

The Music of Matteo Ricci's Funeral: History, Context, and Meaning

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The funeral of Matteo Ricci took place at Zhalan(柵欄) in the western suburbs of Beijing on All Saint's Day (1 November) 1611, and according to those present was "celebrated in the highest possible style, with organ and other musical instruments." "*Missa qua potuit pompa celebrate est, organo alijsque musicis instrumentis*", as we read in *Fonti Ricciane*.¹

These comments tell us, or at least hint at, something about both the music and what it meant to the Jesuits in Beijing in 1611. But they also raise many obvious questions. Just what did it mean in Beijing in 1611 to celebrate Mass 'in the highest possible style'? How high did 'style' run in 1611? What can we tease out of this oblique observation to help us revisit that event, to know something more of what it meant to Ricci's companions, and what it might have been like musically, if not liturgically? More specifically for my own research, I wonder just what kind of pipe organ they had, and what those 'other musical instruments' might have been. How did these add to the solemnity of that particular Mass? This is, at the end of the day, only a brief comment: and yet it was something which seemed comment-worthy to Ricci's earlier chroniclers, and deserves our attention and study today as we commemorate the 400th anniversary of this event.

My first thought, is that the pomp and circumstance of this particular Mass was due in at least part to the presence of the organ and the musical instruments in addition to voices. As we know, Ricci's funeral had been held up for a year and half following his death on 11 May 1610. Intentionally or not, the result of this was that it was to coincide with the dedication and opening of the Zhalan compound. So, three events were being commemorated on this All Saint's Day in 1611: the opening of the renovated compound, the dedication of the chapel, and Ricci's funeral—a very heavy agenda for one day.

Nonetheless, one aspect of meaning begins to be apparent: this was a day of celebration, not particularly a day of sadness. Ricci had been dead for 18 months, and the pomp of the events at Zhalan referred to in the Latin quotation hint at something very modern: not so much the sentiment of tragic loss, as much as what would today be called a 'celebration of the life' of Matteo Ricci. Living in those turbulent times and so far from their homes, how often the Jesuits must have collectively and individually acknowledged what Shakespeare had put into words about a decade earlier, in Act One of *All's Well That Ends Well*:

Moderate lamentation is the right of the dead,
excessive grief the enemy to the living.

Whatever the program for the liturgy was on that day in 1611, the comment about the organ and instruments tells us that they had these resources present at Zhalan to add to plainchant and possibly more, which the voices of Ricci's colleagues could provide for the event. Even as early as the 1570s, music had begun to be an important part of the life – if not always the curriculum – of the Jesuit colleges and churches, especially in Rome where so many of the early China mission Jesuits had studied. Some very prominent musical figures studied, and later taught at the major institutions. For example, the Spanish composer Tomás Luis de Victoria (c. 1548-1611) entered the *Collegio Germanico* around 1563, and probably studied with the greatest of all 16th century contrapuntal composers, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525 or 26-1594), over at the *Collegio Romano*. Ricci must surely have known Palestrina personally during his time there in the 1570s. Despite the oft-

¹*Fonti Ricciani: Documenti originali concernenti Matteo Ricci e la storia delle prime Relazioni tral'Europa e la Cina*, 3 vols., ed. Pasquale M. D'Elia, S.J., Rome, 1942, II, p. 626, N. 998. Note the separation of the "*organo*" from "*musicis instrumentis*". See also: A. Semedo, *Histoire universelle de la Chine*, Rome, 1643, p. 295f; and also: H. Bernard, "Aux origines du cimetière de Chala", Tianjin, 1934, p. 39, and *Departed, yet present: Zhalan, the oldest Christian cemetery in Beijing*, ed. E.J. Malatesta and Gao Zhiyu, Macau/San Francisco, 1995.

repeated proverb, *Jesuita non cantat* [“a Jesuit does not sing”], the situation on the ground was quite another thing. In the words of music historian Thomas Culley, “...the initial attitude of the Society [of Jesus] towards music never prevailed with any great degree of security... After 1600 they seemed to have realized that the granting of an important role to music in churches and colleges was simply unavoidable.”² Even in the 1570s, the Spanish Jesuit, Diego de Ledesma (1519-1575), who taught at the *Collegio Romano* from 1559, encouraged the teaching of the catechism through the use of *recitar cantando* [“recite in singing”], singing words to simple melodic patterns, because as he put it, “memory gets reinforced with singing” (*si per ché più si conferma la memoria col canto*).³

