

Damma Silalahi and the Representation of Simalungun Culture in Contemporary Pop Music

Nova Indriana Sihombing^{1)*}, Kumalo Tarigan²⁾

^{1,2)} Art Creation and Study, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia.

*Corresponding Author

Email : novaindrianasihombing@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Simalungun pop songs by Damma Silalahi, which have significantly influenced the development of popular music in Simalungun society. The main objectives of this study are to analyze the musical structure, uncover the textual meaning, and evaluate the social function of ten purposively selected songs. The study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. The analysis of musical structure is conducted using William P. Malm's theory of scale, melodic contour, and melodic formula, while the analysis of the meaning of the lyrics is based on semiotic theory and the theory of meaning in semantics and pragmatics. The main findings show that Damma Silalahi's songs combine modern style with traditional Simalungun musical roots. The lyrics express themes of love, social criticism, religiosity, and respect for parents. The social functions of these songs include expressive, educational, and recreational functions. Damma's works not only represent the dynamics of Simalungun culture but also reconstruct cultural identity within a contemporary framework. This study contributes new understanding of the transformation of regional music in a society experiencing modernization and globalization.

KEYWORDS

Damma Silalahi
Simalungun Pop Music
Musical Structure
Meaning of the Lyrics
Social Function

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INTRODUCTION

Music is a complex and dynamic medium for cultural expression. In the Simalungun community, regional pop songs serve as an important platform for expressing identity, social values, and collective emotions. Damma Silalahi, one of the most prolific artists in the Simalungun pop music scene, has made a significant impact through his innovative and contextual work.

As an arts and culture teacher and local music activist, I am familiar with regional music. However, Damma Silalahi's songs offer something different—a combination of vocal courage and depth of feeling, a commitment to traditional roots and a courage to challenge norms. This led me to undertake a more in-depth academic study of Damma Silalahi's Simalungun pop music, not only as a form of aesthetic expression but also as a social and cultural artifact of contemporary Simalungun society.

Music is more than just a composition of notes and rhythms; it is a cultural language that reflects how a society thinks, feels, and interprets the world around it. Merriam (1964) in *The Anthropology of Music* emphasized that music has three important dimensions: as sound (music as sound), as behavior (music as behavior), and as concept (music as concept). Therefore, understanding music, especially regional music, means not only listening to it but also reading the social meanings embedded within it.

Regional music holds a strategic position as a medium for cultural preservation and as an arena for identity negotiation. In Alan P. Merriam's view, "ethnomusicology is the study of music in culture and as culture." This means that music is not only seen as a cultural product, but also as a living cultural process, changing, and interacting with the dynamics of society. Regional pop music, such as that written by Damma Silalahi, reflects the struggle for Simalungun cultural identity amidst the currents of modernization and globalization.

Damma Silalahi's courage in voicing social criticism through the song "Gumis Ni Huting," for example, demonstrates the transformative function of music. The song criticizes the sacred position of the "bone" (uncle) in Batak-Simalungun customs, but instead critiques it through the metaphor of "cat's whiskers." This is not merely ironic, but a form of challenge to cultural practices that are beginning to lose their ethical values. As Stuart Hall (1997) explains in his theory of cultural representation, meaning is produced not only in language and symbols, but also in the tension between norms and their violation.

Meanwhile, from a musical perspective, Damma's songs bring new color to the Simalungun musical treasury. He combines contemporary rhythms such as pop, reggae, and rock with lyrics in the Simalungun language that are sometimes humorous, sometimes philosophical, and sometimes bittersweet. William P. Malm (1996) states that "melody is a combination of tones in a succession perceived as a unit," but in Damma's work, melody is not only a musical unit but also a narrative unit. The fluctuating melodic structure in *Talenta* or *Calon Parmaen* is a metaphor for the ups and downs of Simalungun life itself.

Damma Silalahi, although not of pure Simalungun ethnicity, is a significant pioneer in the development of Simalungun pop music. In Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) terms, this can be called a form of "third space"—a space of cultural intersection where identity is no longer seen as something static and pure, but as something constructed through interaction and representation. Through his work, Damma reconstructs Simalungun musical identity in a way that is both provocative and productive. The fact that many Simalungun people are familiar with their songs but not their composer has prompted the author to elevate Damma's figure to the forefront of scholarly discourse. He is not only an artist but also a cultural actor who voices the conditions, aspirations, and dynamics of his society. Music, in this context, serves as both an emotional archive and a social critique.

