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- Interview with Tan Dun
- Buddhism and rock music
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in honour of his ninetieth birthday.

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Antoinet Schimmelpenninck

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**Music in cities, music in villages**

The bus trip to Shuangdu in northern Jiangsu was an unsettling experience. At 40 miles per hour we drove along sandy roads, past barren fields and secluded farm houses. With their curled rooftops the houses looked like Viking ships, awash in a murky landscape. Our driver was a reckless man. He hardly touched his brakes, not even while driving through villages. He just tooted – the sounds of the horn were painful to our ears. We entered another village. A cyclist failed to swerve to the side of the road. The bus hit him at full speed. We saw the man and his bike disappear behind the windshield and heard a loud crash. When we came to a standstill we all looked out of the windows. The bicycle was reduced to rubble, but the cyclist had been propelled to the side of the road and, quite miraculously, had survived the collision. He scrambled to his feet, utterly confused. The driver, who had got out of the bus,
From the Editor

began to scold him and was approached in turn by scores of angry villagers who had witnessed the accident. When one of them ripped off the driver’s glasses, a fight ensued.

My wife and I were on our first folk song collecting trip. This was my first acquaintance with rural China. We watched in horror while the mob grew to nearly one hundred people who tore and pulled at another’s jackets. Most of them blamed the driver for the accident, but passengers who had stepped out of our bus seemed of a different opinion. They were eager to travel on and shouted at the villagers to clear the way. One man went over to the driver’s seat and pressed the horn.

Emotions calmed down when two policemen arrived on the scene. They measured the length of the bus and the size of its wheels, and interviewed some people who had not been near the site of the accident when it happened. They briefly interrogated the driver, too, but not the cyclist, and ignored anyone who had been sitting at the front of the bus. After some deliberation they judged the cyclist guilty and meted out a light punishment to him. They kicked him in front of the villagers. Now there were no protests from anyone. The crowd was all smiles and some people who, only minutes ago, had ardently defended the man now jeered at him. He took his beating in silence and went home.

This happened in the winter of 1986-87. At that time, one of our heroes and shining examples in folk song collecting was the Hungarian composer and ethnomusicologist Béla Bartók. Bartók carried out pioneer work in the Balkans in the early 1900s. He had idealized views about the Hungarian peasants, and about peasant art and village music. We hoped to follow his example by collecting ‘peasant songs’ in China, but I don’t think we harboured romantic notions about rural society. We did not view it as ‘primitive’ or ‘unspoilt’, and the local villages of Jiangnan hardly struck us as idyllic, though some of them had a quiet beauty of their own. The hospitality of the local people was overwhelming, their readiness to receive us – without knowing anything about us except what we told them – was very moving. The bus incident gradually faded from our memories, and we had many positive experiences, heart-warming encounters with kind and helpful people. We made great musical discoveries.

Sometimes we remember the incident again and ponder its meaning. I suppose it might have happened almost anywhere. But in the quick readiness of the local people to accept the authorities’ judgment I am still inclined to read a rural mentality. Not a ‘Chinese’ rural mentality, simply an attitude one associates with life in the countryside – an almost blank preparedness to accept the verdicts of fate or of higher powers. Not that I think that villagers are subservient people or that they have a limitless trust in high authorities or in fate. Villages can also be cradles of enthusiastic atheism or passionate revolutions. But the majority of rural people in the world still seem to accept many facts of life and death with a quiet resignation that baffles the average city-dweller. This may have something to do with the proverbial hardships of country life, with people’s dependence on weather and wind, the unpredictable rhythms of nature, the floods, the crop failures – events simply beyond the grasp of human control. The Dutch historian Geert Mak has argued that a peasant looks upon his life as a transitory episode, an intermezzo: his ideals lie in the past, his obligations in the future, but during his lifetime he will never see the results.1 This may well lead to a more detached attitude towards the general course of events and towards the interests and ‘rights’ of individuals. It also leads to different notions of time.

Of course one must not exaggerate the differences between urban and rural societies or the different mentalities of their inhabitants. Cities and villages are now growing more alike, and the contrasts have not always been very marked. Rural people may at one time have lived a more 'urban' life, and many cities of the past were in size and in culture more like 'villages'.

As opposite poles, villages and cities have become increasingly complex notions. The shift from the self-supporting 'peasant' (who consumes most of what he harvests on his own soil) to the 'farmer' (who produces for the market and becomes part of a distribution system) is a universal development which has led to increased prosperity in rural societies, to a growth in specialized occupations, the improvement of transport networks and increased interdependence of villages and cities. These developments have taken place in rural societies all over the world, at different points in time. They have made urban-rural relationships a great deal more complex, economically, but also in terms of cultural life and music.

With respect to China, we may still be inclined to think primarily in terms of preserved 'tradition' (villages) versus 'innovation' (cities). It may be true that many traditional genres survive (or are being revived) more easily in the countryside than in the city, but the reverse can also be observed. Many innovations start or receive their first impulse from the 'conservative' countryside, and it is in the interaction between urban and rural society that Chinese culture is — and has always been — at its most vibrant.

For many centuries, Chinese villages and cities have differed little in terms of their outdoor 'soundscape'. Few cars, little machinery, no loud blaring radios, no drills or draglines around, many horse hoofs and cartwheels — with sounds hardly disturbing since the majority of roads were unpaved. In many parts of China this sonic picture persisted until the late 1970s. Singers of street songs and outdoor storytellers had an easy job getting their messages across, and if teahouses and local theatres hosted musicians their music could be heard throughout the neighbourhood, advertising its own presence. But music was not always easily available and must have meant a great deal to people — more than it means to many owners of radios and cassette-players today.

In the course of time Chinese city-dwellers witnessed a growing influx of foreign music and of new forms of entertainment. Cities have always served as important focal points for travelling musicians and for supra-regional genres, and culturally speaking this may be one factor that sets them somewhat apart from villages. But the difference is only one of degree. Many new hybrid forms of music began life in cities, from Peking Opera to Chinese pop and symphonic music, but there is no reason to assume that similar processes of hybridization did not take place in rural areas or that rural music only provides the 'raw materials' for Chinese musical genres which are moulded to perfection in the cities — a view sometimes promoted in Chinese writings.

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2 From a jack-of-all-trades, who made his own repairs and was entirely self-sustaining, the peasant became a specialized worker, a carpenter, a baker, a boulanger, an oyster culturist etc.


4 Urban and village culture have diversified. In China, there is a huge (and still growing) gap between the industrialized villages of the eastern coastal regions (with their five-story buildings, asphalted roads and whole counties turned into makeshift industrial corporations) and the remote mountain villages of peripheral China, where life continues on the barest subsistence level. Similarly, few inland cities can match the (recently achieved) cosmopolitan splendour of metropoles like Shanghai and Shenzhen.

5 In Western historical writing, the city as a place of creative innovation and cultural progress has been a bit out of vogue since Lewis Mumford's The Culture of Cities (1938), but it has recently won new supporters in people like Peter Hall (cf. his Cities in Civilization, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999).
The ongoing urbanization of the countryside – which is undeniable – is anything but a one-way process. At present many urban performers – such as ailing urban opera companies – attempt to find new markets in the countryside, while their rural counterparts try to make money in the big cities. ‘Revivals’ of some rural genres may be more successful with urban middle-class audiences than with villagers. There is a continuous interplay between rural and urban music traditions. Pop musicians borrow elements from Buddhist chants or folk music for their commercial songs, but these songs often find their way back to the countryside, where they are immediately ‘recycled’ in folk music repertoires. The interaction is rich and complex and cannot be captured in simple models.

Most of the time, mobility for the majority of common people in China has been limited, except in periods of war or famine, or during natural disasters. Many Chinese have seen little more of the world than what is directly visible from their doorstep, whether they live in villages or in capital cities. In the past most outdoor musical performances – in villages and in cities – were given by local musicians, familiar people who played and sang the locally famous tunes, from street cries to opera, in a dialect which everyone shared. But there may have been times when mobility suddenly increased, leading to an influx of wandering musicians. The ebb and flow of musical cross-fertilization in China may well be partly related to the fluctuating water levels of the big rivers. Mobility has been further increased by economic growth and improved transportation. Street artists who perform in the country’s major cities today are usually non-residents, and many come from remote provinces. How much these temporary visitors contribute to local town or village traditions remains open to question. If they do not know the local language or play unfamiliar melodic strains on instruments with perhaps deviant tunings, they may not have much of an impact. But who knows?

Cultural realms in China are often narrowly defined, on regional and sub-regional levels. This regionality is perhaps best preserved in rural areas – one cannot think of anything more elitist or more place-bound than rural folk songs: what singers in one village produce as a model of style may be incomprehensible and unacceptable to singers ten miles down the road – but regional music culture can be quite pronounced in cities, too. Major industrialized centres like Chengdu and Guangzhou still cherish their famous local operatic traditions. Nevertheless, the signs of a fertile interplay between urban and village culture, between local and supra-regional musical realms in Chinese music, are omnipresent. They are generally acknowledged in scholarly literature, but given surprisingly little attention in musical fieldwork. There may not be such a sharp line of division between urban and rural culture as a whole – notwithstanding my observations above about ‘rural attitudes’ – but a world of hidden differences and hidden connections still remains to be charted. Sometimes we may rely just a little too conveniently on book learning about the roots or social settings of specific styles, or on our own stereotypes of the rural/urban divide.

Frank Kouwenhoven

‘Music in cities, music in villages’ is the theme of the 5th Chime conference, which takes place at the Academy of Music in Prague, from 15 to 21 September 1999.

6 See also Emma Zevik’s article on Sichuan street songs in this issue of Chime.
7 Take Meng Jiangnü, one of Jiangsu’s best-known folk tunes, which is poorly known in some villages, or mainly associated with beggars and low life, while it is valued in other parts of Jiangsu as the core and pride of the local folk song repertoire. See Antoinet Schimmelpenninck – Chinese Folk Songs and Folk Singers, Leiden, 1997, p.312.
THE CONCEPT OF ‘WEIR’

‘Flavour / taste’ in the vocal music of Jingxi (Peking Opera)

Isabelle Duchesne
(New York)

Weir refers to the way actor-singers in Chinese opera produce ‘flavour’ or ‘taste’ in their singing. Special vocal techniques allow them to embody the characters in the plays and to individualize their own interpretations. The subtle nature and complex meanings of weir make its apprehension difficult for the outsider, but also turn it into a fascinating field of study. The author has examined historical recordings of Jingxi (Peking Opera) from the 1920s and 1930s. Obviously, any attempt to discuss in writing, mainly with the help of transcriptions, the quality of voices or the combined intricacies of vocalization processes, pronunciation, breathing and phrasing is beset with difficulties, especially if one focuses on a comparison of various performance versions which are very similar (and which may reveal very subtle shades of expressive differentiation in singing). The author has accepted the challenge and combines an etic analysis of musical examples with emic perceptions of weir.¹

The concept of weir, defined by the culinary metaphor of ‘flavour’ ‘taste’, is a crucial paradigm in the culture and performance of Jingxi. Its initial significance is aesthetic. Musically, it primarily refers to the way the actor-singer produces ‘flavour’ or ‘taste’ in his or her singing during the performance, something that is not only recognizable at the time but lingers among the audience afterwards. The musical accompaniment, almost omnipresent in a Jingxi performance, is important too, but for purposes of analysis, I will abstract it here from my argument. To paraphrase Xu Lanyuan – Mei Lanfang’s personal accompanist on the jinghu (two-string fiddle) – ‘the weir’ is ‘the method within the method’ (suowei fa zhong hai you fa 所谓法中有法)² It consists mainly of a series of ‘little sound tricks’ (xiao yinfa) in the actor’s singing and pronunciation which, combined with the conventions of theatrical performance where weir is also produced in other ways, allow him to embody a character in a play and to individualize his own interpretation.³ This concept also exists in

¹ My gratitude goes to the Société Française d’Ethnomusicologie, whose grant allowed me to present a preliminary version of this paper at the 1995 ‘East Asian Voices’ Conference organized by Chine in Rotterdam, and to Jonathan Hay, for his helpful criticisms and generous intellectual support.

² Xu 1985: 19.

³ I am expanding here on Xu Lanyuan’s argument about the individuation of an actor’s flavour through singing (1985: 19).

Photo: Mei Lanfang as a dancing femme fatale in the play Xishi, 1938. (Shanghai renmin meishu chb.)
the aesthetics of several Chinese traditional arts, under the more standard term ‘weidao’. However, I will prefer here the common vernacular Peking term of ‘weir’ used in Jingxi circles, to stress the specificity, strength and multiple social and cultural dimensions of this concept in Jingxi.

The intricate web of meanings of weir and its very fluid and subtle nature make its apprehension difficult for the outsider. A full treatment of the question would require several different methodological approaches and many examples; one would also have to address, for instance, the theatrical and expressive dimensions of weir as well as its reception by the audience, an important link at the other end of the performance chain. However, since the primarily aural foundations of weir need to be analyzed prior to these concerns, I will restrict my argument here to the vocal techniques by which weir was produced. We will be concerned with the aural images (xingxiang) produced by the actor, something that would ideally need to be heard rather than read about. This poses a real challenge for my demonstration, since the aural material loses its force of conviction once reduced to a transcription on paper. A relatively easy point could be made by comparing several versions of the same play by different actors that present strikingly different melodic and text arrangements (for example, ‘Yu Tang Chun’ by some of the ‘Four Great Male Impersonators of Female Roles’). Nonetheless, how can one demonstrate with only visual and intellectual aids, i.e., mainly through transcription and analysis, the quality of a voice or the combined intricacies of vocalization processes, pronunciation, breathing and phrasing which contribute to distinguishing an actor’s weir from relatively similar material? I will take up part of this challenge by combining an etic analysis of musical examples with emic perceptions of weir.

Since most contemporary stars I have interviewed are still deeply indebted to the weir of their predecessors, commonly associated with a ‘golden age’ in Jingxi, I shall focus on an earlier generation of singers and use historical recordings from the 1920s and 1930s hardly reissued on CDs. Despite their poor sound quality, these represent a musical heritage of inestimable value for the study of Chinese theater and music.

4 Classical poetry provides an important foundation for an aesthetic theory in which an artistic production is valued in function of the mediation between the artist, his work, and his audience. A successful poet is able to communicate his ‘voice’ through images (xingxiang) stemming from the heart/mind (xin), the center of thought (yi) and emotions (qing) in Chinese culture, so as to create a whole mental and emotional universe (yiqing) resonant with his audience. Such a process is said to generate ‘the flavour/taste of the times’ (yueue), ‘an inspired flavour/taste’ (shenweier). See also Stephen Owen’s Traditional Chinese Poetry and Poetics: Oman of the World.

5 For particularly insightful analyses, see Chen Youwei’s intra- and intergeneric approach (Chen 1983: 289-313), and the collective monograph on Yu Shuyan (Yu Shuyan zhi, 1994).

6 By ‘aural images’, I mean the aural representations produced by certain vocal technologies, and their aesthetic effect. I prefer to use ‘aural images’, which describes better the rich aural experience in ‘traditional’ Chinese theater (xing) than the more reductionist term ‘musical images’ (yinyue xingxiang) which excludes all sorts of sounds relevant to the culture of Jingxi. For an expert on Yu Shuyan, ‘to play with aggregates of notes or the voice in the singing is not enough to give musical images [aural images] if there is neither experience from life nor thought and emotional process’ (Chen 1982: 49).


8 The use of historical records in the absence of live performance and fieldwork recordings presents several limitations, a topic I have discussed elsewhere in relation to performance (Duchesne, 1994: ‘Performance on the Record: Studio Recordings of Jingxi [Peking opera] in the Republican Period: 1911-1949’, unpublished paper). Here, I have attempted to remedy this by contextualizing my analyses through fieldwork interviews and contemporary testimony whenever possible.
Observation and practice expose the tight interaction of phonetic, poetic, musical and theatrical factors in the singing of Jingxi. This genre uses its own theatrical language, a hybrid system that combines the phonology (pronunciation, tones, and rhymes) of dialects from Hubei and Hunan (Huanghuang yin), together with the phonology of Northern dialects of the Yuan dynasty (Zhongzhou yun), and dialects from Anhui, Kunqu theater and Beijing. Jingxi itself has quite strict rules governing the phonetic, poetic and musical character of the words. It possesses a rather elaborate system of thirteen different rhymes shared by some oral literature from the North. Words, in turn, can have an impact on the arrangement of the melody. One example is the way melodic movements tend to avoid running against the tonal in-flexions of the theatrical language; another one, the way the extremely decomposed articulation of a word can stretch over a long segment of the melo-rhythmic line. This can be summed up in the musicians' expression: 'The words determine the melody' (yi zi ding qiang).

I will approach the concrete sound and singing methods which generate the weir in three stages: first, through practices concerned with the emission of sound and the use of voice, second, through practices bearing on pronunciation and modes of articulation, and third, through the actor's intricate network of personal strategies such as a specific vocabulary of sounds, 'added syllables', nasalization processes, etc. A more complete survey of these personal strategies would also examine how singers play with various types of contrasts (including glottal stops, contrasts of intensity, etc.), different modes of respiration, or ornamentation.

The three aspects of vocal and musical practice I am emphasizing are pillars of the system of production of weir. The system itself is articulated on two levels. The first level largely corresponds to the more limited number of procedures represented by the first two categories. These practices function more prescriptively within the system and tend to objectify weir in a rather straightforward way, as with the phonetic rules through which an actor can articulate a given word to confer on it a Jingxi 'flavour' or even his own 'flavour'. In contrast, the multiple choices offered by the third category of practices (ornaments, special sound effects in the actor's singing) and the multiplicity of their combinations, give the actor more leeway to use the system in order to create his own 'flavour'. These tend to constitute a second level, more tightly related to the aural and musical part of the system, and to encourage a more individual appropriation of the weir. The juxtaposition, intersection or tension between the two levels of weir ultimately creates an even wider range of possibilities that cannot be explored in a short article. Therefore, this study is necessarily fragmentary, merely outlining some of the contours of the vocal production of weir.

The emission of sound and the use of voice
I begin this examination of 'little sound tricks' with the use of voice and the production of sound, the foundation of Jingxi singing. My main example will come from an excerpt in the

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9 The use of these dialects reflects the theatrical genres which participated in the formation of Jingxi.
10 Word endings are divided into thirteen categories of rhymes (shisan zhe): 'the zhongdong rhyme' as in the word 'nong', 'the renchen rhyme' as in 'seng', 'the jianyang rhyme' as in 'jiang', etc. Each rhyme is subdivided into four main poetic tones. A single rhyme on a single poetic tone must be used to close every alternate line of a sung piece in Jingxi. Other theatrical genres have distinct rhyme systems based on the pronunciation of their own theatrical dialects of reference, and also distinct prosodic rules.
The actor Cheng Yanqu (dan, on the left) in ‘Wenji Returns to the Han’ (Wenji gui Han). The actress Meng Xiaodong (huaqin) as general Yang Jiye, in ‘Suicide at the Stele’ (Peng bei), ca. 1930s-40s.

mode erhuang yuanban from the play ‘The Orphan of the Zhao Family’ (Soug gu jiu gu), interpreted by the famous actor of ‘bearded male roles’ (xusheng) Yu Shuyan (1890-1943) on a 1925 Odeon recording. In this excerpt, the loyal Cheng Ying begs his wife to substitute their own son for the orphan of the Zhao family, in order to save the last male heir of the Zhao clan from being killed.

Traditionally, actors follow the vocal conventions of their type of role regarding the type of voice, ambitus, range of pitch, sounds and timbre, which lay out the conditions for the vocal system of production of weier. When necessary, they slightly adapt these conventions to their own physical condition or to specific musical or theatrical contingencies. In landmark excerpts from ‘The Orphan of the Zhao Family’, the actors Yu Shuyan, Tan Fuying (1906-1977), and the actress Meng Xiaodong (1909-1977) all conform to the timbre of voice and apparent ease defining the ‘natural voice’ (zhen sang) of Jingxi’s ‘bearded male roles’.

12 Tan Fuying’s version comes from the 78-rpm Odeon A 24079 (Teb 119) recording (1925), and Meng Xiaodong’s from a rare live recording or radio broadcast of a 1947 Shanghai performance, remastered on the Shanghai Audio and Video Co. cassette tape YBA 13, 1989.
13 Jingxi’s singing practice makes a distinction between the ‘natural voice’, used by most male roles (sheng), warrior roles (jing), and old female roles (huidan), and the ‘falsetto voice’ (jia sang) of young male roles.
The organs of speech and singing (with the classes of sound added by Isabelle Duchesne) from Huang Jiaheng and Xu Muyun - Guangyin ji changmianfa yanjiu (Study on the rhymes, singing and declamation of Peking opera). 1989, p. 162.

They are also expected to sing as close as possible to what was considered the ideal high pitch and register for the erhuang mode in Jingxi’s early days, the zhenggong diao, where the fundamental degree of the modal scale - here D E (F) G A (B) C D - is tuned to the reference pitch of G. 14 On the recording, Yu Shuyan sings between zhenggong diao and liuzi (xiaoqin) and female roles (dan). (In their declamation, the xiaoqin use, in fact, a polyphonic voice juxtaposing a ‘natural voice’ and a ‘falsetto voice’). To produce the ‘natural voice’, the air rises from the lower abdomen, passes through the resonators of the throat, issuing a direct sound somewhat close to the spoken voice. An approaching concept in Western phonology would be the ‘neutral mode of phonation where the vibration of the true vocal folds is periodic, efficient, and without audible friction’ (Laver, 1980: 94 & 118-120). The ‘falsetto voice’ triggers different laryngeal mechanisms: the throat cavity shrinks, the voice organs are lifted up, and the air column is thin, producing a ‘disguised’ sound distinct in its timbre from the spoken voice and higher in pitch. The fact that the glottis often remains slightly open creates some accompanying friction noises. The Jingxi concept of a ‘natural voice’ needs to be relativized, as demonstrated by the difference of voice quality and pitch between Tan, on the one hand, and Yu and Meng, on the other, discussed below.

14 The reference pitch refers originally to the fingering of the bamboo flute, which was the earliest main accompanying instrument in Jingxi. As the musician uncovered the holes of the flute, he gave the departure point of a new diao bearing the same name. When the huqin replaced the flute as the reference instrument in the nineteenth century, the original names of the diao from the flute were kept. When singing in the same ‘melody-rhythmic mode’ (bangqiang) like erhuang yuanban, the melodic line of the ‘bearded male roles’ is usually shaped in such a way that it sounds a fourth lower than that of female roles.
diaoe,\textsuperscript{15} with the pitch of the fundamental degree of the modal scale between G and F (a 'high' F# on the recording). Meng Xiaodong sings slightly higher than Yu, with the first degree on a 'low' G.\textsuperscript{16} Tan Fuying's pitch, meanwhile, sounds lower than Yu's, with the first degree of the scale on + F, close to a liuzidiao (Fig. 1). The way these actors depart from the expected zhenggong diao can be attributed to the limitations of the recording/playback technology, to a lower natural voice, or to an increasing lowering of the reference pitch over Jingxi's history.\textsuperscript{17}

![Fig. 1. Different diao for 'The Orphans', erhuang yuanban.](image)

Tan's lower register tends to infuse his voice with a relaxed quality of sound, in contrast to Yu and Meng, whose higher pitched and slightly 'higher-strung' voices often translate into a more emotional singing, highly appreciated in Jingxi.\textsuperscript{18} Sometimes, Tan seems to seek to compensate for his relatively low pitch in his treatment of the melody. This can be heard on words like 'Quan niang ci' ('I urge you, my wife', mm.10-11, Fig. 1), where Tan starts the motif on the main modal degree D, a second higher in relative pitch according to the Chinese notation than Yu's rendition, drawing a descending melodic line that runs contrary to Yu's ascending one (Fig. 1). (Meng Xiaodong adheres quite closely to the melodic line and singing aesthetic of her master Yu Shuyan.) Tan also sings higher than Yu and Meng on the melodic line corresponding to the attack of the words 'Zhao Tu', and again, on 'Qian yan' ('A thousand words') (Figs. 2 and 3).

\textsuperscript{15} In the liuzidiao, the fundamental degree is tuned to the pitch of F.

\textsuperscript{16} Chinese specialists usually attribute the zhenggong diao to Yu Shuyan. The cultural historian Wu Xiaoru credits Meng Xiaodong for singing the mode erhuang in the liuzi bunfian, a modern denomination that indicates a pitch tuning half a step higher than F (Wu 1994: 267).

\textsuperscript{17} Yu's and Meng's slight departure from the expected zhenggong diao may be due to the limitations of the recorded source. Tan Fuying's greater departure from the usual diao may also result, in addition to this factor, from a lower natural voice register that would justify his use of a lower diao (for example, a liuzi diao in F that would sound lower on the recording).

\textsuperscript{18} Pitch is associated with other factors (tempo, pronunciation, vocal techniques, etc.) to create this emotionality.
The different pitches and registers (diao) of the three laosheng may be interpreted as the first signs of their differentiated flavour. The limited range of diao applied to each mode, meanwhile, inscribes these preliminary constituents of the weir within the musical (modal) system of the genre. One can also see in this restricted use of pitches and diao an effort by Yu, Meng and Tan to recreate the high-pitch effect of their illustrious predecessor Tan Xinpei as part of their production of weir. Thus what is at stake behind the issue of pitch is as much the reproduction of an aspect of another actor's weir (in this case Tan Xinpei's), as the production of one's own. The symbiotic relationship through which one’s individual weir relates to the weir of others reinforces the actor’s artistic authority in terms of individual achievement and of artistic lineage.¹⁹

This notwithstanding, the primary quality of the actor’s voice remains an important source of weir. Although it is difficult to convey a sense of an individual voice in the absence of the actual sound, one can draw upon perceptions of the actor’s voice in his own culture. While Yu Shuyan is not considered to have the best of voices, he is usually credited with a ‘pure and clean sound’ (yinzhi can jing 含真纯净), and ‘a melodious sound’ (shengyiin hao ting 声宜好听),²⁰ which one scholar, Dong Weixian, describes as follows:

' Amidst a hoarse (cangyin), granular sound (shayin), his voice possesses a clean and pure (qingshun), sweet and crystal-clear (jianlian) beauty (yanwei)'.²¹

Another specialist, Lu Wenjin, observes that Yu has 'a pitch and a modal register that move naturally upward',²² an indication of a good voice in Jingxi. However, the resort to the

¹⁹ In terms of their singing, repertory and use of Huguang yin, Yu Shuyan, Tan Fuying and Meng Xiaodong all belong to the artistic lineage (linpai) of the actor Tan Xinpei (1847-1917), while possessing their own ‘flavour’. Meng Xiaodong is also considered as a late but true heir of her master Yu Shuyan, with whom she studied ‘The Orphan’.
Jingxi concept of a ‘crafted voice’ (gongfu sang) by a third expert, Wu Xiaoru, more accurately credits Yu’s efforts to develop in his own voice the ‘ample’ (kuan), ‘high’ (gao), ‘dense’ (hou) and ‘sonorous’ (liang) qualities that came almost naturally for Tan Xinpei and Tan Fuying at the time of the actor’s recording of ‘The Orphan’ (1925). Tan Fuying’s voice was described as ‘low-pitched but beautiful’. According to a more recent account, ‘Tan Fuying’s celebrity comes mostly from having inherited his grandfather Tan Xinpei’s good voice (yitiao hao sangzi — 衛許嗓子), a quality other actors could not contend with. In his heyday, he could do what he wanted with his voice, which did not have the slightest veil (zhefan) at all, and furthermore naturally inherited his ancestor’s aptitude for rhymes (tianran you naizu zhi yiyun 天然有乃祖之遺韵).’ Tan’s rendition of ‘The Orphan’ illustrates perfectly this natural vocal ease. The third singer, Meng Xiaodong, is credited with a ‘strong and dense voice, hoarse and vigorous, with a versatile and wide register, It is full of melody, and its old man’s energy is high spirited’. According to Wu Xiaoru, by the time when the actress’s performance of ‘The Orphan’ was recorded in the 1940s, her voice had reached its artistic peak, establishing her as the true heir of her ailing master Yu Shuyan. It had cast away most of the softness and the high pitch of an actress’s sound — a liability for her type of role — to engage the clarity, purity, elegance and lightness of a classical Jingxi style. From her diction and singing, her listeners enjoy a feeling of admirable beauty, despite the poor sound quality of the recording.

Control of ‘the five sounds and the four exhalations’ (wu yin si hua) involves a technical knowledge necessary for a successful emission of voice and sound. The ‘five sounds’ refer to the position and mode of production of initial consonants and semi-vowels like w. They usually include: ‘sounds from the throat’ (hou yin), divided into ‘deep throat sounds’ (shen hou yin) and ‘light throat sounds’ (jian hou yin); ‘sounds with the tongue’ (she yin); ‘sounds with the teeth’ (ya yin), in fact, the alveo-palatals corresponding to the pinyin initials j, q, x as in ‘jiang’, ‘qiang’ and ‘xiang’, and other ‘sounds with the teeth’ (chi yin) featuring the alveolars z, c, s as in ‘zong’, ‘cong’, and ‘song’; and finally, ‘labial sounds’.

24 Hatano 1926: 102. Hatano’s writings draw heavily upon Chinese sources of the time. Again, the original term for ‘beauty’ is ‘flavour of the rhymes’.
25 Adapted from Wu 1986: 32. Earlier in his argument, the author had used the image ‘the clouds obscure the moon’ (yun she yue), to depict how at the beginning of his singing, it was ‘as if Tan Xinpei’s strength barely compiled (song xin), as if his voice remained screened off layer after layer. Like the moon concealed by the clouds: but as and when he sang, he paused as if the clouds broke up and the moon came, the pure light shot its four arrows, so as to give auditors the impression of something becoming clear all of a sudden (Ibid.: 32).
26 Zhongguo xiqu quyi cidian 1981: 337.
28 This technical concept can be traced back to Chinese phonology of the Northern Sung Dynasty (Sima Guang, ‘Bian wu yin hie’, Qieyun zhi zhang in, 11th cent. C.E., p. 5). It paves the way for more advanced techniques applied to pronunciation, articulation, vocalization, resonance, vocal timbre, and vocal expression.
29 Semi-vowels can be defined as ‘sounds that are like vowels in that they have no obstructions in the vocal tract, but unlike vowels in that they are not syllabic’, as ‘vowel-like segments that function as consonants, such as [w] and [j]’ [in the International Phonetic Alphabet] (Ladefoged 1996: 282, 322-3).
30 The following examples are based on Xu Muym and Huang Jiaheng (1980 reprint: 60-1). ‘Deep throat sounds’ consist of the initials h and w, as in the words ‘hung’ and ‘weng’, and ‘light throat sounds’ of the initials g, k, and ng, as in ‘guo’, ‘ko’ (‘possible’) and ‘nguo’ (‘IT’, ‘me’), the last two words pronounced as ‘ke’ and ‘wo’ in modern standard Chinese.
31 These sounds are produced by lifting the blade of the tongue, as with ch, sh, r in ‘chang’, ‘chung’, ‘shang’ and ‘rong’.
The Concept of “Weir” in Peking Opera

(chun yin), divided into ‘heavy labial sounds’ (‘zhong chun’ representing bi-labial sounds) and ‘light labial sounds’ (‘qing chun’ standing for tooth to lip sounds).32 ‘The four exhalations’ control the shape of the lips and of the front part of the mouth cavity, plus the degree of opening of the mouth while articulating the median part of a word. ‘The exhalation with the open mouth’ (kaikou hui), for instance, intervenes on sounds like a and e (as in ma and che), while the ‘exhalation with even teeth’ (qichi hui), involves vowels like i with a consonant as in ‘jin’ or ‘li’.

The Chinese classification of initials into five positional categories (‘the five sounds’) refers quite closely to the articulatory system that activates phonation with: the lips, the teeth, the alveolar ridges, the tongue, the hard palate, the soft palate, the jaws, the pharynx, the epiglottis and the glottis. The four vocalic categories that come under the heading of ‘the four exhalations’, meanwhile, bear some relation to the Western concept of ‘vowelization’ establishing the vocalization of vowels as the vehicle of the singing voice.34 However, Jingxi’s compound singing technique, which correlates the place and mode of production of initial consonants and semi-vowels in ‘the five sounds’ with the shaping of the mouth cavity and the exhalation on vowels in ‘the four exhalations’, also denotes a more specifically Chinese phonological and theatrical culture. Such codified technical knowledge can only be acquired through a holistic learning process that leads toward the production of weir, and not through discrete units of analysis. Actors retain a certain room for manoeuvre within the system. The respirations that guarantee the smooth progression of singing have been codified into supplementary techniques. An actor-singer who takes a very quick breath in the middle of a word to save some air is said to ‘exchange air/flow of energy’ (huan qi),35 while ‘stealing away the air/the flow of energy’ (tou qi) allows the actor to renew the air in the middle of a long phrase. Within the capacities of each singer, actors can exploit the alternation between the perceptible exchange of air (first technique) and the inaudible gathering of energy (second technique) to produce a complex flow of energy which leads toward the individuation of an actor’s weir. In ‘Wenji Returns to the Han’ (Wenji gui Han), for example, the female impersonator Cheng Yanqiu (photo see p. 12) has turned the alliance of breathing and sound emission into a masterful illustration of his ‘flavour’, worthy of the Jingxi expression ‘the sound stops but the mood lingers’ (sheng duan yi bu duan).

Pronunciation and modes of articulation

With this rather minimal practical tool-kit for the use of voice and the emission of sound in place, the actor-singer is in a position to progress further into his/her mastery of the system.

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32 ‘Heavy labial sounds’ feature the initials b, p, and m, as in ‘bian’, ‘pian’, and ‘mian’, and ‘light labial sounds’, f and v as in ‘fei’ and ‘wei’ (pronounced ‘wei’ like a Shanghainese word). 33 WU & ZHOU 1991 reprint: 60. The other two categories of exhalations are: ‘the exhalation with a closed mouth and united lips’ (hekou hu) on u (in pinyin) in combination with a consonant or a vowel, as in ‘zan’ and ‘the exhalation with rounded lips’ (cunkou hui), on i, as in ‘jan’ and ‘qian’. 34 I am grateful to David Hofst for alerting me to this similarity. 35 This allows them, for instance, to prepare for a high melodic segment. 36 Cheng Yanqiu, ‘Wenji Returns to the Han’ (Wenji gui Han), fan erhua songban Nippon Columbia reissue GB 7005-B5 of a 78-rpm. Odeon recording, ca. 1930s. Wenji meditates beside the grave of Wang Zhaojun, a Chinese princess who was also married to a non-Han clan leader and similarly exiled from her homeland: 你本是汉宫良家子 / 我也曾是昭阳宫里人. ‘Ni ben shi han gong liang jia zi / Wo ye zeng bei zao yang gong li li ren’ (‘You, a portrait caused you wrong, and all your life you had to drink from the cup of grievances / I have also accumulated suffering because of my beauty’).
Further vocal techniques convey *weir* through the pronunciation and articulation of more meaningful units like words.

'To articulate the words, you have to hold the words the way you hold a rabbit', said Yu Shuyan in a metaphor dear to him.\(^{37}\) And his disciple, Chen Dahu, comments as follows:

‘This means that you have to articulate words as if you were holding a live rabbit; you cannot swallow them. If ‘the rabbit’ wants to escape, you have to tighten the mouth slightly more; if it does not want to escape, you can loosen your mouth slightly, so long as it does not escape. It also means that you have to use your lips, your ‘teeth’ (\textquoteleft chu\textquoteright indicating the alveolar section of the mouth), your throat, [other parts of] your ‘teeth’ (\textquoteleft ya\textquoteright standing for the alveo-palatal section of the mouth), your tongue, nose and mouth cavity with precision and control, in order to achieve good pronunciation and singing. But exaggeration is not permitted, nor can you privilege the energy of the mouth (\textquoteleft kou jin\textquoteright) and forget its relation to the rest of the system of cavities\(^{38}\), otherwise you will harm the whole ensemble of the resonators.’ \(^{39}\)

Before examining some examples, a few clarifications are necessary. In theory, most words can be decomposed into three sound units called ‘the head’ (\textquoteleft shou yin\textquoteright), ‘the belly’ (\textquoteleft fu yin\textquoteright) and ‘the tail’ carrying ‘the rhyme’ (\textquoteleft wei yin\textquoteright),\(^{40}\) respectively the initial, the median, and the last part of the word. Modes of articulation are based upon the segmentation of words independent of the speed of their pronunciation. In ‘fast modes of articulation’ (\textquoteleft kua\textquoteright tu) the initial and the following single vowel are pronounced all at once in a cohesive move, while ‘slow modes of articulation’ (\textquoteleft man tu\textquoteright) decompose each part of the word to the extreme. Yu Shuyan exploits the musical and theatrical possibilities of this technique to enhance his *weir*. Jingxi’s practice also tolerates a certain flexibility, judging from the way parts of a word can merge together or be expanded. Thus, the word ‘jia’ (‘family’), which would be pronounced as a single block with the semi-vowel \textquoteleft j\textquoteright in standard spoken Chinese (\textquoteleft putonghua\textquoteright), can be divided into ji-ia (Meng) or ji-i-a (Yu and Tan) in Jingxi.

The word ‘bi’, from the first sentence in the excerpt from ‘The Orphan’ (mm.13-4), is an example of the ‘fast mode of articulation’. (Fig. 4.) It starts with a ‘heavy labial sound’ (voiced occlusive bilabial initial), and continues with an ‘exhalation with even teeth’ (\textquoteleft qichi hu\textquoteright) on the vowel \textquoteleft i\textquoteright, which requires what singers and phoneticians call ‘abdominal breathing’.\(^{41}\) The articulation of this whole word is delivered in a single impetus. Yu’s clear.

\(^{37}\) Chen Dahu 1982: 54.

\(^{38}\) The system of cavities (\textquoteleft quangti\textquoteright) refers mainly to the respiratory and the digestive tracts.

\(^{39}\) Chen, ibid.: 54.

\(^{40}\) The word ‘rhyme’ has two meanings. The first one, combining phonology and poetics, refers to Jingxi’s classification of word endings into thirteen ‘rhymes’ (\textquoteleft zhe\textquoteright) and five poetic tones. The second meaning of ‘rhyme’, \textquoteleft yun\textquoteright, is more universally poetic. It involves both a location and a function marking the closure of every alternate line, requiring the use of a single word ending on a single poetic tone throughout the poetic/sung text. The two meanings overlap when a specific word ending from the classification fulfills both poetic requirements.

\(^{41}\) In short, ‘abdominal breathing’ triggers a contraction of the diaphragm on the inspiration. When that muscle contracts, it flattens and lengthens the thoracic cavity to allow air in. It also pushes the abdominal organs downwards and outwards, creating a bulge in the lower abdomen. The singer’s expiration is controlled and requires voluntary activity of the abdominal, intercostal and pelvic muscles. It also involves subglottic pressure, created by the flow of expired air against partially closed vocal folds, to regulate the intensity of sound. It is more active than during normal breathing or speaking, but less forced than during physical exercise (see Bunch 1988: 30-41). Lu Wengin assimilates abdominal breathing to the Chinese term ‘breathing from the cinnabar field’ (\textquoteleft dantian qi\textquoteright), referring to a point below the navel. Lu also stresses the complexity of the movement of retraction of the lower abdomen in the Yu school of singing: ‘In that school, one just needs to open the mouth to give the impression that the sound is transferred upward, and continues without interruption to move inward and upward. Thus, the lower abdomen will necessarily retract significantly
direct, and frank articulation on such words (also on ‘zi’, mm.10-11), and his fluid and seemingly very natural singing, convey a clear and powerful message from the loyal Cheng Ying to his wife. *Weir* here serves to portray a character and to convey the urgency of a dramatic situation.

![Fig. 4. "Fast mode of articulation" on the word ʻbi ("do") by Yu Shuyan (mm. 13-15).](image)

In contrast, one can find an example of a ‘slow mode of articulation’ in Yu Shuyan’s decomposition of the word ‘you’ (‘there is’) in three distinct *iliolou* parts, in the sentence ‘There is a feud’ (‘you chouhen’, m.40, Fig. 5).

![Fig. 5. "Slow mode of articulation" on the word ʻyou ("there is") by Yu Shuyan.](image)

Yu detaches the initial [i] from the vibrato on ‘the belly’ [ia], before closing with ‘the tail’ of the word on the rhyme [ou]. The singer’s artistry in this mode is further exposed while he decomposes the homonym ‘you’ from the word ‘hell’ (youming, Fig. 6) into even more parts [io-o-o-o-o-o-ou]. After the first two parts, Yu marks a minute pause, then progresses toward the closure of the word in a very slurred manner, conveying a dynamic character to his phrasing.

![Fig. 6. "Slow mode of articulation" on the word ʻyou ("hell") by Yu Shuyan.](image)

Yu’s different interpretations of two words belonging to the same *youqiu* rhyme classification and the same mode of articulation is not only justified by their specific poetic (inward). But according to this style of singing, the rise carries a sort of elastic vigor. For this reason, the speed of retraction must be slow, although the process by which the sound and the air column rise together is very clear. It sounds almost between a *stir* (hui) and a glide (hua)... Regarding the word ‘bi’, if the retraction of the lower abdomen does not accelerate, but the rate (falu) and the intensity continue to increase, then one cannot reach the singing effect mentioned above.” (Lu 1994: 175)
tones. It also serves different purposes. An aesthetic one is to diversify the aural images, their melody and phrasing. From a dramatic point of view, both words reintroduce facts that have already been exposed by Cheng Ying in his two consultations, first, with his friend Gongsun Chuqi, at the beginning of the play, and second, with his wife, just prior to this piece of singing. The two reiterations denote slightly different nuances: the first ‘you’ introduces a statement of a current situation (‘There is a feud’), while the second one recapitulates a historical event (‘[The Zhao and Tu clans] which sent more than three hundred souls to Hell’). The melodic differentiation applied to these words allows the actor to highlight the way Cheng Ying reinforces his argumentation facing his wife’s opposition. The second ‘you’ also propels the melody toward the resolution of the couplet on the poetic rhyme ‘ming’, sustaining the double articulation between music and poetry.

Fig. 7. Slow mode of articulation’ on the word you (‘there is’) by Meng Xiaodong.

In comparison, Tan Fuying and Meng Xiaodong’s interpretation of the first segment of the couplet diverge from Yu’s in their articulation and singing. Meng Xiaodong stresses the decomposition of the first ‘you’ into [io-o-o-o-ou], with a mordent from the very ‘head’ to the ‘belly’ of the word, before closing the ‘tail’ of the word on the rhyme [ou] (Fig. 7). According to Wu Xiaoru, Meng Xiaodong decomposes the two characters of the compound ‘youming’ (‘Hell’) to an extreme degree:

‘On the character ‘you’, after starting out with [y], then comes [ou], and then she again returns to the rhyme [ou]; after that, she releases a light [w] sound, then finally comes the sound [in], so that the mood appears even more restrained yet tragic’.42

In the first line of the couplet, Tan Fuying substitutes the first ‘you’ by ‘jie’ (‘to form [a feud]’). He sings this word in slow mode of articulation as [ji-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e] with a short appoggiatura on its ‘tail’ in [e], over a measure and half, and a fifth lower. These differences between the two actor-singers despite the constraints of a mode of articulation further illustrate the balance between a codified system and a certain freedom of interpretation behind the production of weir (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. Slow mode of articulation’ on the word jie (‘to form’) by Tan Fuying.

42 Wu 1994: 268.
In the shared vocal knowledge of the actors, modes of articulation are only one way to enhance the pronunciation and singing of words. In this relatively brief argument, I have left aside other relatively standard means at their disposal, such as the various ways of pronouncing words, of prolonging a word with ornaments, or of adding ‘little tunes’ (xiaoqiang) composed of a mix of aggregates of notes, ornaments, etc.

The actor’s personal strategies
The techniques mentioned so far already convey aural images rich in semantic or aesthetic resonances for the participants. However, great actors push this process further and develop certain images beyond the conventionally established usage, to engage in a more personal pursuit of ‘flavour’. Sounds tend to be processed together rather than separately, producing a composite vocal timbre. Each actor builds his own vocabulary by privileging some of these.

A first example is something described by Chinese commentators as ‘the sound at the back of the brain’ (naohou yin), that some actors of ‘mature male roles’ (laosheng), ‘painted face’ roles (huatian), as well as female impersonators like Cheng Yanqiu use in certain situations to sing high-pitched words. If this corresponds to a specific sound, how is it produced? Most Chinese sources agree that during the emission of the sound, the throat is slightly compressed, the posterior wall of the pharynx opens, and the veil of the palate lifts up sending the sound into the head cavity (touqiang). Beyond this point, explanations diverge. According to one source, ‘the sound released in the head cavity merges with the nasal sound and makes the sound meander at the back of the brain. This passage of the sound in the resonators of the head cavity results in a sort of secret, concealed and rich tone (hanxu hunhou yindiao 含蓄含厚音調).’ Another explanation emphasizes the vibration of resonators located above the nasal cavity, between and slightly above the eyebrows, probably a reference to the frontal sinuses.

Most Chinese definitions suggest that the ‘sound at the back of the brain’ results from the resonance of different parts of the head, arguing that the singer feels vibrations at the back of the head, in the forehead, or in the nasal cavity, during the process. This observation parallels the singers’ feeling of vibrations in the air spaces and bones of the head in Western vocal art discussed by Meribeth Bunch. However, for this and other Western authors, the...
contribution of such vibrations in the head, in particular the sinuses, to a vocal resonance perceptible by an outside audience, is controversial in scientific terms.\textsuperscript{48}

Clearly, the putative production of such a sound is problematic. Perhaps it is worth asking the question whether the explanation does not lie at a different level of analysis. The common denominator among Peking opera circles, is that this putative sound is perceived by the singer, is perceptible by his/her audience, and creates a mysterious, interior and deeply intense effect. This suggests that perhaps it is not one sound but a group of sounds/effects produced in a number of different ways. This would explain the lack of consensus in descriptions and technical explanations and the diversified reception of the naohou yin among the public. Whether the singer’s own perception is the product of a mental image, an internal resonance, or an acoustic process audible by another person then loses its relevance.\textsuperscript{49}

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the emic cultural discourse associates ‘the sound at the back of the brain’ with several localizations in the singer’s head, and that these localizations – real or imagined – guide the singer’s voice production, as is often the case in Western vocal art.\textsuperscript{50}

The words ‘lin’ (‘unicorn’) and ‘yu’ (‘word’), in Yu Shuyan’s version, provide specific examples of the production of such a sound effect (Fig. 9).\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{sound-effect.png}
\caption{The words lin (‘unicorn’) and yu (‘word’) sung by Yu Shuyan.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{48} Bunch emits very strong reservations regarding most sinuses in the head (\textit{Ibid.}: 97-9) while Patricia Blanton and Norman Biggs refute more specifically the role of air-filled cavities around and above the nasal cavity (the paranasal sinuses) as major resonators of the voice in \textit{The American Journal of Anatomy} (Feb. 1969 issue: 135-47).

\textsuperscript{49} In the absence of precise measuring tools (sonagrams, etc.), I can only note that, Although membranes, cavities like the occipital section of the vault of the skull, and sinuses (superior sagittal, straight, transverse, sigmoid, etc.) can conceivably vibrate ‘at the back of the brain’, in the occiput, the dural venous nature of those sinuses in particular, and the scientific literature consulted so far, do not seem to support the thesis of a perceptible resonance.

\textsuperscript{50} Bunch discusses how professional vocalists (speakers, singers and their teachers) focus on certain types of sensations and imagery to regulate their voice. Her quote from W. H. Perkins on the importance for the singer to have a horizontal focus at high pitches, ‘i.e. [a dimension] where the tone is focused along a horizontal continuum from the front to the back of the head’, so that ‘at the high end, the tone seems to float in the head as though it was disconnected from the throat’, seems to me of particular relevance here (Perkins 1977. 1978, cited in Bunch 1982: 97).

\textsuperscript{51} Given the unclear quality of this recording, my argumentation relies partly on later performances in Yu’s school and on the testimony of Chinese critics who heard Yu Shuyan in performance.
Yu's emission of sound for 'lin' appears to activate vibrations in the throat, in the resonators in the nose and its vicinity, and perhaps other resonators further back in the head cavity. The median part of the word, on the vowel i, is accentuated, and sung with a 'breathing with even teeth' that requires a slight closure of the mouth. What stands out is an intense and forceful resonance, the feeling that the air is pushed upward at different stages and that the sound is diffused in the head. In my opinion, the nasal coloration of the vowel i quite common with the naohou yin plays a very important role. It 'darkens' this vowel slightly and confers a strikingly interior and muffled quality to the singing, contributing to the impression that the sound travels inside the resonators of the head cavity above the nose. This is particularly appropriate, since Cheng Ying here invokes the supernatural by predicting that a unicorn will bring a new son to their couple. The already powerful aural effect of diffusion is emphasized by the meandering and accentuation of the high notes on the melisma. Here, the Chinese expression 'power rises from softness' (yu gang yu rou) takes on its full relevance. Finally, this naohou yin ends with an ample vibrato which brings a closure to the 'tail' of the word on the rhyme and concludes the musical phrase on the re, an important degree for this mode (Fig. 9). It is ultimately more helpful to consider this sound 'at the back of the brain' as a composite block of sound effects rather than a single and specific sound, so rich is the aural image it presents, altogether intense, interior, muffled, and slightly nasal. It is also very closely associated with other devices -- accentuation and vibrato -- which reinforce its meandering effect.

Meng Xiaodong. Yu's famous female disciple, also uses composite sound effects on the word 'lin', and her naohou yin includes the resonators of the nasal cavity too. But her interpretation is slower, being initially more muted, before becoming more insistent on the 'belly' of the word (the sound i), as if she was pushing the air upward and 'hitting the ceiling' repeatedly with a slow movement to and fro of the diaphragm and the glottis. The power of her singing is sustained through a subtle and interior closure of the rhyme (in) that echoes on and on. The applause and shouts of appreciation on her 1947 live recording gives a fair sense of the enthusiastic reception of this actress's weir.

Actors also possess many interesting ways of using nasality to generate weir. The term 'nasality' refers to a certain type of sound produced when the soft palate is lowered so that air flows through the nasal cavity. International phoneticians of speech and singing distinguish between 'nasals' (nasal sounds) like the consonants [m] and [n], which result from a nasal air flow with a complete oral closure [primary nasal articulation], and 'nasalized sounds' such as the nasalized vowels 'en', 'in' and 'on' in French which act as a secondary [nasal] modification of oral articulation. To my knowledge, Jingxi's insiders' terminology uses the single term 'nasal sound' (bi) for both processes. Yu Shuyan provides a harmonious nasalization of the vowel i while singing the word 'bi' (Fig. 10).

---

52 One diverging opinion is offered by Lu Wenqin, for whom Yu Shuyan's 'sound at the back of the brain' is extremely pure, and thus devoid of 'nasal sound or any other sound when it ultimately deflects in the direction of the frontal cavity' (Lu 1994: 173). Lu explains Yu's production as principally a forced resonance in the cavity of the eyebrows and the occipital bone.

53 This was probably recorded during a performance by Meng Xiaodong at the Great Chinese Theater in Shanghai in 1947 (see Wang Sizai 1990: 292). Meng's interpretation of the three words is qualified by the author as 'a long melody that comes to completion in a satisfying, high-pitched, full, ample and sonorous manner altogether, reinforcing the auditor's impression of something fluid and natural' (Wu 1994: 268-9).

54 My definitions are based on Catford's essay in Manual of Phonetics, p. 324.
He manages to send part of the air several times into the nasal cavity by lowering his soft palate. This push of air also involves a shake of the glottis. The whole effect of the word differs slightly according to the singer. Yu’s succession of voiced i and voiced aspirated hi sounds, together with his fluid and tied notes while singing his, add a certain richness and evenness to his flavour. Tan’s singing on ‘bi’ sounds more tied, but without such a variety of i sounds (Fig. 10). His melodic motif on the second small phrase (‘bu[e]bi’) is more ornamented and florid, however. Tan explores more the lower register with his ornaments at the beginning and the end of the motif. Meng Xiaodong’s singing of ‘bi’ follows Yu Shuyan’s quite closely with regard to the aspirated and non-aspirated i sounds, but it is more heavily accented than both Yu and Tan, with a tint breathing in and a particularly large vibrato on the ‘rhyme’ of the word (Fig. 10). The ‘beauty of the rhymes’ (yunwei) present in the ‘flavour’ of an apparently simple word like ‘bi’ highlights the intricate association of phonetic, musical, and theatrical features in the production of the weir.

Yu Shuyan’s singing of the word ‘zhong’ (good) is another illustration of how an actor can enhance the ‘flavour’ of a word with a nasal ending. (Fig. 11.) Yu prolongs the word and accentuates its moderate nasal character by displacing the nasal ending ng onto the following added syllable, which is pronounced ng in Jingxi (and e in standard Chinese). Moreover, Yu takes a brief respiration in the middle of the added syllable, which becomes [ng-e]. Thus, the actor totally deconstructs word and sound units to create a very striking aural and theatrical effect.

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55 Another type of role, such as the ‘painted face’, would emphasize the nasality of this word much more.
Yu's enhanced nasalization has the retroactive effect of underlining the meaning of the word 'good' while the hero tries to convince his wife. This quite complex 'cluster' of aural images makes full use of decomposition of sounds, nasalization, added syllables, and fluid vocal phrasing within a very limited range of words. The ten or so added syllables in Yu's recording (wa, e, ya, ng, di, na, etc.) cover a fairly wide range of sounds for different purposes. Tan Fuying and Meng Xiaodong, in comparison, are more restrained in their use of added syllables. Added syllables are yet another demonstration of the linguistic musicality, theatricality and emotional range present in an actor's weir.

To conclude, the coalescence of phonetic and musical components in the singing creates a fertile ground for the production of weir in Jingxi. This allows Chen Youhan to define as important parameters of weir the musicality of the language (yuyan de yinyue hua 语言的音乐化), the phonetic character of the melody in theater (xuanlu de yuyin hua 戏曲的音乐化), the emission of the voice, and the pronunciation of words (fasheng yu tu 发声与吐字).56

I will leave aside here many other techniques that enhance the beauty of the weir. As already mentioned, ideally the aural definition of this concept would integrate the function of some ornaments and added syllables, of aggregates of notes and other specific sounds, and the musical phrasing. One would also have to consider the alternation and contrasts between various types of breathing and of glottal stops — a vocal process by which the glottis pushes sounds and breath-energy (qi) outward and inward — and, lastly, the contrasts of intensity.

Finally, the fragmentary character of this analysis should not obscure the full significance of weir. My argument has only addressed the operative modes involved in the production of weir, and is merely a preliminary step toward a more comprehensive evaluation of the significance of weir in the culture of Jingxi. For instance, the formalization of singing by which weir is achieved in Jingxi also enhances theatricality and the production of emotions (qing). By extension, the reception of weir, and the values it conveys, carry wider sociological and anthropological implications. All these aspects deserve further consideration.57

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57 I have gone into this in greater detail in chapter 8 of my Ph.D. dissertation (Duchesne, 1992. 'Le Jingxi et son public: le concept de 'savour' [weir]', pp. 592-653).


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### Glossary

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**Appendix: ‘Searching and Rescuing the Orphan’**

《搜孤救孤》

程婴唱

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<th>[二黄原板]</th>
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<td>我与郑公孙秋月把计定，</td>
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<td>他的命来你我舍亲生。</td>
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<td>无奈我只得双(哭)哭解。</td>
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(translation)

Cheng Ying:

[erhuang yunheban]

My dear wife, do not be in such a violent disposition. Rather, listen to my words.

There is a feud between the Zhao and the Tu clans. That sent over three hundred people to the lower world. With this Gong Sun Chuiju, we have devised a stratagem. He sacrifices his life and we sacrifice our own child. If we sacrifice our son to save a virtuous descendant, The Lord of Heaven will not sever our posterity.

[lit.: posterity branch]

If you sacrifice now your own son, In the future another son most certainly will be born

[lit.: a unicorn will come down from Heaven].

I supplied a thousand words and ten thousand arguments, but he would not consent.

Without sacrificing our handsome boy it is difficult to save the Orphan. I have no other way but to kneel down to you.

[erhuang sanbai]

And to implore you, my dear wife, to sacrifice our own child.
CRITICISM OF OPERA IN THE MING AND EARLY QING PERIODS

What was wrong with Chinese opera?

Anders Hansson
(The University of Edinburgh)

How ‘good’ or ‘bad’ is Chinese opera? In the eyes of China’s ruling elite it was often bad – a vulgar activity, licentious, even dangerous. Influential people sought to control or suppress opera. They criticized it, along with a whole list of other things, like gambling, collecting curios, falconry, polo, snake charming, puppeteering and selling fake medicine. Even the most ardent proponents of the dramatic arts in China hesitated to oppose the idea that opera ‘promoted immoral and criminal behaviour’. But whatever people said or thought, operatic genres were often so irresistible, so unstoppable that they sprang back to life as soon as political pressures relaxed. Conservative Confucians argued that literature and drama should only serve high-brow didactic or political functions. But wasn’t it also Confucius who had said that even board games were a better pastime than idleness? So how would he have rated opera? People in Ming and Qing times struggled with public morals, judgments from the past, and their own passionate involvement in the Chinese theatre.

Ever since ancient times, certain kinds of song and music in China have been viewed as good and refined, ya 雅, while other genres have been condemned as licentious, yin 淫.¹ It is a well-known fact that various kinds of popular or folk songs were adapted by the literati in different periods and eventually came to be accepted as high-culture poetry – a process which ceased in the Song dynasty. In late imperial China, distinctions between good and bad were not only made in connection with individual works, but also with respect to entire genres. Music was either refined and orthodox, or vulgar (su 俗) or licentious.

The new dramatic genres which emerged in Song and Yuan times were not usually regarded as expressions of literati culture but as ‘vulgar’ musical entertainment which could be licentious and harmful. The same was true of fiction. Remarkably, many genres, though condemned by government and moralists, continued to flourish and enjoy widespread popularity. While the authorities were concerned with containing the disruptive forces of sexuality and violence in theatre, many members of the educated elite and the upper classes actually showed a deep interest in drama, also in plays condemned as licentious or subversive. Meanwhile, the common people flocked to local theatre venues to

¹ Confucius had a high opinion of music and dance as performed in the old rituals but also condemned the notorious ‘Odes of Zheng’ (Zheng sheng 鄭聲) in the Book of Odes – see Lunyu yinde, 1966: 31, 36 (sections 15:11, 17:16). The distinction between good music on the one hand and disorderly or licentious music on the other is also made elsewhere in early texts, for instance in the music chapters of the Record of Ritual (Li ji 禮記) – see Shixian jing zhushu, 1979: 1528 (juan 37), 1536, 1538 (juan 38), 1540 (juan 39).
see hugely popular performances with perhaps even more subversive content. The authorities did suppress some performances or types of performance. No doubt they were successful in stamping out many types of opera deemed particularly harmful, but the overall realm of opera survived, and as soon as political control was relaxed, new ‘vulgar’ and ‘licentious’ plays appeared.

**Government and private efforts to control and restrict opera**

What can perhaps be described as the *official attitude* to opera manifested itself in legal restrictions placed on opera performances and other popular musical entertainments. This was the case as early as in the Yuan dynasty, when it was deemed a punishable offence to train commoners to be actors ‘and thereby harm morals’; opera was treated on a par with snake charming, puppeteering, selling fake medicine, teaching martial arts etc.²

The attitude of the government in Ming times can best be described as a desire to limit the prevalence of opera and to restrict it for the benefit of the court and high officials. There was no general prohibition of all theatrical performances.

Both the Ming and Qing penal codes prohibited actors from portraying past emperors and empresses, loyal officials, heroic personages, ancient sages and wise men, and deities. However, the law explicitly permitted the portrayal on stage of morally admirable characters – immortals, virtuous men, chaste wives, filial sons and obedient grandsons.³

Ming and Qing law also prescribed punishments for government officials and their sons and grandsons who took wives or concubines from entertainers’ families.⁴

Entertainers, including actors, musicians and prostitutes, were considered impure and their legal status was ‘mean’ (*jian* 腐), which meant, among other things, that they were not allowed to take the civil service examinations.⁵ Like punished criminals, they were also barred from schools.⁶ Sumptuary regulations adopted in the early Ming dynasty imposed restrictions on the clothing and ornaments that entertainers were allowed to wear. They were no doubt subject to a variety of customary forms of discrimination: for instance, they were reportedly obliged to walk along the sides of roads rather than in the middle.⁷

The official view on these matters was propagated widely, for example through the moral exhortations and lectures delivered by local dignitaries at the gatherings of ‘Community Compact’ (*xiangyue* 鄉約) groups.⁸ ‘Semi-official’ views were also expressed in various ways, for example in local gazetteers, especially in the sections on local customs.

Furthermore, private attempts to restrict or stop opera are evident in the moral and ethical exhortations found in family instructions and clan rules (known as *jiaxun* 家訓, *zonggui* 宗規 etc.). These warned against various vices, especially gambling, and they

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⁴ Ming lü jì jie fu lì, 1669: 698 (6:30b). The article is slightly more elaborate in the Qing code than in the Ming code. See Xue, 1970: vol. 2, 311. For a translation see Jones, 1994: 132.
⁵ Da Ming huidian, 1587: 1232–33 (77:24b–25a). Concerning the legal and social conditions of mean people in general, see Hansson, 1996: ch. 2.
⁸ Concerning the *xiangyue* system see Hsiao, 1960: 184–205.
also condemned opera. The profession of entertainer was often listed as illegal.\(^9\) Buddhist monastic rules contained similar prohibitions. Nonetheless, opera still had a prominent role in local community festivities and in lineage rituals.

Tanaka Issei 田仲一成 has analysed the development of Ming-Qing drama in class terms. He argues that opera performances differed in their content and nature depending on who organised and sponsored them. In Ming times opera performances in market towns and at temple fairs were often under the control of professional promoters, sometimes with secret-society connections. Their plays tended to be extra lively and popular in nature so as to attract crowds to the fairs. By contrast it was usually the local elite who controlled village opera, especially performances organised by kin groups. As the landlord class grew larger and more prosperous in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they took firm control over local theatre at all sorts of festivals. In Tanaka's view, that made the imposition of Confucian morality more efficient, while drama also became more literary and ritualised. Unconventional or heterodox values were suppressed and spontaneous developments stifled. The warfare and social unrest at the end of the Ming and beginning of the Qing again brought changes to local power relationships, and led to a new flourishing of popular and regional opera forms.\(^{10}\)

Opinions on the harmfulness of opera and fiction are also expressed in many kinds of private writings, but nevertheless many people among the literati took a keen interest in opera and fiction, and also wrote favourably about these genres.

The consequences of the official attitude and policy in regard to opera were that actors remained, to some degree, socially isolated and despised, and commoners were shielded against the supposedly harmful effects of opera. But many of the gentry enjoyed opera and paid the costs of performances; so did emperors and members of the court.

Arguments against opera can be said to fall broadly into political, economic and social categories: (1) some performances display lèse-majesté and are subversive, (2) they are

\(^9\) Liu, 1959: 164.
\(^{10}\) Tanaka, 1972 and Tanaka, 1985.
costly and wasteful and (3) contents are morally harmful (yin 淫) and encourage crime. For those who wished to remain pure and frugal (qingbai jiejian 清白節儉) opera was something to be avoided.

