

Kuwerdas Filipinas

Concert Series 2025



20 PEBRERO 2025, 6:00 N.H.
GT-TOYOTA ASIAN CENTER AUDITORIUM
UP DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY



The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)
The Musicological Society of the Philippines (MSP)
The Office of Senator Loren Legarda

in cooperation with
Office for Initiatives on Culture and the Arts (OICA)
University of the Philippines Diliman
Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP)

present

Kuwerdas Filipinas
Concert Series 2025

A major component of:
DIWANG: Musika ng Rondalla, Musika ng Pagkakaisa
(Celebrating 20 years of Strings of Unity:
International Rondalla / Plucked String Music Festival)

February 15, 2025 7:00 pm Tanghalang Ignacio Gimenez (CCP Black Box)

February 16, 2025 3:00 pm Tanghalang Ignacio Gimenez (CCP Black Box)

February 20, 2025 6:00 pm GT-Toyota Asian Center Auditorium, U.P. Diliman



Diwang: Musika ng Rondalla, Musika ng Pagkakaisa



*(Celebrating 20 years of Strings of Unity:
International Rondalla / Plucked String
Music Festival)*

Strings of Unity: International Rondalla / Plucked String Music Festival celebrates its 20-year history and remarkable achievements in “Diwang: Musika ng Rondalla, Musika ng Pagkakaisa”, the concert series of Kwerdas Filipinas (KF), the first professional rondalla group composed of fifty (50) selected rondalla musicians from different parts of the country—the crowning achievement of Strings of Unity.

Strings of Unity was conceived by the Music Committee of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) in 2003 as a flagship project and a model activity of the UNESCO’s International Music Council’s ManyMusics Action Programme. The first Festival was held in 2004, and was followed by four (4) more international festivals and other initiatives and programmes on the rondalla. The festivals engaged twenty (20) countries (Australia, China, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Myanmar, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Uganda, USA, Vietnam, and the Philippines) and over 50 rondalla groups and at least 20 plucked string groups from folk and indigenous communities in the Philippines. The Strings of Unity Festivals were successfully held in:

- Naga City, Philippines (2004): *Cuerdas nin Kagabsan: 1ST International Rondalla Festival*
- Dumaguete City, Philippines (2007): *Cuerdas sa Panaghiusa: 2nd International Rondalla Festival*
- Tagum City, Philippines (2011): *Cuerdas sa Pagkakaysa: 3rd International Rondalla Festival*
- Manila, Philippines (2014): *(Kuwerdas ng Pagkakaisa, prelude to the 4th International Rondalla Festival)*

- Yilan, Taiwan (2015) (*Strings of Unity: 4th International Rondalla / Plucked String Music Festival*)
- Silay City, Philippines (2018); *Kuwerdas sang Paghiliusa: 5th International Rondalla Festival*

Strings of Unity has given birth to many initiatives on the rondalla with its goal of developing a comprehensive program towards enhancing musicians through trainings/education, developing teaching materials; creation of new works and compositions for the rondalla, production of music recordings and documentations; academic researches; concerts and performances, among others activities.

One of the significant accomplishments of Strings of Unity is the establishment of Kuwerdas Filipinas in 2018, with the goal of professionalizing the rondalla, similar to the status of orchestra. The members of the group were carefully selected from participants from the festivals. Since its inception, Kuwerdas Filipinas has begun producing music recordings and collaborations with composers from different parts of the world, creating its own repertoire of original works idiomatically written for the rondalla that also pushes new possibilities in rondalla performance.

In 2024 and 2025, the 20th year of Strings of Unity was celebrated through a concert tour by Kuwerdas Filipinas, which revisited the Festival sites, namely: Dumaguete City, Silay City, and Tagum City (September 2024), and Manila (February 2025), as an expression of grateful appreciation for their sustained support of the rondalla initiatives. An exceptional repertoire was prepared for this concert tour, the very first Kuwerdas Filipinas Concert Series. This includes eight (8) new commissioned works by composers from Australia (Eve Duncan), Greece (Miran Tsalikian), Italy (Alessandra Salvati), Israel/Italy (Yuval Avital), Malaysia (Chong Kee Yong), and the Philippines (Nilo Alcala, Robin Estrada, and Conrado del Rosario), expanding the rondalla repertoire into the world of contemporary music.

