had while others did not.

Intrigued by such explosion of transcendental sound, I experimented on silence as music in itself, in the absence of sound. In so doing, I walked alone in a deep forest in Japan in penetrating silence. Expecting nothing else but to dwell, I noticed its gravitational force as pauses that created inconspicuous music, hidden yet clear. All of a sudden, I realized the pause I was referring to was my own breathing. At the center of my meditative sound was listening to my own music, my own breathing which to me was the highest form of liberation. All I along I was creating authentic sound from the depth of my own breathing that set the pace of my walk in slow tempo. Following my spiritual excursion, I performed even the simplest

of my compositions in the most meaningful way recognizing the power of silence as something not to be discounted.

On the whole, my self-discoveries through deep, meaningful experiences defined a sense of my being a dynamic creator of musical stories that bordered on sensitivity and oneness in the cultural milieu that explained my significance towards building a self and my collective consciousness.

## Part 2: Rhetorical Elements in a Musical Performance

This section of the dissertation has three parts, namely: the ethos, logos, and pathos that correspond to the performer-music-audience interaction of rhetoric that makes good music performance. These are discussed individually in terms of performance and composition.

### 2.1 Ethos: Being a Good Performer?

#### Performance

Good performance mirrors how good a performer is. In achieving so, *ethos* in the classical rhetorical theory is critical as it represents moral credibility and authority of the musical performer. At the core of credibility is interpretation of music. The ancient Greeks believed that the power of music is its ability to imitate emotion and has the ability to shape the character of the performer.

> *"Interpretation of written sheet music was a journey towards understanding the intricate nuances as dictated by the composer at the same time allowing musicality to be a personal direction that was not constricted to the musical structure."*

The vignette articulates two levels of interpretative playing that speaks of my *ethos.* For one, it depicts the idea that success in my performance with a written musical score by a composer will be measured by my analytical and emotional interpretation according to the composer's will. In mimetic sense as an art of imitation of emotion, this becomes a ticklish issue when a composer's emotions will be rendered as a form of representation. On the other hand, my interpretation of the composer's ideas will identify musicality as an innate, individual attribute. The confluence of both ascertains a level of musicianship that is authoritative given the idea of following technical demands of the composer juxtaposed with my heightened personal understanding of the musical saga.

*"In my experience, it was both a celebration of composer's delight and my personal narrative of interpretation."*

According to Frantz (2021), musical interpretation is, in a word, storytelling.

When music narrates, it involves multiple senses dwelling upon layers of musical textuality in order to exhume the richness of interpretation. Such audacious gesture is, of course, reliant upon a performer's sensitivity towards self-expression.

*"For example, dynamics as carefully outlined in the score still had to be interpreted according to my emotions…."*

*"What was even more surprising to me was how much creative imagination I put on the piece that I extended the themes with my rendition creating a dramatic departure from Tchaikovsky to a more personal approach to the music.*

Creative imagination, as articulated in the second narrative, reverberates interpretative playing in its meaningful state. My indulgence with sound imagery, scenery, surrealistic impression, among others, enhance performance hermeneutics as aesthetic devices.

On top of everything, a sincere and honest performance will always give justice to its overall success. As such, in performing another artist's work, I seek to decipher meanings as articulated by the composer. On top of that, my individual expression gives life and meaning to the whole narrative signifying that ownership of music now belongs to me as a performance artist. In retrospect, musical rendering gives new levels of identity formation defining a sense of self in the musical episode that becomes the highest level of musical credibility. Corollary to this notion is passion in emotional narration where profound meanings are expressed in a multitude of ways intensifying vulnerability as an inevitable occurrence.

> *"In effect, I designated interpretation as a language that had to be communicated. This was one realization that defined my sense of character using musical sound as a form of language and the variations of such renderings epitomized a rich form of expression that deepened awareness of my own capacity to communicate."*

Music as a form of language is assumed to be a human universal emerging from an evolutionary adaptation specific to music and/or a by-product of adaptations for affect, language, motor control, and auditory perception (Asprou, 2014). In the above vignette, interpretation as a language of expression imbued with codes and patterns are in fact universally understood (Asprou, 2014), forming the performer's communication practice. As such, richness of the musical language is constituted by

themes to be clearly expressed so that the listening audience understands. As such, my sense of authority is mirrored in explorations of the musical language that creates individual impact so that its deepened understanding ascertains a profound experience.

> *"I learned how to tell a story in terms of sound with its variations, nuance, and volume as elements that when woven together created a unified narrative that was equivalent to human conversation. I also learned that just like telling a story, playing music had to be clearly explained so that the audience would understand what I was trying to explain."*

> *"Nevertheless, playing the Grieg Concerto signaled a rich indulgence into the vast literature of keyboard music with varied temperaments and technical demands."*

The first vignette expounds interpretation as narrative with nuances akin to human conversation. One such realization is the ability to recognize nuances in communication such as being sensitive to signals, listening to sound and silence and reacting to those signals to make interpretative playing rich.

In the second vignette, "indulgence into the vast literature of the keyboard" becomes an essential component in building *ethos* character. Indeed, authority and moral character are honed through skills training where various exposures to different music genres introduce a musician to sensibilities that will enhance cognitive development. It must be understood that rhetoric as an art of persuasion can be learned and developed. Great orators undergo oratorical trainings and master the craft of public speaking through scholarly practice to become effective

communicators. This is the same analysis for performers as musical orators who must undergo perfection of the craft through intensive training as well.

> *"It was at this moment where I understood the immensity of my skill as a pianist, emergent still but profoundly being molded with every literature I was studying."*

In another dimension, a person of *ethos* must observe good sense, moral character, and goodwill (Panda, 2019).

> *"The whole experience gave me a sense of pride and dignity as an artist imbued with intellectual power ready to dispose to his royal subjects. Keeping this mental image made me more confident with my playing and allowed me to indulge in creative imagination."*

Pride and dignity in the vignette define a person's moral character without doubt. The indulgence is a true testament of sincerity in human expression giving sense to such quality. In musical performance, the same accolade can be attributed to a sincere performance that takes pride in one's own interpretive gesture. In keeping truthfulness of such intellectual pursuit, the result is an overflowing creative imagination in visualization of sound as there are no hindrances nor inhibitions affecting me as the performer. The same idea holds true in ordinary instance when a person possesses honest and dignified character, his actions manifest a glorification of sincerity paving the way for indulgent creations without limitations. This is the character of trustworthiness that people relate to, when they expect that what you are telling them is true (Dlugan, 2010). Thus, a musical performance from an honest, trustworthy performer who is true to his interpretation takes pride in moral rectitude that is liberating in many way

*"With all might, I plunged in dramatic monologue unknowingly stretching my imagination with limitless possibilities. In other words, I was constantly creating scenes that depicted different levels of emotion, translated such emotions to musical passages."*

In another discussion, one of the most important dimensions that affect *ethos* is the element of space. This is articulated in the actual performance place where I become robust in artistic expression because the venue is appropriate to the experience.

*"In terms of the venue of the production, I knew my background in music was more meaningful when the scene of the play defined the actual venue or its approximation. When the play was set in an indoor theater, the sound I created in the forest scene seemed inauthentic because it was an enclosed space as opposed to an open-air production that simulated forest atmosphere."*

Implied in the narrative is the notion that one's performance is well understood given the right space or venue. As a consequence, thereof, the performer is accorded trust and credibility as perceived by the audience. For instance, a great violinist who performs in a concert stage expects the audience to have superb performance, thus his *ethos* is magnified as opposed to the same violinist who performs along a busy street. The latter will not receive the same accolade from passersby who have other things in mind outside of listening to violin music.

Indeed, performance reaffirms and restores epideictic function of *ethos* as a mode of cultural and embodied personal narrative; to encourage an ethotic "scholarship of the personal," expressive of one's identification/participation…

(Baumin & Meyer, 2018). Clearly, such discursive stance of personal justification in musical performance magnifies the narrative discourse as personal located within cultural facets. In other words, *ethos* as character is not solely defined by the performer but how he or she is understood by the listening audience in the formation of personal and social identities. More than anything else, the performer's sense of aplomb defining one's reputation involves critical evaluation of the performance including other aspects aside from musicality.

By "character," we assume both personhood and persona – that is, the self's expressive self-identity as well as its social presentation at work (Corder, 1978 as cited by Baumlin & Meyer, 2018). In this regard, a dichotomous self that reveals one's inner character as projected in the performance is juxtaposed by an "outside" self as seen by the culture surrounding it. One hopes for sincerity, authenticity, and self-consistency in this doubled, inside/outside "showing-forth" of character (Baumlin & Meyer, 2018). Thus, the dialectic of inside/outside self manages to explicate a profound understanding of a performer's character regardless of one's intent.

> *"Character, my own being at the same time projecting a character that was believed to concur with cultural expectations. In other words, this duality of self-expressions justified a sense of authentic performance even if there were instances that I was merely confined to meeting expectations from the audience."*

One of the indicators of reputable performance is the physical aspect it exudes through body movements, hand articulations, facial gestures, among other expressive elements that combined with sound, creates an effective performance within the *ethos* dimension. Gesture is complex because it has a dualistic nature. It can be employed as a learned "technique of the body" which follows Mauss

argument (1973), or it can be considered a sign that communicates some meaning. Gesture can be considered a performed symbol, a sign with meaningful referent (Feldman, 2006).

*"One prophetic gesture as a result of my intent listening was a gentle pause in one direction with my head slightly raised above to one side of the audience which to me seemed like gathering tones from the air around."*

*"During my performance, I opened up with rhythmic pulse on Db major with thirds to establish rhythm that swept through the entire piece while my head was swaying left and right in sheer delight."*

*"Before playing the melody on the right hand, I signaled the students with a raised finger on the right to indicate a forthcoming element to be expressed, the melody. Then I lowered my head closer to the keys in order to indicate loudness. Nuances of texture were created with various body gestures like tilting to different directions to highlight changing tonal quality."*

*"During this time, clearer articulation through finger action was sought with round tones coming out from my round movement of the fingers indicating continuity. Moreover, my arm stretched farther out on the side indicating a wider scope of conquest especially on emphatic lines."*

Generally speaking, the vignettes articulate performance gestures through hand and body movements. They are not there as mere theatrics but the overall body motion is underscored by such structures as interpreted from the written music (Macritchie, Buck & Balley, 2013), as indicated, *"….raised finger on the right to indicate a forthcoming element to be expressed, melody."* In other words, body response (raised finger) as a conscious effort of a performer to a musical indication (melody) resonates a confluence of structure and gesture. Moreover, underlying musical structure across performers' motion profiles are seen to be constructed from functions of harmonic and melodic relationships in the score (Macritchie, Buck & Balley, 2013).

> *"In articulating delicate passages, my wrist action was so light, gentle and fluid like soft waves on the ocean avoiding as much as possible tensions and rigidities in articulation."*

It is implied in the vignette that visual imaging of sound helps in the physical response of such sound forming once again an alignment of sound imagery with performance gesture. The overall impact is, indeed, a well-recognized credibility of the performer. Such analysis brings back the notion of interpretive playing manifested in performance gestures as physical response to music structure. It is rightfully asserted that alignment underscores the idea of musical continuity within inside/outside perspective of what is internal (emotion) and outside (perception of physical gesture emanating from the performer) as a form of coherence. Oftentimes, this leads to a moving performance that a delighted audience will associate expressiveness in terms of hand directions and overall body articulations. The assertion becomes inevitable in the sense that *ethos* is to be generally understood by the listening audience not as mere personal exhibition to serve the artist's delight.

*"Lastly, I also noticed that the audience seemed to like exhibitions on the piano as a form of visual spectacle. When I intensified some episodes with elaborate cross-hand technique, the audience rose to their feet and engaged in a dynamic flow of interaction with me, my music, and their emotional state."*

The last phrase in the vignette, *"emotional state"* sends a dialectical tension as discussed in the inside/outside perspective of the self. In addition to the analysis before, musical expression layered within one's emotional state can send varying signals that may not be physically understood by the audience. In many ways, deeply introspective artists drawn to internal communication of musical content might look dull in the physical level but emotionally, the performer is captured by powerful messages that are known to him only. In that sense, the performer escapes in the performance milieu and wanders through rich, creative imagination without any physical manifestation whatsoever.

### ***Ethos*** **in Baroque Rhetoric**

Performance Clip: *Jesu, Joy of Man" Desiring* by Johan Sebastian Bach
Pianist: Leoncio P. Olobia
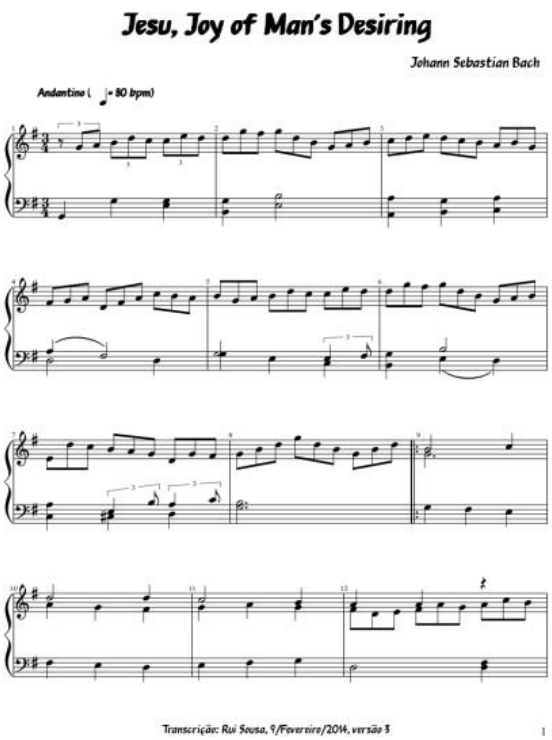
Figure 3. Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring

Ornamentation is extremely significant in Baroque music (Burroughs, 2014). Composers expect musicians to add ornamentation, including trills, mordents, turns, appoggiaturas, grace notes, passing tones, etc. (Burroughs, 2014).

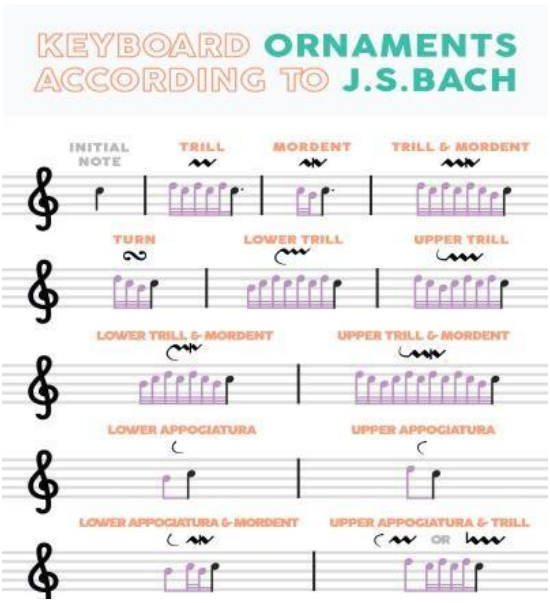


Figure 4. Keyboard Ornaments According to Bach

Ornaments are indicated in the above illustration in the form of trills, mordents, inverted mordents, among others with specific symbols on top while actual note articulations placed underneath. Interpretation of the ornaments requires robust technique even if they are construed as nuances, hence, ornamentations.

> *"However, in the midst of compliance to the manuscript, it dawned in me that the original score I played had no dynamics and tempo indications signifying my freedom to interpret the score."*

> *"Thus, even with the confines of baroque playing, I internalized the notion of ornamentation by placing accents on different sections, thinking legato while some notes had to be played staccato, and distributing melodic emphasis according to how I felt."*

Indeed, what is spectacular about Baroque music is its inherently improvisational character that adds to the intricacy of musical narration. In the original manuscripts of Bach's music, only notes were written down and the rest were left to the performer's imagination. As such, melodic articulations were embellished with mordents, trills, etc. treated as performer's display of technical prowess and profound interpretation.

> *"Once again, my interpretation of the piece was characterized by courage and determination to execute the details perfectly. Realizing that I was glued to every note articulation and accentuation, it became easy for me to communicate the message to the audience where the feedback I got was stunning silence*

*while I played, yet another indication of absorption of the sound reverberating through the walls."*

In expounding on the subject of ornamentation, Baroque performance is to be ignited with such powerful "add-ons" without abandoning what is written in the score. This idea is not similar to jazz music that is also improvisational in character where notes are generally not written in the score. In other words, its improvisational character looms from a performer's imaginative construction of musical lines unlike in Baroque music of Bach where manuscripts are there as "instructional device" but interpretation is left to the performer's interpretation. Aesthetics in exhibiting *ethos* becomes a goal of the performer in expressing the message with ornamentations to deepen interpretation. It is generally thought that Bach's music has intellectual intent with analytical forms to be dissected for richer interpretation.

*"The whole experience was like a didactic lecture with me as the teacher preaching and instructing important information to the listening public."*

Further, it will be noticed that Bach as the father of Baroque music, dedicated his music to the church which signified that his rhetorical appeal was to instruct divine messages through musical sound.

*"In the listening end, the audience seated on pews quietly absorbed the music in a reverential way with some closing their eyes in meditation while others just staring at me. I thought my music aided their spiritual journey, accompanying prayer with cycles of emotions while my music was echoing through the walls of the church, deepening their communion with God."*

It will be gleaned from the narrative that Bach's music has religious and spiritual undertones that "instruct" divine followers to commune with God in an instantaneous manner. Aiding their spiritual journey, it is conceivable that music accentuates deep meditation of prayerful people guiding them in every musical utterance so that meditation becomes meaningful.

On the surface level, much of Bach's playing is characterized by the lack of excess movements (Hays, 2021). This was true of his hands and the rest of his body (Hays, 2021). Johann Forkel (1749-1818) recounts that "Sebastian Bach is said to have played with easy and small a motion of the fingers that it was hardly perceptible…. Still less did the other parts of his body take any share in his play.

> *"Attached to my spiritual journey, I played with minimal body movements. Instead, I focused on the delicate touch of the triplets making sure I was not overplaying or disfiguring other passages. However, even with legato feeling of connection, I articulated a sense of independence in my left-hand expressions."*

In addition to the minimal articulation of body expression in performing Bach's music, the performer must play with such an articulation as to preserve the independence of each of the part (Hays, 2021). This characteristic nature of fugal playing exemplifies independence of voices amidst interweaving of melodic interactions. When learning any Bach music with voices, it is imperative that each voice is learned independently in order to look for themes analyzed in terms of their complexity and recurrence in the different vocal lines in contrapuntal style. Such quality depicts communicative dialogue between the voices that are akin to human conversation. In here, the performer asserts the dominant theme to be well-asserted along the intertwining of harmonic lines. What is also interesting to note is that there

is always something going on in Baroque music like a dialogue that builds on seemingly endless exchange of ideas.

> *"During a school event, I played "Invention no.15 in B minor", the last cycle of the three-part inventions. Amazed at the contrapuntal nature of the piece with three voices intertwining between right and left hand added with inner notes in-between, it was a labyrinth that glided swiftly with rising tensions, deepening temperaments enriched with color tonality especially that the piece was written in a "minor" key, imbued with all nuances of heavy emotions. The music seemed unending especially between the dialogic interactions in counterpoints that sounded like human chattering."*

### ***Ethos*** **in Classical Rhetoric**

Performance Clip: Moonlight Sonata by Ludwig van Beethoven (1st movement) Pianist: Leoncio P. Olobia
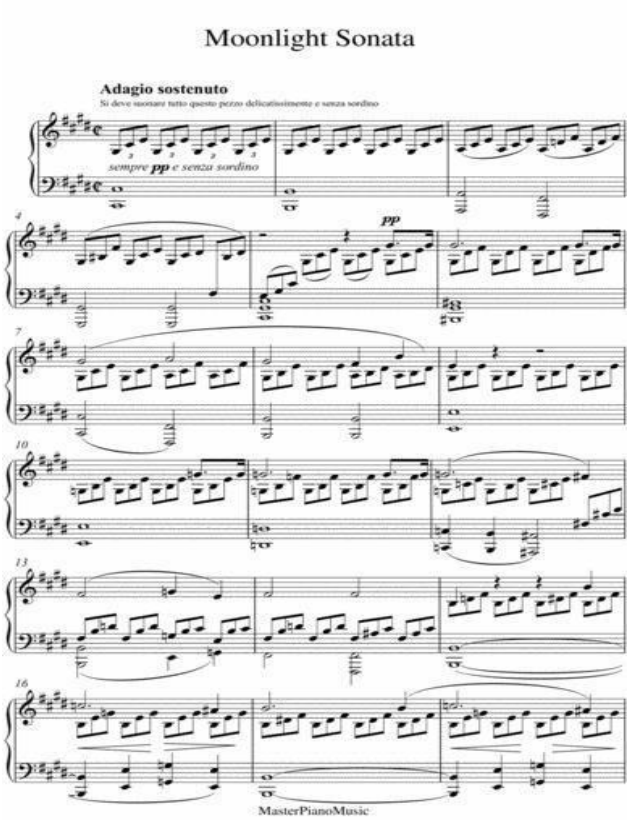
Figure 5. Moonlight Sonata

The Classical Period was roughly from 1750-1810. A common characteristic of Classical music is 'graceful' melodies, in clear-cut and balanced phrases. Classical music is often homophonic, with an emphasis on the elegance and beauty of melody (Rogers, 2015). One of the representatives of Classical music is Ludwig van Beethoven's *"Moonlight Sonata"*, originally titled "Sonata quasi una fantasia" which translates to "Sonata in the manner of a fantasia" (Albertson, 2020). A fantasia is generally conceived as free-flowing with extended variations in improvisatory fashion.

*"In terms of form, the first movement followed the standard structure of exposition, development and cod intricately woven*

*together with notions of improvisation running through my mind as I explored."*

Implied in the vignette is a notion that *ethos* in Classical rhetoric as exemplified through music follows a characteristic standard, well-balanced articulation of melodies. It will be noticed that in *"Moonlight Sonata,"* the performer's degree of interpretation adds to profundity of meaning. Such statement is based on the fact that Beethoven was a transition from Classical to the Romantic period where the latter regarded human expression at the core of musical interpretation. Moreover, as a fantasy piece in sonata form, it follows a free-flowing narrative within a sonata form with ornamentation towards the coda section.

In articulating *ethos* as performance character, using the body to move with the hands is a vital step to playing the piece well (Albertson, 2020). Particularly in Moonlight, the right hand arpeggiated up a scale in the development section, which requires I move my body with the motion of my hands (Albertson, 2020).

*"As my playing progressed, I noticed a sense of gentle swaying with circular movements in my right arm with a feeling of subtlety and somberness.*

Next, in indulging with graceful melodies, *"Moonlight Sonata"* (second movement) expresses such vitality in a well-structured dance-like movement in *minuetto.*

*"In terms of the form, the second movement was written as minuetto with trio in Db major as opposed to C# minor in the first movement. With the feeling of a waltz, I noticed some dance-like movements in my body with short leaps especially in the trio*

*section where octave melodies were literally jumping from high to low registers."*

The importance of the narrative relates to a performer's body movement (short leaps as dance) in perfect unison to the musical theme in *minuetto,* meaning graceful dance of the past. This is a grand statement of interpretation that is relatable to a performer who has knowledge about the music, its period, and artistic temperament of the composer, the combination of which will result to a credible performance.

The third movement is dark and heavy, similar in mood to the first movement, but much faster and ferocious. It is fast, fluid, and exciting (Albertson, 2020).

*"The third movement in presto agitato was a powerful musical exhibition filled with ferocious temperament that was difficult to sustain from beginning to end not only in terms of technique but in emotional depth as well."*

*"It felt like a chariot race, an adrenalin rush with 16$^{th}$ note running like wildfire.*

Clearly, the third movement requires virtuosity at its optimal performance to be endured with utmost determination. This is the pinnacle of the sonata's technical prowess proving the performer's agility and musical background which should be resolved when applied profusely. In this regard, *ethos* is the capacity to withstand such powerful display like an oratorical discourse that sustains the audience with highly motivating speech that penetrates into people's emotions. With this sonata, the performer's audacity and quick reflex are deemed necessary to create a persuasive appeal not only to the audience but to the performer as well. It must be

recalled that in order for *ethos* character to be credible and valid, it must be understood by the audience. Having said that, performance must be centered around personal goal and satisfaction gleaned towards liberation as the last movement is all about comfort speed that should be in the zone of technical and artistic capability of the performer.

> *"Building intensity and indulgence were key properties of persuasive interpretation which guided my playing. I had to make sure that despite tension and anxiety built in the score, my interpretation was emancipatory, without hesitation, and with conviction."*

Finally, *"Moonlight Sonata"* is an emotive piece filled with haunting melodies that capture the performer's artistic nuances that is why to this day, it remains a favorite classical piece used in movies, concert repertoire, advertisement, among many of its popular adoptions. The performer is always drawn to self-expression owing to its emotive qualities.

### ***Ethos*** **in Romantic Rhetoric**

Performance Clip: Etude in Ab Major, Op. 25, no.2 by Frederic Chopin Artist: Leoncio P. Olobia
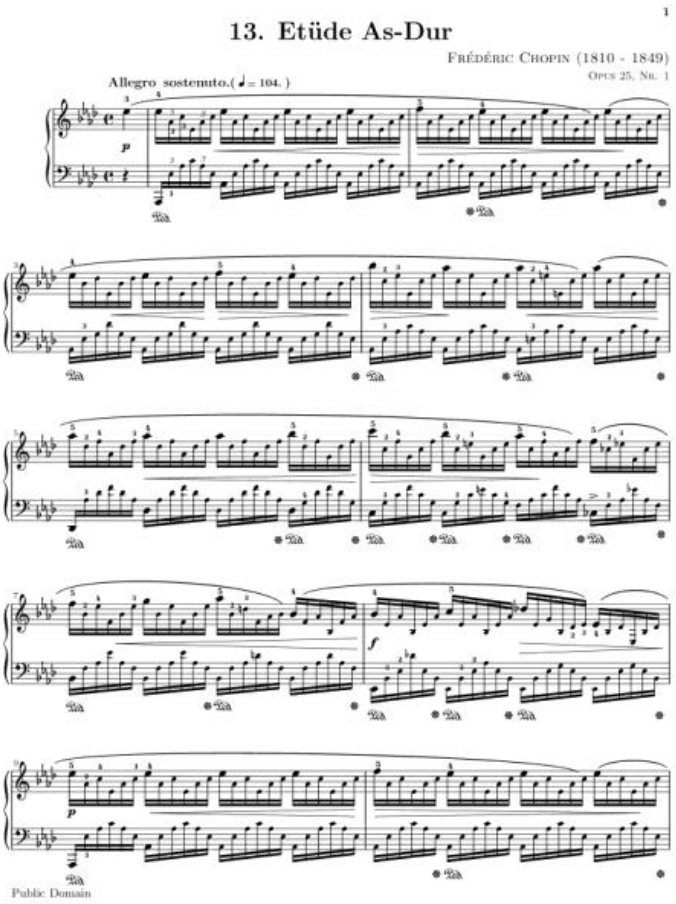
Figure 6. Etude As-Dur

During the Romantic period, musical oration, a public event directed to the listener, has now become a philosophical discourse, a private act that requires no audience, and indeed probably functions better without any audience at all (Leithart, 2016). In effect, Romantic composers and musicians celebrated self-expression as the dictum of musical interpretation. The rhetoric of persuading the audience became a personal narrative.

> *"Following transformation of musical sensibilities in the Romantic period, its rhetoric centered on individual expression, emotional attachment with music, and a broad range of the*

*performer's interpretation that defined his personal character as opposed to the rigidities of the Classical period.*

*Ethos* in the Romantic rhetoric clearly exemplifies individual liberation, a sense of personal realization that the artist is performing for himself instead for a listening audience. In effect, such personalized view emancipates the musical narrator to endless possibilities for creative imagination.

*"Persuasion was self-driven and for self-aggrandizement through narrative explorations of the human soul. Thus, the performer was no longer focused on audience attention, but, was more confined to his inner struggles, pains and triumphs.*

In totality, the richness of Romantic expression is the search for meanings that validate expressions according to personal understanding. It is rightfully situated within rhetorical persuasion, this time to serve the self in establishing emotional connection to the musical sound uttered.

*"For one, the freedom I enjoyed in interpretation broadened my imagination."*

However, even with the idea of self- indulgence, it must be noted that written music of the composer goes with his ideas and emotions to be understood and performed by an artist. In this regard, interpretation becomes an autonomous property of the artist according to his own terms: *"inner struggles, pains and triumphs"*, the vignette signifies.

From the performance perspective, physical action forms part of the narrative tale where the performer interprets music through body motions highlighting self-expression.

*"As a young pianist then, I executed the piece with utmost vigor like a commander-in-chief imbued with authority and dominion to conquer his musical subjects but made sure the notes created a unified ensemble with broad arms stretching and the body tilting to the right occasionally in unison with the melody."*

*"Vigor"* in the vignette depicts an idea of passionate playing that dwells on the artist's deep connection to emotions manifested in *"broad arms stretching and the body tilting".* Such alignment elucidates sensitivity of the performer to one's understanding more than anything else. As a personal communication of the deep messages embedded in the artist's world, performance is not intended for the audience's persuasion or motivation. Incidentally, it becomes an afterthought. Moreover, it will be recalled that the Romantic period occurred in a period of national strife when people sought to find meanings and significance despite the surrounding conflicts affecting their societies. As such, expressions were of longingness to personal redemption, a form of amelioration, a declaration of freedom. These notions affected how they expressed music with self-expressions raised to the highest pedestal of interpretation. This was the rhetoric of Romantic expression. It is persuasion of the individual performance based on emotional and passionate qualities that relate musical utterances to ones' experiences mirrored in physical movements.

*"Following transformation of musical sensibilities in the Romantic period, its rhetoric centered on individual expression, emotional attachment with music, and a broad range of performer's interpretation that defined his physical character as opposed to the rigidities of the Classical period."*

### *Ethos* in 20th Century Rhetoric

Performance Clip: “Claire de Lune” by Claude Debussy Pianist: Leoncio Olobia
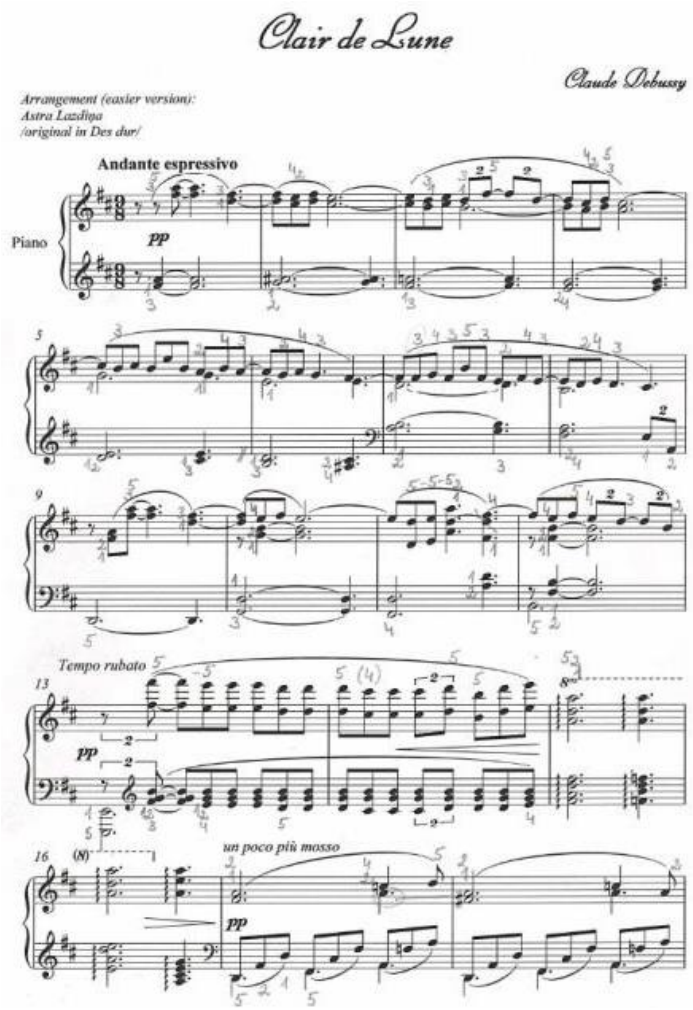
Figure 7. Claire de Lune

At the end of the nineteenth century, common musical rules were questioned, bent, reinvented, altered, and sometimes thrown away completely (Boumpani & Carteret, n.d.) Twentieth century expressions were grounded on discovering new forms and styles that could hardly be combined under one general movement. The

sense of democracy among performers was the guiding principle towering every musical invention of the times.

One of the characteristic features of 20th century music is the notion of impressionism in musical poetry centering on visualization of sound just like impressionism in painting. In this movement, the composer indulges in image creation depicting textures of tonality expressed vividly in *"Claire de Lune"* by Claude Debussy.

> *"As a representative of impressionism, "Claire de "Lune was rich in musical images of sound with different colors like a painting with various colors. It was this magical rendering of images that was central to my impressions with various tonalities creating different timbre with dynamics especially in the fluidity of interconnected notes comprising delicate piano and pianissimo passages."*

The delicateness of the musical colors in impressionistic rendition of *"Claire de Lune"* underscores the idea that the movement captures impressions of reality not reflections on actual reality. In other words, artistic pieces render subjective readings based on the artist's notions of effects, light, balance, color and other visualization of impressionistic poetry rather than painting or playing a depiction of reality that has the objective of elucidating its actual manifestations.

Historically speaking, impressionism originated in the late 19th century Paris serving as a reaction to a rapidly changing urban environment (McQueen, 2018). In this movement, the enjoyment of music has become a strictly individual matter, just like in composition (Leeuw, 2005). This defines individualism in modern rhetoric owing to the notion that individualism does not mean being different, but more as a

normal attribute. The fact that this "normality" sounds so absurd to so many people indicates the extent of present-day individualism (Leeuw, 2005).

*"But, after listening to the lecture of my professor, I was convinced his music was speaking a lot in the midst of silence."*

*"He opened up the sheet music then started his long silence, in other words he did not play a single note on the piano. Why? Because there were no notes written down, only musical symbols…?*

The vignette characterizes an avant-garde composition, *"4'33"* (4 minutes, 33 seconds) by an American composer, John Cage, whose performance envelopes silence where a pianist opens the piano and lays down the sheet music only to sit and not play anything. The music is characterized by the noise and sound within the hall: from people's coughing, chatters, among others. It is a paradoxical silence emanating from the stillness of the performer against the sound resonating in the entire hall. During the early performances of the piece, disgusted audience walked out of the hall in protest.

In articulating the *ethos* of John Cage's composition, one is intrigued by such audacious gesture of complete authority and power of the pianist in imitating the rituals of performance decorum from going up on stage, taking a bow, sitting on the piano bench, opening the pages of the music sheet, and putting arms on the side.

Such narrative is a testament of great individuality so characteristic of modern rhetoric. It is not to be construed as subjectivism that characterized Romantic music with expansive views on emotionality yet still adhering to the rules of Classical form in composition. Opposite this is, the music of John Cage, who along with new

composers debunks notions of objectivity in favor of indulgence to individualistic meanings.

However, the period is so vast in scope that composers and performers expand sensibilities of individualism to include social activism and other forms of expression that have societal impact. To this date, alternative music, gender-focused expressions, and political songs are just some of the themes that have collective resonance creating profound messages that catapult rhetoric to higher levels of consciousness. In effect, persuasion becomes a socially constructed emblem defining a social group. In the final analysis, *ethos* in modern rhetoric rallies individualism at the core of performance character. This is imbued with personal convictions that can have societal ramifications as seen by the performer and understood by the audience.

**Composition**
**Performance Clips:** *"Hating Gabi"* by Antonio Molina
*"Sayaw Fantasia"* by Leoncio Olobia
*"Yolanda"* by Leoncio Olobia

**Pianist:** Leoncio Olobia
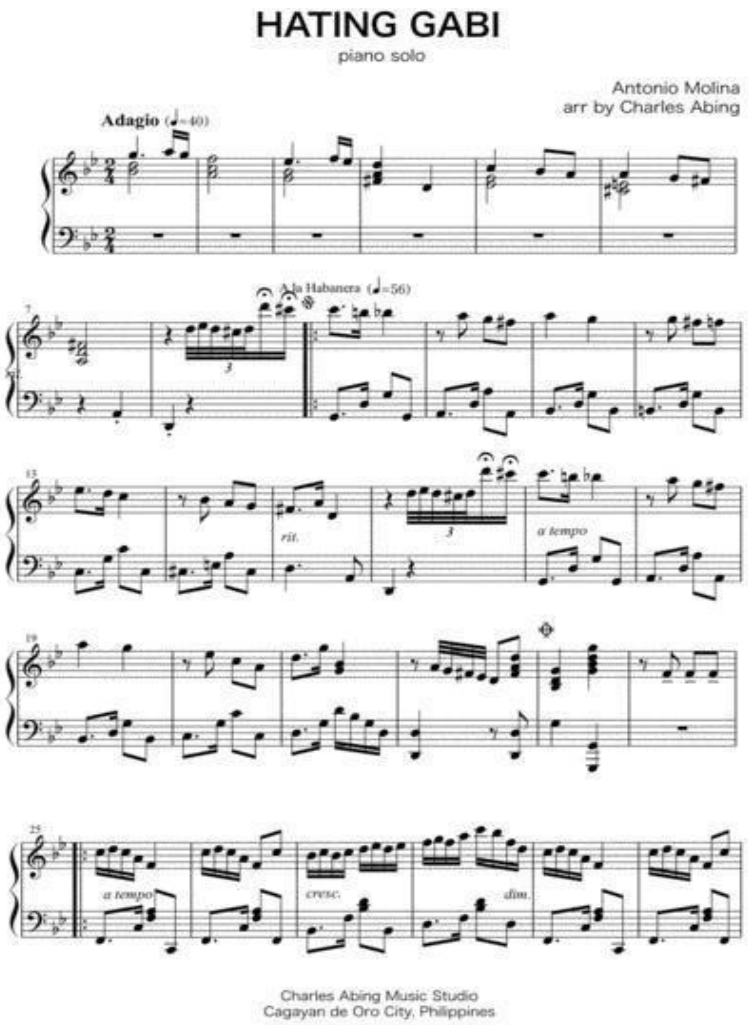
Figure 8. Hating Gabi
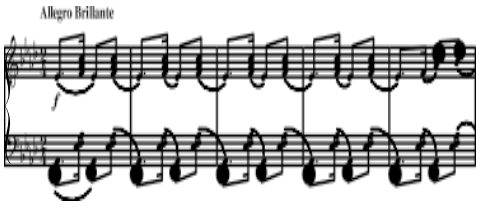
Figure 9. Sayaw Fantasia

*Ethos* in my compositions highlight my application and exploration of the many forms, styles, techniques and expressions learned from various musical periods and experiences in many occasions throughout my journeys which have

become my sources of inspiration. Incorporating ideas, altering nuances for artistic effect, adjusting performance to different audience and setting a high-performance level in each of these occasions are my personal standards that build with every performance.

In the realm of application, it is best noted that throughout my schooling in classical piano, a great influence from European-inspired sound manifests in my original compositions.

> *"One such composition I created was titled "Etude in C Major," a Western concept meaning "study" where I thought the title was significant as its content was more of a technical exercise on finger dexterity. But what was more intriguing was that I used a folksong titled "Kuratsa", a courtship dance in Leyte and Samar, in order to explicate piano pedagogy using Alberti bass in classical form, popular in Mozart sonatas, while the right hand was playing melodies of "Kuratsa" with some added ornamentations with classical nuances."*

The vignette immediately captures an audacious character to apply Western sonata form especially in Alberti technique used in my original composition rightfully expressing my classical influence, not only in terms of its technical value but also in its emotional appeal in interpreting folksong in my locality infused with European technique.
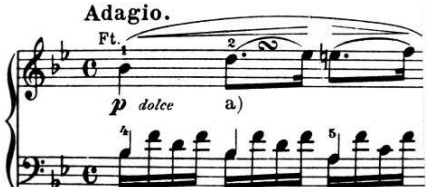
Figure 10. Alberti bass

Alberti bass is seen in the above illustration where the bass part in the lower register depicts moving bass lines between Bb-F-D-F pattern repeated in the second beat, so typical in Mozart and Haydn sonatas of the Classical period.

