

## **Music and the Culture Industry: Theodor Adorno and Gary Granada**

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### **Abstract**

Music in the Philippines can be characterized according to several trends which do not only differ in style or genre but most importantly on the conceptual paradigms of its creators. Over the last thirty years, Filipino music – being very susceptible to commodification - has struggled to balance its “prophetic” and entertainment value. Its autonomy and discerning character have been painstakingly silenced by the machinery of popular music. Nevertheless, a handful of local musicians have refused to be devoured by the apparatus of the “culture industry”. In concept and in style, content and form, they continue to adhere to the critical role of music in the society. This is where Philosophy and Music converge. This paper explores the possibility of juxtaposing Theodor W. Adorno<sup>1</sup> and Gary Granada<sup>2</sup>. In seeking to establish the conceptual relation between the former’s *Philosophy of the New Music* and the latter’s musical endeavors, this article aims to throw light on the plight of Filipino ‘progressive music’ in the purview of Adorno’s *Aesthetic theory* and to re-affirm the role of music as an essential tool for socio-political and cultural critique.

**Keywords:** Theodor Adorno, Gary Granada, Progressive Music, Culture Industry

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<sup>1</sup> (1903–1969) German philosopher, sociologist, composer and a key figure of the Frankfurt School.

<sup>2</sup> Filipino Musician known for his critical, progressive and oftentimes humorous songs.

## Introduction

Emerita Quito's survey on the state of Philosophy in the Philippines three decades ago did not only show the enduring predicament among Filipino philosophers in articulating that which can be truly called a "Filipino Philosophy" but also distinguished the three prevailing schools of philosophical thought. Of these three, one school emphasized the belief that philosophy must not be limited to the academic level but must "spill over into life itself."<sup>3</sup> In this vein, philosophy remains empty and shallow unless it acquires a critical-sociological relevance especially in addressing the current problems faced by ordinary Filipinos.

While music leads listeners to a "world" where words fail, conversely this essay uses words to lead readers to a different "world" of understanding music. Music, as such, needs no elaboration. Adorno contends that art is "able to speak for itself."<sup>4</sup> It can communicate on behalf of itself, let alone defend its own value. However, when the pride of reason dominates culture (which also bespeaks implicitly of its own demise), music has to be understood from a different angle. In a society where the prevailing rationality favors categorizations, dichotomization, and inevitably oppression, music may fall prey to social and economic manipulations instead of retaining its creative and political independence. A different *punto de vista* has to salvage, so to speak, the critical role of music, and the arts in general. It may be well to note that it is not my intention to reduce Adorno and Granada as representatives of philosophy and music, respectively. By converging Philosophy and Music, I do not mean to mix-up

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<sup>3</sup> Emerita Quito. *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* (Manila: De La Salle Publications, 1983), p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Theodor Adorno. *Philosophy of New Music*. trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 164.

the ideas of Adorno and Granada as if they were intrinsically related. Both are distinct in their own right but such distinctiveness provides us precisely the basic condition for the possibility of a critical insight regarding the value of music (and also perhaps philosophy).

This article proceeds in four steps. First, I briefly discuss some salient points from Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as a way of providing a conceptual background of the critical role of music. Second, I describe the status of music in a consumer society. Third, the concept of progressive music is laid down. And fourth, I juxtapose Adorno and Granada and argue that a musician whose music is resistive of the subtle manipulations of the "culture industry" is very much called for today in order to preserve the aesthetic and critical viability immanent in Filipino music.

### **Critique of the Enlightenment**

Adorno, together with Horkheimer, wrote the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), which sought to examine and criticize the repercussions of western rationality's proclivity to dominate over nature. What enlightenment basically means is that "the lamp of reason is lit and that humans exert their thinking to the utmost and free themselves from the clutches of this enchanted and bewitching world."<sup>5</sup> At the root of this idea, is the assumption that the world is intelligible and that man is equipped with rational capacity to know the world and subdue nature. This capacity to know and control nature constitutes power. Being opposed to myth and superstition, enlightenment has sought to place primacy on objective, calculable knowledge over the immeasurable and subjective. "Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought,

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<sup>5</sup> Jacob Klapwijk. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Critical Theory and the Messianic Light*. trans. C. L. Yallop and P. M. Yallop (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2010), p.2.

has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters.”<sup>6</sup> Such is the ultimate project of the enlightenment: to place man on top of nature’s hierarchy in order to execute control and domination.