Musical training for Jesuits of Ricci’s day included three types of singing: first, plainchant; then the technique of *cantus firmus*, or recitation on tones (Ledesma’s *recitar cantando*); and finally figured chants – in a sense, simple forms of polyphony, or accompanied singing. The musically gifted, of course, had opportunities to go beyond this. Music was also taught as part of the *quadrivium*, in the form of acoustics, and was considered a branch of mathematics. From the records of payments at the *Collegio Germanico*, we know the types of instruments that were brought in for special events to augment the voices and organ. These included: sackbuts (early trombones), and cornetti, or zinks, which could double the vocal lines; trumpets and slide trumpets; viols, especially the *violone*, the ancestor of our modern contrabass; violins; harps and theorbos; and even harpsichords. [Figures 1 and 2.]

In Beijing in 1611, it would frankly have been hit or miss what smaller instruments might have been stashed in the luggage of Jesuit missionaries, or what indigenous instruments they might have bent to their service. But we know that music, as a cultural commodity, always makes it on the first trip. As early as the beginning years of Ricci’s mission in Zhaoqing in the 1580s, he had some unspecified Western musical instruments with him, whose novelty provoked a sensation among the literati who came to visit him: “*Dipoi anco vennero instrumenti musici, mai daloro visti*.”⁴

In the end, we can only speculate that some of these instruments were meant by the term *musicis instrumentis*, but they would have played several musical roles: doubling the voices, playing by themselves, and providing a harmonic bass for the music. This brings me to the question of the organ which played along with these instruments.

A smallish room in the centre of the Zhalan complex [Figure 3.] was set aside as a chapel. Assuming that the organ was built in Beijing between 1610 and November 1611, and as the room was not particularly large, a positive organ with a single manual and two or three ranks, containing perhaps a ninety to a hundred and fifty or so wooden pipes, would have been acceptable musically. This could have been a larger positive organ, standing on its own; or, it could have been a somewhat smaller positive, a so-called ‘processional organ’, which could be moved more easily to different locations and placed, say, on a table. (The term, *processional* organ does not mean, however, that it was carried and played at the same time.) The processional organ was a favourite in foreign missions, and examples are known from Mexico and South American missions at this time.

It has been questioned whether this instrument at Zhalan might have been imported from Europe or from Mexico, as well as whether it might have been a small organ of the regal design (essentially a small reed organ). Numerous requests for Western paintings, books, clocks, watches, religious and devotional objects, toys, and other items fill the Jesuit correspondence of these years, and small organs were apparently sent to India and Japan long before this date.⁵ Ian Woodfield has

² Thomas D. Culley, *A Study of the musicians connected with the German College in Rome during the 17th Century and of their Activities in Northern Europe*, Rome, 1970, p. 106.

³ Diego de Ledesma, s.j. *Modo per insegnare la Doctrina Christiana*, Rome, 1573, p. 9.

⁴ *Fonti Ricciani* I, p. 259, N. 310. “After that, there also came [to be shown] some musical instruments, which they [the Chinese] had never seen before.”

⁵ This was particularly true of church decorations: “The execution of elaborate altars made in the European manner was certainly not something that was easily fabricated in this part of the world, not only due to elevated costs that this would imply, but also due to the inexperience of masters and labour[ers] who were capable of producing these kinds of works. From this stems the preference for importing pieces, which perforce had to be of smaller dimensions...” (Sofia Diniz, “Jesuit Buildings in China and Japan”, *Bulletin of Portuguese/Japanese Studies*, Vol 3, 2001, pp. 107-128). However,

documented organs being taken by Portuguese missionaries to Goa as early as 1520. Francis Xavier brought a ‘*monacordio*’ to Japan in 1551; and Alessandro Valignano arrived in Japan in July 1579 with two portative organs brought from Goa via Macau.⁶ Slightly later, there was a pipe organ in the Jesuit seminary at Azuchi (near Kyoto) in 1580.⁷ In 1581, the first Bishop of Manila, the Dominican Domingo de Salazar (1512-94), brought a small pipe organ to the Philippines, presumably a processional organ made in Spain or Mexico. In 1600 a positive was constructed in Macau as a gift for Ricci to present to the Wanli Emperor, and another organ was recorded here in 1601.⁸ By 1606, a Franciscan priest, Juan de Santa Marta (1578-1618) arrived in Manila and began building organs: he moved to Japan the following year and continued this activity.⁹