Such enculturation of a foreign form is interesting because I am indigenizing a foreign idea absorbed into local sensibility in order to deepen my self-expression. As a composition/performance technique on application, it restores native expression to be at the core of identity formation, such restoration centering on individuality and social cohesion through cultural appropriation. In many ways, this is a *glocalization* process that instills ideas and expressions known to the global village as applied within the community which essentially becomes a local sensibility.

*"Nostalgic right at the very core."*

*"True Waraynon, indeed."*

In appropriating foreign element in Filipino composition, one of the most celebrated Spanish-influenced music is *"Hating Gabi"* (Antonio Molina), a romantic piece for violin and piano. This piece elevated in the folksong category never fails to evoke the unique Philippine rural scene of a romantic moonlight evening and a young boy serenading his ladylove (Pil, 2005).

> *"With "Hating Gabi," nocturnal ambience provided a musical setting which also sets the mood for doing a serenade. For my part, the element of nocturne as a dreamy evening piece made me indulge in quiet and subdued sound with some moments of elation especially in the "major" section."*

What is interesting about the piece is its rural atmosphere that is often used in Filipino movies defining a sense of cultural identity as something indigenous, local, and authentic. Moreover, the ambience of guitar music as soulful and sonorous

resonates a feeling of a rural and surreal ambience of quiet sonority. Similar to other *kundiman* songs, it begins with a minor mode and ends in a triumphant major mode, which metaphorically translates transformation from dark to light emotion. In contrast, *"Hating Gabi"* as a folksong has no lyrics to exemplify sentiments of love, instead, melodic utterances with harmonies in thirds and sixths deepen the musical texture.

> *"With all might, I interpreted "Hating Gabi" in terms of temperament using "danza" tempo in 2/4 time signature with accentuated pauses in certain musical phrase endings."*

> *"However, once again, the powerful song in ¾ time signature moved majestically especially when the 'major key' resolution was attained, a standard transition from minor to major key typical of kundiman."*

From the vignettes, *Hating Gabi* represents *danza tempo* as a form of *harana* (serenade) in 2/4 time signature while a typical *kundiman* is in ¾ time signature. The former has Tagalog lyrics while the latter can include Spanish lyrics along with Tagalog lines.

Credibility of the performer in this classic is the ability to express subtlety in musical sound, not through loud, emphatic lines. Also, musical utterance is a manifestation of deep emotional connection of the performer to one's personal experience in a quiet stance as one would feel during a serenade. Akin to soliloquy, the narrative is personal, deliberate and passionate. *Ethos* character looms from my deep expressions of the self through interpretive renderings of the many facets of love and longingness. Although it is personal, the music resonates to a higher sense

of consciousness in forming collective expressions of love and loyalty to a community that bears such longingness. Such adulation highlights a powerful character in a simple manner without overpowering the audience.

Juxtaposed with indigenization process is its reverse: the local becomes foreign. Indeed, in such cultural mix a dominant element can emerge making the other repressed or become subservient. This notion defeats the purpose of identity formation especially when foreign entity is encroaching. Based on lessons from colonialism, it is a form of colonial mentality engulfing an individual, a community and a nation that inhibits local expressions in favor of foreign intrusions. In order to emancipate from imprisonment, local expressions must accept the flow and become one with the foreign and even accept that a powerful influence can find its way within the local text.

> *"In other words, I was playing a local folksong using classical elements. The effect was astoundingly classical that if someone played it without any knowledge of the folksong, it could easily be categorized as a European classical music.*

In another exploration, my sense of agility as music communicator highlights adventurism through creative imagination and sensibility in a boundless fashion knowing that my technique is able to articulate wide musical perspectives. As a universal dictum of professional playing, it is highly commendable that a performer is equipped with the tools to articulate different dimensions of human expression. This confidence is a performance character that looms according to the performer's know-how that allow experimentations to unfold.

*"As I was communicating "musical destruction", on some level I was also re-creating a new sound from the debris of madness. Indeed, my diabolical intentions*

*became powerful affirmations of vulnerability and reconstructions so delicately intertwined that stories were ripped of any plot, the music was deprived of tonality and balance, that life breathed in madness."*

Musical experimentation is a mindset where all ideas are worth exploring, so long as they are new.

To unlock new musical ideas, musicians often employ new methods of music-making, using tactics like playing in unfamiliar tunings, writing with new instruments and intentionally upending their processes (McGuire, 2019). Connecting the previous statement with my vignette articulates a powerful aura of artistic prowess that a *"musical destruction"* can turn into a magical moment of re-creation and reconstruction nesting on vulnerability of the performer. Indeed, with profound music skills, a performer gives way to audacious and creative explorations with dissonant sound providing new direction for credible articulation.

> *"During my continued search for identity, the grand narrative of emancipation through artistic experimentations defined myself even on the brink of defying conventions in some instances".*

It will be noticed that experimentation is an offshoot of liberation of art and the artist. Underpinned by creative imagination, a performer can dwell upon *"musical destruction"* in the pursuit of defying norms and structures in music that can be limiting to a wandering imagination. Similar to an impromptu speech, improvisation in music allows one to dwell upon unchartered areas where the mind explores diminishing the value of conformity outside of the self.

In another dimension of musical rhetoric centering on *ethos,* my struggles during these uncertain times brought about Covid-19 are reflected in a folksong dear

to me: *"Daw Sugad Hin Bukad"* (Like a Flower), a healing song that has powerful message that penetrates in my very core.

> *"Of all the reasons highlighted, the third one, "lifting up the spirit during these uncertain times brought by the pandemic," struck in my mind like no other thought. Truthfully, my interpretation of the song was a tale of healing in a time of anxiety that changed my perspectives, ways and priorities in life."*

The ongoing pandemic is a pernicious condition that does not only affect the afflicted people with Covid-19 but everyone else in the globe. With uncertainty building upon uncertainty, music is a strong medicine for "relaxation, inspiration/spirituality, boost in mood, an outlet to process/ express difficult emotions" (Morin, 2021). Just days after the declaration of a pandemic, a poignant image of life in lockdown reached many various new outlets: Italian musicians playing and singing music from their balconies as a way to create a "moment of joy in this moment of anxiety (Horowitz, 2020 as cited by Carlson et al, 2021).

Indeed, music therapy is a recurring indulgence for many of us beset with health issues who resort to listening to our favorite music to elevate mood and, recall happy memories, thus strengthening our healing journey altogether. That is why music therapy is often used as a strategy to treat a variety of physical, emotional, cognitive, and social issues (Morin, 2021).

> *"It was a relief, at least from few minutes of my life while dwelling upon healing sound, and the effect was so penetrating. Such healing ritual was a credo of spiritual rejuvenation of a lost sense of self, at least in my own perspective. It was at that moment where a rebirth of my soul echoed through every melody of the*

*song, through my Rachmaninoff-inspired tonal textures begging for mercy, for survival in a virus-inflicted world."*

With so much uncertainty and anxiety, a lost sense of self can only be restored through spiritual rejuvenation and a performer's dwindling character slowly heals through music as one seeks divination. In this regard, the effect of music is to ignite a deep realization, strengthening faith and belief in an absolute force so that a performer surrenders his performance to a merciful God.

Based on the foregoing analysis, Table 3 summarizes qualities of a good or effective performer from the lens of rhetorical theory.

Table 3. Qualities of a Good Performer

| QUESTION | INFORMATION GATHERED | METHODS |
|---|---|---|
| 1. How do I consider myself as being a good performer? | **Performance**<br>◦ When my performance imitates emotion and shapes character<br>◦ When my interpretation is a confluence of the composer's ideas and my personal interpretation as musicality<br>◦ When I narrate while performing<br>◦ When I am honest and sincere in my performance<br>◦ When I indulge in vulnerability<br>◦ When I explore musical language<br>◦ When I indulge in keyboard literature and has robust training<br>◦ When I perform in the proper venue<br>◦ When my performance is understood by the audience<br>◦ When my performance forms personal and social identities<br>◦ When physical gestures during the performance respond coherently to the music<br><br>**Baroque Rhetoric**<br>◦ When I articulate ornamentations properly<br>◦ When I understand and apply melodic articulations<br>◦ When I absorb the improvisational character of Bach's music guided by its form<br>◦ When I understand spiritual undertones of Bach's music<br>◦ When I articulate independence of each voice<br>◦ When I understand that each voice is part of an integrated whole<br>◦ Classical Rhetoric<br>◦ When I conform to norms and liberates one's character at the same time<br>◦ When I understand the music in terms of structure<br>◦ When my body moves with the music<br>◦ Romantic Rhetoric<br>◦ When I dwell on self-expressions<br>◦ When I play for myself and not for the audience<br>◦ When my performance is emotionally rich<br>◦ When I am liberated<br>◦ 20th Century Rhetoric<br>◦ When I discover and experiment<br>◦ When I apply imagery in sound | ◦ Personal narratives<br>◦ Recollections of past experiences<br>◦ Reflective analysis of past performances |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | ○ When I highlight individualism in my performance<br>○ When I am connected to myself and the social milieu<br>○ Composition Musician's Rhetoric<br>○ When I am explorative and applicative of skills<br>○ When I embody cultural appropriation/enculturation<br>○ When I express love and longingness in music<br>○ When I dwell on creative imagination<br>○ When I am sensitive to personal experience<br>○ When I use vulnerability to reconstruct musical messages<br>○ When I embody spirituality in performance | |

## 2.2. Logos: Good Music

Good music is exemplified through understanding and application of the elements of music in performance.

*Logos,* or the logical appeal, refers to the use of reasoned argument to persuade (Caufield, 2020). In this study, logical appeal centers on how the elements of music (melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, tonality, timbre, dynamics, and form (Julia, 2020) create a coherent performance.

Because the elements of music affect the performer and the audience, this section incorporates *pathos,* the pathetic appeal, evoking audience's emotions (Caufield, 2020). Thus, discussion and analysis focuses on the appeal of the elements *(logos)* on *ethos* and *pathos* in both composition and performance.

### Melody

This is a successive line of single tones or pitches perceived as a unity (Sarbunan, 2020). It is a series of pitches that makes a tune (Julia, 2020). In other words, a song or an instrumental piece is identified in terms of its melody, the tune,

which we sing into. From a performance perspective, melody is sound utterance that pleases a performer enriching one's interpretation based on its impact to emotion.

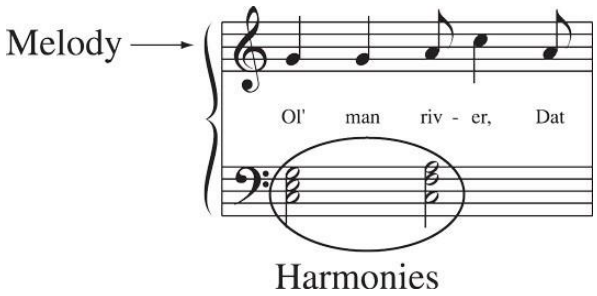

Figure 11. Melody

Figure 11 indicates single melodies in the G-clef (upper register).

Notice that melodies are written as individual notes moving horizontally. The melodic notes are the musical utterances or the messages of a musical piece.

*"In articulating the melodies in C major, I tried to conquer the keys by not discriminating the left hand from the right hand. Meaning, I was playing both hands emphatically with clear sound accentuated by robust pulse in the bass that traversed from C to G and back to C with my left finger leaping freely with regularity."*

The clear message of the vignette is the essence of melody as "clear sound".

Without equivocation, melody as an element identifying the tune of a particular music must be expressed with clarity from beginning to end because it is the reason why music exists. From the *ethos* point of view, it resides in a performer's mental and emotional domain which must be clearly expressed in performance in order to make sense. Clarity is a function of determination and readiness of the performer. With careful analysis of the musical lines, melodic articulation takes priority in interpretation, deepening the credibility and authority of the performer.

*"Then, my musical monologue increased its speed in the next section characterized by chromatic melodies that were comically appealing."*

*"For instance, melodic nuances that were endowed with heavy temperaments in certain lyrical pieces I played dwelt in my inner space exhuming the depth of spiritual assemblage that was sacred to me. As a sacrosanct space, melody became my mantra of human expression most certainly as it mirrored my interpretive understanding of musicality juxtaposed with personal reality. Such marriage of understanding would resonate to the audience that seemed receptive, indulgent and quiet in absorbing what I had to say - the melody as message."*

The first vignette envisages an interpretive rendering of melody that exemplifies comical appeal. This reverberates a powerful attribute that must be an embodied tool of a performer so that the melody becomes a meaningful message as clearly elucidated in the second vignette. In other words, comic appeal as a performance outcome is an embodiment in melodic structure accented in *staccato* of a musical piece, for instance. Moreover, melody as a sacrosanct space identifies a performer's sanctuary of human expression bordering on my personal reality. In fact, this is the argument of melody as the message in a musical narrative.

It will be recalled that the phrase, *"medium as the message"* by a philosopher of public communication once said that the perception of message is always influenced by the medium through which it is transferred (McLuhan, 1970). However, such iconic phase was altered in the sense that the origins of the melody is in the

social bonding between a mother and a child (Hendy, 2013). In this regard, music as message is the utterance of singsongs as “baby talks” embodying music-lingual expressions. The significance of such historical underpinning of the message is the persistence of melody that resides within human domain as a narrative. Indeed, musical language centers on melodic messages that are akin to human speech with the utterance of words.

> *“For example, singing voice resonated in my own instrumental playing of the melody as unity of sound and emotion thwarting any barriers to personal expression, making me more sensitive to the aura of musical sound compared to my previous recital.”*

> *“The way to an effective playing is clarity in the message, and that clarity is expressed through the melody.”*

Melody’s “singing voice” is another quality that cannot be undermined. This is also related to the clarity of expression discussed previously, which altogether creates
brilliance in sound illumination. Although it belongs to melody, “singing voice” generally depicts a performer’s sensitivity to the music creating such brilliance. Hence, it remains a quality of *ethos* in rhetoric. Yet, it can be dictated in the musical score through indications of the composer in interpretation, which basically rests on a performer’s reading of the musical text.

Additionally, since melody is a series of messages, of musical lines, it argues that sentiments of the performer also grow with movement of melodies. They are not static and imprisoned in the rigidity of the structure. In other words, they are free

expressions that are determined by the composer, interpreted by the performer in a cycle of emotions.

> *"In the performance of such structure, nuances of emotions could be detected between verses asserting uniqueness and differentiated expression of the same musical line which intensified with every verse."*

Continuing with my saga on melody, rock icon Carlos Santana once said: Music is the language of unity. It is the balance of male and female, where male is rhythm and female, melody (Ramakrishnan, 2012). Also, melodies in *soprano* and *alto voices* are assigned to female singers while *tenor* and *bass* belong to male counterparts. Such gendering of melody illustrates feminine sound as emotionally drawn, soft and subdued.

> *"True enough, melodic lines were supposed to be sung using vowel sounds only, such profusion making me internalize female qualities of musical tones that would have never been categorized if soprano tones were not required. However, in the middle section a dialogue between high and low melodic patterns emerged, which to me, were cycles of emotions exchanged between a man and woman caught in a duel or in emotional tension as revealed in the darkness of sound."*

In the Baroque period, my performance of *"Jesus of Man's Desiring",* by Johan Sebastian Bach, a celebrated composer in the Baroque period, triplet melodies created a smooth flow when I played *legato* meaning notes were connected with each other. This was achieved when correct phrasing was followed

through careful reading of the manuscript. Melody was the message the music wanted to convey.

> *"During the performance, I kept reminding myself the long melodic lines in triplets written in G major that had to be executed smoothly in legato like flowing water."*

It is interesting to note that Bach's music as written comprised melodies, chords and a few other details except dynamics indications, tempo, and rhythm as his music is left to the imagination of the performer. In this regard, melody is rightfully associated with *ethos* because it belongs to the performer's individual interpretation and understanding commanding musicality. This is also affirmed in the general observation of Baroque melodies that instruct, thus, it is construed as an element associated in *ethos,* the performer being the instructor. Even with well-designed music structure that could be instructive, the performer is involved in enhancing the message and combining effects that the structure signified together with my reading and interpretation.

> *"The whole experience was a didactic lecture with me as the teacher preaching and instructing important information to the listening public. However, in the midst of compliance to the manuscript, it dawned on me that the original score I played had no dynamics indications and tempo indications signifying my freedom to interpret the score."*

During the Classical period, melodies were more clear, well-balanced and without hesitation. Clarity is explained in the less contrapuntal nature of music characterizing the period and accompaniment clearly identified as opposed to

Baroque melodies that are intertwined and in which accompaniment fuse in as melodies.

> *"The next classical piece I performed was "Sonata in G Major, K. 283" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. It was this piece that really opened my mind to the wonderful world of classical music with its precise, well-balanced melodies that tend to be clear-cut, without hesitation and controlled exhibition."*

Similar to Baroque, melody during the Classical period is associated within the *ethos* appeal characterizing performer's exquisite interpretation of the principle of objectivity confining the period.

In the Romantic era, melody was more lyrical, expressive and emotive as music turned to be more personal rather than in compliance to rules and structures of objectivity.

> *"Moved by the rich tonality and rich melodies with so many songs taken from his works…"*

In the 20th century, melodic expression was no longer lyrical, a striking contrast from the Romantic era. With so much experimentation devised by artists, abstract sound came into light, and the presence of silence in musical passages created an important contribution to sound articulation through its absence.

> *"Realizing the power of silence, it became a moment of reflection to dwell upon distance between notes, to acknowledge that brief pause in music is a sacrosanct space to be recognized, to develop a keen awareness of surrounding elements affecting performance silence."*

This is a testament of *ethos* indulgence with profundity of character and authority expressed in democratic expressions that dominated in the 20th century.

Influences from various schools of learning made my own melodic utterances in my original compositions to focus on self-narratives.

> *"Throughout the years of playing music, I have written some compositions that depicted my personal character, taste, and identity."*

> *"With deep exposures to Romantic pieces, it seemed that my emotions echoed through the musical narratives within each piece."*

> *"Inspired by romantic melodies with implicit folk sensibilities…. The piece captured my romantic essence of emotionality and expressiveness in performance usually punctuated by holding notes in certain phrases that sometimes where not written in the piece."*

Finally, melody is not only to be understand as sound utterance in my artistic imagination. I dwell on silence as a form of meditation, drawing inner energy as melodic message.

> *"Intrigued by such explosion of transcendental sound, I experimented on silence as music in itself, in the absence of sound. At the center of my meditative sound was listening to my own music, my own breathing which to me was the highest form of liberation."*

From the different vignettes explored, melody as an important element in music is clearly the message of any musical sound carefully designed and expressed by the performer in order to enhance *ethos* credibility and authority.

**Harmony**

This is created when two or more notes are played simultaneously as in a chord. As an element of music, it adds depth and color to the sound which is generally pleasing to the audience referred to as consonance. On the other hand, dissonance is created when something unpleasant or irritating sound emanates from a combination of notes. As with melody, harmony is created by the composer of a musical piece expressed by the performer. It makes sense, then, that harmony is designed by the composer so it relates very well to *ethos.* From a performance perspective, harmony is built in chord progressions that are vertically aligned because they are played simultaneously, while melodies are horizontally aligned as they are played individually as single notes.

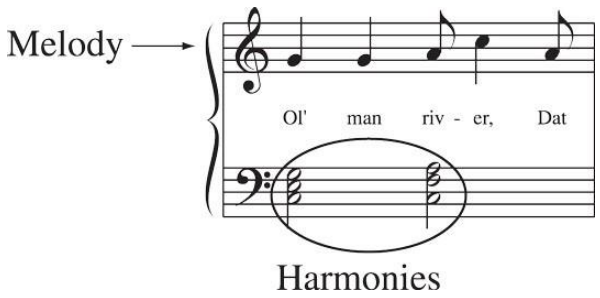

Figure 12. Harmony

In Figure 12, harmonies indicated in circle are basically chords written vertically as opposed to melodies written horizontally. Notice that each harmony in the drawing comprises three notes vertically aligned signifying that they have to be

played simultaneously. Harmonies are construed as layering sound (accompaniment) to the melodies written in the upper register.

> *"I was literally empowered to conquer every melodic progression that seemed to reach the heavens supported by enormous harmonic progressions underneath the melodies."*

Normally, harmony is written below the melody as indicated in the vignette. In piano music, when melody is placed on top of a chord, it is supposed to be played louder and the harmony underneath is played softer. As an *ethos* entity, it implies that a performer must be knowledgeable in music theory so that melody/harmony is designed aesthetically. As a support mechanism, harmony creates a community of understanding of all the notes within a chord in order to create unity.

> *"It was like a feeling of cooperation and collaboration that supported a group cause in a sense. I was engaged in a community of voices reverberating all throughout so perfectly united."*

> *"In harmony, my ears were keen to the dialogic response beat with E an G notes played together. At such a young age, I was fascinated by the combination of two sounds played as a single melody that often made me wonder if it was possible for me to speak two different tones together and achieve the same level of quality as a piano would articulate."*

Apart from technicality, harmony as associated with *ethos* signifies performer's "feeling" as expressed in the vignette. It is a personal acknowledgement of one's sensibility so that performance becomes meaningful.

*"As such, I articulated every line with canonical strength and determination while keeping in harmony with the congregation."*

In some cases, performers with adept knowledge in music especially in chord progressions as harmonic structures can be free to utilize such knowledge at any given opportunity to explore rather than to stick to pre-determined structures as earlier espoused. In this occasion, the performer displays artistic prowess and engages the audience in devising improvisations at times. As such, credibility of the performer is enhanced through spontaneity where musical ideas are sought instantaneously and the audience responds in different ways like clapping or ticking, nodding and all sorts of reactions as a way of communicating with the performer.

*"As I progressed with the song, I noticed I listened a lot to melodic and chord progressions that magically came out of nowhere. Every bit of sound was a serendipitous moment imprinted in my head."*

*"Indeed, I was transformed by the ideas I gathered from attentive listening to what I heard ultimately predicting what would be the next chord that was exciting to the ear."*

As an element associated in *ethos,* harmony has the capacity to express emotions of the performer in a given piece of music. Indeed, the structure of chords in minor mode are generally conceived with sadness while chords in major mode uplift emotions.

*"Also, moving from G minor to G major was typical of a kundiman structure thereby transitioning from soulful to lively spirit in musical recapitulation so aesthetically designed. Thick chords in*

*thirds and sixths as characteristics of Spanish music signified dramatic articulations compelling me to fathom deep- seated emotions that were culturally grounded because such harmony was popular in many folksongs and even popular songs."*

In Baroque music, harmony is manifested in counterpoints, the weaving of different independent voices like in a fugue that although articulated independently, creates a unified balance of the overall musical structure in musical dialogue.

*"The fugue, in three voices with leaping musical lines alternating between left and right hand had marcato (accentuation) sections between verses. With extended phrases, the art of fugal playing was the apex of contrapuntal playing with polyphonic voices layered in the score which had to be explicitly enunciated."*

*"Amazed at the contrapuntal nature of the piece with three voices intertwining between right and left hand added with inner notes in-between…."*

*"The music seemed unending especially between the dialogic interactions in counterpoints that sounded like human chattering."*

Harmony during the Romantic period, based on observation and literature, is classified as generally homophonic, meaning having a singular line and not polyphonic or multiple lines. However, my autoethnography revealed that harmony is a thick and expansive quality with chordal structures moving along with melodies in

layered fashion designed and articulated by the performer's *ethos* as an embodiment of personal interpretation.

> *"Also, I noticed that Romantic music had more elaborate and dramatic rendering of harmonies that spoke of inner emotions and sparked creative imagination from the narratives of the sound."*

> *"This also proved thickness of harmonies through massive chords which created expansive sound altogether."*

Harmony during the 20th century is generally construed as dissonant, not in harmony with melody or chord that would render a pleasing sound. Because of the period's highly democratized expressionism, different harmonic structures affecting *ethos* as in the case of consonant and dissonant harmonies abounded. For example, consonant harmony exudes pleasing sound associated with thirds or triads, for instance, within a chord while dissonant harmony creates clash, tension and disagreement that can be irritating because of its unusual effect. In elucidating such dialectical tension between the two, communication practice as one that engulfs agreements and disagreements in dialogic interactions in effect mirror such relationship in musical sound. This is present in modern music where experimenting sound is the key to individualism.
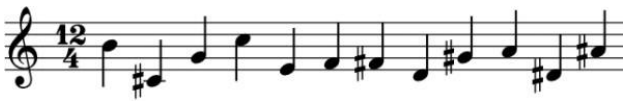
Figure 13. Atonal

Figure 13 depicts dissonant (atonal) sound where natural notes (without sharp) are played then proceeded with sharp tones creating an off-balance, hence,

atonal and dissonant sound. In normal expression, this combination depicts "non-pleasing" sound in the context of harmony.

*"The piece overwhelms a listener's ears, gets confused with so many dissonant sounds articulated with high hand movement, but actually, it is not so difficult to play as one may think."*

Clearly, the audience's association of dissonance to jarring sound "contains frequencies that interfere with one another to set our nerves on the edge" (Ball, 2012). Conversely, the tendency for humans to lean on consonant sound is underpinned by natural law in pleasing sound association, something that is understandable, therefore, pleasing to the ear. In communication practice, this takes place when agreement between sender and receiver of communication message is reached thereby meaningful understanding takes place. In the narrative of dissonant conversation, it can be argued that disagreements and tensions do emanate in communication practice but we do not conceive such actuations as generally abnormal but considered a discourse in practice between opposites. But we do not conceive such actuations as generally abnormal: rather, they are considered a discourse in practice. In musical dialogue, the same accolade is associated with atonal music bearing dissonant sound that is disjunctive but is considered music. The sound departs from normal frequency of pleasing tonality as it is off-balance, discordant yet magical.

*"It is just another etude to play filled with drama and suspension. It is not the usual harmonic music with expressive melodies, rather it is off-balance, exciting and painful."*

As a performance artist, the harmonies I created in my compositions were greatly influenced by the various schools of thought I had studied and heard

throughout my career. Also, my expressive character manifested intensely in various sound imageries, associations through harmonic possibilities.

> *"In terms of taste, I was intrigued by the complicated structures of music, but, at the same time I enjoyed journeying through deep layers of intricate dialogues between melodies, countermelodies, counterpoints, among others."*

> *"In the midst of impassioned renderings, I was exalted in the dramatic melancholy of cascading melodies with rustles of light arpeggios in F minor that sounded like denouement in a musical play so fantastically woven with dialogic chords doubling the melodic lines above. This created emphasis in sound accentuated by bravura 32$^{nd}$ chords reciprocated by the same temperament in the left in the preceding measures."*

> *"In effect, the melodies and harmonies of my composition were a form of rectitude to the wrongful noise around."*

**Timbre, Texture, and Tone**

*Timbre* is another element of music that points to a characteristic quality of sound of a musical instrument. For example, a C chord played on a piano will sound differently when played by a violin even if it the same note is played. Timbre might in principle occupy a critical interface linking the distinctive structural features of an auditory object, such as a musical instrument, with the emotional content of that Object. In fact, a musical instrument's identity can be identified by its timbre

(Hailstone et al., 2009). It is conceivable that *timbre* requires control of the performer in perfecting the quality of sound even with its innate quality coming from the instrument. In other words, one's attack on the instrument such as the piano can create different levels of musical timbre.

> *"After which, I deepened my lecture on the properties of texture and timbre in music through different interpretations of "Happy Birthday." It was then that the students realized how visualization of the song through different sound textures can ultimately lead to an interplay of colors and depth in tone."*

> *"For my part, I elaborated timbre by playing "Happy Birthday" on guitar aside from the piano in order to emphasize that the same tune can utter different tonal quality when played on a different instrument."*

> *"While articulating the melody with rapid rumblings on the right hand that increased intensity page after page until a definitive marcato "C major chord" signaled a new episode of chords and glissandos until a pianissimo with delicate una corda (soft pedal passages ignited impressionistic motif with colorful images and colors of the sound, characteristic of Debussy's music that has elaborate timbre and texture along note articulations."*

However, *timbre* can also be an element in *pathos* as the audience can decipher absorption of sound quality. In other words, the degree of tonal depth is dependent upon the audience's listening of such sound as it reaches their ear. In a

large musical hall, *timbre* can pose a challenge hearing every nuance and the effect of speakers (technology) can alter authentic rendering of sound particularity. In this situation, performance success is determined by audience perception of the qualities of sound.

> *"Changing timbre was a quality perceived by the audience. It resided in them because it was the audience that celebrated such textual nuances more than the performer. In other words, musical effect was a quality of the pathos with all characteristics of visualization of the sound present. Playing the physical aspects of the musical sound (touch, timbre) to the best of my knowledge and musicality was dependent on how the audience absorbed such timbre."*

Following the analysis, it is convenient to assert that *timbre* exhibits both *ethos* and *pathos qualities* as rhetorical appeals. From the standpoint of *ethos, timbre* is a performance interpretation of the music that dwells on intricacies of melodic articulations from the use of an instrument. As an element of *pathos, timbre* dwells upon the audience's perception of sound from the performer as it affects him. As the vignette highlights, *"it resided in them because it was the audience that celebrated such nuances."*

Three important elements were mentioned in the three vignettes, namely: ***timbre,* texture, and tone.** The three elements can be interchanged as all of them relate to quality of sound, as the statements above suggest. For instance, texture is characterized in Debussy's music as colorful images in sound bearing impressionistic quality of softness expressed in *una corda* pedal technique that represses sound volume. Likewise, colorful images account for visualization of

sound depicting scenery like water flow or expansive painting depicting light, all these were achieved through articulation of tone that provides depth of melody. The same association holds true in the following vignette.

> *"When the same idea was applied using an acoustic piano, it was not satisfying to my ear, perhaps due to the difference in timbre from different instruments. Given the innateness of tonal quality in each instrument, I did not resign to such notion, instead, it became a creative opportunity to deepen my sensitivity towards visualization of the sound. For instance, when the forest scene unfolded, I played quiet rumbling of broken chords on the piano with extremely soft texture. Volume was also an important contribution to the visualization of forest scene through music. With that, I almost muted the piano sound in order to simulate distant tones heard in a deep forest where sound was profoundly distant."*

Indeed, such nearness of application of *timbre,* texture and tonality cannot be undermined as they all refer to sound quality. Upon closer examination of the vignette, there seems to be a discordant notion of tonality as innate in each instrument. This becomes disturbing because tonality is not tied to the instrument being used but rather on how sound emanates from the instrument. A tone in lower register of a guitar will produce lower tone of the same note played in a higher register. *Timbre* does not change in the same guitar instrument playing different registers of tone because *timbre* is a characteristic of an instrument producing such unique sound. Having said this, the elements of *timbre,* texture, and tonality are associated with *ethos* (except for *timbre* with *pathos* nuances) because a performer is able to convey meaningful performance using those elements based on desire,

knowledge and familiarity. Among the three reasons, familiarity stands out to be the most determining factor in achieving *timbre* and the other two elements. When a performer knows how to play an instrument, the quality of sound is expected to convey nuances through manipulation of touch, attack, and depth of playing the instrument to produce an effect that also depends on technical knowledge. If the opposite happens, meaning a lackluster playing looms on stage, the performer loses credibility and the whole rhetorical exercise of persuasion falters.

In Baroque music, *timbre* is considered homogenous, depicting a sound quality of a particular instrument. During the period, it used a lot of harpsichord instruments where sound quality was fixed, therefore, homogenous. The use of chamber music with various instruments signified multiple quality of sound from each instrument, but the general idea of homogeneity was still expressed through emphasis in each instrument following independence of countermelodies and counterpoints.

In my experience of playing Bach music on the piano, the sense of homogeneity of *timbre,* texture and tonality were altered because piano has certain nuances, and dynamics. Therefore, there were variations of sound quality even with the classification of piano as a keyboard instrument. In other words, sound interpretation became a personal approach to sound illumination.

> *"Using the piano, my performance of "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" was characterized by emotional message eliciting different qualities of sound through controlled touch on the keys."*

During the Classical period, *timbre,* texture, and tone were generally classified as ringing, vibrant and clear. This quality of tone can be attributed to the way melodic lines are designed to be played with utmost lucidity as in the case of Mozart's music.

*"With regards to timbre or texture, the magic of articulating a certain quality in classical music as light and fluid but very clear and objective with marked phrase endings, among others are well designed in the sonata."*

*"Along with timbre as unique to each instrument, the pianoforte was an articulation of Mozart's quality of clear sound and even touch."*

The Romantic period that followed characterized *timbre,* texture and tonality to be more thick and rich due to the richness of chordal harmonies produced through subjective interpretation. In this sense, *ethos* appeal is magnified in individuality of expression as emotionally indulgent.

*"Moved by the rich tonality and lyrical melodies with so many songs…"*

*"In terms of timbre, along with piano, other musical instruments were also used as concert instruments signifying multiplicity of timbre with each one highlighting unique quality."*

*"Lastly, technique in playing soft melodies amidst arpeggios can be achieved through "bakal" (steel) technique…. which I applied by hardening fingertips like a steel in order to achieve brilliance in sound woven delicately with inner passages."*

At the turn of the 20th century, *timbre,* texture, and tonality became a collage of atonality characterized by disjunctive sound relationship forming abstraction due

mainly to the celebration of democratic expression among musicians as a testament to diversity. It was rightfully acclaimed that freedom of expression accentuated *timbre,* texture and tonality as residing in *ethos* both as observed and noted in my autoethnography. Next, consonance could be juxtaposed with dissonance forming tension in tonality and sound texture that was never imagined before. The period also characterized impressionistic sound envisaging tonality with color, shape, and other visual elements.

> *"As a representative of impressionism, "Claire de Lune" was rich with visual images of sound with different colors like a painting… It was a magical rendering of images that was central to my impressions with various tonalities creating different timbre…."*

> *"This paradigm shift affected my character as I also shifted my performance stance with visual imaginations, creative impulses that enhanced colors of the sound, not in the sense of emotional attachment characteristic of Romantic music but more in creating impressions, images, and representations."*

In the first vignette, impressionism highlighted lightness in tonality and texture visualizing sound with colors as impressions of reality as depicted in paintings, for instance. The music of Debussy exemplified impressionistic nuances of imagery in sound, a rich interpretation of tonality.

*"The lyrical lines at the top of the melodic structure was thickened by gentle arpeggios mostly in thirds performed in the left hand carried over by the right hand so intricately woven to form a unified phrase."*

An important implication in the vignette is that in order to express texture in impressionistic music, a good technique is required, e.g. performing gentle arpeggios requires absolute control of touch that can only be realized through technical practice. Second, playing in “thirds” produces natural loudness from the combination of two notes. With good application of technique, its sound can be as quiet as possible.

> *“Only a trained musician can play delicately music by Debussy. You see, technique is learned with patient practice that is guided by a trainer.”*

In my compositions, *timbre,* texture and tonality were expressed in different levels of emotion giving rise to various responses from beneath the core, the self. In other words, association of sound with personal convictions meant that I was conscious of how it defined my state of being and predicament as felt in depth of tonality, for instance.

> *“Such vulnerability was engulfed with wonder which brought experimentations on timbre, for instance, that spoke of my inner soul. Even with borrowed form, my true sentiments manifested in the different textures of sound compartmentalizing certain mood and character as symbols of sincere expression of emotions.”*

> *“It’s imagery of water rushing in accompanied with howling winds indicated an ominous malady as expressed in atonal arpeggios cascading in discordance.”*

The second vignette clearly defines powerful influence of atonality and impressionism in my own compositions, consistent with universality of music.

*"Visualizing water surge, my musical prayer was interrupted once again with rapid scales and thick chordal patterns…"*

*"Corollary to volume was texture that added to music's meaningful message."*

Impressionism as a movement exemplifies a surrealistic, dreamy state beyond creating impressions of physical reality instead of depicting actual reality. As previously argued, it highlights new expressions away from Romantic subjectivity; it dwells on abstractions and atonality in musical interludes; it creates and re-creates nuances through musical adventurism using *staccato* lines, asymmetrical beats, with ideas of abstraction, continuity and discourse. Debussy's music, for one, is largely inspired by water as a continuous flow.

**Illustration of staccato in Debussy's music:**
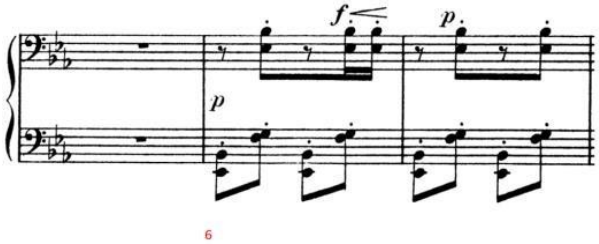
Figure 14. Staccato

Interestingly, Figure 14 illustrates staccatos as dotted notes written on top which have the effect of sound abruptness, meaning it stops immediately once heard. In Debussy's musical impressions along with other ornamentations such as atonality (sound dissonance) and pentatonic modes (Chinese-inspired musical

patterns), off-balance articulations create musical deconstruction not normally found in traditional Classical form in the previous musical era.

Finally, impressionist composers pay attention to how music vibrates in the body. You will hear the lowest notes on the piano played in conjunction with the highest notes. Feeling the music is almost as important as hearing it (Walker, 2019).

**Dynamics**

In music, dynamics refers to the loudness and softness in music. This element can both be performed and heard by the audience and written down on paper by the composer. In written music, changes in dynamics are associated by these symbols: *f (forte)* means loud and *p (piano)* means soft. All the other dynamics in-between have subtleties such as: *mf (mezzo forte)* meaning medium loud and *mp (mezzo piano)* meaning medium soft. Other indications include: *crescendo* (gradually getting louder), *decrescendo* (gradually getting softer), accents placed on a note or a series of notes meant to be played louder than the rest.

| DYNAMICS CHART | | |
|---|---|---|
| Term | Sign | Meaning |
| *piano* | *p* | quiet |
| *mezzo piano* | *mp* | moderately quiet |
| *pianissimo* | *pp* | very quiet |
| *forte* | *f* | loud |
| *mezzo forte* | *mf* | moderately loud |
| *fortissimo* | *ff* | very loud |
| *subito forte* | *sf* | suddenly loud |
| *subito forte piano* | *sfp* | suddenly loud and soft |
| *sforzando* | *sfz* | forceful sudden accent |

Figure 15. Dynamics

*"For example, dynamics as carefully outlined in the score still had to be interpreted according to my emotions. Thus, I would re-interpret soft and loud sounds in the manner that suits my predicament at the time of rehearsal and actual performance."*

*"During the recital, the surrounding noise of chatting audience and car noise from outside that seemed to penetrate the hall did not make sense of my articulation of piano and pianissimo. I had to increase the volume just so I would not drown from the excessive sound in the audience and outside the hall."*

As an element affecting *ethos,* dynamic indications are manifested in a performer's emotions attached to the sound. Clearly, the first vignette glorifies emotional interpretation as executed in different dynamics depending on predicament as mentioned in the second vignette. If the music being performed is from a written score with dynamics indications, the performer is compelled to comply to the composer's indications but magic in performance always relies on the performer's technique in creating perfect dynamics.

*"I had a feeling of relaxed movement in every song even if dynamics, harmony and chordal progressions seemed to created textual tensions that should have been more pronounced with physical strength to execute them all."*

Physical strength is a technical requirement in expressing musical dynamics and that technique is the ability to control touch on the keyboard by a pianist, for instance. In the case of executing loud sound, physical strength is manifested in

open arms extending sideways such that sound is open and massive. Louder *(fortissimo)* means wider extension of arm sideways.

