

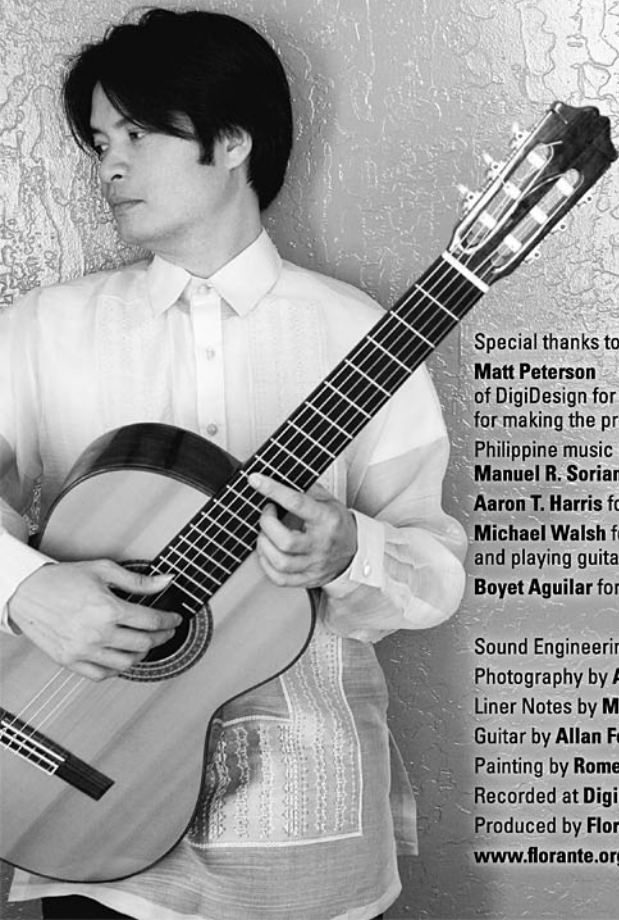
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Tipanan

A CELEBRATION OF THE
PHILIPPINE GUITAR

FLORANTE AGUILAR, GUITAR



Special thanks to:

Matt Peterson
of DigiDesign for the digital magic and
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Philippine music historian
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Michael Walsh for the extra pair of ears
and playing guitar on tracks 3 & 13
Boyet Aguilar for playing octavina on track 12.

Sound Engineering by **Matt Peterson**, DigiDesign

Photography by **Aaron T. Harris**

Liner Notes by **Manuel R. Soriano**

Guitar by **Allan Fontanilla**

Painting by **Romeo Tabuena** (Still Life #15)

Recorded at **DigiDesign Studio**, Daly City, CA

Produced by **Florante Aguilar**

www.florante.org



To take in a full measure of Philippine contemporary music, one has to go back to the source of its varied tributaries; from the ditties and musical games of Filipino children, to the unadorned musical expressions of its common folks or as poignant art songs cast into formal compositions by its masters of kundiman; from the popular songs rich with layers of foreign influences to the pure ritual songs of its indigenous tribes, harnessed to provide beat and rhythm to modern intriguing forms. Guitarist **Florante Aguilar** has done this in **Tipanan** (pronounced tee-puh-nun) meaning, a gathering, an assignation, a rendezvous).

Restituto Umali (1916-1998) learned to play the violin and the guitar as a child from his tailor father and later studied harmony at the University of the Philippines under Felipe P. de Leon. He was a highly sought after band leader, arranger and all around instrumentalist in post war Manila, arranging *Cariñosa* for the big band icon Benny Goodman, *Katataka* for the Boston Pops 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.