I think, however, that had the organ at Zhalan or any other of the early 17th Century China organs been imported, they would have figured (and figured large) in these letters. Instead, they do not figure at all, at least in the 17th century, and I have not verified an imported pipe organ in China until 1671/72: a small positive organ brought to Beijing by Claudio Filippo Grimaldi and Christian Wolfgang Herdrich, and presented to the Kangxi emperor.¹⁰ Doubtless the perils of sea travel, and the appalling conditions aboard ships on these year-long voyages, militated *against* sending organs in particular, among all possible musical instruments. We need only consider the frustration experienced by Thomas Dallam, who brought a pipe organ from England to Constantinople in 1599, and who lamented that

“[W]hen wee opened our chistes we founde that all glewing work was clene Decayed, by reason that it hadelayne above sixe monthes in the hould of our ship, whichte was but newly bulte, so that the extremitie of the heate in the hould of the shipe, with the workinge [motion] of the sea and the hootnes of the cuntrie, was the cause of that all glewinge fayled. Lykewyse divers of my mettle pipes wearebrused and broken.

When our Imbassador, Mr Wyllyam Aldridge, and other jentlmen se in what case it was in, theye weare all amayzed, and sayde that it was not wortheiid. My answeare unto our Imbassador and to Mr. Aldridge, at this time I will omitt; but when Mr. Aldridge harde what I sayede, he tould me that yf I did make it perfitt he wold give me, of his owne purss, 15 *li.*, so aboute my worke I wente.¹¹”

The run to China would have been much longer at the best of times, with at least one major transit stop of many months at Goa, and the risk of damage all the greater. Given the absence of any prior records, and the considerable time the Jesuits had available, there seems to me to be a greater likelihood of the instrument being constructed on the spot. The Zhalan organ, then, was on the one hand a more practical choice, while on the other it represented a considerable feat of ingenuity, as none of the

these limitations with respect to art would not necessarily have applied to the technical skills involved, under supervision, of building a pipe organ.

⁶ See: Ian Woodfield, “The keyboard recital in oriental diplomacy, 1520-1620”, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Vol. 115/1, p. 33-62 (1990).

⁷ See: D. Waterhouse, “Influência Portuguesa na Música da Ásia.” *Revista de Cultura*, Vol. 2, No. 26, Jan.-Mar 1996, p. 42. (Macau, Macau Cultural Institute.)

⁸ See my article, “The Jesuit Organ Builders of China: A Brief Survey”, David C. Lam Centre for East-West Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University, Working Papers No. 81, 2008. An expanded version will be included in my article, “The Organ of the Baroque Era in China” in: *East Meets West: The Cultural Politics of Sino-Western Musical Relations* (forthcoming).

⁹ See: David R.M. Irving, *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in early modern Manila*, London, Oxford, 2010, p. 55.

¹⁰ This was presented along with a harpsichord on 20 February 1672 to the Kangxi emperor by Grimaldi (1638-1712) and Herdrich (1625-84). See: Ferdinand Verbiest, *Correspondance*, pp. 338-39. Cited in Golvers, N., “F. Verbiest, G. Magalhães, T. Pereyra and the others. The Jesuit Xitang College in Peking (1670-1688)”, in: *Tomás Pereira (1646-1708): Life, Work and the World*, Ed. L. F. Barreto, Lisbon, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2010, p. 283. In the event, Grimaldi was sick, and Herdrich went to the palace alone, and played both the harpsichord and the organ for Kangxi. Kangxi then tried out both instruments (it is not known if he had any keyboard skills at this stage) and appointed both priests to work at the court on the spot.

¹¹ Diary of Thomas Dallam, published by J.T. Bent, *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*, London, 1893, cited in Woodfield, op. cit., p. 41.

missionaries in Beijing at the time are known to have had specific skills in organ-building, though as already noted organs had been built in Goa, Macau, Japan and the Philippines in the previous decades.

