

The "Rosary Musicians" *

Recently, a survey of music manuscripts, printed scores and mimeographed copies in the UST Seminary Score Collection, which is stored in the choir loft of the UST Seminary Chapel, was completed. The re-discovery of works by Fr. Primo Calzada y Albarran (1871-1952), Fr. Gregorio Arnaiz y Lopez (1873-1953) and Fr. Francisco Cubeñas (1865-1928) in the course of the survey has added new dimensions to the narrative accounts on the lives of these three Dominican composers which are contained in some manuscripts found in the UST Archives.¹

The development is significant, because even as the Dominicans have been noted for success in many fields of endeavor, they have not been particularly famous for their musical skills, unlike for example, the Franciscans, who have a long history of

* This essay was originally delivered as a paper at the Professorial Chair in Music Research Lecture held under the joint auspices of the UST Conservatory of Music and the UST Integrated Research Committee at the Albertus Magnus Auditorium in UST on September 9, 1986. The lecture was the culmination of the research project, "A Survey of Philippine-Spanish Church Music During the Spanish Era" undertaken from October, 1985, to August, 1986 through a professorial chair funded by the UST Integrated Research Committee.

¹ The archive manuscripts referred to were originally brought to my attention by Fr. Pablo Fernandez, O.P., official chronicler and archivist of the University of Santo Tomas, who had also suggested that the "Survey of Philippine-Spanish Church Music..." should commence at the UST Central Seminary. (Pablo Fernandez, O.P., Interviews held at the Fathers' Residence, UST, Sampaloc, Manila, October, 1985.)

musicianship behind them.² Even more important, is the fact that the centuries-old link between the Dominican Order and the rosary devotion has been herewith re-affirmed.

For, if many Filipinos still recite the rosary fervently, if not frequently, as perhaps best proven by the film-documented conspicuousness of the prayer beads during the last Philippine revolution at EDSA, this can be attributed, at least partly to the zeal of the Dominican missionaries who have propagated the devotion in this country for almost 400 years.

It would be a rare Dominican station where a part of the rosary was not recited daily. In some it was recited completely; in others they recited or chanted it in procession through the streets. In a certain place, as in Binondo, they recited the first two parts and the third was solemnly chanted throughout the length of the streets. It used to be customary for Filipinos before to carry the rosary around the neck, like the way the Dominicans wore it until 1969. In the schools administered by the Franciscans and the Dominicans, the rosary was recited one or two times daily.³

The Dominican affiliation with the rosary is such that when the first members of the Order arrived in this country in 1587, they named their newly-founded province after our Lady of the Rosary,⁴ by which name it is known up to the present. The first book printed in *moveable type* in the Philippines was the *Libro de las excelencias del Rosario de Nuestra Señora y sus Misterios*, written in Tagalog by Fr. Francisco Blancas in 1604. It is only one among the many books on the rosary written by Dominicans in this country.⁵ The UST itself was initially named the College of our Lady of the Rosary upon its foundation in 1611. And when, in 1646, the Fil-Hispanic forces aboard two battered Spanish gal-

² Jesus Merino, O.P., interview held at the UST Museum, Sampaloc, Manila, October, 1985. The Franciscans' long history of musicianship had begun with San Pedro Bautista, who, at the onset of the Spanish era, was reputed to have been the first to "teach Tagalogs the art of (Occidental) Music." (Pablo Fernandez, O.P., *History of the Church in the Philippines* (1521-1898) [Manila: National Book Store Publishers, 1979], p. 411).

³ Ibid., pp. 84-85.

⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵ The Order had of course earlier printed the *Doctrina Cristiana* in block type in 1593. (Ibid., pp. 358-359; p. 429).

leons defeated an invading fleet of fifteen Dutch ships, all sleek and well-armed, the miraculous feat was attributed to the Virgin of the Rosary, to whom the crew had prayed at the suggestion of their four Dominican chaplains. The sailors had vowed to go in procession to the church of Santo Domingo should they emerge victorious from impending encounter with the Dutch. The fulfillment of this vow marked the beginning of a religious tradition, *La Naval*, that was to outlast even the almost three centuries and a half of Spanish rule in the Philippines, such that it is still commemorated yearly up to the present time.⁶

The yearly Naval rites, and similar celebrations of the Holy Rosary feast in other Dominican-administered centers⁷ provided the main inspiration for the three aforementioned composers whose lives and works⁸ it is the purpose of this essay to generate an interest in.

Fr. Primo Calzada y Albarran, O.P. (1871-1952)

Fr. Calzada first arrived in the Philippines in 1896, after which he immediately assumed the position of choir director at Santo Domingo Convent. As it was customary in those days for the Order to send its younger members to the missions in the provinces where they could learn a dialect or two, the then 26-year-old Father Calzada was assigned to the Cagayan Valley in 1897.