*"Lastly, technique in playing soft melodies amidst arpeggios can be achieved through "bakal" (steel) technique."*

One of the technical challenges presented in the vignette is the idea of *"bakal"* (metal or steel) articulation done at the very tip of a finger playing the melody. This technique emphasizes brilliance of sound in soft dynamics. Successful playing results in clarity of melody that is crispy and sparkly as opposed to other tones that are subdued.

Dynamics is a deepening of artistic performance. It involves sensitivity of character and a deep sense of maturity of the performer honed through expression and technical ability. It is musicality in the highest order that gives *ethos* a respectable and convincing performance.

Based on the foregoing discussions, dynamics in music is the performer's communicative interpretation of the musical piece capturing an artist's sensitivity to the sound as a holistic experience of association. Meaning, self-narratives are expressed in differing volumes such that the collage of sound becomes a story in itself because of the meanings attached to each of the dynamics. It is an interpretation of the purest musicality, which is inherently personal, residing in cognitive and emotional dimensions. In the cognitive level, dynamics as interpretation is a thought process where a performer consciously decides which part to magnify sound in order to create effect and which aspects need to be subdued and passive like setting the mood or in repressing emotional value of music. In the emotional dimension, dynamics becomes a rich expression of the inner passion within an artist that can be spontaneously felt as the music grows.

In Bach's music representing Baroque period, dynamic indications are not written in the manuscripts, meaning, softness or loudness is aligned with the performer's interpretation of the score. In my own experience of playing Bach music, dynamics played a great deal in enhancing the sound brought out clearly with proper technique.

> *"As such, contrasting dynamics between mezzo forte (medium loud) was accompanied simultaneously by piano (soft) which was dependent on the amount of pressure I exerted on the fingers."*

> *"For my part, I had to bring out individual voice as continuous lines by switching finger pressure to denote a louder melody and a softer accompaniment."*

During the Classical Period, dynamics was more prominent in music literature expressed in pianoforte (literally soft and forte) instrument that clearly espoused contrasting dynamics. Popular in Mozart's music, repetition as rhetorical appeal was a form of echoing sound where the same musical phrase was played *forte* (loud) to be repeated with *piano* (soft) articulation.

> *"Then, dynamics was clearly defined with soft tones as usually echoing an earlier melodic passage. Such rhetorical device of repetition was very exciting to portray because nuance of soft and loud temperaments had to be well addressed as a technical challenge."*

*"The movement was written using soft sound and some mezzo forte sections but no more than that so I had to respond to the technical demands."*

Following the second vignette attests to the generality of dynamics as frequently dictated. Gradual crescendos and decrescendos gained greater popularity than the terraced dynamics of the Baroque period (Burroughs, 2014).

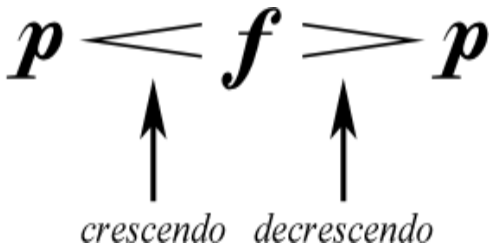

Figure 16. Crescendo, decrescendo

Figure 16 indicates musical dynamics *(p* as soft*, f* as loud*)* with crescendo on the left indicating growing sound from *p* to *f* and decrescendo indicating *f* to *p* indicating gradually reducing volume.

During the Romantic Period, dynamics were more broad and wide such that *forte* was extended to *fortissimo* (louder) and *fortississimo* (loudest) and the opposite *piano* had wider range with *pianissimo* (very soft) and *pianissisimo* (very, very soft).

*"In playing Chopin, it was always a mantra to dwell on intricate sound experience through different intensification of musical dynamics. As such, the softest tones were moving in gradual volume as musical lines developed."*

*"Dynamics indications in the polonaise were stretching from mezzo forte to forte indicating movement of sound expanding in range and magnitude."*

In 20th century music, musical dynamics were used for many reasons. For one, highly individualistic expressions of performers due to acquired freedom meant that volumes of music were aligned to one's temperament as a form of indulgence. "Hairpin" dynamics became popular with the use of crescendo and diminuendo where the center was to be played loud and the surrounding sound in gradation.

> *"It seemed that silence in the lounge jived with the quietness that exuded in the piece with so many piano and pianissimo passages."*

As extreme notion of dynamics, worshiping silence in music ushered a spiritual character that was not only in expressed in terms of volume or its absence as a music element. Silence focused on inner, reflective moments in both performer and audience where sound was reverberating throughout the environment as a form of transcendence.

> *"Realizing the power of silence, it became a moment of reflection to dwell upon distance between notes, to acknowledge that brief paue in music is a sacrosanct space to be recognized, to develop a keen awareness of surrounding elements affecting performance silence."*

In my musical compositions, dynamics played a great role in expressing deep emotions, in capturing reality through different sound volume evoking my inner understanding and sensitivity towards the environment.

> *"Yolanda" depicted dialectical tensions between sound and imagery, between myself and the surrounding milieu with conflicting signals of acceptance and rejection, the latter forming dark impressions imprinted in their faces as they recalled the surge that*

*made me wonder if those where gestures of a successful performance albeit rather poignant. Such tension was evident in robust loudness of sound I created in my composition envisaging a powerful storm in contrast to soft wails from victims struggling for survival."*

In another dimension, musical dynamics manifested in my compositions through feminist quality of tone associated with soft quality, therefore, soft sound. Also, feminine sound quality became associated with soprano singing voice with delicateness.

*"With soft tonal ambience, I dwelt in folkloric temperaments depicting mothers that raised families with affirmations of feminine power in a subdued manner."*

*"In terms of volume, the sheer magnitude of sound level protruded by the instruments highlighted communicative power similar to a public speech that was more emphatic when volume was loud simply because it was heard clearly."*

In another dimension, dynamics became associated with individual struggles such that loudness referred to immensity of pain as an individual and as a people.

*"In Butuan, different dynamics of volume emanating from gong and elements revealed notions of pain and uncertainty to the fading heritage of a cherished culture."*

*"Loudness, on the other hand, foregrounded a decrying moment of resistance accompanied by wailing chant-like mode."*

**Rhythm**

Rhythm is another element in music that is important in performance success. According to Sarbunann (2020), rhythm refers to musical time. It connotes regularity in pulse or movement that sends audiences to their feet when they hear rhythmic performances. As such, rhythm is related to *pathos* in many ways the same way tempo does. Although it originates from the performer in setting regular beat or pulse, the audience absorbs and gets moved by rhythmic flow that they sometimes use their bodies to show empathy.

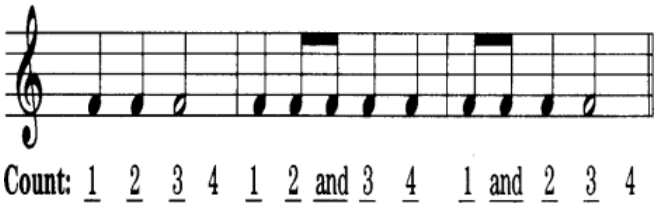


Figure 17. Illustration of rhythmic notation

Figure 17 clearly stipulates the rhythmic patterns expressed in counts (1 to 4) as designated by note value. Musically, these values with musical time prolong and hold the notes according to their value.

*"It dawned on me that rhythm was the most connected to the audience because it was pompous and engaging. Such marching feel felt like I was walking with them in a regular pattern forming a synchronous atmosphere of oneness."*

*"I opened up with rhythmic pulse in Db major with thirds to establish rhythm that swept through the entire piece while my head was swaying left and right in sheer delight."*

The above vignettes illustrate steadiness and regularity of a pulsating rhythm relatable to a marching pace where movement is generally steady. Regularity is also exemplified in human heartbeat that is generally steady unless one experiences arrhythmia or any heart disorder. Thus, if melody is where people sing into, rhythm is an element that people dance to. In the execution of regularity, consistency is a practical urgency in keeping with the flow of the musical narrative, a challenging yet rewarding experience for accentuation of marked passages.

*"As such, my emotional attachment was one of compliance as a receptacle of structured music thrown upon me rather than altering an emotional involvement. Nevertheless, it was "rules of engagement" in a musical episode that exuded delight manifesting in sweating while playing the piece with objectivity and regularity."*

There is a dialectical tension in the above vignette in "emotional attachment" and "objectivity" as rhythmic qualities. Subjectivity in performance (nuances of emotion) can take a critical role in highlighting objectivity in a way that musicality humanizes "rules of engagement". For instance, interpretation as individual quality depicts a sense of ownership of individual expression on top of objective regularity. This is what music human because of its inherently personal nature of amplifying meanings that even rhythmic dimensions are captured. In a sense, the emotional quality of rhythm is affected by *rubato* as a holding back mechanism of melodies giving flexibility to movement.

In expounding rhythm as *pathos* element, the concept of *entrainment* becomes relevant. It describes a phenomenon in which two or more independent rhythmic processes synchronize with each other. For example, the rhythmic coordination of hand clapping in an audience, or a foot-tapping to the beat of a song, is a very common experience (Thau et al., 2005 as cited by Frye, 2020). The sense of synchronicity elicits collaboration as audiences react as one community and increases social bonding.

> *"In discussing rhythm and tempo, I engaged the students on various musical styles with distinct patterns like samba, bossa nova, and swing music articulated in different moods. The students became alive at the various musical interludes showing dance steps that went with the music. The effect of such response was intensification of my musical performance making the audience and me in one musical interaction that was so spontaneous."*

As a consequence, *entrainment* through coordinated actions develops a feeling of empathy among individuals such that a pleasurable experience releases positive emotions based on the entrained rhythmic activities.

During the Baroque period, rhythmic quality was exemplified and steadiness clearly depicted in the bass register. Also, rhythm was observed to be dance-like, a quality of French music and dance characterized by dotting notes to accentuate rhythmic movement.

> *"Regularity in rhythmic pattern was clearly pronounced in the bass that moved along each triple, sometimes mixed with chords that enriched timbre."*

*"Your playing felt like I was walking leisurely at the park. Especially with the inner movements, they reminded me of little steps I used to make when I was a child."*

*"The prelude is structured with pulsating bass interspersed with intricate inner voices in 16th notes that has an effect of a pendulum clock swaying from left to right."*

In the Classical Period, rhythm was still regular, in fact, more objective this time with less dotting of notes so that a feeling of regularity was expressed. It was clearly heard as pulsating sensation as opposed to Baroque rhythm that could be literally moving as lines similar to *basso continuo.*

*"Following such guidance, I shifted my consciousness to objectivity, fluidity and regularity making sure I was not too engrossed in holding notes beyond their value or putting too much emotion on areas that needed logical interpretation as dictated by the score."*

During the Romantic Period, rhythmic patterns were more dynamic and ever-changing depending on the mood set by the music. It was also more elaborate.

*"Rhythmically, I felt that individual character of my sound was reflected in the changing rhythmic patterns so dynamic and intensifying as in the case of the polonaise I played."*

*"Although the piece has regular military cadence sounding like gunfire in thick A major chords in 16th notes with top melodies in succession at the first measure, normally played with*

*determination, objectivity and regularity with long fingers, I had the leeway to expand the horizon using "stretching" technique while in some instances I played with regular rhythm as written in the score."*

The vignettes clearly illustrate a more elaborate rendering of rhythmic pulses with these phrases, "*changing rhythmic patterns"* and *"leeway to expand the horizon using "stretching technique".*

In 20th century music, the general characteristic of rhythm is its seemingly irregular multi-level pattern.

*"It is fascinating to hear so many different rhythmic textures: from mysterious to extremely indulgent rhythmic pattern that requires technical prowess to execute."*

*In another performance of Bartok's "Makrokosmos", I indulged in polyrhythmic possibilities that were literally difficult to manage with all the counting. Not only that, the immensity of complex movements heightened a sense of musical delirium that coincided with atonal sounds of the "Bulgarian Dance".*

*With such wide imagination, I thought that abrupt changes in rhythm were thrilling especially after playing in performance level at the right tempo.*

In my own compositions, rhythm was also multi-level following different emotive power in each piece I created.

*"In Sayaw Fantasia, there were images of skirts flying about with castanets showcasing feminine ornamentations in a frenzied state called dance. Such realization indulged my sense of rhythmic synchronicity, paucity, regularity, and hysteria which could happen during a*

*live performance."*

*"One such transcription, "Di Ak Nahuhulop" (I am not Disappointed) created a spectacle of musical capriccio with playful leaps in distinct staccatos depicting dialogue between a man and a woman caught in a love duel."*

*"Because I wanted to re-create the folksong based on my sensitivity to traditional norms painted with nuances of modern-day fixtures, I explored musical lilts and leaps with bravado and recapitulated the main theme in modulated key in "Eb minor."*

*"In terms of rhythmic movements, certainly the dance form in polyrhythmic accentuations provided entertainment with spectators engaged in the whole performance through imitation of dance steps bringing delight and profound resonance of indignation that intensified with the synergy of music, dance and emotions. In retrospect, rhythmic soaring heard from majestic gongs proved to be a resolute message with a high degree of approval."*

**Tempo**

As an element in music, tempo refers to the speed indicated by slowness or fastness of a musical passage. Within rhetorical real, tempo is identifiable as *pathos* mainly because it persuades the audience through physical actuations like a dance.

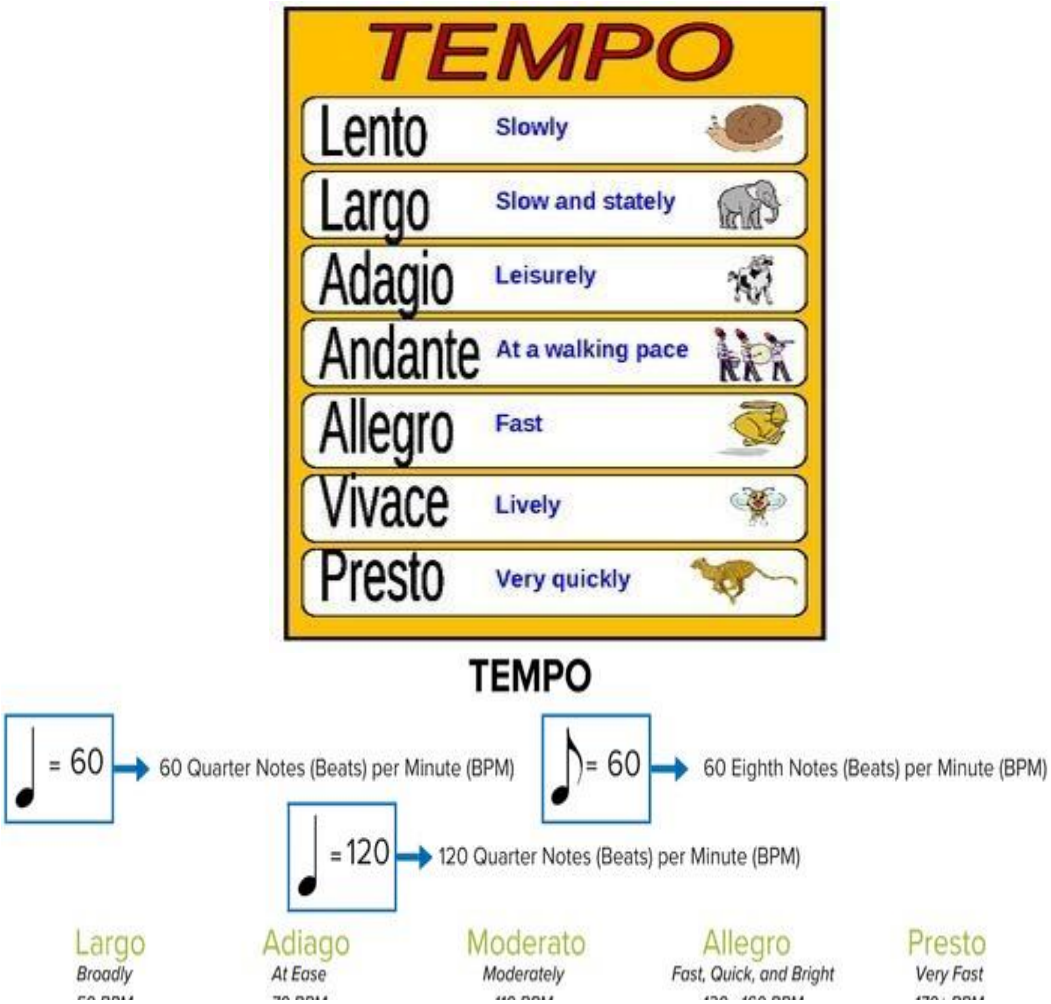


Figure 18. Tempo

Figure 18 indicates numerical time within a given note value where 60 beats per minute, for instance, indicate 1 minute in real time. Tempo gets faster as the number goes up. Note that *presto* in the far right indicates 170 beats per minute, almost tripling 60 beats in the *largo* tempo in the left side.

*"My playing of "Habanera" drew attention from the audience as I saw them dance with the music. The slow tempo of the aria punctuated with seductive accents led them to perform some movements that was a celebration of performer-audience rapport."*

*"In the performance of light classics in lento (slow tempo), it was revealing to me a deep sense of reverberation that echoed throughout the whole piece in a manner that I could control. Once again, embracing such characteristic movement in music served more than a musical cadence or pulse as determined by my performance decorum but more so on its complex interrelationship with the audience."*

In another vignette,

*"Your powerful executions were a visual spectacle. I was carried away by the strength of your arm movements enriching my own experience."*

Interestingly enough, the vignette illustrates *pathos* in its most astounding form magnified in the phrase, "I was carried away by the strength of your arm movements enriching my own experience.

In the performance of *"Le Cavalier Fantastique",* speed is a factor in bravado performance that sends audiences in sheer delight because of its structural givens in rather fast tempo.

*"As I was conquering the piece with all might, I distinctly felt I was playing for the audience, not for myself, so evidently portrayed*

*with flamboyant hand movements exaggerated in height and direction for emphasis and showmanship.*

In effect, tempo as *pathos* element becomes a musical device akin to literary device designed to invoke emotions and other responses to the audience. This way, performance becomes meaningful to them. Performers design the speed of their music even before performance begins which can sometimes change unconsciously during performance. This can be exacerbated by rushed feelings of anxiety, lack of preparation for the concert, and emotional readiness among other reasons. It is interesting to note that such anxiety is relieved by a clear bass line on the left hand indicating regularity of pulse. Waltz music is typically exhibiting such stable tempo because a determined bass line guides the flow of music in one regular fashion so that people can dance to the music.

While tempo relates to the performer due to its articulation of the character, it has to be understood by the listening audience also to be persuasive. In other words, *pathos* as emotional connection from the audience absorbs tempo in terms of acceptance. In some cases, it becomes overwhelmingly spectacular when robust speed is displayed as a form of exhibition of virtuosity.

*"Tempo played a great role in audience's overwhelming acceptance creating a heightened sense of appreciation with my daring speed. It was, indeed, daring and almost uncontrollable especially towards the end. The notion of speeding up was but painfully gratifying, igniting a feeling of relief at the end of the performance."*

As a rhetorical goal, being moved by a performance correlates to a given tempo that is just enough to deliver the message. Arguably it makes sense that

some performances are construed as “too fast” or “too slow,” which can lend disturbing meanings to the listening audience. The final analysis of playing the right tempo is control of the performer in execution. Melodies are the messages of music and their delivery should be carefully directed. The same idea holds true for a speech that is not clear because the speaker is talking to fast and the words are no longer understood or slow speech can bore a listening audience.

> *“In the performance of light classics in lento (slow tempo), it was revealing to me a deep sense of reverberation that echoed throughout the whole piece in a manner that I could control. Once again, embracing such characteristic movement in music served more than a musical cadence or pulse as determined by my performance decorum but more so on its complex interrelationship with the audience.”*

> *“It became a second nature to think of tempo-driven performance as a rhetorical gesture simulating oratorical speech enamored with bodily gestures that flowed with nuance of speed such that I swayed, did some foot assertions creating a visual spectacle of my performance.”*

Related to tempo is the concept of *rubato* playing which indicates that notes are to be played with irregular tempo. As a form of restriction or holding back, *rubato* creates flexibility and freedom in melodic interpretation which has both *ethos* and *pathos* appeals.

Within *ethos,* rubato is a personal expression of the performer in holding back sections of the melody within the frame of a steady accompaniment. It is a technique

as well in finding a perfect spot to enthuse, to pause such that musical rendering is emotionally driven. It is the ultimate liberation of an artist's spirit.

> *"My playing of the song allowed me to enjoy a moment of pause in playing melody in terms of my own personal desire. I held notes, prolonged and released them when I was ready to set free. Rubato was my own declaration of freedom."*

On the other hand, it is an element within *pathos* where the audience evokes, emotes, and empathizes with musical narratives relayed to them.

> *"Embracing the narrative of tempo as musical element, rubato resonated to the audience in terms of musical sigh, a wondering of the senses that was cognizant to the surrounding utterances of sound and noise including silence."*

> *"One remarkable transformation I experienced in performing Beatles music was the way I dramatized songs using rubato tempo, a kind of holding back feeling that grew intently as I saw Japanese listeners close their eyes which to me, was a signal for meditative listening."*

In other words, *rubato* for Japanese listeners is absorbed when they close their eyes, a reaction of being one with the music illuminating connection and empathy to the surrounding sound.

> *"The notion of rubato as a kind of 'holding back' was like a walking sensation that slowed down to pause for silence or to watch and listen to the surrounding environment. Embracing the narrative of tempo as musical element, rubato resonated to the*

*audience in terms of musical sigh, a wondering of the sense that was cognizant to the surrounding utterances and noise including silence."*

The importance of the vignette has to do with the similes punctuated in *"walking sensation", "a wondering of the self that was cognizant to the surrounding…."* These messages reveal audience reception of *rubato* in a way that people act on the basis of "controlled" movement, a perceptive understanding of the absorbed sound.
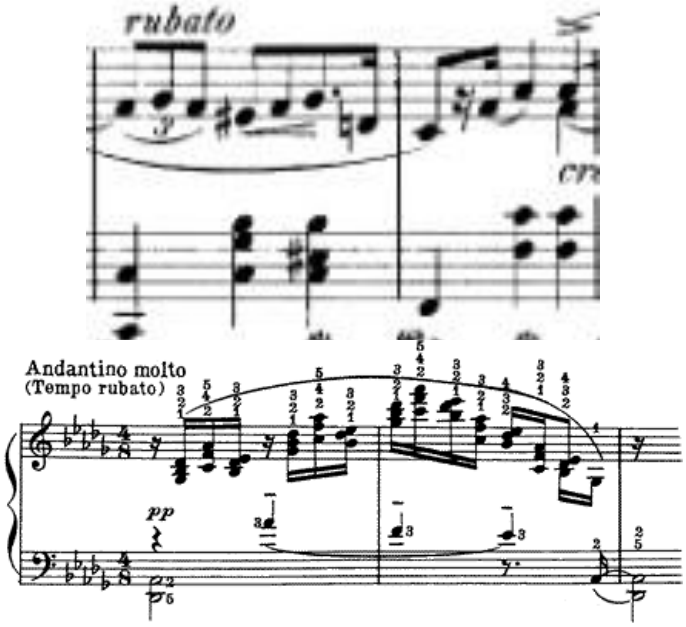
Figure 19. Illustrations of rubato

Figure 19 depicts *rubato* as expressive playing where notes tend to be played a little fast then slow according to the player's interpretation. While the notes in the upper register are *rubato* nuances, the left hand accompaniment in the lower register tends to have a rather balanced rhythm.

*"In discussing rhythm and tempo, I engaged the students on various musical styles with distinct patterns like, samba, bossa nova and swing music articulated in various different moods. The*

*students became alive at the various musical interludes showing dance steps that went with the music. Some of them stood up and elaborated the steps with partners while others remained seated with arm gestures and eager smiles."*

During the Baroque period, tempo was observed to be moderate not to be played too fast nor too slow. In fact, in Baroque sonata of concerto comprising three movements, slow movement in the middle should not be played too slow or too dragged.

*"However, after listening to different interpretations of the prelude under study in my compact disc collection, I noticed that it was played fast and almost furious until an abrupt arpeggio chord in Cmaj7 was reached…. I remember controlling my speed in the beginning so I could justify the difference between presto and allegro keeping in mind static pulse from measure to measure with my hands close to the keys."*

My story implies that due to Bach's non-indication of tempo in his music, performer has the freedom to control speed which resonates that his music should not display finger dexterity per se but as representative of Lutheran church music. It should not be played hurriedly for the sake of virtuosity; instead, it must be reverential and prayerful, thus, his music should not be played moderately.

Tempo in the Classical Period was more pronounced and clearly marked at the beginning of a piece in Italian terminology. Each term codified speed in term of beats per minute (BPM) such that 60 BPM would mean 60 beats per minute or 60 seconds per minute, so going above it indicates faster tempo while below it signifies slower tempo. Tempo was used as dramatic element.

*"This was again done in keeping the lively spirit of the first and last movements marked "allegro" and "presto" respectively."*

*"The third movement in presto agitato was a powerful musical exhibition filled with ferocious temperament that was difficult to sustain from beginning to end not only in terms of technique, but in emotional depth as well."*

*"Overall, the whole sonata in not the usual fast, slow, and fast form because it starts slow, becomes fairly fast, and ends very fast, built on cycles of temperaments from somber state to ferocity in the end."*

During the Romantic Period, *rubato* was introduced as a mechanism for holding tempo slower of a little bit faster for expressive playing. Music's emotive power was glorified by composers and performers as an individual statement rather than for compliance.

*"Next, rubato lines accorded me more freedom to speed up or slow down according to how I felt. Incidentally, there were moments of adrenalin rush that accelerated my playing then I would slow down in rallentando with the feeling of adding away in oblivion."*

As self-expression, *rubato* playing should be an authentic act, meaning, it should not sound structured even if a certain piece has indications written down. For the music of Chopin, for instance, where *rubato* is present vividly, the performer's individual imagination is highly suggested so that its execution becomes personal

and not dictated. In reality, one of the struggles met by artists is how to make sure that *rubato* creates a natural feeling in the audience's ear, signifying a sense of emotional connection.

Tempo in the 20th century was observed to be rather abrupt, dynamic to the point of being unpredictable sometimes. Influenced by individual experimentation generally characterizing the period, tempo also found its way into creativity and uniqueness.

> *"My performance of "Makrokosmos" was filled with bravura as the dynamic tempo in switching meter, mostly off-balance filled with wondrous serendipity with every leap."*

> *"I could sense a great deal of boldness and ingenuity as felt in the experimental movement that made me want to play the piece with such bravura inspired by polymetric temperament sweeping through such that my feet were basically dancing already while playing."*

Tempo in my compositions were influenced by many sources and the whole narratives of sound encapsulated various speed in rendering according to my human condition. Tempo was not only about fastness or slowness, but it was an eloquent expression of my innermost feelings

> *"The term "hagod" signifying a sense of rubato feeling that prolonged sound beyond normal value with all the necessary nuances were reflected in changing moods such as from moderato to animato (animated) that accelerated phrases then held back at some point."*

*"With this in mind, I proceeded the next sections with the same emotional punctuations that heightened during accelerando moments mirroring adrenalin rush brought about by emotional intensity."*

**Form**

Musical logic, the art of reasoning in music, represents structure, the *logos* with which the performer and audience center on expression and understanding. As such, form depicts organized ideas put together to make sense of musical utterance.

In the Baroque period, musical forms were varied. Examples include preludes and fugues, and sonatas, many having spiritual messages owing to the influence of the Church in many artistic creations.

*"The fugue, in three voices with leaping musical lines alternating between left and right hand had marcato (accentuation) sections between verses. With extended phrases, the art of fugal playing was the apex of contrapuntal playing with polyphonic voices layered in the score which had to be explicitly enunciated."*

*"The pinnacle of Baroque playing occurred when I studied "Preludes and Fugues" by Bach where my teacher chose specific studies meant for performance."*

During the Classical Period, form expanded to many composition styles. While the sonata form was a prominent structure, symphony music, opera arias and others diffused considerably.

*"In terms of the form, the first movement followed the standard structure of exposition, development, recapitulation and coda intricately woven together with notions of improvisation running through my mind as I explored."*

*"Overall, the whole sonata is not the usual fast, slow, and fast form because it starts slow in the first movement, then proceeds to a moderate second movement, and ends with a vibrant fast tempo, building on cycles of emotions from somber to ferocious feel towards the end."*

Forms in the Romantic period were expanded to include individual emotions of the composer. In expressing profound emotions, forms like nocturne, etude, rondo, sonata, and concerto became a personal expression apart from unleashing technical prowess.

*"In one of those intimate dinner parties I attended, I was excited to combine some popular classics like "Nocturne in Eb."*

*"In one of the formal dining occasions, I played Chopin's "Nocturne in Eb Major," a quiet piece that is usually a perfect mood-setting music."*

*"Another highlight of playing Romantic music was the experience I had with "Etude in Ab Major, Op. 25, no. 2 which I performed during the "Sangyaw Awards Night". There I was*

*bestowed with the Excellence Award in Music by the City of Tacloban for exemplary contribution to the field of music in the city."*

At the turn of the 20th century, form also became more expansive with composers venturing on atonality, jazz music, and electronic form including folk musical forms embodying cultural representations.

*"When me and my friend played duet pieces, they were mostly jazz in nature. For one, "Girl from Ipanema," a favorite opening piece during gigs, became a popular display of improvisations with each one creating tales with numerous tricks to showcase our pianistic skills."*

*"In playing jazz music, I would often dwell on unexpected sections in my interpretation that seemed to come from excitement giving me impulse to emphasize certain notes with a high degree of articulation relative to the rest of the notes."*

*"To conclude, my performance cum lecture, I played "Pamulenawen," a Filipino folksong and made the students discover musical elements of the song."*

Lastly, exploring musical forms in my compositions included the study of *"kundiman"* as a personal quest.

*"In my quest for self-discovery, I studied kundiman music as a personal endeavor because I did not learn it during my formal piano lessons."*

*"When I composed this piece, I had notions of Oriental sound, something that expressed profound meanings of my Oriental identity imbued with politeness, calmness and a sense of enlightenment that was undisturbed. To me, it was my search for a quiet soul that absorbed everything and extended silence in return."*

*"In another personal story, I was saddened by the thought that my mother died, and she could not be with me for the rest of my life. Hence, I composed a piece titled "Danza ni Nanay."*

Table 4. Summary of the Elements of Music in the Different Rhetoric

| Elements | (Ethos, Pathos, Logos) | Baroque (Performance) | Classical (Performance) | Romantic (Performance) | 20th Century (Performance) | Musician's Rhetoric (Composition) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Melody | Ethos | Music's message | Clear, well-balanced, without hesitation | Lyrical, emotive | Not lyrical, can be abstract, presence of silence | Romantic, lyrical, influenced by various schools |
| Harmony | Ethos | Counterpoints | Minimalist (e.g. diatonic harmonies) | Thick, expansive | Consonant and dissonant | Diatonic (folk) |
| Timbre<br>Texture<br>Tonality | Ethos/ pathos<br>Ethos<br>Ethos | Homogenous, contrapuntal, use of mordents and trills | Ringing, vibrant & clear | Thick<br><br>homophonic | Atonality<br><br>Unusual tone | Different textures as expressions of the soul |
| Dynamics | Ethos | Sound magnification with layers of soft and loud tones | Soft-loud from pianoforte, repetitions highlight dynamics | Broader dynamics | Convey emotions | Different sound volume from being sensitive to the environment |
| Rhythm | Pathos | Influenced from French dance, steady | Dance-like, more regular | Dynamic, changing according to the mood | Percussive and multi rhythmic | Multi-level, multi-rhythmic |
| Tempo | Pathos | Not intended for fast playing | Lively and andante (walking tempo) | Rubato | Abrupt, dynamic & elaborate, off-balanced meter, *"hagod"* | "*hagod",* expression of feelings |
| Form | Logos | Prelude and<br><br>fugue, sonata | Sonata | Free form | Jazz, folk,<br><br>electronic music | *kundiman,*<br><br>*danza* |

Thus, “when do I consider music as good music”? Music is good when I apply correctly all the eight elements (melody, harmony, timber, tonality, texture, dynamics, rhythm, and form) in order to improve the quality of my interpretation of performance pieces from the different musical periods as well as my original compositions, and to create a musical dialogue through the integration of the elements touching upon musicality and technique as important determinants of performance success.

### 2.3. Pathos: Good Audience Reaction

As earlier espoused, *pathos* is the emotional connection of the audience in a musical performance. As an emotional appeal, *pathos* sees to it that a performer embodying *ethos* considers emotion as an important element in persuasion. The other mode of persuasion uses *logos,* music structure, exemplifying reason and logic in a musical performance. Simply put, a powerful performance that encapsulates audience attention must be carefully laid out by the artist along with performance logic so that the confluence of such elements will highlight a meaningful performance.

Emotional attachment to my musical performance construes absorption of the sound that affects listening audience. Absorption could be a cognitive process of intellectualizing the logic of music or dwelling upon my sound so that emotions are stirred or altered as a result of absorption. In another light, emotional attachment is gleaned from familiarity of my sound attached to a listener’s experience that creates such musical affect. Absorption becomes a reflective process of internalizing the musical experience where facets of experience are recalled, relieved and even nurtured. This recollection, indeed, can be an opportunity to create a feeling of

empathy that manifests in entrained behavior where familiar experiences are expressed.

> *"Such feeling of energy drawn from the audience was a glorification of popular music or any song with popular appeal and familiarity that made "Feelings" captured heavily from audience perceptions rather than my interpretation."*

In my vignette, familiarity and popular appeal both impact the listener by way of association. In this way, the sound mirrors conscious alliance, which could be in the form of recollection of fragments of experience that excite a listener through self-introspections. It is this associative connection, the narrative connection of my sound that moves the audience regardless of the nature of music whether it is program (creates a story) or absolute music (music for art's sake). This associative quality must be clearly understood and recognized such that acceptance becomes a spontaneous feeling of the listening audience.

Familiarity as a determinant in music choice is a powerful force that can have valuable economic impact. For one, traditional radio formats continue to endure even in the face of technological changes (Edison, 2006 as cited by Ward, Goodman & Irwin, 2013). This example implies that listener's choice is glued to songs that attach a particular memory of experience whether it has personal or societal value that even with technological proliferation, the same songs in traditional formats or even converted to new platforms like Spotify, etc. will still render the same preferential treatment. Thus, the market of old songs is not displaced even when juxtaposed with novel or popular songs that feed ephemerally and disappears in a short period of time. Aggregating such valuation to a large group of consumers endures a culture of familiarity that cannot be persuaded to alter just because new songs are here.

Familiarity, then, becomes a cultural consciousness of shared memory that is lived and practiced in present condition even with connection dating back to decades of human experience.

On a deeper level, familiarity breeds the question of liking a particular music. It asks whether familiarity necessarily means liking a particular music in order to be moved. In associating familiarity to deeper connections of human condition in many forms (happiness or pain), familiarity offers dialectical and paradoxical lexicon, a kind of tug-of-war malady between pain and happiness harboring ambivalent feelings of attachment in the case of liking and detachment in the case of painful and familiar experience. In the latter, the question of consumer choice in music becomes a poignant consideration in understanding. If familiarity breeds a painful experience, it becomes a difficult choice for a listening audience to like that particular memory. In some cultures, including the Philippines, a nationalist song bearing struggles and pains of heroes in the past post familiar aspects of cultural experience that are transmitted through songs as painful reminders of human struggle and emancipation. In other words, recognizing a familiar history or its facet can make its way to conscious revisiting and restructuring a difficult past in order to elucidate emancipation. In such argument, a painful reminder allows molding a mindset that can eventually awaken, thus, persuade a listening audience. It is for this reason that patriotic songs and many other symbols of national struggles perform cultural signification as the memory continues to live.

What happens to the new breed of listeners who are not familiar with poignant history revealed through songs? How does music move in that case? Truthfully, the role of historical awareness becomes a matter of educational concern so that new

listeners are not detached from their country's struggle in identity formation. In some cases, the memory of experience through reading text, watching documentary film or listening to unfamiliar patriotic songs resonate to a deeper and more personal association of the human condition. Thus, societal struggles in history become personal struggles in illuminating redemption where such mirroring facilitates a form convergence, thus, restoring familiarity.

The following vignettes take into account different notions of familiarity, this time in terms of aesthetic appeal.

> *"You played so beautifully at such a young age." "I was touched by your playing of the song."*

Beauty is a good example of association of my performance, the vignette tells. This word creates a powerful dimension of connection through appreciation such that aesthetic value becomes a testament of meaningful understanding. In another dimension of association,

> *"The saga of performer-audience juxtaposition meant that popular music and culture could be diffused effortlessly to the audience where persuasion is more natural and imposed upon."*

Notice the phrase, *"diffused effortlessly."* In the context of popular music, its ubiquity feeds into the general audience without much constraints as its nature of authentic expression can be driven by affect, the emotional saga. In another dimension of authenticity, it is artistic integrity' – that is the musician followed artistic impulses and not commercial constraints (Stone, 2018). Tension brought about in the preceding statement can be felt by the non-affective nature of my music apart from rendering authenticity as emotionally true and valid. In fact, authenticity can also render a performer's breakthrough in the sense of nonconformity to conventions

in music, and that is being original. These are arguments within *ethos* in the sense that the performer establishes conscious decisions to create authentic expressions where the concept of “beauty” becomes a performer’s perspective of performance.

What about *pathos?* In all my efforts to be emotionally connected to the music being performed, it becomes a challenge to precisely translate emotional values as I felt. This gap of understanding between performer and audience is not a technical requirement. In other words, being moved by a musical performance resides in the conscious connection of the sound through narrative details. In this regard, the confluence between *ethos* and *pathos* on the notion of ‘beauty’ is a challenging quest in terms of equating both appeals.

However, it is also a valid argument to ponder on personal and cultural diffusion, whether both should have equanimity considering the different nuances of beauty. In such malady, beauty is a subjective dimension with relative positions yet its understanding is the cause for appreciation. In other words, even with different perceptions of beauty, the reality of understanding the nature and reasons foreground a liking principle.

> *“It was a profound experience for me listening to your music not only in terms of liking it but I was able to know more about my own experience which led me to liking.”*

Corollary to the idea of *pathos* is *kairos* (picking the right moment). In the context of creating meanings, it becomes a goal of the performer to choose the right moment to deliver a message that will make sense. In some cases, a listener’s emotional and mental state can determine their readiness to appreciate or to be moved by music, but it can be a general statement only. Underneath moments of

liking are small details considered by both performer and audience in order to arrive at a consensual understanding.

In a performer's milieu, picking the right moment is a dynamic process of deepening interpretation through feedback signals from the audience. In a musical concert with different faces, deciphering feedback signals can be a daunting and disturbing task for a performer who is easily disturbed by social signals. On the contrary, engaging rapport with the audience is a dictum of effective performance when music is spontaneous and the audience responds actively by way of clapping, dancing, or doing any gesture that render approval such that *kairos* is translated to "living in the moment"- because the right moment is the actual moment.

In a classical concert, on the other hand, where silence reverberates in a concert hall, *kairos* is a dutiful assemblage of performer-audience sensitivity to create meaningful understanding. For instance, when lackluster performance pervades due to technical mishaps, it is a disturbing instance to pick the right moment to create audience connection because the performer can lose confidence because of ineffective performance. Such vulnerability of the performer to defeat performance goal is a reality among many artists including myself. In other words, it can be an arduous journey to choose the right time to make an impactful performance.

In a much larger society, picking the right moment illuminates social awareness of situations that bear importance to society. In oratorical speech, *kairos* exemplifies careful managing and timing of important communication for the public to absorb its profundity. In protest rallies, social bond that envelopes people with the same ideology is a spontaneous speaker-audience rapport expressed through loud cheers in perfect unison. Phrase like *"ibagsak ang rehimen!"* (destroy the regime) is

a collective expression uttered in perfect cadence every time a speaker makes a strong point such that the right moment is always happening. In this condition, feedback signals are loudly determined in a continuous flow. In music concerts that have protest messages, the audience may clap or move together (entrainment) or they can sit quietly and absorb the music and receive the same level of impact. However, in a musical parody, picking the right moment is another meaningful consideration to be absorbed by the performer.

