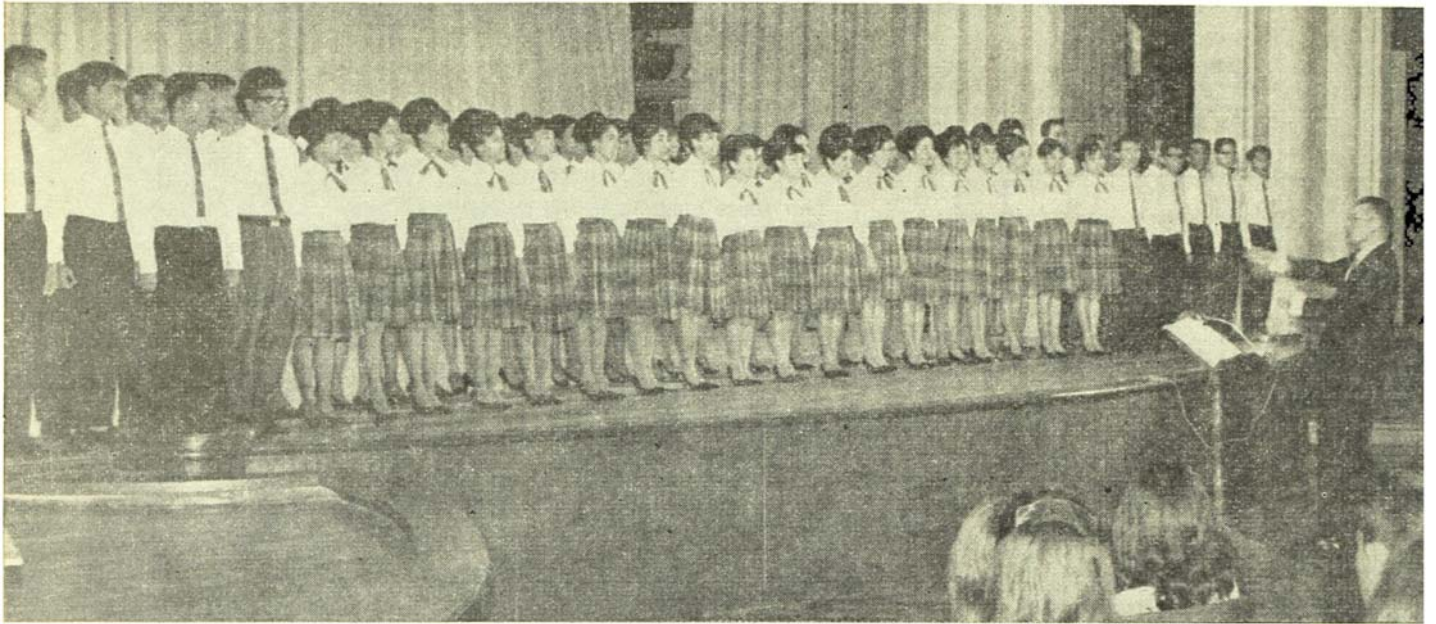


by PORFIRIO S. DACLAN

The USC Choristers



MUSIC has always been with man since time immemorial. Man has been preoccupied with musical activity ever since he learned to imitate the cat-calls of mating birds and to express his heart's woes and happiness in a hum, a whistle or a song. He has been consciously or unconsciously enjoying its cadences, its infectious melodies, its resonances and its rhythms ever since he learned to speak and to communicate. For it is said that even in his speech or in his snore, man is musical.

The ancient philosophers believed that music played an important role in the development of man's character. Plato recommended that music be taught to the young Greeks, together with the teaching of other arts like painting, sculpture, poetry and public speaking. The early Christian Fathers encouraged young boys and girls to join in the Church choir, and clergy and laity worshipped God in prayer and song.

Much has been heard of music and much more has been written about it that today it has become an ordinary ingredient of man's daily existence. A housewife prepares dinner with the strains of the violin playing Schubert's Serenade tapping upon the tympanum of her ears; an executive seeks respite from the tedium of office chores by turning on a transistor radio and immediately a dull office becomes a music room; a teacher in a grade-school class brings music to young ears; and a congregation stands up reverently in church in re-

sponse to a cue to sing a Sunday mass hymn.

Indeed, man and music, good or bad, have always been together as a cause to an effect, as tit is for tat. For one proceeds from the other as a river well from its springs. Music, like any other art, is Adam pouring the "daemon" of his creative imagination by the composition of melodies expressive of his love for God, for country or for woman, and these have come down to us by rote or memory through the inspired warblings of minstrels or the genius of musicians. And through the means of radio, electronics and the record, music is brought within the ken of thousands of music lovers who hanker for metets or mersey madrigals, for Beethoven or the Beatles. Music today has ceased to be the province of the few; it has become an ordinary indulgence of the many.

