

## **Finding Marcelo: Reconstructing the Lost Repertoire of a Nineteenth-century Philippine Master**

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Twenty-one years ago, while on a concert tour of the Southern Tagalog region, I found myself in the plaza of the picturesque town of Pakil, Laguna. My attention was drawn to a small statue standing prominently on the side of the plaza facing the parish church. In the place where the national hero, Jose Rizal, usually stands, was the figure of another gentleman holding a conductor's baton in his right hand. The marker beneath the statue read "Marcelo Quisteria Adonay" (February 8, 1848-February 6, 1928). Intrigued to find a musician's statue in a space reserved for a national heroic figure, I had to confess to myself, with a sense of shame, that the name was unfamiliar to me.

Later, while preparing a script for a documentary on the Hispanic tradition in Philippine music for the Cultural Center of the Philippines, I came across the name again. Marcelo Adonay, according to reports and publications, was arguably the most well-known and celebrated Philippine musician of the late nineteenth century. *Maestro de capilla* of the San Agustin church, composer, conductor, organist, singer, and player of any number of orchestral instruments, his name dominated the field of liturgical music in the Philippines from 1870 to 1928. The information found in E. Arsenio Manuel's *Encyclopedia of Philippine Biography* was accompanied by a list of his best-known works. This raised another whole set of questions. If Adonay was, indeed, a major musical figure of this period, why had I neither learned of him nor heard any of his music? Why were present-day musicologists and musicians unfamiliar with him and unaware of his work?

Preoccupied with other projects, it would be a long time before the subject of Marcelo Adonay was retrieved from my mental data bank. In March of 1999, I found myself in San Agustin Church, listening to a rare performance of early Philippine liturgical music. Included in the repertoire were the *Misa Baclayana* from Bohol, a pair of *Villancicos* from San Juan del Monte, and the *Pequena Misa Solemne sobre Motivos de la Missa Regia del Canto Gregoriano* of Marcelo Adonay. With me in the audience was a small group of cultural workers that had invested their lives in the study of the Hispanic heritage of the Philippines. The music of the Gloria from the *Pequeña Misa* burst upon us like a rocket, exploding in mid-air and showering us with sinuous lines, sparkling tones, and a marvelous sense of light and color. Our surprised cries of delight were suppressed with great difficulty. After the event, the submerged questions again rose into full view—who was this man, where had his music been hidden all this time, why do I not know this music as I know the *concerto grossi* of Bach and symphonies of Beethoven?

I am not a professionally trained musicologist. My degrees are in Comparative Literature, Humanities, and a domain that, in our university, is called *Pilipinolohiya*. My previous work on song traditions in the Southern Tagalog region of the Philippines had made me comfortable with field and ethnographic methods rather than the formal music

analysis, historiography, and archival work that are par for the course for a historical musicologist. However, my doctoral training in *Pilipinolohiya* under my *guro*, Prospero Covar, had taught me that in unfamiliar territory, the technique called *pakapa-kapa* (groping, as in the dark) as a method of inquiry was most useful, especially when more conventional and established methods of research have failed.<sup>1</sup> I was determined to find answers to my questions using whatever skills, tools, weapons, or allies I could pick up along the way as I traveled the unfamiliar terrain.

Given my frame of mind, my first impulse was not to begin my search for music materials in major national archives and libraries. Rather, I decided to pay a visit to my friend, Mr. Iñigo Vito, local historian of Pakil, who had been my host in 1987, to ascertain if field and archival work in the town was possible. He opened up the San Pedro de Alcantara Parish Church vault and showed me a slender file of old music manuscripts that contained pieces purportedly by Maestro Adonay. While the material was admittedly thin, his enthusiasm steadied my resolve. After a little creative salesmanship, I convinced him to be my collaborator in Pakil and work with me on the project.

It was only then that my thoughts turned to Manila, the site where Don Marcelo lived from the age of eight until his death at the age of eighty. I assembled a group of musicologist friends and colleagues, mostly connected with the University of the Philippines College of Music in Diliman, Quezon City, and invited them to join us. For two years, this core group consisting of Dr. Corazon Dioquino, Ms. Melissa Mantaring, Prof. Patricia Silvestre, Prof. Edna Marcil Martinez, and myself, aided and abetted by Mr. Regalado Trota Jose and Dr. William Summers, worked at collecting scattered pieces of a large puzzle in Manila.

