

1) Handwritten Letter

from PAUL KOHNEN ¹⁾

to TOM FRINTA (dated 8th June 2013) – original: Exhibit-1 (links)

“Dear Mr. Frinta,

as promised I am sending you ... attached a paper on our 1973 master class. At our second master class 22. Feb – 24. Mar 1974 the luthier Hubert Schnorr was present ... I vividly remember the enthusiasm that Hubert evoked after having repaired some of the instruments. At the time there was no competent luthier in Manila ...

I wish you all the best and send you my fondest greetings”

2) Report on Master Class of Strings 23. Feb – 31. Mar 1973

from NELLY SÖREGY (violin), PAUL KOHNEN (viola) and GERDA ANGERMANN (cello) ¹⁾

to GOETHE INSTITUTE MUNICH – original: Exhibit-2 (links)

“The official reception at the President’s office of the University of the Philippines, the teachers’ warm welcome – especially the strings – gave us a first impression of the importance and the expectation connected to our master class.

Compared to German standards the performance level at the UP College of Music is modest but not bad. **The reasons for this deficiency becomes quickly apparent through the absence of qualified teachers. The under-developed methodology became particularly visible with talented and very sensitive students.** Since the handling of the instrument is an indispensable prerequisite for artistic achievement, our work – should it be fertile - concentrated on two issues.

1. Fundamental techniques, a clear notion of the concept of movement, the correction of wrong playing habits, finally the incorporation of basic works in violin and viola literature, e.g. the Kreutzer Etudes.
2. Introduction into the artistic interpretation, into the classic rules of phrasing, the interaction in chamber music and chamber orchestra.

After having had twice daily intensive training the attendees hardly had any time to practice. Therefore the full extent of the teaching – eagerly noted by the teachers - will take some months before coming to fruition with each individual student. The final concert aired by the Philippine Broadcasting Service managed to show what could be achieved in only three weeks. We were particularly impressed by the commitment of all. This was only surpassed by their gratitude. Their request for us to stay for at least one full year is another sign to what extent certain developing nations wish to improve themselves in classic music.”

3) Recent Interview with Paul Kohnen

The President of UP was at the time Salvador P. Lopez. The initiative for this master class had originated from Prof. Sergio Esmilla, department head of the strings. The project was funded by Goethe Institute Munich.

While the government in the seventies spent more on cultural programs than any other government ever since 1946 (Independence), the cultural budget in the years 1985 – 2016 collapsed to almost zero. In the seventies there seemed the inherent danger for the College to lose academic independence. Lopez saw this and sought a re-birth of the UP system by being politically highly active defending academic autonomy against militarization. He was considered a progressive and militant member of UP reform.

4) What has changed over the past 40 years?

POSITIVE:

- String Instruments can now be maintained by a luthier in the Philippines.
- Some private initiatives have started strings schools for the very young.

NEGATIVE:

- The level of proficiency has not increased. ²⁾
- Neighbor countries are overtaking.
- Performance teachers are home grown. ³⁾
- Interest to invite internationally famed string players, e.g. chamber groups, is not visible.
- Quality of instruments is below average.

REASONS:

- Past governments have not been supportive of classic music – quite to the contrary – the culture budget to tax income ratio is well below other countries in East Asia.
- The national pride of Filipinos frequently rejects criticism. The Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra is about the only orchestra in the world that prides itself by being National rather than to comprise of the best musicians.
- Many will rather want to re-invent the wheel than accept advice from foreign specialists. This freezes the learning process.

RESULT:

- Musicians as well as audience remain underexposed towards the wealth of classic music and how it ought to be performed.
- College graduates find it enormously hard to be accepted by leading Western Colleges of Music. ⁴⁾

5) NOTES:

1) Trio giving master classes at UP College of Music in 1973 and 1974:

- Nelly Söregi (1932 - 2004), Professor for violin at "Hochschule für Musik und Theater" Hamburg.
- Gerda Angermann (1920 – 2014), Solocellistin of NDR Sinfonieorchester.
- Paul Kohnen (1926 -), Viola - Member of the Bus-Quartet, 1948 department head Chamber Music at the Conservatory Saarbrücken, 1963 Concert master Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken.
- Ernesto Mampaey (1929 -), Violin, Concert master Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg

- 2) As evidence may serve the recently recorded Concert for Piano and Orchestra No.26 in D major KV537 with Belle Yi (piano) and the MSO (Manila Symphony Orchestra). The audio-technically flawless recording could not be put on CD because the strings were incompetent of playing the concert properly although they had been booked many months ahead:
<https://youtu.be/EhjMXWQvACK>
- 3) In 2008 we recorded some of the most competent violin students in Manila. Their best had been under the tutelage of one of Manila's most well-known violin teachers for 10 years. We proposed the student for a scholarship, however we were told since the 23-year old violin student did not know how to support the violin's neck properly with his left hand, he would be too old to eradicate such basically wrong practices. Evidently his Filipino teacher did not know how to hold the violin himself, or did not care to correct his student. – 8 years later this Filipino student is now entertaining in hotel malls while two others (Canadian and Russian) from the same college that had turned down the Filipino are now part of the Eliot Quartet:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kyxpnsi3y58>
- 4) Since the year 2000
 - a. STRINGS: No strings student from a Filipino College was able to complete a Bachelor or a post-graduate course in Germany/Austria.
 - b. VOICE: There has been only one Filipino post-graduate student who was accepted and completed studies in Germany/Austria. This was Ena Maria Aldecoa (studying 2010-2014) with the "Solistenexamen" – equivalent to a PhD in performance. She invested in substantial additional work / coaching after her College Master to be accepted in Germany.

LINKS

- Exhibit-1: Handwritten letter: <http://bit.ly/1rhRX30>
- Exhibit-2: Report on Master Class of Strings 1973: <http://bit.ly/1UbqvOK>
- Music Link: Strings Duo in G major KV 423 (Ernesto Mampaey, violin, Paul Kohnen, viola)
<http://bit.ly/1UbjVb5>