Lèse-majesté and sedition

The problems of lèse-majesté and sedition were primarily the concerns of the state and were dealt with chiefly in legal regulations. Private individuals tended to be concerned with other effects of opera, although some perceived a connection between theatrical performances and various forms of petty criminal activity, mainly theft and gambling. Lèse-majesté and sedition were, of course, serious offences wherever and however they occurred, and they hardly had any particularly strong connection with opera. People could just as easily – more easily? – get into trouble for writing, say, a literary essay which could be interpreted as being seditious. Political suppression and censorship of drama reached a peak in the 1770s and 1780s, as part of a general and much more broadly-focused campaign against 'seditious' writings in the latter part of the Qianlong reign.\(^{12}\)

Wastefulness

Traditionally the Chinese regarded agriculture and – eventually – textile production as primary (ben 本) occupations and handicrafts. Trade and other economic activities were viewed as secondary and less significant (mao 米). The common view was that it was harmful to pursue the secondary and neglect the primary.\(^{11}\) Such a view is reflected in the traditional grading of the people into four 'classes': gentry, peasants, artisans and merchants (shi nong gong shang 士農工商), arranged in descending order of importance. Entertainers, who were 'mean', ranked below these four categories of the people (the si min 四民).

The expense and wastefulness of putting on theatrical performances was emphasized in some local gazetteers which claimed that the primary occupation of farming suffered harm. One community compact condemned as useless such things as indulgence, as well as various types of game and opera performance. In this case opera is placed in the same category as gambling, collecting curios, singing and playing string instruments, falconry and polo\(^{14}\). This list is reminiscent of the excesses (yindang 涼蕩) which demonstrating officials complained the young Zhengde Emperor (r. 1506–1521) engaged in. Encouraged by his eunuchs, such as the powerful Liu Jin 劉瑾, he spent his time on song, music, zaju 雜劇 opera, falconry, hunting with dogs, and sports, such as wrestling, ball games and horse riding (or polo?)\(^{15}\).

\(^{11}\) Wang, 1981: 192.
\(^{12}\) The censorship and bans of books were closely connected with the compilation of the great imperial collectanea, the Sikuan guoju 四庫全書. Cf Guy, 1987: 157–68, 190–91, and Dolby, 1976: 135–38.
\(^{13}\) For an example of this view see monograph on the economy in the Ming shi [Ming History], 1974: 1877 (juan 77).
\(^{14}\) See Huang Zuo 黃佐, Taikuansheng li 泰泉مصل 敦, juan 2, quoted in Wang, 1981: 186, and Dolby, 1976: 107. It is possible that the text quoted by Wang Liqi (chi ma ji ju 跆馬擊鞠) refers to horse racing and some other ball game than polo – the latter game ceased being played at court in the Southern Song, except for some ceremonial purposes: however, it may still have been played in the army in Ming times. Cf Liu, 1985: 203–24.
\(^{15}\) Ming shi, 1974: 4915 (juan 186), 7786 (juan 304). Liu, 1985: 224, note 56.
Evidently, opera (together with sports and gambling, etc.) were not the only non-productive pursuits that made demands on the resources of Ming and Qing China. The state and private households alike carried out other costly activities that did not lead to economic benefit, such as the many and varied rites and ceremonies. Imperial rites and sacrifices and expenditure on such projects as the construction of Imperial tombs required large resources. Private sacrifices, weddings, funerals were expensive affairs, too, and might involve people of inferior status, such as pipers and sedan chair carriers. Furthermore, opera frequently served ritual functions, for instance at religious festivals, temple fairs and also at ceremonies at the ancestral temples of lineages. There are opera stages in the Forbidden City (and the Summer Palace) in Peking, but only in the 'private' part – opera performances were not given as part of the state rituals in the Capital. The difference between opera performances on the one hand, and weddings, funerals and state ceremonies on the other is, obviously, that the latter were approved by the Confucian literati: in their case arguments of wastefulness did not apply.¹⁶

No doubt people who felt that opera was wasteful were quite sincere in their views, and performances could be very costly indeed. But cost was not usually an argument against the elaborate rites which the Confucian literati approved of. For example, it was very common to spend a lot of money on burying a parent. Hence we may regard economic arguments against opera as secondary to criticisms related to the moral and social effects of the genre.

Threat to morals
The moral arguments are concerned with the content of operas, as well as the lifestyle of the actors and the behaviour of the audiences. It was mostly sex and violence which figured in these arguments, and particularly sex.

Many librettos were considered to be morally harmful. Stories of love, such as the famous play West Chamber (Xi xiang ji 西廂記, also translated as Romance of the Western Chamber), were much criticised. The most persistent criticism was concerned with 'licentiousness', i.e. stories about 'illicit' love and texts with sexual innuendo. Operas were said to teach people immorality (quben hui ren yi yin 曲本诲人以淫). In addition, critics disapproved of women mixing with men in the audience, or women and children mixing with actors and actresses at home.

One late Ming scholar-official, Chen Longzheng 陳龍正 (jinshi 1634), stated in his family instructions that training boys at home to play music and to sing bred licentiousness and disorder: it corrupted the young, who grew up without a sense of shame. He noted that actresses were often prostitutes. Keeping an opera troupe at home for amusement thus amounted to promoting immorality. At performances normal customs of separation of men and women were relaxed, which facilitated illicit love.¹⁷ Various writers regarded it as important to protect women and children from the bad influences associated with opera performances (whether in public or at home). Particularly strong outrage at the perceived effects of opera on sexual morality was expressed by a writer by the name of Tao Shiling

¹⁶ Note that this was not always so: in Antiquity the Mohists argued that music and funeral rites were wasteful; even more radical 'agricultural primitives' attacked both Confucians and Mohists. Cf Graham, 1989: 40-41, 64-74.
Like Chen Longzheng, he also lamented the practice of having opera performed at home. The late Ming philosopher Liu Zongzhong listed a number of potential causes for expelling members from an association: gambling; allowing wife and daughters to visit temples, watching operas and lantern shows (presumably at the yuanxiao festival); keeping entertainers in one’s service or taking a singsong girl as concubine; and excessive feasting and drinking, especially with entertainers. Slightly less serious offences, in Liu’s view, were going to the theatre, watching dragon boats, using the vulgar language of the market place, and writing operas or fiction.

The string instruments *pipa* 琵琶 and *suanxian* 三弦 and the wind instruments *houguan* 唐管 and *fanzi* 傍笛 were associated with licentious music, and it was believed that they...
could corrupt the young. These ‘bad’ instruments did not belong to China’s most ancient musical heritage. They were associated with popular tunes of later times, brought in from inner Asia, and it was claimed that they were used for modern music, which led young people astray and encouraged budding desires. By contrast, ancient types of instruments that featured in state rituals and scholar-official culture were regarded as virtuous. They include the bridgeless zithers qin 琴 and se 瑟, and the wind instruments sheng 笙 and xiao 箫.

Theatrical performances might bring together unruly crowds at religious processions, festivals, fairs etc. People stayed out after dark, eating, drinking and often gambling. Gambling was alleged to encourage criminal activities such as theft and robbery. Concerned remarks about crime, as well as about sexual morality and wastefulness, are found in the 1642 gazetteer of Taizang sub-prefecture near Suzhou:

In the fourth and fifth (lunar) months, as the winter wheat comes on the market, itinerant people collect contributions to set up stages at crossroads and gather actors to play opera: this is called ‘performing stage plays’ [bàn tái xiè 扮戱戲]. The harm of that is that men and women mix and within an area of three or four li square many elope with one another; robbers and thieves also seize opportunities. Moreover, such heavy contributions are exacted that damage is caused to the primary occupation of farming, something that especially afflicts country market towns. In the past two-three years prohibitions have put a temporary stop to this.

Attacks on opera were often linked to criticism of popular fiction. While West Chamber was probably the most frequently attacked play in Ming and early Qing times, Water Margin (Shuihu zhuan 水浒傳) stood out in the eyes of the critics as the worst example of fiction, on the grounds that it glorified outlaws and fanned sedition. Those calling for a ban on the novel argued that it ‘taught banditry’ (huì dao 海盗), and the same argument was applied to operas based on Water Margin stories. In the Qing period there were also numerous condemnations of licentious fiction (yín ci xiaoshuo 淫詞小説). Some critics even placed unofficial histories (ye shi 野史) in the same class.

Defence of opera
People directly involved in opera performances were the actors and musicians, those who arranged and defrayed the costs of the performances, and the spectators, with some overlapping of the last two categories. In addition, there were people who wrote operas, some of whom were also involved in arranging performances.

As far as is known, the dramatists – at least those who wrote libretti – were invariably educated men. However, musicians and singers also contributed to the development of opera, and we have little information on some authors, not to mention anonymous dramatists, who contributed substantially to the repertoire. The known dramatists include men who had failed in the examinations, but there were also many degree holders. Two prominent Ming playwrights, Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559) and Kang Hai 康海 (1475–1540) were even zhuangyuan 状元, i.e. they had been placed first in the Palace Examinations. Zhu Quan 朱權 (1378–1448), a son of the first Ming emperor, wrote operas and drama criticism and his grandson Zhu Youdun 朱有瑫 (1379–1439) wrote over thirty

There are various cases of men with a disappointing or failed career who retired to private life, or were forced to do so. One example is the famous dramatist Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1616) whose retirement after a lacklustre career was not unconnected with his distaste for the politics of his day. Such men, to whom an official career had become impossible or distasteful, might consider writing opera or fiction as an intellectual alternative to becoming a Taoist or Buddhist 'recluse'.

Writing plays was quite popular among many of the educated. However, hardly anyone offered a vigorous defence of opera (or fiction) against the conservative Confucian criticisms: it seems there was hardly any dialogue between those who wanted to restrict or ban opera and those who took an interest in it as an art form. One reason for this was, undoubtedly, that many shared the distaste for 'vulgarity', 'licentiousness' etc., but took a more nuanced view of opera than the harshest critics. In other words, they distinguished between good and bad plays and between refined, valuable qualities on the one hand and vulgar aspects on the other. In addition to this, some may have refrained from outspoken opposition to conventional morality out of concern for their general reputation, as well as for fear of provoking retaliation from the authorities.

Early writings on drama tend to be concerned with such technical aspects as music and the prosody of arias. By the late Ming and early Qing we also find some relatively systematic treatment of literary aspects, the most notable drama critics being Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521–93) and Li Yu 李漁 (1611–circa 1680).

Some arguments used in favour of opera are based on comparisons of its literary/aesthetic value to that of orthodox literature. Already in Yuan times, Hu Zhiyu 胡祗遹 (1227–93) had tried to grant legitimacy to zaju 雜劇, arguing that it possessed the qualities of classical music and literature. The late Ming philosopher Li Zhi 李贇 (1527–1602), who is known for his unconventional and unorthodox views, rated Water Margin and West Chamber as highly as traditional high culture. In his view most people were
guided in their literary appreciation by conventional ideas that had been imposed on them. Li himself argued that works that were wen 文, i.e. which had high literary value, were found both in modern and ancient times, and in all literary genres, not just in ancient poetry and pre-Qin prose writings, but also in the later poetry of Tang and Song, in chuangi 奇奇 tales, and in drama. In particular, he praised the opera plays Moon Prayer Pavilion (Baiyueting ji 拜月亭記) and West Chamber as perfect creations that were not at all laboured.27 Another writer, Huang Zhouxing 黃周星 (jinshi 1640), pointed out that arias were in some respects technically more difficult to compose than traditional poetry, although in other respects they were easier, for example in the use of dialect or vernacular language.28 Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578–1642) stated that something refined (ya) was to be found in popular/vulgar (su) music.29

Early on, distinctions were also made between good and bad aspects of opera – for instance between the more cultured and refined plays favoured by the literati – and the common theatre of the streets; between a polished form of the vernacular language as used in arias and the ‘idle talk of the marketplace’. Some also made a distinction between literati who wrote operas and the morally dubious professional actors.30

Much of what has been written about the more or less desirable qualities of opera is concerned with vulgar language. In one late Ming text, possibly written by a man named Zhang Qi 張琦, it is pointed out that the sages had collected the ‘Guo feng’ 郭風 songs (in the Book of Odes) from the villages – in other words, even parts of the Classics have a popular origin.31 Wang Jide 王德 (d. circa 1623) sketched the evolution of opera arias from earlier and more respectable poetry or song forms. He particularly praised the arias of

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27 See Li Zhi’s essays ‘Za shuo 講說' and ‘Tong xin shuo’ 聆心說 in Li, 1908: 3:10a–12a.
30 E.g. the above-mentioned Ming princes Zhu Quan and Zhu Youdun. See Zhongguo gudian xiqu lanshu jicheng, 1959: vol. 3, 24 and vol. 7, 120, and Idema, 1982: 142.
the southern style of opera (nan qu 南曲). The above-mentioned Huang Zhouxing disapproved of too much literary language in drama and wanted the refined and the popular (ya su) to be enjoyed together. Xu Wei favoured simple language, which he argued was more genuine or authentic (ben se ya 本色語) than a highly literary style. In his view and in the opinions of other literati (e.g. Huang Zhouxing, Xu Dachun 徐大椿 [d. 1778]), the important thing was to 'move people's hearts'. Others wished to eliminate vulgar language, as well as dialect (on the grounds that it was difficult to understand).

In Patrick Hanan's view, Li Yu's 李漁 writings 'on drama constitute the most novel and systematic treatment the genre ever received in premodern times.' By quoting Confucius, who had argued that playing board games was better than idleness, Li justified interest in theatre and writing plays. Supposing Confucius was right, wouldn't it be an even better pastime to write songs? Li apparently looked upon opera as a minor art (mo ji 末技) but he argued that even such an art was worthwhile if executed with skill. He pointed out that Tang Xianzu was famous for the opera Peony Pavilion (Huan hun ji 遠魂記) and not for his Classical poetry and prose. Li indicated that the transmission of the Classics since antiquity was taken as a sign of their value, and concluded that the play The Lute (Pipo ji 琵琶記), which had also survived for a long time, evidently showed that its author Gao Ming 高明 had accomplished something good. However, Li wished to strike a balance between the popular (su) and the vulgar (tai su 太俗) and expressed the opinion that excessive vulgarity and obscene language should be avoided in drama, so that refined and serious people (ya ren zheng shi 雅人正士) need not be embarrassed, and that matters of passion and desire were best hinted at rather than treated too explicitly.

One of the few people to take notice in writing of the charge of licentiousness was the above-mentioned Zhang Qi. Should one abandon opera if it turned out to be dissolute and licentious? Zhang's answer was no: after all, even Confucius had preserved the notorious songs of Zheng and Wei in the Book of Odes, and the sages had gone to the common people in the villages to collect popular songs.

Unlike most other writers on literature and drama, Jin Shengtan 金圣叹 (1608–1661) was outspoken in his rejection of the idea that West Chamber was a 'licentious' work. He thought West Chamber and also Water Margin could stand up to comparison with the best works of classical literature, and produced his own editions and commentaries of these two works. He counted them among six 'works of genius' (caizi shu 才子書), along with Li sào, Zhuang zi, Shi ji, and the poems of Du Fu. In other words, West Chamber was the equal of several of the most highly-regarded works of classical Chinese literature. Jin claimed that West Chamber was a wonderful masterpiece (miao wen 妙文) brought forth by Heaven and Earth, or at least by an author who was a manifestation of Heaven and Earth (tian di xian

33 Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng, 1959: vol. 7, 120.
35 E.g. Wang Jide, see Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng, 1959: vol. 4, 130.
36 Hanan, 1988: 199.
37 Li Yu, 'Xian qing ou ji' 閒情偶寄 in Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng, 1959: vol. 7, 7–8, 12.
38 Ibid., p. 62–63. The views expressed by Li Yu on vulgar and obscene language in drama seem quite striking if we accept that he was also the author of the erotic novel The Prayer-mat of Flesh (Rouputuan 夢陽薰).}

As for the sexual elements in the play, he pointed out that they were only one side of the story, and that sexuality was also something reflecting real life. His refutation of the attacks on West Chamber was eloquent and passionate, though hardly based on rational arguments, and probably unlikely to convince anyone holding opposite views.

However, Jin’s rejection of the charge of licentiousness is undermined by the fact that he bowdlerized his own edition of West Chamber. It seems that he found the Yuan version of the play licentious after all, or at least too vulgar.

**Conclusion**

Here we return to the question of how cultural activities that were semi-legal and which came under fire both from the authorities and from moralists could continue to flourish and enjoy great popularity.

The imperial court, the government officials, family heads and community leaders presided precariously over a vast, unruly and disorderly population that was prone to destructive behaviour. They attempted to control the disruptive potential of sexuality and violence by moral exhortations and fitful enforcement of legal rules (which the enforcers themselves frequently flouted). It would seem that quite a number of the scholar-officials looked at official attitudes to opera with some disdain. Members of the elite were deeply involved in creating new plays, and in organizing and paying for performances – at least of those kinds of operas which were deemed relatively cultured. The fact that more popular or ‘vulgar’ forms of opera continued to be popular demonstrates that the common people often ignored and evaded government attempts at suppression.

The strength of orthodoxy and official morality was such that hardly anyone directly rejected the single charge against opera that was of central importance: that it promoted immoral and criminal behaviour. Instead, discourse in favour of opera tended to focus on arguments of literary value and comparisons with classical works. The enemies of opera, for their part, had little to say about aesthetics or the power of opera to ‘move people’s hearts’. Presumably many of them adhered to the common Confucian view that literature ought to have a primarily didactic or political function.

Much of the attraction of opera was, of course, due to its liveliness and closeness to contemporary popular culture: it probably brought a sense of liberation to people who had spent their childhood and youth memorizing ancient texts and orthodox interpretations. Judging from the writings of the literati who took an interest in and loved opera, they were prepared to accept an art form that was popular without being too crude: they wanted their sexuality and violence to be relatively genteel, and preferred the language used to be lively and popular, but not too vulgar. We may of course suspect that some of the literati also took an interest in the more ‘vulgar’ varieties of popular theatre. Were they thus not too dissimilar from the sterner moralists and officials who wanted to restrict and suppress opera? For at the very least, they seemed to share certain values.

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THE OPERATIC THREE-LINE CODA

Three-line Tail Sounds

Marnix Wells
(SOAS, London)

Not long after the fall of the Tang dynasty, about one millennium ago, radical changes took place in Chinese musical instrumentation, notation, and rhythm. We have no scores from the period that correlate words, notes and beats. Yet there is one musical form which combines these three elements, and of which the history can be traced to the 12th century: the Three-Line Coda or ‘Tail Sound’ (三句尾聲 San-ju weisheng). The author examines the interplay between words, notes and beats in this form over a period of some nine hundred years. The Three Line Coda started life as a musical refrain in early Chinese song-suites (the earliest known Chinese operas) which emerged in interaction with central Asian cultural influences in Shanxi. This music developed into a sophisticated opera under the Jurchen Jin and Mongol Yuan, and culminated in the lyric opera of the Ming. The Coda features as a musical refrain in all these forms, and survives in the reed-pipe finale which closes every modern Peking Opera. It will be argued that the Coda forms an intriguing bridge across time from medieval to modern dramatic genres in China. The author stresses the importance of the Coda as an encapsulated summary of the music in terms of dramatic content, melody and rhythm. The complex beat patterns and the interaction of duple and triple rhythm in the Coda are analysed in detail.

The earliest known forms of Chinese Opera are the narrative song-suites (or ‘Medleys’) which emerged in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in a period when China came under the rule of the Jurchen, ancestors of the Manchus. My article specifically traces the history and development of the Three-Line Coda, which started life as a kind of musical refrain in these operas. The Three-Line Coda has persisted as a musical building block in Chinese opera for a period of more than nine hundred years, and a study of its rhythms, melodic properties and word placement in the course of this period can throw new light on many broad historical issues concerning Chinese music.

In the early Medleys, and also in the later Ming dynasty operas, the Coda bound the various songs of an opera together and heralded changes in musical mode and in rhyme. The Coda was sung to different words every time it was repeated. It is possible to identify the Coda’s presence in operatic music scores, but it can also be identified in operas of which only texts survive. In libretti the Coda is specifically marked as ‘Tail Sound’ (weisheng), and it can be further identified by its rhyme pattern and (often) the grouping of the text in three lines.

I will begin my essay with a brief reference to the birth of Chinese opera. I will examine the earliest textual and musical sources (including non-operatic ones) in which the Three-Line
Coda featured. The material ranges from a catchy song from 1120, sung to the Jurchen ‘Great-Peace Drum’ (probably a hand-held frame-drum) and the earliest surviving (fragments) of opera librettis (c. 1200) to the earliest known music score of a song suite (c. 1300) which was performed during football parties. This suite (conveniently referred to in my essay as ‘Football suite’) will feature as a key source in my analysis. It was performed to the accompaniment of flute, drum and clappers.

Like most other Three-Line Codas which I have come across in Chinese drama the Coda of the Football suite consistently observes a 4-5-3 beat pattern: there are four beats in the first line of text, five in the second line, and three in the last. The beats are not marked in the score, but the preface provides general instructions on the grouping of the beats. The music displays an intriguing interaction of duple and triple rhythms. The same elements – a 4-5-3 beat pattern and interaction of duple and triple rhythm – can be detected in later opera sources, for example in late Ming opera librettis in which beats are printed alongside the texts, and in opera scores of still later periods which align words, beats and notes. I will re-examine the Yuan Football suite in the light of some material from the Ming, to deduce how the percussion strokes and individual words in the lyrics of the Football Suite may have exactly fitted together.

I will then proceed with a more general discussion of aspects of rhythm in Chinese music, with special attention for the flexible rhythms which began to emerge after the Tang. Most Tang music scores are fairly rigidly measured, but from the time when Chinese opera began to emerge, beat patterns in the music began to be counted as flexible sums, allowing for blocks of ‘additive’ rhythms in asymmetric shapes. Other changes that took place after the Tang concerned modal shifts in the melodies (from major to minor) and a slowing down of tempo. Laurence Picken has argued that a gradual retardation took place in performance tempo of tablatures of Tang music which were taken to Japan and were re-interpreted as Togaku. I speculate on a similar slowing down of tempo gradually taking place in performances of the Three-Line Coda in Chinese operas.

All these various aspects of the music (rhythm, modes, tempo, text phrasing), and how they changed over time, are then exemplified by a series of nine scores of Three-Line Codas [shown primarily in Chevé notation (number notation)] from different periods. The series starts off with the Coda of the Football Suite, continues with codas from 18th century operas and one instrumental coda from a Peking opera, and ends with five codas from nineteenth and twentieth century Kunqu scores.

I will briefly look into the shared melodic aspects of these nine scores, notably their amazing internal symmetry, which makes it possible to ‘read’ the tunes of the codas as palindromes. I realize that this is a fairly technical approach to the music, but a proper understanding of the basic structure of the music (as an abstract entity) may also help us to understand much better why the Three-Line Coda has persisted over so many centuries as a viable musical form. Generally speaking, I hope that my essay on the Three-line Coda underpins the (often ignored) fact that lyric music has its own aesthetic structures, independent of text.

Finally a word about ‘beginnings’. We know very little about the origin of the Three-Line Coda. Was it fundamentally a Chinese or Central Asian invention? It may be vain to speculate about this, since the Coda first appeared in music which emerged from a lively cultural interaction between different cultures. But given the Indian influence in China’s Buddhist arts and early musical modes, I do end my exploration by searching for traces of
the rhythms of Indian tala in the Chinese Three-Line Codas. I will list some similarities between codas in Indian classical theatre and 'Tail Sounds' in Chinese operas, and leave it to the reader to form his or her own opinion on this matter. Here, for the reader's convenience, is a brief survey of the subsequent sections of my article:

1. The birth of Chinese Opera and the Three-Line Coda  p. 43
2. The Great-Peace Drum of the Jurchens  p. 46
3. The 4-5-3 Beat Three-Line Coda  p. 48
5. The Percussion Part of the Drum and Clapper Football Suite  p. 55
6. Evolution and Elaboration (on changes in modal structure and tempi)  p. 56
7. Nine Musical Examples of 'Tail-sound' Codas  p. 57
8. Melodic Conflations of the Nine Scores  p. 62
9. Palindromic and Additive Rhythmic Structures of Melody  p. 65
10. Harmonic Roots and Multi-dimensional Interpretation  p. 66
11. An ancient Indian theatrical Coda  p. 67

The birth of Chinese Opera and the Three-Line Coda

In 1127, the Northern Song capital of Bianliang (Kaifeng, Henan) was captured by the Jurchen, ancestors of the Manchus, in a lightning cavalry raid. The cultured emperor Huizong and his son, with his art treasures, musical scores and instruments, were carried off
into northern captivity, never to return. North-central China would remain under the ‘Golden’ Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) until China was again unified by the ‘Prime’ Yuan Dynasty (1234-1368) of the Mongols. These Jurchen and Mongol dynasties precipitated the flowering of the first fully-fledged Chinese opera. The earliest theatres date from Northern Song and Jin. Yuan theatres may still be seen in Daoist temples of southern Shanxi. 1 Shanxi, which adjoins Mongolia, was a focal point of cultural fusion between the central Asian steppes and China’s central plain.

The earliest known Chinese opera, the ‘Medley’ (zhui-gongdiao 随宫调), is said to have been produced by Kong Sanchuan 孔三传 of Zexhou 徐州 in southern Shanxi, during the reign 1068-1093 of Northern Song. 2 Fragments of the earliest libretto (c. 1200) — the anonymous Liu Zhiyuan Medley were found in the ruins of Heihui, the Mongol Karakuto ‘Black Water’, by the Russian explorer P. K. Kozlov in 1907 – 1908. This territory in northwestern China in 1200 A.D. was under the Tangut Xixia, a Tibetan people, but the libretto had been printed under the Jin. It is a romance on the life of Liu Zhiyuan 劉知遠 of the Turkic Shato 鋃族 tribe of Shanxi. Liu Zhiyuan was enlisted to suppress the Yellow Turbans of Huang Chao, who rebelled against Tang in 874 AD, but eventually founded his own Northern Han dynasty (AD 960-976), in Shanxi. His tale is retold in the great early Ming southern opera: White Hare Story (Baitu ji 白兔記).

The Liu Zhiyuan Medley has twelve acts, containing up to twenty-four songs each. Each song is labelled by a Tune-title (gupai 曲牌), with mode-key (gongdiao 宫调), though no musical notation is given. Throughout the Medley, mode-key changes are signalled after almost every song, each change normally punctuated by a Three-Line Coda. This is the earliest Three-Line Coda lyric usage I have encountered. Here is an example from the start of Liu Zhiyuan in 7-8-8-word rhyming lines: 3

| 自從一個黃埃反 | Zicong yi-ge Huang Chao fan |
| 荒荒地五十五年 | Huanghuangdi wu-shi-yu nian |
| 叫天下黎民受涂炭 | Jian Tianxia limin shou tutan |

Ever since a Huang Chao rebelled.  
Desolation in the land for fifty-five years  
Caused the Under-Heaven’s people to be smeared with soot.

The Su and Tang mode-key system was established under Indian influence through the oasis at Kucha. In tabulation, it can be seen how each degree of the diatonic scale may, in turn, rule a mode taken on each of twelve-semitone pitches. This makes possible 7 modes in 12 keys, or 84 mode-keys. 4 Of these, 28 mode-keys (4 modes on 7 key-notes) were in official use during Tang.

In the Liu Zhiyuan Medley, 13 mode-keys, a total which remains standard till the end of the Ming dynasty, are used overall. In terms of moveable sol-fa, there are 4 fa-modes (gong: on c·d·g·a), 4 sol-modes (shang: on c·d·e·b), 4 re-modes (yue: on d·f♯·g·b), and 1 rare mi-

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3 Liu Zhangguan Zhonggudiao: 1, p. 2.


5 Huangzhonglong e: Zhonggong d: Daogong g: Nanxiong a.


7 Zhongliadian d: Gaopingdiao b: Xianliadian g: Panhediao b.
mode (shangjiao; on a). No more than four different modes are used, in seven different
df keys, in the then standard diatonic Lydian scale, i.e. the fa-mode, on C
(c; d; e; f; g; a; b).

The only complete Medley to survive, also from the Jin Dynasty, is a libretto by Dong
Jieyuan  (fl. c. 1190–1208). This is the West Chamber Story Medley (Xixiang Ji
Zhongdiao 西廂記諸官劇) a drama of love and elopement, also set in Shanxi. It was re-
written by Wang Shifu into the leading Yuan Dynasty ‘Variety Play’ (Zaju 戲劇), where
mode-key and rhyme are constant within the same act, closed by Three-Line Coda or other
type of finale. The West Chamber Story Medley has no divisions into acts, but follows
the same system as Liu Zhiyuan of constant mode-key changes, punctuated by Three-Line
Codas. Here is its first example:8

曲兒甜 慶兒雅
敘與就雪月風花
唱一本兒後翠竹倡話
Qu’r tian, qiang’r ya:
Caijun -jiu xueyuefenghua:
Chang yi-ben’r yicuirouxiu hua:
Tunes sweet, voices elegant.
Tailoring “snowy moonlight”,
Windblown blossoms”,
To sing a ‘cuddle emerald, secret tryst’ story.

It too uses 13 mode-keys, but now only three different modes, in seven different keys: 3 fa-
modes (gong: on C; D; A)9, 5 sol-modes (shang: on C; D; E; G; A)10, 5 re-modes (yu: on
D; F; g; a; b)11. It has one new feature, absent from Liu Zhiyuan. This is the ‘Cadenza’ (zhuan)
which we will discuss, in the next section below.

The Yuan dynasty ‘Variety Play’, Zaju, a northern opera which marked the next
development of the operatic form, typically limits the mode-keys in a play to four: one for
each act. It employs a variety of endings to each act, including the Cadenza-Coda (Zhuansha
贊煞), and even the Three-Line Coda, though it is less rigid in its protocol.

The Three-Line Coda, which emerged in the north, was observed more strictly in the
south. It is prominent in the ‘Southern Tunes’ of Emperor Yongle’s 1420 setting of
invocations of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to Tune-titles, without scores, where it occurs
often twice or three times consecutively. Here is one example:12

跨真如證涅槃
千江一月懸無窮
萬古歸依大畏中
Qi zhenru; zheng yuantong
Qianjiang yi-yue zhaowuqiong
Wanggu guiye dajue-zhong
Connect to the absolute; witness perfect understanding;
On a thousand rivers, one moon shines inexhaustible.
For a myriad ages, take refuge in Great Awakening’s midst.

The Tune-title opera held the stage for almost a thousand years. It attained its greatest
refinement in Jiangsu where, in the late sixteenth century, it became known as Kunqu 欽折, after Kunshan, between Suzhou and Shanghai. From the late eighteenth century, Kunqu
began to be eclipsed by Peking Opera, which absorbed Kunqu elements. Acts from Kunqu
plays are incorporated into Peking Opera repertoires. Stephen Jones, in his study on the

8 Shangdiao on a.
10 Huangzhongqiongg c: Zhengjiao d: Daogong g: Nanlujong a.
11 Shangdiao c: Xiezhidiao b: Yuediao d: Dashidiao e.
12 Panshediao b: Zhongludiao d: Gaopingdiao #f: Xianlüdiao g: Yudiao a.
13 Zhun-Fa Shizun, Rulai. Pusa. Zone Minceng Geq f.g: juan 44 p. 16, in: Zhonghua Dazangjing 2-j: 21-
cc. Taipei 1968; to which Stephen Jones kindly drew my attention.
Golden-Character Scripture (Jinzi Jing 金字經) has shown the vibrant integrity of a Tune-title’s melody, in versions operatic and instrumental, back to late Ming. This refutes the modernist notion that Tune-title melody merely aped speech-tones, and Wang Guangqi’s dictum that its ‘musicians were literary men’s slaves’.\(^\text{14}\)

The Great-Peace Drum of the Jurchens

Let us return for a moment to the early influx of Central-Asian culture in China, and to the rise of opera. New instruments, which were to dominate popular Chinese music, were introduced into China from the steppes around the close of the first millennium. One was the bowed two-string fiddle, then named Xiqin 西琴 after the Xi tribe of Mongolia.\(^\text{15}\) Another import was the shawn or ‘reed-trumpet’, the suona 喇叭 (from the Persian: surnai). Its name does not appear in Chinese literature until the Ming, but it is accurately painted, by Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049-1106), played by Moslem Uighurs surrendering to Tang general Guo Ziyi 郭子儀.\(^\text{16}\) I suggest it is the ‘reed-flute’ (shaodi 箫笛) banned by Emperor Huizong. Another innovation was the balladeer’s single-faced ‘flat’ or ‘book drum’ (bian / shugu 肱鼓), mounted face-up on a tripod, a suspension later adapted to the operatic ‘block drum’ (banggu 板鼓 班鼓).

General Wang Zichun 王子淳, who conquered Xihe (Gansu and Qinghai) for Northern Song, c. AD 1072, is said to have trained his troops in ‘Greeting-Drum Plays’ (yagu xi) of which he himself composed the rhythm and lyrics.\(^\text{17}\) It seems that he adapted a Turkic song-and-dance routine. This became the tune-title ‘Village Greeting-Drums’ (Cunli Yagu 村里鼓)

The fall of the Northern Song capital in 1127 was preceded by a musical invasion which went beyond the mere importation of a number of foreign instruments, or furtive acquaintance with foreign dramatic genres. The lively northern beat attracted people, weary perhaps of Tang courtly measures. The old Tang music survived in Song ‘Lyric-title’ (cipai 詩牌) music, abstracted from the Great Tunes (daqu 大曲), and in which elegant poets found inspiration. But soon Lyric-titles would be re-interpreted to a new beat as ‘Tune-titles.’ True enough, the musical innovations did not always meet with direct formal approval from China’s ruling elite. Emperor Huizong (r. 1101-1127) had sought allies in Korea, and among the Jurchens, against the Khitan Liao who ruled Hebei, but enthusiasm for his Jurchen allies was tempered by concern at cultural infiltration. In AD 1113 Emperor Huizong forbade the wearing of un-Chinese felt hats and ‘barbarian’ 鏡 (fan) dress, offering a reward to anyone who could acculturize the foreign music. His edict specifically prohibited:\(^\text{18}\)

Striking-off, Reed-flute, Greeting-Drum and Ten-part Dance

打鼓嘰嘰鼓十鼓舞  daduan, shao di, yagu, shi-ban wu

‘Striking-off’ (daduan) is said to have first appeared in 1102-1107, but then changed its name, after the imperial ban, to ‘Great-Peace Drum’ (Taipinggu 太平鼓).\(^\text{19}\)

\(^\text{14}\) Wang Guangqi, 1931: Zhongguo Yinwen Shi-xia p. 98; ‘yinyuejia -ze wei wenren-zhi nuli.’
\(^\text{15}\) Shen Guo (1051-1095): Mengzi Bitan.
\(^\text{16}\) Palace Museum, Taipei: ‘Mianzhou Tu’
\(^\text{17}\) Peng Cheng: Xu Mouke Huixi - Jiao Jianshi wei Yagu; Cao Yanliu 1995 p. 66.
\(^\text{18}\) Wu Cong: Neungsaitai Manhe. AD 1157: 13 Jin Yinwasheung.
\(^\text{19}\) Wu op cit. 2 Jin Fanqu Zhaoli.
Drum, flutes and clappers are called Striking-off... People did not abandon Drum-clapper plays, but changed their name to Great-Peace Drum.

鼓笛拍板名曰－－民間不廢鼓笛之戲稱改名太平鼓
Gudi, pai bān, ming yue: daduan... Minjian befei guban-zhi xi, di gaiming tai ping gu.

'Striking-off' was reported to be the origin of the operatic 'Northern Tunes' (bei gu 北曲). 'Great-Peace Drum' is the name traditionally applied to the hand-held steel-rim frame-drum, beaten by boys at New Year in Peking. It is characteristic of Siberian shamanism, and widely used in north China, across Asia and north Africa. Li Lisha recently described its use in Manchuria. In the exorcistic drama (nuo 鼎) of Quwo 曲沃 in southern Shanxi, it is known as the 'fan-drum' (shan'gu 舜鼓). In the North-east it is known as 'single-drum' (dan'gu 单鼓) or 'block-drum' (dan pantsi 单皮鼓) which directs Peking Opera. The 'book drum', a tambourine horizontally suspended, is seen in the Yuan engraving of an outdoor performance of the Drum-clapper Football tune-title suite. (Figure 1, see p. 43.) The tambourine, I suggest, is closely related to the frame-drum. The name 'ten-part dance' (shiban wu) is close to the name 'ten-part drum' (shifan gu), a genre of instrumental music famous in Jiangsu, which uses ten types of instruments.

By 1120, a catchy Jurchen song and dance, predicting triumph over the Khitans, called Zhen pengpeng 齊連連, from the sound of the frame-drum, was being performed on the streets of the Song capital. Its onomatopoeic refrain or 'Tail-Sound' Coda (Weisheng 尾聲) went: Peng peng peng, Zha zha zha, Peng shi the peng zha.

'Peng' suggests a heavy centre-stroke, like 'cang' in operatic gong-drum code; 'zha' represents an edge-tone in traditional drum syllables. There are eleven syllables, arranged in three lines of two short lines, followed by one long line: as thesis > antithesis > synthesis, or: A > B > AB. Zhen peng peng is one of the earliest known references to the Three-Line 'Tail-Sound' Coda. It even precedes the appearance of the Coda as a musical refrain in the twelfth century Medleys which I discussed above, and in Drum-clapper plays like the Football suite of c. 1300.

Next to the lyric Three-Line Coda, one other salient feature of Drum-Clapper music and of the Medleys which merits discussion is the 'Cadenza' (Zhuoan 豔). The Cadenza provides the climax to a song-suite. It has four parts, each beginning slowly and concluding in an

20 Cao Yanliu 1995 p. 68.
23 Xuanchi Yishi-2, Wu Zhao, Liu Dongsheng: Zhongguo Yin Yue Shi, 1983, p. 138. Except for the text of the refrain, only one verse of the lyric has survived. It runs as follows: 蝎子彈外開花金翅頭, 但看明年二三月, 蜥蜴不見主人顧。Zhen peng peng waitou huahua liou kong, Dan kao mingtian es-san-yue, Mancheng bujian zhuren weng. [Outside flowery inside void. Just look the next year, second third month: in the whole city you'll see no leader.] This song was taken as a prediction of the imminent eviction of the Khitans from Peking (Yangning) by the Jurchens.
24 Chen Yuanjing: Shilin Guangji, c. 1300.
accelerando stretto, approaching free-time. Zhang Wu-niu 张五牛 is said to have created the Cadenza at the Southern Song capital Lin’an (Hangzhou) in 1131–1162 after hearing the Four-Sectioned Great-Peace Drum (Si-duan Taipinggu 四段太平鼓). Zhan, which I translate here as Cadenza' means literally: 'Trick', as rationalised by a Yuan critic.25

It makes people just feel how beautiful it is to listen to, so they are not aware when it has already reached the Coda!

A more prosaic explanation for the term ‘Zhan’, I propose, is a contraction of the two syllables in the word ‘Daduan’, the forbidden Striking-off of the lost northern capital. Possibly Daduan itself was derived from a Jurchen word. The earliest surviving Cadenza, and Three-Line Coda, score is in the Drum-clapper Football Score which is marked off in lines, but does not show beats. Lyrics are given separately. Luckily, the original preface remarks that the Zhan has triple-beat phrasing, with the first word of each of its ‘Four Sections’ 四片 (si-pian) taking a whole beat.26 (Figure 2, p.49.)

This accords with the rhythmic form of the earliest surviving Cadenza scores, of the late Ming, in which individual beats (but not, alas, musical notes) are marked.27 The accelerating tempo, repeatedly passing from slow to very fast, and back, is perhaps akin to the dramatic progressions in Peking Opera from slow, through basic, to ‘flowing water’ liushui 流水 beat and ‘free-time’ sanban 散板. Yang Yinliu calls the Zhan Cadenza a mixture of fixed and free-time. Later Kunqu scores mark it entirely free.

A similar stretto perhaps characterised the Three-Line Coda which tends to squeeze more than its normal share of words into the final three-beat line. However, if the additional words are sung without increased tempo, they simply extend the duration of the last line. Thus, modern scores, which transcribe the ban ‘beats’ as separate bars of 2/4 or 4/4, give extra time to the last line by adding three extra bars to the original final three. This reflects the late Qing practice of supplying three ‘extra’ (譜 chuò-, or 譜 zeng-) ban beats. If pitch can be an indication of tempo — high-pitch being more difficult to sustain at slow tempo — lowered pitch may indicate loss of tempo. We detect in the third verse-line of e) Roaming the Garden a drop to the lower octave, while earlier scores x₁, y₁, z₁, a₁, c₁, b₁ rise to the higher octave in the last verse-line. (Letters x₁, y₁, z₁, etc. refer to the scores shown on p. 57 ff.)

The 4-5-3 Beat Three-Line Coda

Let us take a closer look at the earliest scores of Three-Line Codas, with special attention for percussion strokes and matters of phrasing and rhythm. It was already pointed out that the Coda, whose first appearance in operas we saw in the Jin dynasty Medleys Liu Zhi Yuan and Xixiang Ji functions in the Medleys as a musical refrain, with changing words. Every time the Coda appears it normally heralds a change of mode-key, and also of rhyme. Rhyme and mode-key in Medleys frequently change after only one song. The Three-Line Coda was the cement which bound the songs together. The Coda has three rhyming lines, mostly of 6 or 7 words (Chinese characters) each, but sometimes as many as 12 words per line.

25 (Yuan) Nai Deweng: Ducheng Jisheng.
26 (Yuan) Chen Yuanjing: Shilin Guangji — Yuanliyuan.
Figure 2. ‘Football Suite’ lyrics with prefaced instructions, printed c. 1300 on an English clock.
Chen Yuanjing 陳元競 is the first to give us, c. 1300 AD, a score of Tune-title music, as accompaniment to football parties. This is the score already referred to as Drum-clapper Football Suite. Its actual title is ‘Circles within Circles’ (Yuanliuyuan 圓里圓), and it can be found in the Yuan encyclopedia ‘Affairs’ Forest: a broad record’ Shilin Guangji 義林廣記. Although Chen Yuanjing’s score does not mark beats, his preface gives unambiguously explicit instructions on the grouping of beats for the Three-Line Coda: 4 beats for the first line, 5 for the second, 3 for the third: ‘This is an inviolable rule.’

Fig. 3a. ‘Football Suite’ melodic score, printed c. 1300, with ‘Cadenza’ and ‘Three-Line’ coda. (Shilin Guangji: Zuan; San-ju’e)

Fig. 3b. Football Suite: transcription of Three-Line coda, with rhythmic and phrasing interpretation.

The importance of these instructions lies, I suggest, in the fact that they, together with the fixed prosody of the Three-Line Coda, tell us the number of beats for each verse-line, and provide a separate melodic score of one note per word. Thus, for the first time in the history
of Tune-title music, the three elements of beats, words and melody can be united. As we have seen, this Rosetta stone of rhythmic interpretation, whose sharp outline has survived the centuries, is called the ‘Tail-sound’ Coda (Weisheng 尾聲), though it is also referred to in the Encyclopaedia as Three-Liner (Sanju’er 三句兒). Both terms have persisted in history, with ‘Tail Sound’ becoming the more common term. Its lyrics are curiously labelled: ‘Bones self-possessing’ (guziyou 骨自有), which could refer to rhythmic structure, but strongly suggests a non-Chinese word. (Figure 3a and 3b).

This exact 4-5-3 beat pattern, described by Chen Yuanjing under Yuan, is further evidenced in late Ming libretti on which beats are printed. The earliest Tune-title suite score to mark beats, which I have traced, is ‘Crane Moon, Jasper Harmonica’ Heyue Yaosheng 鶴月瑶笙, of 1596 by Zhou Lüjing 周雍聽 of Jiaxing, Zhejiang. It consists of mode-key suites on naturalist themes, closed by codas, and showing musical beats but not melody. Here is a standard Three-Line Coda beat pattern by Zhou Lüjing: (Figure 4)

![Figure 4: ‘Crane Moon, Jade Harmonica’]

Three-Line Tail Sounds

Here we see a new method of beat marking, in three configurations. Where word and beat coincide, the ‘beat’ is called ‘head-beat’ 頭板 (touban: /), as on the third and seventh word in the first line. The first and fifth words of the first line are cut in the middle by a ‘waist-beat’ 腰板 (yaoban: \(_{-}\)). The last word, of the second line, ends just before the ‘end-beat’ 截板 (jieban, or: 截板 diban: \(\_\_\)). Significantly, all three lines begin with an acruscis up-beat, and end on a down-beat.

Curt Sachs suggested that syncopation in the music of some cultures may be explained if the upstroke is taken as the point of stress. The musical motive, I suggest, for such predetermined syncopation is: an underlying triple counter-rhythm.

---

30 Heyue Yaosheng: 4 Meil Qiarge Shi-shou: Hanshan Hexue.
Given the convention of purely duple sub-division of the 'beat' (2/4; 4/4), triple sub-phrasing (3/3) can be notated only through use of waist-beats and end-beats: e.g. waist-beat, 'qi-an shan' ('thou-sand mounts'), counting 'and, one, two':

```
千山  or, end-beat, 'do-ng-ga', ('so-li-d-') counting 'one, two, and':
123
```

This Coda of 4-5-3 beat lines is musically divisible into triple phrases: $6 + (3-3) = 12$ beats. This is deductible from the placing of the down-beats on the words, even before examining the melody. This could produce phrasing of $(3-3 + 3-3) + (3-3 + 3-3) = 24$ sub-beats. The logic, assuming an innate tendency to group by either duplets or triplets, is as follows:

The waist-beat on the first word makes it unstable and apt to link its second half-beat to the succeeding half-beat word. The waist-beat on the fifth word tends to binds it to the preceding half-beat word. Thus the division by prosodic caesura (@) into 3+3 words (4-4 sub-beats) could be over-ridden, and an enjambment created by ending on a down-beat to link the last beat to the second line, in a triplet pattern.

```
A thousand mountains lonely, @ a myriad gullies void:
```

```
1 2 3.
1 @ 2 3: 1 2.
```

Prosody places the caesura (@) after the fourth word of a seven-word line: 4+3 words. If we apply this rule in the second line, we get 2 bars + 3 bars, the latter again tending to subdivide into triplets:

```
See the  Emerald creek and | jasper @ stream | frozen | solid!-
```

```
3.
1 2 3: @ 1 2 3, 1 2 3:
```

The bottom-beat signals a break at the end of the second line. This leaves the three beats of the last line as a discrete unit, which by internal sense sub-divide in the middle, giving two triplets of quarter-notes:

```
But alas cold trees, | cloud-buried, | road impassable!
```

```
1 2 3.
1 2 3.
```

In the musical examples, which follow, we will see that melodic patterns tend to follow the final model above.

A second possibility is the hemiola, whereby paired six-beats divide into three twos, then into two threes: 2-2-2; 3-3 beats, of $(4-4-4) + (3-3 + 3-3)$ sub-beats. This is the phrasing suggested by the prosody of the first verse line above whose caesura divides in the middle to then produce $(3-1) + (3-1)$ sub-beat groupings. Melody may then decide which, if either, of these two basic patterns to follow $(3-3-3-3)$ or $(2-2-2 + 3-3)$.\(^{31}\)

Now let me briefly return to the 'Football score' of c.1300 (Figure 3). As we are told by its preface, the Coda takes 4 beats in the first line, 5 beats in the second line, and 3 beats in the third line. In other words, the second line robs the first beat from the third. Yet the preface does not specify the placing of beats within each line. If we apply the formula,

\(^{31}\) Cf. Tom Miles: Rhythmic perceptions of 'Nhama musasa' on the 12/8 in a Shona song of Zimbabwe: 'Was the music in duple or triple time?' British Forum for Ethnomusicology: Newsletter 16, 1998 p. 16.
abstracted from the 1596 example which shows the position of beats on individual words, we see that the 4-5-3 beat match is perfect:

五花最里英雄辈
Wu-hua zui li xiong bei.
1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2

在五花朵簇是花而的，英雄到
In five flowers cluster midst, the hero team

依于事香不畏离
Yi yu wei xiang bu wei li
1 2 3 1 2 3

Cuddling jade, snuggling fragrance, not a moment apart,

做得风流第一
Zuo de feng liu di yi
1 2 3 1 2 3

You'll make a loverboy number one!

It is therefore likely that the 1596 formula represents what was substantially already in practice three centuries earlier.

The 12-beat format is re-stated in the technical introduction to Qing Emperor Kangxi's 1715 printing of Lyric Scores 曲谱 which gives no melodies, and indicates beats for Southern Lyrics only. 'Beats' denote regular clapper-beats which were not transmitted for Northern Lyrics.32

Yun Lu's massive Nine Keys Great Compendium, the first to mark Tune-title lyrics, both Southern and Northern, with beats and melodies, was printed in 1746 under Emperor Qianlong. Its preface prescribes, for the Three-Line Coda, a total of 12 beats (or sometimes 13 beats), which it correlates to the number of semi-tones in the octave, and months in the year (which can have a 13th 'leap month'), as if this was a law of nature. It further stipulates that it should total between 19 and 21 words, and certainly not over 30 as in the Four Dreams 四夢 of iconoclast playwright Tang Xianzu 汤显祖 (1550-1617) 33 Yet the earliest known specimens of Three-Line Codas, which we saw in the Jin Medleys, frequently exceed 21 words.

The integrated 1746 Nine Keys scores of lyrics, beats and melody together, consistently observe the 4-5-3 beat pattern for Southern Three-Line Codas (Figure 3). Chen Yuanjing was not exaggerating, four and a half centuries earlier, when he spoke of an 'inviolable rule'.

Additive Rhythms in Chinese Music

Chinese ban beats are divided into three basic types: whole-time, two-time and four-time (武打 liuxihua, 原 yuan and 慢板 man-ban), well known in Peking Opera. These geometric divisions of tempo: fast-medium-slow are comparable to the sixteenth-, eighteenth-, and quarter-note (semi-quaver, quaver, and crotchet) note divisions on the European stave. It is obvious that such divisors, in geometric progression: \( 1 > 2 > 4 > 8 \) etc., do not in themselves describe

rhythmical phrasing or structure in any music. Rather these are the building blocks whose combinations produce the structures of rhythm, which are not necessarily bounded by the bar-line. The standard classic European 4/4 hierarchy of: Strong, weak, less-strong, weak, need not apply.

The facility of the ban beat = bar-line equation has encouraged a misconception of Chinese rhythm as simple. Curt Sachs in his pioneering Rhythm and Tempo: a study in music history considered rhythm to be of lesser importance in the Far East.\(^{34}\) Rulan Chao-Pian has argued against this perception of Chinese music as ‘square’, and for the existence of additive rhythms in Lyric-title (ci\(\text{p}ai\) = ‘t\(\text{syr}\)’ music.\(^{35}\) Stephen Jones reminded us how Yang Yiniu, followed by Li Minxiong and Yuan Jingfang, demonstrated ‘geometric additive phrasing’ in the percussion of Shifan Luogu 十番鑼鼓 drum and gong suites of Jiangsu.\(^{36}\) Little attention has thus far be paid to equivalent structures in melody.

There is a problem in perception of phrasing in ancient traditional pieces, because at slow tempo macro-structures are hard to discern. I propose that dimensions of additive and divisive rhythm necessarily coexist. Li Nuo in an original analysis of Chinese folk-song demonstrates how its rhythmic structure can only be grasped once it is understood that the triple-bar grouping is not an aberration, a defective unit of four bars, but an essential structural element, well established in its own right (Li Nuo 1988).

A history of rhythm by Wang Fengtong and Zhang Lin (1992) contains useful materials on the rhythmic evolution of Tune-title music but, surprisingly, argues that pre-sixteenth century music is un-measured. Lawrence Picken and collaborators in the Tang Music Project continue to open unprecedented vistas on music in the Tang dynasty (618-906), through tapping the musical archives in Japan. These preserve Tang music scores in measured notation, akin to that of the Dunhuang pipa tablature, dated post AD 933. Tang music is mostly measured, with sections in regular measures of 4, 6 or 8 drum-beats each. ‘6-beat’ liu\(\text{p}ai\) 六拍 is transcribed by Picken as 3/2 time.\(^{37}\) A bass-drum beat (*) marks the measures, usually on their penultimate beat (e.g. 4-beat: . . * .). There are indications that one line of verse was commonly set to two measures of music, though no lyric settings survive.\(^{38}\) This system continued to govern Lyric-title music and verse in the Song dynasty, and is described by Zhang Yan 張炎 in his ‘Origins of the Lyric’ (\(\text{Ch}i\text{yuan 詞源}\) c.1300. Thereafter it disappears from the record.

The Opera, which began to emerge c. 1100, with its Tune-title (\(\text{qupai\ 速度牌}\) music is built on the uniform ‘beat’ (\(\text{ban 板}\) of the clapper, though not necessarily struck by the clapper. It is a duple stress-beat, simple and flexible, free to build blocks of ‘additive’ rhythms in asymmetric shapes. The old 4-beat measures of Tang music appear to become 2 x 2/4 beats; 6-beat to become 3 x 2/4 beats; 8-beat to become 4 x 2/4 beats. The size of measures has halved: only down-beats are counted. The ‘clapper-beat’ is a constant unit, and Chen Yuanjing speaks not of its sub-divisions, but rather of its groupings.\(^{39}\) It allowed phrasing to be counted as flexible sums; no longer in pre-packaged measures. By late Ming, the system of clapper-beats had been refined to indicate off-beats, not by sub-division, but by placement: on, after, or in the middle of a word or note.

\(^{34}\) Sachs 1953 pp. 25, 57; Sachs 1944 p. 138.
\(^{35}\) Rulan Chao-Pian 1966 p. 133.
\(^{38}\) Cf. Wells CHIME No. 7 1993, p. 63.
\(^{39}\) ShiLIN GuangJi: Eyun yaojie ‘Stopping Clouds Essentials’.
Shen Jing 沈璟 (1545-1615), in particular, became famous, infamous to some, for his insistence on the 'correct' placing of beats in Lyric-title arias. Under the aegis of Maoist-Marxist ideology, Yang Yinliu reviled Shen Jing for his pains, and blamed Shen's rules for impeding progress. Yet, without Shen Jing's precise definition and scoring of time-values, we would be unable to fathom the rhythmic evolution of Chinese opera. The rhythmic variety recorded in the Tune-title tradition can stand comparison with any in the world. Far from 'inventing the rules', Shen was a conservative. He followed after Jiang Xiao 姜孝 who in turn acknowledged obtaining scores from old Masters identified simply as Chen 陳 and Bai 白.41

The continuity of rhythmic form, which I will demonstrate from examples of the Three-Line Coda, prove that at least the particular rhythmic pattern of the Coda was already taken as an 'inviolable rule' c. 1300 AD. That is around three centuries before the time of Shen Jing.

The Percussion Part of the 1300 Drum and Clapper Football Score

The measures of Tang music appear to have been counted out in pulse-beats (ken 低 or qiao 敲), with a main drum accent, as we saw, often on the penultimate beat. This pulse-beat unit

was also called ‘word-syllable’ (支字) like the aksara ‘syllable’ which was the basic unit of Indian tala.\footnote{Rowell pp. 149-150.} The shortest Tang measure has four beats, with an accent on the third: ..., * ... This corresponds to the opening and closing pattern of the percussion part in the c. 1300 Drum and Clapper Football Suite (shown in Figure 5, p. 55).

The score shows 12 percussion strokes in its Tail Sound, which I propose to take as equal to the 12 beats, described in Li Jingyuan’s preface. Qin Longevity Coda (Qin Shou Sha 靈壽煞) is divided by phrasing lines (n.b. not bar-lines) in the original score as follows:

\[
| \ldots | * : \ldots | * : \ldots | \ldots | * : | \\
\text{Proposed lyric setting:} \quad xx \quad xx \quad X \quad xx \quad xx \quad x \quad Xxxxx \quad xx \quad X
\]

The percussion phrasing is evidently: 2 + (3)+ (3) + 4 = 12 beats. In other words: a hemiola of 4-2 (begun on 2, and ended on the 4), followed by a 3-3. If set against the 4-5-3 beat lyrics, this would generate a strong counter-rhythm. The Lyrics have 21 words, giving an average of almost two words (1.75 words) per beat. This proposed setting of the text of the Football Suite Coda, in 4-3-5 beat lines, indicates rhymes by capitals (X).

\section*{Evolution and Elaboration}

Melodically, the Football Suite of c.1300 (including its Three-Line Coda) is heptatonic. The later examples of ‘Tail Sounds’ which I have found are all pentatonic - pentatonism being a basic feature of the Southern operatic style of which notably Kunqu is representative. The modal structure of the c.1300 score is major, lines ending on mi and do. The later scores are in minor-mode. Laurence Picken noted a comparable evolution from major to minor in one of the Tang Go-gen Kinfu 五絃琴譜 pieces.\footnote{Picken: Music from the Tang Court I, 1981, p. 13.}

The foundation of Picken’s interpretation of the ‘Tang Music’ (Togaku) tablatures in Japan is the proposition that a massive retardation in performance tempo and accretion of ornament, has taken place over the centuries. This has resulted in the original tunes becoming indistinguishable to the ear. He notes that a minimal pace of sixty quarter-notes per minute is required for notes on the biwa to be apprehended by the ear as consecutively linked. Yet the Imperial Palace musicians play them at the rate of only seven to twelve per minute.\footnote{Picken op. cit. 1981, p. 14.} In other words what surely took no more than one second in Tang performances has slowed down to a duration of between five to eight seconds in Togaku. A similar phenomenon may be detected in the evolution of the Three-Line Coda:

- 20 notes c.1300 (x) has expanded to 44 notes in the Peking Opera instrumental (z); and to 70 notes in a Kunqu example sung by Mei Lanfang earlier this century (e).
- 12 beats (ban) in c.1300 (x) has become 12 bars of 2/4 by 1746 (y/y); and 8 bars of 2/4 + 7 of 4/4 by 1930 (e).

\textit{(Letters between brackets refer to the nine scores shown in the next section.)}

If we allow one quarter-note per beat of the c. 1300 score, we get twelve seconds as a playing-time for its twenty notes (allowing a maximum of one second per quarter-note, as in Picken, above). If we then compare this extrapolated ‘original’ time of twelve seconds (x) with Mei Lanfang’s time in Wandering the Garden (e) of fifty-two seconds, we find a
retardation of slightly over four times. Yet it should not be assumed that a given piece ever had a fixed tempo, regardless of occasion.

Togaku: 8th century: 1 quarter-note = 1 second > 20th century = 5-8 seconds
ritarded c. 8 times, over 12 centuries.

Three-Line Coda: 1300: 20 notes (x) >
1746: 40 notes
1930: instrumental 44 notes (x);
1930: vocal 70 notes (e)
1300: 12 beats (x) >
1746: 12 bars 2/4 = 24/4 (y/Y);
1930: 15 bars [8.5x 2/4 + 7x 4/4] = 45/4 (e)
1300: est. 12 seconds (x) >
1930: 52 seconds (e)
ritarded 3-4 times, over six centuries.

Nine Musical Examples of ‘Tail-sound’ Codas
What follows is a series of nine scores of Three-Line Codas from different periods, in which the various musical aspects discussed so far (rhythm, modes, tempo, text phrasing), and how they changed over time, are exemplified. To facilitate reference I have marked each score with different letter. The series starts off with the Coda of the Football Suite (x), continues with three codas from 18th century operas (Y1, Y2 and y) and one instrumental coda from a Peking opera (z), and ends with five codas from nineteenth and twentieth century Kunqu scores (a, b, c, d, e). The music is mainly shown in Chevé or staff notation, either in the text below or in the Figures which follow on p. 63.

x) Football Suite (c. 1300)
A reconstruction of the playful Three-Line Coda from the Football Suite (Figures 2,3).45 Words, notes and original percussion are arranged to the prefaced instructions, interpreted according to the beats and sub-beats of the Kunqu model. Punctuation (J.) interprets phrasing. In this example: 8 x 3 quarter-notes = 24 quarter-notes.

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Wu-hula cong-li ying-xiong bei} \\
&5 \text{ 6} \ 13 \\
&\text{Yi-yu wei-xiang bu zhan li} \\
&4 \ 12 \ 4 \ 13 \ 1 \ 4 \ 12 \\
&\text{Zuo de fen liu di yi} \\
&5 \ 6 \ 1 \ 16 \ 7 \ 1 \\
\end{align*}
\]

1 = C (mode and range: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,1,2) lively

Five Flowers’ Cluster Midst, A Heroes’ Team

Coddle Jade, Nuzzle Fragrance. Not a Moment Apart

You Make A Heart Thrub Number One!

Y1) Moon-Worshipping Pavilion: At the Inn (1746)
Various musical settings exist of what was originally a Yuan opera attributed to Shi Hui 石惠: ‘Moon-Worshipping Pavilion’ – Youngui Ji/ Baiyue Ting 艺圃记/拜月亭 ‘At the Inn’ Zhao Zhao

45 (Yuan) Chen Yuanjing: Shilin Guangji: Gulan Pu; Yuanlijuan.
shang 招商; one musical setting of the Ming is contained in the ‘Nine Keys’ Compendium’ Jiu-Gong Dacheng 九宮大成 by Yun Lu 允禄; Vol. LXXI Southern San-ju’r Sha p. 31 score (see Fig. 6b, and for Chevé notation see below under Y2).

