

Nothing captures the Filipino sentimentality ever more closely than those we call our very own, the kundiman. It is the Philippines' signature love song and is a condensation of Kung Hindi Man. It a self expression – a very distinct type and generally expresses the forlorn lament of a faithful lover pining for his beloved. The melody is characterized by a smooth, flowing and gentle rhythm with dramatic intervals. It came to the fore as art song at the end of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century when Filipino composers such as Francisco Santiago and Nicanor Abelardo formalized the musical structure and sought poetry for the their lyrics, blending verse and music in equal parts.

The Kundiman took a patriotic cast in the early days as a reaction to the Spanish practice of forbidding the Filipinos any display of nationalism. The result was an outpouring of feelings in song, expressing love for a woman who symbolized the Motherland. This makes kundiman a valuable part of our heritage.

1. **Ave Maria**

Francisco Santiago

(Jan. 29, 1889, Sta Maria, Bulacan – Sept. 28, 1947, Manila)

Composer, pianist and teacher, Francisco Santiago is considered as the father of kundiman art song. Utilizing folk songs in his compositions, Santiago elevated the *kundiman* from being a mere love song into a vehicle for patriotic expression. Before Francisco Santiago's *kundiman*, the traditional Filipino love song was just a simple unitary song rendered in either minor or major mode and stereotyped as rural folk music due to its lack of harmonic structure. In Santiago's hands, the *kundiman* was transformed into a three-part musical "art song".

In 1919, Santiago composed Ave Maria and dedicated it to his bride, Concepcion Ocampo. His Ave Maria is known for its vocal and string lines and its heartfelt Romantic expressivity.

2. **Anak dalita**

Anak dalita (1917) was the first kundiman of Francisco Santiago. In this Kundiman, the words express that being unloved is equivalent to being poor and yet there is a glimmer of hope if one gets noticed by the object of her affection. Anak Dalita was sung in the Royal Court of Spain upon the request of King Alfonso II. It was also sung by the tenor Arrigo Pola who was the voice teacher of Luciano Pavarotti

3. **Bituing marikit**

Nicanor Abelardo

(Feb. 7, 1892, San Miguel de Mayumo, Bulacan – March 21, 1934, Manila)

Nicanor Abelardo is revered as the pioneer of Filipino music and pre-eminent master of the kundiman. He composed over a hundred of kundiman songs and his redefinition of the kundiman brought the genre to art-song status. His contributions to this series include Nasaan ka irog, My native land, Mother land, Magbalik ka hirang, Himutok and Bituing Marikit.

Bituin marikit was composed in 1926 by Abelardo to lyrics by zarzuela writer Servando de los Angeles. It speaks of a lover begging for a ray of light from his loved one, a distant and unreachable star. It was used in 1937 as the title song of a movie.

4. Mutya ng Pasig

Mutya ng Pasig was conceived by Abelardo as a musical expression that contains a pre-Hispanic rhythm formula and model configuration. It was inspired by a carnival along the Pasig River and the celebration moved Abelardo who made an allusion to the mythical past with its bygone splendor. It is a song of two persons: the narrator-poet Abelardo and the river nymph (or the mutya). In the song, the mutya speaks, in the light of the full moon, lamenting her kingdom and love that was lost, symbolizing the freedom lost by the country to the Americans.

5. Manalig kang iniibig kita

Lucio San Pedro

(February 11, 1913, Angono, Rizal - March 31, 2002, Angono, Rizal)

Conferred the title of National Artist for Music in 1991, Maestro Lucio San Pedro is a giant in the Philippine music scene with a wide-ranging body of works that include chamber music, concertos, choral works, band music, etc. The Maestro and his music were firmly rooted in the small town of Angono, an idyllic setting blessed with a view of both lake and mountains. It was Angono's rustic charm — the colorful fiestas and the verdant scenery, as well as the simple nobility of its common folk — that inspired the Maestro to write his music.

6. Ugoy ng duyan

The Maestro's skill in composing simple songs and complex orchestrations is evident in "Sa Ugoy Ng Duyan," which is now a classic Filipino lullaby. It also forms the fourth movement of his most famous orchestral work, "Suite Pastorale," which pays tribute to his hometown Angono.

7. Sa kabukiran

Manuel Velez

Manuel P. Velez was the music icon of Cebu and was the leading practitioner of the southern school of composition. Although he remained in Cebu, the influence and the popularity of his songs extended over the rest of the Philippines.

Sa kabukiran is from the theater play about a young mountain girl. It was originally in Visayan and later translated to Tagalog and Spanish. It was made famous in the movies by Velez' daughter actress Lilian Velez.

8. **Purita**

Perhaps, no other event has piqued the interest and stirred a nation's imagination more than the fabled Manila Carnivals. Held from 1908-1939, the two-week fair was organized as a goodwill event to celebrate harmonious US-Philippine relations and to showcase our commercial, industrial and agricultural progress. Spectacular parades, lavish shows, firework displays and the crowning of the Manila Carnival Queen highlighted the "greatest annual event in the Orient".