Kuwerdas Filipinas

Kuwerdas Filipinas is the first semi-professional symphonic rondalla in the Philippines, an offshoot of the Strings of Unity: International Rondalla/Plucked String Music Festival. Officially established in 2018 by Dr. Ramón Pagayon Santos, National Artist for Music, with the purpose of establishing a professional ensemble, the group was launched on August 15, 2018 in a concert at the Tanghalang Nicanor Abelardo (Main Theater) of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. It is composed of more than fifty (50) rondalla musicians from different parts of the country who were carefully selected from rondalla groups that have taken part in the Strings of Unity festivals and its other activities.

Kuwerdas Filipinas performs mostly original works in its repertoire – music that were specifically composed for the rondalla and other supporting instruments. In 2020, the group recorded its first album, featuring twelve (12) original compositions for the rondalla that were previously performed in the Strings of Unity festivals.

In September 2024, Kuwerdas Filipinas opened the 20th anniversary of the Strings of Unity Festival through a performance series. The performances continue this February 2025 in Manila, with a special recording session of new works for their second album.

Kuwerdas Filipinas is under the direction of Prof. Josefino Chino Toledo.



Program Notes

1. *Isahan sa Pagkakaisa*

Josefino Chino Toledo (b. 1959)

Isahan sa Pagkakaisa (2003) is a commissioned piece that was premiered by the festival ensemble at the Closing Concert of the very first International Rondalla Festival, Cuerdas nin Kagabsan (2004) held in Naga City. It was also performed in the next Festivals.

2. *Wooden Boat, Little Star*

Eve Duncan (b. 1956)


Note: To be performed on Feb. 16

Notes from the composer:

“Filipino rondalla derives from the older medieval Spanish rondalla, and this caught my attention. In this, as in Australian time, the past sleeps in the present. So in this work I took elements of medieval music and brought them into the present. I used the Phrygian, Lydian and Mixolydian medieval modes, but in a contemporary way. This led to chord progressions that are at times familiar, and also just a little different.

“In medieval times, the Holy Trinity influenced music in such occurrences as the predominance of triple time. In this triadic spirit, I composed three short pieces that form a unity. Each one is a picture behind which is symbolism, as often happened in medieval art. *Wooden Boat* symbolizes faith, *Little Star* symbolizes love and *Archer* symbolizes hope. The unity of faith, love and hope is one





of healing for the human being, at a time when human health all over the world faces great challenges. I also like that Strings of Unity aims for unity, and I wanted this piece to be for all ages to enjoy.”

Eve Duncan has a Doctor of Creative Arts from Western Sydney University, Masters in Music from the University of Melbourne and Honours In Music Composition from Latrobe University. She was awarded First Prize in the International Music Prize for Excellence in Composition (Greece), Second Prize in the Recital Music Double Bass Composition Competition (England) and Third Prize in the Modern Music Award for Composition (Vienna). In Australia she received APRA Awards for Music Composition in 2013 and in 2017 for the opera The Aspern Papers.

She composes chamber, orchestral vocal and environmental music and enjoys working collaboratively with artists, photographers, poets and writers. In recent years she composed Sydney Opera House, a piano concerto, piano quintets The Butterfly House and Butterfly Modernism and she interpolated the mathematics of Australian modernist architecture into the music to create unique sonic space.

Palabunibunyan

Robin Estrada (b. 1970)

Note: To be performed on February 15 and 20

Palabunibunyan is the second composition under this title, now composed for a Symphonic Rondalla Ensemble. Like its orchestral predecessor, this piece is inspired by the Palabunibunyan Ensemble of Southern Philippines, known for its distinctive use of bossed gongs. Drawing on the rhythmic patterns and melodic scales traditionally performed by the Kulintang Ensemble, the composition transforms these elements into a more contemporary interpretation. As a plucked string ensemble, the Symphonic Rondalla offers a remarkable duality: it can be percussive while also being deeply expressive, using sustained tremolos to convey melodic passages with rich emotional depth.

Robin Estrada ranks among the bold and innovative talents in Philippine composition today. Melding Western forms with Southeast Asian music styles that accentuate the finesse and fire of the region's cultural diversity, Robin's works evoke a unique sound that brings Asia to the world of contemporary art music.