⁶ Ibid., p. 216.

⁷ In Manila alone, there are three notable October celebrations of the Feast: At the Santisimo Rosario parish in UST, it is observed on the first Sunday; in Binondo, a Dominican ministry since 1596, and whose most famous ex-parishioner is of course the Blessed Lorenzo Ruiz, it is held on the third Sunday. *La Naval* itself is celebrated on the second Sunday at Santo Domingo.

⁸ All data pertaining to the lives and works of Frs. Calzada, Arnaiz and Cubañas were culled from the following sources:

Gregorio Arnaiz, O.P., *Continuación del Compendio de la Reseña biográfica de los Religiosos de la Provincia del Santísimo Rosario de Filipinas por el P. Hilario Ma. Ocio*, Manila, 1985, Ms. in UST Archives, Manila.

Florentino Fernandez, O.P., *Historia de la Prisión y Cautiverio de los Padres Dominicos, Ministros Evangélicos en dicho Valle*, Sección de Libros, Tomo 201, UST Archives, Manila.

Provincia Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum, *Acta Capituli A die xxvi Decembris MDCCCCLV ad diem iii Januarii MDCCCCLVI*. (Manilae: Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Sancti Thomas, MDCCCCLVI).

Cagayan Valley became the scene of the most colorful chapter in Fr. Calzada's life, as it was here where he was captured by the *revolucionarios* in September, 1898.⁹ He was tortured and beaten and, at one point was even hung by the feet above the toilets for an entire day, throughout which he was unfed. Fr. Calzada's travails under his captors only ended when he was brought before General Tirona, who, upon learning that the priest was a musician, then ordered him to play the piano for the coming *fiestas* and for the meeting of the *revolucionarios*.

Fr. Calzada was henceforth treated with kindness and ordered to travel from town to town as he taught piano and coached the various townbands so that they could compete with one another in contests. The padre became so dedicated to these tasks that the bands actually grew in competence under his tutorship.

Thus it can be said that Fr. Calzada finally earned his partial release from captivity in 1900 through his musicianship. From then on he was to stay at the Sto. Domingo Convent in Intramuros where he again took charge of the Tiples' Choir. It was here where he wrote music, much of which was orchestrated, for the yearly celebrations of *La Naval*.

Unfortunately, all the music he wrote during the decades he spent at Sto. Domingo went up in smoke when the Church was bombed by the Japanese in 1941. Fr. Calzada must have been grief-stricken upon learning the fate of the music he left behind in Manila. For by that time, he was already back in his native town in Villanazán, in the Spanish province of Zamora, where he eventually returned to after leaving Sto. Domingo in 1927. He died in his hometown in 1952.

Since Fr. Calzada's *La Naval* music has been described with great admiration by many of those who were familiar with his works—like Fr. Gregorio García, O.P., Regent of the UST Con-

Provincia Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum, *Acta Capituli A die xxv Aprilis ad diem vi Maii MDCCCXXXI* (Manilae: Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Sancti Thomae, MDCCCXXXI).

⁹ This was a bit ironic, considering that Manila had already fallen into American hands at least a month before. (Teodoro A. Agoncillo and Milagros C. Guerrero, *History of the Filipino People* Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Publishing Co., 1984, p. 194).

servatory of Music, and Fr. Excelso García, O.P., Director of the UST Printing Office¹⁰ it is indeed a pity that the one surviving example which we have of his music, the *Himno del VII Centenario de la Fundación de la Orden Dominicana* (1916), is apparently not one of his best works. Still, it is a source of evidence that Fr. Calzada had assimilated a little of the "acculturated" style demanded by the spirit and the taste of the *revolucionarios* and the townspeople he had worked with in Cagayan.

We are able, however, to conjecture on the nature of Fr. Calzada's missing "rosary music" through the works of one of his successors in Sto. Domingo, Fr. Gregorio Arnaiz y Lopez, and those of a former rector of the UST Seminary, Fr. Francisco Cubeñas.

Fr. Gregorio Arnaiz y Lopez, O.P. (1873-1953)

After spending a little over a year in Manila on his first assignment outside his native Spain, Fr. Gregorio Arnaiz arrived in Amoy, China in September of 1898, at about the same time his colleague Fr. Calzada was captured by the *revolucionarios* in Cagayan. Arnaiz spent the next 20 years in various Dominican Missions in Mainland China writing historical treatises and teaching mathematics mainly at the Dominican College in Focheu. For the students in this school he wrote treatises in trigonometry and logarithms in Chinese.

