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Beijing Jazz Festival: 132, 133
Cheng Yu (courtesy): 51, 232
Chime Archive: 52
Chow Yiu Fa: 124, 126
Dai Xiaolian (courtesy): 142
Mattheus Engel, Amsterdam: 8, 41 (1994)
Rachel Harris (courtesy): 233
Jonathan IJdis: front cover (1994)
Alice Piemme, Brussels: 113 (1998)
Lincoln Potter, Hong Kong: 190
Dennis Rea (courtesy): 130
Xu Jian, Beijing (courtesy): 58
Yao Gongbai, Shanghai (courtesy): 53
Wang Hong (courtesy): 234
Zhang Xingriong (courtesy): 147, 155

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Front cover: Guo Wenjing with local opera musicians in Sichuan during the shooting of Eline Flipse’s film Broken Silence in 1994.
# Table of Contents

*From the Editor*  
Barbarian Pipes Forever – Some thoughts on Chinese culture and nationalism  

Frank Kouwenhoven & A. Schimmelpenninck  
Guo Wenjing – a composer’s portrait: 'The strings going hong hong hong and the percussion bong kêh – that’s my voice!'  

Cheng Yu  
The precarious state of the qin in contemporary China – The Beijing Guqin Research Association  

Zhu Yongzhong, Qi Huimin & Kevin Stuart  
Minhe Mangghuer kugurjia songs – ‘Mirror-bright hearts and poor lives’  

Yu Hui  
Discontinuity in guqin temperament prior to the 15th century. An investigation of temperament of guqin music as evidenced in Shen Qi Mi Pu.  

Frank Kouwenhoven  
New Chinese Operas by Qu Xiaosong, Tan Dun and Guo Wenjing  

Chow Yiu Fai & Jeroen de Kloet  
Sounds from the margin – Beijing rock scene faces an uncertain future  

Dennis Rea  
China witnesses a sudden vogue for jazz – The Land tour and the emergence of jazz in China  

Frank Kouwenhoven  
Lively exchange during ‘East Asian Strings’ – Report on the 3rd international Chime meeting  

Zhang Xingrong  
(transl. H. Rees)  
A new discovery: traditional 8-part polyphonic singing of the Hani of Yunnan  

Li Wei  
(transl. H. Rees)  
Life cycle rituals and their music among the Mosuo of Yongning  

Terence Lancashire  
For gods or men: changing faces of Iwami kagura  

Laurence Picken, N.J. Nickson, M. Wells  
‘West River Moon’ – A song-melody predicted by a lute-piece in piba tablature
BOOK REVIEW
Rachel Harris

CD REVIEWS
Cheng Yu, Julian Joseph, Frank Kouwenhoven
Music Beyond Sound. The Silk String Zither.
John Thompson, guqin 189

Helen Rees
Dongjing Music in Yunnan, China, Vols 1 and 2. 195

Stephen Jones
Xi’an Drums Music (Xi’an guyue) 197

Frank Kouwenhoven
Tan Dun: Ghost Opera, Marco Polo and other works 200

Frank Kouwenhoven
Urna Chahartugchi et al.: Tal Nutag 203

FILM & VIDEO REVIEWS

A. Schimmelpenninck

A. Schimmelpenninck
‘Broken Silence’. Video / Film. 214

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements 216

About the authors 235

A note on Chime Nos. 10/11
‘Chinese music and nationalism’ featured as an important discussion topic in the CHIME meeting ‘Barbarian Pipes and Strings’, held in Heidelberg from 1 to 4 October 1998. Reports on that meeting will follow in CHIME nos. 12/13 (originally scheduled for 1998, now due out in the summer of 1999). The present double issue of our journal, in a new lay-out, has a report on ‘East Asian Strings’, the CHIME conference held in Leiden in 1997. It also features various papers read at the Rotterdam CHIME meeting of 1995. More papers from both meetings will follow in nos. 12/13. We will firmly attempt to overtake our delay in publication and to get back to a normal schedule with our journal in the course of 1999. (The long delay was due to the founding of the CHIME library. The library was made fully operational in Leiden over the past three years.) For practical reasons, we have not included here the third part of A. Schimmelpenninck’s series of articles on Chinese folk singers in Jiangsu Province: her book on this subject was published by CHIME last year.
Barbarian Pipes Forever – some thoughts on Chinese culture and nationalism

With the ancient Greeks and Romans – and with contemporary Americans – the Chinese share the ironical situation that they are profoundly alien to many civilizations by which they have been influenced. Ancient Mesopotamia, pre-Islamic Iran, India, Islam and the Christian West all contributed to the creation of what we recognize today as one of the greatest and most diversified cultures of the world – that of the Chinese people.

Processes of sinification and continuous cross-cultural exchange, as well as vehement resistance to cultural exchange, are certainly visible in the realm of music. Chinese instruments like the erhu, pipa, yangqin, guanzi and suona are Chinese adaptations of musical instruments of ‘barbarian’ (Persian, Arabian and Central Asian) origin. Along with the many foreign instruments and voices came foreign scales, foreign theories of tuning and temperament, foreign spiritual concepts. Even Chinese Buddhist music, though recognized today as an indigenous product, did not escape formative Indian influences in the early stages of its development in China.

Ongoing sinification can be observed in the present century, as well, when Chinese orchestras are modelled after the Western symphony orchestra, when blind street musicians are styled composers, or when Chinese contemporary music is created by infusing Western-style genres with Chinese texts and tunes. Meanwhile, ethnic tribes of non-Han Chinese origin continue to practice their own musical rituals and traditions on Chinese soil, sometimes carefully preserving ethnic identities, sometimes fusing freely with other tribal cultures, or with what is now recognized as Han Chinese culture. In brief, there is tremendous variety, based on extensive contact between different cultures.

Yet at various times in history Chinese rulers and leading intellectuals have denied or attempted to curb foreign impact on their country’s acknowledged native musical traditions. From the 4th to 7th centuries AD the struggle for political supremacy between the south and the north was partly a struggle between the maintenance of Chinese traditions and the absorption of foreign ideas. During the Tang dynasty (618–907), a rich degree of cultural synthesis culminated in many new eclectic musical works, some so successful that they travelled from China to Japan, Tibet or India. From the late Song to the rise of the Ming dynasty in the 14th century, musical exchange with adjacent cultures was less visible, at least on the administrative and court levels on which our musical knowledge of these periods largely depends.

Attempts to downplay the impact of foreign music – or any other foreign cultural influence, for that matter – are not necessarily based on downright antagonism or xenophobia. The emotional and intellectual foundations of the belief in cultural purity are
rather more complicated. China, ever since it outgrew its status of an ancient religious warrior monarchy, has depended for millennia on small, highly centralized governments. The ruler’s first task was to preserve and reinforce social and political cohesion in a vast geographical area, and by every conceivable means. This included the promotion – at first primarily among the ruling scholarly elite – of powerful emblems and assets of Chinese culture. Civil servants were expected to adhere to court musical rites and to the political tenets for which these stood. To what extent popular culture in China was affected by such policies before the age of mass communications is very difficult to say. The fact remains that musical emblems of China and of Chineseness were used by the authorities to project an image of cultural and political unity upon the entire nation, even if part of the music was created in interaction with foreign cultures and foreign tongues.

A country may attempt to prescribe shared cultural characteristics on a national level, but the point of departure is usually an existing notion of group solidarity. The solidarity may be real or imagined, but the sense of belonging together, of sharing similar goals and interests, of depending on one another for support and recognition, is of all times and all places. It has its roots in the evolution of social behaviour, and occurs in many forms: families, clans, tribes, religious sects, trade unions, and regional corporations. Ultimately, it manifests itself on the level of nations, under the heading of nationalism.

There is disagreement among scholars about the exact mechanisms involved in the rise of nationalism (in China or elsewhere), and about its status in history. Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner have defined nationalism as a pre-eminently modern phenomenon. States or nations may have been in place for several centuries, they say, but a genuine national consciousness did not emerge until the industrial age. Gellner argues that, in agrarian communities, everyone’s place was still narrowly defined, so much so that no nationalist sentiments were needed to serve as binding agents. With the advent of the industrial age, social mobility increased enormously, providing people with a much wider range of jobs and positions, and with a need to be able to rapidly exchange one type (or location) of work for another. To ‘oil’ the mobility of such a society, a shared cultural backdrop was needed, something that all its members, at different class levels, recognized as a common denominator.1 Benedict Anderson has stressed different factors, notably the gradual decline of the ancient ‘sacred’ monarchy and the transfer of political power and knowledge to a wider community, all of which he views as defining features of modern nationalism.2 Another scholar, Prasenjit Duara, is unwilling to accept such a strong divide between the modern and the premodern when it comes to defining the development and historical impact of nationalism. ‘In neither modern nor premodern society’, says Duara, ‘is it possible to sustain the notion of a unified consciousness presumed by the concept of nationalism. (...) Individuals and groups in both modern and agrarian societies identify simultaneously with several communities, all of which are imagined. These identities are historically changeable and often conflict internally and with each other.’3

True enough, people in the Chinese countryside identify primarily with their own regional and village cultures, while acknowledging that they also belong to a larger, national community. This situation may not have been very different in the past. Musicologist Liang Mingyue has stressed the overriding importance of regional identity in Chinese music. Local agricultural and fishing societies in China all have their own typical styles of folk song, theatre, ritual and dance music, as well as their own dialects. Music and language serve as clear boundary markers on local and regional levels. Naturally, what the villagers sing and play is still shaped, throughout the centuries, by extensive cultural exchange, as a consequence of complex networks of trade, and patterns of travel and migration. But the linking of local villages to the wider culture of China cannot be said to have resulted in a single ‘national identity’. For most people in China, the smell of home is the flavour of local dishes, the local language, local musical sounds, etc. While cultural exchange throughout the ages and the gradual growth of common cultural ideas did result in the emergence of national genres like kunqu and Peking opera, the majority of living musical traditions in China remain local or regional in style, and tied to regional audiences.

Then what about the notion of a modern nationalism along the lines of Anderson and Gellner? Does it have no relevance for China? Well, we don’t have to accept their theories wholesale in order to recognize that a huge shift occurred in twentieth century China, with respect to nationalist consciousness. This period did mark the birth of a more mobile, more literate and culturally more standardized population in large urban areas of China, and modern mass communications media helped establish, quite rapidly, and on an unprecedented scale, new cultural doctrines.

One factor that links modern Chinese nationalism with earlier manifestations of nationalist consciousness is that it continues to work as a ‘container notion’: people put into it what they like. In the past, China was a nation of great philosophical systems and literary achievements for some, and a land of brilliant military strategies and grand political unifications for others. But under Mao Zedong, and for vast new generations of Chinese, it became primarily a land of communal folk culture and of peasant power – the land of the ‘White-haired girl’ and of Maoist songs for the masses, learned (though not always with the same level of enthusiasm) in every school and factory. The marriage of nationalism with communism, in an age of rapid industrialization, forged a unique brand of ‘national culture’, almost as widely effective, and probably as one-sided in approach as any of the former national creeds (Confucianism, Taoism, and to a much lesser extent Buddhism).

Nowadays the word nationalism may be tainted, in many people’s eyes, with virulent racism and warmongering. In Europe it is widely viewed as the primary cause of two successive world wars and of numerous regional wars and conflicts. But nationalism has also resulted in legal constitutions, in nationally shared facilities for education and health care, in opportunities for participation in a protected economy, and has led to many great works of (nationalist-inspired) art and music. There is no reason to criticize (let alone dispense with) national symbols as long as they help to maintain effective institutions of social protection and economic opportunity. Nationalism is not ‘good’ or ‘bad’ in principle. The question is what nationalism did to Chinese culture, more specifically to music, once it achieved the massive ideological impact of a populist movement in the twentieth century.

Initially, the dream of unity in China brought out the multifarious qualities and cultural strengths that China’s intellectual soil was believed to possess. Nationalism breathed new life into ancient myths and stories, revived interest in local folklore and, in the critical war years
of the 1940s, helped keep a vast and dangerously disrupted country together. Never before in history were so many Chinese people—including peasants—confronted with a unified view of their country, and with eloquent expressions of it in music heard and played all over China. But in this same period nationalism also took on the grim aspect of a secular religion, a violent creed that downplayed local and regional achievements, killed much of the folklore it was supposed to protect, and destroyed languages and people, again on an unprecedented scale. Nationalism received so much calculated emphasis that, today, it has become difficult for anthropologists and historians to assess the true extent of cultural diversity in the People’s Republic in the past: nationalism has crushed a great deal of local culture; it has become a smokescreen for continuing local traditions.

Now that communism and marxism are no longer effective creeds in the People’s Republic (except in name), nationalism seems to be the only remaining ‘ism’ that can still aspire to ‘unify’ the country— that is, to make a vast number of people in China rally behind a common flag. It continues to be a strong factor, particularly in urban culture and art (which is politically more potent than rural art because it is better financed). Nationalist sentiments are a top-heavy Maoist heritage, though treated today with a lot more caution than a few decades ago. Divorced from its violent partner, communism, the dream of national unity is no longer an imminent threat to freedom of thought and expression in the People’s Republic, even if the situation today may still not be ideal.

The void of communism is rapidly being filled with new upsurges of patriotic fervour and quests for Chinese ‘roots’. Chinese composers write ‘ritual operas’ and works full of references to a remote and mythical past. There is a widespread and booming interest in China’s classical literature, not just among intellectuals, but also among a much wider audience who view the classics as mass entertainment. There is renewed popular interest in the revolutionary songs and model operas of the communist era. These seem to have lost some of their connotations of violence and repression of the past, and have become more generalized symbols of national togetherness and nostalgia. People forget what the lyrics mean, and enjoy the tunes. There is also a booming commercial market for Maoist disco songs. The praise of Red leadership is sung to a rapid beat. Youngsters seem indifferent to the words, or enthusiastic about them for their provocativeness. A further potent symbol of modern nationalism in China is the book China can say no, a nationwide bestseller in 1996, which calls for a return to the fervent patriotism and anti-imperialism of (pre-)liberation days.

It is impossible to predict what direction Chinese nationalism will take in the future. All options remain open, including the gloomy prospect of extreme antagonism towards the West, as sketched in Samuel Huntington’s The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order (1996). Hopefully it will not come to that. In this respect, native Chinese artists have a clear responsibility. Nationalism cannot offer an answer to all questions, and it can become an obstacle to peace and to international co-operation, in the cultural field or in some other realm. A vast number of the world’s problems today require international solutions. Ecological crises, refugee movements, migration, racism, criminality, the increasing power of multinationals, the flow of capital, tax dodging, the export of jobs and expertise, the future of the social welfare state—all these problems can no longer be solved exclusively within nationalist frameworks, or on the basis of patriotic sentiments. In view of this, it seems outdated and frivolous to rally behind national flags and sing songs or compose symphonies that promote forms of ethnic or national solidarity.
Fortunately, artists – and particularly musicians and composers – are often daring travellers in time and space. They manage to cross national borders and initiate intercultural ‘joint ventures’. Artists began doing this long before the first businessmen set up their multinationals and created comparable crossovers in the economic realm. Throughout history, adventurers of the mind have created artistic visions of a world unified in diversity.

Among contemporary Chinese artists, one obvious exponent of this trend is Tan Dun, whose compositions are world-embarking in their incorporation of different musical styles, genres and epochs. Yet it was also Tan Dun who, with his Symphony 1997, written on the occasion of the return of Hong Kong to China, evoked critical comments from people like Allan Kozinn of the New York Times. In the context of the Hong Kong celebrations, Tan’s symphony (with children’s choir and ancient bells) came close to recalling China’s blatant propaganda music of the 1960s, though this can hardly have been what Tan Dun intended.

Perhaps it is symptomatic for the present cultural dilemma of the People’s Republic that two diametrically opposed attitudes – histrionic patriotism versus all-embracing globalism – come together, and clash, in the music of the country’s most esteemed and most successful composer. One thing is the belief in universal human values; another is to find a suitable native musical language to express it.

No one in Europe today aspires to establishing a national (Czech, Scandinavian or Spanish etc.) musical style, as Smetana, Grieg, De Falla and others did a full century ago. Will the quest for a national style become obsolete in China, too? Hard to say. In any event, its replacement should not necessarily be self-indulgent individualism. The need of artists to be ‘true to themselves’ is only another myth to serve its term as long as it lasts. If art continues to carry a moral message, anywhere in the world, it must be a different one. In the age of globalization, the need to communicate with people across ethnic and political barriers remains a more likely (and universal) main theme for artistic exploration.

No society and no individual human being is isolated enough to have a culture or a history of its own. In a deep and revealing sense, all culture is cross-culture, all music is fusion, all history is multi-lingual, and any form of ethnic or national ‘purity’ is by definition a dangerous hoax. The dignity of human beings and the long-term survival of cultures cannot depend on a belief in exclusively national values – if it has ever done so in the first place. In China, as elsewhere, it depends on a fair recognition of people’s constant indebtedness to others, regardless of ethnic or political divisions. Ultimately, the very act of ‘maintaining’ culture may be about honouring our wish to be changed – about fearing, respecting, venerating and loving the stranger in ourselves.

Frank Kouwenhoven
GUO WENJING – A COMPOSER’S PORTRAIT

‘The strings going hong hong hong and the percussion bong kèèh – that’s my voice!’

The smell of the Russian earth is different; and such things are impossible to forget... A man has one birthplace, one fatherland, one country – he can have only one country – the place of his birth is the most important factor in his life.

Igor Stravinsky

His music is often dark, wild, and mysterious, saturated with the brooding and eerie atmosphere of Chongqing, his native town. His orchestral and theatre pieces deal with man-eaters, witchcraft, mysterious coffins on mountain cliffs and age-old inscriptions on animal bones. By contrast, his latest opera, Night Banquet, commissioned by the Almeida Theatre in London (premiere 10 July 1998) explores a more lyrical vein. In daily life, Chinese composer Guo Wenjing (41) is hardly a brooding or mysterious character. But he can be gruff and short-tempered, which may well contribute to the punchy and violent edge to some of his compositions.

In this interview – a compilation of several discussions held in the course of 1997 – Guo talks about his youth and early career, his music, his artistic successes and failures. He reflects on his work as a teacher, his travels, his future plans, and expresses a critical view of contemporary music: ‘So many followers of Boulez and Stockhausen have been turned into slaves... Slaves of numbers, of “structures”. Composers must be liberated again.’

Frank Kouwenhoven & Antoinet Schimmelpenninck
(Chime Foundation, Leiden, The Netherlands)

We met Guo Wenjing for the first time in Beijing in June 1990. It was one year after the Tian’anmen protests in China. It was also shortly after Guo’s return from Chongqing, where he had spent seven years working for a provincial song and dance troupe. Antoinet and I were impressed by the power and drive of his orchestral piece Suspended Ancient Coffins on the Cliffs in Sichuan (1983), which we had heard on a commercial tape, and we hoped to find out more about this intriguing composer, reported to be one of China’s new talents in avant-garde music.

We chanced on Guo in a dark corridor of a dormitory at the Central Conservatory, and went to his working room, which was bare except for a piano and some neatly stored piles of music. To a certain extent Guo resembled his music: a sturdy fellow, full of gusto, straightforward, sometimes a bit stubborn and on his guard. He would punctuate his speech with impatient gestures, streams of onomatopoeic words and sudden outbursts of anger or enthusiasm.
In these aspects, Guo hasn’t changed much over the years. He still tends to interrupt his sentences with hasty cigarette puffs, and to cut them off prematurely, with grunts and snorts. No appetite for fine words or high-brow theorizing. He likes to laugh – at his own plain statements or at questions he doesn’t care to answer. At times he falls silent to the point of making his visitors feel uneasy. There is a distinctly peasant-like quality to him. Guo loves soccer. He looks like a soccer player.

We have followed Guo Wenjing’s career from its beginnings in Beijing to his recent successes in Europe, when he began to be recognized as a major Asian composer. Antoinet joined Guo on a trip along the Yangzi River in 1994, when a film was made about him and other composers of avant-garde music in China. She served as an interpreter for Guo when his works were rehearsed in Holland. And she was my interpreter and assistant in the recent talks we had with him – especially if my own Chinese was not up to the job, or if I forgot to ask essential questions.

No theory, no motto
Guo Wenjing was born on the 1st of February 1956 in Sichuan, in southwestern China. His father was on the medical staff of a local hospital. His mother worked there as a nurse. He graduated from the Central Conservatory in Beijing in 1983. He now lives in Beijing with his wife Cheng Yan and his nine-year-old daughter, and was appointed Head of the Central Conservatory’s Composition Department in January 1998.

Guo has written numerous orchestral and chamber works, over forty scores for films and television plays, and two operas. His most successful works have major parts for human voices and for Chinese or Western percussion. Guo grew up in Chongqing in the rural south, amidst the rough cries of boat people, and the loud banging of percussion players in ritual opera. This world seems to be brought to life again in his own works.

His interest in music started at the age of twelve, when his parents gave him a violin. They hoped to keep him indoors and away from the street violence of the Cultural Revolution. The darker sides of Chinese history ring through many of his mature compositions, perhaps nowhere more convincingly than in Wolf Cub Village (1994), the dramatic opera that marked his international breakthrough. This work was performed with great success in major cities across Europe, and resulted in a contract with the Italian publisher Ricordi and in numerous new commissions.

The triumphant reception of recent pieces like Inscriptions on Bone (1996) has further boosted Guo’s confidence. ‘I think two things are required for an artist to succeed,’ he says. ‘Freedom, and naturalness.’ In a 1994 film about new Chinese composers, he states: ‘My work is not based on any theories. I have no motto. I just follow my heart.’

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1 De Ooogst van de Stilte (Broken Silence), Eline Flipse & Erik van Empel, Sacraflee Films, The Netherlands, 1994, 80 minutes.
2 The main interviews for this article took place in Leiden, 13 March 1997, and in Beijing, 2 July 1997. The information was supplemented with the help of notes from earlier talks, phone calls and faxes, excerpts from newspaper clippings, articles in Chinese journals, and some of Guo’s own writings.
Guo Wenjing in front of a sculpture of revolutionary composer Nie Er.

**Early childhood**

Guo lives on the sixth floor of an apartment building in the compound of the Beijing Conservatory. His home is located next to a dilapidated traditional building where China’s last emperor, Pu Yi, was born in 1906. There is no elevator. When we enter his apartment on a very hot day in July, the composer appears in a dark-blue T-shirt and shorts, apologizing for the fact that his air-conditioning has just broken down. ‘I’ve not been able to do much work,’ he complains. We decide to find a cool restaurant in the vicinity of the Conservatory compound, to talk and to eat.

His hair, normally an unkempt shrubbery that accentuates his boyishness, has just been trimmed, which makes him look even more boyish. Near the main entrance of the Conservatory, he poses for a photo in front of a sculpture of revolutionary composer Nie Er. He mimics the stern look of his predecessor, who is a celebrity in China: ‘The most frequently played composer on Chinese radio!’

Guo Wenjing started his career in a different era, the post-Mao period of the late 1970s, when China was recovering from its revolutionary excesses and the country began to open its doors to the outside world. Consequently, Guo has been given more freedom to follow his own voice. The chamber pieces he wrote as a student in Beijing in 1979-81 are full of dark and sombre sounds which would have been unthinkable in the revolutionary years. These early works and his childhood in Sichuan are the starting-point for our conversation.

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3 Nie Er wrote the tune of the Chinese National Anthem.
Do your early works reflect your personal circumstances?

GWJ: 'No, not really. Both my parents were CCP members. They were well-off. My father had been with the Communist Party since 1937, initially as an army man. He was a local official, later the director of a large hospital, so we had a fairly good life at home. There were three children in the family, my older brother, my younger sister and I. I was aware of the difficulties that other people had to go through. My parents regularly sent money via the post office to their relatives in northern China, who were very poor. When my father left the army and travelled to his native village in Hebei, he was so embarrassed by his relatives' poverty that he left all his clothes behind. My grandfather on the paternal side was an extremely poor farmer; he had no land of his own, and he died of dysentery, having no money to buy medicine.'

Your family came from the north, but you grew up in a city in the south?

GWJ: 'Yes, in Chongqing. The Communists had chased away the Guomindang; they were the victorious party. CCP members like my parents could afford to move to the south, to start a new life in the city, while their relatives stayed behind in the north.

Was there no poverty in or near Chongqing, then?

GWJ: 'Oh, I could see what rural poverty meant in the south, too. City life in Chongqing was still fairly close to life in the countryside. Peasants would row their boats with vegetables, meat and fish straight to town on the Yangzi River every day. After selling their goods they would stuff their empty boats with human shit – good fertilizer – and row home. Throngs of villagers crowded the city every day, and many of them were very poor. There were also folk artists around, story tellers and opera singers, who performed in teahouses.

‘Nowadays, you are deafened by all the loud music played in the streets. Music has lost its clarity and sense of mystery.’

Nowadays there’s no longer a market for folk artists – but in those days there was no television, you see. On my way to school I passed teahouses that had live music. And sometimes I would stand in the door and peep in. Not that I was all that much interested in music. I preferred to play outdoors... What sort of games? Oh, roll a hoop, spin a top. The kinds of things children do. Shooting with a catapult. Many of these games have now disappeared.'

The way of all folklore... It's like what happens with traditional music.

GWJ: 'Yes, a lot of music which was still around in my youth has disappeared. Genres like Peking and Sichuan Opera are dying. They are too much embedded in a traditional way of life that is rapidly losing ground. The same goes for folk songs. We used to have boatmen’s songs. Hey-hey... hey-hey...! Beautiful, long drawn-out cries. You could hear them sung on the Yangzi River, basically on every other river in Sichuan, too. After school I would go down to the Yangzi to swim. I would watch people who hauled boats upstream with long
ropes, or dragged heavy loads up a mountain while singing. Now the traditional boatmen and the work songs are almost gone. The last time I heard people singing such a song was in 1989.'

*Local opera and folk songs in Sichuan have deeply influenced your own music?*

GWJ: ‘While growing up in Sichuan, I didn’t give folk music much thought. Folk music simply happened to be there, and it exerted an influence on me, but I wasn’t very conscious of its impact. It was only much later in Beijing that I came to realize that folk music could serve as raw material for new compositions. Looking upon Sichuan from a distance, I began to view it with very different eyes. I saw it more clearly. And it was not just the music that had seeped into me, but the landscape and the people as well... I could hear the water in the Yangzi rippling against the stones... It conveyed to me a feeling of balance and power. You know, people in Sichuan are fairly skinny and small. They’re not as tall and robust as Westerners are, but they’re very strong. If you saw any of them climbing a very steep mountain with a big load... As a composer, I felt that I wanted to express these people’s inner strength in my music. And there was another thing about Sichuan. You hardly ever saw any blue skies there. It always tended to be grey and humid, very cloudy. The landscape was veiled in mist. There was something mysterious and sad about that. It’s still like that today.’

*The work songs you heard were part of daily life, so to speak. I suppose people didn’t consider them ‘music’. What about music identified as ‘high art’? Did you come across that in your childhood environment?*

GWJ: ‘Oh, there wasn’t any music to speak of in Sichuan when I was a small boy. In our own family no one played an instrument. It was only at the age of 15 that I came across a piano for the first time. The best my elementary school could afford was a harmonium with foot pedals. Most people didn’t know what a violin or a piano was, or what ‘music’ meant, for that matter. My grandfather on the maternal side was a carpenter in rural Shandong. When I became a musician with the Song and Dance Troupe in Chongqing I found it very hard to explain to him, or to any of my grandparents or uncles, what music meant. They were villagers. “You play an instrument?” they’d say. “Hm, a violin? What’s a violin?” None of them ever lived in a city.’

*Even in the city, music-making must have been a special event.*

GWJ: ‘Yes, in the 1960s and early ’70s it was still a rare treasure. If music was played somewhere, you would always have throngs of people listening on the doorstep. Nowadays, you are deafened by all the loud music played in the streets. Music has lost much of its clarity and sense of mystery.’

*Gun battles and violin runs (1966–71)*

During the Cultural Revolution, Chongqing – like many other Chinese cities – was the scene of frequent violent street fights and gun battles between Red Guards and army units. In 1967 the situation ran out of control. University students, peasants and workers carried out veritable street battles among themselves or with the military. Tanks were driving through the
streets. The fighting went on into the early months of 1968. Guo’s parents hoped to keep their 12-year-old son away from the violence by buying a violin for him to play on. Indirectly, the Cultural Revolution became his personal road to music. A driver, a nephew of the family’s nanny, gave Guo a few violin lessons.

What impression did the war in Chongqing make on you as a kid?

GWJ: ‘Kggg... Peww! Lots of fighting, just very violent! I loved nothing better than watching those fights. They shot guns and cannons from ships stationed in the Yangzi. My parents were terrified, they were afraid I’d get killed. They had to think of something.

At that time, violins were produced in China in growing numbers. Mao Zedong’s wife Jiang Qing was attempting to transform Chinese culture in all sorts of ways. She found that traditional Peking Opera always portrayed the same old characters — these people with lots of flags planted in their backs, you know... and then you had the jinghu [a small fiddle] playing its tunes, the percussion going keng keng kang. She simply didn’t like it. So she wanted workers, peasants and soldiers to set up a new kind of opera, revolutionary in spirit, vigorous in sound, which used Chinese as well as Western instruments and music. For the most part she didn’t like Western culture — it was capitalist culture — but still she borrowed many elements from it, and even consented to the production of Western instruments.’

Your violin was made in China?

GWJ: ‘Yes, in Dongbei. Its label was Dongfang hong – The East Is Red. It cost 8 kuai – the equivalent of one dollar today. It was really an expensive instrument. Eight kuai per month used to be the minimum subsistence level in those days. This here [points at his packet of cigarettes] is what costs me eight kuai at present.

You are smoking an entire violin today.

GWJ: ‘Hm, I ought to stop... In any event, there was no way my parents could have bought me a piano. It would have cost them a thousand kuai. Unthinkable! Come to think of it, almost none of my later classmates at the Central Conservatory in Beijing played the piano, with the exception of a few who came from big cities. Tan Dun and Qu Xiaosong and me — we all played the violin.

What kind of music?

GWJ: ‘I started with popular songs heard in the streets. “I think of Chairman Mao” and the like. There were also scores, in cipher notation. Later I learned to read staff notation. One neighbour, a midwife who worked in my parents’ hospital, taught me to read it. She gave me just one lesson. I was clever and figured it out for myself.’

Did your parents manage to keep you indoors?

GWJ: Absolutely! From the very moment I took up the violin I was obsessed by it. I felt I was predestined for it. I couldn’t stop playing. I kept it up until the late 1970s. I was still playing the violin when I began to study at the Central Conservatory in Beijing, and joined the student orchestra there.’
Did you also play Western music as a child?

GWJ: ‘Well, after I had fiddled on my own for two years, I was allowed to join the Song and Dance Troupe of Chongqing, in 1971. I began there as a percussionist, but I got a real violin teacher who improved my string playing. In that time I learned to play some foreign things, like... [sings a Kreutzer violin etude]. Aaaah, I loved it. So beautiful! I could play this a hundred times a day. I liked it because it was so very different from all the Chinese music I already knew. While I was young we could also hear Tibetan, Xinjiangese and Mongolian tunes in Sichuan; I think I liked them for the same reason – because they were so different from Han Chinese songs.’

Playing in the song and dance troupe (1971-77)
Reports that virtually no printed scores of Western music were available to musicians during the Cultural Revolution are not quite correct. While a lot of material was destroyed, music teachers and performers often managed to hide their recordings and scores of Western music from Red Guards. This happened at the big conservatories, but also in provincial institutions like the song and dance troupe [gewutuan] which Guo joined. Guo’s colleague and fellow composer Qu Xiaosong (who lived in Guiyang at the time of the Cultural Revolution) once told a story about how he risked performing Mozart string quartets with some friends – privately, and late at night. His neighbours did not necessarily recognize it as Western music.

How did you get into the Chongqing Song and Dance Troupe?

GWJ: ‘They were on the look-out for young people who could be trained to play Western instruments in performances of revolutionary opera. This was in the wake of Jiang Qing’s calls for modernization of Peking Opera. The musical level of these ‘Successors of the Revolution’ – as we recruits were called – was not an important criterion. You see, the gewutuan leaders mainly looked at one’s family and class background. If that was OK, the rest was of minor importance. Hundreds of young people applied. They all hoped to participate, since this was the only way for them to escape working in the countryside. My older brother and younger sister were sent to work with the peasants. They didn’t play an instrument. Other people, who played the violin much better than I did, were rejected because they had the wrong background – they weren’t sufficiently “red”. I was fortunate, because I was able to fiddle a bit.’

Did everyone who was recruited play an instrument?

GWJ: ‘No. Many applicants came from rural villages; they had never seen or touched any musical instrument, never witnessed any ballet or Peking Opera. But they were peasants, you see... That was enough. Together we formed a dance group with an average-sized symphonic band. It was all-Western in terms of instruments: strings, double woodwinds, four horns, two trumpets, two trombones, timpani and other percussion. We played the so-called model operas, from scores written in Western staff notation. The Red Detachment of Women, The White-Haired Girl, The Yellow River Piano Concerto, and so on. These were the first large-scale compositions I heard – and played. I was extremely happy. They let us play all day, and I loved the music! For me, personally, the Cultural Revolution was a benevolent period. I must say that Western music scores were indeed hard to find in that
period. But then, as young musicians, we were recruited as the new torch-bearers of the revolution. So we received all kinds of training. In one assignment we were sent, with special permission, to a storehouse of forbidden printed matter. There they gave me two of those neibu [forbidden] scores. The orchestra didn’t play any Western music, but privately I tried my hand at some Western violin exercise books. And later at a Handel sonata, Bruch’s Violin Concerto, some Mozart...’

**What about the performance level of the orchestra?**

GWJ: I realize now that it was a big mess, but at the time we were absolutely happy! When I joined the orchestra, I first had to play the cymbals or the triangle, since my violin playing was still too poor to rely on. In this way they let us children get accustomed to playing in a big ensemble. Oh my, we were so pale and nervous in the beginning! As percussionists we were always terribly afraid to miss the right moment, to hit it too late! [He mimics the situation.] After some time, playing in the orchestra became a more relaxed affair. I’ve benefited a lot from the seven years spent in that group, no matter how disorganized it was.’

**Did you play with a conductor?**

GWJ: ‘Our conductor was a former trumpet player. He had very poor ears! We teased him a lot. If the orchestra got very loud, the violin players would do finger exercises instead of play their parts, staring innocently at the conductor.’

**Cruel youth!**

GWJ: ‘Haha. Well, actually not all of us were young people. Our first trumpet had been a traditional percussionist in the old days. The second trumpet was a former erhu [Chinese fiddle] player. These people had been given Western instruments when they entered the orchestra. My neighbour in the violin group also used to play an erhu. That was very clear from the many glissandi he produced! Actually, while the level of the ensemble may have been poor, it was still the best orchestra in Chongqing. I was extremely fortunate to be part of it. I acquired my first basic knowledge about orchestration and timbral combinations, and we gave numerous performances. During the Cultural Revolution there was no other alternative in Chongqing, so a great many people came to listen to our concerts. They all liked the music.’

**Cavalry of the czar (1975–76)**

In the mid-1970s, listening to Western classical music on gramophone records made Guo decide to give up the violin in favour of composition. He began to produce revolutionary music of his own making, and it was played by the song and dance troupe.

**Can you remember how you changed your mind?**

GWJ: ‘When I was 19 – it must have been in 1975 – I had already realized I wasn’t going to be another Oistrach. I felt like becoming a composer. Why? Well, there was an elder composer in the Song and Dance Troupe of Chongqing who had collected many records during his years of study at the Central Conservatory in Beijing. When the Cultural
Revolution started he was supposed to hand in those records for destruction, since they contained Western music. But by becoming a Red Guard himself, and by participating in Revolutionary gatherings, he managed to safeguard his collection. He made sure that his own home was not raided. Especially during 1966-67, the most dangerous period, he kept his records well-hidden. But in the final years of the Cultural Revolution we began to make secret visits to his home to listen to the music.

Some of the pieces he played over and over again made a deep impression on me. Like Paganini’s First Violin Concerto. Or this... eh... [He hums a tune.] ‘Yes, Borodin’s In Central Asia. And Rimsky’s Sheherazade, and Shostakovich’s Eleventh Symphony... Bang! Bang! Bang! Shostakovich, that was the Cavalry of the Czar! Fantastic music! I had never before experienced such vigorous and deeply moving music. Didn’t know music could be like that.

The works we used to play in the gewutuan were rather sweet-toned and simple. But these mighty symphonic paintings disturbed me, they caused me to stop thinking about playing the violin. Fuck! I wanted to compose! If they had let me listen to Handel or Stockhausen instead, it would have meant nothing. I would have been finished! But these pieces... So shocking!

After a while, I began to write works for the song and dance troupe. Of course they were primarily imitations of what I had heard in the model opera pieces, or in Borodin’s tatataaa – it was dance music, all of it! And yes, the gewutuan indeed performed these works. There was a constant need for this kind of eh... optimistic sounds.’

A golden oppportunity to learn the trade?

GWJ: ‘Yes, by playing and listening I learned how to orchestrate. When I entered the Music Conservatory in Beijing, my level of orchestration was in fact higher than that of many students who graduate from the Conservatory today. You see, they have studied the piano, and have learned to transfer Beethoven sonatas from the piano to an orchestral medium, but they’ve never got to hear the results. It’s much better to be part of an orchestra yourself, no matter how disorganized the ensemble is.’

Have any of your early ‘revolutionary’ works survived?

GWJ: ‘I don’t know what has become of them. They were rather poorly structured pieces. Jumbled, over-abundant. They were often instant responses to meet political requirements. On 5 April 1976, when Deng Xiaoping was overthrown, all the song and dance troupes in China had to produce music in celebration of this fact. So I wrote a piece, pa pa peng peng peng, Deng Xiaoping fallen from power! In the autumn of the same year, it was followed by another work, keng keng keng keng, the Gang of Four overthrown, Deng Xiaoping has re-emerged, hurray!... Haha! I was just 18 or 19. No time to think much about what it all meant. The only fact of importance was the opportunity to compose.’

China’s national call for students (1977)
Some time after the death of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping decided to re-open China’s universities and music conservatories. In 1977 an advertisement appeared in the People’s Daily, giving dates and details about the entrance examinations. Guo Wenjing was not the
only one who spotted a chance. Thousands of young people applied – seventeen thousand would-be students reportedly competed for two hundred places in the Central Conservatory in Beijing alone. The days of red heroism belonged to the past, and numerous city youths felt a strong urge to learn something. In the end, only a handful were given the possibility to take part in higher education.

You hoped to make your way to Beijing?

GWJ: ‘I can’t tell you how enthusiastic I was. Just imagine – a genuine call for students in a big governmental newspaper! It was a unique event! They were recruiting students in four places – Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Guangzhou. People like Qu Xiaosong, Chen Yuanlin, Ma Jianping and I did their exams in Chengdu, while Tan Dun and Chen Yi went to Guangdong, Ye Xiaogang to Shanghai, and Zhou Long to Beijing. In Chengdu, they said they would only accept ten students. To enhance my chances I decided to do the entrance examinations for two conservatories simultaneously – Beijing as well as Chengdu, with a preference for Beijing. Some feared it might be difficult to obtain a place in Beijing. They gave Sichuan as their first choice. He Xuntian was even more careful – he gave the Sichuan Conservatory as his first as well as his second choice! But I was still very young. For me there was no limit to the earth or the sky at that time. I wanted to go to the very top, to Beijing!’

And you were fortunate?

GWJ: ‘Oh, very fortunate, once again! I found myself in the company of hundreds of others who applied, as I had done when I tried to get into the song and dance troupe. I got through in the very first round, while many others failed. They tested candidates’ musical skills quite seriously. There was an assignment to harmonize Western tunes – they gave you the soprano part, you filled in the rest – and a listening test. And every candidate was supposed to be able to play at least one instrument. Some played bamboo flute or Chinese fiddle. The majority played violin, like me. My audition consisted of one part of the slow movement of Bruch’s Violin Concerto. Wu Zuqiang, a senior composer who had flown from Beijing to Chengdu, didn’t have much time to listen to any of us. There were literally hundreds of people waiting in front of his little room. So everyone just went in there and played for two or three minutes, and came out again. I had to hand in some compositions, too – a woodwind quartet and an octet for brass. I don’t know what has become of these pieces. I was accepted for Sichuan as well as for Beijing, so the choice was up to me. Of all the hundreds of candidates who applied in Chengdu, only four were accepted to go to Beijing: Qu Xiaosong, Chen Yuanlin, Ma Jianping, and I.

You didn’t have all that much theoretical background yet. You’d just been playing those model operas and a couple of violin pieces for years on end?

GWJ: ‘While I was still in the song and dance troupe, I was already quite serious about my activities as a composer! I had done away with the violin exercise books which I had

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4 Guo is here referring to fellow composers, most of whom would eventually meet one another at the Central Conservatory in Beijing. Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong, Chen Yi, Zhou Long and Chen Yuanlin later pursued their careers in the United States.
obtained with so much trouble, and swapped them for some Russian books on harmony. I also got hold of Rimsky-Korsakov’s book on orchestration. Later I managed to borrow a book on counterpoint, and copied its contents from cover to cover. So, by 1977, I was well prepared. For most people the entrance exams turned out to be far too difficult. After the first round, three hundred out of perhaps five hundred candidates had already dropped out of the race.’

**Did you show your examiners any of your ‘revolutionary’ compositions?**

GWJ: ‘I took along with me a whole bag of those works and handed them over to Wu Zuqiang. Haha! It was poor music. In our first year at the Conservatory, most of us continued to write pieces with a strongly revolutionary flavour. Tan Dun composed a violin piece called *I Dreamt of Chairman Mao*, and Qu Xiaosong wrote a string quartet based on one of Xian Xinghai’s songs, *Let’s Go Behind Enemy Lines*.

**Conservatory years (1978–1983)**

Guo Wenjing entered the Central Conservatory in 1978. It was the start of a new life, in a city then regarded as the zenith of urban Chinese culture. The teachers of the small composition class were older artists who had earned respectable reputations with romantic works written in the 1950s. It was still impossible to foresee that, within a few years, Guo Wenjing and some of his classmates would totally surpass the older generation and bring about a landslide in China’s musical art circles.

In the Conservatory compound, Guo shared a narrow room with Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong and three other students from the south. The students’ dormitories were overcrowded and messy, and the inmates had to get used to living very close together most of the time. Many years later, Guo’s roommates would still remember the ‘swampy’ smell of his socks. Guo, in turn, kept a distinct memory of the extravagant neatness of Tan Dun, who used to store away his shoes and carefully folded clothes in special boxes. They became close friends.

Guo participated in the student orchestra as a violinist. He played Beethoven and Dvorak symphonies, and met his future wife, Cheng Yan, who played the cello. Foreign guest lecturers like Alexander Goehr visited the Conservatory and introduced twentieth century Western music to the students, from Schoenberg to Stockhausen and beyond.

The symphonic and chamber pieces which Guo wrote during his student years in Beijing were suffused with Bartókian rhythms and often expressed dark moods reminiscent of Shostakovich. Guo’s composition teachers at the time, Li Yinghai and (later) Su Xia, were hardly responsible for this development: they favoured romantic music, and were not in touch with twentieth century developments in the West. In 1981 he wrote a string quartet, *The Rivers of Sichuan*, which demonstrated an extraordinary craftsmanship in that genre.

**Initially you wrote revolutionary music. But soon you began to drift away from political works. How did that change take place?**

GWJ: ‘I don’t know, I guess we just followed the general changes that took place in society. We heard about so many things that we didn’t know before. So many things were unmasked.’
You were suddenly confronted with several centuries of Western music. Weren’t Rimsky-Korsakov or Shostakovich as much ‘contemporary music’ to you as Cage or Stockhausen or Ligeti?

GWJ: ‘We were simply not familiar with the notion of contemporary music. It had never existed in China. We looked upon all Western music as “Western music”. Our own musical views were shaped by the few genres which the authorities had allowed us to perform or to listen to. Essentially, Chinese music could be divided into “revolutionary” and “non-revolutionary” music. Western music fell into two categories: one “objectionable”, the other “objectionable but still worth studying”. ‘

But you came from a relative ‘monoculture’ into a sea of new music. How did you cope with that?

GWJ: ‘First of all, we hoped to create something that came from our own minds. Not necessarily something Chinese, but something individual. I guess I’ve been able to survive the flood of new music which reached us after 1978 by listening to it very selectively. In my early works, I was strongly influenced by Bartók. I appreciated Bartók’s and Kodály’s use of folklore in their works. I wanted to employ the folk music that I had heard in Sichuan in my youth in a similar fashion.’

Like in the piano piece ‘The Gorge’, your opus 1?

GWJ: ‘The Gorge, written in 1979, incorporated the work cries of boatmen from Sichuan, albeit in a manner not very customary at that time. Nearly all Chinese composers in the 1970s happened to write folklore-inspired compositions, but most of them used 19th century Western harmonies which did not necessarily retain the spirit of the original melodies. They favoured animated and rather merry tunes to suit political propaganda purposes. I felt that the hardships which common people experienced in daily life were hardly a cause for merriment, and their sorrows were almost never expressed in such music. So this is what I tried to do in The Gorge, and in later works like the First String Quartet or the cello piece Ba. At present, I tend to have a more balanced opinion about the elder composers’ works. I realize now that they did come up with many good pieces, also in that period.’

Recently you deleted a number of vocal and chamber pieces you wrote in 1979–81 from your list of works. Why?

GWJ: ‘They all started off from the same principle, using folk elements and expressing a mood of bitterness. In the 1980s many composers began to write dark-toned works. It became more fashionable. At a certain point I found that I did not want to continue along that line.’
How did your teachers respond to your early works?

GWJ: ‘At that time it was still Li Yinghai, not Su Xia. Li Yinghai was deeply fond of Chinese classical music. Well, I can’t quite remember how he and the others responded. In general they gave us a lot of freedom. They had no real notion of “contemporary music”. As I said, none of us had.’

You wrote a string quartet in 1981, and so did Qu Xiaosong. These works owe a great debt to Bartók. Yet it strikes me that the very choice of this genre made you and your classmates stand out from the older generation. Western-style chamber music was a new phenomenon in China. Even today it remains something of a rarity in Chinese concert halls.

GWJ: ‘The older generation mainly wrote vocal and orchestral works. I suppose big orchestras were a more suitable medium for conveying the ideals and revolutionary fervour of Communism. Big orchestras were associated with rapid and large-scale progress. In chamber music it is much harder to portray the atmosphere of mass meetings and grand revolutionary scenes. But I must say that, in recent years, many Chinese composers have had opportunities to visit the West, and there has been a growth in compositions for chamber ensembles.’

Your String Quartet is called ‘The Rivers of Sichuan’. Was it again influenced by Sichuanese boatmen’s songs?

GWJ: ‘All my early works reflect the dark and strange atmosphere of the Yangzi River culture. The titles and contents of these pieces refer to the scenery, the historical legends and the folk music from that area. I was totally carried away by Sichuan’s traditional culture. The haunting songs one could hear late at night in dark corners or on open stages... The bright coloraturas and the percussion of Sichuan Opera...’

What about ‘Ba’, your rhapsody for cello and piano?

GWJ: ‘Ba was written in my third year at the Conservatory, in 1982. The name refers to an old kingdom located in what is today the eastern part of Sichuan. The music was inspired by a kind of dark-red patterned cloth with which peasants cover themselves when they go out into the fields. They also use it as a bed when they travel long distances. It is fairly dirt-resistant, and the colour stays well. For me, this cloth symbolizes the peasants of Sichuan.’

Bartók, Shostakovich and the ‘Burial’ music (1983)
Guo’s first explorations in the field of chamber music were followed by a major symphonic work: Suspended Ancient Coffins on the Cliffs in Sichuan, for two pianos and orchestra

5 Guo’s prelude for piano, The Gorge (1979), his rhapsody for cello and piano, Ba (1982), his Suite for Violin Solo (1985) and his First String Quartet were issued on a commercial tape by the China Record Company in 1986 (AL-56).
(1983). Alternately known as *Burial on the Precipice in Sichuan*, this piece demonstrated, in the boldness of its colours and brutality of its rhythms, a new sophistication and daring. The music was less indebted to Western romanticism than Guo’s other early works. It was more personal in style, more exuberant, and inspired by a fairly unusual subject. The title refers to a number of mysterious coffins which rest on vertical poles protruding from rocks high on the northern flank of the Qutang Gorge, the smallest and shortest of the ‘Three Gorges’ of the Yangzi River. The water flows very rapidly in that gorge. The coffins – seen as tiny dark objects by travellers on the water below – are ascribed to an ancient tribal culture which apparently had the habit of burying their dead in high and airy places. Some of the coffins contain bronze swords and other artefacts.

*Suspended Ancient Coffins* was written as Guo’s graduation piece for the Conservatory in 1983. With this work he was to complete his five-year course of study. It was also the first of his works to be performed abroad. Guo’s prospects for an artistic career looked bright. But there were some unexpected problems ahead.

‘*Suspended Coffins* is a rather savage piece of music! Suppose a student of yours came up with a piece like that today, how would you respond?

GWJ: ‘Oh, eh... Very, very good! I still think it was very well written. The work was inspired by folk music. The sounds you hear, this *heng heng heng*, and the strings going *hong hong hong*, and then the percussion, *bong këèh* – that’s really my voice! Quite frankly, for a graduation piece finished in 1983, it was written extremely well!’

At times it sounds very Bartókian, almost like a Chinese version of ‘The Miraculous Mandarin’.

GWJ: ‘I didn’t think of Bartók at all when I wrote it. I was hoping to grow away from Bartók. In my opinion, there was more of Penderecki and Lutoslawski in it. For example, the long section with the *eeeee... wuo wuo wong...*, these high-pitched sounds in the strings. When Lutoslawski or Penderecki do this, what they produce is a kind of cackle. But I was trying to incorporate the nasal glissandi of the Chinese fiddle in my string-writing. These *eye eye eye* effects... I still use them. I’m very fond of them! I don’t think I ever had a better idea! You hear a similar kind of sounds in *erhu* music, and in Peking Opera, sometimes on the small gong or in a vocal solo, very delicate sounds...’

*Penderecki would have been happy to discover such sounds.*

GWJ: ‘Fortunately he didn’t. Otherwise people would say that I was imitating him. It’s quite a frustration that so many Westerners perpetually identify Chinese composers with Western ones. They will say: this is Cage, this is Ravel... I remember one older Conservatory teacher getting very angry when a visiting musicologist from the USA identified one of his pieces as Debussy. He cried out: “No, this piece doesn’t resemble Debussy! Not at all! Debussy resembles me! Debussy resembles China!”

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6 It premiered in March 1984 at the University of California, Berkeley. It was twice recorded commercially on cassette in China, by the China Record Company in Shanghai (1986) and the Chongqing Huaxia Record and Video Company (1987).
But how to discard one’s cultural frame of mind? A reference to Debussy may be groundless from a Chinese point of view, but understandable from a European perspective.

GWJ: Well, it’s a continuing problem. Take my percussion piece Drama. Some time ago a Western musician asked me whether I was influenced by Steve Reich, or by African music. Damn it, I hardly knew Reich, I only came to hear his music when I paid a visit to the USA, and as for African music, I knew nothing about that at all. So I said: you Westerners, your judgments tend to be so... so very...’

Simple?

GWJ: ‘Too simple. We don’t know what to do about them.’

You wouldn’t deny the impact of Bartók and Shostakovich on your early works, though.

GWJ: ‘Shostakovich became an important influence later on. His music arrived fairly late in the library of the Conservatory. I read Volkov’s biography of Shostakovich, and at the same time listened to his music. Both the book and the music made a deep impression on me. I was particularly impressed by the final three symphonies. Later on I also became fond of Schoenberg.

Three very different composers.

GWJ: ‘Their music has in common a great strength and spiritual power, a quality which I find lacking, occasionally, in Chinese culture. I’m not very fond of the detached and evasive attitudes you come across in certain realms of Chinese culture, for example in Zhuangzi, Laozi, or in guqin music, or in traditional painting. I prefer the crude vividness of folk music... the banging on cymbals, the shouting of folk opera voices... That’s more appealing to me than many of the intellectual aspects of Chinese culture. Yes, guqin music is lovely, beautifully subdued, but... also rather introvert and inward-looking. What I want to do is move people with my music!’

Guo Wenjing was able to evoke all sorts of responses, not only as an artist, but also as a music student. Around the time of his graduation, the Conservatory leadership forced him to leave Beijing for disobeying the institute’s regulations. His ‘crime’ was to get married before graduation. It was a painful affair with far-reaching consequences. Going back to Sichuan seemed to have serious drawbacks. Guo even believed that his career had come to an end. After a while, things turned out in a more fortunate way. His return to the provincial Song and Dance Troupe of Chongqing provided Guo with many unexpected opportunities. And his stature as a composer continued to grow, in spite of his expulsion from Beijing. In 1985, Ba and The Rivers of Sichuan were awarded prizes in the National Composition Competition of Chamber Music. In the wake of this, Guo began to receive numerous commissions to write music for films and TV plays.

Soon he was a busy composer, one who made money, but who also had time left to write large-scale works like the Violin Concerto (1986-87), another symphonic poem (Sutra on Tibetan Streamers, 1986) and the choral symphony Shu Dao Nan (1987). The last piece
in particular would earn him success in China. His wife had followed him to Sichuan. She would eventually give birth to a daughter.

In the mid-1980s the political situation in China was still quite difficult for young artists like Guo. Elder composers were not quite sure how to respond to the ‘New Wave’ of their pupils. To many artists of the old generation, Chinese avant-garde music often sounded awkward and chaotic, provocative, possibly even politically dangerous. This was anything but ‘music for the masses’, they felt. In such a situation, a composer like Guo who had ‘misbehaved’ was all the more suspect.

On one memorable night in Shanghai, 8 November 1986, when the prizes were awarded following the first composition contest of the Chinese Record Company, Guo Wenjing’s Suspended Ancient Coffins and He Xuntian’s Sounds of Nature were so controversial that the jury – presided over by senior composer Ding Shande – managed only with great difficulty to reach agreement and award them each a second prize. No first prizes were awarded, much to the surprise of the audience. If Guo was still in the picture as an artist, his forced departure to Sichuan did put him in a difficult position.

You went back to Sichuan in 1983. That must have been with a heavy heart.

GWJ: ‘I returned to work with the Song and Dance Troupe in Chongqing, but most of us felt that Beijing was the place to be if you wanted to develop your art and become more successful. We had not yet expanded our horizons beyond that. We did not think of New York or Paris as future possibilities. Everyone who had come from outside to study at the Central Conservatory tried to think of a way to stay on in Beijing. It made one’s future, or that is how we felt. That is how I felt about it, too. I wanted to stay on.’

So what went wrong? Why did they send you away?

GWJ: ‘I had made an error. During one’s study, one wasn’t allowed to marry. This was a regulation in all the institutions of higher education in China, including the conservatories. The fact was that I had married a woman I loved. I was just very young and naive. I suppose I didn’t give a damn about regulations... In any event, they forced me to leave Beijing... I remember that many fellow students felt very sorry for me. They thought that now everything had collapsed for Guo Wenjing. Back to Sichuan! Finished, fallen to the very bottom, from where he had crawled his way up with so much effort! Well, that was pretty much my own view, too, at that time... At present, I realize that my return to Sichuan was actually a good thing – it had many advantages.

First of all, in the song and dance troupe, I was confronted again with my own musical past, a musical world that I knew very well. After my studies in Beijing, I was able to listen to the same music with very different ears... Secondly, many of my colleagues who stayed on in Beijing were given teaching jobs; they had little or no opportunity to compose. By contrast, I spent most of my time writing scores for films and TV productions in Chongqing; in the busiest periods I produced a film score nearly every month! It gave me continuous
practice, and I was able to check all the time how my music sounded in performance. Writing film music would be a wonderful exercise for any graduate student in composition.

How did you get so many assignments?

GWJ: 'I don't know. Maybe because I'd been a student in Beijing. In any event, it provided me with a very broad training. One film would be situated in modern urban surroundings, the next one in a rural village one thousand years ago. Every new situation required a different style, a different type of music. Sometimes I composed from scratch, but in other instances I first undertook research.'

Ultimately you have not included a single film score in your official list of works.

GWJ: 'They were commissions for special purposes, not pieces as I wanted to write them myself.'

What about 'Sutra on Tibetan Streamers', your tone poem of 1986?

GWJ: 'That was actually written after a trip with a film maker to Tibet. In that sense it was the result of an opportunity offered by film, but the music was created independently. The streamers of the title are long banners with religious texts written on them. You find them in every possible colour, in white, yellow, blue, red, green. The Tibetans place them in temples, or on mountain tops, anywhere.'

Next came your Violin Concerto of 1986-87. Why did you call it 'Local rhyme of China'?

GWJ: 'That's a reference to local opera. The violin solo sections in this work imitate vocal techniques found in Chinese opera. Each of its four movements (lento-allegretto-grave-presto) is inspired by an opera mask. In fact, I also made liberal use of a twelve tone row in the concerto:

\[ \text{[Musical notation]} \]

The work sounds sufficiently Western to give the impression that it was written by a Westerner who absorbed some Chinese influences.

GWJ: 'I only realized in 1987 that I had incorporated rather many Western forms in my music: sonata, symphony, concerto... That's simply the way I learned it.'

Is that something you want to get rid of now?