Estrada studied at the University of California–Berkeley, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, University of the Philippines Diliman, and Ateneo de Manila University; studying under Cindy Cox, Ed Campion, Ken Ueno, Dan Becker, David Conte, Josefino Toledo, Ramon P. Santos, and José Maceda.

3. *Night Beings* (world premiere)


Yuval Avital (b. 1977)

Notes from the composer:

“Night Beings is inspired by traditions of animism, magical creatures, dwelling souls and spirits revealed in night time (night as container of subconsciousness, beings as symbols and archetypes populating it). During my several journeys to the Philippines, I was struck by the richness of local heritage in the 7000-island country, bringing a vast pluralism of autochthonous cultural paradigms including a specific ancient richness toward the interpretation of the concept of Soul and Spirit. In addition, I was very struck and inspired by the credo of several composers - in particular of Maceda, Santos and Toledo, to find new and unexpected connections between heritage and contemporary, adding a vital and fundamental layer to the culture of the Philippines.

“The challenge of writing to a Rondalla ensemble or orchestra - a traditional formation result of the Spanish colonisation which found its path to become a significant part of the Filipino identity - is a complex one. There are very few examples relatively of contemporary music scores of this formation which exit the harmonic-melodic paradigm of popular tunes, adding to the challenge of creating diversity of timbre and gesture within a plucked strings ensemble (of which I'm more than familiar). In parallel, it is of a critical importance not to overlook or ignore a musical tradition which has already its own defined identity;





in the gestalt between these previous reflections, I hope, is this composition.

“The imaginary is of a nocturnal in which the different single instruments are representing different beings in sonic scenarios varying in density, rhythm, order/chaos, expansion. The work contains different sections, as a cycle or a suite of interpreting with sound this night and its Beings: in part it is empty, in part it is measured, in part it is rhythmic, in part aleatoric. In a certain section of the piece is also cited a fragment Sarung Banggi - (which means “One Night/Evening”), as a reference to Filipino culture and my own personal experience in it.

“This composition is written to an ensemble of high-level soloists of the rondalla instruments, where doubling of parts might result challenging if not impossible”.

Born in Jerusalem in 1977 and living in Milan, Yuval Avital is a multimedia artist, composer and guitarist who develops his works in a variety of spaces, including public places, industrial archaeological sites, theatres and museums, challenging the traditional crystallized categories that separate the arts.

His exhibitions, performances, immersive installations, total works, large-scale sound “rituals” and concerts involve dancers, contemporary music ensembles, masters of ancient cultures and traditions, individuals or communities recruited in participatory works, multi-projection video, meditative tactile environments, advanced technological tools, archival materials, collaborations with scientific institutions, sound sculptures, objects, painting and printed works.

Each of Avital’s artworks is a unique experiential, poetic and emotional microcosm with its own identity, fruit of a meticulous research carried out in a carefully coded language, confronting the recurring themes of archetype and structure; ancestral and current global-era human condition; nature and hybridity; ritual and science.

Yuval was one of the first participants of the International Rondalla Festival, as a member of the Three Plucked Strings (Israel), in 2004. This encounter in the Philippines brought him to create a composition “Karagatan” for 100 gongs and bamboo musicians

for the Tunog-tugan: Gongs and Bamboo Music Festival (Dipolog City, Philippines, 2013).

4. *Me voglio fa'na casa*

Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)

Arranged by: Ramón Pagayon Santos (b. 1941)

Gaetano Donizetti, despite being born in a poor and unmusical family, became a very prolific and influential opera composer. His extensive repertoire in both Italian and French opera marked a transitional period between Rossini and Verdi. He was able to compose almost 70 operas and hundreds of songs. *Me Voglio fa'na casa* is one of them, written in Neapolitan dialect. The song tells of a dream of building a beautiful house made of luxurious materials in the middle of the sea.

5. *Sleep with your song (world premiere)*

CHONG Kee Yong (b. 1971)


Notes from the composer:

“Sleep with your song is commissioned by the Kuwerdas Filipinas and especially written for soprano Ms. Stefanie Quintin-Avila.

“This work is inspired by a folk song “CHOGCHOG’WE” I learnt when I was joined maestro Josefino Chino Toledo’s Banaue Ifugao immersion field trip program and Banaue International Music Composition Competition in July 2018. I’m grateful to my musicologist friend Lilymae F. Montano who prepared the lyrics and melody of this song from her informants Jose Panpanhon and Guinanuy Chag-ap during her workshop presentation.”

