

How Much Remains to Be Learned about California Mission Music? Two Case Studies

William John Summers
Dartmouth College

The goals of this paper are twofold, first to amuse and “lament,” and secondly, to share some very early thoughts about some new and little-known sources of information on music in the California missions. My case studies are titled, “‘Phantom of the Set,’ Fugitive Mission Music from the TV Series *The Nanny*,” and “All Good Things Come to an End: Mission Inventories, Old and New.” Both present questions about mission music that remain open and in need of further study. Each represents work in progress.

“‘Phantom of the Set,’ fugitive mission music from the TV Series *The Nanny*”

While one of our esteemed colleagues Professor Grayson Wagstaff has reported upon some of the musical contents of this mystery source in his excellent article in the *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* in 2001, I thought it might be instructive to recount some of the perplexing circumstance of the “rediscovery” of what appears to be four pages of a folio-size music-manuscript book from the mission period that came to light in perhaps one of the most bizarre sets of circumstances every encountered by a musicologist.ⁱ

While some readers may not have seen the television show *The Nanny*, starring Fran Drescher, Charles Shaunessey and Daniel Davis, that ran from 1993 to 1999, this was, in fact, our daughter Erin’s favorite television show during those years.ⁱⁱ Critical opinion of its artistic merits ranges widely, but once a week this was an opportunity to settle down in front of the TV with Erin and be mildly amused. She was, at the moment of rediscovery, also at that volatile age of 11, a period when many fathers have to “arrange” moments of socializing with due diligence.

That said, on December 12, 1994, we were settled in at 8 p.m. on Thursday, watching *The Nanny*. We had recently bought a new TV with a large screen for that time, and also for our family pocket book, so we were basking in the newfound clarity and brilliance of the picture. One particular segment of this episode was a moment in time that transformed my life as a research scholar.

In fact, poor Erin thought her dad had totally freaked out. As the camera panned in onto Fran’s head while she was seated on the “safe,” I was sitting on the edge of my chair exclaiming at the top of my lungs that the pages that framed her head actually contained California mission music from the nineteenth century. In a flash I was in a total lather because though we had a video recorder and could have recorded this episode, we had not. Being totally naïve about matters having to do with TV productions, I

desperately feared that my moment to see what was actually in the frames on the wall of Maxwell Sheffield's study had just faded into three minutes of mindless commercials.

In matters of mission music, God sometimes provides, and Erin, bless her heart, immediately chimed in that there would be a re-run of this episode in the daytime on Saturday. As the blood rushed back down from my beet-red face into the rest of my body, she realized she may have just saved me from a heart attack. Abject dejection was immediately replaced by exuberant exaltation: I would have the opportunity to videotape this episode on Saturday. I did, and as they say, the rest in history.

However, the real trial by fire was about to begin. How does one contact a TV show to ask about wall decorations? Well, after a half dozen telephone calls to various Dartmouth College officials, and to the Burbank studios of CBS, I was able to speak with an assistant producer for the show, Ms. Shauna Smith. She was not able to speak with me directly about the set decorations, because these were a "carefully guarded secret." She did promise me that she would speak with the producer and the legal counsel of the studio and get back to me.

When she did write my heart sank again, because she pointed out that the framed images on the set wall that I had seen were actually re-creations of the original manuscripts that had been used on the set for the original pilot episode. That set had been dismantled upon the completion of filming because at least four months would elapse from the pitching of the series and its acceptance into the network schedule. I was also told that the person who had provided the original images refused to be identified or contacted, even though I indicated emphatically that I was a researcher and had no interest whatsoever in anything other than the musical contents. Something I was not aware of at that time in California was the various legal attempts made to repatriate artifacts that had originated from historic California homes and the missions. A second round of correspondence brought forth the Polaroid photographs you see here of the reproductions. One final letter of entreaty for permission to communicate with the owner of the original pages was never answered.