This research will focus on three main aspects: (1) an analysis of the musical structure of ten of Damma Silalahi's works, (2) an analysis of the textual meaning of his song lyrics using a semiotic and semantic approach, and (3) an identification of the social function of these songs in contemporary Simalungun society. This study is important not only to document but also to provide a proper space for appreciation for Damma Silalahi's contribution to the Indonesian regional music scene. By adopting qualitative methods and an ethnomusicological approach, this research aims to reveal that musical works are not neutral entities, but rather a field of struggle for meaning, values, and identity. Damma's songs are cultural texts worthy of deeper reading, listening, and understanding.

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method focused on an in-depth analysis of Simalungun pop songs by Damma Silalahi. This approach was chosen because it enabled the researcher to uncover latent meanings, musical structures, and social functions that cannot be explained quantitatively. As Moleong (2012:6) points out, a qualitative approach emphasizes meaning and process rather than the final product, making it particularly suitable for arts research.

The research was conducted over approximately six months, beginning with the pre-field phase, data collection, data analysis, and compilation of results. During the pre-field phase, the researcher conducted a literature review to understand the historical context of Simalungun music, reviewed previous theses, and gathered preliminary information about Damma Silalahi and his work. The researcher also prepared interview instruments, a list of songs to be analyzed, and scheduled meetings with key informants.

During the data collection phase, the researcher conducted participant observation of Simalungun music performances at church and traditional events in Labuhanbatu and Simalungun. This observation was conducted to capture how Damma's songs were received and responded to directly by the public. In-depth interviews were also conducted with Damma Silalahi, the primary subject, as well as other informants such as musician Sapna Sitopu, music producer Noah Sumbayak, and cultural figure Setia Dermawan Purba. The interviews were conducted in informal settings, often at home, at a palm wine shop, or at a music practice room.

The primary data analyzed were ten songs composed by Damma Silalahi, selected based on their popularity, themes, and diverse musical structures. These songs were manually transcribed by the researcher from audio and video recordings obtained from YouTube, CDs, and Damma's personal sources. The musical structure analysis was conducted using William P. Malm's theory, which encompasses aspects of scale, melodic contour, melodic formula, and rhythm. Meanwhile, the meaning of the poems was analyzed using a semiotic and semantic approach, employing Charles Sanders Peirce's three-sign model and the theories of meaning by Ferdinand de Saussure and Mansoer Pateda.

The final stage of this method is inductive data analysis, in which the researcher groups the findings into categories: musical form, textual meaning, and social function. Each finding is cross-checked with interview data and the Simalungun cultural context. Thus, the method applied in this study aims to capture the complexity of Damma Silalahi's work as a musical text and a living cultural practice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Musical Structure of Damma Silalahi's Songs

Musical structure is a crucial element in analyzing the aesthetic character and musical identity of a work. In Damma Silalahi's songs, musical structure not only serves as a means of conveying a message but also serves as a platform for expressing ideas, values, and a distinctive Simalungun musical sensibility, refined and modified with contemporary flair. The analysis of musical structure in this study draws on the theory of William P. Malm (1996), which encompasses eight main elements: (1) scale, (2) pitch center, (3) pitch range, (4) pitch frequency, (5) intervals, (6) cadence patterns, (7) melodic formulas, and (8) melodic contours. Furthermore, elements of rhythm, tempo, and song form are also crucial in this analysis.

Of the ten songs analyzed, the majority of Damma Silalahi's works utilize the major diatonic scale. This aligns with her vocal characteristics, which tend to be bright, high, and expressive. For example, in the songs "Talenta" and "10 Hali," the use of the major scale creates an optimistic and energetic feel. This scale is also commonly used in Western pop music, indicating a foreign influence on Damma's musical style. The center pitch in Damma's songs is generally stable and undergoes minimal modulation. This stability enhances the listener's grasp of the song and facilitates melody memorization. In "Bapakku Nabujur," the center pitch is in C major, with a short variation to A minor that adds emotional tone to the

refrain. This stability of the center pitch also creates a sense of coherence within the overall structure of the song.