Dr. CHONG Kee Yong, one of Malaysia’s leading contemporary music composers, possesses one of the most exciting voices in new music today. Indeed, his work has been hailed as “imaginative and poetic” by leading conductor-composer Peter Eötvös, and as “very inventive and artistically pure” by composer Jonathan





Harvey. The uniqueness of his music stems not only from a rich palette of sounds, but also in his experimentation into traditions, infusing his own Chinese and multi-cultural Malaysian heritage into his work.

He graduated from the Malaysian Institute of Arts in Kuala Lumpur and completed his Bachelor of Arts at the Xian Conservatory and graduate studies at the Royal Conservatory of Music of Brussels. His postgraduate studies include numerous master classes with composers such as Brian Ferneyhough, Daan Manneke, Zoltan Janey, Peter Eötvös, Salvatore Sciarrino, Henri Pousseur, Chou Wen Chung, Chinary Ung and Hanspeter Kyburz.

Dr. Chong's distinctive style has won him a remarkable number of awards and commissions. He is the first Malaysian composer to receive the prestigious commission grant award by the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation (USA) and the prestigious "The Outstanding Young Malaysian Awards" in the Cultural Achievement category. To recognize Dr. Chong's contributions to South East Asia's contemporary music scene, Huddersfield University (UK) awarded him a full scholarship for a PhD.

He is the creative director of Studio C, former president (2017-2019) and recent executive committee member of the Society of Malaysian Contemporary Composers. He was the artistic director of the 2009 Kuala Lumpur Contemporary Music Festival and SMCC Contemporary Music Festival "SoundBridge" 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019 and 2021. In 2016-2017 he was a visiting professor at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and 2018 visiting professor at the Danish Royal Academy of Music.

6. Sa Kabukiran

Manuel P. Velez (1907-1977)

Arranged by: Ramón Pagayon Santos (b. 1941)

Believed to be composed sometime in 1939, this song by Manuel Velez is in allegretto balitao style which depicts an image of a life in a "kabukiran" or farm with its happy and carefree melodies and birdlike-sounding cadenza. This version is an arrangement of Dr. Ramon Santos.

--- *Intermission* ---

7. *Kuriri*

Ramón Pagayon Santos (b. 1941),
National Artist for Music

Kuriri (2013) was premiered at the 10th anniversary of Strings of Unity in 2014 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. It is based on the *kuriri* music of the Yakan, which is made up of small cells, woven together to create musical frames. While the Yakan *kuriri* uses only four tones, this composition takes on the latitude to use scalar modes which can create different melodic structures.

8. *Grandpa Blues*


Alessandra Salvati (1968)

Notes from the composer:

“The veiled melancholy and sensuality of the classical Philippine repertoire for rondalla, along with the contributions of contemporary composers who have joined the Strings of Unity project, inspired *Grandpa Blues*. The commission of this work was a precious opportunity to get acquainted with the repertoire for rondalla, which features strong elements of continuity with the Neapolitan popular tradition of music for mandolins and other typical instruments.

“While preserving techniques and gestures typical of the popular repertoire for rondalla, this score incorporates more recent experimental techniques as well, for special timbres and effects. There are two passages where players are required to perform a rhythmic speech - accompanied by tapping on the instrument with the palm - that introduces a theatrical element.





“The score starts with a rhythmically lively section characterized by syncopated rhythms, followed by a more enigmatic and meditative part. A gradual rhythmic increase introduces a contrapuntal section, with elaborations of the series in fugato and imitative style, that prepares the finale ‘Danzando’ (Dancing), where the initial rhythmic and melodic elements are reworked and modified to create the finale.”