Y2) Moon-Worshipping Pavilion: At the Inn (1870/1965)
For comparison, I am showing Y1 alongside Y2, the Coda from a later musical setting of the same libretto, contained in ‘Cloud-Stopping Library Libretti’ Eyunge Qupu 揚雲歌曲譜, by Wang Xichun 王錫鏞 1870/1965; beats checked by Li Xiuyun 李秀雲 of Suzhou; (Wenguang Tushu Gongsi, Taibei 1965 p. 1131) score. The two scores Y1 and Y2 are close, but not quite identical. The latter supplies a few supplementary words of lyrics to aid intelligibility. Phrasing interpreted: 8 x 3 = 24 quarter-notes.

\[
\begin{align*}
1 = \text{C (mode and range: 5.6.1.2.3.5.6)} \\
\text{Y1:} & \quad 5 \quad 16 \quad 3 \quad 1 \quad 32 \quad 35 \quad 6 \quad 12 \quad 12 \quad 1 \quad 1 \\
\text{Y2:} & \quad 5 \quad 16 \quad 3 \quad 153 \quad 5 \quad 6 \quad 12 \quad 1 \quad 36 \quad 136 \\
& \quad \text{En l qing zen bi xian l hua l ciao.} \quad \text{His goodness to me is unlike common flowers or herbs.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Y1:} & \quad 23 \quad 12 \quad \text{Wang l chang heni jing chang ji ji liao, l} \\
& \quad \text{Wang chang jian heni jing chang ji ji liao, l} \quad \text{In the past I hated the long watches’ loneliness;}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Y1:} & \quad 1 \quad 2 \quad 1 \quad 16 \quad 56 \quad 15 \quad 653 \quad 235 \\
& \quad \text{Jinye l zhi chou l tian yi xiao.} \quad \text{Tonight I only regret the sky’s easy dawning.}
\end{align*}
\]

y) Monthly Ordinances and Observances (1746)
A court ceremonial adaptation for Emperor Kangxi (1662–1722) of a Ming dynasty Tune-Tite play can be found in the same 1746 source which also contains Y1. The play is called ‘Monthly Ordinances and Observances’ Yueling Chengying 月令承應: ‘Nine Keys’ Compendium’ Jiu-Gong Dacheng 九宮大成 by Yun Lu 允禄; vol. LXXI Southern San-ju’r Sha p. 31. Phrasing interpreted: 24 quarter-notes. (See also Fig. 6a.) Here is the Coda in Chevé notation:

\[
\begin{align*}
5 \quad 165 \quad 3 \quad 15 \quad 5 \quad 2 \quad 13 \quad 12 \quad 16 \\
& \quad \text{5} \quad 165 \quad 3 \quad 11 \quad 15 \quad 13 \quad 32 \quad 10, \quad \text{Tuned to the Prime Note, the Central Pitch anew fixed:}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
5 \quad 1 \quad 612 \quad 1 \quad 11 \quad 5 \quad 16 \quad 15 \quad 56, \quad \text{The Sage’s virtue, daily new, is deeply engraved.}
\end{align*}
\]
z) Peking Opera standard instrumental (1982)
This concerns the instrumental ‘Tail Sound’ Weisheng, played by suona and percussion, in full or in part, to conclude a play in Peking Opera. (Ma Yuxi 1982, pp. 40-41.) See Figure 7. The percussion is referred to as ‘Gong-Drum Code’ (Luogu Jing 锣鼓經) and the syllables shown in the key below (cang, qi, cai etc.) are vocalized sounds of percussion strokes.

Melodically, an affinity of Coda z with Codas Y and y (shown above) is apparent: ‘6535 565 2312’ for ‘653 55 2312’ in the first line; ‘152 321’ for ‘1565 321’ in the second; ‘56 13 216’ for ‘516 1216’ in the third. The third line has increased from three to six bars of 2/4, because three ‘extra beats’ (chuaban 铤板 or zengban 鼓板), added to convert 4/4 to 8/4 in gongche scores, have become bar-lines, making a total of 15 bars instead of 12. (Cf. Coda e.) Figure 7 (p. 64) provides a stave transcription of the music of z, while the Chevé notation below, of the same music, shows how it would be recited.

Gong-Drum Code and abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Cang</td>
<td>big gong, or gongs and cymbals combined; extended by er 聞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>qi</td>
<td>cymbals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>cai</td>
<td>cymbals and small gong’s heavy stroke combined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>tai</td>
<td>small gong’s heavy stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>lai</td>
<td>small gong’s medium stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>ling</td>
<td>small gong’s weak stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>da</td>
<td>drumstick heavy stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dr</td>
<td>dau</td>
<td>drum roll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>yi</td>
<td>rest, syncopation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = D [1 transpose from E flat] (tonic solfa: 1,2,3,5,6,1) pentatonic 2/4 time; phrasing interpreted: 8 x 3 quarter-notes = 24 quarter-notes

(introduction)  
(data)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cang cai tai</th>
<th>Cangda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0:  
Cang cai tai | Cang  
65:13 3 2 2 3 1 2 1 3 1 3 1 3

0:  
Cang lai | Cang  
65:13 3 2 2 3 1 2 1 3 1 3 1 3

(betou)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cang cai tai</th>
<th>Cang cai tai</th>
<th>Cang</th>
<th>Cang</th>
<th>Cang</th>
<th>Cang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

< > = ‘extra’ beats, dividing the 4/4 bars, which are not part of the fundamental beat pattern. Except for the ritardando on the last four notes, the bars of 4/4 time should be played at the speed of 2/4 i.e. their notes should be played twice as fast.

The 12-bar pattern with its 4-5-3 beat phrasing is still discernible, if we combine the betou 'chorus' third-line with the first two (omitting a pause and 'dongda'), bearing in mind the number of bars in the third line needs to be halved: (1-2-1) + (2-2-1) + ([1-2 + 2-1]) = 12 bars. This could also be split as hemiola: 4-2; 3-3:

[CC]  
4 bars: CC-C-C  
5 bars: C-C-C-C  
3 bars: CC-C-C-C
Triple phrasing is more apt to the internal parallelisms and syncopations (yi) of the percussion:

(introduction): [CC]
3-3 bars: CC--; CC--;
3-(3-3) bars: C-C--(CC--CC--);

(introduction)
2-2-2 + (3-3) quarter-notes: Cang cai | Cang cai; Cang, taizi ni taixiti;
2-2-2 + (3-3) quarter-notes: Cang 0 | Cang, taizu ni lingda;
(3-3) + 2-2-2 quarter-notes: Cang c'eri | caititi, Cang 0 0 0; [0 dongda]
2-2-2 + (3-3) quarter-notes: Cang cai | Cang, taizi ni lingda;
(3-3) + 2-2-2 quarter-notes: Cang c'eri | caititi, Cang 0 0 0.

65:
13 3 15.6 52 1 -- 37.2 13 3 11 3 1 11 2 11 2 12 3 5 12 22 10 5.6 13 3 116 1 16 1

To end this series of musical examples, let me provide five scores of Three-Line ‘Tail Sounds’ extracted from Kunqu, the operatic genre which began to flourish in the late Ming dynasty. Here is a key to their transcriptions:

. = proposed triple sub-phrasing
. = proposed triple phrasing
* = points of taking breath
* = main-beat wrongly shown as extra-beat (chuan=chung-beat) in Wang’s score.
>> = diminuendo
— = vibrato e.g. 5 5 5 5

a) Immortality Hall: scene I, The Pledge (1870)
Wang Xichun: *Eyunge Qupu 1870/1965* Kunqu score, beats checked by Li Xiuyun of Suzhou: p. 406. Original by (Qing) Hong Sheng zhexing (1645-1704) of Qiantang (Zhejiang): epic Kunqu opera *Changsheng Dian* 長生殿, Immortality Hall’, set to music by Zhao Qiugu 趙秋古; beats by Xu Lingzhao 徐靈照. The plot narrates the doomed love of romantic Tang Emperor Minghuang (r. 712-755) and court beauty Yang Guifei. Phrasing interpreted: 3-3-6-3-3-3-3 = 24 quarter-notes:

'A Pledge of Love' *Dingqing* 定情 [xianggongdian] = D
(2/4)
6 1.5 3 15 1 2 2 3 1 1

Flowers sway, a lamp moon shines at the window.

(4/4)
2 1 2 3 3 2 1 1 6 -- 5.3 5 6 5 6.5 3.1

Grasp the wedding night, its joys one by one experience!

2 36 53.2 365 333 3 61 21 6 5 13 3 621 6 5 32 13 5

Mó wén tā biéyuán 不問他別院 里宮玉巖
Mó wén tā biéyuán 不問他別院 里宮玉巖

Don’t ask of other courts or out-palaces.
b) Immortality Hall: scene 14, Rainy Dream (1870)

Phrasing interpreted: 8 x 6 quarter-notes = 48 quarter-notes.

In streams tears like beads of jade fall.

Pawonia rain-sounds disturb one.

Just across the window, continuously dripping till dawn.

c) Immortality Hall: scene 19, Spying on the Bath (1870)

Phrasing interpreted: 8 x 6 quarter-notes = 48 quarter-notes.

Mind-midst man, man-midst mind:

Even insensate flowers and birds are love-mad:

They all know how to join heads, and roost in pairs.

d) Immortality Hall: scene 22, Alarmed by Rebellion (1870)

Phrasing interpreted: 8 x 6 quarter-notes = 48 quarter-notes.

In the deep palace to pampered laziness she has been used:

How could she endure the Sichuan road's hardships?

Darling! I worry that you, jade-soft and flower-weak, must on the journey hasten.

e) Peony Pavilion: scene 12 Roaming the Garden (1870 / 1930)

Tang Xianzu 福煦祖 (1550-1617) of Linchuan, Jiangxi composed 'Peony Pavilion' Mudan Ting 牡丹亭, the most celebrated of his 'Four Dreams'. Despite Tang Xianzu's philosophy of free composition, his masterpiece survives on the stage as a Kunqu play, whose rules he opposed. Tang understood syllabic rhythm, but not the musical patterns behind the Kunqu rules codified by Shen Jing (see p. 55) of Wujiang, Jiangsu. Mei Lanfang, leading modern
Peking Opera heroine-role, sticks close to Wang Xichun. Below I make a comparison of the
Three-Line Coda as it appears in scene 12, the ‘Roaming the Garden’ Youyuan 游園 -
Weisheng, in two different sources, e1 and e2. e1) is Wang Xichun 1870/1965: p. 991; e2) is
Mei Lanfang Geqipu p. 188 Nanqu (Liu Tianhua 1930).

52 quarter-notes per minute. Total duration 45/52 x 60 = 52 seconds. 70 notes.
Phrasing interpreted: 1) 6 x 6 = 36 quarter-notes; 2) 7.5 x 6 = 45 quarter-notes.

(2/4)

I have viewed it insufficiently. By him to be dismissed.
Even to enjoy the Twelve Pavilions would be in vain!
It would be better, fun finished, to go home and take
my ease.

(2/4)

(4/4)

Guān zhī hú zu, you lā qīn.

(4/4)

Bian shang l'ian hū shier-1 ting; tā shì wang tā ran.

Melodic Conflations of Nine Scores

Is there a common thread in the melodies of the ‘Tail Sounds’, as we find them in the nine
musical examples given above? The following line-by-line comparison of the nine scores
reveals certain aspects which the Three-Line Codas have in common, and which are probably
representative for this musical form in general. For every line, I have added a ‘skeleton’
version. (Y1 and Y2 are viewed as one score, ‘Y’).

1. Line One

1

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

10)

11)

12)

13)

14)

15)

16)

17)

18)

19)

20)

21)

22)

23)

24)

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Figure 6a. 'Three Liner Finale' Coda lyrics of 'Monthly Ordinances and Observances' and 'Worshipping Moon Pavilion' with beats and melody marked (Shu-Gong Dacheng; Nanzi Gongpu; Yueling Chengying; Basiue Ting, 1746).

Figure 6b. 'Three Liner Finale' of 'Worshipping Moon Pavilion' transcribed in stave with rhythm and phrasing interpreted.

Figure 7. Stave transcription of instrumental Coda melody from Peking Opera in 2/4, with proposed harmonisation in 3/4.

Figure 8. Football Suite Three-Line Coda c.1300 melody compared with Peking Opera Coda melody in stave transcription.
Here is a conflated version, representing matching between the majority of nine versions, excluding repetitions:

line 1): 6 5 3 6 2 1 2 3
line 2): 5 6 1 2 3 1 2 3
line 3): 2 1 6 5 3 6

It may be seen that the first four notes are identical with the last four. The piece may be easily re-arranged as a palindrome (bottom left), and this conflated version can be compared with a palindrome of the c. 1300 version (on the right):

653 6
212
256
123 123
21
653 6

221
56
4
34 5 43
123
56
216 71
The notable resemblances are the highlighted rising do-re-mi at the end of the second line, and the re-do-la cadence in the third.

**Palindromic and Additive Rhythmic Structures of Melody**

The following analyses by internal symmetries of melodic structure may facilitate our understanding of it as an abstract entity, with inherent rhythms, triple and duple, independent of the lyrics. 'Extra beats' (zengban) are shown bracketed, thus: <b>.

x) Football Suite c. 1300 (Figure 3):

```
| 22| - 1 |
| 5 6 |
| - 4 |
| [34] | 5 4|3 |
| [12] | 3 - |
| - 56 |
| [1] | 67 |
```

Y1) Moon-worshipping Pavilion: At the Inn 1746 (Figure 6b):

```
| 5[6] |
| 5- |
| 3-35 |
| 52 |
| 62 |
| 62 |
| 122 |
| 65-633 |
| 5- |
```

Y2) Moon-worshipping Pavilion: At the Inn 1746 (Figure 6):

```
| 5[6] |
| 5- |
| 3-35 |
| 52 |
| 62 |
| 62 |
| 122 |
| 65-633 |
| 5- |
```

y) Monthly Ordinances and Observances 1746 (Figure 6a):

```
| 5[6] |
| 5- |
| 3-35 |
| 52 |
| 62 |
| 62 |
| 122 |
| 65-633 |
| 5- |
```

z) Peking Opera standard instrumental 1982 (Figure 7):

```
| 65 | 13 | 26 |
| 2 |
| 13 | 2 |
| 13 |
| 13 |
| 32 |
| 32 |
| 32 |
```

a) Immortality Hall: The Pledge 1870:

```
| 6[1] |
| 5- |
| 3- |
| 5- |
| 1 |
| 2 |
| 13 |
| 52 |
| 65-633 |
| 52 |
```

b) Immortality Hall: Rainy Dream 1870:

```
| 6 |
| 3 |
| 2 |
| 3 |
| 3 |
| 3 |
| 2 |
| 13 |
| 52 |
| 65-633 |
| 52 |
```

c) Immortality Hall: Spying on the Bath 1870:

```
| 6[1] |
| 5- |
| 3- |
| 3 |
| 3 |
| 3 |
| 2 |
| 13 |
| 52 |
| 65-633 |
| 52 |
```
Harmonic Roots and Multi-dimensional Interpretation

Inevitably, as Chinese traditional music is adapted to key-board instruments and orchestral settings, 'harmonization' is applied. For this to be done in a meaningful manner, it now becomes imperative to examine more deeply than hitherto the rhythmic roots of traditional melody, looking across the barlines.

If we examine the structure in melody and rhythm from the appended examples, and compare the melody c.1300 with 1930 (Figure 7), we may begin to understand the form's durability. Its palindromic runs of balancing and contrasted ascents and descents seem to sum up the possibilities of melodic pattern. Its melodic triple rhythms form a counterpoint to the binary barring, and expectation of four beats per verse-line. Its verbal rhythm which combines additive 4-5-3 divisions for its three verse-lines, has an underlying (2-2-2) + (3-3) hemiola division of the 12 beat total (as in Flamenco compas and Korean jangdan cycles): 1 & 2 & 3 & 12.

The Peking Opera specimen exhibits a strong structural triple-rhythm in its melody. Ignoring the acruscs and starting from the first down-beat, we may pick out a simple triple pattern of initial notes as follows mi-sol-mi-mi; sol-re-re-la:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 24 quarter-note/crotchet durations thus split into 8 x 3 quarter-note/crotchets; or: 4 x 3 half-note/minim bars. To apply European chordal harmony at these points on dotted half-note chords would seem very natural. Not the dramatic shift from major key (mi-sol) to minor feeling (re-la) in the last five bars (see stave notation example in Figure 8, p. 63).

A core-melodic pattern, which accords with the twelve ban bar-beats, of wrap-round 2-2-2; 3-3 hemiola: 1.5+2+2) (3+3) (0.5+ = 12 beats in the same piece produces a falling pentatonic cadence, concluding with an octave leap, or rather a return to the beginning on the highest pitch:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>la</th>
<th>if#</th>
<th>le</th>
<th>1d</th>
<th>lb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>la</td>
<td>if#</td>
<td>le</td>
<td>1d</td>
<td>lb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A three-dimensional form of palindrome is found in the canon cancrizans in European counterpoint.
This equates to a minor key cadential run of sol> mi> re> do> la. Here are some latent patterns formed by the melodic notes, which could be used to form chords:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-5-3:</th>
<th>y</th>
<th>y</th>
<th>y</th>
<th>V₁</th>
<th>y</th>
<th>y</th>
<th>y</th>
<th>V₁</th>
<th>y</th>
<th>y</th>
<th>V₁</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1-2-2-1-3:</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2-2-3-3:</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix: an ancient Indian theatrical Coda

Given the Indian influence in China's Buddhist arts and mediaeval modal system, it may be asked whether there is any trace of the rhythms of Indian talas in Chinese music. A semantic correspondence of tala = clap/beat = pai 拍 is clear.

Richard Widdess, in his decipherment of the Kudumiyamalai 7-8th century south Indian rock inscription, demonstrates that the notes are arranged in fours. These notes, if of constant duration, resemble quarter-notes in 4/4 bars. Above such a base, other rhythmic structures, tala, might be superimposed, in what Lewis Rowell calls a form of 'counterpoint.' Rowell shows that the ancient tala were rhythmic patterns, but not repeating cycles as now performed. The currently pre-dominant Tin Tal cycle has 16 beats, divided 4-4-4-4, provides a matrix over which other patterns are woven.

The theatre music of classic India, in the Natyasastra pre-500 AD, has a characteristic finale which, like the Chinese Three-Line Tail Sound, has twelve beats. These twelve beats consist of three blocks of four-beat, over which a distinctive, integrating rhythmic pattern is laid. It takes the shape, punctuated by long vowels: 3+1+2+2+1+3 = 12 beats, like the now popular Uttara tala, divisible as both: 3 x 4-beat [(3+1)+(2+2)+(1+3)], or: 4 x 3-beat [(3)+(1+2)+(2+1)+(3)].

Rowell illustrates it in the 'two-fold state [medium tempo], as in the sarira ['body'] of the Rovindaka [gitaka]. Each beat is marked by one mnemonic syllable, arranged in a palindrome, a pyramid of symmetrical sound (see Fig. 9, p. 68).

Similarities of this tala coda to the Chinese Tail Sound are:

- both are used as codas in theatre music;
- both have twelve beats;
- both have an underlying structure of three sections of four beats each, over which counter-rhythms, of three or two beats, are woven;
- Both contain palindromic melodic patterns.

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47 MusicRecord of the Sui dynasty AD 581-618, Suishu: Yinyue Zhi.
49 Rowell 1988, p. 186.
50 ibid, p. 151
51 ibid, p. 148. Each beat, particularly at slow tempo, may be considered as one bar. The same is true of Chinese 'beats'.
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PENG Cheng 彭乘 ca. 1150 Xu Mo ke Huixi 縱墨客揮犀 [Continuation of An Ink-Guest wields his rhinoceros].

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**Editor's note**
The original version of this article as submitted by the author included diacritical signs in the pinyin transcriptions of the Chinese texts. For technical reasons, we were unable to reproduce them in this printed version, for which we duly apologize.
A TRADITION SHARED BY MANY ETHNIC GROUPS

Shaonian, Courtship Songs from Northwest China

Du Yaxiong
(Chinese Conservatory of Music, Beijing)

In northwest China young people of Chinese, Tibetan and other ethnic origins sing a vocally impressive type of courtship songs. The songs, performed in the context of festivals, are known as hua’er or shaonian. They are mostly sung in Chinese, even by people who use a different language in daily speech. The main functions of the singing are entertainment, flirting and finding sex partners. The two genres shaonian and hua’er are similar in function but musically and textually different, and linked to different geographical regions. The author focuses on the lyrics and the music of shaonian. He reflects on the remarkable resilience of this genre in a country where so many other folk song traditions have waned in recent times.

During summer festivals held in villages across parts of northwest China, one may hear the impressive high-pitched sounds of shaonian. These are courtship dialogue songs with improvised lyrics. Men and women gather in the mountains, dressed in their best clothes, to engage in the singing and to celebrate the festivals with food and with visits to local temples. On the basis of extensive fieldwork conducted by the author, the present article examines the lyrics and the music of shaonian, and continues with a discussion of the functions and the future prospects of the genre. To begin with, it offers a general introduction to the tradition, which puts shaonian into the general framework of China's folk song traditions.

Shaonian and other Chinese folk songs
Generally speaking, musicologists in China classify Chinese folk songs into three categories, according to their performance contexts (MRI 1964:18). The first category is called haozi (work songs). Haozi are sung when people do some form of physical labour, for example, pushing a ship into water, or building a house. The second category, called shange (mountain songs), covers songs which are sung in the fields or in the mountains. The third category, xiaodiao ('ditties'), is made up of all songs not included in the other two categories.

Work songs are usually choruses with lively rhythms, while mountain songs are mainly solo songs sung in free rhythm. The melodies of xiaodiao are smooth and their rhythms are usually strict. Shaonian belong to the second type of this classification, the mountain songs. (For a critical discussion of these types, see Schimmelpenninck, 1997: 16–21.)
In China, different areas and different nationalities all have their own folk song traditions, just as they have their own languages and dialects, their own cultural histories, geographical environments and modes of production – factors on which the local folk song repertoires depend. Shaonian are unusual in that they are not confined to one particular area or one ethnic group only. They are sung in four different provinces and autonomous regions (Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang) by as many as eight different nationalities (Han Chinese, Tibetan, Hui, Salar, Yugur, Dongxiang, Bao'an and Tu). They have become a particularly famous genre of shan'ge. Among the eight groups who participate in the shaonian tradition, the Chinese and Tibetans speak languages which belong to the Sino-Tibetan linguistic family. Languages spoken by Salar and Yugur belong to the Turkic branch of the Altaic family, while those of the Dongxiang, Bao'an and Tu are part of the Mongolian branch of the Altaic family. Hui are Muslims who speak Chinese (Ma Yin 1981: 585-586).

Shaonian are sung by all these groups in Chinese, though the lyrics display strong Turkic, Mongolian and Tibetan influences.

Shaonian can be heard over vast areas, but people believe that the original homeland of shaonian is the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture of Gansu province. That area was called Hezhou in ancient times (Ke Yang 1983: 88). It is a mountain region inhabited by several nationalities. Its population is mainly engaged in agriculture, with animal husbandry and handicrafts as sideline occupations. The religions in this area include Islam, Buddhism – Tibetans, Yugur and Tu are supporters of Lamaism – and Taoism.
Songs of ‘young men’, expressing sexual desire

*Shaonian* are mentioned as early as 1400 AD in a poem written by a scholar called Xie Jin (Ke Yang 1983:97). Consequently, some researchers think that the tradition has had a continuous history of more than six hundred years (Liu Kai 1995: 225). At the beginning of the Ming period, many Han people moved to Gansu from the south of China, while many minorities (e.g. Salar and Hui) arrived from Central Asia. The new settlers encountered Tibetans, Mongolians and other nationalities whose ancestors had already been living in Gansu long before the Ming period. The lyrics and music of *shaonian* reflect an intermingling of all these cultures (Ke Yang 1983:91).

The term *shaonian* literally refers to songs of ‘young men’. The lyrics usually express sexual desire. Here are two representative songs (Exs. 1 and 2). (For names of the singers and recording dates and places, see the list appended to this article on p. 85.)

**Example 1**

Ga qiu / gu duo / xuan diao xia,  
Bi mao shi / ye ye zhe / lu xia,  
Ga mei de / bi shi / shan dan hua,  
Qiu qiu (la) / an shang ge / ba ba.

The penis hangs just like a bud.  
The pubes look like leaves.  
Little sister’s vagina looks like a morningstar lily flower.  
We can use the penis to be a handle for the flower.

**Example 2**

Da ma’er / bian zi / yi zhu xiang,  
Fang gei zhe / jing tang de / gui shang;  
Wo yi ba / la zai / kang zi shang,  
Man zui de / the tou ha / wei shang.

I put the horsewhip  
On the bookcase in the temple;  
I pull my sweetheart towards me  
And feed her mouth with my tongue.

Because of the sexually explicit content of many *shaonian*, there is a traditional taboo on the singing of *shaonian* inside villages or in any situation involving performers of different generations. Even if the lyrics are not about love or sex – occasionally one may hear songs about political issues or other subjects – the same restrictions apply. Given the courtship functions of the songs, it will not come as a surprise that *shaonian* are mainly sung by young people.

*Shaonian* festivals, and differences with hua’er

In almost every county in the southern part of Gansu and the eastern part of Qinghai, *shaonian* festivals are held every year in spring and in summer – from the fourth month to the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar. Every county has its own preferred festival
dates, in accordance with the traditional calendar. The location, in most cases, is a place somewhere in the mountains, with a fine view of the surrounding scenery, and a Buddhist or Taoist temple near at hand. Thus, the shaonian festival of Ledu county in Qinghai province takes place near the Qutan lamasery, and may run from 15 to 17 June. The festival of Kangle county in Gansu is held at Lianhuashan, a mountain with several Taoist temples, and it may run from 1 June to 7 June.

Festivals are not formally organized. They are spontaneous events. When a festival is held, many people who attend it may actually come from places several hundred kilometres away. Several festivals have ritual acts which initiate the entire event, for example the pushing over of a huge stone, called 'the generation stone', a symbol of moral principles. After this, the singing of shaonian songs may start. Festivals differ greatly in size. The smaller festivals may have several thousand people attending, while big ones like the Lianhuashan festival may attract fifty thousand people or more.

In the festival period, normal taboos with respect to shaonian singing are temporarily abrogated. People may sing the songs to whomever they like, regardless of the spectators. Good singers attract many admirers, and in some cases the singing between spontaneous partners in the dialogue singing eventually results in actual love-making. Elderly people may participate in the singing for amusement, though usually they limit themselves to just watching, recalling the good times when they themselves were young.

Many folklorists and musicologists use the term hua'er (‘flower songs’) when referring to shaonian. They tend to regard the entire tradition of love dialogue song festivals in Gansu and Qinghai as a single culture, and assume that the songs sung in these festivals can be covered by a single term. Admittedly, some scholars still make a certain distinction by speaking of Hezhou hua'er (‘flower songs from Hezhou’), by which they distinguish shaonian, historically associated with the Hezhou region, from other courtship songs, such as Taomin hua'er (‘flower songs from Taomin’) (Miao and Qiao, 1987: 85).

It is true that hua'er as well as shaonian are both frequently charged with sexual meaning and are similar in function and in the aspect of musical dialogue. But I still prefer to avoid the term hua'er in connection with shaonian, because musically and textually, hua'er are a very different type of mountain songs, popular in the southern part of Gansu province mainly among Han Chinese. The modes of performance are also different. Hua'er are sung by groups of three to four singers under the guidance of a lead singer, who is responsible for — and who actually dictates to the others — the lyrics. By contrast, shaonian are always sung by individual soloists. In both traditions, the singing may evoke a response from other singers and lead to musical dialogue. In hua'er, the basic stanza usually consists of three lines plus a fixed coda containing the formula hua ya liang ye (‘flower with two leaves’). In most cases the lead singer provides most of the text, while the rest of the group join in each time when the coda begins. In shaonian, there are four or six lines in each stanza, sung by one performer only. The two genres also differ musically in that hua'er consist of one-phrase melodies (repeated many times) while shaonian have two-phrase melodies. In brief, the two genres represent different styles and merit separate research (Du and Zhou 1997: 42).

Shaonian lyrics
Folk songs are a blend of poetry and music. In performance, words and tunes are blended as smoothly as cream and water in a cup of coffee. In the act of recording and transcribing songs, scholars usually separate the lyrics and the music. In conventional notation this is
unavoidable, though not very convenient, since music and words are blended in perfect harmony in performance. Ideally, music and words both merit our attention and should be studied in conjunction.

The lyrics reflect the most important functions of the genre (courtship, flirtation), and influence the flow of the melody. Therefore, to begin with, let us take a closer look at the shape of the lyrics.

While shaoniai texts are usually sung extemporaneously (i.e. in a spontaneous and improvised fashion) — every stanza adheres to a rigid structure and respects certain established patterns of rhyme and metre. Many of the lyrics are samples of superb poetry.

With respect to the basic stanza structure, two main forms of shaoniai may be distinguished, both of them subject to some variation.

The first form has four lines per stanza, in which the odd lines have seven syllables and the even lines eight. (In Chinese, every syllable corresponds with one Chinese character.) Every line can be subdivided into three feet. Odd lines have their syllables grouped as $2 + 2 + 3$, while even lines have the pattern $3 + 3 + 2$. The basic rhyme pattern in this structure is AAAA (cf. Examples 1, 2 and 3).

Example 3

Shang qu / gao shan / wang ping chuan,
Ping chuan li / you yi du / mu dan,
Kan qu / rong yi / zhe qu nan,
Zhe bu dao / shou li shi / wang tan.

I climb the high mountain and gaze at the plain.
There is a peony there.
Looking at the flower is easy, but getting it is difficult.
I cannot get it and it wastes my energy.

In a variant of this first form, the first and second feet of the odd lines may have three characters each (rather than two), while rhyme is restricted to the even lines (pattern: ABCB):

Example 4

Suan ba li / suan le / mei ru wei,
Ga ping guo / za zhe me / lun le ?
Mei ca / yan zhi / mei dan shang fen,
Ga me yang / za zhe me / jun le ?

The sour pear has not yet ripened,
Why, then, is this apple so sweet?
You have not put rouge on your face,
Then how come you are so beautiful?

In yet another variant, odd lines have ten syllables, divided in four feet ($3 + 3 + 3 + 1$), while even lines have seven (divided in $3 + 4$). The rhyme is ABAB:

Example 5

Da yan mai / chu sui shi / suo suo tou lou / diao,
Xie di li / zhong zhi ma ne,
Yi dui de / da yan jing / shui he he / xiao,
Xiao yan li / shuo shi hua ne.

大雁飞出是贪恋落吊
歇地里听芝麻呢
一对的大眼睛水合合笑
笑眼里说实在呢
The ears of oats are waving in the wind,  
The sesame is planted in the fallow field;  
Your eyes are shining and smiling.  
They reveal your true feelings.

A common factor in these variants of the first form is that the last foot of odd lines always carries an odd number of syllables (3, 1) and the last foot of even lines an even number (2, 4).

The second basic stanza form of shaonian consists of six lines, in which two brief additional phrases are placed in between the odd and even lines of the four-line form, as shown in Example 6 (added lines marked with asterisk). One might regard the four-line stanza as the fundamental form from which all other stanza formats are derived.

**Example 6**

Gao gao / shan shang de / ku si man.  
* Ta zhang de / xuan.  
Gen zha zai / qing shi tou / ya shang.  
Ga mei shi / shan shang de / bai mu dan.  
* Ta zhang de / duan.  
Gen zha zai / a ge de / xin shang.

高高山上的苦丝蔓  
它长得意  
根扎在青石头崖上  
朵朵是山上的白牡丹  
她长得端  
根扎在阿哥的心上

A vine grows on a steep slope  
high up in the mountains;  
It is firmly rooted in black stone.  
My sweetheart resembles a beautiful white peony  
high up in the mountains;  
She is firmly rooted in my heart.

**Metaphorical structure in shaonian and other Chinese folk songs**

Poetical comparisons inspired by scenery and nature are very common in shaonian, as in other genres of Chinese folk song. Their use is subject to formal conditions. In almost every shaonian stanza, an image taken from the material (physical) world is playfully paired with a description of an emotional state of the singer. Thus, in Ex. 3, the image is a peony viewed from a mountain top, and in Ex. 4 there are references to fruit (pear and apple). These images are, wholly or partly, metaphors for the singer’s feelings or for the situation in which he is involved. Thus, in Ex. 3, the singer cannot obtain the peony, i.e. he cannot get the girl he loves. In Ex. 4 he is overpowered by a young girl’s beauty.

The juxtaposition of scenery with descriptions of love and desire is typical of Chinese folk songs throughout history. One ancient lyric may serve as an illustration. It was recorded in the Book of Poetry (Shijing), an anthology of folk songs and other texts reportedly compiled by Confucius in the Zhou dynasty. In terms of its use of metaphor, this ancient song fragment – the first stanza of the book’s first poem, Guan Ju – represents the main form of Han Chinese folk song that has been in evidence for over 2,500 years:

**Example 7**

Guan guan ju jiu,  
Zai he zhi zhou.  
Yao tiao shu nü,  
Jun zi hao qiu.

关关雎鸠  
在河之洲  
窈窕淑女  
君子好求

On an island in the Yellow River,  
A bird called Juiju is cooing.  
Here is a maiden good and fair.  
Whom a young man is wooing.
The songs in *The Book of Poetry* employ similes and metaphors freely, and with great imagination. The lyrics usually start with descriptions which, at first sight, may seem to have little or nothing to do with the actual subject. In the above-quoted poem, the first two lines evoke a scene from nature, while the last two describe a situation of love and courting, but the two halves of the stanza turn out to be related to one another. *Guan Ju* is one of many Chinese folk songs in which a bird serves as a metaphor for an amorous young man. The bird is one of many Chinese symbols for the penis. (The same Chinese character (臍) may be used to refer to both, albeit with different pronunciations: *niao* and *diao*, respectively (LIAS 1973: 747/223)). The bird in the poem may well serve to depict the young man’s sexual desire.

From the 305 songs in the *Shijing*, 160 items found in the section *Guo feng* are clearly in folk song style. These lyrics are said to have been popular in northern China in ancient times. Many of them start off with references to nature. Chinese scholars use the term *xing* (星) to refer to the presence of descriptions of scenery and nature in the first two lines of a poem. Of the 160 songs in *Guo feng*, as many as 72 (45 percent) have *xing*.

The tendency to begin stanzas with evocative images of nature is still very popular in contemporary culture. Even today, approximately half of the Chinese folk songs sung in the north start off with *xing*, and this phenomenon is nearly always found in *shaonian*. As in *Guan Ju*, the lyric quoted from *The Book of Poetry*, the first and second lines of *shaonian*, while evoking scenery, are frequently related in symbolic ways to love and lovemaking.

**Multilingual aspects of the lyrics**

Very few people sing *shaonian* in any other language than Chinese, but the lyrics do betray a range of influences from other tongues, including Tibetan and various Mongolian and Turkic languages. A closer look at some of the mixed features in the texts will clarify this.

Chinese nouns have no plural, but Altaic nouns do. For example, *lar* or *ler* are suffixes used in Yugur to indicate plural. ‘Eye’ is called *kaz*, and the plural form is *kaz*-*ler* (‘eyes’). Analogous to this, some *shaonian* texts contain plural forms with the (Chinesic) suffix *men*. The Chinese word for ‘eye’ is *yanjing*, which, in *shaonian* texts, may be rendered in the plural form *yanjingmen*.

Similar phenomena occur with respect to case endings. Chinese nouns and pronouns do not change according to different cases, but those in Altaic languages do. For example, *ha* is the suffix in Salar indicating objective case. In *shaonian* texts, this same suffix is often added to nouns and pronouns serving as objects. Thus, in the fourth line of Ex. 8, ‘today I see you’, the word *ha* is appended to *ni* (‘you’) in Chinese.

**Example 8**

Hua hua / xi que / lian sheng jiao,  
Xi de zhe / yan pi er / tiao le;  
Zuo wan shang / shui meng li / meng jian le.  
Jin ge zi / wo ni (ha) / jian le.

The magpie sings its lucky song;  
My eyelids twitch in happiness.  
Last night I dreamt of you,  
Today I see you.

*Flowers, yellow or red,  
Now blossoms this color...  
A scaly, scaly skin.  
Last night in a dream...  
Missed you... re-emerged.*
The Altaic languages have a special ‘tool suffix’ which indicates that an object is to be used as a tool. In shaoian, the suffix la is applied for this purpose. Thus, in the last line of Ex. 1, la is added to the term qiù qiù, which means ‘penis’, resulting in a phrase meaning ‘to use the penis’.

Another syntactic element in which shaoian texts may deviate from standard Chinese is word order. The standard for affirmative sentences in Chinese, as in many European languages, is the pattern ‘subject + verb + object’, but singers of shaoian often convert to Tibetan syntax, i.e., they let the object follow the subject and place the verb at the end of the sentence. The last line of Ex. 8 adheres to Tibetan syntax: Jìn ge zi (‘today’) wò (‘I’) nǐ hǎo (‘you’) kān jiàn le (‘see’).

Not only grammatical principles, but words or even entire phrases may be directly borrowed from Tibetan, Mongolian or Turkic vocabulary. In shaoian texts one may come across formulaic expressions like A qì mo gào (Tibetan: ‘Ah, my girl’) and Minige sanhuasao (Bao’an: ‘My beloved’). In rare instances, Chinese words are combined more evenly with idioms taken from another language. In Ex. 9, the words shown in capital letters are Tibetan, while the rest of the text, shown in lower case, is Chinese.

Example 9

SA MA / GA DANG / bai da dou.
RANG DAO / ga me bì / me zou;
A RO / SO MA / xin peng you.
CHA TAI / ga kang shang / shui zou.

SA MA and bai share the same meaning ‘white’, while GA DANG and da dou both mean ‘broad bean(s)’. Likewise, in the third line, SO MA and xin mean ‘new’, while A RO and peng you both mean ‘friend’. The repetition is possibly functional: the Tibetan words may have been inserted to extend the line to the appropriate standard length of seven syllables. A rough translation (ignoring repetitions) might run:

Let’s put the white broad beans into the mill.
New friend, let’s go to sleep on the brick bed.

The lyrics of shaoian occupy a special position in Chinese folk song repertoires because of the remarkable degree of multilingualism illustrated in these examples.

The melodies of shaoian

Over a hundred different melodies exist in the repertoire of shaoian. The regional word for melody is ling. Local shaoian melodies frequently bear names with the suffix ling appended. A tune may be named after its area of origin, after an ethnic group that favours the tune in performance, or after some padding syllables which form an inherent part of the melody. Thus the Hezhou ling is a type of tune from Linxia county (the area historically known as Hezhou). Salar ling and Bao’an ling refer to tunes associated with Salar and Bao’an people. San-san-er-liu ling is a name for tunes which incorporate the words san san er liu (‘three three two six’), a playful formula unrelated to the further content of the lyrics. If a place or an ethnic group uses more than one kind of tune, the various ling are sometimes numbered for easy reference: ‘first ling from Hezhou’, ‘second ling of Salar’, etc.
The various shaonian melodies differ in shape and in performance style, but their overall form is similar in that all of them include two phrases bridged by a transitional clause. This basic pattern may be repeated to cover the four lines of a stanza. The transitional phrase may support the last foot of the odd line, or another (formulaic) text segment, such as A ge de rou ('My sweetheart'), Jiu zhe ge hua ('Yes, it is true') or A ge de bai mu dan ('My white peony').

If the stanza consists of six lines, singers use transitional melodic phrases for two segments of the text, usually in between odd and even lines.

Every melody covers an entire stanza. If lyrics consist of more than one stanza, the melody is repeated until the end of the text is reached.

Some melodies start off with a brief 'prelude' sung to the meaningless words ai yao, before the actual words of the lyrics follow (see Exs. 11 and 12). Usually the prelude starts on the lowest pitch in the performance and rises to the highest pitch of the tune. The function of the 'prelude' is to arouse listeners' attention and to lead up to the actual words of the song.

Almost all shaonian melodies use a pentatonic scale based on a succession of major seconds and minor thirds. This scale is widely used in China and figures in numerous genres of Chinese music. In Chinese, its five tones are called gong, shang, jue, zhi and yu, corresponding with do, re, mi, sol and la in European music. Each of these tones can serve as a tonic, resulting in five different modes named after their initial pitches (Du 1995: 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone</th>
<th>Initial Pitch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gong</td>
<td>do re mi sol la do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shang</td>
<td>re mi sol la do re</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jue</td>
<td>mi sol la do re mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhi</td>
<td>sol la do re mi sol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu</td>
<td>la do re mi sol la</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these scales consist of five tones, usually only three of the tones figure as main pitches. Thus, in the zhi mode, the three leading tones are sol, do and re. In the yu mode, the leading tones are la, re and mi. The modes used most commonly in shaonian melodies are shang, zhi and yu.

The pitch range of shaonian melodies is quite large, frequently spanning an octave plus a fifth or more. There may be big leaps within each melody. The most prominent melodic intervals in shaonian are fourths, fifths and octaves. In some cases singers' leaps may even exceed an octave. Given these properties, the singing of shaonian requires considerable vocal skill. At the end of the melody, there is usually a downward slide which signals the end. Some Chinese musicologists refer to this cadence as 'final glissando'.

The tunes of various ethnic groups

The melodies of shaonian can be classified in four categories according to different ethnic groups with which they are primarily associated: 1) Hui and Han, 2) Salar, 3) Bao'an and 4) Tu. Yugur, Dongxiang and Tibetan are believed not to have melodic styles of their own. I will briefly examine each of the four categories.

The Hui of northwest China are believers in Islam. Most of them are descendants of former migrants, such as Arabic, Persian and Central Asian traders who travelled the Silk Road, or Central Asian soldiers who were sent into northwest China by Mongolian rulers in the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368 AD) (Ma Yin 1981: 124). A number of Hui are descendants of Han Chinese who converted to Islam. Generally speaking, Hui are physically
distinguishable from Han Chinese, but they share the same language – Chinese – and the shaonian tunes which both groups sing are identical. Some of the tunes may have been created by Hui, some by Han, but people in the area do not make any such distinction.

The shaonian tunes of Hui and Han are usually in the zhi mode, with sol (tonic), do and re as leading tones. If, in performance, g is the pitch serving as tonic, the three main pitches in the song will be: d1–g1–c2.

Some tunes use only four steps from the zhi scale, namely the three main tones so, do and re, plus la, but they are relatively rare.

Example 10 The first ling of Hezhou (Linxia) (Hui / Han melody). For a translation of the text see Ex. 3.

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Some shaonian tunes of Hui and Han use five tones, albeit with major emphasis on the three main tones plus la, while the occurrence of mi is just ornamental. See Example 11 (overleaf).

Transl. Ex. 11: On Tangwang river sails a ship.
As Niuxin mountain there’s a cave.
In Dongxiang there’s my tempting sweetheart.
In Lanzhou city there’s only me.

唐汪川有一个轮船
中心山有一个洞
东乡里有我的拉心
兰州城有我的啥?
Example 11 The third *ling* of Hezhou (Linxia) (Hui / Han melody).

The Salar have a population of 87,697 and live in Qinghai and Gansu. They are adherents of Islam. Their ancestry has been traced back to 14th century Uzbekistan (Ma Yin 1981: 154). The Salar and Hui who live in adjacent areas share much the same cultural customs.

Salar melodies mainly use the *yu* mode. The steps between subsequent pitches in the melody are smaller than they are in the Han and Hui tunes. Minor third and major second are prominent intervals, resulting in smoother tunes than the rugged ones of the Hui and Han. Ex. 12 shows an antiphonal song performed by a Han Chinese young man and a Salar girl. Before the 1950s, Han Chinese girls used to bind their feet to make them very small, for aesthetic reasons. Salar girls did not follow this practice.
Example 12 The song of the Salar girl.

(М) Salar girls are nice.
But your feet are just too big — what a pity!
(Ф) What is wrong with my big feet?
They gave me such a beautiful gait!

The Bao’an, with a population of 12,212, live in compact communities in Jishishan county in Gansu province. Their religion is Islam. Bao’an melodies are usually in the yu or shang modes. Sometimes the zhi mode is used, albeit with emphasis on the notes la and mi, creating a type of melody different from Hui / Han tunes. Some Bao’an melodies are actually close to Salar melodies: they share an emphasis on the note la, and subsequent intervals in the tunes are not as large as in Hui / Han melodies.

Example 13 Highway, Bao’an melody.
The mountain road is narrow,
Hardly more than a path, zigzagging all the way up to the sky.
My cart has passed this road with difficulty.
Let’s build a highway to change the situation.

The Tu have a population of 191,624 and live mainly in Qinghai province. They engage in agriculture. Their religion is Lamaism. Shaonian melodies of the Tu are in the jǐ and shāng modes, albeit with emphasis on do, re and mi. Do features as the most prominent note, it is always used to end the first phrase. When Tu singers descend from a high mi to a sixth below sol, in a downward phrase, the sound resembles a slide on a violin or cello string. This is a very special feature of Tu melodies. The same sliding figure can be heard in the melodies of Mongolian folk songs, and there may be a common origin for it (bearing in mind that Tu and Mongols speak related languages).

Example 14 Beautiful Flowers. Tu melody.

A bow and three arrows.
No arrow can kill a pair of wild geese.
Fate brough us together, nothing can make us part.
Peonies will ere bloom in the middle of winter!

Three basic kinds of melodies
Apart from regional and ethnic distinctions, singers and musicologists may also classify shaonian melodies according to certain overall musical features. Three categories can be distinguished: jìan yìn 截音 (‘high-pitched melodies’), cāng yìn 苍音 (‘vast melodies’) and píng yìn 平音 (‘plain melodies’). This classification is primarily based on differences in pitch range but also involves distinctions in rhythm.

In Chinese music, one may distinguish two types of metre: you bān 有板 and san bān 散板. Ban refers to ‘beat’ and you bān may be translated as ‘a metre having beats’. San
means ‘come loose’, ‘fall apart’, or ‘not hold together’, and san ban may be rendered into English as ‘a metre losing its beats’ (or ‘having no beats’). Some Western musicologists have assumed that san ban simply has no metre and can be translated as free rhythm (Wang and Zhang 1992: 271). In fact, san ban does have beats, except that they are not uniformly timed. Generally speaking, you ban in Chinese music refers to beats of equal duration, though these can be lengthened or shortened according to the needs of musical expression. In san ban almost every beat has its individual duration, resulting in beats which are not regular (Du 1995:37).

Among the shaonian tunes, those classified as jian yin, (‘high-pitched melodies’) usually have san ban, i.e. an irregular beat, while the other two categories have you ban.

The pitch range of jian yin is quite impressive. The melodies incorporate big leaps which may exceed an octave. The tunes usually consist of irregular beats. Even in those cases where the rhythm is based on you ban, the pulse is not quite regular. High pitches are often drawn out at length: singers demonstrate their special skills by continuing on the highest pitch as long as possible. Only talented performers can sing jian yin well. (Cf. Ex. 10.)

Cang yin (‘vast melodies’) share with jian yin the aspect of a large pitch range, but are rhythmically different. Except for the ‘prelude’ and occasional long drawn-out tones, the tunes rely on you ban, i.e. they have a regular beat. These melodies are easier to sing than jian yin. (Cf. Exs. 11, 12 and 14.)

The pitch range of ping yin (‘plain melodies’) is smaller than that of the other two melodic types. The tunes have a regular beat and there are almost no prolonged notes. The tunes of this kind of shaonian are very similar to those of xiaodiao (‘ditties’, see p. 70), and are the least demanding type in performance. (Cf. Ex. 12.)

‘Improved’ shaonian, and the survival of the genre

The survival of folk song traditions largely depends on the social circumstances. From the 1960s onwards, many historical events have taken place in China which have deeply influenced folk song culture – the socialist educational movement, the Cultural Revolution and the recent economic reforms have all made an impact. People’s lives have changed enormously. With the disappearance of traditional crafts and modes of production, numerous traditions of work songs have gone lost over the past three decades. Only thirty years ago the lumbering songs of northeastern China were a nationally famous genre, but now very few people are left who can sing them. The same goes for the boatmen’s songs of the Yellow River and the Yangtze. Numerous mountain song and xiaodiao traditions have disappeared as a consequence of young people’s desires for change.

Quite apart from all this, many performers now take a derogatory view of Chinese folk song traditions, as do many composers. They look upon the songs as ‘unsophisticated’ and have often felt a need to change and ‘improve’ them. This has resulted in revised lyrics, rearranged melodies, the introduction of new vocal styles derived from pop music or belcanto, and accompaniments written for jazz bands or Western-style orchestras. Over the past two decades, folk song arrangements sung by professional or semiprofessional artists have become so popular that they have often virtually replaced traditional repertoires, especially among the young generation. Throughout China, these new songs continue to marginalize older folk song traditions. Popular radio and TV artists have successfully toured abroad and treated overseas Chinese communities to the new type of folk songs. In almost any record shop in China one can find dozens of recordings of this kind of songs. It will
hardly come as a surprise that few people in China — especially in urban areas — are still familiar with the traditional songs, which are now often judged to be ‘primitive’. In Gansu and Qinghai, many shaonian have fallen victim to the ‘improvements’ of local composers and (semi-) professional singers.

Nevertheless, the older style shaonian have survived. Shaonian festivals have a continuing life of their own, and have even expanded over the last twenty years. Two decades ago, very few people in Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu province, could be heard singing shaonian. But now they have made their way to the city: every weekend, in a park on the banks of the Yellow River, several hundred people — including youngsters — gather to sing shaonian songs. The gathering looks like a small shaonian festival. A veritable shaonian club was set up in Lanzhou last year, and now every night people go there to drink tea, to sing and to listen to the songs.

A taboo subject for scholars

Why has shaonian culture survived while so many other folk song traditions in China have disappeared? This is a question which begs for substantial research. Quite possibly, the functions of shaonian have contributed to their survival.

‘Why do you sing shaonian?’ When I carried out my fieldwork in Gansu and Qinghai I used to ask singers this question. If the respondent was a man, he would say ‘to attract girls’ or ‘to get a girl’. Female singers replied: ‘to meet a friend’ or ‘to enjoy myself’. One male singer from Gansu, Ji Zhengzhua, told me that the singing of just three songs might be enough to win him a woman’s favours. He regarded women’s generous responses as the best possible compliment for his singing. His performances are appreciated in the way in which, apparently, they are meant to be appreciated — as acts of courtship. Though some people sing shaonian for sheer amusement or other purposes, the main purpose of the songs is definitely to attract the opposite sex.

Some 2,000 years ago, the Chinese philosopher Gaozi stated that ‘food and sex are the basic needs which characterize human beings’. He was quoted by Mencius, another philosopher, who disagreed with him on this point (Meng Zi, 1992: 472).

Gaozi’s views are still shared by a vast majority of the Chinese people. But few folk song researchers in contemporary China take account of Gaozi’s views and recognize their validity in folk song culture. Shaonian have been researched by many scholars since the 1920s (Liu Kai 1995: 375), and many of them have acknowledged the great beauty of the lyrics and of the music. But the social functions of the songs have largely remained a taboo subject. In China, traditionally, sex cannot be publicly discussed, and many folk song experts tend to regard bawdy texts and sexually explicit lyrics as indecent. A number of folklorists and musicologists have simply ignored lyrics dealing too openly with sexual activities. Songs like the ones quoted in Exs. 1 and 2 cannot be published in China. Sometimes lyrics are changed and bowdlerized before they are published. For instance, Liu Kai, a folklorist with specialist knowledge on Qinghai, changed the fourth line of Ex. 9 (‘New friend, let’s go to sleep on the brick bed’) to ‘Let the new friend sit down on the brick bed’ (Liu Kai, 1995: 166).2

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2 One Chinese researcher who has fully acknowledged the sexual implications of Shaonian is Yang Ma (currently based at Northern Territory University, Darwin, Australia). He published a major article on erotic folk songs in Ethnomusicology (Yang 1998).
If we do not take into account the actual functions of shaonian, we will not be able to interpret them correctly, or study them in full perspective. Gaozi is surely right in claiming that sex and food are necessary for procreation and survival. In my view, if any progress is to be made, Chinese scholars should pay more attention to Gaozi’s views and should try to bear in mind the actual main functions of shaonian when they carry out their research in the field.

A note about singers, recording dates and places
Exs. 1, 2, 8 were sung by Mr. Li Guizhou, recorded by the author on 9 February 1998 in Wellington, New Zealand. Mr. Li was born in 1950. He is a well-known folk singer of the Hui and lives in Yongqing county in Gansu, where he works as a pharmaceutical doctor at Chuancheng hospital.
Exs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 10 were sung by Mr. Ji Zhengzhe, recorded by the author on 9 February 1998 in Wellington, New Zealand. Mr. Ji was born in 1971. He is a farmer and well-known folk song singer in Yongqing county in Gansu.
Ex. 9 was sung by Miss Tianzhong Kuize, recorded by the author in July 1964 at Qutansi, Ledi county, Qinghai. Miss Tianzhong Kuize is a Tibetan singer who was born in 1947 in Huangzhong county, Qinghai. At the time of the recording, the singer was active as a farmer.
Ex. 11 was sung by Mr. Chen Aiyip, recorded by the author in 1964 in Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu. At that time Mr. Chen, a farmer in Dongxiang, was visiting Lanzhou. Mr. Chen was born in 1945 in Dongxiang county in Gansu. He is a well-known Dongxiang singer. He moved to Xinjiang during the Cultural Revolution.
Ex. 12 was sung by Miss Su Ping, recorded by the author in 1984 in Lanzhou, Gansu. Miss Su Ping was born in Xunhua county, Qinghai, in 1944. She is a Salar singer. At the time of the recording she was a member of the Gansu Provincial Song and Dance Troupe.
Ex. 13 was sung by Mr. Ma Musa, a well-known Bao’an singer from Jishishan county in Gansu. The author recorded the song in 1980 in Beijing, while Mr. Ma Musa was performing there at a music conference.
Ex. 14 was sung by Mr. Yao Shengqian. He was born in 1950 in Huzhu county, Qinghai. Mr. Yao is a well-known singer of the Tu nationality. The author recorded this song in September 1979 in Beijing, while Mr. Yao attended a meeting of folk singers.

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THE EVERYDAY CRIES OF STREET VENDORS IN CHENGDU

Sichuan Street Songs

Emma Zevik & Zou Xiangping
(Sichuan Conservatory of Music)

'The song of the streetman is like an American sandwich. Sometimes the singer adds small things, to make it more savoury, like one adds onions to a sandwich.'

Liu Moyu

This paper presents the outdoor songs of street vendors in Chengdu, Sichuan. The singers are ordinary folks – shoeshine cobbleris, blind fortunetellers, people selling wares, hawking vegetables or offering all kinds of services. The songs are hollered out vocally or tapped out on a piece of metal or wood. What patterns can be discerned in the music? What are the differences between the songs of women and of men? How has the repertoire changed over time? The authors carried out fieldwork in Chengdu in 1996 and interviewed one inhabitant about street songs before 1949. It seems there have been major changes since that time. Songs of the pre-communist era were often based on folk melodies or opera tunes. Today's songs are short, with limited melodic development. Products and services have also changed, leading to the disappearance of entire categories of songs. Many pre-1949 vendors were well-dressed Chengdu residents who catered to their richer customers in cultured singing voices. The city's vendors of today are primarily poor migrants.1

Amidst the sounds of Chengdu, hectic with construction (heavy machinery alongside the hammering of bricks by hand) and traffic (bicycle bells, wooden carts pulled by hand, taxi and bus horns, trucks groaning), the songs of street vendors ring out the little rituals of everyday life. Many Chinese cities have a living tradition of vendor calls, street cries, hollers, and work songs,2 but Sichuan street songs strike us as being unique in a number of ways. Here, we examine the city's street songs from a number of angles and discuss various aspects which have helped to shape the tradition: geography and history, population, and teahouse culture, gender aspects and economic factors. Both of us have spent a good deal of time, independently, traveling and living in villages throughout southwest China. It is certainly possible to hear street calls in Sichuanese villages, notably on market days, and the

1 We gave this paper as a joint presentation at ESEM (European Seminar in Ethnomusicology) in Toulouse, France, in September 1996. We are grateful to ESEM participants for their comments, which have been helpful in preparing the present version. We wish to thank the Sichuan Conservatory of Music for giving us the opportunity to work together in this project. We would like to extend our thanks to Mr. Chen Zhong for his assistance during the interview with Mr. Liu Moyu, Miss Tian Lijuan for her work with interview transcriptions, and Miss Zhong Yuzhang for her help with translation.
2 For an in-depth analysis of Shanghai work songs, see Huang, 1992.
performances can be wonderfully noisy. Yet listening to street songs in the province’s capital strikes us as an altogether unique experience, with its own dynamics and specific circumstances, and we feel that this repertoire merits separate study.

We randomly recorded our Chengdu samples during a six-month period from January through June 1996. Our observations on the tradition began earlier, in September 1995. In addition to our outdoor fieldwork we had the opportunity to interview Mr. Liu Moyu (b. 1932), a performer, editor, and native of Chengdu, who witnessed at first hand — and provided us with extensive examples of — street songs from the pre-liberation period. His songs are an invaluable collection useful for comparison with the current scene.

Survey of materials collected

We recorded 27 audiocassette examples of current Chengdu street songs, along with 18 examples on videotape. In addition to this, 25 examples of pre-1949 street songs were provided by Liu Moyu in a videotaped interview (June 1996). The following chart shows the various categories of vendors’ songs which we collected in our sample. The only activity involving female vendors (as song performers) is the selling of newspapers. All other categories listed refer to male vendors. The performers range in age from 20 to over 60 years old.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services for Sale</th>
<th>Food Products for Sale</th>
<th>Items for sale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning out cars</td>
<td>Sweets</td>
<td>Newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharpening knives, scissors</td>
<td>Soft bean curd</td>
<td>Rat poison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairing pots</td>
<td>Small eggs</td>
<td>Paper poison (for ritual offerings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning shoes</td>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>Flutes (metal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-making cotton quilts</td>
<td>Ice cream</td>
<td>Flutes (wood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junk dealers: bottles</td>
<td>Red peppers</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junk dealers: paper, books</td>
<td>Fried bread</td>
<td>Toys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junk dealers: furniture</td>
<td>Sticky rice</td>
<td>Mops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning bikes</td>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>Clay pots and stoves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ‘songs’ range from brief rhythmical cries to short melodic phrases, usually carrying some words. We conveniently use the term ‘street songs’ for any type of sonic performance accompanying the activities listed. Eight of the samples recorded on audiocassette in 1996 are actually instrumental performances, involving no vocal action. They are percussive rhythms, tapped out on the tool(s) which the vendor uses in his work. These non-vocal ‘songs’ ring out as clearly as the vocalized calls and their functions are largely the same — to draw the attention of customers. Everyone recognizes the shoeshine man and the sweets vendor from the distinctive rhythms and timbres of their percussive sounds. One of our favourites in this category is the ‘ding ding dang’ peddler. ‘Ding ding dang’ is a sweet that is sold by the piece. The candy comes in large blocks and the vendor carries a metal chisel and hammer with which he slices off bits and pieces from the block. When strolling along through the streets the vendor uses these same tools to announce his arrival, banging out a distinctive rhythm ‘ding ding dang’ and making his presence known to street crowds even before they catch sight of him. See the pictures and musical Ex. 1.

For an impression of some vocal songs, see musical Exs. 2 and 3 (selling mops), 4 (selling earthenware pots and stoves), 5 (waste recovery) and 7 (repairing mattresses).

Ex. 1. Percussion rhythm of a seller of sweets (produced with metal chisel and hammer).
The authors' personal perspectives on street songs

ZX: Although I was born and brought up in Chengdu, I didn't take notice of the city's street songs for many years - maybe because they were such an ordinary thing. Last year American researcher Emma Zeltz came to our school. We taught some classes together and she often talked to me about Chengdu's street songs. This was the first time I met an outsider who had taken notice of them. It made me realize that a native can easily lose touch with certain elements of his own culture. For me the ordinary and characteristic outdoor sounds had become a kind of natural musical backdrop. I was reminded of the time when I was a child, from around 1955 to 1965. In that period I heard many kinds of street songs, e.g. songs to sell poison for masquerades, calls produced by junk dealers or by restaurant waiters. In the past, people did far more work outdoors than today, and there was more singing to accompany it. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), it became less common to hear street songs. Personal services and vendors nearly disappeared from the streets because of the strict regulations and special conditions of that time. The songs gradually returned in the course of the 1980s.

EZ: My first evening in Chengdu was entrancing. Wandering the streets near my new home, I was surrounded by all the sounds around me. Street life in most Chinese cities, as I quickly learned, is lively and hectic, as people young and old, adolescents and families, socialize and shop. But that first night, amidst the clatter of wooden carts, the blaring of bicycle bells and taxi horns, the hammering of bricks by construction workers, the moaning and groaning of tracks and buses, I was enthralled by the sounds of the wandering street vendors. It is an experience that continues to enchant me.

One late afternoon in 1995 I arrived in Chengdu from Beijing, after making a presentation at the 4th International Conference on Women. I had come to Sichuan Conservatory from Boston as a visiting professor for one year to teach composition and musicology. I was born in 1957 in a small New England town. In many ways, adjusting to city life has been much more difficult for me than adjusting generally to life in China. No doubt one of the most helpful people in a growing circle of friends and colleagues has been and continues to be composer Zuo Xiangning. Mr. Zuo was the very first Conservatory faculty member to introduce himself to me. I remember clearly his kind welcome as I answered the knock on my door that first week in Chengdu. He had come by to meet me because he was to be the interpreter for the composition seminar lectures I would be giving. He was born in Chengdu in 1951 and is a graduate of the Conservatory. Now, he teaches there as a member of the Composition Department. Since urban housing is limited, most of Chinese city life takes place on the street. This is why street-song culture is so much alive and why it forms such an important part of the urban soundscape. Zuo Xiangning and I have wondered this hectic, vibrant city collecting street songs.

Ex. 2. Call of a seller of mops.

Ex. 3 and 4. Selling mops and earthenware pots and stoves.

Ex. 5. Waste recovery.

Chengdu and its street-song culture in history

Chengdu, with a 2,000-year-old history, is the capital of Sichuan Province. Rulers of several dynasties have made Chengdu the capital during their reigns, turning the city into a focal point of politics, economic activities and cultural life in southwest China. With a population
of 9.1 million in 1990, and a total area of 12,39 square kilometres, Chengdu is made up of seven districts and twelve counties. The entire region is rich in labour, and in the rural villages surrounding Chengdu mechanized farming is still uncommon, machinery being rare and often improvised. The dense bamboo forests of Sichuan are home to the endangered panda. The Yangzi River forms part of the border of the province. Towering mountains and western highlands isolate the Sichuan Basin, where Chengdu is located. Protected from extremes of climate by the highlands surrounding it and watered by the many rivers that flow through it, the Sichuan Basin is one of China’s richest agricultural regions, producing rice, wheat, rapeseed, silkworm and vegetables among a dizzying array of crops. The commonly understood translation of the name Sichuan 蜀 is ‘four rivers’, though its original meaning is ‘four roads’, an allusion to the Kuizhou, Yizhou, Zizhou and Lizhou roads located on the east, west, south and north sides of the Sichuan Basin.

The development of industry in this region is an economic priority of the government. Steel production, household appliances and vehicles have been emphasized in recent economic reforms, as has free enterprise. For many years, farm production was organized in collective units armed by large groups of peasants. In the early 1980s, the government heralded economic reforms and, as part of this opening, dismantled the communes, restored the land to families and established free markets. All the land is owned by the government and distributed according to family need. After government quotas are satisfied, farmers are allowed to sell their remaining crops on the free market. These economic reforms have had a major influence on the resurgence of street-song culture in Chengdu. Nearly all vendors singing street songs in present-day Chengdu are displaced farmers from the surrounding countryside, migrants who come to the big city with hopes of foraging for job opportunities that often simply don’t exist.
Before 1949, street songs in Chengdu were more closely linked to the city’s performing arts traditions than they are today, and were arguably more artistic. Urban entertainment with its strong local customs ranged from such traditions as Sichuan opera to Qingyin folk singing, and from yangqin (dulcimer) music to teahouse performances of storytelling and folk music. All these genres bore an impact on the street songs and were presumably influenced by them in turn. Humour and wit of the Sichuan people were salient features of the street songs of those days. The street vendors who walked through the lanes and back streets selling snacks or offering services would sing or cry out to the city residents (Chen 1991).