Thus, to answer the third research question, "when do I consider a good reaction of my performance?", I consider a good audience reaction of my performance when meanings are acquired through absorption and reflection; through emotional attachment that can elicit feelings of empathy; and through appreciation and recognition of familiarity including cultural representation. All these I can effectively do when I pick the right moment in order to communicate effectively the message in my performance.

**2.4 Rhetorical Elements**

The confluence of performer-music-audience espouses a logical and meaningful coherence of meanings that encapsulates my thoughts and emotions as a performer and a communicator of sound together with application of the musical structure in order to create impact.

In the "*Illusion of Life"* rhetorical perspective (Sellnow, 2001) that elevates music as a form of communication, the absence of virtual experience (lyrics) and the presence of virtual time (sound) illuminate music's rhetorical function from other sources, in which case, emotions that play a great role in creating meanings. Such concept of illusion exudes a powerful message of creating reality within the listener's

domain such that meanings are assigned to certain aspects of the sound, not necessarily the entire music. In the context of “illusion of life”, “poetic illusions” are a crucial way we release human feeling (Sellnow, 399 as cited by Kibin, 2021), where such illusions can be nurtured in the listener’s cultural context. In other words, musical utterance as a cultural practice deepens meaningful understanding. Yet, it is arguably possible that absorption can only be partial and that other sources of virtual time (sound) can elicit further sources of engagement. For example, listening to popular music that diffuses in popular culture can easily locate sound to various entertainment values found in rhythm (e.g., danceable), melody (e.g., sonorous), harmony (e.g., thick sound), and many other aspects of desire and preference.

Engagement as associative process entails that some structures like rhythm can create unified movement among listeners, which multiplies with a number of persons as defined in entrainment. These synchronous behavioral patterns unify underlying meanings, sometimes they do not. What this means is that human attachment such as emotionality manifested in pulsating rhythm can have unique and more personal interpretation especially instrumental sound. With less objectivity of thoughts and feelings, music has internal elucidation of meanings. This is dissimilar with words that have the power to point direct meanings.

In a performer’s milieu, one’s charisma, character and popularity can be a factor for audience’s excitement, such that the performance would no longer matter if it was good or not. In the context of *ethos* in Classical Rhetoric of Aristotle, it becomes a fallacious rhetoric when the rhetorician bears little credibility and authority as a performer. But in the practical world, a performer’s high commercial value can sometimes suppress equivocation because of stature. This underscores vulnerability and manipulation of message in the audience creating negative impact of rhetoric. In

music, a performer's questionable performance can be a form of message manipulation when it is lackluster, insincere and assuming. But careful analysis of a musician's career journey shows that technique and musicality can wane over time especially in the former. Great artists who conquered the stage in their younger years may have diminution of talent for many reasons, but due to an established career in the past, lackluster playing can still have a profound impact on the audience. A good example is Arthur Rubenstein's performances in his later years, which had errors in performance (e.g., wrong notes), but these never diminished his character as a celebrated pianist. His past record as an excellent performer bore him out. Such labelling exonerates a performer's credibility but can have damaging impact to critical listeners. Thus, it makes sense that in musical performance, actual performance which unfolds on stage is crucial in conveying meaningful messages as it creates an active flow, currency and spontaneity of interpretation.

In the final analysis, the performer should be equipped with performance aura encompassing artistic prowess through masterful rendering of musical utterance grounded on personal conviction and determination. Juxtaposed with such credible stance is a robust understanding of the logic of music, the elements forming completeness, and logical coherence combined with soulful expressions in order to stir emotion, and magnify the artistic aura that will transcend human experience. This transcendence is a realization that can grow within the performance, when the degree of tension and resolution come into play. However, as a performance artist, I have to control emotional indulgence as it can also lead to overplaying the same way an emotional speech can disrupt nuances of sentence construction.

Within *pathos,* emotional connection of with the audience emanates from a modification of belief systems, at least, while listening. In the context of Cicero,

persuasive performance must instruct, move, and entertain. Such realizations have transformative impact that makes music worth listening to. In addition, the performer should connect to his music and such connection must extend to the audience. In simple terms, a performer must communicate well what he interprets and how he wants to convey to the audience must be clearly portrayed. In doing so, a highly engaging performance that takes responsibility of audience perception can have profound meanings. Once again, these meanings are not static but dynamic and create patterns depending on audience's worldview mirrored in the sound.

A related view on the rhetorical impact to the audience is narrative engagement, the extent to which one becomes engaged, transported, or immersed in narrative that influences the narrative's potential to affect story-related attitudes and beliefs (Busells & Bilandzic, 2009).

In *pathos,* narrative connection as an engagement process in a musical performance refers to the audience's perceptive listening to the stories underneath the music whether it is related to experience or something else. Narrative engagement begins with narrative understanding, when, in the context of *pathos,* performance is understood by the audience so that a connection will be formed and attachment to belief systems are solidified. Whether the performers change ideological paradigms altogether or just a fraction, their powerful impact can move audiences in many ways. Following narrative understanding is attentional focus which can be a moment of intense listening of the musical sound. Then, emotional engagement proceeds when intensification illuminates various feelings. And lastly, narrative presence solidifies narratives as the gamut of engagement.

Following the dimensions of engagement (Busells & Bilandzic, 2009), apart from participation, the notion of engagement extends rhetorical purpose of

entertainment according to Cicero. In other words, audience rapport and a feeling of community are shared experiences between the performer and the audience that center on music, forming collective consciousness with nuances of individualism. Also, narrative engagement predicts the idea that listeners decipher meanings of their narratives grounded on the music they represent, not necessarily music as an engagement process per se. In other words, there is plausibility of indirect impact of music in forming associations because they focus on the stories they bring. From rhetorical perspective, it attests that performance meaning is glued to the narratives of music.

Interestingly, such argumentation defines a type of music called program music which, is music that tells a story. Program music refers to a piece (usually instrumental, rather than vocal) that is *about something,* or which has some kind of extra-musical meaning (Farrant, 2021). A good example is film music that clearly underlays powerful narratives throughout the entire film. This is a very effective factor in the storytelling process with music's deep emotional dimensions emerging from different episodes.

To answer the research question, "how do these three rhetorical elements interact for me as performer and my music to resonate with the audience?", the confluence of the three appeals in rhetoric is a dynamic and continuous process of understanding meanings in both ends. For the most part, the degree of confluence can be indeterminate due to the different forms of attachment or engagement the narratives create within the sound. In deciphering meanings in performance, both audience and performer need to be sensitive to such patterns and connections creating powerful energy and vitality. The rhetoric is the strength in deciphering meanings to make sense of a musical experience.

## Part 3: Rhetorical Theory of Communication for a Musical Performance

Based on my autoethnography and rhetorical analysis conducted in the preceding section, these elements are some echoed rhetoric beyond the realm of persuasion in a musical performance.

### Entrainment

Entrainment describes the temporal dynamics of interacting rhythmic systems.

The essence of interpersonal musical entrainment (IME) is the interaction and coordination of human beings mediated by sound and movement (Richardson et al., 2003 as cited by Clayton et al., 2020). In the context of musical performance, interpersonal entrainment is the synchronization and coordination of movements of the audience when they hear, for example, regular beats in rhythm. This is exhibited in synchronized nodding or foot tapping signifying oneness of physical response.

> *"The song affected the audience in synchronized responses with head movements in the same direction. It was perceived to be a clear indication of oneness between me, the performer, and the audience."*

The idea of coordination and synchronicity brings out performer-music-audience interrelationship in such a way that what the performer emits through sound forms a collective consciousness of oneness defining social bond. As a form of understanding, the audience's delightful response is an indication of music's power to move them. This persuasive character can be a mimetic experience one way or another as the representation imitates actual reality defined and illuminated by the performer. In this example, musical coherence is codified as true to the sentiments of the audience as well because movement is synchronized. From

individual to collective expressions, entrainment encapsulates unity of expression where profound collaboration is sought in an instantaneous manner.

*"I was moved by the emotions rendered in the song without noticing that other listeners moved in the same way I did."*

In many ways, rhetorical appeal does resonate with the audience as explained in *pathos,* the emotional connection of the musical speaker to the audience. In interpersonal entrainment, emotional connection is sought through a performer's willingness to connect to the audience using music. However, such emotional attachment in the form of synchronous movement is not a direct explanation of how music communicates emotionality. Even with synchronicity in understanding, individual meanings underneath a general notion of unity prevail as music affects individual persons individually. In effect, entrainment process can be an indirect rendering of social bond, but if prolonged and deepened, the social fabric begins to have a strong hold.

In a much larger scheme of things, entrainment as a cultural phenomenon illustrates prosodic alignment and affiliation through harmonizing of individual beliefs with cultural expectations. While it is easy to say, it is rather difficult to maintain harmonic relationship between individual values that can be independent with societal goals in a society beset with personal struggles such as survival, and amelioration from abject conditions. In managing difficult situation, harmony is instilled when individual motives are sacrificed for a much higher goal, the cultural goal of group harmony. This behavior accentuates group consciousness as previously discussed which later can also form distortion when the self is sacrificed for the group. In this sense, social cognition as the process involved in perceiving

other people and how we come to know about the people in the world around us (Cherry, 2020) rescues self-culture relationship so that entrainment instills.

In this regard, entrainment resides perfectly within *pathos* in the rhetorical appeal as the audience experiences such rhythmic unity in response to the tempo and rhythm of the music.

**Association**

Association is the connection between a percept, an idea, or between one idea and another by virtue of which one appearing in consciousness tends to revive the other (psychology discussion, n.d.). As a rhetorical appeal, association draws heavily from connections formed in a speaker's narrative of experience built in consciousness that are recollected. A case in point is a person's sense of reverie that suggests ideas and experiences forming a continuous labyrinth that can be freed or controlled. The level of association can be determined in terms of frequency, recency, and intensity (psychologydiscussion.net).

In my case, association is best exemplified in these vignettes:

> *"In retrospect, my self-revelations formed collective consciousness as relayed to me by some members of the audience signifying a unified association of musical sound to experience located in the country's history."*

> *"But the most striking to me was how much I associated the "kundiman" to a painful lamentation of my struggles as an individual and as a member of a nation with issues of sovereignty."*

The above vignettes clearly illustrate resonance of *kundiman* to my own personal struggles as a citizen in a country that has historical baggage of colonialism from Spanish and American regimes. In here, music reverberates a cry, a deep sense of wailing pain to free myself from any form of rule that is a representation of a much bigger pain that engulfs a nation. Such association of memory recollection as facets of personal and social struggles elucidates a rhetoric that is emphatically glued on sordid experiences of the past. In other words, music becomes meaningful and emphatic message grounded on a speaker's authentic experience of bigotry, displacement, and freedom. The changing moods in associative transformation thicken musical expression because sentiments are altered, predicaments are transformed, and the elucidation of meaningful sound mirrors those transformations.

> *"Such poignant elucidation of historical association unleashed a powerful force of music to conjure inner sentiments without the indulgence of lyrics to solidify a people's predicament, my predicament. In retrospect, my self- revelations formed collective consciousness as relayed to me by some members of the audience signifying a unified association of musical sound to experience located in the country's history."*

Apart from a historical dimension, association also manifests in visualization of musical sound uttered during performance.

> *"I played with utmost controlled speed to emulate a ritualistic trance. Such heightened stated could have been easily construed as disturbing decorum for someone not used to listening to madness in sound."*

The vignette signifies a metaphor of a "ritualistic trance" as an associative statement as it elaborates and extends interpretation to another level of connection, this time, more creative and indulgent. The insistence upon indulgence in the vignette is connected to the level of frequency and intensity defining association. For example, indulgence in a speech or musical performance creates a rich interpretation of a text that borders on authentic expressions rightfully intensifying associative rhetoric.

Simply put, narratives that are indulgent affect a speaker's *ethos* because performance explains credibility and authority. Thus, performances that are drawn from heaviness in emotional indulgence create a powerful force that elevates a performer's sense of authority.

> *"I was magically switching moods without hesitation as if talking to two different persons with different emotions. Embroiled with dissonant articulations, my sense of enthusiasm to diabolical line ushered a sense of vulnerability that I thought was bordering on insanity, or its approximation."*

> *"Indeed, my diabolical intentions became powerful affirmations of vulnerability and reconstruction so delicately intertwined…."*

It is rightfully gleaned that indulgent notion of vulnerability bordering on insanity is an associative notion of reconstruction that restores chaos from excessive indulgence. In this manner, the degree of emotive power gratifies a sense of commendable performance especially when balance is restored. This is a

persuasive indication of association that gives meaning to music and its realization is delved on by an indulgent performer.

Similar to a speech orator, a musical orator ponders on a sea of ideas from the speech or music and the surrounding signs, impressions collected in the environment as well as from the cognitive domain. In the light of this, Aristotle speaks of the necessity of associability or that concepts are associated because of their basic properties, and that this is natural, inevitable occurrence (Keiser, 1980).

In the context of musical performance, concepts form a system of integrated functioning of the different elements of music previously discussed. The concepts form a network of unified language, an associative connection as a form of inevitable occurrence. For instance, the element of melody is always related to the concept of harmony as the latter is built from the former, *timbre* is always related to touch, and texture arise from melodies and harmonies created. However, the unified language becomes a weapon of the performer's sense of authority that should be understood by the audience. In this regard, "inevitable occurrence of" of concepts becomes a performer's quest in one's interpretative narration that should resonate to the audience's cognitive understanding.

In classical music in general, a selected audience who understands the logic of musical structure will rightfully grasp nuances and logical coherence in musical utterance because performance is associative to the structure as written by the composer.

> *"In terms of form, the first movement followed the standard structure of exposition, development, recapitulation and coda intricately woven together with notions of improvisation running through my mind as I explored."*

It will be noticed that my narrative implores a dualistic notion of association similar to the previous analysis. For one, following the standard structure is in tune with ideas forming associations which are “inevitable occurrences.” Connections are givens, but, adding “improvisation” into the narrative delves interpretation to a more authentic level, hence, not really following the structure anymore, but come to think of it, improvising melodic themes also follows chordal structures that guide a performer in embellishment such that a listening audience can still sing the main melodic themes.

> *“Improvisation was about creating authentic ideas within a chordal structure without playing the actual melody but the surrounding tonal or atonal themes that should be acceptable to the performer, with the ensemble artists, and with the audience.”*

In the context of association, improvisation as connecting ideas subsumes a dialogic interaction between a performer through a process called mental association. Mental association is the state of being connected together as in memory of imagination (Alexander, 2011). Its power is one example of a skill that often times goes unnoticed in our daily routines but, when used deliberately, can help increase the quality of our lives (Alexander, 2011).

mprovisation elevates magical discoveries that are oftentimes spontaneous according to how a musician feels during that moment of discovery. Such *“authentic ideas”* represent a deep-seated invigoration of creative stimulation that surfaces and intensifies especially when the story around improvisation develops a climactic turn. In one instance,

*"Every bit of sound was a serendipitous moment imprinted in my head. I could say that listening to my inner passion was instrumental in exhuming the depths of my narratives."*

This is a classic case of addressing authentic expressions that resonate in improvisational technique. It is a technique because it involves association of creative ideas to chord inventions, modulations, among others. But beyond that, the audacity to magnify self-indulgent themes that are serendipitous, welcoming and true to the musician's spirit is a form of authentic association grounded on personal experience and sensibility that provides creative directions of musical lines.

Improvisation is the heart of syncopation in Jazz music that has its roots in African culture, the sense of off-beat sensation justifying foot work such as walking and dancing in multiple rhythmic pulses and in spoken language with abundant polyrhythmic utterances in everyday conversations among people.

Syncopation is to rhythm what dissonance is to harmony (Hein, 2015). It will be gleaned that as a rhythmic sensation, syncopation is a kind of distortion to a regular beat like placing an off-beat note with a heavy accent somewhere within a measure. A syncopated rhythm has accents on unexpected beats (Hein, 2015). It can be construed as an irregular heartbeat, or something that comes from somewhere surprising. In the sense of its off-beat sensation, dissonance in harmony approximates the feeling of being off-beat because of its atonal, irregular and non-harmonic character in tone.

Comparison between syncopation off and syncopation on:

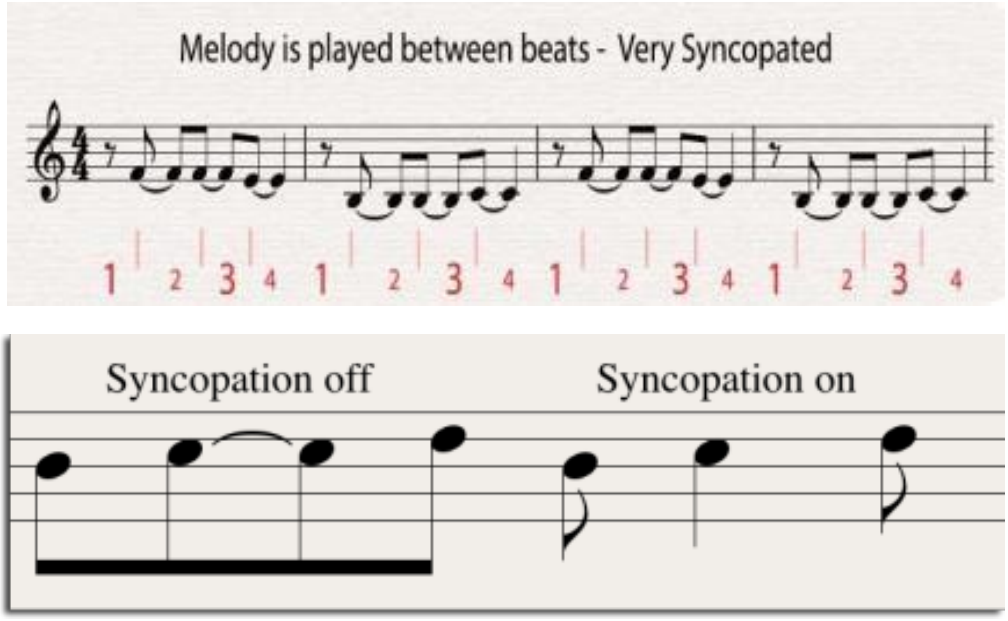


Figure 20. Syncopation

*"In playing jazz music, I would often dwell on unexpected sections in my interpretation that seemed to come from excitement giving me impulse to emphasize certain notes with a high degree of articulation relative to the rest of the notes."*

*"Playing jazz music and all its shades like bounce, swing or bossa nova tempo instigates different rhythmic pulses, syncopated melodies creating new impressions and emotional attachment."*

*"What was exciting also was my determination and audacity to play the same songs in different jazzy rhythms according to my mood, the audiences' reactions, and venue."*

The first vignette highlights an elucidation of impulsive, hence, off-beat feeling with a *"high degree of articulation relative to the rest of the notes."* Indeed, its associative quality accentuates a notion that syncopation is an emphatic articulation

of certain sections exhibited in an unexpected manner. The second vignette highlights emotional attachment as the core of improvisation. When a musician relates his music to a certain experience, expressions are more authentic and involved as with any narrative that draws on personal accounts. The third narrative connotes a confluence among the musician's temperament, audiences' response to one's articulations and the venue affecting overall signification. All such implications drawn upon association are forming networks of influence and interrelationship between performer-music-audience, an inseparable synergy as a combination rather than as summation of individual characteristics.

In African-American music traditions, syncopation is connected historically with slave songs (Sala, 2016). The syncopated attack pulses are supplied by various drums and other percussive instruments, but during slavery in the U.S., drums were forbidden (Sala, 2016). Slave owners feared that they might be used to transmit messages between individual slaves or slave communities, so syncopated rhythms were instead produced by clapping and tapping (Sala, 2016).

In the case of slavery in African-American traditions, persuasive expression of black people's predicaments is just as poignant as today when protests like Black Lives Matter (BLM) continues to haunt Western societies. Black Lives Matter is about the wrongful deaths of men and women of color at the hands of police (Stern, 2020). In its categorical form, BLM music resonates protestation, but in many ways, a great song can unify and provide inspiration for people seeking a better world by serving as a vital soundtrack for actions – large and small, personal and universal – designed to promote positive change (Varga, 2020).

*"The piece called "Round Midnight" by Theolonious Monk, a black jazz composer and pianist, which I played with jazz*

*enthusiasts aboard the ship spoke, and drew attention with some guests lamenting that I embodied the essence of black sensibility."*

Black sensibility in my vignette locates associative resonance of black history of oppression to my own struggle of colonialism. Such predicament of wanting to release from the bondage of repressive structure exemplifies a collective expression that I embody as a person located in society's struggles.

The point of this contention is rhetorical impact of music that is associated in forming collective consciousness beyond the confines of individual gratification.

When rap, rhythm and blues music affect the listening audience due to protest messages embedded in the songs' lyrics, Beethoven's instrumental music is also a 'condemnation' of certain musical confinements that defined the classical tradition. This was because Beethoven he was a transitionary figure between Classical and Romantic periods where the latter focused on depth of human expression more than following rules. Even more emphatic is the discussion of counterpoint in Baroque music as a clear description of association in musical structure.

*"With extended phrases, the art of fugal playing was the apex of contrapuntal playing with polyphonic voices layered in the score which had to be explicitly enunciated. For my part, I had to bring out individual voices as continuous lines by switching finger pressure to denote louder melody and a softer accompaniment."*

Phrases like *"polyphonic voices"*, *"individual voices as continuous line"* all indicate connection of melodic phrases in different voices as associative formations that define the logic of Baroque music. In the language of music theory, counterpoint is a compositional technique in which two or more melodic lines (or "voices") complement one another but act independently (Elfman et al. 2020).

Association in Baroque counterpoint exemplifies musical dialogue as written in the score, learned and played independently but heard interdependently as voices nesting on each other. Such continuity of sound links *pathos* to *ethos* because the core of expressing layers of sound is the performer's interpretation and the audience's impressions of the sound as persuasive statements are tied to the performer's emotional credibility. It will be noted that Bach's music was written as a plain manuscript without indication of tempo, dynamics, and other markings as they were all dictated by the performer's interpretation.

> *"However, in the midst of compliance to the manuscript, it dawned on me that the original score I played had no dynamics and tempo indications signifying my freedom to interpret the score. Thus, even with the confines of baroque playing, I internalized the notion of ornamentation by placing accents on different sections, thinking legato while some notes had to played staccato, and distributing melodic emphasis according to how I felt."*

Such personal assertion to a form that is intricate in itself is a celebration of persuasive playing that instructs and moves the audience in many ways.

> *"In the listening end, the audience seated on pews quietly absorbed the music in a reverential way with some closing their eyes in meditation while others just stared at me. I thought my playing aided their spiritual journey, accompanying prayer with cycles of emotions while my music was echoing through the walls of the church, deepening their communion with God. What was striking in this spiritual journey was that I, too, was one with the audience in their prayer. Such spiritual rapport was relieving and*

*the dialogic air I felt between me, the audience, and to a reverential force, God, was a continuous flow."*

The foregoing vignette comes from my interpretation of Bach's *"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring".* Bach originally programmed it as the finale to a ten-movement liturgical work celebrating the miraculous pregnancies of Mary and Elizabeth from the gospel of Luke, and God's subversion of the world order through the birth of Christ (Jones, 2017). The wondrous hand of the exalted Almighty is active in the mysteries of the earth, the work proclaims (Jones, 2017). As such, my performance of the piece is an associative acclimation in reverential meditation that binds me and the audience in one spiritual journey. Even with spirituality removed in performance, interpretation of such soulful sound will always be associated with reverence and tranquility because the music has its innate qualities of dignified semblance.

In the final analysis, association in rhetoric has qualities of communication practice within the *Sociopsychological Tradition of Communication Theory* as expression, interaction, and influence where communication is mediated by psychological predispositions such as attitudes, emotional states, personality traits, unconscious conflicts, and social cognitions, etc. (Craig, 1999). My psychological predispositions forming associative nuances of ideas, impressions, and historical interrelationship with *kundiman's* lamentation of love of country are expressed in romantic stories and Black Lives Matter consciousness that connect music to a larger issue on imbalance, all of which solidify connections in many different avenues through musical utterance. As a communicative device, the rhetoric of association moves the performer and the audience in a symbiotic relationship reinforcing each other as interpretation deepens.

A clear manifestation of psychological indulgence worth noting is the idea of how much individual traits become important aspects of expression, interaction and influence as associative connections in communication practice. This strengthens communication's interactive power using indulgence of sound, without lyrics, as rhetorical justification that instructs, moves and entertains as espoused by the philosopher Cicero.

In the review of related literature, Berdie (2009) explained that "while this narrative draws on my personal experiences, it also positions these in relation to significant cultural, institutional and pedagogical issues with my profession…" This positioning construes a psychological placement of individual beliefs and interpretations within cultural boundaries explaining association as highlighted before.

Moreover, Ellis (2004) described "back and forth gaze: First, they look through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward and to cultural aspects of their personal experiences; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and restrict cultural interpretation" (p. 37).

Thus, rhetorical association is an expression of human experience that is interdependent, cohesive and mutually understanding which glorifies personal predispositions to cultural facets that produce and reproduce meanings. Connections grow with every utterance in communication practice that listens and responds.

**Identity**

An identity is an "internal positional designation" that represents meanings actors use to define themselves as unique individual (personal identities), role occupants (role identities), or group members (group identities) (Stets 2006; Stryker, 2002 as mentioned by Carter, 2013). For the purpose of deciphering identity in my rhetorical analysis, I will be discussing identity as used in two linked senses, which may be termed as "social" and "personal" (Fearon, 1999). In the former sense, an identity refers to a *social category,* a set of persons marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and (alleged) characteristic features or attributes (Fearon, 1999). In the second sense of personal identity, an identity is some distinguishing characteristic (or characteristics) that a person takes a special pride or views as socially consequential but more-or-less unchangeable (Fearon, 1999).

**Personal identity**

Personal identity as implied in Fearon's sense is my own sense of self, character, pride and dignity for who I am as a musician and as a person. The music I create is an illumination of myself as an adventurous, indulgent, sensitive, and vulnerable individual dwelling upon depths of human experience. Since the beginning of my musical adventures, a great part of my soul was always constantly defined by the music that I created as well as my music defining my identity. In the latter,

*"Damdamin" captured my Romantic essence of emotionality and expressiveness in performance usually punctuated by holding*

*notes in certain phrases that sometimes were not written in the piece."*

The above vignette illuminates my emotional and expressive character of identity through playing *"Damdamin",* with Romantic elements of expressiveness taken from the Romantic period. Such revelation of character is key to a rich interpretation of music because of attachment.

*"With so much attachment to aesthetics in emotional rendering, I thought my performance echoed an emotional struggle of love in all its shades of impassioned vulnerability with resolute ending defining a moment of glorification and liberation that epitomized "kundiman" sentiment".*

The mere mentioning of "aesthetics" in the vignette elevates interpretation of music as an artistic endeavor which adds depth to love's struggles in perfecting *"kundiman"* with self-vulnerability. In this sense, tensions created in the musical narratives explain my own personal struggles of truth searching, restoration of order from disorder and a wondrous liberation at the end of personal debacles. In this regard, identity formation is capable and vulnerable to change as different situations emerge.

While identities influence the way which a role is played out, discrepancies between the meanings of the role performance will result in change (Burke, 2006). Due to the inherent structure of identity systems, change will occur not only to the role performance but to the meanings of identity standard over time (Burke, 2006).

*"Dumagsa" is a vernacular term in Waray-Waray language that means east wind. When I composed this piece, I had notions of an Oriental sound, something that expressed profound meanings of my Oriental identity imbued with*

*politeness, calmness and sense of enlightenment that was undisturbed."*

Indeed, my self-definition of politeness, calmness and enlightenment resonates in *"Dumagsa's* tranquility, my identity structure as vividly portrayed. However, in another composition,

> *"Sayaw Fantasia" was fast and dance-like in the first and final sections. With heavy accents, the piece highlighted a flamboyant character in me that was ready to binge given the right opportunity. Indeed, I was flying with uncontrollable speed so suspended that I lost track of musical gravity of some sort during my performance."*

In another instance,

> *"I was magically switching moods without hesitation as if talking to two different persons with different emotions. Embroiled with dissonant articulations, my sense of enthusiasm to diabolical lines ushered a sense of vulnerability that I thought was bordering on insanity, or its approximation. It was in my vulnerability that brought me to new doors of unchartered territories."*

Vulnerability as being susceptible or capable of being tempted (Hoffmaster, 2006) is one instance that can change identity of a person confronted with differing situations. True enough, different instances especially those that create patterns of change bring about new definitions of the self that can change in a given time.

In exploring the relationship between vulnerability and identity, a pertinent question looms: does vulnerability weaken a person's identity? If the question is answered based on the notion of vulnerability as susceptibility to change, it rightfully construes an implication of weakening identity, or so it may seem. From the

standpoint of rhetoric as an art of persuasion, the end goal of persuasion can either result in positivity or manipulation depending on how vulnerability is applied. In musical discourse, vulnerability is open to various sensations, to different cognitive consonances and dissonances heightening a performer's interpretation. In that sense, vulnerability becomes a delightful indulgence. The following vignettes attest to such positive notions of vulnerability:

> *"I indulged in emotional, tearful yet uplifting journey of knowing more about myself in great appreciation to simple joys and blessings in life devoid of complaints."*
>
> *"Indeed, as a therapy, it was a belief in spiritual divination that did not ask questions but accepted faith wholeheartedly where music was at the center guiding my enlightened being. With that, my sense of emptiness was completeness in itself."*

In the first vignette, a slight tension in the word "tearful" renders a sense of vulnerability that exposes sorrow or pain but the phrase "uplifting journey" counters dissonant vulnerability to a positive outcome of appreciation. In the second vignette, "spiritual divination" is a strong indicator of a "sense of emptiness" as "completeness in itself. The narrative is tantamount to saying spiritual acclimation restores identity in its complete form.

In the final analysis, personal identity is a glorification of individuality defining a self that even with different situations and vulnerabilities, authentic expressions remain strong and willing to adapt to changing tides.

**Social identity**

Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership (McLeod, 2019). Henri Tajfel (1979), in his identity theory, proposed that the groups (e.g. social class, family, football team, etc.), which people belonged to were an important source of pride and self-esteem (McLeod, 2019). Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world (McLeod, 2019).

> *"The idea of venturing into ethnic-inspired music was my sense of involvement with a community theater that practically shared commonalities among members. We were theater enthusiasts inspiring each other with our own creative ideas that defined who we were as individuals then as social beings with responsibilities to the group and to the community."*

The vignette defines a social self that locates a person within a group through creative activities that define them as a community rather than as individual characters detached from the social world. In my case, I become part of the community where my responsibilities transcend to the group, where my personality is understood, and accepted, and where the group's pride takes a providential role.

> *"After the performance, our theater group sat down and evaluated our artistic performance. One member aired out some surprising remarks like our sense of being Waray-Waray was not lost when we changed chanting melodies because we interpreted them our own way, although I still think we preserved what our grandmother possessed."*

In the narrative, a sense of group performance enunciates elements of cultural preservation from the chant but could not be done in its purest form in the light of personal interpretation. Such notion of individual character evolving within a social group does not abandon personal identity for the sake of collective understanding. In other words, the social self is a reflection of individual expression in performance interpretation. It must be argued that interpretation is a personal expression to begin with and its transformation from raw expression (grandmother's chanting) to our group's performance is a confluence of individual and group sensibilities put together. In this sense, the performer's sense of character elucidates within the group with personal interpretation weaving through collective chanting.

Social identity theory provides a framework for explaining intergroup behavior and intergroup communication based on the inherent value humans glance on social group memberships, and their desire to view their specific social groups in a positive light (Harwood, 2020). Implied in this theory is pride that members of a social group cohesively accepts through camaraderie, group dynamism and social cognition unifying every facet of expression that society understands. In other words, group norms tend to create a unifying element in asserting social identity unless conflict sets in. This is entrainment as discussed earlier.

> *"At some point, I could not hold on to my personal values being sacrificed for the sake of the group. I could no longer bear to withstand criticisms of my performance because according to them, they no longer reflected group identity."*

It is readily gleaned from my vignette a kind of displacement and discrimination against me and with the rest of the group, not from other groups. At this point when conflict arises due to prejudiced thoughts against a member, a sense

of assertion of a person's convictions can result in redemption or an outright abandonment of the group, voluntarily or involuntarily. Whatever the reasons are, personal identity can be caught in a web of social turbulence especially pertaining to acceptance as group behavior can radically shift in the principle of "for the sake of the group". As such, a person suffering from group acceptance will always be challenged to alter ways of dealing in the spirit of kindness.

> *"One month later, our little theater group performed the chant echoed by the grandmother. During the performance, certain melodies were altered unintentionally because the performer felt something different that prompted her to perform differently from what she heard before. In the middle of such intense moment, I heard guitar strumming some chords that sounded in consonance with the chanting. It was a magical moment that involved the audience tapping their feet, smiling, and moving around in tune with the music around them."*

The vignette is a metaphor of the previous analysis on conflict with the phrase:

*"the performer felt something different that prompted her to perform differently than what she heard before."* Indeed, such transformation is an allegorical expression of conflict which magnifies social displacement in sociological perspective. In reality, personification of social situations is an issue in identity formation. In many ways, social identity has powerful resemblance with rhetorical association highlighting self- culture interrelationship.

**National identity**

National identity is a sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, as represented by distinctive traditions, culture, and language (lexico, 2022). Such definition reverberates a conscious feeling of being one with the sentiment of a nation a person belongs to.

National identity through music and musical life of the Filipinos from 1870 to 1930s was a period when Filipino musicians from different social and economic environments reached a common consciousness of a music as an art form and as a distinct form of human expression (Ramos, 2003).

> *"With so much attachment to aesthetics in emotional rendering, I thought my performance echoed an emotional struggle of love in all its shades of impassioned vulnerability with resolute ending defining a moment of glorification and liberation that epitomized "kundiman" sentiment."*

> *"But the most striking to me was how much I associated the "kundiman" to a painful lamentation of my struggles as an individual and as a member of a nation with issues of sovereignty."*

The vignettes unequivocally highlight *kundiman* from a Tagalog phrase *"kung hindi man"* or "if it were not so", as folksongs as subtly patriotic but typically designed as love songs (Anderson, 2015). Filipinos, in their long struggle against oppressive Spanish regime, saw it as a tool that would ultimately unite Filipino revolutionaries to wage war against the Spaniards in 1896 during the Spanish- American War (Anderson, 2015).

Both narratives express a personal liberation in *kundiman* sentiment signifying that a nationalistic fervor is driven by personal desire giving rise to social consciousness. In a manner of speaking, nationalism in music is similar to Benedict Anderson's *"Imagined Communities"* where people share common ideology in a community so that even if they may have never met before, there is always a feeling of shared commonality and understanding. For example, in the story of *The Untold Soldier,* a hero lies inside the tomb, not known personally by people who visit the tomb but because of his martyrdom, he is known as a hero who died for the country. With *kundiman,* the sense of commonness of love as human expression cultivates a shared feeling among performers and listeners alike as the sentiment is an active emotional quality shared by the human race. Thus, even without reference to actual people embracing the feeling, *kundiman* has that shared and imagined sense of understanding. From a historical point, the same notion of *kundiman* as a patriotic song that unleashes human struggle binds people together in decrying a sense of oppression that still holds to this day.

> *"Pakiusap" would normally envelope dark and heavy emotions in a musical sound. Such poignant elucidation of historical association unleashed a powerful force of music to conjure inner sentiments without the indulgence of lyrics to solidify a people's predicament, my predicament."*

It is clear from the vignette that notions of emotional struggle from oppressive structure resonate to an individual's inner sentiments explaining that people's predicament is a personal predicament as well. In other words, what is seen by the larger society is a macrocosm of individual perceptions nurturing each other in a cohesive manner.

While *"kundiman"* has associations with the oppressive experience of the Filipino people under Spanish and American regimes, *"Hating Gabi"* is a romantic piece for violin and piano in rondo form ABAC. This piece elevated in the folksong category never fails to evoke the unique Philippine rural scene of a romantic moonlight evening and a young boy serenading his ladylove (Pil, 2005).

> *"With "Hating Gabi," nocturnal ambience provided a musical setting that also set the mood for doing a serenade. For my part, the element of nocturne as a dreamy evening piece made me indulge in quiet and subdued sound with some moments of elation especially in the "major" section."*

What is interesting about the piece is its rural atmosphere that is often used in Filipino movies defining a sense of cultural identity as something indigenous, local, and authentic. Moreover, the ambience of guitar music as soulful and sonorous nurture a feeling of a rural and surreal ambience of tranquility. Similar to other *kundiman* songs, it begins with a minor mode and ends in a triumphant major mode, which metaphorically translates transformation from dark to light emotions. In contrast,

"Hating Gabi" as a folksong has no lyrics to exemplify sentiments of love, instead, melodic utterances with harmonies in thirds and sixth deepen the musical texture.

> *"With all might, I interpreted "Hating Gabi" in terms of temperament using "danza" tempo in 2/4 time signature with accentuated pauses in certain musical phrase endings."*

*"However, once again, the powerful song in ¾ time signature moved majestically especially when the 'major key' resolution was attained, a standard transition from minor to major key typical of kundiman."*

From the vignettes, *Hating Gabi* represents *danza tempo* as a form of *harana* (serenade) in 2/4 time signature while a typical kundiman is in ¾ time signature and the former has Tagalog lyrics while the latter can include Spanish lyrics along with Tagalog lines.

Given the cross-fertilization of Spanish and Filipino cultures in the 19th century, *kundiman* art songs were typically a blend of melodic material from native folksong and European music traditions. Though the *kundiman* has been credited as a colonial- era art, it actually evolved from a pre-colonial tradition known as the *kumintang.* The *kumintang* is an indigenous courtship or bridal song that shares the same sense of heart and passion (Co, 2021). Francisco Santiago, credited as the *"Father of Kundiman",* described that the early *kundiman* was a passionate love song with erotic underpinnings, and sung extemporaneously with the accompaniment of a guitar (Santiago, 1957 as cited by Ramos, 2003).

*"The music sounded like a Spanish piece in danza tempo."*

*"Without saying anything, I played "Besame Mucho", a Mexican song known all over the world. With all might, I interpreted it just like "Hating Gabi" in terms of temperament using danza tempo…"*

Clearly, the narratives explicate cross-cultural accommodation of European and Filipino traditions in musical passages and rhythmic modes in *danza*. While

cultural borrowings could not be avoided in country under 333 years of rule, it cannot be undermined that the existence of *kumintang* as pre-colonial expression already defined indigenous rituals of courtship or religious worship defining local identities of people in scattered communities. Such expressive character of pre-colonial people magnified a sense of ownership of human expression that no amount of colonialism could just simply discard.

It is for this reason that today's Filipino music (Original Pinoy Music or OPM) embodies the ideals and aspirations of the Filipino people because the music speaks those inner sentiments of love, pain, struggle, and redemption. In many ways, the Filipino spirit is vulnerable also with so many ways to profoundly affect and be affected by the musical sound.

> *"It was like the audience embraced every aspect of my Filipino identity with a hint of vulnerability. Such vulnerability was probably due to the presence of foreign audience understanding a part of me and my culture from the outside."*

One popular appeal of OPM that lures audiences to listen is the word, *hugot,* which expresses a sentiment at the heart of so many love songs. It makes you swoon, if it makes you want to get up and sing, then it's a ballad for the ages (newsroom, 2019). According to Isidora Miranda, a Phd candidate studying the history of Filipino music at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, "it's coming from the gut," it has that *hugot* nuance. *Hugot* is metaphorically what *hagod* is in *kundiman* music. While the form punctuates on essential, value-driven messages that speak of emotion, the latter is a musical rendering that is emotive, *rubato*-driven technique of holding back. The two terms accentuate a union of words and music in a manner of speaking.