The team began with a search for both written and oral information about the maestro and copies of his works. The ultimate goal was a biography and a critical edition of his music, a first extended attempt in Philippine historical musicology. We understood from the beginning that to understand and reconstruct the scores, it was also necessary to put them in the proper musical and socio-historical context. We also realized that local histories and histories of special institutions or sectors in the Philippines have, until very recently, taken a back seat to the writing of national and political history; thus, there were many gaps in our understanding of the place music might have had in a small town such as Pakil or even a major church such as San Agustin. We would have to fill in these huge gaps ourselves, using the meager haul that had resulted from the diligent combing of Manila archives and libraries.

To improve the situation, we enlisted the assistance of elderly Pakil residents that actually had occasion to meet or live with the Maestro or his daughter, Marieta. These individuals, Simplicia Adonay, Josephine and Paulino de Jesus Cadsawan, and Marciana Peralta Saldaña, were ferreted out by Mr. Vito, and they patiently consented to be interviewed. Fr. Pedro Galende, Director of the San Agustin Museum, and Fr. Policarpo Hernandez, Master of Novices of the San Agustin Convent in Manila, were also most helpful in helping us understand life in a provincial house in the nineteenth century. A

rare memoir of a choirboy's life in the San Agustin convent in the 1920's, written in 1992 by the late Antonio Adonay Santos, was shared by Fr. Galende, director of the San Agustin Museum with the team. Fr. Hernandez took the time to read early drafts of the manuscript and make comments on its contents. Ricky Jose tracked down a writer, Ernesto Epistola, who had interviewed Marieta Adonay Cadsawan in the 1950's. Mr. Vito and I found Rose Gutierrez, a lady living on the site of Marcelo's old home in Malate whose father had bought the property right after World War II. Their narratives fleshed out the stories behind each work. From these oral and unpublished sources, we learned much about domestic life, patterns of travel and migration, life in a religious community, music in the liturgical and ritual life of the church, musical education, and performance practice in Luzon of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

At the same time, we were also concerned about finding enough music to merit a volume of collected works. Only one published work of Marcelo Adonay currently exists, a *Salve Regina*, copied by the mid-twentieth-century composer and musicologist Antonio Molina, who included it in one of his published essays.<sup>2</sup> At first, we had no idea of how much work the maestro had produced. Save for the *Salve Regina*, we knew that a score and parts of the *Pequeña Misa Solemne* existed somewhere and must have been used in the 1999 San Agustin performance. I had seen manuscript copies of parts of a *Benedictus* in the Pakil church in connection with my earlier scriptwriting effort. Otherwise, we had no knowledge of any other works. The research team searched for references to Marcelo Adonay, his life and his work, in libraries and archives all over Manila. An initial search for information yielded five short essays listing a total of fifty-seven known compositions by the Maestro.

This same search revealed the presence of a single photocopied rehearsal score of his *Pequeña Misa Solemne* from the library of the University of the Philippines Music Library in Diliman, Quezon City. Also found in this library were choral and orchestral parts of the *Misa* that had been used for the San Agustin performance, parts of the earlier mentioned *Benedictus* for tenor and small instrumental ensemble and a *Libera Me, Domine*, for tenor solo and a string ensemble. All were photocopies.

San Agustin church and convent, where Adonay had spent all of his musical life, was a disappointment. Although the reverend fathers were kind and tried to be helpful, the library was in a dire state, perhaps as a result of the catastrophes that have befallen the convent in the past. Included here are the October 1901 reorganization of the *Provincia de la Santisima Nombre de Jesus* and the consequent transfer of the center of the province and its archives elsewhere. The destruction of Manila in 1945, in the last months of World War II, must also have wrought havoc on the remaining convent records and documents. Today, it is physically impossible to work in the library, as there is neither light nor ventilation. Books and other materials are not organized in any discernible fashion, and there is neither an inventory nor a catalog of materials. There are a number of cantorals but they were, at the time of our survey, dumped in piles on the floor of the attic. It is no wonder that all the performances of the *Pequeña Misa Solemne* in the last decade have been based on the U.P. photocopy.