However, as it turned out, this domination does not only translate to man’s domination over nature, but also over other human beings as well. In other words, man’s primordial fear towards nature compelled him to maximize rational control over everything, both to humans and non-humans. Consequently, enlightenment became a reversal of what it sought to achieve. In replacing myth and superstition, it privileges science and objectivity with the same mythical veneration it once attributed to nature. Hence, as the autonomy of reason progresses, it resulted to certain modes of thinking that became responsible for the emergence of totalitarian systems and oppressive social structures. In a modern society, for instance, the dignity of man is oftentimes determined by the nexus of his political, economic and social circumstances, which in turn define his present and future possibilities. On this note, Klapwijk argues that “the meaning of being human is now reduced to the function that human beings fulfill within industrialized society.”<sup>7</sup> Hence, alienation towards nature and towards other humans has become inevitable consequences in a society that is steered by the sovereignty of reason.

Among the numerous effects of enlightenment is the “culture industry” which aims at homogenizing the primordial diversities of culture through the impositions of rigid standardizations. In the field of art, for instance, the culture industry (which is steered by the values of capitalist consumption) seeks to manipulate the masses by spreading

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<sup>6</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. trans. Edmund Jephcott (California: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Klapwijk, 2010, p. 4.

false consciousness thereby rendering human reason docile and vulnerable. Thus Adorno and Horkheimer believe that the culture industry is a tool for mass deception. They assert that “the more strongly the culture industry entrenches itself, the more it can do as it chooses with the needs of consumers-producing, controlling, disciplining them; even withdrawing amusement altogether: here, no limits are set to cultural progress.”<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, art – music in particular – is one of the areas most damaged by this industry. Music has been relegated to the status of a mere commodity for consumption.

### **Music and the Consumer Society**

Today, what most people usually listen to and regard as “music” is actually entertainment-music. What is routinely heard from radio stations, the internet and television channels are products of a totalitarian entertainment industry. A media-dominated society is vulnerable to this subtle dictatorship. According to Adorno, “when they think they comprehend the music, they only perceive an inert, empty husk of what they treasure as a possession and what was already lost in the moment in which it became a possession: an indifferent showpiece, neutralized and robbed of its own critical substance.”<sup>9</sup> A case in point is Pop-music which has entered the music scene in the 1950’s. Its heterogeneous and eclectic musical form speaks of its obvious dependence from other diverse forms of musical elements. Its verse-refrain-chorus structure, repetitive melodic lines and specifically its usual length are apparently tailored-fit to be consumed and absorbed. On a theoretical level, pop-music is a concrete result of a culture that promotes identity thinking and categorizations. On this note, Paddison argues that western music, which is characterized by its tonal structures and fragmented musical language is a

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<sup>8</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002, p. 115.

<sup>9</sup> Adorno, 2006, 12

“reflection and a manifestation of the tendencies of bourgeois culture/society itself.”<sup>10</sup>

Apparently, there is a huge misconception among consumers as regards the nature of music as a form of art. With the fast advancements in technology, it is no longer impossible to come up with random rhythm, melodic lines, lyrics and drum beats. The result of such mixture is immediately considered music, readily “uploadable” for public consumption. However, a closer listening to these songs immediately calls to mind some other popular songs from which several elements are derived. It goes without saying that most of them are actually spinoffs from other existing but rather common songs. “Djent”, for example, which is an offshoot of metal rock music, follows a very droning sound and beat so that just by listening to one of its songs is almost tantamount to listening to all of them.

