

*Awit-Tuksuhan at Tsismisan: Filipino Children's Folksongs in the Context of
Modern Day Hugot at AOS Lounge*

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Abstract

All-Out Sundays, more known as AOS, is a weekly musical variety show in GMA Network. While it shares most of the elements present in rival ABS-CBN's All-Star Afternoon Party (ASAP), humor is one of the show's distinct features through the AOS Lounge segment. The AOS Lounge segment is known for situational and observational comedy through hugot statements and gossips. While hugot is often associated with melodrama, it is presented humorously by using the melodies of Filipino children's folksongs, such as "Ako Ay May Lobo" (I Have A Balloon) and "Leron, Leron Sinta" (Leron, Leron, My Dear). To expound this discourse, I intend to apply Apte's (1985) approach on institutionalized humor. As this segment deals with satires of children's folksongs, I also explore through Titon's definition how the segment creators produce affect through the use of children's folksongs in an adult context.

Keywords: Humor, Parody, Children's Folksongs, AOS Lounge, Hugot

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Introduction

In everyday life, folksongs are part of a child's development, particularly in learning his/her own culture. While most of these folksongs like "Bahay Kubo" are reflective of one's Filipino roots, some speak of a child's despair, dealing even with the most trivial things, such as the losing a balloon.

During the 20th century, National Artist Ramon Santos composed "Tuksuhan" (Teasing), which combined the following folksongs: "Sampung Mga Daliri" (Ten Fingers) and "Isa, Dalawa Tatlo." (One, Two, Three). Santos changed the text of the latter in the context of children teasing each other. Another folksong that was recontextualized in 2018 was "Pakitong-kitong" (Here and There). Recorded by Lea Salonga for the "Awit at Laro" (Song and Game) anthology, "Pakitong-kitong" put into the context of "crab mentality," which dealt with people ruining one's reputation to attain their own successes.

Given the amusing nature of these children's folksongs, this led me to my curiosity on how the producers, writers, and the music team of AOS Lounge, a segment in GMA Network's "All Out Sundays" that dealt with humorous discourses on *hugot*, a Filipino concept which dealt with love-related issues, such as breakups, falling out, and being cheated on. Using Apte's theory on institutionalized humor, this paper will explore how these folksongs were taken into an adult context like *hugot*, in connection with the presenters' banter. I also explore how these folksong melodies create humor in discussing this melodramatic concept. Through interviews with the presenters and a few members of the creative team, I explore how they put up the segment's concept without the use of pop songs. Now I discuss genres of comedy that are currently used on television.

Apte explained two more genres of comedy: puns and parodies. While puns involve playing with words, parodies are humorous recontextualizations of TV shows, movies, and songs. Oftentimes, song parodies often involve both puns and bastardizations of the original text. Furthermore, the song's context is changed when parodies are created. This also applies to TV shows and movies.

Presenting another humorous genre on television, Ancheta (2015) also expounded the concept of observational comedy. It is recurring in Philippine variety shows, such as Eat! Bulaga and It's Showtime. Popularized by standup comedian-turned-TV personality Vice Ganda, it involves on-the-spot jokes, which may be rooted from the people or elements existent in the studio. Since the return of Tawag ng Tanghalan (Call of the Stage), a singing competition that became one of the segments in It's Showtime, Vice has been making humorous banter that are heavily based on the contestants' profiles and even the judges' respective professional backgrounds (Reyes 2019; interview). Sometimes, pop songs that were originally recorded by one of the segments' judges were put into the humorous context of advising contestants on showcasing a polished musical performance. However, contrary to parodies, observational comedies do not necessarily involve singing, as these are more humorous discussions of everyday life situations.

While humor is typically associated with things that make people laugh, it is not always the case for Gordon (2012). It brings people together and reduces tension. As far as my discourse on AOS Lounge is concerned, I surmise that the creatives and the presenters attempted to present situations involving melodrama like *hugot* to make the atmosphere lighter, not only

for the audiences, but also for the people involved in the show. Furthermore, the audiences may be able to relate with the situations being presented without the feeling of melancholy.

