



## LSF-UK Mission Report No.19 Philippines October 2022

Luthiers: Nicole Terry and Robert Cain

The Jose Depiro Education Centre for the Arts is situated in the rural settlement of Pagalangang, in Bataan province, a three-hour drive north-west of Manila. It is administered by the Roman Catholic 'Missionary Society of St Paul' and reaches out to this economically disadvantaged community by offering employment training, life skills, sports facilities and music education.

The centre is run by Fr. Joseph Cremona whose vision has seen the centre grow from a 'fishpond' to a thriving community centre over the past 17 years. Recognising the value of music participation to young, disadvantaged people, the centre is home to a youth orchestra and offers music education, (much of it by 'Skype' lessons with overseas teachers) and performance opportunities. The centre hosts regular visits from volunteer professional musicians from various countries. Students who excel in music regularly obtain university scholarships at home and abroad.



LSF-UK first visited this community in 2018. At that point, no-one in the Philippines had had any formal training in lutherie but after two weeks, we had set up a well-equipped

workshop and trained three local people in basic instrument and bow maintenance. Teaching continued via 'Skype' and email.

Four years later, after the ravages of Covid19, we arranged to return. Two of our 2018 trainees had moved away to university. Our aim was to teach the remaining trainee to re-hair bows and two new trainees to repair the instruments.



On arrival, we were very heartened to find all our 2018 tools and equipment securely stored and ready to use (if a bit rusty due to the humid climate). This is the perfect scenario and shows the excellent organisation at the centre.

We brought supplies of bow hair, strings, bridges etc and a few extra tools. A great addition was a hand-operated grinding wheel which Rob found in a second-hand tool shop in the UK. Its safe and very effective. We also brought a violin, a viola and 20 bows – all donated by UK supporters.

We worked Monday to Friday plus some evenings and part of the weekends where possible. LSF volunteers typically work long days. It was exhausting in 30 degree heat and

high humidity but very, very productive and great fun.



The three students Aaron, Russel and Gigo were aged between 19 and mid-twenties. They took the work very seriously and learned quickly e.g. by the end of the first week, bows were being re-haired and bridges and soundposts fitted satisfactorily. This left the second week for extra practice and for tackling some of the more complex jobs. We left after two weeks feeling that the workshop is in good hands.



### Reflections:

- There is a real shortage of lutherie expertise in the Philippines; the only known luthier passed away during the covid19 pandemic.
- There is the potential for the Pagalangang workshop to become a training centre and to service a much wider area. This idea was discussed in 2018 but has not progressed for various reasons (including covid19). This model has been very successful in Haiti since LSF-UK's first mission in 2008.

- There is also a tentative plan for one of the luthiers to travel to Europe for work experience, initially in Malta. LSF-UK could offer to facilitate further experience in UK workshops.
- Hand operated grinding wheels are terrific!

### Budget

Airfares, travel, vaccinations etc: approx. £2480.

Tools etc: approx. £400.

(It is a condition of LSF-UK missions that our accommodation and food is supplied by our host).

The above figures are typical for a two-person, two-week mission and represent excellent value for money.

### *Thank you to:-*

Our many friends and well-wishers who support our work. Much of the equipment in the workshop from donated items.

and especially Father Joe Cremona and the community of Pagalangang, for their hospitality.



*Robert Cain: Trustee, volunteer luthier*  
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For more information about our work visit

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