Miguel Velarde Jr. (1913-) was the youngest of the triumvirate of the golden age of Filipino popular song that included Constancio C. de Guzman and Santiago Suarez. He earned a living in the movies and in broadcasting as a young man using his skill and facility that came with his fondness for jazz and American popular music. 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. At that time, the prevailing Filipino song style was tentative and supplicating in its approach, used figuratively poetic and remote archaic Tagalog and employed registers that were accessible only to the operatically trained. Immersed in the pervasive influence of casual American song structure and harmony in Manila in the nineteen-thirties, he spun out one hit after another with his modern approach, straightforward, phrased in everyday idiom and set with easy, remarkable melodies. This playful, subtle and cosmopolitan approach worked wonderfully in his first hit *Ikaw* (You), from the 1935 movie *Milagro Ng Nazareno*, and the perennial **Lahat ng Araw** (All Through the Days), which is also more well known by the first word of its refrain *Silayan*. Along with *Habang Buhay*, *Minamahal Kita* and *Gabi at Araw*, these hits were the precursor to his big Filipino international success of the sixties, *Dahil sa Iyo*.

Ryan Cayabyab (1954-) Ryan Cayabyab's career was set in motion when his song *Kay Ganda Ng Ating Musika* won the Metro Pop Song Festival in Manila in 1977. Ever since, Ryan has been prolific,

churning out hit after hit of what is often classified as OPM (Original Pilipino Music) of which the present **Nais Ko** (I Wish), arranged for two guitars, is a perfect example. But to know Cayabyab's music as simply "Pinoy pop" paints an incomplete picture. Cayabyab's more "serious" works, which include orchestral pieces, sacred choral works, a ballet, and numerous musicals, have been recognized internationally, having won several honors and competitions. Today, Ryan can arguably be considered the most successful composer in the Philippines in both pop and classical music. The depth of his influence is felt with today's young generation of musicians, and many successful careers, such as those of Hajji Alejandro, Kuh Ledesma, Lea Salonga and Basil Valdez, were launched by being associated with his songs. Cayabyab is presently the executive and artistic director of the San Miguel Foundation for the Performing Arts, whose aim is to become the central repository in the preservation of true Filipino music through his vision of excellence, innovation and talent development.

Constancio C. de Guzman (1903-1983) 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 novellas. Apart from the long string of love songs that became the backdrop of the lives of Filipinos who came of age around the Second World War (such as *Babalik Ka Rin*, *Ang Tangi Kong Pag-ibig*, *Malaala Mo Kaya*, *Ang Langit Ko'y Ikaw*, and *Kung Kita'y Kapiling*), he wrote the present patriotic song **Bayan Ko** (My Country) which set to music the words of the Tagalog poet Jose Corazon de Jesus (Huseng Batute). This song became a second national anthem to Filipinos in the years before and during the Japanese occupation and more recently, during the clamor to oust the Marcos regime in 1986.

Manuel P. Velez was the leading proponent and practitioner of the southern school of composition in the period between the two World Wars. Although he chose to remain in Cebu, the influence and the popularity of his songs extended over the rest of the Philippines and even among Filipinos living in the United States of the roaring twenties. He wrote music in partnership with the local playwright Kabahar for a zarzuela of the same title, which bequeathed to us the present **Sa Kabukiran** (In the Country). The song, originally in Visayan and later translated to Tagalog and Spanish, was made famous in the movies by Lilian Velez and Elsa Oria and by performers such as Conching Rosal and Sylvia La Torre. It was Conching Rosal however, well ahead of everyone else, who showcased this song as a recital gem, elevated as a coloratura *piece de resistance* in her performances and recordings from the late fifties. We encounter it here as an impressive *bravura* transcription for the guitar by Florante Aguilar himself.

As a composer, Philippine National Artist **Lucrecia Kasilag** (1918-) has written in almost every form imaginable since her student days at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY where she obtained her Master of Music degree in Theory and Composition. A life-long ethnographic musical anthropologist, she did original research into ethnic Filipino culture and gained worldwide recognition as the music director of the Bayanihan Philippine Dance Company. She pioneered the integration of indigenous scales and modes in contemporary formal compositions. A guitar player herself, her first piece for solo guitar, however, is a recent work (1996) and seemed only in response to a prod by a guitar student. In the present **Prelude Etnika** she utilized melodic quotations from the **Dandan-ay air**, a chant heard during social gatherings among certain tribal groups living in the Cordillera region of the Philippines and features playing techniques imitating sounds of bamboo instruments. Its spontaneous and unmistakable Filipino tone lends it a direct and immediate universal appeal.