The more dignified vendors, who sold deep-fried doughcakes, rice cakes, dandan noodles and other snacks, were neatly dressed, attractive, clever and fluent. Most importantly, the street vendors of that period had beautiful voices. They were usually city residents and primarily hawked their wares in the wealthy section of Chengdu, hoping to attract rich customers. That old part of Chengdu, called Shaocheng or ‘small city’, is a city within the city. Situated in the western part of Chengdu, Shaocheng was established in 1677 during the Qing Dynasty, and was inhabited by Manchu and Mongolian people. They were the privileged residents and their ancestors were called Baqi or Qiren. These people were mostly soldiers, originally sent to Chengdu by the rulers of the Qing Dynasty for military purposes. Eventually they settled down in the city to make a living for their families. In 1862, there were 4,500 families with over 13,000 people. When the Qing Dynasty was overthrown in the early 1900s, Shaocheng became the place for Manchu, Mongolian and Han people to live in compact communities (Zhang 1996).

The urban street songs of today’s Chengdu differ in many ways from those of early

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3 Sichuan Qingyin 四川清音, a folk song genre with accompaniment of percussion and strings. It first emerged in the period 1736–1820, during the Qing dynasty. The performers are women, who accompany themselves with wooden sticks (left hand) and a bamboo drum (played with the right hand). The supporting ensemble consists of pipa, erhu and other instruments.
Republican times, both musically and in terms of social setting. The songs of today are short, with limited melodic development. By contrast, the songs from pre-1949 were often based on folk melodies or opera tunes. The products and services offered by outdoor entrepreneurs have changed in the course of time, leading to the disappearance of entire categories of songs. Many pre-1949 vendors were well-dressed Chengdu residents who catered to their richer customers in cultured singing voices. Today’s vendors are mainly poor migrants from the countryside who try to eke out a daily living among the city’s dense population. Though the standard of living was much lower and people were relatively poorer in the old days, street vendors and other day labourers of that period were able to make a better living than they can today. While the overall standard of living has risen enormously over the past two decades, Chengdu’s vendors are clearly much poorer today than they were in the past.

Three major aspects

Sichuan street songs seem to be unique in a number of ways. We will discuss three aspects of the local tradition in some detail: geography, population density and teahouse culture. All three of them have influenced and shaped street-song culture in important ways.

First, there is the area’s geographic isolation and self-supporting economy. Because of its position in the centre of the Sichuan Basin and with an abundance of high-quality agricultural produce, Chengdu is a prime location for the exchange of goods – specifically the buying and selling of fresh produce. Other large cities in China, like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, are generally acknowledged as centres of high cultural and intellectual life, but do not have the wealth of fresh produce that is available in and around Chengdu. Correspondingly, they seem to lack the vibrant street-song activities that echo the small rituals of everyday life in Chengdu. To our experience, not even two other large and important cities in the southwest region of China, Kunming, the capital of Yunnan, and Chongqing, just east of Chengdu, have quite so much activity in terms of vendor calls and hollers as Chengdu.

The high population density of the city is a second and vital factor in the sustenance of street-song culture. What effects can be seen from Chengdu’s ‘anthill’ environment? Daily life in the city is full of odd and surprising juxtapositions: labourers with hand tools working side-by-side with operators of heavy construction machinery, wooden carts jammed next to transport trucks and vehicles, bicycle bells ringing out above blaring taxi horns. These contrasting activities create a ‘polyphonic tapestry’ which combines aural with visual and kinesthetic sensations. In Chengdu, we hear and feel the layers of sounds moving along their own individual currents. The urban soundscape with its everyday noises of people, traffic and construction work propels and even amplifies the street songs.

It seems likely that the everyday noise level is much higher today than it was before 1949, forcing peddlers to holler and shout more loudly in order to be heard. The increase in population density also seems to have had a crucial impact on the songs. In our view it not only serves as a backdrop for the calls and hollers, but perhaps even as a foundation on which the vendor songs flourish and without which they cannot exist. Consider Beijing, far less crowded than Chengdu though it has a larger population. During several trips made in 1995-1997 we observed (independently) that street songs can be heard in Beijing, but mainly in back streets. By contrast, the street songs of Chengdu are a thread running through the fabric of daily life throughout the city. We noticed the same during visits to Kunming,
Chongqing and Xi'an – cities nowhere near as crowded as Chengdu, and not as rich in terms of street song culture.

Mr. Liu Moyu offered a comparative assessment of the musical quality of Chengdu street songs. 'The large population has negative effects on the street songs. Many of today's vendors come from the distant countryside, partly from poor areas. They are living in poor conditions. Their rhythms and melodies are weak, not so appealing as they were in the past. Listen to the vendor songs we are hearing outside [right now]. They are not as good as the old ones. Some vendors try to peddle fake merchandise, so in fact the entire tradition is decaying in quality now.'

It will be interesting to see what effects demographic changes may have on street song culture in the years to come. With the one-child policy instituted in 1980 there will be fewer vigorous young workers to support a large, ageing population. But no doubt Chengdu will continue to be quite crowded.

Teahouse culture
A third factor influencing street songs is Chengdu's teahouse culture. People throughout its history have spent countless hours at the teahouses, sipping tea all afternoon, socializing and being entertained by a veritable passing parade of storytellers, musicians, acrobats, folk operas as well as peddlers and small-service vendors. The relaxed atmosphere at the teahouses appears to reflect something of the good-humoured and amiable character
traditionally associated with people in Sichuan. Typical Sichuanese wit can be sensed in the street songs, too. The area’s geographic isolation may have been one of the forces which helped shape the special character of the Sichuanese.⁴

The teahouses were shut down during the Cultural Revolution, but with China’s open-door policy in the 1980s, Chengdu experienced a renaissance of teahouses, with new enterprises sprouting up all across the city. We believe this revival of teahouse culture is the primary reason for the parallel comeback of street songs. The songs were almost completely eliminated during the Cultural Revolution. This gap in the tradition makes it even more worthwhile to compare the old-style street songs to the vendor calls of today. We hope to address this subject at some length in a future article.

Some gender issues
As we noted earlier, the only examples we encountered in fieldwork of street songs performed by women were songs produced by newspaper vendors. During our research in 1996 we found women in a variety of vendor occupations in Chengdu but did not manage to observe them producing calls or hollers. It is difficult to draw any concrete conclusions about the role of women in street song culture on the basis of our limited observations. It may be that the female vendors we met did not participate in the tradition, or perhaps we simply did not have enough opportunities to watch and record them. In any event, there are clearly far more male vendors than female in Chengdu.

⁴ Chengdu residents have had their share of war and atrocities, but they like to remind visitors that Sichuan was somewhat more protected from wars and struggles by its geography than certain other parts of China.
One occupation filled predominantly by women is that of bus-ticket sellers. This job entails standing in the doorway of the bus and hollering out to nearby crowds, inviting pedestrians to ride the bus. We have not examined the ticket sellers' hollers in much detail, but they would certainly merit some study. The performers' voices are clear, strong, loud, and focused on Chengdu destinations and landmarks, and the hollers, like all of the calls sampled for this project, are in Sichuan dialect. A comparative study of bus-ticket sellers from several cities in China might yield fascinating information, based on the characteristics of local geography and dialect linguistics. Indeed, a comparative study of street songs across the country based on dialect differences could yield interesting results.

Liu Moyu told the following story about traditional outdoor occupations of women in Chengdu before 1949. ‘Before Liberation women could not leave the family home until they were married. After marriage they were allowed to go out to work. Most of them would be selling eggs

A bedding vendor with his wooden bow.
or corn. We had some middle-aged women who came to the city to offer their services as dental cleaners. At that time there was a popular belief that one’s teeth could be infested with worms or insects. So there were all these women offering to clean people’s teeth. They carried a well-decorated bag and were very well-dressed for this trade. But of course the whole thing was a bit of a fraud. To earn more money, some of them would even put some worms in a water bowl, [pretending that they had removed them from people’s mouths].

Changes in repertoire

Obviously, in today’s street-song culture, no songs to advertise teeth cleaning can be heard. With improvements in education and health, this particular job does not exist any longer. One can think of many other examples of street songs (and outdoor jobs) which have disappeared due to social and economic changes. Liu Moyu: ‘There used to be a song for vending wicks for oil lamps. The people who sold the wicks were nearly always blind. The buyers would take the wicks home to worship their Buddha with it. Nowadays people have electricity, so the Buddha is cheated [of his wick], and the wick is no longer sold by any street peddlers, but is used as an element in herbal medicine to cure eye diseases.’

Another interesting example of changing trends is the improved position of bedding vendors. Liu Moyu: ‘Nowadays these vendors are thriving more than they did before Liberation, when cotton was plentiful and within everyone’s reach. After 1949 it became controlled merchandise, like a number of other products. Every citizen needed to hand in some coupons to purchase it. The quilt became an item of very limited availability for ordinary families.’ Today’s bedding vendors seem to do a thriving business. With the booming economy more people can afford to buy expensive goods, and the reforms have released controlled merchandise items.

The sounds of the bedding vendors are among the most intriguing we encountered. Customers will bring their old quilts to a bedding vendor who will refurbish the flattened quilt. The old quilt’s cotton batting is pulled apart and refuffed on a large spinning wheel. Then, on a bed-size wooden frame, the cotton fluffing is re-woven into a strong quilt. The vendor uses an 8-foot wooden bow and hammer to do the fluffing. This tool produces an incredible percussive rhythm and timbre, distinctive throughout the neighbourhood. Like wandering minstrels, these vendors typically set up their frame and spinning wheel and spend one or two days in a particular spot, then move to another place in the city. (See the pictures and musical Exs. 6 and 7.)

Ex. 6. The fluffing of cotton. Lower sounds: beating of cotton with hammer; higher sounds: fluffing of cotton with wooden bow. High and low sounds alternate by chance.

Ex. 7. A bedding vendors’ call.
Our report can only offer a limited impression of Chengdu’s fascinating street song activities. Many aspects of the tradition merit further study. Meanwhile, the city’s vendors earn our respect, as artists in their own right and as a living testimony of local people’s resilience and enterprising spirit. The Chinese have endured war, famine, and tremendous cultural upheaval, yet in numerous meaningful ways, they are able to connect to a past that enriches and sustains them. In Sichuan, the rich and vibrant street-song culture is one lens through which to view such vital connections.

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Call for Papers

Performing Arts of Asia / 6th annual CHIME Conference, Leiden, 23-27 August, 2000

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In this meeting we look beyond performance as a ‘self-contained act’ towards what performance essentially constitutes: an on-going and dynamic interaction with the environment. The role of the environment is emphasized: the audiences who attend, the patrons who protect, and the people who organize and support, politically or otherwise, the arts. The theme at the heart of this conference is how they influence performances and performers, and are in turn influenced by them.


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 IMPRESSIONS FROM THE 18TH CENTURY BOOK
YANGZHOU HUAFANG LU

Storytelling in Yangzhou

Lucie Olivova
(Charles University, Prague)

In the eighteenth century, the dramatist and song composer Li Dou wrote a book on the sights, culture, and people of his native Yangzhou, one of the most flourishing cities of Jiangsu at that time. His lengthy report, essentially a guide-book supplemented with quotations from poetry and colourful anecdotes, was called ‘Reminiscences from the Pleasure Boats of Yangzhou’ (Yangzhou huafang lu). In some chapters, Li writes about the performing arts, including storytelling. These parts of the book may actually be among the most systematic and detailed accounts of storytelling which have survived from imperial times. Although storytelling is never the main topic of Li’s account, his observations and remarks on this subject nevertheless form a unique source of information. Men of letters like Li usually considered storytelling vulgar, and they seldom gave it much attention in their notes and memoirs. Yangzhou huafang lu offers rare and fascinating glimpses of a major performing art as it existed two centuries ago. Some genres of storytelling described in Li’s book are still performed in Yangzhou today.

Yangzhou storytelling has an uninterrupted history of three hundred years, and is thus one of the oldest traditional performing arts in China. The earliest storyteller we know of so far is Liu Jingting 柳敬亭 (1587–ca.1670) who performed in the pinghua 詩話 style (see Wei Ren & Wei Minghua 1985: 261n). Liu Jingting’s background, however, was not that of an ordinary entertainer. He initially served as a minor military official in the Nan-Ming army, and made contacts with gentry. After the defeat of the Nan-Ming court, he tried his luck at storytelling in Yangzhou. He learned it by imitating other performers. Eventually he found a tutor in another town. He returned to Yangzhou in his advanced years, and became very popular among a circle of storytellers who focused on the local history of the Sui and Tang dynasties. Some of Liu Jingting’s occasional poems have survived. In addition to him, we know the names of only two other pinghua storytellers who were Liu’s contemporaries – Kong Yunxiao 孔雲霄 and Han Guihu 韓圭湖 (Li Dou 1977: 257). Notes on Liu Jingting can be found in Lao Yu’s 老余 ‘Various Records of a Plank Bridge’ (Banqiao zaizi) and in Zhang Dai’s 張岱 ‘Dream Recollections of the Tao’an Studio’ (Tao’an mengyi).

The lack of information about Yangzhou storytelling in the past is primarily due to the general reluctance of men of letters – who were the ones to jot down observations on various topics – to comment on an art as ‘vulgar’ as storytelling, let alone to describe it in any detail. In this respect, Li Dou forms an exception. Important information about Yangzhou storytelling can be found in his ‘Reminiscences from the Pleasure Boats of Yangzhou’ (Yangzhou huafang lu 揚州畫舫錄). This book, written over a period of thirty years, and
Street entertainers in Qing dynasty China. This drawing and the illustrations on the following pages are taken from a ten-leaf album compiled by Cen Zhong Ling alias Feng Xiang. The original document can be found in the library of the National Gallery’s Department of Asian Arts in Prague (inventory number Vm 450-1171/473).

completed in 1793, was criticized by contemporaries for dealing with trifling matters. Li Dou (7–1817), a shengyuan 生員 degree holder, was an educated, well-travelled gentleman who made his living as an editor, dramatist, and song composer. In his spare time, he worked on a lengthy account of the culture and sights of Yangzhou, which described the various town quarters and captured in detail the city’s leisure life. In accord with his interests, he paid much attention to the performing arts, including storytelling. (Chapters 2, 5, 9 of his book deal with the performing arts: notes on storytelling are mainly in chapter 11.)

A description of pleasure boats
Among authentic historic accounts of storytelling, Li Dou’s may well be the most systematic one, although storytelling never became the principle topic of his writing, not even in ch. 11 of Yangzhou Huafeng Lu. This chapter describes the main entertainment district Hongqiao 紅橋 (‘Rainbow-bridge district’), where ‘decorated barges’, or pleasure boats, served as popular vehicles. Though Li Dou structured the contents of his book mainly topographically, he tends to pay attention to specific topics which he brings up. Thus, in the chapter in question, he describes all kinds of pleasure boats – e.g. lantern boats, flower boats, floating brothels, and song-boats – and he lists what food, drink, and entertainment was to be had. On the whole, the foremost forms of entertainment aboard these boats were: enjoying the company of prostitutes, listening to singing and storytelling, and playing chess (yi奕).

Song boats waited under a shed before passenger-boats arrived. Then, song-boats strove against stream, and passenger-boats strove downstream, making mutual exchange of civilities possible.

Thus opens the passage about song-boats (Li Dou 1977: 255). Li Dou then names eight musical genres which were played on these boats. Four of these, namely qingchhang 清唱,

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1 To become an administrative official, one had to pass three rounds of written examinations, which were held once a year or – at the highest level – once every three years. Shengyuan was the degree which could be obtained in the first round. It granted the holder a certain social recognition and the right to participate in the next round of the examinations, but it provided no access to any official posts.
played on these boats. Four of these, namely qingchang 演唱, xiaoguo 小歌, duibai 對白, and pinghua 話話, can be labelled ‘storytelling’ according to modern Chinese classifications. It seems that the audience favoured most of all the qingchang genre, and Li Dou, being a song composer, dwells upon it. Qingchang had a fairly rich musical accompaniment, and the singing techniques were the same as in the kunqu 小曲 theatre. (The Chinese term for storytelling: quyi 曲藝 [literally ‘art of singing’] is obviously more adequate than story-‘telling’.) Li explains about the musical instruments, and then proceeds to list various schools of singing techniques, and musicians and singers. Many of these singers are also mentioned elsewhere in the book as actors. He gives the name of the founder of each school, and records who his students and followers were, but he often provides little more than names. There is no explanation of what was typical for each of the schools. In his time, presumably, no such explanations were needed, but today his lists present a problem. Fortunately, he also tells some anecdotes from celebrities’ lives. These will be discussed in the second part of this article.

**About various genres and performance rules**

The other genre which Li describes in detail is pinghua. Pinghua and xianci 委曲 are the two major storytelling genres in Yangzhou today. Traditionally, most storytellers performed both forms, and pinghua and xianci naturally influenced one another. Unlike most quyi genres in China, pinghua and xianci emphasize the spoken word. Pinghua, also known as pingci 話曲 or shuoshu 説書, is purely spoken, with a frequent use of classical verse shi 詩 or fu 賦.

The introduction is always a poem, and the main section of the story is inlaid with poems which are used for direct speech or for detailed descriptions of a character or setting. The poetry is recited, not sung. But poems are not indispensable to a performance. They serve rather to embellish certain episodes (Bødahl 1993: 134, and 1996: 140–145).

The storyteller, a man or a woman, speaks in several colours and tones of voice, in order to distinguish the narrator and the various characters. There is the ‘distinguished style’ fengkou 方口 (‘square mouth’), and the ‘emotional’ (unreserved) pronunciation yuanqou 圆口 (‘round mouth’). During the performance, the story will shift between guanbai 官白 (public talk), which is employed for dialogues, and biaobai 表白 (private talk), used for everything except dialogues, e.g. for the narrator’s descriptions and comments (Bødahl 1991: 138, and 1996: 83–85, 97–98). On the technical level, there are five voice techniques (kouji 口技) for basic reciting. Experienced storytellers used to teach these techniques to their young apprentices in teahouses during morning hours. The most difficult technique is called tuigongshu 推功書. It means delivering a very long passage at great speed. Other vocal techniques are imitation of emotions (laughter, weeping, etc.), or of bird song and other animal sounds. Li Dou names five storytellers who excelled in bird song. One of them, Jing Tianzhang 井天掌, would even compete with birds upon the request of boat passengers (Li Dou 1977: 259).

During a performance, the storyteller sits at a desk, with a folding fan and a small jade or wooden cube called zhīyu 止語 (talk-stopper). He uses the zhīyu to hit the desk at the beginning of a session and, later, a few times during the session to create tension (Bødahl
The fan is the most visible requisite, serving not only as an actual fan, but as any illusive object. The storyteller may have still other requisites, e.g. a teapot or a handkerchief, but there are usually no more than a few items. For expression he makes use of fine, stylized hand gestures, turns his head, and fixes his eyes all around. One can still witness the distinctive, elaborate body language of Yangzhou storytellers today.

Since the late Ming, Yangzhou storytelling has observed four basic rules: xi, yan, ping, and shi. Firstly, dialogue, comments, and descriptions are so detailed as to bring a situation, person, or object vividly alive in the listeners' imagination (xi 練). Secondly, the storyteller attends to the core line of the story, in spite of many interwoven secondary story threads and digressions (yan 彈). Thirdly, he examines the psychology of his heroes and states his opinion about who is right and who is wrong (ping 評). Fourthly, the telling is free from abstractions and accurate (shi 實) (Wei Ren 1981: 9, 10). Beyond these habitual four rules, there are other characteristic features, such as the ever-present humoristic tone. Loosely related, straightforward jokes are included in the form of digressions (Bördahl 1994: 39). A slow tempo of narration is also typical, with the story stretched and details emphasized. Naturally, a very distinctive feature of all the above-mentioned genres is the Yangzhou dialect, generally considered to be very pleasing to the ear. In the past, plenty of local popular or slang expressions, sometimes shortlived, and often no longer intelligible to present-day audiences, were used (Su Shangmen 1980: 360). In eighteenth century China, Yangzhou was reportedly the place where local-dialect storytelling flourished most (Wei Ren 1984: 150).

Xianci – sometimes referred to as tanci 彈詞, the general term for stories narrated with alternating songs, music, and prose – developed from pingshu toward the end of the Ming dynasty. The storyteller speaks and sings, accompanying himself on a three-stringed plucked lute called sanxian 三弦. But singing is rare in this genre, and the song lyrics contain only descriptions. Direct speech, as it occurs in the narrative, is never included in the lyrics. There are very few historic records left about xianci. In fact, in chapter 11 of Yangzhou huafang lu, xianci is mentioned only briefly: the blind Wang Jianming 王建明 is praised as a master of the genre, and another performer, Gu Hanzhang 顧翰章, is praised as the one ranking next to him. We are also told that Gu Hanzhang had the music for his songs written by a certain Jiang Xinshe (Li Dou 1977: 257). By the eighteenth century, it became habitual in xianci performances for two or even three persons to perform a swift dialogue (duibai 對白). In the same period, the musical accompaniment was extended to include the pear-shaped lute pipa (Zhongguo da baike quanshu, Xiqu quyi 1983: 530). Duibai is the term which Li Dou uses for this genre.

2 Talk-stoppers are used for similar purposes, in Chinese education, in Buddhist and Daoist sermons, and in other circumstances. The objects in question carry different names, depending on the context of use. In education, they are referred to as 'admonishing rulers' (jiechi 戒尺), in Buddhism as 'wakening rods' (xingmu 開木), in Daoism as 'commanding tablets' (lingpai 令牌).
The so-called Yangzhou ballads (qingqu) were performed, from beginning to end, as songs with instrumental accompaniment. In Yangzhou huafang lu, the term xiaoqu 小曲 (or xiaochang 小唱, literally ‘minor songs’) was used to distinguish these ballads from daqu 大曲, i.e. from the airs of the opera genre kunqu. Xiaoqu originated in the eighteenth century among boat people on the Yangzi and Huai rivers. The singers sang these ballads in the streets in a straightforward manner, without any theatrical elements added. They were often hired to play in kunqu opera orchestras. Nowadays, about two hundred ballads of this kind are known.

As for the term qingqu 清曲, it did not emerge as a name for the ballad genre until the 1930s, when a more sophisticated stream of amateurs, who used to play for pleasure at home, joined the tradition. These people added the other qin to the already accustomed four-stringed fiddle sihu (or two-stringed fiddle erhu) and pipa to accompany their singing (Gong Fu 1957: 1-4).

The content of the stories
Most topics were based on historical, detective, and amorous novels. Today, twenty-eight recorded pinghua texts are extant (seven historical, seven detective, three buddhist, and one contemporary topic) (Su Shangmen 1980: 379). Historical topics were the most popular ones. Good storytellers must have had an excellent knowledge of their topics. There is actually a story to illustrate this:

When Xu Guangru 徐廣如 started out as a pinghua storyteller no one came to hear him. He went back to the inn and slapped his own face. An old man came in and asked what was the matter. Xu explained that his technique was poor and that he would kill himself. ‘Why don’t you let me hear you?’ said the old man, whereupon Xu performed. The old man listened, and then smiled: ‘If you are willing to wait for three years, I guarantee that your technique will be the best in the empire’. Thereafter Xu served the old man, who had him study the history of the Han and Wei dynasties. After three years had passed, the old man said: ‘You are ready now’. This is why Xu’s reciting was so accomplished and refined, and regarded highly even by men of letters (Li Dou 1977: 258).

Li Dou writes that there were numerous stories, or story cycles. According to him, the following ones were performed in a masterly manner:

| Wu Tianxu’s | 呂大緒 | Sangzou zhi | 三國志 | [Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms]. |
| Xu Guangru’s | 徐廣如 | Dong Han | 東漢 | [Eastern Han dynasty]. |
| Wang Deshan’s | 王德山 | Shaihu ji | 水浒記 | [Water Margin]. |
| Gao Jingong’s | 高景公 | Wu mei tu | 五美圖 | [Five Beauties’ Strategy]. |
| *Pe Tianyu’s | 佘天玉 | Qingfeng zha | 清風鶴 | [Qingfeng Lock]. |
| Fang Shannian’s | 房山年 | Yu qingting | 玉麴鶴 | [Jade Dragonfly]. |
| Cao Tianheng’s | 曹天衡 | Shan e tu | 善惡圖 | [Strategies of Good and Evil]. |
| Gu Jinzhang’s | 郭君章 | Jing nana gushi | 鏡花故事 | [Stories of Restoring Order]. |
| *Zou Bixian’s | 尤必顯 | Feituan zhuans | 飛鵲傳 | [Tale of a Braggart]. |
| *Chen Si (the Liar) 陳四 | 鄭州話 | Yangzhou hua | [Yangzhou slang]. |

(Li Dou 1977: 257 - 258)

3 ‘Jingnana’ usually refers to a historical episode during the reign of the Ming Emperor Jianwen, when the capital was taken by the Emperor’s uncle, who later on usurped the throne. Nevertheless, according to the pinghua scholar Fei Li 樊力, this story refers to an episode from the Northern Song, about the general Yang Fei who fought the Jurchen. On Fei Li, see Börj算了 1996: 66-67.
Titles in this list marked with an asterisk refer to original stories with a contemporary topic. They form a special group which stands out of the classical repertory. The cycle ‘Qingfeng Lock’ embroiders on a tragic story based on reality, about an ordinary young girl. Li Dou writes that the author Pu Tianyu was annoyed with stories and plots well-known to the audience, and decided to add a story of his own. Apart from creating a new narrative, Pu Tianyu went still further in breaking accepted rules. The main character of his story is a low-class criminal, and throughout the story, Pu Tianyu mocks the gentry. Another well known storyteller, Zou Bixian, came up with ‘The Tale of a Braggart’, about a self-made nouveau riche. His text is no longer extant, but the story has survived to the present day in the form of a novel based on it (Su Shangmen 1980: 375). In this story about eighteenth century life, the gentry is again ridiculed. ‘The Tale of a Braggart’ became extremely popular and was still performed during the Tongzhi era (1862–1874). Zou Bixian, whose short biography is in chapter 9 of Yangzhou huafang lu (Li Dou 1977: 199), is credited as the author of both ‘The Tale of a Braggart’ and ‘Yangzhou Slang’. Nevertheless, in most cases, contemporary events and anecdotes were inserted into a traditional story cycle and presented as lengthy digressions (shuwaishu 番外書), rather than shaped into separate stories in the storyteller’s repertoire. Quite probably, such digressions were normally created by the actual performer.

About performers
The list quoted above gives the names of ten performers. It referrrs mainly to artists active before Li Dou’s time. But this list is followed by another one, which gives the names of the ten most popular pinghua performers in Li Dou’s time. In alphabetic order: Chen Dashan 陳達三, Chen Tiangong 陳天恭, Chen Yaoting 陳耀廷, Ni Zhaofang 倪兆芳, Tao Jingzhang 陶景章, Wang Chaogan 王朝幹, Wang Jingshan 王景山, Xie Shouzi 謝壽子, Xue Jiahong 薛家洪, and Zhang Potou 張破頭 (Li Dou 1977: 258).

In his book, Li Dou enjoyed describing peculiar characters. At times he jotted down facts which most modern Chinese scholars tend to judge irrelevant or improper and which they usually ignore. But these facts are valuable social testimonies. The section on Pu Tianyu is
an example of this. In modern sources this section is usually quoted in abridged form, deleting the first and third paragraphs. But the notes about Pu Tianyu deserve to be shown in full. Here is a complete translation:

His right hand was shorter and twisted, so he was nicknamed Pizi [a fist / to give a blow]. He lost his parents as a child, and started begging in the town, sleeping in back lanes. When he had grown up, a woman from the neighbourhood wanted to find him a wife. Pizi was terrified, but she insisted on her own reliability. One day, she told him the wedding date and place were fixed, but he thought it was just a joke. On the wedding day he was nowhere to be found. The matchmaker was perplexed, and had to use many tricks to bring him around. Finding the place full of people and the air scented, he had no other choice but to marry. From then on, he stopped begging, and began to work sweeping the streets. Then the old woman who ran a teahouse on the southern side of Diaqiao-bridge, asked him to assist at gambling. He worked well, and after some time, he finally started accumulating money of his own.

His neighbour had a nephew – a pinghua-teller who practised at her house every day. For a long period of time, Pizi used to come and listen. Pinghua, he thought, was not difficult to learn, but he did not like the topics familiar to all. And so, he created 2 story of his own based on a true incident. He renamed the main character Piwu, and the setting Qingfeng lock. He composed the text in moments of inspiration, trained his voice and restructured the story. It was about a young girl from the town who had recently committed suicide. Everybody knew about her, and when they heard the story being retold, they were moved and delirious. Pizi then became the master of this specific performance.

He was quite fat. He used to spit, and, above anything else, he loved to sleep. Furthermore, he was good at imitating laughter. He ridiculed rules and admonitions. His primary intention was to make jokes. In old age, he bestowed gifts on poor people. Jin Zongting wrote his biography.4 (Li Dou 1977: 205)

It is worth noting that several storytellers whom Li Dou describes in detail do not stem from families of professional storytellers. Pu Tianyu was originally a roamer who begged for food. He used to listen to other people’s storytelling and learned from listening. Still other storytellers were shengyuan degree holders who eventually turned to pinghua. Very likely, it was on purpose that Li Dou wrote about individuals with unusual backgrounds. He based his portrait of Yangzhou primarily on an endless string of anecdotes and short biographies – it seems to be the main compositional principle of his book. He consciously looked for bizarre and amusing incidents from people’s lives, and sometimes recorded unique details. Here is another biography:

Big Song 大松 and little Song 小松 were brothers, originally from an honourable Zhejiang family. Having no restraints, they became storytellers at the Rainbow bridge [in Yangzhou]. Big Song played the late yueqin 月琴, little Song accompanied on wooden clappers tambas 撞板. They sang on pleasure boats, seeking livelihood. After a year, little Song died of malnutrition. Big Song was nineteen at that time. He started playing tunes of Yan and Zhao5, and became quite popular. He set off for the capital, and escorted a certain high official, who brought him into an encampment where they stayed in tents. After a hunt, everybody started drinking, and they ordered Song to produce the voice of a warrior. He roared deliriously, as a tiger dying in the wilderness, or an eagle shot above the encampment. The ‘Ballad from Encampment’ was favoured at that time. But he also knew Southern melodies, and was convincing when he wept and complained. A woman in the neighbourhood died after listening to his storytelling. He travelled a lot around in remote countries. When his fellows were about to lose courage, he sat with crossed legs in his chariot and sang about returning home. Everybody shed tears like raindrops. In old age, he avoided people. I know nothing about his end. (Li Dou 1977: 258 - 259)

4 Jin Zongting 金宗亭, the hao of Jin Zhaoyan 金兆燕, the first publisher of the novel Rulin waishi.
5 Yan 燕 and Zhao 趙, two archaic enfeeblements in Northern China.
As already mentioned above, the audiences at storytelling strongly appreciated special vocal techniques which resembled natural phenomena and animal sounds, especially the songs of various birds. A controversial attitude to the limits of sound-imitation lies behind the following record of a pinghua performance of Zhang Fei’s battle scene from the Three Kingdom cycle:

[Wu Tianxu] seemed to start any time, but no voice was being heard. Everybody was all ears, but he would still only make faces, open his mouth, roll his eyes, gesture with his hands, and still no sound. Even so, in the hall packed with listeners, everyone had the impression of an earthshaking tempest taking place, so impressive was the expression of his face. He commented to someone, ‘Could one ever master the voice of Zhang Fei? ’ Getting a grip on the role means that instead of producing the sound with my mouth, I make it spring from everybody’s heart. Only thus can I achieve a passable semblance.’ Though storytelling is a minor art form, Wu Tianxu trained himself to the top level. It was not a matter of fortuity! (Li Dou 1977:258).

The Yangzhou huafang lu also mentions the pinghua storyteller Ye Ying 葉英, or Ye Shuanglin 葉霜林, but he is listed in chapter 2 among calligraphers, and the couple of phrases referring to his masterful pinghua are only an additional comment (Li Dou 1977: 56). Ye Ying belonged to the circle of Li Dou’s friends, as is apparent from the poems written by one of them (Huang Chengji 1832: 3 juan: 8b). Like several other storytellers discussed by Li Dou, Ye Ying did not have a professional storyteller’s background. He passed the first degree examinations, but failed three times at the second level. In daily life he was virtually surrounded by pinghua. He became so fond of it that he wanted to learn it. He adopted a new name and eventually earned fame as a storyteller who was able to bring his audience to sheer extasy. His specialty was a historical tale set in the Song dynasty, ‘The Imperial Regent Hands in the Seal’ [Zong liushou jiaoxin 常留守交印] (Xu Ke 1983: 465–466). Rich merchants of Yangzhou and renowned transient scholars were eager to hear him, but he did not always comply with their wishes. In Guangling shishi 廣陵詩事 [On Poetry in Guangling, i.e. Yangzhou], Ruan Yuan 阮元 wrote about a certain well-to-do family in town who wanted to have Ye Ying perform at their house. They made it clear that the scholar Jiao Xun 焦循, his biographer, would be among the guests, a fact which would help persuade Ye Ying to come. After the storytelling was over, they presented him with a gift, but he refused to accept it, thus humiliating the hosts (Wei Ren & Wei Minghua 1985: 264). Apparently, he did not care for money. Jiao Xun remarks, ‘when he had money, he drank the whole day. Then, for several days on end, he would go to bed with an empty stomach. He used to ask money from friends, and in the end, someone would always help and save him from suffering hunger.’ (Chen Ruheng 1984: 54).

Various settings for storytelling
In peak periods of its popularity, storytelling could be heard on streets, in the private houses of the rich, or on pleasure boats. But the most common places to enjoy storytelling were teahouses, where, in fact, storytellers often used to live. From the Kangxi era (1662–1722) there are records of the existence of auditoriums (shuchang 書場) equipped with a special central stand (shutai 書台) for storytellers. These venues had daily programmes. By the nineteenth century there must have been more than sixty places with such facilities; the names and locations of most of them are still known (Wei Ren 1984: 155). While the story unfolded, the audience enjoyed tea and snacks – storytelling and good food went well
together. At tables in the middle, men of influence and other special guests were seated (Su Shangmen 1980: 383). Chapter 9 of Yangzhou huafang lu describes such an auditorium:

Inside the auditorium [at Big East Gate], seats are placed all around a platform (shuatai). Above the door, a horizontal scroll gives the name of the storyteller. A hanging scroll by the door records the name of the story. The owner of the theatre collects money on odd days, and the performer collects money on even days. If he is a celebrity, he may collect as much as a hundred cash a day. You will find these theatres on every corner. (Li Dou 1977: 207 - 208)

Scholars such as Hu Shiyin confirm the extraordinary rise and development of storytelling in eighteenth century Yangzhou. According to a folk tale, the Qianlong emperor, on a voyage to the South, explicitly requested a certain storyteller – three names come up in various sources – to come to the pier and perform (Wei Ren & Wei Minghua 1985: 91). The excellent level of storytelling in Yangzhou was due to various factors. Firstly, the whole region was among the wealthiest ones in Qing China, thanks to salt production and a flourishing luxury trade. Secondly, many educated men gathered in this town, and they, just like local commoners, had a taste for storytelling and made high demands on local performers.

Competition among the performers was yet another positive stimulus to the growth of pinghua. Competition probably gave rise to a new type of stories: those set in contemporary life (see above). At the same time, some of the finest operatic styles of all time were practiced in Yangzhou (see Mackerras 1970), and they had a direct influence on storytelling. Li Dou has recorded that two storytellers, Xie Shouzi – one of the abovementioned ten best storytellers – and Zhang Potou, were originally trained actors of repute (Li Dou 1977: 131). After they turned to storytelling, they interspersed their performances with actors' techniques. This is not to say that it was very common for actors to leave the theatre and devote themselves completely to storytelling. But some took it up as a side-line activity, for example Fan Songian, who was primarily an actor, but who also excelled in telling 'Water Margin' (Li Dou 1977: 128).

Changing traditions
As already mentioned at the beginning of this article, men of letters looked down upon storytelling as vulgar (su 俗), though some of them were obviously still fond of it – for example Li Dou. Their condescending attitude cannot be explained simply in terms of a conflict between scholarly and popular urban tastes. In Yangzhou, derogatory views of storytelling were enhanced by prevailing tensions between transient non-natives and Yangzhou citizens. The non-natives were often politically influential and of cultural repute. The Yangzhou citizens were formed, on the one hand, by settled immigrants, who were tradesmen, salt merchants, and other kinds of entrepreneurs, and on the other hand, by natives from the Yangzhou region, who were artisans, peddlers, artists – people with all kinds of menial professions. There were also local literati, who possessed clerical skills and sometimes found employment in local government offices, but most of them 'must have occupied marginal positions in the society' (Finnane 1993: 141n). 'The relative weakness of the local elite' is of interest to us with regard to Li Dou. Finnane points to 'a correlation between occupation and native place origin'. This correlation led to the discrimination against Yangzhou people (Finnane 1993: 146). In other words, the fact that pinghua was disregarded by the elite was perhaps not only due to its supposed vulgarity, but also to the
fact that, unlike theatre, it was primarily a local art. The other writers who mention storytelling (Ruan Yuan, Jiao Xun, Lin Sumen and Xu Ke) all happen to be natives from the region.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the salt distribution system in China was reformed, with negative consequences for Yangzhou’s economy (Weinstein 1972: 40). The rapid decline of the city’s economy during the first half of the nineteenth century in turn had a negative impact on the arts. By the time the Taiping rebels occupied Yangzhou in 1857, entertainers were no longer allowed in town (Su Shangmen 1980: 361–362). In search of new opportunities, the artists moved to villages and small towns in Northern Jiangsu and Anhui and adjusted their art to the tastes of new and less sophisticated audiences. Zhenjiang, Nanjing, Shanghai, and other towns became the new centres of storytelling. Now that storytelling had spread over a much larger area and reached many new listeners, the number of storytelling groups – groups took over from individuals in the second half of the nineteenth century – grew to two hundred or perhaps even three hundred. As many as one-third of them specialized only in 'Three Kingdoms' or 'Water Margin', and in many instances the repertoire of a group was even limited to a single episode (Su Shangmen 1980: 362). The best known masters did not create any further new cycles, but elaborated on the existing tradition and created their own schools based on individual manner, fixing 'the stamp of individual on the common core' (Børdahl 1994: 37). Once again, one performer could often imitate several other individuals' styles, if required (Wei Ren 1981: introduction).

The tradition was continued after the Communist came to power in 1949. Since that time storytelling has survived several blows. In 1953, for example, a formal decision was taken by the authorities to record the stories in written documents. After all, they were the people's art. This was basically a positive step, but – as in the case of the infamous Qianlong inquisition of two centuries earlier – selective editing and censorship barred many 'unfitting' stories from being published, and from being further performed. Further restrictions were imposed in 1960 with the establishment of the Yangzhou Quyi Troupe (Wei Ren 1981: 19n, and Gong Fu 1957). One can imagine that the founding of an officially administered troupe implicitly led to the suppression of all individual undertaking in the field. The troupe still exists today, with twenty-nine members, and it gave 1296 performances in the pinghua section in the year 1991.6 (The other artistic sections, though equipped with far more personnel, give one hundred to two hundred performances a year, but their productions are a great deal more demanding in terms of materials and preparation, compared to the relatively modest needs of a storytelling performance.)

Recently, the city government has attempted to revitalize the art of Yangzhou storytelling. A new auditorium (Da guangming shuchang 大光明書場), covering 948 square meters, was built in traditional style and inaugurated on 28 April 1991. In the same year, a quyi festival was held in Yangzhou. Nevertheless, today's audiences consist mainly of elderly listeners, and many of the people involved in storytelling – performers, scholars, organizers, supporters – feel that its future as a major popular art is at stake.7

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6 Based on Yangzhou nianjian, 1992.
7 This article is a slightly modified version of my article 'Storytelling in Yangzhou in the Eighteenth Century' in V. Børdahl's The Eternal Storyteller. (Curzon Press, Richmond, 1999.)
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THE CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH INTO

The Religious Music of the Kaifeng Jews

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The music of the Chinese Jews is one of the few enigmas yet to be fully addressed in the field of Jewish ethnomusicology. This article raises questions regarding the vocal and instrumental practices associated with the synagogue in Kaifeng (Henan) in past centuries, and concludes with a brief assessment of the present situation of the Kaifeng Jews. Sources of information comprise not only written documents but also discussions between the author and Chinese scholars in Beijing in the mid-1990s.1

Jewish religious music is by its very nature intercultural, having been born some three thousand years ago in the region where Europe, Africa and Asia meet. Since that time it has, on the one hand, preserved certain idioms peculiar to Jewish practice, such as the cantillation of the Bible and the cantorial chant of the liturgy. On the other hand, it has absorbed so much from the wider world, especially since the expulsion of the Jews from the Levant in 70 AD, that it may sometimes appear to be indistinguishable from the musics of its respective host cultures. How do these observations apply to the study of Chinese-Jewish music?

Jews from West, Central and South Asia travelled to and from China as merchants along the Silk Road and by sea ever since the time of Jesus, if not earlier. Fig. 1 (p. 110) shows the centres of Jewish settlement and lists some of the salient events in Sino-Judaic history between the 11th and early 20th centuries.2 The main focus of Jewish life in China during this period was Kaifeng, an important city in Henan Province.

Although very little is known about music (whether sacred or secular, vocal or instrumental) in the life of Kaifeng Jewry, brief and somewhat tantalizing observations have been made by a number of scholars and commentators. Perhaps the most comprehensive picture to date is evoked in a short article entitled 'Jews of the Far-East – the Chinese Jews,' written at the end of the 1960s by the important Israeli ethnomusicologist Edith Gerson-Kiwi. Since that time, the writings of a new generation of researchers have added new perspectives.3 This article blends the essence of their findings as a whole with some ideas offered by the author for further discussion.

1 This article was presented as a paper at the October 1998 Chine Conference in Heidelberg.
Fig. 1. The centres of Jewish settlement and some of the salient events in Sino-Judaic history between the 11th and early 20th centuries.

The Kaifeng Synagogue

Early descriptions of the Divine Service indicate clear Judeo-Persian and Judeo-Yemenite orientations in matters of ritual. This is further evidenced by the presence of Judeo-Persian colophons in some of the extant Hebrew texts. And it seems that ‘New Persian’ was the vernacular of the Kaifeng Jews in the 12th century.


4 The most important sources of information about the history and everyday life of the Jewish community are (i) four stone steles, inscribed in Kaifeng in 1489, 1512, 1663 and 1679; and (ii) the extant letters of three Jesuit missionaries to Kaifeng: Fathers Matten Ricci (1552-1610), Jean-Paul Gozani (1659-1732), and Jean Domenge (1666-1735).
Although it would appear that whatever remained of the oral tradition has been lost ever since the demise of the Jewish community and its synagogue in the 1860s, there is one useful clue to the music of the past, namely, the music of the present. Is it possible that a song for the ‘Feast of Lots’ (Purim) – concerning a famous incident in Ancient Persia that is recounted in the biblical Book of Esther, and which is still chanted today in the Persian-Jewish tradition – could yield valuable indicators as to the highly embellished musical style that might have been heard in the early period of the Kaifeng Synagogue?

During the selected reading from the first five books of the Old Testament (Torah) at a Sabbath or Festival service, a ‘monitor’ would stand beside the celebrant (a rabbi, cantor, or lay-person) to assist with practical matters regarding the sacred scroll itself; and a few steps down from the monitor stood the mullah, whose purpose it was to ensure the correctness of the rendering of text and cantillation melody. These functions are illustrated in Fig. 2 – a sketch made in Kaifeng in 1722 by the Jesuit missionary Father Jean Domenge.

The Israeli scholar Guy Shaked has made some important discoveries regarding the written signs used by the Kaifeng Jews for their cantillation of the Bible. The Tiberian system of 'accents of biblical recitation' (ta'ame hammiqra), found in the Kaifeng Torah section books dating from the 9th-18th centuries, contain numerous discrepancies when compared to the standard shapes in use throughout the rest of the Jewish world.

Some of these neumes are unique in their appearance, whereas others, though bearing resemblances to original forms, have been strikingly modified. This can be demonstrated by juxtaposing the opening five verses of Genesis in the 'standard version', as in Fig. 3a, with the same text in the 'Kaifeng version' of 1621, Fig. 3b.

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5 At this point during the spoken presentation of the paper, the following brief musical example was played on cassette: 'Song of Purim' in the Persian tradition, from a Unesco compilation: Album IV: Prayer and Devotion, Gustav Bosse Verlag, Regensburg, 1985. Cassette 1, Side B; 'Jewish Music,' band 12.


7 See footnote 2.

The first sentence reads (from right to left): 

B'\textit{reshit bara Elohim et hashamayim v'et ha'\textit{aretz} ('In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth').} Here, it can be shown that the sign \textit{tipcha} beneath the word \textit{bereshit}, the signs \textit{mercha tipcha} beneath the words \textit{et hashamayim}, and the sign \textit{mercha} beneath the word \textit{v'et} have all been reduced to the same symbol as that for the sign \textit{sof pasuk} beneath the word \textit{ha'\textit{aretz}}. (Each of the relevant accents has been encircled.) Close examination of the remaining four verses will reveal many more such changes. Since they seem to be systematic rather than haphazard, we must ask whether they are merely typographical errors on the part of the Kaifeng scribes, or whether they might reflect, in visual terms, a later attempt to simplify the highly complex modality of Persian cantillation, with all its microtonal inflections.\(^9\) Indeed, it is likely that the melodic intonation, as well as the pronunciation of Hebrew, heard in the Kaifeng Synagogue would gradually have been influenced by the Chinese environment. After all, the synagogue itself - first erected in 1163 and rebuilt three times over the succeeding seven centuries - looked from the outside like a typical Daoist, Confucian or Buddhist Temple. A modern replica of this building, housed in the 'Museum of the Diaspora' (\textit{Beth Hatefusoth}) in Tel-Aviv, is shown in Fig. 4.\(^{10}\)

**Rendering of the liturgy**

As regards the rendering of the liturgy, bodily gestures designed to aid intense concentration, such as \textit{shockeling} (associated with orthodox Jewish practices of today), were clearly well

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\(^{10}\) Photograph of replica (based on the 18th-century drawings and descriptions of Jesuit visitors), in Uri Ram and Lesley Marks  - \textit{The Jews of Kaifeng: Chinese Jews on the Banks of the Yellow River} (see footnote 2), no page number.
established in Kaifeng by the 15th century. Records dating from 1702 mention that, in addition to praying silently, the Jews would ‘chant’ in the synagogue every Sabbath. And later references to processional rituals, especially on the Festival of ‘Rejoicing in the Law’ (Simehah Torah) that is celebrated each Autumn, suggest that the accompanying prayers were chanted rather than merely spoken. Sadly, all contemporary accounts of prayer are vague and ambiguous in the use of terminologies such as ‘chanting’, ‘reciting’, ‘reading’.

In all traditional societies, a clear distinction is made between chant and music. Chant, as a form of heightened speech, is usually considered not only legitimate but indeed desirable in the expression of religious and spiritual values, whereas music – and especially the use of instruments – is often frowned upon as frivolous, or even dangerous to public morals. To what extent did this dichotomy apply in the context of the Kaifeng Jewry?

The prohibition against instrumental performance was enforced not only on Sabbaths and Festivals, as in orthodox Jewish communities around the world to this day, but also at weddings and other ‘semi-religious’ ceremonies. It is not clear whether the Shofar – the ‘Ram’s Horn’, rendered Shao fa phonetically in Chinese and translated as Yang jiao hao – was blown each year during the High Festivals (‘New Year’ and ‘Day of Atonement’ each Autumn) in the Kaifeng Synagogue as it always has been elsewhere in the Jewish world. However, there was a resonant chime, made of black jade, about 12 inches in diameter, which the leader of the community would strike in order to summon all Jews in the community to prayer. Fig. 5 (p. 114) shows the chime and the four characters inscribed upon it: Ling Yang Yu Qing (‘The jade chime which calls to the spirits of the departed and the living’).11

This practice of summoning the faithful finds parallels in indigenous Chinese religious rituals (though it has not been customary among Jews outside China for about eighteen or nineteen centuries). So it is necessary to query the assertion made by Father Domengé that no instruments were ever used.12 Furthermore, in a very rare, perhaps unique, scroll of the Book of Esther that had been in use in the Kaifeng Synagogue at around the end of the 18th

11 This chime is kept at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.
Fig. 5. The black jade chime which was used in Kaifeng to summon all Jews in the community to prayer.

century, there are illustrations depicting not only the jade chime, but also a pair of castanets and, on the very last column of the scroll, two musicians - one of whom is playing a flute. Even if these musical manifestations developed after Father Domenge's time, why is there no reference anywhere else to such activities?

**Jewish culture in China today**

Some Chinese ethnomusicologists and music historians are interested in the possible relationship between ancient Jewish and ancient Chinese musics beyond Kaifeng. Professor Su Mu (Former Director of the Research Institute, Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing) has pointed to a genre known as *Anguo Yue* which flourished as early as the Tang Dynasty in Bukhara in what is now Uzbekistan. The specific theme of this article precludes any further reference to such matters here; but there is indeed much scope for research into affinities and relationships (i) between the Muslim and Jewish traditions of Xinjiang Province and Central Asia; (ii) between the musics of North Eastern China and Mongolia and those of the Jews of Eastern Siberia and the Russian Far East; and (iii) between local Chinese styles and the musics of Jewish immigrants to Harbin, Shanghai and Hong Kong, *inter alia*, during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Although modern Chinese Jews see themselves as the custodians of the ancient

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13 This scroll is housed in the Roth Collection, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

Jewish heritage in China, they practise very few of the rituals. However, they do refrain from eating pork; and men wear head-covering, as in Fig. 6.

Since the Jews are not at the present time recognized by the government as an official ‘ethnic minority’ in China, there is no ‘Jewish Community’ per se in Kaifeng. However, an estimated 600 individuals there (and about 100 in Beijing) trace their ancestry to one or other of several long-established Chinese-Jewish clans. They are known to each other, and choose to identify as Jews. Plans to rebuild the Kaifeng Synagogue on its traditional site, with the help of foreign aid (mainly from America and Israel), have been mooted tentatively. Fig. 7 shows the site as it appears today, surrounded on three sides by a hospital.\(^{15}\)

There is considerable interest in Jewish music research in a number of academic institutions in Beijing, notably the Central Conservatory of Music, the Chinese Conservatory of Music, the Music Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Arts, the Institute of Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Central University of Nationalities, and Beijing University Department of Oriental Studies. The author’s own research project, initiated and developed through discussion with scholars at these institutions during lecture visits to Beijing and other Chinese cities in 1993, 1994 and 1996, is still at an early stage; and much as yet uncharted territory awaits exploration. Maybe the study of ‘Jewish Music in China’—in all its interpretations—will one day be an established component in the curricula of Conservatoire Centres of Ethnomusicology, as well as the growing number of University Departments of Jewish and Hebrew Studies in China.

\(^{15}\) Photographs of (i) the Chinese-Jewish father and his son, and (ii) the traditional synagogue site, were taken by the author in Kaifeng in October 1996.
Towards the end of the 19th century, Western music intrigued urban musicians and music scholars in China and Japan. In Japan, the overriding tendency was to accept Western music, not as an alternative for Japanese music, but as a tradition in its own right. By contrast, urban musicians in China thought that Western music might actually point the way to a new era of Chinese music. They began to infuse traditional Chinese genres freely with stylistical elements and techniques borrowed from the West. Many Chinese intellectuals even looked down upon their own country’s traditional music. The present article deals with the musical ‘reforms’ which took place in early 20th century China, and which were guided by the idea that music should make ‘progress’ and ideally support the social advance of mankind. Japan played a mediating role in transmitting these ideas, though its own music culture developed along very different lines.

Around 1900 many music scholars and urban musicians in China had the idea that Western music was ‘superior’ to China’s own native musical traditions. Perhaps because they were impressed by Western economical and military achievements, they assumed that Western music, like Western technology, was probably based on ‘advanced’ and ‘scientifically objective’ principles. Chinese scholars in this period often discussed Western music in terms of its ‘scientificness’. Believing that music followed an evolutionary path and could be ‘improved’ over time, they began to propagate the emulation of Western musical techniques and (sometimes) Western instruments. However, in a new and rapidly Westernizing world, people still felt the need to retain and preserve certain elements of China’s own culture. For many the path to the ideal was to find some way to amalgamate Western and Chinese elements and to establish a ‘national style’ for the future, which could raise the standard of Chinese music to a level of international competitiveness. Some considered these aims rather contradictory and feared that they would lead to hybrid results, namely a culture that was *bu zhong bu xi* 不中不西 (‘neither Chinese, nor Western’).³ Imitating the West was one thing, but trying to retain elements of Chinese tradition was another. Some intellectuals argued that traditional Chinese values and aesthetics might very well be irrelevant from an international perspective and that this debate did not warrant further consideration. A number of musicians and composers who believed this to be the case turned their backs on Chinese traditional instruments altogether and praised the piano and the Western orchestra as the ideal musical

media of the future. But others, for the same reason, tended to reject Western music completely and adhered to China's own traditions. They were a distinct minority. Many urban Chinese seemed to prefer a middle course – retaining what was good in Chinese music and learning from the West if possible.

From the very onset, the 'modernization' of Chinese music – as it was called in China – was publicly debated. The discussion focused on the key question of whether Western and Chinese musical aesthetics could be conciliated and if so, how? The same discussion continues today in much the same vein in Chinese academic music journals, albeit with a different political bias. Communist propaganda has stressed the importance of creating 'national' music which can be understood by the 'masses'. Contemporary Chinese music remains the subject of fierce controversies and of conflicting political and nationalist views. The situation is as unresolved as it was at the beginning of this century.

Early reforms which took place in China's music education system vividly reflect the beginnings of this whole debate on the modernization of music. In Japan, many reforms of the native music education system had already taken place during the 19th century. Both countries felt a need to formulate an adequate reply to the growing influx of Western music. While the early reforms in China were in fact initiated by Chinese students in Japan, the

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outcome of the reform processes in both countries was very different. Despite public criticism of the growing impact of Western culture, China firmly embraced Westernization. Urban intellectuals emphatically tried to superimpose Western cultural standards on Chinese music culture. Traditional music genres suffered badly in the process. Reforms started spontaneously and were eventually taken up by the Chinese authorities as part of their cultural policies. In Japan where the government was involved from the very outset, traditional music was preserved and treated much more cautiously, while Western music was viewed (by the Japanese) as a realm much in its own right, not as an alternative to replace or totally reform Japan’s traditional music.

A new impetus from abroad
The starting point for the development of a modern Chinese music system was 1903, when the first music lessons in Shanghai were given as a regular part of the school curriculum. Already at this time, Chinese intellectuals had begun to blend Chinese and Western elements in their compositions and in the educational material which they prepared for schools.

Interestingly, these beginnings of a modern Chinese urban music culture lay in the hands of non-professional musicians under the aegis of a Chinese students organisation in Japan. This organization had developed into a union of music educationalists. (Japan, at this time, was to China what America became more than half a century later: a country with a threatening and competitive culture, but also a place where young Chinese went for higher education in the interest of their own nation’s economical and cultural advancement.)

The early music reforms in China came from students who had visited Japan. In this respect developments in China differed from Japan’s own music reforms. In Japan, the creation of a new musical system during the Meiji era was guided by ambitious gagaku musicians and Japanese music claus rather than by amateurs. Next to propagating an interest in new and different genres of music, these proponents of Japanese elite culture favoured a faithful continuation of the old traditions. Mantle Hood has pointed at the bimusicality of Japanese court musicians: they happened to be — to their advantage, he felt — well-trained in the music of two cultures:

In some instances, we might point to an ‘alternative musicality’, i.e., an interest in Western music which has developed at the expense of the indigenous music. However, in Japan the musicians of the Imperial Household in Tokyo would seem to be truly ‘bi-musical’. They have undergone rigid training since childhood, not only in the Gagaku dances and instrumental techniques, but also in the performance of Western music of the classical period. In their capacity as official court musicians, they are required to perform both Gagaku and Western classical music.

In Japan the renewal of the music education system was fostered by the Ministry of Education, which relied on ‘court musicians and poets as major consultants on tunes and

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5 Mantle Hood – ‘The Challenge of “Bi-Musicality”’, in: Ethnomusicology 4/2, 1960, pp. 55–59. Hood, who is actually the spiritual father of the term bi-musicality, has propagated bi-musicality as a useful tool in music research: he argued that students of ethnomusicology should study the instruments of the musical culture which they investigate.
texts.\(^6\) As a consequence, much of native music in Japan was allowed to run its course, faithful to tradition, while Western musical training was developed and supported as a separate activity. In China there was a much stronger call for hybridization. Some viewed Western culture as an enlightening model. Prominent Chinese intellectuals like Liang Qichao and Kang Youwei called for a broad range of military and educational reforms. The country was gradually overrun by foreign powers and was threatened with internal collapse. The only way to secure China's future, argued Kang and Liang, was to enforce a policy of drastic modernization along Western lines. Their enthusiasm for foreign military technology, which split over to the realm of culture, was by no means uncontroversial, and the two reformers were forced to flee to Japan after the Empress Dowager Cixi rose to power.

But many shared their call for innovation and in this period the first important changes took place in Chinese music education as part of more general reforms of the educational system. To some extent, developments in Japan began to serve as an example. The first Chinese students who went to Japan for their studies at the end of the last century found that Japan had a highly developed music pedagogical system, whereby singing was taught on all levels of schooling—kindergarten, primary, secondary and tertiary education.

**Early composers of Chinese ‘school songs’**

In 1902 a visiting student called Shen Xingong 

![Image](image.png)

founded the Music Study Society 音乐学会 (yinyue jiuxihui) in Japan. The first article of the society's constitution described as a major aim the development of music in Chinese schools and public life 'in order to awaken the national spirit' (guomin jingshen 国民精神).\(^7\) This nationalist attitude towards Chinese culture marked a turning point in Chinese music education, which first bore fruits in the so-called 'school songs' – tunes and lyrics collected and published as educational material for teaching singing in elementary schools and on higher levels. The songs were Chinese tunes with new texts or Chinese poems set to new melodies – mainly from Japan or (via Japan) from the West.

Shen Xingong was the first Chinese to compile an anthology of school songs entitled *Xuesiao Changgeji 学校唱歌集*, of which the second section of the preface is of special interest:

> In the process of learning to write songs, I began by mainly selecting Japanese melodies. But nowadays I am no longer fond of these songs. I rather prefer European melodies. The small tonal range of Japanese tunes may be pleasing to the ear, but the tunes are trivial. By contrast, the tonal range of Western melodies is more complete and clear, and the music suggests a noble spirit. (Admittedly) the general psychology of the Chinese shows more of an inclination towards Japanese tunes. Chinese are not very fond of Western tunes. Surprisingly, in the process of teaching songs, some teachers like to add extra elements [to the music]. They are very proud that they are capable of doing so. (But such additions) to the music are disastrous.\(^8\)

This short passage reflects a clear pedagogical motivation in the selection and the use of school songs. The author conveys to the reader a notion of 'noble' superiority on the part of Western melodies, and he argues that it is easier to adapt such tunes for pedagogical

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\(^7\) Xinxin Congbao 1905/9, 'Yaya yinyue hui zhi lishi' (‘History of the Asian Refined Music Society’), pp. 101–104.

\(^8\) Shen Xingong – *Xuesiao changgeji*, Shanghai 1915, preface p. 3.
purposes than Japanese ones. Furthermore, it becomes evident that Chinese students were usually required to keep to the melodies exactly as they were noted down on paper, or were demonstrated in practice. At this early stage, some teachers apparently introduced rhythmical and melodical ornaments in the manner of Chinese folk songs into the Western tunes. In the framework of traditional culture such ornaments may have been regarded as a prerequisite for vivacity and originality, but Shen Xingong clearly did not appreciate such traditional assets in the context of his proposed innovations.

Li Shutong 李叔同 (1880–1942) was another early composer of school songs and the second Chinese to publish them. His works were more deeply rooted in Chinese tradition than those of Shen Xingong. After his study of traditional painting in China, he then took up the study of techniques of Western oil painting in Japan where he also took lessons in writing piano accompaniments for songs. Li wrote several articles which attest to his moderate reforming spirit in China’s first modern music journal, Yinyue Xiao Zazhi, edited and published in Japan in 1906. Under his pen name Xi Shuang he wrote:

From the time I came to live in Japan I have occupied myself very superficially with Japanese songs. About ninety-five percent of the lyrics derive their content and ideas from ancient Chinese poems. (The most famous Japanese writers of song-texts are at home in classical Chinese poetry.) Since the Qing Dynasty, Chinese literati have made painstaking efforts to write in the schematic Cizhang style. Consequently, classical poetry and prose went into oblivion. Later, Western learning was introduced and became fashionable. The word cizhang was hardly mentioned. For the kind of literati at home in this style, who cannot grasp the meaning of classical texts, the only options are to falsify or to misinterpret the texts. Thus, classical knowledge is dishonoured or discarded. When such people deal with Japanese song texts they greatly admire the fascinating thoughts contained in them. They consider as preeminently Japanese what the Japanese have actually taken from our classical poetry. In such a situation these people become ridiculous, to the Japanese as much as to the Chinese.

Li Shutong’s strong commitment to Chinese tradition may be further illustrated by the fact that he set to music (as school songs) poems from two ancient Chinese anthologies of poetry, the Shi jing 詩經 and the Chu ci 楚辞. He used Japanese and Western tunes for them. Thus, in various ways, Li Shutong, Shen Xingong and others began to incorporate Western tunes in Chinese educational material, and in this manner helped to introduce Western music in China. During the same period Zeng Zhimin introduced elementary Western musical terms in China. Again this was transmitted via Japan, where Zeng had spent some time as a student.

Western music terminology
When Zeng Zhimin 曾志忞 (1879–1929) introduced new technical music terms to China, he clearly aimed at offering a modern alternative to China’s own music terminology, not just an additional set of terms. In a treatise on music pedagogy he wrote: ‘An imported cultural tradition is not a locally created [‘homegrown’] one. Therefore it falsifies our own tradition.’ But apparently his intention was not to reject foreign culture, but to avoid half-hearted measures or a situation of hybridization from which he drew inspiration.

10 Xi Shuang – ‘Wu zu Cizhang’, Yinyue Xiao Zazhi, 1906, p. 20
In the same treatise, Zeng insisted upon the adoption of modern (Western or Japanese) terminology as a sound basis for instruction. He compiled an educational text in accordance with that view. It was called ‘The Foundations of Musical Theory’ (Yuejü dayi) and was published in the Journal of the Union of Jiangsu-Chinese. In his introduction to Yuejü dayi Zeng interprets the newly awakened interest in music pedagogy in China in terms of traditional Chinese ethics. He refers to the ancient Confucian distinction between ‘high’ and ‘low’ music and seems to hint at the possibility that this distinction was lost for many centuries, during which there was no progress and no sophistication in Chinese music. By accepting modern (foreign) standards in music education, China might be able to recapture some of the old glory.

The musical development of our country attained a high standard in the earliest times. It blossomed in full during the Sandai-epoch (the Yin, Shang and Zhou dynasties), when music counted as one of the six arts. From ancient times onwards pedagogues considered music to be of great importance. But from the Han dynasty onwards, ritual music (雅樂 yǎ lè) lost its importance, and profane music (俗樂 sú lè) became licentious and degenerate, so that music became unworthy of men of letters.

