

# Rondalla's struggle to past until present essay sample

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



This research paper widens the knowledge of people, especially for the younger generations, about the existence and importance of Filipino Folk Music through exploring the world of Rondalla. It shows the importance Rondalla to the Filipino society through exploring its roots, (where it originated) and through showcasing the methods of revival of the art at present. This research pushes one to explore its pathway of development until it bloomed and became an important factor for the Philippine culture. Rondalla is more than just a group of stringed instruments, it is a group showcasing the beauty of our own music with the unity and uniqueness of its melody from other countries. Finally, this research, aside from giving the acts and aspects of Rondalla, also makes one aware of the deterioration of the art and persuades one to prevent its loss from our own Philippine culture.

### Introduction

One of the greatest ways to express oneself is through music. It brings out one's emotions and can influence the moods and feeling of a person. Music can serve a lot of purpose: it can be used as means of communication and it can even be a medicine for the soul; but the most common purpose of music is for entertainment.

In the early days, with our ancestor's limited knowledge of, they only know how to produce simple sounds and melodies through the limited sources in their environment along with their creativity and resourcefulness. As time pass, because of people's curiosity and thirst for knowledge of music, they began to try and explore new things to enhance their concept about music. For instance, before, the instruments used to produce, music were mere

materials available in the environment, but now, people were able to come up with new tools and instruments. Soon, great number of instruments were invented that they were classified into groups, like chordophone, idiophone and membranophone. Then, people formed groups according to their classification, melody they produce and to their taste of music; groups like rock band, orchestra and our own Rondalla.

Rondalla is a legacy that we inherited from our great ancestors; it is an art that gives more life and color to our already rich culture, it is the sound that enhances the uniqueness of Filipino music, and most of all, it is the one that strengthens and remind us the true beauty of our Filipino roots. But because of what we call neo- colonialism, we tend to neglect our own culture and prefer the influences given to us by other countries. Even though our generation now exists under the modernized era, we must not completely “ shut out” our own music which is a big part of our rich heritage. It is essential for us to keep parts of our culture, especially Rondalla, from extinction because these parts of our culture is what defines our Filipino culture. Statement of the Problem:

This research aims to persuade its readers to know how great and important Rondalla is. It also informs everyone that we have a music that we should preserve because it is one of the most important factors that define our Filipino culture.

### History of Rondalla

A Rondalla is an ensemble of stringed instruments that are played with a

plectrum or pick. Rondalla's originated in Spain but became most popular in Philippine folk music. Philippine Rondalla instruments are made of native Philippine wood and played with a tortoise-shell plectrum. The word "Rondalla" is from the Spanish ronda, meaning "serenade." The core instruments of Spanish Rondallas are the guitar, the mandolin and the lute. Rondallas usually are accompanied by at least one singer and sometimes by percussionists playing handheld instruments. The first version says in the beginning it was a group of young men who went around regularly playing and singing in front of the houses. The second version says it was a group of musicians begging for alms. The group it says was called murza or murga and there were also groups like it in Spain and Mexico. The third version says it was a musicians group playing on the stage and that it was called comparza.

And a fourth version says that it was a typical music group popular among universities in Spain as the estudiantina — tuna for short. The members of the group played mandolins, violins, guitars, flutes, cellos, basses, tambourines, castanets, and triangles and the students donned pirate costumes.

The terms comparza and Rondalla seemed popular in the higher strata of musical society. They have the same connotation. In the Philippines, the term comparza was popularly applied to the group only during the Spanish regime and up to the early years of the American domination, and later on, the Rondalla took over.

### Timeline ( Evolution of Rondalla):

- \* 16th century-String instruments existed in Spain, bringing with them Spanish Rondalla, first with bandurias, violins, guitars, flutes cellos, basses, tambourines, castanets and triangles but was changed into 14 stringed instrument added by other instruments commonly made by Philippine wood like langka, kamagong narra and ballantinao to modify Philippine culture.
- \* 18th century- Introduced in the different parts of the Philippines. The widespread of Rondalla in the whole country because it was commonly used for entertainment for guests primarily alongside with Philippine Folk dance.
- \* 19th century-It has enriched the musical life of Filipinos of all ages, Rondalla was not only considered as an accompaniment for Philippine folk dance but an independent music as well. It is because several Rondalla pieces was composed. More personalities come arise like Antonio Molina, Comparza Joaquin, which played aboard the American Luxury Liner; groups like Rondalla Ideal, Rondalla Filarmonica Juvenal (composed of teenagers) and Yellow Taxi Rondalla by Lucio San pedro
- \* 1949- All-Star Filipino Rondalla by Juan Silos Jr., also known as father of Rondalla, encompassed Philippine music through Rondalla. Different instrumentation has formed like piccolo, bandurria, laud, octavina, guitar and bass that became the standard Filipino Rondalla instruments, percussion instruments were added later.
- \* 1960- It became popular in the Philippines and they regularly competed.