Fig. 1: Reproduction of Mission Music Used on the Set of *The Nanny*



APPROX. 19" x 13"

Fig. 2: Reproduction of Mission Music Used on the Set of *The Nanny*



Prof. Wagstaff had alluded to the importance of this source in his study, but for those who study California mission music, these pages actually carry the very first polyphonic music for the Office of the Dead that apparently had been notated in California. The Mass for the Dead, in plainsong and polyphony, was recorded in a number of the Mission sources. Both Fray Juan Sancho and Fray Narciso Durán had provided Mass settings in polyphony. This was the first indication of part music for texts from the Office of the Dead. Two different page numbers (I am assuming page numbers rather than folio numbers), 134 and 151, apparently original, can be seen. This suggests that Matins from the office for the Dead covered a significant portion of seventeen pages (this also assumes that they come from the same book). The Burial Service texts are represented on p. 151, and it is interesting to note that the well-known text *In paradisum* is set in both plainsong and polyphony. I have not yet discovered why the second verse is labeled an antiphon and would welcome suggestions on this point. Why the second verse is in polyphony totally stumps me.

Table 1

Contents of the “Nanny Fragment”

Page. 134

[Invitatory, Matins for the dead, opening verse]

... Venite adoremus. (plainsong)

Psalm 94, verse, Quadraginta annis proximus... (polyphony)

Page. 151

[Burial Service for the dead]

[In paradisum... visita-] tem sanctam Jerusalem. (plainsong)

Chorus angelorum.. (polyphony)

These data when taken all together suggest the original manuscript, perhaps with parchment pages, had at least 152 pages, and that the Office for the Dead appeared to be notated at the end of the manuscript covering at least 17 pages. This would make the original one of the three largest mission-era music books, and add another source to the group of books that carried part music in the colored notational format utilized by Fray Narciso Durán in the choirbook he oversaw the production of in 1813.

Who owns this phantom source, and will we ever gain scholarly access to its other contents? What mission is the most likely to have owned this book, and what is the origin of this polyphony for the Office of the Dead? We know that the various Spanish printed music books, *Prontuarios* and *Método*, that survive from mission times had newly composed music in this compositional style.ⁱⁱⁱ In a general way they serve as models, however, the question about the origins of this polyphonic music for the Office for the dead remains open. Perhaps a future “*Nanny ex Machina*” may appear and reveal some additional answers.

“All Good Things Come to an End: Mission Inventories Old and New”

From 1769 to 1821, Spain carried out a missionization project in Alta California entrusted to Franciscan priests from the Apostolic College of San Fernando located in Mexico City. This fifty-two-year period witnessed the establishment of twenty mission communities from San Diego in the South to Sonoma in the north (the mission founded in 1823 was actually not a Spanish mission). As all the research presented here makes clear, music of all kinds was an integral part of mission life.

The late eighteenth-century foment for independence from Spain brewing in Mexico reached a boiling point in September, 1810. For the next eleven years various wars for independence convulsed Mexico. In 1821 independence was achieved.^{iv} California experienced some of the impact of these changes, not the least being an almost complete cessation of the shipping of support materials of all kinds up from Mexico to California after 1810.

In 1833 the Mexican Congress passed a secularization Order for the missions in Alta California.^v This issue had been discussed by regional government officials as early as 1826, but the 1833 order forced the regional government to take action. This decree mandated, theoretically, that the properties of the missions be turned over to Native Californians, removing them from the control of the Franciscans who had held them in trust only. On August 9, 1834, Governor José Figueroa issued his “Decree of Confiscation.”^{vi} He died in 1835, before his plans could be fully implemented. Even though concern for the California Indians was voiced by some politicians in Mexico City, the gleam of greed, especially in the eyes of some now Mexican colonists, derailed these seemingly altruistic sentiments. Ultimately, no real concern was ever shown for the fate of the California Indians or the legitimacy of their vast inheritance.

Prior to the final confiscation of an individual mission, a full inventory of its land, buildings, and “moveables” had to be made. Remarkably detailed information about the entire physical plant of a mission, right down to the actual number of nails found in the *carpinteria*, is given in these documents.^{vii} They also reveal, sadly, the full scope of the plundering and despoliation by the lay administrators appointed to oversee their dissolution. It is to a group of recently, re-discovered, mission inventories that we now turn.