GWJ: 'Recently I've been writing some works for Chinese instruments. The technique is not as advanced as that of many Western instruments. So you can't hide yourself behind a lot of virtuoso writing, as you might do with Western instruments. In a Chinese ensemble piece, a lot more depends on genuine expressiveness. But I don't want to write for Chinese
instruments all the time. It would be like putting on a traditional costume. I prefer to realize Chinese music in all sorts of new ways. The plain fact is that Western music offers certain expressive possibilities which cannot be found in Chinese music. I see no reason why I should avoid them.’

How do you look upon your Violin Concerto today?

GWJ: ‘I’m still very fond of it. But recently I listened to it again, and noticed that it is too long, and too much influenced by Western music. For composers outside Europe and the USA it is very difficult to break away from Western influences. Some will need as many as ten years to achieve this, others may never succeed. Yes, I would like to get away from the Western impact. It may just not be possible to escape it entirely. Can you think of any Asian composer who has managed to do that? Takemitsu perhaps? Tan Dun? Isang Yun?’

Shu dao nan (1987) and final years in Sichuan
It is the voice of Shostakovich that rings through Guo’s symphonic cantata Shu dao nan (1987), the last work he finished in Sichuan, and one of his most successful ones. It is a setting of the poem ‘Hard roads of Shu’ by that great Sichuanese poet and restless traveller Li Bai (also pronounced Li Bo, 701-762). Li Bai’s celebrated text describes the impenetrable landscape of the Qinling Mountains which, in the old days, separated the Shu region (Sichuan Province) from China’s then capital Chang’an. It starts with a cry of awe:

Ah ya ya!
What heights! What towering cliffs!
How hard the roads of Shu, more precipitous than a path straight to the sky!

Guo’s music epitomizes the wild scenery of Sichuan’s mountains, but the hard roads of the text are also metaphorical. The basic mood of the music is dark and cataclysmic; Shu dao nan appears to mourn a great tragedy, perhaps the victims of a war – most likely the ill-fated history of the Chinese people in the twentieth century – in a manner close to what Shostakovich achieved in his brooding symphonies. It is hardly a suprise that Shu dao nan became very popular in China.

The cantata had its premiere in Beijing on the 29th of April 1987. The same concert included the Violin Concerto (also a premiere), and Suspended Coffins. All these works were issued on a commercial tape.7 One year later, Suspended Coffins and Shu dao nan featured in a programme by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra during a festival of new Chinese music in Glasgow (13 and 17 September 1988).

The Cantata marked your first real success as a composer in China?

7 For further details on Guo’s music on commercial records, see the composer’s list of works at the end of this article.
GWJ: ‘Yes. Many critics in the West, including Chou Wen-chung and a certain Frank Kouwenhoven, branded *Shu dao nan* as too Western, too much influenced by Shostakovich, but in China it was very well received. The work won many prizes. It was felt to be a very powerful piece, particularly the tenor part, which is close to Sichuan Opera in style. I still appreciate this composition very much, even if the rest of the vocal parts indeed resemble Western music.’

*What was your point of departure in this piece?*

GWJ: ‘I was particularly keen to explore sound colours and the use of the human voice, especially the tenor voice. I wrote a solo part requiring a very wide range, and stipulating that the tenor voice and the chorus should not sing in a Western way. I mean, they shouldn’t use any vibrato. It’s actually hard to find people in China, especially in choirs, who have not been trained to sing primarily in Western style. They all use lots of vibrato. If you ask them to sing in a folk style they tend to complain that it spoils their voices. Yes, I’ve thought for a while about employing genuine folk singers, but they wouldn’t be able to read my music. A tape? No, that wouldn’t be a solution. It would no longer be my own music.

*There’s quite a gap in your list after ‘Shu dao nan’. The next piece you have retained, ‘She huo’, was written four years later.*

GWJ: ‘In that period my daughter was born. I wrote lots of works for television and film. Our expanded family needed money.’

**She huo, a rural folk ritual (1991)**

In the late 1980s, the Chongqing Song and Dance Troupe faced a drop in popularity. Growing numbers of Chinese bought television sets and were no longer interested in the company’s concerts and ballets. In March 1990, Guo Wenjing returned to Beijing, while his wife and daughter stayed on in Sichuan for a while. Back in the capital, Guo resumed his connections with the Central Conservatory, and divided his time between teaching and writing music for films, in order to support himself and his family.

His position was now better than it had been for many years. He became assistant head of the Composition Department at the Conservatory in April 1993, and grew into something of an artistic celebrity, like his colleagues Tan Dun and Qu Xiaosong. Most of the conflicts of the past seemed buried. But in the early 1990s there were new obstacles and problems to overcome. Guo had no shortage of ideas or convictions, yet he wasn’t quite sure where he was heading, and whether there would be any genuine opportunities for him to build a long-term career in Beijing.

When we first met him in June 1990, and asked him whether he wanted to go abroad, like so many of his colleagues, the reply came with difficulty. He felt no urge to leave his native country, but he was shaken by the political

*‘It may just not be possible to escape the Western impact entirely. Can you think of any Asian composer who did?’*
events. This was a period of heightened tensions in all institutions of higher learning in the capital, following the crackdown on the Tian'anmen Democracy movement of June 1989. Yet Guo was not pessimistic. He felt that the older generation in the Conservatory had decided to support new Chinese music. ‘Even the most conservative people have changed their attitudes,’ he said. And he added that he hoped the lack of money for concerts and the political tensions would turn out to be merely temporary.

The first work he wrote upon his return to Beijing was *She Huo*, a piece for Western ensemble with added Chinese percussion (1991). This was the first of a series of works commissioned by foreign musicians – in this case the Nieuw Ensemble in Amsterdam. It was the work in which he found his true voice as a composer, and which marked the genuine beginning of his international career. Critics abroad generally responded enthusiastically, and the members of the Nieuw Ensemble became staunch supporters of Guo’s music.


‘Music which is reminiscent of Ustvolskaya in its vigour and expressive power.’ [E. Voermans, *Het Parool*, 3/4/91]

‘Guo turned the Nieuw Ensemble into a kind of Chinese peasant band, for example by re-tuning the instruments and letting the flutist sing into his instrument. The result is hard to judge. The music sounds exotic, at times exciting, but it also strikes me as rather crude.’ [R. Hazendonk, *De Telegraaf*, 5/4/91]

The magnificent instrumental writing and the continuous flow of ideas turn this evocation of ancient rites into a stunning experience.’ [J.E. Foussnaquer, *Le Monde*, 28/10/95]

In China, *She Huo* was first heard only six years later, when the Nieuw Ensemble came to Beijing as one of the first Western groups to perform Chinese contemporary music there. They had *She Huo* in their repertoire. The title of the work refers to the blessing and thanksgiving ceremonies that are part of Chinese folk festivals, often in the form of outdoor theatrical performances. The atmosphere of these performances is generally bustling and optimistic in nature, although the rituals are not looked upon as mere entertainment.

**How did Chinese listeners respond to this particular work?**

GWJ: ‘Naturally, most of those who attended the performances of the Nieuw Ensemble were familiar with contemporary music. They tended to like the music, and reacted very enthusiastically. But I find it hard to say how the general public in China would judge my music, or that of my contemporaries. I don’t suppose it would make much sense to them. The general attitude remained one of polite interest and respect, so if people did not grasp the essence of new music, they may still have thought that it was probably good in its own right.’

*You never played any of your music to villagers in the countryside? I could imagine them being very enthusiastic. Especially a piece like ‘She Huo’, with its vigorous cross-rhythms. Recently we heard some traditional cymbal players who put up an astonishing performance which reminded me of your piece.*

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8 The work requires pairs of high-pitched, medium-pitched and low-pitched Chinese cymbals as used in Beijing and Sichuan Opera, as well as a high-pitched opera gong, a Chinese woodblock and various Chinese drums.
GWJ: ‘Usually folk musicians in China do cross-rhythms with two players playing in alternation. But in She Huo you have three percussionists playing very rapid notes in alternation. That’s a great deal more difficult.’

*Does the title of your piece refer in particular to the New Year Festival?*

GWJ: ‘The way I see it, my work is unrelated to the New Year Festival. I wasn’t thinking of any particular calendric or regional event when I wrote it. Basically, there are so many traditional festivals in China, and the New Year Festival happens to be the least meaningful of them – it has become a rather hollow activity, often consisting of nothing but eating, drinking and having fun.’

*How did you get the commission for this work?*

GWJ: ‘Tan Dun had mentioned my name to Joel Bons, the artistic leader of the Nieuw Ensemble. I was told that Joel mockingly responded like this: “Who is this Guo Wenjing? We don’t want him.” Haha! Well, they gave me the commission!’

*You applied some very unusual tunings in ‘She Huo’. 9*

GWJ: ‘Yes, I’m fascinated by the phenomenon of Chinese folk instruments using specific tunings. Different regions within China all have their own stylistic features where instrumental folk music is concerned. This includes specific tunings. You can even come across very different conventions of tuning within one particular region. There may be considerable differences between individual players, and one player can change the tuning of his instrument in between two pieces, going about it so individually that he actually creates a new work! I took inspiration from that when I wrote She Huo.’

*At that time you were also working on various commissioned pieces for Chinese instruments: a bamboo flute concerto for the Conservatory’s Chinese Orchestra, and a programmatic piece, ‘Melodies of West Yunnan’, for the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. Why did you make two versions of the flute concerto, one with Western accompaniment?*

GWJ: ‘The version for Chinese orchestra has been performed many times in Beijing. Some years ago the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in Sweden asked me for a version for Western orchestra. Personally, I’m rather fond of the other piece, Melodies of West Yunnan, which is plain and clear in style, and like Sutra on Tibetan Streamers the indirect result of a film journey. The film in question, The King of Chess (Qi Wang), based on a novel by Zhong Acheng, was about a young man who travelled to Yunnan during the Cultural Revolution. Melodies of West Yunnan had nothing to do with the music which I wrote for the film. It was a separate composition, but it was inspired by what I saw and heard while I accompanied the film crew to western Yunnan in 1987. People played some folk music there, a performance by a local song and dance troupe. So, eventually, I incorporated some music from the Awa and Jinuo tribes in my work, gleaned from a book on Yunnan folk music.’

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9 For example, the strings of the mandolin are tuned a half-tone apart. The cello has F#–A–Ab–Bb, the viola B–A–G–F, and the violin: A–A–A–A.
Wolf Cub Village (1994)

The pieces for Chinese instruments were well-received, but it was Guo's exploration of the combined forces of Western instruments and Chinese percussion in She Huo which set the tone for his next major work, the opera Wolf Cub Village. This work was again commissioned by the Nieuw Ensemble. Its premiere in the Holland Festival, 24 June 1994, conducted by Ed Spanjaard, was a major triumph for the composer, librettist Zeng Li and the performers. There were concert performances of the opera in the Festival d'Automne in Paris (1995) and elsewhere, and the work resulted in a contract with Ricordi, and, eventually, a commission to write another opera, for the Almeida Theatre in London.

Wolf Cub Village is a free adaptation of 'Diary of a Madman' (Kuangren riji) from Lu Xun's famous collection of stories 'Call to Arms' (Nahan). Lu Xun characterizes Chinese society as cannibalistic in its lust for violence and destruction. Guo Wenjing claims that he used the story primarily because he liked its suspense and its preoccupation with ghosts, witchcraft, and fantastic and mysterious events. According to the Chinese music journal Renmin yinyue, Guo had toyed for ten years with the idea of writing an opera based on one of Lu Xun's stories. It took him nine months to compose the piece; he finished it on 20 April 1994.

On the surface, 'Diary of a Madman' portrays a man who thinks that he lives in an environment of man-eaters. He imagines that the people in his village are all cannibals or wolves, and that he may be their next victim. In Guo Wenjing's opera, a village doctor forces the man to take some medicine, after which he calms down, but comes to the conclusion that he, too, is a man-eater, like the others. He is co-responsible for 'four thousand years of man eating' which have gone on in his village.

Lu Xun's 'Diary of a Madman' first appeared in China in 1918, when the country was torn apart by Chinese warlords, foreign invasions, famines and war. Lu Xun protested against this gradual collapse of the country and the people he loved. Instead of trying to build a healthy nation, Chinese men were fighting and eating each other. 'Diary of a Madman' was the first modern short story written in vernacular Chinese. Its ten-odd pages had a major impact on contemporary Chinese literature and social thought. Guo Wenjing turned the dark tale into a shattering theatrical statement. He cast the tormented spiritual world of the 'madman' in a very personal musical idiom, with a strong emphasis on percussive and single sounds. Here are some excerpts from critics' reviews:

'Wolf Cub Village is a Chinese Wozzeck, not only because it so powerfully expresses the idea that spiritual confusion may be caused by a sick mind as much as by a sick society, but also because the dramatic structure is so tight and the music so very penetrating. The madman is portrayed with poignancy by the British tenor Nigel Robson - his performance is a truly crazy achievement. Both vocally and dramatically he is required to play on all registers, to express virtually every possible shade of fear and confusion, to make his changing moods heard in the most extraordinary glissandi and falsetto pitches - rendered even more difficult by the fact that the entire opera is sung in Chinese. (...) Guo's brilliant and colourful music fully carries the dramatic events, and is executed with crystal clarity by the Nieuw Ensemble conducted by Ed Spanjaard. Wolf Cub Village is heart-rending, bizarre, deeply moving, and ravishingly beautiful.' [F. van der Waa, De Volkskrant, 27/6/94]

'This opera equals the best and greatest works written on the theme of madness. One thinks of Wozzeck, notably in the encounters between the hero and his doctor. One thinks of Ligeti, of Maxwell Davies' Eight chants for a mad king, and above all, of Shostakovich's The Nose, with which Guo's music shares many dark and savage moments, and an opulent use of percussion. (...) This opera goes straight for the listener's throat and it doesn't let go. (...) How can such a brief
Two scenes from the 1998 Almeida opera production of Guo Wenjing's *Wolf Cub Village*, with tenor Nigel Robson as the madman.
opera contain so much music? (...) It’s music in a state of total panic...’ [J.E. Fousnaquer, Le Monde, 28/10/95]

‘Guo’s rough and exciting music sometimes approaches Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring in colourfulness, and drives on relentlessly. He punctuates the explosive expressiveness of his score with a number of deeply moving quiet arias for the madman’s sister.’ [R. Hazendonk, Het Parool, 28/6/94]

Wolf Cub Village is one of the most successful of all Chinese modern operas. A monument, on a par with Tan Dun’s Marco Polo. Its success turned Guo into a much-demanded composer abroad. The London Sinfonietta, the Swiss ensemble Contrechamps, the Norwegian Festival Ultima and Radio France all performed or broadcast his works, and audiences were introduced to the composer in person via Eline Flipse’s prize-winning documentary ‘Broken Silence’, which was produced in 1994.

I found your opera just as surprising as Tan Dun’s ‘Marco Polo’, from a dramatic point of view perhaps even more convincing. The libretto is wonderful.

GWJ: ‘A clear story is even more important for Chinese spectators than it is for Westerners. They demand it. So that’s what I tried to achieve. The ultimate fate of the madman, the course of his illness... I’ve tried to capture his entire development in the music.’

It strikes me that Lu Xun is not as popular a writer in China as is suggested in Chinese academic writings and propaganda.

GWJ: ‘He is often disliked because of his sharp tongue and caustic wit. He does not tolerate a single weakness in Chinese people. He can be quite deadly in his criticism, regardless of people’s position in society. Traditional literati like Confucius were more disposed towards compromise and the golden mean. But why did China’s history go awry? Why was Mao Zedong given absolute power? Wasn’t it because so many Chinese were hampered by exactly the kind of weaknesses that Lu Xun so relentlessly exposed and condemned?’

In the act of addressing China’s problems, Lu Xun also transcended his own country’s grim history. The human faults which he exposed are essentially universal ones.

GWJ: ‘Yes, but still I feel that Lu Xun was very much a patriot. He hated China’s backwardness. He had no choice but to reproach the Chinese for their faults. For him there was no alternative. China wouldn’t survive without change, and the country could hardly expect to grow into an important nation by bluntly importing technology from the West. No salvation could be expected from the likes of Philips or Sony. The country needed a surgical operation... right here!’ [Grabs a knife from the table and points it at his head.]

Had Lu Xun been alive in the 1950s, he would have been killed or persecuted?

GWJ: ‘I’ve heard many people say that. It’s certainly true that China has witnessed difficult times. But the situation has improved a lot. There is a great deal of relaxation now. The comments I made just now will not put me in danger in China. Many people have condemned Deng Xiaoping for his role in suppressing the protests of 4 June 1989, but he has done a great deal to improve the country’s situation. One just hopes that further changes
Pages from a composer’s diary (1994)

In June 1994, GWJ and his wife Cheng Yan travelled to Holland for rehearsals of his new opera Wolf Cub Village. In NRC Handelsblad he wrote a public diary of this period in Holland. Here are some excerpts.

Thursday, 2 June
Rain. I hadn’t thought it would be so difficult to pass the customs. They interrogated us for a long time, and all our suitcases had to be opened for inspection. I wonder why they were so particularly interested in the value of the Chinese gongs I’d brought along. In any event, after customs, we were heartily welcomed by our friends of the Nieuw Ensemble, who made us forget all the unpleasant experiences.

Sunday 5 June
Cloudy. In the afternoon, the Nieuw Ensemble performs my work She huo. Well done, much wilder and with far less restraint than in 1991. More un-Western wildness.

As many as 16 Chinese contemporary pieces have been programmed for the Holland Festival 1994. I believe that, right now, more new Chinese music is being played in the West than in China. And Western musicians play these works better than their Chinese colleagues. This is a big problem for China. I wonder whether all the new Chinese music of the final years of this century is going to be premiered in the West, and published by Westerners.

Holland is still a very remote and unknown place for me. (...) In my youth I never imagined that, one day, I would visit Holland for performances of my music. When will Chinese musicians in Beijing play the music of Dutch composers? In the evening I went to see a performance of Dutch composer Rob Zuidam’s opera Freeze, in the Westergasfabriek [a former gasworks turned into a theatre]. It has some very good music. My own opera will be performed here as well. The Westergasfabriek is an excellent place, it fits in very well with my opera Wolf Cub Village. The bare and desolate atmosphere offers a splendid backdrop for ‘eating people’.

Saturday 11 June
This morning the singers and the ensemble had their first joint rehearsal in the Westergasfabriek. I’ve lost my trust in this opera. I think I’m a worthless composer. In the evening I hear a very moving concert of choral music in the Old Church. The ancient songs touch me so deeply that I suddenly lose my entire belief in contemporary music. I look upwards, at the huge dome of the church. I’m reminded of the classical Chinese image of a scholar who, in the verdant and solemn silence of a mountain landscape, softly touches his zither....

After the concert, while leaving the church, I see a whole series of brightly lit windows with girls standing behind them. Qu Xiaosong says, laughing: how can people inside the church resist such a temptation? I think that the Dutch attitude towards life is fairly down-to-earth.

The red-light district in Amsterdam is quite amazing. I wonder what feminists have to say about this. In Asia, all women’s movements are against prostitution. Some Chinese tend to feel pity for girls of this profession. But while walking through the district, I find that I cannot share that view. I rather get the impression that these women are mentally superior to the men who observe them. I’m convinced that these women can understand the men best. Behind their smiles there is probably some gloating. It may well be that, in their eyes, none of these men have so much as a thread left to wear on their bodies.

Sunday 12 June
Clear sky. The historical atmosphere in Amsterdam exerts an endless fascination on me. I continually feel as if I’m living a few hundred years ago, having gone back in the past. Beijing used to have a strong historical atmosphere of its own, and it should have remained like that. Now the entire city has been filled up with monotonous, grey concrete flat blocks.

Looking up at the stone-built Royal Palace, from the central square, I’m reminded of the wooden palaces of the Chinese emperors. Two very different styles of architecture. On the outside, the Chi-
nese palaces are much more colourful and majestic; they’re more imposing and take up more space than the Dutch ones. But the 5,000-year-old, all-powerful Chinese empire with its palaces was smothered in revolution, while Holland still has its Royal House. (...) Laozi said to Confucius: ‘Look, all my teeth have gone, but I still possess a tongue.’ Something that is too powerful will ultimately break down much faster than anything else.

**Monday 13 June**

A bright sky. We’ve rehearsed the entire opera. The Chinese language is an enormous obstacle for Western singers. Such a strange idiom makes it incredibly hard for them to articulate all the sounds in a proper way... If I try to sing something in a foreign language, it sounds even more horrible. I can’t open my mouth, and if I do succeed in opening my mouth, I can’t get it shut again. In any event, their diligence and persistence have really touched me. God, make them succeed in learning it all by heart!

**Friday 17 June**

Now, finally, the world cup soccer, USA 1994, to which I’ve been looking forward so much, has started! How fortunate for me to be in Europe right at this time. In Beijing, I wouldn’t have had any choice but to get up every morning at three clock, for a whole month on end, to watch television. Well, just wait until the world cup 2002 is held in Asia. Then it will be European soccer fans’ turn to sit up at night in front of their television sets. Oh well, real soccer freaks all around the world don’t really mind that!

**Saturday 18 June**

No rehearsal today. Joel Bons [artistic leader of the Nieuw Ensemble] drove us to the beach today. I walked in the seawater with bare feet. The seawind blew in my face. I was able to get rid of all my tiredness and worries from the rehearsals. (...) I wish my little daughter could be here to enjoy the scenery with me. (...)

**Monday 20 June**

The conductor Ed Spanjaard has changed the tempo of the fourth section of my opera. As a consequence, the ending no longer sounds monotonous or boring. It’s simply wonderful to work with Ed. (...)

**Tuesday 21 June**

The brilliant acting of Nigel [Robson] has restored my confidence in this opera. I’m still not used to all the customary embracing that Westerners seem so fond of, but today I couldn’t help embracing Nigel after the rehearsal! The rehearsals are finished now.

will come about gradually in China, and not abruptly and violently, as in Russia and some parts of Eastern Europe.’

*There is a major role for Chinese percussion in many of your works, and notably so in the opera. I’d say that in this respect you adhere very much to an age-old tradition.*

GWJ: ‘In the oldest Chinese ensemble music, thousands of years ago, metal bells, chime stones and various types of drums played prominent roles. Ever since, the sounds of Chinese ensembles have been dominated by loud and resonant percussion instruments. This is true for folk ensembles but also for temple and court orchestras. Percussion is a very important element in the Chinese ensemble culture. I am particularly fond of the percussion heard in southwestern folk music, so I took inspiration from that for *Wolf Cub Village.*’
The other medium which dominates in many of your best pieces is the human voice. Many people feel that your talent lies specifically with human voices and percussion.

GWJ: ‘Eh... I suppose they’re right! Both these elements derive from traditional music. Recently I was struck once again by the differences between Western and Chinese vocal music, when I heard a concert in Beijing which featured Messiaen as well as Peking Opera. The piece by Messiaen consisted of a prolonged series of clear-cut pitches, which gave it a certain melodical sameness. By contrast, the opera piece sounded so much more flexible and more varied in colour. There was only one tune, but the melody was vibrant and moving all the time. You heard the lute trrr dang trrr dang, and the Chinese fiddle dzjhorn dzjhorn... So many details! A single tone would start off with a very big sound and then gradually turn into a very thin line with a tiny tail... I suddenly felt how much Western composers could still learn from Chinese music!’

Have you ever thought of performing your own music, as a singer, I mean?

GWJ: ‘I’m not suited for the job. As a student I got the highest marks for writing and playing by ear, but for this... [hums softly and continues in a soft voice] only a meagre little “4”... Around 1992 I wrote some music for a film about the youth of revolutionary composer Nie Er, and I happened to sing a tune for the soundtrack. I was shouting some kind of Yunnan folk song, haha. No, I really wouldn’t be able to sing my own works.’

Inscriptions on Bone (1996)

In the next two years, Guo Wenjing added two attractive chamber works for Chinese instruments to his oeuvre. Late Spring (1995) was commissioned by Maison de Radio France and premiered in February 1996. A light and pleasant polylogue for pipa, zheng, ruan, bass, erhu, chinese flutes, and percussion, this work was inspired by one of Hang Tingjian’s (1045–1105) wistful poems:

Spring has gone – no one knows how – but where?
It has left no trace
Is neither here nor there.
Solitude is all we find.
If any person knows the true way
Let him ask spring to stay with us.
Without leaving a trace, spring has gone.
The nightingales know what is relevant
But who can understand their songs?
Look, beneath the rose bushes, there’s one passing just now!

Another piece with strongly traditional colourings is Drama, for three pairs of Chinese cymbals and the players’ voices (1996), commissioned by a percussion group in Cincinnati. Drama employs only three small-sized instruments, and contains no explicit references to any programmatic content beyond its title, but the piece is more ambitious in scope than its predecessor, full of subtle rhythmic play and delicate timbral effects. Guo calls it an ‘encyclopedia for cymbals’. It has been taken up by various percussion groups in Europe.

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10 The premiere performance, by the Ensemble Huaxia from Beijing, conducted by Zong Ye, took place during the Présences Festival, which was held from 2 to 24 February 1996 in Paris.
Arguably the most important work to emerge in that year was *Inscriptions on Bone*, for alto voice and 15 instruments, in which Guo Wenjing portrayed in music an ancient Chinese legend about the goddess Nüwa who repaired heaven. The piece, another work commissioned by the Nieuw Ensemble, demonstrated his continued interest in voices and percussion, and in the potential of mysterious tales, but also marked an artistic turning-point in terms of his choice of melodic materials. *Inscriptions on Bone* premiered successfully in Amsterdam during the Holland Festival 1996. Music critics were unanimous in their praise:

> 'The work has the same ghost-like atmosphere as Guo’s opera, not only because of the chilling and snappy sounds of metal on metal produced by the four percussionists, but also because of the extraordinary convulsions in the vocal part, sung magnificently by the alto Anna Larsson. (...) Silence plays a crucial part in this score. Every note, every individual sound works like an interruption of the silence, even when the ensemble is playing at full steam.' [J. Oskamp, *De Volkskrant*, 13/6/96]

> 'The tearing apart of the skies, an all-consuming and inexorable fire – Guo Wenjing is at his most inspired in the depiction of such scenes of terror. (...) His music has compelling and powerfully built-up episodes which surge across the stage like tidal waves. Anna Larsson knows how to tear apart the skies. Her performance was full of sting and claw. Superbly controlled madness, never resorting to hysteria, in one word: magnificent!' [E. Vermeulen, *De Volkskrant*, 13/3/97]

The alto singer tells the tale of a disastrous collapse of the firmament, which results in general chaos, the raging of fierce fires on earth and an upsurge of evil spirits who chase and devour innocent people. The goddess Nüwa repairs the cracks in the firmament, supports the heaven’s four corners with legs cut from a giant tortoise, and restores order and peace. With *Inscriptions on Bone*, Guo confirmed the artistic promises of his first opera *Wolf Cub Village* without repeating himself, and strengthened his appeal as an essentially dramatic composer.

*Let me first ask you a question about ‘Drama’, which is so very economical in texture and resources. How did you come to write that piece?*

GWJ: ‘The percussion players in Cincinnati were about to start on a concert tour, and they were complaining to me about the many heavy instruments they would have to carry along. So could I limit the number of instruments involved, and make things easier for them? It was said half in jest, but that’s what I did, I wrote a piece just for a few hand-held cymbals.’

*I remember you being uncertain about ‘Inscriptions on Bone’ on the eve of the premiere. You said that this time you had really failed to pull it off. But when the concert came, the music sounded splendid.*

GWJ: ‘Yes. I remember the rehearsal for the premiere starting off rather badly. At that time, I didn’t realize that the musicians were not putting all their energy into it because they wanted to save their best effort for the actual concert. I was also unaccustomed to the acoustics of the Concertgebouw. Ultimately, everything went fine.’

*Some time later, ‘Inscriptions on Bone’ was performed in Beijing. I remember you saying that people in Beijing were critical of the vocal soloist Anna Larsson. Do you think they would have preferred a Chinese singer? I thought Anna was pretty good!*
GWJ: ‘Well, I liked the performance, and the audience liked it, too. Anna’s really very good. Just think of those very low sounds right at the beginning... the way she captures those deep sounds! Very beautiful. It was only my colleagues Qu Xiaosong and Chen Qigang who were somewhat critical of her contribution. They said it sounded too much like belcanto. They would have liked to hear the Chinese opera sounds come out more clearly.’

In the programme notes of that particular concert, you wrote that you expected the next century to turn, musically speaking, into another kind of ‘18th century’. What did you mean by that? A return to the ideals of 18th century musical beauty?

GWJ: ‘That’s part of it. I was thinking of a number of important composers in the 20th century, notably Prokofiev and Stravinsky, who progressed towards the 18th and 19th century, in romantic and neo-classical works. I call this ‘progress’, not a move backwards. In recent years, many composers have begun to write more melodious works. I’m not saying that they simply copy the past – they are still creating original works of art. I mean, you don’t mistake Philip Glass for Bach. Personally, I still don’t quite know what to think of this development. Maybe it’s me who has changed.’

Changed?

GWJ: ‘I’ve changed a lot, especially since Inscriptions on Bone. While I was working on that piece, writing out the solo part for alto voice and the part for the harp, I noticed that I could only use perfect fourths and fifths. It was impossible to apply any other melodic intervals. I can’t explain how this happened. It wasn’t a conscious decision. Something inside you makes you evolve in a certain direction. I can only listen to my inner voice. The fact is that my music has become more harmonious in expression, and melodically more dependent on fourths and fifths.’

Wasn’t your opera ‘Wolf Cub Village’ already quite melodious? There is that beautiful, spine-chilling moment, just before the soprano solo begins...

GWJ: ‘The opera had a very good balance between modern and melodious elements. I wrote some very attractive melodies for the soprano. Without those tunes the opera would have become unbearable. Too much shrieking and tension! But these are qualities that you cannot theorize about. What exactly has made the opera into such a success? It’s hard to say. While you compose you just think about the final result, not about how you will put everything together. The first thing you have in mind is the final result.’

How do you get there? What is your point of departure when you compose?

GWJ: ‘For a start, usually just one part of the music comes to my mind. Maybe a segment from the middle, or perhaps what turns out to be the final part. Maybe I have to add something, or to find a section which can precede it. I usually start with a colour, perhaps just a vague colour, and gradually I begin to perceive some sounds which fit that colour. I write things down in a score immediately. I don’t make preliminary sketches.’

Did the staging of your opera ‘Wolf Cub Village’ match the colours which you saw while you were composing? The lighting was quite brilliant!
GWJ: ‘I actually provided instructions for the lighting of Wolf Cub Village. I imagined twilight at the beginning – the madman makes his entry at dusk – and then it turns to nighttime darkness. When the doctor arrives to examine the madman, a fire flares up in the darkness. The final scene takes place in the calm pure whiteness of morning light. These changes run parallel with the madman’s disease, with his rise in temperature. At sunset he begins to grow feverish, and by the time the doctor arrives his body temperature has run very high – the fire in the dark. After having swallowed his medicine, he wakes up in a calm mood. His fever has abated, his forehead has grown cold and he feels more clear.’

American contacts (1996)
Wolf Cub Village and Inscriptions on Bone firmly bolstered Guo Wenjing’s reputation at home and abroad, and new commissions kept coming in. For the Italian ensemble Ars Ludi (who visited Beijing in October 1996) he wrote an Elegy for soprano solo and three percussionists (1996). The work was commissioned by the Italian Embassy in Beijing.

While most of Guo’s ties with the West now lay in Europe, there was a growing interest for his music in the United States, too. In the autumn of 1996, Guo spent several months in New York, living at the home of fellow composer and friend Qu Xiaosong, who had settled in Brooklyn. Guo met with many other Chinese composers who had migrated, and he presented some papers at American universities. He also worked, with some difficulty, on yet another commission from the Nieuw Ensemble: a cello concertino.

He visited America at the invitation of the Asian Culture Centre. A handful of his works had already been performed in the States11, but while few new performances took place during his stay, the encounters he had with Chinese and American composers and musicians proved fruitful and gave him many new ideas. The Kronos Quartet, which had already commissioned some Chinese works, showed enthusiasm about Tan Dun’s Ghost Opera, a string quartet with pipa, and now asked Guo to produce a piece for them.

What did you do in New York?

GWJ: ‘I went to concerts at the Metropolitan and the Avery Fisher Hall. I heard the New York Philharmonic. I also went to many smaller concert halls and Broadway shows, and saw some movies. So basically I looked around. And I wrote the Cello Concertino.’

They didn’t perform your music while you were there?

GWJ: ‘There was a concert with my percussion piece Drama in Michigan, and one in Cincinnati, and I presented some papers at the Conservatory of Cincinnati and at the Manhattan School of Music, where Lam Bunching acted as my interpreter. Furthermore I looked around in Philadelphia, Washington DC, Boston, Baltimore, the Peabody Conservatory, where I went to see Chen Yi. Now Professor Chen Yi! She is doing well.’

How did you feel about America?

GWJ: ‘Well, I spent most of my time in New York, a very special city that probably does not represent America as a whole. But I liked it very much. The whole world comes together in

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11 Notably the ‘Suspended Coffins’ music for orchestra in 1984, and She Huo in October 1991, by the New Music Consort of New York.
that city – so many different cultures. I was inspired to re-think my own music and to consider the option of incorporating more elements of different cultures into my own works. Until that time my music had mainly been influenced by Han Chinese culture, particularly the traditional music of Sichuan, in southwestern China. I had never considered using, for example, elements of Jewish music in my own works. Or Dutch music, for that matter... When it comes to the impact of foreign music on Chinese traditions, one should be aware of the fact that such an impact has existed from the Tang Dynasty onwards, probably even in earlier times, for thousands of years. So why should I restrict myself to Sichuanese music and try to incorporate just one particular style or genre?

Actually, do you remember the first time we were in Holland, at the time of this concert of new Chinese music in Amsterdam, in 1991? One thing made a deep impression on me. Preceding that concert, you happened to present a kind of introductory lecture, and you were showing some slides of Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet and Yunnan. In your view all this was part of Chinese culture. So I said to myself, "Look at this Dutchman, this European, who is thinking of China in such broad terms." I had never thought of it like that, and I didn’t agree with you. I felt that only Han Chinese music was part of my own culture. Even now I’m not sure why you showed those pictures and why you wanted to present all that as Chinese culture."

_I suppose I just wanted to stress that China is the home of many different cultural realms, that it is a truly international culture, as much as America or Europe. When you enter Xinjiang or Tibet, politically speaking you may still be in China, but you enter very different worlds. But let's get back to America. You didn't feel like staying there?

GWJ: ‘Settling, you mean? No. Life is not easy for many of the Chinese composers who live in the United States. Cheng Yi and Bright Sheng happen to have jobs, but most of the Chinese composers don’t. And then, New York is a very distracting place, so I didn’t get much rest to compose. I’m not used to composing abroad.’

_China is not very quiet either._

GWJ: ‘Well, one thing is that one may simply have certain habits or certain locations with which one feels at home. Some people need to sit on a specific side of the table, or work on a special kind of paper, otherwise they can’t get anything done... My own habits? I don’t have any special ones, except that I prefer to compose at home, in Beijing.’

_What music did you hear in America?

GWJ: ‘A lot of contemporary works, many of them very technical and complex. I wasn’t very attracted by them. What I did appreciate were... eh, some of those really beautiful
pieces. Hahaha! For example works by David Lang, an American composer of my age. And a few others whose works were played by the Kronos Quartet, relatively unknown artists from Vietnam, Argentina, or Azerbaijan and some other satellite states of the former Soviet Union. Perhaps this is a genuine new direction in contemporary music: people who incorporate influences from native traditional cultures in what they write. After all, traditional music is a living entity, something that grows from the soil, from sun rays or moon beams, from water and air, from nature... Damn it, it can still touch your heart!

You just said you were thinking of incorporating more than just one traditional style in your own music. So not necessarily from your own native soil?

GWJ: ‘Yes, there’s no reason why one couldn’t do that. It doesn’t imply that I believe in “global music”. I don’t! There is no reason for any nation to give up its own culture. There is no way to escape from the facts – even Coca Cola brings along a culture of its own. And you can see the same thing in music. When rock and roll came to China, people liked it, but especially when the music was adapted to incorporate tunes from northwestern Chinese folk music, and still better when Chinese instruments like the suona were used.’

So the impact of Chinese tradition will remain an important element in your music?

GWJ: ‘Yes. But the use of traditional elements as such is not very important. Actually the composers I referred to just now are all considered to be Americans. I visited the American Music Centre, where they told me they had the scores of all the American composers, including Chen Yi and Tan Dun... Haha! They view everyone who is living in the United States as an American composer. But the reason for me to appreciate their music was not that they incorporated elements of traditional music, or happened to be non-Western in origin. I liked their music simply because it sounded natural. Because it was a natural product from the cultures in which they had grown up.’

When you think of combining elements from different cultures, isn’t that something you have actually done all along in your music?

GWJ: ‘Well, then what you are referring to then is just European culture, what one might call the ‘mainstream’ of modern musical culture. But the fact is that Western harmonies, Western music notation or instruments like piano, flute and violin are now used all over the world, they’ve been integrated into many local cultures. They are like cars and electricity – things invented in the West, but now so much incorporated in daily life in non-Western societies that they are no longer looked upon as “Western influence”. What struck me in New York was something else, namely the idea of absorbing in my music elements from other, non-Western traditional cultures, which is a very different matter.’

Can we still distinguish something called a ‘mainstream’ in Western contemporary music? Isn’t everybody now doing everything possible under the sun? We’re faced not so much with a ‘postmodern’ period as a ‘post-stylistical’ one, as John Adams calls it. There are almost as many directions as there are composers.

GWJ: ‘Maybe, but the things taught in music conservatories all over the world now offer the
same points of musical departure for everyone. That’s what I mean by ‘mainstream’. A kind of inescapable basic setting shared by all, just like car traffic or electric light.’

The Cello Concertino (1997)
On Saturday, 8 March 1997, Guo Wenjing’s Concertino for cello and ensemble premiered in the prestigious Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, by the Nieuw Ensemble led by Ed Spanjaard, with Natalia Gutman – in later performances Taco Kooistra – playing the solo part. In the programme notes, Guo said about this piece:

‘I wrote all my works in China, except this one. Is it important? I don’t know. But while I was working on this piece in New York, I felt that I wanted to express something different from what I had produced so far. For that reason I incorporated bird songs and sounds from nature. The final part of the composition is a song of the prairie. I wrote it in a very plain way: I just wanted to please the ear.’

The same concert featured Guo’s orchestration of Shostakovich’s Prelude and Fugue for piano no.19 (from opus 87), a neat and inventive arrangement, which replaced a more ambitious plan on Guo’s part to arrange the first movement of Shostakovich’s Thirteenth Symphony for chamber ensemble. Guo retained the beginning and end of the Shostakovich Prelude and Fugue in its original form, for solo piano, while setting out to orchestrate what evolved in between. Critics praised the instrumentation of the piano piece as effective though perhaps not very exciting, while the Cello Concertino evoked mixed responses:
In contrast to his previous works, written in China, this piece, which in turn surprises and verges on banality, was written in New York. Guo says (...) he tried to express the differences between these two worlds. The singing of birds and (artificial) sounds from nature as opposed to a “song of the prairie”. The latter aspect escaped me. Maybe Guo Wenjing has taken this passage too literally and has tried to please the ears of the listeners too much? Nevertheless – a fascinating composition." [H. Heg, De Volkskrant, 11/3/97]

In music without vocal parts, Guo Wenjing is far less convincing [than in his vocal works]. The concertino is a somewhat naive portrayal of scenery with birds and crickets and an initially largely decorative part for the cello, which eventually changes, without much logic, into a cantillation (...) called “song of the prairie". No, I wish Guo Wenjing would return to fighting black dragons, and leave the little birds to Messiah - all this chirrupping and rustling was too noncommittal for my taste." [E. Vermeulen, NRC Handelsblad, 13/3/97]

The Nieuw Ensemble in Amsterdam has played a major role in the promotion of new Chinese composers, and gave constant support to Guo Wenjing. In 1997 they performed a whole series of concerts dedicated to individual Chinese composers. Their concerts of Guo Wenjing’s music included Inscriptions on Bone, a suite from the opera Wolf Cub Village, a work by one of Guo’s students in Beijing, Chen Dan, and the above-mentioned pieces. In late March 1997, the Nieuw Ensemble toured China with a mixed programme of Dutch and Chinese music, a unique event.

The Nieuw Ensemble was not the first contemporary music group to visit China from abroad. But their concerts were looked upon as a unique event, I think.

GWJ: ‘In the past two decades, many foreign orchestras have come to China. But no other group has had such a good exchange with Chinese Conservatory students as the Nieuw Ensemble. You know why? Because they also played or discussed some of the students’ pieces. Nothing like that had ever happened before! And the concerts were successful. The group has strong affinities with new Chinese music. I’m convinced they’ve played more new Chinese music than any other foreign orchestra. I expect this fact to be noticed in our music history books, because it is such a unique contribution to China’s musical culture. I must say that I sometimes wonder why an ensemble with such a big heart for Chinese music happens to be located so many thousands of kilometres away from my own country! That is a mystery to me.’

Some listeners find it difficult to recognize your ‘voice’ in the Cello Concertino.

GWJ: While I was thinking about that piece, I suddenly had in my mind a beautiful combination of human voices and instruments. I suggested to Joel Bons [artistic leader of the Nieuw Ensemble] to include vocal soloists in the score, but for practical reasons they couldn’t accept that. So, while pondering the Concertino, I continued to be haunted by those sounds for a long time. I was forced to find a new starting point. It was quite maddening... For several weeks I didn’t know what to do... Very frustrating! There was a lot of pressure from my publisher Ricordi. Then I began to compose. The final part, the ‘song of the prairie’, was written in a single evening... In the end, I wasn’t perhaps quite satisfied with the work. Nevertheless, my ‘voice’ may very well continue to sound like this in future, haha! The concerto’s first movement turned out to be problematic. I had imagined a very clear and bright effect [he hums ], but it worked out very differently. However, the middle section [he sings again ] came off exactly as I had envisaged."
You refer to the final section as ‘song of the prairie’. It reminds me of the Mongolian or Tibetan ‘songs of the grassland’ that many Chinese composers have written for orchestra. Almost a stereotype. So you use Mongolian, I mean non-Han elements in your music, after all! And you –

GWJ [irritated]: Well why shouldn’t I? Oh, this is typically a Western way of looking at new music: “you are doing what others have done before.” So I am using a “stereotype”. Well, what if I do? What if many composers happen to follow the same track? To do something in a similar vein is one thing, but to do it well is another.

I was just thinking of the critic’s review in the newspaper: he could not detect any ‘prairie song’ in the final part of your concerto. Maybe the word ‘prairie’ suggested the American Wild West to him. In any event, he seems not familiar with this type of music as it exists in the Chinese romantic tradition, so he missed the point.

GWJ: ‘What difference does it make, American or Chinese prairie... I just wanted to convey the feeling of a wide and desolate landscape. So this critic felt that I made the Cello Concerto too simple, too facile, right? I don’t agree. The slow, final part is very attractive. And Taco Kooistra played it without false sentiment. Yes, it’s a plain song, and the accompaniment is just a long drawn-out sound. But why not? Why shouldn’t one be allowed to write a simple, melodious tune? Isn’t this just a matter of having a free mind? Tell me, do you like this Chinese piece...’ [Begins to hum the Butterfly Concerto, a celebrated romantic Chinese violin concerto from the 1960s.]

Hardly my favourite work. Too much dependent on Western romanticism. Too shallow, perhaps.

GWJ [angry, banging his fist on the table]: ‘This is so unfair! How can you judge it like that? Why should music be “complex” at all cost? Why shouldn’t it be allowed to be plain, straightforward and melodious, like this concerto? Isn’t this just a story, a beautiful and moving story about a butterfly? I am very deeply moved by this concerto. Very fond of its main theme. [He hums again.] If we had a record of it here, I would like to listen to it right away. It is so very, very Chinese. So delicate and refined. The music is an ideal portrayal of the Chinese aristocracy of ancient times, with its gifted scholars and beautiful ladies in long-sleeved robes. And the music flows in a very natural way and betrays very little Western influence. It’s very Chinese. Don’t you agree?’

I suppose it would strike most people as a very Chinese piece. I must say that I’m not opposed to romanticism as such. Let every composer take his materials from wherever he likes, as long as the result is not sheer imitation. You don’t expect composers to simply repeat the 19th century.

GWJ: ‘Of course, even if one prefers to write beautiful and natural, free-flowing music, certain conditions must still be met. People should at least be able to recognize one’s music as belonging to the twentieth century. Take a piece like Tan Dun’s Circle. There’s a very attractive melody in it, which is sung towards the end. You cannot mistake this work for a piece of 19th century music, not for a minute.’
Talking about melodies: my favourite composers for the second half of the twentieth century are The Beatles.

GWJ: ‘That’s good. The Beatles, right? I have a feeling that many people are now waking up and are growing more tolerant of a wider range of musical styles. We have moved a long way from the notion that “serialism is our only way out”. I remember hearing a concert at Columbia University in Manhattan, by professors from different universities. Papaa, pipiii, tacka-tack! It was called contemporary music. I thought: shit, this is many times worse than the worst Broadway show I’ve seen. Actually Broadway was nice by comparison.’

The idea that so-called ‘avant-garde’ represents the summit of all current music making, including jazz, rock and numerous local and folk genres, is simply untenable.

GWJ: ‘I agree that it’s just one part of twentieth century music. You know, I’ve changed a lot, recently. There is a lot of music by other people I can no longer bear to listen to. Like the kind I just sang. The academic type of music, which we’ve been hearing now for nearly half a century. Even some of the works by Ligeti, Lutoslawski, Gubaidulina, Schnittke, Kurtág. Or those very technical pieces by Babbit, Eliot Carter and the like – I really can’t appreciate them. Why do these people get so much attention? Sometimes I almost think it must be because they create job opportunities for musicologists. I’m fond of George Crumb, but some critics complain that his works are so very hard to analyse. You can’t do research and become a professor on Crumb, so to speak. I have the feeling that many academicians are just talking and writing about “structures” all the time because they think this is a really scholarly approach. They may not care all that much about the actual music.

In my view good music is impossible to analyse. Really good music is impossible to analyse. How should one do it? If it were possible to point out mechanically which are the good elements in a particular piece of music, everyone could become a good composer. I’m not saying that complexity is by definition unattractive. I’ve heard Wozzeck – great music. Berg, Webern and Schoenberg are great composers. But they are not, like many of their followers, the mathematicians that some people hold them to be. Not that I’m in any way opposed to the idea of a complex “structure” as such. Naturally, music cannot exist without a shape, but what I resent is a situation where structure becomes a purpose in its own right.’

Kurtág is the very opposite of a mathematical composer. I’m sure you would appreciate his Troussova songs. Maybe someone should write about him in a Chinese music journal.

GWJ: ‘I must admit that I have never read any of the journals published by our music conservatories here in China. They have too much of that very dry kind of analytical writing about music, totally devoid of feeling, and very much in contradiction with Chinese tradition. Everyone agrees that classical writers like Laozi and Zhuangzi were profound thinkers. They did not cast their ideas in dry analytical essays, but in very lively texts, beautiful short stories, with a delicate literary taste. Their writings are more beautiful than those of Goethe or Shakespeare! I would like to argue that the more penetrating your ideas are, the more lively and moving your words will be – precisely because of what they express. This is unlike what many musicologists seem to achieve today!’

Are there any Asian composers you feel attracted by?
GWJ: ‘I remember listening to two successive evenings of genuinely beautiful chamber pieces by Takemitsu in the American Hall. The music sounded fairly Western in style. I don’t think he has painstakingly attempted to be “Japanese”, though his works do breathe an Eastern spirit. Basically he has just tried to express himself in music. I think that two things are required for an artist to succeed: freedom, and naturalness. Composers like Boulez and Stockhausen have had a tremendous impact on contemporary music, but so many of their followers have lost their freedom and naturalness. That is very tragic. They’ve been turned... haaa, they’ve been turned into slaves. Slaves of numbers, slaves of “structures”. Composers need to be liberated again! Schoenberg made a great contribution to humanity. He offered many untalented people an opportunity to start composing, and gave many professors in academies an opportunity to start writing articles. Hahaha. But Schoenberg himself was not like that. Freedom is... ah, very precious!’

Have you reached freedom?

GWJ: ‘I’m not afraid of anyone now. For example music critics, I’m not afraid of them. Or of any great figures in the music world. If you start being afraid, you cannot make your own music.’

Is any living contemporary composer a great inspiration for you?

GWJ: ‘No.’

What about composers of the past? Shostakovich?

GWJ: ‘He no longer influences my music, but I still admire him.’

How about Chinese composers?

GWJ: ‘I’m most impressed by Tan Dun. His recent works are very good, in so far as I’ve heard them. For example Marco Polo, Orchestral Theatre I, with its wonderful beginning, Death and Fire. Orchestral Theatre III is also very good. It involves video, it’s a kind of multi-media piece. Tan Dun is especially successful in Europe, though I think his importance is now being recognized in the United States, too. I’m very curious about Xu Shuya. His music is not bad at all. Chen Qigang? I don’t know how the Chinese public responds to his music, but fellow composers in China are very enthusiastic about the incorporation of folk music in his recent works.’

At home in Beijing

In July 1997, Hong Kong celebrated its return to the People’s Republic in grand style, with numerous concerts and other festive activities. Several composers, including Tan Dun and Guo Wenjing, were commissioned to write orchestral works for this occasion. Guo duly delivered a festive Overture, and spent the summer with a friend in Xining in northwestern
China, working on his Second String Quartet for Kronos. In the second half of 1997, some of his works featured in the Festival d’Automne in Paris, while interrupting his writing of the String Quartet, he started work on another major new project: a second opera. Meanwhile, in January 1998, he was appointed Head of the Composition Department at the Central Conservatory.

Unlike many prominent fellow composers – such as Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong, Chen Qigang, Xu Shuya, Chen Xiaoyong, Chen Yi and Zhou Long – Guo has stayed at home. He clearly prefers a career in China over an adventurous but perhaps less secure existence abroad. He feels at home in China, in spite of the huge problems Chinese culture is still facing. Most orchestras and ensembles in the People’s Republic have to try to survive on their own means. A strong commercialization has changed the face of musical life in China almost overnight. For several years, the Central Philharmonic Society was on the brink of financial disaster, so much so that a big industrial company on Hainan Island proposed in 1993 to take over the entire orchestra on the condition that it change its name to Hainan/Central Philharmonic Society. The central government intervened and, in a belated gesture, settled the orchestra’s debts. But many other ensembles are still facing serious setbacks.

The government has come up with questionable solutions to financial problems, such as a ‘vulgarity tax’, which is reportedly imposed on karaoke bars, disco venues and pop concerts in order to raise extra funds for sustaining opera, classical music and folk dance groups. Pop musicians find it hard enough to keep their heads above water, while numerous classical and traditional musicians, subsidized or not, are still forced to earn extra income by playing in restaurants, bars and hotels on their spare evenings.

Guo earns a fair salary and has a major position in contemporary musical life in his country now, but the only way for him to have his own music performed is to go and look for private sponsors. He is cautiously hopeful about changes for the better. Together with Ye Xiaogang, he remains one of the few Chinese composers who have made a name in the West but who remain active as teachers of composition in China. He believes that there are new talents on the rise in China, and speaks positively about his own students.

You are a teacher of composition at the Beijing Conservatory. Can you tell me something about what you teach your students?

GWJ: ‘In the first year they are required to write short piano pieces. No escape from that. Just let them emulate Chopin, Scriabin, Rachmaninov, and find out the possibilities of the instrument. Later on, especially from the fourth year onwards, they are gradually given free rein to write their own things.’

What is your personal contribution as a teacher?

GWJ: ‘I give them advice on practical matters. All beginning composers have many difficulties to cope with, notably when they are trying to structure their works. I don’t think any composition teacher should meddle with aspects other than technical and practical ones. The artistic side is for the future artists to contemplate. As for contemporary music – what they prefer to hear and what they like to draw inspiration from is their own business. If someone happens to be most fond of Haydn, well, so be it. Naturally I will come up with occasional suggestions that they listen to certain contemporary pieces. I use my own works
to illustrate certain points, and other Chinese composers’ works, too – notably Tan Dun’s. I would like to pay still more attention to new Chinese music. In the past we venerated so deeply anything coming from the West that we tended to overlook our own culture in the act. In higher music education, Chinese compositions were practically ignored in favour of Western music. At present the situation is already different. We have many interesting Chinese composers now, and their pieces merit closer attention. This is also something the students appreciate.’

*Are many of them imitating you or Tan Dun?*

GWJ: ‘No, not really. The idea has now struck home that it’s no good to simply copy others. Every student probably has the same experience. When you start composing you may think very firmly: [raises his voice] I don’t want to copy others – but you still find yourself doing it. All the same, it’s better to try to resist emulation than not to be bothered by it.

In the end, it remains an extremely difficult task to teach composition. Every student is so very different, everyone’s circumstances are so different. So I only give individual lessons. Students come to me one by one. I can’t handle an entire class in one go, not even in the first year. Naturally some aspects of composition can be taught in a classroom situation. We have specific teachers here for harmony and for instrumentation, as well as for counterpoint. In Chinese conservatories these are clearly separated disciplines, more separate than in the Western curriculum. I suppose this is a heritage from the Russians, who used to have a strong impact on music education and composition in China back in the 1950s.’

*You’ve referred a number of times to freedom and naturalness as important aspects for a composer. Do you find that freedom in China? Can you write what you like?*

GWJ: ‘Oh, I was referring to a notion of freedom unrelated to geographical or political circumstances.’

*But a composer will have to deal with political and social constraints. Do you observe any improvement in China in terms of opportunities for avant-garde composers to have their works performed?*

GWJ: ‘There is a very slow and gradual change for the better. Things are still far from ideal. Usually composers have to raise money in order to have their own music performed. But this was not the main issue. I was talking about the process of composing.’

*Did you ever get assignments in China for new works, apart from commissions for films?*

GWJ: ‘In China contemporary music is not much in demand. I was offered one commission by the Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra, which I felt reluctant to accept. They asked me to write a piece called Xianggang huiguì (‘Hong Kong’s return’), on the occasion of the handover of Hong Kong to China in July 1997. I’m afraid I was not able to do it.

*But you did accept a commission for an overture for orchestra?*

GWJ: ‘Yes, it was commissioned by Hong Kong, as part of the celebrations for Hong Kong’s return to China. I wrote it very fast, I started early in May and finished it on the 4th
of June. I wasn’t really up to it, but they put a lot of pressure on me, and they needed the piece quickly. It was premiered on the First of July. It is for symphony orchestra plus a military wind band. It has some good tunes, which everybody will like. The music was written in such a way that the band members all get up in the end to play a fanfare. Waaang waaang waang! It’s all about the return of Hong Kong, you see. [He lights another cigarette.] I don’t accept many assignments for film music any longer. Due to the low budgets of Chinese films, I often cannot completely realize my musical ideas, so I am not much interested in such assignments any more.’

If you compare your recent works with the music you wrote before, what would you see as the biggest difference? What has changed?

GWJ: ‘One thing is that my works have become more plain. Secondly, I’ve begun to explore more Chinese elements. I mean, Chinese ways of expression. For example, there is very little in terms of Western techniques or forms to be found in a piece like Drama. If you compare that work with my early chamber works, such as my String Quartet, I believe I’ve definitely grown more Chinese!’

A selective list of Guo Wenjing’s compositions

This is a selective chronological list of Guo Wenjing’s compositions, provided by the composer. Guo has deleted some early and immature works (cf. pp. 20–21), as well as his many scores written for films and plays. Numbers in italics refer to page numbers in this journal where the pieces are discussed.

Xia. Recording: China Record Company (1986). 20, 21n

The Rivers of Sichuan, Str Qt no.1, op.7 (1981).

Ba, Rhapsody for Cello and Pf, op.8 (1982).

Suspended Ancient Coffins on the Cliffs in Sichuan, 2 Pf and Orch, op.11 (1983).

Local Rhyme of China, Conc for Violin & Band, op.13 (1986-87).

Sutra on Tibetan Streamers, Tone Poem for Orch, op.14 (1986).

Shu Dao Nan, Symph, T solo, Ch, Orch, op.15 (1987).
She Huo, for 11 instr, op.17 (1991).


Melodies of West Yunnan, for Chinese Orch, op.19 (1993).
*Dianxi tufeng.* First perf. 25 March 1994, Hong Kong Chinese Orch, cond. Yoshikazu Fukumura. 29

Suite for Percussion op.20, for 5 perc. (1994).
*Daijuyue zuqiu.* First perf. 23 May, 1993, Li Zhengui and other percussionists of the Central Conservatory Chinese Ens, Beijing Concert Hall.

Wolf Cub Village, chamber opera, 4 scenes, op.21 (1994).
*Langzi cun.* (Kuangren riji.) Adaptation from Lu Xun’s short story ‘Diary of a Madman’. Libretto Zeng Li. First perf. 24 June, 1994, Nieuw Ens, cond. Ed Spanjaard, with Nigel Robson, Shi Kelong, John Tranter, Elena Vink and other soloists, Westergasfabriek, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. 10, 30–34, 37–38, 42

Late Spring, for Octet of Chinese Instr, op.22 (1995).

Drama, for 3 pairs of cymbals and voices of the players, op.23 (1995).
*Xi.* First perf. in 1996 by Cincinnati Percussion Ensemble. 23, 35, 36, 48


Elegy, S solo, 3 perc, op.25 (1996).
*Zheng ju yuan.* First perf. 24 Oct, 1996, Luisa Castellani, sopr, Ens Ars Ludi (Italy), Beijing Conc Hall. 38

Concertino for Cello and Ens, op.26 (1997).