Alessandra Salvati was trained as a pianist and composer in Italian conservatories and in the United States, where she pursued her doctoral degree at the University of Miami. Her music has been welcomed worldwide by critics and audiences for its communicative power, and described as ‘potent, moving and able to create a strong connection with the audience’ (L. Budmen, Florida Classical Review). Among her many accolades, she was awarded The American Prize in Composition, with her symphonic cycle Tektosyne: Three Architectures for Orchestra. She received commissions and performances from prestigious ensembles and institutions, such as the Israel Camerata Jerusalem, the Penderecki String Quartet, the Georgia Institute of Technology, the Cultural Center of the Philippines, and the Festival Miami. Besides her activities as a composer, she collaborated with the San Carlo Opera House for the revision and modernization of 18th Century manuscripts. A passionate educator, she has taught Music Theory and Composition in American, Italian and Chinese universities. In 2015 she was invited in the United States as Master Teacher at the National YoungArts Foundation, a center created by Michael Tilson Thomas to identify and support the next generation of artists in the visual, literary, design and performing arts. Dr. Salvati currently works in China, as Associate Professor of Music Theory and Composition at Chengdu University.

9. Zupf

Conrado del Rosario (b. 1958)

Zupf is a modern contemporary classical composition for the Philippine Symphonic Rondalla. The title, German for “pluck,” reflects the nature of the instruments used. This innovative piece blends abstract interpretations of sounds from various Asian plucked instruments, including the Indonesian siter, Japanese koto, shamisen, and biwa, with bell tones and low Buddhist Zen chants.

The composition strives to create a rich, textured soundscape that merges traditional and contemporary influences. It evokes the essence of these sounds, offering a unique and immersive auditory experience that showcases the rondalla's versatility and expressive potential. The meditative quality of the chants intertwines with the intricate melodies of the plucked strings, resulting in a harmonious fusion of Eastern musical elements and contemporary classical techniques.


Zupf holds personal significance for the composer, whose first instrument as a child was the bandurria, a core member of the rondalla ensemble. This early experience deeply influenced the work's creation and musical direction.

The piece aims to transcend traditional boundaries, celebrating the rich diversity of Asian musical traditions while pushing the expressive limits of plucked string instruments. The result is a compelling composition that bridges cultural and temporal divides, inviting listeners to explore new sonic landscapes through the familiar timbre of the rondalla.

Conrado del Rosario won a scholarship to study composition, conducting and flute at the University of the Philippines College of Music with Lucio San Pedro, Francisco Feliciano, Ramon Santos, Eric Barcelo and Sonny Yangco. He worked as a professional musician, composer, and arranger for studio and film in Manila and taught Music Theory at the Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music. He won 3rd prize in the solo instrument category (flute) in the National Competitions for Young Artists. He has also conducted the Young Artists' Chamber Orchestra and the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Among his many awards and recognitions in composition were: League of Filipino Composers Chamber Music Composition Competition (first prize); Young Artists of the Philippines Foundation Scholarship at the Berlin Hochschule der Kuenste (now Berlin University of the Arts); Hambacher International Composition Competition Prize (1985); Hitzacker International Composition Competition (1988, 2nd prize); Work-Scholarships from the Berlin Cultural Senate (1988, 1991, 1997); IRINO International Composition Competition in Japan (1995, finalist); He taught piano and composition privately and was an instructor in Piano and Improvisation at the Berlin-Charlottenburg





Musikschule as well as the Piano Instructor in the Show and Musical Department of his alma mater, the Berlin University of the Arts. He was a member of the Gamelan-Ensemble, Banjar Gruppe Berlin. In 1989 he founded B I C E - The Berlin Improvising Composers Ensemble and has performed with this group in various European and American cities. Since 2007 he has returned to forming, playing, and writing for Berlin jazz groups like Understatement, The Be Cool Jazz Quartet, Sowat von Funk and OhrJazzMus. In November 2013 he returned to his hometown, Angeles City, Pampanga and founded KAPAMU (Kapampangan Musicians') Jazz Collective which has been nominated for the 2018 and 2019 Aliw Awards, built the Jazz Grill, and founded the bamboo instrument ensemble SUNLAG. Conrado was the 2017 Most Outstanding Kapampangan Awardee in the field of Arts and received the Angeles City 2018 Pupul ning Banua Award for Music. He and his group KapaMu Jazz Collective have been nominated as best instrumentalist and best music group for the Aliw Awards.

10. *Euphoria* (world premiere)

Miran Tsalikian (b. 1986)

Euphoria (Ευφορία) draws its title from the Greek concept of an emotional state of intense pleasure, well-being, happiness, and enthusiasm. *Euphoria* is a musical exploration that bridges the rich cultural landscapes of Greece and the Philippines. Composed in a neo-tonal style, the work weaves traditional musical elements from both cultures into a vibrant, dynamic tapestry. The composition draws inspiration from Greek musical traditions while embracing the unique timbral qualities of the Filipino rondalla ensemble.