Technical expertise is, on the other hand, a basic requirement but is *not* the only main factor in the formation of a musical genius. A person may be trained since childhood how to play a musical instrument and hence through time will acquire an adequate technical expertise. But without a keen mind to assess his musical landscape, one will end up being devoured by the same culture where he grew. According to Hegel:

...not only do we see the gift for composition developed at the most tender age but very talented composers frequently remain throughout their life the most ignorant and empty-headed of men. Music is therefore more profound when the composer gives the same attention even in instrumental music to

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<sup>10</sup> Max Paddison. “The Critique Criticized: Adorno and Popular Music.” in *Popular Music*, Vol. 2, Theory and Method, 1982, p. 203.

both sides, to the expression of the content and to the musical structure.<sup>11</sup>

The expression of the content is as important as the structure of a song or a symphony. Both are essential musical components that make great music, especially when the content (either lyrical or non-lyrical) genuinely expresses the “un-transfigured suffering of men.”<sup>12</sup> Music therefore, as a real form of art cannot be reduced to a mere tool for amusement. In a consumer society, however, the progressive element latent in music is subsumed under its entertainment value. What industry highlights is its seemingly “substantive character” which, if one were to uncover, is nothing more than a thin veil that conceals its main purpose: profit. Entertainment shows, concerts, tours, radio programs, competitions, and the like are apparatuses for product placements, promotion of media personalities and product endorsements.<sup>13</sup> While it is true that musicians practically need to sustain their income for their sustenance, what is disagreeable however is when these artists fall prey to the “commodifying” proclivities of the industry that turn them into objects of consumption, rather than agents of social critique and emancipation. It is no longer novel that the more sellable a song is, (which, by the way, does not have to be of good quality) the longer it maintains its prestige in hit charts, television channels, the Internet and radio stations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Quoted in *Philosophy of New Music*, 2006, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> It is quite disappointing to see in TV commercials and print ads respected music artists endorsing products (e.g. clothing, beverages, internet service providers, telecom, etc.) that have completely nothing to do with music.

<sup>14</sup> Today, a song or an album is no longer the means to increase commercial profit. Music is only a marketing tool, a means to an end. The artist *is* the subject for business, not the music. Hence, we see a lot of artists today selling their “image” to lure people to his/her fan-base which basically sustains their lifeblood in the industry.

Amusement music is a tool to divert the listener's attention.<sup>15</sup> What this kind of music gives is an ephemeral relief from the real state-of-affairs and provides a false consciousness that redirects one's focus, albeit temporarily. Adorno argues that in a culture industry, art becomes a "reified, hardened cultural possessions" and, worse, a "source of pleasure that the customer pockets."<sup>16</sup> This is why music industry zeroes in on those who can amuse, gratify and preoccupy people's minds. Most contemporary music reveals a lot about the present culture. In contrast to symphonies and ensembles which would last more than 30 minutes (the least), five-minute modern songs speak of the short attention span of modern-day listeners. These songs are efficient for consumption, not contemplation; for entertainment, not reflection; for absorption, not apperception.<sup>17</sup>

What the present mainstream music culture apparently aims at is the numbing of people's aesthetic consciousness. To do so requires an abundant supply of pop-music, parading celebrities and free concerts. Its success is determined by the incapacity of consumers to discriminate the good from bad music. It conditions the musical taste of the people and sets the parameters of what is supposed to be regarded as "good" music. Hence, this results to aesthetic stagnation, a kind of "musical tautology", where no new "musical idea" is being put forward.

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<sup>15</sup> During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the primary meaning of "amusement" was to "deceive, cheat" by first occupying the attention; to divert attention in order to mislead. See etymonline.com.

<sup>16</sup> Theodor Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*. trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor. ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (London: Continuum, 1997), p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> These kinds of music are like aesthetic fast-food chains (fast-music chains). For example, when one feels lonely, it might be tempting to listen to songs which have a tonal emphasis on melancholic lines.



