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Philippines Music in Politics: The Songs of Protest

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ABSTRACT

Globally and locally in the Philippines, music has made a significant impact in projecting the shared experience of people expressing their political views and alliances. Music can be likened to a great catalyst to organize, unify and mobilize people into a common purpose. The beat of the drums (music) has this gravitational pull that can move people to listen. History is replete with how music has changed the political discourse, bringing to fore issues on racism, gender, democracy, and other matters related to the socio-political landscape of countries. The new world order is shaped by the so-called songs of the times, influencing how people stand up or stand down on issues affecting their lives. Music is the medium of expression and communication that enables people to flesh out sentiments on critical matters and push these issues to the forefront where people can act out their emotions. In the Philippines, music plays an integral part in any event, including that of politics. The political landscape throughout its post-war history has been shaped by the music of its times. Borne of influences from western counterparts, music has helped the Filipino's need for a national identity. It has allowed Filipinos to articulate his nationalistic sentiments in harmony, rhythm, and pitch.

Keywords: Music, Politics, Philippines

I. INTRODUCTION

Music, according to definition, is the science or art of ordering tones or sounds in succession, in combination, and in temporal relationships to produce a composition having unity and continuity (Webster's Dictionary Online). It is produced by the combined sounds using various musical instruments coming into play together, with or without the addition of vocal sounds as a means to project emotional expression. The rhythm and melody that come from the space of such instruments and vocals create harmony, and this is often accepted by the audience for which they were made following specific cultural standards. From the most straightforward indigenous tools to the more complex, electronic, or computer engineers, the many kinds of musical compositions were conceived by artists as a medium of personal expression.

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Music is the art of communicating a message from the artist to its audience. There is always a message for an intended audience. The auditory medium that music represents lends itself complementary to that of any art form: ritual, drama, or dance. For that matter, it communicates to the audience the human emotion it wishes to project. This is seen throughout the history of the art form in radio, film, television, and theatre and, now most noteworthy, on the internet.

"Where words fail, music speaks, " research from the Harvard University has explored the significance of music as a language form that cuts across cultural barriers and accepting its universality and importance to bridge the understanding between cultures. The study examined the shared qualities of music and how when all of these come into play. Rhythm, tone, ornamentation, and tempo, among others, make it possible for people, regardless of cultural background, to understand and appreciate the music being played. And suppose music helps to create a mutual understand and appreciation among people of different backgrounds. In that case, it is there that bears evidence in its ability to send the message across, enable emotional expression, and project what needs to be projected to the audience. And when music transcends the relationship between the sounds produced by musical instruments to the message it intends to deliver to its audience, it becomes a potent tool for communication.

As a tool to communicate, music has shaped controversy over the years. Thought impacted by cultural trends and generational styles, music can carry subtle themes that bring to the table current issues that some people may never talk about. These issues may or may not be specific to culture but go out of cultural boundaries as well but definitely issues that impact society. This has allowed the medium to support freedom of expression and free speech where the use of musical trends and the lyrics that come with them are able to bring to light people's passive emotions to the light, where it can be discussed without free of repercussions. This allows music to have that global appeal as a medium of expression. Music speaks for the silent minority who cannot tell their mind out loud because they are not comfortable doing so. Now since music is a medium of communication and expression, it is no surprise that it lends itself to the many facets of human interrelationships. Culture and social life or society are but the aspect that music has become a symbolic form of expression. In this expression, individuals' experiences, motivations, and goals form the backdrop for how music is created and sent across the audience. This is where lyricism and instrumentation come to play as the organized sound that seeks to communicate what it wants to convey to many people. Nevertheless, there are other aspects that music makes an impact on. Politics is one of them.

II. MUSIC AS A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE

In an essay that she wrote, Alexander-Marietta Georgia (2011) explored the universality of music as a language form. She opens her article by stating that almost everyone, every human has the innate capacity to appreciate and enjoy music. She asserts that there are many theories that attest to the reasons behind this, but from all of them, it is a common ground that the understanding of music seems to be an integral part of being human. Regardless of cultural backgrounds, humans used music to express themselves, to convey what cannot be outright spoken. This ranges from various emotions that humans have felt. Since the beginning of time where tribal rhythms were the order of the day, music has undergone an evolution that has allowed a variety of music types to come to the fore. This has paved the way for various genres ranging from complex ones like classical, rock, jazz, and R& B to styles that are more attune with popular culture, differentiated only by people's language and signs of the times. Nevertheless, however, varied music may be across genres, their universal appeal stays the same, and people do relate to them. She explores the essential part of language and how music can capture this to assert its universality. Language as a communication medium uses words as a tool to deliver the message. That is the essential part of the language; the ability to send a message in this precise form where the message intended is the message received. The words used in sentences are the way the message is delivered. The choice of words, tone of sentence delivery, and style of writing are the ones that provide for the efficacy of sending the message effectively. For the language of words to be effective in sending the message, the sentences should evoke feeling within the reader. Thus, words, phrases, and sentences are combined to convey a reaction in human emotion. The author asserts that music does this in the same way, just as words are used to create phrases and create sentences; piece uses notes to create tone, rhythm, and harmony to conjure up emotions.

