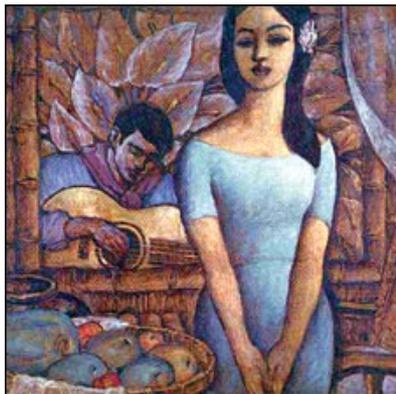


What is Harana?

by Florante Aguilar and Fides Enriquez



Harana was a traditional form of courtship in the Philippines wherein men introduced themselves and/or wooed women by singing underneath her window at night. It was widely practiced in old Philippines with a set of protocols, a code of conduct and a specific style of music.

In this endeavor, the most trusted instrument was the guitar. Its intimate sound complemented the sweetness of Spanish-influenced songs combined with the poetry and lyricism of the Tagalog language as it wafted through the breezy, tropical night.

For a young man in colonial Philippines, it was certainly advantageous to possess musical abilities as it was often useful in courting a Filipina woman. However, all is not lost if he lacks the singing ability. It was common practice to

enlist friends as well as the best musicians and singer or *haranista* in town. Thus, *harana* was not always a solitary endeavor. In fact, it was considered a social event.

Harana was an exclusively nocturnal practice. Due to the daytime tropical weather, the evening offers respite from the heat, a time when everybody comes alive, full of romantic ideas, and as is typical of Filipino nature, always ready to enjoy the company of friends and loved ones. It was during this old Philippines, before the widespread use of electricity, that *harana* was at its ripest.



A *harana* scene as depicted in the 1947 LVN movie *Sarung Banggi* starring Rogelio dela Rosa.

About the Music of Harana

by Florante Aguilar

(as published in *Filipinas Magazine*, 10/07)

For a tradition that is widely known in the Philippines, the *harana* yields surprisingly little documented history. It is often heard in passing, seen depicted in old paintings, referred to in Tagalog literature and in modern times, almost always made fun of as *pasas*.

One thing is certain. Nobody practices it anymore. Yet the list of *harana* songs one can dig up on Google suggests an evocative time in old Philippines - *Natutulog Ka Na Ba Sinta?* (Are You Asleep, My Love?), *Kay Lungkot Nitong Hating Gabi* (How Sad is This Night), *O Ilaw* (Oh Light), *Umaga Na Pala* (Morning Has Arrived).

Another thing certain is that some of the songs filtered through time and are heard in various incarnations, often as pop or jazz songs by current Filipino singers.

The songs are sometimes in the *kundiman* form, evoking the *haranista's* humble origins, his offer of unequalled love and always assuming that such love is unrequited. In fact, *kundiman* is a composite of the phrase *Kung hindi man* (literally, "If It is Not"), a declaration that implies, "if it's not meant to be" or "if you do not love me". Such proclamations suggest that *harana* was performed in a rural setting, sort of a poor man's way to date a '*dalagang Pilipina*'. A son of a wealthy sugar cane hacienda owner can hardly be expected to sing such songs. Depictions of *harana* done in front of a small hut also support this notion.

Describing *harana* music itself is a study in Philippine colonial history - both from Spain and the United States. The rhythm is almost always in *habanera*. Think of the rhythm from the popular aria *Habanera* from Bizet's opera *Carmen*. Played on solo guitar and slowed down to a grind, the result is a lilting tropical rhythm . Crooning a la Bing Crosby on top of that, you get *harana* in the Ruben Tagalog style of the 1940's.

To find out more about harana, please go to Florante's blog to read topics on:

- [Top 10 Misconceptions About Harana](#)
- [The Difference Between Harana and Kundiman](#)
- [The Different Stages of Filipino Serenading](#)
- [Harana and the Latin Rhythms](#)

Ref.: <http://www.haranathemovie.com/whatisharana.html>

Look more about Harana here www.Courtship.PhilippineCulture.ph