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# MAGUINDANAO KULINTANG AESTHETIC IN THE DIASPORA: HONORING THE LEGACY OF DANONGAN KALANDUYAN

*Bernard Ellorin*



**K**nown affectionately as “the grandfather of kulintang music in the United States,” the late Danongan Kalanduyan, Maguindanao master artist and National Heritage Fellow, brought an indigenous genre of Philippine gong music abroad which led to a ripple effect of multiple kulintang ensembles being established in the Filipino American Diaspora. Many of his non-Maguindanaon students are streamlined into two branches of conservation: practitioners of the traditional repertoire and contemporary innovators fusing kulintang with foreign musical elements. Nonetheless, Kalanduyan’s pervasive lineage has established an aesthetic rooted in the traditional repertoire from his hometown of Datu Piang, Cotabato. Since his passing in September 2016, however, Kalanduyan’s disciples are compelled to continue his legacy.

However, what steps have been made by his own direct descendants to continue the family tradition? The video of our culminating performance for the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA), held on October 20, 2019, features the unique journey of reconnecting with the legacy of Danongan Kalanduyan through his long-time student, Bernard Ellorin PhD, and Kimberly “Kim” Kalanduyan-Villanueva, his eldest grandchild. As part of the ACTA fellowship, both Bernard and Kim are fulfilling the urgency to continue the Kalanduyan legacy within the direct bloodline. Kim, as part of Ellorin’s Pakaraguian Kulintang Ensemble, is able to reconnect not only with her Maguindanaon culture, but also bridges the cultural relationship she hardly had with her grandfather. Kim and Bernard’s bond throughout the apprenticeship reveals a transnational approach that respectfully honors the legacy of the Kalanduyan family through a research excursion to Cotabato. She reconnects with relatives she has never met before, and Bernard fulfills his *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) to Kim’s grandfather for instilling the knowledge of kulintang music for over twenty-six years. This apprenticeship changes the narrative of kulintang music from an exoticized instrument linked to an imagined pre-colonial past, to a living tradition that is inherited by family members from generation to generation. In sum, the legacy of Danongan Kalanduyan is now an empowering tangible legacy that his own grandchildren will continue to nurture as a distinctly musical heritage from the Kalanduyan family of Maguindanao master musicians.