Music, like language, compares in similar ways, as a language form for expressing oneself and evoking emotion; music can put all these through various styles. Where one can be fluent in the language to express their sentiments, musicians do the same with music and lyrics as well. Music has evolved in that new types of music are coming into the forefront because of the many kinds of sounds being created over the years. Old and new instruments are being used to create a variety of sounds meant to deliver the message to the audience more effectively. This is why the author avers that there are many similarities between language and music as a universal language for communication and expression.

Alexander-Marietta Georgia's essay says that across cultures, where differences in languages,

people still identify with the message of each musical piece of work. Even when people do not speak fluent English, and there are lapses in communicating vocally, music transcends beyond these barriers, so direct translation is hardly needed. Through the use of musical instruments, people can harmonize with each other and even bounce off each other's creativity, as when two musicians do not vocalize but work on a musical piece together to create a melody that becomes stitched in perfect harmony together.

In this way, the author reinforces the comparative similarities between music and language as they play their roles as effective communication mediums. Music, similar to speech, brings people together. It builds the connection where words are unable to. It has the ability to deliver the message and trigger the emotion that the news is ways to convey. In its universality, it connects mankind. It projects a borderless connection that goes beyond the boundaries of culture.

III. MUSIC AND WELL-BEING

In order to understand the influence of music, it is crucial to know how it affects human nature. In a study by Tricia Fox Ransom (2015), she explores how messages in the lyrics of songs contribute to the well-being of a person. In the study that she made, she has asserted that music has always been the most effective way to communicate to people, especially the masses. The impact of music is in the lyrics or the messages that the songs want to conjure in the listener. The role of music as a communication medium becomes effective when messages being sent are of positive affirmations, which contribute to positive well-being. She explores the theory in her research that the potential for any music to impact the listener must impact positivity where it can positively affect people. Positive emotions, she states, are increased by positive messages. When a person is mindful of the kind of music one is taking it, and how it affects her positive state of mind, then there are more chances that one will relate to this music, that will influence the choices she makes and the actions she will take in relation to the messages set in the music. Her research states that meaningful lyrics begets positive emotions of affirmation and inspires positive actions. And since music is easily accessible to us in the present times, music then becomes an effective way of influencing people positively that would lead to positive actions.

Music and Lyrics Used to Teach Political Theory

In an internet source (Cambridge University Press, 2015), Christopher Soper wrote an article that has discussed a pedagogical method used in teaching political theory. He averred that music and lyrics of selected songs could help forge a better understanding of politics. Selected

songs that he used were pop culture songs of artists of a chosen era. This gives new light to the use of music as a learning tool.

The article explored how music was used in an academic, social science course such as political theory. It paved the way for students to understand the discourse better. It allowed them to think critically by connecting the lyrics of a song about theoretical readings used in the classroom. Critical thinking using the song lyrics permitted them to form analogies and spearhead the engagement of new ideas to the topic they were discussing. These kinds of thinking initiate their minds to giving analytical reason and logical movement of thought that allows them to better organize, relate and interpret what is being presented as theoretical thought. These ideas become more relatable when seen through the prism of lyrics in a song. When music is used as a learning tool in this way, students who are more or less, for the most part just passive readers, are then transformed into students who use higher-order thinking skills in learning political theory.

Music and lyrics create a deeper connection for a person. Music creates a relatable experience for anyone because it triggers a memory one way or another. As a learning tool, music can bring the discussion in the classroom activity alive, even in an ordinary academic debate. In discussing politics through, shared values of thoughts that can be gathered from song lyrics allow students to relate better, understand easier, and expound better what the message of the subject is trying to project about. It will enable more reflection on the underlying knowledge needed to be gleaned from theoretical discussion, perhaps not only in political theory but also in other social science subjects. It is therefore not surprising that music in politics is very much used. Freedom of expression culminates when persons can relate the lyrics of a song to the bigger picture that wants to be translated into action but sometimes is being suppressed in one way or the other. It is in this scenario, as stated in the article is where music becomes a tool not only for understanding and self-expression but also can be viewed as a catalyst of effecting change. Change in political and social thought will ultimately be translated into action.

IV. MUSIC AND POLITICS

A journal article by Jean-Mari Donegani (2004) was posted on the website of Cairn. Info International Edition discussed music and politics, specifically the language of music as used as an objective expression and subjective reality.

