

MICHAEL DADAP'S VISIT

Flashback 25 years. We first met Mike Dadap unknowingly in Los Angeles sometime in the late 1980s during a concert of a Filipino group from the East Coast. We were there to see our good friend Maurie Borromeo, music major from UP, who later had done graduate studies in ethnomusicology. In the group was soprano Priscilla Magdamo, which rang a bell because her sister, Martha, was part of the close-knit Tanjay circle of friends we maintained in Los Angeles.

At the end of the concert, we purchased a vinyl record produced by Magdamo, and it indicated that the solo guitar accompanist was Michael Dadap. The album "Ang Katahum Mubihag (Beauty Captivates) - Songs of the Visayas", was dated 1982. Except for well known pieces such as "Ay Kalisud" and "Dandansoy", most of the other selections were not, as they originally were taken from field recordings of ethnic music collected by Magdamo from the Visayas and Mindanao in the mid 50s, as part of a Silliman Music Foundation project under a Rockefeller Foundation grant. The pieces were the collaborative effort of Magdamo and Dadap.

One that caught my fancy was titled "Day, Baling Mingawa" where in the highlands of Valencia, west of Dumaguete, haunting calls echo about loneliness, and the voice sings out "It is so lonely, shall I go to you, or you shall come to me". When played on a stereo, Magdamo's voice seemed to overlap in an electronically created echo.

Fast forward 15 years. We had moved to the East coast, and met up with old UP friends, creating an interesting social circle in the 62nd Street Forum group, where we periodically met in the NYC house of physicist Amador Muriel. And Michael Dadap was part of the group. Though he had finished his philosophy degree in UP a few years after our time, now in NYC, he was all into music, having taken his classical guitar training at Mannes School of Music, and composition and conducting in Julliard. No need for more intros for Mike. And it turns out it was his older brother Jerry Dadap, a music major, who was our UP contemporary. Jerry used to play the Carillon, pounding those large wooden levers serving as "piano keys" which were mechanically connected to the clappers of the bells above. Most campus residents would remember.

And even after we left the NY scene and retired to Tanjay, Philippines, we kept in touch with Mike. For one, he was Visayan, and makes yearly visits to Dumaguete where he mentors a musical group of Silliman on stringed instruments. In 2007, he conducted a workshop during the



That's Lisa with Mike in 2007, at the Dumaguete Exposition Hall, where a whole lot of Philippine goods were displayed. The booth on music showed Mike's creations. Barely visible is the bandurria.

Lisa convinced me to get one, in the hope I'd get imbued with some musical talent. But it didn't, and the bandurria languished in the house for 5 years, until last month. The only talent I can concede to is that during sing-alongs of "golden oldies" I manage to recite the wordings from memory and coax those who are doing the singing.

Last month, it was the Silliman Anniversary, and there were a number of cultural presentations. One of Lisa's good friends has a daughter, Mathilda, who teaches music in Silliman, and is the "Girl Friday" of Mike whenever he is in town. She tipped us off that Mike and his wife were visiting, and having a concert, a duet of violin and guitar, at the Luce Auditorium. This is an impressive structure built in the 1970s funded by that famed American Foundation. It is a highly regarded for its excellent acoustics and stage equipment. We've never been there, so what better occasion to buy tickets for Mike's concert, and see him in person again. Mathilda helped get tickets, which were almost sold out.



The 2007 Rondalla Festival also performed in Tanjay, at the town auditorium, with groups from Iran and Singapore. Shown is the local Tanjay high school group, with a large ensemble of bandurrias on the left. The banner says "Cuerdas sa Pinaghiusa", or "Strings of Unity".

2nd International Rondalla Festival held in Dumaguete, He designed some stringed instruments, had them specially made in Cebu, and displayed them during the festival.



The program brochure showed solos and duets of Mike and his better half, doctor Yeou Cheng Ma

While still on the stage Mike joked that he was surprised at their picture on the program (on left) brochure because that was their honeymoon photo.

The selections were an excellent balance of classical, popular and Filipino music.



The only performers during the 21 August 2012 Concert. What brought the house down in applause was the duet performance of the popular "Sa Kabukiran."



Though I am not musically minded, I appreciated the concert immensely, but also did give approval to the excellent lighting, air-conditioning and stage equipment of the auditorium, shown on left. The ceiling even had those triangular sound-absorbing modules for better acoustics.

But there was yet more to come. Two days later, on August 23, there was another concert "Handulantaw - A Tribute to the Great Giver of All Talents". And Mike was conductor of a special orchestra using "plucked strings".



On stage, shown on left, he explains the many nuances of the instruments. From the bandurria, to the laud, octavina, and contra octavina, and how they relate to the traditional western orchestral instruments of violin, cello, bass, etc. I got

the impression that if we developed these musical instruments further, both in quality and the training of the players, we'd become a formidable entity in music. Filipinos already are. Witness the bands and combos playing the entertainment circuit, but this would be a step higher in terms of orchestral genre.