*"The power of the lyrics of "Anak": "Pagsisisi ang sa isip mo't nalaman mong, ika'y nagkamali," (so sorry to find out you made a mistake).*

The above lyrics are poignant lines representing *hugot* which captivates a listener especially that they are repeated three times towards the end of the song. This is a classic rhetorical appeal called *epiphora,* repeating words or phrases at the end of a musical line meant to create an emphatic appeal. Several speeches follow this order of *epiphora* this line from Abraham Lincoln: *"that the government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."* As previously mentioned, its purpose is to create an emphatic appeal to the message. Its opposite is called *anaphora,* the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a clause or statement. In musical rhetoric, *anaphora* is best exemplified in the first movement of *"Moonlight Sonata".*

*"Even with ostinato triplets (repeating triplets) to be construed as soft, flowing accompaniment underneath melodies on top, still I was beset with my altered senses in visualizing triplets because I did not want them to sound too flat, regular or almost forgotten."*

*"It was my changing moods that led to erroneous rendering of such delicate structure oftentimes halting my playing in order to reflect upon the whole idea of repetitive triplets…."*

Apart from rhetorical appeal, *anaphora* and *epiphora* in music literature provides aesthetics to compositional style and technique. For instance, in George Gershwin's *"I Got Rhythm",* epiphora is seen in the opening phrase *"I got…."* In

successive repetitions. However, underneath the lyrics is a musical articulation that follows the same repetitions as the lyrics indicate, a successful marriage between words and music.

Going back to OPM, it must be recalled that it was a movement created in the 1970s that emphasized playing of compositions by Filipino artists on radio and television whether written in Tagalog or English, hence, giving honor and pride to local artists in letting their music be heard on radio and television. Over the years, the idea has been carried out with new artists expressing sensibilities in the vernacular tongue and spreading local consciousness of identity formation as evident in the creation of new compositions.

his is a clear manifestation of a community consciousness, a shared understanding of national identity through vernacularization of the Filipino language that spread awareness to different areas outside of Metro Manila, the pop music hub of OPM. Similar to Benedict Anderson's print technology that facilitated the spread of vernacular news outside *Latin* as lingua franca, OPM enlivened and prompted music enthusiasts to take pride and dignity in cultural possessions.

> *"With that, new expressions of admiration and understanding about themselves as individuals came about. Preferences to local music translated to preferences in anything local – from shirts to food and drinks, my cousins had a new indulgence which literally affected their friends, too. This tradition of sharing stories building upon individual to social understanding essentially became my quest for playing OPM more substantively."*

Careful analysis of the foregoing vignette reveals an important role of music: it creates culture and society. The powerful line that reads: *"preferences to local music*

*translated to preferences in anything local……. which literally affected their friends, too."* This statement resonates a notion that OPM mirrors socio-cultural understanding through praising and patronizing anything local as a consequence of listening. In effect, music creates a culture of formative practices that border on people's sense of identity expression. Music emancipates the souls of its listeners filling up culture from what I call empty vase, or "*empty vessel* waiting for people to fill it with meaning" (Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht and Lindsley, 2008). In other words, when culture is shared by the people, its precedent is to acknowledge what is to be shared. With music as a ritual with signification, it basically constitutes one of the elements to fill an empty vase together with language and art, among others. Then, its powerful impact creates a diffused sense of knowing authentic meanings of the self simply because it envelopes the very essence of their existence.

When music as rhetorical association has its power in persuasive meanings, such association is nurtured by daily practice, actual performance of culture apart from historical association regardless of its parallelisms or discordances in any way. Really, culture and society created by music accounts for determinism the same way technology creates society. As a deterministic factor, music has the capacity to build upon culture not culture building upon music. The former runs contrary to the notion of "a particular cultural context that surrounds a distinct music practice influences the music produced within those cultural boundaries" (Henrndon & McLead, 1982; Lomax, 1976; Merriam, 1964; Nettl, 1992).

My argument on music's culture-defining element is also explained in its dynamic interpretations that develop through time. For instance, even if *kundiman* and *harana* songs of the past have historical references, new listeners of *kundiman* and *harana* create new meanings and impressions according to the events

surrounding their time and context. Such impressions may not necessarily locate themselves to historical struggles of emancipation but their feelings are valid, too.

> *"Hating Gabi became an instant favorite among new listeners because of its minimalistic acoustic appeal. It is simple, direct and elegant."*

The vignette is a departure from previous descriptions bordering on nostalgia and melancholy. Such words are now replaced by *"minimalistic acoustic appeal."* For one, guitar as a sonorous instrument has a popular usage of "acoustic" sound especially among millennials who use the term with a "cool" effect relevant to their time.

On top of everything else, the grand narrative of music as universal penetrates this notion of culture and society created through music. Such element of tonality, for instance, as a Western concept will now have a universal appeal with people associating depth and richness of sound to something wonderful, a feeling that is true across cultures. Moreover, music is universal and that some songs sound "right" in different social contexts, all over the world (Gottlieb, 2019). Due to its universality, emotions that go with it have to be essentially universal like love or anger. Now, in its contextual basis, music creates new understandings within universals, formulates subsets of emotions as new narrative paradigm.

Clearly, music is a narrative caught in between commonplace beliefs and practices it defines. By virtue of "uniqueness" in human interpretation of the musical sound, it defines a person's identity and forms collective expressions when played with an audience, moving them in any way.

**Feminism**

**Silence**

One of the most profoundly meaningful performances an artist can endure is one that recognizes silence as a valuable attribute. For a serious artist that dwells on contemplation and self-reflection while performing, silence releases relaxing energy that allows one to meditate, thereby improving overall performance sensitivity.

> *"I was able to concentrate with my playing because I listened to silence in the music. The absence of sound gave me more time to reflect upon my inner passions to the music I was flaying. It gave me new directions in interpretation such that my playing created more profound textures of ideas and emotions."*

In Oriental philosophy, silence is best expressed through meditation. In the practice of mindfulness meditation, focusing in the moment, that very moment where all consciousness is centered on everything seen and felt in the environment without chasing any feeling or acting upon any idea, silence absorbs all energy thereby allowing oneself to observe everything without participating. Meaning, a person in deep meditation listens to silence in his body in confluence to the sound from the surrounding milieu creating oneness and unity while not feeling any form of agitation because it alters equilibrium. Applied to music, silence facilitates inward communication to a performer's inner core listening to every pulse of his heart where such rhythm is enough to create balance from the noise outside.

> *"Drawn by the musician's oneness with his music so evidently felt in dramatic impulse, I was captivated and inspired to emulate inner silence within the music that I heard. I wanted to*

*empty myself from the notes, the distance between the notes, the distance between utterance of sound rather than the sound itself."*

*"One remarkable transformation I experienced in performing Beatles music was how I dramatized songs using rubato tempo, a kind of holding back feeling that grew intently as I saw Japanese listeners close their eyes, which to me, was a signal for meditative listening. I practically learned the art of listening, which I applied a lot in interpretative playing."*

When silence is richly applied, music played afterwards creates a sensitive articulation of messages in differing nuances because the mind and body are ready to accommodate new messages following meditative cleansing.

*"The feeling was like ritual cleansing such that I appreciated my playing once again after dwelling upon inner communication with my being, my soul. Every note uttered new levels of meanings. New expressions surfaced from deep meditation and I became more sensitive with my actions on the piano."*

As a sociological concept, silence has certain implications in a society that struggles in many ways such that silence of the people defeats the purpose of amelioration and emancipation. When ideological beliefs are repressed despite sordid reality, the result is a blind acceptance to the quagmire of existence resulting in social pressures that are inimical to the muted voices in society. In other words, silence should never be accepted as persuasive element residing in an audience construed merely as a receptacle of information. Indeed, manipulation as a rhetorical

outcome can manifest itself when silence is imbued with unchallenged ideas and actions perpetrated by the speaker.

In the realm of critical theory as applied in music, silence in sociological dimension can also elicit a revolutionary feeling of condemnation to a dominant force that inflicts pain through play of power. As such, the effect of silence can go both ways, one when silence is endured, thus instilling suffering and the other when silence provokes action thereby allowing the flow of criticisms in society ushering emancipation. This is where protest music sets the tone for revolutionary movements engulfing individuals who have been silenced before and cannot forever feel the same way. As a form of redemption, silence becomes an awakening force.

**Spirituality**

In practicing silence through meditation, a performer can dwell on spirituality in seeking truth and meaning of the performance. The object of such practice is communication to a higher force not fulfilling a persuasive mission. In this regard, the performer focuses on reverential themes expressed through soft tones in a musical prayer that resonate to the audience in a sublime way, not in a persuasive or convincing manner. While spiritual performance indirectly intends to draw audience attention and participation, the aim of the spiritual performance is to perform service to a higher force.

> *"Expecting nothing else but to dwell on it, I noticed its gravitational force as pauses that created inconspicuous music, hidden yet clear. All of a sudden, I realized the pause I was referring to was my own breathing. At the center of my meditative sound was listening to my own music, my own breathing which to*

*me was the highest form of liberation. All along I was creating authentic sound from the depth of my own breathing that set the pace of my walk in slow tempo."*

In another dimension, spirituality is practiced as a form of social communication involving a cultural community with unified expression of reverence as in the case of people hearing mass in a church. Outside the church, the use of folk media such as drama, poetry, and narratives as forms of unmediated communication in certain culture in India becomes important in "Warkari keertan" folk media (Diwanji, n.d.) that centers on religion in musical expressions using rhetorical appeals yet the goal is not to move the audience but to engulf them to be "part of the enlightened world" (Diwanjii, n.d.). In the Philippines, which is a Roman Catholic nation, music plays a major role in holy masses through liturgical hymns sung normally in congregation. In this way, the community is involved in a musical prayer deepening communication with the Almighty. While singing is essentially spiritual in character, the sense of community is expressed with unified voices echoing in the walls of the church signifying oneness of intent and action. As such, the engagement process is evidently felt and the inescapable feeling of social bond through social communication is a celebration of divination and spirituality.

*"Following my inspirational excursion, I performed even the simplest of my compositions in the most meaningful way recognizing the power of silence as something not to be discounted."*

*"On the whole, my self-discoveries through deep, meaningful experiences defined a sense of my being a dynamic creator of*

*musical stories that bordered on sensitivity and oneness in the cultural milieu that explained my significance towards building a self and my collective consciousness."*

It is interesting to note that even with socialization of the spiritual process, the ultimate end is salvation which is basically an act of self-realization, a moral and spiritual ascendance as a journey of the self. While this generally resides in *pathos,* the performer embodying *ethos* character also prays to a greater force before, during and after a performance. Moreover, as music and spirituality intertwine, their boundaries become increasingly fluid to the point that distinguishing between one and the other becomes trivial (Potvin, 2019). To be spiritual is to be musical, and to be musical is to be spiritual (Potvin, 2019).

In the grand narrative of spirituality, engaging listeners and performer is a testament of communion in the service to God such that music as a form of prayer and meditation is an effective communication based on deep sentiments, faith and perhaps reason that solidify the practice.

**Synthesis**

The concepts identified and discussed previously create patterns of absorbed meanings in communication practice affecting the individual, the individual within society, and the spirit. When a performer plays music, for instance, it affects him or her emotionally, it creates a feeling of relief, it heals pain, it reinvigorates the performer. Then, the messages are shared to the audience in a multitude of meanings drawn from association, engagement, and entrainment such that identity formation is nurtured, memory is awakened through historical connectivity. Socio-cultural consciousness is developed where the audience becomes part of a cultural

condition emancipating a vulnerable self from struggles of humanity, asserting positionality of feminist philosophy through gendering in music, and listening to silence as an absorption of the wondrous and endless possibilities of music's communicative power unleashed in rhetoric's audacity to create meanings.

Meanings reside in the performer through interpretation as they travel to the audience in many forms of attachment, absorption, association, engagement including identity formation and nurturing spiritual silence as previously discussed. While these can be affected by the listening audience, these concepts affect the larger society as distinct patterns, alliances and connections of multiple meanings created by the rhetoric which have individual and social meanings.

For example, the narrative of historical positioning in association through *kundiman* envelopes a struggle in uniting pain and suffering of the Filipino people. Such message is larger than how a listener can connect *kundiman* in terms of music's sonority of melody. At the same time, it heals the wounds by way of emancipation from oppressive structure redefining a sense of identity. In rhetoric's elucidation of meanings, *kundiman's* historical resonance may be thoroughly absorbed by a critical audience but others will have different meaningful associations of the music creating different signification and appreciation. The former magnifies a form of nourishment and the latter popularizes the feeling of simple liking that can diffuse fast in a cultural setting. In other words, popularization of *kundiman* can grow infinitely with the effect of social media creating different levels of meaningful understanding according to their contexts.

In another dimension, entrainment, for example, illustrates a social connection that goes beyond harmonizing movement between performer and audience as it also embodies social cohesion as a recognizable pattern of ideological worshipping

asserting deep levels of association and engagement. Nurturing connectivity in entrainment can further transcend spirituality and silence as a process of internalizing cultural representations where new patterns of meanings emerge in emancipating the self within cultural praxis.

Following the narratives of absorbing meanings in communication dispel the idea that meanings provide power and strength in communication as forms of energy. Communication as an energy stipulates that human interpretation as meaningful understanding, for instance, has the tendency to create infinite resonances, nuances as powerful tools providing signification to whoever finds communication meaningful in the way they are affected or how they affect others. Both ideas as patterns of energy guide communication flow elevating interaction to a higher level. Meaning to say, as an everlasting and transcendental form of energy, meaning always resides in every person whether it is recognized or not. When recognized, its strength magnifies human behavior, nurtures intellectual capacity or deepens emotional attachment. If not recognized, meaning remains suspended as energy form finding its way in another person's thoughts or emotions in a bigger world of meanings. Meanings are the constant in communication that people need to realize whenever they communicate.

Through these patterns, communication achieves profundity, enlightens an individual, which resonates to the society through many forms of associations and connections. These patterns are eventual occurrences of communication's audacity to dwell upon connections as essential moments in human condition. For example, communication's deeply rooted association to a person's history as memory recollection is a distinct pattern of interconnection where meanings are solidified and strengthened by way of identity formation. Discovery through revisiting the past

exhumes layers of meaningful energy that stirs emotions, creates new ideas, and influences society. As such, patterns of meaningful creation remain embedded in the realm of thoughts and emotions.

What happens then when a person dies? In this case, energy, like the spirit, departs from the body and remains suspended as reservoir of meanings until it finds itself again in another human being reborn and creating new meanings. As such, communication emphasizes the capacity to absorb these everlasting meanings that are always present in the environment to be nurtured.

**The Constellation Rhetorical Theory**

Based on the foregoing discussion of concepts elicited, I introduce the **Constellation Rhetorical Theory** as a theory that espouses rhetoric as patterns of meanings as energy forms understood and shared by individuals consciously or unconsciously as they engage in communication practice (Figure 21). These patterns of meanings elicit power and strength, hence, energy, providing a sense of community of expressions affecting individuals and groups where new forms and meanings arise as a consequence of connection.

Constellation Rhetorical Theory recognizes the importance of creating meanings in communication. Meanings, therefore, come from two camps: from the speaker who creates interpretation in the form of ideas and emotions comprising meaningful understanding conveyed to the listener who then creates meanings based on levels of interpretations that may agree or go beyond the intent of the speaker. In this sense, meanings are not controlled by the speaker as they resonate in different degrees, intensity, and understanding as they travel to the audience and to the larger environment beyond performance space. In such transformative

journey, meanings become sporadically abundant strengthening their power as they traverse through.

The audacity of meanings as energy forms acknowledges the power of communication as a powerhouse of meanings. Energy perceived as the capacity to do work pushes communication to generate significance and essence as provided by meanings, whether they are understood holistically or partially. In holistic understanding, communicative essence is equivalent to an enlightenment, which creates harmony between communicator and recipient; there is no wasteful energy. When partially absorbed, excess meanings find their way to other consciousness that can render signification once nurtured. In other words, when communication practice is alive, understood, and nurtured in a given cultural setting, meanings are elevated as a powerful energy engulfing an individual, society and the environment; when not cultivated, meaningful energy remains present in the environment.

Great Oriental cultures, for example, place music as communication from the perspective of creating harmony with nature. As such, the speaker is one with the self and with the natural flow of energy ascribed in the ritual of communication whether with another person, with the spirit, or with silence. In any of these instances, meanings deciphered through meditation, for example, deepens communion in many ways, therefore, showing patterns of energy that can be both conscious and unconscious clustering of emotions and thoughts.

In the grand narrative of elucidating meanings, emotional attachment as a meaning in communication purports the idea that even if emotions are relative, they create a sensational pattern, a physical manifestation guiding emotions. Such sensations giving rise to emotional release are manifestations of clustered meanings representing energy forms. They embody effervescent perceptions in utterances.

In explaining the essence of energy forms as meanings in communication, Constellation Rhetoric Theory has the following assumptions:

- **Association**. Association as rhetoric emphasizes creation of meanings through building connection, familiarity and engagement in communication practice. It could be emotional, ideal, historical or socio-cultural association where signification is articulated as a form of synergy. At the core of association is absorption of meaningful energy emanating from messages serving as basis for associative communication.

  Connection of ideas, images, nuances of emotions, among others, attached to communication practice deepens meanings created in any form of association. In such connectivity, both speaker and receiver may be conscious or unconsciousness on how associated meanings form or, build upon each other creating layers of sensations that give rise to emotions, for instance. In the conscious level, meanings elucidated are known by the speaker guiding utterance based on intended meanings as they travel to the receiver. In this regard, when harmony of meanings is achieved, the confluence creates a pattern of mutual understanding deepening relationship, for instance, between communicator and receiver. In the unconscious dimension, intended meanings by the speaker can unknowingly project to the audience in different ways creating new levels of connections. As the capacity to create meanings multiply, energy becomes a salient factor in strengthening communication with its resonance to deep layers of association.

  As implied in the previous discussions, historical association in

communication referring to a sense of cultural and historical connection, unearths deep layers of societal struggles as patterns of human conditions resulting from communication's constitutive value. In this regard, people create patterns of understanding through social cognition as social expression emanating from association.

The essence of associative meanings in communication as energy relies on its capacity to dwell on both cognitive, behavioral and environmental domains that have become natural forms of power surrounding the human condition.

- **Entrainment**. Entrainment as rhetoric entails unity as a product of mutual understanding between people. Entrainment paves the way for the creation of social consciousness through harmonious relationship among communicators where meaningful energy is sought. Likewise, entrainment precludes the idea that individual character is not repressed in the social construction of meanings.

  It is asserted rightfully that entrainment as confluence of meaningful understanding of messages in communication signifies coherence in meanings in communication. As a consequence, thereof, people perform entrained behavior largely drawn from mutual expressions. However, it leaves the question whether intended meanings of the speaker are coded perfectly by the receiver creating a perfect confluence? In such regard, invoking meanings at the receiver's end qualifies intended goal of entrainment, that of mutual understanding leading to unified behavior among people.

What are some pre-requisites to entrainment? Familiarity is one critical element that defines shared commonality because being familiar with the speaker, the message, among others, allows engagement to influence the listeners through familiar elements which can ultimately give rise to further connections and associations.

As energy form, entrainment is the capacity to absorb consonance in consciousness and behavior such that communication transcends its performative role. Meaning to say, as a product of group harmony, individuals with the same communicative tendencies, beliefs, and ideals form a consensual practice of shared meanings. The harmony created, once again, can be consciously placed or unconsciously driven such that the latter feeds into the culture unknowingly but providing strength and power as energy form. When sustained, cultural expressions shared in different traditions illuminate the power of meanings as transcendental energy diffused deeply.

- **Identity.** Identity as rhetoric is the capacity to identify authentic expressions in communication, discovering the self while allowing oneself to be part of a group and national identity formation. Recognizing oneself as the main source of strength is the most meaningful articulation of identity. As a starting point of creating rhetorical meanings, identity foregrounds communication practice as it situates within individual and cultural praxis.

Expression such as “being true to one’s self” exemplifies communication’s

pure intent of expressing an honest, true, and sincere message that is true to the speaker as an intended effort. In the receiver's end, such honest expression is deciphered and eventually understood with the idea that communication message speaks of the self, the identity. This recognition deepens the power of rhetorical meaning.

Based on the analysis conducted before, group and national identities emerge when individuals form social consciousness allowing new levels of cultural representation and signification to form new identities expressed through emancipation from historical struggles, community of nations as shared expressions of nationhood within community, to name some. The strengthening of communicative meanings binds individual and nation's sense of self and group expressions grounded on collective conviction and in the context of identity formation - cognitive memory of experience, belief systems, attitudes and other lexicons of identities create a robust energy unseen but greatly felt by communicating individuals.

As such, identity meanings as forms of energy elucidate a powerful rhetoric of self and group expressions within communication practice that remain active ingredients in cultural assertion. When new people live within a particular cultural setting, these energy forms get absorbed, altered or maintained by new individuals as stable and extended meanings defined by the situation they are in.

- **Feminism.** Feminism as rhetoric promotes communication's power to render

gender equality amidst a gender-biased society illuminating emancipatory feeling in gender expressions. Foregrounding feminist gendering in communication alters a patriarchal rule in communication power usually attributed to great speakers and orators belonging to the male population. In feminist rhetoric, women's rights and privileges become songs of assertion, empowerment, and engagement emancipating social category of femininity from its displaced record in history.

Feminine power as an energy form unequivocally takes the notion of redistribution of such power to the many roles and responsibilities women have acquired over the years and through years of discourse. Indeed, with women's voice transcending in collective resonance through communication, patterns of ameliorative and emancipatory feelings of redemption exhume profound meanings dispersed in society as a collective discourse.

Following such communicative power, the idea of equality through resistance from a socialist perspective, feminine power becomes a natural tendency among muted and displaced sectors to rally against imbalance, to assert equality that will restore normalcy in society. Indeed, as an energy, the spirt of feminist power is a strong force binding individuals in the modern world where communication articulates rhetorical meaning.

- **Silence.** Silence as rhetoric exemplifies profound meditation as internal communication drawing upon "subtle" energy by emptying oneself in order to allow meanings to flow. There are two meanings attributed to the power of

silence. The first one is its meditative resonance allowing a person in deep silence to dwell on inner forces at the same time become sensitive to outer vibrations. The confluence of the two forces creates a balance that sets the tone for effective communication. Thus, silence as an energy form magnifies strength in emptying oneself in order to listen intently allowing communication to flow naturally without restraint.

The second meaning attributed to silence has cultural signification which has profound impact on people's sense of acceptance, for instance, in a period of repression. Such attribution diminishes the power of liberation whereby social displacement can be a result of deafening silence evoked by people. Silence, in this scenario, is believed to dwell on non-communication resulting in imbalance.

Whatever the reasons are, silence is an eloquent form of communication when used to absorb and release positive communication vibes to a speaker. A speaker who appreciates silences in speech allows the audience to absorb messages, hence creating powerful resonances. In Oriental cultures, silence is perceived as a "golden thing", as the proverbial statement goes. Many religious rituals recognize the power of silence as an energy form that is constant in the environment to be absorbed by people in deep meditation.

In the end, silence exudes profound meanings in communication practice certainly because it dwells on perceptive listening where quietness leads communicators to becoming more sensitive to utterances.

- **Spirituality**. Spirituality as rhetoric emphasizes communication as a transcendental energy residing within the self or from the environment forming connections when a sensitive individual recognizes such pattern of connection. Corollary to the theme of silence, spirituality elevates a person's awareness of spiritual dimensions of communication, namely: communion, and oneness. Communion is a profound relationship sought between a speaker and receiver, for instance, where agreement goes beyond literal meaning.

  Communion as a binding force between people creates a harmony of understanding of the meanings evoked in communication. Not only that, spirituality elevates communication as a spiritual practice, recognizing meditation as a form of communication in itself resulting from oneness in expression. Such interconnectedness allows individuals to create patterns of authentic communication messages that also recognize the importance of the "other", the spiritual dimension.

  In such regard, spirituality in communication creates a powerful effervescence in meanings residing in communication practice. Consistent with the idea of transcendental energy circulating around in the environment, spiritual dimension in communication makes its way to individuals that embody sensitivity allowing such energy to circumnavigate through in creating meaningful articulations.

The confluence of the five elements exemplifies a multitude of meanings creating optimal signification of the rhetoric. In practice, some patterns may embody few elements only while others will only have one pattern to recognize. As a constellation theory, rhetorical meanings come in different forms and sensations creating various signification aligned to a person or a group's understanding of those meanings. In other words, individuals tend to create clustering of meanings in communication practice which they themselves identify or are unconsciously driven because these meanings are energy forms residing anywhere. In effect, all communication is a meaningful utterance since there is always meaning present as a transcendental energy that can be recognized or not all by speakers and listeners.

Optimization of the theory occurs when all elements discussed combine together as clusters of meanings in communication practice. When a multitude of meanings layer upon themselves extending other meanings, patterns and connections, communication becomes profoundly rich, diversified and vulnerable. Whatever the nuances are, the practice grows infinitely as energy forms circulating in the cosmos.

The theory was created based on my autoethnographic sketch comprising performance and original composition as foundations of rhetorical analysis. As such, Constellation Rhetorical Theory illuminates a performer's sense of meaningful realization in every artist where energy as strength and power transcends meanings in different levels through patterns developed in the performer-music-audience rhetoric as *ethos, logos,* and *pathos* comprised the

analytical foundation. In musical expression, elucidation of meanings as a personal journey makes the Constellation Theory valuable. At the same time, its cultural signification attests to the different meaningful energies that make sense in communication through music.

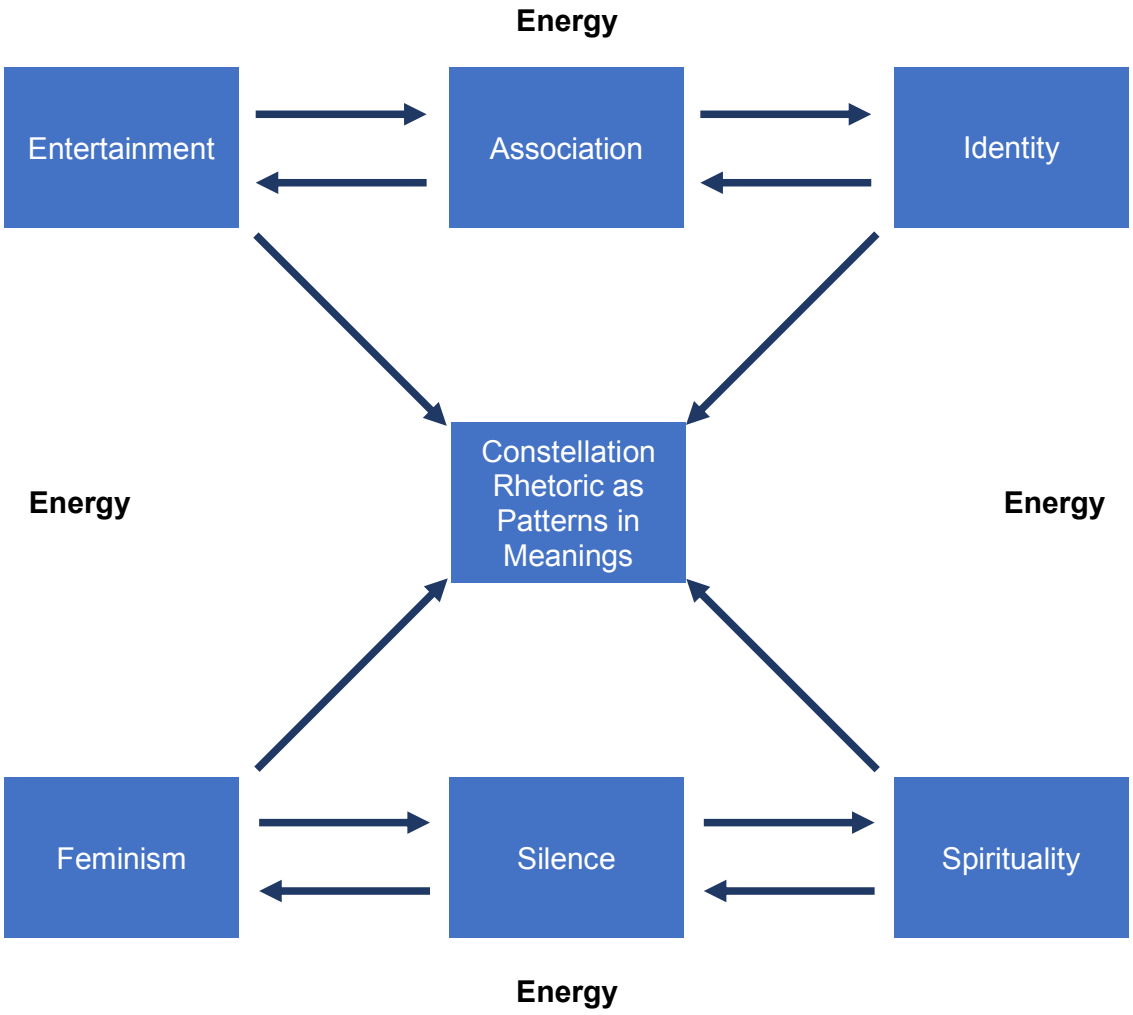


Figure 21. Model of the Constellation Rhetorical Theory

Figure 21 illustrates Constellation Rhetorical Theory as patterns of energy, which create meanings in communication practice. Rhetorical meanings are realized through entrainment, association, identity formation, feminist philosophy, silence and spirituality where strength and power as energy forms accrue to each of the

elements when individuals form patterns of the themes based on signification. The horizontal arrows between the themes in opposite direction illustrate the degree of patterns formed through an individual's sense of meaningful realization or each element can be a rhetoric in itself as indicated by the arrow pointing to the middle.

Meanings as forms of energy are always present in the environment making their way in people's thoughts and emotions through communication practice. When not absorbed, the energy remains suspended which can be seen as sporadic element around the diagram until they find in another's consciousness or emotions.

# Chapter VI

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Summary

This dissertation explored and analyzed rhetoric through the confluence of performer-music-audience (ethos-logos-pathos) in a musical performance and composition viewed through autoethnographic lens.

In performing autoethnography, recollection and reflection of memory from past performances such as piano recitals, concerts, gigs, and other musical appearances formed part of data collection and analysis alongside interviews I conducted with mentors, co-artists and the audience in general. In rhetorical analysis, performance-music-audience interrelationship (ethos-logos-pathos) was analyzed and explored across the different periods in Western Music, namely: Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20$^{th}$ century, and musician's rhetoric as the pinnacle of rhetorical expression of creating meanings together. I created four phases of autoethnographic sketch comprising different time periods where I narrated my various musical experiences of the different music genres beyond the established Western musical periods, namely: jazz, popular, ballad, Japanese, and silence as music as part of my musical journey as an artist.

The following answers are highlights of the autoethnography:

### Performer

Qualities of a good performer in performance are exhibited in how I am able to express emotions and shape my character in my musical narratives, in the inspiration and honesty I harbor, in my sincerity and vulnerability to interpretations construed as meanings expressing thought patterns and emotional connections

through my musical utterances considering that I will be understood by the audience, my physical gestures in performing coherently with the music and my performance liberating me as an artist and as a human being.

When do I consider myself as an effective performer? In performing Baroque music, I articulate ornamentations of Bach's music as expressed in his music while allowing myself to have freedom of interpretation, and to have spiritual connection creating profound meanings in musical utterances. In performing Classical music, I apply the rules and procedures of playing music that is generally objective, fluid, and yet procedural in interpretation. In Romantic music, I express my emotions in the music that I play recognizing the importance of individual interpretation more than following the rules of objectivity. In performing 20th century music, I experiment with different musical forms and expressions recognizing a deep sense of freedom, allowing unconventional tones in music to have profound meanings, and recognizing the power of silence and spirituality as effective forms of communication in a musical performance. In performing my original compositions, I apply ideas from the different musical periods I was trained in the music that I compose, manifesting self-expression in identity formation as a dictum of creating meanings.

**Logos: Good Music**

I consider music to be effective when I apply appropriately the eight elements in music, namely: melody, harmony, timber, tonality, texture, dynamics, rhythm, and form as defined in the period they belong. This is done to enhance meaningful interpretation of performance pieces from known composers in the different musical periods as well as my original compositions, and to create a logical dialogue through

the integration of the elements touching upon musicality and technique as important determinants of performance success.

On top of understanding music structure in the different music periods, my personal interpretation is revered as the most authentic indicator of good music. This is because my interpretation is an expression of my inner self, sensitive to the flow of energy that creates meanings in my musical utterance.

**Good Audience**

I consider audience reaction to my performance as effective when perceived meanings are acquired through absorption and reflection; when there is emotional attachment that elicits feelings of empathy, appreciation and recognition of familiar themes including cultural representation of my music. I achieve these when I pick the right moment, and when I indulge in sensitivity in order to communicate effectively. In some cases, meanings captured are indeterminate as different perceptions and connections of the musical sound affect the audience in many ways.

Emotional attachment as a good indicator of performance success is tied to how belief systems are modified in the audience, engulfed as larger themes that have societal resonances where other individuals in society become affected as well. Feelings of entrainment as uniformed behavior, association and identity expressions as patterns of meanings, emancipation as an expression of free will, vulnerability as the capacity to dwell on undetermined sensations, and recognition of silence as power in music are but some of the impacts of my music as they touch the listeners with different intensities.

**Confluence of Rhetorical Elements for Persuasive Performance**

The confluence of the three appeals in rhetoric is a dynamic and continuous process of understanding meanings that are created in the performer and audience from the music performed. The degree of confluence can be determinate and indeterminate, the former due, for instance, to entrainment as synchronized understanding of communication message, while the latter is due to the different forms of attachment and engagement that the narratives create within the sound. In deciphering meanings in performance, both audience and performer need to be sensitive to such patterns and connections creating powerful energy and vitality in creating meanings. The rhetoric is the strength in deciphering meanings that make sense in a musical experience.

**Persuasive Musical Performance as Communication**

I am forwarding the Constellation Rhetorical Theory as an outcome of this autoethnographic study. It espouses meanings in rhetoric as transcendental energy forms understood by individuals engaged in communication practice. These patterns of meanings elicit power and strength, hence, energy, providing a sense of community of expressions affecting individuals and groups where new meanings, namely: entrainment, association, identity, feminism, silence, and spirituality arise as a consequence of musical performance.

So, how does a rhetoric study contribute to the understanding of a musical performance as a communication phenomenon? Using the proposed theory, the Constellation Rhetorical Theory, I emphasize the following points:

First, the Constellation Rhetorical Theory asserts that rhetoric is an elucidation of meanings in performance originally starting from the performer

(musical speaker). The strength of the rhetoric goes beyond persuasion because the speaker must possess robust understanding of the many nuances of meanings comprising rhetoric. Depth of interpretation of the musical structure (meanings created in the message), for instance, ascertains that communication lends itself to credible, truthful dialogue that creates powerful meanings as communication progresses.

In other words, in a musical performance where spontaneity of interaction and feedback are instantaneous whether intended meanings from the speaker resonate with the audience or other meanings reside in the audience based on many factors, the communicator of the sound must be sensitive to the changing meanings that accrue to him recognizing the fact that the communication process is a building process where meaningful understanding emerges. Beyond persuasion as originally intended in the Classical Theory of Aristotle, rhetoric extends power and vitality in understanding and absorbing meanings. In addition to the persuasive rhetoric of Aristotle, Constellation Rhetorical Theory elucidates entrainment, association, identity, feminism, silence, and spirituality as meaningful energy forms in rhetoric as meanings nurtured in communication practice in varying degrees and intensities.

Second, the Constellation Rhetorical Theory from the listener's domain as receptacle of communication message, ascertains that attachment to a musical performance is likened to an audience's reaction to any form of message and sensation as meanings are created within their domain. In this regard, the audience can build upon patterns of meanings by way of association, entrainment, memory of an experience ignited from a musical performance, among other others. In ordinary communication practice, individuals do engage in associative connections, for instance, when conversations turn into memory recollection of a dialogue that was

not originally intended by the speaker. In this instance, new levels of meanings depart from its original intent thereby deepening communicative meanings. The same with speaker's intended meanings or not, the audience is also capable of absorbing what the speaker intends to convey or absorb different patterns of meaningful understanding that can also be an instantaneous process as communication builds.

Having said these, the theory proposed recognizes rhetoric as creation of meanings within communication practice that accrue to both the speaker and the listeners. While the Classical Rhetoric of Aristotle emphasizes persuasion emanating from the audience, this proposed theory emphasizes rhetoric as meanings shared by both the speaker and the audience.

As meanings travel, they can be absorbed altogether, creating entrainment as a unified expression of oneness, for instance. If not taken in, meanings remain suspended in larger space beyond the audience. For example, an individual listening to a powerful speech might be able to capture the essence of the speech but there are other nuances of meanings that may not be captured by that particular audience. In this sense, those meanings transcend to higher, larger space such as the society, culture, and the environment. Thus, a simple speech emanating from a speaker can influence human society in conscious and subconscious ways. Put differently, when intended meanings of the speaker are not captured by the audience, someone else in society and the environment is capable of absorbing such meanings because they are effervescent energy forms.

Third, the capacity to create meanings from both speaker and listener asserts the idea that rhetoric is a form of energy that remains transcendental as the energy travels from the speaker to the listener, vice-versa and sporadically spreads in space

as realms of meaningful energy forms. Individuals who capture such essence are the ones who form patterns like association, entrainment, identity formation, spirituality and silence, among other themes discussed previously. This implies is that communication as a process of creating meanings is inherently rhetorical, and once nurtured, its power magnifies communication practice.

Thus, from the original framework of rhetoric as persuasion in nature, the Constellation Rhetorical Theory embodies the element of creating meanings as patterns of energy forms that are always found in the environment to be absorbed by communicators and listeners in unique ways as an extension of rhetoric's persuasive native. Second, rhetorical appeals of *ethos, logos, and pathos* still maintain their confluence but beyond persuasion, rhetoric emphasizes elucidation of meanings as transcendental energy forms. Third, a new element, the grandest narrative of my proposed theory is the effervescent energy form of meanings that are always present in communication practice that when absorbed and nurtured by individuals, meanings create powerful connections, clusters providing essence, power and energy in rhetoric.

In closing this episode of my theoretical justifications, it is only safe to say that the gamut of transcendental energy in creating meanings is my profound, artistic indulgence in deciphering deep layers of interpreting music during performance that ponders on intricate emotions, thoughts and sensations as natural energies that confluence while my music builds in performance. Such energy comes from somewhere in my consciousness or in the surrounding space where I perform. In some cases, I am aware of these energy forms while in some instances they unknowingly create sensations transporting me to deep creativity that comes out naturally in the music beyond my control sometimes. If this is a form of enchantment,

astral projection, or heightened sensation, I can tell that my meaningful interpretation progresses as I build energy in deciphering meanings of my musical messages.

Because of the infinite power of music in communicating my emotions and thoughts through sound utterance or in communication's infinite power to elucidate musical nuances, these energy forms are everlasting themes guiding through my performance in unique ways. Indeed, musical performance is a perfect language in communicating profundities, in exhuming deep layers of meanings, in affecting others with clusters of understanding meanings or even beyond.

**Conclusion**

This dissertation sought to explore and analyze rhetoric through the confluence of performer-music-audience in a musical performance and composition viewed through autoethnographic lens.

First, the absence of virtual experience (lyrics) and the presence of virtual time (sound) illuminate music's rhetorical function from other sources, in which case, emotions that play a great role in creating meanings.

Second, the concepts identified extend the persuasive character of classical rhetoric of Aristotle comprising *ethos, logos,* and *pathos.* In performer-music-audience analysis using music performances comprising the works of other artists and my original compositions, I found that individuals value meanings in communication as energy forms circulating in the environment. Patterns of meanings emerge as energy forms are created and shared by individuals through entrainment, association, identity formation, feminism, silence, and spirituality in various connections formed consciously or unconsciously in communication practice as espoused in the proposed Constellation Rhetorical Theory. When these energy

forms are absorbed, patterns develop and meanings seek new levels. When not absorbed, meanings remain suspended until they find themselves in consciousness and feelings of individuals.