Through intricate musical dialogues, Greek modal scales and melodic expressions find new life through the characteristic sounds of the Filipino rondalla. Rhythmic structures inspired by karsilamas, xasapiko, zeibekiko & Hasaposerviko dances are transformed through the distinctive timbral qualities of Filipino stringed instruments. The Kuwerdas Filipinas serves as the perfect vessel for this musical journey, its distinctive timbre revealing the nuanced conversations between Mediterranean and Pacific musical expressions.

Structured around sophisticated rhythmic patterns and melodic motifs, the composition challenges traditional instrumental boundaries, creating a unique soundscape that honors both musical traditions. Each note represents a moment of artistic exchange, each phrase a testament to cultural connectivity. The work invites listeners on a journey of musical discovery, where traditional sounds merge with contemporary compositional techniques, creating a harmonious blend that transcends geographical boundaries.


“*Euphoria*” stands as more than a composition—it is a musical handshake between two distant yet spiritually connected cultures, inviting listeners to experience the profound beauty of cross-cultural musical dialogue. Moreover, it is a testament to how musical traditions can find new voices through different instrumental colors, inviting listeners to experience Greek musical heritage through the distinctive sound world of the Filipino rondalla.

Miran Tsalikian is a musician of Greek-Armenian origin. He holds two master titles in Composition and in Music Technology Systems. He holds a degree in Harmony, Counterpoint and Fugue with Excellence, and completed his Piano studies at Bachelor level. He is a professional artist of Bouzouki as a soloist. In 2008 he was involved in the Olympic Flame delivery ceremony at the Beijing Olympics. At the same time, he studies Music Composition and takes conducting lessons while he is also a professor of bouzouki at the Municipal Conservatory of Korydallos.

Today he works as a musician in the Air Force Concert Band and he orchestrates for its 49 members. He is also a founding member of the six-member Musical Folk Form of HAMAT, a group that performs in cultural sites and for charity in collaboration with the FLOGA Foundation. In 2021 he was selected as a PhD Candidate in Geopolitics and Music.

His scores have been selected in several international calls for scores. Tsalikian’s works have been performed in Belgium, Greece, Cyprus, Korea, Philippines, Japan, Romania, Russia, Lithuania, Canada and the U.S. by renowned ensembles and orchestras. He has also received various awards and recognition in composition, some of them were: the International Orchestral Composition Competition by Gwangju Cultural Foundation; 2018





Banaue International Composition Competition; Pan-Hellenic Orchestral Composition Competition; 2020 International Zepick Modern Opera Competition; 2020-21 International Sawakami Opera Foundation Competition; and 2020 International Music Composition Competition from Future Symphony Orchestra in Lithuania.

11. *Sagayan Para sa Kuwerdas*

Nilo Alcala (b. 1978)

Sagayán pára sa Kuwérdas. In ancient *Maguindanao*, *Sagayan* is performed as a pre-battle ritual. The traditional kulintang music *Tagonggo* is central to this ritual. Long ago, *Tagonggo* is used in 1) healing rituals, 2) in driving away negative energy/spirits, and 3) at a pre-war ceremony to invoke invincibility and power. Also related to the *Sagayan* ritual is *Kasalawat*, the practice of chanting to seek for blessing before going to war.

Sagayan Para sa Kuwerdas re-imagines these rituals of *Kasalawat* and *Sagayan* where sacred chanting and dancing supposedly sanctifies and strengthens the warriors. This work was originally for choir and kulintang ensemble and is now transformed into a rondalla piece.

Trailblazing composer and artist Nilo Alcala is carving a legacy for Philippine arts internationally. He is the first Philippine-born composer to receive the COPLAND HOUSE Residency Award (2017), as well as to be commissioned by the Grammy-nominated Los Angeles Master Chorale. He is also the first Filipino-American artist to be featured as Musical America Worldwide's Artist of the Month, and winner of the Professional Division, Major Choral Works Category of The American Prize.

Alcala's awards include POLYPHONOS Young Composer Award from The Esoterics (Seattle, WA), IGNITE Commissioning Competition of C4: The Choral Composer/Conductor Collective (New York, NY), Asian Composers League Young Composer Award (Israel), and two (Ani ng Dangal (Harvest of Honor) awards from two Philippine Presidents.