The silver lining for the researcher in music (if one is ever possible under circumstances like this) is the fact that inventories very often provide detailed information concerning the presence of music books and also music instruments held at the respective missions. You can see from Table 2 what the inventories from nine missions and one presidio chapel revealed.

If we pause for a moment to look at these listings, we see quite an amazing array of string, wind and brass instruments, ranging from piccolo to contrabass, though of course not at every mission. Even the lowly triangle seems to have been ubiquitous. Also, the inventories reveal that the variety and number of instrument varied from

mission to mission. To the best of my knowledge, none of the original music instruments survive today in the missions with inventories, but some of the music books do, especially Santa Clara. Hubert Howe Bancroft fortuitously stole the Durán choir book from mission San José, or bought it from the original thief, and it is now in the Bancroft Library. One music book purportedly from Mission San Rafael is in the Santa Barbara Mission Archive Library, and a third from Carmel Mission is in Stanford University Library.

Another important point is the wide range in dates of the inventories, 1834-51. Others more expert in the matters of secularization may be able to explain this circumstance; however, it appears that the Santa Clara inventory, if it is not a copy of an earlier inventory simply supplied with a later date, may suggest that the twenty-four musical instruments were still there in 1851. One may also spot the expert eye and careful hand of Fray Narciso Durán in the Santa Barbara listing of instruments, made, interestingly, the year after he moved to this mission from San José in 1833.^{viii} What possibly could the players of all these instruments have performed from, since we have notated, instrumental music from only one of the missions, San Antonio de Padua? This remains one of the most pressing, big-picture questions that will perplex and titillate us for the rest of this new century.

We know, for instance, that the pipe organ listed in the Santa Barbara inventory of 1834 was still in proper playing order in 1842, when the British explorer George Simpson heard it being played in the choir loft by a Native Californian. One of the pieces was, shockingly, the Lutheran hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”!^{ix} What other music might this organist have known? Simpson says he was playing a number of pieces.

Table 2

Selected Inventories
from California Missions, 1833–1851

1. Mission San Francisco de Solano (no date):
 - 2 violonistas
 - 5 violones nuevos (violines?)
 - 3 violones viejos (violines?)
 - 2 libros de coro
2. Mission Santa Barbara, 1834:
 - 4 flautas
 - 3 clarinetes
 - 2 trompas
 - 2 violones
 - 1 chimesco
 - 1 bombo
 - 2 tambores
 - 16 violines
 - 1 organo con 6 registros y un teclado y quatro diaposones
 - 4 violines nuevos
 - 3 triangulos
 - 4 violines nuevos
 - el vestuario de los musicos
3. Mission Nuestra Señora de Soledad, 1834:
 - 2 flauti
 - 3 violines buenos
 - 1 tambor
 - 1 violon viejo
 - 2 triangulos buenos
4. Mission San Diego, 1834:
 - 1 organo (á \$70)
5. Mission Santa Clara, 1836:
 - 13 violines
 - 1 violon
 - 3 tambores
 - 1 tambora
 - 2 trompas
 - 2 decavinos
 - 2 flautas
 - 2 clarinetas
 - 2 clarines
 - 2 cornetas
 - 2 tambores
 - 2 triangulos
 - 1 pandero
 - 1 silindro (á \$500)
6. Mission San Jose, 1842:
 - 1 contrabaso
 - 4 violon melos
 - 19 violines
 - 1 idem viejo
 - 1 libro coral vel pergamino
 - 1 tambor
 - 2 triangulos
 - 1 cilindro y 3 cilindros 27 piasas
 - 26 vestidos para musicos
7. Mission San Antonio de Padua, 1842:
 - 4 violines nuevos
 - 1 idem viejo
 - 1 idem grand llamad bajo
 - 1 tambor
 - 4 flautas
 - 1 idem nueva
 - 1 trompa
 - 1 clarin
 - 2 triangulos
 - 1 libro de coro ya viejo con 10 u' 11 misas
8. Mission San Carlos de Borromeo, 1835:
 - 1 organo de siguiñela con 3 cilindros
 - 2 violones
 - 7 violines
 - 1 tambor
 - 2 flautas
 - 1 clarineta
9. Mission Santa Clara, 1851:
 - 1 bajo grande
 - 3 bajos medianos
 - 13 violines
 - 3 idem
 - 1 redublante
 - 1 tambor
 - 1 libro coral de pergamino
 - 2 triangulos y varios papeles de musica
10. Santa Barbara Presidio Chapel, 1858:
 - 1 pequeño organo con cuatros mixturas
 - 1 seraphina grande
 - 1 idem pequeña
 - 1 violon
 - 3 violines