And that is one of the goals of Mike.



The Philippine folk string ensemble: Bandurria, Octavina and Laud. Picture scanned from the book of Michael Dadap.

The program brochure for the concert didn't mention anything about the "plucked string" orchestra, but the two photos below say it all. "Orchestra sin Arco", or orchestra without bows, meaning to say, they have to be plucked.



Yet, later in the program there were violins, violas and cellos, and other bowed instruments. This was the finale: the full blown 80 member orchestra and vocal ensemble of Silliman University. A phantasmagora of dance and music entitled "Alay Sa Inang Bayan", composed by none other than Jerry Dadap, and conducted by Michael Dadap.

We have seen extravaganzas like this before. Aside from the Bayanihan, Filipinescas and other troupes, who are professional, we are used to see school productions. In UCLA, the school sponsors a yearly program of "Samahang Pilipino" where the students do song and dance. Both of our UCLA children joined that group yearly. But they were not music students. Here in Silliman, most of them are, and one could easily tell the difference in performance.



The 15-20 minute composition of Jerry Dadap was a nutshell of almost everything in the Philippine historical and musical scene: from Igorot, Moro, Bayanihan dances to KKK revolution and independence. Most apropos for the composition's title meaning "Tribute to the motherland". Photo above shows the finale of the dance "Piliin Mo Ang Pilipinas", choreographed by Engel Zerna.

But to me, there still was something better that had come along. One of the performances was by a choral group who sang "Day, Baling Mingawa". I listened raptly as the trio on stage warbled their song, and soon, I heard an echo of the same. I thought to myself that this was an electronically generated echo, just like in the record of 25 years back. But then, I turned around and saw other groups of singers at the back and on the sides of the auditorium, singing in reply. It was beautiful.

Later on, Mike said that record is very rare and not anymore available. Even he has no copy. Mathilda said she once had a cassette tape of it, but is now lost. Not to worry, I countered, I still have that record, and with my hobby of maintaining old stereo components melded to modern digital equipment, I can digitize the entire album, clean out the clicks and pops that are inevitable in old records, then burn it into CDs. A few days later, I did just that, and even scanned the Visayan-English wordings into an editable format and made it part of the CD.

We also invited Mike to come and visit our place in Tanjay. He said he'd be free in a few days as he still was going to Leyte.

Turns out that the best was yet to come.

A few days later, we picked up Mike at noon from the Silliman President's residence where he was guest, and met up with Mathilda and her Mon on campus, then drove off to Tanjay 32 km away. We ate lunch at the seaside resort in the next town, and stayed on for almost 2 hours due to the good Pinoy food, banter, and interesting talk.

For instance, the topic came up on authorship of musical score. The song "Usahay" is a very popular Visayan song. Most Tanjayanons will swear it was composed by one of their own, Andrews Calumpang, who reputedly sold it in the early 50s to a Cebu radio station for P200, a pittance even at that time. Before long, the song appeared in records, but had no byline, and is now staple for many singers. Yet, Mike recalls that in Cebu, there was a popular composer Nitoy Gonzales whom he knew pretty well, who indicated that it was his composition. Both men are now gone, and Mike mused that if there were a handwritten score written at that time, with signature, then that would help resolve the issue. Better yet, if there was an equivalent ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) in the Philippines, that would even be more

ideal since royalties could be more equitably distributed. He says that nowadays, with music so easily copied electronically, composers are discouraged from producing.

Mike then asked Mathilda if there are any rondalla groups in Tanjay that he can meet at this short notice and so they could do some "jamming". Mathilda reached for her cell phone.

Our original itinerary was to go to Bais, which Mike wanted to see (especially the market where dried fish was the must-buy specialty), then double back to our farm, and finally have dinner at home.

But en route, Mathilda said that the popular rondalla group of octogenarians Tio Peding and his brother were available, and they happened to be gathered at his house at the moment. So we diverted, and went straight there. Mike needed a good guitar and bandurria. Tio Peding had an extra guitar, and I volunteered my bandurria.

It was a fantastic jamming session of almost 2 hours.



It was amazing how they played so spontaneously and synchronously, even without a conductor. I guess they never need such in a rondalla. They played Visayan and Tagalog pieces, then classical tunes. Tio Peding would play lead tune, and everybody would follow. Mike shifted from the guitar to the bandurria and back, after having tuned my bandurria. When Mathilda joined with the bandurria, I counted a total of 10 musicians. Mike would strike a tune, apparently not too well known to the others, but pretty soon, they pick it all up in harmony. Mike was especially impressed by the young fellow Max, shown with the bass guitar, who reportedly could play the drums, piano, accordion, various stringed instruments, etc. He works as a mechanic.

Later, I kidded Mike about how Tio Peding and him reminded me of the musical duet (duel?) in the movie "Deliverance", and that he was Burt Reynolds.

We still made it to Bais, then to the farm for buco juice, then to the Tanjay house for dinner and more piano music.

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