His commissions include San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra (California), Asia-Europe Foundation; Andrea O. Veneracion International Choral Festival; Korean Ministry of Culture; National Music Competition for Young Artists; Metro Manila Community Orchestra, Manila Symphony Orchestra, and other ensembles and artists. Notable collaborations include several performances by the World Youth Choir, San Francisco Girls Chorus, South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, Manila Symphony Junior Orchestra, UP Symphony Orchestra, and many others.



Josefino Chino Toledo

Music Director and Conductor



International composer-conductor **Josefino “Chino” Toledo** is a Professor Emeritus at the University of the Philippines.

His works have been performed at festivals, concerts, and recitals in Australasia, Europe, America, and Asia by renowned international artists and ensembles. His choral music has gained widespread exposure in international competitions and festivals in Slovenia, Hong Kong, Germany, France, Bulgaria, Spain, Hungary, Italy, and Wales. *Misa Lingua Sama-sama*, a mass that fuses Filipino and Latin texts, was presented at the 2015 centennial celebration of the University of the Philippines College of Music. His 2013 opera *San Andres B*, about the Philippine national hero Andrés Bonifacio, received the Gawad Buhay-Philstage awards for Outstanding Original Musical Composition and Outstanding Musical Direction.

Toledo’s music has been described as “pure and powerful” and “full of energy,” often bearing a relationship to the traditional music of Southeast Asia. He

has been widely praised for his ability to fuse Western and Asian aesthetics. Music critic Rosalinda Orosa described him as “a composer-conductor of considerable worth” and “an ingenious, remarkably original composer of singular creativity and imagination.”

As a conductor, Toledo is noted for premiering works by Filipino and other Asian composers. As the artistic and music director of the 1997 and 2015 Asian Composers League Music Festivals in Manila, he was praised for conducting the premieres of dozens of contemporary music compositions during the week-long festivals. He was also the music director and conductor of the Philippine gala presentations at the 2005 Aichi, Japan, and the 2010 Shanghai, China World Expositions.

Toledo’s conducting has been described as “clear and expressive” and “like weaving a musical magic.” Philippine art critic and National Artist Leonor Goquingco says, “Toledo is one of the Philippines’ finest and best conductors ever.”



Ramón Pagayon Santos

*Conductor and Director
of Strings of Unity*

Ramón Pagayon Santos belongs to the New and Experimental Music group of Filipino composers. He initially trained in Composition and Conducting at the University of the Philippines, and earned his Master of Music (with distinction) and Ph.D. degrees at Indiana University and State University of New York at Buffalo, respectively. He was a full fellow at the Summer Courses in New Music at Darmstadt, Germany, and undertook post-graduate work in Ethnomusicology at the University of Illinois under grants from the Ford Foundation and the Asian Cultural Council. He has been elected as Member of Honor of the Asian Composers League which he led as Chairman in 1994-1997, as well as elected Vice President of the International Music Council at UNESCO from 2001 to 2005.

As composer, his works have been conceived along concepts and aesthetic frameworks of Philippine and Southeast Asian artistic traditions, featuring elements from western and non-western sources, including various combinations of orchestral instruments, Javanese gamelan, Philippine

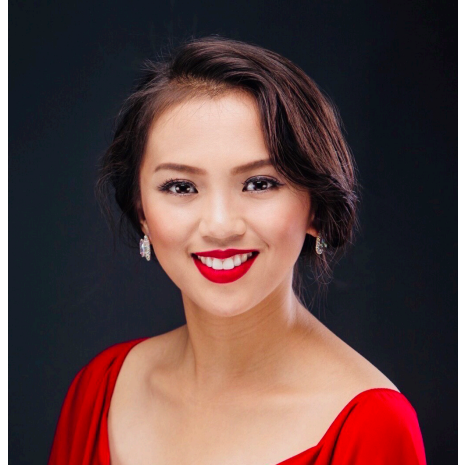
indigenous instruments, as well as different styles of vocal production.

He was Composition Chair and Dean of the University of the Philippines (UP) College of Music, Director of the UP Center for Ethnomusicology, and Artistic Director of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. He is now a University Professor Emeritus of the UP. In 2014, he was proclaimed National Artist for Music of the Republic of the Philippines.