While this first set of data from inventories was published in 1981 in the *Congress Report of the International Musicological Society*, the process of assessing inventories has not stopped. Recent suggestions from John Koegel and David Shaul led me to examine databases in Arizona and New Mexico libraries and archives for additional inventories. “Lo and behold,” a cache of fifteen additional inventories was found in the collection of Arizona State University. I was not totally surprised to find these inventories, apparently surviving from the archives of the Apostolic College of Zacatecas, an institution that began to supply priests to California right around the time of secularization in 1833.^x These copies may have made their way back to Mexico through the agency of these friars.

My work on these documents, in the form of photocopies, has only just begun, so my comments offered today are extremely preliminary. I eagerly await guidance from the scholars present here today to further refine my understanding of these inventories and their survival.

Table 3

Arizona State University Film Collection

Film #/FrameNumbers	Mission Church	Inventory Date
5.7681-7693	San Antonio	1835/31 xii
5.7797-7805	San Antonio	1842/18 vi
5. 7643-7649	San Carlos	1838
5.7698-7710	Santa Clara	1843
3.4941-4971	Santa Clara	1836
3.3266-3293	Santa Clara	1842/16 vi
4.7248-7262	Santa Cruz	1834/24 viii
5.7856-7865	Soledad	1834
3.4307-4325	Solano	1834/35?

As you can see, the microfilm collection from the Old Spanish Mission Historical Research Library, Microfilm Inventory, holds fifteen inventories from California. Some of these documents appear to be copies of inventories already known from the Santa Barbara Mission Archive (so identified in Table 3). Others are not exact copies and contain similar but also additional information that does not substantially change what was already known about music. Some actually have no information on music.

What I do want to spend my last minutes on is the inventory for Mission Santa Cruz. My previous research on inventories had not turned up one from this Church. The data presented on music in this document provide wholly new information. Until now, Santa Cruz had been a rather musically silent member of the chain of twenty-one missions. Here is the opening page and the listing of the music instruments taken from this source. Time does not permit extensive comments about it as a document. I will only say that it is in the same hand throughout, and appears in general respects to be an authentic mission period inventory.

The listing of instruments that covers portions of pages four and five (see Ex. 2 below), bears a striking resemblance to the inventory from Mission Santa Clara both in the order of instruments and their numbers. The full listing is as follows:

Año de 1834. Agosto 24.	2. Decavinos
En el Coro un Silindro. 500.p.[pesos]	2. Flautas
	2. Carinetes
13. Violines	2. Clarines
1. Violon	2. Cornetas
3. Tamboras	2. Tambor...
1. Tambora	2. Triangulos
2. Trompas	

This coincidence immediately sent a red flag up the pole for me. Also, notice the existence of a barrel organ written in a bold, oversize note in the margin of page four. This was a most unusual feature. I had previously studied the presence of barrel organs in California and published my findings.^{xi} No mention in Norman Benson's articles, the most extensive discussion on barrel organs, or other narrative sources available on Mission Santa Cruz indicated that a barrel organ was known there. Finding an additional barrel organ in and of itself is not entirely unusual, but when it does come along without any other corroborating evidence, I have a question. I remain uncertain about what to make of the information concerning the barrel organ.