Nothing is more glaringly scandalous than the uncritical – and oftentimes, if not always, profit-driven – elevation of a work of ‘low art’ to the standards of genius. Beauty has become a household commodity- something that is conjured out of the categorizations imposed by the society. The present culture, which is obsessed with identity, has permeated the once “uncorrupted” walls of music and has forced it to bend its knees before the stronger and mightier hands of the music industry. Quality is reduced to statistical ratings. The more people who “consume” a work of art, the more the latter is exalted to a high level of stature. Numbers seem to be the sole determinants of aesthetics.

Modern art does not follow rules. It is the industry which subject art to the standards of conformity. A type of music, for instance, can impossibly reach a large audience if it sounds “irrational”, that is, if it does not adhere to the musical “models” the industry upholds. Adorno, criticizing the folkloristic, neoclassical and collectivist schools, regarded them as sharing only one aspiration: “to remain in the harbor and disburse the used and the prefabricated as if they were the new.”<sup>18</sup>

Almost all musical creations borne out of an aesthetic impulse, and not for economic gain, are potent materials for “contemplative immersion.”<sup>19</sup> In the past even up to today, a work of art (e.g. painting), can capture the attention of an audience and lead them to mediated reflection. Likewise, an opera or an orchestra has the power to captivate its audience and bring them into a non-predetermined aesthetic experience. Today, any popular song may result to either an increased critical awareness or a useless distraction. It may serve to sidetrack reality temporarily and bring the absent-minded listener to a fleeting trance. For Benjamin, “the distracted mass absorbs the work of art” rather than being

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<sup>18</sup> Adorno, 2006, p. 83.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Benjamin. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 13.

“absorbed by it.”<sup>20</sup> In a consumer society, where people are bombarded with irrationally immense doses of distraction from the media, it is therefore critical to determine the quality of input that gets consumed.

### Progressive Music

Progressive music is a tension-laden form of art. Its truth content is not as easily determinable as the content of amusement-music. This is so because the truth that is latent in progressive music proceeds from an internal dialectic between its *content* and *form*. This tension is the locale for the determination of its philosophical import. However, such determination is neither dogmatic nor totalitarian. It allows for a critical evaluation of its validity or non-validity. Hence, treating progressive music requires both aesthetic and critical consciousness which must be keenly aware of music’s internal dynamics, socio-historical context, realities that it tries to reveal, and the message that it seeks to purport.

Music is identity-elusive. There is neither one concept that can fully define its nature, nor a definition that can comprehensively set its parameters. The least, and perhaps the best, that one can do is to approach it phenomenologically, that is, to describe music as it presents itself to a specific period and place. That music has a fixed nature, utility and characteristic is to reduce it to a subjectivity-immune human phenomenon transcending into the illusory realm of pure objectivity and conceptualization. Such reveals the “negative” character of music, which is inherently connected to its critical role. Though music per se, is impartial, it may serve as a “critique of a society damaged by reification.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, music acts as a mouthpiece to reveal a society’s contradictions. Marcuse, a contemporary of Adorno, argues that “music responds to, and at the same

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Paolo Bolaños. “The Critical Role of Art: Adorno between Utopia and Dystopia.” In *Kritike* 1:1 2007, p. 25.

time negates the society for which, and against which it is created."<sup>22</sup> This does not only show the impartial nature of music but also its inherent critical force. Music discloses that which is usually left unsaid. It reveals the internal conflicts that a consumer society consistently keeps repressed.

The truth content of progressive music is offensive in that it is an "antithesis to the total control aimed at by the industry."<sup>23</sup> There is a thin, but nonetheless conspicuous, line between mainstream music and progressive music. Knowing their difference requires a keen outlook towards music's import and function. Hermeneutically, one can determine the socio-cultural import of a song whose internal meaning is available for construing. Empirically, a song's function is accessible by examining the socio-historical context from which it is grounded. Nevertheless, a piece of music only finds its ultimate value when it serves the purpose of "resisting" identification, or better yet, by being a voice of the minority.

