Peter Keppy, *Tales of Southeast Asia's Jazz Age: Filipinos, Indonesians and Popular Culture, 1920–1936*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2019, xiii + 269 pp. ISBN: 9789813250512, price: SGD 42.00 (paperback).

This book advances Southeast Asian popular culture history by contextualizing the musical lives of the Filipino “King of Jazz”, Luis Borromeo, and the Javanese trans-local popular music and theatre icon, Miss Riboet. Peter Keppy skillfully balances a variety of sources and languages through his training in anthropology and history to revise the theoretical understanding of popular music culture in 1920s colonial Southeast Asia to include these seemingly banal yet significant figures. Keppy centers Filipino vaudeville and Malay opera and illustrates how the new culture intertwines with many other musical and theatre genres including: *zarzuela*, *balitaw*, and *kundiman* from the Philippines; early jazz, Tin Pan Alley popular song, and ragtime from the United States; *bangsawan*, *komedie stamboel*, *kroncong*, and *dongengan* from Indonesia; and influences from Chinese opera. The Indonesian sources come from all over the archipelago, demonstrating the reach of this popular culture beyond major urban ports, whereas the Philippines sources focus on the urban centers of Manila and Cebu.

Keppy draws out how both artists contributed to and consumed an “in-between culture” associated with modernity, cosmopolitanism, and nationalism. He determines that nationalism was not the singular and dominate force behind these emerging cultures, as conceptions of modernity and cosmopolitanism were equally meaningful. Importantly, both Borromeo and Riboet were not particularly anti-colonial throughout their careers, rather they were noticeably accommodating to and approbated by the ruling classes. This sympathetic quality might explain why each artist has been long overlooked in post-colonial national musical heritages, as they remain outside of straightforward national-building hero narratives.

The history is bracketed from the 1910s to mid-1930s, focusing on how the colonial Philippines and Indonesia in the 1920s bore witness to dynamic cultural transformations during profound social and political turmoil. Keppy delves into largely unexplored multilingual material, including short stories, poetry, letters, theatre, film reviews, recordings, advertisements, and sheet music (including rare 78rpm gramophone recordings from Jaap Erkelens’s collection, the former director of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, KITLV-Jakarta), to track cultural and moral debates on issues such as changing fashions and new socialites formed through dance halls. Keppy argues beyond flattening theoretical notions of “the culture industry” and instead frames the multifaceted and contested lives and works of these two

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musicians, and the communities they worked within, as exposing the 'mentalities and ethics within and across societies' (p. 2). This position complicates the discourses of cultural appropriation, resistance, and hybridity, as the rapidly changing 1920s political landscapes made some, but not all, of the musical and theatrical forms that were fashioned through the weaving together of innovative, subversive, and transformative flows, part of the cultural establishment by the mid-1930s.

Keppy employs key theoretical terms to interpret both case studies: popular cosmopolitanism, popular modernity, and participatory pop. With these terms non-elites can be understood as 'actively shaping and engaging in cosmopolitanism and modernity' (p. 7), challenging Frankfurt School ideas of elites being the exclusive architects and guardians of cosmopolitanism and modernity. Keppy points to how transcultural flows of popular culture inspired new forms of cultural competencies and global consciousness, how people outside of highbrow groups 'equally contributed to modernity' (p. 8), and how the fluid boundaries between producers and consumers, importantly the journalistic and music producing audiences of Borromeo and Riboet, had an active role in producing new emergent cultures.

Chapters 2–6 focus on Luis Borromeo who belonged to the urban merchant and landholding elite of Cebu, with origins in the seventeenth century Chinese and Chinese-*mestizo* (people of Chinese-Filipino descent) community. This group later became part of the *ilustrado* milieu, the educated Hispanicized Filipino upper class of a landholding background, often working within the newly instituted American regime who practiced a policy of tutelary colonialism. Throughout his singing, piano, composition, and vaudeville career, Borromeo brought together many influences to help develop a local style of vaudeville as a 'popular art' (p. 71). Borromeo's career also entails politicized debates concerning new forms of socialization through new dance institutions as well as how these cultural forms produced (mostly male generated) arguments concerning the modern Filipina.