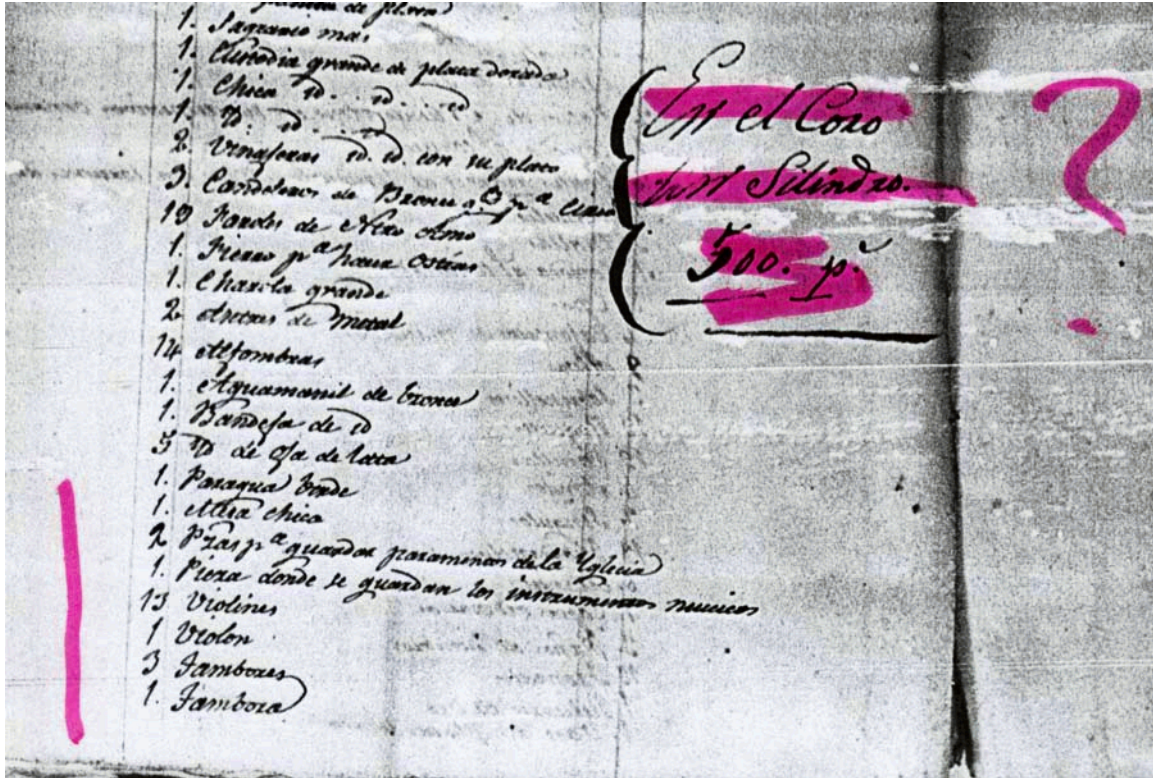
Ex. 1: Listing of Musical Instruments at Mission Santa Cruz

Ymplementaria Grat. de todas las existencias pertenecientes a la Ellecion
de Sta. Cruz comprendiendose en el los Libros de cada Ellecion y
demas documentos relativos a Intereses, Exodios, Accion y pasivos, edi-
ficios, Agüicia, Fuycas y demas Locales: Vinas, Huertas, Alotinos, Cerezos
y demas correspond. La viño raices: viño de Campo como son gaz-
nados, mayor y menor, Cacahuates y demas pertenecientes a este ramo
todo con la devida separacion de lo correspond. a cada oficina

Agüicia Unica

1. Ellece mayor con su Colocerial de lienzo
1. Ellece mediana con caquillo de oro
1. Ymagen de los Dolores en una rejisa sobredorada
6. Espejos sobredorados grandes
1. Palabucos id de columnas con cerchios de brassero
4. Ymagines de bruto de grandes y de mediana con sus rej-
isas sobredoradas
3. Colocerials de lienzo
4. Candeleros amantiles
1. Ellece con un seguro y de oro
6. Candeleros de plata grandes sobredorados
2. id de oro de mediana
1. Santo Cristo de metal sobredorado
6. Floreros de crystal con sus ramilletes
1. Ellece y un riso
1. Ellece menor
1. Ymagen de la virgen de bruto con su nicho de madera
con vidrieras
1. Divina Pasion en un nicho de madera sobredorado
1. Santo Cristo de metal
2. Espejos sobredorados
2. Quinquas sobredorados
4. Recables id
3. Id grandes
1. Id mediana de lienzo
6. Candeleros grandes de madera
1. Palabucos de id
1. Ellece de id
1. Ellece menor
1. Ymagen de Nra Sra P. S. Juan de bruto con su nicho y vidrieras
1. Pasion en un nicho sobredorado
2. Espejos grandes id
1. Ellece con 6 Candeleros de plata
7. Recables grandes de lienzo
3. Id chicos de id