Damma Silalahi's tonal range is quite broad. Her vocal range spans more than an octave, particularly in songs with dramatic overtones like "Sel Pengasingan" and "Bubar Angin." This wide range demands excellent vocal ability from the singer and is a hallmark of Damma's vocal style, which tends to emphasize power and vocal expansion. The frequency of pitch usage indicates a tendency toward the dominant use of certain notes. In Elvi's songs, for example, the notes do, mi, and sol are frequently repeated to form a recognizable melodic hook. Damma understands the importance of repeating key notes in creating a song's memorability.

Damma uses relatively consonant and easily digestible melodic intervals, such as major thirds and fourths. However, in some songs, wider intervals, such as octaves or sixths, are used, which typically appear at the song's climax. This pattern is evident in Mardatu, which has a ballad structure with emotional emphasis at the end of the verse. The cadence pattern, or closing of musical phrases, exhibits interesting variations. Many of Damma's songs use an authentic cadence (V-I) at the end of the verse as a powerful conclusion, but he also often misleads the listener with a plagal cadence (IV-I) or even a hanging chord (closing with a IV chord) in the chorus, which creates anticipation for the next section. This strategy demonstrates Damma's intuitive understanding of musical drama.

The melodic formulas in Damma's songs tend to be simple yet effective. He frequently uses an A-A-B-A pattern in his verse construction, a common structure found in classic pop songs. This formula creates a familiar sense of repetition while still allowing for variation in the "B" section, which is typically used to convey the song's emotional climax or main message. The melodic contour, or melodic line, exhibits a dynamic rise and fall that reflects the content of the lyrics. In the song "Gumis Ni Huting," the melodic contour descends during the section that mocks the role of bones, and rises again when expressing anger and sharp sarcasm. This demonstrates Damma's close connection between melody and the meaning of the lyrics, so that the two reinforce each other expressively.

In terms of rhythm, Damma tends to use quaternary rhythms and light syncopation, following the rhythmic patterns of popular pop songs. Some songs, like "10 Hali," even display rhythmic influences from reggae and rock, demonstrating Damma's boldness in exploring non-traditional musical forms. However, the rhythm of the Simalungun gondang (a traditional musical instrument) occasionally appears as an accentuation in the intro or transition sections of songs, as in "Calon Parmaen."

The tempo of Damma's songs is quite varied. Some songs, like "Elvi" and "Golap," use a slow tempo (andante), suitable for conveying stories of love and regret. On the other hand, songs like "10 Hali" and "Talenta" use a fast tempo (allegro), emphasizing the spirit of motivation and struggle. This choice of tempo aligns with the expressive purpose of each song. The song's form generally follows a verse-chorus-bridge pattern, a popular form in commercial music. However, Damma doesn't always adhere rigidly to this pattern. In "Sel Pengasingan," for example, the bridge section is arranged like a musical monologue, reinforcing the atmosphere of alienation that is the song's main theme. This tendency demonstrates Damma's creative ability to craft song form as a dramatic narrative, rather than simply musical repetition.

The harmonies in Damma's songs are generally simple, using basic chord progressions such as I-IV-V-I or I-vi-IV-V, commonly found in pop music. However, in some songs, he experiments with minor chords and suspensions to emphasize certain moods. In the song "Kabar Angin," the transition from C major to A minor creates a poignant and mysterious

feel, as if representing the atmosphere of separation and waiting that is the song's core theme. Damma does not use jazz harmonies or complex chords, but he is quite sensitive in placing chord changes to create dynamics. Chord changes typically occur every two to four beats, creating a regular and easy-to-follow feel, in keeping with local folk and pop songs.

The musical texture in Damma's works is predominantly homophonic, where the main melody is supported by harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment. Accompanying instruments generally include acoustic guitar, keyboard, drums, and bass, with the occasional addition of traditional instruments such as the sordam or saligung. The use of reverb and delay effects on vocals is also frequently found in studio recordings, creating a sense of space and depth. Damma herself frequently uses the guitar as a primary instrument in her creative songwriting process. The guitar serves as both a means of improvisation and accompaniment in composing lyrics and notes. This creates a close connection between the melodic structure and the rhythm of the lyrics, as the process of song creation is inseparable from the words and notes.

From the overall analysis, it can be concluded that the musical structure of Damma Silalahi's songs reflects a fusion of popular music forms with local Simalungun content. Although not adhering to academic composition theory, her works demonstrate authentic and consistent musical quality, with a strong emphasis on emotional expression and communication with the listener. This musical structure also serves as a vehicle for the social and cultural messages she wishes to convey. With a distinctive, easily recognizable style, Damma has created a musical signature that has become a distinct identity among Simalungun songwriters. Therefore, this analysis of musical structure not only explains musical techniques but also opens up a broader understanding of how Damma presents the voices of the Simalungun people in an inclusive and communicative pop music format.