He is the founder of the “Strings of Unity: International Rondalla/Plucked String Music Festival” created in 2004, during his term as Music Committee Head and Commissioner for the Arts of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in the Philippines.

Stefanie Quintin

Soprano



Stefanie Quintin graduated with a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Pedagogy and Performance from the University of the Philippines and a Master of Arts in Contemporary Music Performance from the University of California San Diego. She has performed as a soloist in various international festivals and was featured in concerts with the Asia Traditional Orchestra, Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Hong Kong Bach Choir and Orchestra, and the Hong Kong New Music Ensemble.

Stefanie is a prize winner in various vocal competitions such as the Hawk Vocal Awards Competition (USA), Musical Merit Foundation Competition (USA), La Jolla Symphony Young Artists Competition (USA), and the ASEAN Vocal Competition (Opera-Professional Category, Singapore).

Kuwerdas Pilipinas

Concertmaster

Raylan Dominic Julayco

Bandurria 1

Anna Mae G. Alarcon
Prince Loyd C. Amora
Lyka Marie B. Belasa
Ayana Von C. Chavez
Kristine Lorraine T. Ferrer
Sunshine G. Pacino
John Walter H. Sacley
Astly Brian B. Turno
Bethel Dawn G. Ymalay

Bandurria 2

Lyndrhea D. Bagaboyboy
Daniel Roi A. Calingasan
Trinity L. De Castro
Kris P. Jaranilla
Sir Virgil S. Jimenez
Alyza M. Mapa
Rojan A. Max
Nikki Zen A. Obmasca

Octavina 1

Marie Fides DC. Topico
Silver Feb J. Aumentado
Michael John G. Samaniego
Jerome A. Quejano

Octavina 2

Janroni A. Max
Nicholas Ryan V. Oliver
Alain Rae S. Tuayon

Laud 1

Jan Kristine C. Olmillo
Lawrence G. Parcon
Geneses V. Rubica
Jayserine Andaling

Laud 2

Jezeel K. Lastra
Lean Jay M. Indonto
Kryss Jochelle I. Pascual

Guitar 1

Nathan Neil V. Manimtim
Benedic Justine U. Velasco
Angelica Asuncion B. Vinculado

Guitar 2

Karl M. Leis
Daniel S. Morabe
Patrick Paul L. Roxas

Cello

John Paolo A. Anorico
Patrick John C. Espanto

Double Bass

Ben B. Brillantes
Rhon Dave J. San Diego
Prince Jezeel V. Santiago
Bryan James S. Uy

Percussion

Noel D. Crisostomo
Joshua J. Dela Cruz
John Benedict C. Marcelino
Julia Carla S. Tabije
Paul Jason Santiago

Kuwerdas Filipinas Concert Series 2025
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Aurea B. Lopez	Managing Director
Loen M. Vitto	Project Manager
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Marie Fides Topico	Music Coordinator
Paul Jason Santiago	Performance Coordinator
Aji Manalo	Sound Engineer / Technical Director
Jaymee Ranoa	Assistant Technical Director
Florence Sevilla	Stage Manager
Michael Gregorio	Assistant Stage Manager
Avelino Martin Jr.	Assistant Stage Manager
Mark S. Cabrera	Host
Mapee Singson	Administrative Staff / Designer
Rosalito Amosco	Graphic Artist
Nolie Señeres	Logistics Staff
Ambrio Media	Documentation
Elvert Bañares	Documentation
Acoustic Underground	Audio Recording

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Maria Lourdes Arandia	Administrative Officer II - Grants
Johannah Mae Razal	Administrative Officer I - Records
Cyprian Jeremiah Damo	Media Production Specialist I
Luisito Mainot	Administrative Assistant
Esperanza Dela Cruz	Administrative Aide III

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UP Diliman Arts and Culture Festival 2025

Production Team

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Jazz Reformado	Asst. Production Manager, Kuwerdas Filipinas Concert
Geraldine Corpus	Lights Designer, Kuwerdas Filipinas Concert
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Acknowledgments

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UP Theater Complex
Campus Maintenance Office, University of the Philippines Diliman
Asian Center, University of the Philippines Diliman

National Commission for Culture and Arts
Office of Senator Loren Legarda
Musicological Society of the Philippines
Cultural Center of the Philippines

Kuwerdas Filipinas

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