With all this information and speculation we can posit a likely order of business for that busy day in Beijing. In whatever manner Zhalan was officially opened, and the chapel consecrated, Ricci's funeral was undoubtedly the emotional high point of the proceedings. Carried in procession to his final resting place, his confrères sang the appropriate chants, perhaps in plainsong, but maybe in two or more parts. Instruments played along with an organ, which might have been small enough to carry from the chapel in room 13 to the back of the property where his grave had been prepared. It doubtless doubled the voices as well, and one of the priests – perhaps Diego de Pantoja (1571-1618) – may even have improvised, as organists will, on a plainchant melody in the *fantasia* or *fabordón* style of his native Spain [Figure 4.]. In 1608 Ricci had put the number of Jesuit priests and brothers working in China as a whole at around 20, so perhaps 8 were in Beijing, augmented on this day by some friends and students. It was all very appropriate, for as Elisabetta Corsi has pointed out, Ricci as is well known had himself already “pave[d] the way to the belief in the evangelizing virtues of music, even if this attitude contravened the Ignatian dictates against the use of music both in pastoral as well as liturgical services.”¹²

What we do not know with any specificity, is to what music the Mass and ancillary texts might actually have been sung, leaving aside the obvious connections between the plainchant traditions of 1611 and today (which were similar, though not identical). We do know that the library of the China Jesuits had a copy of de Ledesma's book, with its musical examples, as well a copy of Girolamo Mei's *Discorso sopra la musica antica e moderna* of 1602. But just when these books were acquired in China is not known, and as usual we know nothing of what actual music, printed or in manuscript, the Zhalan Jesuits might have had access to. Looking at other 17th Century mission records, in Mexico, Paraguay, and the Philippines, for example, it would not be surprising to find works by Francesco Guerrero and possibly Victoria, were such sources ever to surface.

In preparing the program for our commemorative concert, then, we had to settle for something no less scholarly but also more creative: an attempt to create an ideal, rather than a real, recreation of the musical content of Ricci's funeral. The Victoria four-part *Requiem* formed the center of the whole, and was published in Rome in 1583, the year in which Ricci's Zhaoqing mission began. Born in Avila, Spain, Victoria (also known by the Italianized spelling of his name, Vittoria) came to Rome about 1563 and enrolled in the Jesuit-run *Collegio Germanico*. It seems certain that if he did not in fact study with Palestrina, he certainly knew him (Palestrina taught at the nearby *Collegio Romano*) and was the first Iberian composer to master the subtleties of his style. He wrote two settings of the *Requiem* mass, of which the four-part setting is performed tonight. This year (2011) also marks the 400th anniversary of Victoria's death.

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525 or 26-1594) the greatest of all the Italian Renaissance contrapuntal composers, taught in Rome at the *Collegio Romano* from 1566. Ricci entered the College in 1572, and undoubtedly knew him. Even in his lifetime, Palestrina's music was held in awe by his contemporaries, and through his enormous body of works continues to define the art of counterpoint to this day. The motet, *Nos autem* is a work known to have been in the library of the *Collegio Germanico* during Ricci's time in Rome.

Francisco Guerrero (1527/28-99) was another major figure of the Renaissance, and part of the tetrarchy that includes Palestrina, Victoria, and Orlando di Lasso. Born in Seville, he led a rather swashbuckling life. His early career was spent in Spain and Portugal, followed by a year in Italy with the Emperor Maximilian II (1581-82), where he published two books of music. He travelled to the Holy Land in 1589, and on his return his ship was attacked by pirates, who threatened his life, stole his

¹²Elisabetta Corsi, “Practical music and the practice of music before the arrival of Tomás Pereira, S.J., in Beijing”, in L. F. Barreto, ed., *Tomás Pereira: Life, Work and World* (Lisbon, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2010)p. 227.

money, and held him for ransom (he wrote a best-selling book about his experiences on his return to Spain, which apparently influenced Cervantes). His music was widely dispersed among the Spanish foreign missions, perhaps because he favoured homophonic textures and easily-remembered melodies which appealed to non-Western converts. In manuscript and in practice, his music was then preserved well into the 19th century by the cathedrals of Latin America and the Philippines (the latter named in 1542 for the same Prince Felipe mentioned below, by then Philip II of Spain). It is tempting to imagine that – as with several 17th century Philippine-manufactured pipe organs – Guerrero’s music made the leap of a few hundred miles from Manila to Macau and China at some point as well.