Borromeo visited San Francisco for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915 and quit his high-ranking government position to become a professional entertainer on the American multi-ethnic vaudeville stage. Borromeo performed an orientalist "yellowface" Chinese jazz act appreciated by a white, middle-class audience that remained separate from African American circuits (p. 28). In 1920, Borromeo released a foxtrot entitled "Jazzy Jazzy Sound in Old Chinatown" co-composed and co-published by the Tin Pan Alley connected Fred Fisher. A year later, Borromeo released "My Beautiful Philippines", which was 'not necessarily less orientalist or jazzy kitsch' than his other material but revealed 'a compromise between Borromeo's patriotism and the American

publisher's reliance on the popularity of "yellowface" acts' (pp. 33–4). In addition to the characterizations based on Keppy's training in history and anthropology, it would have been nice to include musical notation or a transcription in order to better grasp these musical qualities.

In Chapter 4, Borromeo returns to the Philippines in 1921 with a 'classic jazz' act, combining vaudeville with aspects of a classical music concert to attract a middle- and upper-class audience. In 1923, he tours Southeast Asia as part of a carnival/*pasar malam* (night fair) with traveling boxing contests and vaudeville interludes, performing in Java in 1926. While Keppy demonstrates many moments of intersection between Borromeo's and Miss Riboet's communities, there is no evidence that the two had direct contact or influence on one another.

Chapters 7–10 focus on Miss Riboet, which reiterates much of the background from Keppy's previous research of the Malay opera star (2013) as well as betrays his much more extensive knowledge of the languages and circumstances of colonial Indonesia. For example, he provides an in-depth explanation of the politically significant timing of calling Miss Riboet 'the first *Indonesian* woman to advance in theatre' (p. 172, emphasis my own), while much thinner explanations are given throughout Borromeo's chapters. Keppy does provide new details about a rival Malay opera company, Dardenella, which better sits with anti-colonial and nationalist underpinnings for these emerging cultures. Chapters 8 and 10 focus on forms of 'participatory pop' through analyses of Riboet's crucial affiliations with Chinese journalists, brokered by her husband Tio Tek Djien Jr., an educated *peranakan* Chinese, as well as a revealing 1935 photograph of a middle- to upper-class "European" audience attending Riboet's performance, signaling her loss of relevance for Indonesian nationalists.

Keppy's ambitious project significantly contributes to the examination of popular music at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Philippines and Indonesia. The book evenly presents its arguments, potentially causing a reader to forget the required languages for the research, including older, mixed, and transitory varieties. There remains several unexpected similarities of both contexts Keppy could have further delved, including the connections to semi-professional sports and emergent advertising industries. Borromeo's tours with boxers and Miss Riboet sponsorship of a soccer team (p. 200) relate to trends outside the region as Louis Armstrong sponsored a baseball team in New Orleans in 1931 and American musicians such as Benny Goodman, Count Basie, and Tommy Dorsey also sponsored teams (Pope 2006). Deeper consideration could have been given to connections with the early advertising industry, as Miss Riboet actively promoted products like *bedak* (face powder), a wrist-watch, cigarettes, beer, and a tonic wine (pp. 190–1).

Tales of Southeast Asia's Jazz Age brings into focus the popularity and contributions of Luis Borromeo and Miss Riboet, who fall outside of strictly anti-colonial and nationalist narratives. In my own research on the history and contemporary practice of jazz in Indonesia, many Indonesian jazz musicians remain unaware of Miss Riboet's pioneering contributions to Indonesian popular music. This mirrors Keppy's experience discussing the unfamiliar Luis Borromeo with Cebu's music heritage experts (p. 240). Researchers of music, history, cultural studies, and anthropology will all benefit from this accessible account from a myriad of sources, languages, and contexts, as a springboard for further questions as Keppy compounds this era beyond contracted explanations.

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