In classical diction Zeng carries on his Confucian argumentation. He explains that from the Han dynasty onwards folk music was collected by music officials and began to permeate the upper social strata. The result was a blending of folk and elite music which was quite unacceptable to the strict Confucians at the court, who rejected the non-literati tradition of folk music (shēn yue) and its rough emotive qualities. Zeng then re-examined the meaning of modern educational song teaching, as he had learned it in Japan. In Zeng’s concept of modern music pedagogy, there is no need to rely on China’s native musical traditions. At least he shows no interest in Chinese instruments or in traditional musical ethics. As one transitional step in the development of a new educational system he proposes to recruit Japanese and European teachers unacquainted with Chinese music. He favours the use of the organ as the main musical instrument for teaching. By contrast, he utilizes Chinese poems as song texts and melodies of Chinese folksong to preserve at least certain elements of tradition.

The rules which Zeng established for school music in the last chapter of his Yinlue Jiaoyulan indicate his insistence on a new way of thinking and on a downright departure from Chinese traditional music with its great freedom of performance variation and reliance on oral practice:

1. An original composition should not be altered.
2. The stanzas of a song should not be shortened.
3. No new words should be added to a song after it has been learnt by heart.
4. Ignorance of musical theory permits neither the composing of songs, nor their correct notation.

No ‘progress’ without staff notation
The introduction of Western staff notation was considered necessary to facilitate learning, allow a more accurate notation of traditional music and – so it was believed – it could even

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14 Zeng, ibid., p. 63.
enhance the quality of Chinese music. Many Chinese viewed the invention of staff notation in European music as the main reason for the West’s musical ‘progress’. Its absence in China was believed to account for the ‘backwardness’ of Chinese music.

Xiao Youmei 薛友梅 (1884–1940), one of the first Western-trained composers in China, was active as a music teacher and music organizer in Beijing and Shanghai. In the first issue of Yinyue Zazhi (Music Journal) he remarked that in the West staff notation was still subject to revisions. It was improved every year, he claimed. Thanks to this sophisticated system, it had been possible for Westerners to preserve and to transmit music in written form from the 15th century onwards. Even older music could be re-performed with the help of this system. Xiao admitted that China could boast of a rich musical past, with many great musical pieces and valuable techniques, but he seriously regretted that so many melodies and techniques of Chinese musicians were lost because of the absence— in crucial moments—of friends or disciples to pass them on (orally) to later generations: ‘For this reason Boya played no more and broke his qin after the death of Zhong Ziqi. Otherwise, wouldn’t we have had continued opportunities to hear that music played today?’

Xiao refers here to a well-known story about a Chinese zither (qin) player called Boya, and his best friend Zhong Ziqi. Zhong was a woodcutter who showed deep affinity with Boya’s playing. When he died, Boya was so struck with grief that he destroyed his instrument and decided never to play music again. This story is usually interpreted as a tale of compassion and friendship; it illustrates how closely qin music can bring people together. But Xiao gives it another twist. He argues that Boya was mainly disappointed that he no longer had a pupil to whom he could pass on his musical art. Without the means of staff notation qin playing became a useless activity for Boya who had no one to whom he could transmit his music.

Xiao Youmei uses this clever argument which conveniently overlooks the fact that China actually had a highly developed native system of qin music notation which had already existed for at least five centuries!

Xiao Youmei analyzed at length possible reasons for the ‘backwardness’ of Chinese music. Looking at how Western music developed, he concluded that the following elements were lacking in Chinese music:

1. Keyboard instruments, and ‘hence’ (Xiao thought) polyphony.
2. The invention of mensural and staff notation (which contributed to the development of counterpoint in the West).
3. Respect for the musical profession. Musicians in China were not venerated or respected like organists and cantors were in the West.
4. China had no ‘mastersingers’, i.e. no people who joined professional singers’ guilds like it happened in the West. China did not even have anything resembling these singers’ predecessors, the minnesingers.
5. China did not establish music schools at an early stage, like Europe did from the 16th century onwards.

This analysis indicates that the study of Chinese teachers and musicians in the traditional style should include Western notation, harmony, counterpoint, instrumentation and composition. Only then could reforms of Chinese music be successful, so it was thought.

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17 Xiao Youmei, ibid.
18 Chen Lingjian et al, p. 414.
Conclusion
At the heart of China's early twentieth century rethinking of its musical system lay an evolutionary approach. The basic idea was that in the course of history music could gradually improve and achieve an ever-increasing refinement. In this spectrum Chinese folk music represented a backward past, while China's refined classical music constituted, at best, a lost ideal. From the very beginning, attempts to improve the situation drew inspiration from Western classical music, which seemed to offer new standards. Chinese music scholars promoted Western instruments and techniques and even adopted Western aesthetic criteria which made it increasingly difficult for them to perceive Chinese music traditions in a native context, and to acknowledge the intrinsic values of Chinese music. Some scholars even claimed that Chinese traditional music had 'stagnated' ever since Han times. Their attitude seemed to be the exact opposite of the cultural chauvinism which reigned in the West during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By negating their own culture, the Chinese actually appeared to support the erring beliefs of many Europeans that the West was culturally 'superior' to non-Western societies. This overbearing attitude among Westerners was rooted in Social Darwinism.19

Calls for a new musical system in China often expressed derogatory views of traditional Chinese music. Most of the proponents of musical change in China adopted, quite uncritically, the ideas and mannerisms of the chauvinist West. With political reformer Liang Qichao leading the way, music enthusiasts like Xiao Youmei, Zeng Zhimin and their followers in turn began to refer to the principles of Social Darwinism in their writings. New Chinese music was expected to ride the waves of a new tide and to serve major edifying goals - it was expected to form an inspiration for people's newly awakened nationalism. It would abandon the rigidity of moral and Confucian teaching and aim at clear purposes. There was no longer any room for art based on coincidental meanings or on chance. From that time onward, musical compositions were to be written with specific edifying aims in mind - they became functional music in a new sense.20 Almost overnight China's new music (xin yinyue) entered the political realm; the tasks of the music became socio-political.

The debate on new Chinese music is carried on today with much the same emphasis on the search for a 'national style'. There are ongoing politically biased discussions on how to preserve 'Chineseness' in music under growing Western influence. Evidently, the question of how 'Chineseness' can best be guarded is still unresolved. Western admirers of such impressive and wonderfully vital Chinese traditions as guqin music or genres of Chinese opera and folk music may wonder whether, in fact, it was ever the right question to pose.

Meihua san nong (‘Plum Blossom – Three Variations’) is one of the best-known pieces in the repertoire of the seven-string Chinese zither guqin. In the course of six centuries, more than forty different versions of this piece have appeared in print. This shows that the music has been subject to constant change, and that qin players acquired clear preferences for specific versions and specific elements in the composition as time went on. Two basic models of the piece emerged in the course of the 16th century, one of which acquired the status of ‘standard version’ in the 18th century. Further variants continued to appear. A comparison of different sound recordings of the piece from the 1950s to the 1980s attests to the continued vitality and creative bounce of qin music in modern times.¹

The Chinese seven-string zither qin (or guqin) is famous for its long history and rich culture. The earliest known depictions of the qin are 2,000-year-old sculptures of musicians playing zithers (discovered in Han dynasty tombs). The oldest surviving notations date from the 15th century, but many of them are presumably based on (lost) manuscripts from still earlier periods. At present, more than one hundred anthologies of qin music are known. They amount to a total of some 3,000 qin pieces. Many are variants of one and the same composition, and some can be found under a number of different titles, in different anthologies. But even taking this into account, we are still left with an estimated 600 different compositions for the qin. There is no other instrument and no other musical genre in Chinese music history with a similar wealth of surviving scores.

Qin pieces change over time, as a natural result of performance practice. Most qin players study and play the music primarily for their own enjoyment and relaxation. They are not just performers but also composers and re-arrangers. When recreating old scores, many players modify and restructure the pieces. This is partly a spontaneous process, though many

¹ A shorter version of this article was presented as a paper during the Chime conference ‘Barbarian Pipes and Strings’ in Heidelberg, Germany, 2 October 1998. A Chinese version of the full text will be published in Zhongguo yinyue xue no.4, 1999. The current translation was adapted, in close consultation with the author, to fit the needs of Western readers, who may be less familiar with certain aspects of the qin tradition than Chinese qin specialists. Some parts of the text have been abridged or supplemented to make the author’s points more accessible to general readers.
musicians will also consciously try to bring out perceived meanings of the music more clearly and put their own stamp on the compositions. Processes of deliberate or spontaneous re-composition, in a framework of changing playing styles and techniques and altering cultural views, are continuous. They can be traced historically in many pieces for which variant scores have emerged over time. There are now more than forty (printed) scores of Mei hua san nong 梅花三弄 ('Plum Blossom – Three variations'), and as many as forty-eight of Xiao Xiang shui yun 潭湘水云 ('Mist and Clouds over Xiao and Xiang Rivers'). A few of the versions are identical, but most of them show differences, and some differ to a considerable extent.

To illustrate the range of variety, and to examine processes of change in qin music in detail, I would like to trace the musical transformations in one particular piece, Mei hua san nong, on the basis of manuscripts and printed versions of this composition which have emerged since 1425, and with the help of sound recordings of different players, dating from 1955, 1962 and 1982.

The aim is not to decide which of these versions is ‘best’. One could certainly speculate about the reasons why qin players show preferences for specific variants of specific pieces, though much of the argument would focus on aesthetic aspects and on personal taste. For example, most players nowadays perform the version of Xiao Xiang shui yun contained in the Weizhi zhai qinpu 五和斋草谱 of 1721, which they prefer to the one contained in the

Shengqi mipu of 1425. They would argue that the 18th century version of the piece has a more beautiful tune, a more powerful melodic flow, a more lucid structure and a stronger atmosphere than the early version. The present author basically shares this view. The inner coherence of the more recent version and its direct emotional appeal are qualities highly valued in qin music. But fashion and taste do not always favour the more recent interpretations of qin pieces. In the on-going processes of change, certain pieces may gradually take on such a novel shape and meaning that they move far away from earlier versions. This may lead, in some cases, to a renewed interest in the ‘original’ scores. Thus, most qin players today prefer the 15th century version of the piece Guangling san nong to the various later versions which emerged during the Qing dynasty (and which are rarely played nowadays). But my aim is not to decide which versions of Meihua san nong are artistically or technically more convincing or satisfying. Every player has his or her own preferences. The purpose of this essay is to undertake a historical journey which highlights the individual charms and the changing cultural connotations of subsequent versions of Meihua san nong.

If anything, an analysis of successive scores will show that the music has been subject to constant change. The processes of transformation at work in this piece perfectly illustrate the profound creativity which lies at the heart of the guqin tradition. They also reflect technical innovations and broader issues of cultural change which have accompanied the development of qin music throughout history.

Humble beginnings as a flute piece

Meihua san nong is one of the best-known pieces in the qin repertoire. Historically, it appears to have appealed both to refined and popular tastes. The composition can instantly be identified by its main tune, which many people in modern China are familiar with in one form or another, be it as qin music or in other instrumental arrangements (Ex. 1):

Ex. 1. Tune of Meihua san nong.

The title of the piece may be explained from an old saying, which many qin players are familiar with: "梅为花之最清，竹为声之最清，以最清之声写最清之物。"

'The plum blossom (Meihua) is the purest of flowers, the qin brings forth the purest of sounds. With the purest of sounds, the purest of things can be depicted.'

The plum blossom here serves as a symbol of purity. The san nong, the 'three variations', refer to three distinct variations of the main melody, which form an essential part of the structure of the piece. Today, two or three different printed versions of the piece circulate which are favoured by the vast majority of Chinese qin players, though there is a much wider range of variants to choose from.

The earliest surviving notation is found in a qin anthology called Shengqi mipu, dating from the year 1425. There is no reason to assume that this is the earliest version. If, in the remainder of my article, I refer to it as 'earliest version', this is only to distinguish it conveniently from later versions. In fact, the 1425 score contains a commentary which suggests that Meihua san nong may originally have been a flute piece, later reworked for qin.
This commentary in the 1425 score refers to a meeting between a flute player and a princess some time during the Jin dynasty (265–420 A.D.). The story is quoted as stemming from another qin handbook, the Quxian' an qin zhuan 塞仙按舊傳, which is no longer extant. When the princess, named Qiu, encounters flute player Heng Yi, she descends from her chariot and invites him to play. In response, Heng performs the tune Meihua san nong. The commentary continues: ‘Later, people referred to San nong as a piece for the qin.’ A later (vocal) version of Meihua san nong, in the handbook Xie lin taigu yiyin (1511), is accompanied by the same reference, with a different conclusion:

‘Later, people copied the piece and included it in qin scores.’\(^3\)

This statement directly refers to the process of melodic adaptation and appropriation by qin players. Throughout history, many such comments can be found in qin handbooks, which explicitly state that qin players have edited, reworked or refined existing tunes and musical pieces, or adapted melodies for the qin. In view of the continual process of re-creation of scores, it may not be meaningful to point out Heng Yi as the ‘composer’ of Meihua san nong. There is no way to establish who the composer was, if there ever was a single creator of this piece in the first place.

In the Boya xin fa of 1589, compiler Yang Lun again links the piece with an ancient flute (di) piece, while he identifies Yan Shiqu, a qin player from the Tang dynasty, as the author of the qin version contained in his anthology. He still refers to the Shengqi mipu version of 1425 as the ‘original’ from which all other versions sprang. In other words, Yan Shiqu was not so much a composer but a creative performer who simply arranged his own version of Meihua san nong on the basis of existing material.

The flute piece which Yang mentions in his commentary is called Luo mei qu (落梅曲) ("Tune of Falling Plum Blossoms"). It reportedly dates from the Han and Jin dynasties. It may have served as an inspiration for early qin versions of the music.

A long list of plum blossoms
Throughout the ages, qin players have paid tribute to plum blossoms and to the guqin as important icons of Chinese culture. Both the instrument and the flowers are viewed as major symbols of purity and profound beauty, and they feature jointly in the piece Meihua san nong, where the purity of the flowers is celebrated in sound, in a zither composition.

More generally, the guqin and the entire tradition of playing this instrument are in many ways intimately linked with images from nature. For example, in painted scrolls qin performers are often shown playing outdoors surrounded by scenery—qin players are ideally supposed to play on mountain tops, in bamboo groves or near rivers!—and even such technical aspects as different qin fingerings are often illustrated in handbooks with images taken from nature, for instance the hands of the player are compared with the shape of birds or other animals.

Meihua san nong often stars as the first item in collections of qin pieces, which shows that many players attach special importance to this piece. Tables 1 and 2 provide a survey of eighteen versions dating from the Ming and Qing periods. Table 1 covers all versions which emerged from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), except for five duplicate scores and six qin songs. The songs will not feature in my structural analysis of Meihua san nong

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\(^3\) In this reference the piece is not called Meihua san nong but Meihua qu ("Plum Blossom Piece").
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song name</th>
<th>Title of piece</th>
<th>一二</th>
<th>三</th>
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Table 1. A selective list of instrumental versions of *Meihua san nong* which emerged during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). For every version the tables give the name of the handbook in which the piece appeared, its year of publication, the specific title used for the composition, and the overall structure of the music (in sections). The various sections within each piece (a, a1, a2, etc.) are related, but this horizontal relationship is not maintained vertically, i.e. "a" in one piece is not necessarily identical to "a" in a different piece. Any attempt to indicate all the occurring changes schematically would result in a hopelessly complicated and impractical matrix. The letter b refers to variant versions of the *nong*, the recurring variational sections which serve as the binding cement in the musical structure. Underlining refers to a lowering by an octave. The marking * indicates sections supplemented with an extra element.

Table 2. A selective list of versions of *Meihua san nong* published during the Qing dynasty (1644-1912).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Sections</th>
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<td>Meihua san nong</td>
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</tr>
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<td>a</td>
<td>a1, a2, a3, a4</td>
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<td>1880</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Meihua san nong</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a1, a2, a3, a4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

because they don’t have the extended form of the instrumental versions. (They are independent pieces based on the main theme of *Meihua san nong*.)

Table 2 provides a selective list of versions published during the Qing dynasty (1644-1912). From the total of twenty-two scores printed in that period, I have chosen five representative ones (leaving out sixteen other versions plus one *qin* song).

Jointly, the two tables present a broad survey of different scores of *Meihua san nong* throughout the ages, starting with the earliest known version of 1425, and moving on to anthologies from the 16th to (late) 19th centuries. All these scores make use of traditional *qin* tablature notation, a system called jianzhipu, which I will not discuss here.

Looking at these tables, which provide information about different names used for the piece throughout history, and about changes in the (overall) structure of the music, we immediately note a number of interesting facts. For example, the title of the piece is not always *Meihua san nong*. Sometimes it is called *Meihua yin* ("The Sound of the Plum Blossom") or simply, *Meihua* ("Plum Blossom"). Similarly, the structure of the piece changes a lot in the course of time. There is a lot of variation in the number and order of sections, particularly during the Ming. Variation is more limited during the Qing (which is why I have included only a selection of sources covering that period in Table 2). It is hard to say why there was less change in the overall structure of the piece during the last three centuries. Perhaps *qin* players of the Qing were generally more concerned with fine details of *qin* esthetics, such as tone quality and embellishments, and less with matters of overall
structure. Throughout the entire history of the piece, the number of sections in the structure may vary from 10 – as in the more recent versions of the Qing – to 14 or even 15, as in some of the older versions. A closer look at the architecture of the piece and how it changed over time will bring to light further important facts.

The overall structure of Meihua san nong – two basic models
In all the extant versions of Meihua san nong, we find, as a major structural feature, the three nong, or three 'variations'. I have indicated them in the tables with the letter b. Every version of the piece consists of three instances of this section, interspersed with other elements. The other main material in the music is the opening theme 'a', which is heard at the beginning of the piece, and which recurs a number of times in the course of the composition, in modified ways. (It is often varied by modulating to a different key.) The nong occur in two different forms: a nong either consists of element 'b' alone, or of 'b' coupled with a variation of 'a'.

To a certain extent one can describe the overall form of the music as a 'rondo', with 'b' as the recurrent theme, except that ‘b’ is absent in the final parts of the piece. In any event, the three nong are the music's most distinctive features. It is always part 'b' which contains the melody shown above in Ex. 1, by which most listeners can immediately recognize Meihua san nong. This tune is played in harmonics, and both its melodic contours and special timbral quality make it easy to remember. Various comments in qin handbooks refer explicitly to the three nong and sometimes praise them as 'the most beautiful' parts of the music. There is even a ci poem about them, by the Song dynasty poet Li Zhongguang:


| 诗书万卷  | Ten thousand scrolls of poems and books... |
| 琴瑟三弄  | The three nong of the gorgeous qin       |
| 更有新词千首 | bring forth thousands more of new poems |

Every time it occurs, part ‘b’ is realized with a different left-hand position on the qin: It is first played on the lower, then on the middle and finally on the upper part of the instrument. The three nong occur in all the existing versions of Meihua san nong, with faithful observance of the three left-hand positions, low, middle and high. Interestingly, in different scores, the three nong are distributed in different ways over the entire structure, i.e. their location within the piece is not always the same.

There seem to be two main models. One corresponds to the version of the piece in Shengqi mi, and one corresponds to the version found in Feng xuan xuan pin, roughly one hundred years later. Up to the beginning of the 18th century, both versions are widely found, but from 1705 onwards, the second model appears to have become the accepted standard.

In the first model, the three nong feature as the second, third and fifth sections of the music. In the second model they appear as sections two, four and six. This revision of order is not the only change. In the second model, the shape of the nong itself is different as well. Here the two constituent parts of the original nong (b and a') are lengthened (and modified) to such an extent that they become independent sections. The new nong consists only of a

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4 From Que qin xiong 45, 54 ("The Immortal of Magpie Bridge").
5 Since the music here consists of harmonics, these positions do not necessarily correspond to lower or higher pitch levels. In fact, in the low position, the sequence sounds on the same pitch level as in the highest position, while the sequence in the middle position sounds an octave lower.
modified part 'b', while the section that follows is an extended variant of 'a'. This pattern is repeated a number of times. Compare:

<table>
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<th>Section:</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **MODEL I**
Sheng ni pu (1425) | a | b+a | b+a1 | a1 | b | a2 | a1 | a2 | a2 | a3 |
| **MODEL II**
Feng xuan xuan pin (1539) | a | b | a | b | a1 | b | a2 | a2* | a2 | a3 |

There are indications that Meihua san nong was a fairly popular piece by the mid-16th century. In the span of roughly two decades, it appeared in four different handbooks: Feng xuan xuan pin (1539), Wu gang qinpu (1546), Xi lu tang qintong (1549) and Qinpu zheng zhuang (1561). In fact, in the last-mentioned book it was recorded twice, once as Meihua san nong and once as Meihua yin. The structure of the first piece is that of 'model I' as shown above. The second piece, Meihua yin, has a deviating form, which resembles neither model I nor model II: here, the three nong appear as one uninterrupted series, in sections two, three and four. Apparently, in this period Meihua san nong was subject to constant structural changes, until the new dominant form (model II) emerged in the Qing dynasty handbook Chen yi tang qinpu (1705). During the Qing, the three nong remained in place as sections two, four and six of the music, while the total number of sections became fixed (at ten). On the whole there was less variety in the editing of the piece in Qing dynasty scores.

Changes in melodic material

In the various scores published in the first 150 years of the documented history of this piece, a great deal of arbitrary variation occurred, not only in the structure but also in the melodic material of the music. For example, compare the beginning of the piece as it appears in the Sheng ni pu, the earliest known score, and in three later handbooks.

Ex. 2. The beginning of Meihua san nong in four different handbooks.

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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feng xuan xuan pin (1539)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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<table>
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<th>Wu gang qinpu (1546)</th>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Qinpu zheng zhuang (1661)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is also considerable change in the shape of the main melody of the three nong. Compare its appearance in the same scores that were listed in Ex. 2:
Ex. 3. The main melody of the *ming*, in four handbooks. This section is played in harmonics.

**Shengqi ming**
(1425)

**Feng xuan**
*xuan pin* (1539)

**Wu gang qinpu**
(1546)

**Qiqiu zhenzhuan**
(1661)

### Ornamentation: the rise of a new aesthetics

A very important change takes place in the course of the 17th century (end of Ming, beginning of Qing). From this time *qin* scholars begin to emphasize all kinds of aesthetic principles, which are translated into imaginative fingerings and special playing techniques. The music is embellished in many new ways. This is reflected in the various scores of *Meihua san nong* as well as in other *qin* tablatures of this period. It is hard to tell whether these changes had already featured in performance practice for a longer period of time or were first introduced at the time when these scores were published. In any event, scholars' theoretical writings also attest to this increased interest in ornaments and timbral variety. At the end of the Ming dynasty, Yan Tianchi (1547–1625) stressed the importance in *qin* performance of the four principles of *qing*, *wei*, *dan* and *yuan* ('clear', 'subtle', 'light' and 'distant'). In the same period another scholar, Xu Shangying (1573–1619), distinguished as many as twenty-four different aesthetic principles in connection with *qin* playing:

- **le** peaceful
- **jing** quiet
- **qing** clear
- **yuan** distant
- **gu** ancient
- **dan** soft
- **tian** tranquil
- **yi** free, leisurely
- **yi** refined, elegant
- **li** beautiful
- **lian** spirited
- **jie** clean
- **run** smooth
- **yuan** even, steady
- **hong** grand, magnificent
- **xi** exquisite, delicate
- **tuo** sliding
- **jian** firm, strong
- **qing** light
- **zhong** heavy
- **chi** lingering
- **jian** hard, solid
- **su** fast, rapid

*Qin* players were clearly looking for a new and expanded expressiveness, new techniques — or new ways to capture existing techniques in notation — to achieve a richer spectrum of moods and meanings in music. The scores of the Ming dynasty and early Qing had looked relatively simple in terms of their fingering signs and performance indications. In the course of the Qing many new signs began to appear.

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6 Recorded in *Xi shan qin kung* [fá 割革]. The (tentative) English translations have been added by the present author.
One can trace this development in the scores of *Meihua san nong*, which show increasing sophistication. The earliest known version of 1425 had had only three fingering signs (for the left hand) which modified pitch contours, usually by a glissando or a vibrato:

ʂuŋʂəu — a quick slide upward and back to the note, produced with the flesh of the thumb
ʂəu — a quick strong vibrato on a single pitch, produced with the flesh of the thumb
ఄ (ఄ) — a quick vibrato like ʂəu, but carried out with less force.

These signs were used sparingly: less than 8 percent of the notes in the score were produced in the form of slides. By the time we reach the *Jiao’an qinpu* four centuries later (1868), the number of fingering signs which affect pitch contours had increased to more than twenty, and the total amount of sliding notes in the score was more than 20 percent. To be precise, the 1868 version of *Meihua san nong* incorporated a total of 89 fingering signs. In addition to signs corresponding to ʂəu and yin (see above), there were signs like i (ఄ) zhu (a downward glissando toward the intended pitch), f (ఄఄ) xiyin (an extremely subtle version of yin), ఄ (ఄఄ) dangyin (a free ‘vibrato’, usually resulting in an approximate figuration like ఄఄఄ) and ఄ (ఄఄ) huyin (another flexible type of figuration).

In principle, with all these extra indications, the music could sound very different in performance, even in places where the overall melodic shape was retained in much the same way. Compare the following two fragments, one from the 1425 version, the other from the 1868 version:

Ex. 4. Corresponding fragments in *Meihua san nong*, as they occur in two different scores.

![Fragment comparison](image)

Expanding and shortening of phrases

One basic compositional principle in *qin* pieces (and in many other genres of Chinese music) is the serial repetition of phrases. In Chinese music one may often find structures like a a b b c c ..., etc. One modern scholar, Qian Renkang (钱仁康), has called this basic architectural principle jù jù shuāng hē hē hē (‘doubling line by line’). It can be found in numerous *qin* scores, including those of *Meihua san nong*, from the earliest known versions onwards. With the new and expanded expressiveness of *qin* music in the Qing dynasty, repetitions of phrases were subjected to more variety by expanding or shortening them. Compare the
following excerpts from the second part of *Meihua san nong* in scores from four different periods (Ex. 5).

**Ex. 5. Excerpts from the second part of *Meihua san nong*, taken from four different versions.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song title</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Shengqi napu</em></td>
<td>1425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Feng xuan xuan pin</em></td>
<td>1539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Qinpu sie sheng</em></td>
<td>1820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jiao'an qinpu</em></td>
<td>1868</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fingerings**

The score from *Jiao'an qinpu*, with its wide array of special markings for pitch embellishments, is the one followed by most qin players today. It is easily the most influential score in the contemporary performance practice of *Meihua san nong*. Generally speaking, most performers today attach a lot of importance to ornamentation and sliding techniques in qin playing. When teaching a qin piece to their students they may go far beyond the actual demands of the scores in terms of slides or ornamentation. This has already been common practice for a long time, though it is hard to speculate about exactly when these extra embellishments became an inherent part of performance practice. One can trace their impact in notation in the scores from the Qing dynasty onwards. On the whole it is difficult to know what the music of the past really sounded like. All the early qin notations
are tablatures: fingering scores. There is no representation of the actual pitches of the music, only of places where one put one’s fingers on the strings to produce a required sound. At different points in time different fingering signs were used. Some signs gradually changed shape. For all we know, their meanings in performance practice may have changed too. The table below documents change in a number of signs found in qin notations. (The terms between brackets refer to the names for the signs, which can be subject to change, too.)

|------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|

The thirteen studs (hui 极) on the body of the qin mark certain pitch positions on the strings. In-between two studs there is usually a whole range of possible intervals which one could play, from a minor second up to a minor third, not to speak of microtones. Until the publication of the Gu yin zheng zong in 1634, all the available qin anthologies gave only approximate locations for pitches produced in-between two studs. So how did the melodies really sound? We can safely assume that Chinese music of earlier centuries used several kinds of tone scales, including seven-tone scales. The precise melodic interpretation of ancient scores remains largely a matter for conjecture. In the 1634 qin handbook, for the first time, the pitch range in-between studs is subdivided (in ten parts), enabling an accurate knowledge about the individual pitches intended.

From the late Qing dynasty onwards, the five-tone scale was gradually established, which came to dominate many later interpretations of guqin pieces.

A summary of the changes in Meihua san nong
The list below provides a tentative survey of the most important changes which took place in written scores of Meihua san nong in the course of five centuries, as documented in a number of representative versions.

- **Shenqi mi pu**: The earliest surviving score of Meihua san nong.
- **Feng xuan xuan pin**: Very different from the above score in melody and in musical structure.
- **Wu gang qinpu**: Many modifications in the structure. Simplifications of the melody. Big impact on later qin scores.
- **Qinpu zheng zhuang**: Contains two structurally different versions, of which one is identical to the version in Wu gang qinpu.
- **Wu yin qinpu**: Extensions of the melody, extended structure, many new elements.
Beija xin fu (1589)  
A more carefully balanced, crystallized structure.  
Becomes a blueprint for all Qing dynasty scores.  
Many pitch ornamentation techniques added in the notation.

Gu yin zheng zong (1634)  
Here, for the first time, a precise notation of  
itches in-between the strings (shui) of the qin.

Cheng yi tang qinpu (1705)  
Structure of the piece in ten parts (rather than 12  
or 14) definitely established. This score forms a  
prototype for Qinpu xie sheng.

Zi quan tang qinpu (1802)  
Influenced by Beija xin fu. Modifies that version in  
several ways, with melodic refinements and various  
musical cuts. Embryonic form of all later versions  
of Meihua san nong of the Qing dynasty. (The Jiau-  
an qinpu version is basically the same as this one.)

Twentieth century sound recordings

Naturally a documented history of Meihua san nong should not remain limited to a screening  
of written scores. To my knowledge the oldest surviving sound recording of the piece is a  
performance by an ensemble of qin, se 瑟 (a related zither type) and xiao 箫 (bamboo flute)  
recorded in the 1940s. It was issued on a 45 rpm gramophone record privately produced by  
the Jinyu Qin Society 今虞社 in Shanghai. This was followed by a 33 1/3 rpm gramophone  
record of a version for qin and xiao, issued by the China Record Company in 1955. In 1956  
the qin scholar Zha Fuxi 赵福熙 and some of his students carried out fieldwork among qin  
players in various parts of China, collecting a wealth of information and numerous precious  
recordings. Various versions of Meihua san nong recorded at that time (e.g. as  
performed by Liu Shaochun 刘少春, Pu Xuehai 普新海, and Zhang Ziqian 张子谦) have  
recently been re-issued on CDs. In recent decades, and especially from the 1980s onwards,  
nearly one hundred cassettes and CDs of guqin music were published. They include  
performances of Meihua san nong by over twenty-five different players. Quite a few of these  
players have recorded the piece more than once.

The remainder of this article will focus on three specific recordings of Meihua san nong  
which, in the author's opinion, stand out as prominent versions:

1) Wu Jinglue 吴景略 recorded 1955*  
   after: Qinpu xie sheng (1820)
2) Zhang Ziqian 张子谦 recorded 1982  
   after: Jiau an qinpu (1868)
3) Wei Zhongle 卫仲乐 recorded 1962  
   after: Jiau an qinpu (1868)

[*Wu Jinglue plays together with Sun Yude. xiao (bamboo flute)]

All three players listed here, Wu Jinglue, Zhang Ziqian and Wei Zhongle, were one another’s  
contemporaries. They were well-known and outstanding qin players, and officially  
recognized as important stage artists in the People's Republic. But their individual  
backgrounds were rather different, resulting in different styles of playing.

7 Before 1949, qin playing was not a stage tradition. Qin masters usually played at home or outdoors,  
for themselves or for an intimate audience of friends or students, and the teaching of qin music was a private  
matter. After the founding of the PRC, many traditional musical activities were institutionalized. This  
resulted in many changes and in new opportunities for the qin and its performers. The qin was soon taught in  
music conservatories, and it also became an optional instrument in Chinese national orchestras. Qin players  
like Wu, Zhang and Wei were formally recognized as minshu xinwenxi (“national folk musicians”).
Wu Jingle (1908-1986) grew up in Changshu, an old town in Jiangsu, in a climate of literary cultivation, calligraphers, painters, sculptors, musicians, and local teahouse music. The qin tradition in Changshu can be traced to the Southern Song dynasty (1125-1279), when Xu Xiaoshan 徐紹山, a descendant of qin master Xu Tianmin 徐天民 of the so-called Zhe school (浙派) exerted great influence and established high standards of qin playing. It was in this rich artistic and intellectual climate of Changshu that, many centuries later, Wu Jingle developed his own unique style of qin playing: smooth and melodious, clearly flavoured by the qualities of Jiangnan folk music, and full of bright and vivid rhythms. Wu’s performance of Meihua san nong 美华三弄 strikes the listener as a youthful and spirited one, with the beauty and fragrance of a freshly picked flower. Indeed, Wu’s interpretation is known, in qin circles, as Xin Meihua 新梅花 (the ‘New Plum Blossom’).

Zhang Ziqian grew up in Yangzhou, and was a pupil of Sun Shaotao 孙少涛 of the Guangling qin school (广陵派). He learned quickly, mastered many qin pieces while he was still very young, and had an open-minded cheerful nature and a great modesty, which brought him new friends from many places. He felt he could learn from all of his friends, and gradually formed his own highly individual style, while still paying homage to his original master. In his old age, he told his pupils: ‘I learned the three pieces Long xiang yao 龙翔瑶, Meihua san nong and Ping sha huo yan from my old master. Please don’t ever change them!’ In reality his manner of playing these pieces changed a lot in the course of time. Zhang Ziqian had a flexible and easy way of handling the rhythm of the music. This was typical of him. It resulted in an unrestrained flow of music, at once firm and beautiful in its grace and simplicity. Although Zhang’s interpretation is based on the Jiao’an qinpu, published nearly half a century after the Qipu xie sheng from which Wu Jingle took his version, qin scholars have named Zhang’s interpretation Lan Meihua 老梅花 (the ‘Old Plum Blossom’).”

* For more information about Zhang, see my article in Chime 3 (Spring 1991) pp. 76-87: ‘In Memory of a great guqin player – Master Zhang Ziqian’.
Finally, there is Wei Zhongle. In his youth in Shanghai he loved and played all kinds of Chinese folk instruments. He played in a folk orchestra, studied *pipa*, *erhu*, *guqin*, *se*, *di*, *xiao*, *saxian*, *yueqin*, and also Western violin and conducting. After 1949 he became a Professor at the Shanghai Conservatory, and eventually established the conservatory’s folk music department (*minzu yinyuexi*). His version of *Meihua san nong* derives from the same score as Zhang Ziqian’s but is clearly influenced by Wei’s knowledge of folk music. Wei Zhongle’s style is powerful, imposing, and appealing to both refined and popular tastes. He plays *Meihua san nong* with majestic grandeur, in a regular march rhythm.

I would like to compare a number of specific elements in the versions of these three players: rhythm, ornamentation, and musical vocabulary. I will also look at the use of certain finger techniques, and at certain overall similarities (in addition to the many differences) in the versions of the three players.

A comparison of the recorded versions of Wu, Zhang and Wei

A rhythmic figure which Wu Jinglüe often uses in his version of *Meihua san nong* is: \(\overline{\text{7-7}}\). Zhang Ziqian often uses a rhythmic grouping which permeates the entire piece as he plays it: \(\overline{\text{7}}\). Finally, Wei Zhongle’s preferred rhythmical pattern is: \(\overline{\text{7-7}}\).

Here is a comparison of the *nong*, the part in harmonics, as played by the three performers (Ex. 6). One can clearly see the differences in rhythmical approach:

Ex. 6. The second section of *Meihua san nong*, as played by Wu Jinglüe, Zhang Ziqian, and Wei Zhongle. The entire section is played in harmonics.

There are also clear differences in ornamentation. Zhang Ziqian’s beautifully realized upward and downward glissandi affect the rhythm of the music, but not the overall melody, as in Example 7.
In the first two excerpts shown in example 7, the melody is not much affected by Zhang’s fingerings, but he does introduce some distinctive rhythmical figures. Example 8 shows how Zhang uses the sliding techniques *zhuang* and *dou*.

*Ex. 7.* Three examples of upward and downward glissandi in Zhang Ziqian’s version.

*Ex. 8.* A further example of glissando ornaments in Zhang Ziqian’s version.

We can also compare the different ways in which the three players handle the fingerling techniques *yin* and *rou*. Theoretically, these are just quick vibrati on a single pitch. But in Zhang Ziqian’s playing, they often become an upward or downward slide towards the prescribed pitch. By contrast, in Wu Jinglue’s playing, they are frequently elaborated to small melodic motifs. Finally, in Wei Zhongle’s playing, we get to hear entirely new pitches. Ex. 9 (p. 140) is a comparison of one specific segment of the music in which the fingerings *yin* and *rou* are realized differently by the three players.

There are many individual differences in musical style between the three players. We might say that all of them have their own personal vocabulary. For example, Wu Jinglue has his own way of interpreting certain fingerings like *yin, rou, cua, zhu, shang* and *xia*. He often introduces four-note groupings, usually played on one string, in a continuous
glissando. The effect is like that of a string of pearls briefly exposed to sunlight. In example 10, we can see some illustrations of this:

Ex. 9. *Yin* and *run* (vibrato) techniques, realized differently by Zhang Ziqian, Wu Jinglue and Wei Zhongle in segments from *Meihau san nong*.

Ex. 10. Four-note groupings in the playing of Wu Jinglue (two examples).

A typical feature of Wei Zhongle’s playing is that he frequently adds some pitches to elaborate an already existing musical gesture. For example, if a note goes up in the score Wei Zhongle may decide to make it return to its original pitch level in sliding fashion. Thus, after the note group \( \frac{7}{3} \) in the score, Wei Zhongle may add \( \frac{5}{3} \); and in some other places with an upward step, we can hear him play a double glissando: \( \frac{7}{3}, \frac{5}{3} \). (In other words he repeats the figure.) Here is a fragment in which we can observe these characteristics:

Ex. 11. Elaboration of musical gestures in the playing of Wei Zhongle.
Wei also introduces in *Meihua san nong* the principle of 'rolling fingers' (卷指 *lunzhi*), a technique borrowed from *pipa* (Chinese lute) music. Wei Zhongle was a respectable *pipa* player, and he drew inspiration from that instrument. *Lunzhi* is a fast arpeggio of (usually descending) notes. Wei realizes it on the *qin* via a (left-hand) downward slide while the fingers of the right hand produce the quick 'rolling' movement so typical of *pipa* playing:

Ex. 12. Wei Zhongle: *lunzhi* ('rolling fingers') in *Meihua san nong*.

To my knowledge this technique is not found in traditional *qin* playing. So far Wei Zhongle is the only one to apply it to *qin* music. Curiously enough, he only uses this technique in *Meihua san nong*, and it can only be heard twice in the course of his version of that piece.

While there are many remarkable differences in playing style, techniques and emotive approach in Wu, Zhang and Wei's versions of *Meihua san nong*, the three performers also have some relevant aspects in common. They share a similar sense of artistic freedom, coupled with a deep respect for tradition. In their recordings, all three perform with great skill and ease, with a high degree of technical proficiency. All three of them show strong affinity with what they have learned from the past, but feel free to put their own personal stamp on the music, as so many *qin* players of older generations have done before them.

**Historical breath**

Opinions may differ about the quality of ancient or modern interpretations of *Meihua san nong*. Some people may prefer the oldest versions of the music, with which they associate, perhaps, the primitive beauty or purity of an idealized past. Others may prefer the versions of the late Qing, for their technical and aesthetic perfection. One might feel attracted by more than just one version or type of performance. Open-minded listeners and researchers may well discover special merit in some of the most divergent interpretations and re-creations of *Meihua san nong*. The author has no problem accepting many of the changes that have taken place in the music throughout history. Perhaps the only essential condition is that the basic spirit of the piece should be maintained, i.e. the music should still express the concept of purity which lies at the heart of the composition — a purity symbolized by the 'purest of flowers', the plum blossom.

The changes in *Meihua san nong* are typical for what has happened in the entire repertoire of *guqin* music. *Qin* music is always subject to change, like a never-ending stream. Being a *qin* performer myself, I consider it a blessing to figure as a 'drop of water' in this stream and to participate actively in the processes of change in Chinese traditional music. But only when looking back at the many different interpretations of *qin* pieces which have reached us over the past six centuries can we experience the full historical breadth of *qin* music, the full and profound beauty of its musical and architectural creativity. *Meihua san nong*, with its perpetually changing musical forms, features in the *qin* repertoire as a particularly fascinating jewel.
Chinese composer Tan Dun started his adventures in the realm of contemporary opera with his ritualistic 'Nine Songs' (1989). His international breakthrough in this field came seven years later, with the drama 'Marco Polo', which earned him numerous international prizes. The present interview was conducted shortly after the world premiere of 'Peony Pavilion' in May 1998, a four-hour drama developed in close co-operation with American director Peter Sellars and Hua Wen-yi, the grand old lady of Chinese Kun opera. Tan Dun's recent plans include a full-scale Peking Opera and a St. Matthew's Passion! In this interview the composer talks at length about his present ideas on musical style and cultural cross-over — from shamanism to Warhol, from faked tradition to Gianni Versace: 'I prefer to play under a big umbrella.' And: 'Yes, I try to be more shamanistic than traditional shamanism.'

How to deal with existing musical traditions in a rapidly 'globalizing' world? One possible answer to this question comes from Tan Dun. His recent opera 'Peony Pavilion' is based primarily on classical Chinese music theatre, but also contains numerous references to other musical realms. The first half of the production consists almost exclusively of selections from traditional Kun opera music (Kunqu), while the second half is an original work, in a bold mixture of styles. There are frequent excursions into the realms of Asian shamanism, Western romantic opera, and pop music, as well as Chinese traditional opera. The stage is dominated by glass panels and video screens, but the story — about a pair of lovers miraculously reunited after an encounter with death and the spiritual world — is set in Ming dynasty China. The opera is based on Tang Xianzu's famous 16th century play Mudan Ting (1589). What is Tan Dun's attitude towards Chinese native traditions? How does he go about integrating the very distinct stylistical realms in his music? The present interview focuses on these questions. It took place at the K&K Hotel Maria Theresia in Vienna, 13 May 1998, one day after the world premiere of 'Peony Pavilion'.

Shamanistic roots

How do you deal with inherited tradition, notably with Asian traditional music theatre, in your own compositions?

TD: So far, in most interviews, this matter has been discussed in too general terms. When people do scholarly research on Chinese music, they might want to look at it in more
detail. If I were to write a PhD thesis about Schoenberg, my own point of departure, initially, would be his personality, rather than broader cultural issues. One cannot explain a composer’s artistic development solely by his or her background, say – in Schoenberg’s case – the cultural climate of Austria during his lifetime. Ideally, every artist must be regarded, first and foremost, as an individual. How one particular composer differs from all the others largely depends on two factors: his personal education and cultural surroundings, and the musical innovations which he brings about in the course of time.

There are a great many contemporary Chinese composers who, initially, grew up with traditional Chinese culture. For most of us, our regional roots are very important. I was raised in the world of the Chinese theatre, so to speak, as a musician in Hunan Province, south of the Yellow River. During the historical period of the Warring States, the regions Hunan and Hubei were China’s cultural heartland, with a strong shamanistic tradition of which many elements have survived to the present day. Upon close analysis, one would probably find that, because of these roots, I’m using a musical language which differs from composers who come from, say, the north of China, or Sichuan, or Guangdong.

But your music is a melting-pot of styles and idioms from many parts of the world. Wouldn’t it actually be impossible to tell your Hunanese roots from your music, unless one knew?

TD: To a certain extent it is important to be aware of a composer’s cultural background.
But you wouldn’t want to care too much about it either. In the end, it’s the composer’s music which speaks when it sounds, and which explains everything that needs to be explained.

_Do you set any limits when you use traditional materials? Is everything allowed? What are your criteria?_ I’m asking this, bearing in mind the popular ‘world music’ scene with its abundance of hybrid styles.

_TD:_ First of all, there are no limits—but that’s precisely what makes the concept of working with tradition so difficult and so challenging. In my own music, I have managed, quite successfully, to blend materials from different sources by submitting them to a common process. I have had a very extensive education in Western composition techniques, which is fairly obvious in my compositions. For example, I like to develop simple short motifs, just like Beethoven did: _ba-ba-ba-bam._ I like that. But I have also got acquainted with many different languages and cultures from other parts of the world. That, too, was part of my education. I think it is actually a tragedy for a contemporary composer to be interested in only one culture. That’s not enough to form a language of one’s own.

Yet what are the criteria in this process—if you can pinpoint them at all? Just think of the British pop group _Enigma,_ who mixed Gregorian Chant into their tracks. That, quite obviously, has nothing to do with the actual tradition of Gregorian Chant. But it led to commercial success.

_TD:_ You cannot judge this matter in general terms, saying ‘it’s good’ or ‘it’s bad’. You have to assess every new approach, every single piece individually, and judge it on its own merits. I have been dealing a lot with pop culture, with Duchamp and, very intensively, with Andy Warhol. For me, the realm of music is closely linked to the visual arts and to literature. Consequently, for a contemporary composer, it doesn’t make much sense just to study the Second Viennese School, Pierre Boulez, Messiaen, and so forth. It is of equal importance to know the attitudes and achievements of people like Cage, Duchamp, Warhol, and Philip Glass. Because of my studies in this field, I don’t have any problems accepting pop music. But in my own works, the way I see it, I’m not creating pop, or medieval music, or _Kun_ opera. Nor is my music a collage of such elements. I prefer to think of it as a mosaic. This mosaic contains a great many elements from different traditions and cultures, but they are moulded into a genuine whole.

My music is often based on processes of ‘re-creation’. At the same time its technical design is realized in very careful ways. For example, if you consider the chanting in the second half of ‘Peony Pavilion’, you will find that there are no quotations, that I wrote all the music myself. Yet I composed it exactly _that_ way—in a manner frequently reminiscent of _Kunqu_, because I knew which other materials—mainly original _Kun_ opera—would be incorporated into the piece. Just take one of the central motifs in the piece, A-e-d-a, first introduced by a male choir on tape: it corresponds with the standard tuning of the _pipa_, the Chinese lute, which is a basic instrument in this composition, and it also figures prominently in the _Kunqu_ style. All this is designed very carefully and conscientiously.
Glass panels and video screens in Tan Dun’s ‘Peony Pavilion’.

As a composer, do you proceed instinctively rather than well-planned?

TD: My music is very much determined by my instinct, my feelings. At the same time it involves extensive technical elaboration. If you were to analyse ‘Ghost Opera’, for string quartet with pipa, you’d come across counterpoint passages of a Chinese folk-melody Xiao bai cai ya and a theme from one of Bach’s cello suites. At first glance, this music may appear to be spontaneous invention, very intuitively conceived, but technically it is very carefully wrought.

Can you describe in more detail the kind of techniques you use in shaping the structure of your music?

TD: I apply one technique which is little used by other composers. I start with a kind of collage of several short motifs. For example, the pipa motif A-e-d-a which I referred to earlier, and which is the basic motif in ‘Peony Pavilion’. The next step is to derive several melodic lines from this motif, for example A-a-f-e-c-d, which sounds very much like medieval music. With other derivations you may suddenly find yourself in the realm of Kunqu. You can see that, in this way, one almost automatically shifts to and fro between different cultures. If, subsequently, three of these derivations come together in a single vocal part, this is a fairly natural process.

For the rest, my composition method differs considerably from that of other
composers in that I have no system to dictate my musical language, in the manner of Schoenberg's twelve-tone principles. I rather prefer to play under a big umbrella — yes, I'd say that my composing is actually something very playful.

In every new piece, I start from a different concept. The choice depends on the subject. I may involve the Kunqu tradition, I may also refer to young generation music like rock, jazz or rap, as I did in 'Peony Pavilion'. In that opera, actually three different generations are presented on stage: the Kunqu generation, the 'ghost' generation, and the young generation. So it was only appropriate to incorporate elements of young generation music. I said so to Peter Sellars: 'The music springs entirely from my own imagination, I'm not trying to copy the Kunqu style or the original style of music from the Yuan or Song dynasties — nobody could really manage that. Basically, what I'm doing is creating my own response to those traditions.'

**Pentatonicism**

*Again bearing in mind the Kunqu tradition, it's interesting to note that you make use of the traditional concept of 'labelled melodies' (qupai). How exactly is this achieved?*

**TD:** The qupai concept is used mainly in the vocalizations which I sing personally on the tape that you hear during the performance. I have developed a number of different patterns: Moistening, Spring, Watered, and Blow. These melodic patterns are derived only to a certain extent from Chinese opera traditions. They are also the result of my own vocal style. I am doing quite a lot of experimental music in New York. I have been working in this field for ten years now, with my own group, Blue Screamer.

*I discern further affinities with Kunqu in the fairly gentle melodies of 'Peony Pavilion' – often reminiscent of pentatonicism without necessarily being pentatonic.*

**TD:** Maybe. Pentatonic systems were of major importance in nearly all the great cultures of antiquity, because they were so much closer to our manners of speech intonation than the more complex scales of later times. Those later systems culminated in numerous different musical styles, in the realm of church music, folk music and so on, but also in individual styles, like that of Messiaen.

*At present, pentatonicism based on combinations of major seconds and thirds has acquired an implicit cultural meaning; it has practically become a major symbol for Chinese musical culture.*

**TD:** While I was composing, I did not give any thought to the possible use of pentatonic scales. I just let my inner voice lead me along. To begin with, I made detailed outlines, I formulated basic rules. For example the principle that, in 'Peony Pavilion', there would be neither harmony nor counterpoint. Even so, in the end it turned out that practically everything in the score became harmony and counterpoint! But not the concept of harmony one finds in Western classical music.

**Quotation or fake**

*In your earlier opera 'Marco Polo', of 1996, there was a far more dominant role for 'Western classical' musical elements. Your approach in 'Peony Pavilion' appears to be similar, in many ways, to what you did in your earliest opera, 'Nine Songs' of 1989: this idea of 'one
line music', the attempted avoidance of harmony and counterpoint, the ritualistic and shamanistic eruptions, the predominant use of elementary musical gestures, rather than melodic motifs in the conventional sense, and so on.

TD: That's absolutely true. The only difference is that, in 'Nine Songs', all the material was basically invented by me. In 'Peony Pavilion', the music was again written by me, but much of the material was deliberately and explicitly linked to Kunqu. The basic concepts of 'Nine Songs' and 'Marco Polo' are totally different. I am about to start work on a St. Matthew's Passion for the Stuttgart Bach Society. Again, this piece will have a point of departure entirely different from anything I've done before. All of my compositions start from different concepts, but naturally there are certain key aspects which all of them share.

Surely, some of the links with Kunqu as you have pointed them out in 'Peony Pavilion' must have their parallels in the score of 'Nine Songs' ? I can't help feeling that certain vocal passages in 'Nine Songs' must have been derived almost directly from Chinese opera.

TD: Of course there are influences like that in 'Nine Songs', too. But no direct quotations. It's all my own vocal style – the music in both these operas. I have a very, very strong tradition. In fact, it is so strong that I could easily fake 'folk music' if I wanted to. When I prepared the soundtrack for a 4-hour TV documentary on Mao Zedong for PBS – 'Mao Zedong's Years' – I was expected to incorporate some recordings of traditional Chinese music. I didn't like the available recordings, they weren't sufficiently traditional in my view, so I decided to compose fake traditional music instead. I am able to compose pieces which you wouldn't be able to distinguish from a genuinely ancient Chinese repertoire. Anyway, neither 'Nine Songs' nor 'Peony Pavilion' contain direct quotations.

In 'Marco Polo', by contrast, there are quite a few quotations. For example the beginning, which sounds like a straight copy from a Peking Opera overture.

TD: Yes, but once again, the opening is not a quotation, it's a fake. I admit that 'Marco Polo' does include many genuine quotations, from Mahler and Richard Strauss to Indian scales. But the beginning is an 'original composition'. And if you ask the participating Chinese performers about this, they will confirm it. If it were traditional music, it would be a great deal less hard for them to learn. When they have studied the score for some time, they may actually come to the recognition that – 'ah, it sounds like traditional Chinese pieces after all...'. That, in my view, is concept art. Are you familiar with the paintings of the well-known 20th century artist Zhang Daqian? He was able to paint exactly like artists of the Northern Song dynasty, while in fact his works weren't Song paintings at all.

I believe you're touching upon a very important aspect: the quotation is replaced by a 'fake' which communicates the impression of being a quotation. In fact it's an original composition, a perfect copy of the style, so to speak. Why go about it this way?

TD: I have spent my whole life studying different musical styles. If you want to do comparative research on, say, literature in China and Europe, you better be well-versed in the different literary styles of those cultures. Well, this happens to be a major part of the basic concept of my music. I'm not interested in compositional 'methods' as such, as developed by Messiaen, Boulez or anyone else.

1 Chang Dai Chien (1899-1983).
Yet you use some of these methods within your own 'comparative' approach?

TD: Yes, that’s true. It’s interesting, I had never thought of it that way.

Vocal styles – mixed or kept apart

I’d like to come back to the question of vocal techniques. I noted that, in ‘Marco Polo’, Eastern and Western vocal styles frequently merge in the part of one singer. This happens in the music of the Peking Opera singer, but also in the other vocal parts. By contrast, in ‘Peony Pavilion’, the two stylistic realms seem to be kept more distinct by allotting them to specific singers: the music of the ‘Western opera’ couple is clearly juxtaposed to that of the Kunqu actors, which remains in Kunqu style. Would you agree that this amounts to an important conceptual difference between the two works? And why did you do it that way?

TD: I have only worked with Ying Huang, the soprano in ‘Peony Pavilion’, for a rather short time. Initially I considered developing new vocal techniques in co-operation with her, but it turned out there was simply not enough time for that. Her own performance experience has focused almost exclusively on Western music. But our co-operation will continue. We’re planning a lot of workshops together. For example, we’ve hired a coach who will teach her Mongolian and Tibetan chant, and she’s also working with Hua Wen-yi to master Kunqu vocal techniques.

So the separation of vocal styles in Peony Pavilion was due mainly to practical considerations?

TD: I wouldn’t put it like that. I’d rather say it was an outcome of my manner of working. When we prepare projects like ‘Peony Pavilion’ for performance, the music takes shape in workshop-like situations, in close co-operation with the performers. If I were to write a piece for you, I would also do it that way. I try to make sure that you can perform it in an ideal way, a way that suits your own skills. For example, this is how I worked with Mr Lin, the tenor in ‘Peony Pavilion’. His grandfather was a master of pingtan, which is a genre of southern story-singing. One might argue that pingtan presents the chief vocal techniques of folk music in the Shanghai region. Lin studied pingtan quite intensively as a child, and in our work together we tried to trace these roots.

But to me, his part in ‘Peony Pavilion’ seemed to be reflect mainly European vocal techniques. Where can one detect the influence of pingtan in his part?

TD: It’s more the atmospheric quality of pingtan which we’ve tried to incorporate. Here
again, there are no quotations! Generally speaking, the direct use of folk music is very unusual in my music. I have difficulties with it for two reasons. Firstly, to me this music is often not ‘folky’ enough – that is to say, not extreme enough, not sufficiently shamanistic. Secondly, if I really were to use this music, I would feel obliged to teach it to the singers. I mean, I would require them to sing exactly like folk singers. That would imply a lot of very hard work, and it might just be a waste of time. I much prefer to teach my own vocal style to the singers, which is so much more within reach, and easier to achieve.

Two distinct paths
Do you think of your music as being actually more shamanistic than traditional shaman music? If I understand you correctly, you attempt to distill the essence from such a tradition in order to reinforce and invigorate it until it fits your own needs.

TD: Yes. My music is really taking two distinct paths. One of these paths leads to Chinese culture. It’s the ‘one culture’ path. As far as this direction is concerned, processes of making something more shamanistic than the original play an important role. The other path is multicultural. This is the direction which, for example, predominates in the funeral scene of ‘Peony Pavilion’, where a traditional-style Taoist shamanistic ritual is combined with the use of synthesizers and a drum set. In this particular scene, the vocal part of Sister Stone, the priest, is a free development of elements from the Kunqu vocal style.

I’m now planning to compose an opera which is entirely based on vocal styles from Peking opera, but without using a single quotation. All this is so new, that I can hardly make any general statements about it at present.

I do not doubt the quality and integrity of your music, but I see certain dangers in the way it is often presented to the public. CD buyers might easily feel carried away by facile slogans from the record industry. They might just be attracted by the assumed ‘exotic flair’ of your music, by its enticing packaging, without necessarily grasping the full profundity of compositions and the actual complexity of your artistic approach.

TD: I don’t particularly want to make things look ‘exotic’; actually, I am very much against people doing this.

Doesn’t the record industry attempt to promote your music in simplified terms to make it more marketable?

TD: I don’t think this really happens. The people who buy my CDs do not belong to a standard category of consumers. They are a new generation. Most of them, as far as I can see, are very open-minded young people, and they’ve got the future, that much is sure. Basically I don’t think that I’m gearing my CDs to any specific tastes. But let me remind you again of Warhol and Glass. Initially people believed that commerce and the philosophy of art were mutually exclusive categories. However, these two realms soon proved to be closely related – they are rooted in the same cultural soil. The affirmation of this relationship is just one example of contemporary art crossing conceptual borders.
Obviously record buyers are not entirely dependent on commercial slogans or sales techniques. As time goes by, they have the opportunity to acquaint themselves in-depth with the substance of your music.

TD: Let me give one last example to illustrate my point of view. Take Gianni Versace, the fashion designer. He created many clothes which — at first glance — seemed to have an exotic touch. In actual fact, this was not exoticism. I’d rather describe it as the manifestation of a strong creative urge within the world of fashion, an urge based on an extreme cross-over, an extreme open-mindedness in all directions. However — and this is the point I would like to get to — Versace also managed to put an extremely personal imprint on his designs — precisely by looking in so many directions. At first, his designs were praised as ‘exotic’ in order to draw public attention to them, but later they became just Versace, genuine Versace, and that was it! This is exactly how I think about my own music. Here, once again, it’s an ‘extreme cross-over’ — although I generally don’t like the word cross-over — which leads me to an extremely personal kind of music. And just as Versace’s clothes are not intended for everyday wear, my music does not necessarily fit the needs of the average CD purchaser. It speaks to a new generation.
A NEW MUSIC STYLE?

Buddhism & Rock Music

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One of the most remarkable alliances in Chinese popular music is that of Chinese rock music with elements of Buddhism. Examples of this include songs by Wang Yong and by the rock band Zijue Yuedui – spontaneous and inventive compositions, not prompted by commercial motives. The long-term ‘commodity value’ of these songs is hard to predict, but the artists who create them seem firmly committed to the new and original combination of ‘Buddhist rock’. The author examines a number of Buddhist-inspired rock songs and briefly looks into the future prospects of the genre.

An interesting new tendency in the realm of (modern) popular music (fuxing yinyue) in the People’s Republic is the absorption of traditional religious elements into new compositions. Philosophical as well as musical ideas – vocal or instrumental practices, even complete musical structures – are borrowed from ritual traditions and incorporated wholesale or in modified form in popular Chinese songs. One of the most fascinating and perhaps least expected alliances is that of rock music (yaogun yinyue) with elements of Buddhist music and thought – a fairly recent phenomenon.

Rock music in China remains a complex topic. In its mere ten years of existence, the genre has witnessed a confusing series of ups and downs, due to political, economical and social factors. Rock musicians were, and still are, a frequent target of political campaigns and of prohibitive measures by the Chinese government. Moreover, Chinese rock is still being produced and enjoyed mainly in Beijing. Under these circumstances, it is quite astonishing that it manages to survive as one of many popular music styles all over the country.

We can only grasp the full significance of rock music in China if we examine it as a genre in its own right, with its own functions, rather than as part of the vast plethora of Chinese popular music. I would like to discuss, at the beginning of this article, some important general features of rock music, and their consequences for Chinese musicians, before turning to the specific realm of rock with Buddhist influences. I will explore three specific songs incorporating Buddhist elements: one by Wang Yong, and two by the rock bands Zijue Yuedui and Zhinanzhen. Finally, I will turn to the question whether we can indeed speak of the rise of a new and typical music genre in China, which could be termed ‘Buddhist rock’.

Wang Yong, co-founder of one of China's first rock bands. He is a devoted Buddhist.

As in other non-Western countries, pop and rock music in China were first imported via sound recordings from the West, then imitated, then recontextualized and adapted to native tastes and to local musicians' own purposes—essentially an on-going development. Roughly speaking, the processes of musical adaptation and recreation take place on two different levels: the 'private' level (i.e. that of individual musicians), and that of the music industry, with its facilities of sound technology.

Until the end of the Cultural Revolution (1976), not only China's music industry but also most forms of individual music performed in the country were under the tight control of China's Communist Party (CCP). In the late 1970s, when Deng Xiaoping introduced his reform policies and China began to open its doors to foreign trade and culture, the situation changed, and a growing gap became apparent between the two aforementioned levels. Governmental subsidies for many performing activities were reduced or withdrawn, and a number of institutions in the entertainment industry were privatized. Popular music in China became an 'open-to-all' field, which, on the private level, attracted increasing numbers of musicians because it was so easily accessible.

Essentially this same picture is valid today: popular music can be played and enjoyed without any kind of formal education, and offers opportunities for freely combining all kinds of different styles and sounds. There are no restrictions to individual experimentation and creative innovation, as long as the musicians perform mainly in the privacy of their own homes or in the circle of their own friends. But this relative freedom of expression may be subjected to all kinds of restrictions as soon as they start playing in public places or (attempt to) publish recordings—in which case they may have to count upon pressure from govern-
ment officials, the public, the music industry, and – above all – the hit charts.  

The situation of rock music in China differs from that of Chinese pop or light music (liuxing yinyue, qing yinyue) in that the latter is supported by the state-run entertainment industry. Rock music, in contrast, was ignored by the state and the state-run media for many years, and at present still receives scanty official attention. For a long time its life depended mainly on the support of private interest groups, largely consisting of Chinese and foreign individuals. Since the early 1990s a growing number of private production companies (zhizuo gongsi) have appeared, which has led to certain changes. For rock musicians, recording a master tape or a CD has now become primarily a financial problem and much less a political problem. All the same, the musicians will have to find state-run companies to help them release their CD or tape. They still have to rely on official publishers (chubanshe) and distributors (fa-xing gongsi). Unlike the government-owned enterprises, private production companies have no legal right to publish or distribute music; they are inclined to promote mainly recordings of popular and politically less sensitive music in order to reduce the risk of their products being refused circulation on the market.

Production and distribution of rock recordings

Many Chinese rock cassettes are recorded or produced in Beijing and later sold to publishers and distributors in Sichuan, Guizhou, Shanghai, Guangzhou and elsewhere. If rock musicians cannot find a company on the Mainland willing to release their records, they may still try to find one in Hong Kong, on Taiwan or still further away – the first CD of the all-female rock band ‘Cobra’ was issued in Germany.  

Selling a (rock) record in China has become a nationwide if not an international process, depending on a long chain of political, economical and aesthetic considerations, in which different people and companies are involved.

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2 Hit charts (puxiangbang) are published in various music journals, such as the Shanghai-based monthly Yinxiang shijie (‘Audio and Video World’ in English), which was founded in 1987. Recently, the 120th volume of the magazine appeared. It has a nationwide circulation, is printed in Hong Kong and costs 10.80 Yuan.