**Future Prospects for Research**

Based on the results of my study, the following ideas can be identified for further studies:

- Autoethnographic or phenomenological study of each of the elements identified in the Constellation Rhetorical Theory that will analyze deep structures of rhetorical meanings.
- Case study on the validity of assumptions provided in the proposed theory in a specific context.
- Literature research on the themes identified for robust understanding of theoretical underpinnings of the elements.

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## APPENDIX

## MY MUSICAL JOURNEY

This section is divided into four phases of my musical journey: Formation (Phase 1), Sojourn (Phase 2, Coming of Age (Phase 3) and Awakening (Phase 4) (Table 1). My story was developed through recollection of personal experiences and narratives from different sources of information, to wit: interviews with fellow musicians, the audience along with my piano teachers; employing perceptive analysis of video concerts and reading selected articles from the Internet.

Narratives from the different music periods were interspersed along with stories from other genres of music I experienced forming part of my musical journey.

### Formation

(Phase 1)

The beginnings of my musical talent can be characterized with wondrous excitement in a new form of expression. I was 8 years old when my father introduced me to a piano teacher who was incidentally recruiting children in our neighborhood to enroll in her private piano school. Elated I was after being enlisted even without being asked, my father convinced me most especially when I received monetary allowance for each piano lesson. I remember my brother had to draw piano keys from a cardboard as we did not own a piano back then. He insisted that I practiced on it in order to strengthen my finger muscles and to keep me out of playing guitar which I had learned first. Much later I switched to our dilapidated Hitachi electric fan buttons pressing the numbers alternately that I thought would mimic actual piano mechanism

During that summer, I did a daily regimen of piano lessons which started at six o'clock in the morning with my younger sister lasting for two months. I learned the rudiments of music theory and simple note-reading exercises using John Thompson's piano books in successive levels of difficulty.

Over all, my first piano lessons where brain-wrecking mainly because of the overload of information from theory to practice and back which I had to absorb without question. It was direct application of theoretical which burdened me because I had to demonstrate what was told to me by my teacher. Such remote style of learning was initially revolting but as I absorbed the lessons slowly, I had a magical moment of serendipity, some wondrous feeling of excitement that purged me to go on despite technical difficulties because I felt that I wanted to be a pianist. I was inspired a lot from listening to my classmates' tickling of the ivory keys with determination and bravado, and with their convincing posture seated on the piano bench as if they conquered the whole piano studio in my teacher's house.

In one of those magical experiences, I was mesmerized by a lady pianist, an advanced student about ten years older than me, who played so effortlessly "Gaano Ko Ikaw Kamahal" (How Much I Love You), a song written by George Canseco and popularized by Celesti Legaspi. I was seated close to the piano so I watched the whole performance listening attentively to the soft melodies emanating from her soft, gentle touch on the keys of the piano. To my delight, I sang the melodies with the lyrics in a whispering volume. What surprised me back then was how I thought song familiarity influenced a lot in my degree of appreciation.

After two months of daily regimen, I was put on a stage with my other classmates in a piano recital where I played "Waltz of the Hour", not the intricate piece by the composer, Delibes, but it was a beginner's piece with large notes and

playful drawings on the side which I took notice and got distracted with their visual appeal more than the sound coming from my playing.

As I sat down the piano bench, nervous and excited I was, I began tickling the ivory keys on a Weinstein upright piano that had yellowish shade, a testament of antiquity. Anyhow, I remember my hands where sweating profusely leaving marks on the keys with dark shadows of fingerprints which seemed troubling as my fingers would just glide over and the possibility of hitting wrong notes was almost inevitable.

As a young performer with inchoate piano technique, my playing was rather timid and not boastful. My eyes were glued to my fingers' movement making sure they were not in the wrong keys. I sat up straight like a pupil in class who would listen attentively to the teacher without making any distractive behavior in order to avoid attention. As I moved gently with my arms in a hammer motion in simultaneous fashion, I thought I was in deep concentration because I did not mind the sound I heard in the recital hall packed with other recitalists with their friends and families. Literally, I felt feverish with the rush of heat pouring in which could also have been affected by the stage lights focused on me.

As a young musician on a musical test with a public audience, I was already drawn to the music I was playing. The gentle ¾ time signature of a waltz was lulling me away but I was widely conscious. In articulating the melodies in C major, I tried to the conquer the keys without discriminating the left hand from the right hand. Meaning, I was playing both hands emphatically with a clear sound accentuated by a robust pulse in the bass traversing through C and G chords and back to C chord with my fifth left finger leaping freely and with regularity. Unknowingly, I was already enthralled by the lulling movement through emulating a soft sway of my body in a semi-circle fashion as I expressed the waltzing tempo. In harmony, my ears were

keen to the dialogic response to the pulse beat with E and G notes played together. At such a young age, I was fascinated by the combination of two sounds played simultaneously as a single melody which often made me wonder if it was possible for me to speak two different voices together and still be able to achieve the same level of quality as a piano would normally achieve.

The nervousness and excitement built before and during my actual performance must have had an impact on how I relayed my music to the audience. Before I played my first recital, I was already a guitarist and a vocalist playing for an audience in school where the same agonizing fear always haunted me in the beginning of every performance. However, it would turn into a serendipitous occasion the moment I strummed chords on the guitar with my vocal renditions relinquishing all anxiety into oblivion. During my first public performance with a different instrument, it was a different feeling, a different experience of conquest of my innermost struggles that must have affected how I communicated my music to the audience.

Nevertheless, I was listening intently to my rendition of the “Waltz of the Hour” while hearing chitchats from the audience. I thought my playing was not interesting enough. I thought my playing was not motivating enough. I thought my playing was not powerful enough to make them silent.

It was this back-and-forth feedback loop from me to the audience that affected my instantaneous playing. Meaning, I had to create emphatic musical lines such as hitting the piano keys a little harder or exaggerating body gesture to create an effect. In some cases, I would use the piece to strengthen my ability to interpret profoundly and to be able to resonate such expression to a listening audience that seemed large and unknown to me. Looking back, I thought I was only trying to play for an

audience close to the stage as I could glance at them on the side in clear navigation. It was an indirect listening to audience response that ignited new forms of deliberate musical utterances from resonating response.

A year after my first public performance, I developed a strong affinity towards reading and playing pieces recommended by my teacher. It was during this time that I learned “Le Secret”, a delightful music with lots of playful rhythmic structures with sharp contrast of lively tempo in conjunction with comical melodic lines reminding me of Charlie Chaplain’s background music in his silent movies where music set the dramatic tones. I had to make sure I was technically prepared because I was already using octaves despite small hands and a relatively “pre-mature” technique, hence, it was a struggle interpreting and memorizing musical notes.

On the day of my public recital, extreme nervousness led me to play the piece at an uncontrolled and accelerated tempo rather than its normal speed which I had prepared. Perhaps, one of the reasons attributed to my runaway tempo was the nature of the piece as lively, moving, therefore, exciting. After I was done with the first section in G major, a rather slower tempo came in full view with images of men walking in playful yet controlled manner suggesting that I created a more emphatic pulse with regular, slower temperaments. Then, my musical monologue increased its speed in the next section characterized by chromatic melodies more comically appealing. It was then that I realized how semitones produced in chromatic narratives created such playful utterances that stood as musical comedies never known to me before.

If musicality construed characteristic emotions, such comical texture must have been an innate element in the structure itself, or so I thought. For example, staccatos spread all over melodic lines heightened such lightness and bravura

depicted in ordinary conversations where communication layered upon vocal utterances in various degrees of intensification, texture, shortness of articulation, among others.

Interpretation of written sheet music was a journey towards understanding of the intricate nuances as dictated by the composer at the same time allowing musicality to be a personal direction that was not too constricted with the musical structure. In my experience, it was both a celebration of the composer's delight and my personal interpretation. It was never a competition of priority so to speak but a dialogic intertwining of messaging that mattered to me.

I was affected, for the most part, on how I would treat musical elements in such a way that each one was a persuasive element defining my characteristic interpretation, exuding to the audience with such delight and acceptance. For instance, melodic nuances endowed with heavy temperaments in certain lyrical pieces I played dwelt in my inner space exhuming the depth of spiritual assemblage sacred to me. As a sacrosanct space, melody became my mantra of human expression most certainly as it mirrored my interpretive understanding of musicality juxtaposed with my own personal reality. Such marriage of understanding should resonate to the audience that seemed receptive, indulgent and quiet in absorbing what I had to say - the melody as the message.

In my performance of "Le Secret", a surprisingly timid and quiet coda section epitomized a purposeful silencing of cheerful melodic runs, which overwhelmed some previous sections of the piece. That short episode of restfulness was deemed shocking to me because of its abrupt change of character and mood, but, with careful analysis, it dawned in me that deep musicality meant deciphering the abyss of musical expressions beyond normal consciousness. Such receptive stance to

dwell upon contrasting tempo, melody and texture meant maturity in interpretive playing.

Apart from the aforementioned elements, exuberance of musical timbre unique to an individual instrument intensified through color tonality which affected the listening audience in terms of a quiet response from the lightness of texture created in the musical utterance. In my playing of Debussy's "Children's Corner" pieces, I distinctly noticed delicate transitions of touch using deep soft pedals from *forte* to *piano* in order to create a surreal effect in switching mood. Changing timbre was a quality perceived by the audience, I thought. It resided in them because it was the audience that celebrated such textural nuances more than the performer. In other words, musical effect was a quality of the pathos with all characteristics of visualization of the sound. In playing some episodes from Debussy's music, I indulged in personalized graduation of the physical aspects of the musical sound (touch, timbre) to the best of my knowledge with musicality where everything was thrown to the audience to be absorbed in every way they could.

Towards the end, the performance of "Le Secret" emphasized eloquence as something born from anxiety-free performance relatable to switching tempos especially fast tempo. Meaning to say, what I realized was that a faster tempo immediately released tension in interpretation because of the adrenalin rush coming in. From then on, I wanted to start my performances with an upbeat and lively tempo in order to set the mood of lightness with a tension-free atmosphere.

In effect, I reckoned interpretation as a language that had to be communicated effectively. This was one realization that defined my sense of character using music with such renderings epitomizing a rich form of expression, deepening awareness in my own capacity to communicate.

After my early recitals, I was introduced to the world of glitz, glamour and "who's who in high society" when I was introduced to the former First Lady of the Philippines, Imelda Romualdez Marcos, to play for her with an audience tagged as 'blue ladies' (a term coined by local people as Imelda's close confidantes in the province of Leyte where she was born) during a lavish luncheon party in her private resort called "Olot" in Tolosa, Leyte. This was perhaps the pinnacle of my performance fright because most of the audience comprised the elite class in society. It was my first time to play on a baby grand piano, so stunning and beautiful in sound even it looked terrifying as it was my first time to play such 'legitimate' instrument in an intimate setting. During my performance of the classic song, "Feelings" dubbed as Imelda's favorite song, I distinctly remember I envisaged a fairyland where fantasy was reality, where my playing was majestic because of the kind of instrument I was using. But this euphoria was halted when Madame Imelda came close to the piano and watched me play. She even sang certain sections of the melody igniting attention from the audience that became glued to her impromptu performance.

I remember being emotionally drawn to the music with soft melodies on the right hand and sweeping accompaniment on the left hand with rubato movements holding back certain sections like a rhetorical pause punctuated with distinct arm movements flowing with the melody. However, as my skill was still emerging and hopeful, my listening spectrum extended beyond listening to melodic lines. I was becoming attached to phrases on my left hand, the accompaniment hand, which I thought was also speaking something else while I was enmeshed in the overall tones that Madame Imelda was singing. It was in this realization where I transformed texture of my playing from loud to soft with all nuances in between resulting in an

exotic unfolding of creative imagination expressed instantaneously without interruptions. For example, a singing voice resonated in my own playing of the melody as a unity of sound and emotion thwarting any barrier to personal expression making me more sensitive to the aura of musical sound compared to my first piano recital. My playing of the song allowed me to enjoy a moment of pause in playing melody. I held notes, prolonged and released them when I was ready to set free.

Rubato was my own declaration of freedom.

The notion of rubato as a kind of 'holding back' of musical accompaniment was like a walking sensation that slowed down to pause for silence or to watch and listen to the surrounding environment. Embracing the narrative of tempo as a musical element, rubato resonated with the audience in terms of a musical sigh, a wondering of the senses cognizant to the surrounding utterances and noise including silence.

In the performance of light classics in lento (slow tempo), it revealed to me a deep sense of reverberation which echoed throughout the whole piece in a manner controllable to me. Once again, embracing such characteristic movement served more than a musical cadence or pulse as determined by my performance decorum but more so on its complex interrelationship with the audience. Having said, it became a second nature to think of a tempo-driven performance as a rhetorical gesture simulating oratorical speech enamored with bodily gestures which flowed with nuances of speed such that I swayed, did some foot assertions creating a visual spectacle of my performance. In the case of articulating lento, such physical display of rhetorical gesture was recurved to an inner communication between me and my soul. The sound coming out was a mirroring of my inner struggle, pleasure, and pain exuding textuality of sound and beyond.

Because I was young then, I thought my performance should be more objective with all the notes correctly played, interpretation elicited as dictated by the performer, and music as a definitive articulation of what was read. In the context of playing “Feelings” in the luncheon with Imelda’s entourage, I was quite ambivalent and uncertain in directing my music to a particular area in the audience where I could draw energy from. This made me dwell upon performance as centering on a space in the audience that can be used as an energy receptacle where I could extract energy from and bring back to its receptacle the same energy that has been used already but still capable of transformation.

Such intense feeling of energy drawn from the audience was a glorification of popular music or any song with popular appeal and familiarity which made “Feelings” heavily captivating from the audience rather than to me as the performer. This saga of performer-audience juxtaposition meant that popular music and culture could be diffused effortlessly to the audience where persuasion should be more natural and not imposed. In the classical realm, with its wondrous complex ideas and emotions, it became more of a challenge to connect naturally with the audience.

Another popular song I played as a performance debut number was “Someone That I Used to Love” during that faithful luncheon with Imelda. I have been trying a lot to learn from a cassette tape I bought bearing its #1 hit song, “Someone That I Used to Love” as the soundtrack song. I distinctly remember the unique timbre of the keyboard clearly articulated when I played the music. Its sound was distinctly similar from the cassette tape tape I have been playing over and over in order to copy the artist’s interpretation. I was drawn by the quality of the piano sound in its most brilliant capacity especially in the higher register where I mostly

played the melodies. I even switched playing middle-range tones to higher register notes where I could connect with the music more profoundly.

In the overall experience of playing popular music, I seemed to engulf in a feeling of engagement which involved me, the audience, the place, and time and the whole tapestry of my musical narrative in an enriching dialogue manicured with colorful ornamentations most especially in my interpretation of the music. For one, the place added to my interest and credibility which suited to the kind of music I was playing. It was almost innate to think that with popular music, I was more of a background player rather than as a concert artist. This way, I could play cozily without having to worry about playing wrong notes, among others. However, even with such relaxed atmosphere, I felt more connected with the audience with the idea that familiarity of the sound was already a gesture of acceptance on their part and entertainment venue proved to be an effortless quest. Indeed, with each song that I played including standard songs that located most of the audience's emotional attachment, I thought that playing in a venue such as at a dinner or luncheon party was indicative of a higher rapport with the audience even if there was not so much active response like clapping as diners were busy eating and chatting. In that sense, I felt like one of the people talking with each other in the table where my music would be listened to occasionally and in some cases I was just ignored.

One of the factors attributed to my growing confidence in playing could have been the genre of music I was playing at the party - popular music, which was generally understood by the audience and, therefore, easy to absorb and appreciate, and of course, the character of Imelda contributed to the overall impact.

Going back to "Feelings", it is a ballad with soulful melodies written in a 'minor' key that usually exudes powerful emotive lines, dark or melancholic in nature. Its

structure is an AABA and strophic form with the former indicating two verses (AA) and a chorus (B) then recapitulates in (A) form once again. Strophic form is accentuated in repeated musical lines from A to another A with different lyrics. This musical structure was popular in rock and popular music in the 1960s and beyond.

In the performance of such structure, nuances of emotions could be detected between verses asserting uniqueness and differentiated expression of the same music line which intensified with every verse. One important lesson I gathered during my performance was that the structure grew in me as I moved from one phrase to the next. It highlighted different levels of emotion making the form a living testament of human expression.

Further, my interpretation of the song during that faithful day in Olot was perfection in my own right because it was also my father's favorite. During the performance, I was constantly engaging with an inner dialogue between myself and the audience that could not be anything more than the ordinary. Such idea was a powerful tool in persuading the audience as manifested in stunned silence, heartfelt facial expression of approval and a resounding clap in heightened sections of the song. Most notable in the chorus part where the lyrics, "Feelings" echoed. Even as an accompanist, I became more attuned to the idea of a solo performance that magnified notions of a self-driven, self-focused performance with all ears pointed on me. Thus, I realized I was creating a musical dialogue with Madame Imelda with every note that rose and fell in the musical narrative. Towards the end, a deep sense of satisfaction surfaced out and the feeling was like receiving an exemplary mark during an examination.

After my brief performance, I was approached by some listeners giving me wonderful remarks of my playing. I remember one of them said, "you play so

beautifully at such a young age." Another one lamented, "I was touched by your playing of the song." Such powerful accolades stuck in my mind for the longest time giving me high hopes to improve my art, to let music flow naturally without any obstruction. It was also then that I thought music, in whatever genre or form it was written or heard, affected individuals in unique ways.

It was during that faithful luncheon with Madame Imelda where I was introduced to a more powerful, rigid and very classically oriented piano mentor of Tacloban City, a stalwart figure in serious piano music known to many elite pianists in the city who was one of the "blue ladies" of Imelda. After going through the classical literature in greater depth which my teacher had taught me, I was prepared for my next piano recital.

The second major recital was figuratively a triumph of my emerging musical career. Even if my part was minor compared to the rest of the class, I thought I was in a battle of serious tickling of the keys especially after hearing them play during the grand rehearsal, such battle would only enforce a solid interest in honing my skills.

I do not remember the title of the piece I played during this event. But I reckoned it was a march written in Bb major with complex chords and melodies and robust rhythmic patterns in 2/4 time signature accentuated by bass lines between Bb and F major in the verses with Eb and Bb in the chorus section. As a marching tempo, my playing was agile, purposeful and militaristic in countless ways. I remember I envisioned marching bands as inspiration to guide me through in my playing with clear, regular pulses akin to foot and leg articulation emulating a march. Interestingly, after mastering the piece, I played it fast, which to me was a virtuoso performance even if it was classified as a Grade 2 level of difficulty as written on the score.

The piece, written in AABA form with strophic lines, had inner melodies in major thirds on the right hand that were technically challenging but also rewarding. As I moved from A to B, timbre exemplified a sense of profound exuberance with different layers of tonality from rhythmic interpretation. It was like adhering to the rigors and conventions of disciplined military exercise where there was no room for questioning. As such, my emotional attachment was one of compliance as a receptacle of structured music thrown upon me rather than altering any emotional involvement. Nevertheless, it was “rules of engagement” in a musical episode that exuded delight manifesting in sweating while playing the piece with objectivity and regularity. Such delight in a strictly regimental sensation was grooming to be a conscientious follower of musical structure that proved to be a weapon of authentic musical expression.

Among the elements of music highlighted, it dawned in me that rhythm was the one most connected with the audience because it was pompous and engaging. Such marching feel felt like I was walking with them in a regular pattern forming a synchronous atmosphere of oneness. Moreover, the audience was silent which was a good indication of musical absorption. I felt I was connected with them because I was instantaneously inspired by the deep silence in the HDRC Auditorium that enriched sound acoustics. As I played the final chord in Bb major with a loud bang, I heard a thunderous applause from the audience and to this day, those echoing sounds of joy and elation are still heard in the abyss of emotions.

As I was moving back to my designated seat, I was greeted by my piano professor with a big smile and warm hug and she said, “congratulations, that was a good performance.” Once seated, my fellow recitalists nearby glanced with a smile and a quiet clap, some looking at me deeply with a stunned silence. It was a glorious

moment to be around serious pianists imbued with different levels of finger dexterity but coming together to cheer and applaud fellow aspirants.

Even with such a minimal part of the program, I thought I gave the best performance that my classmates had to hear. With every robust sound I elicited, I could not have been prouder that day. It was a departure from my usual carefree personality as a kid because I felt I was in a serious battle with myself trying to assert that I was a better musician than before. True enough, as I walked up the stage and took a bow before playing and right after I played the last note and the same gesture was displayed, it was an honorific experience being heard by everyone else with the same passion. Such gesture of grandiosity in its simplest narrative created a powerful impact in my next journey in the piano world and the effect of this second recital was a perpetual devotion to the study of the classics at all cost. I had to abandon my prior indulgence with popular music, guitar playing and other imagined distractions in order to pave the way for a more intellectual journey in studying vast musical literature.

A year after, my teacher, Prof. Salud E. Larraga, introduced me to ensemble playing where I played Secundo of the piece, “Community Grand March”. It was an ensemble of four young pianists, carefully chosen by our teacher. I felt so excited to play with my fellow classmates, so I learned the piece seriously in my own time aside from the lessons I received.

I distinctly remember I was struggling to play octave bass on the left hand especially with my short stretches alternating with right hand chords that sounded so magical when played together with melodies played by my other classmates. In the next recital, more piano duets where assigned to me. Apparently, my teacher noticed my quickness in learning new pieces astounding my classmates who felt nervous

and also excited to play with me. One of the pieces I played as duet was “Floods of Spring” by Sergei Rachmaninoff where I played Piano II. Knowing Rachmaninoff, it was a technical challenge to conquer chromatic scales alternating between right and left hand that had to be executed as lightly as possible in ascending and descending order without tension on the fingers. This piece required so much listening with my duet partner making sure we were in perfect synchrony. It was a formidable but also overwhelming to combine all notes with so many meanings attached. The texture of the piece really exemplified colors of spring water running through in the different chromatic scales. I took it as a literal challenge to prove to the audience that my sound emulated the sound of the water.

Even with the goal in perfecting ensemble playing, a part of me wanted to be heard most, to be a star. It was a self-imposed criterion of excellence where I wanted to be better than my classmate playing with me. However, such offbeat realization was able to create casual interactions among pianists during rehearsals making me a part of the community of learners. This was very important for my development because knowing my classmates on a personal level made me more secure about my playing with less anxiety and exhilaratingly increased concentration.

After the recital, it dawned in me that the venue affected very much my playing. With the piano situated at the center of the stage in a concert hall, it felt like people came to watch a credible performance. They expected to hear classical music in the recital which was an essential motivation for me to play with exemplary technique and interpretation.

A defining moment in my budding musical career was my performance debut of “Piano Concerto in A minor” by Edward Grieg where my teacher played the orchestral part and I played the piano solo part of the first movement. Overwhelmed

by the depth of the movement, it was indeed a tumultuous challenge to learn many sub-sections with multiple tempo changes indicating different temperaments. For example, the animato section with grace notes in chords required absolute precision that had to be learned in slow tempo until reaching the ultimate speed with repeated practices. I spent so many hours, days, weeks, and months trying to perfect this section only until I achieved the perfect effect that was required.

In executing dramatic passages of the different episodes, I created mental images that interesting to me. For instance, the opening chords that descended on the keys were imagined as pillars of steel, so massive in composition yet so fluid and linear and horizontal in articulation. The effect of such reflection was smooth and confident conquest even if my little fingers were struggling at first.

I endured so many lessons of artistic playing in playing this concerto. I learned how to tell a story in terms of sound with its variations, nuances, and volume as elements that when woven together created a unified narrative that was equivalent to human conversation. I also learned that just like telling a story, playing music had to be clearly explained so that that the audience would understand what I was trying to explain. Such experience of performing a colossal masterpiece was thoughtfully a difficult task for me as school work got in the way of performance and rehearsals.

Nevertheless, playing the Grieg Concerto signaled a rich indulgence into the vast literature of keyboard music with varied temperaments and technical demands.

Yet, I was always guided by my teacher's words of wisdom of playing from the heart. Such powerful line meant I had to go beyond the composer's dictates. For example, dynamics as carefully outlined in the score still had to be interpreted according to my emotions. Thus, I would re-interpret soft and loud sounds in the manner that suits my predicament at the time of rehearsal and actual performance.

Melody was so richly crafted especially in the main theme written in A major which reminded me of a majestic march of royalty accentuated by rhythmic design with regular pulse emulating a slow marching movement until the cycle moves to E major with arpeggios woven as inner passages holding the weight of rising melodic lines until animato kicked in with capriccio feel indicating a lilt sensation.

During the recital, the surrounding noise of chatting audience and car noise from outside that seemed to penetrate in the hall did not make sense of my articulation of piano and pianissimo. I had to increase the volume just so I would not drown from the excessive sound in the audience and outside the hall. It made me think, then, that musical dynamics in such situations are elements that consider audience perception, meaning to say, I had to make sure I was expressing tonal volume with the idea that the audience could hear clearly every sound but not to create a bombardment of such sound.

The complex textuality of Grieg's concerto was exhibited in profound variations of underlying emotions as indicated in rhythmic design and melodic utterance. Such changing mood and temperament were clearly indicated in the musical score and with that, I grew with every movement, with every character I envisioned.

In the succeeding months, I was tasked to perform "Piano Concerto no. 2 in C minor" by Rachmaninoff where I played the third movement. Ornamented with delicate passages that required robust technique, I studied the piece for a year with lots of very slow practice. During the final performance, it was an audacious task to play such a colossal masterpiece that has never been played before at least in my generation of pianists in the province.

The haunting romantic theme in the middle section in Bb major that modulated to Db major and ended in a sweeping, majestic coda in C major with different sub-themes interspersed in one musical thread proved to be the most challenging yet rewarding gesture of accomplished performance as foretold by my teacher. It was, indeed, the most difficult piece not only in terms of technique but in interpretation enmeshed with complex textuality, narrative tones with impeccable character. It was at this moment of classical immersion that I smothered, bewildered in technical challenge but, I was later rewarded with authoritative performance.

I had to admit conquering Rachmaninoff onstage was a tumultuous challenge with all the technical demands of the piece and the rich musicality required to go through all the emotional narratives that layered with each episode of the movement. However, when I sat on the piano just moments before the accompaniment pianist started the first opening lines, I was transported to a heightened state of consciousness where I felt I was on top of everything, that every energy I exuded was perfectly meaningful to myself. It was at this moment where I understood the immensity of my skill as a pianist, emergent still but profoundly being molded with every literature I was studying. I felt a heightened sense of security, a deepened understanding of myself and the reality surrounding me. Such transcendence mirrored in my sweeping articulation of musical phrases with utmost clarity, bravura and magnetism that I totally forgot anything outside of the musical sound.

In terms of the musical elements, the whole movement of the concerto emphasized different textures of tonality with contrasting temperaments from enlivened state to soulful, melancholic section that grew in intensity from Bb Major to Db Major and ended with an emphatic grandness in the recapitulation part in C Major where the melody was now transferred to the orchestra and the piano was

immensely asserting chordal passages, so rich in depth and character until a sweeping presto cascaded in presto tempo with thick chords that sounded like marathon between piano and orchestra. While playing these intense sections, I had goosebumps in my arms which initially I thought would get in the way with my arm action, but, I did not care. I was swept by such powerful narratives that I almost forget that I was playing.

Weeks after my recital, a former student of my piano teacher who attended the performance event lamented the following:

> *"As a concert pianist, I felt that the Rachmaninoff concerto should have been played as a complete set of three movements. Although I was mesmerized by your performance, it felt lacking because of the missing movements (1 and 2)."*

> *"From the last time, I watched your performance up to this day. It is very encouraging to say that you have become more mature and sensitive in your playing. I was drawn to listening to sharp contrast of emotions which proved that you have, indeed, understood the movement."*

The beauty of playing Rachmaninoff concerto was its haunting melodies whether in slow tempo or in presto motion. Such polarity of tempo exuded powerful message of determination not to be undermined because the piece had a global appeal. It was a performative task for me to elucidate such immense literature according to my own interpretation. But at the same time in keeping with the tonal structure as required by Rachmaninoff, a high degree of understanding of the piece had to be absorbed in order to mirror a sense of dignity in musical interpretation.

I always had inhibition in playing a concerto because the soloist was the center of all scrutiny. Although I had an accompanist in both Grieg and Rachmaninoff concerto, it was always a formidable playing to have a dialogic performance with my accompanist for fear that I might be making mistakes, or that my tempo was so fast he could not catch up, and many more anxious feelings that interrupted with my flow. On top of everything was this command performance I had to execute knowing that I was playing a masterpiece the whole world knew.

Airing my anxiety with my piano teacher after the performance, she resolutely stated that I possessed a great zeal in learning difficult pieces and I had laudable enthusiasm in learning them. These observations made me want to push on despite some side comments she mentioned about playing oido (playing by ear) style that she always cried would ruin my rhythm.

In many occasions where I had to wait for her during my lessons, I would play some popular songs I knew from heart. Without realizing she was listening, I immersed myself in a splendor of popular musical anthology which was self-gratifying before embarking on classical music that seemed so demanding yet satisfying. My casual playing was therapeutic in a sense.

With such zeal of popularizing some of the pieces I learned, I took “Themes from Piano Concerto in Bb Minor” by Peter Tschaikovsky into the stage during a performance in school where I basically embellished the themes according to my own interpretation. Generally speaking, I re-arranged the accompaniment structure with running arpeggios in order to create an impact to the audience. In terms of melody, I played in octaves with inner chords creating a rich texture of tonality that was self- indulgent in classical feel. What was even more surprising to me was how much creative imagination I put on the piece that I extended the themes with my

rendition creating a dramatic departure from Tschaikovsky to a more personal approach to the music. In here, I became glued to myself exhuming the depth of the sound consciously traversing into a multitude of tonality that caught me by surprise. It was this improvising mode that I endured with great passion, with great engagement that deepened my understanding of music and the reality surrounding its interpretation.

My performance was emotionally rich with intent pauses in some sections where my head was almost touching the piano keys. It was a moment of oneness with music and with the instrument I was playing. Such feeling of oneness embraced a kind of justification of how the self can transcend to a state of acceptance any form of influence from another reference sound for as long as it fitted well into my personal space.

After the performance, I had mixed feedback from the audience which literally and metaphorically took me by surprise. For one, the audience felt I was re-creating melodies with audacious variations that were logically convincing as the predicament was consistent and not meant for showmanship. Even if my intention was really to impress, the audience felt I was sincere with my personal convictions. In other words, my music was construed as a liberation of my ideals and aspirations amidst rigidity in classical form. It was, indeed, the apex of my authentic expression in my own right because I was communicating with the music as it was being performed. It was like re-creating reality that developed with every note I endured.

The opposite of such serendipitous moment was a rather disturbing feedback that I overplayed and faked the music. In my defense, I simply reasoned that it was my intention to go beyond the structure, to be more self-indulgent with experimentation because I really loved the piece. Creating new ideas was a way of

expressing a sense of me in the music of Tschaikovsky. He was always known to be a master of embellishments with his colorful progressions which I wanted to imbibe at least in some ways. If I was overplaying, then I felt I succeeded in enriching music with my own stories in any way they were understood. Just like watching a theater drama, a musical rendition was always engulfed with vulnerability in allowing creative imagination to take its dramatic role in deciphering tales.

I did not dwell on such misinterpretation of my interpretation. It was not a crisis of representation simply because the music penetrated into the depth of my soul and with that, new forms of expressions mirrored in each variation I made, no more, no less. I did not think I went beyond the ears could absorb.

Related to my tales of exploration was a collaborative performance of a song our musical pool in a theater group created during a workshop conducted along UP lagoon in Diliman, Quezon City surrounded by green grass and trees in cool Sunday afternoon. The result of such creation was a performance at a restaurant in Quezon City in the presence of theater critics like Doreen Fernandez, among others.

Being the musical director, I was responsible for a lot of things related to performance but my focus was individual expression more than technical prowess. As such, my co-performers indulged in self-narratives of the original song inspired from a mountain trek in Mt. Banahaw, which many of us, including me, joined. Drawn into introspective singing that recollected moments of agony and excitement experienced during the trek, the result was a thick layer of emotional attachment with every tone. For my part, I transcended my performance with a spontaneous chanting that felt like I was one with the spirits I encountered in Mt. Banahaw. Even with a different performance space already, I could still hear the silence of running water

along the river and the gentle rustling of leaves creating a magical moment of oneness with nature.

The chant I echoed was not prepared. It was an embellishment of some sort just like my Tschaikowsky narrative but it was more free and devoid of conventions. I realized I was re-creating my journey with new levels of emotion and the presence of silence ignited depth of understanding.

**Sojourn**

(Phase 2)

When I was in my early 20s, I auditioned at the Manila Hotel for a piano solo gig at the champagne lounge. While waiting, I chanced upon pianist Joselito Pascual playing popular classics. When his set was done, he saw me holding a Chopin book that made him ask if I were a pianist which anxiously made me say yes and that I was looking for a piano job. Right there and then he asked me to play something for him. So nervous I was that I thought my playing was sloppy and lacking in enthusiasm. At the end of my brief performance of "Stardust," he gave me some of his comments that I recall vividly:

> *"Leo, you must bring out the melody of the song. Do not be focusing on your embellishments. The way to an effective playing is clarity in the message, and that clarity is expressed through the melody."*

In another performance setting, this time at the Weinstein Piano Competition at Landmark Department Store in Makati, Metro Manila, I played "Le Cavalier Fantastique" by Benjamin Godard. Amidst a noisy crowd of shoppers and spectators

chitchatting while watching me perform, I was so focused with my playing that I didn't mind the noise around me.

The heavy octaves in my left hand against octaves in the right hand in rapid tempo were furious in sound and technically so demanding. As part of Godard's set of etudes, the piece was a never-ending fire from beginning to end with brief melodic episodes in the middle section in F major until octaves recapitulated, this time with inner voices in thirds, until the key landed in D major from the initial D minor. In the coda, virtuosic octaves demanding dexterity, accentuation and determination swept through in a majestic descending pattern until a triumphant D major chord was echoed in the end.

As I was conquering the piece with all might, I distinctly felt I was playing for the audience, not for myself, so evidently portrayed with flamboyant hand movements exaggerated in height and direction for emphasis and showmanship. With each stroke I did, my mind was also responding by strategizing my next moves. Luckily, I had memorized the piece so well, otherwise, I would have committed mistakes with all such cognitive planning.

Even with all the preparations made, I was frustrated by the uncontrolled noise inside the mall that I could hardly hear my playing. Although I already expected such outcome, still I could not help but be weakened by the bombardment of background sound overpowering my music.

However, in a candid conversation with a friend who was in the performance, he said: "your powerful executions were a visual spectacle. I was carried away by the strength of your arm movements enriching my whole experience."

After working in major hotels in Manila, I joined an ensemble called Rosario Strings that played in the high seas. After years of touring the Caribbean aboard

luxury ships with the group, I ventured into solo piano gigs aboard Royal Caribbean International, Carnival Cruise Line, and Holland America Line for many years playing different genres of music.

Playing for different audiences meant that I had to broaden my repertoire of music to suit to their taste and preference. In fact, my goal was to learn five new songs each week, mostly coming from requests in the audience. They were mostly delighted if I played their requested song the next time they heard me play. I could see the smile in their face with soft humming of the melody I was playing. It gave me inspiration to finish the song with bravado.

In one of the afternoon highlights on a transatlantic cruise for seven days, I was featured, along with other pianists onboard, to perform two pieces of my choice in a “Piano Potpourri,”. I played “Waltz in B minor” by Chopin and a Filipino classic, “Gaano Kadalas ang Minsan”, literally translated as “How Often is Sometimes” where the former was to show my classical influence while the latter was to showcase Filipino music which many of the passengers adored because of their fondness to Filipino waiters serving their meals.

My performance of the Filipino song drew a lot of attention from the audience as seen in the thunderous applause and standing ovation I received as soon as I stood up and took a bow. Many guests who were already known to me from their nightly visits to the Explorer’s Lounge where I played with the Rosario Strings cheered, hugged and kissed me and even asked if I was selling my own CD. Moreover, the cruise director who was also the host of the mini-concert announced on stage that my playing was exquisite, full of emotions and longing. The effect of such accolade was more playing of Filipino classics, which I did with utmost enthusiasm while the waiters sang the lyrics to the guests they served.

In one program of all-Filipino songs, Rosario Strings featured Original Pilipino Music (OPM) that guests of Holland America Line learned to love from frequent dealings with Filipino crew aboard the ship. In one of those highlights, we played "Paminsan-minsan" (Once in a While) with another Filipino band, and I played the grand piano. I was so engrossed with my playing because it was a different feeling playing with a band. The sound was bigger and I could hear other instruments doing their own tricks in layering upon melodies that had a wonderful effect on my ears.

Also, playing for foreigners made me feel more Filipino, loud and proud for who I was. It was like the audience embraced every aspect of my Filipino identity with a hint of vulnerability. Such vulnerability was probably due to the presence of foreign audience understanding a part of me and my culture from the outside. During performance, I kept reflecting on such naked openness to an audience that was not known to me. But, then, I also thought this was not the first time I played for unknown people.

Nevertheless, exposing my sense of self, my character and practically my soul as a Filipino was something I enjoyed because the music I played resonated to the guests aboard the ship. I could see in their smiles a great sense of happiness and contentment. These guests have been sailing with Holland America Line for many years already, hence, they have befriended many Filipino crewmembers from cabin attendants, waiters and now musicians. Such familiarity made it so easy for me to relate my music. I was holding to the idea that performing for an audience exposed my own character, my own being at the same time projecting a character that was believed to concur with cultural expectations. In other words, this duality of self- expressions justified a sense of authentic performance even if there were instances that I was merely confined to meeting expectations from the audience.

The next song that we played was “Anak” by Freddie Aguilar. The song in A minor captured my attention thinking about my relationship with my father. While dwelling on my personal triumphs and tragedies in music, it penetrated in my consciousness that they all happened because it was my father who encouraged me to take piano lessons. As I internalized the haunting melodies of “Anak’, I literally welled up and my hand shivered for a little bit but it never affected my playing whatsoever. My fingers moved gently through the keys with no effort. I could probably say it was subdued, layback playing because I knew the song too well. The powerful lyrics of “Anak”: Pagsisisi ang sa isip mo’t nalaman mong ika’y nagkamali” was the one that haunted me because I envisioned myself feeling sorry for some of my misgivings towards my father. First, I have not taken pride as a budding pianist even if he has been proud to his friends about my talent, though exaggerated sometimes. I felt he was showing off a lot and I had to please his friends even if I could barely play his songs at that age. Second, I was not sure I wanted to be a pianist because all my friends were living a normal life, out in the streets playing while I was locked up in my room learning how to play the piano. Looking back, I thought the early stage of my piano adventure was a little bit imposed upon me until that one day when I heard a lady played a beautiful rendition of an OPM song that turned things around.

Thoughts about playing OPM more often kept flashing through my head. It was difficult to explain why such urge would extremely keep me upbeat and excited about until I realized it was familiarity that purged me into doing OPM repertoire. I had been singing songs from karaoke and with the acquired knowledge about the melodies of some songs, I realized I wanted to learn them instrumentally. For

example, a popular tune called “May Bukas Pa” by Rico J. Puno was a karaoke favorite among my cousins who would spend holiday weekends in our humble abode. Naturally, each one would take turns singing their favorite number. “May Bukas Pa” was always in the top list because it was a high-pitch song where only a male singer with high register voice could overcome the rigors of persuasive singing using natural voice, like singing at the top of the lungs. For my part, I memorized the melody from too much humming and listening, which eventually made me curious on how such sound would come out on piano only with vocal part.

Eventually I was creating a community of singers and “pleasers” to the song without my knowing. Their fondness to my new-found talent in rendering songs on the piano made them more attentive to how I discovered and rediscovered new sound from familiar themes. The effect of such community of appreciation affected the way they perceived OPM music: praising and talking about it more. Indeed, what happened was sharing of personal anecdotes built from their own listening experience. With that, new expressions of admiration and understanding about themselves as individuals came about. Preferences to local music translated to preferences in anything local – from shirts to food and drinks, my cousins had a new indulgence which literally affected their friends, too. This tradition of sharing stories building upon individual to social understanding essentially became my quest for playing OPM more substantive.

