

Caroline Cabading Biography

Caroline Cabading, a 4th-generation San Franciscan, is an actively performing jazz and R&B vocalist, indigenous Philippine percussionist, composer and traditional arts educator with over 20 years experience performing, touring and teaching. She has been commissioned by the San Francisco Arts Commission (2016, 2018, 2020, 2022) the California Arts Council (2018, 2020, 2022), Zoo Labs (2021) and the Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center (2022) to compose original music contributing to the Filipino-American jazz genre and she has been funded by the California Arts Council (2018, 2020, 2022) and the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (2021, 2022) to teach and present pre-colonial Philippine music to the local San Francisco Bay Area community.

Caroline currently leads the jazz ensemble “The Autonomous Region” and the traditional Philippine ensemble, the “Manilatown Ancestral Ensemble”. As a roster artist of Young Audiences of Northern California and Rhymmix she presents curriculum-based assemblies, workshops and residencies to K-12 students throughout the Bay Area.

Caroline’s work is strongly informed by her connection to tribal Culture Bearers in the Philippines as well as her engagement with a San Francisco Filipino community that has been contributing to the City since the turn of the century. Her Cebuano family first came to San Francisco in 1904 to survive both the 1906 Earthquake and Fire and the influenza pandemic of 1918. Her connection to San Francisco’s Historic Manilatown came from her Ilokano grandfather, of the “Manong” generation, who lived on Kearny Street as a young laborer and whose children would stay rooted to the San Francisco Filipino community’s first village as part of the human chain that defended the I-Hotel in 1977. But when Caroline’s grandfather and grandmother decided to start a family during the 1940s they settled in the Western Addition, or as the locals called it, “The Fillmore”. The Filipino families that settled there would create lifelong friendships and alliances with its African-American and Japanese-American communities and would play an active part in a Jazz and R&B scene that would dub this neighborhood the “Harlem of the West.” Caroline was born and raised in the Fillmore and would cut her eye teeth as a Jazz and R&B musician in San Francisco studying with vocal coach Raz Kennedy at the Blue Bear School of Music, Jim Larkin and Maestro Curtis at Larkin Studios and Wayne Wallace at Berkeley’s The Jazz School.

As a college student, when Caroline heard Philippine kulintang music for the very first time, her DNA somehow also “remembered” it. Thus began a 25-year study of pre-colonial Philippine music that continues today with her annual visits to the tribal lands to deepen her studies. Caroline began her kulintang studies with National Endowment for the Arts Fellow, Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA) Mentor Artist and Kulintang Master Danongan Kalanduyan in 2000 and joined his professional touring ensemble, the “Palabuniyan Kulintang Ensemble”, as a musician and principal dancer that same year. She would continue to study with the late Master Kalanduyan for over 20 years until his passing. Caroline continues her advanced studies today with Maguindanaoan Kulintang Culture Bearers and University of the Philippines professors Guro Kanapia Kalanduyan and Guro Aga Mayo Butocan. She also collaborates regularly with her traditional Philippine colleagues ACTA Mentor Artist and Kulintang musician Bernard Ellorin and ACTA Mentor Artist and Pangalay

dancer Peter Paul DeGuzman, with whom she completed a formal ACTA Mentorship in 2022-23. Caroline also studied Tausug Pangalay dance in the Philippines with Ligaya Amilbangsa, considered the premiere authority on this classic dance form of the Southern Philippines. Caroline continues her advanced Pangalay training through private studies with Ethnochoreologist and University of Hawaii professor Desiree Quintero. Caroline has also been studying Kalinga gangsa, bamboo, and singing since 2016. She travels regularly to Kalinga, Philippines for advanced music and cultural studies with Culture Bearer Cyrilo Bawer and studies locally in the Bay Area with Kalinga Culture Bearer Jennilyn Bawer Young.

Caroline's original compositions fuse Jazz with Philippine tribal music and instrumentation to tell the stories of her Filipino-American "tribe." Individual songs from her soon to be released album, "Sugilanon", were first presented in May 2022 at the United States of Asian America Festival, then subsequently at the Clarion Performing Arts Center and Bird & Beckett.

When she's not composing original work Caroline absolutely loves performing straight ahead jazz and R&B in the Bay Area and in 2022 enjoyed engagements at the Clarion Performance Center, Bird & Beckett, the J-Town Jazz Festival, and the Neon was Never Brighter festival, to name a few. In 2023 she looks forward to performances at the International Hotel Manilatown Center and the Clarion Performing Arts Center. Caroline also collaborates with other local composers as a side musician. In 2022 she was a vocalist and percussionist in composer Mark Izu's live concert at the Presidio Theater, "Songs for J-Town" and in September 2023 she will sing and play percussion in Brenda Wong Aoki's theater performance at the Presidio Theater, "Soul of San Francisco".