In 1918 he returned to the Philippines. He was asked to teach mathematics at the Dominican Seminary in Cagayan which he eventually became director for five years. Fr. Arnaiz was then appointed Vicar of the Dominican House in San Juan del Monte in 1928 and in 1930 he became Cantor of Sto. Domingo and director of the Tiples' Choir there. In 1934 he was named archivist and chronicler of the Order and in this capacity he later

¹⁰ Fr. Gregorio García, who was for many years choir-master of the UST Seminary, briefly succeeded Fr. Arnaiz at Sto. Domingo in the 1930's; Fr. Excelso García's past assignments include having been in charge of the Tiples in the old Sto. Domingo Convent in Intramuros. (Fr. Gregorio García, O.P., interview held at the UST Printing Office, Sampaloc, Manila, January, 1986).

wrote the lengthy manuscript from which I have gathered much of the information on Frs. Calzada, Cubeñas and himself.

Surprisingly, Fr. Arnaiz, in his own manuscript, records having written only the antiphon, "Magne Pater" in three voices for the novena of *La Naval*. More substantial is his Cagayan output which consist of a pair of motets for the *Exposición* and the *Reserva* of the Blessed Sacrament, a *Despedida* or "Farewell" to the Virgin in 2 voices and a musical setting of the *Litany to the Blessed Virgin* in 3 voices. All three works were presumably for the novena rites.

Also in Cagayan, he wrote a *rosario de procesión* which might be the same Arnaiz *Rosario* found, in the composer's own handwriting,¹¹ at the UST Seminary.

In San Juan del Monte, where he was last assigned before his death in 1953, he wrote a number of antiphons in honor of various saints and music in honor of the Sto. Cristo de San Juan del Monte.

Fr. Francisco Cubeñas, O.P. (1865-1928)

Fr. Cubeñas was trained both as a priest and as a physicist in Spain. When in 1901, the then 36-year-old Dominican first set foot on Philippine soil, he was immediately assigned to the University of Santo Tomas where he obtained a doctorate in sacred Theology and where he subsequently taught. In 1917, he was appointed Rector of the UST Central Seminary, an office he was to hold for the next ten years. Fr. Cubeñas also held the distinction of having been the first director of the *Boletín Eclesiástico*, which exists as a UST publication to this day. He wrote a complete catechism called *Hojas de Catecismo* and contributed regularly to the newspaper *Libertas*. His musical compositions, presumably published by the UST Printing Press during his ten-year rectorship of the Seminary (since they bear no dates of pub-

¹¹ Attested to by Fr. Pablo Fernandez, O.P., who is familiar with Arnaiz's writings as well as handwriting. (Pablo Fernandez, O.P., Interviews held at the Fathers' Residence, UST, Sampaloc, Manila, February, 1986).)

lication) are affectionately dedicated to the students there. Of his works, two *villancicos* (one for Christmas, another for the Epiphany) and a *rosario de procesión* have so far been retrieved.

Although Cubañas' *Rosario*, like his *villancicos*, might be judged as the work of an amateur,¹² together with the other specimens of "Rosary Music" found in the Seminary Score Collection, it provides us with some bases for the study of this musical genre.

"Rosary Music"

Since the celebration of the feast of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary usually includes a nine-day novena, a concluding mass, and, as in the case of *La Naval*, an ensuing elaborate procession, it naturally provides many instances where music is called for.

Evidently, the *despedidas* were written as a "farewell" to the Virgin at the conclusion of the novena. Found in the Seminary were copies of the *Despedida a la Virgen* by Hernandez which to this day is sung for *La Naval* at Sto. Domingo. This same *despedida* was further immortalized by our national artist in Literature, Nick Joaquin, in the third scene of his famous play, *Portrait of the Artist as Filipino*, which in itself is a most moving commemoration of *La Naval*.¹³ Also, there was a *despedida* in Tagalog, *Pagpapaalam sa Mahal na Birhen*, by Benito Trapaga. From these examples, we can surmise the nature of Arnaiz's and Calzada's *despedidas* which have yet to be found.

It might be worthwhile to note, that except for the aforementioned *despedida* in Tagalog by Trapaga, the relatively more recent *Holy Rosary Crusade Hymn* (1949) by Julio Esteban Anguita which has English lyrics by Ted Owen, and the *Himno Ed*

¹² In *Continuación*, Arnaiz describes him as a "bastante aficionado a la Música." Arnaiz also credits him with a setting of the *Ave Maria*, which was not found among the scores in the choir loft. (Arnaiz, O.P., *Continuación*, pp. 468-469.)

¹³ In the Joaquin play, the character Bitoy Camacho is made to sing the first two lines of the song during his reminiscence, with the other characters, of the Feast — which lasts throughout the length of the third scene. (Nick Joaquin, *A Portrait of the Artist as Filipino* [Manila: Alberto S. Florentino, publisher, 1966], p. 89).

Pamalanget Na Magloriam Virgen Ed, in honor of the Virgin of the Holy Rosary of Manaoag, Pangasinan,¹⁴ the text of which is in the Pangasinan dialect, most of the rosary-related works in the Collection are in Spanish.