The Textual Meaning of Damma Silalahi's Songs

Meaning is a key dimension in the creation of works of art, particularly vocal music such as songs. In Damma Silalahi's songs, meaning is not only present as a verbal message but also as a cultural construct rich in symbols, values, and social reflections. In this case, song lyrics function as cultural texts open to various interpretations. Therefore, the analysis of textual meaning in this study was conducted using a semiotic, pragmatic, and contextual approach, referring to the thinking of Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce, and Mansoer Pateda.

According to Saussure, linguistic signs consist of two elements: the signifier and the signified. In the song lyrics, the words and phrases used by Damma serve as signifiers that point to specific concepts (signifieds), both denotative (direct meaning) and connotative (implicit or emotional meaning). Peirce added that signs have three forms of relationships: icon (similarity), index (causal relationship), and symbol (convention). All three can be found in the lyrics of Damma's songs, which are full of metaphors and idiomatic expressions typical of Simalungun.

Love is a dominant theme in most of Damma's songs, such as "Elvi," "Calon Parmaen," and "Gumis Ni Huting." However, the love expressed by Damma is not always normatively romantic, but often implies a tension between personal desires and social norms. In the song "Gumis Ni Huting," for example, love is confronted with the authority of a bone (bone), who holds authority over his niece's marriage. Lyrics such as:

"Anggo anggar gumis do tulang, gumis ni huting pe ganjang do..."
(If only a bone's whiskers, even a cat's whiskers are longer...)

is a symbol of resistance against a customary system perceived as unfair. In this case, the mustache becomes an index of power that is challenged with irony. Damma uses humor as a rhetorical strategy to challenge convention, while simultaneously reinforcing the connotative meaning of social inequality.

Lyrics such as these demonstrate that meaning is not neutral, but is shaped within a specific social context. As Halliday points out, linguistic meaning cannot be separated from social function and situational context. In Simalungun society, which upholds tradition, mocking bones can be considered taboo, but Damma uses this taboo to open up space for criticism and reflection.

Besides love, Damma also explores existential themes such as hope, regret, loss, and gratitude. The song "Talenta," for example, reflects frustration with inequality in education. The line:

"Ras ni dohot na pinasupasu, adong pe so jadi..."
(Talent and blessings already exist, but still not successful...)

contains a pragmatic meaning about fate and failure, which do not always depend on effort. The word "talent" here symbolizes human potential that is often stifled by systems and circumstances. The contextual meaning of this verse refers to the post-reform social conditions, when many rural communities felt left behind in increasingly competitive competition. The song "Selection Cell" presents another aspect of existential reflection. Using the metaphor of a prison, Damma expresses an individual's alienation from their social environment and perhaps even from themselves. The lyrics of this song are filled with symbols of dark, cold, and silent spaces, suggesting a person's isolated mental state. Here, meaning is conveyed not only by the words, but also by the atmosphere and supporting musical mood.

In "*Bapakku Nabujur*," Damma touches on a theme that is very characteristic of Simalungun culture: respect for parents. The song is filled with expressions of love, guilt, and appreciation for the father figure. The use of words like "Nabujur" (good) not only demonstrates character but also the ideal values instilled by a father in his child.

The meaning of this song moves across lexical and connotative realms. Simple Simalungun words like "parpadoman" (guide) and "parpanuturi" (advice giver) carry symbolic meanings about the father's role as a moral guardian within the family. This song is not only emotionally touching but also reinforces cultural values within Simalungun society, where family is the foundation of social identity.

Some of Damma's songs explicitly voice social criticism, such as in *Tarkul*, a song protesting the spread of pornographic content and the negative influence of digital media on the younger generation. The word *Tarkul*, an acronym for "pulling kulit," is an explicit symbol used to shock listeners, but it contains a serious moral message. In a semiotic context, the use of vulgar symbols is a provocative strategy to raise public awareness. This song demonstrates that Damma not only creates entertainment but also conveys collective ethics through music. She uses music as an alternative discourse space, where messages that cannot be conveyed directly in conservative indigenous communities can be symbolically expressed through song.