3 Cobra recorded their first solo-CD ‘Hypocrisy’ after a successful tour through Germany in 1993. It was published by ‘Network Medien GmbH’, Frankfurt, 1994, in cooperation with the Hus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin. Later, the record was also published in China under the title Youqing she (Cobra), by the China Record Corporation, Guangzhou, 1996.
In the course of time, the music market in China has expanded considerably. There was a disco (*disike*) boom around 1985, with rock music following suit in 1986 and scaling to new heights in the early 1990s, when record companies from Taiwan and Hong Kong joined forces with Mainland production companies.

Growing numbers of people began to foster hopes of becoming pop or rock musicians. Everyone wanted to jump on the boat, to copy what others had already played, and to make money, if possible. Hardly a situation unique for China, but certainly one that could affect the quality of the music produced. Within a few years after rock music had been launched, big state-run enterprises like the China Record Corporation began to participate in the rock business, cautiously sounding the air. This suggested at least a temporary relaxation of official political constraints on rock music. The situation remained precarious, and many rock concerts had to be cancelled or broken off due to government interference. At this time, notably around 1993, many musicians grew so tired of preparing concerts which they were not allowed to give in the end that they shifted their focus more to studio work. Both factors – the gradual involvement of state-run companies and the stronger emphasis on studio work – soon resulted in a rapid growth of the production of rock tapes. According to Wu Jiniao, in 1994 this development actually led to a situation in which only two popular music styles could be heard in China, namely, a ‘Mainland Chinese influenced sort of Gangtai-music and a European-American based rock music’ (*Daluohua de gangtai yinyue*, *Oumeihua de yaogun yinyue*).\(^a\)

The description may be valid in an overall sense, though it tends to overlook the creative achievements of individual musicians who, at this time, tried to innovate Chinese rock and pop. Efforts to innovate and give new impulses to the genre continue today, in a situation where the exchange of musical ideals and ideas in the realm of rock is still restricted in many ways. True enough, a large number of rock tapes can now be found in Chinese music shops, but access to the public via concerts or radio and television broadcasts remains very limited.

One explanation for the official sanctioning of Chinese rock lies in what Chinese music critics often describe as the ‘revolutionary spirit’ (*fanpuan jingshen*) of the genre. This – a mood of rebellion and proud display of autonomy – is closely linked to another significant general feature of the music: the close unity of singer, composer and lyric-writer within one person or one rock band. The musicians’ strong sense of ‘oneness’ is a powerful stimulus for spontaneous and uninhibited music-making. It helps them to produce music that is authentic in its direct reflection of personal experiences and emotions. Because of this, the songs of rockers and their public impact are not an easy target for CCP’s cultural policymakers’ attempts at manipulation or control. Its authenticity (so to speak) prevents rock music from being utilized or manipulated for state-propaganda purposes – contrary to so many other genres of popular music, which are easily appropriated for rounds of praise for Mao Zedong, Communism, or specific government policies or campaigns.

In performance, the unity that rock musicians feel, and their sense of spontaneity and authenticity, are conveyed to audiences, and are fully shared by them. The listeners strongly identify with the rockers and form a close alliance. CCP officials look upon the rock scene\(^a\) See Wu Jiniao – ‘1994 gegan zhijie’ (‘Critical examination of the 1994 music scene’). In: *Yixiang Shejie*, 1994, No. 2, pp. 14-15. The term gangtai is a contraction of Hong Kong (Xianggang) and Taiwan. Here it refers to the most popular type of pop music in China. The gangtai songs of Hong Kong and Taiwan are usually mellow and soft-toned, with lyrics focusing primarily on love. Beijing rockers tend to criticize the genre for being overly commercial (but they seem to overlook its impact on their own music).
with apprehension, because the idea of an independent hearer-community may just not fit official Party policies. Ultimately, Chinese rock, in its combination of personal statements and musical creativity, constitutes a new and powerful form of cultural individualism. No doubt this is one major reason for the exclusion of the genre from the state-controlled media and television industry.

'Ten years of struggle'
It was Cui Jian, who in 1986 came to the fore with the very popular Chinese rock song Yi wu suo you ('Nothing to my name'). Three years later he released the first Chinese rock album, Xia changzheng lushang de yaogun ('Rock 'n Roll on the New Long March') which is now generally viewed as the beginning of the history of Chinese rock music. Cui Jian was the pioneering musician who discovered new ways to express individuality and authenticity, in a genre of music which foreign critics later often denoted as a combination of 'Westernization and countercultural critique'.

Cui Jian's major impact on Chinese urban youths and his immediate success as a rock star probably increased other musicians' awareness of their own aspirations and artistic potentials. From the middle of the 1980s onwards, many of them became more thoughtful about what they actually tried to express. Listening to large quantities and broad varieties of pop and rock music imported from the West, they began to pick the styles which seemed most suited to reinterpretation and adaptation along their own lines and for their own purposes. Initially, most of this happened on the aforementioned 'first level' of private and individual music making — that is, before any of the compositions could be taken up by the record industry. Many songs of this period can be defined as fairly straightforward and individual products, which emerged directly from 'below'.

Naturally, the long-term existence of China's new popular music depends not just on individual skills or on an aura of 'authenticity', but also — as I have already argued — on sufficient circulation of the new material outside rehearsal-rooms and local bars. In other words, it also depends on the proficiency and readiness of the record industry — the 'second level' — to support the music financially and to produce and distribute recordings of it. The China Record Corporation's 1995 release of the CD Zhongguo yaogun jingdian ('Chinese Rock Classics') is entirely typical for the situation in China at present. The album was intended as a celebration of the first decennium of Chinese rock music. On the inside of the CD-cover, the editors of the album say (and I quote them verbatim):

Through ten years' struggle, the Rock possessed a space in the music circles of China eventually, and the Rock Music disks produced in China have a good sale both at home and abroad, this is a matter for congratulation.

The words reflect the pride of the music industry at surviving what they call the 'ten years way of hardships', i.e. the decade of difficulties which Chinese rock music had to go through so far. Behind this quotation looms the impact of the above-mentioned private production companies who — constantly on the look-out for new sounds and new musicians

6 Calhoun, p. 95. Countercultural: i.e. countering the official, politically sanctioned culture of China.
have been genuinely instrumental in promoting and popularizing the genre, in the face of numerous difficulties. Musically speaking, the release of ‘Rock Classics’ seems a compromise between what the private and the state-run record companies would ideally like to promote as acceptable artistic standards. In any event, rock music was now finally allowed to enter the sphere of popular music in China. Official censorship gradually turned away from the purely musical aspects of rock and began to limit its attention primarily to the lyrics.

The eagerness of companies to produce rock records is now based primarily on commercial motives. Whenever rock songs are expected to sell well, they are no longer a problem for the new ideology of the booming Chinese music industry.

Below, I will discuss some individual compositions which emerged on the ‘first level’, but (eventually) were lucky enough to meet the criteria of the influential record industry and to appear on tape or CD on the Chinese music market. The songs that I have selected here for discussion, and which incorporate various elements of Chinese Buddhism, strike me as still fairly spontaneous and straightforward compositions, examples of creative musicianship – they did not copy any existing trends, and did not become real ‘mass products’ so far, although they are sold via the big record industry, an aspect to which I will return later.

**Buddhism and rock music – Wang Yong**

Many rock musicians studied Chinese traditional instruments, privately or at music schools, before they switched to rock music. Some continued to play them after becoming rock musicians. For example, Wang Yong studied zheng at the Central Conservatory. Cui Jian studied Chinese shawm (suona). Liu Xiaosong, now a drummer of rock and jazz music in Beijing, learnt traditional percussion techniques at the Beijing Opera School – many more examples could be added to the list. Given this interest in traditional sounds, it is not much of a surprise that, at some point, Chinese zithers (zheng), plucked lutes (pipa), shawms (suona), templeblocks (muyin), cymbals, gongs and numerous other traditional instruments began to find their way into the rock musical repertoire. Musicians familiarized themselves with traditional music structures, modes, rhythms, timbres and playing techniques, and gradually discovered a treasure-house of new expressive possibilities which could enrich their music and make it sound more ‘Chinese’. Beyond the realm of mere sounds, some artists also developed an interest in Chinese traditional thought, and explored their native cultural roots in ever more versatile ways. Chinese Buddhism is just one strand of Chinese culture that became a new focus of attention.

Wang Yong – a Buddhist himself – was one of the first musicians to incorporate, in his own popular musical compositions, elements of Buddhism. He came from Guizhou to Beijing at the age of nine. Stimulated by his father, who was the general secretary of the Chinese Zheng Research Association (Zhongguo guzheng yanjiuhui), he started with zither lessons at an early age. He studied traditional Chinese music at the Central Conservatory in Beijing, and played in various orchestras before turning to rock music. Later on he learnt to play piano and keyboards and, in 1984, became a co-founder of one of China’s first rock bands, Budaoweng (‘The Tumbler’), together with Cui Jian. At one point he joined another band, called ‘1989’, while continuing to collaborate with Cui Jian. In the early 1990s, he left the two aforementioned groups and started to concentrate on his own music, in which he kept cautiously aloof from politics. In his own words: ‘There are many things I don’t understand, one of which is politics. Precisely for that reason you won’t find the slightest
trace of it in my music." Wang's compositions – which combine conventional sounds with 'meditative' sounds generated with the help of MIDI and computer electronics – all attest to his faith in Buddhism. His lyrics are a synthesis of Buddhist prayers and of Wang's own thoughts, feelings and ideals. For one of his first compositions, *Anhun jinxingqu* (‘Soul-Comforting March’), recorded in early 1993 for the cassette *Yaogun Beijing* (‘Rock Beijing’), he invited Jing Lin, a monk from the Zhuhua Temple in Beijing, to chant Buddhist prayers, as an added element in the music. Here is the text of Wang Yong's song:

Personalities between the sky and the earth, not living endlessly.
When Autumn comes, flowers and grass wither, the sky is gray, the souls of the dead assemble and separate.

Tears of fear are pouring from your eyes, (and) your mouth is shouting future ideals.
Ghosts are singing songs, to welcome your arrival, the living (people) are playing funeral music, to say goodbye to you.

Softly pass away, sleep in peace.
Softly pass away, sleep in peace.

Personalities from the sky and the earth, not living endlessly.
The body is gone, (but) oneself is still there.
Life will soon come into existence.

You hear the sound of the (alarm) horn, da da da ...
Little boys and girls are standing in a queue to welcome you.
The sound of the horn accompanies you, a new generation has already grown up.
Forming a new troop, da da da ...
which helps your soul to pass away peacefully.

Andrew Jones views this composition as a 'thinly veiled tribute to the victims of the democracy movement.'

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consider how Wang Yong later described his motives for writing the lyrics (in a programme note of 1993):

Mao says there are two ways to die. One of them weighs as heavy as Mount Tai [one of China’s sacred mountains, in Shandong Province. AS]. This is the act of dying for an ideal, for a good cause. The other way weighs as little as a chicken feather. In that case your life and your death are so insignificant that people will immediately forget you. A good friend of mine who cherished high ideals had to suffer a lot of pain due to his convictions. When he was just twenty years old, something dreadful happened, and he died, in the prime of his youth. I wrote this song in order to express my grief upon experiencing the heavy loss. May our friend rest in peace.11

Wang’s explanation reminds us of what was a common practice in China during the Republican Period (1912-1949). Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom speaks of ‘the singing of a specially written mourning song and other funeral rites’ in order to commemorate student martyrs.12 While Wang Yong’s song cannot be linked with complete certainty to the democracy movement of 1989, it certainly builds on an existential tradition of Chinese martyr ‘mourning songs’. These songs were, in Wasserstrom’s words, part of the students’ revolutionary repertoire of the late Qing and Republican periods:

With the musical interlude, however, we are back within the Chinese protest tradition, since such songs had been a standard part of patriotic rallies involving students since at least as far back as the anti-Russian agitation of 1903.13

While Wang Yong’s claim that his songs have no political content holds true for the larger part of his repertoire,14 this particular song, which was recorded for a Chinese rock sampler and thus made available to a wider audience, probably reveals a ‘revolutionary spirit’. But the full meaning of the lyrics becomes clear only if we take a closer look at how Wang Yong actually presents his message.

Viewed from a Buddhist perspective, the song unfolds a longing for the Western Paradise of the Buddha Amitabha, and demonstrates Wang’s confidence in the Buddhist cycle of reincarnations with their promise of gradual enlightenment. True enough, the phrase ‘the body is gone, oneself is still there (…)’ is sufficiently ambivalent to allow for political as well as religious interpretations. Given the song’s element of protest, the line in question may be read as a quiet hint at the ever recurring movements for political reform – and accompanying bouts of violence – that punctuate China’s history. But Wang’s faith in Buddhism is omnipresent in this song, as in his other compositions, and it is expressed so convincingly that it must be granted a meaning in its own right.

In ‘Soul-Comforting March’ Wang’s religious aspirations are exemplified in particular by his collaboration with the Buddhist monk Jing Lin, whose chanting is woven skillfully into the music. We are left with the impression of a personal ‘confession of faith’ and, ultimately, with a strong musical document that supersedes the mere notions of either a revolutionary or a strictly confessional song.

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11 From Wang Yong’s programme notes for his concerts during the China-Avantgarde exhibition in the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, Spring 1993.
13 Wasserstrom, p. 79.
14 See also his recently released record Wangsheng zhuoji – Samsara, produced by Magic Stone Records (Gunshi), Taiwan, Taipei, 1996.
Buddhism and rock music — Hao Han’s dream world

Other interesting examples of rock music with Buddhist influences can be found in the repertoire of the rock band Zijue Yuedui (‘Self-Confident Band’). Judging from their lyrics, and from pictures on the records, the songwriter and composer Hao Han who leads the group must be a devoted Buddhist. To date, in a studio in Beijing, the band has recorded three songs. The earliest composition, recorded in 1993, is called Jile shijie (i.e. Sukhavati, Pure Land, or Western Paradise of the Buddha Amitabha), a title which directly evokes the song’s Buddhist content.¹³

Hao Han’s monotonous singing in this song is reminiscent of a Buddhist monk’s chanting. It is accompanied by a solid rock rhythm, which sometimes loses its steadiness and — in such instances — seems to disturb the harmonious image of the ‘Western Paradise’ evoked and praised so lavishly in the lyrics. But note that, in one part of the text, Hao Han refers to ‘a dream world’ (menghuan shijie), an illusion. He does not actually make very clear in the text whether the ‘Western Paradise’ constitutes a true world for him; or only something imagined and hoped for. This uncertainty is maintained throughout the song. There is no final solution: after the refrain and its troubled effort to persuade the audience (perhaps even Hao Han himself ?) to believe in a future paradise of freedom and happiness, the rhythm of the music again subsides to a steady pulse, obeying the continued monotony of the monk’s chanting.

People are flying, the sky is free and comfortable.
A bright and beautiful rainbow, a dream world.
The precious trees are completely arranged in order,
The stems of the plants watching each other.
Fresh springs and scented (or; smelling) pools.
Flowers and trees in a gentle breeze.

[Reprise]
A multitude of precious lotus flowers covers the world.
A fresh breeze is blowing over — it makes the five sounds heard.
The whole nature in this country is extremely pure and the scenery beautiful.
A situation of auspicious wisdom.

[Refrain]
Return and listen to Buddhism, return and listen to the
Dharma.
Return and listen to the three treasures (of Buddhism).
Return and listen and the fetters of a Buddhist monk.

[Reprise: 1st & 2nd stanza]
... the paradise of the Buddha Amitabha requires life and a pure earth.
So that the soul can fly and reach (or; support) the coming life.
The creatures of this territory are far removed from
unpleasant crimes.
There is absolutely no suffering and famine.

Taking into account the Buddhist backgrounds of Wang Yong and Hao Han, I would argue that the two songs presented here are sincere expressions of individual attitudes towards Buddhism. I would not hesitate to refer to these songs as ‘Buddhist Rock Music’. In each case we are dealing with personal and private approaches towards Chinese Buddhism, mediated through rock music and – at the end of the process – taken up and distributed by the entertainment industry. The two songs differ notably from the final example that I would like to present, a song by the band Zhinanzhen (‘The Compass’). Here, once again, we have a composition utilizing Buddhist ritual sounds in innovative ways, but applied this time to symbolize the values of a conservative or bygone world – a world criticized and rejected in the lyrics.

**Buddhism and rock music – Zhinanzhen’s ‘Walk on the pavement’**

Zhinanzhen, a rock band originally from Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province, has been based in Beijing since 1991. Their first recording, *Qing zou renxingdao* (‘Please walk on the pavement’), appeared on the previously-mentioned sampler *Yaogun Beijing* in early 1993. It was also included on their first CD which appeared in the following year. In one part of this song the band uses a *mu yu* – a wooden percussion instrument that normally accompanies Buddhist (and Daoist) temple prayers – to support what sounds like an old monk’s voice. The instrument and the monk’s voice are not used to express religious feelings but primarily as a symbol for the rites and moral codes of a traditional past, a world no longer applicable to a young generation of people.

In this song, the deliberate use of traditional elements underpins its key message: young urban Chinese would like to overcome the limitations of the past; they are dying to get away from what they regard as outdated traditional values. ‘I look at the past; oh how ridiculous to walk on one street until one gets old,’ desairs female singer Luo Qi at the beginning of the last (spoken) stanza. The song starts with a powerful rhythm-and-blues introduction before literally plunging into the section with the woodblock and the monk’s voice. The voice is heard listing a series of rules for appropriate behaviour. Then, abruptly, Luo Qi comes in, expressing her anger at being confronted with these rules – she would like to get rid of them. Both the lyrics and the music clearly echo the passion and enthusiasm that inform her dreams about a ‘free universe’ but ultimately the song appears to reflect her inner conflicts rather than any genuine success in gaining freedom.

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It makes me crazy and I want to get rid of it, though I can't escape.
(because) since my early childhood men are better than women.
I cannot find comfort.
I only realize that love is far away.
I don't understand what pride is.
I don't understand what individuality is.
I don't understand what it means to make a scene.
It's just today that I realize there is not only one assigned pavement in the world.
The earth is wide and the sky is high. It is possible to look around;
There is not just one aim.

I want to shout. I want to run. I want to escape your tides;
and I will not walk alone over the wooden bridge.
The world is big and it possesses innumerable mysteries, not just yours;
I want to seek. I want to run, and if I rush into this free universe I want
to do everything I can do.
(Everything I can get I want to have.)
[Spoken:]
Please walk on the pavement (...)

[Spoken, Luo Qi:]
I look at the past; oh how ridiculous to walk on one street until one gets old.
No matter how vexed I am, no matter how excited I am.
Every day I become more and more timid.
The grown up 'I', the heart is higher than the sky;
We have our own ideas (illusions),
Seeking together, burning together,
It is my aim to look for the free universe.
(To rush into the free universe, that is my aim.)

[Music: Zhou Di, Lyrics: Luo Bing]

The three compositions discussed in this article demonstrate a number of different ways to incorporate elements of Buddhism or other aspects of Chinese tradition in a popular musical style. Wang Yong expresses his faith in Buddhism musically with the help of computer and MIDI technology, whilst his lyrics can be regarded either as a message of political protest or as a personal expression of religious belief. The ‘Self-Confident Band’ describes the beauty of the Buddhist ‘Western Paradise’ and tries to persuade the listeners to appreciate and love it as well. These songs can be viewed as ‘Buddhist Rock Music’, in the sense that the artists try to convey Buddhist-inspired experiences via music. ‘The Compass’, by contrast, applies elements of Buddhist music or of traditional thought only in a particular part of their lyrics, as a kind of illustration, to symbolize a past that has become a burden and must be fought against.17

Not rock, but Chinese music

These examples should suffice to illustrate a new awareness among Chinese performers of popular music – a fresh affinity for combining, in original ways, elements of traditional thinking or sounds of traditional music with rock music, either for musical effect, or with the aim of conveying particular views and ideas. In my view, the outcome of this synthesis of old and new can be regarded as essentially Chinese. ‘Chineseness’ is something that many Chinese rock musicians consciously strive for in their compositions. Quite a number of artists argue in interviews – published in journals or conducted privately by this author – that, under the present circumstances, they regard rock music as the only appropriate, true and direct means of musical expression for individuals in the People’s Republic; but as they are aware of the foreign origin of the genre, they look forward to transforming it into ‘something Chinese’, as they put it.

Their Buddhist connotations turn the songs discussed here into recognizably Chinese products. The songs also demonstrate that the popular medium of rock music may very well serve as a new vehicle for young Chinese musicians to experience and express religious beliefs.

Chinese and foreign critics often argue that modern popular culture in general – as a derivative from foreign styles and attitudes – poses a threat to Chinese traditional culture, in urban and rural areas alike. This may be true for commercial pop music in the PRC, which

17 This attitude is also reflected in the title of their second cassette: Zhotianzheng II - Bu guan guowu zenyang (‘The Compass II – No matter what the past was like’). International Cultural Exchange Music and Publishing Company, Beijing, 1994.
Bluntly tries to copy Western or Hong Kong models simply for financial gain; even if it amounts to musicians negating their native cultural backgrounds. By contrast, rock musicians are less prone to outward (commercial) pressures. As we have seen, there is a close unity of composer, textwriter and singer/songwriter in rock bands; a sense of togetherness which stimulates a spontaneous and free creative process. In their search for individuality, rock musicians are able to draw from all possible (musical) sources without neglecting their native roots.

Let us ignore for a moment the long-term impact of the music industry on the nature of Chinese rock. If we concentrate on what the musicians try to express on both a personal and individual level, we can see that they incorporate genuine elements of Chinese traditional culture and religion in their music, and that they equip these with a new life and new meanings. Popularized through rock music, many aspects of Chinese tradition are thus allowed to 'live on', in modern transformations, among young generations of urban Chinese.

Even the official music critics in China have noticed that "it is part of the ideology of rock music (yaoguan taiwei) to take materials from folk or traditional music in order to create new musical styles."18 I would like to ask: Is there any reason why one cannot have many different successful combinations - meaningful to a new generation of young musicians and music fans - of new music and elements of traditional music and religious thought? And can Buddhist rock not serve as a convincing illustration of this? For an answer we may need to take a closer look at how popular music normally functions in society, with particular attention to the relationship between the lyrics and the music of pop/rock songs. This relation is described by Simon Frith as follows:

In a culture in which few people make music but everyone makes conversation, access to songs is primarily through their words. If music gives lyrics their linguistic vitality, lyrics give songs their social use.19

So far in this article, we have taken the first steps towards a better understanding of some Buddhist rock lyrics, but this does not necessarily give us much information about their social influence. The very young phenomenon of Buddhist rock appears to point in a new direction, but it is too early to say whether it will have a lasting impact and will be picked up by a sufficient number of musicians to develop into a major new trend. For a deeper understanding of its meanings we continue to depend, first of all, on the musicians' own opinions. This is how, for example, Wang Yong looks upon his music:

What I am doing at the moment is not rock music, and I don't like other people to say it is. It does consist of many musical elements, including those of rock. But there is one thing I am convinced of: it is Chinese music.20

Obviously, the structure and meaning of Buddhist rock cannot just blindly follow traditional Buddhist music. We are looking at very different genres with very different functions, and the character of Buddhist rock is largely determined by the ideology of rock music at large.

18 For example, Jin Zhaojun in one of his early articles. See "Qingxian liuxing yinyue chaungren quan de si ti faxi" ("A psychoanalysis of the composers' colony of the popular music of youth"). In: Renmin Yin Yue. 1988. No.8, pp. 15-17.
20 In: Xia Ji (see footnote 8), p. 146.
which defies comparison with the Chinese traditional world of temple worship. Nevertheless, we have noted that there are some interesting points of reference. It remains to be seen if other realms of traditional culture – for example, Daoism, Confucianism or the world of Beijing Opera – can find their way into the rock repertoire and can lead to acceptable syntheses. Perhaps some musicians have already begun to explore these alternative possibilities.

In my view, the combination of Buddhism and rock in China has led to a new style of (Chinese) popular music that can make strong claims on being original and sincere and direct in its expression. Buddhist rock is, first of all, true to life, and self-determined. Whether it will develop into a new trend on the Chinese music market depends on the sustained interest of musicians and rock fans, and its availability in music stores. In contrast to the viability of traditional Buddhist music and chants, that of Buddhist rock co-depends to a large extent on the record and media industry.

So far, this particular genre has received limited attention from record companies. We should not overestimate its future prospects. Its market potential remains difficult to assess. No matter how interesting and innovative Buddhist rock may be as a new phenomenon in Chinese popular music, its commodity value will to a considerable extent determine its long-term chances of survival, and the impact and popularity it may have in the future.

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FRANK KOUWENHOVEN

Chinese Folk Songs and Folk Singers

Shan'ge Traditions in S. Jiangsu

Antoinet Schimmelpenninck

Chinese folk song is a neglected field of study in the West. This book is an introduction to shan'ge, the most popular type of rural song, and to the 'kings' and 'queens' of this genre. In folk mythology, the master shan'ge singer is a carefree person who is able to perform magic, who likes to seduce women, who is not afraid to play tricks on the gods and who loves to sing naughty songs. A major focus of this study is monothematism, one of the most intriguing aspects of shan'ge culture, examined here in relation to tune variation, processes of remembering and oral transmission.

445 pp. + 1 CD (70 min.), 35 b/w illus., 66 music exs., 84 lyrics in Chin. and Engl., gloss., index. Price: NLG 75 (Dutch guilders) Postage (surface mail): add NLG 10. Postage (air mail): NLG 15 for Europe, or NLG 25 rest of world. Orders: CHIME, Holland, Fax +31-71-5123183, E-mail: Chime@wxs.nl.
The writer, translator, adventurer and jack-of-all-trades Rewi Alley spent much of his life in China. Many sinologists are familiar with his translations of Chinese poetry. Alley was revered by millions of Chinese as a real hero, but during the Cold War his reputation at home (in New Zealand) suffered because of his stance towards Communism. Alley began his Chinese adventures as a fireman in the Shanghai of the 1920s. He soon became an active organizer of industrial reforms, relief aid, schools for the poor – just anything that could help the country ahead. Alley, who died in 1987 in Beijing, is now the subject of an opera by his countryman Jack Body. The music, written for a mixed ensemble of Chinese and Western performers, is a fusion of Chinese and Western music, not too far removed from the tonal language of artists like Qu Xiaosong and Guo Wenjing. Nigel Butterley saw the opera in Wellington and reports on it.

Looking for poetry for a new choral work a couple of years ago, I came across translations from the Chinese by a New Zealander, Rewi Alley. They were effective, if rather wayward. I saw his book on Chinese opera, and another that seemed like communist propaganda. I became interested to know who he was. Then I found that one of New Zealand's leading composers, Jack Body, was writing an opera about Alley, which was to premiered featuring Chinese and Australasian performers at the 1998 New Zealand Festival.

About Rewi Alley

So who was Rewi Alley? His name is well known to many older New Zealanders and revered by millions of Chinese. Named after an admired Maori leader, he grew up in and near Christchurch and on a farm in Southland, then fought and was injured in France in World War I. After returning to farm in a remote hilly district for six years he left for Shanghai, aged thirty. It seemed as remote from New Zealand as he could be, and as Jack Body says 'in "misplacing" himself he perhaps discovered himself'. Alley died in Beijing in 1987, not long after his ninetieth birthday, having lived through a period of tumultuous change.

His first job, as factory inspector with the Shanghai Fire Department, made him aware of widespread poverty and squalor and the exploitation of child labour. He initiated factory reforms, and determined to continue working for the cause of ordinary Chinese people. This led to famine and flood relief, and to his major achievements: establishing the Guo Ho Industrial Co-operatives movement during the anti-Japanese war, and running schools for refugee and peasant boys, where equal emphasis was placed on studies and manual work.
Press critics on ‘Alley’

Even the inspired visions of director Chen Shizheng, and his towering performance as Yan Wang, the Chinese God of Death, didn’t make up for the frustration of some at the amount of untranslated Chinese in the libretto (surtitles would certainly have helped to convey the bitter irony of the work’s final minutes).

Visually, Alley had style: there were scenes that could have been painted with a few strokes of a watercolour brush (Martyn Anderson as the dying Alley in a bleak room with armchair, standard lamp and glowing Chinese lantern), spectacle (an ethnically diverse group of Red Guards, banners in hand, dashing through the theatre) and effective use of multi-media (a collage of sounds against a great projected portrait of Mao Zedong and, elsewhere, a film projector probing the audience with flickering light).

Lyndon Terracini was a robust young Alley, stalwart in the many heroic arias Body had written. In the pit, Peter Walls created a special harmony between a band of western instruments and the three Chinese musicians of the Huaxia Chamber Ensemble. On stage, two folk singers from Hunan, Ji Zhengzhu and Li Guizhou, wove their full-throated song against Body’s subtle musical backdrops, perhaps the greatest moment of musical and cultural synthesis in the score. (...) Alley was realized against extraordinary odds. A CD recording must be the next step... and more productions. [William Dart, Listener, 11 April, 1998.]

Much of Alley’s success lies in Body’s ability to fire talents into action and accept their contribution with confidence. Chen Shizheng directed and choreographed the performance, and played the vital, controlling role of Yan Wang, the Chinese God of Death who subjects Alley to a ruthless examination as he sits in a chair dying. Chen is a master of theatrical movement and gesture who continually holds one’s attention from the moment he is first seen at the back of the stage as the worrying disturber of Alley’s mind. The opera has as its dramatic centre Alley’s decision to stay in China and serve the new regime, and from this point on Yan Wang is seen as increasingly in control and the young Alley becomes openly critical. The work is highly theatrical, and yet it also manages to present facts with a documentary coolness, inviting the audience to understand rather than react.

Martyn Sanderson was superb as the old Alley, and Lyndon Terracini was in fine voice as the young Alley. The Chinese folk singers Li Guizhou and Ji Zhengzhu gave poised and vital performances. Peter Walls was a sensitive conductor, knitting together all the disparate elements of the score with alert precision. [Rod Biss, Sunday Star-Times, 8 March, 1998.]

His last three and a half decades were spent travelling, lecturing, writing and translating. A friend of Zhou Enlai, and honoured by Deng Xiaoping with a banquet for his eightieth birthday, Alley’s reputation in his homeland suffered during the Cold War but began to be restored after New Zealand recognised the Peoples’ Republic in 1971. To stay in China he was obliged to conform, and some of the contradictions and paradoxes in his life and personality come out in the opera, particularly in the last scene.

Plans for an opera

Alley’s absorption into the history, culture and people of a country so different from his own was what appealed to Jack Body, whose approach to composition has been dominated by his own passionate interest in other cultures, particularly those of Indonesia and China. Like those musics, his is founded on melody and rhythm, rather than harmony. And while his style at times suggests the tag of Minimalism, repetition is constantly varied and stems not so much from America as from Javanese Gamelan.

Body had been planning an opera about Alley for ten years, but homegrown opera production in New Zealand has had a difficult history, and opportunities for local composers are rare. There seems to have been nothing substantial produced between a children’s opera
by David Farquar in 1962 and Christopher Blake's *Bitter Cahn* (1994), so New Zealand Festival's interest in Alley was most welcome.

Plans were well towards completion when the project nearly foundered in 1997 for lack of funding. It was rescued by several generous private benefactors who realised that this was something really important, not only artistically but in terms of inter-cultural exchange and as the most apt way of honouring 'the world's most famous New Zealander', soon after the centenary of his birth.

Alley premiered in Wellington's State Opera House on 27th February 1998. New Zealand's composers will be hoping that the near sellout of the three performances, and the very enthusiastic reception will have boosted the confidence of the Festival and of Creative New Zealand (the equivalent of the Australia Council).

**A musical fusion of East and West**

Chinese and New Zealand elements were brought together in a remarkable way, both by Jack Body and co-librettist Geoff Chapple, and in the final realisation. It all worked because Body's musical language is so convincingly a fusion of East and West. You never think of this vocal melody being pentatonic or that instrumental gesture being highly chromatic. Also, the ensemble of Chinese fiddle and three Western strings, Chinese flutes and mouth organ with three orchestral winds, piano, two synthesizers and plenty of diverse percussion forms an integrated texture from which an endless range of new colours is continually drawn.
Geoff Chapple had made two documentary films on Rewi Alley and published his biography in 1980. Wanting to draw as much as possible from Alley’s own prolific writings, he and Body decided against a narrative opera. Instead Old Alley, slumped in an armchair, is confronted by memories of his life evoked by Yan Wang, judge of the dead and symbol of the power of China. Young Alley and a chorus flesh out these memories.

Director and choreographer Chen Shizheng also played the role of Yan Wang, a sinister presence straight out of the Chinese operatic tradition in which Chen was trained. His burgeoning international career has included directing Euripides’ Bacchae in Beijing, in Chinese and Greek, and singing in the world premiere and recent recording of Tan Dun’s Marco Polo. Chen’s approach to the opera was to balance what he saw as an essentially Western fear of death, conveyed by the libretto and score, with a Chinese ritual celebration of it. His staging was as skillfully paced as the music itself.

All male cast
The scoring for an all-male cast covers a wide vocal range. Old Alley, tellingly evoked by the actor Martyn Sanderson, is a speaking role, culminating in song as he is borne out in the final procession.

Lyndon Terracini, well known in Australia and Europe for his authoritative creation of contemporary operatic roles, aptly brought out Young Alley’s energy and determination. The part exploits the full baritone and falsetto range, but whole sections are often confined to two or three notes. This is to suggest the comparatively unmodulated speech of Australasians, to avoid ‘expressiveness’ and achieve clarity, and to contrast with the constantly moving pitch of Yan Wang, who uses a Chinese equivalent to Schoenberg’s sprechstimme.

Untrained singers are specified for the chorus, and they came from various sources, including martial arts clubs and a drama school. They may have been picked for their vitality, stage presence and ability to move, but they could sing a folk song in two-part canon, in Chinese, with plenty of assurance.

Some of Rewi Alley’s most rewarding years were spent in remote Gansu province, and he lived to see the desert school he had established at Shandan rebuilt after the Cultural Revolution. He loved that country, its people and its folk songs. Perhaps the most moving aspect of the opera was the participation of two singers who came from Gansu. This was their first journey in an airplane, and at Wellington they had their first sight of the sea. As a child one of them had known Alley. They sang traditional, highly ornamented melodies to words translated from Geoff Chapple’s English, and their role was to represent the Chinese people. At key moments they stood, almost immobile, singing in a way that seemed to cross centuries.

Bravos and boos
The stage was dominated by a monumental grey wall, a ceremonial doorway at its centre. At the front was Old Alley’s armchair and beside it a standard lamp. Towards the rear a small sandhill suggested the Gobi Desert. A bare and lonely space when only the two Alleys inhabited it, it allowed maximum impact from processions and mimed enactments, which culminated in the Cultural Revolution, with filmed rallies and slogans, blinding sunlight and deafening firecrackers. Here the faceless Chairman Mao was an evocative image, his features lost in the blank space of the central doorway.
Soon after the orchestra establishes the opening scene, a red lantern falls and flares up, the skin disappearing to expose its skeleton, just as a long life will erupt in memories and confrontation before its ceremonial end. In numerous short scenes Yan Wang confronts Old Alley, whose life reappears to him. Eventually Young Alley is enlisted by the accuser: 'Look at what you have become! The humble peasant ricebowl I sought to share became for you a banquet dish. I wrote five poetry; each of your 22 books is the same dull book! I served no master but you served the State. When the Cultural Revolution came you were silent."

Alley admits defeat, and is ritually shamed and lifted up in a final slow procession. For the first time he sings, affirming his life, though in a succession of negatives: 'Not all dreams allow their wings to be clipped. Not all flames burn out without sparking others. Not all songs brush past the ear without lodging in the heart.' Young Alley takes up the song, and retreats with him. Red banners slowly recede, white lanterns slowly ascend, and the accuser departs. One lone singer remains, and his ancient song stays long after the faint whisper of percussion has merged into silence and applause.

That the opera’s theme of international understanding and inter-racial acceptance needs to be continually repeated was illustrated by boos and ‘go back home’ from one member of the first-night audience, when the two folk singers were taking their bow. He was ignored and drowned out by the bravos.

The instrumentalists from two quite different backgrounds, and the disparate vocalists were all held together with precision and sensitivity by the conductor Peter Walls.

[Reprinted, with permission, from 24 Hours Magazine, Sydney]
Gansu ‘flower songs’ bloom in Wellington

Du Yaxiong
(Chinese Conservatory of Music, Beijing)

When composer Jack Body decided to use rural Chinese folk singers in his opera ‘Alley’, he had no real idea of the enormous difficulties involved in such a project. He attempted to find suitable singers in Gansu, the heartland of the celebrated hua'er or ‘flower songs’, but did not succeed. There were fine singers around, but just not the ones he thought he could use. Fortunately, he came across an amateur video with some promising performers. Body asked the Chinese musicologist Du Yaxiong from Beijing to identify and trace these singers for him. Armed with the video tape Du Yaxiong travelled to Gansu. In this article he reports on his remarkable Odyssey, and the many obstacles which had to be overcome in order to bring two fine Gansu folk singers to New Zealand. He also comments on these two singers’ magnificent contributions to Body’s avant-garde opera.

On February 27, 1998, the opening night of the New Zealand International Festival of the Arts in Wellington, Li Guizhou and Ji Zhengzhu, two folk singers from Gansu province, stepped out onto the Western operatic stage as characters in a remarkable music drama called Alley. They played themselves — two villagers from China’s northwest. In the story they represented ‘the voice of the people’, the perennial masses of China. Alley, a groundbreaking opera by one of New Zealand’s best known composers, Jack Body, is based on the life story of the New Zealander Rewi Alley (1897-1987), who spent most of his life (from 1927 onwards) in China. He was a witness to — and sometimes a participant in — some of the tumultuous social and political changes in twentieth century Chinese history. In the decade before liberation he was a school headmaster in Shandan, a remote town in Gansu. Because of Alley’s intimate association with Gansu and its people, and the fondness he always felt for this period of his life, composer Jack Body chose to use the folk songs of this region to express the sentiments and responses of ‘The People’ in his opera. Three years ago he asked me to help him find suitable singers for his project.

Looking for singers
Jack first went to Gansu in 1996 in search of the appropriate style of folk song. With the help of several contacts he auditioned numerous singers, none of whom fulfilled his expectations. Then, quite by chance, at a dinner party, he saw an amateur video which had been shot at a folk singers’ competition the week prior to his arrival. Among the participants were two singers whom Jack recognised to be exactly what he was looking for. The song genre, he
Ji Zhengzhu sings of seeing Alley driven through the countryside to be shown ‘model cooperative farms’.

was informed, was *hua’er*, though he was later to discover that this was a misnomer, and what he was actually listening to were *shaonian*, young men’s songs.¹ He asked for the names and addresses of the two singers. No one could tell him. He was confused and frustrated — did they really not know, or was this typical Chinese bureaucratic obfuscation? In order to secure evidence of what he had seen and heard Jack took a video of the video monitor. He sent a copy of this very poor recording — which contained as much dinner party noise as folk singing! — to me in Beijing with a request to locate the two singers.

After Jack had returned to New Zealand, I made a trip to my home town of Lanzhou, the provincial capital of Gansu, to try to find the singers. I was willing to help because I was enthusiastic about the idea of using folk singers in a Western style opera. I showed the pictures to several musicologist friends living there, and two of them recognized Qi Fulu, a folk singer from a village in Yongjing county. I called a friend living there and asked him to invite the two singers to come to Lanzhou to meet me. They arrived the next day and I was able to record several songs and to photograph the performers. I contacted Jack and told him the good news. He was very surprised that I had found them so quickly!

In July 1997 Jack returned to Gansu with his friend Gong Hongyu, a Chinese scholar living in New Zealand. Although a meeting with the folk singers had been arranged in advance, some anxious, urgent negotiation was still necessary. Luckily Jack and Gong were able to spend two fruitful days working with Qi Fulu and Ji Zhengzhu. Communication was

¹ For an introduction to the genre, see my article on *Shamian* in this issue of Chime, pp. 70-86.
not always easy. Texts originally translated from Chinese into English by Rewi Alley had to be related back to the two folk singers, whose dialect was often difficult for Mr. Gong to understand. In addition to this, the texts had to be adapted to suit the style and form of shaonian. For all the frustrations of miscommunication, important groundwork was laid and a warm friendship established. The singers understood their roles and the general meaning of the texts. Unfortunately, however, it became apparent that Mr. Qi had lost his voice, and that this might be a permanent condition perhaps due to the evils of too much smoking! And so Jack asked my help again, this time to locate a replacement for Mr Qi.

**The search is continued**

A month later my wife Izabella and I returned to Lanzhou to visit my father. We discovered that some shaonian aficionados had set up a club in Lanzhou, where they gathered every night to enjoy a cup of tea and to listen to shaonian. Mr. Ji had left his farm and now sang in the club every night, for which he received 500 yuan (about US $65) a month. We also found a group of enthusiasts that met every weekend in the Old People’s Park, by the banks of the Yellow River. We listened to many performers and among them found two particularly excellent singers. But we could not persuade them to go to New Zealand since they thought that flying in a plane was far too dangerous! I consulted with an old friend, Mr. Yang, and he recommended Li Guizhou, who had sung in a ‘New Style’ Chinese opera in the 1980’s. Mr. Yang remembered that Mr Li had an excellent voice, but he had no idea of his present whereabouts, apart from his having a medical practice somewhere in Yongjing county.

In November, I took another trip to Gansu specifically to find Mr. Li. We drove around Yongjing county for two days, and finally found him in a small mountain village where he ran a successful medical clinic. I asked him to sing for me, but he said he had not sung shaonian for many years, not since he had started a family. He also explained the taboos, the fact that such songs could not be sung within the village, that they could only be performed in the mountains. And so we drove to a mountain about two kilometres away, where I was able to hear him sing. I was convinced Mr. Li would be ideal for Jack Body’s opera.

At first, he did not like the idea of leaving his patients. But when I explained the importance of his role in the opera, he agreed. He had known about Alley since childhood, and knew the special place Alley’s name held in the hearts of the people of Gansu. I gave Mr. Li the texts which I had re-translated from English into Gansu dialect, and asked him to teach them to Mr. Ji, who is not able to read.

**Travelling abroad**

Now came the problem of how to get Mr. Li and Mr. Ji to New Zealand for the production of Alley, the opera. Although the open door policy has been effective in China for about 20 years, there is still a great deal of paper work to be done for Chinese who need to go abroad, especially if they are villagers. Among other things we had to overcome was official scepticism that village folk singers were the appropriate people for roles in a Western opera!

When Mr Li made enquiries at the County Government office, nobody could advise him, since no one had ever requested permission to travel abroad before at this office! Li called me and I suggested that he should go to the District Foreign Affairs Office. They explained the process to Mr Li, who then went back to the County office. ‘Well, that’s fine,’ said a staff member, ‘but we don’t have any forms for this’. Mr. Li had to make a special trip to the
provincial capital to collect the required forms, but he had no luck: the office was closed. A second trip to Lanzhou was successful and Mr Li was finally able to fill out and deliver the requisite form to the County office. When all the required documents had been collected, including the No 1 Permission for Overseas Travel from Yongjing County, forty days had already passed.

With the Chinese New Year approaching fast, the problem of how to secure the passports in time seemed insurmountable. I called on some friends for help: Mr. Fei Yafu, one of my brother’s friends who worked in the Foreign Affairs Department of the Gansu Government, and Mr. Li Chong’an, the Vice-Governor of Gansu who had been my highschool classmate. Mr. Fei achieved the impossible by ensuring that the passports were processed in three days. Our next question was how to obtain the visa from the New Zealand Embassy in Beijing. Mr. Li Chong’an was able to locate the person who had carried the passports to Beijing on January 20. We waited in the airport in vain, as bad weather had disrupted some flights! We made contact the following day and took the passports to the New Zealand Embassy. Normally, the processing of visas would require fourteen days, but with the help of Jack’s former student, Nick Wheeler, a New Zealander working in Beijing, and thanks to the wonderful co-operation of the Embassy, the visas were ready the following day.

But the saga was not yet over. With the return of Hong Kong to China, it is no longer an easy matter for a Chinese citizen to transit through Hong Kong. We had to apply for permission. We got the necessary forms on the 26th and our departure date was to be the 29th – but the 28th was Chinese New Year and of course all the offices were closed on the 27th. Against all odds, we made it by the skin of our teeth!

Once we were airborne our troubles should have been over, but Mr. Li and Mr. Ji were very anxious about whether the plane would stay in the air – this was the first time either of them had been in an airplane. Once we had arrived in New Zealand, we were well looked after and both folk singers adapted easily to their new environment, although they preferred to eat food which they prepared themselves, particularly in the case of Mr. Li, who is a Moslem, and can eat only h·llal meal.
The performances
Mr. Li and Mr. Ji appeared in six scenes of the opera. Several of the texts used were of poems that had been translated from the Chinese by Rewi Alley, including one by Shu Ting, one of the leading lights of the Meng Long (‘misty’) poetry movement of the 1970s. Musically, four of the songs were shaonian and and one was a shan’ge (a mountain song) from Central Gansu.

Jack Body created an accompaniment using an ensemble of fourteen instrumentalists, eleven Western and three Chinese. Generally the vocal line had a very loose relationship with the accompaniment. After all, the songs would normally be unaccompanied. In only one of the songs was any sort of rhythmic synchronisation required; in other cases the accompaniment mainly provided a simple pedal or drone, with occasional interjections.

The composer had specific pitch levels in mind, and some adjustments were required during rehearsals. For instance, in the very first song the singers found the pitch level uncomfortably low, and consequently they tended to sing sharp. It was only after experimentation with various transpositions that a satisfactory pitch was found – a fifth higher than the original notation! The composer also wrote in instrumental cues to give a starting pitch to the singers.

In the early rehearsals the singers struggled to try to pick up these pitches from the unfamiliar sound of a piano (‘How can you hear any melody from that?’ they protested), but later found it easier when rehearsing with the full ensemble, where they heard the sound of the erhu and xiao.

The inclusion of these folk singers in a Western style opera created a sensation. It was the first time that Gansu folk song was heard in such a context – indeed it was the first time for this audience to hear anything like this kind of music. All commentators made special mention of Mr. Li and Mr. Ji, and according to some of the audience their performances ‘stole the show’: ‘The Chinese folk singers. Li Guizhou and Ji Zhengzhu, gave poised and vital performances’ (Rod Biss, Sunday Star-Times); ‘The two folk singers, Li Guizhou and Ji Zhengzhu, are absolutely first-rate’ (John Button, The Dominion); ‘I agree with everyone I talked to that the Gansu folk singers were absolutely superb. The melodies they sang and their manner of singing were stunning’ (Prof Bill Willmott, President, NZ China Friendship Society).

Some of the most enthusiastic responses were from Chinese. Taiwan-born Musician Miss Niki Wang said, ‘We have never heard such beautiful folk songs. We did not even know we had this kind of song’. Mr. Gao Xuyong, an artist living in Wellington, said, ‘These songs are not to be compared to other songs which are popular in China. These folk songs are real art, and they are sung with true feeling.’

Wellington audiences will long remember the experience of seeing these folk singers and hearing their songs. But in China, the motherland of these songs, why is it that Chinese composers have paid so little attention to this beautiful music, or ever considered integrating it, in its original, authentic form, into their own compositions? In Gansu, how many people really value these songs? The success of this performance in Wellington poses a challenge for Chinese people, especially the people of Gansu. It makes us think seriously about our tradition and our folk song heritage.
The ancient university town of Heidelberg was the location of ‘Barbarian Pipes and Strings’, the fourth Chime meeting, in October 1998. A favourite spot of great German thinkers, it seemed an apt setting for a meeting engaging a rather weighty subject: 2,000 years of cross-cultural influences in the music of China. Papers covered a broad range of topics, from China’s ancient fascination with music cosmology (shared by the Babylonians in the Middle East) to the Western impact on Chinese music in the twentieth century: school songs, popular record sleeve designs, Hollywood films, Viennese serialism. Not a single element of foreign influence seemed to have been overlooked, and there was also room for papers on the reverse process, China’s impact on Western music. With over seventy participants, an art exhibition and five concerts, this was one of the finest Chime meetings in recent years.

The 4th International Chime Meeting under the title ‘Barbarian Pipes and Strings’ was held at the Internationales Wissenschaftsforum in Heidelberg from the first to the fourth of October 1998. In the shadow of the beautiful Heidelberg castle, surrounded by a misty autumnal atmosphere, scholars and students of Chinese and other East Asian musics, as well as artists and musicians enjoyed an intense and stimulating programme of meetings and events.

Thanks to Barbara Mittler and Frank Kouwenhoven’s dedicated efforts and impeccable organisational skills, the participants in the Chime conference were able to listen to and discuss some forty papers, attend concerts and performances and witness the opening of an exhibition of paintings while enjoying a very pleasant stay in Heidelberg. Despite having been established rather recently, Chime meetings play an important role as platforms for scholarly exchange and for bringing together Western and Chinese scholars in the field of Chinese music. They also give young scholars and lovers of Chinese music a chance to meet more seasoned academics in a collaborative, creative environment. In this context, and also given the great variety in intellectual backgrounds and hermeneutic tools employed by the participants, some differences in scientific depth between contributions may be unavoidable. Here follows a brief discussion of some of the papers presented at the conference, with a complete list appended at the end of the article.
From Fujian to Tibet

Most participants concerned themselves with the musics of modern and contemporary China, both Han and ‘Barbarian’. Rachel Harris looked at the important issue of the ownership of music in the context of folk songs and the musics of China’s ethnic minorities. She described the life and work of the composer and song collector Wang Luobing, and the reactions of minority people to his exoticised versions of songs from Xinjiang and the Northwest. Mercedes Dujunco’s interesting paper also touched upon issues of ethnicity and identity with reference to the music of Hakka people in Guangdong. She examined the processes through which Hakka people try to negotiate with the Han community through their music. Tan Hwee-San presented some of her ethnographic findings in the Buddhist communities of the Quanzhou area of Fujian, one of the most interesting and religiously active areas in today’s China, and an area which is a constant source of fascination for sinologists and musicologists alike. Isabelle Henrion presented part of her pioneering work on Tibetan traditional opera (Lhamo). Having spent almost two years in Lhasa, she has developed an understanding of important aspects of this style of performance which have never previously been studied, such as vocal techniques, and the way in which singers constantly re-create and re-arrange their material. Mr Zhu Yongzhong from Xining brought along very interesting footage of some Tibetan and Mangghuer festivals in Qinghai Province, and also tried his best to satisfy the vast curiosity of those on the floor. Alexander Knapp surveyed the state of research on the music of the mysterious ‘Jews’ of the Kaifeng area, and their possible contacts with Chinese religion and Islam. To turn to more traditional Han domains, a number
of contributions showed just how much the *pipa* and *guqin* are 'in transition'. The papers in this section examined a broad spectrum of arguments spanning from transcription to recordings, and from organology to modern compositions for the *pipa*.

The sessions and discussions on modern and contemporary China and on Chinese composers were interesting and stimulating, also thanks to the presence of the Macao-born composer Lam Bunching, who talked about her inspirational motivation and her composition techniques. Nancy Yunhwa Rao's brilliant analysis of *Poème Lyrique II* by Chen Qigang examined the ways in which Chen integrates dramatic and musical elements from Beijing Opera with atonal musical idioms. Other contributions by Luciana Galliano on the relationship between creativity and subjectivity in the work of contemporary East Asian composers, and by Christian Utz on the eclecticism of Tan Dun's pieces, amongst others, generated a debate around issues of Chineseness and musical composition. Professor Liu Ching-chih and Professor Hsu Tsang-houei’s interesting surveys on social and musical changes in mainland

< Hsu Tsang-houei.
China and Taiwan were maybe too wide in scope for the short time allotted to each presentation, but provided important frameworks for the ongoing discussions. Incidentally, the entrance of Chinese imagery into the world of Western composers was examined in the session ‘China seen through Barbarian eyes’. Andreas Steen’s delightful presentation on the Shanghai recording industry and advertising in the 1920s and 1930s opened a window onto an almost forgotten material culture, shedding some light on the formation of consumer taste in that crucial period of Chinese history. Finally, through the analysis of yangbanxi video materials, Barbara Mittler explained the functioning of the model operas and how their political meanings were carried at various levels of performance, not only textual but also musical and performative.

**Babylonians**

A few papers looked at the music of a more distant past. Professor Bäcker examined the connections between music and cosmology in ancient China and the Near East, and showed how Confucians and Babylonians were both obsessed with music and numbers. Ulrike Middendorf and Stefanie Ahlborn dug out new materials on early dance and on Chinese Opera from conventionally historical materials such as Dynastic Histories, legal codes and edicts. Finally, Dr Francois Picard gave an account (in Chinese!) on the finding of eight
books of notations of Christian hymns sung in eighteenth century Beijing. His desire to 'restitute' this music for modern audiences has led to the creation of a new CD.¹

Catch-up culture?
There were hints of a desire to stir up controversy during the final panel on 'Chinese Music and Nationalism on the Brink of the 21st Century'. Most of the discussion was informed by Professor Rudolf Wagner's introduction of the notion of 'catch-up culture' with reference to China, to describe a culture whose strategic decisional centre is not within itself but somewhere else. Professor Wagner lamented that most scholars are at a loss when trying to analyse in positive terms a series of cultural practices which characterise the fields of literature, music, painting and other liberal arts in China. A 'catch-up culture', he argued, is essentially discontinuous and not homogenous by nature, so it is difficult for scholars to identify the origins and the nature of artistic and intellectual trends in modern and contemporary China. Some participants had difficulties in accepting the notion, and they objected on various grounds, such as that it is only descriptive of urban elites, and that Chinese people have a strong sense of their own cultural identity, which outside metropolitan areas is strongly rooted in the locale. Although it went unnamed, the discussion focused upon the apparent split present in many postcolonial societies between the concept of a modern nation and that of its traditional culture. As Partha Chatterjee's studies on nationalism have shown, the concept of the nation is predicated as a universal category, but most post-colonial societies are constituted on a notion of the particularity which makes them different from all other nations: a primordial spiritual and cultural essence which is the nation's tradition. It seems to me that the way in which Chinese artists, in China and abroad, articulate and negotiate this dialectical exchange is the most intriguing issue here. Another issue which arose during discussions was the 'myth of continuity', which often plagues Chinese and Western approaches to Chinese civilisation. Finally, the idea of Chineseness as a trademark of Chinese composers living abroad was raised, and the example of Tan Dun's 'writing different pieces for different governments' was mentioned. This might be slightly unfair, but I was nonetheless reminded of Eric Satie's comment after he heard that Maurice Ravel had refused the Legion d'honneur: 'He might refuse it, but all his work accepts it'.

¹ Messe des Jesuites de Pekin. Joseph-Marie Amiot. Auvidis Astree E 8642, published 1998. This album, and various CDs of Chinese Buddhist music recorded by François Picard, will be reviewed in Chime 14/15.
Papers

Stefanie Ahlbom – “How dangerous is Chinese Opera? The discourse under the Qianlong Emperor.”
Chen Shizheng – [Interviewed by F Kouwenhoven on his experiences as a theatre director, actor and singer].
Cheng Gongliang – “The process of transcribing guqin scores.”
Cheng Yu – “Images of the Pipa - Assimilation, Sinicization and Modernization of a Once Foreign Lute.
Dai Xiaolian – “A Study of Meihua San Nong (‘Plum Blossom, Three Variations’).”
Paul Dice, with Gao Hong – “Master Lin Shicheng and the Pudong School.”
Mercedes M. Dujunco – “From Outsider to Insider: Chinese Identity in Guangdong Hakka Music.”
Luciana Galliano – “Contemporary Composition in East Asia.”
Martin Gieselmann – “Experimental Theatre in Taiwan.”
Rachel Harris – “Wang Luobin: Folksong King of the Northwest, or Song Thief?”
Isabelle Henrion – (1) “Traditional Tibetan Opera (Lhamo) and its Current Forms under the PRC’s Regime.”
Isabelle Henrion – (2) Video presentation: Lhamo: selected highlights of traditional Tibetan Opera.
Hsu Tsang-Houei – “Composing Tradition.”
Julian Joseph – “Yi Qiao - The Reconstruction of an Ancient Qin Melody.”
Alan Kagan – “Aural Imagery of Suona in Ritual Theatre.”
Frank Kouwenhoven – “New Music of Great Antiquity: Five Decades of Qin Playing on Records.”
Lam Bunching, with Gao Hong – “From ‘Run’ to ‘Sudden Thunder’: transformations of a pipe composition.”
Liu Ching-chih – “Copying, Imitating and Transplanting: The Development of New Music in China.”
Ulrike Middendorf – “Dancing to Another Tune: or Why Cai Yong Refused to ‘Make his Retribution’.”
Barbara Mittler – “To be or not to be - Making and Unmaking the Yangbanxi (Model Works).”
François Picard – “Catholic Spiritual Songs in Chinese from 18th Century Beijing.”
Andreas Steen – “Changing Visions: Music on Record Sleeves in the Republican Era, 1911-1914.”
Joachim Steinhauer – “Pagodas in European Compositions.”
Tan Hwee-Sun – “Caige, Buddhist ritual specialists in the Minnan area (Fujian).”
Christian Utz – “From Fake to Recreation: Tan Dun’s Approach to Music Theatre.”

Panel


Performances

Cheng Gongliang, guqin
Chen Shizheng, voice
Cheng Yu, pipa
Dai Xiaolian, guqin
Gao Hong, pipa
Inok PaeK, kuyangum
Reimund Korupp, cello
Brigitte Geller, soprano
Werner Volker Meyer, baritone
Heidelberg String Quartet
“Plus Percussion” Ensemble
Heidelberg Philharmonic / Thomas Kalb
FROM MAHLER TO CHINA

The Heidelberg Concerts

Frank Kouwenhoven
(CHIME Foundation, Leiden, The Netherlands)

It was a telling contrast: two Chinese qin players dead nervous about their debut as soloists in a modern work by German composer Stefan Hakenberg, and the members of the Heidelberg Philharmonic, seemingly over-confident about their role in the same piece. On paper, the music inspired by Mahler and by Chinese zhither music looked as if it might become one of the highlights of the concerts in the framework of the Chime meeting in Heidelberg. But how to reconcile the performers? The composer's remarkable solution to this problem came as a shock for the Philharmonians.

The two qin players, Dai Xiaolian and Cheng Gongliang, had received their parts a few days earlier. They had had no idea what to expect from a modern piece called In dieser Zusammenhang ('In this relationship'). It was an unusual challenge for these two individualists (accustomed to playing in their own flexible tempi) to be called upon to submit to the discipline of a conductor's baton and a rigidly measured score. After the first rehearsal the situation took an interesting turn. Panic began to spread among the Western performers, who discovered that the music was more complex and 'fluid' than they had anticipated. Meanwhile the qin players concluded that the score was not such a demanding one after all. The composer had modelled the qin parts on phrases from existing qin pieces. The complexities of his Mahler pasticcio lay elsewhere – in the tricky polyphony and sudden transitions.

Hakenberg, a former student of Henze, had challenged his Western ensemble players to adopt something of the rhythmic flexibility of the guqin, while he required the two qin players to re-create Mahler and to act as an 'orchestra'. It took conductor Thomas Kalb extra rehearsals to reach the coherence suggested in the title of the piece. The final result was pleasing, a fine tribute to Mahler and a delightful mixture of Western romanticism, Chinese heterophony, zither music, Tang Poetry and (Mahlerian) chinoiserie. The two vocal soloists, soprano Brigitte Geller and baritone Werner Volker Meyer, excelled in the excerpts quoted from Das Lied von der Erde, a work based on Chinese poetry in German translation, while actor-singer Chen Shizheng added an extra dimension by reciting fragments from the same lyrics (in German and in Chinese). Musical motifs fluttered from the woodwind to the soprano's voice, from the bowed strings to the guqin, in a complex but light-hearted interplay of individual voices. Eventually the qin players admitted they liked the bits of Mahler in their own parts better than the quotations from traditional qin music!

Hakenberg's piece was only one of several fascinating works in the Heidelberg concerts. The level of the performances was first rate, and in the programming traditional and contemporary items had been neatly balanced, offering sufficient variety to please everyone.
The concert series opened and finished with some fine solo recitals. In Heidelberg’s church-like University Hall (Alte Aula), Cheng Gongliang and Dai Xiaolian presented an attractive array of new and old pieces for the Chinese seven-stringed zither. The hall’s creaking wooden benches formed a slightly disturbing counterpoint to the delicate qin sounds, but Cheng’s and Dai’s playing still came across very well. Cheng is the more romantic and more robust player of the two, Dai’s playing being more restrained and subdued. Both are masters of the tiny and delicate gestures and fine timbral shifts which are at the heart of inspired qin playing.

Other fine contributions came from kayagum player Inok Paek, and from pipa players Gao Hong and Cheng Yu. Their performances or demonstrations all paid tribute to the conference’s main subject, ‘cross-cultural influence’. The kayagum, widely used in folk and narrative genres, is reportedly a Korean development of the Chinese bridged zither zheng, while the pipa is a plucked lute of Central Asian (rather than Chinese) origin. The concerts underpinned the fact that terms like ‘traditional music’ and ‘contemporary music’ are (strictly speaking) tautologies – all music is bound to be part of some tradition, and any live musical performance is, in a significant sense, ‘contemporary’.

Gao Hong and Inok Paek are superb masters of their instruments. Gao Hong, a one-time student of the great pipa player Lin Shicheng, contributed a fine composition of her own, Flying Dragon, inspired on her life story. It captures the mixed emotions and confusion brought on by her nomadic lifestyle. (She left her family at age 12 to become a professional musician and first moved to Beijing, then to Japan and finally to the USA.) Other pipa works she played in Heidelberg included virtuoso works, such as King Xiang Yu takes off his armour and Lam Bun-Ching’s effervescent Run of 1993. Inok Paek, born and educated in
Seoul, and currently based in England, also contrasted traditional (Sanjo) music with a modern composition, *Dance in the Perfume of the Aloes* of 1974. Hearing Inok’s music in a concert together with that of the qin makes one realize that Oriental ‘quietism’ exists in a great many contrasting forms and guises. The melodic ‘breath’ of the *kayagum* is on the same magnificent level as the qin, but musically it belongs to a very different world.

**Two world premieres**

Arguably the most spectacular concerts were those of new ensemble music. Members of the Heidelberg Philharmonic Orchestra presented two world premieres. Acoustically the Providenz church in the heart of town was hardly an ideal choice for this group, but the warmly lit baroque interior contributed to the concert’s fine ambiance, and the musicians’ playing was inspired throughout the evening. Brigitte Geller and Werner Volker Meyer sang impressive solo parts in Qu Xiaosong’s *Mist* (1992), which received one of its finest performances to date. The work, which contrasts long silences with hidden passionate outbursts, is among Qu’s finest creations. Hakenberg’s *In dieser Zusammenhang* was one of two works especially commissioned for the occasion. The other commissioned piece was Lei Liang’s gentle and translucent *Garden Eleven*, for *pipa*, soprano and ensemble: music as light as a breeze in spring, with sonic events frequently verging on the inaudible. The *pipa* part was played delicately (and invisibly) by Gao Hong, from the back of the church. Both Hakenberg and Lei Liang (the latter originally from Tianjin) currently live and work at Harvard University in Cambridge. They have cooperated on a number of cross-cultural musical projects. They share an interest in Asian instruments and culture, but stylistically they could hardly be more different. It is difficult to assess the weight of Hakenberg’s own voice in a work so dedicated to (and dependent on) Mahler, but he is clearly fond of drama and extroverted gestures, with a touch of good humour and a fine sense of instrumental colour. Lei Liang represents a very different tradition, closer to the intimacy and esoteric aspects of the *guqin*, but also close to certain Western trends in meditative music.