Addressed to fill the need for an original contemporary Filipino guitar solo piece, **Bayani de Leon's Kapilas na Giting** (A Measure of Valour) also paved the way and inspired other Filipino composers to start writing for the classical guitar. This piece was premiered in a performance by Agnes Narciso in 1976 in Alicante, Spain and since then has become a proud part of every Filipino classical guitarist's repertoire. This novel composition features the percussive beat of the **bagbagto**, an aboriginal song of the Ifugaos and the lyricism of the **kumintang**, the ancient Batangueño chant of war and victory, which is the forerunner of the **kundiman**, the Filipino love song *par excellence*.

The revered pioneer of Filipino music and pre-eminent master of the **kundiman**, **Nicanor Abelardo** (1892-1934), learned the rudiments of piano playing from overheard lessons being given to a cousin. He played it well enough to be employed by the zarzuelista Francisco Buencamino as a salon player. He continued taking lessons in voice and bandurria technique under Jose Silos, violin playing with Bonifacio Abdon and further piano lessons with Jose Estella. His composition **Nasaan Ka Irog** met with instant and lasting critical and popular success followed with other equally highly esteemed pieces such as **Bituing Marikit**, **Mutya ng Pasig**, **Himutok** and the present **Nasaan Ang Aking Puso**. Also included is a piece he composed originally for the violin in 1921 called **Cavatina** in the same vein though simpler than his immortal **kundimans**, which he properly regarded as operatic arias. His intense but healthy rivalry with his friend and academic colleague Francisco Santiago resulted in one of the most prolific periods in the history of Filipino music and cast a lasting and powerful influence on their contemporaries and subsequent generations of Filipino composers.

Josefino Y. Cenizal (1919-) met early performing success as a banjo player in the two most well-known orchestras of peace-time Manila, the Ilaya and Ideal orchestras. He sang and played the piano in radio broadcasts and at seventeen became the youngest orchestra leader of the US Army and Navy Club. He also began his successful career in the movie industry at this time, starting from playing supporting roles and progressing to musical scoring and finally to directing. It was in the social functions of this *milieu* that his young wife Gloria Maigui was discovered and subsequently became the singing movie sensation Olivia Cenizal. His best known compositions, now both considered classics, are **Ang Pag-ibig Koy Ingatan Mo** and the present **Hindi Kita Malimot**, which was featured in Sampaguita Pictures' movie of the same title starring Carmen Rosales and Leopoldo Salcedo.

Florante Aguilar studied arranging and composition under Ryab Cayabyab at the University of the Philippines College of Music. He has long pioneered the revival of Philippine music for the classical guitar through performances and recordings. In 2003, his first solo CD release, **Art of Harana**, included contemporary original Filipino compositions and arrangements of classic Filipino songs.

Since the premiere of his endearing original composition **Manang Biday** (based on an Ilocano folk song) in 1986, Florante Aguilar has been exploring the suitability of Filipino traditional forms on the classical guitar by casting his net on the wide variety of Filipino folk melodies that can be developed for performance on the concert stage. **Sing Sing**, based on Kapampangan folksong **Atin Cu Pung Singsing**, children's songs **Sitsiritsit** and **Pen Pen di Sarapen** for guitar and octavina, and **Radyo Tipanan** for two guitars, are his most recent forays into this lode.

Florante Aguilar gives these songs their richly deserved signature treatment while expanding the solo guitarist's repertoire with new and attractive original Filipino pieces. These are his novel reconciliations with the native spirit, paying respect to the integrity of the rudimentary forms while displaying the creative inspiration and performing facility of the artist.

- by Manuel R. Soriano



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