For many years, serenading with passengers in the high seas was my main source of income and great inspiration to venture into playing different types of music notably jazz which was a wonderful surprise considering my classical background.

While sailing from Bermuda back to New York City from a seven-day cruise, a performance night exclusive for staff only (without guests) was held with the ship

orchestra (brass musicians) as the main entertainer. Because the group's pianist was strictly a "note-reader", I was called upon to substitute him on the keys. After gulping two beers, my adrenalin rush was in full swing so I joined the band without reservation. We played a song that had some improvisations in the middle and each instrument had to do a solo. For my part, after being familiar with the basic chords running through the song, I did some blues patterns in my right hand that had the staff especially the cruise director in sheer delight while watching me play blues. It was a long narrative of improvisations with leaps and bounds, strong articulations and accents matched with standing and repeated nodding while playing my solo and the audience couldn't stop cheering me on. Incidentally, the bursting cheers purged me to continue what I was doing creating more effects instantaneously. The cruise director loved the night and so we all had to do it regularly and bar sales surged high.

In one of those long days at sea, I decided to record my favorite classical pieces on an MD recorder which I purchased in the Caribbean Islands. I listed my top 10 favorites, and practiced daily until I was ready to record.

The first piece in the album was entitled "Pictures from an Exhibition" by Moritz Mussorgsky. I played the opening theme with its grand and vibrant tones accentuated by heavy chords resembling architectural pillars. The piece reminded me of Greek sculptures, columns and statues of gods and goddesses. I actually visualized these images while traversing through the opening theme with all might, with the idea of "pictures" enmeshed in musical poetry. With vertical playing in my mind, I imagined structures of music as physical attributes strengthening musical verses. The whole experience gave me a sense of pride and dignity as an artist imbued with intellectual power ready to dispose to his royal subjects. Keeping this

mental image made me more confident with my playing and allowed me to indulge in creative imagination.

Another highlight of my personal recording was a rendition of “Vocalise” by Sergei Rachmaninoff, a short piece designed for a soprano singer using vowel sounds as lyrical text. Its piano transcription is one of the most celebrated pieces played by many pianists because of its haunting melodies.

Written in C# minor, I treated the whole music as a tale, a storytelling adventure of a wandering spirit in the forest where rustling of the leaves and gentle river flow could be softly heard from a distance. The opening C# minor triads was a prelude to a blissful incantation about to unfold with melancholic tones suspended in mid-air. True enough, melodic lines were supposed to be sung using vowel sounds only, such profusion making me internalize female qualities of musical tones that would have never been categorized if soprano tones were not required. However, in the middle section a dialogue between high and low melodic patterns emerged which to me were cycles of emotions exchanged between man and woman caught in a duel or in emotional tension as revealed in the darkness of sound. The rush feeling of anxiety and excitement was a unity of opposite emotions deepening interpretation that can only be fathomed by serious artists.

With all might, I plunged in dramatic monologue unknowingly stretching my imagination with limitless possibilities. In other words, I was constantly creating scenes that depicted different levels of emotion, translated such emotions to musical passages. Finally, it would be noticeably indulgent to reveal that such piece written in a “minor” key was full of emotional vulnerabilities putting me on the verge of scrutiny of my inner world.

A sonorous piece with so many nuances of emotion, “Vocalise” depicted a sense of femininity in musical thought from sound articulation. Indeed, I imbibed a feminine character in my interpretation and such visualization reflected in the sonority of sound with “curved” sense of balance. Meaning to say I was metaphorically enriching the sound with soprano singing technique while celebrating womanhood in a genderless musical sound.

Was there going to be gender in sound? If so, what musical characteristics should I assign in order to have a sense of universal understanding of the meaning of feminine sound? In my performance, I embraced lyrical passages as soft, tender and placid qualities of sound that would usually describe a woman, a tender woman at that. With that, I controlled my touch without overexerting effort to emphasize a note. I just considered the verse as one horizontal line with connected sound that formed a unified entity of a woman making sense in a male dominated profession in music, or so I thought.

I chanced upon listening to Beethoven’s “Tempest Sonata in D Minor” (3rd movement) from my compact disc collection. This was another feminine display of tonality with continued phrases so perfectly articulated between the left hand and right hand that depicted a flow of movement, so continuous, and not abrupt. This was also heard in “Fur Elise”, also by Beethoven, which depicted a logical sense of feminist feeling of continuity in the main melody similar to “Tempest Sonata”.

In a conversation with my piano teacher, the subject of feminine sound came up. In classical music, my teacher reckoned, some pieces are dedicated to a composer’s inspiration which is ultimately reflected in the musical flow. In “Fur

Elise", historical records show that it was dedicated to Therese Malfatti, a woman whom Beethoven supposedly proposed for marriage in 1810. In Chopin's nocturnes, they were dedicated to George Sand, a woman he had a romantic relationship with.

Interested I was in sharing my personal anecdotes of femininity in musical interpretation, I lamented that I heard feminine sound in the structure of the music as I played. Also, how my fingers, wrists and arms moved was affected by the flow of the music depicted in sways, gentle leaps, stereotypes of feminine gesture. Thus, it was an assemblage of musical structure and interpretation that embraced femininity, a celebration of emancipatory narrative of cultural signification.

One of the entertainment activities the ship came up with was a classical recital by a concert pianist who re-arranged popular classics in different style and interpretation, and mashed up with standard songs. For example, the standard song "Mack the Knife" was segued with "Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto no.2," with such determination and ingenuity loaded with interesting musical phrases intricately woven together as a single piece. Backed up with a big band orchestra, the performance was interestingly convincing mainly because the pianist was technically adept. So many wonderful surprises emerged in his playing creating a dramatic tale that could not have been performed by some mediocre artist. In his rendition of "Rhapsody in Blue" by George Gershwin, I was stunned to hear new variations so delicately performed while preserving some original passages. Such idea of incorporating new ideas into an old classic was new to my ear. At first, I was a little bit indignant considering the fixated view of interpreting classical music according to the rules yet knowing it was intrinsically jazz in nature, I thought improvisation was second nature.

As he managed to conquer the keys with superb dexterity, the rhapsody was electrifying to the audience who adored so much as seen in their wild applause. I was seated in the balcony seat so I could see how the audience behaved indulgently in the concert. It was like a rock concert with so much wild uproar emanating from them.

One of the reasons for such indulgence could be that alcohol drinks were constantly being served while the concert was going on. With so much sound reverberating through the theater coming from the piano, orchestra and noise from spectators, the whole scene was a pompous, high-energy occasion. It was enjoyable to see people enjoy a classical concert in a flamboyant, wild way.

The whole evening created a magical inspiration in how I played that eventually showed in my more artistically deep interpretations in my performances. For instance, improvising classical pieces that had no available sheet music made me explore some sheet music from “fakebook”, a collection of songs with melodic lines and chord accompaniment. Such material gave me a direct leeway to interpret melodic lines and accompaniment according to how I felt and understood.

In interpreting arias from popular operas, the preponderance of sheets from my “fakebook” honed my appreciation of arias like “Habanera” from the opera, “Carmen” by George Bizet. This was a piece performed by Carmen, the protagonist of the story, a female prostitute whose lustful temptations to entice men where evoked in the aria. Such a powerful musical tapestry of femininity in sound was clearly elucidated in seductive rendition of chromatic melodies in a rather pungent danza rhythmic tempo that showcased her dance of seduction. I, for myself, was carried by the immense dance-like aura of the melodic structure that I moved in the direction of a dance in unison with music.

Influenced by the improvisatory style that I had just captured from the concert pianist aboard the ship, I elaborated my performance with stylistic treats using ostentatious display of octave melodies interspersed with inner melodic chords in a dance-like manner which thickened the whole musical poetry. It was especially meaningful during repetition of the first verse. Such effect was exceedingly persuasive to the audience because the feedback I received was astounding. In other words, the simple aria turned into a flawless capturing of musical skill with bravura and deep temperaments woven together.

In another aria this time by Puccini, “O Mio Babbino Caro” (Oh My Dear Papa) was yet another powerful celebration of womanhood as the piece was sung by Lauretta, a character in the opera, lamenting her tensions with her father. The soothing coloratura soprano in the melodic section was a technical challenge in pianistic interpretation considering technical differences in piano and vocal articulations. For my part as a pianist, I paid heavy attention to phrasing so I could perform legato melodies way above in the higher register. In this way, I approximated how the tones would sound as if the piano were a singing soprano. It was this colorful resemblance and “illusion” that enriched musical timbre, meaning to say, I was enmeshed in a heightened sense of consciousness and conditioning making me feel confident in re- creating vocal statements into non-textual expressions using sound only.

In the middle of my playing, it dawned on me if I was convincing enough to go through with my performance with the idea that the aria was generally sung in soprano. It was a little awkward to alter such expectation, so I created embellishments on the left hand which created an impact to the audience evidently seen in their adulations. With improvisations in inner passages especially after a long

pause in certain sections, it became a rhetorical appeal of spontaneity similar to an impromptu speech that would normally contain surprising revelations in content and delivery.

True enough, I lavishly endured in creative storytelling that grew intently with colorful motif of tones. At times, I would envisage a duel of characters within melodic interactions signifying a dialogue that was improvisational, casual, and conversational. To me, such improvisation was indicative of rhetoric as narrative in itself, in other words, my storytelling prowess was an act of persuasion already.

In another incident where I played another aria by Giuseppe Verdi, I was compelled to play straight melodies as written in the score without any hint of creating embellishment. One reason I discovered later was that I did not know the piece well enough so creatively I was restricted. It was important to me that I internalized the aria in order to create new avenues of sound indulgence. The effect of such realization was a rather dull performance, unable to discover new ideas to wow the audience, and even to myself. I did not re-invent the piece with additional ideas because my mind was locked. Thus, musical narrative as a spontaneous flow was only possible if I knew the music well enough.

Nevertheless, even with creative impediment I managed to finish it with a sense of accomplishment for another reason. Arias as musical monologues in an opera are construed as stories within a larger plot of the opera such that by themselves they are already stories. Its implication to my performance was a determination to endure a narrative struggle because it was already a story to begin with as opposed to playing a scherzo, rondo, or etude where stories underneath the melodies were not usually known. In this instance, performance experience became the narrative.

In one of my visits to Sam Ash music store in New York City, I discovered a helpful tip that helped nurture memory worth through reading through pages of sheet music from the rack. Because money was in dearth supply, I had to memorize everything I saw then later apply these during my gig aboard the ship. One such incident was learning the theme from “Forrest Gump,” which had this very sweet lyrical melodic line at the high register of the piano that so moved me while watching the dance of the feather in the movie.

Of course, it was not a perfect copy of what I saw in the music score but combined with my experience of listening from the compact disc recording, I discerned the music’s structure through self-interpretation largely based on memory recollection while inside the premises of Sam Ash. At first, I was reluctant to play the piece as I was not sure I would be able to finish given the kind of professional playing I had to exert with every song I played. Nevertheless, I took the challenge of elevating my performance with nuances of spontaneity and impromptu character, which I slowly developed with confidence and determination. It proved to be an exciting twist of artistic performance where I left many things to imagination that seemed to pour spontaneously. On the whole, the value of artistic performance was a test of memory strength, my ability to recall memory data that would normally require repetitive practice, however, in this this situation, I simply relied on immediate memory from my experience at Sam Ash

Playing jazz music and all its shades like bounce, swing or bossa nova tempo instigate different rhythmic pulses, syncopated melodies creating new impressions and emotional attachment. What was exciting also was my determination and audacity to play the same songs in different jazzy rhythms according to my mood, the audiences’ reactions, and venue. For example, in terms of venue, large crowds

with noisy listeners gave me more freedom and flexibility to create so many things in my rendition while quiet listeners made me more focused with my playing paying attention to every detail. Coffee lounge inside the ship created an ambience of quiet mood so I had to play soft music, mostly ballads, while large dining rooms made me want to play loud, playful music. It felt like listening to what the audience wanted to hear or not to hear creating an effect of background music that should not be overpowering or intrusive.

In the narrative of background music, several insights were drawn from personal experience. For instance, setting the mood for theater production gave me an artistic license to explore on musical narratives that connected with the scene without stealing focus. In my experience as the musical director of a theater group in the University of the Philippines, one production intensified my connection with the story, the venue of production, and my relationship with co-actors.

In terms of the story, listening to the narratives created powerful impulse to craft melodies instantly that would heighten the mood especially in the opening scene of a play where I designed a flow of placid tones emanating from *kubing* (jaw harp). It was a forest scene and *kubing* amplified a magical sound from the rustling of the leaves as the wind blew upon them. When the same idea was applied using an acoustic piano, it was not satisfying to my ear, perhaps, due to the difference in timbre from different instruments. Given the innateness of tonal quality in each instrument, I did not resign to such notion; instead, it became a creative opportunity to deepen my sensitivity towards visualization of the sound. For instance, when the forest scene unfolded, I played quiet rumbling of broken chords on the piano with extremely soft texture. Volume was also an important contribution to the visualization

of forest scene through music. With that, I almost muted the piano sound in order to simulate distant tones heard in a deep forest where sound was profoundly distant.

In terms of the venue of the production, I knew my background music was more meaningful when the scene of the play defined the actual venue or its approximation. When the play was set in an indoor theater, the sound I created in the forest scene seemed inauthentic because it was an enclosed space as opposed to an open-air production that simulated forest atmosphere. The difference in musical articulation was distinct, thus, I was not connected at all in the production process.

This signaled a disconnected interpretation of the story with weak musical messages ultimately affecting how the actors related to the story. Because of such restriction, it affected my credibility as a performer.

Lastly, my relationship with co-actors affected how I created and played music. In many ways, I was affected by fluctuations in my dealings with other theater workers. Such vulnerability deemed not worthy in creative endeavors because fluctuations meant unstable energy exuded during performance. One time, I had to 'manipulate' a scene because an actor playing the part was mean to me so I bastardized the scene with loud music that made everyone on stage stare at me. What happened was that focus on the actor was taken away and reverted towards me. When the spotlight was pointed towards me, I did an impromptu mini-concert and the stage was emptied. It was a powerful drama on the piano using melodies crafted earlier in the play but this time, I created variations in rhapsodic interpretations that catapulted my spirit in exaltation. Such vulnerability turned to be a glorification of ingenuity.

After my impromptu performance, the scene was brought back to life and everyone else onstage adjusted to the energy level.

One of the highlights of my emerging career was an involvement in church activity where I was tasked to accompany songs in the mass. A particular mass in Leyte had me as church organist accompanying congregational songs. Elated I was to embark into something different from my solo performances, this was a great opportunity to share my talent to the church. The organ/keyboard was situated at the right side of the church from the altar so I thought I was not stealing attention. However, with wires and speakers installed throughout the church, I had to be perfectionist in playing making sure there was no mistake as the sound was amplified exponentially. To the best of my ability, I managed to impress the singers surrounding me with pleasantry and wonderful smile as they sang the melodies.

With so many church hymns I played, “The Great Amen” was the most soulful hymn that penetrated through my senses. I was literally empowered to conquer every melodic progression that seemed to reach the heavens supported by enormous harmonic progressions underneath the melodies. It was like a feeling of cooperation and collaboration that supported a group cause in a sense. I was engaged in a community of voices reverberating all throughout so perfectly united. Indeed, the powerful key in G major was a colossal exuberance of spiritual divination that was emphatic, magnificent and omnipotent in character.

Church songs are carefully designed to enunciate liturgical themes into the music so that composers follow a certain procedure in how melodies should flow. In my case as a performance artist, the soulful and reverential character resonated to my sense of being one with the music in the pursuit of divine intervention. As such, I articulated every line with canonical strength and determination while keeping in

harmony with the congregation. This was the epitome of audience connection through artistic performance which to me was directed towards God. Such liberating feeling was an exalted expression of communion and individual emancipation. Moreover, as a devout Catholic, I thought my performance was a service to our religious community of Catholics so admired by my family especially my mother.

Such notion of reverence reverberated in my interpretation that had some nuances of reverential touch that demanded attention and careful listening, demanding in a sense of a subconscious imposition to achieve perfection that I would usually imbibe in every performance but this time, the level was much higher because of the magnitude of churchgoers listening to every bit of sound I played. In a manner of speaking, it was must have been the voice of God that guided my fingers as they navigated through the keyboard. I had a feeling of relaxed movement in every song even if dynamics, harmony and chordal progressions seemed to create textual tensions that should have been more pronounced with physical strength to execute them all. Such surreal effect was like floating in space in transcendental state, a kind of trance felt in deep meditation. This was the apex of musical sobriety and solemnity – meditation.

Throughout my playing of church hymns during the mass, I was in prayer. My meditative state put me at the center of tension-free moment where I emptied my mind including music. It was a communion in silence, dwelling upon the absence of sound as the highest musical expression because I felt I was communicating with God. When I played “The Lord’s Prayer” by Malotte, I was in trance mode where metaphorically my body was in astral projection with melodies floating in space.

What was interesting about such revelation was that I was conscious even in transcendental meditation, so conscious because I felt my body, my fingers gliding through the keys as the liturgical song was progressing through.

Written in classical form, “The Lord’s Prayer” was an assertion of technical prowess most especially for a soprano that had to conquer celestial melodies way up in the register. For my part, building up accompaniment towards the middle section was like articulating a climax scene with intense moments until the word, “forever”, encapsulated everything as omnipotent in celebration of an absolute God.

In my involvement with priests in Leyte as musical director for their concert dubbed, “Sonata-N-Sotana”, I wrote my arrangement of “The Lord’s Prayer” putting emphasis on the lyrics forever with repetitions to stimulate omnipotence of some sort. It was my way of glorifying His power through music.

During performance, the colossal voices of men echoed through the auditorium with reverential aura as the priests performed as if they were saying homily. As accompanist to the song, I had my own tale of reverence in a manner that I meditated during performance. I did not look at the audience nor the singing priests but I could hear them so clearly as I played in silence, composed and meditative. But my fingers were so alive and conquering that I did not even notice the power I exuded.

**Coming of Age**

(Phase 3)

During my holidays after playing in luxury liners, I found myself joining the music scene in Metro Manila with new friends in the industry helping me out. I accompanied Velvet Mood Musicale, Voice of Manila, among other groups, but I

always wanted to play as a solo instrumentalist. During a concert titled “Ina”, where I accompanied the Voice of Manila in their songs, I was asked to do a solo number where I played “Prelude from Pour Le Piano” by Claude Debussy where Prof. Agosto Espino, my teacher during that time, was sitting in the audience.

Packed with an audience from various schools in Metro Manila, the UN Auditorium looked formidable especially with my piano teacher eager to hear me play the piece that he taught me. As I opened the piece with vertical accents on the left in single melodic lines against soft thirds on the right hand, I knew my music resonated to the audience because acoustics in UN was always considered of good quality during that time. While articulating the melody with rapid rumblings on the right hand that increased intensity page after page until a definitive marcato “C major chord” signaled a new episode of chords and glissandos until a pianissimo with delicate of una corda (soft pedals) passages ignited an impressionistic motif with colorful images and colors of the sound, characteristics of Debussy’s music with elaborate timbre and texture along note articulations.

In rendering the entire piece, I felt so nervous that it took me a while before I really dwelt on my playing. My nervousness was later mentioned to me by my teacher, reminding me to start only when I was mentally relaxed. Nevertheless, I thought it opened up possibilities for sensitive playing that considered emotional readiness before even playing the first note. On the notion of impressionistic playing, he mentioned that I should create visual images of the sound and to play with colors in order to achieve overall effect.

During my stints with Velvet Mood Musicale, I was exposed to wedding gigs around Metro Manila accompanying our group during church weddings and receptions. In one of those wedding receptions in Tagaytay City, I elaborated on

standard songs as requested by the wedding couple. A song in particular, “Embraceable You” was instantly played without any lead sheet to guide me. Luckily, I had learned the piece in my youth from my father’s collection of vinyl records to which I constantly listened to as part of my listening trainings. Then I would try capturing what I had acquired by tickling the ivory keys with somewhat timid articulations interrupted by frequent stops. Back then, my father would correct my mistakes as he sang the melody while seated in our family music room.

During the wedding gig, playing “Embraceable You” instantly created flashbacks of those childhood episodes. What was interesting to me was that memory of those episodes was so vivid which translated to clear recollection of melodies and chord patterns as I learned in those days. Surprised I was with my execution, the following songs such as “Nearness of You” and “Laura” brought back to life images of my father giving me early lessons in music with emphasis on listening as he was not gifted with reading musical notes. As a guitarist imbued with vocal prowess, he trained me to study his repertoire so I could accompany his songs or listen to my renditions on Sunday afternoons. In fact, it was he who convinced me to study piano after that faithful visit of a piano teacher in our neighborhood. I could still remember my daily allowance of one peso which motivated me to study and, of course, when he bought Trebel piano. At that time, I had just finished learning “La Cumparsita” and my grandfather was always excited to hear me play on a daily basis.

One memorable performance of the tango was a simple family gathering where I ran immediately to the piano bench when I saw everyone else was gathered around. To their delight, I played the accented tango with determination and bravura, at least in my own right. The piece was arranged for beginner’s level but I thought it

was a masterful music. I even stamped my foot simulating footwork as seen in dance performances. I was so inspired by my family's constant cheering as I was rushing through the music with maximum speed. Then, later my father stood up and shouted bravo which made me want to play more. At such a young age, I had very limited repertoire but it did not matter to me, I just played bits of melodies from any song I could think of.

Those memories enshrined my adult performance journey placing emphasis on memory recollection that solidified my interpretation. Even with technique far advanced than during my younger days, I always cherished the effect on me, strengthening relationship with my family as provider of first music lessons and my father being the main reason I entered into this world.

Continuing with my exposure to music, I was introduced to a fellow pianist whom I had the pleasure to play in some of the gigs he could no longer attend because of his hectic schedules. In one of those intimate dinner parties I attended, I was excited to combine some popular classics like "Nocturne in Eb," "Feur Elise", "with some standards and Broadway tunes in my repertoire. It was rather a casual night with guests chitchatting while I was playing some background music. Even with occasional glance, I thought the noise was deafening and disturbing me. In fact, I did not feel any connection towards the audience because I believed my existence was an afterthought of some sort. After playing straight for more than an hour, it felt hellish where heavy burden was thrown upon me. It was at that moment where I did not want to fulfill my obligation to entertain the guests with my music. I dreaded that night.

To my surprise, a friend approached me while having my dinner alone. During our heartfelt conversation, she gave me some important lessons about playing for an audience:

> *"You see, Leo, as artists, we always think that our music must be applauded all the time. We always feel we are on center-stage and everyone else is pointed towards us, but, audiences especially at dinner parties are always busy catching up with friends or whatever it is they are doing. We should never expect gestures that manifest approval of our playing to be there all the time. We are there to set the mood, the tone for good conversation, not to steal conversation away from them."*

Analyzing my performance decorum made me realize that the luxury of playing for an audience was, indeed, a privilege enjoyed by those gifted. In other words, at no point in time should I complain about audience attention because my talent was my own possession, something that exuded pride about my character and identity.

The dinner party of my friend was repeated once again, this time, I was invited by another pianist to play duet pieces together as the host had two baby grand pianos. During my break time, my friend played some dinner music that stunned me to silence with his cozy style of playing. It was like an effortless gesture without tension whatsoever. The effect of such performance was a re-evaluation of my own style of playing dinner pieces that should not be imposing and demanding to the audience.

With that, my turn to do solo pieces became an introspective storytelling that was more or less cognitive on the whole and the music I played became a

background sound from my internal narrative. In this way, I played softly and the choice of piece was in keeping with the vibe of dining experience. It also helped me appreciate dinner playing upon watching movies with dinner scenes where piped-in piano music was heard in the background.

When my friend and I played duet pieces, they were mostly jazz in nature. For one, “Girl from Ipanema”, a favorite opening piece during gigs, became a display of improvisations with each one creating tales with numerous tricks to showcase our pianistic skills. On the whole, the dialogic interaction profusely displayed instantaneous ideas that enriched musical engagement. It was also then that I realized how engagement profoundly affected musical interpretation in terms of authenticity. After all, improvisation was about creating authentic ideas within a chordal structure without playing the actual melody but the surrounding tonal or atonal themes that should sound acceptable to the performer, with the ensemble artists as well. In playing jazz music, I would often dwell on unexpected sections in my interpretation that seemed to come from excitement giving me impulse to emphasize certain notes with a high degree of articulation relative to the rest of the notes.

A lesson I had with playing ensemble music is worth pondering. In one occasion at the Manila Peninsula Hotel where I was a substitute pianist in a strings ensemble, we played “The Way You Look Tonight”, yet another favorite among musicians. Because there was a bass player already in the group, he was responsible for providing steady beat to the pulsating bossa nova rhythm so what I did was to play chords, to remove bass lines in order to avoid overlapping each other’s ideas. What happened was constant listening to bass lines of the bass player so I could be guided in forming chord inversions that provided thick texture in the

overall sound. It was an interesting gesture of non-verbal interaction using our ears only to adjust to each other's playing. When it was my turn to play solo, I performed my father's favorite classic, "People" in C major with so much passion and chordal textures intricately shaped that showed how much I matured with my playing.

As I progressed with the song, I noticed I listened a lot to melodic and chord progressions that magically came out of nowhere. Every bit of sound was a serendipitous moment imprinted in my head. I could say that listening to my inner passion was instrumental in exhuming the depths of my narratives. One prophetic gesture as a result of my intent listening was a gentle pause in one direction with my head slightly raised above to one side of the audience which to me seemed like gathering tones from the air around. Indeed, I was transformed by the ideas I gathered from attentive listening to what I heard ultimately predicting what would be the next chord that was exciting to the ear. With instantaneous notions of musical complexity pouring in, I was able to alter certain chords that sounded off in a manner that was not obvious to the audience, or at least I thought so. I continued to do the practice with songs that I played especially standard tunes.

In another occasion, my friend from UP Diliman, a Humanities teacher, invited me to do a lecture on the elements of music in one of his classes. Excited I was, I made a lecture-performance of the elements as highlighted in the different compositions. For example, in discussing melody, I played familiar tunes like "Bayan Ko" and "Dahil Sa Isang Bulaklak" without any accompaniment. I even asked the class to sing along with the songs in case they knew. In discussing rhythm and tempo, I engaged the students on various musical styles with distinct patterns like samba, bossa nova and swing music articulated in different moods. The students became alive at the various musical interludes showing dance steps that went with

the music. Some of them stood up and elaborated the steps with partners while others remained seated with arm gestures and eager smiles.

The effect of such response was intensification of my performance making the audience and me in one musical interaction that was so spontaneous.

After which, I deepened my lecture on the properties of texture and timbre in music through different interpretations of “Happy Birthday”. It was then that the students realized how visualization of the song through different sound textures can ultimately lead to an interplay of colors and depth in tone. Even in the volume of singing, students performed the piece with different layers of musical sound that catered to emotional depth. For my part, I elaborated timbre by playing “Happy birthday” on guitar aside from the piano in order to emphasize that the same tune can utter different tonal quality when played on a different instrument.

In conclusion of my performance cum lecture, I played “Pamulinawen,” a Filipino folksong and made the students discover musical elements of the song. During my performance, I opened up with rhythmic pulse on Db major with thirds to establish rhythm that swept through the entire piece while my head was swaying left and right in sheer delight. Before playing the melody on the right hand, I signaled the students with a raised finger on the right to indicate a forthcoming element to be expressed, the melody. Then I lowered my head closer to the keys to indicate soft melodies while broadening my arms to both sides in order to indicate loudness.

Nuances of texture where created with various body gestures like tilting to different directions to highlight changing tonal quality. The whole performance was both auditory and visual creating a spectacle that delighted the listening audience with profound explanation of the different elements of music.

After fulfilling my missions in music in the Philippines while on holiday, I went back to the high seas as Piano Intermissionist aboard Carnival Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean International entertaining different guests with various musical tastes and preferences. As a house pianist, I was tasked to play in dinner occasions, lounge cocktail sets at the top deck and at the ship's atrium with guests moving around all the time.

During dinner sets, I would play background music while guests made deafening noise with their utensils filling up the three-floor dining area. Even if the piano had a microphone, I thought my music was being drowned by the excessive noise. However, I turned such challenge to a great opportunity for me to capture audience attention, at least to those who seated closer to the piano. Depending on the age level of those around me, I played songs that I thought would be familiar to their ears like certain Broadway tunes but there was always the universality of classical music in terms of appreciation regardless of the age level of the listening audience.

In one of the formal dining occasions, I played Chopin's "Nocturne in Eb Major," a quiet piece that is usually a perfect mood-setting music. As I played its lyrical passages, I noticed that the noise around me was getting softer as my playing progressed and I could hear soft humming from nearby listeners who knew the piece too well. To my delight, an old lady came forward and started singing along with a big smile. After her impromptu singing, she cheerfully said that the music brought back memories of her family sitting around the piano while her father played exactly the same song. I, then, asked what aspect of the song reminded her most and her reply was this:

*"On many nights, my father would play the nocturne to make us all silent because we were such a big family that always talked, laughed for just about anything. Listening to such music was like bringing us together to pay attention to quietness in the evening."*

It was an interesting musical dialogue between me and the captive listener because I was spontaneously responding to every note she sang with a cheerful smile as I played the melody on the piano. It was a perfect unison of a musical emblem that I did not want to end. True enough, I played the next piece, "Love is a Many Splendored Thing," this time with flamboyant passages accentuated by thick chords underneath the melody that defined the musical structure. It was at this moment that the changing atmosphere from soft to a demanding ear like an oratorical speech with powerful lines echoed throughout the dining hall with spontaneous clapping heard everywhere. Remembering this night made me realize that despite the idea of playing background music during dinner, the audience can be active listeners, and, therefore, should not be disregarded. Meaning, I should not be playing for myself without consideration for what the audience might feel, like and respond to.

Some remarkable incidents during my playing that captured attention included clarity of melody, robustness of accompanying arpeggios with refined execution, perfect touch on the keyboard that was not irritating to the ears, and a good command of piano technique. Lastly, I also noticed that the audience seemed to like exhibitions on the piano as a form of visual spectacle. When I intensified some episodes with elaborate crossing-hand technique, the audience rose to their feet and engaged in a dynamic flow of interaction with me, my music, and their emotional state.

"Love is a Many Splendored Thing" was first heard from my father singing the song accompanied by guitar in one of many drinking sprees in our house. It was during these moments where I started absorbing the melodies from constant listening, such familiarity magnifying in my ear which literally paved the way for slow playing on the piano based on recollection of those fragments until the whole song was complete.

When I first played it with my father sitting on his cozy chair, I was quite nervous because I have not mastered all the verses in terms of melody and chord progressions – something that I thought I had already perfected, but in reality, my father was still guiding me through repetitive singing. It was more of an instruction rather than entertainment but I enjoyed every moment of my soulful rendition until I grasped the whole structure and from it I became free to express the music.

When I played it in Japan, the song called "Bojo" (Japanese translation), I was captivated by the way Japanese listeners internalized it with eyes closed as I played the masterfully my grandiose arrangement which I instantly created during my set in the Le Ceres lounge in Hotel Taikanso.

As I was cruising in Grand Cayman with some friends, a delightful guest approached me and asked some questions about my playing. These were some of the thoughts I shared:

> *"Regardless with what kind of music I play, I always manage to create a dialogue between me and the audience. Even if they have their private conversations, my playing should somehow influence the flow of their talk creating an atmosphere of serenity and profound understanding. I always get goosebumps about the whole thing when a cheerful nod or smile is received. To me, it is*

*the most meaningful gesture of acceptance about my performance."*

In retrospect, the guest lamented the following remarks:

*"Listening to you every night in the lounge is always a pleasure because your music touches me. The feeling is like listening to a story that I should always pay attention to. The way you express yourself is especially beautiful. It is real, magical and exciting."*

*"Although you are playing for many different listeners, I always feel that you are talking to me directly. It is as if you are listening to my emotions and you relate with my emotions."*

It was important for musicians aboard the ship to be mentally healthy always after being away from loved ones for long periods of time, usually six months. During those times, I would find new friends mostly musicians from different countries like United States and Europe. It was a good cultural mix that opened my mind to understanding different cultures that certainly affected how I played. For example, I had the great opportunity to befriend Polish musicians who played in the orchestra, trio or strings quartet. In most of our interactions, the subject of Chopin's music was always put to the table. I, being a great admirer of his music, was an instant favorite among Polish people because they were inspired and happy to know someone from the Philippines knew Chopin. With so much inquisitiveness in knowing the depth of such loyalty, somehow, I reflected deeply my sense of Filipino character and pride in playing some of the well-known classics that could be at par with Chopin and other masterpieces.

During that time, I had no repertoire of Filipino classics that I learned from sheet music. In order to satisfy the need to play, I performed my own interpretation of "Hating Gabi" by Antonio Molina which I learned in my youth after listening many times to my father's record. Confident I was with the piece, I embellished a lot in my interpretation which I thought was not for spectacle's sake, but, as a product of rich imagination, so to speak. For instance, the main section in G minor was filled with such longingness in soulful soliloquy where I played so much rubato technique to dwell on emotional depth where such abyss was a sacrosanct space for me while serenading. There were pauses at the end of the phrase that literally were breathing spaces for me to endure.

Musical sections were punctuated with chordal ending in arpeggios which I envisaged as powerful rhetorical phrases that emphasized communication of the message. Also, moving from G minor to G major was typical of a kundiman structure thereby transitioning from soulful to lively spirit in musical recapitulation so aesthetically designed. Thick chords in thirds and sixths as characteristics of Spanish music signified dramatic articulations compelling me to fathom deep-seated emotions that were culturally grounded because such harmony was popular in many folksongs and even popular songs.

Indeed, for many singers and instrumentalists including me, layering melodies with harmonies in thirds was typical, therefore, it was easy to perform while harmonies in sixths required deeper understanding of music theory to be able to designate harmonic dimensions quite naturally. However, those gifted with a good ear did not have to identify the structure of harmony, - it came out naturally.

With “Hating Gabi”, nocturnal ambience provided a musical setting that also set the mood for doing a serenade. For my part, the element of nocturne as a dreamy evening piece made me indulge in quiet and subdued sound with some moments of elation especially in the “major” section. With this, I moved my body more excitingly with arms moving freely in round motion in a swift tempo in contrast to the rather andante or moderate walking tempo in the “minor” section. “Hating Gabi became an instant favorite among new listeners because of its minimalistic acoustic appeal. It is simple, direct and elegant.”

After I played the entire piece, a Polish friend commented:

*“The music sounded like a Spanish piece in danza tempo. Are you sure it was Filipino music? On the whole, I enjoyed listening to folk melodies but still I was intrigued to find something unique, something that showed your culture.”*

Without saying anything, I played “Besame Mucho”, a Mexican song known all over the world. With all might, I interpreted it just like “Hating Gabi” in terms of temperament using danza tempo with accentuated pauses in certain musical phrase endings. It was a spontaneous gesture of comparison and contrast of two songs in what could be termed as closely linked to each other. In fact, my performance of “Hating Gabi” was accentuated with poetic touch just like “Besame Mucho” played both in G minor.

**Awakening**

(Phase 4)

Fourth phase of my musical journey was solidified after a return to classical music which formed part of my formal piano schooling in my early years. While

cruising the high seas playing different musical styles, I suddenly felt the urge to revisit my classical technique that thought was fading away. As such, when I returned from travel, I spoke to Prof. Agosto Espino if I could prepare a solo recital of my favorite piano classics to which he gladly said yes.

In 2010, I embarked on an audacious program of Chopin and from modern composers in an afternoon recital at the Mini Concert Hall, College of Music, in UP Diliman. Highlight of this concert was my own transcription of Filipino folksongs featuring classics such as “Pamulinawen,” “Dinumdum Ko Ikaw,” and “Kataka-taka” in a medley. Among the three excerpts, “Dinumdum Ko Ikaw” was easily the most poignant, deep and melancholic of all musical narratives most especially that the song is known to many Waray-Waray listeners sitting in the audience.

With its slow danza tempo in Bb minor, I could hear the audience singing with me as I played giving me a sense of deep connection with them. There were moments of the piece that I just posed in silence with eyes focused in one direction while I was rendering profound tones from the ivory keys of the baby grand piano. Even more profound was how much I was carried away by the audience’s singing that I also quietly hummed the melody in my head in perfect consonance with the audience.

Similar to a kundiman in terms of structure, the folksong started in minor mode and ended in jubilant major mode while keeping the danza pace constant. As a song of lamentation, “Dinunumdum Ko Ikaw” dawned upon me a sense of going back to my roots as told by my grandparents who loved the song very much. Somehow, listening to my playing accorded me a feeling of delightful nostalgia even if it was only recalled based on storytelling. It was a moment of redemption, a sense of connection to my past that was inside me expressed through the sound. It felt like

I knew my grandmother's life, her friends and family, and I was a part of such connection.

Another meaningful piece I played was "Le Cavalier Fantastique" by Benjamin Godard, which I studied in my youth and became part of my standard repertoire. What was challenging about the piece was its technical demands notably on the octaves stretching throughout the piece like a chariot race that intensified in speed and strength. I had to make sure there was enough energy to conquer such a powerful etude. The effect it brought to the audience was a stunning splendor most especially at the end of the powerful chord where a thunderous applause reverberated throughout the concert hall.

When I played the same piece at a dinner party in school, I thought I was not connected to anyone present. I could not even say my music was background music. It was misplaced, misunderstood so I had a feeling the audience was apathetic towards it. It was then that I realized classical music must be carefully played to selected audience only.

Back to my recital debut in UP, my piano teacher had some wonderful remarks about my playing, to wit:

> "*What a transformation you had during the recital. I especially like your interpretation of Chopin pieces. You have communicated your music well to the audience. It was a rich and wonderful experience listening to a sincere expression of yourself through music*."

One of the meaningful pieces I played during the recital was "Malikmata" by Antonio Molina which I already heard from a recitalist back in college. So intrigued by the mystery it evoked, my playing was carefully dramatized to depict transfiguration

of character. Even the opening “C” tone on the left hand created suspense with right hand dissonances in delicate soft texture smothering imminent
feeling of danger that was looming ahead that ended in ominous glissando on both hands conquering all black and white keys. My technical approach here was hammer and percussive playing emulating a pounding sound that felt like stabbed wounds. This creative imagination helped me interpret dissonant tones, heightened a deep state of inner disturbance which to me was a sentiment required to expressive the piece more dramatically.

Then, as soon as the lyrical section echoed with single tones accompanied by soft arpeggios on the left hand, my teacher advised me to treat it like a water sound. Without hesitation, I accepted my teacher’s eloquent advice. In the beginning, it was easily said and done but when I performed the piece in the recital, it was a polished internalization of visual playing that was impressionistic in character.

Another performance piece that caught my attention during my recital in the Mini-Hall of the University of the Philippines was a piece called “Ritual Fire Dance” by Mauel de Falla which I learned to play the duet version back in my recital days in Tacloban City. This time, however, it was a solo rendition of such diabolically rich ornamentation of trills and more trills from beginning to end with a rhythmic twist in the middle section dominated by accents and octave melodies. With so much vigor and horror-like ambience in executing trills between left and right hand, I thought the piece explored on the infectiously insane side of me. With a high degree of zeal and enthusiasm, this musical narrative was pompously invigorating with conflicting resonance only music could expound with such clarity.

As I traversed through episodes, I reckoned that I was more challenged with pieces that enamored a sense of vitality in dissonance, and this one was no

exception to the rule. The madness of sound exemplified a character with wondrous search for destruction in meanings without any vocal rhetoric to elucidate. Driven by my inner power to conquer dissonances, the piece resonated to the audience with utmost enthusiasm and delight. This was later echoed to me by some friends during refreshment.