\* 1963- 1st Rondalla completion that was aired at ABS-CBN TV "Hamon sa kampeon"

\* Nov. 12, 1978- Enrico Pio Toledo presented a rondalla festival at the CCP main theater. Beforehand, Rondalla competitions were held in participation with NAMCYA (National Music Competitions for Young Artists) in CCP.

\* 1998- Fil-Am veteran's rondalla formed by George Gange - Gauge was really part of the navy and was given recognitions because of outstanding service, but he is also a good musician and became a part of Rondalla since child.

- The kababayang rondalla was formed

\* Late 20th to early 20st century- The popularity in Japan has waned, but groups in other countries, including the US and Japan help keep the tradition alive. Further groups of

Rondalla was formed, even schools that were first established by Silos.

Schools of

Rondalla like St. Anthony's Institution, Centro Escolar University, Assumption College,

Stelle Maris College

-Rondalla pioneers can be classified into two.

1. Foreign based- ex: Joseph Eustace Earl Peter's NUS or National University of Singapore for Musical Activities.

2. Philippine based-ex: Bayani Mendoza de Leon's Pasakat- Samahan

Rondalla

- \* 2004- First international Rondalla festival in Bicol region.
- \* 2007- second international Rondalla festival in Dumaguete City - a week long gathering of plucked string masters from Europe, Asia, The Arab region, Australia and the Philippines.
- \* 2010- 3rd Internation Rondalla Festival: Cuerdas ng Pagkakaysa
- \*International Festivals for Rondalla were established to revive the spirit of Rondalla.

### Instruments of Rondalla

The instruments of the standard Filipino Rondalla have similarities in structure and are played with a plectrum made out of turtle shell, also called "pick" by others, except for the bass guitar (double bass) which is played by "plucking". Except for the guitar and bass guitar, all are 14- stringed consisting of six (6) sets of strings tuned in the intervals of fourths, each set consisting of 1, 2 or 3 string/s. The purpose of the doubling or tripling of strings is to produce better sound and increase tone volume.

The standard Filipino rondalla instruments are: bandurria, octavina, laud, guitar, double bass and percussions.

#### A. Main Instruments:

##### A. 1 Bandurria

The bandurria is a small instrument played by a plectrum, originally found in Spain and parts of Latin America.

Filipino artists copied the Spanish guitar and bandurria during the Spanish colonial era. These two instruments, combined with several other new instruments, became the base of the Filipino Rondalla.

Besides the regular Bandurria, there is the piccolo Bandurria. It is smaller in size and shaped like a teardrop. Both the regular bandurria and the piccolo bandurria have six sets of strings tuned in intervals of fourths: the first highest string being G (sol), followed by

D (re), A (la), E (mi), B (si), and F# (fa#).

The piccolo bandurria resembles the standard bandurria, but is tuned an octave higher. It plays all forms of variations, while the standard bandurria plays melody. A. 2 Guitar

The guitar is a stringed instrument that belongs to the lute family; it is either plucked or strummed and it plays the rhythm for the rondalla. It has frets on the fingerboard, six strings, made of wood and has sidewalls curving inward, and a flat back. At the centre of its face is a hole from which sound is produced within the chamber. The strings of a classical guitar is either a combination of nylon strands with fine metal spun around it while a modern day guitars makes use of metal for all strings. Nineteen frets of silver or nickel mark the guitar's total range of three-and-a-half octaves. The guitar is tuned according to the country standard, starting from the lowest to the highest: E, A, D, G, B, and E.



### A. 3 Laud

The laud is a tear-shaped instrument used in the Philippine rondalla. It is similar in shape to the bandurria, but has f-holes instead of the usual round hole of the bandurria, and a longer neck.

The laud is tuned in the same manner as the bandurria: from the highest G, D, A,

E, B, and F#. The laud, however, is tuned an octave lower than the bandurria. It mainly plays the contrapuntal parts (countermelody) or the second voice for others. A. 4 Octavina

The octavina is a musical instrument modelled after the Spanish guitar, and the regular part of the Philippine rondalla. It looks like small guitar, with a round hole in the middle. Unlike the guitar, however, it has six sets of doubled stings, and is played with a plectrum. It is turned in the same manner as the bandurria but, like the laud, it is tuned as octave lower: its pitches, starting from the highest are G, D, A, E. B, and F#.