Historical Context

During the 1970s, comedians Tito Sotto, Vic Sotto, and Joey de Leon, known as the comic trio Tito, Vic, and Joey, released “Tough Hits,” an anthology of pop song parodies, taken in the context of domestic issues (e.g., married life), toilet humor, gay man’s struggles, body shaming, and objectification of women. In the second volume of “Tough Hits,” the OPM Department was a medley of OPM song parodies, which included a parody of the Tagalog folksong “Paru-parong Bukid” (Farm Butterfly), in the context of stereotypes towards gay men, particularly cross-dressing and binge-drinking liquor to entice men. Due to flourishing discourses on feminism and gender equality, jokes focusing on the aforementioned themes became taboo, four decades after.

In 1995, Bubble Gang was launched by GMA as its flagship gag show. While it initially featured humorous translations of pop songs, comedian Michael V did a humorous take on the hit songs of the 2000s, which were mostly part of the “Bubble G Anthology” released by GMA Records in 2006. While these song parodies were well-received by the show’s audiences, they often focused on derogatory ideals like homophobia and racism. However, Michael V’s parody of Up Dharma Down’s “Oo” (Yes) dealt with the struggle of not having a stove that helped with the preparation of cooked meals for selling. Although Bubble Gang adapted the themes used in “Tough Hits,” Michael V also wrote song parodies that are more relevant to the present society, particularly “Gusto Ko Nang Bumigay” (I Want To Break Free; parody of Morissette’s “Gusto Ko Nang Bumitaw” [“I Want To Give Up”]), which talks about a closeted gay man’s struggle to fully declare his true gender.

In an attempt to surpass the “concert-TV” legacy of ABS-CBN’s “All-Star Afternoon Party” or ASAP, GMA Network also produced another musical comedy segment in “Sobrang Okey, Pare” (So Okay, My Friend). As a regular segment from 2007 to 2008, “Sobrang OJ Pare” (So OJ, My Friend) focused on song parodies in the context of the latest news that mostly dealt with showbiz issues, with the opening line, “Ito ang OJ n’yo” (This is your OJ), presented by singer-comedians Ogie Alcasid and Janno Gibbs. This partly became the prototype of “AOS Lounge,” one of the comedy segments of “All-Out Sundays,” GMA Network’s Sunday musical variety show at the present.

Welcome to the AOS Lounge!

In 2020, GMA Network launched All-Out Sundays, more known as “AOS,” as its flagship Sunday musical variety show, which aimed to compete against ABS-CBN’s All-Star Afternoon Party or ASAP. Although AOS adopted ASAP’s “concert TV” format that included song performances and dance numbers, comedy segments were a distinct feature of the show, which were derived from its predecessor, “Sunday Pinasaya” (Sundays Made Happy), a comedy-oriented variety show. Some of the elements present in Sobrang OJ Pare were also existent, particularly the presentation of gossips in the musical sense.

While most of the comedy segments in AOS were humorous skits, AOS Lounge focused on parodies of Filipino children’s folksongs, which were written and rearranged by theater composer Vincent de Jesus. Presented by singers Aicelle Santos, Maricris Garcia, Christian Bautista, Garrett Bolden, Muriel Lomadilla, and singer-comedienne Tuesday Vargas, the

banter made among themselves were heavy on issues related to love and relationships, such as breakups, falling out, being cheated on, among others. Mediating the practice of gossiping with friends, the presenters were wearing formal attire, specifically suits and evening gowns, which created an elegant mood. Adding sophistication to the scene were De Jesus's musical arrangement style present in musical theater and the sleek sofas onstage where the other mainstays are seated. This is contrary to the typical Filipino "Marites" meme (derived from the Filipino question, "*Mare, anong latest?*") which meant "What's the latest, buddy?") where a group of people exchanging gossips in the neighborhood were mostly wearing house dresses, known as the duster.

The Presenters: More Singers Than Comedians

Although the AOS Lounge is categorized by the producers as a comedy segment, the presenters are all singers based primarily in the recording industry. Vargas may be more known in the entertainment industry as a comedienne, but her song "Babae Po Ako" (I Am A Woman) became one of the most popular novelty songs in the mid-2000s.

Bautista may be known in Southeast Asia for his hit love ballad, "The Way You Look at Me," but he was also able to establish his acting career in Filipino television dramas and romantic comedies, such as "Kampanerang Kuba" (The Hunchback Bellringer), "With A Smile," and "My Mother's Secret." Playing the role of Lorenzo in "Kampanerang Kuba," Bautista has occasionally exchanged humorous banter with actors Luis Manzano, Edgar "Bobot" Mortiz, and comedienne Eugene Domingo in some of the fantasy drama's episodes. In 2018, he has also appeared in an episode of Bubble Gang, GMA Network's longest-running comedy show (Bubble Gang 2018).