Overture, Orch and Wind Band, op.27 (1997).
*Yu feng weng li – qingzhu Xianggang huigui* (Overture in celebration of Hong Kong’s Return to China.) First perf. 1 July 1997, 1997 Harmonic Orchestra (ad hoc orch), cond. Long Yue, Hong Kong. 45, 47–48

String Quartet no.2, op.28 (1997–98). *Di er suanmuie sichongou.* Currently in progress. Commissioned by the Kronos Quartet. 46

Ancient Porcelain, guitar solo op.29 (1997).
*Gu ci.* First perf. Reinbert Evers, Münster, Germany. Recording: Sono Ton, CD.

Night Banquet, chamber opera op.30, libretto by Zhou Jingzhi (1997–8).

Arrangements

Arr. of Shostakovich’s Prelude and Fugue no.19, for 9 instr (1997).
First perf. 8 March, 1997, Nieuw Ensemble, cond. Ed Spanjaard, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, The Netherlands. (For: fl, ob, klar, pf, perc, 2 vn, vla, vcl, cb.) 41
The Precarious State of the Qin in Contemporary China

Cheng Yu
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In a music anthology from the Ming Dynasty, the qin is described as a ‘sound descended from remote antiquity’. The seven-stringed zither qin (or guqin) has an unbroken history of more than 2,000 years. Its rich notations, highly developed musical system and aesthetic principles have secured this instrument a prominent position in China’s musical history. At the same time, its elegant style, scholarly temperament, complicated techniques and abstruse philosophy have separated it from common people’s lives. Only a few hundred people play the qin in China today. This article discusses the instrument’s current position, and in particular the achievements of the Beijing Guqin Research Association, an organization which has been active in promoting and preserving the qin since the 1950s.

Since its establishment in 1954, the Beijing Guqin Research Association (in Chinese: Beijing Guqin Yanjiu Hui) has suffered the tortuous fate of many organizations of traditional music in China. Before the Cultural Revolution in 1966, the Association met weekly under the chairmanship of qin master and musicologist Zha Fuxi. In this period the Association published many valuable studies on the guqin and recorded music transcriptions from different parts of China. Its musical and scholarly activities were highly valued by the state. During the Cultural Revolution, the Association was compelled to close down for more than twelve years. At that time, under the government policy of ‘sweeping away of old culture and remnants of feudalism’, numerous ancient traditions were rejected and cultural organizations disbanded.

It was only in 1978, under Deng Xiaoping’s political reforms, that qin players regained their confidence. They reassembled their Association and began to hold meetings, as they had done in the 1950s and 60s, on Sunday afternoons. These renewed gatherings, at the home of the then director, the influential qin master Professor Wu Jinglue, continued for eight years. Following the death of Professor Wu in 1986, the Qin Association ceased to be active. It was another eight years before it was relaunched again, in 1995, by one of its present Vice-Presidents, Professor Li Xiangting, following his return from a period of research in the United Kingdom.

During the summer of 1996, while visiting China for fieldwork as a PhD student, I had the honour to be invited by Professor Li – who for several years had been my guqin teacher – to attend some of the Association’s activities. I was most impressed by the members’

1 Title of a volume of qin scores, Taigu yiyin, compiled by Yuan Junzhe (1413) in the Ming Dynasty.
devotion to the task of nurturing the art and tradition of the qin. I am convinced that their efforts were a vital contribution to the resurrection of this part of China’s musical heritage. The precious qin culture was threatened with total destruction during the Cultural Revolution. Due to the activities of the Beijing Guqin Research Association and of qin players elsewhere in the country, it has now gained new prestige and renewed interest, in China as well as abroad. But qin players are also faced with new dangers. The country’s present concentration on economic modernization, to the detriment of the country’s cultural heritage, forms a novel threat to the art of the qin.

The present article offers a brief survey of the history of the Beijing Guqin Research Association (hereafter BGRA), and examines the present position of the instrument in some detail.

BGRA’s early years: 1954–66
The BGRA is the successor of the Beiping Qin Society (Beiping Qinshe).2 Before the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, there were a number of qin societies in China, such as Shanghai’s Yushan, Sichuan’s Lühe and Yangzhou’s Guangling. Few still exist today. Their regular meetings were a continuation of the tradition of Chinese literati’s yaaji (‘gatherings of the refined’) from the Tang and Song Dynasties. Soon after 1949, Mao

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2 Beijing was the old name of Beijing in the Republican period (1912–1949). In fact, there were several active qin societies in the 1950s, such as the Beijing and the Yuyun Bieye Qin Societies, which had partially overlapping memberships. The BGRA is the only qin society active in Beijing today.
Zha Fuxi, initial chairman of the Beijing Qin Research Association. He undertook extensive fieldwork in the 1950s.

Zedong, Zhou Enlai and other Chinese leaders suggested the formation of cultural associations to promote different areas of Chinese culture, such as qin playing, chess, traditional calligraphy and painting. Following the formation of the BGRA in 1954, the government purchased a traditional Chinese house in the western district of Beijing to serve as the home for this qin society, and provided the organization with an annual grant of 6,000 yuan. The prestigious qin master and musicologist Zha Fuxi was appointed as its Director, and he was assisted by two of his colleagues, Vice-Directors Pu Xuezhai and Xu Jian. In fact, all the members of the BGRA were well-known and influential qin players of that period: they included Zhang Boju, Guan Pinghu, Wang Mengshu, Guan Zhonghang, Yang Baoyuan, Wang Di, Wang Shixiang and Yue Ying.

In the years from its establishment until the beginning of the Cultural Revolution the Association undertook extensive and valuable fieldwork. It made sound recordings of live reconstructions of precious qin scores, and published scholarly writings on the qin. In 1956, Director Zha Fuxi and two colleagues, Wang Di and Xu Jian, spent more than three months doing a recording tour along 22 cities in China, including Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Chengdu. They recorded a total of 262 pieces from 87 qin players.\(^3\) Most of the players consulted and recorded at that time are no longer alive. Their recordings have major historical and research value. Zha Fuxi and his colleagues also discovered some rare and ancient qin

\(^3\) Selections of these recordings were published in recent years by the China Record Company (in the series 'An Anthology of Chinese Traditional and Folk Music'), by Hugo Records in Hong Kong, and by Taiwan's Xueding Recording Company (Qindao Chanyun, 8 vols.).
books and anthologies, such as Zheyin Shizi Qinpu (1491) of the early Ming Dynasty, from Ningbo, and Qinyuan Xingzhuan (‘New Commentaries on Qin Art’) from the Chongqing Library in Sichuan Province. In the course of their fieldwork, they established contacts with qin players all over China, and laid a firm foundation for further collecting and publishing in the realm of qin music.

BGRA’s publishing activities
Since 1956 the BGRA has compiled and published many scholarly writings of international importance. They include a facsimile edition in three volumes (1956) of Sheni Mipu (‘Marvellous and Mysterious Scores of Qin’, China’s oldest known anthology of qin pieces, first published in 1425), and Qinyan Jicheng (‘The Complete Collection of Qin Pieces’), an ongoing publication in more than twenty volumes initiated in 1963, and projected to be the most comprehensive anthology of ancient qin notations from the Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. Upon completion, it will consist of more than 3,000 qin pieces from 150 different manuscripts collected from all over China. In addition to this, the BGRA published

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4 For a recording of qin pieces from the Zheyin Shizi Qinpu (‘Qin Handbook Transmitting Lyrics with Music of the Zhejiang School’), see John Thompson’s CD ‘Music Beyond Sound’, published by Toadall Sound, Hong Kong, 1997, TDS 10001.

5 Compiled by Zhu Quan in the Ming Dynasty. Many later transcriptions and scholarly studies are primarily based on materials taken from this publication, including Professor Bell Yung’s recent Celestial Airs of Antiquity: Music of the Seven-String Zither of China, A-R Editions, Madison WI, 1997.
Guqin Quji (‘Collection of Guqin Pieces’), a compilation in two volumes (1962, 1983) of qin scores based on recordings, transcribed in both Chinese characters and modern staff notation for the convenience of contemporary students and practitioners of the qin. These books have become basic teaching materials for qin students in China as well as abroad.

In order to bring the ancient music back to life from dormant stacks of paper, the Association has encouraged qin players in China to examine the ancient scores and to exchange ideas about how they might sound in actual performance. In a small number of cases this has led to fascinating reconstructions of ancient pieces, including such famous ones as Guanglingsan, Youlan, Xiaohujia, Dahujia and Hujia Shibabai. After 1959, the BGRA organized many conferences and concerts with financial support from the Chinese Ministry of Culture. All these activities were aimed at collating, transcribing and performing works of qin music. BGRA meetings played a significant role in the preservation and development of qin traditions, and in opening up the instrument’s repertoire to new generations of performers.

Besides publishing qin scores and other writings related to the instrument’s repertoire, the Association edited and issued some significant studies on qin playing techniques and fingerings as well. These include Cunjian Guqin Zhifa Jilan (‘Compilations of Existing Qin Fingerings’, 1958), Gu Zhifa Kao (‘Examination of Ancient Qin Fingerings’, 1963), Wusilan Zhifa Shi (‘Explanation of Qin Fingerings of Wusilan’, 1959), and Youlan Shilu (‘Records of Youlan’, 1960).

Other important qin materials published by the BGRA include prefaces and postscripts of ancient scores, annotations, written inscriptions, explanatory notes, and qin-related poems and lyrics from Chinese literature. Of special interest is Cunjian Guqin Qupu Jilan (‘Compilations on Existing Records on Qin Scores’) which appeared in 1958, edited by Zha Fuxi. This book, which contains more than 800,000 characters, is a collection of 336 song lyrics, 658 titles of qin pieces and 1,171 notes of literary records relating to as many as 3,365 qin pieces. These are classified systematically and indexed with clear statements about the origin and existing variations of each piece, if known. The excellent documentation, unique methodology, vast span of knowledge and sheer size of the book resulted in an exceptional scholarly work on qin musical history. It was the first comprehensive collection of historical literary records of qin pieces, and remains one of the most important reference books for qin researchers and players today.

Players’ biographies, scholarly essays, and training activities

In addition to (re)publishing historical sources and promoting performances of qin music, the Association was – and still is – active in collecting and publishing biographies of historically important qin players. Between 1959 and 1961, the BGRA issued six volumes of Lidai Qinren Zhiuan (‘The Biographical History of Qin Players’), a series based on ancient records and other collected materials, providing data about more than 2,000 individuals. The series expanded on such previous works as Zhu Changwen’s Qinshi (‘History of Qin’) of the Northern Song (960–1127), in which information about more than one hundred qin players was recorded, and Zhou Qingyun’s Qinshi Xu (‘Continuation of Qin History’) and Qinshi Bu (‘Supplementary Qin History’) of the Qing Dynasty (1368–1644), which added data about another six hundred qin players. The BGRA series is not only an important archival document, but also a major source for a more systematic and more comprehensive understanding of the development of qin music and performance traditions through the ages.
In further efforts to stimulate scholarly research, the Association in 1962–1964 edited and published three volumes of Qinlun Zhuixin (New Essays on Qin Theories). This series contains forty scholarly essays, including some written by scholars abroad, reflecting the international interest in qin research.

Attention was also given to the performance aspect and the training of qin students. In its very first year of existence, the Association gave more than twenty performances and made its first recordings for TV and radio broadcasts. Many well-known qin players of today, such as Li Xiangting, Wu Wenguang and Chen Changlin, studied at one time with the Association’s first-generation members of the 1950s. Now important representatives of the second generation, they have become teachers in turn, and train students at the two Conservatories of Music in Beijing.

The BGRA during the Cultural Revolution
During the decade of political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution (which started in 1966), the activities of the Association were seriously disrupted. Government funding was withdrawn. BGRA premises were confiscated and turned into a residential building. The Association’s leaders, including Pu Xuezhai, Guan Pinghu and Zha Fuxi, were persecuted. In this period, many qin players died as a consequence of violence and persecution.

Editing work on the monumental series of qin pieces, Qinqu Jicheng, was carried on sporadically by a handful of scholars appointed by the Ministry of Culture. This work took place under a special policy to protect China’s national treasures. But most other qin related activities stopped nearly all over the country. If some qin players, such as the members of the Shanghai Jinyu Qin Society, still held meetings, these had to be organized privately and secretly. In this period many qin players were sent to state farms – places set up by the government to reform and ‘re-educate’ China’s intellectuals. Professor Li Xiangting, one of the current Vice-Presidents of the BGRA, was among them. He did compulsory work on a state farm for more than ten years. ‘I was told to play the duxianqin [a single-stringed instrument which was popular at the time] after farming,’ he recalls, ‘and it was with great pain that I gave up playing the qin – the art to which I had actually devoted my life. The whole period was a nightmare.’

The BGRA in 1978–1986
The Association was revived in 1978 under the leadership of Wu Jinglue and other qin masters. In its new form, the BGRA organized a national conference on the transcription of ancient notations, and republished the 1962 first volume of Guqin qiji (‘Collection of Guqin Pieces’). It added a new volume to it in 1983, and also republished ‘Collection of Qin Notations’.

The previously accumulated notations, literature and data on qin players provided basic sources of information for another book, Qinshi Chubiian (‘Preliminary History of the Qin’), which appeared in 1982. Written by Xu Jian – one of the current Association’s Vice-Presidents – it concentrates on introductions to well-known qin pieces, players, theories and
Chen Changlin: ‘Struggling hard to find a small niche for the qin in contemporary China.’

aesthetic principles. It is supplemented with musical analyses and illustrations. The first book of qin songs since the Song Dynasty, and the only collection devoted entirely to this genre, was compiled by Wang Di and published in 1983. It contains 52 pieces. Qin songs, presumably the oldest genre of qin music, have been sadly neglected in recent years. The Association earned a growing reputation by organizing (or participating in) many concerts and by its teaching activities. It gained many supporters among qin lovers both in China and abroad.

In this period, the Association also strengthened its leadership structure. It appointed prominent second-generation members to its board. The BGRA Executive Committee at that time included Wang Di, Yi Hongshu, Li Xiangting, Wu Wenguang, Wu Zhao and Zheng Minzhong as Vice-Presidents, Jing Nenggang as Secretary-General, and Xiao Xinghua, Chen Changlin, Xie Xiaoping and Shu Linchu as Councillors. The Association’s meetings were essentially spontaneous gatherings, organized privately; they continued for a period of eight years. Shortly after the death of its President, Wu Jinglüe, in 1986, the BGRA ceased its activities, due to lack of funding and the absence of a suitable meeting place.

The BGRA since 1995
In 1995, the Association was once again revived, following the return to Beijing of Professor Li Xiangting after a research period in England.6 The current Executive Committee

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6 Professor Li was a visiting scholar in the United Kingdom between 1990 and 1995.
of the BGRA consists of President Wu Zhao, Vice-Presidents Li Xiangting, Xu Jian and Zheng Minzhong, Secretary-General Xie Xiaoping and Director Chen Changlin. The Association now holds regular meetings on the first Sunday of every month. Each meeting is chaired by one of the above-mentioned Committee members in rotation, and it usually consists of three parts: a survey of qin events over the past month by the chairman, a scholarly paper by a qin researcher, and voluntary qin performances by BGRA members. The Association now produces its own monthly newsletter, the Beijing Qinxun (‘Beijing Qin Bulletin’), which reports on performing activities, research projects, publications and other matters of interest. The bulletin is sent to over 200 players and enthusiasts of qin music in China and abroad.

While attending several BGRA meetings in the summer of 1996, and interviewing some of its members, including Li Xiangting, Chen Changlin and Xie Xiaoping, I noted that the present Association differs from its predecessors in a number of ways. Firstly, whereas the former BGRA mainly held private meetings in the vein of traditional yaji (exclusive gatherings of literati), the current Association tends to open its doors to a much wider range of people, including qin lovers and amateurs from China as well as overseas. BGRA Director Chen Changlin has actually stated that ‘one of our current aims is to cast off the long-established aura of self-absorption and forbidding esotericism of the qin. The BGRA is striving to expand awareness of the qin among a wider public, for example by holding workshops at schools and universities, and by presenting a series of TV programmes on the qin. However, for the time being we are struggling hard to find even a small niche for the qin in contemporary Chinese culture.’

A second factor which makes the BGRA different from its predecessors is the monthly bulletin, which provides useful information on qin activities and research trends at home and abroad.7

Thirdly, the present BGRA can boast about some breakthrough developments with respect to qin performance and research. These include Li Xiangting’s improvisations of qin music and sung poetry, Chen Changlin’s recent reconstruction of the qin piece Huaxuyin, and Zhang Tongxia’s qin adaption of the pipa piece ‘Flute and Drum at Sunset’, all of which present new styles of qin performance that were heard during the BGRA meeting in September 1996. Furthermore, Chen Changlin has been experimenting for many years with computerized qin tablatures. The results of his work are judged positively. His findings may well facilitate the future documentation and notation of qin music.

**Difficulties and future prospects**

Despite these notable achievements, the BGRA has also had to face numerous difficulties since it was revitalized two years ago. The main problem is financial. The Association never regained the government funding it enjoyed in its early years, nor does it have a fixed venue.

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7 For donations or for information, the address of the BGRA is: Beijing Guqin Yanjiu Hui, No. 1 West Building, Xinyuanli, Dongzhimenwai, Beijing 100027, P.R. China.
Xu Jian, one of the Association's leading members. This photo was taken in the 1950s, while he was a student of Guan Pinghu.

for its regular meetings, as it did in the past. The present costs for renting a meeting place and for printing and mailing the monthly bulletin are barely covered by members' private donations from China and abroad. This tenuous position worries many qin lovers. They are reluctant to see a repetition of the interruptions which smothered BGRA activities in the past.

Financial problems are not an obstacle for the BGRA alone, but for qin societies in other parts of the country, too. At present, active societies in China include the Jinyu Qin Society in Shanghai (established in 1936 and revived in 1980), the Meian Qin Society in Nantong in Jiangsu Province (re-established in 1987), the Xihu Qin Society in Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province (since 1987), the Jinjiang Qin Society in Sichuan Province, (re-established in 1979 as a successor to the former Shuxin Qin Society), the Dongpo Shi Qin Society, also in Sichuan (since 1985) and the Mengxi Qin society in Zhenjiang in Jiangsu (established in 1980). Furthermore, the Liaoning Guqin Research Association, set up in 1980, and the Tianjin Guqin Research Association, established in 1993.8

While this survey may give the impression that the number of qin supporters is on the increase, the overall situation of qin culture in China remains precarious, as the case of the BGRA exemplifies. Most of the above-mentioned qin societies are spontaneous initiatives by qin lovers who meet on a fairly small scale. They lack sufficient funding to carry out any

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8 This survey of qin societies may not be complete. Qin Yun (Tang Zhongliu 1993) lists as many as 17 Qin societies active since 1979. It is unclear how many of them are alive today.
major research or organize performances on a regular basis, and there is little recognition or involvement on the part of society at large.

In present-day China, young people are primarily keen on learning Western instruments; they prefer pop music over traditional music and show a waning interest in the traditional arts. In July 1996, Xu Jian, one of BGRA’s Vice-Presidents, painted a sombre picture of the changing times: ‘According to a survey by the Jinyu Qin society in Shanghai, there were more than 250 qin players in China in the 1930s. At the time of the BGRA’s fieldwork carried out by Zha Fuxi and Wang Di in 1956, only about 80 players could be traced in all of China, and most of these died during the Cultural Revolution. Today, quite unfortunately, perhaps less than 40 accomplished qin players and even fewer qin musicologists remain, who still tenaciously continue the art of the qin in our country. I cannot imagine what is going to happen to the venerable qin a few decades from now.’

Certainly, concerts and research projects of qin music remain rare in China; some people even seem to view them as ‘out of date’. As far as the repertoire is concerned, less than ten percent of the more than 3,000 qin pieces surviving in written notation have now been reconstructed (dapu) and brought to life in actual performance. Young players tend to prefer the already familiar pieces circulating among qin performers, many of which have been transcribed in Western staff notation from ancient scores. On the whole, there have been few attempts to explore the vast reservoir of remaining written scores in ancient notation. Moreover, creative composition in the realm of qin music seems rather at a standstill when compared to other Chinese instrumental traditions, such as that of the pipa (four-stringed lute) and the erhu (two-stringed fiddle).

As for scholarship, present activities are confined primarily to the reconstruction of ancient pieces, and to study of the history, aesthetics and musical temperament of the qin, while the present state and social context of the qin remain relatively underexplored. The general position of the qin and of qin scholarship in China can be expected to improve only if constructive proposals are made. It will be necessary to arouse the attention of the Chinese government, and qin players must find ways of gaining wider and more structural support among the Chinese public.

Despite the BGRA’s significant contributions to qin culture, evaluated in this article, the present state of the qin remains a tenuous one. The question is how long the BGRA will be able to sustain its activities without government support and without a more generous response from society. It would be a sad irony if the ideological goals of the Cultural Revolution were eventually realized via ongoing public and governmental neglect shown towards one of the oldest and most precious parts of the country’s musical heritage.

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9 An exception is the American qin scholar John Thompson in Hong Kong, who has reconstructed the complete repertoire of qin pieces from the major anthologies Shenqi Mipu and Zheyin Shizi Qinpu.
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**GLOSSARY**

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<tr>
<th>Beiping QinShe</th>
<th>Wang Di</th>
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‘MIRROR-BRIGHT HEARTS AND POOR LIVES’

Minhe Mangghuer
Kugurjia Songs

Zhu Yongzhong, Qi Huimin, and Kevin Stuart
(Xining, Qinghai)

Hua’er (‘flower songs’) are a popular genre of regional folk songs of Northwest China. They are often sung in the form of love song dialogues in the context of temple festivals. Han Chinese as well as other ethnic groups in Northwest China participate in hua’er singing, mostly for amusement or for courting. The accepted view of hua’er in Chinese scholarship is that they are normally sung in Chinese, even if the singers are non-Han. The present authors argue that our understanding of hua’er would benefit from a much broader definition of the genre. Various local love song traditions of minorities in Northwest China resemble those of hua’er and merit closer study. As one example the authors present here a repertoire of Mangghuer minority songs, collected from a performer in Heyan in Minhe.

Feng and Stuart (1994) reviewed the literature on hua’er ¹ and concluded that the term was poorly defined, owing to a lack of musical data, little study of the genre among non-Han peoples, and few or no comparisons with similarly themed songs from other regions of China. Most writings on hua’er in China have been composed by citizens of China who do not understand the languages of non-Han peoples. This has also contributed to the dearth of material on such important issues as, for example, the way love songs performed by Tibetans and Monguor² living in eastern portions of Qinghai and western Gansu (adjoining provinces) relate in terms of lyrics and musical characteristics to love songs commonly termed hua’er that are performed by people classified as ‘Han’.³ This deficiency has been

¹ Hua’er is a complex, contested term. In terms of lyrics, love, the vagaries of life, and the telling of stories have all been identified as the subjects of hua’er texts. Musical characteristics are less clearly understood but it appears that the hua’er musical repertoire finds similarities in ritual performances, at least in Qinghai, such as shehuo-like performances known locally as yangguo.

² The Monguor were classified as ‘Tu’ by the Chinese government in the 1950s. They number more than 190,000 and live predominantly in Huzhu Monguor Autonomous County, Minhe Hui and Monguor Autonomous County, Datong Hui and Monguor Autonomous County, and Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, which are all located in eastern Qinghai. Monguor also inhabit Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County, Gansu Province. Monguor speak archaic Mongol dialects displaying much variation depending on specific locality. Zhu Yongzhong, Üjijedin Chuluu, and Stuart (1995) may be consulted for further information about the Minhe Mangghuer, whose recent population was given as 38,872. In this paper we use ‘Mangghuer’ to refer to those classified as ‘Tu’ living in Minhe County, for this is the term they use to refer to themselves. We use ‘Monguor’ to refer to the nationality and to groups of Monguor whose name for themselves we do not know.
further exacerbated by prevalent attitudes accepting the notion of ethnic classifications representing rigid entities allowing little sharing in cultural arenas.

**Hua'er and language**

An example of this is portions of Yang Mu’s, at times, helpful discussion of *hua'er* scholarship and issues (Yang, 1994). He begins by writing that ‘People of north-western China sing what they call *hua'er* or *shaonian* songs...’ (100). The provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, and Shaanxi and the Xinjiang Uygur and Ningxia Hui autonomous regions comprise ‘Northwest’ China, however, there is no mention of *hua'er* songs from Shaanxi and only the briefest reference to a small region (Changji) in Xinjiang where they are performed. Furthermore, this opening suggests that if local people do not use the Han Chinese term, *hua'er*, what they are singing does not qualify as *hua'er*. This point is further emphasized by the assertion that non-Han ethnic who sing *hua'er* have ‘their own language but can also speak Han Chinese. Despite their differing linguistic backgrounds, all groups sing the *hua'er* songs in the local Han dialect...’ (101).

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3 Although, for example, the Chinese Music Dictionary (*Zhongguo yinyue cidian*) (Miao 1984: 168) does not specifically state that *hua'er* must be performed in the Han language, the two examples given to illustrate the entry feature a Han language text.
In fact, many Monguar, Dongxiang, Yugu, Tibetans, and Bao’an have very limited competence in the Han language,\(^4\) which poses a problem for defining *hua’er* as a Han language performance. Yang further demonstrates his lack of familiarity with the people and areas where *hua’er* is sung by writing that ‘Hui people have adopted the Han Chinese language, speaking Mandarin and/or the local Han dialect’ (101). In fact, most of China’s 7,300,000 Hui’s ancestors are Han Chinese who converted to Islam (Miller 1994: 277). Yang’s and most Chinese researchers’ insistence on referring to Tibetans as *Zang*, a Chinese term, is another problem. This term is objectionable to many of the nationality, who refer to themselves as *Bod*.

**Minhe Mangghuer Kugurjia**

This paper aims at a better understanding of *hua’er* through a broadening of its traditional definition by exploring a collection of songs from certain Monguar living in the southern part of Minhe Hui and Mongguor Autonomous County\(^5\) situated in eastern Qinghai Province in Northwest China.

In the mid-1990s Minhe Mangghuer songs known variously as *kugurjia*,\(^6\) *kukujia*, *adalihier* (literally: similar), and *ajia yao*\(^7\) (literally: elder-sister *yao*) referred to folksongs sung mostly by youths predominately in the Mangghuer language in the Zhaomuchuan\(^9\) area in Guanting, Minhe County. They may be divided into two categories: (1) love songs and (2) songs expressing a sense of sorrow. They were performed at times and in ways similar to that of *hua’er*. In 1996 the popularity of these songs had declined to the point where they were sung by very few people.

The only previous collection of *kugurjia* songs that we are aware of is that by Zhao Cunlu (1982:164-172), who gave the songs in Chinese. There were no notes on collection or singers and only lyrics were presented. Thus, this paper presents for the first time *kugurjia* songs as actually sung and with musical notation.

In the 1990s *kugurjia* were sung only in Zhaomuchuan. This is not a formal administrative region. When used by local Mongguor it refers to an area along the Yellow

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\(^4\) Through centuries of intense contact with Chinese speakers, including massive bilingualism, the Minhe Mangghuer language has shifted from being clearly Mongolic to having the characteristics of a mixed language. It retains largely Mongolic morphosyntax and core vocabulary, but has been heavily influenced in many structural ways by Chinese. Its Mongolic lexical base is increasingly being eroded by Chinese borrowing to the point that a word list count would likely yield 40-50 percent of words of Sinitic extraction. Vocabulary replacement will probably continue at a high rate. One advantageous development has been that the Minhe Mangghuer phonemic inventory now approximates that of the local Northwest Mandarin dialect so closely that it can quite felicitously be written with the official *pinyin* romanization system used for Modern Standard Chinese. (We thank Mr. Keith Slater, a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Linguistics, University of California-Santa Barbara, for comments on the linguistic characteristics of Minhe Mangghuer. Mr. Slater’s dissertation focuses on the linguistic structures of Minhe Mangghuer and the historical development of the language.)

\(^5\) Hereafter referred to simply as ‘Minhe’ or ‘Minhe County’.

\(^6\) Mongguor whom we consulted could not explain the meaning of this word. *Kukujia* is a dialectical variant. The oral Amdo Tibetan pronunciation of the written Tibetan *ko-ko-rgy*, which refers to a beautiful bird, is very similar.

\(^7\) The terms *kugurjia* and *kukujia* have been rendered *kugujia* in Chinese (Zhao 1982). The term *ajia yao* has been rendered in Chinese characters (Ma 1982). To our knowledge, there are no published articles about *adalihier*, which is a Minhe Mangghuer term.

\(^8\) Sound word.

\(^9\) Literally: Zhao-forest-plain.
River that separates Qinghai and Gansu provinces. To the north lies Xinger Tibetan Autonomous Township, to the west is Xunhua Salar Autonomous County, and to the east lie the Yongdong Mountains. More specifically, Zhaomuchuan refers to Zhaomuchuan and Heyan villages (cun) that, formally, are located in the west of the Guanting Region (zhen). Each of these villages is made up of a number of small villages (she). The total population of Zhaomuchuan and Heyan villages was, in the mid-1990s, approximately 1,500. Except for a very few Hui residents, all villagers are Mongguor.

**Geographical isolation**

We cannot explain why these are the only Minhe Mangghuer to, at present, sing these songs. There is frequent intermarriage between residents of different villages in the area, the Minhe Mangghuer language shows limited dialectical variation between villages, and the area where Mangghuer speakers live is small. These factors would seem to encourage considerable homogeneity in cultural presentations. However, Zhaomuchuan Mangghuer, owing to their geographical isolation, are generally considered to have preserved certain archaic elements of Mongguor culture that other groups of Minhe Mangghuer have not. Geographically, Zhaomuchuan Mangghuer also live nearer to Salar and Tibetans than other groups of Minhe Mangghuer. Further research is needed to establish, for example, what relationships might exist between musical characteristics and lyrics of the songs of these adjacent ethnic groups and the Zhaomuchuan Mangghuer and to what extent these songs resemble similarly themed songs of groups of Mongguor not living in Minhe County.

Minhe Mangghuer use the terms *shaolian*\(^{10}\) (literally: youth) and *hua’er*\(^{11}\) to refer to songs of this genre sung in the local Chinese dialect. *Shaolian* are sung when girls and women weed fields during the third and fifth lunar months. Men and boys are generally free at this time and may walk around the fields in pairs and groups of three and four. Either the females or the males may begin singing to become better acquainted. As the songs progress, sung antiphonally between the male and female singers, a certain relationship is established through the singing of questions and answers that might lead one side to conclude that they have no further interest in one another, in which case the songs are terminated. At the other extreme, the songs could lead to one or more pairs of the two groups retiring to a secluded area and having sexual intercourse, or making an appointment for such a later encounter. A number of taboos surround these performances, such as not singing within range of mothers and sisters and not singing to such relatives as paternal cousins.\(^{12}\)

**Shaolian (hua’er) versus kugurjia**

Minhe Mangghuer distinguish *kugurjia* from *shaolian* based on the former being sung in Mongguor, differences in musical characteristics, and *kugurjia* being generally sung in stanzas of three lines, whereas Minhe Mangghuer sing *shaolian* in stanzas of four lines and six lines.

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\(^{10}\) Modern Standard Chinese: *shaonian*.

\(^{11}\) The former term is more commonly employed than the latter.

\(^{12}\) Yang (1994) errs again by writing that ‘sex should never occur between members of the same family or the same kinship group, who usually live in the same family home or village’ (108). Actually, before Liberation, many Han Chinese considered marriage between maternal cousins to be ideal. Furthermore, among many Qinghai Han Chinese a young unmarried man having sex with an older brother’s wife, though not encouraged, is not seen as a serious offense.
Non-Zaomuchuan Mangghuer tease Zaomuchuan Mangghuer about certain textual elements in *kugurjia* by saying 'ajīayaonang yīge daola'. This translates literally as ‘elder-sister-sound word-own one sing’ and more freely as ‘Sing one line of your “elder-sister yao” song.’ This may be explained by the fact that, in years past, men and boys called girls and women ‘elder-sisters’ (ajīa). This term refers to females who are older, but of the same generation as the speaker. Furthermore, the term *shinajīa* (literally: new-elder-sister) is used by a speaker to refer to older married females who are members of the speaker’s home, as well as other older married females who are residents of the village and who are of the same generation as the speaker. A sense of teasing comes from non-Zaomuchuan Mongguor male singers never singing to their ajīa in *shaolian*, rather they sing to *gamei* (younger sister), a reference that suggests the male is more respectable and older than the female. Thus, Zaomuchuan male singers singing to their ‘elder sisters’ is just the reverse.

**Collection**

In November 1995, the first author recorded on cassette tape the songs presented in this article. Mr. Zhao Guoxiang 赵国祥 (b. 1943), a Mongguor native of Shanzhaojia (Mountain Zhao Family) Village, a subdivision of Heyan Village, sang the songs. Zhu later transcribed the lyrics of the songs and translated them into English. Qi Huimin wrote the music in consultation with Zhu. It should be noted that, because the songs presented here, come from a single singer, this is an introductory study of *kugurjia*. Detailed studies of a numbers of singers’ materials and a better contextualization of performance await future study. For practical reasons, the lyrics cited below have been divided in three categories: 1) love songs, 2) songs of the elderly, and 3) songs of solitude. Before turning to this material, a brief examination of the performance context of *kugurjia* may help to put the lyrics into perspective.

**Performance Context**

In the past, the singing of *kugurjia* was popular. Before the advent of electric grain mills in villages (1970s), and when the male head of a household left for an extended period of time, for example, to do construction work in Xining, his wife might have taken wheat to a water-powered mill for it to be ground. The amount of time that passed before she returned home might have been as long as two days because millstone grinding was slow. If the woman had a secret lover who learned that she had gone to the mill, he might have gone near the mill to sing *kugurjia* to her. When the production team system\(^\text{13}\) was in place (1960s to early 1980s), Shanzhaojia villagers were assigned to make baskets from branches gathered from nearby mountains. In late autumn / early winter, after villagers handed in the required quota of baskets to the Guanting Store approximately 14 kilometers roundtrip from the village, they began singing *kugurjia* when they were halfway home and continued singing until dusk.

Kugurjia were sung at gatherings where *hua ’er* were sung\(^\text{14}\) in the 1990s in Xinger Township and in Xiaohongping\(^\text{15}\) Village in Gansu. More informally, when several men

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\(^\text{13}\) *Shengchandui*. Under this system of production, areas were divided into communes and the residents were divided into groups. These groups worked together on common land and shared the land’s production.

\(^\text{14}\) *Hua ’er* meetings are traditional gatherings held in spring and summer on lunar calendar dates during at designated sites where as many as several thousand people may gather. Audience members may picnic, drink liquor, meet friends and relatives, attempt to form romantic liaisons, and/or sing *hua ’er* songs.

\(^\text{15}\) Literally: Small-red-level ground.
gather to drink without the presence of women, these songs might also be sung. When a singer finishes a kugurjia selection, each member of the audience is expected to drink some liquor. The singer does not drink. In other instances, when young men meet young women, they may sing two kugurjia lines. If the women respond positively, they continue to sing.

The popularity of kugurjia is rapidly fading. In the 1980s economic conditions improved and there were more choices for people in terms of recreation, education in the Chinese language, traveling, watching television, and so on. Furthermore, greater contact with non-Zhaomuchuan peoples conveyed the notion that kugurjia were somehow ‘backward’ and comical, in light of what was discussed above. All of these factors have combined so that by the mid-1990s kugurjia are rarely heard. When they are sung singers refer to each other as adalinhermi amula (literally: similar youth), rather than what was used in the past when females referred to males as mula (‘younger’) and males referred to females as aija.

Most frequently, kugurjia are sung in pairs, that is, one group of two male singers and one group of two female singers ask and answer each other in song. This dialogue may take place in at least three ways: (1) some lines of kugurjia are so well known that the singers sing them together; (2) one singer sings and if the other is not sure what the singer will say he or she hums along, and (3) the singers may briefly discuss what their response will be and then sing together.

The lyrics (1) – Love songs

The following stanzas might be sung by two groups of youths – one of boys and men and the other of girls and women. For the sake of illustration, let us suppose that one or two women are weeding in a field and one or two young men come to sing love songs. The male singers generally begin and are answered by the female singers.

**Male Singers:**

Adalinhermi amula yao ye,16
Naomi wuduerku wuduerdu,
Ni you dihuangdu yiriku.

Yama yamadu saiberi yao ye,
Adalinhermi amula yao,
Qi you muladu boloba ai.

**Female Singers:**

Liangjin zuergaitu amula yao, ye,
Qi you muladu boloku,
Qini sanerdu bainu guang ai ?

**Male Singers:**

Nini wuduerku wuduerdu, yao, ye,
Liangjin zuergaitu amula,
Shixing wuginang guerma ri.

Youth of the same age,17
On this exact day,
I came to this place.

Not for nothing.
Youth of the same age,
I came for missing you, youth.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
Though you miss me, a youth,
Do you speak from your heart ?

On this very day,
Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
Sing two lines from your heart.

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16 The Monguor is written as sung. The translation is a free one.
17 Here ‘the youth’ refers to whom the singers sing to. Literally, it could be ‘fruit’ in Monguor. It may also mean ‘youth of the same age’, which we have used in the translation.
**Female Singers:**
Liangjin zhurqaitu amula, yao, ye.
Riku sanersa shiguo bang,
Danyuriakuni yijian bang.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
I strongly desired to come here,
But I’m afraid of something.

**Male Singers:**
Liangjin zhurqaitu amula,
Yama yamasa baodanyou,
Danzi Huangda zhi chang liangsheng

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
Don’t worry about anything,
Bravely sing two lines.

**Female Singers:**
Liangjin zhurqaitu amula,
Niantai sanerni sanasa,
Huli huduher chang liangsheng.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
Though you think this way,
Let’s sing two lines caring about nothing.

**Male Singers:**
Qini keliba ya Zhuoni gi yao ye,
Khurong Nasiini shijiedu,
Huli huduher luoki ya.

What you said is true,
In the time of youth,
Let’s be merry and carefree.

**Female Singers:**
Niantai sanerni sanasa yao ye,
Liangjin zhurqaitu amula,
Youxing pandi yige xing youli a.

Though you think this way,
Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
My heart hopes for your love.

**Male Singers:**
Qini keliba ya Zhuoni gi yao ye,
Shitou chahuerli you youli,
Shixing pandi yige xing youli.

What you said is true,
There is oil in the stone oil-pot,
My heart hopes for your love.

**Female Singers:**
Niantai sanerni sanasa yao ye,
Sanyou mazhan chi shushili,
Mula ghulonang chuouti a.

Though you think this way,
The pressed mazha\(^{18}\) yields no oil,
We two youths will love each other till we die.

**Male Singers:**
Qini keliba ya Zhuoni gi yao ye,
Wayou shazidu pan jinzi,
Bupan gameida pan sha li ?

What you said is true,
Digging sand hoping for gold,
If I cannot not hope for you what can I hope for?

Qini keliba ya Zhuoni gi yao ye,
Liushu pangendu geng shen liao,
Mula panduqin qi shen liao.

What you said is true,
A willow grows roots and the roots grow deep,
I hope for you and my love for you deepens.

**Female Singers:**
Liangjin zhurqaitu amula yao ye,
Niantai sanerni sanasa ya,
Rizi buzudu tuanyuan ge a.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
Though you think this way,
Let’s meet a few days later.

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\(^{18}\) Mazha refers to plant material that has been pressed to obtain edible oil.
Male Singers:
Liangjin zhurghaiu amula yao,
Nintai sanerni sanasa,
Naoni shuliandu tuanyuan ge a.

Naoni shuliaku shuliandu ye,
Qi ni shuangshan damennang banyer nie,
Bi mager shencainang liu jinlai.

Female Singers:
Qini keliba ya zhuoni gi yao ye,
Mager shencainang liu jinlai,
Sanjian daigandu kuorei a.

Qini keliba zhuoni gi yao ye,
Siliu mianzhanbang pulaku,
Xicha bayernang tuomo a.

What you said is true,
You sneak your thin body inside,
Let’s have a good time in the main room.

What you said is true,
After I spread my soft felt on the bed,
Let’s count our joys one by one.

Male Singers:
Qini keliba zhuoni gi yao ye,
Huli huduer naokeji,
Gegan wduerri chaigha ya.

What you said is true,
Let’s enjoy ourselves without a care,
Until dawn.

Female Singers:
Qini keliba ya zhuoni gi yao ye,
Huma mazhadu huo gaizi,
Mula ghulonang huo xingsi.

Tiantai sanernang sanasa yao ye,
Beima ladi yige chang jiangsheng,
Mula ghulonchi chang jingsheng.

What you said is true,
Huma mixed with rapeseeds,
We two youth are one heart and one mind.

If you think this way,
Long reins lead a white horse,
We two youths will have a long lasting love.

Male Singers:
Qini keliba ya zhuoni gi yao ye,
Beitu qiangshangdi tu baoluo,
Beibu shoujinli rou baoduan.

What you said is true,
Soil on a white wall won’t come off,
Every time I come to you I’ll bring a good gift.

Female Singers:
Qini keliba ya zhuoni gi yao ye,
Sandan gaizdu you shu li,
Qi nang mulasandu wu shu li.

What you said is true,
Three dan of rapeseeds are countable,
I’ll miss you immeasurably.

19 The Monguor homes in this region are several rooms built around an adobe-wall compound. The compound is secured by a large double-leaved gate.
20 A particular oil-bearing plant.
21 Adobe walls are sometimes whitewashed. If soiled with earth, it is hard to remove without removing the whitewash.
22 A literal translation could be: ‘Meat in a white-cloth handkerchief will continue coming.’ Customarily, if a young man visits a young woman under such circumstances as the song relates, he brings mutton wrapped in a white cloth as a gift.
23 One dan equals fifty kilograms.
Male Singers:
Tiantai sanerni sanasa yao ye,
Mianxian shensherla zha kouzi,
Mula ghulunang zha genzi.

Female Singers:
Qini kiliba ya zhuoni gi yao ye,
Ganxu Liangzhoudi ge hao mianhua,
Mula ghuoloni hao yanhua.

What you said is true,
Liangzhou, Gansu has nice cotton,
With you, youth, I’ll have a good lot.

Qini kiliba ya zhuoni gi yao ye,
Tidi keler shi miahadi,
Liangjia qingyan shi naihadi.

What you said is true,
The basket I have was bought from others,
Our fate comes from our love.

Male Singers:
Niantai sanerni sanasa yao ye,
Baxian zhuozi shang zer xieha,
Yinsi yangjiandi hua shuoha.

If you think this way,
Let’s write Chinese characters on a sacred table,
Let’s solemnly promise to love each other forever.

Female Singers:
Qini kiliba zhuozi gi yao ye,
Baxian zhuozi zer bunie,
Yinsi yangjiandi hua buwang.

What you said is true,
Words on the sacred table won’t vanish,
Our promise to love each other won’t be forgotten.

Male Singers:
Tintai sanernang sanasa yao ye,
Zouler gongjinji jiaxang zao,
Shiqi shibadi huashang zhan.

If you think this way,
A purplish red rooster stays on the roost,
We should keep the promise we have made now that we are seventeen-eighteen years old.

Female Singers:
Liangjin zhergaitu aluna yao ye,
Jiaxang buzudji ji bushi,
Huashang buzhandi yige ren bushi.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
It isn’t a rooster that doesn’t stay on the roost,
I’m not a person who breaks promises.

Male Singers:
Niantai sanerni sanasa yao ye,
Shitou luohadi qiang shili,
Shixing weihadi ren shili.

If you think this way,
A wall made of bricks,
I’m a person who makes friends with his heart.

Female Singers:
Niantai sanerni sanasa yao ye,
Huoche yangjian shi yida zou,
Sizhi yinjiandu yilier hui.

If you think this way,
Let’s be together while we live on earth,
Let’s be together while we are in the netherworld.

24 The singer is rhyming zha kouzi with zha genzi, a pattern seen in this song. We are unable to relate the meaning of this line with the following line.
25 This table is known as baxian, which refers to the Eight Immortals. Such tables are used by Mongguor to entertain guests. Eight guests are normally seated at such tables, thus, guests are praised by being likened to the Eight Immortals. Furthermore, in Mangghuer homes the baxian is considered to be the abode of gods.
Male Singers:
Liangjin zhurgaitu amula yao ye,
Naoni wuduuerku wuduierdu,
Naria kharianang berghaba ye.

Liangjin zhurgaitu amula yao ye,
Kharia sanernang qi khari,
Germi diantoudu khari a ai.

Female Singers:
Liangjin zhurgaitu amula yao ye,
Qini sanerdu wuguuku,
Germi diantoudu qi khari.

Male Singers:
Naoni wuduuerku wuduierdu, yao, ye,
Kedu shiqingnanq kelij,
Qini sanerdu wugu bi.

Female Singers:
Liangjin zhurgaitu amula yao ye,
Qini sanerdu wuguuku,
Qi liyou wuginang keliba ye.

Male Singers:
Liangjin zhurgaitu amula yao ye,
Shixing wuginang kelij,
Gami zhurgandu shendania.

Adaliherni amula yao ye,
Germi diantoudu khariku,
Kharou huidani lailuni.

Kharou huidani lailuku ye,
Liangjin zhurgaitu amula,
Erghai tiaozini nailani.

Female Singers:
Qini keliba ya zuoni gi yao ye,
Liangjin zhurgaitu amula,
Germi diantoudu kharikru.

Liangjin zhurgaitu amula yao ye,
Ziyou erghanang bi zharia,
Ziyou erghanang bi zharia.

Male Singers:
Qi tintai sanerni sanasa yao ye,
Naoni shuliianku shuliandu,
Nangtuo zhouweidu bu hergia.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
On this very day,
We sang till sunset.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
Calm your wild heart,
Let's return to our own homes.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
If you don't love me,
Go home alone.

On this very day,
I said so much to you,
Probably you don't really love me.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
Because you don't love me,
You said we should go home.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
You spoke heart-felt words,
These words will melt in Brother's heart.

Youth of the same age,
When you go back to your home,
You couldn't find an excuse for returning so late.

If you cannot give an excuse,
Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
You will be beaten with a branch.

What you said is true,
Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
When I return to my home.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
I'll deal with the problem,
I'll deal with the problem.

If you think this way,
This very night,
I'll ramble outside your courtyard.
Female Singers:
Tintai sanerni sanasa yao ye,
Nangtuo zhoudiedu qi hergi,
Ziyou erghanang bi zharia.

Male Singers:
Rigu sanerni shiguob bi yao ye,
Liangjin zhuragaitu amula,
Shiguob musasa zou danyou bi.

Female Singers:
Liangjin zhuragaitu amula yao ye,
Shiguob musasa bao danyou,
Gherni kherghala bi zhousia.

Male Singers:
Liangjin zhuragaitu amula yao ye,
Gherni kherghala zhoukesa,
Khuru jiuriasa roukini ai.

Female Singers:
Khuru jiuriasa roukiku,
Liangjin zhuragaitu amula,
Dierni angaila zhoukia.

Male Singers:
Liangjin zhuragaitu amula yao ye,
Dierni angaila zhekiku,
Chazi jiuriasa raokeni.

Female Singers:
Chazi jiuriasa raokigu ye,
Liangqing zhuragaitu amula,
Bi molan shounjina zhekiku.

Male Singers:
Liangjin zhuragaitu amula yao ye,
Molan shounjina zhekiku,
Qini shangtou jiuriasa raokini.

Female Singers:
Liangjin zhuragaitu amula yao ye,
Qini suersangdu laikuku,
Zhuhuer moyou dao nahuertiao.27

If you think this way, 
You ramble outside my courtyard, 
I'll deal with any problems.

I really do want to come, 
Youth with a mirror-bright heart, 
But I fear your elder and younger generations.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart, 
Don't be afraid of my elder and younger generations, 
I'll will hide you with my palm.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart, 
If you hide me with your palm, 
I'll be seen through the cracks of your fingers.

If you are seen through the cracks between fingers, 
Youth with a mirror-bright heart, 
I'll hide you with the front part of my waistcoat.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart, 
If you hide me with the front of your coat, 
I'll be seen though the waistcoat's opening.

After you are seen through the coat's opening, 
Youth with a mirror-bright heart, 
I'll hide you with my blue cloth scarf.

Youth with a mirror-bright heart, 
After you hide me with your blue cloth scarf, 
I'll be seen behind your shangtou.26

Youth with a mirror-bright heart, 
My singing ability is less than yours, 
You make all sorts of excuses for not coming to my home.

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26 The hairstyle of Mongguor women in olden times.
27 This sentence means 'you look for this or that kind of excuse to refuse.'
The lyrics (2) – Songs of the Elderly
When elderly Zhaomuchuan residents sing this sort of kugurjia, lyrics are almost all Mangghuer. Note the use of the expression ajia yao, which is absent from the above example.

Adaliherni amula yao ye,  
Ni wuduierka wuduierdu yao.  
Youth of the same age,  
This very day.

Hulang kuernerni honghuazer yao ye,  
Nangguang zhaorerni herzishei yao,  
Nangguang zhaorerni herzishei liao shei ya.  
Red-flower sister in a red long coat,  
The herzishei\(^{28}\) in a red cotton-padded coat,  
The herzishei in a red cotton-padded coat.

Qini youku youdereri wujisa yao,  
Mori dagerni youder bang ye.  
When we watch the way you walk,  
It’s the way a pony walks.

Saoku saodereni wujisa yao,  
Jinji shibaoi saoder bi ye.  
When we watch the way you sit,  
It’s the way a phoenix sits.

Gherang yerissa youder tai yao,  
Terghainang xingkesa xiaoader tai yao.  
You walk so beautifully when you swing your arms,  
You cast a shadow when you lower your head.

Huaqin nian lai ni mannian xiao ye ye,  
Liange nianjinzi liangxian deng ya,  
Liange mimaoni a liangtiao long ye.  
On your huaqin\(^{29}\) face all is smiling,  
Your two eyes are like two lamps,  
Your two eyebrows are like two dragons.

The lyrics (3) – Songs of Solitude
The songs selected here have the same musical characteristics as the love songs. Kugurjia might also be sung when feeling tired or lonely and away from one’s village, such as when herding sheep on a mountainside, as exemplified by the following six examples:

(I)  
Ni you dabangni yanzhang da yao ye,  
Bi you mulani niezhang da,  
Bi you mulani niezhang da.  
The miasma on this mountain is strong,  
1, a youth, suffer more,  
1, a youth, suffer more,

(II)  
Ni you dabangni gherultu yao ye,  
Qian you sanpunang herghusa,  
Hou you chiwusa tulani.  
When I climb up the mountain,  
If I walk three steps forward,  
I need to move one and a half chi\(^{30}\) back.

(III)  
Ni you dabangng gherultu yao ye,  
Gani manlaini khuerlisi,  
Yourou hueradaiu tangkeni a.  
When I climb up the mountain,  
Elder-Brother’s\(^{31}\) forehead sweats,  
And flows down my cheeks.

(IV)  
Yourou kueradaiu tangkeji yao ye,  
Shazi ghazherdu shenlan,  
Shazi ghazherdu shenlan.  
Flows down my cheeks,  
Sweat seeps into the sandy ground,  
Sweat seeps into the sandy ground.

\(^{28}\) Meaning unknown.  
\(^{29}\) Huaqin is a fruit with a beautiful red rind. In this context, it refers to the female’s beautiful face.  
\(^{30}\) One chi equals one-third meter.  
\(^{31}\) The singer refers to himself.
(V)
Yamer risangni kuming bi yao ye?
Liangjin zhuer giai amula,
Risang kuming gaiharn.

How was I born to such a miserable fate?
Youth with a mirror-bright heart,
I am surprised by my miserable fate.

(VI)
Adaliherni a dongda yao ye,
Gani yi qini wulan bi,
Gani niezhang wugui bi.

Among those the same age,
Many come together with me,
They may not be as poor as me.

Musical characteristics of kugurjia

In all the songs presented in this paper, with the exception of the songs sung by the elderly Zhao muchuan residents, there is only one basic melody. The music may display variation in accordance with different lyrics, but the basic melody does not change. Here, by way of illustration, is a schematic notation of the tune as heard in the first stanza (intended to be sung by male singers) of the lyrics quoted on p.67.

Ex. 1. (Tune of stanza 1, male singers.)

The melodic similarity of the three lines in this stanza is obvious. Lines 2 and 3 follow roughly the same pitch contours as the first line, while their rhythmic properties and cadences are different. Lines 2 and 3 both propel towards D as phrase final, but in the second line there is a further glissando down to A, resulting in a temporary suspension – the third line is required to bring the melody to its final close (on D).

The tune of the second stanza (not shown here) is similar to that of the first, but more simple, and it lacks the low cadence on A. In fact, in the love song dialogues quoted on pp. 67–72, all other selections reportedly sung by male singers follow this pattern (i.e. without the low cadence). Apparently, the tune of the first stanza acts as a kind of musical prelude.

The sections intended for female singers largely follow the melodical pattern sung by the men. Here, for example, is the music of the fifth stanza:
There are some minor differences between the male and female tune forms: phrase final A in line 1 is now reached with an upward glissando, and the melody of the female singers does not move up to top note D, except in the final line. In actual performance the female singers’ tunes tend to show more pitch variety due to additional small embellishments (not included in this notation). The ornaments may perhaps be interpreted as emphasizing feminine qualities in contrast to the masculine.

The overall contour of the tune as used throughout the love song dialogues remains the same. Judging from our informant’s demonstrations, similar tunes are used by elderly Zhaomuchuan residents. However, when the elderly sing this sort of kugurjia, their music tends to show more variety in pitches and an increased frequency of fast four-note groups. Here, for example, is the melody of the first stanza quoted on p.73.

And here are the second and third selections of the ‘songs of the elderly’, which constitute two other variants of the melody as sung by elderly Zhaomuchuar residents (Exs. 4 and 5):
Most of the songs have three lines per stanza, while some have two. Every line roughly follows the same basic melodic shape.\(^{32}\)

We can summarize the melodic material as follows: the love songs are different from the other songs discussed here in that they are sung antiphonally, and begin with an introductory melody by the male singers which is not repeated in the ensuing selections (Ex. 1). The tunes sung by female singers in love song dialogues include more embellishments than those of the male singers. The kugurjia tunes of elderly Zhaomuchuan residents (Exs. 3 to 5) are sung as solo songs and they display more melodic variation than the love song tunes and tend to include more melismatic passages on fast notes. Nevertheless, the basic pattern of the melody for all the kugurjia shows little variation. The beginning and ending notes of every stanza presented in this article are the same, and all the tunes share the basic characteristic of long sustained pitches at the end of each line, especially in the first line of each stanza, creating a trill. The long-held tones enhance the musical expression of the songs and add interest to a form which otherwise might become monotonous.

**Musical relationships between kugurjia and hua'er**

There are interesting similarities between the music of kugurjia and that of songs identified as hua'er. The musical relationships between these genres warrant further investigation. Here

\(^{32}\) The tunes of Ex. 4 and 5 are different from the other tunes in that they rise as high up as E in their second lines; furthermore, the beginning of line 3 in Ex. 4 differs from the standard beginning of the lines.
we will limit the discussion to a brief comparison of some melodic elements of *kugurjia* with two tune forms of traditional *hua’er* – *feihong hua ling* (‘red flower tune’) and *bai mudan ling* (‘white peony tune’). The long sustained pitches at the end of each line in *kugurjia* love songs, especially in the first lines, are strongly reminiscent of the long held pitches in the ‘red flower tune’ category of *hua’er*, as for example in *Wo zoushi ni xinsuangel mo bu suang?* (‘Were You Sad When I Left?’, Ex. 6).

![Ex. 6. Long held pitch in the first line of *Wo zoushi ni xinsuangel mo bu suang?* (a *hua’er* tune).]

Sequence *x* in Ex. 6 (rising steps of a minor third and a major second, resulting in a sustained high pitch) corresponds with *x* in Ex. 1. The reversal of this sequence in the second lines of the *kugurjia* tunes as well as the *hua’er* tunes is again similar. Compare *y* in Exs. 1, 2 and 7.

![Ex. 7. The second line of *Wo zoushi ni xinsuangel mo bu suang?* (a *hua’er* tune).]

These same elements *x* and *y* are also found in lines 1 and 4 of *Qianliu wanlin liu bu xia* (‘It’s So Difficult to Ask You to Stay’), another example of a ‘red flower tune’ (cf. Anonymous n.d.; p. 11).

In terms of ‘white peony tunes’, the first and last lines of *Gamei shi mudan yuanzi li zhang* (‘The Young Lady Matures in a Peony Plot’) display considerable likeness to the lines of *kugurjia* under discussion:

![Ex. 8. The first and last lines of *Gamei shi mudan yuanzi li zhang* (a *hua’er* tune).]

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33 The schematic notations of *hua’er* tunes quoted here stem from Anonymous n.d. (p. 8 for Exs. 6 and 7, p. 4 for Ex. 8). The tentative barlines in the original notations have been omitted. Most *hua’er* are sung in a free rhythm, like *kugurjia*. 
Wo zushe ni xinsuang mo bu suang? is listed as being sung in Minhe County and adjacent Ledu County; *Qianliu wanliu liu bu xia* is referenced as originating among Han and Hui living in Tongren, which is located in Tongren Town, Tongren County, Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture; and *Gamei shi mudan yuanzi li zhang* is from Xining. Thus it appears that *kugurjia* share musical characteristics with *hua'er* sung in the Han language in a rather large area within Qinghai. Furthermore, the performance contexts and lyrics of *kugurjia* and *hua'er* are similar in many ways.