The article opens its discourse to state that music is a part of social life and a product of culture. Music brings about a shared experience among people. Music that there for every facet of social and community life. This is why music is always around for social events like celebrations and

traditional rites, regardless of the culture. With this, music can bring people together; it has that unifying appeal that somehow excites the crowd, triggering hunger and revelry, having the capacity to move people.

As the article infers, music as a language gives vent to help people take action. Its power lies in what is termed instrumentalization. There is something enigmatic about the absolute power of music, but by knowing and accepting its force, there lies its power. Even as its trustworthy source for being such a potent mobilizer is not known, knowing how to utilize it to harness it and have the capacity to regulate it will provide the results it was intended for.

In politics or for any people movement mobilization to command citizen involvement in pursuits, the political function of music is to provide a pleasant and harmonious way to express a political view and romanticize such to make it acceptable while driving the message across. In so doing, it transcends subtle messages that would one day be ingrained in the subconscious of the people and, in later part, will allow for a movement response which is the needed essential for a political movement.

The article discusses that music is mainly used to a greater degree amongst totalitarian systems by those in power in such scenarios. It likens music to an opera, an opera with political meaning, and as such provides a metaphor to what is happening in the political environment that it exists. As an art form, it tells us that the characteristics of musical work are subtle cues to a political situation brewing. The aesthetic side of music against the backdrop of reality somehow allows the music to drive the political goal. In this perspective, music then becomes a formula not only of artistic expression but of political expression. Charged music, as it is used in politics, is dedicated to bringing about the desired action in favor of the powers that support its use. There is, as they say, a political story in the lyrics that it conveys. When music is used this way, the political intention is clear. The art form has thus become a formal structure to exact the desired outcome for political gain. It is masking truths and painting an image to the audience that uses the art form radically to communicate political views. Either it becomes a political conscience of some sort of a propaganda advantage. Music as a form of communication now has become a work intended to push political gains or push an ideology. Such is so when it is used for political protest when the music becomes the formal avenue where the rally anchors itself in the music medium.

In this, we can see that the political aim of music used in politics is a subtle form of revolution against the backdrop of melodic and harmonic style. The artists creating this music are, in a way, making the scenario where music stands against or sides with the political machinations

of the powers than me. On the other hand, when used in protest, it symbolizes the silence of the masses, concocting with music and lyrics a silent revolt to express suppression or any kind of clamor that cannot be verbalized by the groups. Thus here lies the potent force of music.

The Relationship between Music and Politics

Hera Soysal (2020), in an internet article, explored the connection between music and politics. She avers that it has been evident for a long time. For centuries, music artists have been very active in political movements. They have pushed for a multitude of advocacies ranging from various environments, cultural and socio-political concerns that impact many people in society at large.

There is a global movement of artists presenting themselves using political music as a platform to put the message they are advocating across. These artists are the new movers of change, the catalysts that make way for global issues to come to light where the voice of the minority is now heard and which is receiving greater acceptance worldwide.

Music has indeed sparked a revolution of change. In politics, it has become the prime mover in drawing crowds, from campaigns to protests, from speeches to debates; there is a new way of communicating the political message complimentary to personalities involved in the political discourse. The musical artists, their creative presence, and musical work have catapulted political characters and have presented a new stage to bring the message across. A range of social issues and concerns related to political views are being lobbied across the grassroots, where people are inclined to open their minds to these kinds of problems. This includes issues and concerns on race, war, poverty, human rights, world order, and social injustice. This is the new revolution prompted by the music of the times. They have become catalysts for social change. The use of the lyrics in songs is able to put the message across and be accepted by a broader range of audiences regardless of age, gender, social status, and other demographic profiles.

Political music is a unique genre on its own; in fact, it is a cornucopia of many genres that have been created carefully together by creative artists. Notwithstanding the tradition music usually modified for political purpose, musical artists who are into political music has positively channeled their musical work and energies to creating a particular medium in an effort to express their opinions and have been increasingly successful in having this kind of music resonated with a general audience specifically for the purpose for which it is intended. The new movements of musical artists who have created music with political overtones have not only been a game-changer for the politicians who hire them to endorse their platforms and views,

but in a more general perspective, they have changed the discourse on how political and social issues are being openly discussed.

The article states that the advent of digital media has infused this new changed and triggered a vast potential of music to do what it has achieved so far. Digital media has improved the sound of the times. There is still much to be improved, though, but it has taken music and its artists and the themes they carry, whether it is social or political, into new dimensions and extremes. On the other hand, social media has been an essential part of the wave of change. It has bolstered the potency of music. And when used in politics, the advantage is unstoppable. Political viewpoints are no longer confined to the lyrics of songs but carried in social media; it has taken a virtual and visual advantage.