However, even progressive music is itself vulnerable to categorization and commodification. Companies make a great deal of money by setting up the idea of conformist alienation and then selling products that promise to help consumers express their real, authentic selves.<sup>24</sup> One glaring means by which the industry silences the critical voice of music is song "revivals" or "remakes". This consequently undermines and eventually terminates the critical moment in

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<sup>22</sup> Herbert Marcuse. *Art and Liberation: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Vol. 4.* ed. Douglas Kellner (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 135.

<sup>23</sup> Adorno, 2006, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Jason Hickel and Arsalan Khan. "The 'Harlem Shake' and the Western Illusion of Freedom" in *New Left Project*. March 21, 2013. [http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article\\_comments/the\\_harlem\\_shake\\_and\\_the\\_western\\_illusion\\_of\\_freedom](http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/the_harlem_shake_and_the_western_illusion_of_freedom)

progressive music.<sup>25</sup> It is an alienation of a song from its aesthetic individuality; a way of uprooting it from its ground. Accordingly, its truth content is unlikely to survive from its being incorporated into a totalitarian music identity - the mainstream. "Since the culture industry has trained its victims to avoid all effort in the leisure hours allotted them for cultural consumption, they cling all the more obstinately to the appearances that conceal the essence."<sup>26</sup> Just as the song's being-in-itself is diminished, so is the artist's integrity similarly debased.

Now, since the music industry can extend its scope of power and influence to all forms of music including progressive music, how is it possible to preserve the aesthetic and critical viability immanent in music? In other words, if we were to uphold the critical role of music, how can it resist reification? These questions are dealt with in the following section.

### **Resistive Music**

It may be well to reiterate that it is not my intention to discuss Granada as a representative of radical, progressive or resistive music. In the Philippine local music scene, there are a lot of musicians, songwriters, performers and artists alike who have embraced a lifelong task to create, perform, raise consciousness and spread reality-based awareness among the masses. Some of these musicians, whose

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<sup>25</sup> A case in point is *Buklod's Tatsulok*. The song was an anti-militarization anthem during the years when the Philippines was under the Aquino administration. But when it was revived by Bamboo in 2004, it became a hit. However, the message of the song was heavily attenuated. Its additional synthetic sound overshadowed its once very strong lyrical content. It basically turned the song into a household commodity. Today, people listen to it without regard to its message. Like many other songs, *Tatsulok* was uprooted from its historical context.

<sup>26</sup> Adorno, 2006, p. 12.

reluctance to get absorbed into the mainstream music has kept them obscure, are worth mentioning.<sup>27</sup> However, what makes Granada distinct is his endeavor for *popular instruction* and his resistance against the large companies' domination over intellectual property.

Most of Granada's songs expose the ills in the society through a mixture of uncomplicated musical structure, folk but poignant melodies and vivid lyrics with a tinge of humor. Most of these songs seek political change, criticize the system, mock the government, and speak in behalf of the victims of injustice. During the 80's and 90's his songs became anthems for socio-political-cultural change which sought to revive traditional Filipino core values and culture.<sup>28</sup> What he usually did was to create a musical caricature of real life scenarios of people's struggle against military abuse, poverty, injustice and corruption. Obviously, his is a type of music that has outgrown the run-of-the-mill music whose contents are fixated to premature romance, love, relationships, friendships, et. al.

Nevertheless, in my estimation, the greatest blow he launched against the industry is his resistance against "commodification". By this, I mean to refer to his consistent opposition against the usual practice of maximizing profit

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<sup>27</sup> Here are some of the numerous-anonymous Filipino artists whose works are imbued with a resistive, patriotic and even "militant" character: Heber Bartolome, Ramon Ayco, Jess Santiago, Karina Constantino-David (Inang Laya), Dong Abay (Yano), Noel Cabangon (Buklod), Joey Ayala (Bagong Lumad), Chikoy Pura (The Jerks), Danny Fabella (Musikang Bayan), Freddie Aguilar, Lolita Carbon and Mike Pillora (Asin), Bobby Balingit (The Wuds), Mike Hanopol (Juan dela Cruz band), Paul Galang, Popong Landero, Coritha, Grace Nono and some 1990's Filipino bands like Datu's Tribe and The Youth.