Lastly, I played my teenage favorite piece that catapulted me to a higher level of awareness in musical indulgence. Entitled “Impromptu in C# minor” by Hugo Reinhold. I also learned it in my youth, but playing it as a mature pianist was more challenging and satisfying as I possessed a higher level of appreciation and understanding of tonality during this time.

The rapid 16$^{th}$ notes in fast tempo sounded like heavy downpour interspersed with arpeggios that seemed endlessly tiring but fortifying with every technical articulation. The middle section in Db major was a lyrical episode opposite to the torpedo melodies in the first section. Played with such emotional connection to the music, I was listening intently to the interaction between melody and harmony during the entire section. With my foot pedal pressed down for more sustained sound, this section sounded like a musical longingness, a kind of subliminal wondering expressed in moderate tempo that allowed me to process deep thoughts for convincing interpretation.

Then, a recapitulation of the first movement in presto motion was even more challenging than the first one. It was always a mantra not to repeat the same interpretation of the same melodic section and with that, I just went on with my rapid playing as if there was no way to slow down until a delightful coda recapitulated the tale with sweeping bravado and declining arpeggios in C# minor concluded the music.

For this piece, tempo played a great role in audience's overwhelming acceptance creating a heightened sense of appreciation with my daring speed. It was, indeed, daring and almost uncontrollable especially towards the end. The notion of speeding up was painfully but gratifyingly endured igniting a feeling of relief at the end of the performance.

The overall impact of my recital was a great fulfillment of my longing to play the classics straight throughout the entire program. It was a declaration that I could still manage to deliver public performance that did not involve reservation from too much popular, standards and Broadway selection in my travels.

When super typhoon Yolanda ravaged Tacloban City in 2013, I was in Japan doing my yearly contract at Hotel Taikanso as house pianist. Worried as I was after watching video footages of the devastation, I quietly sat on the piano, meditated in silence and prayed to God for some enlightenment. Then, all of a sudden, my fingers played the Santo Nino theme, a church song known to many Taclobanons being the city's patron saint. It was a soulful rendition filled with longing and sadness that I cried a lot while playing the melodies. Images of my city in pain kept flashing through my mind not knowing if the city would rise once again.

I posted my recording on Facebook which drew a lot of attention from netizens, some of them included: "very emotional performance," "very touching", "moving". Deeply touched by such overflowing love, I called a friend who told me that he was deeply touched by the music because it gave him hope, renewed his faith despite destruction and loss, and made him smile once again. My sister, who also listened to my recording, was brought to tears as she was reminded of the horrific tragedy that almost destroyed the house she had just renovated.

For my part, I kept revisiting images of my city in its glorious days. So many scenes of fiesta parades, locals worshipping in church, fiesta goers creating traffic in downtown Tacloban – all these pictures enriched my interpretation of the musical prayer not realizing I had been playing the song over and over again with different cycles of emotions. It was a therapeutic activity that had lasting effects in my wellbeing.

While in Japan, I listened to live koto music in my hotel normally staged during New Year celebrations that lasted for three days. Drawn by the musician's oneness with his music so evidently felt in dramatic impulse, I was captivated and inspired to emulate inner silence within the music that I heard. I wanted to empty myself from the notes I heard while playing. I wanted to listen to the silence between the notes, the distance between utterance of sound rather than the sound itself.

In my deep realizations about silence, I turned simple walks in the garden into creative activities thinking of melodies, composing new sound while listening to my own footsteps. Then I would go back to the hotel, record my ideas on the piano to be performed later during live performance with Japanese audiences who would close their eyes meditating upon the music they heard. Many times I have been reprimanded to play softly. Japanese people do not like loud music. They want to embrace silence even when they talk. Music is an accessory to silence, not a barrier, as one guest told me.

Such powerful narrative on silence affected my playing. It made me grow more maturely. It made me listen more attentively to nuances of the sound, to different textures of tonality that created different meanings but all connected. Japanese music, especially enka music (traditional) made me capture emotive qualities of any music I played even Beatles songs.

One remarkable transformation I experienced of performing Beatles music was the way how I dramatized songs using rubato tempo, a kind of holding back feeling that grew intently as I saw Japanese listeners close their eyes which to me was a signal for meditative listening. I practically learned the art of listening which I applied a lot in interpretative playing.

After I studied traditional Japanese music, I ventured into J-Pop (Japanese pop) repertoire after I purchased a collection of popular Japanese songs from various artists. Astounded I was with how much similar Western music was with J-Pop, I began playing some in my performances at the hotel. The first heavy influence I got was from the boy band called Exile that played my ultimate favorite “Michi” (road), a ballad with soothing melodies in common time. The first time I played the song was one of those sight-reading moments on stage where I would flip pages of a book to look for songs to play. When I began the introduction, I was already moved by its lightness and ubiquitous appeal consistently felt especially when the chorus part came in. It was like an explosion of emotion that resonated with the audience that sang as I played. Nervous I was that I might make any mistake, I tried to ignore the growing sound around me but focused on what was written in the sheet music. To my surprise, facilitative singing really facilitated my playing which altogether made me more confident I would surpass any challenge.

One of my realizations in sight-reading music was that I was always vulnerable to anything that could happen in live performance and that I should be ready to rectify errors instantaneously without feeling any hint of remorse. During life performances, I encountered difficult situations like when an audience would know the song too well and I would make mistakes. Through time, I learned to contain feelings of remorse and just act professionally on stage. On top of it, I just had to

make sure I chose songs that I knew I was going to conquer without making any mistake.

There was one occasion where I had to sight-read music in a Christian church service where incidentally the score I had studied was written in a different key that I was supposed to play in the service. It was an accompaniment to a trumpet solo that meant I had to read the score without modulating to another key. It was a nerve-wrecking experience with all the pressure from live performance with churchgoers listening to every note not to mention the fact that I had to fit in with the trumpet sound making sure I was not overpowering. Compounding with my self-inflicted fear was my stubborn reservation to finish the performance because I had not played with a trumpet soloist before. It was this apprehension that translated to my tensed playing as commented by a co-musician who sat next to me. Disgruntled I was then, I realized I had to rise above the occasion as I had few moments left so what I did was I blocked any form of anxiety, instead, I recurved my energy to perfecting my execution of the notes as written in the score. It helped that the tempo of the piece was rather slow giving me more time to pay attention to details.

Back in Manila where I played with a strings group at the Manila Peninsula Hotel, sight-reading music was almost second nature. We had to do five sets of serenading for hotel guests, such long sets would be devoted to reading music instantly without any practice (hence, sight reading). In the beginning, it was very intimidating especially with fellow musicians listening to what I had to play. It was like a test I had to pass in order for me to be part of the group.

Unequivocally speaking, it was classical music that gave me all anxiety as everything written had to be executed properly without improvising anything. But with other arrangements where a lead sheet with melodies and chords were considered

as guide, there was so much room for creative improvisation that proved to be more exciting. This was the kind of playing that required ornamentation in playing to enhance textural quality of accompaniment. I found it riveting to indulge in authentic renditions of counter melodies, fill-ins, in-between passages, and at the same time rewarding whenever they sounded fine. I would usually learn from my co-musicians' gesture of acceptance through their smile, a good indication that what I was doing was acceptable to their ears. Just like any activity, it was always a welcome surprise to bring in new ideas to the music I was playing.

Most especially with solo music, I was enthralled to ascribe new ways of playing the same songs by changing rhythm and tempo, mood and articulation depending on context and time. In places where people just come and go like on a ship's atrium, I would lazily play songs unmindful of technique and emotion. In other words, my playing was robotic. Conversely, in a quiet scene where I knew people came to listen, my renditions would be more expressive and meaningful. Most especially during a formal recital, I would focus on my own expressions making sure they jived with the music I exuded. Such formal setting was designed for people to be attentive listeners and the performers to be active participants of the music they played.

When the pandemic struck, people were confined to their homes in quarantine due to lockdowns. As a result, I switched to virtual performances just so I could continue with my craft. Last year, I organized a fund-raising event for victims of typhoon in Jipapad, Eastern Samar, through an online piano concert featuring folksongs, favorite popular music and many other selections to an audience from around the world. Sitting on a Kawaii white baby grand piano in an empty room in Hotel Taikanso, Japan (on lockdown at that time), I felt a mixture of anxiety and

excitement looking at the number of friends watching and posting comments on Facebook live minutes before the concert. I also felt a deep sense of nostalgia for being away from home locked in a hotel uncertain about my repatriation flight back to Manila due to lockdown procedures. Such uneasiness was creeping in just before I started my first number. However, playing to an audience digitally connected with me also meant that there was readiness building inside me about to explode. And so it did. The first song was a local folksong known to many residents of Leyte and Samar. I played with so much readiness, gentleness, and natural flow as I could hear every sound of the instrument since no one was around.

In another fund-raising event for a medical procedure of a friend, I managed a full-length concert at Kbox Studios with a decorated stage and colorful lights pointing at me. Although this concert was online, the pressure was bigger since there were crew members and staff helping around. To me, it was a normal live concert even without the audience in the studio. Doing the concert dubbed “Carols for Ana Lyn” online was an artistic challenge. For one, in-between cues were observed carefully as Facebook commercials were aired. This created restlessness because my momentum was diminished each time a commercial was aired. Next, poor Internet connectivity was a huge impediment to reaching wider audience coupled with heavy downpour at that time which, of course, affected my performance.

Nevertheless, I turned such challenges to wonderful opportunities to deliver quality performance. Highlight of my concert was a soulful rendition of “Pasko Na Sinta Ko” by Gary Valenciano. Because of its over familiarity, my narrative of the song was masterful in style and delivery with embellishments especially in the beginning section where I played sporadic passages that exemplified technical

prowess. I turned such popular song into a virtuoso piece with complex layers of arpeggios, scales and thick chords.

When I played the chorus, there was a sudden silence inside me that manifested in soft notes with minimal character, in dark contrast to rapidity that characterized the prelude. It was also an intense moment of listening to the lyrics of the song singing in my head while I played the instrumental melody on the piano. Such marriage between sound and words created a perfect consonance that I learned during my ship gigs before.

It was Christmas time and I thought the concert was my gift of life to a patient in pain. I simply dedicated every sound for her recovery, and with that, it was full of emotions. I ended up my instrumental version with tears pouring naturally.

**Composition: Musician's Rhetoric**

Throughout the years of playing music, I have written some compositions that depicted my personal character, taste, and identity.

In terms of character, it was known to me all along that I chose pieces that reflected my personality, or, at least, aspects of my personality. With deep exposure to Romantic pieces, it seemed my emotions echoed through the musical narratives within each piece. Different levels of expression resonated freedom, a sense of emancipation from the rigidities of life. True enough, indeed, my music encapsulated a free spirit wandering around, capturing tones and emotions that would communicate with my inner being. Conversely, my ontological being would also transmit vibrations to the environment in different degrees and dimensions defining a sense of oneness, or at least, I thought.

What was important to me was how I communicated my music that expressed my emotions more than anything else. Such vulnerability was engulfed with wonder that brought experimentations on timbre, for instance, that spoke of my inner soul. Even with borrowed form, my true sentiments manifested in the different textures of sound compartmentalizing certain mood and character as symbols of sincere expressions of emotions. In effect, what was written in the music sheet was not to be literally followed as I listened to my feelings.

With Romanticism occupying a lot of space in my musical influence, I could not proceed with my original compositions without expounding on my Romantic sensibilities. For one, my performance of *"18th Variation from Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini",* piano solo version by Rachmaninoff, as an emancipatory gesture, was engulfed with liberating sentiments such as playing as if I have forgotten all the notes in my head and letting go of the moment. Freedom from rigidities in life ascribed to notions of freedom from 'structures' – such powerful revelations of meaningful experience were expressed in music that wanted to be released.

Doing some research on Rachmaninoff made me recognize that he was a Russian pianist and composer at the turn of the 20th century. Coming from a culture of strict compliance to a totalitarian regime at some point in history, his music exemplified dark layers of emotions so beautifully expressed with wanton freedom, a kind of self-glorification. With that, it made me think I could accept a sense of propriety but at the same time it could unravel a sense of self-longing that was unprovoked, illuminating, and convincing. Such powerful resonance would remain my testament of authentic music describing authentic character that no matter what form of government I was playing for, I was expressing myself and for myself.

In terms of taste, I was intrigued by the complicated structures of Baroque music, but, at the same time I enjoyed journeying through deep layers of intricate dialogues between melodies, countermelodies, counterpoints, among others. While struggling through, I would often resort to a sense of "high art" in playing Bach's music. It was not a feeling of rejection to the demands of the piece, rather, it was a nurturing feeling of understanding the structure, interpretation, and delivery of sound that mattered.

In life, such musical taste engulfed with nuances of fear and anxiety created paradigms of adventure, willing to discover new feelings and ideas along the way. What was more profound to me was that most discoveries I encountered opened up new ways to understanding my sense of character. In my experience of playing *"Tocatta in G Major"* by Bach, for instance, I discovered the inner child in me, that stage in my life that was full of adventure and wonder expressed in the difficult passages of the piece's beginning section. Imbued with playful tones, I imagined a fantasy land where rules meant no rules but could only be achieved if juxtaposed with a sense of anxiety. Such duality of fear and excitement mirrored in the complex tonality of the toccata which addressed issues of conformity and freedom.

Corollary to the two themes of character and taste, my identity was rightfully conceived as a confluence of the two elements, character and taste. In addition, born as a Gemini with "two hearts", I realized my drifting sense of self was colorfully mounted in the different rhetorical figures comprising Baroque, Classical, Romantic and 20$^{th}$ century leaping in wondrous delight depending on the situation I was in.

In terms of influences from the Classical school, my deep sense of conformity to the rigors of conventions unleashed notions of stability in my character. It was a positive gesture of acceptance to such conventions that made me feel I was one with

the community of artists that performed pieces with universal elements present. In other words, my interpretation of “Moonlight Sonata” was deeply attuned to the demands of the piece as written by Beethoven. However, certain nuances of individual interpretation surfaced exhibiting the idea, “notes and beyond”.

Throughout the years of my study in piano coupled with various experiences in performance, it was convenient to gather ideas that would ultimately shape my sense of rhetoric that incorporated various sensibilities forming my character and identity.

In my quest for self-discovery, I studied kundiman music as a personal endeavor because I did not learn it during my formal piano lessons. Perhaps one of the reasons was its inherently vocal nature or difficulty in finding sheet music. Nevertheless, with my initiative, I got a copy of *“Damdamin”* (Romance) by Francisco Buencamino from a friend who studied Music.

Inspired by its romantic melodies with implicit folk sensibilities built in the key of D major in *moderato* (moderate) tempo, the piece captured my romantic essence of emotionality and expressiveness in performance usually punctuated by holding notes in certain phrases that sometimes were not written in the piece. The term *hagod* signifying a sense of rubato feeling that prolonged sound beyond normal value with all the necessary nuances were reflected in changing moods such as from *moderato* to *animato* (animated) that accelerated phrases then held back at some point. This required understanding of the musical structure coupled with an indulgent interpretation that was emotionally rich.

During my performance of *“Damdamin”* the colossal chords in the beginning section were treated as horizontal melodies layering on top of each chord which could be treated as vertical articulations. In order to succeed, I sang the layered

tones in my head while conquering chordal structures and the effect was a series of singing tones that sounded like me dwelling on personal intentions of wooing an imagined girl.

With this in mind, I proceeded the next sections with the same emotional punctuations that heightened during *acellerando* moments mirroring adrenalin rush brought about by emotional intensity. Such was a feeling of climactic proportions that musically was astounding to hear.

Of course, there were technical demands of *"Damdamin"* which had to be executed intricately clear. For example, arpeggios in the left hand were more than accompaniment to me as they had messages to tell: emotional rush highlighted as dialogue patterns in both left and right hand in some sections meant a sense of agreement between me and my imagined girl filled with serendipity while quiet arpeggios in the left that emphasized melody in the right hand signified listening to the soulful telling of my girl's emotional state. Subdued and almost passive, the texture was wind-like, smooth and not imposing. However, it also carried the weight of sound in order to exude connectivity of melodic lines like a soliloquy.

In the midst of impassioned renderings, I was exalted in the dramatic melancholy of cascading melodies with rustles of light arpeggios in F minor that sounded like denouement in a musical play so fantastically woven with dialogic chords doubling the melodic lines above. This created emphasis in sound accentuated by bravura 32$^{nd}$ chords reciprocated by the same temperament in the left in the preceding measures. Such tension was interpreted as rhetorical arguments between me and my imagined girl depicted in chordal leaps in accelerating rhythm.

At the end of climactic tensions, an opening heart and mind restored the musical theme to its beginning moderato tempo with balance, rancor-free motions of my relaxed hands in placid mode.

With so much attachment to aesthetics in emotional rendering, I thought my performance echoed an emotional struggle of love in all its shades of impassioned vulnerability with resolute ending defining a moment of glorification and liberation that epitomized kundiman sentiment.

At some point in my career I became a Musical Director of MUZIK Harmonie, a singing group based in Leyte Normal University. During the group's first major concert in the school campus, I accompanied a kundiman entitled *"Pakiusap"* by Francisco Santiago, to a baritone singer of the group that had warm sound going up to tenor register. It was his contest piece rendered during a regional singing competition among artists within state colleges and universities of the Philippines.

During my performance as accompanist, I realized the piece was doubling the melodies of the baritone, a great challenge to replicate the singer's vocal stylings, pauses, phrasings, among others. Thus, my ear was glued to his musical utterances and in no time did I speed up or slow down outside of the singer's will.

After playing my piano solo introduction, the main theme opened up in C minor key with hidden tenuto that literally jived with the singer's interpretation. *Kundiman* usually starts in a minor key with soulful melodies edifying emotional longingness and ends in a major key signifying triumph and delight.

True to its ornamental dialogic responses of the upper melodies positioned as inner counter-melodies in both right and left hands, the piece was a continuum of uninterrupted communication between melodies and counter-melodies in dramatic storytelling. In interpreting such delectation, my body was responding profusely with

deep connection by way of gentle sways and occasional pauses. But the most striking to me was how much I associated the kundiman to a painful lamentation of my struggles as an individual and as a member of a nation with issues of sovereignty. As I proceeded with my playing, I could not help but recall from historical readings how Filipinos suffered from the oppressive structures of both Spanish and American regimes in the country. Three centuries or 333 years of Spanish colonization characterized by cultural displacement, bigotry and loss of identity suddenly rushed through my veins most especially in the "minor key" of the opening section of *"Pakiusap"* that would normally envelope dark and heavy emotions in musical sound. Such poignant elucidation of historical association unleashed a powerful force of music to conjure inner sentiments without the indulgence of lyrics to solidify a people's predicament, my predicament. In retrospect, my self-revelations formed collective consciousness as relayed to me by some members of the audience signifying a unified association of musical sound to experience located in the country's history.

A wise spectator of my performance told me the following words:

> *"The music you just* played made me cry over the suffering of our people which today are still felt. Our lost pride and dignity continued to haunt Filipino natives even during the American regime and up to this *day."*

Recently, I posted on Facebook my rendition of *"Bayan Ko"* (My Dear Country), composed by Constancio de Guzman. I dedicated this to the late President Benigno Aquino III when he passed away on June 20, 2021. Stirred I was by the hype, I turned to music in mourning the death of a leader. With so much passion poured into my video recording, I was, once again, catapulted to history with so

much sadness in recalling sorrows and pains of my countrymen in both Spanish and American occupations. The same association of music to memories of indignation punctuated in every melody I played on the keys. With indulgent tenuto as part of my dramatic narrative, I was consoled amid sadness and rage over unresolved expressions of liberation haunting me to this day.

However, with impervious mind, I began questioning the sincerity of the narrative of *"Bayan Ko"* in today's context. In a period of dismay and discontentment, I thought the dignity of the lyrics has been tarnished by political groups trying to capture attention from the masses with their quick wit in grandstanding. Resorting to emotional appeal just to be able to win their hand was something untruthful and manipulative.

Sometime during these explorations, I ventured into composition in order to draw out personal convictions and musical notions that were not labelled to create impressions but simply to express my identity. A ticklish form of identity formation surfaced in my composition titled *"Dumagsa",* written in C major, inspired by *saronay* (small *kulintang*) which I learned how to play during a seminar-workshop conducted at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Although I have been humming the pentatonic melodies of the piece for many years already, it was not until the workshop unfolded that I found the need to jot down my ideas.

The whole accompaniment was written in ostinato, so technically, the right hand did all the embellishments, improvisations and recapitulation towards the end. It was completely a relaxing feeling when I played ostinato lines in pianissimo in the first two bars until melodic lines resonated with themes and variations. With placid texture, it was almost like a passive performance, very reflective with inner resonance and not so demanding to the ear. As I played *"Dumagsa",* I envisioned a

dense forest with chirping birds heard from a distant layered with soft wind blows touching upon the leaves creating soft rumblings. In the middle of everything was my voice reverberating through the forest with magnanimity in the signification of myself, my identity.

How would such piece explain my identity?

*"Dumagsa"* is a vernacular term in Waray-Waray language that means east wind. When I composed this piece, I had notions of Oriental sound, something that expressed profound meanings of my Oriental identity imbued with politeness, calmness and a sense of enlightenment that was undisturbed. To me, it was my search for a quiet soul that absorbed everything and exuded silence in return.

As a Filipino artist, it was a joy to expound on ideas about self-preservation and identity formation that transcended to nature. The moment I played the melodies on the saronay, it felt like listening to the soft murmurs of the leaves in tranquility. Amidst complexity, I was perched on the idea of preservation of natural entity without any hint of provocation life would sometimes offer. Unknowingly, I was exhuming the depths of my quiet being awakened in meditation.

To me, my adventures with nature revealed a sacrosanct place that was only known to me. With music, I was vulnerable to noise all around my country, hence, *"Dumagsa"* was the sole refuge to rescue my identity. With flourishing modes and stylings of cultural presentations brought about by globalization, my sense of self was at the mercy of getting lost amidst interconnectivity. In effect, the melodies and harmonies of my composition were a form of rectitude to the wrongful noise around. I had to assert my authentic self, my sense of being a Filipino musician within Asian community. Rallying for my pureness of heart for who I was, who I am, and who I will

be, “Dumagsa” accentuated a powerful voice of acclimation. In effect, it was listening to the self that made sense.

Historically speaking, this composition became a musical production in Tacloban City bearing the same title where I played the piano with ostinato accompaniment and another musician played the melodies on *saronay*. It was an indulgent fusion of East-West sentimentality but in my defense, it was a glorification of Oriental sound because of the melodic narratives I portrayed.

Another composition I made, *“Sayaw Fantasia”,* embodied parallel Oriental touch just like *“Dumagsa”,* but this time, it was fast and dance-like in the first and final sections. With heavy accents, the piece highlighted a flamboyant character in me that was ready to binge given the right opportunity. Indeed, I was flying with uncontrollable speed so suspended that I lost track of musical gravity of some sort during my performance.

The piece was written to mirror my Gemini character of duality expressed in a flamboyant dance followed by surreal themes in the middle section that elaborated on impressionistic nuances. When I performed it for the first time in my concert dubbed - “Concert at the Mall”, I was magically switching moods without hesitation as if talking to two different persons with different emotions. Embroiled with dissonant articulations, my sense of enthusiasm to diabolical lines ushered a sense of vulnerability that I thought was bordering on insanity, or its approximation. It was in my vulnerability that brought me to new doors of unchartered territories. For instance, in the presto sub-section, I played with almost uncontrolled speed to emulate a ritualistic trance. Such heightened state could have been easily construed as disturbing decorum for someone not used to listening to madness in sound.

As I was communicating “musical destruction”, on some level I was also re-creating a new sound from the debris of madness. Indeed, my diabolical intentions became powerful affirmations of vulnerability and reconstruction so delicately intertwined that stories were ripped of any plot, that music was deprived of tonality and balance, that life breathed in madness.

Just before the turbulent, trance-like section, the andante section was the most surreal sound I have ever composed. In fact, I distinctly remember how structurally it was difficult to find coherent inner melodies. However, with my indulgent sense of getting lost in space, this section, had somewhat blissful resonance.

To enrich my state of suspension, I literally moved my arms in very slow, synchronized gestures like performing slow karate movements that approximated oneness with nature of some sort. Throughout the episode I felt a sense of lightness like the wind blowing gently and my mind in meditative state.

Another thunderous musical composition I created was titled *“Yolanda”,* a sordid narrative of pain, struggle, redemption, and resilience of the people of Tacloban City that bore the brunt of suffering from a super typhoon that claimed lives and property in unimaginable scale. Its imagery of water rushing in accompanied with howling winds indicated an ominous malady as expressed in atonal arpeggios cascading in discordance. After such sordid explication, I played the haunting theme in A minor with profound sadness and a struggle to overcome uncertainty. With different cycles of emotions layering in complex textuality accentuated by a dramatic climax, the musical saga halted with a resolute timbre followed by a spiritual divination setting the mood in the next segment which was taken from a religious hymn known to all Taclobanons. In this section, I played reverently excerpts of the

hymn of Sto. Nino while tears just poured instantaneously on the keys. With so much internalization, I played the melody and chords in soft but resolute manner.

Visualizing water surge, my musical prayer was interrupted once again with rapid scales and thick chordal patterns deepening a Romantic expressiveness in the tones that emerged. I ended the piece with a mysterious accelerando of glissando capturing an uncertain aftermath of the typhoon.

I imbibed the audience in my sordid narrative. I could feel tension in their eyes as they listened to every disturbing sound rushing through. I felt their stillness and soft wails the moment I played the Sto. Nino hymn. As later told to me, many had goosebumps with such a detailed narrative using sound only. It was a moving performance, an uninterrupted narrative of experience of struggle and pain during the typhoon.

*"Yolanda"* depicted dialectical tensions between sound and imagery, between myself and the surrounding milieu with conflicting signals of acceptance and rejection, the latter forming dark impressions imprinted in their faces as they recalled the surge that made me wonder if those where gestures of a successful performance albeit rather poignant. Such tension was evident in robust loudness of sound I created in my composition envisaging a powerful storm in contrast to soft wails from victims struggling for survival.

In another personal story, I was saddened by the thought that when my mother died, she could not be with me for the rest of my life. Hence, I composed a piece titled *"Danza ni Nanay",* a sublime celebration of motherhood. Filled with gentleness, the walking tempo of danza epitomized femininity in its grandest gesture with a touch of kundiman expressed in thirds and sixths as nuanced ornaments in certain melodic sections. With soft tonal ambience, I dwelt in folkloric temperaments

depicting mothers that raised family with affirmations of feminine power in a subdued manner.

I never thought music could perhaps express “feminine” tonality until I wrote *“Danza ni Nanay,”* which was clearly portrayed in my gentle swaying of head as I played while pounding on such question as “was there a feminine sound?”. Such realization would open up new ways of deciphering music structure that would elicit gender qualities.

In *“Sayaw Fantasia,”* which I discussed earlier, there were images of skirts flying about with castanets showcasing feminine ornamentations in a frenzied state called dance. Such realization indulged my sense of rhythmic synchronicity, paucity, regularity and hysteria which could happen during live performance.

During my continued search for identity, the grand narrative of emancipation through artistic experimentations defined myself even on the brink of defying conventions in some instances. One such composition I created was titled *“Etude in C Major”,* a Western concept meaning “study” where I thought the title was significant as its content was more of a technical exercise on finger dexterity. But what was more intriguing was that I used a folksong titled *“Kuratsa”,* a courtship dance in Leyte and Samar, in order to explicate piano pedagogy using Alberti bass in classical form, popular in Mozart sonatas, while the right hand was playing melodies of *“Kuratsa”* with some added ornamentations with classical nuances. In other words, I was playing a local folksong using classical elements. The effect was astoundingly classical that if someone played it without any knowledge of the folksong, it could easily be categorized as a European classical music.

Such transformation of a musical lore was a declaration of deep-seated liberation in forming musical ideas that depicted my background in classical music

juxtaposed with local themes as something to be proud of. When I posted this piece on Facebook with me playing on the piano, it immediately drew attention from friends and fellow Waray-Warays from different parts of the globe. Ubiquity of social media has, indeed, created a huge audience with various sentiments aired. The following were some of the posted comments:

*"Nostalgic right at the very core."*

*"True Waraynon, indeed".*

*"Exciting to hear different interpretations".*

In a manner of speaking, yes, it was a unique experience both in writing and playing. In writing, I did not use a piano to arrange, develop, and organize themes as the folksong was known to me by heart. I took an empty music manuscript with my special Japanese pencil bought at Daiso in Sendai, Japan and started scribbling notes after having my breakfast at McDonald's.

I did not want my piece to be an exact replica of *"Kuratsa"* so I called it an *"Etude in C Major"* to emphasize its technical qualities for piano pedagogy, thus, it was termed as a transcription of some sort with lots of 16$^{th}$ notes executed in Allegro tempo similar to Mozart's piano sonatas. In articulating the music, I used "high-finger" technique during practice for clarity and evenness of sound that depended on touch. But, in actual performance, my fingers were close to the keys already signifying well-practiced finger articulation.

On top of all technical demands, I envisaged a local couple dancing to the piece but was interrupted by the speed of my playing that was almost impossible to dance with. Hence, I called it a dance to be listened to, not to dance to. Quite similar

to Chopin waltzes that were generally meant for listening, I justified my *allegro* tempo as a pianistic journey in all its glamor.

In the final narrative of identity formation, I created musical transcriptions of some folksongs in Leyte and Samar, my place of locality, mostly identified from my grandparents' repertoire of bedtime lullabies. One such transcription, *"Di Ak Nahuhulop"* (I am not Disappointed) created a spectacle of musical capriccio with playful leaps in distinct staccatos depicting dialogue between a man and a woman caught in a love duel. Because I wanted to re-create the folksong based on my sensitivity to traditional norms painted with nuances of modern-day fixtures, I explored on musical lilts and leaps with bravado and recapitulated the main theme in a modulated key in "Eb minor" with thick chords in extremely opposite motions, but, still managed to articulate folk character with my melodic accentuations. The ending sweep was a wave of tensed arpeggios in accelerando until a definitive ending with emphatic chords vociferously resonated throughout the concert venue.

Recently, I recorded my own rendition of *"Daw Sugad Hin Bukad"* (Like a Flower), another folksong in our region, posted it on Facebook, which earned accolades I never thought would be so overflowing. Perhaps, one of the reasons could be that the song was rarely heard in the repertoire of nostalgic songs, or perhaps, my playing was passionate to their ears, or simply because it lifted up spirit during these uncertain times brought by the pandemic.

Of all the reasons highlighted, the third one, "lifting up the spirit during these uncertain times brought by the pandemic", stuck in my mind like no other thought.

Truthfully, my interpretation of the song was a tale of healing in a time of anxiety that changed my perspectives, ways, and priorities in life. It was a relief, at least for few minutes of my life while dwelling upon healing sound, and the effect was

so penetrating. Such healing ritual was a credo of spiritual rejuvenation of a lost sense of self, at least in my own perspective. It was at that moment where a rebirth of my soul echoed through every melody of the song, through my Rachmaninoff-inspired tonal textures that begging for mercy, for survival in a virus-inflicted world.

With that, I indulged in emotional, tearful yet uplifting journey of knowing more about myself in great appreciation to simple joys and blessings in life devoid of complaints. Indeed, as a therapy, it was belief in spiritual divination that did not ask questions but accepted faith wholeheartedly where music was at the center guiding my enlightened being. With that, my sense of emptiness was completeness in itself.

Finally, while themes of my compositions, arrangements and transcriptions bordered on personal narratives, still a whole part of my character mushroomed a vulnerable self that was willing to change for the sake of self-preservation and societal transformation.

In the years that followed, I became engrossed with music that echoed cries of indigenous groups in the country. It started during a visit to Butuan, Mindanao where I immersed in cultural activities such as listening to the plight of Butuan people in the face of modernization through instrumental renditions of powerful protest without the indulgence of musical lyrics to accentuate their predicament Instead, it was a cheerful expression of a threatened voice through musical lamentations played on local gongs conjoined with guitar as women danced in synchrony to the musical showcase.

What was endearing about the performance was the immense spontaneity of artistic aura perfectly gleaned from dynamic hand and arm gestures of the gong musician that levelled up with every hammering movement and from the guitarist's emotional connection to the melodic lines created as he embraced his instrument

like some inseparable entity. What I witnessed was an intense dialogue between two musicians with complex layers of expression which I later found out to be voices of indignation to the invasion of modernization in their locality.

Deciphering music's message made me wonder how such protestation unraveled through sound only without any form of utterance. Careful analysis made me dwell into depth of sound in terms of volume, texture and rhythmic dynamism as powerful elements in persuasive protest music. In terms of volume, the sheer magnitude of sound level protruded by the instruments highlighted communicative power similar to a public speech that was more emphatic when volume was loud simply because it was heard clearly.

In Butuan, different dynamics of volume emanating from gong and guitar elements revealed different notions of pain and uncertainty to the fading heritage of a cherished culture. Guitar's poignant melodies with strong vibrato were symbols of anxiety played with so much passion and gongs' towering sound echoed a deep calling to the citizenry to rally behind cultural resistance brought about by modernization.

Corollary to volume was texture that added to music's meaningful message.

Volume created visual images grounded on depth and lightness of tonality. For instance, light sound from the gong instrument encapsulated placid state, such calmness construed as quiet lamentation of people muted by the immensity of institutional structures the same way an onerously light texture from the guitar was not melancholy in romantic terms but more of an imminent danger looming ahead. Loudness, on the other hand, foregrounded a decrying moment of resistance accompanied by wailing in chant-like mode.

In terms of rhythmic movements, certainly the dance form in polyrhythmic accentuations provided entertainment with spectators engaged in the whole performance through imitation of dance steps bringing delight and profound resonance of indignation that intensified with the synergy of music, dance and emotions. In retrospect, rhythmic soaring heard from majestic gongs proved to be a resolute message with a high degree of approval.

The idea of venturing into ethnic-inspired music was my sense of involvement with a community theater that practically shared commonalities among members. We were theater enthusiasts inspiring each other with our own creative ideas that defined who we were as individuals then as social beings with responsibilities to the group and to the community. For my part, my role was the musical director and with it came responsibilities of overseeing rehearsals, providing music trainings and arranging songs for performance. I was known to be the point person for anything musical. But what was also good about it was that outside of the group, I was just one of them. In other words, my role did not extend to anything beyond the scope of music-related activities. Being the musical director, it was almost like innate impulse on their part that I performed my duties without question.

Because of such heavy responsibility, I saw to it that my functions reflected the goals, sentiments and values of our theater group more than my own personal convictions. At the end of the day I was proud for who we were and the music we performed reflected my character and personality and also to the cultural community where we belonged.

For instance, I was tasked to perform folksongs that expressed cultural heritage of the Waray-Waray group. In doing so, I researched a lot interviewing grandparents from different barangays. I asked them to perform songs that they

could remember that highlighted special occasions or ordinary events where singing or playing instrument was involved. From one of those I interviewed, I found out that there were special chant-like melodies performed by women performing birthing procedures in certain families during their time. Chanting intensified when the mother was ready to give birth, kind of like a trance that grew louder. Asked why such ritual was performed, I was told that its purpose was to draw out bad spirits that might be inhabiting inside the mother.

I was intrigued that such “exorcist” mentality was very much alive especially that the one performing it was not a priest but local healer. To my delight, I asked her to recall some melodies which she gladly did. With a recorder on my palm, she performed a 5-minute musical oracle that seemed like an indulgent prayer that invoked spirits rather than drove them out.

One month later, our little theater group performed the chant echoed by the grandmother. During the performance, certain melodies were altered unintentionally because the performer felt something different which prompted her to perform differently than what she had heard before. In the middle of such intense moment, I heard guitar strumming some chords that sounded in consonance with the chanting. It was a magical moment that involved the audience seen from their tapping, smiling and moving around in tune with the music around them. After the performance, our theater group sat down and evaluated our artistic performance. One member aired out some surprising remarks like our sense of being Waray-Waray was not lost when we changed chanting melodies because we interpreted them our own way, although I still think we preserved what our grandmother possessed.

Even with all efforts to preserve group sensibility, at some point, I could not hold on to my personal values being sacrificed for the sake of the group. I could no

longer bear to withstand criticisms of my performance because according to them, they no longer reflected group identity. This happened when one member argued that I was no longer following what has been discussed during the story conference. In my defense, I reasoned that I had to assert my individuality because I was the one performing, not the grandmother.

In the final analysis, feminine power as epitomized in the grandmother's chanting narrative elevated a unique and emphatic musical sound uttered by a woman, an answer to an abnormally skewed musical performance towards masculine character, against a feminine form. In the utterance of chanting sound, I deciphered its inner meaning and structure in terms of feminine quality apart from the obvious notion of the grandmother expressing those lines. While it was true that the sound was coming from her vocal chords, I could not help but dwell on the idea that I, the listener, had the final say on its femininity or indefinability whatsoever. It dawned on me that her way of relaying the chant could be different from what I heard. In other words, while in tantric mode, was she actually aware of her feminine power expressed in the voice and in her body response, or was it just a matter of listener's perception?

Inspired by the wondrous impact of my experience in Butuan, I mounted a performance titled *"Kalahi",* an original piece performed with some participants of a workshop conducted by the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD) where I was invited as a resource speaker. The piece was a collaboration in many ways but I provided the musical thread in crafting popular melodic themes that were relatable to the audience. When I said relatable, I meant something that was easily absorbed and understood in order to be performed effortlessly. Indeed, after doing

short rehearsals, the final performance was an emotional moment for each of them as I could feel how they related to the whole drama unfolding on stage.

The piece summed up themes of unity and progress in a time of difficulty. In effect, as composer and arranger, I transformed the message using rhetorical appeals such as tonal repetitions that did not only solidify affirmation but delightfully increased familiarity of sound. With such familiarity, profound messages were delivered forcefully in a manner so musical yet indirect. Such paradoxical motive of musical expression had to be embraced with openness especially in facing off the challenge of creating impact to a societal cause through mobilization of information. With the proliferation of digital platforms, dissemination has become an instinctive behavior and with music as language of expression, the grand narrative of dissemination became more effortless.

Enjoying my freedom in production and dissemination of music, I became more active in musical narratives that had cultural appeal and value aside from re-creating folksongs with new forms under the umbrella of preservation. One activity so meaningful to me was my exposure to a local shaman in deep meditation whom I visited with a theater mentor. I had the simple task of listening to the silence in him and the surrounding milieu. Afraid that I might have been disturbing the ritual, I sat quietly with my eyes closed in an attempt to imbibe the energy so I could transform my own being in a way different from my normal stance.

In the stillness of my mind, in the quietness of intense, unobstructed listening, I heard voices from a distant that grew by the second. These voices started as undefined rumblings in sporadic motion that seemed to come and go but became closer and louder when the wind blew against them. In keeping the spirit alive, I did not interrupt such moment, instead, I became one with it by mimicking what I heard. I

remember I was chanting in an engaging manner attuned to the recitatives chanted by the shaman. The episode was kind of a spiritual partnership that evoked deep realizations in my musical thoughts. Moreover, transcendence of music was an idea that sound as musical attribute was a form of energy that was present elsewhere including air. It was always there since the dawn of creation. It was up to us to gather such energy. In effect music was not residing in human consciousness that one had while others did not.

Intrigued by such explosion of transcendental sound, I experimented on silence as music in itself, in the absence of sound. In so doing, I walked alone in a deep forest in Japan in penetrating silence. Expecting nothing else but to dwell on it, I noticed its gravitational force as pauses that created inconspicuous music, hidden yet clear. All of a sudden, I realized the pause I was referring to was my own breathing. At the center of my meditative sound was listening to my own music, my own breathing which to me was the highest form of liberation. All I along I was creating authentic sound from the depth of my own breathing that set the pace of my walk in slow tempo. Following my spiritual excursion, I performed even the simplest of my compositions in the most meaningful way recognizing the power of silence as something not to be discounted.

On the whole, my self-discoveries through deep, meaningful experiences defined a sense of my being a dynamic creator of musical stories that bordered on sensitivity and oneness in the cultural milieu that explained my significance towards building a self and my collective consciousness.