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GLOSSARY

| Bai mudan ling 白牡丹令 | Heyan 河沿 | Shanzhaojia 山赵家 |
| baxian 八仙 | hua’er 花儿 | she 社 |
| chi 尺 | Huangnan 黄南 | Tianzhu 天祝 |
| cun 村 | huaqin 花青 | Tu 土 |
| dan 石 | Hui 田 | Xiaohongping 小红坪 |
| Datong 大通 | Huzhu 互助 | Xinger 杏儿 |
| feihong hua ling 飞红花令 | mazha 麻渣 | Xunhua 循化 |
| gamei 原妹 | Minhe 民和 | Yundong 云冬 |
| Guanting 官亭 | Salar 萨拉儿 | Zhaomuchuan 趙木川 |
| Han 汉 | shaolian 少年 | zhen 镇 |
AN INVESTIGATION OF TEMPERAMENT OF GUQIN MUSIC AS EVIDENCED IN SHEN QI MI PU

Discontinuity in Guqin Temperament prior to the Fifteenth Century

'Numbers are dead, once fixed they do not change;
Sounds are alive, and evolve without end.'
Zhu Zaiyu

The study of musical temperament (lǜ xue) can boast of many brilliant achievements in ancient Chinese musical scholarship. It continues to figure prominently in Chinese music research today. Guqin temperament forms an independent branch of study since the twelfth century. The tablatures of the Chinese seven-stringed zither guqin, which preserve and reflect many ancient Chinese music traditions, are among the few music notations in the world which can indicate minute differences of temperament with some accuracy. The oldest surviving collection of qin pieces, Shen Qi Mi Pu (1425), contains unique material for study of the nature and evolution of guqin temperament. In this article the author re-examines a number of scholarly writings in this field, and discusses his computerized analyses of qin scores. He arrives at new ideas about guqin temperament prior to the fifteenth century, and presents his discoveries with the aim of rectifying some existing viewpoints and providing practical references for qin players who attempt to reconstruct music from the Shen Qi Mi Pu.

Yu Hui
(Wesleyan University, USA. Translation: Christopher Evans)

It was upon the publication by Alexander J. Ellis in 1885 of his On the Musical Scales of Various Nations, which founded comparative musicology, the precursor of ethnomusicology, that research into temperament became an important component of research into the musics of different peoples. In fact, research into temperament had already had brilliant success in ancient China. From the Di yuan chapter of the Guan zi 管子·地員篇, a work of the Springs and Autumns Period, to the Yue Lü Zhi 燕樂志 (Notes on Music and Mensura-

1 Zhu Zaiyu, 'Establishing Scales', in: Lüxue Xin Shuo (A New Theory of Temperament.) Zhu Zaiyu, (1536-1611): mathematician, scientist, and prince of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). He was the first person to discover the mathematical formula for the twelve equal temperaments. See Huang 1989c.
2 A. Ellis (1814-1890): English philologist, mathematician, and comparative musicologist. His invention of 'cent' as a measurement for intervals provided an efficient way to compare the music scales and temperaments of different nations. See entry on him in New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Vol. 6, p. 138.
tion) in the dynastic histories, almost every stable dynasty left long descriptions of tireless exploration of ancient musical temperament by scientists and musicians. Tablatures for guqin music constitute the only extant type of record capable of noting minute differences of temperament in ancient Chinese music. They have provided us with over three thousand scores as valuable material for research into the facts of musical temperament in ancient China. Research into the temperaments in these tablatures should become an important part of studies of China’s traditional music, and constitute a significant element of contemporary research into temperament. Through analytic investigations of specific historical materials (guqin tablatures) using palaeo-musicology’s micro approach, such research can do more than assist ethnomusicological morphologists to a macro-understanding of the characteristics of traditional Chinese music and thence gradually to summarize its inherent regularities; it can at the same time play a role in promoting other fields of research within ethnomusicology, such as music history, studies of musical style, and performance.

As will be seen below, the central question for researchers into guqin temperament has been seen as a question of whether guqin temperament is san fen sun yi temperament, just temperament or a composite temperament with elements of both. Corollary to that are the questions whether guqin temperament has changed over time, and when the changes, if any, occurred. And finally there is the question, beyond the scope of this article, of whether this is a topic of purely academic interest or one which has implications for the performance of guqin music, especially that of pieces which are no longer in the current repertory but only found in ancient tablature collections.

Historical evidence suggests that the relationships between musical notes have interested humans since before written records began. What lengths of string produce the best sounding note combinations? How many notes are there? And so on. In China the earliest attempt to answer them, so far as we know, was the development of san fen sun yi 三分损益, the subtraction and addition of thirds. In known records the earliest reference to this method is in the Guan Zi, which gives instructions for generating a series of five notes, as follows: given a string 81 units long, producing the note gong 宫 (do); if the string is lengthened by one third, to 108 units, the note it produces will be zhi 徵 (so) below gong; if the new length is then shortened by one third to 72 units, the note it produces will be shang 宫 (re) above gong; lengthening that length by one third to 96 units will produce yu 角 (la) below gong; and finally another shortening by one third to 64 units will result in jue 角 (mi) above gong. Traditional Chinese music in fact used twelve notes, equivalent to the twelve semitones of Western art music, but the process of lengthening and shortening can be extended to create as many notes as one wishes, as is demonstrated by Qian Yuezhi’s generation of 360 pitches sometime in the second quarter of the 5th century AD.3

At an early stage the procedure was altered slightly so that the first step was to shorten the string by a third, but while the method recognised the existence of octaves by allowing two shortenings in succession when they were necessary to keep all the notes within a single octave, it is mathematically impossible for the simple process of adding and subtracting thirds to the length of a string to produce an octave. Guqin players, on the other hand, routinely

3 Qian Yuezhi (5th century AD): mathematician, historian. According to the Lüli Zhi [Notes on Music Temperament and Calendar] of the Suishu [History of the Sui], at the time of Song Yuanjia (424-453) of the Southern Dynasties Period, Qian used the SAT method to produce up to 360 Lü, which is equivalent to the number of days in one year. A comma produced by this method, 1.845 cent, is called ‘Qian Yuezhi comma’ in today’s China. See Huang 1989a.
produce octaves simply by stopping strings at their mid points, the correct position being marked with small round inlays set into the lacquered surface of the instrument.

There were attempts, summarised later in this article, to account for this impossibility of squaring san fen sun yi with guqin temperament, but they never entered the mainstream of Chinese musical theory, which remained firmly wedded to the san fen sun yi-system. It was not until Chinese musicologists encountered Western musicology that a systematic explanation could be found in the works of Zarlinno,4 in particular his just temperament, which allows the string to be divided not only into thirds, but also halves, quarters, fifths and sixths of its length. The difficulty for Chinese musicology was again that the notes associated with some of Zarlinno's ratios were different from those generated by san fen sun yi.

This opened up the possibility that guqin temperament might not be a san fen sun yi system after all, and yet guqin players routinely use san fen sun yi intervals.

The issue may be clearer if a table showing how the notes differ is added to the very rough outline already given. In the table gong has a frequency of 440 Hz (cycles per second), but the same ratios would apply if gong were at any other musically useful frequency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>San fen sun yi</th>
<th>gong</th>
<th>shang</th>
<th>jue</th>
<th>zhi</th>
<th>yu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frequency (Hz)</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>556.88</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>742.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cents above gong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>906</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

JUST intonation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>frequency (Hz)</th>
<th>gong</th>
<th>shang</th>
<th>jue</th>
<th>zhi</th>
<th>yu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cents above gong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>884</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The just pitch for jue and yu is one common comma lower than their san fen sun yi pitch. It should also be said that while the tables above are limited to the pentatonic scale which forms the core of all the scales in Chinese music, the differences affect others of the twelve pitches recognised by traditional Chinese music theory.

Although guqin tablatures are capable of noting minute differences of temperament in guqin music with some accuracy, nonetheless in their true nature they are simply notations of fingerings, based mainly on performance technique, and they cannot directly reflect pitches in tunes. Thus there are certain limits to the number of guqin pieces from which we can derive inferences and statistics for our research into guqin temperament, and this factor may also affect the objectivity and comprehensiveness of some of the conclusions of today's research into guqin temperament. With this in mind and with the assistance of the computer music research laboratory at Shanghai Jiaotong University I have developed an 'Automatic Transcription and Pitch Processing System for Guqin Tablature', which provides a convenient technique for research into guqin music.5 Using this system I have established a

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4 Gioseffo Zarlinno (1517?-1590): Italian theorist and composer, leading theorist of counterpoint in the 16th century. The Pythagorean theory had limited the class of intervals they called consonant to those produced by the first four divisions of a string. Zarlinno extended the upper limit to the first six divisions of the string, which permitted the admission of several more intervals including major 3rd, 5/4; minor 3rd, 6/5 and the major 6th, 5/3. See entry 'Zarlinno, Gioseffo' in New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Vol. 20, pp. 646-649.

5 See Yu Hui 1993: 56.
computer database for the Shen Qi Mi Pu 神奇秘谱 [‘Exact Tablatures for Treasured and Beautiful Melodies’, see Translator’s Note 1], a work of great historical value and the oldest collection of guqin tablatures now in existence. I have translated them into series of pitches and made statistics of certain information about temperament, for use as a basis for a preliminary discussion of temperament in these tablatures.

The Development and Nature of Guqin Temperament

Guqin temperament began as an independent field of study during the Southern Song Dynasty (1127 – 1368 AD) with Qinlì Shuo 腦律說 (Discussion of Guqin Temperament) by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130 – 1200 AD)6 and later Qin Tong 琴統 (The Guqin Compendium) by Xu Li 徐理 of the same period7; under the Yuan Dynasty (1271 – 1368 AD) there was Qinlì Fa Wei 腦律發微 (Detailed Exposition of Guqin Temperament) by Chen Minzi 陳敏字; under the Ming (1368 – 1644 AD) there were Xilutang Qin Tong 西麓堂琴統 (Guqin Compendium of the Hall at the Western Hill Foot) edited by Wang Zhi 汪芝 9 and Yuelü Quan Shu 乐律全书 (Temperament Complete) by Zhu Zaiyu 朱載育 (1536 – 1611).10 All these relate to research into guqin temperament.

Among contemporary musicologists, Yang Yinliu, Miao Tianrui, Wu Nanxun, Huang Xiangpeng, Chen Yingshi, David Liang Ming-yueh, Yip Ming Mei, Ding Chengyuan and others have in their books and articles discussed and described guqin temperament. The various views about the development of guqin temperament and its nature may be described as follows:

(1) The Division into Historical Periods

Scholars generally consider that the history of guqin temperament can be divided into a period of just temperament (or rather a period when just temperament predominated; in the rest of this article, except when quoting from other authors, ‘just temperament’ is abbreviated to ‘JUST’) and a ‘Subtraction and Addition of Thirds’ period (or one when Subtraction and Addition of Thirds, hereinafter shortened to ‘SAT’), was the main system), and that the development of guqin temperament may be described as a change from JUST to SAT. But there are two different views as to precisely when the change took place.

One view, Yang Yinliu being a representative proponent, is that the change from JUST was in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasty. Yang held that:

‘There is evidence of the use of just temperament in the performance technique of the Seven-stringed Qin at a very early date. The Qin has thirteen inlays [Translator’s Note 2], and the harmonics at the third, sixth, eighth and eleventh of them are notes found only in just temperament. (…) From the countless guqin tablatures which exist, we may at least confidently deduce that from the sixth century A.D. until the sixteenth century, a period of over a thousand years, China’s guqin players continuously used just temperament, entire and unmodified. The earliest known piece is the Northern and Southern Dynasties tablature for the Jieshi Diao Youlan 碧石调幽兰 (‘Solitary Orchid’ in the Jieshi Mode), transmitted by Qiu Ming 丘明, in which all

6 See Qinshu Daquan (Complete Collection of Works on Qin), Qinju Jicheng (Collection of Guqin music) Volume 5, Zhonghua shuju, 1980.
7 Manuscript held in Beijing Library.
8 See Qinshu Daquan (Complete Collection of Works on Qin), Qinju Jicheng (Collection of Guqin music) Volume 5, Zhonghua shuju, 1980.
10 In Wangyou Wenku (Comprehensive Collections), Commercial press, 1931.
Discontinuity in Guqin Temperament

thirteen inlays are used. Then there is the guqin song Gu Yuan 古怨 (Lament for Ancient Times) contained in the Bai Shi Daoren Gequ 白石道人散曲 (Songs by the White Stone Daoist) of Jiang Kui 纪 квар (1151 - 1221) of the Song Dynasty, which was followed by many guqin tablatures published during the Ming Dynasty. In the two latter cases, in addition to the harmonics at the thirteen inlays, the locations of stopped notes between the inlays are given with great clarity, and they represent positions for just notes.’ (Yang 1981: 1015.)

However, after careful research Chen Yingshi has pointed out that,

‘The 'positions for just notes' in guqin tablatures from the Ming Dynasty or earlier, which Yang mentioned, do not exist. The positions of just notes shown in the diagram of relative string lengths were calculated by himself. They never appeared in historical fact, because these just note positions cannot meet the needs of the use of just temperament on the guqin. (...) From today’s perspective, Yang’s theory is imperfect and needs further proof.’ (Chen 1984a: 16.)

Thus there is a question of how JUST was used on the guqin in and before the Ming Dynasty. According to the Dalu yinyue cidian (Dictionary of Mainland Music) published in Taiwan, ‘How far just temperament was used on the guqin is an unresolved problem.’ (Kang 1984: 212.) But the dictionary’s view as to how to divide the history of guqin temperament into periods is basically the same as Yang’s:

‘Although the locations of stopped notes are shown on the basis of simple divisions of the guqin’s strings, guqin music uses very many harmonics. Guqin handbooks since the sixteenth century show some adjustments to the strings, to bring the tuning closer to Pythagorean temperament and equal temperament.’ (Kang 1984: 212.)

The assertion here is the same as that in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians but the latter takes the view that after the sixteenth century guqin temperament was closer to equal temperament. This latter point is clearly rather remote from actual conditions.

The second view as to the division of guqin temperament into historical periods holds that the change from JUST to SAT happened in the Song and Yuan periods. For example, Ding Chengyun believes,

‘After the invention of guqin inlays, guqin music tended for a time towards using the just intervals of the harmonics (...) but the contradictions between just and the Subtraction and Addition of Thirds temperament were resolved over a long period of practice, gradually forming a composite temperament based mainly on the Thirds but also including an element of the just. This is shown by the many guqin pieces from Tang to Song times which very rarely make use of the harmonics at the eleventh, eighth, sixth and third inlays, pieces such as Meihua San Nong 梅花三弄 (Three Variations on the Plum Blossom), Li Sao 离骚 (Meeting Sorrow), and Yu Hui Tushan 与会泰山 (Yu’s Meeting at Tushan).(...) This change took place, at the latest, in the Song Dynasty and by the Yuan Dynasty the matter of the temperament system had already been clarified.’ (Ding 1987: 4.)

Here ‘clarified' doubtless means that by the Yuan Dynasty guqin temperament had already completed its historical development from being a composite temperament based mainly on JUST to being one based mainly on SAT. Taking a similar view is He Changlin:

‘China’s guqin music, from its leaning towards just temperament (using the harmonics at all thirteen inlays) in the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420 - 589 AD), to its tendency in Yuan, Ming and Qing times towards simple temperament (avoiding the harmonics at the third, sixth,
Looking at the Shen Qi Mi Pu, which was completed in the fifteenth century, from these two points of view, then on the view represented by Yang Yinliu all the pieces it contains must use JUST or JUST mixed with SAT, while on the second view, the situation is reversed and they must use SAT or SAT mixed with JUST.

(2) The Nature of Guqin Temperament

Some scholars consider the guqin temperament as a static nature. Generally, there are also two views about the nature.

On the first view, guqin temperament is pure SAT. This view has dominated the theory of guqin temperament since the Ming and Qing Dynasties and was found even earlier. From Tang times, for example, there is Yue Shu Yaolu 乐书要录 (Digest of Books on Music)\(^\text{12}\), while from the Song Dynasty there is Zhu Xi’s Qinliu Shuo. Then there is Chen Minzi’s Qinliu Fa Wei from the Yuan Dynasty. All without exception use SAT to explain guqin temperament. Volume Five of the Yue Shu Yaolu, entitled ‘Lun san fen sun yi tong zhu xian guan’ 论三分损益通诸弦管 (A Discussion of Application of the Subtraction and Addition of Fifths to Strings and Pipes), records that,

No matter what the length of a particular guqin may be, one string is tuned to the Huang Zhong 黄钟 note [The pitch of huang zong varied from dynasty to dynasty. For illustrative purposes, it is here assumed to be C]. It is divided into three and played while stopped at one third less than its length, thus being in tune with a six cun (寸) Lin Zhong 林钟 note [G]. This is again divided into three and one third added, to be in tune with a Tai Cu 太蔟 [D] of eight cun. And so on until there are twelve notes corresponding to the Lü 戋 and the Lü 緗 [the first ‘lü’ has the fourth tone and the second, the third. Starting with the root note, lü 戋 are the first, third, fifth, and so on, pitches in the cycle, while lü 緗 are the second, fourth, sixth, etc.], without the slightest discrepancy. (Anon. 1981: 158.)

The second view holds that the basic nature of guqin temperament lies in the combination of two types of temperament, that is to say it is a form of composite temperament system which combines both JUST and SAT. When discussing the second theory of the division into historical periods I mentioned a composite temperament system based on the combination of two forms of temperament, but from the point of view of how guqin temperament can be divided into periods. Here the ‘combination of two forms of temperament’ is a judgement as to the nature itself of guqin temperament. Zhang Shibin considers that,

‘The basis of the positions of stopped notes on the guqin and its scales is without question simple temperament [Zhang’s term for SAT]. (...) Since the guqin began to have thirteen inlays and guqin tunes began to use melodies played on harmonics, there has been use of just temperament. (...) The use of both simple and just temperament on a single instrument is characteristic of the guqin.’ (Zhang 1982: 387.)

Zhang’s view of a ‘combination of two forms of temperament’ is formed by his different treatment of the temperament of the guqin’s stopped and harmonic notes. Yip Ming Mei also remarks that,

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\(^{12}\) In Congshu Jicheng Chubian (The Draft of Collection of Series Books), Commercial Press.
Discontinuity in Guqin Temperament

'The guqin has seven strings and a total of ninety one harmonic notes can be obtained; when complete sections of guqin tunes are played as harmonics, they use just temperament. (...) There are more stopped notes than open-string notes and harmonic notes; the positions of stopped notes on the guqin are calculated according to Thirds temperament. They are derived according to certain ratios, and the Subtraction and Addition of Thirds, derived from non-random stopping, is a way of generating notes. Stopped notes in guqin tunes belong to Thirds temperament.' (Yip 1984.)

David Liang Ming-yueh also considers that, 'the temperament of harmonics is just temperament.' (Liang 1991) Huang Xiangpeng’s researches into guqin temperament, however, were based on bringing together the temperaments of the stopped and harmonic notes and led to a view different from those above:

'Although Thirds temperament exists in some fingerings, nevertheless guqin temperament is a composite temperament system based mainly on just temperament, since all the ways for stopping notes relate to the use of the guqin's inlays.' (Huang 1989b: 530.)

The Structure of Guqin Temperament

Guqin tablature (including both Wenzipu or 文字譜 (Character Tablature), now to be found only in the Jieshi Diao Youlan, and Jianzipsu 戮字譜 (Abbreviated Character Tablature), used at least since the time of Jiang Kui) is in reality a notation based on co-ordinates. It uses the thirteen inlays in the guqin as the warp and the tuning sequence of the seven strings as the weft, to determine the location of the pitch conveyed by each notation sign. The present writer considers, however, that as regards the actual formation of the temperament in guqin tunes, four levels exist in objectivity, and these four levels jointly determine the appearance of the temperaments of guqin tunes.

The relations between the inlay locations on the guqin form the first level and the tuning pattern of the seven strings forms the second, the two together providing the possibility of all the pitches and fingerings of guqin temperament. The third level in the composition of guqin temperament consists of the fingerings; that is to say that, given the different pitch possibilities provided by the thirteen inlays and the length ratios of the strings on the one hand and particular tuning patterns on the other, then the temperament surface of a guqin tune is determined by the positions of the notes on the instrument, especially when fingering at different points on different strings may produce (for the same note) pitches belonging to different temperaments. The fourth level in the composition of guqin temperament is the pitch of the gong note (the instituting note of scales in Chinese traditional music, somewhat akin to the tonic). The pitch of gong determines the acoustic structure of the scale, i.e. differing locations of gong within the gamut generally create changes in the acoustic structure of the scale.

The first two levels are the stable (or objective) elements in the composition of guqin temperament, setting out the possibilities for the various pitches within guqin temperament. The latter two are its variable (or subjective) elements, determining the realisation of the sound structure of a tune’s temperament. Some of the views of the authorities cited with reference to the division into historical periods and the basic nature of guqin temperament, were based only on how certain inlay locations were used in a tune (i.e. only on the first level in the composition of guqin temperament), a limitation which must inevitably affect the objectivity of the conclusions. It is only upon comprehensive, overall consideration of guqin temperament at all four levels that a conclusion may be reached which, in a comparatively sense, accords with objective reality.
(1). The Location of the Thirteen Inlays
This is the first of the four levels in the composition of guqin temperament, and is a basic element. ‘It may be said that the locations of the inlays is the main factor in the structure of the guqin, it determines the organisation of the temperament, and implies the method of performance.’ (Yang, n.d.) The method of locating the inlays was calculated using actual dimensions by Zhu Xi, in his Qinliu Shuo, and Xu Li, in his Qin Tong Shi Ze 十則 (Ten Principles for a Guqin Compendium), both during the Song Dynasty. On the other hand, in the section on locating inlays in the Feng Xuan Xuan Pin 凤鸾纹品 (Mysterious Works Carried in the Wind) edited by Zhu Houjue, the Ming Prince Hui 明微王朱厚爝, in 1539 AD, and in the section on Lun Zhun Hui Yu Qin Hui Zhi Bu Tong 论准徽与琴徽之不同 (Differences between inlay locations on the Zhun and the Guqin) in the Lüxue Xin Shuo (A New Theory of Temperament) of Zhu Zaiyu, the locations of the thirteen inlays were described in terms of length ratios. Sachs, in his Comparative Musicology, and Bose, in his The Music of Non-European Peoples, both noted the distinctiveness of the way in which the thirteen inlays divide up the length of the strings on the guqin. Sachs considered that, ‘some locations for stopped notes are not used’, and that ‘a series of this type clearly demonstrates that it derives from theory and not from listening.’ Frits Bose considers that the differences between stopped notes according to the inlay locations and the intervals of the series of fifths, ‘shows that people made the guqin based not upon musical but upon metaphysical, philosophico-religious considerations.’ The ratios along open strings for the locations of the thirteen inlays on the guqin are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inlay position</th>
<th>open string</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>7</th>
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<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length Ratio</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7/8</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>2/5</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>1/5</td>
<td>1/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The question now is how we should explain this method of dividing the length of the strings. Ever since the ‘Di Yuan’ chapter of the Guan Zi generation after generation of Chinese has calculated the string lengths for different notes by successively multiplying by 2/3 (subtracting a third) or 4/3 (adding a third). But among the thirteen inlay locations of the guqin only the 9th (2/3) can be accurately derived by the SAT method. For example, according to China’s traditional SAT method, the ratio for the Zhong Lü 中呂 [F] pitch is 131072/177147; it is impossible to derive the original Huang Zhong pitch (the starting pitch for the Chinese scale) by adding one third to Zhong Lü. The desired pitch for an open string being Huang Zhong, it is only when the relative length of the Zhong Lü pitch at the tenth inlay is taken to be 3/4, that the original Huang Zhong can be derived by the addition of one third. Thus the Zhong Lü at the tenth inlay is not a SAT Zhong Lü. The differences in the ratios of string lengths at the third, sixth, eighth and eleventh inlays are even greater.

Mention is made in the chapter on ‘Lü Li Zhi’ 律吕志 (Mensuration and Calendars) in the Jin Shu 魏书 (History of the Jin Dynasty) of Si fen sun yi 四分损益, ‘Addition of Quarters’, as a way of generating a scale. Chen Yingshu has suggested that on the guqin, starting with

13 Zhun 准, also called Xian Zhun 纘准 or Lü Zhun 律准, is an ancient instrument for measuring temperament. The shape is similar to a qin. See Miao, Ji and Guo, ed, 1985: 519-520, 422.
14 See Chinese translation of Curt Sachs Comparative Musicology --- Musics from different Cultures, in Minzu Yin Yue Xue Yi Wen Ji, China Wenlian Press, 1985, p. 66.
15 See Chinese translation of Frits Bose’s The Musics of Non-European Peoples in Yinyue Yu Minzu, edited and printed by the Music Research Institute of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Anhui Literature and Arts Research Institute, 1984.
the eleventh inlay as jue\(^6\) (the third note of the pentatonic scale, broadly equivalent to mi), adding one quarter gives gong for the open string, while deducting one quarter gives yu (the fifth pentatonic note, la) at the eighth inlay, and that gong, jue and yu constitute three notes most characteristic of a JUST scale. (Chen 1984b: 21.)

Like the Addition of Thirds, the Addition of Quarters suffers from the difficulty that it cannot regenerate the starting note, that is to say that neither can explain the principle by which the seventh inlay – one half of the way along the string – is derived. Clearly it is possible that another way of generating notes exists in addition to the Addition of Quarters and the Addition of Thirds.

I believe this to be the Addition and Subtraction of Halves; for example, starting with an open string one half is subtracted for the seventh inlay, which gives the pitch for Qing Huang Zhong (清黃鍾); adding a half to that \((1/2 \times 3/2 = 3/4)\) gives the tenth inlay, i.e. the Zhong Lü at 3/4 of the string length. In this way the Addition of Halves explains the location of the tenth inlay, which the Addition of Thirds and the Addition of Quarters cannot.

Records of the use of the Addition of Halves to explain the locations of some inlays can be found in historical documents. The ‘Lü Li Zhi’ of the Jin Shu records that during the Jin dynasty Xun Xu (荀勖) made twelve dizi (horizontal bamboo flutes) in accordance with descriptions in the classics, and after recording that ‘with the Ruibin Dizi (蕤宾之笛) the home note corresponded to Ruibin (蕤宾) [F\#], while the Zhi (徵) below it corresponded to Dalü (大吕) [C\#], with a length of 3.95 chi (=),’ it was noted that ‘the Biangong (变宫) [ti] being ‘bei ban ling’ (傍平令) below the gong hole is convenient for performance, and similarly for Lin Zhong (林钟).’ In another section it is recorded that, ‘No matter whether double or half or quarter, all provide reasons for the inlays of the guqin.’\(^17\) Wu Nanxun interprets ‘bei ban ling’ (double and half) as meaning ‘double plus a half’, i.e. \(11/2 = 3/2\), which is an addition of halves. (Wu 1964: 131.) ‘No matter whether double or half or quarter’ it is a ‘subtraction of halves.’ Therefore, I believe, the determination of the string ratios for the locations of the hui on the guqin by traditional methods should involve at least the Addition of Halves, the Addition of Thirds and the Addition of Quarters.

In the traditional view, it is precisely because the locations of the thirteen inlays involve more than one theory for dividing strings and generating notes that the possibility is created that the first structural level of guqin temperament may form a composite temperament. This multiplicity of theory also constitutes the difference between the Addition of Thirds found in guqin musical practice and the SAT of long-standing Chinese musical theory, which is mainly that in the guqin’s Addition of Thirds Huang Zhong can be regenerated: Zhong Lü gives rise to Huang Zhong. The latter point makes the guqin’s Addition of Thirds much closer to Pythagorean temperament. Ignoring sharps and flats, the only differences between them is that the interval do – fa is 522 cents in the former while the latter allows fa to be generated directly from do at an interval of 498 cents. In the remainder of this article ‘guqin SAT’ should be understood to reflect these differences from the Addition of Thirds found in traditional theory.

(2). Methods of Tuning Strings

Yang Yinliu believed that, ‘In the tablature of the Jieshi Diao Youlan the harmonics at all thirteen inlays are used, providing confirmation of scales in just temperament.’ (Yang 1981:

\(^{16}\) See Translator’s Note 3.

\(^{17}\) For both quotations, see Jin Shu Volume 16, Punctuated edition, 1974, Zhonghua Shuju, p. 485.
171) However, the harmonics do not appear on all thirteen inlays of a single string, but are distributed among the ninety one inlay positions of the seven strings. Thus, if the open notes of the strings are not in JUST, then the harmonics cannot amount to completely JUST scales. At the same time the stopped notes at the inlay positions are also unable to form completely pure intervals. By the same token, if the strings are tuned to JUST, it is not possible to obtain a tune wholly in guqin SAT, simply by completely avoiding the positions of JUST notes. The following tables show the stopped and harmonic notes which can be produced exactly at the inlays of a guqin tuned in accordance with guqin SAT. Underlining the name of a note shows that the note is a common comma lower than it would be according to guqin SAT, i.e. that it is in JUST.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harmonic notes</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>10</th>
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<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G g</td>
<td>g</td>
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<td>j</td>
<td>i</td>
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<td>g</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>i</td>
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<td>y</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>z</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>J j</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>q</td>
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<td>y</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>qg</td>
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<td>qg</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>qg</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the tables, G, S, J, Z and Y refer to strings with open notes of Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi and Yu respectively; and g, s, j, z, and y refer to the notes gong, shang (re), jue, zhi (so) and yu respectively, while b or q prefixed to the abbreviation for a note means bian (-flat) or qing (sharp), as the case may be.

It is apparent that with open strings tuned according to guqin SAT, gong, jue, qingjue [mi#], zhi, yu and bianqiong all appear with both JUST and guqin SAT pitches, but due to the effects of the tuning method, guqin SAT pitches are more frequent than JUST ones.

Overlooking the effects of the tuning method may affect not only the ability to come to a correct conclusion regarding the nature of guqin temperament, but also the objectivity of today’s guqin players when interpreting tablatures to recreate guqin pieces from ancient times.

(3) Note Fingerings
As shown in the tables above a single note may be played on different strings and at different inlays, i.e. there may be different fingerings for a single note. Since this often results in a single note having two pitches, it is only by avoiding certain fingering positions that the character of a single temperament can be maintained.

For example, we know that JUST is internally inconsistent in that, e.g., the interval shang – yu is a narrow fifth of 680 cents, not the JUST fifth of 702 cents; while yu – shang is a wide fourth of 520 cents, not the JUST fourth of 498 cents. But the stopped note at the guqin’s tenth inlay is a JUST fourth above the open string note and the stopped notes and harmonics
at the second, fifth and ninth inlays and the harmonics at the twelfth inlay are all JUST fifths. Thus in guqin pieces tuned to JUST intervals the stopped note at the tenth inlay of a string tuned to yu and the stopped notes and harmonics at the second, fifth and ninth inlays of a string tuned to shang must all be avoided, if a classical just temperament is to be achieved.

In the same way, when strings are tuned according to guqin SAT, the stopped notes and harmonics at the third, sixth and eleventh inlays of a string tuned to gong and the harmonic jue and the stopped yu at the eighth inlay must all be avoided if the whole piece is to be played in a uniform temperament. Thus the fingerings of notes must be taken into consideration as an important element in a close analysis of guqin temperament. This is a matter which some scholars have failed to take sufficiently into account. Clearly it was difficult for them to collect manually the numbers and frequencies of appearance of all the different ways of producing all the notes, but it is comparatively convenient and accurate when a computer is used.

(4). The Pitch of Gong

The relationship between the gong system (mode with gong as its root) for the open notes of the guqin’s seven strings and that of the tune itself may be Zheng Nong 𦛨 (homo-modal) or Jie Diao Ce Nong 𠄝 (hetero-modal). ‘Homo-modal’ means that the open string gong is also the root note of the gong system of the piece, while ‘hetero-modal’ implies that they are different, that is to say, the original string tuning being unchanged, the fingering of the notes has the effect of moving gong away from its home string. In this way, when forming a series of notes with the same string tuning and fingering, different positions for the gong note may bring about different interval and acoustic structures. For example, the series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

If C is taken as gong, then the interval structure is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>bg</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

while if G is gong, then the structure is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>G</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>qi</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>y</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

where the abbreviations are the same as for the tables above. It can be seen that the acoustic structure of the core pentatonic notes is different in the two series.

Methods of Tuning the Strings for Pieces in the Shen Qi Mi Pu

In old musical practice and theory in China, musicology and the study of temperament are often inextricably linked, so that research into guqin temperament cannot be completely divorced from musicological analysis. The temperament of the open string tuning provides the basis and possibilities for a piece of itself forming some kind of temperament. It is a critically important factor in determining the nature of guqin temperament. This article must therefore take tuning methods as the starting point for its analysis of guqin temperaments in the Shen Qi Mi Pu.
Tuning relates first to the *Qin Diao* 调 or modes, that is to say, the way the strings are required to be tuned, or the musical style and character specified for the piece. The *Shen Qi Mi Pu* specifies the mode before every piece and classifies the pieces according to different modes. In the final volume the pieces in each mode are preceded by a *Diao Yi* 意 or short piece exemplifying the 'essence of the mode'. In the three volumes of the collection, the modes used are the *Man Jue* 慢角调, *Bi Yu* 比玉调 (both with strings tuned to the intervals exemplified by C D E G A B d), *Man Shang* 慢商调 (C C F G A c d), *Qi Lian* 凄凉调, *Chu Shang* 舛商调 (both C E F G B c d), *Man Gong* 慢宫调 (B1 D E G A B d), *Huang Zhong* 黄钟调 (Bb1 D F G Bb c d), *Rui Bin* 妮宾调 (C D F G Bb c d), *Gu Xian* 姑洗调 (C Eb F G Bb c eb), *Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi, Yu* and *Shang Jue* modes (all tuned to the most frequently used pattern, the *Zheng* 正调 pattern: C D F G A c d). Thus all the tunes can be brought within a scheme of eight different tuning patterns. But similar modes may exist in different tunings, causing identical intervals formed by the open notes of the seven strings to fall into different acoustic structures.

Although in the final volume it is sometimes specified which notes on which strings correspond with each other, the *Shen Qi Mi Pu* does not specify a complete tuning sequence for any of the tuning patterns, so that the relationships between the strings are not entirely clear. In this study the method principally used to discover the relationships between pairs of strings was to search for sequences of unisons or octaves played on different strings, and whence derive the tuning patterns. The principle was that unisons or octaves, known to psycho-musicology as 'equivalent notes', should not produce beats (*yin cha* 音差). Also unisons and octaves do not normally vary in pitch as a tune progresses. The principle was to look for symbols referring to notes exactly at inlays, preferably harmonics but stopped notes if there were sequences of harmonics. This is because the locations of notes between inlays may vary slightly in performance, while the locations of the inlays are fixed. This is especially so in the case of harmonic notes, because inaccuracies of fingering result in their not being clear and bright. The following is the actual method used:

1. Inferences as to tuning patterns were made using cent values. By converting the different lengths of the strings into cent values, addition and subtraction can be substituted for multiplication and division, making pitch markers and the conversions more directly apparent and comprehensible:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
<th>Inlay positions</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stopped notes</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1586</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>2786</td>
<td>3102</td>
<td>3600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonic notes</td>
<td>3600</td>
<td>3102</td>
<td>2786</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>2786</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>2786</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2786</td>
<td>3102</td>
<td>3600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the 'equivalence' of octaves we may regard two notes separated by one or more octaves as being the same, and in this way derive the following simplified table of cent values for the pitches at each of the thirteen inlays, as shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th>Inlay positions</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stopped notes</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>±0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonic notes</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>±0</td>
<td>±0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The specific method used in the calculations was: where two different strings produce the same note or octaves at different inlay positions, the cent value of the string and inlay
position of the lower note is equal to that of the higher note plus the cent value of the interval between the two strings. For example, if we know that there is an interval of a minor third between the fifth and sixth strings but are not clear whether it is a JUST or a SAT interval, then we can make deductions based on playing one after the other the harmonics at the twelfth inlay of the fifth string and the eleventh inlay of the sixth. The cent value of the former, taking the open string as zero, is 702 while that of the latter is 386. If there is no beat, then the cent value of the interval between the strings is 702 − 386 = 316. From this it can be seen that the interval between the strings is a JUST minor third.

The locations of tablature symbols within the text are shown by fractions in which the divisor indicates the page number and the dividend the line number, with F and A showing respectively whether the note is a harmonic or stopped one. For example, '8/20f' refers to a symbol in the eighth line of page 20 and requiring a harmonic note to be played. In addition I indicate whether a piece is in the first, second or third volume of the collection. Below each tablature symbol there is indicated the name of the note deduced and its difference if any from the guqin SAT pitch of that note, a horizontal line above or below meaning that it is a common comma sharp or flat as the case may be, by reference to the guqin SAT pitch. In the case of a piece for which the volume or string numbers are not shown, the process and volume are the same as those for the immediately preceding piece. Today the Shen Qi Mi Pu exists in the Wang Qiong [name] re-cutting dating to the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty and another re-cutting, now held in the Shanghai Library, dating to the Wanli period of the same dynasty. The editions being basically similar, the indications as above used in this article are equally applicable to both.

Comprehensive statistical analysis allows us to classify the string tuning methods in the Shen Qi Mi Pu into five types, falling basically into two groups.

(1) guqin SAT Temperament
The first group is based on the guqin SAT method, its characteristic being that the intervals between the open notes can be brought within the chain of fifths. The method of matching strings is generally to match the perfect fifth or fourth on one string with the octave or open string on another. Shang is 204 cents above gong, jue 408 cents above, zhi 702 cents and yu 906 cents.

(2) Just Temperament
The second group consists of ways to tune to JUST intervals. There are four types.

(2) (i) JUST Type A
The first, Type A, gives typical, Western JUST intervals. The notes are generated as follows:

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Y</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>Bg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qj</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This method generally matches pairs of JUST notes, fourths with fifths and thirds with sixths. The ratio of string length and the cent values for each note compared with that for gong are as follows:

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length ratio</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>Qj</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Bg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cents of the notes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>1088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the heptatonic scale the jue, yu and biangong notes are all a common comma lower than their guqin SAT equivalents, while in the pentatonic scale the jue and yu notes are lower by that amount.

(2) (ii) JUST Type B
The second method for tuning just intervals is here termed Type B. In addition to the flattening of yu and jue, it also lowers shang by a common comma compared with the guqin SAT pitch, to 182 cents above gong. The range of bells in the Zeng Hou Yi 齊侯乙 (Marquess Yi of Zeng) tomb, which attempts to solve the problem of discords by including bells with pitches additional to the standard twelve, calls this note ‘su shang’ 素商. The structure of the scale is as follows:

Table 10

| S | Y | G | Z |

The cent intervals above gong are: shang 182 cents; jue 386; zhi 702 and yu 884.

(2) (iii) JUST Type C
The third method is here called Type C. Its characteristic is that the note which was originally furthest left in the chain of fifths is here generated by using a JUST third. In the pentatonic scale this note is jue, and in the Zeng Hou Yi bells it is called ‘gong jue’ 合角. In cases of the hexatonic Qi Liang tuning where the seventh string has been lowered by a common comma, when the fifth string is used as gong the seventh string is gong jue, but when the second string is used as gong the seventh is a bian gong flattened by a common comma, and what inscriptions on the Zeng Hou Yi bells call ‘zhi fu’ 微 . The structures of these scales are as follows:

Table 11

| j | G | Z | S | Y |

(or)

Table 12

| Bg | G | Z | S | Y | J |

(2) (iv) JUST Type D
The fourth method is here called Type D. Its characteristic is that gong is a common comma higher than the guqin SAT pitch, or that zhi, shang, yu and jue all are that much lower. The structures are as follows:

Table 13

| Z | S | Y | J | G |

(or)

Table 14

| Z | S | Y | G | J |

In either case the cent intervals above gong are shang 184, jue 386, zhi 680 and yu 884. Among these four types of JUST tunings, by moving the gong note by a fourth or fifth interval the scales can be converted into each other. See, for example, the following string interval relationships for the Qi Liang tuning.
Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pitch name</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>bE</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>bB</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note name (1)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Bg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note name (2)</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>QI</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the second string is used as gong then we have a classical JUST scale with a Type A tuning with cent intervals: shang 204; jue 386; zhi 702; yu 884 and bian gong 1088. If the fifth string is used as gong there is a JUST scale of Type B and the cent intervals away from gong are: shang 188; jue 386; qing jue 498; zhi 702; and yu 884.

(3). Tunings by the Subtraction and Addition of Thirds
Altogether the Shen Qi Mi Pu includes twenty-five pieces in five modes which may be regarded as being tuned by the guqin SAT method.

(3) (i).
In the Zheng mode tuning the relationships between the strings are as follows:

Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the sixth and seventh strings repeat the first and second, in principle it is only necessary to find the relationships between the five strings for the pentatonic scale. The following, from Yang Chun 阳春 (Sunlit Springtime) in volume 2, is an example.

Table 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open string notes</th>
<th>1/29</th>
<th>8/31</th>
<th>6/30</th>
<th>6/30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first step the harmonic at the ninth inlay of the third string is paired with that at the seventh inlay of the sixth string. Ninth inlay harmonics are 702 cents above the open string notes, while seventh inlay harmonics are ±0 cents above the open string notes. Thus 702 cents = X + 0 cents, therefore X = 702 cents. This confirms that the gong string and the zhi string are a perfect fifth apart. The next four steps all work on the same principle and determine the relationships in turn from zhi string to shang string to yu string to jue string. In this way in can be confirmed that the tuning method for this piece is the guqin SAT method. Other pieces tuned by this method are: Gao Shan 高山 (High Mountains), Liu Shui 流水 (Flowing Waters), Xuan Mo 玄默 (Profound Silence), Zhao Yin 隐隐 (Welcoming Seclusion), Jiu Kuang 酒狂 (Bacchic Delirium), Mei Hua San Nong 梅花三弄 (Three Variations of Plum Blossom), He Ming Jiu Gao 鹤鸣九皋 (Cranes Calling from High River Banks), Yin De 隐德 (Concealed Virtue), Wang Ji 忘机 (Effortless Success). The piece derives from a story of a person who failed when he had a plan in mind but succeeded when he forgot it. Literally the title means ‘forgetting plans’), Guang Han Qiu 广寒秋 (Autumn Cold), Wu Ye Ti 夜夜啼 (Bird Calls in the Night), Kai Gu 慨古 (Sighing for Things Past), Shen Pin Shang Yi 神品商意 (Superior Essence of the Shang Mode), Shen Pin Gu Shang Yi 神品古商意 (Superior Essence of the Old Shang Mode), Shen Pin Zhi Yi 神品征意 (Superior Essence of the Zhi Mode) and Zhi Zhao Fei 齐朝飞 (Ringed Pheasants on the Wing at Dawn).
(3) (ii).
In the *Man Jue* tuning 慢角調 the strings are tuned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only piece in this type is *Dun Shi Cao* 逃世操 (Fleeing the World).

(3) (iii).
The tuning pattern for the *Man Gong* tuning 慢宮調 is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only piece in it is *Huo Lin* 蒼麟 (Capturing the Unicorn).

(3) (iv).
In the *Huang Zhong* tuning 黃鐘調 the pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pieces using it are: *Xiao Hujia* 小胡笳 (Shorter Version of ‘Shawms’), *Yi Zhen* 養真 (Nourishing Truth), *Huang Yun Qiu Sai* 黃云秋塞 (Lowering Clouds over an Autumn Village), *Da Hujia* 大胡笳 (Bigger Version of ‘Shawms’) and *Da Ya* 大雅 (Great Elegance).

(3) (v).
In the *Qi Liang* 凌凉調 (Chu Shang 楚商調) tuning there are two possibilities for the relationships of the open note of the seventh string. In this article the second string is taken as gong. The pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Bg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only piece is *Huaxu Yin* 华胥引 (Huaxu Prelude).

(4). Tunings by the JUST Method

(4) (i). Type A

(4) (i) (a)
In the *Zheng* tuning 正調 the pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discontinuity in Guqin Temperament

Pieces: Tian Feng Huan Pei (Heavenly Breezes and Jade Pendants), Guang Han You (Promenade in Wild Coldness), Shen Hua Yin (Becoming Immortal) and Zhuang Zhou Meng Die (Zhuang Zi’s Butterfly Dream).

(4) (i) (b)
For the Man Gong tuning 慢宫调 the pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only piece is Guangling San (Guangling Melody [Guangling is an old name for today’s Yangzhou]).

(4) (i) (c)
For the Huang Zhong tuning 黄钟调 the pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only tune is Kai Zhi (Warming up the Fingers).

(4) (i) (d)
In the Gu Xian tuning 姑洗调 the pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two pieces: Fei Ming Yin (Singing in Flight) and Qiu Hong (Swan Geese in Autumn).

(4) (i) (e)
For the Rui Bin tuning 此宾调 the pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and the only piece is Fan Canglang (Floating on the Canglang River).

(4) (i) (f)
For the Qi Liang tuning 凄凉调 the pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Bg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Again there are two pieces: *Ze Pan Yin* (Song from the Marsh Side) and *Chu Ge* (Song of Chu).

(4) (ii). **Type B**

(4) (ii) (a)
For the Zheng tuning 正調 the pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pieces concerned are: *Gu Feng Cao* 古風操 (Melody in an Ancient Style) and *Ling Xu Yin* 凌虛吟 (Ascending the Void).

(4) (ii) (b)
For the Huang Zhong tuning 黃鐘調 the pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and the tunes involved are: *Shan Zhong Si Youren* 山中思友人 (Amidst Mountains, Thinking of Friends), *Qiu Yue Zhao Mao Ting* 秋月照茅亭 (An Autumn Moon Illuminates a Thatched Pavilion) and *Long Shuo Cao* 朗朔操 (Air from a Northern People).

(4) (ii) (c)
For the Bi Yu tuning 碧玉調 the pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and the only piece involved *Ba Ji You* 八極游 (Roaming to Infinity).

(4) (ii) (d)
In the case of the Qi Liang tuning 凌凉調, if the fifth string of the JUST Qi Liang tuning previously mentioned is taken as gong, then it becomes this scale; while this tuning becomes Type C if its fifth string is taken as gong. The pattern is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Bg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( S</td>
<td>Qj</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>J</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and the only piece using it is *Li Sao* 离骚.

(4) (iii). **Type C**.

(4) (iii) (a)
For the Zheng tuning 正調 the pattern is
Discontinuity in Guqin Temperament

Table 32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

taking in Lie Zi Yu Feng 列子御风 (Lie Zi Riding the Wind), Yi Lan 稠兰 (Flourishing Orchid), Duan Qing 短清 (Short Clarity), Chang Qing 長清 (Long Clarity) and Shen You Liu He 神游六合 (The Spirit Roaming Freely).

(4) (iii) (b)
For the Gu Xian tuning 坤洗调 the pattern is

Table 33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and the only piece, Shen Pin Gu Xian Yi 神品坤洗意 (Superior Essence of the Gu Xian Mode).

(4) (iv), Type D

(4) (iv) (a)
For the Zheng tuning 正调 the pattern is

Table 34

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and the pieces concerned are: Bai Xue 白雪 (White Snows), Shan Ju Yin 山居吟 (Mountain Dwelling), Yu Hui Tushan 雲会涂山 (Yu’s Meeting with Tushan) and Qiao Ge 青歌 (Woodcutter’s Song).

(4) (iv) (b)
In the Rui Bin tuning 稔宾调 the pattern is

Table 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String names</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note names</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>String pitch intervals</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the only piece using it being Xiao Xiang Shui Yun 薛湘水云 (The Waters and Clouds of Xiao and Xiang).

(5) Rules for Tuning Strings
The process of deduction for the tunes listed above looks mainly at how the pitches for the open strings are generated. On the guqin there are generally one or two strings which are related as octaves or unisons, which means that the complete tuning procedure for the acoustic structure of the open string notes may be completed on the basis of the string-matching method described above, but using the inlay positions for octaves to tune strings whose open notes are octaves apart. Thus equivalent acoustic structures for the open notes
may be reached by different tuning procedures. Because the pieces in the *Shen Qi Mi Pu* were composed at different periods and by different people, were played in different geographical regions, and we are only able today to make inferences about the acoustic structures of their open string notes, it is very difficult to come to clear conclusions about which particular tuning procedures may have been used for tunes when they were composed.

Even though the various types of tuning method listed above were derived by inference and deduction based on the tablature symbols, we can see from the records of tuning methods in the *Tai Yin Da Quan Ji* 太音大全集, a work on the *qin* edited by Zhu Quan 朱欽, and the last volume of the *Shen Qi Mi Pu* that before and at the time of the *Shen Qi Mi Pu* *guqin* players used both *guqin* SAT and JUST tuning methods on their instruments. It should be noted that in traditional usage the strings from first to seventh are called *gong*, *shang*, *jue*, *zhi*, *yu*, *wen* 文 and *wu* 武 respectively. In the *zheng* tuning their open notes are respectively lower octave *zhi*, lower octave *yu*, *gong*, *shang*, *jue*, *zhi* and *yu*.

(5) (i)
In the first half of ‘Section 10, Tuning the Strings’ 品弦第十 in the *Tai Yin Da Quan Ji*, we find:

‘Whenever tuning the strings the open note of the *wu* string [the seventh string] should be tuned first, and then the stopped note at the ninth inlay on the *zhi* string [the fourth string] (*shang* + 702 cents = *yu*) should be matched to it. Then the open note of the *wen* string [the sixth string] is obtained by matching it with the note at the tenth inlay of the *zhi* string (*shang* + 498 cents = *zhi*). After that the open note of the *wu* string is used to obtain the note at the tenth inlay on the *yu* string [the fifth string], any sharpness or flatness being dealt with by tuning the *yu* string (*jue* − 498 cents = *yu*). After these four strings have been tuned, then the open note of the sixth string gives the stopped note at the ninth inlay on the first (*gong* + 702 cents = *zhi*), the open note of the fifth string gives the stopped note at the ninth inlay on the second (*yu* + 702 cents = *jue*) and the open note of the fourth string gives the stopped note at the ninth inlay on the first (*zhi* + 702 cents = *shang*), in each case the stopped note matching the open note...’

This procedure works entirely by matching stopped notes at the ninth and tenth inlays with open notes, and is thus a *guqin* SAT method of obtaining the standard tuning.

(5) (ii)
In ‘Section 24, The Furthest Feeling of Knowing Sounds’ 知音端第繪 in the *Tai Yin Da Quan Ji*, there is:

‘Using the thumb to stop at the ninth inlay and going over two intervening strings, start with the fourth string and return to the fourth string to finish’ (...) ‘Using the ring finger to stop at the tenth inlay and going over one intervening string, but in the case of the third string stop beside the eleventh inlay.’

The ninth and tenth inlays and beside the eleventh inlay are locations of *guqin* SAT notes. Using these locations necessarily tunes to an open string note acoustic structure which accords with *guqin* SAT temperament. The importance of the instruction to stop the third string ‘beside’ the inlay is that stopping there produces a *guqin* SAT note, while stopping precisely on the inlay produces a JUST note.

(5) (iii)
In the second half of ‘Section 10, Tuning the Strings’ in the *Tai Yin Da Quan Ji*, we find:
'(...) play the [open] third string and the first stopped at the tenth inlay (gong - 498 cents = zhi), play the open fourth and the second stopped at the tenth inlay (shang - 498 cents = yu), the open fifth and the third stopped at the eleventh inlay (jue - 386 cents = gong), the open sixth and the fourth stopped at the tenth inlay (zhi - 498 cents = shang) and the open seventh string and the fifth stopped at the tenth inlay (yu - 498 cents = jue).'

This procedure is not complete. If a further match is made, 'open seventh string and second string stopped at the seventh inlay', to lower the second string by a common comma to become the lower octave of the seventh string, then the seven strings as a set will form the Zheng mode tuning in the Type A just temperament, that is a classical JUST scale.

(5) (iv)
In 'Section 23, Adjusting Strings' 調弦第二十三 in the Tai Yin Da Quan Ji, there is:

'Pluck the open seventh string and the fourth string stopped with the thumb at the ninth inlay (shang + 702 = yu). If when stopping the fourth string with the thumb at the ninth inlay the [matching] sound is above the ninth inlay then slacken the seventh string and if below then tighten it. Pluck the open sixth string and the fourth stopped by the ring finger at the tenth inlay (shang + 498 = zhi). Adjust as before. Pluck the open fifth string and the third stopped by the ring finger at the eleventh inlay (gong + 386 = jue). If when stopping the third string with the middle finger the [matching] sound is above the eleventh inlay then tighten the third string, but if below the inlay then slacken the third string. Pluck the open third string and the first string stopped by the middle finger at the tenth inlay. If when stopping the first string with the middle finger at the tenth inlay the [matching] sound is above the tenth inlay tighten the first string, but if below then slacken it.'

The acoustic structure of the open string notes for this tuning method is

Table 36

| G | Z | S | Y |

which forms a JUST scale structure of Type C.

(5) (v)
Before the ‘Essences of the Modes’ 調意 in the last volume of the Shen Qi Mi Pu the following tuning methods are given:

Huang Zhong mode: 'the open seventh string corresponds to the fifth string stopped at the eleventh inlay (gong – jue), the open fourth string corresponds to the first string stopped at the eighth inlay (gong – yu).'

Rui Bin mode: 'the open seventh string corresponds to the fifth string stopped at the eleventh inlay (gong – jue).'

Qi Liang mode: 'the open seventh string corresponds to the fifth string stopped at the eleventh inlay (gong – jue or zhi – bian gong), the open fourth string corresponds to the second string stopped at the eleventh inlay (qing jue – yu or gong – jue).'

These methods all cause the open string notes to have a JUST acoustic structure.

Two points need to be explained:

1) In the Shen Qi Mi Pu there are ten ‘Essences of the Modes’. They are too short to permit the acoustic structures of all the open string notes to be deduced, but when interpreting the tablatures we can make a general assessment of the trend of the temperament based on the notes which can be deduced and the statistically predicted ones, and use a corresponding tuning method.
2) During the deduction process the writer found that pieces which use the guqin SAT tuning method almost entirely avoid the harmonics at the third, sixth, eighth and eleventh inlays, while these just notes appeared among the harmonics of basically all the pieces in JUST tunings. This shows that there is a certain degree of relationship between just notes among the harmonics and the temperaments of the tuning methods for guqin pieces. Thus in the case of a small number of pieces, one should consider the locations of the harmonics when deducting the possibility of JUST or guqin SAT temperament; if JUST harmonics appear then a JUST tuning method may be used, but if they do not appear then guqin SAT tuning may be used. At the same time when different types of JUST tuning methods are possible for a single piece, then the matching notes which occur more often can be used and those which occur less often excluded, thereby limiting as far as possible the occurrence of notes with the same rank but differing pitches.

The Fingerings and Types of Scales Used in Pieces in the Shen Qi Mi Pu

The analysis in this paper of how notes are obtained is based on the locations of notes and harmonics stopped precisely at inlay positions. The pitches of notes between inlays are variable but the variation can only occur within the framework of the temperament system established by the notes exactly at the inlay positions. Thus the basic type and tendencies of the temperaments of guqin pieces may be determined on the basis of the notes stopped accurately at the inlays.

Huang Xiangpeng has proposed using the concept of a ‘bell temperament network’ 钟律音系网 in place of the ‘just temperament network’ 纯律音系网 (or 五度网) used by Miao Tianrui in his Lü Xue (Miao, 1996), and further asserts that bell temperament is in fact guqin temperament. (Huang 1986.) But while it is true that on any one string of the guqin the way the string is divided by the thirteen inlays amounts to a combination of at least the Subtraction and Addition of Halves, Subtraction and Addition of Thirds and Subtraction and Addition of Quarters and sets up a number of types of interval relationship, the writer nonetheless believes there is a distinction between guqin temperament and bell temperament, in that the former does not suffer from the difficulty of not being able to return to its original note. Thus if the Subtraction and Addition of Thirds is considered to be a mono-axial, ‘linear’ temperament system, then just temperament is a bi-axial, ‘planar’ system and guqin temperament a tri-axial, ‘solid’ system. guqin temperament includes the acoustic structures of both guqin SAT and just temperament and overcomes the contradictions found in both, thus giving it its characteristic richness and flexibility.

It is precisely because the guqin temperament sound system network exists, that for any particular piece it is only under conditions of a suitable fingering and a corresponding gong system, that the acoustic structure of the music and that of the open string notes can be kept in line. For example under guqin SAT temperament it is necessary to avoid using fingerings at JUST locations. In all the JUST tuning methods there will always be a pair of fourths and fifths which are not pure, so that on the corresponding strings it is necessary to avoid using the locations of some related fourths or fifths.

The writer has designed a statistical programme for fingerings used in guqin tunes. The programme has two parts: one gives general statistics for the locations of all the notes which appear in the entire piece, enabling the researcher to see whether or not, for a given tuning, the same note appears with different pitches; while the other enables a general analysis of appearances of two pitches for the same note. The results are given below.
In pieces where the guqin is tuned by the guqin SAT method, the following types of scale structure appear:

(1) (i) Pure guqin SAT temperament:
Huaxu Yin uses the Qi Liang tuning, the relationship between the seven open string notes being C, E, F, G, B, c, d. An important characteristic of the use of this tuning is that there is frequent modulation of the gong system of the piece. The statistics show a complete avoidance of the fingerings for JUST thirds and sixths, so that where the strings are tuned by the guqin SAT method, no matter whether the gong system is based on B or E, JUST intervals cannot occur. This piece may be regarded as a typical guqin SAT piece.