<sup>28</sup> Some of these songs are: "Paligid", "Ang Lupang Ito", "Bahay", "Manggagawa", "Dam", "Kanluran", "Pilipinas", "Pagsamba at Pakikibaka", among many others. These songs are available for download at <http://garygranada.co/Music%20Albums.htm>

from an artist's original composition, through unjust contracts and unprofessional treatment of rejected commissions and projects. A case in point is his word-war against GMA Kapuso Foundation last 2009. According to Granada, GMA Kapuso Foundation did not only reject his "study", but also tampered and copied the musical structure of his original 60-second jingle purposely composed for the same client. Unprecedentedly, he made use of the New Media (Web 2.0) to air out his audio complaint which publicized the issue and reached thousands of concerned people.<sup>29</sup>

It is now a general fact that the music industry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has suffered a great blow in the advent of the Internet. The proliferation of songs, which are freely downloadable via the Internet, has caused a great deal of loss of profit among music companies. Traditionally, potential artists or bands would sign a contract with a record label which spells out a scheme that would serve as the basis of profit-sharing. Today, bands and individual musicians – which usually call themselves "indie" (independent) – can record songs and sell albums without a contract with a music company. In fact, some local artists had already become popular among a target audience, long before they signed a major record label.

While most of the local artists fight against piracy and illegal downloading of songs, Granada, on the other hand, allows his listeners to listen and even download his music for free via his website.<sup>30</sup> He writes, "so why are the mp3s in this site accessible and some even downloadable for free? No, they are not. We're just charging zero pesos (cf. garygranada.co)."<sup>31</sup> Because of this, he'd been usually asked whether he's too rich or too stupid to allow the public to

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<sup>29</sup> See Gary Granada's Profile at <http://www.agimat.net/music/2002070.php>

<sup>30</sup> <http://garygranada.co/Music%20Albums.htm>

<sup>31</sup> See *How come some songs in this site are freely downloadable*, garygranada.co

freely download his songs. But his constant reply would always re-echo his belief in a “better way of doing things even within the framework of market economics.”<sup>32</sup> This is no less than a symbolic protest against the current capitalist market system. It defies record labels to extract profit from his songs up to the last centavo. A song (its content and form) is more important than the economic gain. To be an artist that is effective and socially relevant needs no contract and extravagant publicity.

Granada finds the Internet as the most efficient and practical tool to promote his advocacies. The Internet - having a ubiquitous character and appeal to people from different walks of life - has become the main arm for his *popular education*. His self-maintained website offers free audio courses pertaining to sociology, economics, politics and philosophy.<sup>33</sup> Also, his MAPA1 (*Mga Awit na Magagamit sa Pagtalakay ng Panlipunang Aralin, Para sa mga Paksang Kasaysayan, Sibika, Literatura at Musika*) and Children’s Songs for Peace Education are products of his unique and ingenious effort to impart *Araling Panlipunan* (Social Studies) and Peace Education via the maximization of the power of music and discourse, in contrast to the traditional teacher-based, lecture-type pedagogy. Just like many progressive educators, Granada believes that the “real battleground for change is the classroom.”<sup>34</sup> This goes without saying that he does not want to be confined within the limits set by the music industry. Music creation is more than becoming famous and rich. Better still, to be an artist is not simply to entertain, but to educate.