Guo Wenjing’s *She Hong* (1991), with its exciting percussion dialogues, was played at such a slow tempo that even the composer might not have recognized it. Perhaps the slow speed was chosen to accommodate the percussion players, but it took the sting out of the music. Singer Chen Shizheng kindly replaced Qu Xiaosong (who had fallen ill) at the last moment to sing the solo in Mo Wuping’s *Fan I* (1991), a very beautiful piece based on a Chinese folk song. Chen’s voice seemed a bit too ‘trained’ to capture the intended ‘roughness’ of the vocal part. Mo Wuping would have been the best choice for the soloist, but Mo died of cancer in 1993, at the beginning of a promising career. He sang his own music with a tremendous vocal energy, almost incongruent with the frailty of his body or his gentleness of character. He sang like a pop musician – and was criticized for it – but his singing in *Fan I* was deeply moving. It was unmatchted by later performers, even composers like Tan Dun and Qu Xiaosong, who sang the work on various occasions, or such prominent vocalists as Shi Kelong, or Chen Shizheng in the present concert. The concert ended with a fine performance of Tan Dun’s *Circle*, with audience participation.

**Plus Percussion**

The Municipal Theatre hosted an exhibition of Chinese oil paintings by Luo Zheng. This exhibition was inaugurated on 2 October 1998 with a performance of Luo Zhongrong’s
Luo Zheng's Oil Paintings

Since he began to paint in 1992, Luo Zheng's oils have earned growing praise from numerous connoisseurs in China and abroad. They are mostly abstract paintings on musical subjects. Luo's sources of inspiration vary from Chinese ancient culture to Debussy, from Ligeti to Boulez. The paintings are usually marked by vigorous motion, a unique blend of primary colours and a rough and dark emotive power, which sometimes calls to mind the oppressive moods of Munch or Van Gogh. The exhibition of twenty new works in the Municipal Theatre of Heidelberg in October 1998 marked Luo's European debut. He has previously had successful solo exhibitions in Beijing. Luo Zheng's powerful art is the product of a mentally retarded person who can hardly speak, and whose communication with the outside world is largely dependent on endless hours of listening to classical music. Luo Zheng is the 33-year-old son of senior Chinese composer Luo Zhongrong. He has Down's syndrome, and is still living at home, in the care of his parents and his sister. The Luo family were among the distinguished guests of the 4th Chime meeting in Heidelberg. Luo Zheng's father, initially earned fame in China as a 'revolutionary' composer, with works like the popular mass song The Land is Beautiful Beyond the Mountain (1947). In the early 1980s, he became a promoter of avant-garde music, and young composers in Peking and Shanghai now look upon him as a 'spiritual father'. Quite apart from this, Luo Zhongrong is the father of an unusually gifted child.

Luo Zheng's gifts for painting were discovered in 1992. Since that time he has produced a steady outpouring of oils. His canvases now take up virtually all the available space in the Luo family home in Beijing. He has painted hundreds, and his parents do not wish to sell any of his works. There is no shortage of international attention for the unusual painter. Cellist Yo-Yo Ma fell in love with Luo Zheng's depiction of Stravinsky's Firebird and obtained that work as a gift. Hungarian composer Ligeti was so impressed by Luo's painting of his music that he wrote a laudatory letter from Germany. Luo Zheng's paintings have been featured on back covers of the music journal Renmin yinyue, and he continues to amaze art critics and general art lovers with his new works. The superbly

Luo's interpretation of his father's 2nd String Quartet. Oil on paper, 26 x 38 cm. (1992).
produced catalogue for the Heidelberg exhibition is his second catalogue. Luo’s evocation of Mahler’s Third Symphony (1997) is a feast of different shades of warm orange and red which cover the entire canvas. The painting captures and blends in a remarkable way the titanic sentiments and brazen romanticism of Mahler’s music and its moments of childlike innocence and serenity. All movement in the painting radiates from a single point. Other works such as the ones inspired on Stravinsky rely on deliberate, strong colour contrasts and rough, frenzied zigzagging brush strokes. Figurative elements, when they rarely occur, are worked unobtrusively into the texture, as in the gloomy and ghost-like ‘Terracotta soldiers’ (1995) or in the amazing ‘Ping, Pang, Pong’ (1996).

Luo is not part of any ‘direction’ in Asian art, which is perhaps a bit too much to ask from an artist living in such a splendid isolation as Luo, but he has shown an interest in 20th century art, and has visited modern exhibitions in the company of his family in Beijing. Luo’s firm brush strokes, his preference for primary colours, his amazing colour syntheses and his dark energy are among the most distinctive features of his style.

Second String Quartet (1985). The Heidelberg Quartet got the best out of the vigorous score, though the timing of the concert (after a series of speeches) was not ideal, and the audience had to listen while standing. Hopefully the piece will stay on the group’s repertoire.

The whiter-than-whitewashed walls of the Heidelberg Kunstverein served as the backdrop for an evening concert of the ensemble Plus Percussion, conducted by Olaf Storbeck, with Chinese works for cello, soprano and percussion. Reimund Korupp played several pieces for unaccompanied cello (by Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong and Lam Bun-Ching) as well as the solo part in Tan Dun’s exuberant Snow in June (1995), with percussion.
With six substantial items, the programme was somewhat overloaded. After the intermission the constant emphasis on stark contrasts – frequent alternation of loud thuddering percussion with moments of introspection – became a bit wearisome, though the playing of the four percussionists was technically matchless and inspired throughout. The basic juxtaposition of massive percussion and ‘lonely’ voices, in this case soprano and cello, reads like a skeleton outline of Chinese dramatic music, but obviously the effect wears thin if too many composers are featured exploring the same ground.

Chien Nan-Chang’s 158 (1996), an ode to the joy of loud banging, had no special surprises in store once it was set in motion with its big drums and child-like energy, but it was delightfully crude! The players justifiably took some liberties with the over-repetitive score. A different kind of ‘childlike’ music was Qu Xiaosong’s Ji 7, Motionless Water (1997) for unaccompanied cello, more airy in texture than Lei Liang’s Garden Eleven. Following an overload of percussive violence, it offered a most welcome distraction. Perhaps no other contemporary Chinese piece expresses its programme so aptly as this delectable miniature. The music is inspired by a poem of just eight characters, which I can’t resist quoting: 树静 石登 波平. In Qu’s translation:

trees are still
the pool is deep green
a little stone falls
ripples fade.

During one of his solos Reimund Korupp broke a string. In Chinese philosophy it’s (ideally) the tiniest sound which create the biggest or the most disruptive effect, but here, more likely, it must have been the strain of playing a series of extremely demanding solos all in one evening, a superb achievement on the part of Korupp.

The concert’s most rewarding work had no cello in it and only limited fireworks for percussion: Guo Wenjing’s Elegy (1996), for soprano and three percussionists was sung with glowing intensity by Brigitte Geller. By relatively simple means Guo attains an unusual level of tension and unearthly beauty in this music, which mourns the victims of an all-out war.

Incredibly, and unknown to the public, some items had to be repeated after the concert for radio recording purposes. The musicians, exhausted after a demanding programme, managed to honour the request, though one wonders how, with what hidden energies.

Another person who performed miracles was Barbara Mittler, the ‘motor’ behind all of these splendid events. She managed to organize five concerts, a conference and an exhibition (which were all very successful) with almost no help from others and with a near superhuman persistence in finding the means, the appropriate locations, the best possible publicity and everything else needed. She turned ‘Barbarian Pipes and Strings’ into a memorable occasion and one of Chime’s finest events in recent years, and gave the Chime Foundation a tremendous boost in its function as an international platform for scholars and aficionados of Chinese music. The board of Chime elected her an honorary life member of the Foundation to thank her for her work.

Despite the recent international success of some Chinese composers (e.g., Tan Dun or Guo Wenjing) twentieth-century Chinese music remains widely unknown and underrepresented in the West. Barbara Mittler’s compendium-like publication *Dangerous Tunes* will surely correct this. Apart from the fundamental research of Frank Kouwenhoven in *Chime* (1990-1992), some specific surveys (e.g. Zhang, 1992), a few doctoral dissertations and a number of articles (e.g. in Ryker, 1991), until now little that was substantial and certainly nothing comprehensive on this subject could be found in a Western language. Writings in Chinese – published in the PRC or elsewhere – often tend to be rather limited in scope, partly as a consequence of political censorship.

Mittler’s book, based on the author’s 1993 doctoral thesis, can therefore, without reservation, be labelled a pioneer work. Far more than a historical survey of Chinese music since the division of China in 1949, it is the first publication to try to describe and compare the development in all three regions where Chinese culture predominates: the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan (ROC) and Hong Kong. Furthermore, it emphasizes the relationship between political repression and compositional creation – co-existing and inseparable in China since the beginning of Chinese history. Within the framework of an extensive number of reference works, Mittler’s study is principally based on detailed interviews with fifty-nine Chinese composers as well as on the analysis of a large number of hitherto mostly unpublished scores. Apart from describing large-scale developments and paradigms, the book provides an abundance of gripping details: political background information, biographical details, historical context, and reflections on aesthetics. This breadth of material, however, extends the footnotes to a number that occasionally causes the readability to suffer, which might damage the chances of attracting readers beyond academic circles. In general, a lack of clearness in structure often makes reading laborious. A more comprehensive table of contents would have been a great help to the reader.

Mittler decided to methodically concentrate on instrumental music, for it communicates a basic ambiguity that makes the political manipulations and interpretations impressed upon it more transparent. Another important issue of the book is the reception of East-Asian/Chinese music in the West and the (subsequent) reception of this Asian-influenced music in China, a process the author has labelled ‘double-mirror-reflection’. Although frequently referred to, this promising idea remains rather vague until the end.

A historical sketch of the intertwined relationship between Western and Chinese music before 1949 shows the author’s talent for detecting analogies and parallel methods to subordinate music to political purposes in the communist as well as in the nationalist area in the 1930s.
and 1940s. The question to what extent music in China was influenced by government policies is dealt with in chapter 2. Mittler points at parallels between the Confucian view of 'correct' (zheng) music and the functional role which Mao and Chiang Kai-Shek assigned to music within the framework of their respective ideologies. In contrast, the traditional role of the remonstrating intellectual in China is brought to mind. The author describes convincingly how oppressive the situation during the Cold War was for composers on both sides of the Taiwan strait. A retreat into an apolitical sphere proved impossible in practice, since any musical as well as any other kind of public remark was considered and judged from within a political context. In Mainland China, music loyal to the government and the party line was expected to rely on simple harmonies, clear-cut tunes and 'appropriate' lyrics, while questionable properties like 'a lack of melody', 'exaggerated chromaticism' and 'capitalist relics' had to be avoided. The yangbanxi ('model work')Hongse niangzijin (The Red Detachment of Women) – revealing the strange alliance of 'revolutionary realism' and 'revolutionary romanticism' – and Zhu Jian'er's First Symphony are analysed extensively and their use of specific (often iconographic) musical vocabulary is connected with the contemporary historical situation. Zhu Jian'er's work, one of several 'Scar symphonies' that were composed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, is depicted by Mittler as a complex amalgam of the composer's own preoccupation with the recent past (the Cultural Revolution) and the perpetuation of orthodox governmental policy. Official cultural policies in China fluctuated a lot. In the time during and after the Cultural Revolution the government's 'hot-cold-treatment' made composing 'orthodox' music – even when explicitly intended – a game of chance. The type of 'music opposing government policies' is the counterpart of such 'orthoprajy'. It is predominated by works in reaction to the massacre of students on (or near) Tiananmen Square in 1989. While the scolding intention is often apparent from the titles (like Tan Dun's Snow in June or Zeng Xinkui's Tianmen Wangzi), the author's emotional description of Tan Dun's key work overshoots the mark (p. 117). It probably would have been more constructive to analyse the musical structure of the work in detail. Its inner logic might have revealed an expressive potential beyond direct links to contemporary history. By translating musical events into realistic scenarios, Mittler denudes the music of what she general claims for it: ambiguity.

Chapter 3 provides a profound chronological description of new music in the PRC, the ROC and Hong Kong. Political and cultural idiosyncrasies of the respective regions are discussed. Historical phases that were influential in the creation of a unique musical identity (like the opening up of Mainland China to the outside world after the Cultural Revolution or the 1970s' xiangtu movement in the ROC) are referred to as well.

Biographical information is conveyed chronologically and structured according to generations. A major function is accorded to the 'paradigmatic composer' of each region determined by analyzing data from a questionnaire and personal interviews. Although the validity of the paradigms generally remains doubtful (e.g., are Taiwanese composers really so unconcerned about their audience?), the consequences of the method are positive: generous space is allowed to composers that until now have rarely or never been dealt with in the West. The Taiwan chapter in particular provides fascinating encounters (Li Taixiang, Dai Hongxuan, Wu Dinglian, Pan Shiji) and puts Taiwanese musical culture – which has hardly been studied in the West so far – on the same footing as the Mainland's. Also, the emphasis on women composers is a positive point. Music analysis in this chapter is largely descriptive.
On the one hand this consciously avoids assessments, but on the other hand leaves a lack of criteria that within such a broad context are imperative.

Chapter 4 returns to a discussion of politics and music, but now with special attention for the problems inherent to the Chinese reception of Western music as well as on the Chinese struggle for a unique identity represented by the discussion of minzu xing (national character). First, Mittler sums up the ambivalence of the idea of ‘world music’: ‘Understanding world music may simply be uncovering certain affinities or differences between the familiar and the unknown’ (p. 273). Within China, a self-conscious claim for difference is undoubtedly still predominant, as the wish of several composers to emphasize their unique identity (in particular when faced with the West) shows. This becomes even more understandable when one considers the decades of more or less passive reaction to Western musical and cultural heritage (copying of Western musical concepts, instruments, forms and, particularly, Western clichés of China as found in the works relying on ‘pentatonic romanticism’). The mythical and ambiguous impact of minzu xing is revealed in what is arguably the most important part of the book. Minzu xing here appears as a cultural myth, as an ‘imaginaire’, a ‘set of common symbolic representations and expectations that the Chinese have fabricated for themselves’ (p. 281). A wide gap remains between musical ideals promoted by the state – with emphasis on the use of pentatonic scales and of Chinese folk tunes in a framework of Western functional harmony – and the (younger) composers’ preference for a much broader array of elements borrowed from tradition (‘Why do we have to use folk songs to be considered Chinese?’, p. 283). The matter’s complexity further increases through the demand for Chinese exoticism by the West: some composers may feel inclined to go along with that, up to the point of perversing their own traditions.

The Maoist slogan ‘gu wei jin yong’ (To make the past serve the present) serves as a reference in the discussion of the encounter with authentic musical practices young composers experienced during the Cultural Revolution. These years in the countryside, a consequence of the xiaxiang policy, certainly proved crucial for many composers that later were labelled the ‘xin chao generation’. This policy was thus unintentionally an important turning point in Chinese music history. Unfortunately Mittler seems to idealize this period, underplaying the widespread violence and destruction. She refers to ‘a glorification of China and the Chinese countryside not by urban youth inventing a tradition but by urban youth who have lived the tradition’ (p. 297). It may be true that the Cultural Revolution marked the birth of a new artistic consciousness, but it did so at a terrible cost, an enormous loss of human lives, talents, culture, memories (e.g. cf. Chen, 1991). The full extent of damage done remains a subject for further investigation.

It might furthermore be doubted if xin chao music is actually as ‘authentic’ as generally assumed. What were the encounters between the composers from the big cities and the music of the villagers really like? Perhaps the romantic idea of the ‘earthy’ and ‘authentic folk-inspired’ Chinese composer – an image readily promoted by several Western researchers of new Chinese music – is based not so much on reality but on Western idealized visions of the ‘primitive exotic’? Does not at least the earlier music of the xin chao composers contain many ‘romanticized’ adaptations of rural and ancient music, although these might be less explicit than in the works of ‘pentatonic romanticism’?

The analysis of traditional elements in the works of Chinese composers only partly answers these questions. In four categories – Stylization, Free Transformation, Radicalization and Mythologization – Mittler traces these remnants of tradition, of which the first two
categories mainly illustrate the procedures of 'pentatonic romanticism' (pentatonic melody within a Western—often simplified—romantic framework). 'Stylization' refers to the use of Chinese (folk or classical) tunes, rhythms and instrumental effects in a framework of Western functional harmony. This music is performed on Western instruments (symphony orchestra, piano). 'Free transformation' refers to the same kind of music, but now performed, at least in part, on Chinese traditional instruments. By referring to nineteenth-century music from the West, these works use Western-Old in order to create putative Chinese-New. To preserve and reinvent idiosyncratic elements from Chinese music and culture, however, is characteristic for the categories Radicalization and Mythologization that mainly are imposed on 'xiao xiao composers'. Here, Chinese-Old is radically transformed into Chinese-New by discovering fundamental affinities between Western-New (Western avant-garde techniques and aesthetics) and Chinese-Old. This is further illustrated by reference to seven basic techniques (like the concentration on single sounds, the intentional use of silence, or specific vocal techniques borrowed from traditional opera) providing a huge number of musical examples. This passage aptly conveys the breathtaking modernity of new Chinese music, its independence and its international appeal. Though the abundance of materials is impressive, analysis remains cursory and descriptive, even in the rather extensive look into Tan Dun’s On Taoism. One particularly longs for an interpretation of the analysed facts that would reveal structural consequences beyond the enumeration of techniques and the explanation of a formal scheme. Moreover, the question of why the compositional techniques discussed are necessarily 'Chinese' arises repeatedly, since most of these techniques can easily be traced back to other East Asian or even European traditions. It might therefore be more useful to interpret the presence of these techniques as a sign of 'internationalization' rather than as a reinvention of 'authentic', specific Chinese traditions.

The book ends with a survey of parallel developments in the three main geographical regions (PRC, ROC and Hong Kong) that seem to me to have been approached too generally. In my view the political and social differences between the three regions are far more pronounced than Mittler is willing to admit, and these differences have also led to different music cultures, more so than Mittler acknowledges.

_Dangerous Tunes_ is a significant book. Barbara Mittler’s enthusiasm for her subject immediately infects the reader, and the book will certainly contribute to an increase in the appreciation of new (and old!) Chinese music in the West. Furthermore, the Chinese world will be confronted with a meaningful mirror. The criticism brought forward here only shows that it is impossible to solve all the problems in a pioneer work of this sort. The wealth of information presented in this book makes it a unique and major work of reference, not likely to be soon surpassed.

Christian Utz

REFERENCES


The publication of Barbara Mittler’s *Dangerous Tunes* is a welcome and timely initiative. This is a richly informative study. Based on interviews, music analyses and an ample reading of (mainly Chinese) sources, it reflects the wide-ranging interests and insights of its author. *Dangerous Tunes* is one of the first substantial studies of Chinese contemporary music to focus on the works of composers from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong alike. Political divisions between these areas have resulted in new Chinese music taking a number of separate roads over the last fifty years. Composers from the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong have all gone their own ways, and in research they are usually studied separately – with few scholars looking upon them as exponents of a shared tradition. Matters are complicated by the fact that levels of research have been somewhat at variance in the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Barbara Mittler has accepted the challenge to visit these three main areas, and she presents a comprehensive picture of new Chinese music in communist, nationalist, and colonialist China. Three main issues are emphasized in her book: the relationship between music and politics, the future of China’s own musical traditions, and (an assessment of) the music’s novelty. The author argues that contemporary Chinese composers have managed to write truly new music by linking up, in new and meaningful ways, with Chinese tradition. Though I have difficulties with a number of Mittler’s views and statements, the book as a whole remains an extraordinary achievement. Its discussion of the use of Chinese traditional elements in new Chinese music and its survey of new music in Taiwan are particularly valuable. This review will focus primarily on the portions of the book dealing with those topics.

For me the most interesting chapter in this study is ‘The Music Shape of Tradition’. It looks at different ways in which traditional elements are incorporated in new Chinese music. Mittler distinguishes four categories: Stylization, Free Transformation, Radicalization, and Mythological Conceptualization. The first two refer to the use of Chinese tunes, rhythms and (sometimes) instrumental sonorities in combination with Western functional harmony, usually in a romantic style – Mittler uses the overall term ‘pentatonic romanticism’ to describe this kind of music, which may be played on Western instruments or on a combination of Western and (modified) Chinese instruments. Many Chinese piano pieces as well as works for the so-called Chinese orchestra – an ensemble modelled after the Western symphony orchestra – come in these categories. Mittler states that these compositions are in line with the Maoist slogan to ‘make the past serve the present and make foreign culture serve China’. She argues that Chinese traditions are not so much faithfully preserved as ‘purposely deranged to be newly invented’ in these works (p. 314). Actually, the world of traditional Chinese

1 One other publication that addresses the music of the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan in combination is C. C. Liu’s *Zhongguo sin yinyue shi lun* (‘A History of Chinese New Music’), Taipei, Yaowen Publishing Co. 1996. In Liu’s vision, new Chinese music started in 1885.
instrumental music (for small ensembles) is a far cry from the multi-part, harmonically complex orchestral music of Western romanticism, which became a model for Chinese composers in the 1950s. The traditional ensemble music is linear, "horizontal" in the sense that most of the instruments follow the same tune, and there is no "vertical" organization quite like that of Western functional harmony. Mittler refers to a statement by Stephen Jones that such music in "national style" is ignored or at best only accepted passively by the vast majority of Chinese who live in the countryside, because its vocabulary and aesthetic ideas are largely alien to them (p. 323). All the more reason for Mittler to wonder why Chinese composers chose the alien ideas of functional harmony and Western romanticism as a point of departure for their new works. Her answer is that this must have happened because it was prescribed by the Chinese authorities (p. 18). It may be that Chinese government officials promoted "pentatonic romanticism" and stimulated its use in music education, but this kind of music was also (and continues to be) readily embraced by urban audiences in China, independent from political action. Since the 1920s, compositions influenced by Western tonal music have made an increasing impact on Chinese urban society. They featured prominently in middle-class citizens' domestic music making, long before the communist era. Generations of educated people have enjoyed songs like Zhao Yuanren's Jiao wo ruhe bu xiang ta ("How can I not be thinking of her?"), composed in 1926, and to this day school children in Taiwan can still sing Huang Zhe's Xi fong de hua ("Words of the western wind"), written in 1935 for incorporation in elementary school textbooks. Western functional harmony has become an important and fully integrated element in Chinese urban music, not just due to government policy, but also as a consequence of a long-term process of cross-cultural influence. Kouwenhoven (1991: 49), in his series of articles on new Chinese music in Chime, makes a similar point when he writes about the "double background" of the Chinese in the PRC.

In her listing of four ways in which traditional elements are incorporated in new Chinese music, the third category — "radical" adaptation of the tradition — is, according to Mittler, the one where a new generation of Chinese composers begins to develop a personal and "authentic" voice. The composers discover their Chinese roots, not just in the living traditions of their own country, but also in new music from the West. This is not as surprising as it may seem. Contemporary composers in the West are often reacting against the romantic idiom of their own European past. They show an increased interest in single sounds, in complex sonorities, and in primal rhythms — elements which all happen to play a major role in the living music traditions of Asia. It may be that Western composers are reaching out for a period in their own past, many centuries ago, when the music cultures of Asia and the West happened to be a lot closer than they are today. At some point in the past they must have shared the aspects of linearity and heterophony which still characterize Chinese traditional music today. In any event, by emulating methods and techniques of contemporary Western music, Chinese composers have found meaningful new ways to incorporate Chinese tradition in their own works. Mittler identifies seven characteristics for the music in this category and examines the works of a number of composers to illustrate these points and suggests that in these works "the traditional heritage is used as if it were a kind of museum stacked with raw-material." She may be right, but doesn't that make it rather difficult to maintain that this type of adaptation of traditional material is "based on strong traditionalist feelings", as the author claims on p. 324? One could very well argue the opposite, namely that such an approach challenges tradition, rather than constitutes a return to it. Taken out of
its traditional context, the Chinese musical heritage is extracted, fragmented, augmented, and transformed – sometimes beyond recognition – in the works of new Chinese composers.

Nevertheless, Mittler’s attempt to list general characteristics for music of this kind is an important first step towards a theoretical framework for contemporary Chinese music. Perhaps the next step could be to examine the different functions these characteristics assume in the compositions of different composers. I believe that only issue-oriented analysis like Mittler’s can provide new perspectives on the oeuvre of individual composers and result in meaningful comparisons.

Obviously, the identification of general Chinese characteristics in contemporary music is fraught with problems. There is always the danger of perpetuating stereotypes (a kind of 20th-century chinoiserie), or of taking an egalitarian approach to borrowings from Chinese tradition. Such borrowings may have very different origins – folk or elite – which require different types of discussion. It might be interesting to categorize traditional elements in new Chinese music according to their origins, for example to examine how much of their original function has been retained. This could lead to a fine-tuned analysis, possibly breaking ground for a well-founded comparison with similar attempts on the part of Western composers to incorporate elements of traditional music in their own works.

Now to new music in Taiwan. Local research on contemporary composers there started only in the early 1990s. The fact is that, for a long time, musicology in general did not receive much attention as an academic discipline in Taiwan. Things began to improve a couple of years ago, and at present there are a large number of music departments and several graduate programs, though none that offer Ph.D. degrees. Taiwanese music essays and M.A. theses focus primarily on Western music or on traditional Chinese music. In brief, Mittler’s chapter on new music in Taiwan is a welcome addition to the scant material available in this field. Mittler brings the Taiwanese music scene vividly alive via her interviews with composers and analyses of musical pieces. With no substantial publications to rely on, with a general lack of interest in new music among musicians and the public in Taiwan, and with few established contemporary music forums to consult, Mittler’s research in Taiwan cannot have been a very easy task. Yet she managed to compile a significant and impressive amount of information.

Mittler conducted her interviews with Taiwanese composers in September 1992. Not very long ago, any talking in public about relationships between politics and music would have been a risky act in Taiwan. But relations between the government and the people of Taiwan began to look more relaxed in the late 1980s. The fact that the composers felt comfortable enough to talk to Mittler about encounters and collisions they had had with the government shows that the situation was indeed changing.

In her analysis, Mittler attaches much importance to a government-led movement of the late 1960s, called Wenhua fuxing yundong (Cultural Renaissance). She looks upon it as a ‘nationalist mirror image of the Cultural Revolution, reversing its iconoclasm’ (p. 190). The movement advocated root-seeking and the fusion of tradition and modernization, and Mittler suggests that it constituted an officially prescribed nationalism. She contrasts it with another movement of the 1970s led by Taiwanese intellectuals, called Xiangtu (‘native soil’). According to Mittler, Xiangtu was a genuine search for tradition and Chineseness, unlike the earlier movement of the 1960s. It is surprising that Mittler attaches such political weight to the Wenhua fuxing yundong. This was essentially a social movement which aimed at a renaissance of mainland Chinese (traditional) culture in Taiwan. It has since become an
institution in its own right. But it never turned into a genuine political movement with mass appeal, like the Cultural Revolution. It never had much practical impact on Taiwanese society as a whole. Curiously, Mittler suggests that ‘Wenhua fuxing ... eventually stimulated musicians such as Shi Weiliang and Xu Changhui ... to explore the treasures of folk music on Taiwan’ (p. 278). Officially inaugurated in July 1967 with the founding of an advisory committee, Wenhua fuxing yundong can have had little to do with Shi Weiliang and Xu Changhui’s collecting of Taiwanese indigenous songs which took place from January 1966 to August 1967. By contrast, the Xiangtu movement had a real impact on society. It gave Taiwanese literature a place of its own and led the society to celebrate not only its traditions but also its separate status versus the Mainland. But it was largely a literary movement, and its influence on music was very limited. In Mittler’s study, only one composer – Li Taixiang – may be meaningfully associated with the ideals of Xiangtu, though the term does not do so much as turn up in Mittler’s analysis of Li’s works.

The group of five Taiwanese composers which Mittler selected for case studies – Lu Yen, Wu Dinglian, Dai Hongxuan, Li Taixiang and Pan Shiji – is not completely representative. It may be diverse in terms of the artists’ backgrounds, with two Mainlanders, two Taiwanese, and one member of the Amei Tribe, but all these composers received their higher education in the USA. The fact is that European-trained composers dominate the Taiwanese music scene, and have been for a long time. Prominent artists like Ma Shuilong, Xu Changhui, Pan Huanglong, Zeng Xingkui, Lai Dehe – to list only a few – all went to Europe to study, notably Vienna and West Germany. Mittler’s five case studies are notable exceptions in a generation of primarily European-trained composers. It remains open to further investigation how different kinds of training have influenced Chinese composers’ attitudes towards new music. American aspirations towards a national musical style have waxed and waned since the late 19th century, while the opponents of such a search for a ‘native sound’ have seen it as a hindrance to international recognition for American music. Towards the end of the 20th century most European composers seem to be far less concerned with matters of musical nationalism than their American counterparts.

The ‘case studies’ provide valuable insights in the composers’ works, and Mittler often puts the music in a social context, providing refreshing and carefully balanced perspectives, which make it easy to forgive her an occasional slip of the pen. (Writing about Lu Yen’s adoption of serial technique she says that ‘Lu does not respect the strict rules of non-repetition formulated by Schoenberg: motivic parts are split off, chords appear in combination’ (p. 204). But combination and partition of motifs are really at the core of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone technique!)

Notwithstanding my criticisms, Dangerous Tunes is an outstanding and significant contribution to the study of Chinese contemporary music. The sheer quantity of music analysed or discussed in this book is most impressive, and Mittler’s interpretations are often very rewarding and stimulating. I have no doubt that this study will serve as a major reference for future scholars in this field.

Nancy Rao

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Many scholars think of Chinese ritual as a field divided in distinct spheres, such as ritual, texts, music and religion. Their tendency is to focus their attention on one of these spheres, or on one particular genre of ritual, rather than tackle the many different aspects in combination. So far the bulk of scholarship in this field has focused on the understanding of texts. But now that China has become more accessible, a growing number of researchers have shown interest in ritual practice and the role of music. Buddhist and Confucian ritual music have been the subjects of several studies in recent times, though much of this research still tends to stress ritual procedures rather than the role of music per se. Harmony and Counterpoint, a collection of research papers compiled by Bell Yung, Evelyn Rawski and Rubie Watson, offers a partial correction to this situation. It may well be one of the very few attempts to provide a more comprehensive view on the many elements involved in Chinese ritual, including music. Readers who expect main emphasis on musicological aspects may be disappointed, but the diversity of the approach still makes the book worth reading.

Nine authors with backgrounds in anthropology, musicology, music ethology and sociology, have set out to investigate how music, as a central element in most Chinese rituals, achieves its effect. How sound can bestow power on a person, and how it can help any ordinary individual to be transformed into an administrative official or priest. In many Chinese rituals, processes of transformation are driven or supported by music. Music frequently plays a role when a person transcends from one level of existence to another, for example in the act of making contact with spirits, or receiving messages from the gods. And even if the materialistic realm is left behind for only a short timespan, during a prayer for instance, there may be music to accompany or guide the ritual action. The contributors to this book examine processes of transformation and how they are affected or supported by music. In doing so they look at a broad variety of rituals, ranging from the elaborate state ceremonies of the past, to 20th century local operas, folk ritual music and funeral processions. Several chapters deal with rituals of non-Han Chinese ethnic groups in China, or in areas bordering on China. Not surprisingly, there is no single answer to the question of how music induces or supports states of transcendence. If anything, this anthology underpins the fact that rituals are among the strongest forms of expression of ethnic or individual identity. They reflect the customs and values of
specific times and places, as elements which are constantly re-negotiated and reshaped, resulting in different musical traditions.

In a chapter on 'The Nature of Chinese Ritual Sound', Bell Yung offers a theoretical basis for investigations of all kinds of aural phenomena, 'sound' or 'noise', in ritual contexts. He argues that musical and verbal forms of expression in musical rituals are by no means all stylised and formalised, but contain a potential for creative variation.

The bulk of the book is divided into three sections, dealing with the authorization of power, with rites of passage, i.e. rituals which mark the transition from one stage of life to another, and with rituals intended to pacify or win the favour of spirits.

The first section contains studies on the legitimation of existing social and political hierarchies via rituals. Joseph Lam investigates the interface between domestic politics and state rituals in 16th century China, on the basis of Ming dynasty source material. Taking a conflict between Emperor Shizong and the Ministry of Rites as his point of departure, Lam argues that the balance of power at the imperial court was inseparably linked to the conduct of state rituals.

Robert Provine writes about a similar conflict of legitimation at the Korean court of the early Choson period (15th century), though here the outcome concerns the power relationship between two neighbouring states. The Korean court of the 15th century behaved like a subordinate of the Chinese empire as far as its state sacrificial rites were concerned. The Koreans presumably viewed China as a culturally superior power. While the Korean king was willing to adopt Chinese sacrificial rites, he did not necessarily accept the political subordination implied by the Chinese rituals. According to the Chinese, the Korean king was entitled only to rituals on a provincial, rather than state level. Provine compared primary Chinese sources for sacrificial rites, which circulated in Korea, to native Korean versions of the rites. He shows that the Koreans, while apparently content to carry out official sacrificial rites appropriate to a Chinese province, actually extended the size of the provincial rituals in order to express their unwillingness to submit to Chinese political hierarchy.

Helen Rees's contribution on semi-ritual ensemble music from Yunnan Province offers further support for the view that borrowed rituals and ceremonies may help to affirm or raise social prestige. She looks into the present and recent past of Naxi gyu ("Naxi Ancient Music"), and tackles the question of why men of the Naxi minority in Lijiang chose to perform what actually amounted to Han-Chinese rituals and ritual music which is dedicated to Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist deities. Rees shows that the participation of Naxi in so-called Dongjing associations served to harmonize relations between the upper strata of the Naxi community and the Han-Chinese administration who ruled them, while participation in the ritual offerings also ensured the transmission of status and social prestige from the presumably superior Han culture to the Naxi musicians.

The second section of the book focuses on rituals which mark the transition from one stage of life to another. Rubie Watson investigates the passage from childhood to maturity as reflected in nuptial rituals in the New Territories (Hong Kong). Women in traditional Chinese society often remain fairly 'invisible'. They do their work indoors, don't interfere with the outside world, refrain from commenting on the power domains of men, and that is the picture which has persisted in conventional scholarship for a long time. Watson stresses that Chinese women actually created richly expressive traditions in music, poetry, storytelling and the visual arts; and she refers to recent studies in this field. The Cantonese bridal laments from
the beginning of this century which are examined here show women at their most defiant. In
the context of the laments, Watson ponders the question of why traditional Confucian
 teaching in China, with its strong emphasis on family relationships, has so completely
neglected the roles of daughters and sisters, and the function of sister-friends.

A very different ritual ‘journey’ is examined by Li Ping-Hui. She looks at the role of
Taiwanese processional music in funerals, and is in a good position to do so. She
participated as a musician in a shawm and percussion band in Taiwan, and writes in
particular about the function of the occasional cacophony of sounds created when various
funeral bands in a procession play at the same time. An unexperienced listener may get an
impression of disharmony, but Li Pinghui argues that this abundance of sounds and tunes is
actually a representation of the dead person’s past life, with its multitude of social relations,
complementing or working against one another. In its function of representation, the music is
addressing the family left behind, as well as the dead person, and it is meant to reconcile
everyone involved with the fate of mortals.

Evelyn Rawski looks at the function of music in the ritual of imperial accession in the
18th century. Again we are dealing with a transformational process as the heir to the throne
was believed to part from the world of human beings as soon as he assumed the role of the
Son of Heaven. The matter was complicated by the fact that the ritual marked a joyful as well
as a sad event. The intransigence was an auspicious and joyful affair, meant to be
accompanied by joyful music, while the mourning period for the previous emperor who had
just died, demanded a solemn and quiet conduct. This problem was solved with a truly
Salomonic decision: the court musicians, holding their instruments, took part in the
ceremony, but without making any sound, as the performance of the music was only
panomimed. Rawski’s rich and lucid description of Qing court music traditions and her
analysis of the interaction between ritual melodies and lyrics make for a particular rewarding
chapter.

The final section of Harmony and Counterpoint deals with rituals of propitiating meant
for pacifying or winning the favour of gods or spirits. Judith Magee Boltz looks at the pudu,
a ritual aimed at appeasing the spirits of deceased people who have remained restless as a
result of a violent death, or because their bodies have not undergone the appropriate ritual
treatment. These spirits are potentially harmful. In the course of a pudu ritual, a combination
of movements, lyrics and music, the Daoist priest who is in charge transcends to a state of
higher awareness. Boltz argues that it is the combination of music and liturgical texts which
empowers the priest to reach out to the netherworld. She comes up with an intriguing new
interpretation of the ultimate aims of pudu ritual services. A reexamination of liturgical texts,
chants and hymns has led her to the conclusion that lost souls are not merely to be appeased
and sent away, but the priest’s additional goal is to establish quasi kinship ties with the
unknown dead: a kind of posthumous ‘adoption’ by messengers from the living. The main
motive for this remarkable step, says Boltz, is subconscious fear among the living that they
may one day share a similar fate. If their kin and friends forget them, they may well end up
as neglected and restless spirits too. A fascinating theory. It would be interesting to see
whether its validity can be extended to other salvation rituals, such as that of the hantian, the
Cold Altar. This tradition, still practised in Jiangsu and Anhui, concerns ritual offerings made
at neglected graves. The participants address the souls of people from a remote past, whose
names may not always be known. Boltz’s study is among the most stimulating contributions
in this volume.
Another fine paper is Ellen Judd's *Ritual Opera and the Bonds of Authority: Transformation and Transcendence*. A somewhat ostentatious title for what is basically a helpful analytical description of a *Mulian* opera. The main plot of the opera is the journey of the faithful Buddhist believer Mulian to hell, with the aim of rescuing his mother. Numerous operas have been based on this story. They constitute a genre of their own, with a lot of regional variation. Mulian operas are essentially religious plays. Until the 1950s they were frequently performed as highlights of the *hungry ghost* festival, a calendrical festival of propitiation, mainly performed in monasteries. Their purpose was to 'purify' the community of the living and the dead, and to bring them a step nearer to salvation. Judd argues that the priests, actors and audience members involved in a Mulian opera event formed more of a unity than in other types of performances. There is music throughout the plays, with deafening instrumental interludes which announce the various stages of transformation of the opera's hero and his mother, and vocal laments or fierce arias which depict these transformations and lead up to the climax of salvation. The basic story of the plays first follows Mulian, descending in his search deep into the caves of the Chinese Hades, while the musicians produce a veritable carpet of sounds to accompany this journey. After he encounters his mother, he continues his spiritual journey together with her.

Today performances of Mulian operas are practically extinct. Due to government repression of religious activities, especially from 1949 onwards. Mulian operas have disappeared or gone underground, as has happened to so many other ritual activities. As far as I know occasional secret performances took place during the 1950s and 60s, but not to the extent that the tradition could really thrive. Recent years have seen a partial renaissance of Mulian plays, but the current approach to the tradition which involves 'reconstructions' of lost material, is museal and academic. Modern recreations of Mulian operas are probably no more than very pale reflections of a once thriving and vivid dramatic tradition. Performances which I attended in Hunan, Fujian and Anhui happened to be staged in drab concrete cinemas-halls, for audiences of academics and cadres; a far cry from the bustling temple compounds which, on religious holidays, formed the traditional backdrop for these performances. Only fifteen years ago, one could still have witnessed this impressive traditional type of performance, with hundreds of pilgrims thronging in front of the stage, for example on the holy Buddhist mountain of *Jiuhuashan*.

*Harmony and Counterpoint* offers a rich and stimulating collection of papers on the subject of Chinese ritual music. Only now is this subject beginning to be explored in some depth, and while the book provides no more than intriguing snapshots, it certainly pushes the door a little further ajar. Pioneer work needs to be done on many local ritual traditions, especially in remote areas. Quite apart from this, the state rituals and ceremonies of Imperial China and those of the PRC or Taiwan invite comparative study. So do incursions of Buddhist and Daoist elements into the ritual services of Christian communities in China.

Stefan Kuzay

As a scholar in ethnomusicology, Du Yaxiong is well known for his research on the music traditions of ethnic minorities in China, as well as for his studies on Eastern European folk music, and musical culture of the Silk Road. But Du’s expertise is not limited to these areas. A review of his published writings reveals a wide-ranging scholarship in traditional Chinese music, musicology, and aesthetics. One is therefore not surprised to encounter a book such as Zhongguo minzu jiben yueli coming out of the hands of this prolific writer. Although there are many published monographs that explore specific topics of Chinese music theory, Zhongguo minzu jiben yueli is the first to provide a comprehensive introduction to the principles and techniques of traditional Chinese music. Another strength of the book is the integration of theoretical instruction and performance practice, which is manifested in the diversity of exercises including transcription, composition, improvisation, and sightsinging.

Intended as a textbook, Zhongguo minzu jiben yueli covers more than what one would usually consider to be yueli (music theory). In fact, in addition to dealing with pitch, rhythm, and tonal systems, Du ventures into the fields of acoustics, notation, tuning and temperament, musical texture, and form, with the goal of presenting a comprehensive view of materials and principles important for a solid theoretical foundation in Chinese music. These additional topics are necessary since, according to the author, theories of traditional Chinese music have been misunderstood by many who examine them through a Western lens. For example, one might make the mistake of using Western terminology to explain certain Chinese musical phenomena, which results in a distorted view of the aesthetic and theoretical foundations of the material under examination, and then leads to incorrect judgments and misleading conclusions (Preface, 1-5). Nevertheless, we find certain Western-derived systems such as simplified notation (jianpu) and interval designation employed in Du’s text. Du certainly doesn’t want to eliminate the Western elements in his text, especially not the ones which are widely accepted and which help the reader understand the material under discussion. What he stresses, though, is a researcher’s responsibility to distinguish primary sources from secondary sources and to evaluate information critically and objectively within a historical-cultural framework.

The book comprises ten chapters and an epilogue. Each chapter is divided into sections; each section concludes with summary questions and short assignments. The text is filled with musical examples, of which the majority are in gongche or jianpu notation and are selected from folk music repertoires. The remaining examples are from ancient Chinese as well as minority sources. Comparison tables are included to clarify similarities and differences between various notational or tuning systems.

The introductory chapter covers the acoustic properties of sound and the physio-biological nature of music cognition. Even in this short chapter, we see Du’s ethnomusicological

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1 Comparative Research of Chinese Folk Songs and Hungarian Folk Songs (Buenos Aires: Osy Gyoker, 1985); Zhongguo shaoshu minzu yinyue (Beijing: Zhongguo wentsian chuban gongsi, 1986); Zhongguo ge shaoshu minzu minjian yinyue gaishu (Beijing: Renmin yinyue cbs., 1993); Sichu zhilu de yinyue wenhua (Beijing: Minzu cbs., 1997). A review of Du’s Zhongguo ge shaoshu minzu minjian yinyue gaishu [A survey of the folk music of each of China’s minority nationalities] by Rachel Harris can be found in Chime 9 (1996): 141-42.
stance, as reflected in his belief in the effects of cultural background and cultural beliefs on music perception (4). The next two chapters focus on the two major components of music — pitch and rhythm. Discussions of pentatonic and heptatonic modes, the twelve lù, intervals, and pitch nomenclature govern the content of chapter 2, while concepts of ban (板) and yan (眼) are explicated in chapter 3. In these two chapters, as in all other ones, exposition of material is amply supported by quotations from historical sources. Given the variety and profundity of the available sources, Du has done a fine job in providing just enough information to support his arguments without confusing his readers.

The next two chapters delve further into the realm of pitch theories. Chapter 4 introduces various tuning systems that have been significant in the development of Chinese music, either as theoretical constructs or as practical systems in music making. They include the equal-tempered system, Pythagorean or sanfen sunyi (三分损益) tuning, just tuning, and the unusual twenty-four tone unequal-tempered and seven-tone equal-tempered systems. In chapter 5, the distinctions between jun (均), gong (宫), and diao (調) are explained. This discussion is timely because of the recent research emphasis on the concept of jun — new ground has been broken in this area (particularly regarding tongjun sangong 同均三宫) beginning in the 1980s, with controversies and debates continuing among Chinese scholars up to the present day. The remainder of this chapter covers modal modulation and modal nomenclature in gongche (工尺) notation.

Chapter 6 is devoted to jianpu notation (简谱). Unlike other notational systems such as qin or gongche notations, jianpu is a much more recent development and doesn't have any particular historical significance. Du's reason for including the system is practical rather than historical, for jianpu has been a standard tool in the transcription and transmission of music in China since the 1930s. By tracing the use of numbers to represent scale degrees in Europe as early as the sixteenth century, the introduction of jianpu to the Japanese by an American in the late 1880s, its consequent adoption by Chinese students living in Japan, and its later transmission to China, Du provides a clear picture of how jianpu came to be a major notational device in twentieth-century China. Even though the system has been so widely used among scholars and performers in the transmission of Chinese music, Du nevertheless warns us of its limitations, which include its inappropriateness in recording certain instrumental music, its illegibility in the case of full scores, and its lack of symbols to represent numerous performance subtleties in Chinese music.

Chapter 7 focuses on melodic development, with topics on phrase structure and various techniques of melodic elaboration. In addition, Du discusses the role of qupai (曲牌) ('labelled melodies') in Chinese music and how larger forms are generated by combining various qupai. Musical texture is the subject of chapter 8, dealing primarily with multi-voice compositions. The remainder of the chapter explores harmony in Chinese music as well as aspects of intervocalic structure and melodic motion in the formation of sonorities. Chapter 9

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2 For example, see Huang Xiangpeng's 'Zenyang bianjie bateu yuezhong de gongche pu dianzishou ?' ['How to identify the dianzishou of various musical genres in gongche notation ?'] (Minzu minjian yinyue, 1986/2: 8-11). Du's discussion is based upon Huang's work. Tongqian sangong ('Three gongs sharing one jun') is a theoretical construct that expresses the three traditional Chinese heptatonic scales in seven pitch-classes. A discussion of Huang's system can be found in Tong Zhongliang's 'Cong shiwu dao yibai baishi diao de liyun kuangxia' ['From fifteen modes to one hundred and eighty modes: a theoretical framework'], Yinyue yanjiu 88/1, 1998: 61-65.

3 In addition to this, European tablature, as found in some Spanish keyboard music notations of the sixteenth century, frequently makes use of numbers as a way of notating pitch.
provides an informative overview of notational systems in China, ranging from the highly
codified qinpu of the elite to the unusual ‘contour’ notation (quxianpu 曲線譜) of Tibetan
Buddhists or the onomatopoeic luogu ziptu (鈪鼓字譜) of Chinese percussion music. The last
chapter summarizes the author’s views on relationships between notation and performance,
and serves as a ‘practical’ guide for performers and scholars. In the epilogue, the author
reiterates the significance of a solid theoretical foundation in music instruction.

Perhaps, given the complexity and depth of Chinese music theory, it would be difficult for
some of us to acknowledge the value of a book that attempts to cover the major tenets of
music theory in China’s history in the span of 237 pages. Nevertheless, with its clear
organization, short-sectional format and concise description of terminology, Zhongguo
minzu jiben yueli certainly deserves a place in introductory courses on traditional Chinese
music theory, and it serves as a handy reference for students of Chinese music and
performing amateurs alike. Still, the book could be improved in several ways. Although
pitch, rhythm, and related topics are covered at length, it is surprising to find no discussion
of timbre in the book. Timbre plays a significant role in the structure and style of Chinese
music, and exclusion of theories of timbre (such as bayin) makes the book seem incomplete.
Moreover, given the many different concepts and terminology in Chinese music, it would
have been helpful to attach a glossary at the end of the book for quick reference. Since the
book is introductory in nature, a review of influential writings (such as those by Li Yinghai
and Huang Xiangpeng) as well as a selective bibliography arranged by subject would have
served those interested in further study of individual topics. Some of the musical examples
suffer from poor printing quality (such as missing dashes to indicate eighth- or sixteenth-note
durations in jianpu) or editing (parts in multi-voice examples are not aligned, 178-80). These
flaws should be eliminated in future editions of what is in all other respects a very welcome
and admirable book.

Eric Lai

Joseph S. C. Lam – State Sacrifices and Music in Ming China. Orthodoxy,
Creativity and Expressiveness. State Univ. of New York Press, Albany,

This book describes the Ming dynasty state sacrifices, with special attention for the roles
played by the first and eleventh Ming emperors, Taizu and Shizhong. It contrasts Ming music
theory with the practice of ritual music at court, and offers a neat analysis of a small selection
from the 283 state ritual songs which have survived from the Ming dynasty. Excerpts from
many documents on ritual doctrine and musical practice are made accessible here for a
Western (non-Chinese-reading) audience for the first time.

The author’s point of departure is the existing tension between orthodoxy and creativity
in any ritual music tradition: is the music subject to change, and if so, would it be possible to
trace individual musicians’ or other participants’ contributions to those changes? As general
topics these questions are hardly meaningful, for if rituals are indeed ‘models of and for
reality which communicate culturally important cosmological conceptions and values’ –
Clifford Geertz’ definition, which Lam quotes at the beginning of his book – they are bound
to be dynamic and changeable. ‘Creative’ change is a fundamental aspect of human society –
and the wealth of anthropological literature on this subject in connection with ritual attests to
it. Lam's basic hypothesis - 'concerned participants and critical audiences always find orthodox ritual and music expressive', p. 14 - is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Nevertheless, it can still be important to examine the general question raised here with respect to any specific tradition. Lam traces the (political and ideological) mechanisms of change in Ming state sacrificial music in admirable detail, and presents a wealth of historical data and intriguing anecdotes. But he is curiously over-persistent and unduly repetitive in his claim that the music is 'orthodox, yet creative and expressive'. Is the hidden implication that many people actually view Ming state sacrificial songs as dull and unimaginative? I wouldn't be surprised, but in that case it would have been more effective if Lam had addressed his opponents directly, instead of raising a theoretical issue without indicating the challenge hidden behind it.

A glance at the music examples in chapters 6 and 7 shows that all the songs are set syllabically (one word to one note) with notes of equal duration. Lam oddly refrains from any comment on rhythm - the word does not even occur in the book - though surely there must have been a distinctive rhythmic dimension to the songs, in any case for the accompanying percussion. Some of the items were performed with dances, and although, by Ming times, the songs were no longer a prayer medium or a means to reach trance, it seems likely that they had such functions in a more remote past, when the performances were not yet stifled by the massive weight of political and ideological theorization. No doubt state ceremonies have always been an important means to confirm political power relationships, but surely, the music must also have been music at some point in time, whether in the Ming or in earlier periods. Lam evidently struggles with the musicality of his material. He states that anyone looking at the scores will be 'overwhelmed' by perpetually recurring melodic formulae and predictable structural patterns, but (upon taking a closer look) will be 'dazzled' by the variety in the melodies (p. 121).

Dazzled or overwhelmed - for the reader the music and its functions often come across mainly in off-hand remarks or in secondary information appended to main arguments. The Ming dynasty poem by Wang Shenzhong (a young official in Shizong's court) which comes towards the end of the book should ideally have been put at the beginning, because it so vividly evokes the atmosphere of a rehearsal for a Ming state musical ritual and expresses real enthusiasm on the part of an onlooker. 'The music begins like a flash / The interludes are like strings of pearls (...) / The pitches activate the eight winds / The drum beats echo through the sky / The zithers project their plucked tones / The rows of graceful dancers are arranged like the abundant stars (...)'. The entire poem is an eloquent appraisal of the music and the ceremonies, perhaps more telling than many of Lam's quotations from senior officials' writings and imperial edicts.

Lam's data and musical analyses are useful and certainly support his main arguments, but his book falls short of providing the broad historical outlook that the subject ideally requires. The author asserts that state sacrifices are now 'historical' and that 'their aural, visual and psychological impacts can only be historically imagined with experiences learned from the Confucian Ceremonial performed in present-day Taipei, Qifu and other Chinese cities' (p. 6). So why not take a look at those ceremonies, which are open to the public and can be filmed and recorded? Why not analyze the surviving historical recordings of Confucian ceremonies of the 1930s and 1940s, or re-examine Yang Yinliu's research on this kind of music? Admittedly, the twentieth-century rituals are part of a post-imperial context, and are 're-invented traditions', but re-invention (in the guise of 'reconstruction') seems to be
a basic aspect of Confucian state rituals throughout history, with political goals and power struggles always hovering in the background. The revival of Confucian ceremonies on both sides of the Taiwan Strait in recent times may not be as heavily charged with ancestral wizardry as the old rituals in Ming times, but these ceremonies, once again, are attempts to appropriate an ancient cultural heritage with its implied 'rightful' links to political power. Lam briefly makes the link with the death ceremonials of Sun Yat-Sen, Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong. He says they are 'fundamentally different from Ming state ritual' but '[in] their webs of cultural, social, political and personal meanings (...) not incomparable to those of Ming state sacrifices and music'. No book-length treatment is needed here, but a further exploration of this comparison (with special attention for the music) might have put the entire subject in a much broader perspective, perhaps also enhancing its interest for contemporary readers.

What remains is an impressive collection of data and elaborate descriptions. Lam reveals interesting details and certainly succeeds in conveying how theoreticians and practitioners, emperors and court officials in Ming times struggled (in varying degrees) with the conflict between orthodoxy and practical political needs. He also shows that many Ming theoreticians were never really involved in the actual rituals, which they could only follow at a distance or not witness at all - which did not impede them from writing and publishing detailed theoretical works about them.

Frank Kouwenhoven


This book is a scholarly study of six qin pieces in interpretations by the late qin player and scholar Yao Bingyan. Other reviewers have extolled the many virtues and listed the trivial blemishes of Bell Yung’s Celestial Airs of Antiquity. To repeat what they have written would be an act of supererogation. What I should like to do here is to look instead at some of the issues which occurred to me whilst reading the book. They are not properly musicological, nor do I wish to discuss them from a musicologist’s or ethnomusicologist’s vantage point. They relate to 'the guqin tradition,' valuably summarised by Yung in his Introduction.

He deals first with the social milieu of the guqin players: 'Historical writings suggest that its solo music has, since antiquity, been associated intimately and exclusively with China's small and elite class of the educated and privileged. No other instrument and music are so closely identified with the refinement and sophistication of this class.' 'As members of the literati class, guqin players were predominantly amateurs ... The music was played not so much for an audience as for the scholar-gentleman's own enlightenment and enjoyment. Occasionally he might play for friends who also played the instrument, the performance being the privacy and intimate surroundings of a scholar-gentleman's study.' (Celestial Airs of Antiquity, p. 1)

Next, '... Guqin music is probably the most complex type of Chinese music in structure and the most refined and subtle in aesthetics.... First, the sound of the instrument is extremely soft, and consequently dynamic variations are confined to within a small range. Second, minute differences in finger technique produce many shades of musical timbre. It
takes a sensitive and cultivated ear to appreciate the subtleties of dynamics, timbre and other aspects of the music, ...’ (ibid, p. 1).1

Then come the musical and aesthetic consequences of the social milieu: ‘With few exceptions, a guqin composition has a programmatic title that may paint a picture, suggest a mood, or tell a story. Many of these titles are closely associated with the history, myths, legends, philosophy, and religion of China.’ ‘The essence of guqin aesthetics lies not so much in the appreciation of the structure of the music sound as in the yijing, or mood, that the music evokes based upon the literary content of the composition.’ (ibid, pp. 1 and 2).2

Questions have to be asked, however, not about what Yung has written, which to my mind is absolutely unexceptionable, but about what he has not.

The most striking thing about the guqin tradition as it appears in the documentary record, is that it covers only a small part of Chinese society. Perhaps that is inevitable, since compiling a tablature collection requires literacy (rare in dynastic China), musicality of the highest (which in any society excludes large numbers of people) and leisure (which in dynastic China would have excluded most of the scholars able enough to become officials, at least during the active years of their official lives). Amateur qin players among the commoners, most of whom could not read, had no way and perhaps no desire, since their culture was almost exclusively orally transmitted, to leave a permanent record of their musical activities. It is significant that in the entire surviving written guqin record, there is only one tablature collection, the Shiyi Xian Guan Qinpu, which explicitly draws on the playing of a man who earned his living with his hands. And yet we know that commoner amateurs did play the qin.3 We know also, because Zhu Quan tells us so in the Preface to the Shenqi mipu, that some professional musicians did, but here we know even less than we do about amateurs, since nothing at all of their practice has survived in writings from their own hands.

J. C. Y. Watt has in his ‘The Qin and the Chinese Literati’ made a distinction between people who understood qin music, and those who only thought they understood. The essence of his view is that ‘Qin music was never a mystery to the musical Chinese. It was excessive veneration of qin music on the part of the amusical which estranged it from the musical public and almost effected its demise through the lack of an appreciative audience.’ (Watt, p. 38) For as long as the literati could accept the contribution of good players, no matter what their background, as was the case up to the Yuan dynasty, qin music remained strong. The increasing social and musical isolation of qin players under the Ming and especially the Qing left the instrument and its music vulnerable to all the worst effects of the demise of literati culture, institutionalised by the abolition of the keju system.

There are great strengths in the guqin tradition, in the insistence on purity and variety of tone, the subtlety of phrasing and gracing, the value attached to the yijing and self-expression, and the links with other aspects of Chinese culture.

There are also weaknesses, derived perhaps exclusively from social factors. The attitudes prevailing among the people who compiled tablature collections have led to our knowing about only a part of the qin playing that actually took place. It is understandable that Zhu Quan could write in the Preface to the Shenqi mipu: ‘The instrument has been used by

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1 Even after the introduction of metal strings over-wound with polymer it is still true that the qin is very quiet.
2 There is a more detailed and wider ranging account of this in the locus classicus in English for guqin aesthetics, van Ginkel’s The Lute of the Chinese Lute.
3 For details see Xu Jian’s Qin Shi Chi-Bian.
illiterates and merchants, low prostitutes and actors, vulgar foreigners, and the sick. However, we are all the products of the intellectual and social environments we grow up in, and today it would be indefensible for views such as Zhu Quan’s to be repeated with approbation. Much more congenial are Zha Fuxi’s opening remarks in his preface to the Cunjian Qinpu Puji Lan, where he wrote: ‘The guqin is no longer the “treasure” of the solitary hermit; something new has appeared in our new society.’

But however distasteful some of the implications of Zhu Quan’s views may be, that should not detract from the underlying message, that the sine qua non for appreciating the qin as a Chinese literatus would, include immense erudition not only in Confucian and Daoist and, for some, Buddhist philosophy, but also in the poetry and history which formed the core of classical Chinese literature, and highly developed social and emotional sensibilities.

It has been said before, by van Gulik and Watt as well as by Yung, that the essence of literati guqin aesthetics lies more in these matters than in the purely musical, and this leads on to the question of whether, for a literatus, guqin music was music in the usual sense of the term. Music, as understood in the West and increasingly so in China, requires at the least melody, metre and rhythm, but these are the things which a literatus would value least. Purity of tone and minute differences of timbre were admittedly crucial, but less for their own sake than for their contribution to something greater: ‘the scholar-gentleman’s own enlightenment and enjoyment’ and ‘the yi jing, or mood, that the music evokes based upon the literary content of the composition.’

Such values would inevitably and always exclude virtually all foreigners and most Chinese from appreciating literati qin music, but going back to my earlier theme, literati qin music probably never was the only qin music, and outside literati circles there was no need that it should be. Indeed, if those who lay claim to the literati tradition insist that qin music should be confined to their own group, they may well be signing the music’s death warrant.

To cite Watt again: ‘In the new order of things, the future of the qin music will depend largely on its successful disengagement from the literati (if they survive), and upon the critic’s not imputing “class association” into the music where none exists.’ (Watt, p. 49) If we wish the music to survive we must learn to accept diversity; only when there is a sufficiently large corps of players will it be possible to revive and encourage tradition.

Christopher Evans

REFERENCES


4 Translations from the Zhu Quan’s Preface to the Shenqi mipu come from Goormaghtign & Yung, with occasional modifications by myself aimed at making the English flow more easily.

5 ‘Solitary hermit’ hardly captures the full meaning of ‘ji li you ren’ but does convey the core ideas of pensive isolation on the part of a man or woman of culture.


During Vibeke Bødahl’s workshop on ‘Oral Literature in Modern China’ (Copenhagen, August 1996) the conference room was transformed every afternoon into a ‘storytellers house’. Tea cups were passed around, fans distributed among the participants, while storytelling masters invited from Yangzhou told different versions of the story ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’ from the popular *Shuihu* (‘Water Margin’) cycle. Only after reading Bødahl’s *The Oral Tradition of Yangzhou Storytelling* did I realize that by attending the workshop I had actually relived the fieldwork on which she based this study.

In 1967, while preparing a thesis on Chinese dialectology, Vibeke Bødahl recorded a Mr Chu in a Chinese restaurant who happened to be good at telling jokes and stories in his native Yangzhou dialect. Twenty years later, while preparing an anthology of Ming and Qing fiction, she was struck by the ‘storytellers’ manner’ in the old novels. In the hope of catching in the act the time-honoured art of storytelling in Yangzhou she returned to that city in 1986, ‘roaming the streets and lanes’ in search of informants. A photo on the inside cover of the book shows the author on a bicycle, in the company of Professor Chen Wulou, a specialist who was particularly helpful in tracing storytellers. He accompanied her on numerous trips to storytellers’ homes and offered assistance during recording sessions and interviews. The resulting book – based on Bødahl’s fieldwork in Yangzhou over a period of six years – amply demonstrates the author’s expert knowledge as well as her love and deep respect for the subject and for the people involved.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One is a very informative general introduction to Yangzhou storytelling, both its past and its present. It looks at ways of transmission, performance settings, matters of repertoire, and other aspects. Bødahl explains how she collected (recorded), transcribed and translated her material. She provides (long!) hereditary trees of several major schools of *Yangzhou pinghua*, as the genre is called locally, and introduces the storytellers involved in her project. She analyzes at length a corpus of several versions of the story ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’, from the perspectives of phonology, grammar, style and narration, while the concluding chapter of Part One deals with the intriguing interplay of orality and literacy. Bødahl has managed to squeeze all this into just 243 pages – a miracle of conciseness.

Part Two features nine stories told by different storytellers, in Chinese and in English translation. (For the reader it may be helpful to digest some of these stories before starting on the analytical chapters in Part One.) A list of special terms used by storytellers is appended. The book concludes with an overview of recordings made for the project.