(1) (ii) Just temperaments:
In pieces with just temperaments but using guqin SAT tuning, the JUST notes generally occur away from open string guqin SAT notes. These JUST notes are usually located at the positions of passing notes. E.g. in the Huang Zhong mode Shan Zhong Si Youren no JUST intervals appear among the five main notes. There are only three occurrences of the harmonic bian zh i note at the eleventh inlay of the sixth (shang) string and one appearance of a stopped bian gong note at the eleventh inlay on the third (chi) string, giving the following scale type:

Table 37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bg</th>
<th>Bz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) (iii) Composite temperament:
This arises when the same note is sounded simultaneously in two different temperaments, one in guqin SAT and the other in JUST. This phenomenon occurs in the majority of guqin pieces played with strings tuned by guqin SAT. Because the number of occurrences of open notes and octaves is greater than of other intervals, pieces with such a composite temperament all use the temperament system formed by the open strings, and at the same time include other pitches. Pieces tuned by guqin SAT mainly use guqin SAT temperament, with added JUST notes. The statistics have not yet uncovered a case where there were more JUST notes in a piece than guqin SAT notes.

Based on possibilities for fingering and temperament, guqin pieces with hexatonic tuning (such as the Qi Liang mode) can be classified into sound system networks as below:

Table 38

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>#F</th>
<th>#C</th>
<th>#G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bA</td>
<td>bE</td>
<td>bB</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The notes within the box form the acoustic structure of the open note scale, while those outside the box are all the possibilities for the various notes which can be produced for those open notes when stopped at the inlays. (This diagram shows mainly the relationship between pitches in the sound system network. The pitch names are not fixed because the majority of guqin players do not tune their instruments to a determined standard pitch unless playing in ensemble). In the diagram there are nine notes which may produce two temperaments, i.e.

Table 39

Pieces with hexatonic tuning, on the other hand, form the following sound system network:

Table 40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>D</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>#F</th>
<th>#C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bB</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bA</td>
<td>bE</td>
<td>bB</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here six pitches give rise to the possibility of two temperaments, i.e.

Table 41

F, F, A, A, bB, C, C, D, D, E, E

Among the guqin pieces with these types of compound temperaments Jiu Kuang and Huo Lin have only one note which appears with two temperaments. The pitches are respectively the JUST jue note of 386 cents at the eighth inlay on the Zhi string and the guqin SAT jue note of 408 cents, but the proportion of JUST notes is very small. In Jiu Kuang they occur 8 times, or 18.6% of all jue notes, while in Huo Lin they appear 14 times, totalling 14.53%.

Apart from this, He Ming Jiu Gao uses the Zheng tuning, its open string notes being C, D, F, G, A, c and d, with F as the gong note, but the piece itself ‘borrows a mode’ using the sub-dominant C as its gong note. Among the pentatonic notes of the piece there are only three occurrences of the jue note, a common comma low, found by stopping the sixth (Gong) string at the sixth inlay, making up only 5.26% of all the occurrences of this note, while all the other jue notes belong to guqin SAT temperament. There is a single occurrence of a bian gong (ti) note played by ‘gliding up to the eighth inlay’ on the seventh string and a single appearance of a qing shang (316 cent) note played by ‘gliding down to the twelfth’ inlay on the sixth string. In fact the instructions to glide make it possible for the player to avoid JUST notes. Each of the three times when notes are fingered at the sixth inlay on the sixth string, the note is part of a downward glide.

Dun Shi Cao uses the man jue tuning and has no JUST notes except some stopped at the eighth inlay. There are only four of them, all of which involve glides upwards, which makes it possible to play a guqin SAT major sixth above the open string note. The use of JUST stoppings in other pieces is comparatively frequent. In the case of certain passing or bridging notes such as qing yu (la#), qing gong (do#) and qing shang, even more are stopped at JUST positions.

Analysis of the notes as translated by computer shows that in the great majority of pieces in the Shen Qi Mi Pu there is movement and modulation of the gong system, mainly of two types: up or down to the dominant or sub-dominant; or down by a major second. Pieces which use guqin SAT tunings and with clear ‘mode borrowing’, or ‘hetero-modality’, include Shen Pin Shang Yi, Shen Pin Gu Shang Yi, Kai Gu, Wang Ji, Yin De, Chang Qing, He Ming Jiu Gao and Shen Pin Zhi Yi. Basically all these pieces are tuned to the Zheng mode with F on the third string as gong, and then ‘borrow a mode’ by using the C on the first string as gong.

I have mentioned that the stopping of notes in pieces which use guqin SAT tunings has one important characteristic, viz. that the harmonics almost completely avoid using the JUST locations at the third, sixth, eighth and eleventh inlays, with the result that harmonic passages in these pieces have pure, unmodified guqin SAT temperament. If one starts from the view that the stopped notes should have the same temperament as the harmonics, then objectively there exists the possibility, that when guqin performers in ancient times played these pieces
with strings tuned to guqin SAT, in reality they adjusted the locations for stopping JUST notes, for example, by stopping the eleventh inlay at the tenth inlay plus eight fen (the distance between adjacent inlays is divided into ten equal parts, called fen), and the eighth inlay at the seventh inlay plus nine fen, and so on. In this way they could reduce the number of occurrences of the same notes being played at different pitches. If such a possibility exists then the great majority of pieces with guqin SAT tunings have pure guqin SAT temperament, but no matter whether the possibility exists or not, when today’s guqin players interpret tablatures to rediscover these pieces, suitable adjustments to the positions of stopped JUST notes can ensure that a uniform temperament is used throughout.

(2) The fingerings and acoustic structures of JUST guqin pieces
It is the writer’s view that the guqin SAT temperament used in practice on the guqin was different from the SAT temperament of traditional theory and that the guqin’s just temperament differed significantly from the classical Western just temperament.

Western just temperament arose from the need for consonance in the principal triads of the major and minor keys and from those of the development of polyphonic music. The main contradictions appeared in keyboard instruments with fixed pitches, where modulation became extremely difficult and troublesome, though the practical needs of music made it impossible to avoid the flexible use of certain notes at more than one pitch, both with Western just temperament.

JUST temperament in guqin music, on the other hand, arose in monophonic music out of timbre or the need to be expressive, and thereby gave rise to the two characteristics of the just temperament of guqin music. One characteristic is the multiplicity of form of JUST scales. Because of the tuning method, the stable elements of guqin temperament make it extremely difficult for the Gong systems of equivalent JUST scales to modulate, and thus necessarily bring about the existence of different types of JUST scale acoustic structures.

The other is the widespread existence of composite temperaments. The stable element of the way the strings are tuned sets the framework for the basic scale structure of the just temperament of the piece, but the two variable elements of fingerling and the location of the Gong note are frequently not governed by the type of scale and form the characteristic of the guqin’s just temperament of being a composite temperament. That is to say some notes are played in both JUST and guqin SAT temperament.

In pieces with strings tuned by just temperament the stopping of the notes has the following characteristics:

First, there is less possibility of the same note being played in two temperaments than is the case with pieces where the strings are tuned to guqin SAT temperament. The diagrams below show respectively the sound system networks of the various notes which can be stopped in hexatonic and pentatonic scales in pieces with JUST Type A tuning. The notes within the boxes show the structure of the open string notes.

Table 42. Hexatonic scale:

![Hexatonic scale diagram](image-url)
Table 43. Pentatonic scale:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
#F & #C & #G \\
D & A & E & B & #F \\
F & C & G & D & A \\
\bar{b}E & \bar{b}B & \bar{F} & \\
\end{array}
\]

In the two note system networks there are only four notes which can be played in two temperaments, i.e. D, D, A, #F, #F and F, F.

Secondly, the number of horizontal lines has changed from three in the case of guqin SAT temperament to four. The string tuning itself sets up two lines. By means of the JUST major third and major sixth intervals, the notes with single underlining set up those with double underlining, while the base line sets up the overlined notes by means of the minor third interval.

Because the just temperament of the guqin has an inherent tendency towards being a composite temperament, pieces with JUST string tuning are not absolutely free of the phenomenon of a single note being played in two temperaments. At present only Qiu Yue Zhao Mao Ting can be said to be in pure just temperament. It is in the Huang Zhong mode, and the strings are tuned

Table 44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String name</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Note name</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The open string notes form a Type B JUST scale, but stopping at the tenth inlay of the sixth string must produce a zhi note which is a common comma low. On the third string the stopped notes and harmonics at the second, fifth and ninth inlays and the harmonics at the twelfth inlay must also be a common comma high, that is they have guqin SAT temperament.

It can be seen from the stopping table of this piece that there are no notes stopped at the tenth inlay on the sixth string and that for the corresponding note on the third string there is only one occurrence of a stopped note at the ninth inlay and that is as a short note in a double glide up to one note and then on to the next higher one. This piece may be seen as having a classically pure just temperament, but in all the other pieces there occurs to a greater or lesser extent the phenomenon of notes played in two temperaments.

As is the case in pieces where the strings are tuned to guqin SAT temperament, the great majority of pieces where the strings are tuned to just temperament show movement or modulation of the gong system to the sub-dominant or dominant or down by a major second. This movement or modulation often causes the piece to change from one type of JUST scale to another, or even to a guqin SAT scale. The pieces below all show a clear 'borrowing of modes' and modulation of the gong system.

Guangling San and Tian Feng Huan Pei both have Type A JUST open string tuning, which can be shown as

Table 45

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{Y} & 1 & \text{Qi} \\
G & S & Z \\
\end{array}
\]
The pieces modulate by ‘borrowing the mode’ of the dominant, causing their scale to become a Type B JUST scale

![Diagram](image)

The strings for *Qiu Yue Zhao Mao Ting* are tuned to Type B JUST temperament.

![Diagram](image)

*Gong* moves up by a fifth during the piece, causing it to change to Type D JUST temperament.

![Diagram](image)

The strings are tuned to Type C JUST temperament for *Shen You Liu He, Duan Qing* and *Yi Lan*.

![Diagram](image)

but during the piece the dominant mode is ‘borrowed’ changing the temperament to Type A.

![Diagram](image)

For *Bai Xue, Shan Ju Yin, Yu Hui Tushan* and *Qiao Ge* the strings are tuned by Type D JUST temperament,

![Diagram](image)

but all ‘borrow’ the dominant mode, thereby bringing their main notes into *guqin* SAT temperament.

![Diagram](image)

In the frequency tables for the stoppings of the notes it may be found that, among the harmonics in pieces where the strings are tuned to just temperament, the JUST third, sixth, eighth and eleventh inlays all occur. Therefore when today’s *guqin* players interpret the tablatures of these pieces no changes should be made to the positions of the stopped notes,
thus ensuring that the temperament is uniform throughout the piece and an objective recreation of the original temperament can be achieved.

**Conclusion**

After comprehensive investigation of the guqin temperaments in the Shen Qi Mi Pu it is possible to reach the following conclusions:

1) Yang Yinliu’s conclusion as to the development of guqin temperament, i.e. ‘starting in the 6th century and ending in the 16th century, that is for a period of one thousand years and more, the temperament used by China’s guqin players was indisputably just temperament’, (Yang 1981: 1015) was too broad. Since the Shen Qi Mi Pu was completed in the first year of the Hong Xi 明洪熙 period (1425) most of the pieces in it can be dated to the 15th century or earlier. But we have found among them twenty-five pieces including Dun Shi Cao, Huaxu Yin, and He Ming Jiu Gao with pure guqin SAT temperament or with a tendency towards using guqin SAT as their principal temperament.

2) Further research is needed into the view that guqin temperament changed in the Song and Yuan periods to become a composite temperament with guqin SAT as its main component. We have found twenty-nine pieces in the Shen Qi Mi Pu, including Yi Zhen, Qiu Yue Zhao Mao Ting, Qiao Ge and Zhuang Zhou Meng Die, which have pure JUST temperament or a tendency to use JUST as the main temperament and some of them are works of Song and Yuan composers.

3) All the views held hitherto regarding guqin temperament have their deficiencies. If one holds that guqin temperament is a composite temperament, then one finds examples of pure JUST temperament as well as of composite temperament in the Shen Qi Mi Pu. The composite temperaments include those with guqin SAT as their main component and those with JUST as the main element. The view that since guqin temperament is based on harmonics it is a JUST temperament is also at odds with reality. This article has suggested the objective existence of four levels in the structure of guqin temperament, among which the tuning pattern of the open strings and the stopping of the notes are of crucial importance in determining the nature of guqin temperament.

4) From our investigations we can divide the temperaments of the pieces in the Shen Qi Mi Pu into the following types:

| Table 53 |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Pure temperament    | Composite temperament |
| SAT                 | SAT as main component |
| JUST                | JUST as main component |

It can be seen that in fact guqin temperament is a flexible temperament system which uses a number of methods to generate its temperaments to suit a number of temperamental needs. Several temperament systems can exist in a single temperament sound system network, and
within a single sound system network different stopping positions can create different temperaments. In the table below, sound systems with C as gong can form a number of different temperaments.

Table 54

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAT</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JUST A type</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>D</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>JUST C type</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>D</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composite temperament</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of different temperaments in guqin pieces must make the acoustic coloration of guqin music richer. This rich acoustic coloration also promotes the formation of different styles of guqin playing. It is because the Shen Qi Mi Pu brought together the best pieces of guqin players from a variety of places at that time plus a number of famous pieces with very long histories that a number of temperament systems can be found.

We have found two phenomena worthy of attention:

(I) Based on an analysis of notation symbols Wu Wenguang has divided the pieces in the first volume of the Shen Qi Mi Pu into two groups:

   Group 1 includes Dun Shi Cao, Huaxu Yin, Gao Shan, Liu Shui, Yang Chun, Zhao Yin, Huo Lin and Yi Zhen

   Group 2 includes Guangling San, Gu Feng Cao, Xuan Mo, Jiu Kuang, Kai Zhi, Qiu Yue Zhao Mao Ting, Shan Zhong Si Youren and Xiao Hujia.\(^\text{18}\)

The investigations of guqin temperament in this article have shown that Group 1 pieces all have guqin SAT temperament while, with the exception of only Jiu Kuang, Xuan Mo and Xiao Hujia, Group 2 pieces have JUST temperament or tend towards JUST as their main temperament.

(II) In the Shen Qi Mi Pu the introductions to most of the pieces mention the periods when the pieces were composed and who their composers were. In the case of some composers from comparatively remote times the attributions cannot be relied on, but in the case of those attributed to the Southern Song 'Zhe Pai' guqin player Guo Chuwang and his student Mao Minzhong are comparatively reliable, because they were fairly near in time to the compilation of the Shen Qi Mi Pu. There are two pieces by Guo Chuwang, Fan Canglang

\(^{18}\) See Wu Wenguang 1984.
and Xiao Xiang Shui Yun, and five by Mao Minzhong, Lie Zi Yu Feng, Shan Ju Yin, Yu Hui Tushan, Qiao Ge and Zhuang Zhou Meng Die. In this article it has been found from analysis of temperament that all seven pieces are to be played on strings tuned to JUST temperament and that the harmonics in all of them use the third, sixth, eighth and eleventh inlays.

The existence of these two phenomena cannot be due to pure chance. I believe they reflect some of the potentials inherent in guqin temperament. The first phenomenon may be related to the periods when the pieces were composed, while the second is clearly related to the composers' style or to that of the 'Zhe Pai'. Of course further research must be made to clarify these questions, and this will be a complex and profound subject for guqin studies.

Afterword
Many ancient traditions are maintained in Guqin practice, and many of them reflect historical truths. Natural laws and human choices have resulted in the variety and richness of the temperament systems in the Shen Qi Mi Pu, and to a greater or lesser extent have shown us a little of the reality of China's even more ancient bell music. It has also made us aware that in the study of applied temperament we must take note of the various objective possibilities provided by the instruments under study, the temperament surface created by people's subjective choices, and the relationships and inconsistencies between the two. This will be the union on a new level of musical theory and practice. Such a union must lead to studies of temperament looking further into musical reality, and gradually impel China's ancient studies of temperament, which to a degree already lead the world, towards new frontiers.

Acknowledgements
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Translator’s notes

1. I have generally preferred not to translate the titles of the collections of tablatures referred to in the article because most of them contain more layers of meaning than can be adequately reflected in a few English words. Shen Qi Mi Pu, for example, is often translated as if shen qi were a unit. As it undoubtedly is a single term in today’s Chinese, such an approach cannot be absolutely wrong, but Zhu Quan wrote almost six hundred years ago in the classical language and that, in my view, compels his readers to consider an alternative approach: whether each character might be a separate semantic unit. On this basis the only character which can be taken at face value is pu, which must mean ‘tablatures’ or the more general ‘guide’ or ‘manual’. The total number of combinations of meanings for the other three characters runs into hundreds, even after excluding impossible meanings like ‘a house-shaped mountain’ for mi.

   My choice, which in the absence of a great deal more research and thought can be no more than a tentative suggestion, would be to translate Shen as ‘treasured’ or ‘precious’ (see Hanyu Da Zidian, p. 2392, shen, sense 6, going back to the Er Ya), qi as ‘beautiful’ (op. cit., p. 533, qi, sense 3, used by Su Shi at the time of the Northern Song), and mi as ‘precise’ or ‘exact’ (op. cit., p. 940, mi, sense 9, citing the Guan Zi). ‘Melodies’ can be supplied from the context giving the translation in the article as the meaning of the whole. If however the correct meaning of mi in this context is ‘secret’, my translation becomes ‘Secrets of Treasured and Beautiful Melodies’, which like the title of a ‘kiss and tell’ implies that the secrets are about to be revealed.

   I would be interested to know whether there is any indication in Zhu Quan’s writings or those of his contemporaries of what he actually meant. Similar considerations apply to the titles of the tunes contained in the Shen Qi Mi Pu, though in their case I have offered suggestions. Given that these pieces, if not composed by the literati, were at least named by them, their titles are likely to contain allusions which only someone better versed in Chinese classical literature than I am could pick up. I must trust to the reader to treat my renderings with a measure of indulgence.

   In the middle of organising a festival of Asian arts John Thompson in Hong Kong was generous with his time and comments both as to how the titles of the pieces might be translated and on translation matters in general. I should like to express my sincere gratitude to him here.

2. Hui 徽, literally ‘emblem’, ‘badge’ or ‘insignia’, is often translated as ‘stud’, implying to those who have not seen a well-made guqin that hui are not simply fixed in the surrounding material but protrude above it (see the definition of ‘stud’ in the New English Dictionary). ‘Inlay’ suggests what is in fact the case, viz. that the surfaces are at the same level.

PREMIERES IN BRUSSELS, VIENNA & LONDON

New Chinese Operas by Qu Xiaosong, Tan Dun and Guo Wenjing

Frank Kouwenhoven
(Chime Foundation, Leiden, The Netherlands)

In the first half of 1998, new operas by Qu Xiaosong, Tan Dun and Guo Wenjing premiered in Brussels, Vienna and London. All three productions are based on Chinese traditional subject matter, and employ, in economical ways, a mixture of traditional Chinese and contemporary Western musical means. But the three composers create very different worlds. Peter Sellars’s brilliant staging of Tan Dun’s Peony Pavilion is a romantic love drama, enacted simultaneously on many different levels: as Chinese traditional theatre, as dance or pantomime, as Western spoken theatre, as grand opera, and with ample usage of modern audiovisual gadgets. By contrast, Qu Xiaosong’s Life on a String is an intimate exploration of Chinese traditional storytelling, making the most out of very little, with just one singer doing nearly all the roles. Guo Wenjing’s Night Banquet is an attractive pipa concerto built into a lyrical chamber opera, or perhaps the other way around.

Many years ago – well before he himself began to conduct operas – Pierre Boulez argued that Western opera was dead. Meanwhile the genre flourished. At present, while avant-garde music struggles along in the margins of Western concert life, contemporary operas – no matter how uncompromising in sound or conception – manage to draw full houses. Modern theatre retains its role as a superb medium for exposing, unmasking or eulogizing human society, and opera seems to take pride of place as the most distinguished forerunner of – and most poshly alternative for – cinema and television. Presumably, nothing exceeds the thrill of a good story told in music, dance and words.

The continued importance of narration in modern theatre – notwithstanding claims to the contrary – seems specifically relevant in the context of Asian and Chinese musical theatre. Chinese listeners are conditioned by a culture where the inner cohesion of musical works is believed to depend primarily on stories, legends, myths, folk tales, religious beliefs – in brief, on extra-musical facts. This may explain, to some extent, why Tan Dun’s opera Marco Polo – a broad-sweeping lyrical poem, rather than a clearly constructed tale – was not nearly as successful in Hong Kong as it was in the West. If good narration is a critical standard, the three new operas by Tan, Guo and Qu can safely be predicted a positive future in China. Guo’s drama is somewhat static in nature, almost like a tableau vivant – it is in fact a musical
evocation of an old painting – but it still has an unmistakable plot and dénouement. Chinese composers have taken up contemporary opera as a major challenge. Some have already contributed significantly to the innovation of the genre in Europe and the USA. Next to the three artists discussed here, one might think of Su Cong (in Germany) and Bright Sheng (USA), who made a considerable impact with various works for the operatic stage.1 Both Xu Shuya and Chen Qigang in Paris are working on theatre projects right now. All of them share the advantage of being close to one of the world’s greatest and oldest theatre traditions, that of the Chinese theatre, with rules and conventions often diametrically opposed to those of the (modern) Western stage.

One cannot do full justice to Chinese composers by continually discussing them as a homogeneous lot. By now they must find it pretty tiresome to be always identified as the writers of ‘new music from China’, their native backgrounds perpetually raising (unfounded) expectations about a commonly shared Chinoiserie. But if three prominent Chinese artists come up almost simultaneously with operas based on native traditional subjects, a comparison seems justified. The three composers in question once happened to sit in the same composition class in Beijing, and they chose closely similar musical directions at the beginning of their careers. So why not take a look at where they are today, with respect to one another?

Perhaps, for a flexible listener, the attraction of the new operas, first performed in May and July 1998 in Brussels, Vienna and London, lies not so much in any Chinese overtones – though these are certainly present – but in a broad variety of other elements. In the case of Tan Dun, it is the surprising combination of almost Monteverdian ‘one-line music’ with a complex, multi-layered dramatic representation of a love-story on stage. Beautifully done. The opera is the result of a committed cooperation between the composer and director Peter Sellars. In the case of Qu Xiaosong, it is the beauty of his libretto and the extreme simplicity of musical and theatrical means employed. Qu’s score, like Tan Dun’s, with its virtual absence of counterpoint, may be cited as another instance of ‘one-line’ music, but the sounds and timbral colours are not nearly as eclectic or extrovert as Tan’s. Qu is deliberate in his restraint: he does not want to impress or overwhelm.

Guo Wenj’ing’s opera, outwardly more conventional than the other productions, is in fact a unique mixture of an opera, a pipa concerto and a tableau-vivant, with the great advantage of being concise: just over 40 minutes. Qu’s opera takes much longer (85 minutes), while Tan Dun spins a story of sheer Wagnerian proportions, lasting four hours. All three productions were well-received by the European press.

Life on a String – an essay on the principle ‘less is more’

*Life on a String* is Qu Xiaosong’s third endeavour in the realm of opera, after his two successful settings of Greek drama, *Oedipus* (1993) and *The Death of Oedipus* (1994).2 He

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1 Su Cong’s chamber opera *Wenn die Sonne aufgeht... (When the Sun is Rising...)*, premiered in Germany in 1997, is based on the story of the Dutch businessman Johannes van Damme, executed in Singapore in 1994 under the accusation of heroin smuggling. The opera portrays this event in the wider framework of long-lived cultural-political tensions between Asia and the West. Further theatre projects by Su Cong include *Fremder Sturm* (Strange Storm), a science-fiction musical (1998), and the opera *Cuba Libre*, to a libretto by Daniel Call, (still in progress). Bright Sheng spent several seasons with the Chicago Lyric Opera as composer-in-residence. Among his most successful theatre productions is the one-act opera *The Song of Majnun* (1992).

has now (for the first time) turned to Chinese subject-matter, and has become, in his own words, 'more Chinese, closer to Chinese theatre tradition' than in his earlier operatic works.

Life on a String (Ming rwo qinxian) premiered on 11 May 1998 at the Brussels Festival of Arts, with the Nieuw Ensemble from Amsterdam, stage-directed by the French-German Ingrid von Wantoch Rekowski, who earned a name with imaginative productions based on works by Aperghis, Luciano Berio (A-Ronne II) and others.

The opera is primarily based on a recent novel by Shi Tieseng, but incorporates some materials from Dou E yuan, a famous Yuan dynasty play by the poet-playwright Guan Hanqing (c.1210–c.1298). At the heart of Shi Tieseng’s novel is an old blind folk musician and storyteller, Laohan, who travels from one village to the next, performing in teahouses or in open spaces. His three-stringed lute hides an important secret. Every string which Laohan breaks brings him closer to the day when he will finally be permitted to open the soundbox of the instrument and take out a mysterious piece of paper which his master once put into it. After breaking one thousand strings, Laohan will be allowed to take this piece of paper — apparently a magic recipe which will cure him from his blindness — to a doctor. His
In Qu Xiaosong’s *Life on a String*, the concept of ‘less is more’ is probed to its very limits.

Blindness has always been a cause of sorrow to him, partly because, in his youth, it kept him from marrying the woman he loved.

When the opera begins, Laohan has broken 997 strings. One evening, while he is entertaining his audience with the tragic story of Dou E, a woman falsely accused of murder, the final strings of his instrument begin to snap. The audience on stage is captured by the double tension of narrated and real events, and holds its breath. The story within the story unfolds: Dou E, convicted to death, makes her dramatic prediction about heaven proclaiming her innocence. After her beheading, white snow suddenly begins to fall from the summer sky – a miracle. But now the time has also come for Laohan to explain to his audience the mystery of his instrument. After breaking the last string, he finds out that the piece of paper inside the lute is empty. Nothing is written on it. For a moment it looks as if his entire world will collapse. But then the storyteller magnificently regains his balance, and acquires a new outlook on life.

This tale is set to a very economical score, making the most out of very little, with just one singer doing nearly all the roles. One moment we see Laohan reminiscing about his unhappy youth, the next moment he talks (or sings) in the voice of the innocent Dou E, or that of her executioner. There’s an instrumental ensemble of thirteen players which accompanies the soloist and acts as his teahouse audience, with cries of encouragement and questions. One of the musicians plays the sanxian, the storyteller’s lute; most of the other instruments are Western (winds and strings), with important parts for Chinese and Western percussion. The sanxian’s contribution to the music of the opera is surprisingly modest, and the instrument – played eloquently by Xiu Fengxia – is not drawn into the action on stage.

Silly robes

During the premiere performance in Brussels in April, the musicians had to put up with a brief spell of hot weather which drove up the temperature in the Théâtre 140 to almost unbearable heights. This is a circumstance any storyteller or teahouse musician in China might encounter, but it was a different matter for the Nieuw Ensemble, and notably for Chinese bass Gong Dongjian, who featured as the only solo singer in the premiere of an 85-minute contemporary opera. In the suffocating heat, Gong performed miracles. He sang beautifully and sensitively, and made the best of the rather minimal stage directions of Von Wantoch Rekowski.

The theatre had facilities for subtitling, but Von Wantoch did not want to make use of them. She preferred to secure the audience’s undivided attention for the events on stage. Whatever the stage had to offer, this was a missed chance. The libretto, written by Wu Lan and the composer, is a piece of highly effective drama, full of unexpected turns. It has all the charm and pluck and philosophical depth of classical Chinese literature, plus an ingenious psychological twist added by the composer towards the end. The text deserved on-the-spot translation and a more thoughtful translation into images and stage action.

True enough, the stage was beautiful to look at, with the musicians placed in a semi-circle around the storyteller, and a single row of lamps in the background to accentuate a vast, calm darkness which encompassed not only the teahouse, but the world at large, with
the main character’s deep and painful memories shivering almost visibly in the air. There were some lucky strikes, such as the storyteller’s walking stick, which served as the mysterious ‘piece of paper’ handed around among the visitors of the teahouse (i.e. the musicians) towards the end. Or the subtle stage lighting, which correlated with the intensity of emotions throughout the performance.

But too many turns in the story were bluntly lost because of the absence of any translation, and because of Von Wantoch’s apparent wish to avoid over-acting, which resulted in an over-cautious staging. Little advantage was taken of potentially great moments in the drama. And why were the players rigged out in silly robes with long sleeves? Why did they wear huge Chinese straw hats and stride onto the stage and move around like priests in a solemn ritual? Hardly fit to evoke the atmosphere of a Chinese teahouse, and not in line with the lively interaction supposed to take place between the storyteller and his audience. The interaction was there in sound but not in bodily motion; the teahouse was there in terms of the little wooden chairs, but not in the appearance of the people, with their red-painted mouths and chins.

Much in the staging contributed to the idea of a solemn ritual, the storyteller sometimes taking on the aspect of a shaman engaged in phases of spiritual transformation. I find it hard to believe this was Qu Xiaosong’s intention, even though his music, with the many long silences, protracted cantilenas for one instrument and long unaccompanied vocal lines, sometimes did create the impression of a meditative or sacred event. Musically, the concept of ‘less is more’ was probed here to its very limits, even beyond the extremes of Qu’s severest score so far, the radically sparse and silent Ji of 1990. Ingrid Von Wantoch followed suit, adopting the same principle in her stage actions, but less is not always more. Yet this very sober and economical approach earned Von Wantoch ample praise in Le Soir and some other Belgian newspapers.

The Nieuw Ensemble played (plucked, bowed, spoke, shouted) their parts with zest and brilliance. They got the best out of the delicate score, for example in some terse passages for winds, and in the tense closing pages, with its effective Ustvolskayan drum beats, when the storyteller discovers the terrible truth about the empty piece of paper. While Qu Xiaosong’s opera would probably merit from a less intellectual and more exuberant staging – the sobriety of the score requires a daring answer, not necessarily an overprudent one – Life on a String certainly confirms his talents as a dramatist. His interweaving of the threads of Dou E’s story with those of Laohuan’s drama is magical and unforgettable, and a fitting modern tribute to the treasure-house of China’s classical literature.

Peony Pavilion – a classical play put on a new musical footing

Those who prefer lively action and a savoury visualization on stage would be better served with Peter Sellar’s realization of Peony Pavilion (Mudanting), a 16th century Chinese play put on a new musical footing by Tan Dun. It is Tan’s third opera – after the ‘ritual opera’ Nine Songs (1989) and the hugely successful Marco Polo of 1996, which won several major prizes. In Nine Songs, Tan used a group of singers and dancers chanting, shouting, speaking, singing and moving like actors in a tribal, shamanistic ceremony, to the

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3 For flute, clarinet, violin, viola, double bass, piano and percussion. Originally called Yi, it was followed by a whole series of other instrumental compositions which were titled Yi #2, Yi #3 etc. and which shared the same tranquil mood.
accompaniment of ceramic chimes, bells, and jars of special design, plus Chinese traditional instruments. The more eclectic and brilliantly orchestrated *Marco Polo* embraced Western grand opera and symphonic music, and a good many other styles in the bargain, from Gregorian to Renaissance chant, from Tibetan overtone singing to Indian sitar. Each of these operas refrained from a clear-cut story or conventional dialogue, employing a fragmented and poetical libretto instead, which conveyed an atmosphere rather than a plot. Not so *Peony Pavilion*, which has a linear story, told not just once but many times in parallel, on different levels.

The music of *Peony Pavilion* uses a small ensemble, and relies on monophony. It basically unfolds as a single, uninterrupted line and refrains from much counterpoint – the opera is a return to the economy of *Nine Songs*. It has only four vocal soloists, four actors, an ensemble of seven musicians and a tape. Its free incorporation of all kinds of musical styles makes it as eclectic as *Marco Polo*, but in actual sound *Peony Pavilion* is a far cry from Tan’s previous operatic adventure.

The new opera premiered on 12 May 1998 in the Sofiensäle in Vienna, in a staging which reminded one critic of the Salzburger Nachrichten of a ‘jet-set disco in Los Angeles’: it had bright lighting, a very wide empty space and only a few large transparent glass walls to demarcate a space-within-a-space, perhaps a room, or a corner in a Chinese garden. The (movable) glass panels had video screens attached to them, tiny screens as well as big ones, which were used as decorative elements but also, quite effectively, as dramatic tools.

In *Peony Pavilion* Tan Dun acts as an ambassador of traditional Chinese culture. He preserves the first half of the production for selections from the original Kunqu opera play, with the music as it has been handed down by tradition. He does insert a few taped ‘modern’ sounds – a whisper, a trickle of water, a gust of wind – but the traditional Chinese music prevails. One might actually get the impression that Tan, like Qu Xiaosong, has moved closer to his native soil, after the Western orchestral explorations in *Marco Polo*. But in the second half of the production, Tan Dun moves into realms of pop music, world music and Western grand opera, merging these into an unmistakable personal idiom. A drum kit may burst out in a slow pop rhythm, but within seconds it becomes the throbbing background for a classical soprano and tenor duet. This is no facile collage. No matter how one rates the many different sources of the musical materials used, the unity in this composer’s score or the dramatic appropriateness of his musical gestures cannot be called into question. ‘Fascinating’, judged the Wiener Zeitung, ‘though a bit of a trial to sit through it all!’ *Peony Pavilion* lasts four hours. During the premiere, there was a delay of an extra half an hour, due to technical problems.

**Romantic heroine**

So what about the original *Peony Pavilion* of 1589? This play, by Ming-dynasty playwright and contemporary of Shakespeare Tang Xianzu (1550–1617), was specifically written for the opera stage. In the late 16th century, it found its way to many different regional theatres in southern China, later also to the north, including Beijing, in productions supervised by the
A scene from Tan Dun’s Peony Pavilion, with (from left to right): Jason Ma, Hua Wenyi, Joel de la Fuente and Shi Jiehua.

author or by others, and in all kinds of modifications and musical styles. By late Ming times, the story was already one of the country’s most popular opera subjects, with a plot which would take 30 seconds to explain, and a total playing time which could extend to many successive evenings. The entire play encompassed 55 scenes, but these were hardly ever performed in toto.

The tragic love life of the main heroine, a dreamy girl called Du Liniang, was portrayed in an extended series of arias and interior monologues. Chinese opera singers would get the most out of each aria, spinning their music to marvellous length. But it was common to stage abbreviated versions of the play, with only selected highlights, lasting a day or a night. The most important events in the Kunqu versions are the girl’s initial complaints about her loneliness, her ecstatic dream of love-making with an unknown scholar, her act of painting a self-portrait as a reminder of her beauty to the world, her death from love-sickness, and – after she has withered away – the arrival of the scholar out of her dream, apparently a real person, who falls in love with the girl’s portrait and miraculously resurrects her from death.

These key scenes became a staple of the opera repertoire both in literati homes and popular theatres in the early sixteenth century, and remained theatrical favourites throughout much of the nineteenth century.

Love which overcomes barriers of life and death and serves as the primary and essential condition of life is the major tenet of the cult of qing (feeling, emotion, love), which dominated a vast portion of China’s fiction and drama of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Tang Xianzu’s love story became a famous embodiment of this idea of qing. In the course of the
drama, the girl meets the scholar three times: first in a dream, then while she is a ghost in the underworld, and finally in reality, when she is pulled out of her grave by her lover. This miraculous ending, with love overcoming death, no doubt enhanced the play’s popularity. For generations of lonely young Chinese women, the romantic heroine of the play became an alter ego or a model, if not an actual goddess to pray and make offerings to. 

The present production has adopted something of the Peony Pavilion’s original epic breath. German newspapers referred to a four-hour kurzfassung (abbreviation) of the 22-hour original. Perhaps that particular time-span refers to a recent production of a complete version of Peony Pavilion by the Shanghai Kunqu Opera Company, staged and directed by Chinese-American artist Chen Shizheng. This ambitious six-night performance was scheduled to tour Europe and the United States in the summer of 1998, alongside Tan Dun’s version, but its touring abroad to festivals in New York, Paris, Sydney and Hong Kong was blocked by cultural officials in Shanghai.

From Kun opera to post-Puccinian soap
Tan Dun’s setting of the play starts off in traditional vein, with a re-creation of parts of the traditional opera. We see two Kunqu singers moving about on stage in splendid costumes, singing traditional Chinese arias. We hear much of the vocal style and gusto that must have inspired late-Ming audiences, and little of Tan Dun, whose contribution is limited to some modest ‘interludes’ on tape, mostly in-between scenes. The stage is dominated by the impressive Kunqu actress and singer Madame Hua Wenyi from Shanghai (now living in the United States).

Unlike the music, the staging is not limited to classical conventions. Peter Sellars immediately has two surprises in store. The lonely wanderings of Du Liniang near the Peony Pavilion and her dream-encounter with the scholar are not only portrayed in the restrained gestures of Kun opera, but are also acted out, parallel to this, by English-speaking actors. If the Kunqu character Du Liniang wakes up in dreamy slow motion from her sexual fantasy, we are also shown a modern teenager Du Liniang who, with dishevelled hair and untidy T-shirt, jumps up from the ground and takes a casual look in the mirror – still caught in the excitement of her dream, but in a very different manner. In other words, we are given a running translation, and a commentary in modern popular soap fashion on the highbrow classical Kunqu drama.

Sellars’s second surprise is the video screens. Much of the time they serve mainly as decorative lanterns. At other points they show vague decorative objects and movements, perhaps the petals of a flower floating on a garden pond. These movements become vehement if the stage action requires it. More interestingly, the singers and actors occasionally place themselves in front of a fixed camera, or operate hand-held cameras to capture their own or other players’ emotions. Their faces and bodies appear on the screens, sometimes bigger-than-life. Certain video images are frozen to retain a specific facial expression or hand gesture, while the action on stage continues. More than a volatile

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4 See Dorothy Ko, 1994, pp. 70-75 ff.
5 An interesting opportunity for Chinese culture missed out, due to the floundering judgement of the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Culture. Apparently they found the production unworthy of representing Kunqu tradition. Some people have suggested that the real reason for preventing the production from going abroad was a fear of defections. If anything, this kind of prohibitive measures only adds fuel to the ongoing brain-drain of artistic talent from China. Cf. Oestreich, 1998.
seasoning of modern audiovisual gadgets, this is hi-fi technique effectively put in the service of high-tension drama.

There are many great moments in this production, and few really depend all that much on technical ingenuity. Madame Hua Wenyi’s death scene is unforgettable simply – well, not quite so simply – because of her deeply felt singing. Very moving is her version of the encounter with the scholar, which takes place in complete silence: the man ‘undresses’ her in a ravishingly beautiful pantomime. Silence here replaces an aria in the Kunqu version which could not have conveyed quite so dramatically the intensity of the encounter.

Three layers
The plain story allows for a complex rendering of its constituent elements on parallel levels. In the Tan Dun/Sellars production, after the intermission, the two initial layers diverge in at least three different directions. Actors continue to play the story in an explicit and sometimes deliberately hammered-up fashion. (Their ‘scholar’ is actually more like a country boy, who shouts ‘fuck’ when things go badly wrong, or complains to his girl that ‘here you’ve got out of your grave just a couple of minutes, and you’re already citing classics again!’) Joel de la Fuente and Lauren Tom act their parts with great conviction. The latter (as Du Liniang) has a rather demanding crying scene towards the end, when she is lifted out of her ‘grave’, a huge glass container filled with water. Meanwhile, Madame Hua, now a silent part, dances and dumb-acts her way through the drama, still in refined Kunqu fashion, supported by other silent parts.

A third layer is presented by two Western-trained opera singers (Ying Huang and Li Qiangxu) who add a grand Puccinian dimension to the story. Tenor Li Qiangxu expresses much of his agony in horizontal position, lying on his back, which somehow suggests a much older and more sedate scholar. Ying Huang has earned a reputation as a great romantic soprano, at her best in Puccini, and she acts and looks the part. Yet this operatic couple is also responsible for what is arguably the most light-hearted and least operatic scene in the entire production – a passionate bout of mating in ‘worksong’ style (to the words ‘he, ho’).

In the entire second half of the production we hear music composed by Tan Dun. Pop-beats, kunqu, Western romanticism, Monteverdi all mixed together in seamless fashion, as if it could only be like this. The first scene (in hell) is where the drum-kit comes in for the first time, quite vehemently. From that moment on there is uneasy tension in the drama. Hard percussive sections alternate with long cantilenas. The ensemble relies largely on Asian instruments or sounds (of which some are conveyed by synthesizers and electronics). In a ‘shamanistic’ dance passage we hear an appropriate shawm (the bamboo oboe piri). There is an important part for pipa (played excellently by Min Xiaofen). Among other musicians in the ensemble led by Steve Osgood, it is particularly Bruce Gremo who is striking with his expressive playing on various instruments.

Throughout the opera there is a backdrop of natural sounds: splashing water, panting, laughing, cooing, moaning. Much of this comes from a pre-edited tape, in which Tan Dun’s own singing – in a virtuoso style borrowed from his famous vocalizations in the early work On Taoism – also plays an important role. Since the music reaches the audience largely via speakers, it is often unclear which parts are played live and which have been pre-recorded. There is reportedly ample room for improvisation, but this is something listeners can only guess at in this carefully rehearsed production.
Night banquet – an opera-concerto

Guo Wenjing’s new opera Night Banquet (Ye Yan) is outwardly more conventional than the other two productions. It creates a beautiful tableau vivant out of an unlikely subject: a banquet-orgy staged by a scholar who is reluctant to accept the responsibilities of a ruler. Guo Wenjing appears to side (or at least sympathize) with this escapist scholar, who declares, in one of the drama’s best moments, that he carries the entire country in his belly. His audience of court ladies, officials and visiting scholars and artists is visibly shocked. It is the moment when – in the Almeida Theatre production premiered in London on 10 July 1998 – we get to see Geoffrey Moses’s bare belly, in a provocative gesture that underpins the main character’s independent stance. Moses sings and acts the part of Han Xizai, a scholar-poet who prefers a life of debauchery over the corruption of political office. The emperor would like him to become the new prime minister, but when reports begin to come in about Han’s dissolute style of life, the Emperor asks two court painters to visit Han Xizai and investigate his behaviour. Their veiled threat of recording his debaucherous night-banquets in a painting does not seem to intimidate Han Xizai. When they openly accuse him of social irresponsibility, he drops his pants to tell them his view on worldly matters. His favourite concubine (the soprano Yvonne Barclay) later inquires: ‘Did you really need to do all that to avoid becoming Prime Minister?’ A point likely to strike home in conservative Britain. It is one of a few tense moments in a drama where all the conflicts are largely painted in subdued and introvert colours, almost as peaceful as Gu Hongzhong’s Southern Tang painting ‘The Night Revels of Han Xizai’ on which the libretto (by Zhou Jingzhi) is based.
Some of the best music in Night Banquet is part of a rather wild court orgy, with a pipa player performing in centre-stage position. Wu Man stars as the pipa soloist, and no one else could have played the solo sections with such energy and fire. The score is a unique mixture of an opera and a concerto. It has a broad lyrical melodic flow and there are frequent borrowings from Chinese traditional genres. Guo’s musical idiom seems close to almost anything one can hear among contemporary Chinese composers who – like him – still live and work in the People’s Republic: broad romanticism, strands of pentatonic tunes, Chinese traditional timbres and vocal techniques, and occasional impressive outbursts of Chinese percussion. This musical vocabulary contrasts with the more eclectic, far more radical idiomatic adventures of Tan Dun and Qu Xiaosong. Both Tan and Qu live in New York, where they have access to a much broader range of musical styles and genres than Chinese composers working inside China. What matters is Guo’s extraordinary craftsmanship, the consistency and the natural ‘swing’ of his materials. This is music that one can enjoy every inch of, even if there were no stage representation or story to go with it.

In London, Night Banquet was presented in a double bill together with Guo’s first chamber opera Wolf Cub Village (1994), based on a story by Lu Xun. Wolf Cub Village is more dramatic, has a powerful story and truly amazing music for percussion and for its vocal soloists, first and foremost the ‘madman’, so splendidly sung and acted by Nigel Robson in the great tradition of mad opera heroes, from Shostakovich’s The Nose to Alban Berg’s Wozzeck.

Unfortunately, the chamber-size orchestra conducted by Brad Cohen underestimated the complexities of both scores, and there had evidently not been sufficient time for rehearsals. The percussion parts in Wolf Cub Village came out in an embarrassing chaos (at least on the evening of the British premiere), and this opera’s climaxes sounded appallingly dull in comparison with the tremendous intensity of the world premiere by the Nieuw Ensemble in June 1994 in Amsterdam. Not even Nigel Robson, who sang the part of the madman in Amsterdam, and who was cast again as the main character in London, seemed quite as inspired as on the original occasion.

One difficulty with Guo’s operas is that they are sung in Chinese, while nearly all the vocal soloists are Westerners. The Chinese usually comes out blurred and distorted. There is no reason why it should. Today anyone singing Italian opera like this would be thrown out. Why is there no attempt to take the Chinese language more seriously, as part of the music?
In this respect, the musicians in Qu Xiaosong’s opera in Brussels (who had minor spoken parts) did a much better job. Those who think that it can’t be done should remember that the same was said at the turn of this century of Germans who attempted to sing opera in Italian, or vice versa. No doubt the Almeida theatre did hire a language coach, but the time spent on rehearsing the texts was insufficient. Next to Nigel Robson, John Tranter excelled in Wolf Cub Village as the mysterious doctor. There were some surprises in the supporting roles, notably Frances McCaffery as the rough country woman and later the witch. Beautifully played and sung. In my view the two sopranos in Night Banquet were miscasts – these parts
require a lot more warmth and delicacy. With the instrumentalists, there may have been other problems. Guo’s scores require a tremendous dedication and precision of the performers. The ensemble at the Almeida failed to get to the very bottom of this sensitive music, though I’ve heard reports that the playing did improve enormously in subsequent performances. Apart from Wu Man’s contribution, I found that true passion and the utmost effort were lacking during the premiere. James MacDonald’s stagings were attractive without necessarily taking the best advantage of the two plays’ dramatic possibilities. The video installation which served as a backdrop for both productions provided translations of the Chinese texts, but not always synchronized with the stage action, and often obscured by the performers in front of them.

Most critics in Britain responded positively to the production. Nick Kimberley, in *The Independent*, praised Guo’s percussive writing, the economy of the scores, the ‘unfailing intensity’ of the vocal performers, and the subtleties of MacDonald’s direction: ‘witty, engrossing, and wonderfully operative’. Tom Sutcliffe (*Evening Standard*) was less impressed, and felt that there was ‘almost no worthwhile material for singing (or recalling)’ in the two operas. *The Guardian* judged that the Chinese double-bill was ‘an intriguing evening, one of Almeida Opera’s best in recent years’. Finally, Rodney Milnes (*The Times*) praised the cast for its ‘admirably concentrated performances’ and refrained from comment on Guo’s music, except that it seemed ‘more decisively tilted to East than to West’.

Guo’s *Night Banquet* will receive new chances in Holland, Hong Kong and Taipei in 1999 and 2000, with different performers. Tan Dun’s *Peony Pavilion* was recently staged successfully at the Lincoln Center in New York, with the same cast as in Vienna. Qu Xiaosong’s *Life on a String* will be staged again in Paris (3 and 4 December 1998), Munich (10, 12 and 13 December) and in Holland (13–15 April 1999), as well as in Hong Kong and in Japan, partially with different performers. The three operas underpin Chinese contemporary composers’ continued interest in traditional materials, but from amazingly different angles. Now that Tan, Qu and Guo begin to make their presence felt on the Western operatic stage, ‘Chinese opera’ will never again mean what it meant exclusively until recent times.

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Beijing’s rock scene faces an uncertain future

Chow Yiu Fai and Jeroen de Kloet
(Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Starting from October 1, 1997, 48 years after liberation, a new set of regulations went into effect in the People’s Republic of China, aiming at strengthening the control on live performances of ‘unorthodox music’ – that is, most observers would agree, music produced by artists deemed problematic by the officials. Once again, the Beijing rock scene is forced to go further underground. Because of the 15th Party Congress, performances were already scarce in September. Owners of rock venues in Beijing face an uncertain future. So does the Beijing rock scene. More than ten years after Cui Jian desperately screamed ‘Nothing to My Name’, what is happening in Beijing under the surface of prosperity and rapidly rising living standards? A report on the latest concerts, and a talk with China’s most prominent radio DJ of rock music, Zhang Youdaì.

It is late in the evening, a hot Saturday summer night in Beijing. The Lufthansa Centre and the Kempinski Hotel symbolize China’s path to a luxurious lifestyle. Nearby, the head office of Mercedes Benz caters to the needs of the newly rich of Beijing. A first, superficial glance at our environment might give the impression that we are in Hong Kong. By crossing the street we enter a different world. The small restaurants, barbers and street vendors in one of Beijing’s dusty alleys serve the less wealthy Beijingers. Yet, on this particular Saturday night the people here are strikingly different.

Chinese youths, many with long hair and black T-shirts, are queuing in front of Keep in Touch bar. Apparently, the opening of China to the West has resulted in more than the emergence of glamorous shopping malls and hotels. Exciting, distinct youth cultures are another outcome of the growing interaction between China and the outside world. Tonight’s show features Tang Dynasty, one of Beijing’s older rock bands. In their hard rock, long guitar solos are interspersed with desperate outcries from lead singer Ding Wu. ‘Our music has balls,’ claims guitarist Kaiser Kuo, and the enthusiastic response of the predominantly male audience seems to support his statement. Apparently government officials value the power of the music differently. One hour after the beginning of the show, policemen suddenly show up and stop the performance. A combination of vague reasons circulates among the edgy audience: the show is too noisy, no official permission has been given, there are too many people... We wait, hoping that negotiations between the bar owner and the

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1 This article was submitted for publication in Autumn 1997.
policemen may turn the tide, but the results are zero. The audience begins to leave, disappointment drawn on their faces.

‘Just some nice guys’

‘The government should actually be happy with us,’ says Kaiser Kuo. ‘We are certainly not anti-establishment. We offer Beijing’s youth a way to release their energy. Our music functions as a kind of safety valve. And we do have a message; we want to tell people that they have reason to be proud of their culture.’

Singer Ding Wu adds: ‘We believe it is important for Chinese youth to be aware of China’s rich cultural past.’ These statements show how little ground there is for the tenacious cliché of rock music opposing established cultural values. The music which may strike local officials as aggressive, perhaps even threatening, is actually produced by – as Kaiser puts it – ‘just some nice, sincere guys who like to play music’.

A few weeks later the band gives it another try in Keep in Touch bar, and this time the police do not interfere. The performance shows how professional these nice kids actually are.

The audience goes wild when the show reaches its climax: Tang Dynasty, which proclaims to love traditional Chinese culture, touches on China’s recent past with a provoking, hard rock interpretation of the grand old socialist classic, The Internationale. The audience knows the lyrics by heart and sings along. Here, the Chinese educational system proves its worth.

Tang Dynasty belongs to the oldest generation of Chinese rockers, together with bands and singers like Hei Bao, Cobra, He Yong, Dou Wei, Zhang Chu and, of course, the godfather of Chinese rock, Cui Jian. A new generation of rockers is gradually taking over the scene. Just one night before the Tang Dynasty concert, eight different bands turn up at the ‘Great rock and roll swindle’ concert to testify to the development of Beijing’s punk scene.

The audience is younger and wilder. Torn jeans and purple hair dominate the venue, bringing to mind the grand old days of punk in the United Kingdom. People lose themselves in a wild pogo in which they run across the dance floor, bumping violently against one another. It is more like a radical denial of dance; it is an eruption of energy, a dance filled with confusion, anger, but above all hedonistic pleasure. People throw beer around. The singers seem unwilling to look at the audience; they gaze bewildered at the ceiling, just like Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols did in the past. The various bands blend punk and grunge into a new style of Chinese rock. ‘Dou shi yige yang’ – ‘it’s all the same’, screams singer Gao Wei of Underground Baby. The audience knows the lyrics by heart and screams along with the singer.
Tough music styles do very well in China. ‘I don’t really know why, but hard rock has a very good market in China,’ says Kaiser from Tang Dynasty. Nirvana is tremendously popular among the rockers of Beijing. The suicide of Nirvana’s leading musician Kurt Cobain has almost turned him into a saint on the Beijing rock scene. A nihilistic, at times pathetic, lifestyle seems to be the only option left for many youngsters facing contemporary Chinese society. This time there are no police to interrupt the punk performance. It’s one advantage of not yet being famous.

**China’s most prominent radio DJ**

‘This punk festival, you know... These bands just copy, it’s not their own music.’ Radio DJ and record-shop owner Zhang Youdai is clearly not impressed by the provocative poses struck by the wild young bands at the ‘Great rock and roll swindle’ concert. Zhang Youdai has been following the rock scene in Beijing for years. It was different in the past, he claims. As China’s first and still most prominent radio DJ who presents the latest Western and Chinese rock music to the listeners of his programmes, Youdai knows what he is talking about.

Music has always played an important role in Youdai’s life. Now 30 years old, his parents taught him to look beyond the boundaries of his own culture; they inspired him to search for more in life. ‘I think I didn’t learn anything from school, but I learned from my parents.’ He learned notably from what happened to them during the Cultural Revolution. ‘When my father was as young as I am now, he seemed to have many chances and a big future ahead of him, but the country changed, and the changes affected his whole life. His entire life was fucked up, you know. My parents wasted most of their lives, they wasted time – that’s so bad!’

Youdai was convinced at an early age that one should do everything possible to lead an independent, free life. ‘My parents never talked about this to me directly, but their kind of experiences had a very big influence on me and on other people of my generation. Nobody can understand why this happened to us, and that’s why rock’n’roll came; that’s why Chinese rock emerged in the 1980s.’

Most Chinese families were affected and damaged one way or another by the Cultural Revolution. In the impossibility to deal with the cruelties of the recent past, some youngsters picked up guitars and started experimenting with rock music. The recent past no longer offered any convincing role models for urban youths, nor did the inflexible, hierarchical Confucian ideology. Rock music seemed to offer new opportunities, ways to explore new lifestyles, and possibly - just possibly - a chance to liberate oneself from the confinements of the past.

At that time, Youdai had just entered drama school. After reading Shakespeare and Chinese classics by writers such as Mao Dun and Cao Yu, he found his real love – drama. But the school soon disappointed him. ‘Drama has changed in China. It’s being used for propaganda. The original spirit is lost. So at the time when I found this out, I also happened to discover rock’n’roll music – something true. That music is very straightforward.’
He began to listen to both Western and Chinese rock. Foreign friends introduced him to the latest music styles of the UK, and Youdai’s collection of musical recordings grew day by day. His roommates at the drama school were first annoyed by his strange music, but gradually became infected with Youdai’s enthusiasm. By the time he was in his third year, many students would come over to Youdai’s room in the evenings to ask him to play music. That is how his career as a DJ started.

While he was still a student, Youdai began to work for a Beijing radio station. He acted as producer and selected the music. Because of his long hair, the radio officials did not trust him to actually present the programme. ‘At one stage I asked them to let me try to host the programme. But they replied: “Don’t even think about it. This radio station is the voice of the government, so you shouldn’t be doing this”.’ Eventually, in 1993, Youdai had the opportunity to work for a new station, Beijing Music Radio, with a programme of his own called ‘Jazz Train’.

**Music shop**

By now Zhang Youdai is acknowledged as a serious and dedicated broadcaster, who hosts two weekly programmes, called ‘New Music Magazine’ and ‘Blues Train’. He sends taped copies of his programmes free of charge to regional stations in China. He is not making any money through his radio activities. Sponsors who could support his programmes are hard to find, mainly because they are unfamiliar with the music. So why does he remain so committed to his work?
'My programme is a kind of window on the world for Chinese young people. You know, I always say that today's Chinese youth, at the end of the twentieth century, are still living as if they were deaf and blind. They can't see or hear what is new in the world. If they had a lot of choices, and knew many different kinds of music, their lives might change. But right now they seem to have only one choice available, namely to live like their parents did. You marry, you work and have children; and once you have a child, your entire life is devoted to it, and in the end your life is wasted...'

To give young Chinese more chances to get to know different genres of music, Youdai has opened his own music shop, tucked away somewhere in Beijing's old neighbourhoods. He did so out of dissatisfaction with the way CDs are sold in China, 'just like shoes or hats'. He was unhappy, too, with the unavailability of more alternative music, and soon found ways to lay his hands on CDs one would never come across in other stores on the mainland. Youdai's shop is unique for China. He sells mainly Western music, ranging from the trip hop of Tricky and Portishead to the latest dance music. But next to CDs of Beck, Radiohead and Nick Cave, his shelves also contain recordings of Chinese rock and the latest fad in trendy Beijing: Chinese jazz. But customers are still rare.

'It's a shame that many young people in China are so lazy – they are simply not moving ahead. Most of the audience want to hear the same Cui Jian they heard ten years ago. I try to get young people on a different track; I say to them that "maybe nobody is telling you about these things, but look, you ought to be interested!" If young people are able to change, all of China will have hope for the future.'

If this is how he feels about it, why does he criticize the young punkers who are searching for new ways? Youdai's reply is: 'The new generation don't have their own culture, their own lives – consumerism is all that counts. I think the 80s were the golden years. Many people ask me why rock started in the 1980s. I think one should rather ask why rock died in the 90s! Nothing new is happening at the moment. In the 1980s, young people were very much focused on culture, but right now they concentrate mainly on the economy; they simply want to make money.' Does he feel, then, that all contemporary Chinese culture is doomed in this era of commercialism?

Youdai says he still cherishes some hope for the future. 'But we have a long way to go... It may take another long march. Yes, I expect Chinese rock to come back. But right now the biggest problem is that all the musicians are too much focused on themselves. They don't care about society, don't want to be part of it. I think they should listen more to the Chinese audience – the common people, people living in the streets, working in factories, studying at schools... At present, rock in China is just like a very remote place, people simply can't reach it.'