Undeterred by the paucity of material found in Manila, I decided to bring the entire team to Pakil. Mr. Vito had previously, with the assistance of Alejandro Macabasco, Silvestre Sabiniano, and Ceferino Pasang, elderly cantors and church musicians, retrieved, collected, and in one case, reconstructed music that they had performed in their youth in San Agustin church and used in the local parish church.<sup>3</sup> A crate of music sheets in envelopes had been recovered by him and his friends. The team proceeded to inventory this collection (Pakil I Collection) and discovered that all the photocopies from the U.P. library could be traced back to Pakil manuscripts. Macabasco, the only one of the choristers to survive until 2000, indicated that these had been copied from original scores in the possession of the composer's daughter, Marieta Adonay Cadsawan, by students or choirboys of the maestro until her death sometime in the 1950's.<sup>4</sup> Aside from the *Pequeña Misa*, *Benedictus* and *Libera Me, Domine*, there was a second *Libera Me, Domine*, for tiple and keyboard, and another *Salve Regina (Salve a Solo y Septimino)*. Still another two other works, *Villancico a Belen Pastores* and *Villancico al Nacimiento Señor*, were identified by a shaky, unknown hand as compositions "por M. Adonay" or "por M.A.," respectively. The Adonay materials were photocopied and scanned by the team. This move was providential as a few years later, the second *Libera Me, Domine* was no longer found in the box that held the pieces. Because of that occurrence, what we now refer to as the Pakil I collection has been turned over by Mr. Vito to the U.P. Library for safekeeping, where it has been inventoried and is currently undergoing conservation.

Meanwhile, a series of serendipitous events in Manila led to the discovery of a few Adonay works in two private collections. In both these cases, the materials had been rescued from imminent destruction. The first involved the music collection of Bienvenida Roxas Evangelista, a member of a choir based in Santa Ana, Manila, that performed both in church and on stage in the first half of the twentieth century. The music had been scheduled for burning, along with other old papers and belongings of the family, which was emigrating to the United States. One of the grandchildren, however, decided to entrust the materials to Mrs. Veronica Dado of the National Historical Institute with the instructions that if anyone was interested in the works, they could use them provided this led, to the performance of at least some of the materials. Dado, in turn, passed the materials on to art historian Regalado Jose, Jr., who had been her mentor at U.P. While poring over the materials, Jose discovered a *Rosario de Difunto* attributed to Adonay and lent the parts out to the team. We offered to inventory the entire collection in exchange for permission to reconstruct and publish whatever Adonay scores were found. During the inventory, still another work by Adonay was found, a *Gozos* dedicated to Nuestra Sra. De Remedios, the patroness of the parish of Malate, where Adonay lived after his marriage.

A second rescued collection was the Antonio Molina collection. The music of this prominent composer, a national artist, had been badly damaged by a fire in the family ancestral house in Manila's Quiapo district in the 1980's. Whatever had been salvaged was transferred to a *bodega* (storeroom) in his son Exequiel's home in Parañaque, a satellite city of Manila. In 2001, the *bodega* was flooded during an unusually severe monsoon season and more of the works were damaged. By this time, Exequiel, a jazz

musician, had been paralyzed by a stroke and could no longer communicate. Through the efforts of Exequiel's daughter-in-law Katherine Valdellon-Molina, a professor at the U.P. College of Music where we all worked, the team was allowed to survey the mass of materials. We found two works, *Gozos a la Santisima Virgen* and a *Secuencia*,<sup>5</sup> both attributed by Molina to Adonay in addition to manuscript copies of the already published *Salve Regina* in Dr. Molina's handwriting. The collection was turned over by the Molina family to the U.P. Library, where it has been inventoried and stored since 2002.

Armed with these nine titles, we began to reconstruct the scores. In the initial phases of reconstruction, we realized that the parts for the *Pequeña Misa Solemne* found in Pakil had been copied by two different copyists—one, Alejandro Macabasco, a grandson of the composer; and an unknown copyist, possibly Ceferino Pasang, who had been an assistant to the maestro in San Agustin during his youth.<sup>6</sup> We also discovered that the instrumental parts in one version were different from the other, the second having a richer orchestration for a bigger body of instruments. The group decided that it would be important to publish both sets of reconstructed scores to provide musicians with two options for performance and give musicologists insights into how music was prepared for performance in that period of our history. Still another example of this practice is *Gozos a la Santisima Virgen*, dedicated to *Nuestra Sra. De Consolacion*, a patroness of the Agustinian order. In the Molina collection, it is a work for unison or two-voice choir with tenor and baritone solos, with keyboard accompaniment. The *Gozos* dedicated to Our Lady of Remedies in the Evangelista collection was for a three-voice choir, tenor and baritone solos, and a small instrumental ensemble. The Molina and Evangelista versions have identical melodies but the voicing and instrumentation of the two pieces are different, and the texts have been altered slightly to fit the needs of the specific devotion. Again, both versions were included in the volume.