What the tenor voice to the choir, the octavina is to the rondalla. It frequently plays the melodic counter parts or fills in the harmonies by playing the lower notes in accompaniment or in unison with the bass.

### A. 5 Double Bass

The Double Bass is a violin-shaped plucked instrument. It is similar to the violin but it is bigger, and tuned in reverse to the violin: from the highest G, D, A, and E. The double bass plays as a background to the melody.

The bass voice of the choir is the role of the double bass. It helps with the

dynamics of the melody: heavy and light.

## B. Secondary Instruments

### B. 1 Mandolin

The mandolin is a pear-shaped plucked stringed instrument of Italian origin belonging to the lute family. An open sound hole lies below the root of the neck. Earlier mandolins had circular sound holes, while later ones featured oblong sound holes. The low wooden bridge has ivory or bone facing. A plate of tortoise shell or hardwood above the bridge protects the body from being scratched by the plectrum with which the mandolin is played. The instrument has a short neck with a fingerboard furnished with 14 to 17 fixed frets of metal or ivory, and spaced in semitones. The peg holder is flat and bent slightly backwards. There are eight strings arranged in double courses. The tonal range is two octaves and one tone, from G to A. Tuning is in fifths: G, D, A, E.

### B. 2 Violin

The violin is a bowed string instrument, the body of which is a curvaceous hollow box about 35.5 cm long. The body is divided into three precisely proportioned sections; the middle, being the narrowest, looks like a “waistline”.

Unlike the bandurria, it has two f-shaped sound holes in the middle of the soundboard.

It has four strings tuned to G, D, A, and E.

The violin plays different variations in the rondalla and plays the melody as well.

### B. 3 Percussion

Other instruments in the string and percussion sections are added when the rondalla must assume a symphonic stature. In this case the number of players increases proportionately doubling or tripling the number of original and authentic instruments of the group. The bass drum, snare drum, cymbal, triangle, tambourine, marimba, timpani and kettle may be added for the rhythmic effects.

In example; the UPA&F Rondalla uses the maracas in one of their musical rendition. Maracas are gourd or gourd-shaped rattles filled with seeds or pebbles and used often in pairs as a rhythmic instrument.

Rondalla, in the earlier times is an eight- member Rondalla ensemble usually has four bandurrias, one laud, one octavina, one guitar, and one bass guitar. A larger group of 30 members, would have 16 bandurrias, 3 piccolos, 3 laud, 3 octavinas, 3 guitars and 2 basses. Today, number of members or instruments per section: bandurria, octavina or laud, guitar, double bass may have equal distribution, and a drumset for the percussions.

### The Importance of Rondalla

#### Role of Rondalla in the Philippine Culture

Filipinos, before, are used with all the music around them. They make music out of chopped bamboos and some other woods. Music has been a habit to the Filipinos. As the Spaniards first introduced the guitar to the Filipinos,

they, the Filipinos, grew an interest in learning how to play a guitar. The Spaniards then introduced Rondalla and made a Rondalla group composed of Filipinos. Not for long, the Filipinos, especially the youth, were very eager to be a member of the Rondalla group.

Rondalla has been a part of the Philippine's culture and one of the Filipino Music.

The Rondalla group are often played in;

- \* Fiestas
- \* Weddings
- \* Folk Dances
- \* Other special Occasions

Its compabability with native Philippines music allowed the Rondalla to figure prominently in Filipino rural community life, providing accompaniment to folk dancing and singing as well as a featured ensemble. Rondalla became the basis of music in the Philippine culture and was used in everyday life of people. It also justified the music of folk dance because of their features like precision of the notes and pleasant harmony of sounds. It also became a medium of communication before to express one's feelings in a lot different way especially love, for instance, the way men court women before.