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Cat and mouse game

Zhang Youdai envisages another China, one that has come to its own again. 'I think China should be more like Hong Kong – a place with deep-rooted traditions, but combined with Western systems of law and economy. I think that Hong Kong is actually more Chinese than China, although it has been a colony for many years. China has already lost its traditions. You know, China is so weird, it makes me feel as if it's neither China nor the West! Just look at the buildings, it's nothing, they've got no style.'

Such opinions are rarely heard among people involved in the Beijing rock scene. Most of them view Hong Kong as the embodiment of commercialism, with the mass-produced Cantopop songs as a typical example. Visits to Hong Kong have opened Youdai's eyes, he says.

'I happen to know many musicians from Hong Kong. Before I went to Hong Kong I thought that they would only have Cantopop there. Now I know what is really going on in that place: some people have their own dreams, and they keep on doing whatever they want to.'

This view links Youdai with non-mainstream Hong Kong musicians who try to create their own music without being led very much by commercial motives. It also links him with all those others around the world who try to make a different living and strive to make their personal dreams come true. It is this aspiration that Youdai seeks to communicate. 'I tell my listeners: “Don’t think only that you are Chinese, or Hong Kongese or American – think first that you are human, you are a human being on earth. Don’t think about one country, rather think about this new map in your mind – just one world!”'

Just one world – even if this were the case, the question remains whose world it is... At the end of October 1997, after an interruption of nearly two months, rock bands in Beijing took up performing again. During those two months, some had been interrogated by the police, after being suspected of drug use. Some were detained without trial.

In the same period, Cui Jian finished recording his new album. In provocative rap songs he once again challenges Chinese society. But for the time being, it remains uncertain whether he can release the album. The rockers themselves often lightly refer to it all as a 'cat and mouse game'. However, it is a dangerous cat, and the game sometimes turns more serious than the mouse wants.
CHINA WITNESSES A SUDDEN VOGUE FOR JAZZ

The Land Tour and the Emergence of Jazz in China

Dennis Rea
(Seattle, USA)

Less than one decade ago, jazz was virtually nonexistent in China outside a tiny circle of musicians and cognoscenti. This situation has changed considerably over the past few years. In 1997, the Beijing International Jazz Festival (initiated in 1993) witnessed its fifth edition. Jazz bars have sprung up in Beijing, Chengdu and elsewhere. A respectable number of Chinese jazz groups is now active on the Mainland, with repertoires ranging from classic jazz to bebop, from jazz-rock fusion to New Age. Guitarist Dennis Rea of the Seattle-based instrumental group ‘Land’ reports on Land’s concert tour of China, Hong Kong and Macao in 1996, and on China’s rapidly emerging jazz scene.

In November 1996 ‘Land’, a Seattle-based instrumental music group that combines elements of modern jazz, free improvisation, electronic music, and various world music traditions, made a concert tour of China, Hong Kong, and Macau. Founded by noted composer and keyboardist Jeff Greinke, the touring edition of Land also included guitarist and tour organizer Dennis Rea, trumpet player Lesli Dalaba, percussionists Greg Gilmore and Bill Moyer, and Chapman stick player George Soler, a veteran of Taiwan’s progressive music scene.

This was the third concert tour of China I’d undertaken, having previously performed in Beijing, Chengdu, Chongqing, Kunming, and Guangzhou with the Taiwan-based expatriate group Identity Crisis and the Seattle-based Vagaries in 1991. Unlike both earlier tours, which were fraught with all manner of logistical and bureaucratic headaches, the Land tour was rewarding on many levels, both musically and in terms of audience response and collaboration with local artists. Bringing this particular group to China was a deliberately risky venture, with its odd blend of decidedly non-commercial musics; but to our surprise, audiences reacted favourably everywhere we played, even to our more experimental excursions. Considering that this may have been the first time this type of music was performed in China, the openness of Chinese audiences to such an unfamiliar listening experience reflected poorly on our own country’s supposedly more informed and open society.

Beijing Jazz Festival
The ostensible purpose of Land’s visit to China was an appearance in the 1996 Beijing International Jazz Festival. The festival, which featured twenty ensembles representing ten
different countries and as many approaches to improvised music, was a striking example of how quickly contemporary music is evolving in China since I’d first played there in 1989.

At that time, jazz was virtually nonexistent outside a tiny circle of musicians and cognoscenti. The only working Chinese jazz group to speak of was Shanghai’s Peace Hotel Jazz Band, a relic of the city’s notorious heyday as ‘Paris of the East.’ Before the revolution, the group was a fixture at one of the most opulent European hotels in the Far East. Mao changed all that, and when the hotel’s foreign patrons fled China after 1949, the jazzmen fell on hard times. As purveyors of a decadent foreign artform and court entertainers to the imperialists, the Peace Hotel Jazz Band epitomized the class enemy in communist China.

Ironically, after decades of forced inactivity the now superannuated musicians saw their careers revived during the tourist boom of the 1980s, when they were reinstalled in the ballroom of the expensively refurbished Peace Hotel on Shanghai’s Bund. I saw them play there while traveling in early 1989. A sextet comprising trumpet, two saxophones, piano, bass, and drums, the Peace Hotel Jazz Band proffered an anemic variety of nostalgic lounge music with little, if any, genuine improvising. Still, ‘real’ jazz or not, the group was a big hit with the large crowds who showered the musicians with cash, drinks, and cartons of Marlboros between sets every night.
The first evidence I came across of a nascent jazz movement among younger Chinese was pianist Gao Ping’s 1988 tape *Jazz in China* (China Record Co. FL–128), in all probability the first indigenous jazz recording made in the country since 1949. Released by the state-run China Record Company, *Jazz in China* was a curious melange of mostly non-jazz material, ranging from Cantopop melodies to the ‘Theme from Love Story,’ from bubbly synthesizers to sampled operatic tenors. While the recording did display jazz sensibilities, with a fair measure of improvisation and identifiable jazz harmonies, it was a far cry from what jazz partisans in the West would consider jazz. This was hardly surprising, considering the scarcity of authentic jazz recordings in China, official disapproval of this ‘degenerate’ artform, and above all a predisposition in modern China against the type of spontaneous expression embodied in jazz.

Fast-forward to 1996. Just eight years after the release of *Jazz in China*, the four-year-old Beijing International Jazz Festival draws nearly 10,000 listeners to the state-of-the-art 21st Century Theatre for seven nights of cutting-edge jazz played by Chinese and major international artists. The event is extensively covered by local, national, and international media, and in a striking reversal of Chinese musical mores, audiences warmly applaud even the thorniest musical explorations of avant-garde stalwarts such as drummers Han Bennink and Tony Oxley, pianist Misha Mengelberg, and trombonist George Lewis. After the festival wraps up, many of the musicians go on to participate in the first Shanghai International Jazz Concert Series; similar events were planned for Shanghai, Hangzhou and Dalian in 1997. Meanwhile, a dozen or more jazz bars have sprung up in Beijing, where highly competent Chinese jazz bands improvise confidently and swing hard. Indeed, a joke circulating in Beijing goes that every local establishment seeking to boost its hipness quotient simply adds the words ‘jazz bar’ to its name.

**Frustrated rockers**

How is one to account for this sudden vogue for jazz? One obvious reason is that China’s entry into the global marketplace has brought freer access to imported recordings, and consequently greater public awareness of jazz and other foreign musical styles. A second factor is the continued suppression of live rock music, which has driven frustrated rockers to turn to jazz, which is seen as a much less threatening form of musical expression by the powers that be. Another consideration is the growing perception among *nouveau-riche* Chinese of jazz as a ‘classy’ lifestyle accoutrement – background music for the chic bars and coffeehouses springing up in most Chinese cities.

But most of the credit is due to jazz promoters such as the organizers of the Beijing Jazz Festival, who have given the Chinese listening public their first real taste of serious live jazz. Not only has the festival itself become a huge success, but important artists like Bill Laswell, John Zorn, the Brecker Brothers, and the George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band have recently traveled to China for well-received concerts and club appearances.

The Beijing Jazz Festival was founded in 1993 by Udo Hoffmann, a longtime member of the city’s expatriate business community with a passion for modern jazz. Hoffmann’s involvement with the Chinese music scene dates from the formative days of Beijing rock in the late 1980s, when he was instrumental in organizing the now-legendary ‘parties’ where budding Chinese rockers were given a chance to perform away from official scrutiny. In the early 1990s Hoffmann, recognizing a growing interest in jazz among Chinese musicians and listeners, drew on his musical expertise and contacts among the international jazz community...
Guys, formed in June 1996 in Beijing. With Jin Hao (saxophones), Gu Peng (vocals, drums), Cui Honggen (piano), Liu Xiaosong (drums) and Zhang Hui (bass).

to launch China’s first jazz festival. From the start, festival organizers made a point of covering the entire continuum of jazz styles, from Dixieland to free improvisation. Such musical catholicity would be unusual in any major jazz festival, much less a festival in communist China.

Growth of the Beijing Jazz Festival
The inaugural Beijing International Jazz Festival took place in 1993 at the 700-seat Beijing Children’s Theater. Co-sponsored by the Goethe Institute, the China International Culture Exchange Centre, and others, the festival proved so successful that organizers decided to make it an annual event. Performers in the 1994 and 1995 editions of the festival included the madcap Willem Breuker Kollektief, the Clusone Trio, turntable terrorist Otomo Yoshihide, trumpeter Palle Mikkelborg, and fusion violinist Didier Lockwood, as well as a number of Chinese jazz bands.

By 1996 the administrative burden of organizing such a large and diverse festival – compounded, of course, by the ever-shifting vagaries of Chinese politics – led Hoffmann to take on as his partner Robert Van Kan, the assistant cultural attaché at the Netherlands Embassy. Van Kan brought to the festival a comprehensive knowledge of modern music and years of experience in negotiating cultural exchange activities. The festival venue was shifted to the 1,400-seat 21st Century Theatre, and numerous corporate and foreign government sponsors were recruited to help defray operational costs.

The resulting festival, the largest and most ambitious to date, was a resounding success. It was clearly the ‘in’ place to be for culturally progressive Beijingers, and was a virtual sellout despite the (necessarily) steep ticket prices. Although a sizable number of foreign expatriates attended, the majority of the audience was Chinese. Musical highlights included
the free improvising trio of Han Bennink, George Lewis, and Misha Mengelberg; Italian trumpet player Enrico Rava’s adventurous adaptation of Carmen, abetted by the Beijing contemporary music group Ensemble Eclipse; the European improvising trio Cercle (drummer Tony Oxley, pianist Dieter Glauwischnig, and violinist Andreas Schreiber); the slick multicultural fusion of French group Sixun; and the irreverent, crazy-quilt jazz of Denmark’s New Jungle Orchestra. But the biggest surprise was the number and quality of Chinese jazz musicians, whose instrumental skills and grasp of jazz idioms marked a major advance on earlier, tentative forays into the music such as Jazz in China.

Chinese jazz
In contrast to their adventurous foreign counterparts, the Chinese groups hewed closely to the traditional repertoire and standard head-solos-head structures; this musical conservativism was only natural, considering the musicians’ relative inexperience playing jazz. Local groups included the Beijing Jazz Unit, a big band made up of both Chinese and foreign expatriate musicians who played polished renditions of hoary jazz standards with competent if conservative soloing, a bright spot being imaginative pianist Liang Heping. Jazz-rock fusionists Tian Square proffered their version of Jazz Lite, while Guys, featuring the impressive Jin Hao on saxophone, went in for a more reverent, ‘classic jazz’ approach.

Saxophonist and hometown hero Liu Yuan, the only Chinese musician to have performed in all four editions of the festival, delivered a vigorous set of muscular bebop standards and originals with his piano-based quartet. Liu Yuan first attracted attention in the late 1980s as a member of rock icon Cui Jian’s band ADO, contributing distinctive saxophone and suona (shawm) solos to massive hits such as Yi wu suo you (‘Nothing to my name’). After immersing himself in jazz during a stay in Oregon in the early 1990s, Liu Yuan returned to China to pursue his muse, and is now widely considered the elder statesman of Chinese jazz. He plays jazz several nights a week at clubs like the CD Café and continues to perform rock music with Cui Jian and others.

The biggest surprise in the Beijing Jazz Festival: the number and quality of Chinese jazz musicians.

Jazz education in China
Many of the jazz and rock musicians now active in Beijing are alumni of the MIDI Music School, reputedly the first independent music school in China dedicated to non-classical contemporary music. Established by Zhang Fan, with assistance from influential radio per-
sonality and modern music advocate Zhang Youdai, the MIDI school attracts young musicians from all over China who are eager to learn the instrumental skills necessary to play pop, rock, and jazz. The Beijing International Jazz Festival coordinates a series of master classes each year with the MIDI school, featuring visiting artists from around the world. Several members of Land gave workshops at the school, a drafty, six-floor walkup crammed with more than one hundred onlookers that afternoon. Why the school is named MIDI – an acronym for Musical Instrument Digital Interface – is a mystery, as it was difficult to find a single functioning electrical outlet. Operating on an extremely meager budget, the school is definitely a labour of love.

The majority of the audience at festival events had little or no previous exposure to jazz. To the uninitiated, listening to jazz – especially in its more abstract manifestations – is like trying to decipher an alien language. I have often been asked by Chinese listeners to explain what a particular piece of jazz music ‘means.’ The question is understandable in view of the fact that Chinese instrumental music has historically been either representative (‘Moonlight in Spring Water’), programmatic (‘Ambushed from All Sides’), or ceremonial, rather than existing as a sonic event in its own right. But since most non-vocal jazz has no specific message to convey or story to tell, it is difficult to assign ‘meaning’ to the music.

The confusion is further compounded by the multiplicity of styles gathered together under the imprecise banner of ‘jazz,’ which on the surface seem to have little in common aside from a greater or lesser degree of improvisation. To help newcomers better understand the music, longtime Beijing resident and jazz aficionado Loren Clarke has written a book, I love jazz, outlining the music’s history and its diverse subgenres. A Chinese translation of the book, available for purchase at festival venues, will no doubt help foster a greater appreciation of jazz in China.

‘Off festival’ events

Land’s set at the jazz festival was unfortunately marred by the interminable grandstanding of the preceding act, German reed specialists Claudio Puntin and Stefan Schom, who delayed our starting time a full hour and a half, too late for many in the fatigued audience. We made up for it a few nights when we jump-started an after-hours session at the Sunflower Club with a strong set by Land, followed by wide-ranging improvisations involving Land members and Beijing musicians such as Liang Heping, Liu Yuan, Cui Jian, and drummer Liu Xiaosong, plus trombonist George Lewis and other festival participants. A highlight of the evening was the spectacle of 74-year-old jazz jet-setter Trudy Morse ululating like a banshee while a drunken Chinese punk rocker shrieked along at the top of his lungs.

Throughout the week, festival concerts were followed by similar open sessions at Beijing night spots like the CD Café, Shadow Café, and the attractive San Wei bookstore near Tiananmen Square. These sessions gave festival guests and locals alike an opportunity to stretch out and interact with one another in a relaxed environment. The events were invariably standing-room-only affairs lasting well into the night, with expat businessmen and diplomats hauling out their rusty horns for 101 choruses of ‘Take the A Train.’ Disappointingly, there were few encounters between Chinese and visiting musicians.

Most of the official after-hours sessions defaulted to fusion and mainstream jazz, but improvisers of a different stripe found an outlet for their creativity when Wang Yong, one of the most innovative zheng (zither) players in China, hosted a series of group improvisations at his club Keep in Touch, reputedly the first Internet café in China. A recognized master of
Chinese traditional music, Wang Yong is unusual in his willingness to explore disparate musical forms such as rock and jazz. His zheng solo is one of the highlights of Cui Jian’s haunting ‘False Itinerant Monk,’ and his recent CD for Taiwan’s Rock Records, *Samsara* (Rock/Magic Stone MSD–007), is a promising blend of traditional Chinese and New Age styles.

For four consecutive nights Wang Yong extemporized fluently with improvisers from around the globe, including Han Bennink, Anthony Cox, Django Bates, Christof Lauer, Andreas Schreiber, and members of Land, showing a remarkable ability to adapt to the various players’ musical languages. These sessions were the realization of my long-held wish that Chinese traditional musicians would come forward and improvise with their counterparts from abroad. It’s not unrealistic to hope that the Keep in Touch improvisations have engendered a Chinese free-improvising scene.

**Hong Kong**

Leaving Beijing, Land traveled by train to Hong Kong for a concert at the Fringe Club, the only local venue that regularly supports the experimental arts.

I had always loved Hong Kong, but was perennially disappointed by its paucity of creative music, unusual for such an urbane, sophisticated metropolis. The cliché goes that in Hong Kong, money is everything, and this stereotype is certainly borne out by the glossy, overproduced Cantopop the city exports to China, Taiwan, and the rest of the Chinese world. But Hong Kong is also home to a small community of musicians and promoters who produce uncompromising modern music in the face of near-total indifference; indeed, much of the experimental music being made in Hong Kong is arguably far more radical than anything similar being done in China or Taiwan.

Land’s Hong Kong concert was organized by Henry Kwok and Li Chin Sung, who as owners of the independent Sound Factory label are at the center of the city’s underground music scene. Sound Factory’s catalogue includes CDs by Hong Kong fringe figures such as Nelson Hiu, industrial noisemeister Xper.Xr, and the group Dancing Stone, as well as compilations of East Asian rock and the quixotic 100-CD set *John Zorn and Yamantaka Eye Live in China*. Sound Factory partner Li Chin Sung recently released a CD of his own sonic experiments, *Past*, on John Zorn’s prestigious Tzadik label. The company also promotes concerts by visiting avant-gardists such as Zorn, Otomo Yoshihide, and Fred Frith, usually at a loss.

Wang Yong flew down from Beijing to join us for the show, embroidering Land’s compositions with striking zheng solos and engaging in sensitive group improvisations. The music was inspired, but—typically for concerts of this kind of music in Hong Kong—only about twenty people showed up. I’m sure it didn’t help that tickets cost nearly $30 U.S.

I wondered what would become of Sound Factory after Hong Kong’s reversion to Chinese rule in 1997, when the company would become China’s lone independent avant-garde music label literally overnight. Sadly, the news from Henry Kwok is that Sound Factory has recently gone bankrupt, so we may never know how the company might have fared.
Macau

After the Fringe Club concert we boarded a jetfoil for the Portuguese colony of Macau, where Land was booked to open the festivities surrounding the Macau Book Fair, a multicultural event sponsored by the Instituto Portugues do Oriente. The concert took place in Macau’s beautiful city square, the Largo do Senado, one of the most attractive public spaces in East Asia with its floodlit, exquisitely refurbished old Portuguese buildings. Land performed for people from all walks of life, from Cantonese elders to little kids to a raving Portuguese madman. We were surprised and delighted at the warm response we received from the audience, made up mostly of curious passersby. For me, playing to such non-specialist audiences has always been one of the great pleasures of performing in China.

Our host in Macau, João Pedro Costa, is co-founder of the Music of the Fourth World group, an organization dedicated to promoting new music in Macau. Music of the Fourth World regularly brings contemporary musicians of international stature to the tiny colony, often in cooperation with Hong Kong’s Sound Factory. As host of an adventurous radio show, Costa has introduced thousands of listeners in Macau to unusual music of the globe. He is the producer of the first-ever CD anthology of modern music from Macau, compiled from tapes of rock, pop, and techno music submitted by his listeners.

Costa and a group of like-minded Portuguese expatriates also operate Macau’s cozy Jazz Club, hidden away among the city’s labyrinth of narrow lanes. The club is home to the 20-year-old Macau Jazz Festival, the longest-running jazz festival in East Asia outside of Japan. Despite its relatively low profile, the festival manages to attract top-notch modern jazz musicians to the colony, among them virtuoso trombonist Ray Anderson and Berlin-based pianist Aki Takase. The night after our concert in the square, Land played to a packed house of Portuguese hipsters at the Jazz Club, delivering one of our best sets of the tour.

Kunming

Back inside China, Land flew to the southwestern city of Kunming for two semiprivate engagements at an upscale local bar. Earlier efforts to schedule a legitimate public concert had been quashed by local officials, despite my having performed at the city’s National Defense Arena in 1991 with the approval of the provincial government. Apparently there had been a recent controversy involving foreigners in the province, so the local government was in no mood to rubber-stamp what was being billed inaccurately as a rock concert. This didn’t seem to deter the club owner, who put up posters outside his establishment anyway.

Each of the shows was attended by about 300 people, including local artists, musicians, writers, radio personalities, and other creative folk. Land played on a stage hung with a U.S. Marine Corps banner, our eyes assaulted by blinding beams of laser light. Kunming was no longer the relaxed, provincial city I remembered from 1991, when I had played there with the Vagaries. Back then, we were told that our show was the first rock concert ever in Yunnan Province; now, according to local DJ and rock musician Shen Hui, dozens of rock bands were active in the city, many of them influenced by Seattle grunge bands like Soundgarden and Nirvana.

One afternoon the remarkable modern painter Mao Xuhui arranged for us to visit a compound in the nearby countryside where young musicians from Yunnan’s Yi, Naxi, Hani, and Tibetan nationalities worked to preserve their endangered musical traditions. We were treated to a programme of stirring songs and dances, and were able to reciprocate when a busload of the young musicians came down to the city that night to take in our concert.
Unfortunately, the front-row seats we’d reserved for the minority musicians were commandeered by slick businessmen who downed expensive drinks and carried on loudly throughout our set.

Chengdu
The final stop on Land’s tour was Chengdu, where my Chinese musical juggernaut had started back in 1989. Everywhere we had gone in China we were amazed at the rapid pace of change, but it came as a shock to find my onetime home transfigured almost beyond recognition. Like most Chinese cities, Chengdu had been radically changed by relentless development, with all the attendant traffic and environmental woes. In just seven years, historic neighbourhoods of narrow lanes and half-timbered houses had given way to a forest of skyscrapers, and miles of the surrounding paddy country had been swallowed up by runaway construction. High-class restaurants, luxury hotels, karaoke palaces and brew pubs were ubiquitous, and where bicyclists had once pedaled at a leisurely pace, a roaring torrent of automobiles now raced endlessly by. The disappearance of the Chengdu I had known and loved deeply depressed me, but I soon realized that my indulgence in nostalgia was mere selfishness, for without exception my old friends were better off materially than ever before.

The city’s newfound prosperity had also brought a leap in sophistication — I’d never have imagined in 1989 that I would one day find a translation of John Cage’s treatise *The Future of Music* in a Chengdu bookstore. Amazingly, a reggae bar had opened in Chengdu, and the jazz virus had infected the city as well; we were booked to open the city’s first jazz bar while in town.

Land played a large invitational show at the brand-new Rhinoceros Garden resort in suburban Pixian, a strikingly bourgeois recreational complex complete with golf course, tennis courts, and all manner of upscale amenities. It seemed an unlikely place for a concert of experimental jazz-rock, but the owners were gambling on our drawing a sizeable number of the city’s literati and media figures, who would then report favorably on the resort. (A free banquet and libations no doubt helped oil the publicity machine.) The concert organizers even arranged free minibus shuttle service from Chengdu to Pixian for concertgoers. It was the Land’s last and perhaps best show, as Jeff Greinke had to leave for Seattle the following day. After our set, the patrons got up and danced into the wee hours to videos of the Eagles.

The final two shows of the tour were performed by Nada, a subgroup of Land specializing in a different style of instrumental music. Nada christened the first jazz bar ever in Chengdu, the New Orleans Jazz Pub, which opened its doors three weeks ahead of schedule just to accommodate us; indeed, a crew of carpenters and electricians worked furiously right up to showtime to ready the club for its grand opening. The crowd was primed with a set of tepid, lock-step standards played by Chengdu’s first jazz band, a group of dance band veterans with no prior experience playing jazz — a brave effort under the circumstances. Nada then played to a noisy, packed house, presided over by a mural of B. B. King. The show was recorded and later broadcast by Chongqing Radio.
As concert tours of China go, this one was remarkably hassle-free. The tour actually broke even – no mean feat in China – and when the value of the services, accommodations, meals, and air tickets provided by our hosts is tallied up, what we received in hospitality is incalculable. Every musician wishes they were treated with half the graciousness we were shown; I only hope that one day I will have opportunities to do the same for visiting Chinese musicians.

Much of the credit for the tour’s success goes to our tour manager Tang Lei, a tireless worker for meaningful cultural exchange. Had we tried to organize such a tour along official lines, it would never have gotten off the ground; everything was made possible through the cooperation of creative artists and ordinary people who wanted to help make something special happen in their city.

Looking ahead
As the millenium draws to a close, jazz shows no signs of slowing in China. Unlike the once-idealistic Chinese rock scene, which in an amazingly short time became thoroughly vitiated by the same commercial mandates that compromised its Western counterpart, the Chinese jazz phenomenon may well point the way to a truly creative union of Chinese and global musical sensibilities. With its open structures, jazz is intrinsically better able to accommodate elements of non-Western musics; indeed, much of the ethnic fusion so popular in the West today can arguably be traced to earlier world-music forays by jazz artists like Don Cherry and the group Oregon.

A growing number of Chinese traditional musicians are exploring cross-cultural improvised music, among them Wang Yong and pipa virtuosi Wu Man and Min Xiao-fen, collaborators with such influential figures as American jazz innovator Henry Threadgill and British free-improv icon Derek Bailey. Meanwhile, in the jazz motherland of the United States, a distinct Asian jazz subgenre has emerged in the 1990s to widespread critical acclaim. Chinese-American jazz musicians such as pianist Jon Jang, reed player Fred Ho, violinist Jason Hwang, and bassist Francis Wong are reclaiming their musical origins and finding ways to integrate Chinese instruments and musical concepts into jazz. While some of these musical mergers sound forced, in most cases the admixture of Asian music and jazz has yielded fascinating results.

Completing the circle is the ‘Jazz and East Asian Traditions’ concert series which was planned for the 1997 Beijing International Jazz Festival. Featuring such potent role models as Jang, Hwang’s poly-Asian improvising ensemble the Far East Side Band, and Nguyen Lê’s Tales from Vietnam, these concerts will no doubt inspire a new generation of Chinese musicians to explore ways of reconciling their age-old tradition with contemporary global musical currents.
REPORT ON THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CHIME MEETING

Lively exchange during ‘East Asian Strings’

Frank Kouwenhoven
(Chime Foundation, Leiden, The Netherlands)

Some forty-five scholars and students participated in the CHIME meeting ‘East Asian Strings’, 29 to 31 August 1997 in Leiden, the Netherlands. They performed or discussed music for pipa, gugin, zheng, erhü and a number of less familiar Asian instruments such as the Japanese sanshin, the Uyghur lute rawap and stick-fiddle gijâk, and the Khakassian box zither chaikhân. The programme featured fourteen papers and twelve musical performances. The recitals contributed to the lively and homely atmosphere of the meeting. There was room for some in-depth analyses of string music repertoires and a bout of on-the-spot re-interpretation of ancient scores. Historical links between traditional string music in China and in Japan constituted a recurring theme.

‘East Asian Strings’ had a brisk musical start on the afternoon of Friday, 29 August, when Chinese composer Qu Xiaosong (New York) and Japanese singer and biwa performer Junko Ueda (Amsterdam) joined forces in an impromptu performance for vocals and percussion. No ‘strings’ (other than human vocal cords) were involved, but the idea was to create a small ritual to inaugurate the new CHIME library, in a renovated 16th century house in the historical heart of Leiden, five minutes’ walking distance from the Leiden University Library. With most of the doors in the building ajar, the sounds of voices, drums and cymbals travelled freely through the rooms, while musicians and spectators gathered in the hall downstairs. Live music remained an important element during the entire meeting, which lasted three days. A lecture room in the Gravensteen, the former town castle now housing the Faculty of Law, served as the site for most papers and demonstrations. An evening concert of string music from Persia to Japan was held on Saturday, 30 August, in the nearby Lokhorst Church.

Sheep’s knuckles
Major issues in Asian traditional string music that were touched upon during the meeting were ancient tuning systems, the interpretation of surviving instrumental scores from medieval times, the historical development and the dissemination of specific types of instruments, historical or contemporary links between various vocal narrative repertoires accompanied by strings, and present-day string ensemble traditions.
That the Chinese *pipa* and Japanese *biwa*, or the Chinese *sanxian* and Japanese *sanshin* are close kin may be obvious from their design and names alone, but potential connections between numerous other instruments – for example certain instruments played by ethnic minorities in China and in adjacent Central Asian cultures – await closer investigation.

On the look of it, it seems a huge step from the Khakassian box zither *chatkhan*, a herdsman's zither with strings supported by sheep's knuckles, to the delicate Chinese bridged zither *zheng* with its historical connotations of a court musical instrument. In any event, both instruments are box zithers with movable bridges, a type played in a vast area across Central and East Asia, of which Khakassia constitutes the northern boundary. In her paper on the *chatkhan*, Liesbet Nijssen (University of Amsterdam) referred to indications of early cultural exchange between Chinese and Khakassians, such as a 13th-century Chinese medallion found in Khakassia with a Chinese stringed instrument depicted on it. Nijssen refrained from speculating about possible links between South Siberian and Chinese zithers, but she did point out the pentatonic tuning of the *chatkhan*, which is in remarkable contrast to the diatonic melodies played on it. It is possible that Persian box zithers of the 16th and 17th century found their way across China to southern Siberia, but many other roads of dissemination are conceivable, too, and so far no hypothesis in this field can be substantiated.

Nijssen's paper may serve as an example of the historical issues raised during the meeting. The relaxed atmosphere stimulated free discussion and frequent interruptions even during the presentation of papers. Judging from the many remarks and comparisons offered, a vast array of local types of Chinese box zithers and other stringed instruments in East Asia await further study.
Lucie Borotova (Charles University, Prague) provided a useful general introduction to the zheng, while various local zheng styles were eloquently introduced by Han Mei (University of British Columbia, Vancouver). Before she became an ethnomusicologist, Han Mei played the zheng professionally for fifteen years in an orchestra in Beijing. While giving her paper, she demonstrated in practice a number of stylistical differences between the four major zheng schools of the People’s Republic. She pointed out in passing that the zheng is nowadays often referred to as guzheng, but that this term (‘old zheng’) has been promoted primarily in the last fifty years, the instrument traditionally being called zheng.

Towards qin meetings in Europe
Several sessions were dedicated to the classical Chinese seven-string zither guqin, believed by many to represent a key tradition in Chinese music and a major contribution to Chinese intellectual history. A gradually widening circle of qin devotees can now be found among sinologists and musicologists in Europe. Some have followed in Robert van Gulik’s tracks, taking lessons from Chinese masters and studying or translating historical writings on the qin. A vast body of ancient scores, with pieces dating back to the 15th century or earlier, awaits analysis and reconstruction. It is arguably one of the most important collections of surviving ancient music from any part of East Asia.

During the meeting, papers on the interpretation of guqin music alternated with musical performances. One afternoon was an ‘open-to-all’, with some of the less sophisticated presentations serving as a quiet reminder of what it actually takes to become a master player.
Dai Xiaolian from Shanghai, one of China's prominent qin masters, played both a contemporary qin and a Ming-dynasty instrument brought to the conference by John Thompson from Hong Kong, and gave an impression of differences in sound. The use of silk strings versus (now more commonly used) steel strings was briefly discussed. John Thompson presented his ongoing work on the interpretation of ancient guqin scores, notably the Ming-dynasty guqin handbook Zheyin Shizi Qinpu. Recently he published a CD with interpretations from the Zheyin handbook plus a written study on these same materials.

Among those from Europe who played qin were Julian Joseph, an amateur performer from Chippenham, UK, and sinologists Dorothee Schaab-Hanke (Hamburg, Germany) and Hanno Lecher (Vienna). Julian Joseph gave a detailed account of his heroic efforts to teach himself to play the qin in the absence of a Chinese master. He listened to records and studied the few available teaching materials in the West (notably Fred Lieberman's Qin Tutor), which were his only means to come to terms with the instrument. Feeding every bit of information into a computer, Joseph gradually obtained sufficient knowledge to read qin scores. He even made some attempts to re-transfer pieces heard on records back to paper, efforts bound to fail, as he later discovered, if only because of differences in pitch level between the recordings and the actual performances.

John Thompson played some of his interpretations of Ming-dynasty qin scores and asked his audience for comments. He did so during the sessions, but also afterwards in leisure hours, taking every available opportunity to play qin pieces and discuss them in detail. The various rooms of the CHIME library offered participants ample opportunities to
practice or to try out all kinds of instruments. Especially in the mornings, this resulted in a mild cacophony which set the right tone for the discussions.

The idea to start qin meetings on a regular basis in Europe (following the Chinese practice) was greeted with enthusiasm. Qin music returned as an important topic in the recent CHIME meeting in Heidelberg (1–4 October 1998).

China versus Japan
The pipa and its Japanese counterpart the biwa could be heard during the meeting in varied examples of ancient and local repertoires. They were put into a wider perspective by Han Mei’s video report on love songs (accompanied by a horizontally held plucked lute) of the Dong people in Guizhou and by Junko Ueda’s performance of Dan-no-ura, the climax from the Japanese epic tale Heike monogatari, in the version by Kinshi Tsuruta.

Marnix Wells (SOAS, London) gave an up-date on his in-depth research on the Dunhuang pipa scores (music from the Tang dynasty), which he illustrated with a brief demonstration of the tune ‘West River Moon’ (Xi jiang yue). A brave endeavour by a scholar hardly claiming to be a musician. Wells should have brought a tape of Chinese performers, because he did manage to have Chinese musicians play his interpretation while he was in China. Wells presented ‘West River Moon’ in a vocal version with pipa accompaniment. The relationship between the lute piece and the song of the same name is based on conjecture, but several other scholars have tried to combine words and music, and over the years a number of different interpretations of the piece have appeared in music journals. ‘West River Moon’ is one of twenty-five lute tunes which have survived in written notation in China, while the vast majority of surviving manuscripts of Tang music are now located in Japan. The Chinese manuscripts were presumably taken home by Japanese envoys who had visited the Chinese capital, and were eventually transformed into a new genre, Togaku.

Links between China and Japan (or between historical regions within these geographical entities) were also an important element in Robin Thompson’s paper on the Ryukyuan classical music tradition, a repertoire of songs and instrumental music played on the three-stringed plucked lute sanshin. Thompson, a composer and musician from London who was initially raised in the Western classical music tradition, spent half a lifetime in Japan working and studying with Japanese musicians. He illustrated his talk about Chinese influences on the formation of the Ryukyuan repertoire with taped examples, and with live performances.

Flesh and bones
In the evening concert in the Lokhorst Church, Thompson’s sanshin offered a suitable contrast to the rawap, a lute of Persian origin. Kamil Abbas from Xinjiang provided a useful introduction to this instrument. The one type of instrument sadly underrepresented in the lectures was the fiddle, but glowing performances on gijak by Kamil Abbas and on erhu by Fang Weiling did much to compensate for this.

Plucked lutes played a further important part in Kyle Heide’s admirable analysis of the structure of instrumental voices in Nanguan, southern Chinese ballads for a singer plus ensemble. Heide (Indiana University, Bloomington) is currently in the final stages of a PhD on Nanguan music. He demonstrated various basic principles of Nanguan, such as the interplay of ‘flesh’ and ‘bones’, and the hierarchy with which certain instruments follow
other instruments with a brief delay, creating subtle heterophonic effects. Mercedes Dujunco offered an equally impressive analysis of remarkable modal shifts in Chaozhou music.

While ‘fieldwork’ was an additional theme in the conference, there were only a few contributions. Han Mei reported on (and showed video images of) courting songs among the Dong people in Guizhou, a tradition which involves a pipa-like accompanying instrument. Frank Kouwenhoven and Antoinet Schimmelpenninck (Leiden) showed videos of recent fieldwork on temple and love song dialogue festivals in northwest China. A very special form of ‘fieldwork’ was contributed by Garrie van Pinxteren: she accompanied the Dutch composer Guus Janssen, who is working on a new opera based on Chinese subject matter, in his search for Chinese traditional musical sounds. She introduced Janssen to the Peking Opera Company of Dalian, who contributed three traditional Chinese opera singers to Janssen’s project.

With a lot of live music and a fairly intimate atmosphere which facilitated discussion, ‘East Asian Strings’ was a successful meeting. The informal set-up merits repetition. Due to a much bigger-sized programme, the CHIME meeting in Heidelberg in October 1998 was different in nature. A report on the Heidelberg meeting will be included in Chime nos. 12/13. For the next four years, CHIME meetings are scheduled in Prague (15–19 September 1999), Leiden (23–27 August 2000), Venice (20–23 September 2001) and Sheffield, UK (2002). The Prague meeting, organized in cooperation with Charles University, will focus on ‘Music in Towns, Music in Villages’. For the meeting in Leiden, in cooperation with the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), a different thematic focus has been planned: ‘The Performing Arts of Asia: Audiences, Patrons and Performers.’ Themes for Venice and Sheffield are still under discussion.

Papers
Han Mei: ‘Love Songs of the Dong people – a fieldwork report on Ga pipa.’
Marnix Wells: ‘Up-date on research on the Dunhuang pipa scores, specifically West River Moon.’
Lucie Borotova: ‘The history and present status of the zheng (bridged zither) in Chinese music.’
Han Mei: ‘The four traditional schools of zheng music in China.’
Kyle Heide: ‘Aesthetics and Performance Style in the Strings of Nanguan.’
John Thompson: ‘Report on Transcriptions from the Ming Dynasty Guqin Handbook Zheyin Shizi Qinpu.’
Liesbet Nijssen: ‘An Introduction to the Khakasian box zither chatkan.’
Cheng Yu: ‘Music Styles and Diversity in Xi’an Guyue: summer fieldwork, 1996.’
Robin Thompson: ‘Chinese influences on the formation of the Ryukyuan Classical Music Tradition (Japan).’
Frank Kouwenhoven: ‘No strings attached? – love songs & temple festivals in Northwest China.’
Antoinet Schimmelpenninck: ‘The annual festival of the Gods in Xincheng, Gansu Province.’

Performances
Qu Xiaosong, percussion & Junko Ueda, voice
Kamil Abbas: gijak (spike-fiddle) and rawap (lute)
Cheng Yu: pipa (pear-shaped lute)
Robin Thompson: sanshin (3-stringed lute)
Junko Ueda: voice & biwa (Japanese lute)
Dai Xiaolian, guqin (seven-stringed zither)
John Thompson, guqin
Cheng Yu, guqin
Liesbet Nijssen, chatkan
Fang Weiling, erhu (spike-fiddle)
Dorothee Schaab-Hanke, guqin
Hanno Lecher, guqin
A NEW DISCOVERY

Traditional 8-part polyphonic singing of the Hani of Yunnan

Zhang Xingrong
(Yunnan Art Institute)

Translated by Helen Rees (Univ. of California, Los Angeles)

Many Chinese researchers have documented local traditions of vocal polyphony among minority cultures in China, particularly in the south. So far, most of the songs presented and studied in articles or issued on recordings have been examples of two- or three-part polyphony. The recent detection of an extraordinary form of eight-part singing among the Hani is a cause for some excitement. The author briefly reports on his fieldwork in a mountain village in Yunnan and presents a partial transcription of one performance.

In early 1995, in cooperation with Pan Records, my wife Li Wei and I carried out a project to investigate and record multi-part folksongs of Yunnan’s national minorities and their cultural context. In the evening of 19 February that year, we found ourselves at Puchun Village, a mountain village of the Hani people located where the borders of Honghe, Luchun and Yuanyang counties meet. The village has no electricity and is not on any road. There we recorded their rice transplanting songs, sung in five or more parts during the planting season. We were astounded by the complex coordination of the part-singing, the melodic use of augmented and diminished fourths and fifths, the distinctive instrumental accompaniment, and the apparent resemblance to some Japanese music. Curiously, however, nobody who has previously investigated folksong has remarked upon this style of singing.

In order to confirm our findings, we requested the assistance of the Cultural Office of Honghe County, which entrusted Mr. Keli, a Hani, to help us arrange for ten folksingers and instrumentalists from the four villages around Puchun Village to visit Kunming and make a recording with each part mixed separately (see musical example). Thanks to high fidelity and the ability to transcribe each voice separately, we discovered that the eight singers produced an eight-voice polyphonic texture in which all parts entered successively.

Bridal laments and rice-transplanting songs
There is also a similar style of bridal lament, in which on the night before the girl leaves her parents and sisters to be married, everybody substitutes song for speech to express their emotion at parting. The result is a polyphonic folksong in five parts, sung by the women.
We asked the singers why they like this singing style with its successive entries and leaps in pitch. The first person answered that, ‘When one is out walking, each person treads his or her own path. Everybody can come together only by each leaving his or her own house.’ The second said, ‘When we go to the fields to transplant rice seedlings, some arrive earlier, some later; singing the transplanting songs is just like this.’ A third singer replied that ‘We’ve sung it this way for generations; it sounds good this way.’

Ms. Li Yanban’r, a singer of over seventy years of age, told us of an old saying about singing the rice-transplanting songs. According to this saying, in the transplanting season, if the girls didn’t sing the transplanting songs, the souls of the men would be dragged off to hell, and they’d be sleepy in their work. Some men’s souls would already have been taken to hell, some would still be en route, and some would only just have been snatched. With everybody helping in summoning the souls, if the first person got no response, the second

Map of Yunnan Province, showing Honghe County.

--- prefecture-level boundary
----- county-level boundary

K  Kunming City, provincial capital
H  Honghe County, part of Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture
L  Luchun County, part of Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture
Y  Yuanyang County, part of Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture
Music example: opening of vocal section of transplanting seedlings song (Wuchu Acı), Baina branch of the Hani, Azahe Township, Honghe County, Yunnan Province. Recorded by Tang Ke and Xiao Geng, translated by Keli (Wu Zhiming), transcribed by Zhang Xingrong, 1995. The upper five lines are performed by female singers (Chen Chen’guyi, Chen Guile, Ma Bushou, Nong Yueyou, Li Yanban’er), the next three by male singers (Zhang Zebo, Che Liyue, Che Xiyang), and the bottom two by the endblown flute labi (Chen Woduo) and two three-string plucked lutes lahe (Zhang Yangde and Zhang Zebo).

吾处阿茨
（栽秧山歌）（领唱与混声合唱）

Moderato \( ( \text{q} = 92 ) \)

红河县阿扎阿乡
哈尼族白纳世系

女一
（陈桂格衣）

女二
（陈固勒）

女三
（马布收）

女四
（依约优）

女五
（李烟板儿）

男六
（张则勃）

男七
（车里悦）

男八
（车习伊）

（陈窝朵）

腊枯（卜三双）
（张羊得, 张泽勃）
would join in the summons; if the second was unsuccessful, the third would join in, and so on. It was in this way, with everybody assisting consecutively in calling the souls, that the transplanting song style of singing gradually came about.

The traditional life, language and sayings of these people reflect the origins and aesthetic principles of the thought embodied in their multi-part folksongs.

Prof. Zhang’s talk at the CHIME conference on ‘East Asian Voices’ in Rotterdam (September 1995) was illustrated by two video excerpts from his fieldwork with Li Wei: the first showed performance of the transplanting song transcribed in the musical example, the second an unaccompanied bridal lament in five parts.

Translator’s Note
A CD including these Hani songs is forthcoming from the Taiwanese company Wind Records. Professors Zhang and Li have published longer accounts of this project in Chinese (Zhang 1995a and b, Zhang and Li 1996). Publications of related interest include Fan 1993 and Fan 1994.

REFERENCES
FAN Zuyin 1993 ‘Duoshengbu min’ge yanjiu sishi nian’ (‘Forty years of research on multi-part folksongs’). Zhongguo Yinyue 49, pp. 5-8.


——— 1995b ‘Minzu yishu de liangdian – Diannan 4-8 shengbu fuyin changfa de xin faxian’ (‘A bright spot of ethnic art – new discovery of 4-8 part polyphonic singing in southern Yunnan’ [sic]). Yunnan Yishu Xueyuan Xuebao 10, pp. 11-20.

——— and LI Wei’er (Li Wei) 1996 ‘Yunnan shaoshu minzu duoshengbu min’ge kaocha ji’ (‘The Polyphonic Folk Songs of the Minorities in Yunnan: A Field Work Report’). Yishu Xue (Taipei) 16, pp. 59-151.

SELECTED GLOSSARY

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RITUAL MUSIC OF THE MOSUO (YUNNAN)

Life cycle rituals and their music among the Mosuo of Yongning

Li Wei
(Yunnan Art Institute)

Translated by Helen Rees (Univ. of California, Los Angeles)

Music plays a role in various traditional customs of the Mosuo of Ninglang County in Yunnan Province. At the age of 13, Mosuo children participate in a coming of age ceremony and dance a ‘cooking pot’ dance. Antiphonal songs play a role in courtship, but also in efforts to sustain or to break up marital relationships. At funeral ceremonies, ritual songs are sung. The author briefly reports on various Mosuo customs.

The Mosuo, a branch of the Naxi, live around the Lugu Lake (Lugu Hu) in Yongning Township, Ninglang County, Yunnan Province, and on the adjacent Sichuan side of the border. They still practise traditional matrilineal customs, especially the ‘azhu marriage.’ With this kind of marriage, rather than the man taking a wife and the wife leaving her home, each party continues to live in her or his own mother’s home. In the evening the man goes to the woman’s house to spend the night, and when it gets light again he returns to his mother’s house. This is termed the ‘visiting marriage’ (Chinese: zoufang hun) of ‘nights together, mornings apart’. Any children of the union belong to the mother.

When a Mosuo child reaches the age of 13, he or she undergoes a coming of age ceremony. The boys undergo the ceremony of putting on trousers, the girls that of putting on a skirt. This takes place on the morning of the first day of the New Year at about 9:00, in the main room of the matrilineal household. The ceremony starts with a lama reciting scriptures and calling on the gods of wealth. Then the participants move into the main room to pay their respects to the god of the cooking pot and put on the skirt (or trousers), after which older family members and friends give the children presents and wish them good fortune. The children kowtow and give thanks to the gods of the cooking pot and kitchen and to their elders, and finally the boys and girls dance the yacuo (dance of the cooking pot). After the coming of age ceremony, they are full members of their clan, and may begin associating with azhu (friends of the opposite sex).

The characteristics of the azhu marriage are, first that both parties must have gone through the coming of age ceremony; second, that both parties agree to it; third, that they spend nights together but the daytime apart; and fourth, that each party can also have relations with another boy- or girlfriend. Mosuo can have relations with Naxi, Pumi or Tibetans but not with Yi or Lisu, possibly because they must stay within the Buddhist faith. Since 1950 there has been a gradual trend towards monogamous marriage.
Antiphonal love songs between men and women are an integral part of this marriage system and can be categorized according to content into those sung before a relationship starts, those sung during a ‘walking marriage’ (Chinese: zouhun), and those sung when such a relationship breaks down. Before a couple gets together, they sing words like ‘Friends would like to get together, come to the place where the fresh flowers bloom’, or ‘The myriad rivers run into the ocean, gold and silver birds fly together’, or ‘When I hear your song I am drunk with emotion, but I can’t get through to your heart’. When a couple is in the middle of a relationship, the man may sing something like, ‘I’m here and the mosquitoes are biting me unmercifully’, to which the woman may respond, ‘Don’t come, the fire is still alight and mother hasn’t gone to sleep yet’. In another song, the woman sings ‘Last night was really great, give me one of your two sets of clothes’. Once relations have gone sour, the man may sing something like ‘On the mountain there is a noble animal, it won’t eat the grass others have eaten. Red deer won’t drink from muddied waters’. The woman may sing ‘Thousands of robust young men like me: I’m like the evergreen, pretty all year round’.

Map of Yunnan Province, showing Ninglang County.
Mosuo funerals are as follows. When an old person dies, he or she is temporarily interred in a foetal position behind the house. On an auspicious day the corpse is disinterred and placed in a square wooden coffin, which is carried away and burned. The entire funeral ritual is accompanied by music.

During the temporary interment, a lama is invited to recite scriptures for the soul's salvation; the assembled relatives keep vigil, singing drinking songs and dirges for the deceased. In the pre-dawn hours of the auspicious day of disinterment, around 5am, the chanting of scriptures, exploding firecrackers, blowing of conch shells, and the sound of gongs and drums and laments all mingle to become an emotional soundscape for the funeral. The assembled relatives kneel on the ground in a row, and the square coffin is carried over them to the cremation ground, where axes are used to split the coffin open. The corpse is taken out and placed in a 'house of firewood' previously piled up. To the sound of the assembled monks' chanting of the scripture of salvation, and the family's laments, the fire is lit and the deceased cremated. The laments chiefly eulogize the deceased and express the mourners' sadness at their loss. After cremation, the person's ashes are collected and taken to a special cave in the mountain, where they are left.

At the CHIME conference on 'East Asian Voices' in Rotterdam (September 1995), Professor Li Wei illustrated her talk with four video clips from her fieldwork, as follows: 1. Lunar New Year, 1984, morning: a girl's coming of age ceremony at Dashi Village, Yongning Township, Ninglang County, Yunnan. 2. The singing of antiphonal folksongs as part of the azhu courtship. 3. A girl inviting her boyfriend into the special 'guestroom.' 4. 1 August
1986: a funeral in the Han Guang family at Gan’er Village, Yongning Township, Ninglang County, Yunnan. The deceased was an old lady of over 80.

**Translator’s Note**
Excerpts from Professor Li’s Mosuo videos may be found on two commercially available video sets, *Tufeng Yueyun / Local Customs and Music* Vol. 2, and *Yunnan Yueqi Wangguo Kaocha Ji / The Instrument Kingdom in Yunnan, China* Vol.1. Information on Mosuo society may be found in Cheng 1986, Cheng 1988, Cheng and Qiao 1987, and Shih 1993. The complex relationship between the Mosuo and the Naxi nationality to which they officially belong is explored by McKhann (1995). Mosuo love songs and marriage are treated briefly by He Yunfeng (1990).

**REFERENCES**


HE Yunfeng 1990. ‘“Niu’er guo” zhi sheng – Naxizu Mosuo ren de qing’ge yu hunyin xingtai’ (‘The sound of the “land of girls” – the love songs and marriage of the Mosuos of the Naxi nationality’ [sic]). In: *Yunnan Yihu Xueyuan Xuebao* (Journal of the Yunnan Art Institute) 3, pp. 54-59.


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A JAPANESE FOLK PERFORMING ART

For gods or men-the changing faces of Iwami Kagura

Terence Lancashire
(Osaka University, Japan)

With well over one hundred performing groups in action today, Iwami Kagura is a thriving form of (urban and rural) folk entertainment in Japan. It consists of dance, song, percussion and (masked) theatre. Its ritual connotations may no longer be apparent, except during festivals in autumn, when numerous Kagura performances are held within the precincts of a shrine, and in local religious performances in inland mountain areas in Iwami. The author speculates on the origins of Iwami Kagura, and on its (Buddhist and Shinto) religious backgrounds. He ponders about its ritual functions in the past – evocation of the gods, possibly also exorcism of evil spirits. The genre has grown from a simple shrine performance into an elaborate theatrical display, a representational folk performing art, and a symbol of local traditional culture. Its new vitality is reflected partly in occasional references to contemporary events, such as the sarin gas attack in a Tokyo subway by the fanatic religious group Aum Shinrikyo in March 1995.

At the conclusion of a day long event of Iwami Kagura performances, given on the 6th June 1992, by child members of various Kagura shachu (Kagura troupes), the performers assembled on the stage and pledged the following oath. The oath had been devised by the host shachu, Kamiko children’s Kagura group (Kamiko kodomo Kagura dan).

The Oath of Kamiko Children’s Kagura

1) Kamiko children’s Kagura group, through [the act of] Kagura, will strengthen the body and mind, will not forget gratitude and be thorough in politeness and courtesies.
2) Kamiko children’s Kagura group, through [the act of] Kagura, will nourish love for the home province and encourage acts of service.
3) Kamiko children’s Kagura group, through [the act of] Kagura, will cultivate endurance and will correctly transmit Iwami Kagura which has tradition.
4) Kamiko children’s Kagura group, through [the act of] Kagura, will spread friendship and future solidarity.
5) Kamiko children’s Kagura group, through [the act of] Kagura, will learn history and encourage the promotion of both friendship and the heightening of local culture.

The use of Kagura for promoting moral virtues (or at least social etiquette) and representing local culture is clearly evident in this somewhat idealised and aggrandised interpretation of the social importance of Iwami Kagura. Yet, depite the solemnity with which the oath was recited, no mention was made of the ritual aspect of the Kagura, the association with the shrine form which this purportedly ritual entertainment sprang. As a way of summoning or
perhaps entertaining the kami (gods), has the function of the kagura been temporarily forgotten, or does this oath represent just one aspect of the continuing secularisation of a supposedly ritual act? The recitation of such an oath is, in fact, a rarity. Nevertheless, large-scale Iwami kagura events held in halls organised solely for the entertainment of a mass audience, are, although a comparatively recent phenomenon, beginning at least locally in the mid-1970s, a common occurrence. As a representative of the Japanese folk performing arts, Iwami kagura is very much a thriving entertainment form with well over a hundred performing groups in action today. In terms of numbers of performing groups alone, this is a situation unparalleled in the west of Japan if not the whole country.

Yet, despite this new trend, the festival season in autumn, where performances occur within the precincts of a shrine, still remains the busiest time of the year for kagura performers. A dual role, therefore, appears to have been carved out for Iwami kagura. From this, the question ‘for gods or men?’ arises. I have made this the title of this article. However, in looking at the recent developments in Iwami kagura, an alternative could also be ‘how a traditional folk performing art survives in present day Japan.’ Iwami kagura has remained far from static in its form, and, in this respect, the concept of correct transmission, as an aim expressed in the third oath above, is also a matter for conjecture.

Ritual connotations

Before dealing with these issues, some background information is necessary.

Iwami kagura takes its title from the old regional name of the area where it is performed – Iwami, and this embraces the western half of present day Shimane prefecture in western Japan. Other kagura styles or forms in the west of Japan whose names are similarly derived are Izumo kagura to the east and Bigo and Bitchu kagura to the south east.

Kagura itself may be defined as some form of dance and music performed within the grounds of a shrine often in a purpose built stage.

The forms of kagura are, in fact, various – ranging from the dances of miko (shrine maidens), through lion dances, to theatrical performances. Iwami kagura, itself, is primarily theatrical in nature and depicts mythical episodes related in the Kojiki (A.D. 712) and Nihon shoki (A.D. 720) as well as some stories taken from no drama. Given the range of kagura types, definition in terms of function is not easy and much time is spent by kagura scholars in determining the original meaning and purpose of the act.

Nevertheless, a connection is often made to the mythical dance or spirit possession of the goddess Ame Uzume no mikoto as related in the Kojiki and Nihon shoki. The sun goddess, Amaterasu O mikami, has hidden herself in a cave because of the misdeeds of her younger brother and Uzume’s dance is an attempt to draw the sun goddess out. Uzume’s dance succeeds and light is restored in the world.

In the Kogo shui of 807, Inbe Hironari states that Sarume kimi no uji (a priestess group) conducted the act of kagura and they in turn looked to the goddess Ame Uzume no mikoto as the source of their art. The services of the Sarume kimi no uji were subsequently taken over by miko. If kagura is simply a realisation of Uzume’s mythical dance described as asobi (play) in the Kojiki, the summoning and enticing of a god appears to be the fundamental aim of kagura. However, the situation is complicated by Inbe’s additional reference to the enactment of kagura as part of a court ritual originally connected with funerary rites known initially as mita mafuri and subsequently as mitama shizume. An understanding of kagura has almost invariably been linked to an understanding of this ritual. Many researchers have
tended to base their views primarily on the scholarship of one of the pioneers of Japanese folk studies, Origuchi Shinobu. Origuchi saw_kagura as originating in the ancient ritual of_mitama_furi – a ritual first recorded in the_Nihon_shoki where_mitama_furi was enacted to revitalise and strengthen the life force of the ailing Temmu emperor (reign A.D 673-686) (summarised in Iwata 1990: 32-34). Here, the character _振り is often chosen to capture the meaning of_furi and from this, a physical shaking or, by extension, a revitalisation are the derived images. In his comprehensive study of_kagura in 1966, Honda Yasuji follows the Origuchi tradition by stating that_kagura itself is a prayer for the prolongation of life, as in the case of the Temmu Emperor, as well as being a prayer for abundant crops which prolongs human life or the exorcism of evil spirits which cause sickness or disasters thereby shortening people’s lives (Honda 1966: 6-8).

An alternative interpretation has, however, recently been proposed by Iwata Masaru (Iwata 1990: 35-37) and this accords perhaps more with the_kagura act as observed today. Following the research of Mishina Akihide (1971: 275-280) who has drawn attention to the Korean word variously expressed as_futo, futsu, furu, furi (puli) and written with the Chinese characters 風流 , Iwata suggests that the origins of_furi in_tamafuri lie here. The word in Korea is associated with the driving away or placation of evil spirits. The term_furyu, written with the same Chinese characters, is already known in Japan to describe folk performing arts which originate, for example, from ceremonies in which the expulsion of evil spirits or sickness inducing spirits was a central act. A borrowing of the Korean term for the Japanese_furyu has already been postulated here. A Korean connection for both is, of course, by no means impossible. The worship of a Korean god Karakami in the Imperial court resulting possibly from the Emperor Kammu’s (reign 781-806) maternal connection to the royal family of the Korean Kingdom of Kudara, and the incorporation of a song dedicated to the same god in the oldest surviving_kagura, the mikagura of the Imperial court, possibly following the adoption of the key (dance) role of _ninjo in mikagura by a naturalised Korean, are well documented evidence for Korean influence (Arai 1990: 290-291; 342-344).