From my own fieldwork experiences in the realm of folk song I know how important it is to grasp local performers’ terminology. Terms and their explanations do not just provide technical or conceptual information, but frequently offer crucial insights into the essence of a performance tradition. Bødahl does more than provide a list of terms. Throughout the book she quotes and explains storytellers’ own statements. By pinpointing the exact meanings of words like *fangkou, yuankou, guanbai, or sibai*, all directly related to performance practice,
she offers an in-depth perspective on how language works in this genre. Terms like ‘shuo kong shu’ or ‘shuo shishu’ (‘empty / dead storytelling’) are more than just qualifying labels. They illustrate that most storytellers reject the reproduction of texts memorized from books and still attach great importance to improvisatory skills and traditional ways of learning (i.e. via listening to a master).

The interplay of orality and literacy is among the most interesting of the topics dealt with in the book. Børdahl illustrates the mutual influences of oral and written texts and shows how inversion of oral and literate functions takes place. During the Yuan and Ming dynasties – while more and more subgenres of storytelling emerged – oral stories were committed to print. The resulting books developed into genres of written colloquial literature which anticipated the creation of the great Chinese novels of the Ming and Qing. In Børdahl’s words: ‘Works in the written tradition are dependent on already existing oral material (plots, mythologies, etc.), but as that tradition is established, the reverse also becomes true. The written versions reciprocally gain impact on the storytellers’ art.’ The repertoire of most schools of Yangzhou storytelling is directly related to popular novels like Shuihu zhuan (‘Water Margin’), San Guo (‘Three Kingdoms’), and Xiyou ji (‘Journey to the West’), which begs a comparison between the oral and the written texts. Børdahl exposes striking differences between storytellers’ versions of ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’ and the episode as found in the Shuihu zhuan. The main plot remains the same, but storytellers elaborate enormously on details. Consequently, most episodes of the Shuihu cycle are much longer in the oral versions than in the novel. One would expect certain elements in the novel – such as the insertion of small poems, the use of fixed expressions, or a proclamation ‘read aloud’ – to be of influence on the oral tradition, but this is not the case. Only the opening couplet of Shuihu zhuan re-emerges in most Yangzhou storytellers’ performances. Børdahl shows that poems and other ‘literary’ elements (possibly) borrowed from books and incorporated in oral performance generally take on explicitly rhetorical functions – they occur at moments of suspense, to prolong the time of expectancy, or with sequences of lyrical description, or in introductory or concluding passages. They are usually recited in high-strung declamatory fashion (p. 236). An inversion from oral to literate functions takes place when oral stories are committed to paper: many chapters in Shuihu zhuan and Xiyou ji start with a standard phrase from the storytelling repertoire (‘The story tells...’) and conclude with another one (e.g., ‘If you want to know how this episode continues, please listen to the...')
explanation in the next session"). Interestingly enough, these stock phrases are not used by the storytellers recorded in Bødahl’s fieldwork. The author ponders on whether such elements can really feature as proof of a development from oral to written texts – they might also be a literary simulation of storytelling, used by writers of vernacular fiction.

Vibeke Bødahl is to be congratulated on this adventurous study of an oral Chinese repertoire. Her book is well-written and well-structured, and balances neatly between a broad introductory study and an in-depth treatment intended for specialists. As the author of The Oral Tradition of Yangzhou Storytelling, Bødahl ranks among the regrettably small number of Sinologists who demonstrate a genuine interest in Chinese oral traditions and who extend their studies beyond library work to explorations in the field and recording sessions. Apart from being a fine contribution to our knowledge of oral traditions in China, Bødahl’s study also opens up important new vistas on China’s literary past.

Anything missing? Well, yes, a CD with excerpts from the stories discussed in the book! Admittedly this is partly made up for by the pictures of storytellers in action which accompany the various stories quoted in Part Two. These pictures – which deserved better reproduction – provide an important visual dimension to the repertoire; they show the vivid facial and bodily expressions of the masters in action.

In the more recently published The Eternal Storyteller. Oral Literature in Modern China, Bødahl brings together a selection of the papers presented during the above-mentioned oral literature workshop in Copenhagen. As a contributor to that book I may be partial to it, but never mind – it’s a fine selection, beautifully edited! Bødahl has supplemented the papers with some transcribed and translated excerpts of stories performed during the workshop, and this time the pictures of the storytellers at work are reproduced very well. She supplies a comprehensive bibliography of studies on Chinese storytelling, plus two selected bibliographies of works by two major specialists, Chen Wulou and Boris L. Riffkin. The two books nicely complement one another. The Eternal Storyteller covers genres of oral literature throughout China. It also includes essays on aspects of Yangzhou storytelling not dealt with in the other publication. Bødahl’s own contribution (on the Poetics of Chinese Storytelling) picks up the thread of her terminological research where she left it in the first publication, and incorporates results of recent research. These two books are highly recommended.

Antoinette Schimmelpenninck

Jo Riley – Chinese theatre and the actor in performance. Cambridge Univ. Press UK, 1997, xii + 348 pp., illus., gloss., bibliog., index.

With the virtual collapse of government sponsorship, the survival of China’s traditional theatre is once more in the hands of the gods. Urban companies have suffered tremendously from the massive decline in public interest, due to the stifling impact of Chinese cultural politics and competition from new forms of entertainment. Big opera productions have become a hazardous enterprise because they must be kept on the repertoire for a long time and played every evening to full houses in order to generate sufficient money. In some hotels special ‘abridged’ performances are now given for tourists, which mainly concentrate on spectacle and dazzling choreography. The traditional opera public (mainly older people) still exists, but is no longer big enough to justify long series of performances of one specific play. Until recent years state subsidies kept opera groups limping on one leg, enabling them
to be a little bit flexible in their repertoire and to change to new plays quickly if necessary. But now very little money is trickling through and many theatres have closed down or have been transformed into cinemas or disco bars. For their income, some of the remaining bigger companies rely mainly on tours abroad, on school and hotel performances and (sometimes) on tours in the Chinese countryside, though even playing in the countryside no longer seems to offer a really viable basis. Many villages can no longer afford urban troupes, or prefer to spend their money on karaoke and disco shows. Urban opera companies have drastically reduced personnel. Some groups have resorted to smaller theatre venues, a few have even dropped their 'modern' plays and gone back to playing 'traditional' pieces in fairly small settings, which are less costly than new plays — no need to hire a librettist, for one thing!

Rural theatre groups and ritual performers face additional problems because they are associated with 'superstitious' practices. The (numerous!) private troupes still active in Gansu, Shanxi, Anhui, Hubei and elsewhere travel and perform throughout the year to earn a living. For their survival they depend entirely on the goodwill of regional officials and of local village administrations (who pay for rural performances from funds acquired mainly from the peasants through local taxes). The government 'tolerates' them — if they are lucky. Ritual specialists in rural areas are allowed to continue their (semi-theatrical) practices if the local authorities happen to be sufficiently sympathetic to them. With the recent crack-down on supporters of the Falun Gong and members of the Protestant church in China, the Chinese authorities hardly promise to grow more tolerant of religious practices. In brief, one of the world’s greatest theatre and ritual cultures is currently at an all-time low.

From a practical point of view, Jo Riley’s excellent Chinese theatre and the actor in performance has been published at the wrong time, but the author is the first to recognize this fact. She begins her book mourning the decline of Beijing Opera, and relates her sad experiences with jingju (Beijing opera) while she visited China in the early 1980s. The genre is only the faintest shadow of the great and rich tradition it was in the past. Jingju has suffered, like so many theatre and ritual genres in China, from crude political interference and the shockwave of social changes.

Riley’s book is an indispensable guide to a world that has partly vanished, or is in danger of vanishing. It is not a general introduction to Chinese theatre, but, more importantly, a well-written and ground-breaking book on the role of the body in Chinese theatre, notably the aspect of functional representation, taking into account all possible social,
ritual and philosophical connotations of dress, appearance, action, movement, bodily and spiritual presence and absence in the Chinese theatre, as well as the hereditary ('family') aspects of the actor's profession. Riley's central tenet is that, in a broad variety of theatre and ritual genres, the human or artefact body (actor, puppet, mask) is metaphorically dissected and reassembled anew, either for ritual (exorcist or initiation) purposes or for artistic reasons. In jingju this process has simply become part of a professional actor's performance skills. In opera training, students begin with a conception of the body as dissected into separate units of articulation, which have to be brought together again to construct a whole. The hand movement required to suggest the presence of flying geese must be linked up and unified with the rest of the body in order to present a person watching those geese in the air. In marionette theatre and especially in exorcist theatre, the process of dissection and reassembling the body often assumes the aspect of an initiation or purification ritual in which the body becomes a spirit or deity. This frequently involves the spilling of blood. In ancient burial rituals, the process can take on an even more literal shape when victims are slaughtered and their severed heads and corpses buried with a dead king or high official in order to metaphorically preserve a life-giving force (yang) for him in the afterlife.

While some of these topics have been dealt with in isolation in other Western writings, they have never before been put in this all-encompassing and illuminating perspective. Riley links up a 20th century urban theatre tradition with a (seemingly remote) world of past or rural rituals and ceremonial practices. Exorcist elements were clearly present in traditional jingju (notably in the figure of the exorcist Zhong Kui) but were cruelly eliminated by the Communists in the late 1940s. What remains is the art of movement and of appearance and the many metaphorical ideas contained in them, which show that jingju was not only a splendid art form but also a historical development in a long chain of ritual and ceremonial practices in China. Riley masterfully combines fieldwork data on rural and urban theatre and ritual genres – she studied jingju in Beijing and also carried out extensive research on nuo (exorcism) theatre in Guizhou – with information derived from literary, anthropological, archeological, ideographical, ritual and musicological studies.

Her book is unique in its attempt to bridge the gap between all these realms. For many Westerners, from Brecht to Meyerhold, from Grotowski to Peter Brooke, the Chinese theatre was, or is, mainly attractive because it is different (not to mention 'exotic'). Riley's point of departure is familiarity – what does Chinese theatre mean for people born and raised in the tradition? What do Chinese (traditional) spectators expect and experience when they watch a performance? What do the actors in a performance represent, how is this communicated to the audience, and what is the audience's relationship to the actors? These questions are more easily posed than answered, because the frame of reference is immense, certainly if one looks beyond the surface of jingju towards Chinese theatre and ritual throughout history, and takes into account cosmology, archeological finds, etc.

Obviously this is also a slippery area which involves a lot of speculation and frequently moves into realms which are poorly documented or difficult to relate. I'm not an expert in this field, but Riley's arguments and her central tenets strike me as convincing, even if some of the lesser sources quoted (Eberhard, C.A.S. Williams) are not always reliable in matters of detail, and even if I doubt that the true connoisseurs of jingju in the past knew as much about the shared ritualistic aspects of jingju and rural traditions as Riley does!

The outward structure of the book is plain and elegant. Riley follows the actor-of-all-actors Mei Lanfang step by step in his performance of the concubine Yang Yuhuan in Guifei
zuiji ("The Favourite Concubine Becomes Intoxicated"). This was one of Mei’s star roles, which has been preserved in Mei’s notes and in a rare film of Mei made in the 1950s. (He was one of the last male actors allowed to play a female (dan) role on stage in the People’s Republic.) Every chapter in Riley’s book describes a small excerpt from Mei’s performance and takes it as a starting point for a broad discussion of key aspects of the Chinese theatre, such as ‘family’, ‘appearance’, ‘severing’ (the process of dissecting the body, described above), ‘identity’, and ‘presence’. There are frequent excursions into the realm of nudd theatre and references to Daoist and other ritual practices, past or present, while the reader is led past the terracotta army of Qinshi Huangdi, the human and animal victims trapped in the Shang royal tomb at Anyang, and a host of other burial sites, mortuary figures, marionettes, and healing figures. Jo Riley’s approach is admirably broad in scope, and apart from being a pioneer study, her book is also a veritable compendium of theatrical symbols (with clarifying illustrations and a helpful index).

This is not the ‘ultimate’ book on Chinese opera (which may not be a feasible project). There is relatively little about music (dealt with more substantially in studies by Schönfelder and Wichman) or about outward details of face-painting in jingju or matters of repertoire, for which other works are available. However, Riley puts the entire Chinese theatre tradition in a significant broader perspective. As a model of a combined study of urban and rural practices, her book is obligatory reading for anyone doing research on Chinese theatre.

Frank Kouwenhoven


This CD of north Chinese wind music from Hugo, a label better known for its fine series of qin and zheng music, complements their disc of the ceremonial music of Xi’an (reviewed in CHIME 10/11: 197–9), supplementing our scanty knowledge of folk instrumental music in northern China. One should also mention the two fine CDs of shawm bands from Dalian in Northeast China (Picard 1995). Some of the music featured is related to the so-called ‘eight great suites of Shanxi’ (rendered here as ‘Eight Divertimento’), a title which misleadingly standardizes the variety of instrumental music in the province. The four bands featured are active in the area of Wutai, Dingxiang, Yuanping and Xinxiang counties (more properly called central than northern Shanxi). Though shawm bands and sheng-guan ensembles, typical of north China, usually contrast, these ensembles often combine the two styles (Jones 1995a chs. 10–12). Although commercial cassettes of this music have been available locally for some years, and there is a five-cassette series of the temple music of Wutaishan, this CD may reach a wider international audience. One might compare a recorded excerpt of Xu Yousheng’s ensemble from Dongye (Jones 1995b: cf. CD with 1998 edn of Jones 1995a). Such bands are evidence of the continuity of tradition in rural China, where they perform for life-cycle and calendrical ceremonies. The main melodic instruments are guan, sheng, and small shawm: the whistle kouxian is also, often heard. Unremitting yet sensitive support is
provided by drum and cymbals. Though most pieces are in a jovial style, including some popular pieces adapted from the Errentai vocal repertory, no strings are featured. Most 'classical' of the bands is that led by Shi Yongquan (tracks 9-13), including pieces from the so-called 'eight great suite' repertory. Still, to my ears this style lacks the magical intensity of groups further north in Shanxi like the lay Daoist guan player Liu Zhong or the searing shawm bands. A version of the melody Wusheng Fo is included, and even of Baban, less common in northern wind music than in southern string music. The CD takes its title from a version of the raucous shawm suite Da desheng, its short ostinatos typifying the more popular style. Yet all this music is far from simple: we must see through its jovial surface to appreciate the complexity of the combination of fixed and improvisatory modules and the subtle changes of tempo.

Recorded in the provincial studio in 1992, the sound quality is none too clear. Though the booklet is less superficial than with some Chinese CDs, it is undistinguished in Chinese, and even less instructive in the English version. But the music itself makes an important addition to our knowledge of Chinese instrumental music. Next, may I suggest, it is high time for a CD of shawm bands from north Shaanxi to be released!

Stephen Jones

REFERENCES


Candy Lo - Miao. 1 CD, total time 38'50" + extra VCD with 4 songs, 1998, No. 493131.2, Sony Music Entertainment (Hong Kong).

Anita Mui - Larger than Life. 1 CD, total playing time 39'50", 1999, No. CD-04-1280, Capital Artists Limited (Hong Kong).

The popularity of Cantopop, pop music with Cantonese lyrics produced mainly in Hong Kong, certainly extends the geographical boundaries of the Cantonese dialect. Cantopop is an important part of East Asian pop culture. Its stars, such as Faye Wang and Jacky Cheung are glamorous media personalities who capture the imagination of Chinese people everywhere. Apart from being active as singers, Cantopop stars frequently appear in TV shows and act in movies. Faye Wang, for example, had a leading role in Wong Karwei's Chungking Express.
But with Mandarin gaining importance as the official Chinese language during the 1990s, a growing number of pop singers have turned to producing albums in Mandarin. They aim to attract wider audiences on the Mainland and especially in Taiwan. The handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997 has further marginalized Cantonese. Under these threatening circumstances, Cantopop is groping its way. The two albums under review can be considered attempts to regain the favour of many pop fans by presenting more daring musical compositions. In the packaging of the albums, but also in the musical compositions and the lyrics, Cantopop is constantly competing with its foremost antagonist, pop music from Taiwan ("Mandapop"). This creative battle is likely to continue. Both Candy Lo and Anita Mui manage to reinforce the importance of Cantopop in the Asian music world.

The diva of Cantopop, Anita Mui, might not be pleased to see her name coupled in a review with that of one of her possible successors, Candy Lo. For more than one reason, Candy’s album is a remarkable release. Like Faye Wang, the singer was closely involved in the production of the album, and wrote most of the compositions. It is a concept album revolving around the idea of ‘cats’. The lyric writers were asked to touch upon issues related to a cat’s life, but without mentioning the word cat. The title of the album, _Miao_, is a reference to this concept. For the EP which preceded this album, Candy Lo was voted Best Newcomer of 1998 by Commercial Radio. _Miao_ leads the listener into a mysterious soundscape. Candy Lo’s high-pitched voice resonates both loneliness and a strong will to shape her own life. Yet this is not girl power as we know it from the Spice Girls, so much as a complex exploration of both the possibilities and impossibilities of life in a metropolis.

We hear a wandering soul struggling with the rapid changes which are taking place in Hong Kong. The consistency of the album is remarkable, with each track balancing out the other. The music resembles that of Faye Wang, but it has its own characteristics. It is more straightforward than Faye Wang’s songs, more ‘simple’ perhaps, while the lyrics are very diverse. However, the well-produced album somehow seems old fashioned to me, especially in the arrangements. More daring compositions with a stronger trip hop sound might have made the album more special. Yet I realize that such a statement reveals a Western bias. Though not quite as sharp, Candy Lo’s voice reminds me
of the lead vocal of Portishead. But perhaps I’m automatically searching for a similar sound, and this begs the question of whether one should compare Cantopop with its Western counterpart in the first place. To avoid positioning of Western pop music as the epicentre of global music culture, it might be more meaningful to base one’s judgments on comparisons between related genres within a particular region.

Good pop songs reveal different things over time. The songs’ possible interpretations multiply because of the manifold layers of the compositions and lyrics. Candy Lo succeeds very well in producing such songs. Repeated listening evokes new emotions and new ideas. Anita Mui is equally powerful at times, but she lacks the consistent quality which characterizes Candy Lo.

Anita Mui was tremendously popular in the early 1990s. Her song *Bad Girl* sparked off heated debates in Hong Kong and was forbidden on the Mainland. Journalists frequently compared Anita to Madonna. Like her US counterpart, Anita Mui is constantly involved in a postmodern play with identities. She plays with female sexuality and challenges her audiences by constantly changing faces. She used to work with Anthony Lun, until she felt that he could no longer add new things to her music. Their last joint production, *Variations*, consisted of cover versions of Cantopop classics. It was not very well received by the press and was considered rather outdated. The new album, *Larger than life*, marking her break with Anthony Lun, was born out of a desire to change her style. Though Anthony produced one song, there were as many as eight producers involved in the present album. On its cover Anita Mui appears as a female dandy, as if she had just returned from the Shanghai of the 1920s. She is the very embodiment of urban decadence and knows how to play the game. She clearly shows that she wants to be seen as a show-business insider. But this time, she seems less capable of exposing her play with identities than in previous albums. Some songs successfully reflect the image on the jacket. For example, the second track employs a combined dance-pop sound developed by Anthony Wong, who produced two songs on the album. The songs conveys the atmosphere of a decadent, dandyish nightclub and resembles the sound of the Pet Shop Boys. (But here I'm getting caught in the trap of a Western musical bias once again...) In this song the minimalist sounds of the synthesizer combine very well with Anita’s sultry voice. Some tracks, like the first one, stick in one’s mind, but in its entirety the album is far from balanced. Though it may be due to the *potpourri* of different-sounding producers, it seems Anita Mui wants to please all possible kinds of audience – which doesn’t reflect a play with identities so much as an inability to make up her mind. In the third track, Anita successfully uses trip hop arrangements mixed with a melodic score. There are the upbeat songs in which she appropriates a rock sound. These, in my opinion, are less convincing. And there are the somewhat traditional Cantopop arrangements in which, I feel, she completely fails to articulate her own style. Ultimately, the listener is left with a confusing array of sounds. Some of the songs evoke an imaginary cosmopolitan world where the listener is drawn into the dandy-like nightlife of Hong Kong or some other big city. But a number of songs fail to bring alive such powerful images.

Both albums attest to the musical and lyrical complexity of Cantopop. The qualities of the genre are often downplayed by journalists and academics alike. They tend to describe Cantopop songs as overproduced commercialized love songs suffering from a tremendous lack of creativity. This is surely a blunt simplification, valid only for people unwilling to
search for hidden qualities in the music. They should listen more carefully to both these albums. But then, it also took Madonna quite a few years before people began to take her seriously.

For an analysis of Anita Mui, see: Larry Witzleben - 'Cantopop and Mandapop in Pre-Postcolonial Hong Kong: Identity Negotiations in the Performances of Anita Mui Yim-Fong.' In: Popular Music 18, no. 2 (1999).

Jeroen de Kloet


Zang Tianshuo is a prominent figure in Beijing's first generation of rock musicians. He played in several bands (e.g. Cui Jian, '1989') and composed a number of film songs before he finally tried to publish a compilation of his own songs, Wo zhi shi nian ('My Ten Years'). The album was first released in Beijing in 1995. Zang was also offered a contract by Colorway Records. Hong Kong, who changed the title of the CD to that of one of the songs contained on it, Pengyou. This is one of Zang's well-known items, which already gained popularity in China in 1994. The ten songs presented in the album were composed at different stages in Zang's career, and reflect a number of different styles and combinations of musical genres derived from the realm of Western pop and rock music. Xin de qidao ('Prayer of my Heart'), originally from 1987, is a love song of the kind that was current in the mid-1980s, a mixture of Gangtat-Pop and a Western rock ballad. It is followed by the more recent, rather funky and heavy Di ba jie ba ('Unintelligible'). Changes in style and rhythm are typical for the entire album. Zang also combines elements of soul with rock and offers one of China's earliest rap songs: Shuo shuo (Talk Talk). The broad spectrum of stylistical variation is not only due to the long time-span covered by the songs, but is also a consequence of Zang's own attitude towards musical composition. In an interview he stated: 'I think that music has no limitations. Therefore I like to experiment with different kinds of music. And this alone allows me to feel what type of music more or less suits me' (Yinxian Shijie, no.3, 1995). In his lyrics, Zang narrates fantastic and witty stories, and he deals with emotions, dreams, friendships and love. Meili de guniang shan ('The Mountain of Beautiful Girls') is a song, situated in a remote past, about 300 heroes who hear of a wonderful mountain of beautiful women in the south and set out on an endless journey to find it. Zhongyang fahao ('Central Symbol') describes a person surrounded by four black walls. Some beautiful paintings adorn the walls, but the person in the song is only irritated by them. He cannot escape the feeling of being lost and lonely, and repeatedly sings: 'Don't ask me what life is all about.' Other songs are concerned with personal relationships and with women. One often reoccurring theme is the fear of being
manipulated or rejected, e.g., in Wo jiu shì zhegē muyōng (‘I am just this Appearance’) and Mohe (‘Torturing’), where Zang refers to himself when he sings: ‘Don’t ask me – Zang Tianshuo, what kind of thing are you?’ Most of the songs start with the syllable Wo (‘I’), and the listener is likely to identify the narrator in the lyrics with Zang, but the texts can be interpreted in various ways and should not be taken over-seriously. Zang demonstrates a typical Beijingese sense of humour. He plays with words and often seems to poke fun at himself—a light-heartedness reinforced by the voices (of ghosts?) which are occasionally heard shouting, laughing or screaming in the background. The album is partly a musical penchant of Wang Shuo’s ‘hooligan’ novels, but Zang is a sincere artist and his banter develops on firm musical foundations. Listeners are expected to come to terms with the overall sound of the music before trying to grasp the more personal aspects of Zang’s compositions, notably the particular ‘Beijingese’ feeling which Zang, as a famen dizi (‘Follower of Buddha’), expresses via his music.


The three Anthology series produced for Unesco by the French musicologist Alain Daniélou, and published between 1968 and 1987 on the German label Bärenreiter, have finally been issued on CD. The series originally comprised a total of fifty long-play records divided in three main sections: North Indian classical music, the Orient, and Africa. At that time they offered beginning ethnomusicologists like Hugo Zemp an opportunity to make and publish recordings. The records combined good-quality field recordings with substantial information about the music included, which is why they became very popular.

Afficionados of these three magnificent series can feel relieved. For years it was only possible to get hold of an occasional dusty record via long and complex negotiations with remote acquaintances. In the long run the idea is to make all the titles in this series available again, unabridged, occasionally even supplemented with extra items which found their way to the original master tapes, but never made it to the records. The producers have dropped the original division in three parts. The series is now simply called Anthology of World Music. By way of an homage to Alain Daniélou the series has started with the publication of a 4-CD set containing the complete recordings of North Indian Classical Music. This album may well be described as a personal heritage. In the early 1960s, when Unesco first made plans to start new series of records of traditional music and was looking for an editor, Daniélou seemed a logical choice. At that time he had already lived a rather eventful life. Daniélou was born in 1902 in a French upper-class family. His mother was a
passionate catholic, his father an anti-religious left-wing politician, his older brother a cardinal. Showing an interest in art, he left his parental home at an early age to immerse himself in the lively art scene of Paris. Later he made use of his family connections to travel to Algiers for a study of Arab music. He also visited Afghanistan, India, Japan, China and Indonesia. In the 1940s he became resident in India, where he studied Sanskrit, Indian philosophy and music, amongst other things. In this period he wrote the book Introduction to the Study of Musical Scales and also laid the foundations for The Ragas of Northern Indian Music, which is still viewed as a standard work today. After the war he bought one of the first available tape-recorders in America, with which he recorded the most important North-Indian classical musicians of his time. In India he earned such a high reputation as a musicologist that he was nominated President of Calcutta’s All India Music Conference in 1950, a prestigious festival where the most famous Indian musicians performed for an audience of several thousands. His fame as an authority in the field of Hinduism increased, too. He had converted to Hinduism and in later years he would write several books about this religion.

North Indian Classical Music – for the Bärenreiter pundits: the old BM 2051-4 – attests to Daniélou’s vast knowledge in the field of North Indian music and demonstrates his affinities with the musical background and with musical quality. In addition to four CDs the CD-box contains a 40-page booklet in which Daniélou provides a survey of the various instruments, styles, rhythms and techniques used in Indian classical music. He also provides comments on the structure of the pieces. In his selection of the musicians he has clearly paid major attention to quality, ignoring whether the musicians’ names were famous in the West or not. Apart from Hariprasad Chaurasia, the Dagar brothers and Lakshmi Shankar, the names in this album will only have a familiar ring for very few people in the West. Yet all of them were first-rate musicians, well-known in India (at least at that time, for some of them died in the meantime). The female singers Siddheshwari Devi and Dipali Nag, the male singer Yunus Hussain Khan, sarangi-player Sabri Khan, pakhávaj master Gopal Das, vina masters Asad Ali Khan and Gopal Krishna – these are just a few of the names featuring in the album. Fortunately, because it enables us to get acquainted with all these prominent of musical life in India in the early 1960s!

Claudine Batthacharya

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In Brief


This is a fine album of Chinese instrumental solo music played by prominent classical musicians of the 1950s to 80s. Previously published as a gramophone record under auspices of Unesco, it features pipa-players Chen Zeming and Li Tingsong, zheng player Ding boling, and qin players Guan Pinghu, Wu Wenguang and Fu (or Pu) Xuezhai. The latter is assisted on xiao by Zha Yiping in a performance of Meihua san nong. The item played by Wu Wenguang (an early performance on his part of Guangling san) is a bonus, previously unreleased. The recordings were obtained from China with no information covering recording equipment or dates and locations of recordings. Meanwhile most of these recordings have also been re-issued on Chinese CDs, but these are not generally available to the Western public. The recording quality is good. The accompanying notes, written by Wang Qun, reflect the state of research into Chinese music at the time when the album first appeared, and offer a rosily and totally unreliable picture of the CCP's concerns with China's ancient musical heritage.

Other albums in the 'Anthology of World Music' series include two CDs with music of Laos and Vietnam, both recommendable.

Traditional Instrumental Pieces by Wei Chung-loh (Wei Zhongle). Recorded 1930s-60s. 2 CDs, TT 148'39": ROI, Hong Kong 1996. RB 961010-2C.

This is one of a series of magnificent double-CDs of historical recordings of Chinese music issued by ROI in recent years.
quite worthwhile. In brief, a great album, indispensable for anyone interested in the development of 20th century performing styles in Chinese instrumental music.


This album offers a fine general introduction to urban and rural secular music in Tibet. Admittedly, it is difficult to assess the extent of ‘secularism’ in this music, since the lyrics of the vocal pieces are missing. But this is made up for by the brief but essential programme notes, which take account of the individual performers, the musical instruments used and the social setting and thematic content of the 26 items recorded. Robert Zollitsch has visited Tibet many times. He displays a genuine affinity with the music and true respect for the performers. The programme includes impressive examples of strongly ornamented ‘mountain songs’ as well as some fine instrumental contributions. Some important genres missing are Lhamo and work songs. Nearly all the recordings were made in Lhasa during the winter of 1997-98. Winter is the time of pilgrimage when people from all over Tibet come to pray at the Jokhang temple. The tracks of the CD have been arranged in a way that guarantees musical variety, but listeners who prefer to listen to the music arranged by region are provided with suggestions for an alternative track order. Good recording quality. Warmly recommended.


Some years ago, when the Tibet specialist Mervyn Goldstein visited Qinghai and saw Kevin Stuart’s videos of local Bonpo rituals, he was amazed at the unfamiliar nature of some of the ceremonies carried out in the framework of this elusive religion, one of Tibet’s remaining mysteries. Bon is a generic name for the pre-Buddhist beliefs which survive among a minority of Tibetans, and which involve exorcist practices and divination. Bon has some of the basic tenets of Buddhism but the Bonpos do not recognize the authority of the Buddha Sakyamuni, the historical ‘founder’ of Buddhism. In the absence of available recorded materials from Tibetan areas inside the PRC, Ricardo Canzio’s recordings from the early
1980s of Bonpo ritual music sung and played at the Menri monastery in the Western Himalayas (India) remain primary documents. They were initially published as a gramophone record, and reissued on CD in 1993, with twenty minutes of extra music. The main musical ingredients (low-voiced chanting, slow drum beats and fluttering cymbals) are familiar enough, but the melodies are often difficult to follow. The CD combines three samples of vocal music with a piece for shawms and percussion.


Wen Deqing (b. 1958) studied composition in Fujian and at the Chinese Music Conservatory in Beijing, with Shi Wanchun and Luo Zhongrong, before moving to the West in 1991. He continued his studies at conservatories in Geneva and in Lyon (with Gilbert Amy). The present CD features one work for an ensemble of winds, strings, piano and percussion (Qi, 1994) plus four chamber pieces. Wen’s String Quartet of 1995 (played eloquently by the Quatuor du Temps) partly bears the stamp of his teacher Luo Zhongrong (in the percussive second movement). Wu (Awakening), for soprano, alhorn and double bass is a light-hearted appraisal of Zen Buddhism, with a touch of (Gregorian) humour. The music, written for Wen’s friend Pascal Schaefer, who plays the alhorn, combines spoken dialogue with bouts of Swiss yodelling and a veritable ronz des vaches (a cowherd’s song). Complante (1994) is a setting of a poem by Wang Lihua for solo voice (in Beijing opera style) plus percussion. The composer features as the soloist. Wen’s colourful and jerky Ji I & Ji II (1992-93) for piano solo takes inspiration from Schoenberg as well as from qin music. The piano is played in the normal way as well as on the inside, in direct contact with the strings.


Zhu Jian’er (b. 1922) is exceptional among Chinese composers of his generation for his remarkable capacity to adapt himself to the changing spirit of times. His studies in Moscow (1955–1960) turned him into a brazen romantic. When his music was criticized in China for its ‘revisionist’ spirit, he stopped composing for a while. In the late 1960s he was swept along by the revolutionary ardour of the Maoists and began to compose choral cantatas on texts of Mao Zedong. By the end of the Cultural Revolution he lost faith in his ‘political music’ and in himself, but in the 1980s he embarked upon an astonishing second career as an orchestral writer. His First Symphony (1986) was musically indebted to Britten and Shostakovich and took him nine years to write. In subsequent explorations in this
genre he paid tribute to many Western models, from Bartók to Ligeti and beyond. The Marco Polo album features, amongst other things, a fine performance of his moving Fourth Symphony (1990) for *dizi* (bamboo flute) solo and strings, a piece which shows that musical innovation in China is not the exclusive domain of younger composers. By the end of 1998, Zu Jian'er had already finished nine symphonies, of which three (nos. 6–8) were completed within the space of one year, during a stay in the USA.


'In the tradition of Alan Lomax and Bartók, Josef Bombback has masterfully blended voices of the past with ones that resound clearly and boldly today.' This is what Yo-Yo Ma says on the box containing the 3 CDs and 56-page accompanying book of this album. It all sounds more exciting than it is, for none of the recordings included in the album were made by Bombback, and only part of them are field recordings. This set is a broad compilation of recordings previously published on other labels (including Rounder, Nimbus, Pan, Schott Wergo etc.). It offers brief glimpses of a number of genres of Chinese music, from conservatory-style ensemble music to ceremonial pieces by (state-sponsored) percussion groups, from Cantonese tunes to Naxi ceremonial pieces, from folk songs to *qin*, from Tibet to Mongolia. The selections are interesting but predictably uneven. German-based Chinese composer Chen Xiaoyong is not the ideal person to represent the Chinese *qin* tradition, and Peking opera cannot be suitably represented by one piece of percussion music (which is practically all we get of Chinese opera in the entire CD-set.) The compilers have never heard of Chinese pop music or Chinese avant-garde, and the presence of urban and professional musicians in the album grossly outweighs that of the amateurs and the folk performers. The accompanying notes are written by aficionados of Chinese culture with a keen eye for the exotic and the colourful. Same goes for the selection of pictures. This is an album for people with little time to spend on tracing good recordings of Chinese music. They get a huge but unbalanced selection of music pieces, some fine, some awful, always well-recorded, with accompanying documentation of limited value. The packaging is nice, and the music won’t do anyone harm. Ellipsis has previously produced similar compilation albums, including a 3-CD set with percussion music from all over the world.


Chen Xiaoyong (b.1955) studied composition with Su Xia in Beijing and with György Ligeti in Hamburg. Chen has been
György Ligeti in Hamburg. Chen has been living as an independent composer in Hamburg since 1989. Chen Xiaoyong’s music, like that of his compatriot Tan Dun, can be described as a continuous play of light and darkness, of delicate timbral shades and tiny variations in pitch. Most of his works are introvert, austere, tightly structured and fairly complex in nature, betraying a deep involvement in European music, from Ligeti to Scelsi and beyond. Yet there are constant references in Chen’s works to Chinese traditional music and culture. The elegant Duet for violin and zheng (1989) and the intriguing and ‘folky’ Circuit, for zheng solo (1996) stand out among a long series of chamber works in which Chen explores new instrumental sonorities and unusual playing techniques. Compositions on a more ambitious scale include Warp for orchestra (1994), one of his finest achievements, which effectively employs Tibetan bowls and Chinese percussion. All these works by Chen now feature on a CD produced by the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie in Bremen. Impeccably recorded, well-played, with fine solo contributions from Chen Pi-Hsien (piano) and Xu Fengxia (zheng). Arguably one of the most interesting CDs of new Chinese music published in recent times.


For anyone who missed the impressive 19-hour marathon production of Peony Pavilion directed by Chen Shizheng at Lincoln Center in New York, here is a double CD with highlights from the same opera (though not the same production), respectfully performed by the Lan Ting Chinese Opera from Taiwan, and co-featuring ‘first lady of Kun opera’ from the mainland Hua Wenyi as Du Liniang, and her colleague Kao Huilan as the young scholar. Like most other performances of Peony Pavilion, this is an imaginative re-interpretation, not a scholarly reconstruction of historical practice, but the overall result appears to retain the spirit and passion of Tang Xianzu’s 16th century masterpiece. In view of the scarcity of Kunqu recordings commercially available in the West, this is a most welcome produc-

Frank Kouwenhoven
The editors of the CHIME Journal encourage readers to submit news about their own research projects and fieldwork trips, announcements of meetings, notices of recent publications, abstracts of papers, theses and dissertations, and news about performance activities, commercial recordings and new compositions in the field of Chinese music. For the announcements below, we gratefully acknowledge the assistance of: CX (Chen Xiaoyong), DW (Deng Wei), GWJ (Guo Wenjia), ID (Isabelle Duchesne), JJ (Julian Joseph), QX (Qu Xiaosong), ST (Sue Tchoy) and WM (Wu Man).

People and Projects

Rachel Harris accepted a post with the BBC Radio. At SOAS in London she finished her Ph.D. on the Sibe-Manchu minority people in the Yili Valley in Xinjiang in 1998. In May/June 1999 she spent a month of fieldwork in Beijing and Xinjiang interviewing musicians for the Asian Music Circuit.

Deng Wei completed his PhD study on pipa music at the University of Queensland in 1996. It is called Historical and Stylistic Development in the [repertoire of the] Chinese Four-Stringed Lute Pipa from 1800 to 1995, with Particular Reference to "Spring River". Concentrating on composing, Deng Wei stopped his work for the Queensland Conservatorium of Music and Queensland Art Council. Together with his wife he established his own music school in Brisbane, where he teaches some 80 students.

Composer He Luting dies at 95
Composer He Luting (He Anqing) died in Shanghai on the 27th of April 1999. He was born in Shaoyangdong, Hunan, 20 Jul 1903, taught composition in Shanghai, and worked as the Director of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music from 1949 to 1984, with an interruption during the Cultural Revolution. In China he earned a reputation as a fervent proponent of Western classical music and as a writer of numerous patriotic film scores and politically inspired songs and choral works. His output also includes some operas and orchestral works. He studied composition with Huang Zi in Shanghai from 1931 onwards. His elegant piano piece for piano Mucang duandi (The Cowherd’s Flute, 1934), written in 'Chinese style', earned him national fame. During the Anti-Japanese and civil wars in the 1940s he was active as a conductor and composer in the Communist mass song movement. Much of his music consists of Western romantic harmonizations of Chinese folk (or folk inspired) melodies. A prominent Communist Party member, he was influential in PRC musical life as an essayist who propagated European music as one road to the 'modernization' of Chinese music. His views brought him into serious conflict with anti-Western populists. There were violent attacks on him and his family during the Cultural Revolution. (FK)

Institutions and Media

Web sites on Chinese music
For a list of web sites on Internet dealing with Chinese music, see Chinese 10/11, p.217-218. Here are some supplementary sites:


http://members.aol.com/Chinmusic/clcy.htm (Cheng Yu, primarily on guqin, pipa and Xi an Guqin).

http://members.aol.com/CCEvans42/index.htm (Christopher Evans: Chinese traditional music, guqin, list of people interested in guqin, guqin discography).


http://members.aol.com/JMGJoseph (Julian Joseph (Chippenden, UK) concerning beguqin).

http://members.wbs.net/homepages/g/u/q/guqin.htm (Wang Fei, a guqin player and teacher from Beijing, now based in California).

http://www.cs.pdx.edu/~jrb/chin/index.html (Jim Binkley: translation of sections of the Yuguang Qiuxu which describe the construction of a guqin).

http://www.fn.or.jp/~youran (On guqin music).
Current bibliography
The bibliography below is arranged according to subject matter. The subject categories are: (1) History and Theory; (2) Religion and ritual; (3) Oral narrative genres and folk song; (4) Theatre and Dance; (5) Instruments and instrumental music; (6) Ethnic Traditions; (7) New music. Avant-garde; (8) Popular Music; (9) Modern culture & politics; (10) Cinema; (11) Music education; (12) Bibliography and reference; (13) Miscellaneous and conference reports; (14) Tibet; (15) Other parts of Asia & Pacific

1. History and Theory

2. Religion and ritual


3. Oral narrative genres and folk song


4. Theatre and Dance


CHANG, Hei-Yuan Belinda - 'A Theatre of Taiwanese: Politics, Ideologies, and Gezai.' TDR 41/2, pp. 111-120.


CHUNG, Oscar - 'Operatic Orgins,' Brief journalistic article on Taiwanese opera in special (opera) issue Free China Review 48/9, Taiwan, 1998: 30-39.


GUY, Nancy – ‘Writing about Chinese Opera (Xiqu) in English: One Hundred Flowers Bloom. One Hundred Terms Contend.’ ACMR Reports Vol. 11, Fall 1998, pp. 89-94.


HWANG, Jim – ‘Lights, Camera, Action... Sing!’ Brief journalistic article on Taiwanese opera in special (opera) issue Free China Review, vol.48 no.9, Taiwan, 1998, pp. 24-29.


5. Instruments and instrumental music

BELL, Yung – ‘Music of Qin: From the Scholar’s Study to the Concert Stage.’ ACMR Reports Vol. 11, Fall 1998, pp. 1-14.


GOORMAGHTIGH, Georges – ‘Propos de quatre auteurs chinois sur le qin.’ Cahiers de Musiques Tra-


LAU, Frederick – 'Little Great Tradition: Thoughts on Recent Developments in Jiangnan Sizhu. ' ACMR Reports Vol. 11, Fall 1998, pp. 45-66.


6. Ethnic Traditions (for Tibet see 14)


7. New music / Avant-garde

CHAN, Jing-yan – Composition in Western Idioms on the Chinese Mainland (1920s-present). D.M.A. project. U. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1996.

CHANG, Yu-shu – An Analysis of an Original Composition as an Example of Chinese and Western Synthesis. PhD. diss., Yale University, 1996.


LIU, Ching-Chih and Wu Gungbo, eds. – History of New Music in China: The Development of Chinese Music. Univ. of Hong Kong, Center of Asian Studies, Hong Kong, 1994.


8. Pop & Popular Music


9. Modern culture & politics


WITZLEBEN, Larry – ‘Enigma and Li Fangkuo.’ SEM Newsletter 33V1, 1999, pp. 8-10.


10. Cinema / film / video


11. Music education


CHUANG, Wuei-Chun Jane – An Investigation of the Use of Music Aptitude Profile with Taiwanese Students in Grades Four to Twelve, PhD. diss., Dept. of Music, Michigan State Univ., 1996.


12. Bibliography and reference


13. Miscellaneous and conference reports


GUY, Nancy – ‘Writing about Chinese Opera (Xiqu) in English: One Hundred Flowers Bloom, One Hundred Terms Contend.’ ACMR Reports Vol. 11, Fall 1998, pp. 89-94.


14. Tibet and Himalayas


SKAL Bzang Nor Bu and Kevin Stuart – 'The Rdo Shis Tibetan Wedding Ceremonies.' Anthropos 91, 1996, 4-6, pp. 441-453.


Announcements


15. Other parts of Asia and Pacific (selection)

BARWICK, Linda et al - The Essence of Singing and the Substance of Song: Recent Responses to the Aboriginal Performing Arts and Other Essays in Honour of Catherine Ellis. Univ. of Sydney, 1995, 269 pp.


FERRANTI, Hugh de - 'License to Laugh: Humour in the Practice of 'biwa' Recitation in Rural Hyusha.' Musicology Australia 19, 1996, pp. 3-15.


HOWARD, Keith - 'Different Spheres: Perceptions of Traditional Music and Western Music in Korea.' The World of Music, Bamberg, 1997, 2, pp. 61-68.


LANCASHIRE, Terence - 'Music for the Gods; Musical Transmission and Change in Iwami Kagura.' Asian Music 29 (1), 1997, pp. 87-123.

LEE, Tong Soon - 'Technology and the Production of Islamic Space: The Call to Prayer to Singapore.' Ethnomusicology Vol.43 no.1, 1999, pp. 86-100.

POON, Chia-Soo - 'Chinese Theatre Dance in Malacca: Response to the Changing Social Environment.' Dance Studies 18, 1994, pp. 113-128.


Meetings

ICTM Study Group on Music Archaeology, Michaelstein, 20–26 Sept. 1999
The ICTM Study Group on Music Archaeology will hold a symposium on 'Tunings and Intonations - Modal and Tonal Systems in Music Archaeology' in Michaelstein, Germany from 20 to 26 September 1999. For information, contact Professor Dr. Ellen Hickmann, Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hannover, Emrichplatz 1, D-30175 Hannover, tel: +49-511-3100.601 or 604, fax +49-511-3100.600.

Yang Yinliu Memorial Conference, Beijing, November 1999
The Beijing Music Research Institute organises an international conference on 'Chinese musicology in the 20th century', in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Chinese music scholar Yang Yinliu (1899-1984). The meeting, co-organized by the Chinese Art Academy, the Chinese Musicians' Associa-
tion, the Central Conservatory, the Chinese Conservatory and the Shanghai Conservatory, will be held in Beijing in November, 1999 (presumably around 10 November). Yang Yinliu's date of birth. Themes for the meeting will be (1) the music theories and practical research of Yang Yinliu, and (2) 20th century Chinese musicology in retrospective and a view of the next century. For more information, contact: Zhang Chunxia, Beijing Music Research Institute, No. 1 West Bldg., Dongzhimenwai xinyuanli, 100027 Beijing, P.R. China. Tel. +86-1-64674194; fax: 64674416.

SEM, Texas, 18-21 November 1999
SEM, the Society for Ethnomusicology, will hold its 44th annual meeting from 18 to 21 November, 1999, at the University of Texas, Austin, Texas. There are five themes: (1) Theories of Music and Emotion; (2) Music, Race, and Culture; (3) Historical Ethnomusicology; (4) research Cultures, and (5) The Effects of Capitalism on indigenous Music Making: Is Grey-Out No Longer an Issue? Abstracts and session proposals must be received by 10 March, 1999. For information about local arrangements, contact: Stephen Slawek, School of Music, University of Texas at Austin, Austin Texas, 78712, USA. Tel: +1-512-471.0671. Email: slawek@mail.utexas.edu. Program Committee contact: Tom Turino, School of Music, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1114 W. Nevada St., Urbana Illinois. Tel: +1-217-244.2681 Fax: +1-217-244.4585 E-mail: t.turino@uiuc.edu

An International Buddhist Music Conference will be held in Taipei 25-26 January 2000. The conference will be held at Taipei Central Library, and concerts will take place on 26 and 27 January in the Dr Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall. Main theme: 2000 years of Buddhist Music in the East. Subsidiary themes: 1. The origin of Buddhist music – its function and its correlation with religious practice; 2. The dissemination of Buddhist music – its change over time, space and among peoples; 3. The essence of Buddhist music – its aesthetics and morphology; 4. The development of Buddhist music – its acculturation to the modern society. Organizers: Fouganshan Cultural and Educational Foundation, Nan Hua Management College, Taipei City Orchestra. Papers are invited from international scholars and researchers on Chinese, Japanese and Korean Buddhist music, monastic and non-monastic members with special interest in Buddhist music. The Languages will be English, Chinese and Japanese. Length of paper should be no less than 4000 words. Abstract deadline: 30 September 1999, paper deadline: 20 November (for pre-publication). For further details and application form, please contact Ven. Yung Ben, Fouganshan Cultural and Education Foundation, Ta Shu Hsiang, Hsing Tian Road 153, Kaohsiung 84010, Taiwan R.O.C. Tel: +886-7.656.1921-8, ext. 1119; fax: +886-7.656.1373; e-mail: cfh@mail.fksnet.org.tw

2nd Conference of Melody Studies, Hong Kong, 8-14 June, 2000
From 8 to 14 June, 2000, the Music Department of the University of Hong Kong hosts the Second National (China) Conference of Melody Studies. The National Society of Melody Studies (China), who features as a co-sponsor, was established in July 1998, during a conference held in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia. The Society's aim is to promote the investigation and teaching of melody (in China and elsewhere).

The forthcoming meeting will take place at the University of Hong Kong, and will be held in Chinese. (Papers may be presented in a non-Chinese language by special request.) The themes of the June 2000 meeting are: 1) The nature and structure of melody and its cultural connotations and significance; 2) The geography of music through melody studies; 3) The potential of melodic development through compositional processes and performance practice; 4) Theories on melody. Deadline for the acceptance of paper proposals: 1 October 1999. Registration Fee: HK$1000 (includes opening and closing receptions, and concerts; costs for meals (lunches and dinners for six days); HK$1200. Costs for lodging (HKU guest house); HK$506 per night for a single room and HK$605 for a double one. For participants whose papers are accepted for presentation, these costs are waived or covered by the Conference.) Presentations are limited to 15 minutes. For enquiries on submission of abstracts, contact Bell Yung, e-mail: belyung@hkuch.hku.hk, tel.: (852) 2859-2891, fax: (852) 2858-4933. For other enquiries, contact Rose Ho, e-mail: rskho@hkusua.hku.hk, tel. (852) 2859-7043, fax: (852) 2858-4933. Mailing address: Melody Conference 2000, Music Department, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam, Hong Kong.

9th Seminar Tibetan Studies, Leiden 24-30 June, 2000
In the last week of June 2000 up to 350 members and invitees of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) are expected to gather at Leiden University for their 9th IATS seminar, hosted by the International Institute for Asian Studies. IATS started life in Zürich, Summer 1977, where a group of young Tibetan scholars convened for a seminar on the initiative of Per Kvaerne and Martin Braune. This gathering led to further international meetings. Over the last twenty years, the seminars have developed into the world's largest convention for Tibetan scholars. At Oxford, 1979, the
idea for an international association promoting the study of Tibet was conceived. The Zürich initiative was retrospectively recognized as the first IATS seminar. The seminars now convene every three or four years. In 1989 at Naritasan, Japan, the IATS adopted formal statutes and instituted a periodically elected board of advisors and managing officers. IATS provides a platform for study and discussion covering the full range of Tibetan cultural phenomena. Though, generally speaking, proficiency in (classical or modern) Tibetan may be assumed for most participants, the reflection and dialogue with regard to Tibetan culture is endeavoured from all relevant angles and disciplines of academia, not only via written or spoken Tibetan. The meetings have an informal character. The seminars do not have overall themes, but specialised workshops and round-table panels, at times with separate proceedings, are encouraged. Participants are generally required to contribute a paper and discuss the latest developments in their own work or project(s).

Invitations to the seminars are extended on the basis of a growing invitation-list of members of the IATS (now amounting to about one thousand members), but new people can always solicit invitation (by submitting abstracts). New participants are also requested to submit evidence for their academic qualifications (CV, list of tibetological publications etc.). The first circular and pre-registration-forms for the ninth seminar of the IATS were sent out at the end of January this year, the deadline for pre-registration was the first of May 1999. For further information, contact Henk Blezer, Convener Ninth Seminar of the IATS, International Inst. for Asian Studies, e-mail: iats@rullet.LeidenUniv.nl

An International Jewish Music Conference will be held at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, from 25 to 29 June, 2000. Conference Director is Alexander Knapp. The main theme is ‘Music in Jewish Communities: Dispersal, Displacement and Identity.’ Keynote speakers are Prof. Israel Adler, Chairman of the Jewish Music Research Centre, Hebrew Univ. of Jerusalem, and Prof. Alexander Ringer, Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For further information, contact Alexander Knapp, Joe Loss Lecturer in Jewish Music, Music Department, SOAS, Univ. of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG, England UK. Tel: +44 171 691 3410. Fax: +44 171 637 6182. E-mail: zak42@soas.ac.uk

The 24th World Conference of the International Society of Music Education (ISME) will be held from 17 to 22 July, 2000, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. It is titled ‘Music of the Spheres’. For information, contact Dr. Amanda Montgomery, Programme Chair, ISME 2000, Department of Elementary Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, T6G 2G5 Canada. Tel: +1-403-492.4273 ext. 266. Fax: +1-403-492.7622. E-mail: amanda.montgomery@ualberta.ca; website: www.quasar.ualberta.ca/isme2000i.

The theme of the 6th International CHIME Conference is ‘Performing Arts of Asia: Audiences, Patrons and Performers’, to be held at Leiden University, from 23 to 27 August 2000, as a joint conference of CHIME, the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and the Department of Cultural and Social Studies of Leiden University.

After a series of CHIME meetings in which the focus was mainly on China and East Asia, this meeting is also concerned with music and narrative traditions elsewhere in Asia. We look beyond performance as a ‘self-contained act’ towards what performance essentially constitutes: an on-going and dynamic interaction with the environment. In a reversal of what is perhaps the most habitual direction of our viewing, we emphasize the role of the environment: the audiences who attend, the patrons who protect, and the people who organize and support, politically or otherwise, the arts: the theme at the heart of this conference is how they influence performances and performers, and are in turn influenced by them. Whatever singers, storytellers, puppeteers, actors, or musicians in Asia have on offer for their audiences – in terms of entertainment, ritual, or re-enactment of social relationships and dilemmas – for the viability of their art they depend on more than just one-way communication. How do they cope with the many different – often contradictory – voices and expectations that emerge from different groups in society, each with their own norms and values?

This theme will be tackled from a number of angles. Sub-themes include: ‘Art criticism’, ‘Creativity’, ‘Asian diaspora’ and ‘Liveness’ (the importance attached, in an era of mass media, to the ‘live’ aspect of performances, and such phenomena as the simulation of ‘liveness’ on recordings and in broadcasts).

Contact address: P.O Box 11092, 2301 EB Leiden. Deadline for sending abstracts: 1 March 2000. For information, contact: Dr. Wim van Zanten at Leiden University, tel: +31-71-527.3465, fax: +31-71-527.3619, e-mail: zanten@rulfsw.LeidenUniv.nl, or Frank Kouwenhoven at the CHIME Foundation (tel: +31-71-5133.974, fax: +31-71-5123.183, e-mail: chime@wxs.nl).
Composers

‘Strange Sounds’ – festival of new music
From 26 to 30 May 1999, the Biennale of New Music in Hannover (Germany) organized the festival ‘Strange Sounds’ (Der Fremde Klang), a celebration of traditional and contemporary music in China, Japan and Korea. The five-day festival included 17 premiere performances of new works by contemporary Asian composers. The concerts were given by various German ensembles, with the participation of Asian musicians and two French groups, the Ensemble Meilun Fleur de Prou (led by François Picard) and Musique des Lumières, led by Jean-Christophe Frisch (with Jesuit baroque music and Chinese music from 18th century Peking). The concerts featured major works by Toshiro Hosokawa, Keiko Harada, Isang Yun and others. The Hannover Radio Philharmonic played Julian Yu’s Wu Yu and Tan Dun’s Orchestral Theatre II, flutist Eberhard Blum and pianist Steffen Schleiermacher performed recent works by Chen Xiaoyong and American-based Chinese composer Pei-Yi Lee, as well as Tona Scherchen’s ‘in’ for flute solo (1965). A new work by Guo Wenjing, commissioned by the Ensemble Modern, was sadly cancelled; the composer was unable to deliver it in time, due to illness. In addition to the concerts, there were public lectures on East Asian music by Rüdiger Schuhmacher, Heinz-Dieter Reese and Günter Kleines.

New music from Taiwan
A concert of solo and electro-acoustic works by Taiwanese composers Liu Li-Li, Tsao Shin-Wen, Wang Ming, Lan Hui-Ling and Hong Lei-Ying took place during the Vienna Contempary Music Festival Wien Modern, 19 November 1998.

Chen Xiaoyong’s ‘Interlaced Landscapes’ for large orchestra (1999) will receive its first performance 10 October 1999 in Shanghai. The Shanghai/Galbenian Symphony Orchestra will be led by Mahai Tang. (After Shanghai, there will be performances in Macao and in Beijing.) New works by Chen recently performed include “Evaporate” for chamber ensemble (Bremen, Taipei, Beijing, Hong Kong), ‘Floating Threads’ for strings (Bremen, Forbach in France), ‘Invisible Landscapes’ for cheng, piano, percussion and ensemble (The Netherlands), and ‘Static and Rotation’ for guitar solo (Seoul, Dorimund). Chen’s Second String Quartet will premiere in Taipei (May, 2000). Radio Bremen published a CD of Chen’s orchestral music. (CX)

Chen Yi is the first recipient of the $25,000 Eddie Medioni King Award for Musical Composition at The University of Texas at Austin. The new award is the third-largest such prize in the USA, after the University of Louisville’s Graemeley Award and the CalArts/Alpert Award in the Arts. The King Award, to be made every other year, recognizes a body of musical composition contributed to the field, rather than one specific composition written in a specific year. Chen Yi is currently Professor in Composition at the Conservatory of the University of Missouri Kansas City. She will participate in the 1999-2000 Visiting Composers Series at the School of Music, University of Texas.

Guo Wenjing’s Second String Quartet, commissioned by the Kronos Quartet, will receive its first performance in San Francisco in September 1999. In this work Kronos will be joined by a percussionist. Guo is currently working on a Third String Quartet (with dizi) for the Arditti Quartet and dizi player Da Ya. It will be played during the Huddersfield Festival in Britain in November 1999. Other recent works include Echoes of Heaven op.31, for choir (commissioned by the Dutch Chamber Choir and first performed in January 1999) and a version for pipa and ensemble of Guo’s Concertino (1997, originally for cello and ensemble). Various new works by Guo featured in the Edinburgh Festival (August 1999). (GWJ)

Qu Xiaosong has joined the Composition Department of the Shanghai Conservatory. He finished a choral piece ‘The Rain’ commissioned by the Berlin Radio choir (where Qu will be a composer-in-residence from 15 October 1999) its premiere is scheduled for 27 January, 2000, in Berlin. (QX)

Wang Fei is one of six composers in Adriana Hölszky’s composition class at the School of Music and Theatre in Rostock who contributed music to the opera ‘Perceval’. This adaptation from works by Wolfram von Eschenbach and Chrétien de Troyes premiered 17 April 1999 during the Sixth Munich Biennale in Germany. The other composers involved were Jens M. Müller, Holger Klaus, Benjamin Lang, Carsten Henning and Gerhard Veser.

Performers

Wu Man played at the White House
The American-based pipa player Wu Man participated in a concert at the White House in Washington following a State Dinner for the Chinese premier Zhu Rongji, 8 April 1999. She performed for President Clinton and his wife and a selected company of some 200 guests. The other performers were Yo-Yo Ma, cello and Sara Wolfensohn, piano. The programme included cello pieces by Gershwin and Piazzolla, as well as a contemporary Chinese work, especially arranged for the occasion by the American-based composer Bright Sheng, ‘Three Songs’ for cello and pipa. Mr.
Announcements

and Mrs. Clinton showed enthusiasm about the music and complimented Wu Man with her performance, saying they hoped to hear her again soon. (WM)

Penny Pavilion in New York

After a planned Western tour by the Shanghai Kunqu Opera Company with a marathon version of *Penny Pavilion* (Mudanting) was cancelled by the Chinese authorities, the initiators (John Rockwell, former director of the Lincoln Center Festival, New York) and director Chen Shi-zheng revised the original plan and started an independent production which retained the original main (young) actress, Qian Yi and the Music Director and flutist Zhou Ming, but replaced the rest of the original cast. The new cast, who had only four months to rehearse instead of eight, was composed of Kunqu actors and musicians from China, other traditional actors, plus New York-based professional traditional Chinese Kunqu and Peking opera actors and musicians.

The production ran in three marathons of six episodes/performances each, with sometimes two episodes/performances taking place on the same day. They were held as part of the Lincoln Center 1999 Festival at La Guardia Concert Hall in New York from 7 to 25 July 1999. Tickets could be bought individually or as a set, which allowed the audience to catch up with some of the missed performances. Further performances are scheduled for Milan, Paris (Festival d’Automne, co-producer), Festival de Caen (co-producer) and elsewhere.

The lead roles were performed by Qian Yi (as Du Limang, dan) and Wen Yu Hang (Liu Mengmei, sheng). Zhou Ming (flutes) and Tang Jirong (percussions) were the main musicians in this 12-piece orchestra.

After all the advance criticism of this ‘Penny Pavilion’ production (expressed among actors and scholars), the marathon performances at Lincoln Center came as a pleasant surprise, especially. The sets were gorgeous, the musical performances very satisfying and attractive, while the directing was at times extremely inventive and poetic, especially in the sad or love scenes. The male and female leads were rather good for young actors, certainly if one considers the strains of performing such a long and challenging play after a limited period of rehearsals.

Admittedly, America does have better, if older, Kunqu actors, who were defectors a long time ago. But most actors in this production performed between eight and twelve different roles in the production, an unusual challenge for them and a remarkable feat, all the more if one considers the fact that the integral play lasted nineteen hours.

The sets and onstage Chinese pavilion, particularly beautiful, were built by twelve master carpenters who used traditional Chinese techniques. According to the programme notes, the costumes were embroidered by 'more than four hundred elderly women from the villages surrounding Suzhou'.

Under a veneer of 'tradition', the production was actually quite hybrid at times in its directing. Some actors made up in front of the audience on a surelevated platform on the left. Musicians sat mostly on a surelevated platform on the right with some percussionists not on view. Musically, the introduction of the *xiao* as a temporary alternative to the Kunqu flute was convincing, and so was the richer orchestral texture. The introduction of *pingtan* to replace some theatre scenes, like the 'Self-Portrait Scene' (no.14), usually a highlight for opera connoisseurs, was a less fortunate choice. Equally unconvincing were the added folk village scenes (dances on stilts and Hanum *hangu-xi*-like performances), and the insertion of puppets manipulated by inexperienced actors. Aesthetically beautiful additions, such as a number of rituals, and Du Liniang’s funeral, did not meet with universal approval. The spoken dialect of the actor Lin Sen (Sister Stone) was noteworthy.

Several symposiums were held in conjunction with the Festival, and at least four other productions of *Penny Pavilion* took place in the USA in the course of 1999. Peter Sellars, who went to China with Chen Shi-zheng and John Rockwell, directed a hybrid classical and contemporary performance in California (as well as in Vienna, London and Paris), with Tan Dun and Min Xiaofen (*tipa*) among the musicians, and with US-based Kunqu actors. A 6-to-8-scene ‘traditional’ performance was offered by the New York Kunqu Society (with Hua Wanshi as Du Liniang, Shi Jiexun as the maid Chius Xiang, and Wang Taiqiu as Liu Mengmei) in February 1999. This was organized by the China Institute, and accompanied by a symposium on Chinese opera. (IB)

The Deadline for submission of articles and news for *Chime* 13-14 is 5 December 1999.
2000 Years of Buddhist Music in the East
International Buddhist Music Conference
25-26 January 2000, Taipei

Call For Papers

Date: 25-26 January 2000.
Venue of conference: Taipei Central Library, Taiwan, R.O.C.
Venue/dates performances: Dr Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall
26 and 27 January, 19:30–21:30

Main Theme: 2000 years of Buddhist Music in the East.

Subsidiary themes:
1. The origin of Buddhist music – its function and its correlation with religious practice.
2. The dissemination of Buddhist music – its change over time, space and among peoples.
3. The essence of Buddhist music – its aesthetics and morphology.
4. The development of Buddhist music – its acculturation to the modern society.

Organizers: Taipei City Chinese Orchestra, Nan Hua Management College, Fuguangshan Cultural and Educational Foundation.

Terms and conditions:
1. Papers are invited from international scholars and researchers on Chinese, Japanese and Korean Buddhist music, monastic and non-monastic members with special interest in Buddhist music.
2. The Languages will be English, Chinese and Japanese.
3. Length of paper: no less than 4000 words.
6. Paper deadline: before 20 November (Papers will be pre-published for the Conference, edited versions may be published later as proceedings).

For further details and application form, please contact:
Ven. Yung Ben, Fuguangshan Cultural and Education Foundation, Ta Shu Hsiang, Hsing Tian Road 153, Kauhsiung 84010, Taiwan R.O.C.

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