Filipino Rondalla has a great role in the Philippines as it has a lot of songs from the " Musikang Panlipi" to the modern songs today. They bind with the folk music and folk dances. The Rondalla limit their following repertoire;

- \* Folk music
- \* Folk dances
- \* Kundiman
- \* Waltz
- \* Danza
- \* Balitaw
- \* March music
- \* Modern music
- \* Contemporary melodies
- \* Foreign and Filipino classics

Rondalla serves as one of the Philippine's "Katutubong musika". Even though it has originated from Spain, it has been considered as one of our culture. It's role in the Philippines is to make and let all Philippine folk culture to stay alive. The number one song, accompanied by the Rondalla, made the Filipino culture stay alive. this song is famously titled Kalesa. Tinikling is a folk dance mainly accompanied by the Rondalla

Over the years, Rondalla has achieved great memories to some Filipino musicians. Because of thede composers, they have gave more interest to some youths to join the Rondalla group. Juan Silos also known as the "Ama ng Rondalla" are one of those great Filipino musicians who gave interest to the youth.

Nowadays, Rondalla is slowly fading as a new modernized age came. Others wanted to preserve Rondalla as our own native music. The University of the

Philippines Alumni & Friends Rondalla proposed a concert tour around and outside the country. The purpose the U. P & F. R propose this kind of concert is to;

\* To promote the Philippine cultural heritage through indigenous musical instruments \* To preserve and promote the native music of the Philippines \* To propagate the Rondalla as a native string ensemble

#### Importance of Rondalla in People or Personalities in Music

Rondalla is more than just a group of stringed instrument to other people. To them it means more than that for they know its deeper meaning and value to our country and our culture. Some example of these people are: Bayani De Leon, a writer and composer, who attempted to transform Rondalla to symphonic entity and said that the attempt in Rondalla compositions is to achieve two goals: 1) to show capacity of the Rondalla of interpreting classical music and 2) to give the Rondalla a symphonic status; Juan Silos Jr., a composer and arranger, or also known as the " Father of Rondalla" who organized several groups who al displayed versatility with the performance of classical compositions especially Tchaikovsky's; and who can forget Ramon Santos, who, besides his high international academic attainment in music, went back to his motherland to learn, to teach and to help in reviving Rondalla. They are just among the plenty people who practically devote their lives into bringing back Rondalla and keeping it alive. They do this without bearing in mind of someday becoming famous because , but they do this because they want to and choose to. The importance of Rondalla on their lives can be seen in every arrangement, composition and work they make.

Every single note in their composition and work they make. Every single note in their composition shows their belief of the need for Rondalla in our culture.

Importance of Rondalla in Music itself:

In every big things created by humanity every now and then, smaller bits of what made up these big things are often not given attention, like the origin of our music today, folk music. When we say Rondalla one can immediately connect it to folk music. Folk music did a very big part in our community today, it helped the development of music that resulted to a wider and more beautiful scope that partly defined our culture and eventually, also defined the nature of people of today. Rondalla is important to music because Filipino Rondalla has a wide repertoire, ranging from folk to modern and contemporary tunes as well as Filipino and foreign classics. This means, like orchestras, brass band or rock it can depict and showcase modern melodies and classical tunes, but unlike them, Rondalla can depict Filipino's folk music which is the root of every music that we hear of now. Rondalla's flexible ability to play Western European songs, mostly arias and symphonic overtures, contemporary music at the same time folk music, exposes a listeners ears not only to the tune of what we call modern songs but also to the melodic theme of folk that also makes them aware and appreciate our own culture.

Rondalla also gives the light life, expressive and emotional feeling of music. Time have indeed took up its effect in music, it opens to what we call heavy music and may bring up to a dark aura, opposite to the heart lightening sound of traditional music.

Rondalla is indeed important to music, which is why even though people have somewhat neglected this kind of music, others are still trying to revive it, to also revive Filipino music. That is why festivals like the “Cuerdas ng Pagkakaysa” for Filipinos not to completely forget about this music and for young generations to know about this music more. “We certainly hope that this festival will not only sustain the development of an important musical patrimony but more importantly will also promote global peace and understanding through a shared music tradition.” said Santos. It shows that through this kind of music, one will not only look simply at the origin music may also see the essence of unity that it may bring to all. Conclusion

Rondalla gives a lot of aspect in us Filipinos; it defines us Filipinos, our roots and our culture. It gives us way to appreciate folk music at the same time the essence of culture and music itself. It uplifts the spirit of us Filipinos with the strength of our unique music to make us unite. Rondalla is more than a group of stringed instrument, it is a group full of foundations of the Filipino culture. A group capable of unlocking the forgotten treasures of the past. But because of different factors that changed humanity, because of modernity, we tend to forget these roots, these legacy that our ancestors left us. In return, we must pay back to our ancestors the rich culture they gave us through preserving this, and we, especially the next generations must unite and protect it to make Filipino's heritage stronger and richer.

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