

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF COLONEL ANTONINO BUENAVENTURA (1904-1996) 1998 NATIONAL ARTIST FOR MUSIC¹

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Abstract

Among the nationalistic artists of the twentieth century, Colonel Buenaventura stands as one of those who, before World War II, brought prestige to the Philippines with its rich source of talent. Moreover, Buenaventura stands among other great Filipino composers as the one who perhaps wrote the most number of tone-poems and symphonic band music. His compositional innovations which include the use of folk music materials and combining it with Western compositional devices or norms are two essential factors which brought forth a "new" distinctly Filipino sound. At the time when Western classical music and forms was the center of the Philippines' musical tradition, Buenaventura introduced the idea of using Philippine folk music material into a form which was basically Western. The concept was to retain the folk melodic material as it was, then use in its accompaniment material Western music concepts on rhythm, melodic embellishments, chordal progressions and the like. It is this conceptual framework that consequently served as Buenaventura's channel in conveying his nationalistic ideals and sentiments. Hence, significant to the understanding of Buenaventura's compositional styles is to know of his influences as a person and a composer.

¹Significant parts of this essay were lifted from this writer's unpublished Master's thesis – The Life and Music of Colonel Antonino Buenaventura : a Study of There Major Orchestral Works, submitted to the University of the Philippines College of Music in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Music in Musicology in 1995. Moreover, details in the biographical sketch were taken from interviews with the subject done from 1993-1994. The first of which was undertaken in 1993 by Dr. Elena Rivera-Mirano from the University of the Philippines College of Arts and Letters, then followed by several ones in 1994 by this writer. Antonino Buenaventura was born in May 4, 1904 and died in January 25, 1996, four months short of his 92nd birthday.