In 1908, Francisco Santiago composed Purita which was dedicated to the first Carnival Queen, Miss Pura Villanueva of Molo, Iloilo.

9. **Ay Kalisud**

Jovita Fuentes

(February 15, 1895, Capiz – August 7, 1978)

Her name is synonymous with excellence in the field of music.

Jovita Fuentes achieved international fame as an opera singer in the 1920's and 1930's. Her performance as Cio Cio San in Puccini's Madame Butterfly; as Mimi in La Boheme and Liu Yu in Turandot earned her international recognition. In 1932, the composer Richard Strauss took notice of her voice and chose her to star in his opera Salome. In 1976, Fuentes was conferred the National Artist Award in Music.

The Ilonggo folk song Ay Kalisud was performed in public by Fuentes in 1919 at a concert sponsored by the Asociación Musical de Filipinas. Its lyrics speak of the despair of one who has been abandoned by the beloved.

10. **Usahay**

Juanito Gonzales

(October 20, 1911, Cebu)

Juanito Gonzales was the rondalla maestro of the famed Bayanihan Dance Troupe. As a musician, he performed with the dance troupe in different appearances abroad but his love for Philippine music never faltered despite his exposure to foreign culture.

Gonzales composed Usahay in Sept. 1, 1961. This famous Visayan song tells about the woes of unrequited love. It has a Tagalog version entitled Napangarap Kita.

11. **Maalaala mo kaya**

Constancio de Guzman

(November 11, 1903, Guiguinto, Bulacan)

Constancio Canseco de Guzman was the second pillar of the triumvirate that led the golden age of Filipino music. He studied composition under Nicanor Abelardo and composed the musical themes of numerous Filipino movies and radio novelas. In 1948,

his song “Ang Bayan Ko” and “Kung Kita’y Kapiling” bagged the gold medal at the Paris International Fair.

De Guzman was known for the long string of love songs that became the backdrop of the lives of Filipinos who came of age around the Second World War which includes *Maalaala mo kaya*. This classic harana song is usually sung as a duet. The lyrics illustrate that these lovers' predicament of belonging to different social classes, i.e. rich and poor, can be overcome. One asks the other to remember their pact of undying love, while the other answers with an outpouring of reassurance.

12. **Saan ka man naroroon**

Restituto Umali

(June 10, 1916, Paco, Manila)

Restituto “Restie” Umali learned to play the violin and the guitar as a child from his father and later studied harmony at the University of the Philippines under Felipe P. de Leon. His other mentors included Antonino Buenaventura, Bernardino Custodio, Lucio San Pedro, Ramon Tapales, and Lucrecia Kasilag. He was a highly sought after band leader, arranger and all around instrumentalist in post-war Manila and conducting hastily formed ensembles to accompany visiting foreign singers. His distance-spanning composition *Saan Ka Man Naroroon* (Wherever You Are) became an apt favorite among the large number of Filipinos now living and working around the globe.

13. **Minamahal kita**

Miguel Velarde Jr.

Miguel “Mike” Velarde Jr. was the youngest of the triumvirate of the golden age of Filipino popular song that included Constancio de Guzman and Santiago Suarez. He took lessons in composition with Antonio Molina who introduced him to the works of the preceding generation of Filipino classical musicians, most notably Nicanor Abelardo and Francisco Santiago.

Mike Velarde, Jr. body of works includes the popular and quintessential Filipino love songs *Dahil Sa Iyo* and *Lahat ng Araw*.

Written in 1937, *Minamahal Kita* speaks of a man's promise of undying love to his beloved. The song was first heard in the 1940 film *Niña Bonita*, where it was sung by actress Elsa Oria.

14. **Gaano ko ikaw kamahal**

Ernani Cuenco

(May 10, 1936, Malolos, Bulacan - July 11, 1988)

Composer, film scorer, musical director and music teacher, Ernani J. Cuenco was hailed as a National Artist in Music in 1999. His works embody a Filipino sense of musicality, and the classical sound of the kundiman is evident in some of his ballads.

His immortal hit, “Gaano Ko Ikaw Kamahal”, was first performed as a duet by sopranos Conching Rosal and Evelyn Mandac at a Cultural Center of the Philippines recital. The song, which expresses genuine and undying love and faithfulness, is considered as a true Filipino classic.

15. Pilipinas Kong Mahal (Francisco Santiago)

Aside from being the “Father of Kundiman Art Song”, Francisco Santiago was also a great composer of national songs which include Pilipinas kong mahal. It is one of the most popular patriotic songs in the Philippines and it is based on our native kundiman. It is known for its solemnity and nobility which expresses the inherent Filipino sentiment.

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