Apart from doing TV shows, Bautista has also starred in musical theater plays, such as "West Side Story" and "Rama Hari," both alongside singer-actress Karylle. Outside of the Philippine entertainment scene, Bautista was one of the lead actors in the Singaporean TV series "The Kitchen Musical," as well as in the Indonesian film "Simfoni Luar Biasa," which were both musical dramas.

Both Aicelle Santos and Garcia became grand finalists in Pinoy Pop Superstar, a singing competition produced by GMA Network in the 2000s. Alongside fellow singer and Pinoy Pop Superstar Season 1 Grand Champion Jona (then known as Jonalyn Viray), they performed in SOP as a trio called La Diva. While Garcia won the third season of Pinoy Pop Superstar, Santos placed second to Gerald Santos during the second season. Despite not winning the competition, Aicelle Santos got her biggest break in the music scene when she became part of musical theater productions here and abroad, such as PETA's "Rak of Aegis" and the UK production of "Miss Saigon."

Completing the roster of presenters are Bolden and Lomadilla, who have previously joined GMA Network's The Clash. Although both did not win in the first season, they were able to establish their respective singing careers. While Bolden became part of the "Miss Saigon" cast in Guam, Lomadilla is currently a member of XOXO, an all-female singing group based in GMA Music.

The Happier Ending of “Leron Leron Sinta” – A Strong Relationship

Proceeding to the discussion on AOS Lounge’s folksong parodies, “Leron Leron Sinta” has a tragic theme that dealt with a person’s failure to pick the papaya fruit. However, during the first episode of AOS Lounge last June 14, 2022, the text focused on two of the show’s mainstays that are allegedly going strong as a romantic couple. This is shown on the next page.

Table 1. Original text and English translation of “Laro Laro Sinta,” a parody of Tagalog folksong Leron Leron Sinta, as performed in AOS Lounge.

ORIGINAL TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
<p>CHRISTIAN Laro, laro, sinta Kaibigan nung una. Co-host sa isang show (The Clash!) May concert pa sila.</p> <p>Pagdating sa dulo, Na-fall ang dalawa. Sadyang kapalaran, Pinagtagpo sila!</p> <p>AICELLE Ang blooming nga ni girl! Laging nakangiti (hehe) Bitbit lagi ang phone. Si boy laging ka-text (Hi, Babe!)</p> <p>Kasi itong si boy, Minsan absent dito. Kaya pag magkasama, Ayaw maghiwalay!</p>	<p>CHRISTIAN Let’s play and play, my dear. Started out as friends. With a co-host in one show (The Clash!). They are also having a concert.</p> <p>In the end, The two fell in love with each other. They have been fated, To see each other!</p> <p>AICELLE Girl is so blooming! Always smiling. Always brings her phone. Texting with the boy (Hi, babe!).</p> <p>Because sometimes, the boy, Is sometimes absent here. That’s why when they’re together, They don’t want to part!</p>

Looking at Bautista and Aicelle Santos’s musical banter, “Leron Leron Sinta” was contextualized in a more positive light, also given the song’s cheerful melody. Not to mention, the two singers’ side comments pertinent to the mainstays involved spoke of a couple’s favorable romantic relationship status.

As remarked by Bautista, the two mainstays that he and Aicelle Santos were referring in their musical banter are singer Julie Anne San Jose and actor Rayver Cruz. While Bautista is currently one of the judges for GMA Network’s singing competition called “The Clash,” San Jose and Cruz are the show’s hosts since the second season in 2019 where the two may have had established a bond that led to the two being in a relationship, despite Aicelle Santos’s comment towards Cruz’s occasional absences in All Out Sundays. This tells us that “Leron Leron Sinta” was brought in a more positive perspective, as far as Bautista and Aicelle

Santos’s musical banter is concerned. The next section will explore how “Isa Dalawa Tatlo”, which was originally a game song, was put into the context of ghosting.

1-2-3, Gone!

During the episode aired last July 17, 2022, Bautista, Aicelle Santos, Garcia, and Bolden opened the segment with “Isa, Dalawa, Tatlo,” in the context of ghosting. The original text of the said folksong is shown below, as well as the English translation.

Table 2. Original text and English translation of “Isa Dalawa Tatlo,” a parody of Tagalog folksong Isa, Dalawa, Tatlo, as performed in AOS Lounge.

