

# Gathering with Gratitude: A Year-Long Celebration of Music, Camaraderie, and Purpose

by Veralyn Monte

## Gathering with Gratitude



### A year-long adventure for the Kodály Society of the Philippines!

2025 was a very special year for the Kodály Society of the Philippines (KSP). It was the 40th founding anniversary of the organization as well as the 25th year of the Kodaly Certificate Course in the Philippines. These milestones celebrated decades of training Filipino music educators in Kodály-based musicianship and pedagogy. The KSP Board of Directors, led by its then president, Ms. Roselle Elinore “Leleng” H. Matias, was determined to make that year memorable and meaningful for everyone.

First among the series of workshops was the **Koro Kodály: Applications of the Kodaly Approach in Choral Rehearsals**, facilitated by Danny and Vera Monte in February 2025. This whole-day workshop catered to conductors and music teachers alike,

The poster for the Koro Kodály event has a black background. At the top, "KORO KODÁLY" is written in large, white, serif, all-caps font. Below it, "Applications of the Kodály Approach in Choral Rehearsals" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. A yellow horizontal bar contains the text "BY DANILO N. MONTE, JR. &amp; VERALYN DEL ROSARIO-MONTE" in black, all-caps font. Below this bar, the event details are listed in white, all-caps font: "SATURDAY // FEBRUARY 22, 2025 // 8AM-4PM WORKSHOP // 4-5PM CONCERT // SISTER IRMENGANDIS HALL // ST. SCHOLASTICA'S ACADEMY MARIKINA". On the right side of the poster, there is a small photograph of two people, a man and a woman, smiling and raising their arms in a celebratory gesture.

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especially those who had yet to bridge the gap between the Kodály approach and their individual styles of conducting. It started with a Musicianship session with Vera Monte, then a lecture on rehearsal technique with Danny Monte. A unique feature of the workshop was an actual demonstration of the approach with the help of a clinic choir, the St. Scholastica's Academy, Marikina High School Glee Club. The group learned a new piece while the participants observed. The workshop culminated in a concert performed by the clinic choir.



One of the highlights of the year, **the 25th Kodály Certificate Course**, was held in June 2025, with guest instructor and choral clinician, Dr. Árpád Tóth. Participants came from all over the Philippines, facing gruelling but fulfilling activities that the instructors prepared for them. An additional feature of the certificate course was the choral clinic **KANTA! 4**. The participating choirs were the Coro Jesu (Krystl Buesa, conductor), FAITH Colleges Minstrels (Arjay Viray, conductor), Coro San Benildo (Krystl Buesa), Guang Ming College Chorus (Arjay Viray), Muzon Harmony Hills High School Choir (Kristine Bracamonte-Gutierrez), and the St. Scholastica's Academy, Marikina High School Glee Club (Danny Monte). All these activities were housed at the Philippine Women's University, which has hosted the certificate course and most of the KSP-sponsored workshops since 2009. It is the only university in the Philippines that offers an M.A. in Music Education with Emphasis in Kodály Approach.



The event was graced by no less than Her Excellency Titanilla Toth, Ambassador of Hungary in Manila. Her inspiring message included the joint milestones of KSP and IKS, 2025 also being the Jubilee (50th) Year of the International Kodály Society (formed in 1975). She spoke on the

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important role of the Kodály Society of the Philippines in promoting the Kodály philosophy in “nurturing musicality and preserving cultural identity through melody”.

In the culminating concert, the history of the Kodály Society of the Philippines was shared through a video presentation. It made the participants and KSP members feel the significance of being part of the organization as well as the weight of being able to continue the mission begun by the founding members of the KSP.

Several founding members were recognized that night: Mrs. Lualhati Santillan and Dr. Rosemarie Banta who were present during the event, Prof. Carolyn Cheng, a current officer of the KSP, and Dr. Miriam Factora, represented by her sister, Betty Merritt, and niece, Mia Merritt. It was really a moment of gratitude for all their sacrifices for the KSP. Having all the participants of the certificate course and the choral clinics join together to sing **Esti Dal** by **Zoltán Kodály** was truly a fitting way to end such an event!



Another exciting workshop was offered the following month, facilitated by Ms. Gemma Arguelles, entitled **Kodály Sampler: An Introduction to Applications in the Classroom and Choir**. As always, Gemma did an exceptional job of sharing her personal techniques and activities that achieve magical results with her choral groups!

Rounding out the year was the workshop **Moves and Grooves 2.0: A Dalcroze and Orff Workshop** held by the mother and daughter tandem Carolyn and Catherine Cheng. They shared movement ideas and activities appropriate for children from pre-school to high school.



Participants sang, moved, created and improvised, learning how these activities could stimulate and engage their students.

In the latter part of November, a new set of board members was elected during the General Assembly of the Kodály Society of the Philippines with the presidency being passed on from Ms. Roselle Elinore Matias to Mrs. Rea Jimenez.



The year-long celebration did not end there. A sumptuous “dessert” of a training was given by none other than Dr. Miriam Factora in January 2026, entitled **From Fieldwork to Classroom: Developing Philippine Music Resources for Teaching**. Dr. Factora walked the participants through some delightful activities that

were in her newly revised books and song collection. She also shared her new publications simultaneous with the launching of her new website. They did not just do the activities; they also discovered why research is important and they even explored what the guidelines in choosing age-appropriate activities and in the analysis of materials for teaching are. The cultural aspect, a very important and nuanced topic, was also discussed. It was truly an eye-opening workshop!

of Hungary in the Philippines

What a memorable 40th year celebration for the Kodály Society of the Philippines! Here's looking forward to the 50th!