

## EDITORIAL

### MUSIC IN RITUAL

Music and ritual are close conceptual cousins. Both draw a recourse to formal, highly patterned, repetitive symbolic languages. Ritual can be heuristically defined as an ordered sequence of collective actions usually involving sacral objects and marked speech forms, aimed to produce certain effects on the natural and social worlds. These make ritual performance quite distinct from everyday behavior. To say that "ritual is a cousin of music" is not to say - of course - that music is in all rituals; certainly there are rituals which do not need music. Thus, a modern litigation ritual in the courtroom or a Presidential State of the Nation Address would never demand music for these events communicate mostly referential information and evidence-based reasoning. But for rituals that express participants' identities and their relationships to one another and of their existential attachments to the worlds of their own making, ritual participants engage human sense faculties fully, sometimes exhaustively, thanks to their physical bodies. Through these material mediums, ritual performance thus affirm participants' experience of their material and transcendent worlds. In festivals, life cycle rituals, calendrical ones, and so on, music is a necessary component for it transports the ritual events into the sphere of the extraordinary. These multisensorial rituals normatively utilize music. As hinted above, its repetitiveness and its highly patterned languaging can facilitate the "choreographing" of the celebrating bodies in space, which then construct the kind of envisioned social order or state those bodies

have now become.

The five articles in this volume illustrate this basic proposition on the use and meaning of music in ritual, particularly the multisensorial ones that engage participants' bodies in events that involve intense degrees of complexity and heightened aesthetics. Martin Amlor demonstrates this in the Ghanaian annual Oguaa fetu afahye festival, which is a classic example of a commemorative ritual that binds the polity of Central region in Ghana. Using symbols of the past (harvest of the first fruits of yam, fishing, warriorship, installation of the King, etc.), drumming, dancing, singing, and playing instruments climax the complex syntax of events spread within weeks. This renews annually the foundation and definition of that West African political grouping. From a ritual practised in another part of the globe, Jacqueline Kitingan, Hanafi Hussin, and Judeth John Baptist describe the music connected to the Kadazan Dusun monogit ritual in Sabah, which juxtaposes drumming, trance dancing by women mediums accompanied by interlocking hung bossed gongs, and solo chanting that takes back "lost souls," all within a three-day period. Kitingan et al utilize a framework popularized by Eliade in understanding the bringing forth of the world of spirits in the human realm and the consequent infusion of sacred and secular time. In lowland Christian Philippines, Juliet Bien demonstrates the function of Spanish-derived music of string and wind instruments in accompanying the religious danced theater *invencion* in a peasant community in Bikol region. She infers that this facilitates the narrative of finding the holy cross and its veneration. This icon is a metaphor of the solidarity that must be continuously sustained by a community that is specifically made up of the heirs of the founding families of that particular place. In these three rituals, music functions obviously as an enabler of ritual actions with their effects, a sound material that canalizes the praxis with great effectivity.

As a catalyst, musics in the said rituals are, however, not inert or fixed as if musics' gestural rhythmic and melodic formulaic routines stand

outside of history. In fact, music is what enables the negotiation of conflicts of everyday life that multisensorial rituals then present and negotiate. Some of these rituals even resolve this opposition into a healthy coordinated work in ritual performance that spells a satisfying ordered totality, if not a coherent experience of integration. Christine de Vera has found out, e.g., that contemporary group singing of antoway genre in Bontoc funeral rite is now realized into two performance modalities that co-exist (i.e., the older style of improvised, antiphonal singing extolling personal qualities of the Dead alternates at present with antoway unison singing with texts that are read from printed songbooks thus discouraging improvisation and offering messages of current public civic order). We also find this music change as a sign of modern times in Arlene Chongson's interpretation of one of Philippines' important ritual sung genre, the pasyon which recounts the life, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ during Lenten season. Chongson describes the incorporation of pop melodies in the pasyon, thus clearly indicating the genre's grounding within an unassailable material social reality. What is most interesting in Chongson's analysis is the fact of ritual music's having a malleability in adapting to the diverse performance contexts where and for whom the pasyon is held. Chongson's reading is thus insightful for it is resonant with current perspective on ritual as ritualization, i.e., a form of social action by which ritual sponsors and other agents get empowered through their embodied performances. They do ritual as a strategy and means for confronting the conflicts of harsh everyday realities. Chongson's documentation of elites holding a pasyon ritual in a mall in urban Manila is quite telling in this regard; she interprets that power frames and inflects such ritual performance. In that case, it both affirmed and transgressed the boundaries dividing the rich and poor in the Philippines. For more than presenting harmony and social order, ritual is also as much at home with contradictions. The pasyon in the mall that Chongson documented is therefore a good illustration of ritual presenting irony and the ambivalences of social life.

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From the insight that Chongson's interpretation opened up, we leave behind the concept of ritual as a passive reflector of social reality and enter a realm of understanding it as capable of defining and negotiating the contradictions, differences, and boundaries that are always already in any form of human solidarity. In the modern world split asunder by these difference-based conflicts, ritual's capacity--enabled all the more because of music--to outdo solipsism and individualism is what is most needed in a time when people have to find solace and social belongingness. The essays in this volume rightfully point to that direction. The articles depict that selves are made aware of their places in larger social orders - be they secular or transcendent. Via music, this ritually-presented reality is felt physically by participants. Coupled with human imagination, this physical embodiment through music in ritual then becomes a facilitator of social experience at a different level, perhaps that of healing and spiritual transcendence.

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