The pragmatic meaning in this song is very strong. The social events that occur provide the context that gives meaning to each word. In this case, meaning resides not only in the

text but also in the relationship between the text and the context, between the singer and the listener.

One of Damma's lyrical strengths is her ability to combine humor and criticism. In the song "10 Hali" (Ten Times), Damma expresses disappointment with a partner who breaks a promise in a humorous and rhyming style. Humor is used not to obscure meaning, but rather as a softening tool in conveying criticism. In Batak-Simalungun culture, a sarcastic yet subtle style of speech is known as marsipitna or sintong. Damma brings this style to life in her poetry, making lyrics a less direct yet powerful medium of communication. This aligns with Bakhtin's argument that oral texts in folk culture are always polyphonic, meaning they contain many interacting voices and meanings.

The textual meanings in Damma Silalahi's songs demonstrate rich symbolic complexity, reflecting the cultural, social, and emotional dynamics of the Simalungun people. Through the use of metaphors, symbols, local idioms, and a distinctive style of speech, Damma effectively conveys both personal and collective messages.

The meanings in Damma's songs are not singular or fixed, but rather open to interpretation and change according to the social context and experiences of her listeners. She doesn't simply write songs; she constructs narratives and representations of what it means to be human in Simalungun culture today. Thus, Damma's works are important cultural texts to study, not only as aesthetic products, but also as a reflection of the social structures and values that live in their society.

The Social Function of Damma Silalahi's Songs

Music is not merely a form of art, but a powerful social instrument that communicates values, reinforces identities, and regulates emotional and communal life. In the context of Damma Silalahi's songs, music functions as a dynamic cultural force that negotiates between personal expression and collective consciousness. His works transcend aesthetic enjoyment; they become vehicles of social commentary, moral guidance, cultural preservation, and emotional catharsis. The functions of his songs, therefore, must be understood not only through formal musicological analysis but also through their social resonance in Simalungun society and beyond. Alan P. Merriam (1964) proposed three layers in understanding music—music as sound, music as behavior, and music as concept. Damma's songs operate across these layers: the sound (structure and melody), the behavior (performance, reception, and dissemination), and the concept (meaning, purpose, and value). By analyzing how these elements work together, we can uncover the multifaceted social functions embedded in his songs.

Damma Silalahi's songs serve as a medium for expressing personal sentiments, social frustrations, and existential contemplation. In songs like *Talenta* and *Sel Pengasingan*, the lyrics depict a sense of alienation, disillusionment, and inner conflict that reflect not only individual experiences but shared emotional states among his listeners. The characters in his songs—be it a fatherless child, a disillusioned lover, or a young man confronting societal injustice—are often drawn from everyday life. Through them, Damma articulates what many feel but cannot express publicly.

The expressive function of his songs lies in their ability to verbalize and sonically channel the emotional complexities of modern Simalungun society. It allows individuals, especially from rural or marginalized backgrounds, to find their voice within his music. His melodic choices often emphasize lamentation, tension, or ironic juxtaposition, reinforcing the emotional charge behind the lyrics. In *Bapaku Nabujur*, for example, the song becomes

an elegy—a space for mourning and remembering parental wisdom in an increasingly individualistic society.

Several of Damma's songs directly fulfill a didactic or moral function. They function as tools of social pedagogy, communicating ethical principles and warning against destructive behaviors. This is particularly evident in *Tarkul*, a song that critiques the oversexualization of youth and the normalization of pornography in everyday media consumption. The bluntness of the language used—often laced with vulgar humor—is not a lapse of taste, but a deliberate strategy to shock, engage, and provoke thought.

Damma's social critique does not spare sacred customs or respected social figures. *Gumis Ni Huting* questions the authority of bone (maternal uncle) in marriage decisions, revealing how traditional power structures can be manipulated for personal gain. By embedding critique within a humorous and musically engaging form, Damma turns his songs into cultural mirrors that reflect the contradictions, hypocrisies, and complexities of social life. In this sense, his songs operate like what Bakhtin called “carnavalesque literature”—subverting official discourses through folk humor, inversion, and parody. These songs offer a space where the “common people” can see their social reality reimaged, their frustrations validated, and their moral compass recalibrated.