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> See *Hierarchism* at [garygranada.co](http://garygranada.co)

<sup>34</sup> Gary Granada. *MAPA1 Mga Awit na Magagamit sa Pagtalakay ng Panlipunang Aralin, Para sa mga Paksang Kasaysayan, Sibika, Literatura at Musika. Kaalagad, Katipunang Kristiyano.* February 2013.  
<http://garygranada.co/MAPA/MAPA.htm>

Moreover, Granada is a fierce protestor against intellectual property. In June 22, 2016, he wrote a post on his Facebook account: “copyright is one of those classic oppressive mechanisms of capitalism to maintain the great divide between owners and non-owners.”<sup>35</sup> Intellectual property, which is a part and parcel of the whole idea and practice of private property, does not only create and harden social classes, but also deprive people from what they are inherently entitled to. This proceeds from an egalitarian (and socialist) concept that all people regardless of social status have the right to pursue rewarding lives without discrimination from the state and the society in general. When it comes to his song compositions, he does not claim full ownership over them and “never thinks of them, as my (his) own creations” since primarily they come from the richness of an individual’s or a community’s stories.<sup>36</sup> In other words, they are stories of the people which cannot simply be taken as anyone’s private property. He adds “My work is not a career in music. My work is my duty to my nation. And in my book my nation owns the copyright to my work.”<sup>37</sup> Granada refuses to perpetuate inequality and social divide by not succumbing to capitalism’s apparatus to subject certain creations to the marginalizing conditions of intellectual property.

*Sulit na sulit ang buhay ko, lalo na sa pagsusulat ng mga kanta na walang nagdidikta*<sup>38</sup> writes Granada in the cover of his last independent-released 2009 album *Basurero*

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<sup>35</sup> Gary Granada. “No, I am not an Advocate of Intellectual Property.” Facebook, 22 June 2016. Web. 5 Aug. 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/mapa.09175851111/posts/969500556504870>

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> “This life is worth living, and made even more so by the songs I write undictated.” From the album “Basurero ng Luneta” (2009).



*ng Luneta*.<sup>39</sup> Such is an expression of the freeing culmination of “artistic slavery”. For the past decades, Granada intermittently accepted commissions to write jingles for different purposes. But his long experience in the industry has taught him that commercial viability is not the vocation of musicians but originality and creativity; substance not popularity. Granada, among many others, is a true Filipino artist who did not remain within the confines of “commercial music”. His artistry and genuine advocacies, have led him to let his music “spill into life itself.”<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

Music as such, proceeds from a spiral, dialectical unfolding marked by internal creative tensions, which in turn allows it to thrive and remain dynamic. The result of such dialectic process is what I call Music’s *digressive* character. Music thrives due to this ontological character that “turns away” or deviates from any external force that attempts to contain it. To put it in an analogy, the concept is to the audible part of music as the non-concept is to the inaudible part - its shadows, so to speak. Such digressiveness in music is closely tied with the concept of artistic freedom. Music will always remain uncontained by the apparatuses of the industry as long as the ambiance of artistic freedom is preserved. However, the culture industry - and its counterpart, the consumer society - espouses a “linear” process of music development. By controlling the industry, what happens is a subtle imposition of shallow aesthetic standards which purports to mirror the “voice” of the masses, but actually poses as *the* voice of the people. Backed up by the power of the media, music is now presented as a go-to “package” that offers what it thinks the society must consume. Modern-day listeners think that they are the ones *choosing* their kind of music, but the truth is no less than

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<sup>39</sup> His last album marks his 33<sup>rd</sup> year as a composer, performer, poet and songwriter.

<sup>40</sup> Quito, 1983, p. 38.

expressed in the reverse: the industry actually *chooses* the sort of music which the same industry deems wanted by the people, and no longer that which is necessarily needed by the people.

While it is true that the media (which is not entirely free from the manipulations of capitalism) may be deemed as a major driving force in shaping the culture of music in the Philippines, the quality of the people's attitude and response to what the media offers, on the other hand, is also a factor that cannot be simply dismissed. In other words, the people actually shape the media in the same way as the media shape the people. Both the music industry and the people are in a constant dialectical tension. This, for me, calls for a constant vigilance on the part of the "consumers". In a country where the majority, if not all, are music enthusiasts, there is a need to highlight the value of music as a critical voice in the society. There is more in music than entertainment, profit and distraction. I believe that we have more than enough means for amusement and recreation. What is lacking are musical or artistic outputs that will encourage people to change from just being absent-minded consumers to critical listeners; from being passive spectators to active participants in the society.

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