ORIGINAL TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Isa, dalawa, tatlo, Una-unahan tayo! Apat, lima, anim, Sa balong malalim.	One, two, three, Let’s race for first place! Four, Five, six, To the deep well.
Pito, walo, siyam, Lakad parang langgam, Pagdating ng sampu, Ang lahat ay umupo!	Seven, eight, nine, Walk like ants. At the count of ten, Everybody, sit down!

Looking at the text above, “Isa, Dalawa, Tatlo,” is initially a game song where everyone’s goal is to finish first in a race, later slowing down from the count of seven until ten. However, the version performed in the AOS Lounge focused on the concept of ghosting where a person ends his/her relationship with another person without his/her prior knowledge.

Going back to the AOS Lounge, De Jesus played a few bars of triplets where the first note for every triplet is accented. Contrary to Bautista’s crooning style used in most of his sung performances within and outside GMA Network, he opened “Isa Dalawa Tatlo,” with a mix of vibratos and accents, especially on the first line. Such extended techniques gave the audiences a hint on how Bautista and his co-singers recontextualized the game song, focusing on the stages of how a couple falls out of love. Now I present how Aicelle Santos and Garcia interpreted musically the principle of “ghosting.”

Figure 1. Excerpt from "Isa Dalawa, Tatlo" in the context of ghosting as performed by Maricris Garcia and Aicelle Santos.

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Maricris

I - sa, da - la - wa, tat - lo, in - un - fol - low niya - a - ko
(One, two, three, he un-followed me.)

Aicelle

A - pat,
(Four,

21

Maricris

Pi - to - wa - lo, siyam I - ba na ka -
(Seven, eight, nine, he has been kissing

Aicelle

li - ma, a - nim lu - ma - mig ang dam - da - min
five, six, feelings have gone cold.)

2

27

Maricris

- ha - li - kan. Pag - da - ting ng sam - pu, nag - change sta - tus na - a - ko. Pag - da - ting ng sam - pu, nag -
someone else.) (At the count of ten, I've changed my relationship status.) (At the count of ten, I've

Aicelle

Pag - da - ting ng sam - pu, nag - change sta - tus na - a - ko. Pag - da - ting ng sam - pu, nag -
(At the count of ten, I've changed my relationship status.) (At the count of ten, I've

Usually, when composers deal with melodramatic themes like ghosting, they utilize the common elements existent in sentimental ballads, such as slow tempos, smoothly flowing instrumental passages, and even belting. However, this was not the case for De Jesus's interpretation, as well as the vocal performances of Bautista, Bolden, Aicelle Santos, and Garcia. In presenting this *hugot* concept, De Jesus used a children's game song melody as a mockery of the situation. This tells us that the five of them used musical comedy, not only to criticize ghosters, but to also present the discourse in a lighter perspective.

Moving on to another children's folksong, "Ako Ay May Lobo" talks about a child who regretted buying a balloon that ended up popping. Below is the original text of "Ako Ay May Lobo" with English translation.

Table 3. Original text and English translation of Tagalog children’s folksong
 “Ako Ay May Lobo.”

ORIGINAL TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Ako ay may lobo. Lumipad sa langit. Di ko na nakita. Pumutok na pala.	I have a balloon that flew to the sky. I haven’t seen it anymore. It already popped.
Sayang ang pera ko, pambili ng lobo. Sa pagkain sana, nabusog pa ako.	I wasted my money in buying the balloon. I could’ve spent it for food and made me full.

During the episode aired last July 17, 2022, Aicelle Santos, Garcia, Bautista, and Bolden talked about the different ways on how a person is fooled by his/her lover. “*Tingin ko, mas masakit kung harap-harapan ka nang sinaktan, eh hindi mo pa rin alam,*” Garcia explained (I think, it is more painful when someone hurts you directly but you still don’t know.). She pointed out that there are some people who are already fooled by their boyfriend/girlfriend, yet they lacked awareness. In connection with Garcia’s statement, below is the notated visualization of Bautista’s interpretation of “Ako Ay May Lobo” (I Have A Balloon), with the text focusing on how a person is fooled by his/her ex-boyfriend/girlfriend.

Figure 2. Notation of “Ako Ay May Jowa,” as performed by Christian Bautista.