Despite their critical and philosophical undertones, Damma's songs also fulfill a recreational function. Many of his works are performed at weddings, traditional feasts, Christian celebrations, and even karaoke gatherings. Songs like *10 Hali*, *Calon Parmaen*, and *Elvi* are favorites during *marpariban* (marriage ceremonies) or festive *gotilon* (harvest thanksgiving), where music plays a central role in building communal bonds and festive atmosphere.

The social function of these songs in such events goes beyond entertainment. They reaffirm shared experiences, revive memories, and create a participatory sense of community. The act of singing along, dancing, and laughing at humorous lyrics cultivates an inclusive environment where people from various generations can connect. In societies like Simalungun that are facing the erosion of traditional forms of gathering, such musical experiences have become important rituals of cohesion. Moreover, in religious spaces, Damma's spiritually inclined songs like *Talenta* or *Parjalang* have been used in youth worship programs and Christian concerts. While not strictly classified as liturgical hymns, their messages align with Biblical themes of stewardship, love, and faith. Here, his songs transcend boundaries between the sacred and the secular, enriching the expressive repertoire of spiritual practices in local churches.

One of the most significant social functions of Damma Silalahi's music is the construction and negotiation of cultural identity. Although Damma himself is of Toba Batak descent, his consistent use of the Simalungun language and symbols in his music has made him an accepted cultural agent within the Simalungun community. His songs help articulate what it means to be Simalungun in the modern world—not through static traditions, but through dynamic cultural expressions.

In his lyrics, terms like *bone*, *parpadoman*, *lapo*, and *sipanganon* serve as cultural markers. These are not just decorative; they root the songs in specific socio-cultural realities that resonate with Simalungun audiences. Damma's deliberate choice to write in Simalungun also emphasizes the value of the language in a time when local tongues are being supported by Bahasa Indonesia or global English. Thus, Damma's music becomes a cultural project—one that both preserves and reshapes the identity of his listeners. His songs act as “sonic identity markers”, embedding cultural pride in the everyday experience of listening, singing,

and sharing. In this way, his work contributes to the resistance against cultural homogenization and language death.

Another important social function of Damma's songs is their capacity to bridge generational gaps. While elders appreciate the use of traditional language and values, youth are drawn to the rhythmic diversity, pop-rock infusions, and bold thematic choices. Songs like Calon Parmaen appeal to young couples navigating expectations of marriage, while Bapaku Nabujur evokes nostalgia in older audiences. The multivocal nature of his music allows it to function as a cultural connector across age groups. The accessibility of his songs via digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and WhatsApp further enables cross-generational sharing. A song that was sung live at a wedding can be reshared through a WhatsApp group and eventually remixed by a teenager on TikTok. In this sense, Damma's music becomes mobile, reproducible, and socially elastic—capable of entering various social spaces without losing its core identity.

In sum, the songs of Damma Silalahi exemplify how music functions as social praxis—a living, breathing interaction between sound, meaning, and community. His works encapsulate the tension between tradition and modernity, the personal and the political, the humorous and the profound. They express, critique, entertain, educate, unite, and preserve. Whether serving as emotional outlets, moral reflections, cultural affirmations, or spaces of negotiation, his songs are embedded in the everyday social fabric of Simalungun life. Damma's contribution lies not just in writing good songs, but in understanding that music, when crafted with cultural insight and emotional intelligence, can become a voice for the voiceless, a mirror for the forgotten, and a bridge across generational and ideological divides. His songs are not just listened to—they are lived with.

CONCLUSIONS

This research concludes that Damma Silalahi's Simalungun pop songs are cultural creations that reflect a synthesis of tradition and modernity. In terms of musical structure, Damma's works exhibit a distinctive diversity of musical scales, contours, and patterns, and cross-genre styles. Despite having no formal musical background, Damma has succeeded in creating aesthetically pleasing and contextual works. The textual meanings in his songs are rich in symbolism and multi-layered, addressing social, cultural, and personal themes. His eccentric and sometimes controversial lyrical style is a distinctive characteristic that enhances the songs' artistic appeal and social communication.

The social functions of these songs are proven to be significant, encompassing expressive, educational, recreational, and identity-building functions. Damma Silalahi has succeeded in elevating Simalungun pop music into a broader public sphere without losing its cultural roots. This research is a significant contribution to ethnomusicology studies, as it not only uncovers musical and textual aspects but also demonstrates how music can become a site for identity struggles and social reflection. In the future, further studies can be directed at analyzing audience reception and the development of Simalungun pop music post-Damma Silalahi.

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