Ex. 2: Listing of Musical Instruments at Mission Santa Cruz



This inventory from Santa Cruz is surely a welcome addition to the documentary evidence, but I remain skeptical about the accuracy as a document from Santa Cruz. It is very likely that Santa Cruz did, in fact, have a collection of instruments, and it is not impossible that a barrel organ was owned by this mission.

Despite my caution, I have intensified my search for other records to try to determine which of the priests stationed at Santa Cruz may have been responsible for promoting and cultivating music. No music books are noted, but I am intensely curious to learn what music might have been performed? Clearly, this document, previously unknown to me, has prompted more questions than answers, and that sent me on additional searches. If it is possible to verify the accuracy of this inventory as being from Santa Cruz, we will be able to rejoice in the new knowledge of a sizeable instrument collection, and an additional barrel organ, not to mention the many ramifications these had on the musical life of this community.

In conclusion, one part of me wishes that this presentation had been devoted to completely new finds rather than to a challenging, logistical cul-de-sac: “The Phantom Source from *The Nanny*,” and secondly to the unanswered questions surrounding the Santa Cruz inventory. However, as we press ahead in our study of the musical life of the missions, we can be hopeful, patient and, in certain circumstances, quietly resigned to gaps in our knowledge that may not be able to be filled. Both big- and little-picture

questions remain to be explored. Clearly, there is much more still to be learned about the music of the California missions. In the end, California is fortunate to have so much of its historical materials survive and equally blessed to have the small army of scholars assembled here today who are seeking to push the research frontiers ever forward, always knowing that the process is one of endless beginnings.

ⁱG. Grayson Wagstaff, "Franciscan Mission Music in California, c. 1770-1830: Chant, Liturgical and Polyphonic Traditions," *Journal of the Royal Music Association* 126 (2001): 54-82.

ⁱⁱ See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Nanny_\(TV_series\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Nanny_(TV_series)). The specific information about the episode in question was provided in this online discussion of this television show.

ⁱⁱⁱ See William Summers "Music in the California Missions: An Inventory and Discussion of Selected Printed Music Books Used in Hispanic California, 1769-1836," *Soundings: The Collections of the University Library (Santa Barbara)* 9 (1977), 13-29.

^{iv} See Michael C. Meyer and William L. Sherman, *The Course of Mexican History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 296-98.

^v Bill Yenne, *The Missions of California* (San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2004), 18-19.

^{vi} See Zephyrn Engelhardt, *The Franciscans in California* (Harbor Springs, MI: Holy Childhood Indian School, 1897), 177-78.

^{vii} See William Summers, "Spanish Music in California, 1769-1840: A Reassessment," *International Musicological Society Report of the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley 1977*, Daniel Hertz and Bonnie Wade, eds. (Basel: The American Musicological Society, 1981), 360-80. A number of inventories of the missions are discussed in this article.

^{viii} See Maynard Geiger, *Franciscan Missionaries in Hispanic California*, 72-73.

^{ix} See his *Narrative of a Voyage to California Ports in 1841-42* (San Francisco: Private Press of T. C. Russell, 1930), 129-30.

^x See Maynard Geiger, *Franciscan Missionaries*, x-xi, 15-18. Seven of the eleven priests from this college returned to Mexico.

^{xi} See William Summers, "The Organs of Hispanic California," *Music Magazine (A.G.O.-R. C. C. O.)* 10 (1976): 50-51.