Figure 2 shows the musical notation for the song "Ako Ay May Jowa" as performed by Christian Bautista. The notation is in bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. It consists of three staves of music with lyrics in Tagalog and English below. The first staff starts at measure 1 and ends at measure 7. The second staff starts at measure 8 and ends at measure 14. The third staff starts at measure 15 and ends at measure 18. The lyrics are: "A-ko ay may jo-wa, la-ging ka-text ang ex niya. Di ko na-ma-la-yan, nag-ka-ba- (I have a lover who always texted her ex-boyfriend.) (I wasn't aware that they are li-kan na pa-la! Sa-yang ang ef-fort kong i-bi-nu-hos sa kan-ya. A-ka-la-in mo together again!) (I wasted my efforts dealing with her.) (Can you imagine?) iyon, nag-mu-kha a-kong shu-nga. (I looked stupid.)"

Upon reaching the line “*Nagkabalikan na pala,*” Bautista started singing this phrase with a slight growl while the syllable “la” on “pala” was half-spoken in a shout-like manner, giving emphasis on the persona’s shock towards his supposed girlfriend. While he started singing “Ako Ay May Jowa” smoothly the line “*Sayang ang effort kong ibinuhos sa kanya*” (I have wasted my efforts on her.) was more accented and vibrato-heavy, stressing how the persona’s time was wasted in dealing with the girl romantically. Bautista ended his part in a whimper-like manner, expressing his disappointment towards the situation he has just presented.

Aicelle Santos jokingly mentioned that the situation Bautista has just presented was a case of bad karma, as it was a failed attempt of winning back the love of an ex-flame. Garcia’s

interpretation of “Ako Ay May Lobo” had a text that focused on single ladies who fell in love with men who pretend that they are single, even if they are already married. Furthermore, the concept of “ghosting” or breaking up with somebody without any explanation was presented in a lighter perspective, not only because of how De Jesus played with the cheery melody of “Ako Ay May Lobo,” as well as its original text. While the *birit* technique is normally associated with this discourse, Aicelle Santos, Garcia, Bolden, and Bautista purely used extended singing techniques that gave emphasis to the melodramatic *hugot* situations while evoking humor at the same time.

Apart from heartbreaks, the segment also criticized women who are extremely picky towards men, causing them to be single for a long time. During the episode aired last July 24, 2022, Vargas’s version of “Pen Pen De Sarapen” made fun of women who give men a hard time in making their romantic relationships official.

Table 4. Original text and English translation of the parody of “Pen Pen de Sarapen,” as performed in AOS Lounge.

ORIGINAL TEXT	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Pen pen de sarapen, itong si girl single pa rin How, how, de carabao, no comment. Itong si girl, sobrang pakipot, Kaya si boy biglang napagod, Ayan kasi... dasurb!	Pen pen de sarapen, this girl is still single. How, how, de carabao, no comment. This girl is too fickle, That’s why the guy got tired of her. That’s why... she deserves it!

In modern-day Filipino slang, “dasurb” is a corruption of the English word “deserve.” Garcia sang in jest that women who are fickle towards men trying to court them deserve to stay single for life. However, Bautista told the audiences that happiness does not always deal with having romantic relationships. “You don’t have to be a relationship to be happy,” he said.

Affirming Bautista’s statement, Vargas mentioned in jest that there is nothing wrong with being single, referencing further Céline Dion’s “All By Myself,” a power ballad that talks about the sadder side of living alone. Later on, Garcia advised the younger audiences in the studio that they should not rush in having the ideal romantic partner. She also said that the right one will come.

Conclusion

Having said these, the producers of the AOS Lounge were able to present melodramatic situations like *hugot*, both in terms of melody usage and manner of presentation. As musical theater actors, both Bautista and Aicelle Santos were able to utilize the expressive vocal techniques that gave emphasis to both the humorous and melodramatic side of *hugot*. On the other hand, Vargas and Lomadilla, being comedienne, brought the discourse on breakups and “ghosting” in a humorous matter. Furthermore, this performance affirmed Gordon’s theory that the producers and presenters of the AOS Lounge segment were able to reduce tension in explaining sensational topics pertinent to love and relationships.

The melodies of Filipino children’s folksongs, particularly “Leron Leron Sinta,” “Pen Pen De Sarapen,” and “Ako Ay May Lobo,” all have jovial melodies, which added jest to the

situations being presented. At the same time these songs also partly served as puns to these scenarios that were explored in the segment.

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