Iwata’s proposition is, of course, mere speculation. Nevertheless, he spends much time and effort explaining the origins of a variety of rituals including the Ame no Uzume myth in terms of the expulsion of evil spirits as a fundamental preparation for all subsequent acts (Iwata 1990: 31-81).

Although interpretation of the meaning of early forms of_kagura is inconclusive, the expulsion of evil spirits and purification are, for Iwata, the central features of_kagura which are at least, he claims, concomitant with observations of more recent forms of the act. He summarises the main components of_kagura as being, in addition to the purification and expulsion of evil spirits, the summoning and welcoming of gods which protect the local community in order that an oracle may be obtained, though weight should be placed on the former. He also sees those types of_kagura which have evolved into an entertainment form as a formalisation of the ritual act of purification or pacification.

The predominant theatrical nature of_Iwami_kagura may fall into this last category. Relating the portrayal of myths in a dramatic form as a formalisation of the act of purification is possible but uncertain. Admittedly, the majority of performance pieces depict the subjugation of some demon or villain by a god or hero, yet no purpose of actual ritual purification appears to be served, unless one interprets its representation in dramatic form as symbolic. As a_kagura form, the theatrical pieces seem to add a new dimension to the meaning of the word_kagura.
The depiction of Ame no Uzume’s dance before Amaterasu is the subject of one piece in the theatrical repertoire of ‘Iwato’ and this is often explained locally as portraying the origins of the kagura act. Yet here too, there is no semblance of ritual and the meaning or role of these pieces, which fall under the rubric kagura, requires consideration.

Dances and songs
Although performances of Iwami kagura are dominated by theatrical aspects, this is not the sole component of the repertoire. Of significance is that performances of the theatrical pieces are preceded by unmasked dances by men holding objects – torimono ranging from go hei wands (sticks to which zigzag cut paper is attached), to sakaki branches and suzu bells. These dances may be seen as male counterparts to miko dances. (Uzume’s dance is also, in part, distinguished by the use of torimono, and such male torimono dances as Kume mai and Yamato mai, which Iwata also sees as influencing the form of kagura, have a long history in the Imperial court.) The words of the songs which accompany these dances provide some clue as to the intention of the act. The first of these dances is simply entitled ‘Kagura’ (which perhaps raises the question as to the originally perceived status of the rest of the dances). The single song, in tanka form (syllables arranged in a 57577 pattern), simply expresses the joy of hearing kagura.

roll up the decorated screen before the kami,
how happy it is to hear the voice of kagura

The song is not unique to the Iwami area and, in fact, finds its origins in the Imperial song collection Gyokuyo waka shu commissioned in 1311 and completed somewhere between 1312-1314. The original version suggests the dominance of Buddhist thought for it is not the voice of kagura which is a source of happiness, but that of nenbutsu, a prayer to Amida Buddha. The inclusion and alteration of such a song suggests the workings of external forces on the formation of certain aspects of the supposedly local tradition of Iwami kagura. This is a factor which is taken up later.

The succeeding torimono dances, ‘Shio barai’ (purification with salt – no salt is in fact used), ‘Masakaki’ (dance with sakaki branch), ‘Obi mai’ (dance with obi), ‘Kanmukae’ (meet / greet the kami) incorporate a variety of songs. (A song is represented by one line of verse, one line being, in most, though not all, cases, one tanka.) The dances relate the separate themes of the songs. For example, there is the gogyo derived thought (harmony of the five basic elements of wood, fire, earth, gold and water and associated elements) expressed in ‘Kanmukae’ where the directions / positions east, west, south, north and centre are correlated with the four seasons of the year and the doyo days (18 days taken from each of the four seasons). One of the songs incorporated in ‘Kanmukae’ runs:

spread the figured cloth in the garden where the god will descend,
arrange the brocade and let the gods set foot on this za

The repetition of these lines in both ‘Shio barai’ and ‘Kanmukae’, clearly expresses preparation for the gods’ descent. Similarly, in ‘Masakaki’, the dancer stands consecutively on the four sides and centre of the stage and recites on each occasion:

1 za - the seat of the god, the place where the god (provisionally) stays or habits.
take and lift up the sakaki [branch] in the folded hand, 
pray respectfully to the east (west, south, north, centre) 
the gods will appear in all the directions. 
If we pray three times, the gods will descend.

The descent of the kami (gods) appears to be the principal aim of these songs, though no evidence for Iwata’s diagnostic expulsion of evil spirits in preparation for this appears to be evident. Nevertheless, as a means of summoning the kami, Iwata’s definition is partially fulfilled and the aim of these kagura dances is, at least, apparent. Confirmation of the ritual aspect is evident in the performance of the torimono ‘Kagura’ dance performed within the sacred confines of the shrine itself. This is the only dance which is so treated.

However, in the case of the overwhelmingly predominant twenty-two theatrical pieces (excluding a further sword dance and drum display) reproduced in the most recently edited version of the Iwami kagura script intended for performers, Shinohara Minoru’s Corrected Iwami Kagura Script (Kotei Iwami Kagura Daihon, Shinohara 1954, 1972), their role is less clear. According to the accounts of past practitioners, the theatrical pieces were performed, oblivious to the presence of onlookers, beneath a canopy, known locally as a kumo, which delineated a sacred space. (Performances still occur beneath a kumo, even in the secular context of a concert hall.) The theatrical pieces were, so it is related, primarily an entertainment for the kami. However, when the contents of the pieces are examined, the entertainment, and to some extent the didactic nature of the performances suggests, in the past, a more secular role.

Content of pieces – four examples

Some idea of their content may be gleaned from an outline of four examples – the first two of which are deemed by the local people as representative, or more accurately, highlights in performances of Iwami kagura.

The piece ‘Shoki’ (Zhong gui), portrays the subjugation of a demon sickness threatening the people of Japan. In Iwami kagura, Shoki is the name Susanoo no mikoto, the younger brother of Amaterasu O mikami, acquires as he crosses the sea to China. Shoki is originally a Chinese Tang dynasty figure who appears in a Chinese narrative. Here, he rids a demon sickness which has been plaguing the emperor Xuan Zong (reign 847-859). In a dream, the emperor sees a small demon stealing treasured items. When the emperor demands the capture of the demon, Shoki appears and devours the offending demon and the emperor is cured. When the emperor enquires of Shoki’s identity, Shoki replies that he was a scholar who failed to pass the civil service exams and, for this reason, had killed himself. The emperor had kindly buried him and, in gratitude, he decided to aid the emperor at a time of need. In the Iwami kagura version, as presented today, (an older version has more detail) only mention of the Chinese emperor and the demon sickness are made. The origins of the appropriation of the Chinese figure Shoki by the Japanese mythical figure Susanoo no mikoto is unclear but may be interpreted as a way of transferring the attributes of one figure on another mythical figure pertinent to Japan. Shoki makes its first appearance in Japan in the 12th century Scroll of Hell (Jigoku Zoshi).

‘Orochi Taiji’ has become the highlight of Iwami kagura and is now invariably chosen to conclude all kagura performances. The story again focuses on Susanoo no mikoto who, on this occasion, having been expelled from the land of the High Celestial Plain (Takamagahara) because of his misdeeds, descends near the river Hi in the land of Izumo. He hears the crying
of an old couple and, when he asks them the reason for their sorrow, they explain that a great eight-headed, eight-tailed snake has been devouring their daughters. One sole daughter survives and the snake’s return is imminent. Susanoo promises to slay the snake if he can have the hand of the last daughter in marriage. After some deliberation, the old couple agree and they prepare vats of sake for the snake. The snake enters, sees the sake and begins to drink. Before long the snake falls into a drunken stupor and Susanoo seizes the opportunity and slays the snake.

The next two pieces are not so frequently performed because of the length of dialogue which has to be learnt. In the case of ‘Kuro tsuka’, one shachu (troupe) has made it its speciality and repeatedly performs it in kagura events.

‘Kuro tsuka’ takes its plot from a combination of two stories related in the no drama ‘Kuro tsuka’ and ‘Statsushoseki’. A man called Yukei and his two retainers set off for Nasuno to subdue a white-faced fox which has been seeking vengeance on passers by. When they reach Nasuno they find an inn and request to stay the night. Initially they are refused and then, on further consideration, are given shelter provided they gather 75 bundles of wood from the nearby mountain and 75 scoops of water from the nearby stream. When the retainers have fulfilled their task, they enter the inn and begin to ask various questions of the lady of the house. Before long, the lady transforms into a dazzling beauty. She then begins to relate a tale and invites Yukei to visit her home. Out of curiosity, Yukei accepts and, when he enters, the beautiful woman suddenly turns into the fox and kills him. News of the murder reaches the Imperial court and two envoys are sent out and eventually succeed in killing the demon woman.

In actual performance, in addition to the script, there is a considerable amount of ad libbing as humour is injected into the story. The vocal style constantly shifts from the formal, when the script is adhered to, and to the local dialect when humorous comments on topical issues are made. (In a performance on April 25, 1995, references were occasionally made to the fanatic religious group, Aum Shinrikyo and their sarin gas attack in a Tokyo subway (March 1995). The demon on stage was accused of being one of the perpetrators.)

The final piece in Shinohara’s script is ‘Gojin’ which again, because of its length, remains a challenge for most shachu. Here, the principles derived from gogyo and in/yo (yin/yang) are related, and, in particular, an explanation of the division of the year into the four seasons and the doyo days is given. Four brother gods, Shunzei (spring), Kaseki (summer), Shuhaku (autumn) and Tokoku (winter) each control their respective seasons and enjoy mutual respect. They, however, show scorn on their youngest brother Haniyasu and treat him coldly. Haniyasu is angered by their treatment and appeals to their paternal god Kokujoryu using, for his argument, concepts based, for example, on the principles of gogyo and the five moral paths (gorin no michi – the Confucian emphasis on the five fundamental relationships of master and vassal, father and son, husband and wife, young and old, and friends). The elder brothers do not relent and Haniyasu is enraged. A fight then ensues between him and his brothers. At this juncture, an old man enters and arbitrates. He divides the year into the four seasons plus 18 days of each season for Haniyasu. These become the doyo days (see p. 160).

Terminology and history – Buddhist and Shinto aspects
Although just four examples, the entertainment value and, in the case of ‘Gojin’, the didactic quality of these pieces is clearly evident. This seems to have been long understood, for one
historical account relates, in the year 1715, that a local group of shrine performing priests went to Kyoto, a distance of over 400 kilometres, and performed their kagura every day for three weeks before crowds of two to three hundred people.

While the secular value of the theatrical kagura is seemingly apparent, its role as ritual performance is less clear.

Additional problems in interpreting the role of the theatrical pieces arise from the use of the word kagura itself. Although the term applies generally today to both the unmasked dances and the theatrical pieces, it has been suggested by one scholar, Ishitsuka Takatoshi, that this usage is, in fact recent, and, by implication, inappropriate (Ishitsuka 1979: 407-408). In some remote areas of Iwami, the theatrical pieces were (and occasionally still are) referred to simply as ‘dances’.

For a clearer understanding of both the terminology and historical background to the theatrical content of Iwami kagura, it may be helpful to turn to the neighbouring Izumo kagura to the east, in eastern Shimane prefecture, to which Iwami kagura is often linked.

The earliest clear evidence for theatrical activity in a shrine context in the Shimane area comes originally from an oral tradition which relates that a priest by the name of Miyagawa Hideyuki, of the former great shrine of Sada near the city of Matsue, in east Shimane, went to Kyoto in 1608, learnt no drama and, when he returned to Sada, formulated a series of dramas which came to be known as shinno.

This theatrical tradition at Sada is believed by its performers and some scholars, to have been influential in the establishment of theatrical kagura in other parts of the country. As Sada lies in the east of Izumo, the term ‘Izumo type kagura’ – not to be confused with ‘Izumo kagura’ which denotes the kagura in the Izumo area alone – has been used to describe all theatrical kagura in Japan. Actually, the influence of the Sada shinno, as the original theatrical kagura form, in the establishment of other theatrical traditions is doubtful on a local level let alone nationally, and the suitability of the term ‘Izumo type kagura’ is questionable. Such documents as the diary of a priest recording events at Sada from 1684-1744 provide relevant information with respect to the presumed status of shinno as a kagura form. In this diary, the words shinno and kagura are listed as separate activities (Ishitsuka 1979: 408-410). It may be inferred from this that the two acts were separate and that the shinno were not originally considered to be kagura. Likewise, in the Iwami area to the west of Izumo, a similar term to shinno, namely nomai, is occasionally applied by some practitioners to the theatrical tradition in Iwami (Ushio 1985: 11). Here again, the implication is that the word kagura, as an all-embracing term used today for both theatrical drama and unmasked dances, may have little historicity. Current usage of the word kagura has possibly complicated interpretations of the role of the theatrical drama.

Is the theatrical drama strictly speaking kagura or is different usage of the terminology simply a reflection of regional variation? Whatever the answer, it is significant that, in the 17th century, new dramatic forms arise which incorporate gods and ritual activities which have never played a role in popular religion. As we have seen, the kagura pieces mentioned earlier had an apparent value as popular entertainment and included Buddhist and in particular in/yō (yin/yang) related Chinese derived thoughts. But in the 17th century dramatic forms emerge which portray episodes taken predominantly from the Japanese classics of the Kojiki and Nihon shoki; the gods and their activities related in those sources have never been the object of popular worship, and their inclusion in a ‘popular’ performing art suggests the hand of external controlling forces.
Although oral tradition has it that the Sada priest, Miyagawa Hideyuki, learnt no while in Kyoto, his original aim in going there was, in fact, to obtain a licence from the powerful shrine family of Yoshida to practise as a priest. Yoshida Shinto had already begun to emerge as a force in the 15th century where emphasis was placed on that which was perceived to be indigenous to Shinto teaching. The Yoshida family had, at the end of the 14th century, elevated the Kojiki and Nihon shoki to the status of sacred texts.

The power of the Yoshida family was consolidated, or rather confirmed, through their performance of the funerary rites for the Shoguns Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1598 and Tokugawa Ieyasu a few years later, and the family’s influence on shrine activity around the country was exerted through the licencing system.

The emergence of theatrical kagura as a medium for propagating Japanese mythology may result indirectly from the influence of Yoshida Shinto. Alternatively, it may suggest the early stirrings of National learning (kokugaku) activity and a connection with Restoration Shinto. In this respect, of particular interest is a sequence of events which occurred in the Great Shrine of Izumo, one of the two Great shrines in Japan – namely the abolition, in the mid-17th century, of Buddhist related ritual, which had hitherto been practised at the shrine, and the removal of a three-tiered pagoda from its grounds. In addition, prior to the formation of the shinno at Sada, there is a reference, in a document dating to 1512, to an entertainment/ritual recorded as hogaku (Honda 1966: 42). This entertainment occurred on the same 25th day of the 8th month as the subsequent shinno. (At present, performances of shinno and associated dances are on the 24th and 25th of September.) The content and nature of hogaku is not known, though the word itself, namely the character 法, indicates the possible practice of some Buddhist related entertainment. The very pronounced Buddhist content of kagura scripts going back in time from the 16th century is well attested, and the more recent kagura styles which were possibly an attempt to return to a mythical golden age of Shinto practice, overshadow a long period of Buddhist association where, whithin the concept of ryobu shinto (dual Shinto), Japanese kami were seen as manifestations of Buddhist bodhisattvas.

The seeming abandonment or disappearance of hogaku at Sada and the formation of a possible replacement may be part of the same process – namely the removal of Buddhist elements. The combination of these occurrences suggest an early Shinto revivalism in the Shimane area, a movement predating, by a period of over 200 years, a similar national policy of separating Shinto from Buddhist ritual (shinbutsu bunri) normally associated with the Meiji period.

The impact of kokugaku

Earliest evidence for performances of Iwami kagura come later in the form of kagura scripts written, in many cases, to stabilise an oral tradition. The earliest of these dates to 1761. One such script, reproduced at the back of Shinohara’s Iwami kagura revised text, was compiled in 1810 by a local priest Hira Jukan² from the Hamada han area in western Iwami. He explains the necessity of correcting a tradition which had become, in his words, equal to a vulgarised joke (Shinohara 1974: 213). Hira’s motive may have been simply to produce a revised text though the influence of kokugaku activity also needs to be considered.

² It is not clear what the correct reading of the Chinese characters for this priest’s name is I have opted for the most obvious.
Contemporary documents indicate that a number of young scholars from Hamada han in west Shimane had entered the national learning school of the then main proponent of kokugaku at the end of the 18th century, Motoori Norinaga (Yamafuji 1967: 8-9).

The influence of kokugaku activity on kagura is particularly conspicuous at the beginning of the 19th century and many examples of its influence can be seen as, for example, in Bitchu kagura in neighbouring Okayama prefecture, where the local priest and kokugaku scholar Nishibashi Kunibashi added performance pieces based on those already found in the Shimane area. The Ame no Uzume dance before Amaterasu O mikami (the supposed mythical origins of the kagura) and the slaying of the great snake by Susanoo no mikoto were two stories introduced at virtually the same time the Hamada han priest Hira was making his textual revisions.

As a means of conveying kokugaku thought, or at least educating a wider public in the content of a mythology embodied in the supposedly sacred texts of the Kojiki and Nihon shoki, the potential of theatrical pieces as kagura appears to have been realised.

Given this background, to view the theatrical pieces as possibly the formalisation of the act of ritual purification or, alternatively, a simple ritual entertainment for the gods seems questionable and a more secular role requires consideration.

From simple ritual to elaborate theatrical display

If the ritual role of the theatrical pieces is questionable in the early stages of their formation, this role takes on a different dimension towards the end of the 19th century, when in 1870, a ban on shrine priests performing theatrical kagura was issued in an attempt to unify Shinto ritual and heighten respect for the gods.

In what may be interpreted as a conflict between local and national interests, many performing shrine priests taught Iwami kagura to newly formed civilian groups who became and remain the chief kagura exponents. In another seemingly contradictory move, the text of the (supposedly unsuitable) kagura was revised by the former head of the local Shinto bureau, Fujii Muney in 1885 and this revision was, in turn, accompanied by alterations to the musical accompaniment. Here, the slower steady drum rhythms of what is known as the older roku choshi style became the faster exciting rhythms of hachi choshi – a style which began to dominate from the earlier half of this century.3

Textual and musical changes were later accompanied by radical alterations to the costume design undertaken by a former employee of the kabuki costume design department of the Shochiku film and theatrical company.

The end result was that Iwami kagura was transformed from a simple shrine performance to an elaborate theatrical display. The new style attracted attention and, in the immediate pre-War years, kagura groups from Hamada were invited to perform in Kyushu to the west and

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3 The meaning of the terms roku choshi and hachi choshi are, in fact, unclear. As a musical term, choshi has a variety of meanings ranging from mode to tune. In Oki kagura, the kagura performed on the island of Oki off the coast of Shimane prefecture, choshi simply means a tune or piece which accompanies a given dance (Ishitsuka 1971: 155). In the case of Iwami kagura, according to some performers, hachi choshi refers to the basic number of beats, namely 8 beats, in the drum pattern used to accompany the dances. This may apply to one tune ‘shingata’ which accompanies the appearance of gods or heroes, but is not applicable to other pieces. According to the published analysis of a local school headmaster, the numbers 6 and 8 refer to the number of drum strokes, irrespective of the rhythm, which make up a drum pattern. In other words roku-choshi is characterised by a six stroke drum pattern and hachi-choshi by an eight stroke pattern (Takeuchi 29/2/1980: 8). Again the explanation works for some pieces but not all.
Performances of ‘Orochi Taiji’ up to the 1920s: A single ‘snake’ in simple costume.

Hokkaido to the north with one group making the short trip across the sea to give performances in the then colony of Korea.

This new trend was not without its critics and one contemporary local historian stated that Iwami kagura had entered and ‘evil course’ (Yadomi 1942: 850).

The intervening war years caused a temporary halt and the post war years saw a gradual reconsolidation of performing groups. However, the major impetus for consolidation was the Osaka World Exposition in 1970 where Iwami kagura groups, along with other representative groups of the folk performing arts from around the country, were invited to perform.

Adaption to a large stage meant changes to the performance itself. The piece chosen for performance, Orochi Taiji, saw the appearance of eight snakes where, in early original performances, there had hitherto only been one. (The number matches the eight-headed, eight-tailed snake of the original myth, though performances of twelve snakes are not uncommon.) In other words, to show the representative folk arts of Shimane prefecture,
unrepresentative performances were given. This scale of performance has now become the norm for performances in large halls (see photos).

Performers seem indifferent to the altering nature of Iwami kagura – in fact one group leader expressed his aim to become one of the major tourist attractions in his town. But criticisms, particularly by local historians, continue. These range from complaints about the elaborate heavy costumes which stifle the movement of the dance, to remarks about the accompanying music, which is described as being more akin to a disco beat. There are also criticisms directed against the hachi choshi kagura tradition itself. For example, a shrine priest, performer and author of books on kagura in the west of Japan, Ushio Michio, has stated that the newly emerged kagura style can no longer be called kagura in the way we understand it (Ushio 1985: 11-12).

Despite the lament of these individuals, the kagura continues to thrive and frequent Iwami kagura events throughout the year have become a fixed feature; they are often held in large local halls, beginning at nine in the morning and continuing to five in the afternoon. Other performance venues are conferences, department stores and local weddings. Work is plentiful for the many semi-professional groups who find themselves booked to give performances often at least once a week and sometimes more.

Iwami kagura as a 20th century construct
The connection with the shrine has not, however, been severed and, as noted previously, the festival season between September and October remains the busiest period for most per-

Present day ‘Orochi Taiji’: Elaborate performances match contemporary tastes.
forming groups. Apart from the sheer enjoyment of performing, practitioners are proud to be bearers of what they believe to be an historical performing tradition from their local region and younger generations of performers are unaware of the changes that have occurred.

Present performances may seem removed from shrine ritual practice, but, because of the increasingly refined entertainment value of the performances, Iwami kagura receives the popular support of the local people. For this reason, Iwami kagura is very much a living folk entertainment art which thrives in a modern context.

Whether there has been a change from ritual to entertainment or whether the theatrical repertoire in Iwami kagura has always served a secular purpose is difficult to determine. Yet there is no doubt that there has been radical change both in the presentation of the pieces and the environment in which performances occur. Given the changes that have taken place, what constitutes a traditional performance and what is correct transmission, as stated in the third oath of Kamiko Children’s kagura group (see page 157), becomes problematic. Given the degree of change, the concepts of tradition and correct transmission appear to have acquired their own mythical dimensions.

If entertainment is a dominant role today, it is not the only one. The shift from simple performances solely within a shrine context to performances in concert halls, not only within the Shimane area but, more particularly, as already noted above, in areas far removed, means that the kagura in Iwami has also acquired regional identity. It has become a representational folk performing art – a symbol of local culture as expressed in the fifth oath of Kamiko Children’s kagura group.

Whether the use of the term kagura to denote theatrical shrine performances in western Shimane has only a recent history as suggested by Ishitsuka is difficult to determine. What is more probable is that the concept of Iwami kagura itself is a 20th century construct. Although commonly used by the local people today, the term Iwami kagura only begins to emerge in the early half of the 20th century along with the publication of local histories and almanacs. The kagura script used by many shachu today is titled a Corrected Iwami kagura Script. Its main predecessor, following a major revision of the text in 1885, was simply entitled the Voice of a Revised Kagura. The elevation of a shrine entertainment to a symbol of local traditional culture echoes concepts expressed in the term ‘invented tradition’ as posed by Hobsbawm and Ranger (Hobsbawm 1983). Iwami kagura is not an invented tradition in the sense that there has been a long history of performance (unless one views its inception as such.) Yet its role as cultural symbol is new and, in this respect, there are shared qualities with invented traditions.

For gods or men?

Of course, much has to do with the context in which the act occurs. It would be wrong to negate, if not the ritual role, the direct association with shrine activity in the autumn festivals where performances in remote villages are given solely by and for the villagers themselves.

In the inland mountain areas of Iwami, where the older roku choshi kagura style is still preserved, one of the main aims included within kagura performances is to obtain an oracle from the god Omoto (possibly an ancestral god) through spirit possession. In modern day Japan, spirit possession is a rare occurrence, though in Okayama prefecture to the south, as part of Kojin (the counterpart to Omoto) kagura and the older kagura in Iwami, attempts to retain the tradition continue (Suzuki 1990: 99-130). Questions directed to the god, through the medium, are invariably focused on practical daily problems and concerns such as future
crop yields and outbreaks of fire. A mutual dependence, where the god protects the villagers and they in turn, through the festival, direct their attention to the god, indicates a somewhat pragmatic relationship.

Although the composition of dances is similar to those in the coastal areas of Iwami where the vibrant form of hachi choshi Iwami kagura flourishes, this kagura is identified not by the regional/cultural denotation of Iwami kagura but the older term of Omoto kagura (or more accurately Omoto mai (Omoto dance). If the theatrical pieces introduced here were the product of external forces attempting to inculcate knowledge, or heighten awareness of classical myth, their entertainment value was suitably exploited and incorporated into a possibly pre-existing repertoire of dance forms.

As Frank Hoff points out, kagura was and is a performance medium capable of absorbing performance elements from different eras and different sources (Hoff 1978: 166). The composition of the kagura is eclectic. Its aims may also be various.

For gods or men? In many performance contexts, the secular is emphasised and, as one of the few shrine priests who heads a kagura shachu stated, on such occasions their (the performers’) desire is to show off their performance skills to a wide public. His comments probably reflect the attitudes of performers of the all dominant hachi choshi kagura style. In the remote mountain areas, where the roku choshi style survives, the last words should, perhaps, be those from the god itself. In one account of a spirit possession session, the Omoto god was asked if there was anything it desired. The reply, through the medium, was ‘Yes there is. Why have you stopped dancing? Dance! Dance!’ The kagura dances were continued (translated in Blacker 1975: 272-273).

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**GLOSSARY**

**Place names**
- Hamada (han) 浜田 (藩)
- Matsue 松江
- Sada 佐賀
- Shimane ken 島根県

**Kagura Regional Types**
- Bigo 備後
- Bitchu 備中
- Iwami kagura 石見神楽
- Izumo kagura 出雲神楽

**Names of Historical Figures**
- FUJII Muneo 藤井宗雄
- HIRA 平重賢
- INBE Hironari 斎部広成
- KAMMU 桀武
- MIYAGAWA Hideyuki 宮川秀行
- MOTOORI Norinaga 元居宣長
- NISHIBASHI Kuniibashi 西橋国橋
- TOKUGAWA Ieyasu 德川家康
- TOYOTOMI Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉
- XUAN ZONG 玄宗

**Names of Gods / Characters**
- Amaterasu O mikami 天照大神
- Ame no Uzume no mikoto 天宇津女命
- Haniyasu 境安
- Karakami 韓神
- Kaseki 夏赤
- Kokujoryuo 国常立王
- Shoki 鍾馗
- Shuhaku 秋白
- Shunzei 春青
- Susanoo no mikoto 須佐之男の命
- Tokoku 冬黒
### Titles of Dances and Theatrical Performance Pieces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gojin</td>
<td>五神</td>
<td>Obi mai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwato</td>
<td>岩戸</td>
<td>Orochi Taiji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanmukae</td>
<td>神迎え</td>
<td>Satsusheoki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kume mai</td>
<td>久未舞</td>
<td>Shio barai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurotsuka</td>
<td>黒塚</td>
<td>Yamato mai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masakaki</td>
<td>真権</td>
<td>大和舞</td>
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### Book / Manuscript Titles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jigoku Zoshi</td>
<td>地獄草紙</td>
<td>校訂石見神楽台本</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kojiki</td>
<td>古事記</td>
<td>玉葉和歌集</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kogo shui</td>
<td>古語拾遺</td>
<td>日本書紀</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Miscellaneous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>asobi</td>
<td>遊び</td>
<td>nenbutsu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gorin no michi</td>
<td>五倫の道</td>
<td>nomai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hogaku</td>
<td>法楽</td>
<td>Sarume kimi no uji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kagura shachu</td>
<td>神楽社中</td>
<td>shin butsu bunri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamiko kodomo kagura dan</td>
<td>神子子供神楽団</td>
<td>tanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kokugaku</td>
<td>国学</td>
<td>torimono</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miko mai</td>
<td>巫舞</td>
<td>Yoshida Shinto</td>
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<td>吉田神道</td>
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‘WEST RIVER MOON’

A Song-Melody Predicted by a Lute-Piece in *Piba* Tablature

Laurence E.R. Picken, Noël Nickson and Marnix Wells
(Jesus College, Cambridge / University of Queensland / SOAS London)

In 1993, Marnix Wells presented an interesting vocal interpretation of ‘West River Moon’ (Xijiang Yue), one of twenty-five surviving Chinese lute pieces from the late Tang dynasty (618–907). Like various other scholars, Wells assumed a connection between the instrumental (tablature) score of ‘West River Moon’ and a Tang lyric of the same title, and tried to match the words with the music. Laurence Picken and Noël Nickson, while accepting the possibility of a link between the poem and the lute tune, question several aspects of Wells’ interpretation of the music. In the present article, in consultation with Marnix Wells, they offer alternative solutions.

This essay has arisen from a proposal, made by Wells (1993), for deriving a song-melody from a lute-melody, for the only piece in the Dunhuang yuepu (alternatively Dunhuang pibapu) for which a complete text of a lyric of the same title is available.¹

Previous attempts at transcribing the tablature and distributing the text as underlay to the tune, had been made by Hayashi Kenzō (1957), Ye Dong (1985) and Chen Yingshi (1988). (See Wells for references, pp. 88-89; for in-text discussion see pp. 62, 80-82, 83-85.) In this piece, the lute offers noticeably more notes in a given musical line than the number of monosyllabic words in the equivalent text-line. As observed by Nickson, it is almost inevitable that any song-melody, detached from its text, will tend to develop in independence of prosodic limitations that once shaped it. The accretion of decorative notes over time is inevitable. Wells, however, in an endeavour to recreate the song, sought an alternative to the one-word-to-one-note setting practiced in notated songs such as those of the twelfth-century Chinese poet-composer, Song Jiang Kui / *Baishi Daoren* 宋姜夔白石道人, first printed in Tongyan (Jiansu) in 1202 (Picken, 1966).

Regarding the setting of words of a lyric text when more notes than monosyllabic words are present, Wells (p. 68) has stated: ‘One could prepare a vocal-part (for which we have no Tang scores) that only uses one note for two of the instrumental score’ and added a reference to *Music from the Tang Court* 3, p. 19 (Picken and others, 1985). He continued, however, asking the question: ‘Yet why should the vocal part always be simpler?’

¹ The authors prefer *piba* to (the now more commonly used spelling) *pipa*, because *piba* was the received pronunciation of this binome in the 1940s. *Piba* was what L.E.R.P. heard in Chongqing from Beijing speakers in 1944 and 1945. This pronunciation was confirmed by Dr Harry Simon on a visit to Beijing after the end of the war.
The setting of Chinese words to music and the contour of Chinese vocal melody

There is no reason whatever for a vocal line to be invariably simpler than an accompanying instrumental line. It is certain, however, that the ‘classical’ Chinese practice of setting verse: ‘one monosyllabic word to one note’ was still largely observed even as late as the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) (Picken, 1981, p. 76).

Analysis of ten transcriptions of supposedly Yuan songs (Yang, Liang and Yang 1970), from the great eighteenth-century collection: Jiu gong Nan Bei ci gongpu 九宮南北詞宮譜, showed that the ratio of syllables (properly, monosyllabic words) sung to one note, to syllables sung to more than one note, was still effectively unity. One hundred syllabically sung lexigraphs are there associated with 60 two-note ligatures, with 45 three-note ligatures, with 5 five-note melismata and with 1 six-note melisma.

The contrast between this type of Yuan melody, and the highly melismatic vocal line of a later Kunqu 嵩曲 aria from the Ming, could scarcely be more striking. (See Picken 1981, pp. 63-65 for a relatively accessible example in notation.) Yang Yinliu (1981) provided a systematic survey of multi-note, vocal formulae for the singing of words in each of the four segmental tones of the Beijing dialect, as used in Kunqu. The most extended of these formulae are those for monosyllabic words with rising (shang 上) or falling (qu 下) tones. (The first edition of Yang’s book included many striking examples in staff-notation of more extended melismatic treatment of these particular segmental tones.) A Table on p. 887 (Yang 1981) sets out the vocal expression of segmental tones in summary fashion, and a detailed transcription (pp. 889-894) of an aria from ‘The Peony Arbor’ Mudanting 牡丹亭, with tones of all lexigraphs marked by numerals 1-4, displays their varied treatment in terms of melodic gesture. A diagram on p. 895 gives a qualitative indication of relative pitch-heights and pitch-change in time of the four principal segmental tones in speech, and pp. 898-900 illustrate melodic contours in certain pairs of tones in sequence.

Apart from the fact that the direction of movement from note-to-note within rising or falling formulae is not necessarily continuously up or continuously down (notwithstanding the implications of the tonal name), all such melismata are chiefly conjunct in their musical movement. Occasional steps of minor or major thirds, and even of fourths, may occur, but never more of the last than one per melisma in the examples cited by Yang Yinliu.

In the vocal line proposed by Wells so as to assimilate more of the lute’s notes to the vocal melody, the contour of the melodic line is very different from that of Kunqu or indeed of any hitherto known type of Chinese song. As shown on p. 61 of his paper of 1993, and here in Figure 1 (see p. 174), his proposal permits markedly disjunct melodic movement: for example, two sizeable leaps in succession on no less than six different syllables, as well as leaps of an octave, and of a sixth followed by a fifth. No such leaps occur in any of Yang Yinliu’s examples. In particular, a descent of a fifth followed by an octave (Figure 1, system 2, bar 4) is not possible in any previously known type of Chinese song.

Slurs in the score proposed by Wells do not reflect any feature in the original manuscript. They mark two- or three-note ligatures to which a single monosyllabic word is to be sung. The frequency of three-note groups is related to his reading of the six-beat bar as if the time-signature were 6/4, rather than 3/2 with a drumbeat on beat 3.

It seemed to L.E.R.P. that the solution proposed in 1993 overlooked an important fact, namely, that the Dunhuang yuepu ‘The Music-Score from Dunhuang’ is also, quite certainly ‘The Lute-Score from Dunhuang’. Twenty years ago, Wolpert (1977, p. 113) set out in
Figure 1. Marnix Well’s interpretation of ‘West River Moon’ (from Chime 7, 1993, p. 61).
vertical alignment all known primary tablature-signs in use in surviving Chinese and Sino-Japanese manuscripts for four-stringed lute (pipa/pipa/biwa), from an eighth-century fragment, to a copy of 1328 of an original from the late twelfth century. The Dunhuang MS itself (Pelliot 3808, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris) is probably of the tenth century, as Wells confirmed in 1993. The fact that this is a lute-manuscript demands consideration of the musical properties of such a plucked-string instrument.

**Melodic lines of strings and winds**

An important characteristic of lute sounds is their rapid decay. In this respect they differ markedly from those of winds which (with cyclical breathing) may be sustained virtually indefinitely. Studies of that part of the Court Entertainment Repertory of Japan known as Tōgaku 唐樂 (‘Tang Music’) have revealed over the years a very distinctive relationship between the melody-line of a sustaining wind-instrument (the free-reed mouth-organ (sheng/shō 笙) and the lines of plucked strings, such as zithers and lutes, performing their own characteristic versions of that same line.

Examples may be found in each of the fascicles and in the latest volume of Music from the Tang Court (Picken, Nickson and others, 1998). In Fascicle 5 (1990, p. 21), for example, the quarter-notes/crotchets of the transcribed mouth-organ melody are often replaced in the lute-part by a pair of eighth-notes/quavers, or a finger-plucked mordent, etc. — or in melodic terms by appoggiaturas, passing notes, échappées, octave leaps, alternation in pairs of stopped and open-string notes, etc.

The implication of these observations is that a lute-version of a song is likely to offer the performer more notes than does the melodic line of the song itself, for the simple reason that a plucked-string instrument cannot sustain the sounds generated. It is quite certain that a listener familiar with the song would be reminded of the original song-line, embedded in the sequence of string-sounds, when listening to the lute-version; and of course the latter could also be played as an accompaniment to the song.

There is, however, another and important feature of the melodic line proposed by Wells to be considered. While the proposed vocal line imitates many features of the instrumental line, as can be seen from the same notation of the song with text-underlay (Figure 1, and Wells, 1993, p. 61), the character of that line is unique in Chinese music in that, during three separate half-bars it executes a broken triad, either major or minor. Elsewhere the line may consist of an octave-leap with a fifth inserted between the limits. That is to say, this lute-melody has what seem to be harmonic implications. If we listen with Western ears, whole measures quite clearly spell out harmonic consonance. In this instance, the very pipa-tuning is unequivocally a harmonic statement of which advantage is taken in measure 10, though not in measures 8 and 16.

The time-signature proposed by Wells is 6/4; but the placing of the bassdrum-beat on the third beat of the bar confirms rather a 3/2 metre, with the measure divided into two portions: an anterior single binary beat and a posterior pair of binary beats. The time-signature of a number of Broaching-movements in the Court Entertainment repertory is also 3/2; but there the bassdrum-beat falls on the fifth beat. In accentuation, therefore, neither the opening, rising, broken A-minor triad, nor the broken octaves with a fifth between, can have the ternary rhythm suggested.

In fact, in measures of 3/2, this song is either a jin 近 or a ling 令. Each of these is represented by a single example in the songs of Jiang Kui: Song 8 and Song 4 respectively
(see Picken, 1966). Mistakenly, Song 4 was given a time-signature of 8/4 rather than 3/2 by L.E.R.P. This error has been pointed out by Lee Hye-Ku (1995, p. 231 onwards), and might have been avoided (in the case of the jin) by more careful reading of the cipu 詞譜 of Zhang Yan 張岩. (See 頒曲指出: 破近六均慢八均 ‘po and jin have six beats; man have eight.’ The passage is discussed by Qiu Qionsun (1959) on pp. 66-8. Yun is to be understood here as an equidivision, a beat.) This passage only specifies the number of beats in what we would call a ‘bar’ or ‘measure’. It tells us nothing of the position of the principal accent in either form.

Unfortunately Jiang Kui’s marking of the drumbeat is not sufficiently explicit to enable us to be certain of its position in either song-type. There exists, however, a piece in flute-notation: Yuan cheng shuang ling 顧成雙令, specifically described as a ling, in the popular encyclopedia from the early Yuan dynasty: ‘The Vast Record of the Forest of Affairs’ Shilin guangji 事林廣記. This tune was published in transcription (Picken 1969, p. 611), again mistakenly barred in measures of eight beats. In the original notation, however, as noted at the time, small circles appear to mark bassdrum beats, as larger circles or dots do in Japanese Tōgaku scores. Inspection shows that the measures of eight beats may readily each be changed to two of six beats: 3/2, with the drumbeat falling on the third beat in six.

‘West River Moon’ is surely a ling.

Features new - to Chinese music of the early Tang - in this 10th c. piece
What is here extraordinary – and indeed new in Chinese music in tablature – is the strong feeling of key and of harmony, conferred by the presence of sequences of notes that suggest either A-minor or C-major in different parts of the composition.

Although the Chinese text seems to imply a song in two stanzas, the musical structure is that of a unitary movement in two halves. Such a structure has not been encountered before. The first line of the first half begins as it were in A-minor (it is in fact a Church- (or Glarean) Dorian A-minor: A B c d e f♯ g), but this half ends, eight measures later, in Lydian C-major (with sharpened fourth, f♯).

Since the melody for the entire song ends on C, and the note-set may be set out as C D E F♯ G A B, the mode is Chinese Gongdiao 宮調 on C. Musically, the structure of the song may be represented as:

\[ \parallel A B \parallel C B' \parallel \]

where \( \parallel A B \parallel \) is the musical structure of the first half and \( \parallel C B' \parallel \) that of the second half. Each musical line (represented by a letter) carries two text-lines, and within each half, line-terminal syllables rhyme (in Tang-sounds) as a b b a (see Karlgren: Grammata Serica Recensia, 1957). Wells has set out in full the structure of all the texts associated with ‘West River Moon’, including the sequence of segmental tones in the monosyllabic words of each text.

A more detailed analysis of structure by N.J.N. is shown on p. 181 following a discussion of the proposed song-line.

Segmental tone & word-setting in Chinese song
The relationship between segmental tone and the musical treatment of monosyllabic words in song, where word-setting is still predominantly or entirely one-note to one-word, has never
been satisfactorily resolved, perhaps because the volume of surviving written musical material available is restricted.

Evidently there can be no direct gestural correlation between changes in vocal pitch, that occur in time, during enunciation of monosyllabic words in song, where a single pitch serves for the delivery of that same word. Early work on the songs of Baishi Daoren by Qiu Qionsun (1959) suggested that the composer was influenced by the system of segmental tone that prevailed in his native province. (See pp. 125-139 of his study: 声律考索, with graphs of segmental tone of syllable plotted against height of song-pitch of each 字 in Jiang Kui’s songs.) So far as we are aware, however, the primary difficulty of relating the melodic shape of segmental tones with single pitched notes has not as yet been confronted.

The major distinction in speech among the ‘four sounds’ 四聲 of the segmental tones, the ‘level’ (ping 平): comprising the ‘female level’ (yinping 陰平) and the ‘male level’ (yangping 陽平), and the ‘oblique’ (ze 仄): comprising the ‘rising’ (shang) and the ‘falling’ (qu), is that the first and second tend to lie (in general) at a higher pitch than the third and fourth. If single vocal pitches of those respective relative heights were conferred on monosyllables in a line of verse, however, the result would be song of a kind, but not necessarily musical.

In speech (for example), the pitches of the yinping level tones of bo and guang (in the first line) are not merely approximately constant during the enunciation of each syllable, they are also higher in the F0 frequency of the vocal pitch, and louder than other segmental tones. Merely to pitch the oblique tones at a lower F0 and at a lower amplitude, would not perhaps provide sufficient meaningful differentiation between level and oblique to confer intelligibility. In such a one-note-to-one-word musical setting the individual word-melodies of speech are lost. It is to be remembered, however, that word-setting in folksong is frequently unrelated to segmental tone, without loss of intelligibility.

At times, however, it seems (to L.E.R.P.) that the direction of melodic movement, implicit in the spoken tone, may be indicated in early Chinese artsong by the direction of movement in vocal pitch in reaching or quitting a syllable. Such a movement is exemplified by the beginning of the first line in each half-stanza of the paired sequence so sensibly suggested by Wells. Here is the Chinese text with pinyin transcription:

船押波光搖搖 頭聾
坦觀不覺更深 楚歌哀怨出江心
正值月當南午

云散金烏出吐 裡煙
煖者沙渚沈沈 遊激起亂極禽
女伴各歸南浦

Chuàn yǎ bō guāng yáo yáo, tóu lóng
tǎn guān bù jué shēn gēn, chǔ gē ài yuàn chú jiāng xīn
ezhèng yuè dāng nán wǔ

Yún sàn jīn wū chū tǔ, lí yān
yǎn mò shā zhǔ shěn shěn, zhōu jī qǐ luàn jí qín
nuǎn bàn gè guī, nán pǔ.

This is translated by Wells (1993, p. 73). Here is an equisyllabic paraphrase, singable to the melody proposed in Figure 2:

Boat seals’ waves’ gleam, oars sweep;
Pleasure bound, night lengthens.
Chu Song’s grief rends river’s breast,
Just as moon tops South Point

Scattered clouds chase sun’s gold,
Mist-lost sandbars sink deep.
Rowers’ songs rouse roosting birds;
Girls return to South Bay.
Figure 2.

Figure 3. Derivation of bars 9 - 12 from bars 1 - 4.

Transcription

Transpositions

Transcription
In the first line (as Figure 2 shows), the rise of the melodic line through the first hemistich of the pinyin transliteration (shown here) seems to give musical significance to a word with yangping segmental tone: chuan, by movement of the voice upwards to ya on quitting the syllable. This rise is continued to bo guang, with the high level tones of bo and guang, marked both by pitch-height and by sustained duration. However, the pitch line of the lute permits no escape from the suggested level pitches for the following yao lu, both of which are of oblique segmental tone. Further reference to this matter will be found on p. 183.

Application of the Weighted-Scale procedure (Nickson 1997, pp. 203-210), summing durations, occurrences, initials and finals for each note of the note-set, and converting to percentages, shows that the impression of key-change is justified, in that for C + G as for A + E, the summed percentage-weights are of the same order of size: C + G = 34; A + E = 39. Together these amount to 73 percent of the sum for all notes. These values are thus correlated with the observed strong statements of measure-finals and their (temporary) dominants (Nickson). Since each measure is in fact a textual and musical hemistich, this means that measure-finals are also hemistich-finals. Verse-structure and musical structure are intimately correlated.

Nickson has shown that the incipit-formula of the piba: a - c - e - d - c - e occurs, transposed (b - d - f# - e - d - f#) in the Broaching of the dance-suite ‘The Emperor Destroys the Formations’ (Odai-hajin-raku/Huangdi pozhenyue 皇帝破陣樂) in Section 1, measure 4; and slightly modified in Section 3, measure 1 and elsewhere (Picken and others, Fascicle 1, 1981, pp. 66, 70), and in the Quick of ‘The Bird’ (Tori/Niao 鳥), measures 5 and 6 (Fascicle 3, 1985, p. 44). To this extent the musical idiom of this music is akin to that of the Court Entertainment of the Tang.

Adding to the perception of key, and the feeling of key-change, is the distinctive quality of open-string sounds as compared with stopped-string sounds (already referred to by Wells, 1993, p. 67, paragraph 3). The tuning of the four-stringed lute, for all pieces in the Section of the Dunhuang yuepu in which this item occurs, is A c e a. In the bass-clef stave of Figures 1 and 2, open-string notes, designated by their tablature signs as such, are shown in transcription with both an upbeat and a downtail, regardless of the position of the note-head on the stave. This convention marks an open string – not (as it might appear) a unison of two notes of two strings plucked simultaneously.

As N.J.N. points out, however, the extent to which this difference between the tonal qualities of open and stopped strings is audible will also depend both on the character of the strings and on the crafting of the body of the lute. Silk strings of the quality of the best strings for 7-stringed zither (guqin, qixianqin) available today have a relatively long reverberation period; but however good the string-quality, a piba with a body/shell as thick as that of current Japanese Gakubiwa 樂琵琶 will have but a short reverberation time. Moreover, where an open string is stopped in the production of an immediately following stopped note, its period of vibration will be limited and its initial tonal quality quickly extinguished. Slower tempo will favour the audibility of difference between open and stopped strings.

In the first measure, while the stopped second note prevents the first note sounding for more than one beat, in the second measure the first and sixth notes are free to sound longer, while the third note is blocked by the fingered f# on the next beat. The open-string es provide most emphatic insistence on the fifth above A, and for a Western ear the sounding of the fifth above e (namely b) in this measure, gives it the colour of an Aeolian note-set on E.
Thus far the minor modality suggested by the opening of the song has been described as 'Church Dorian on A', but this same mode is identical with a Chinese Yü-mode, such as would be established on the sixth degree of a heptatonic Gong-mode on C. This mode is none other than the Chu-mode itself: Chudiao 楚調 (Picken and Nickson, 1998). Songs in that mode are referred to in the third line of the first half of the song-text: 'The piteous complaint of songs of Chu emerges form the river's heart' (Chuge aiyuan, chu jiangxin 楚歌哀怨出江心). The first half of this line (up to the caesura marked by a comma over the first barline in the second system) is sung over the open string dominant (e) of the opening A-minor. This musical approach in the first hemistich facilitates modulation to the Lydian Gongdiao on C, in which mode the half-song will end.

N.J.N. shows (Figure 3, p. 178) that bars 9 - 12 are derived from the latter. The Figure shows the transposition and the bars 9 - 12 as transcribed. Further insight into the modal and key-structure of the piece is yielded by his juxtaposition of the four cadential formulae (reduced) as in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Four cadence formulae (reduced).

Which is original melody, which embellishment?

In assessing the melodic weight of notes of a lute-part in the Japanese Tang-Music repertory, we have over the years been guided by the following principles. Where appoggiaturas occur, whether ascending or descending, the primary note thus decorated is the second note. In the case of échappées, the first note is the primary note of the pair. That is to say we have taken 'second note of conjunct pairs, first note of disjunct pairs' in order to obtain the unembellished melodic sequence (Nickson). Following this well-supported procedure (Picken, Fascicle 3, 1985, pp. 53-68; Nickson, Volume 6, 1997, pp. 86-169), the lute-line may be resolved into three halfnotes/minims per 3/2 bar, as shown in Nickson's reduced version of the transcription of the lute-line in treble clef (Figure 5).

Such a tune could accommodate a stanza of four lines of six monosyllabic words per line (the seven syllables of the third line could readily be accommodated by substituting two crotchets for one minim). It is the case, however, that a vocal line that proceeds continuously in notes of equal duration would be highly unusual in Chinese song of any period other than that of the bulk of ritual songs of Shang and Zhou date, as performed (or rather as believed to have been performed) in the Tang (Picken, 1956-7, 1977). (Even in songs of this degree
of uniformity in note-duration, correlation between binary beats and the linguistic unit of the
binome was rigorous (Picken, 1956, 1957, pp. 171-172)).

Regarding the 17 songs of Jiang Kui (previously mentioned) the intimate relationship
between the structure of the song-text and the music to which it is sung is evident:
punctuation of the Chinese text reveals immediately the coincidence between text-lines and
musical lines. The poet-composer’s addition of beat and duration signs to the pitch-signs
further prescribes the detailed rhythmic structure of the songs, to such an extent that, even
though the precise meaning of some of these terms is uncertain, a greatly varied semantic
rhythm of phrase-structure is evidently present in a given song.

Such observations encourage the search for a less monotonous structure than that of the
simple succession of notes of equal duration.

**Melodic structure and semantic rhythm**

While textually the piece appears to be one of two stanzas of identical prosodic structure, it is
in musical terms a piece in two halves of similar, but different, structure. In each half, the
half-lines 2, 4, and 8 readily provide musical substance for a meaningful pair of lexigraphs:
*yao lu* ‘sweeping oars’, *geng shen* ‘late watch’, *nan wu* ‘southern compass-point’; *chu tu*
‘first spat out’, *chenchen* ‘sinking sinking’, *nan pu* ‘south reach’. Line 6 in both halves is
three-membered and perfectly fits the three minims that derive from the lute-version. In the
first half: *chu jiangxin* ‘out from river’s heart’; in the second half: *luan xiqin* ‘disturb roosting
birds’. In each instance, monosyllabic verb is followed by disyllabic binome. When half-
lines 2, 4, 6 and 8 are allotted durations that amount (in each instance) to a 3/2 bar, the four
syllables of the previous half-line must also in each case be accommodated within another 3/2
bar.

If, tentatively, we allow the vocal line to adopt the first two notes of the lute (in each
musical line) for the singing of the first binome, we immediately give greater prominence to
the remaining binome, since it will of necessity be sung to longer notes. In the first measure
of the first line of the first stanza, therefore, *bo guang* is lengthened in delivery, while the
first two monosyllables are fitted to quarter notes; the psychological effect is entirely
appropriate. The impressive phrase: ‘waves’ brilliance’ outweighs the observation: ‘boat
seals’ – that is, like a personal seal descending on the gleaming white of a document to be sealed. In the next line, the fact that the party ‘mind not’ (bu jiao) that the night is far advanced is what matters, rather than the explanation of this oversight: that they are ‘eager for pleasure’ (tan huan). Similar arguments support the semantic rhythm of each line as transcribed in Figure 3 (Picken, strengthened by Nickson’s strict reduction of the lute-version in Figure 5).

A point to be mentioned is that while one may read the third and fourth notes of the lute in Bar 1 as an appoggiatura on d, explicitly lengthened in the tablature, the figure: ‘e...d...c e...’ is a ‘turn’, in that it returns to the first note, and may fairly be regarded as a turn on e, yielding two e minimis for ‘bo guang’. (This figure returns elsewhere in the MS.) The effect of the lute-line clashing with the voice singing e on ‘bo’ and ‘guang’, is magical. In this same line, too, the four sustained e’s surely follow the regular sweep of oars.

Scene-painting in melodic shapes in Chinese song
Taking into account all aspects of semantic rhythm and semantic melody, Figure 2 is proposed as an approximation to a melodic line sustained by the given lute-piece as accompaniment. The overall wavy contour, repeated in each half-stanza, and matching the environment to which the song-text refers, is striking and calls to mind the seascape in three stanzas of Jiang Kui’s sixth song: ‘The Spirit of the Billows’, in the ‘Nine Songs for Yue’ Yue jiu ge 越九歌 (Picken 1957, pp. 211-212).

At the time of publication of that set of transcriptions, caution inhibited barring in standard time-signatures. For that reason the tune is now reprinted here (Figure 6), transposed to Figure 6.
the same mode-final as ‘West River Moon’ to facilitate comparison, but now barred as justified by experience of the structure of Chinese melody over an acquaintance of 40 years. The mode of this song is Church Mixo-Lydian. The text describes the successful meeting at sea between a shaman and a female divinity, on board his boat in the gulf of Wuchang, Northern Zhejiang Province. The wave-contour of each musical line of every stanza is evident.

Such expressive use of musical contour occurs not infrequently in the surviving music of the Tang and Song dynasties. As shown by Nickson (1990, p. 79), a land-and-water-scape is conjured up by the zither-line through the last two bars of the Tōgaku item: ‘River Waters’ Kasuiraku/Heshui yue 河水樂 (Music from the Tang Court, Fascicle 4, p. 54). Indeed, throughout this piece, the greater compass of the zither is expressively used in delineating descending or rising contours in each measure; most impressively, in the last two.

Returning now to the rhythmic structure of ‘West River Moon’, the presence of the drum- or clapper-beat on the third unit beat of the 3/2 measure invariably results in a meaningful segmentation of text-lines within the two-hemistich structure of the line. In every instance the accentuation is appropriate to the sense of the binomes, not counter to it.

**Fixed rhythmic elements in counterpoint with elements of rhythmic irregularity**

In addition to this rigid rhythmic structure, imposed by the marked drumbeat, two further elements are present that act so to counter that rigidity. These are the incidences of open-string notes in the sixteen bars: (1) on the first beat in seven bars; (2) on the second beat in two bars; (3) on the third beat in six bars; (4) never on the fourth beat; (5) on the fifth beat in three bars (counting the quaver); and (6) on the sixth beat in two bars. In terms of the modal octave of Dorian A-minor this amounts to 7 incidences on A, 9 on e, 1 on a. Strikingly, though open-string e is available in this tuning it is used only three times, counting the quaver.

Furthermore, the lute-score marks up-strokes (retroflex strokes) of the plucking finger or plectrum. Such retroflex strokes are marked by a dot beneath notes of the bass-line in Figures 1 and 2. If executed by finger or thumb, the string then leaves from the nail-surface, not from the fleshy cushion of the tip of the digit, and this results in a change in tonal quality in notes thus excited. Even when a plectrum is used (as a professional guitarist informs us), the mechanical difference between upstroke and downstroke will determine a difference in note-quality, and this difference in quality will be perceptible as rhythmic impulses that run counter to the 3/2-bars defined by the drum- or clapper-beat.

As a final comment on the suggested song-line, the choice of octave in which a particular pitch is placed was first made on grounds of the musical suitability of a high or low note in relation to the shape of the musical line at that point. In bar 5 of both halves of the song, the high g' was originally chosen to secure continuous descent from thence to the lower octave g on the third binary beat of the sixth bar.

In an endeavour to follow strictly the implications, both of Nickson’s reduced version of the transcription of the lute line, and of the obligatory fall in pitch from the level tone of ai to the oblique tone of yuan, the lowg has been chosen, however, for the fourth monosyllabic word in the fifth bar of each half. Even though the words chu jiang xin are all of level tone, there is no option (in the notes available) other than to allow the vocal line to descend from d to g in steps of minim duration. This descent, however, makes possible the continuous
descent of the first hemistich of the fourth line of both halves: Zheng zhi yue dang and Nu ban ge gui. The pitch-rise thence to g is appropriate to the level tones of both dang and gui, and the descending final cadence: g - C on nanwu and the fall of a fifth to the final nanpu continue the overall tonally descending character of the two fourth lines. In tonal terms, gui/dang, and nan, are respectively yinping and yangping, and the following descent to pu/wu (oblique tone) is entirely appropriate. To this extent, the suggestion made earlier (p. 177) that direction of pitch-movement between syllables may at times reflect the direction of pitch-movements within syllables in sequence, perhaps receives here some support.

The fall of a fifth at final cadences, is almost without parallel elsewhere in Chinese melody. It seems to us, perhaps not without significance, that it is to be found today as measure-final cadence (a-D) in a transcribed specimen of ‘Sitting Music’ from Xi’an (Jones 1995, p. 242).

Repeated f# s in bar 7 and 15 of the vocal line, and repeated a s in bar 14, have been avoided by not observing Nickson’s reduced version. The repeated a of bar 14 is not signalled, however, in the corresponding bar 6 of the first half. Perhaps this also justifies ignoring repeated f# s and accepting the (subjectively) more musical readings. In the tablature, all that would be necessary would be to change the sequence e f# to f# e, and the sequence g a to g b, as occurs already in bar 6.

For performance, a metronome marking of minim/halfnote = 60 is suggested. It is of course the length of these notes that imposes the conspicuous dignity of the vocal line, a dignity compatible with the reference to the grief of Chu songs. The atmosphere of the first text chosen by Wells as illustration (Stein 2607), might at first sight appear incompatible with the presence of ‘women companions’ (nü ban 女伴); but the occasion is evidently not frivolous. (Only Western associations suggest that it must be so. The accomplishments of the women companions will have been those of the literate geisha 藝者 of Japan.) Other of the Stein versions do not display dignity of manner in this degree, even though in one instance ‘songs of Chu’ are mentioned.