Thus, I also came across various hymns in Spanish like *Venid Fieles Hijos*, *Viva Maria* and *Sea El Rosario*, with an indication in the copies that each was to be sung with a corresponding mystery of the Rosary; and the *Letrillas Populares del Santo Rosario*, credited to a certain A. Valbuena.

Obviously written for the procession on the final day of the novena were the *rosarios de procesión* which were found in the Collection. From the works of Arnaiz and Cubeñas, the *rosario* can be described as a paraliturgical form consisting of musical settings of the *Padre Nuestro*, *Dios Te Salve* and *Gloria*, which may be sung in any number of parts; and may be furnished with organ or orchestral accompaniment.

Fr. Gregorio García had observed that it was common practice in those days for the rosarios to be sung in antiphonal style, i.e., with the choir of Seminarians and/or Tiples singing the first half of the prayer, responded to by the rest of the faithful, who sing the second half.¹⁵ This is confirmed by the arrangement of the settings in both Arnaiz's and Cubeñas' scores, where each first half of the "Our Father," "Hail Mary" and "Glory Be" follow one another in succession while the second halves of each prayer follow one another in turn. Arnaiz's score further indicates that the choir and the faithful were expected to alternate in "leading" these prayers.

Short interludes assigned to the clarinet precede certain measures in the Arnaiz vocal score, giving evidence that the work was originally orchestrated. However, no separate orchestral parts were found, and the piano or organ accompaniment is not included in the score as it is in Cubeñas's work.

¹⁴ Manaoag is the site of one of the first Dominican missions in the Philippines, founded some twenty years after their arrival in 1587. (Fernandez, O.P., *History of the Church*, p. 23).

¹⁵ Fr. Gregorio García, O.P., interviews, 1986.

The "rosary music" itself, as well as the lives of the "rosary musicians" that have been discussed in this essay could well be regarded as sources of inspiration for corollary research and new directions in creativity.

We know, for example, that copies of the music included in Fr. Arnaiz's Cagayan output might have been left behind there. Also, Fr. Calzada might have written music during his "captivity" in Cagayan, and however remote the possibility, some manuscripts could still be in the hands of certain people in the region. Perhaps someday a team of Thomasian researchers could tackle the Cagayan question through an expedition to this province.

Closer to home is the Santuario de Santa Cruz in San Juan, where I strongly believe, Fr. Arnaiz's works, written during the 22 years he spent in the place, can still be found.

But aside from precipitating the wish for more examples from which a more definitive study could be made, the resurgence of rosary music provokes the question as to the earlier models of the genre, after which Frs. Calzada, Arnaiz and Cubeñas patterned their works at the turn of the century.

In the abovementioned book by Fr. Fernandez on Philippine Church history, mention is made of Fr. Francisco de la Maza, a Dominican painter and musician who died in 1703.¹⁶

As far as creativity is concerned, certainly, Fr. Calzada's experiences with the *revolucionarios* in 1898 could provide any play or opera with colorful scenarios. Should a literary or musical opus on Fr. Calzada's life ever be written, it would be quite unique for being a Filipino creative work where for once, the friar will not be an oppressive *contravida*.¹⁷ Fr. Arnaiz's multi-

¹⁶ Fernandez, O.P., *History of the Church*, p. 409. Domingo Collantes, O.P., *Cuarta parte de la Historia Provincia del Santisimo Rosario de Filipinas* (Manila, 1783), p. 270; 36, cited in *ibid*.

¹⁷ Fr. Calzada's story brings in its wake a relatively, if not totally unexplored facet of our history, and that is, the issue of "friar-collaborators" during the revolution which began in 1896. While it was in fact a Spanish friar, Fr. Mariano Gil, who first denounced the Katipunan to the authorities then (Agoncillo and Guerrero, pp. 166-169), there were also those friars who made themselves "useful" to the cause. A case in point is Fr. Jose Brugues, O.P. (c.1900), an accomplished architect and chemist who helped in the *revolucionarios'* defense of Aparri by teaching them how to manufacture gun powder. (Fernandez, O.P., *History of the Church*, p. 408).

faceted career as a historian, mathematician, musician and priest-administrator could also be the subject of an interesting biographical novel.

Finally, there is the hope that the *rosario*, the *despedida*, the *letanía* and the other forms in the "rosary music" genre could be infused with new life through the innovations of 20th century composers who will create new versions of these works with the prevailing artistic idioms of our time.¹⁸

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¹⁸ In response to a similar "hope" expressed in an earlier and shorter essay which I wrote on this subject, Antonio P. Africa (B.M. in Composition, '87) of the UST Conservatory of Music wrote his own *Rosario de Procesion* inspired by the Arnaiz and Cubeñas models, but with the use of 20th century idioms. The work was premiered during the abovementioned lecture wherein this paper was read.

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