In the University of San Carlos, we have a group banded together for the "dear delight" of music, the sheer love of singing, the joy of listening to the sonorous quality of the human voice.

Their musical director was Stanley Munro and the group he called the Carolinian Choristers. In August of 1965, the group started their rehearsals and in December they held their first concert.

The Christmas concert was the first public appearance of the group. It was a two-night affair and each night a definite conquest of the audiences hearts. The chorister's faces glowed in candle light and when they sang, the audience'

reaction was that of an almost reverent quiet and a burst of applause broke loose after a carol was sung through. This silence of the audience was understandably self-imposed for they wanted to hear harmony. They laughed and clapped their hands, they were one with the choristers.

The membership of the group swelled to 60 voices, and the music director sang with the choristers, sweated out with them, slaved with them in the hectic rehearsals.

During the USC College days, the Choristers publicly appeared again before an open-air audience that were entertained by the group's choral rendition of "Laylay Agolaylay" (a Visayan folk song), "If I Loved You," and the stirring "Johnny Comes Marching Home." The reaction was unanimous — the audience wanted more.

After the college days, the choristers braced themselves for a summer concert. This was an ambitious choral project requiring 25 songs for a night's performance, involving a good number of the works of the musical "greats" such as Handel, Morley and modern music like those of Rogers and Mammerstein. They didn't mind the demanding rehearsals, because for the choristers, singing is an experience that removes the worries of the mind and lifts the heart from the depths of despair. For it is the charm of music that drew the group together. They find joy in singing together. The repertoire of the Summer Concert includ-



ed an interesting variety of excellent music, that is, music of high melodious quality, taking the form of hymns or spirituals, war songs, which have won the heart of modern listeners and a set of novelty songs. The April concert was really a musical treat, a feast for the ears and the eyes. For the singers not only sang their music, they also danced to it. The love songs were done with the smiling singers strewn on the stage in pairs, the men attired in dark suits, the women in colorful gowns. The war songs were introduced to the audience with the choristers doing left and right flank marching on the stage as they warbled and whistled the marital tunes.

The Carolinian choristers showed us how much a group can achieve by patience and discipline, by interest and ideas. The rehearsals were demanding almost to the point of being exacting, but the choristers went through them with undying eagerness — this was patience. The group at times appeared "incorrigible in their musical faults and lapses in tune but the music director advanced with a little" scolding and towed the unruly tunes of the singers to the musical line — this was discipline. The poetry was long and the music was difficult. Both were to be committed to memory, to be mastered — but the concerts were finally sung with only piano and director's musical sleight of hand as guide. — This was interest and the choristers had much of it. The concerts aimed to present man and music in miniature. The stage

was set into scenes and song-settings that present the life of man in song and dance. It was a triumph of a concert. The glee club is composed of Carolinians of exciting personalities. A good number of them are scholars, and all of them have the natural power to sing the range of an octave.

Father John Berry is the spiritual adviser of the Choristers. He has also contributed greatly to the success of the choral group, sharing their heartaches and their happiness.

President of the group is Gideon Villafior an enterprising young man, always on the go.

When Mr. Munro announced that he was departing for Canada to accept an assistant dean's position in the University of Alberta every chorister thought this was the beginning of the end of the group. They were sad for they have learned to love their director. They had long been associated with him and the thought of parting was something they didn't wish to entertain. But Mr. Munro and his wife Aileen, who incidentally was also a chorister, had to leave for good. So the choristers held a send-off party where, in midst of sighs, they hankered for a Munro song. The latter obliged with a song, "Profundo" and the choristers responded with "Vaya con Dios."

For this school year, a new director of the choristers has arrived. Like his predecessor, Mr. John Araneta has a passion for music. He has composed a number of musical pieces. The Caro-

linian audience have reason to expect much from him and his "adopted" choristers. The new director and his group have not yet revealed their plans for Christmas. Whether they would present another choral concert of carols or "The Messiah", the remains to be seen. But one thing is sure. The departure of Mr. Munro has not cooled the musical flame in the choristers' hearts. The group has remained alive and singing and they will never stop, so long as there are songs to be sung. We wish them godspeed!



A Description

Long white dunes
Snaking sands . . .
On the wrinkled sea;
A lonely hawk
Is lost.

—Carlos Emperio