For the next three years, Mr. Vito and I continued our house-to-house search hoping to find missing pieces that might have been stored by Pakil musicians or Adonay family members in unlikely places. The maestro's personal collection continued (and still continues) to elude us.<sup>7</sup> Then in 2003, as eleven scores had been reconstructed and were being prepared for publication, I received a large manila envelope from him containing still another collection he had received from Ms. Fe Maulawin, whose father, Roman, had also been a student of Don Marcelo. Don Roman, who had been the mayor of Pakil for many years had often commissioned works for community and church events in the town, and Don Marcelo had, of course, graciously acceded, providing his hometown with much of its civic and ritual music. At least eleven works in this collection are attributed to Adonay, some bearing his signature as well as his personal notes to Maulawin concerning, among other matters, aspects of performance. We decided that the Roman Maulawin collection, consisting of works specifically written for the Pakil community and its residents deserved a separate volume. These works, even as I speak, are being encoded by composition students of the U.P. College of Music.

Cross-checking our present collection, we have retrieved a total of twenty-two complete works, have fully reconstructed eleven, and are currently in the process of reconstituting another eleven.

In conclusion, I would like to note that natural and historical factors have made it difficult to do archival research in Philippine music. The Philippines is a disaster-prone nation and an archivist's nightmare. Situated strategically in the Pacific Ring of Fire, it is subject to earthquakes, typhoons, floods, volcanic eruptions, and other natural catastrophes. Political instability and waves of invasions by contending forces have made historical documents extremely vulnerable to man-made devastation. Complicating the picture is a semi-oral music culture. Many musicians who were literate in western music notation did not entrust their music manuscript collections to libraries or archives. In part, this might have been because competition among rival orchestras, choirs, and bands led to the jealous guarding of personal scores, which were therefore accessible only to one's trusted associates. Thus, one cannot rely on well-stocked libraries with documents neatly catalogued and inventoried. Tracing and finding the musical documents has been an extremely frustrating task.

But we know that the manuscripts *did* and *might* still exist somewhere, earthquakes, wars, and gatekeepers notwithstanding. To find them, I had to fall back on personal networks of colleagues, family, and friends. We sifted through academic debris together, pried open closed doors, contacting friend after friend, knocking on door after door, sharing bits of information like tasty morsels of food. We built and cultivated relationships, allayed suspicions, kept confidences, and acknowledged individual person's contributions to the work as it progressed. And we have constantly returned to our friends and informants in the field, bringing back to them the first fruits for their delectation, evaluation, and use. The staff of U.P. Press, which is doing the final edit of the layout, has remarked that the Adonay volume has an unusual number of authors. My response is that it is the work of a collective, a community that has taken a journey in search of the lost music of Marcelo Adonay. In the process, it has found itself.

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<sup>1</sup> *Pilipinolohiya* is a term used to indicate a study of the national construct, Pilipinas, from an emic perspective towards emic communication. It stresses research methods that involve sensitivity towards people and their communal lives (pamamasid, pakiramdam, pagtatanong-tanong, pagsubok, padalaw-dalaw, pagmamatyag, pagsusubaybay, pakikialam, pakikilahok, pakikisangkot, pakikitungo, pakikisalamuha, pakikibagay, pakikisama, pakikipagpalagayang-loob, pakikiisa).

<sup>2</sup> Antonio Molina, “Music: Between God and Man,” *Musical Philippines* 3 (January-March, 1951): 5-7.

<sup>3</sup> Pakil had, until the 1930’s, been a rich field for the recruitment of *tiples* for this church due to the influential presence of Don Marcelo.

<sup>4</sup> Marieta, the only child of Marcelo to reach adulthood, died childless.

<sup>5</sup> The team later ascertained that the *Secuencia* score might have simply been copied by Don Marcelo and that the composer was probably Manuel Arostegui, Adonay’s mentor.

<sup>6</sup> Pasang’s handwriting has been identified by his son, Victor.

<sup>7</sup> Marieta Adonay-Cadsawan married Paulino Cadsawan, a composer and student of Marcelo Adonay. They had no children. After her death in the 1950’s, Paulino remarried. His descendants are unaware of any collection of music that their father might have left behind.