The other composers heard on our program are very minor, yet interesting figures in the history of Spanish and Portuguese music of the 16th century, thus being directly relevant to Macau and the China mission. Fr. Tomás de Santa Maria, O.P. (c. 1515-c.1570) was born in Madrid and joined the Dominicans in 1536. His main interest lies in a book on keyboard improvisation, *Arte de tañer fantasía* (Valladolid, 1565) which remains an important source for understanding how keyboard music was played and taught at this time on the Iberian peninsula. In this sense, the three little *fantasías* performed on the concert program are merely examples (or models) of compositions, which it was expected could be improvised by any competent organist of the day.

Santa Maria’s book was plagiarized by later writers (perhaps the ultimate compliment) and he mentioned in the preface that it had been reviewed before publication by António de Cabezón (1510-66), a distinguished organist who was born near Burgos, and who went blind at an early age. Isabella of Portugal, the wife of Charles V, employed Cabezón in 1526, and he spent his entire life working for the Spanish royal family. He was a tutor of the Regent, Prince Felipe,¹³ and travelled with him to England in 1544-46 on the occasion of Felipe’s marriage to Mary Tudor (“Bloody Mary”, who had previously (in 1522) been briefly engaged to his father, Charles!). Here Cabezón seems to have met Byrd and Tallis, among other English musicians. His variation style, as heard in the *Fabordón del primer tono*, may even have influenced them.

Through the Spanish court, António also knew the vihuelist, Luis de Narváez (fl. 1526-50) whose polyphonic *fantasías* were intended for the organ and harpsichord as well as the vihuela. They have been preserved in his only publication, *Los seys libros del delphín* (Valladolid, 1538). The *Fantasia de consonancia del quinto tono* comes from the first of the six volumes. Cabezón’s son, Hernando (1541-1602), was also a composer, and he preserved much of his father’s music in a publication (*Obras de música para tecla, arpa y vihuela*) in 1578. Hernando’s style, as heard in his variations on Pierre Sandrin’s popular song, *Dulce memoria*, was somewhat more advanced than his father’s.

All these works were chosen as part of our attempt to recreate the *Klangwelt* – the ‘sound world’ of Ricci’s time, the kind of music which he would have heard in Rome and other European cities, and which he and his colleagues would have carried with them from Rome, Spain, and Portugal as part of their collective cultural memory, to China. We cannot pretend that we are not 21st century people listening with 21st century ears to music which we understand rather in the way we approach 17th Century art in a museum. But through this experiment we tried to at least catch a sideways, very brief glimpse of that cold day in 1611 when Ricci finally rested from his labours and his colleagues wished him well on his journey ‘with the sounds of organ and other musical instruments.’

¹³ It is worth recording here, that it was Philip II (1527-98, and known as Philip I in Portugal) who in 1586 granted the status of a city to Macau, along with the title, *Cidade de Nome de Deus* [“City of the Name of God”].

Captions for Figures:

1. Title page of *Theatrum Instrumentorum*, from *Syntagma Musicum* of Michael Praetorius (Wolfenbüttel, 1620.) A gallery choir is accompanied by string instruments, including a *violone*; while around the organ a pair of sackbuts and other wind instruments are led by a choirmaster.
2. A page from *Theatrum Instrumentorum*, showing sackbuts, cornetti, and trumpets.
3. Zhalan, from Alvarez Semedo, *Histoire universelle de la Chine* (Rome, 1643). The chapel was located in room 13, at the center of the complex.
4. Italian positive organ, ca. 1500. A century later in Beijing, this would still have been generally the design for a largish processional organ, though perhaps without such a heavy case.

David Francis Urrows was educated at Brandeis University (A.B., *magna cum laude*, 1978), the University of Edinburgh (M. Mus., 1980) and Boston University (D.M.A., 1987). His principal teachers were Randall Thompson and Kenneth Leighton. He also studied composition with Harold Shapero, David delTredici, GirolamoArrigo, Donald Martino, and Arthur Berger. His organ teachers included Allen Sever and Peter Williams. An accomplished organist and choral conductor as well as a composer, Dr. Urrows is Associate Professor in the Department of Music at Hong Kong Baptist University, where he teaches music history, composition, and music theory and analysis, and where he directs The Pipe Organ in China Project. He has been musical director of the Cecilian Singers, and was Assistant Organist at St. John's Cathedral (both 1997-2000.) He has also taught at the University of Massachusetts, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, and Eastern Mediterranean University. Dr. Urrows is widely published as a music historian, on topics ranging from the history of the organ in China, to contemporary choral music and choral composers.