The influence of media to impact people's lives has become a turning point for political music. In this platform, the persuasiveness of the music coupled with the charisma of the artists brings to the fact that the music being performed has an audience that is more inclined to take it all in. The vast options of applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter have the following be a potent source of willing audiences due to ease of access in these applications. This has made music more accessible, more concentrated, and has the enormous ability to become a significant avenue for information on political themes and influence much more.

Social media is visual as the article has discussed a visual image and the correct lyrics of a song commands greater attention. The enormous amount of influence that social media can cascade to a greater audience is the game-changer for any politician or political movement that would use them. Nevertheless, this may go both ways as artists must also be selective of the support they will give to politicians since even the best campaigns may turn into protests and may also be successfully implemented through the social media platform. This new generation of getting the message across with music through lyrics and with the use of social media is of very great value in the political environment. It is now evident that a new relationship is born where artists have used their craft, their creativity, and their musical work to act as a catalyst for change when they have linked their music in support of political themes, political personalities. That they have channeled their influence to become an influential force in society has changed the game in the political environment. That the use of social media as digital journalism has made such artists take their persuasive power to a new level, becoming the potent power to become platforms where the political discourse on the issues concerning politics and society has become magnified and has the ability to resonate to a larger audience and has the power to be cascaded thereon. Music and its relationship with politics have not only merged the creative power of people making music and those performing it become a tremendous force for pushing

political themes, but they have also been able to amass great support for their causes, as well as for the politicians that carry these causes. And this has made their influence and their music's influence to a great degree a testimony to music being identified as a universal language. In this regard, the article states that artists are very fluent in this language.

V. THE POWER OF PROTEST SONGS

Paul McGuinness (2020) published an internet article on the website of UDiscovermusic about the power of songs with themes of protest. He takes a historical look at the protest songs in the US and how they seemed to have undergone a period of exploitation but regained their power to influence in the present times.

The author has averred that back in the '80s, musical artists who performed using acoustic guitars were labeled as protest singers. This meant that folk songs during that era delved into protest music. Protest music, as defined by Wikipedia.org was that has been to large part identified with pushing for a movement towards social change or any issue affecting society. The genre of these protest songs is, most of the time, folk songs, classical or, for the most part, commercial. These songs have themes that range from human rights, civil rights, abortion, racism, and feminism, animal right, environmentalism, and others.

The article explores the phenomenon that has given rise to these protest songs, which have made massive influences as signs of their times and triggering a wave of artists who have tried to copy or create similar pieces to push for similar themes that protest songs have been created. A lot of artists since the '60s have been voicing the message they meant to deliver across a vast majority of societal, environmental, and political through the use of protests songs. Since medieval times, the author infers songs of protest have been in place in England where people used different genres such as folk and ballad to amplify dissatisfaction and anchor their vents using music and lyrics. In this way, people have come to realize this new venting forum in the form of protest songs, and through this, protest songs have come to become songs that only push societal issues but, to a large extent, have genuinely impacted the political discourse of the times. They have come to amplify the sentiments of the populace, prompting governments to take a hard look at what is happening and how people are accepting or not accepting their governments. The songs became the sound of the populace, promoting virtue, values, and questioning moral matters.

The article tells us that the power of the collective voice of the populace through protest songs has already been evident in the course of history from England to the United States. It continues to be alive today, as protest songs continue to carry nationalistic themes amidst traditional folk

songs. The power of singing communally continues to enjoy massive acceptance throughout the world, in every country, and in every culture. Its main focal point could be considered that it shapes the hopes and dreams of an unsatisfied populace, and through these songs; the populace singing together gathers the courage to overcome the problems that plague society or the suppression that is being experienced in totalitarian governments that suppress the voice of the populace. These protest songs not only created a niche in these kinds of the environment but, in fact, inspires the people of those whose voices have been silent, those who cannot speak up.

The author continues to state that protest songs continue to flood the airwaves when society needs them. Artists, both singers, and songwriters used this platform of music and harness the power of social media to provide a thrust for issues affecting people today. It is more evident now when the political discourse is directly being lobbied on the streets. And because it is on the roads, the power and influence of political songs of protests becomes afresh, creating renewed awareness for long-standing issues, unifying common goals, shared experiences, and mobilizing movements that clamor for change, for improvement, for the realization of the long-standing problems carried as themes of such protest songs. The author avers that protest songs do not intend to shift the world on its axis. It has never pushed the discussion, for that matter, but what it wants to do is to move the perspectives and call attention to the signs of the times, to the issues and concerns of the times, to change the opinions of those in power to change the situations and provide solutions to long-standing problems in governments, society, and the environment. In this way, the power of protest songs is utilized for the greater good of a general populace who need inspiration, who need to find hope where hope seems lacking. When one hears a protest song, one regains hope that there lies a chance that in time change will come.

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