At the outset, the title of this study was deliberately worded to emphasize the derivative nature of the vocal melody proposed. That the lute version may indeed function as accompaniment is evident from its structural relationship with the song-line established in relation to the structure of the text, and to the position of the drumbeat.

It is to be noted, however, that the lute could still perform the piece solo without its losing dignity, and would still evoke the original – for someone who knew the song – because of the persistence in the texture of the open-string notes (see p. 175). In a majority of the musical lines, these would carry unmistakable reference to the sustained notes of the vocal line suggested.

In support of the validity of our collective proposal for a song-melody for ‘West River Moon’, derived from the lute-version in the Dunhuang yuepu, is the fact that all the quasi-stanzaic text-variants, set out by Wells (1993, pp. 73-74) are immediately singable to our tune.

On this occasion, the reasons for stylistic differences between this song and the music from early Tang that constitutes the main bulk of Japanese Togaku will not be discussed. Let it suffice to point out how far the oasis of Dunhuang was (in the tenth century AD) from the centre of administrative power of the Chinese in Eastern China.
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QIU Qiongsun 丘鴻蕃 1959 Baishi Daoren gequ tongkao 白石道人歌曲通考 [A general study of the songs of Baishi Daoren.] Yinyue Chubanshe, Beijing. [In transcribing this title, a non-standard abbreviated form of 鴻 was wrongly romanised as ‘Ching’ by Picken in 1966.]


Jonathan Stock’s new book draws together several strands of ethnomusicological approaches to Chinese music, focused around the shadowy but much exercised figure of the folk musician Abing and his music. The manipulation of Abing as historical figure by Chinese musicologists, and the changing meanings imputed to his music, make a rather juicy story, and give fascinating insights into the relationship between politics and musicology in the PRC. Also interesting is Stock’s portrayal of Abing’s original recordings as situated in the musical milieu of their time. Several studies have been published in the West describing musical creativity, processes of variation and augmentation in Chinese folk music (see, for example, Lawrence Witzleben on Jiangnan sizhu [silk and bamboo music] 1995); studies of the impact of the revolution on cultural forms are also available (such as David Holm on Shaanxi yangge plays, 1991) This account differs in its even weighting of attention to tradition and modern development, and the author’s sense of the continuity underlying the radical changes wrought by the conservatory tradition. I enjoyed the structuring of this book, and the way that the author interweaves and underlines his social and political points with thorough musical analysis. This is, above all, a musicologist’s account of Chinese music, and it should be accessible to non-China specialists.

I am struck by the extraordinary importance that these few recordings have assumed. Made on a chance encounter with the influential musicologist Yang Yinliu in 1950, and rejected by Abing himself as being of poor quality, surely few pieces in the history of music have been so thoroughly appropriated, and gone through such contortions of meaning and form in a relatively short time span.

Stock begins by situating Abing the man in his historical context, and this section is necessarily somewhat speculative given the paucity of sources. He moves onto firmer ground when he analyses the various biographies of Abing, which range from Yang Yinliu’s first brief entry in musical dictionaries, to a romanticised 1980s film version of his life. Abing’s successive reincarnations - as inspired revolutionary, as romantic creator, or as victim of society, opium and syphilis - are indicative of the changing agendas of musicologists in China, and revealing of musicologists as both subject to the dictates of politics, and as manipulators of history with their own personal agendas. There is some entertaining material regarding the debate over the naming of the pieces. Was the title ‘Listening to the Pines’ Abing’s own reference to the Song dynasty hero Hua Fei who fought off the barbarians, thus demonstrating Abing’s patriotic resistance to the Japanese invasion? Or was it a casual invention by Yang Yinliu, to add some local colour to a nameless improvisation? The issue not only casts a slight shadow on Yang Yinliu’s
reputation, and Stock is carefully neutral on this point, but also questions the conservatoire tendency to interpret the music programatically.

Stock then moves on to an analysis of the original recordings. As background information he provides some useful sketches of instruments and local musical genres, including some information on variation techniques in the different styles. This helps to support his detailed analysis of Abing’s recordings as a series of variations on thematically related material, rather than, as is still popularly supposed, as separate compositions. Thus he is able to depict Abing the musician as assimilative craftsman, drawing on his musical context in improvised performance. Stock draws on his knowledge of performance techniques on the pipa and erhu to solidify his analysis. His refinement of Shenkerian analysis to produce reductive outlines of the melodies seems to fit well in the Chinese context of augmentation and ornamentation in performance based on fixed modal structures, but such deducted models should be clearly distinguished from the pre-existent skeletal melodies from which folk musicians may work.

One can only regret that Abing himself was never asked how he constructed his compositions, but then again, the whole ‘Abing tradition’, as Stock puts it, is built upon Abing’s silence and the ambiguity of his music. In fact, as Stock notes, several Chinese writers have previously noted thematic relationships between Abing’s recordings, and their relationship to music in other contexts. Political considerations have helped to suppress this reading, particularly since one of the melodies which Abing draws on is Zhixin ren (Intimate Companion) a popular brothel song of the time, and not at all in keeping with the revolutionary purity required of a musical model in the 1950s.

Stock follows this section with a historical sketch of the rise of the conservatory tradition. Much of this ground has been covered in previous publications: the gap between the bourgeois conservatory musicians and traditional music, the introduction of Western-style harmony and instrumentation, the perceived need for rational and scientific music, and the impact of the changeover from oral to written forms. Through analysis of conservatory renditions of the pieces, Stock demonstrates how the blend of new social, political and aesthetic factors worked on Abing’s music to produce a multiplicity of interpretations. Abing was established as a great composer on the Western model, but his music, far from serving as a fixed canon to be reproduced authentically, was taken as raw material, manipulated by the conservatory musicians according to their own aesthetic and political parameters. Stock neatly summarises the prevalent aesthetic evaluations of Abing and his music:

As far as the conservatory musicians were concerned, they still played Abing’s great music, but as a result of their access to modernised instruments and training, they simply did it better than he (p. 150).

Stock sees continuity between Abing’s own reworking of his musical repertoire and the conservatory musicians subsequent reworking of Abing’s tunes, underlying the restructuring of their meanings. The great difference surely lies in the radical shrinking of the repertoire of melodic material available to the conservatory musicians, imposed by artificially constructed considerations of political correctness.

I was struck by a recording on the accompanying CD of a street musician’s performance of Erquan yinyue (Second Springs) in a Beijing underground station in 1990. The echoing acoustics of the station stairwell recall the atmosphere of the concert hall, but loud voices talk over the music, and one solitary coin clinks into the musician’s bowl. This tune had transcribed an arc through time and space from one street musician, through rapid
contortions in the conservatories, back to another street musician 40 years on. I was disappointed that this musician remained even more silent than Abing. Who was he (or she)? Where had he learned the melody? And especially, what else could he play, what was his repertoire? Was it limited to a few received compositions, or was he able to creatively rework a larger repertoire as Abing did 40 years ago? This wordless encounter raises questions regarding the future of Abing’s music and the whole conservatoire tradition which call for an addendum. Is the music surviving in the market economy? How far has state control over and support for the conservatories dwindled? Where is its audience today? Westerner commentators have perhaps been quick to judge the conservatoire tradition, though this book remains admirably free of value judgements; perhaps the most important test of conservatoire-bred music is if it can survive and develop in China’s changing social climate. In response to Philip Bohlman’s metaphor of the market place (Bohlman 1988), Stock suggests the conservatoire as an alternative over-arching metaphor for musical contact and change in the 20th century, but I fear that in contemporary China at least, the conservatories will be increasingly side-lined, and the market place will prevail.

Rachel Harris

REFERENCES


Call for Papers

5th annual CHIME conference, Prague 15–19 Sept. 1999

The fifth annual CHIME conference will be held in the Academy of Music in Prague, from 15 to 19 September, 1999. Its main theme is: ‘Music in cities, music in villages – East-Asian music traditions in transition’. We invite papers and audiovisual materials which highlight musical traditions in China, Taiwan, Tibet, Mongolia, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and adjacent countries. We expect the emphasis to be on rural or urban perspectives, or – ideally – on a comparison of both. Subsidiary themes for which we invite abstracts are: (1) Musicians’ biographies; (2) Musical motives in literature and art; (3) Ancient Chinese music and Chinese music archeology. (For further information, see also this journal, p. 228.)

The deadline for sending abstracts is 31 March 1999. Paper proposals submitted after this date may still be considered but cannot be guaranteed inclusion in the programme. For all enquiries, contact: Dr. Lucie Olivová or Sankya Fülle at the International Sinological Centre, Celetná 20, 116 42 Praha 1, Czech Republic. E-mail: CCK-ISC@ff.cuni.cz

John Thompson’s CD of *guqin* pieces ‘Music Beyond Sound’ was considered sufficiently important to merit three independent reviews. They are presented below. The first one is by Cheng Yu, a pipa and *guqin* player and Chinese music scholar currently based at SOAS in London, the second one is by Julian Joseph, a *guqin* aficionado from Chippenham, and the third one by Frank Kouwenhoven, editor of the CHIME journal.

The *guqin* (also called *guqin*), an unfretted zither with seven strings, has an unbroken history of over 2,000 years. Historically, the instrument plays an important role in the traditional literati’s process of self-cultivation, along with activities like Chinese chess, calligraphy and ink-painting. Perhaps even more remarkable than the large number (3,000 or so) of surviving ancient *guqin* notations is the fact that so few of them (less than 300) have been brought to life in recent times. The 13 pieces of *guqin* music recorded on John Thompson’s CD fill an important gap in this respect. They were selected and transcribed from the first volume of the twenty-four-volume set *The Complete Collection of Qin Pieces*, containing the early Ming (1366-1648) period *guqin* score Zheyin Shizhi Qinpu (‘Qin Handbook Transmitting Lyrics with Music of the Zhejiang School’). This score was rediscovered in 1956 by *guqin* master Zha Fuxi (1895-1976) at Chongqing Library, during his fieldwork in Sichuan province at that time. John Thompson, a *guqin* player and arts organizer in Hong Kong, is the first scholar to recognize the importance of this early Ming notation and to actually reconstruct and record the music.

Generally speaking, ‘Music Beyond Sound’ is a successful and courageous endeavour. Firstly, the accompanying 35-page booklet to this CD is very impressive. It contains a thoroughly documented introduction to the sources, the instrument and the performer, and the information is well-presented. Each piece is introduced separately, with its origins, lyrics and section titles in both English and Chinese. Secondly, the sound quality of the silk-stringed *guqin* as played by Thompson on this CD is truly outstanding, certainly in comparison to previous recordings of the silk-stringed *guqin*. Apart from a few re-issued, pre-Cultural Revolution, recordings of *guqin* with silk strings, John Thompson’s CD is about the second commercially released recording since the 1960s on which silk strings are used. (The other is by Lau Chor-wah, published by ROI Productions in Hong Kong.)

It is rather sad to see that in China today, traditional silk strings are no longer even in production, and that almost all modern *guqin* players use metal strings. True enough, good sound recordings of silk-stringed *guqin* are very hard to achieve. There is an aesthetic tension between, on the one hand, capturing the full resonance and full tonal clarity of the silk strings and, on the other hand, trying to keep within reasonable limits the buzzing and other noises
caused by rubbing the strings and scraping them with the fingernails – the fact is that silk strings are thicker and less smooth than metal ones. Mr Thompson’s efforts to tackle this problem are highly successful, enabling him to produce a CD that, in terms of sound quality, far surpasses any other recordings of a silk-stringed qin with which this reviewer is familiar.

On the whole, John Thompson’s sustained interest in qin music and his longstanding devotion to the instrument over a period of twenty years are most impressive. Being a qin player myself – though not a very regular practitioner – I’m aware of the fact that the process of learning and memorizing a single piece of qin music in certain instances may require hundreds of hours of practice. To decipher and reconstruct old qin scores is an even harder task, and a real test of human tenacity and endurance. This very circumstance may go some way in explaining the declining number of qin players in recent times, compared to the (growing) number of players of certain other Chinese instruments.

Generally speaking, most qin players tend to play those pieces which have already been transcribed. Few performers have the ability to reconstruct pieces from ancient scores, which may be one reason why so few of the ancient notations have been brought back to life. John Thompson’s achievements are all the more impressive if one realizes that, to date, his total activities in this field – of which the music on the CD represents a small part – account for approximately one quarter of all the existing reconstructions of old qin pieces. Thompson’s recorded interpretations (so far) include more than five hours of recordings of qin pieces from the 15th century collections Shenqi Mipu (64 pieces) and Zheyin Shizhi Qinpu (28 pieces). (Most of these recordings have not been issued commercially.) I would like to discuss in more detail John Thompson’s work in the field of dapu – the process of reconstructing qin music from ancient notations – and his abilities as a musical performer.

Dapu is not just a technical activity but, within the limitations set by the existing scores, a creative and artistic process. Qin notation has a unique and elaborate tablature system, based on fingerings and string positions. It does not record actual pitches and there are no indications of rhythm, tempo, musical expression or divisions of phrases and sections in the scores. While the practitioner of dapu is required to stay as close as possible to the original score, he is still allowed a measure of freedom and flexibility in the arrangement of the music and with respect to such elements as key, mode, layers of music and thematic structure. As a consequence, the results of dapu vary

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John Thompson.
from one individual to another, and one particular original score may give rise to many different interpretations. The results of dapu are to some extent a reflection of a player’s musicality, artistic spirit and individual understanding of the aesthetics of qin music. To master the work of dapu one must be a competent player, because the process can only be completed in playing. Even so, an excellent qin player is not necessarily capable of doing dapu. Apparently, few people in China have successfully mastered both activities. John Thompson’s CD demonstrates his ability to combine both dapu and playing. Moreover, he has proved himself to be a critical scholar: he has corrected mistakes in the original scores where some notes were found to be physically unplayable.

The compositional arrangements on John Thompson’s CD are generally good, though in some pieces the melodies, the changes in rhythm, as well as the tempi and the gradations in the music lack variety and are not sufficiently pronounced. The structure of qin music can largely be compared to that of classical Chinese poems. A qin piece often has the following basic components: qi (start/intro) – cheng (continuation) – zhuang (shifts) – he (coda). Qin pieces such as ‘Flowing Water’, ‘Three Variations on Plum-blossom’ and ‘Mist and Clouds over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers’ are good examples of this structure. A clear sense of this kind of structure is missing in some of John Thompson’s performances.

A further important aspect is the discernment of the correct key and tuning when transcribing an old notation. These are often not indicated in the manuscripts. It requires a strong sensibility on the part of the transcriber to discern the right key and tuning. Needless to say, any misjudgement may lead to drastically deviating results – for example if one applies a tuning of C-D-F-G-Bb-c-d in the key of Bb (which requires raising the 5th string by a semi-tone based on the common tuning of C-D-F-G-A-c-d in F key) to a piece in the G key tuning C-D-E-G-A-c-d (lower the third string by a semi-tone). Such a policy may result in the superfluous appearance of semi-tones in a piece – an unusual phenomenon in traditional qin aesthetics. The ninth piece, ‘Fisherman’s Song’ on John Thompson’s CD, appears to be a case in point.

Apart from the sensible compositional arrangement of a qin piece, a performer’s expressive abilities also constitute an important factor. A good performance is not merely a transmission of a series of sounds; it is a vehicle for expressing human feelings, so that a piece becomes a medium of personal communication between the player and his audience. The subtle expressive possibilities of qin music are manifold; they provide the performer with the means to put his own characteristic stamp on each piece, for example via changes in dynamics and tempo, or via contrasts between phrases or sections, or in variations in the rise and fall of a melodic line. Sometimes, the performances on ‘Music Beyond Sound’ simply lack musical power. ‘Thrice Parting for Yangguan’ (Yangguan San Die) should express a reluctant parting of intimate friends, but in John Thompson’s interpretation, the tempo is fairly fast, and the melody light and cheerful, which is obviously not consistent with the theme of the music.

Generally speaking, ‘Music Beyond Sound’ remains an impressive CD. Not only does it provide a rare example of qin music played on silk strings, with most of the pieces previously unheard, but it also reflects the player’s considerable skills in dapu, his affinity with qin aesthetics, and his respectable talents as a performer. The artist’s persistent devotion
to the study of qin music, this sophisticated musical art of the traditional Chinese literati, must be an inspiration for qin players everywhere. We look forward to follow-up publications of John’s recordings of qin music.

Cheng Yu

John Thompson is an American guqin player in Hong Kong who specializes in reconstructing the music in earlyqin handbooks. He has his own web site with information on his activities in the field of qin music research (http://www.iohk.com/UserPages/thompson). In October 1996 he issued some of his qin reconstructions on a CD entitled ‘Music Beyond Sound’. The CD consists of all the pieces in the 15th century collection Zheyin Shizi Qinpu, excluding the ones which are also included in the earliest known guqin handbook in existence, the Shengyi Mipu (A.D. 1425).

When I first heard John Thompson’s playing on CD it seemed so utterly different from any style of guqin playing with which I was familiar that I was not sure what to make of it. Most of the pieces on ‘Music Beyond Sound’ are premiere recordings, which precludes the possibility of comparing them with alternative recorded versions. Thompson’s Yangguan San Die (‘Thrice Parting for Yangguan’) is so different from the music usually played under this title that a comparison is not very instructive. The only pieces previously issued commercially are Wu Ye Ti (‘Evening Call of the Raven’) and Qu Yuan Wen Du (‘Qu Yuan Asks for Advice’), but even these sound quite different in Thompson’s interpretations, partly because he plays them on traditional silk strings (rather than the metal strings which most qin players prefer at present), and partly because his style of playing is more restrained than that of many of his Chinese colleagues. Perhaps Thompson’s approach most closely resembles the style of playing heard in some pieces by Guan Pinghu, a great qin master of the first half of this century, or in some of the recordings of Wu Zhaoji, a qin master now well over 80 years old. Perhaps Thompson plays in an even more subdued fashion. His style may well represent the Ming ideal of extreme restraint. His speed of playing is generally faster than what present listeners to qin music may be accustomed to. His playing technique is excellent.

It took me a long time to become familiar with all the pieces, some of which may not have been played very much since the 15th century. I find that I can listen to the unusual and intriguing repertoire over and over again, without tiring of it, my favourite pieces being Yu Ge (‘Fisherman’s Song’, but not the piece usually played under this title) and Zhi Zhao Fei. The music is played with little deviation from the original tablatures, and is of enormous interest as a historical record.

The sound of the CD is very clean, well balanced and spacious, with very little or no external noise or tape hiss audible. It is far superior to some commercial CDs of guqin music. I did occasionally notice a very slight buzz from one of the strings. This is a feature of the instrument, a qin built in the Song Dynasty, and it does not detract from the overall effect, indeed even enhancing it.

The accompanying booklet is well produced and very thorough. Unlike any other qin recordings I have seen – and I have seen most – this CD provides the names of sections of pieces in both English and Chinese. It also gives English and Chinese versions of the original prefaces to the pieces in the Zheyin Shizi Qinpu, and is written in natural and correct
English. John Thompion has now also published a book of his transcriptions of the music in the Zheyin Shizi Qinpu to accompany the CD.

This CD is almost the only high-fidelity recording published of a guqin using silk strings, making it difficult for me to comment on this aspect of the instrument. I am beginning to form an impression that metal strings are perhaps better suited to certain pieces (e.g. Guangling San) and silk to others. Certainly, this recording is proof that it is possible to make high-quality recordings of silk-string zithers, despite opinions sometimes heard to the contrary.

‘Music Beyond Sound’ is an excellent recording in every respect and a ‘must’ for anyone seriously interested in guqin music. From the time when I first became interested in guqin, I have been waiting for someone to start publishing systematic recordings of all the pieces in the major guqin handbooks, especially those in the Shenqi Mipu. The good news is that John Thompson’s next publication will be a complete survey of the music of Shenqi Mipu. I am eagerly looking forward to it.

Julian Joseph

On his CD ‘Music Beyond Sound’, John Thompson has unearthed a veritable treasure house of qin pieces from the 15th century and earlier. For each piece he documents its context, meaning(s), occurrences in other existing handbooks of qin music, and provides the Chinese and translated versions of prefaces and section titles. This turns the CD into an eminently useful introductory guide to the Zheyin shizi qinpu (the handbook from which the music on the CD was taken). In October 1998 Thompson published an accompanying 120-page book with his transcriptions in Western music notation (ISBN 962-85279-24).

It is not hard to echo other qin lovers’ praise for John Thompson’s efforts as a qin scholar and music historian. His trump cards are his analytical insights, his immense professional curiosity and his attempt to be complete in his coverage of the old scores – he goes where few qin players in China have ventured to go, far beyond the thirty-odd pieces played over and over again at qin meetings and on recordings produced in China. But I also feel that his interests, in this respect, are different from those of qin players in China, and that his scholarly approach to guqin music turns the CD into an undertaking with specific aims and limitations.

Many – though certainly not all – qin players in China primarily view the seven-stringed zither as a tool for spiritual and bodily self-cultivation, not as an object for musical adventurism, academic challenges or archival explorations; this would almost be more like a Western approach to the instrument.

Qin players in China do acknowledge the importance of transcribing old scores, but few see it as a primary activity, and still fewer are likely to approach the old notations with a purely historical interest. Qin players’ work of ‘reconstruction’ normally involves a fair amount of re-composition. It is inherent to the qin tradition that players change notes, omit complete sections if they feel like it, and add new elements, in addition to providing their own rhythmical interpretations. A ‘reconstruction’ will be considered successful if, apart from taking account of the original score, it is convincing as an artistic product. In this respect, ‘Music Beyond Sound’ may fail to impress some listeners. John’s achievements as a musician, though very respectable, are not on a par with his accomplishments as a scholar.
He spends a tremendous time learning pieces by heart, and probably surpasses many qin players in China in terms of actually memorized repertoire. But in some of his performances it is the conviction of a single powerful statement that I find lacking. Sometimes there is a sense of restlessness in the music – perhaps not so much due to the fast tempi – which seem close to what some of the old masters were doing on recordings from the 1930s to 1950s – but to the absence of sufficient elasticity in the rhythmical phrasing, a lack of ‘breath’, so to speak. I don’t want to detract from the attractive points of John’s playing. Many of his phrases are beautifully realized, the sound of his qin is always warm and spacious, and the CD as a whole is still a first-rate intellectual adventure, enabling listeners to explore note by note these unfamiliar, sometimes odd-sounding pieces.

From an orthodox point of view, the artistic aspect makes ‘Music Beyond Sound’ a difficult project to judge. In the Chinese qin tradition, scholarship and musicianship are so much intertwined that they have become inseparable. Qin aesthetics may have undergone many changes in the course of time, but qin performers do recognize good arguments expressed in music: from time to time a real qin master turns up who becomes a new trendsetter. John Thompson’s aim is not, I believe, to compete artistically with qin masters in China or to set new musical standards, nor would it be fair to judge his achievements in such terms.

A number of (notably middle-aged and young) qin players in China seem to cherish the idea of superbly controlled rhythmical ‘breath’ as a principle which gives unity to entire pieces. On the whole they tend to play slower and with much more dynamic and rhythmical contrast than their predecessors (made possible to some extent by the use of steel rather than silk strings). This may not be in line with historical trends, but it has earned them authority as the master players of a new generation. I hope that some of them will take up John’s reconstructions, because it would help to do full justice to his work as a qin explorer. It would not result in historically more reliable interpretations, but it would be a fitting homage to one of the few Western qin players who is literally investing a lifetime in this repertoire.

The question of authenticity remains a tough one. We can indicate where qin players in present-day China change pitches or omit parts from written scores, and to some extent such deviations can be explained as concessions to current musical style, (e.g. when Guan Pinghu turns an essentially heptatonic score into a largely pentatonic one, claiming that it sounds more ‘natural’ that way). But we don’t know what the predecessors of these players did when they, in turn, tried to bring the same scores alive, how much they deviated, or indeed were expected to deviate, from what was written in their own time. There is room here for much speculation, but limited certainty.

John Thompson’s CD offers, in audible form, a hitherto almost unexplored chunk of China’s ancient qin repertoire, if only in ‘schematic’ interpretations. His performances are unique in their near-total attempt at faithfulness to the notations, and they are presented in actual sound, with a directness that no scholarly paper could ever achieve. We are now perhaps in the initial stages of an exciting new era in guqin research, involving full-scale historical exploration of the qin repertoire along the lines of comparative research already embarked upon by scholars like Yoko Mitani, Lin Youren, Chen Yingshi and Bell Yung. For this kind of adventure we need the artistry of master musicians as well as the thoughtful opinions and analytical insights of scholars like John Thompson.

Frank Kouwenhoven
Dongjing Music in Yunnan (CD Review) 195


Recorded in May, 1994 in Kunming, these two CDs present twenty-nine selections of Dongjing music. The liner notes state that the musicians are members of the ‘Dongjing Ancient Music Band of Nanjian,’ with one suona player from the Yunnan Provincial Nationalities Art Research Institute added in four tracks on the first CD. I am assuming, therefore, although it is not explicitly stated, that all the pieces are from the Dongjing repertoire of Nanjian County (near Dali, in west-central Yunnan).

Dongjing music is an important part of Yunnan’s soundscape, but is relatively little known outside that province. Before the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, there existed in most Han Chinese cities and counties of Yunnan organizations known as dongjinghui (Dongjing associations). The sinicized elite among some minorities, including the Naxi of Lijiang and the Bai of Dali, also adopted these associations. Composed in the main of the local male literati, these groups celebrated the festivals of various deities prominent in the Taoist, Buddhist and Confucian cults; those most frequently honoured by the associations were Wenchang, patron of literati, and Guandi, god of wealth and war. Indeed, the term ‘Dongjing’ is an abbreviation of the title of a major scripture associated with Wenchang, the Dadong Xianjing (Transcendent Scripture of the Great Grotto). Dongjing associations were found mainly in Yunnan, although some seem to have existed in contiguous areas of Sichuan and Guizhou, and possibly even among Chinese communities in Burma and Thailand.

Association meetings usually took place at a local temple and lasted at least three days, as the participants sang, chanted, and spoke their way through the entire scripture relevant to the deity being honoured. Associations were renowned for their spectacular altar trappings, the dignified gowns and jackets (shanzǐ magua) worn by the members, and for the elaborate array of string, wind and percussion instruments used in instrumental interludes and as accompaniment to some of the singing. Each county had its own repertoire of pieces, although many tune-titles and some tunes recur throughout the province.

The associations were suppressed in the years following 1949, but since the post-Mao reforms have seen quite a resurgence. This CD-set is a welcome symptom of this revival, and makes one county’s Dongjing repertoire more accessible to a non-local audience.

The pieces on this CD include both sung and instrumental items. They are beautifully performed by the musicians, and in general the recording allows the different voices and instruments to come through clearly. The balance is good on most of the selections, although in one or two places the suona is less audible than one might expect, and occasionally the low-pitch fiddle dahu seems a little overpowering.

The real problem with these CDs lies in the brevity and vagueness of the liner notes, which are bilingual in Japanese and English. Co-author Wu Xueyuan is a noted Dongjing researcher, and should have been allotted more space to inform the listener. The liner notes for the first CD allow only one page for a general description of Dongjing music and associations; those for the second CD amplify this information with just half a page. The content concerns the province-wide Dongjing phenomenon; there is no mention of Nanjian County, despite the fact that the entire repertoire recorded is presumably from Nanjian. Given
the regional variation in this genre, this is a serious oversight. We are not even told if the Nanjian revival has included any ritual component—an important point, since some groups that have revived their tradition have resurrected both music and ritual, while others have taken the repertoire in a more secular direction (e.g. in Lijiang County). From the layout of percussion instruments and the presence of a scripture of some kind in the accompanying photos, it looks as though the music may indeed still be used ritually in Nanjian. It would be nice to know for certain, however, how it is used today, and thus what it means to the tradition-bearers. Indeed, it would be nice to know who the tradition-bearers featured on the CDs are—their names are omitted from the liner notes.

The English notes give the pinyin titles of the pieces played, but offer no translation of what the titles actually mean. Fortunately one can find the characters from the Japanese notes. The scriptural words sung are given in the Japanese notes, but are not translated or even referred to in the English notes. Nor are we told which scripture they come from. There is a very short description of each piece.

There are several excellent photos in both sets of liner notes, showing the different instruments used very clearly. Yet, while the melody instruments are given their full names (in characters and pinyin), the many percussion instruments are generically described as ‘various percussions.’ Since nomenclature for such instruments differs so much from one locale to another, it is a real disappointment not to know what they are called in Nanjian.

In places the English-language liner notes are quite obscure. For instance, the description of the fourteenth selection on the second CD states that ‘“Yinghe,” “Ruanhe” and “Qingtiange” are performed at the close of chanting of the three respective parts of a scripture’ (liner notes to second CD, p.11). It is only through reference to the Japanese notes that it becomes clear that ‘the three respective parts of the scripture’ means the central fascicles of a scripture, usually designated _juan shang_, _juan zhong_, and _juan xia_. In one or two places the notes seem inaccurate. For example, the eighth selection on the second CD is described as consisting of singing accompanied by _xiyue_ (_xiyue_ is identified previously as ‘an ensemble of stringed instruments and flutes’ [liner notes to first CD, p.10]), while what we hear appears to be just one singer plus percussion.

There are also mistakes in the pinyin and some typos. And while we are supplied with a useful map of Asia pinpointing Yunnan and Kunming, why is Nanjian omitted, when that is the county featured?

The music here is aesthetically very attractive, and seems to be quite ‘folk’ in style; but the package as a whole is marred by the poor documentation. Even if the CDs are not primarily aimed at the scholarly audience, more consideration should have been given to making Nanjian County, its music and musicians lively and comprehensible to the layperson.

Readers interested in Dongjing music and ritual may wish to supplement these CDs with other readily available publications and ‘folk’ (as distinct from conservatoire-style) recordings. The Dongjing music of Lijiang is featured on the CD _Naxi Music from Lijiang: The Dayan Ancient Music Association_ (Nimbus NI 5510, 1997); this has much fuller liner notes. A CD of field recordings of Dongjing associations from five different cities and counties in Yunnan was published at the end of 1998 by Pan ( _Dongjing Music. Where Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist culture meet_. Pan Ethnic Series 2058 CD). There are several publications which give an overall picture of Yunnan’s Dongjing associations and music. Two such Chinese-language articles are Lei and Peng 1986, and Wu 1990. The only book-
length work officially published in China on the subject is Dali Shi Xiaguan Wenhuaguan 1990, although one from Zhang Xingrong is forthcoming from the Yunnan Education Publishing House. The third chapter of my dissertation (Rees 1994) offers an English-language overview, with many Chinese-language sources listed in the bibliography.

Helen Rees

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Xi’an Drums Music (Xi’an guyue), CD, 64’21” playing time, with notes by Li Shigen, Hong Kong 1993, Hugo CD HRP 758-2.

This is a most welcome CD. The ceremonial music of the Xi’an area has been recognized by Chinese scholars since the early 1950s as an important genre of instrumental ensemble, using flutes, free-reed mouth-organs, frames of pitched gongs, and a large percussion ensemble led by several types of drum. In fact it thus has much in common with para-liturgical instrumental genres throughout northern China (Jones 1995a: chapters 11-12).

The culture of Xi’an, the bustling capital of Shaanxi province, has suffered heavily since the 1950s, like most towns, from official secularizing policies, and since the dismantling of Maoism the revival in traditional religious culture there has been partly offset by further modernization. But the music lives on as a part of ritual activity both in Xi’an and the neighbouring villages. From the early 1950s this was one genre which came to represent the music of a whole province. Just as the ‘eight great suites’ represented Shanxi, or Nanguan stood for Fujian, regional variety was neglected, and the ritual contexts of the music downplayed. We constantly need to bear this variety in mind. Shaanxi province has a rich
variety of fantastic music, as we can now see from the ongoing volumes of the *Anthology of Chinese folk music*. Shaanxi is famed for its folksong - note some songs included on the recent 2-CD set from Taiwan (Qiao 1996, reviewed in CHIME 9: 171-4), as well as narrative-singing genres such as *Errrentai* and the Yulin 'lesser pieces'. Operatic forms include *Qingiang*, *Meihu*, and puppets. For instrumental music alone, many genres deserve to be heard, including Buddhist and Daoist groups in both northern and southern Shaanxi, and the magnificently earthy shawm bands (remember *Yellow Earth*?).

So the ceremonial music of the Xi'an area just happens to be the genre on which most research has been done - although more transcriptions of traditional scores have been made than study of the social background. As often with Chinese music (cf. *Shifan* in southern Jiangsu: Jones 1995a: Ch. 13), the prestige of the 1950s fieldwork may have inhibited ongoing research into the current state of the music. I gather that the revival of pilgrimage to the mountains to the south of Xi'an has been impressive, and so fieldwork is much needed, documenting not only ritual and social aspects, but also how the music is actually performed within them. Cheng Yu (SOAS) is currently working with local scholars in updating research. Since I have given an introduction, with bibliography, to the genre (Jones 1995a: Ch. 12), I will not repeat ground here. In addition, Lei 1991 is a major statement of the Conservatoire research; Li Shigen's major books remain to be published in Taiwan; and the relevant sections of the *Anthology* (vol. 1: 9-31 Introduction, 34-571 transcriptions) also provide data.

The Chinese name *Xi'an guyue* (Xi'an drum music or ancient music) is itself a minefield, hence my neutral choice of 'ceremonial music of Xi'an'. One of the most acrimonious musicological debates in China, if ironically productive of research, is between Li Shigen and He Jun of the *Chunzhong yishuguan*, in the red corner, one might say, and Yu Zhu and Li Jianzheng of the Xi'an Conservatoire. This debate goes back as far as the early 1950s, when Li Shigen received the distinguished central scholar Yang Yinliu and the name *Xi'an guyue* was coined. By now I suspect we may be lumbered with the name, but I think it is not too late to resist bringing the name Chang'an into it, purely a recent attempt by the Conservatoire to cash in on the 'Tang dynasty bandwagon.

Two CDs of the genre, available in the West, illustrate the schism, much to the Conservatoire's disadvantage. The Conservatoire group was recorded by the Maisons des Cultures du Monde label on its visit to Paris in 1991 (see review, CHIME 5: 164). In 1993 the distinguished scholar Li Shigen produced a fine CD of four groups representing the traditional style. From these recordings, one can hear the debate between traditional and conservatoire styles which I often see as more of a conflict than a continuum (again, cf. my remarks on Jiangsu in Jones 1995a: and *passim*). The Conservatoire's efforts are less successful than Western 'reconstructions' of medieval music, and inevitably fail to match the integrity and complexity of the folk musicians' performance.

The Hugo CD makes good listening, for this is majestic music with intricate interplay between melody and percussion which repays repeated listening. It plainly belongs to a classical tradition, and is largely reserved in style, despite the large percussion ensemble. The four amateur ensembles featured here perform, like similar groups throughout northern China, for funerals and calendrical rituals, and their music derives from the former Buddhist and Daoist temples. Three are from the town (the Dajichang, Dongcang and Fusanxue societies) and one from the nearby village of South Jixian. Apart from illustrating different instrumental styles of Sitting and Processional Music, the CD has the further benefit of
including two lustily-sung choral ritual songs (tracks 3 and 9), a genre of the Xi’an music once said to be largely obsolete, from the Fusaxue group, led by Ji Fuhua and Ji Shuhua, the first accompanied by ritual percussion, the second, to the Tang ‘Medicine King’ Sun Simiao, also by the melodic instruments. Indeed, this may alert us to the fact that para-liturgal instrumental music has been studied more in China than the vocal liturgy which it punctuates, as I find in my fieldwork.

The recordings are clear, if a little too studio-fied for my taste, with beautiful heterophony on dizi, yunluo, and sheng alternating with the majestic percussion. These ensembles are rather different from most para-liturgal groups in northern China in that the guanzi is rarely used today. Indeed, it seems to be used less here than the notes claim, although it still leads the Dajichang and South Jixian ensembles for some pieces.

In a worthy attempt to restore a defunct tradition of plucked instruments, tracks 4 and 5 (from the Dajichang ensemble) are nonetheless somewhat marred by arpeggios on the zither zheng. I’d like to know more about Shaoban (track 10: South Jixian ensemble); with its rather conservatoire-style solo sections, this piece also suggests that cadres have become involved in arrangement, and other musicians may be involved who have yet to assimilate the folk style. Scholars of southern silk-and-bamboo may note track 7, which includes a version of the piece Baban.

The notes by Li Shigen, who has devoted his life to studying the music, are far more informative than one often finds with Chinese recordings. Musicians are acknowledged, and the lyrics are given both in Chinese and in English translation; I hope this is a trend. Though the English translation of the notes is typically impenetrable, it may be worth it for the inspired rendering of nianci (‘recited text’, or ritual song) as ‘rap music’. What are these translators smoking?!!

Another recording from AIMP (Jones 1995b) also features two excerpts from the canonical 1961 performance in Beijing of a distinguished group led by the great musician An Laixu, former Daoist priest. It includes the famous prelude which also opens the Hugo CD.

Since other CDs in the Hugo series, like most commercial CDs from the Chinese world, consist largely of conservatoire-style arrangements performed by professional urban troupes, this CD is all the more valuable, allowing us to experience the grandeur of the traditional style which is still performed throughout Chinese villages. More please!

Stephen Jones

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Tan Dun: Marco Polo. An Opera within an Opera. The Netherlands Radio Kamerorkest, Cappella Amsterdam, soloists, cond. Tan Dun. 2 CDs, rec. 1996, total time 1 hr 40 min. Sony 01-062912-10.


The earliest piece by Tan Dun recorded on these CDs is the Violin Concerto of 1988, written at a time when the composer was still recovering from the sudden transition from China to cosmopolitan New York. Other works from this period, like the trio In Distance, and Eight Colours for String Quartet demonstrate a similarly uneasy alliance between elements of Chinese music (notably Peking Opera) and Western ‘modernisms’ (ranging from atonality and sound clusters to a neo-romantic eclecticism). The language adopted in the Violin Concerto is still fairly conservative. The music starts off beautifully with the violin, unaccompanied, playing high and scratchy like a Chinese stick-fiddle in Peking Opera. According to Cho-Liang Lin, the (brilliant) soloist in the debut recording of the concerto on the Ondine label, the Chinese audience ‘completely cracked up’ after hearing the first few bars when this concerto was played in Shanghai. But apart from a few melodic figurations and some percussive noises at the beginning and ending of the work, the links with Peking Opera are not all that strong.

For most of the time, the violin is played like a violin, in grand romantic style. Mild lyricism and brooding dark romanticism alternate with noisy outbursts for brass or percussion, interspersed with bravura passages for the soloist. The success of the piece in China may well be due to its romantic pathos, so typical of the works of many of Tan’s Chinese colleagues who still live and work in China, rather than to any Peking opera elements.

The style of Death and Fire (1992), Tan’s orchestral tribute to the paintings of Paul Klee, while again indebted to Western models, is far more personal and inventive. This work plays superbly with light and space, especially when the music moves on the edge of silence, or turns away from conventional means to favour such things as the reeds of wind instruments piping like
birds, or the voices of the members of the orchestra shouting and twittering. The bonus work on the Ondine CD, *Orchestral Theatre II*, has certain ingredients in common with *Circle*, a chamber ensemble piece written in the same year, such as a conductor reciting poetry and an audience participating in the music with sighs or shouts. But, unlike *Circle*, the tutti outbursts in *Orchestral Theatre II* sound rather drab and impotent, and the bass soloist (with his mock-Tibetan recitation) doesn’t seem to be heading anywhere. The Helsinki Philharmonic plays impeccably under its Chinese director Tang Muhai, and Cho-Liang Lin is a warm-blooded soloist in the violin concerto, but the main interest of this CD is still *Death and Fire* (of which a fine rival recording exists on the label Koch Schwann, with Tan Dun conducting the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.)

Tan is at his most inspired if his basic materials and musical forces are very limited, like in the brilliant *Paper Music* of 1993, or in his piece *Ghost Opera*, which was written for the Kronos Quartet and *pipa* player Wu Man in 1994. *Ghost Opera* now features on a Nonesuch CD. The use of water, stones, paper and metal in this score has impressed some listeners as revolutionary, at least in the realm of the string quartet, but perhaps it is more simply a need felt on the part of the composer to expand his array of instruments without necessarily involving more players. As a string quartet, *Ghost Opera* may not even be very successful. But as a theatrical stage-act for Kronos, as a vehicle to promote the Chinese lute, and as a musical co-operation between musicians in East and West, it brilliantly serves its purpose. Those who witnessed Kronos playing the piece on their tours in Europe and the United States may remember the huge glass bowl filled with water, lit up from below, which served as the focal point of attention during the live performances. The players dipped their hands into the water, made splashing sounds, or held gongs in the water which resonated eerily. The slow-motion movements of the players added to the sense of a ritual taking place. And there was Wu Man’s silhouet behind a huge paper screen, while she sang and played the Chinese lute.

Without the visual and spatial dimensions, on CD, *Ghost Opera* remains a very interesting piece. One of its musical ingredients is a tender Bach melody, which is pitted against Chinese traditional materials, such as a popular Chinese folk song (*Xiao bai cai* — ‘little white cabbage’), or imitations of monks chanting. There are some attractive *pipa* solos, and the third movement ingeniously blends the Bach tune with the Chinese folk song. Some Boulez-adepts will scorn the lack of ‘structure’ in this piece. But *Ghost Opera* is meant for enjoyment, not for analyzing. And it shares with Mozart’s and Rossini’s music a sense of playfulness and wit that is all too rare in contemporary music.

Unfortunately, the Nonesuch CD has only 35 minutes of music. There would have been space for another Tan Dun string quartet piece, or perhaps for a very different kind of composition, such as Osvaldo Golijov’s *Dreams and Prayers*, another recent acquisition in
the Kronos Quartet’s repertoire, which they combined with *Ghost Opera* in some of their concerts in Europe.

Simplicity and restraint are often the best warrants for quality in the music of Tan Dun. But in his ‘Symphony 1997’, written for the hand-over of Hong Kong from Britain to the People’s Republic, Tan Dun collapses under the sheer weight of the forces employed: a set of 2,000 year old bronze bells, a children’s choir, the cello soloist Yo-Yo Ma, a symphony orchestra, and – not present on the CD – a bass soloist. The bass joined the symphony’s finale during the celebration concerts in Hong Kong and Beijing. Judging from its mankind-embracing programme – the symphony is dedicated to ‘the people who wish to love and be loved’ – Tan attempted to write a modern Beethoven’s Ninth. But in Hong Kong there was no Berlin Wall to be brought down, and the piece is frequently embarrassing in its banality and sentimentalism – notwithstanding some fine, introspective moments for Yo-Yo Ma. Presumably music of this kind fitted the slick atmosphere of the celebrations – the quotation from *Moliêre* must have pleased people aspiring for a ‘Chinese national style’ – and the symphony was a commercial success for Sony. If bronze bells can be heard in contemporary music again one day, it will hopefully be in a different way.

This work is balanced by Tan’s attractive opera *Marco Polo*, finished in 1996. Based on a libretto by Paul Griffiths, it confirmed his reputation in the West as one of Asia’s foremost contemporary composers. It was awarded several major prizes. In *Marco Polo*, Tan Dun summarizes his musical experience from his early years in China up to his American present. The experimental solo voice of Tan’s *On Taoism* (1985) has multiplied in the opera: it has culminated in a whole array of voices which explore the terra incognita between Western opera and Eastern ritual, between folk song and Chinese theatre, between singing and other vocal sounds, from stammering to crying, from barking to sighing.

On the Sony recording we hear the singers who featured so splendidly in the opera’s premiere in Munich, and who even surpassed their Munich achievements in the concert version in the Holland Festival in Amsterdam. Thomas Young and Alexandra Montano are quite impressive as ‘Marco’ and ‘Polo’. The high and smooth glissandi of soprano Susan Botti are truly astonishing, and Chen Shizheng again confirms his reputation as a masterful Beijing Opera singer who is well at home in Western contemporary music, too. Further formidable contributions come from Dongjian Gong, Nina Warren and Stephen Bryant. Though the opera has its problematic sides – musically and in terms of its vague libretto – the overall impression is that of a splendid musical drama, often unique in its vocal and instrumental effects. The breath-taking acrobatics of the vocal soloists and the many fine choral passages (including overtone singing) are unforgettable. So are numerous orchestral elements, such as the juxtaposition of Tibetan horns and ‘shawm’ (English horn) in the ‘Himalaya’ section, the use of sitar and tabla in the ‘Desert’ music, the attractive colours in the percussion, and the *pipa* solo towards the end of the work.
Marco Polo is a plethora of musical styles and idioms, ranging from Western medieval chant to Tibetan over-tone singing, from Indian and Mongolian music to Mahler and Shostakovich, but successfully integrated. The work is possibly done more justice when played in the concert hall than in theatre performances. The Sony double-CD, recorded in Amsterdam with Tan Dun leading the Netherlands Radio Kamer Orkest and Cappella Amsterdam (choral conductor: Daniel Reuss) is beautifully produced.

Frank Kouwenhoven

Urna Chahartugchi. Tal Nutag. Songs from the Mongolian Grassland. 1 CD, rec. 1995, total time 48’58”. Klangräume, Karsten Strück, Alte Kieler Landstr. 187, D-24768 Rendsburg, Germany, tel +49-(0)4331-24038, fax +49-(0)4331-24033, e-mail KlangRme@aol.com


In 1988, Mongolian singer Urna Chahartugchi left her native soil – Inner Mongolia in northwest China – to try her luck in Shanghai. She learned to speak Chinese, took lessons on the Chinese dulcimer yangqin at the Shanghai Conservatory, and, in 1993, met with German zither player Robert Zollitsch, an encounter which marked the beginning of a lasting musical and personal partnership. She began to sing the folk songs from her homeland (and improvisations based on Mongolian folk song styles) to the accompaniment of Zollitsch’s Bavarian zither and other instruments. It worked out well – a good example of East successfully meeting West. After her first public appearance in 1994, Urna’s career skyrocketed, and she became a much sought-after performer on festivals of traditional music in Europe and beyond. Her vocal style did not undergo any major changes, but she gradually extended her experiments with jazz and other Western idioms, and co-operated with a growing number of Chinese and Western musicians.

Urna, barely six foot tall, equipped with dark Mongolian eyes, a ravishing smile and a hidden resonance box which must be bigger than her actual body has an amazing voice. Her timbral and pitch range are impressive, and she sings with great fire, accuracy and wit. The essence of her performance is in the long drawn-out soaring high tones she produces, which never fail to convey a sense of the wide open spaces of her native soil – no matter whether she sings the music delicately pianissimo or in a fierce and loud manner (sometimes adding an extra interval on top of one of her peak pitches). Grasslands and floating clouds are
evoked in her music not just as impressive scenery, but also, and particularly, as illustrations of man’s essential loneliness in the world. While most of her songs are love songs, love and life are seemingly portrayed in the music as brief and furtive opportunities in between the huge certainties of death and eternal darkness. This may be the most powerful message of Urna’s vocal escapades, even if the texts may refer to the beauty of a noble grey horse, or the sadness of an old man deserted by his children. Her songs have sometimes been interpreted as ‘New Age’, or as semi-ritual performances. The drones sometimes heard in the instrumental and vocal accompaniment have inspired some of her fans to sit in the lotus position and pray while they listen to the music, although there are no direct religious implications in Urna’s repertoire. The soaring heights which she reaches in some of the improvisations, and in such fine reflective songs as Dunjidmaa and Öndör uul (with its fine guqin solo), are balanced by earthy and humorous tunes such as Beijing lam and Jigder nana. One vocal technique notably absent is the throat- and overtone singing frequently associated with Mongolian chant. It cannot be found in Urna’s native region, the Or-dos district, a high plateau in western Inner Mongolia, and she has not taken an interest in it.

Her second CD, Tal Nutag, Lieder aus dem mongolischen Grasland (1995) offers an attractive portrait of the singer Urna. One feels that it is also a portrait of the person: plain, straightforward, honest, yet also prickly, unpredictable, with hidden fire and anger hidden beneath a beautiful calm surface, unique mixture of a naughty girl, a bodhisattva and an Asian femme fatale. Unmissable! Urna is assisted by Robert Zollitsch (zither, guqin and guitar) and by Oliver Kälberer (guitar, mandolin and voice).

Urna features more modestly — too modestly perhaps — on the CD Crossing, produced in 1994, a co-operative project of German and Chinese musicians (notably Robert Zollitsch, zither, Dino Dornis, guitar, Wu Wei, sheng, Wang Wei, Chinese percussion and Cao Xiaohong, yangqin). This album includes various instrumental items, such as ‘Desert dream’, mainly a vehicle for the Chinese dulcimer, and ‘Dragon wings’, a fine atmospheric piece for percussion. Urna’s vocal contributions are limited to brief vocalizing choruses, except in Jaran Hailas and in the title song, arguably the finest item in the album. Much of the music has something of an Uygur touch, due to Wang Wei’s groovy drumming on a snakeskin-covered hand drum from Xinjiang. Some of the recordings are electronically manipulated. There is also a lot of jazz influence here, and one of the basic musical fingerprints of Robert Zollitsch: slow repetitive triplets as a continuous background for free-floating melodic excursions. Purists may prefer the ‘plainer’ and more restrained approach of the second CD, Tal Nutag, which has almost no amplification and little in terms of added instrumental effects.

Several musicians in Urna’s equipe have also published albums without Urna. Zollitsch and Kälberer already co-operated, with viola player Gertrud Rudhart, on the CD Zanskar,
produced in 1993, before Zollitsch made his first journey to China; *Zanskar* is a pleasant, somewhat non-committal mixture of contemporary jazz, Renaissance music, traditional Indian flavours, Anton Karas and easy listening.

More recently, Wu Wei produced an album of *sheng* pieces in Chinese conservatory style, with some contributions by other native Chinese musicians and by bass player Martin Lilich. The CD, called, rather unimaginatively, *Organ for the mouth, traditional Chinese music for sheng*, proves him a capable and virtuoso instrumentalist, but it actually differs little from dozens of cassette-tapes and CDs of *sheng* solos’ produced inside the People’s Republic by other players. Wu Wei’s qualities are challenged in a much more daring fashion when he plays together with Western musicians, as on *Crossing*.

As for Urna, until her next album, a live recording of an inspiring concert at the folk and dance festival of Rudolstadt (November 1998), comes out, the CD to go for is *Tal Nutag*.

Frank Kouwenhoven

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**In Brief**

The Music of Chen Yi. Women’s Philharmonic, cond. JoAnn Falletta, Chanticleer, Chinese musicians. 1 CD, 1996, total time 69’08”. New Albion Recs, NA 090. Addr.: 584 Castro Str. No.525, San Francisco, CA 94114 USA. Fax 1–415–621. 4711. E-mail: ergo@newalbion.com

Judging from the four works on this CD, the American-based Chinese composer Chen Yi must have a penchant for archaic and primal atmospheres: in pieces like the *Symphony no.2* (1993) and *Chinese Myths Cantata* (1996) we frequently hear evocations of foggy darkness, of volcanic and dangerously eruptive landscapes or of a near-cosmic chaos. At times, loud hooting trombones seem to suggest the arrival of some huge prehistoric beast. The human presence, if any, is suggested in occasional wild rhythmic dances or quasi-tribal tunes, notably in the two works directly inspired by folk music, *Duo Ye* (1987) and *Ge Xu* (Antiphony) (1994). These are based in part on traditional tunes of the Dong and Zhuang ethnic groups of southern China. *Duo Ye* is an orchestration of Chen Yi’s piano piece of the same title from the early 1980s.

What these four works may lack in inner consistency and melodic substance is balanced by the composer’s remarkable energy and her skills of orchestration and atmospheric painting, notably in the most ambitious work on the CD, the 34-minute *Chinese Myths Cantata*. This piece, in three movements, portrays several Chinese creation myths. The music requires the cooperation of some Chinese traditional soloists as well as of an orchestra of voices
in this case the twelve male singers of Chanticleer, a group well-versed in all kinds of vocal music, from Renaissance madrigals to gospel, jazz and avant-garde. With its astonishingly skillful counter-tenors and deeply resonant basses, Chanticleer has a readily recognizable ‘sound’, and Chen Yi has cleverly employed the group’s special timbral qualities in the Cantata, notably in the beautiful ending of the work, the Song of Weaving maid and Cowherd, with its tight harmonies in a tricky high range. The Chinese instrumental parts in this work are equally demanding, both technically and musically. Liu Weishan, zheng, Zhao Yang-qin, yangqin, Chen Jiebing, erhu and Min Xiaofen, pipa, are up to the job, and blend perfectly with the orchestral sounds.

A further CD with chamber works by Chen Yi will be released in Februari 1999 on CRI, New York, with contributions from the New Music Consort, Music From China, the Manhattan String Quartet and the New York New Music Ensemble.


Zhou Long – The Ineffable. Compositions played by Music from China, New Music Consort, Manhattan Brass Quintet, members Brooklyn Philh. 1 CD, TT 63’44”. Cala CACD 77008, 1998. Cala Recs, 17 Shakespeare Gardens, London N2 9LJ, UK. Fax +44.181.365.3388. E-mail: music@calarecords.com

These two CDs offer a selection of recent works by the American-based composer Zhou Long. His renewed cooperation with the Shanghai String Quartet has resulted in an album of sugar-sweet instrumental Chi-
long. Three smaller works are sandwiched in between these sextets. The music of ‘Wild Grass’ for cello solo (written in 1993, here played admirably by Fred Sherry) is cued to the text of the foreword to Lu Xun’s ‘Wild Grass’. The instrumental score can stand on its own, yet why not let someone recite the Chinese text concurrently, which could have enhanced the recording’s impact? ‘Five Maskers’ (1995), for brass quintet, reportedly an evocation of ‘a folk dance in Northeast China’, sounds pleasing to the ear, but is not reminiscent of Chinese folk music. The oldest work on the CD, Ding (1988), for clarinet, zheng (originally: koto) and double bass, is a bold exploration of three very different sound worlds, juxtaposed rather than united.

The listener is never swept off his feet by Zhou Long’s music, but works like Ding and ‘The Ineffable’ do merit repeated listening, and they tend to become more intriguing over time.


Ye Xiaogang’s ‘Nine Horses’ (1993), the title-piece of this CD, starts with a vehement and hypnotizing rhythm which calls to mind the music of Ye’s one-time teacher Louis Andriessen, but the drama gradually trails off, and eventually evaporates in loose and dull gestures. The CD combines this piece for ten players (a re-working or a follow-up of Ye’s earlier work ‘Eight horses’) with a number of chamber pieces for piano and strings by Ye Xiaogang (from Beijing) and three of his students (Zhao Li, Liang Liang and Zou Hang), plus one piece by Chen Qiangbin from Shanghai. The CD leaves no doubt that today’s composition students in Chinese conservatories possess a much firmer technical knowledge than their predecessors did in the early 1980s. The pieces are always well-balanced, thoughtfully structured, but none of them are very surprising. Admittedly, Hang Zou’s Ai, Ai? Ai! Ai for piano trio (1995) is a work of sustained interest, apparently inspired by a love relationship. The quotation from Gounod’s Ave Maria in it remains unexplained. Liang Liang’s ‘Aurora Borealis’, for piano quartet (1995), a tranquil and lyrical piece, is mainly a succession of delicate filigree shifts in colour and pitch in the highest ranges of the instruments. Chen Qiangbin’s ‘Recital for Quizzi’, for viola and piano (1995), considerably more romantic, is also more robust and dramatic, but it could easily pass for a Russian piece of the 1930s, perhaps by a talented colleague of Shostakovich.

Eclipse, founded in 1995 by Ye Xiaogang, is reportedly the first ensemble inside Mainland China to specialize in contemporary (Western and Chinese) music, and this disc is their recording debut. The front cover of the CD booklet, a painting by Fang Lijun (one of his ‘smiling faces’) is somewhat misleading, as it suggests a link with the ‘wounded generation’ of the Cultural Revolution, while most of the composers in
the album (except Ye Xiaogang) were born later, in the mid-1970s. Ye Xiaogang’s claim (in the CD booklet) that truly individual works of avant-garde began to emerge in China only in the early 1990s is absolutely untenable, as is his statement that he is possibly the only remaining avant-garde composer of his own generation inside China. He knows he is not.


Chinese pop singer and writer Liu Sola continues her explorations in the realm of pop music with the album ‘Haunts’, produced in 1998. The CD features some of the musicians with whom she collaborated in her first album ‘Blues in the East’ (1994), (Amina Claudine Myers and Fernando Saunders) and the music embroiders much on the same receipe as that CD – a free mixture of pop, rap, blues, ornamented chant and folk song. The focal point of interest remains Liu Sola’s unmistakable voice, miraculously flexible, well at home in jazz, funk, Chinese opera, Chinese folk song, but also in baby-prattle and animal noises, as numbers like ‘Witch’s beads’ and ‘Drunk on Images’ make clear. The links with Chinese tradition are less obvious here than in ‘Blues from the East’ (except in the liner notes which accompany the various items). ‘Haunts’ has its interesting moments, but no doubt the more daring and more individual album which Liu Sola produced is ‘China Collage’ of 1996, in collaboration with pipa player Wu Man. ‘China Collage’ offers an ideal pact between a classically trained instrumentalist and a vocal freewheeler and acrobat, who do more than just reinforce one another’s talents and imagination. Wu Man and Sola create magnificent music on an extremely fertile mixed soil. The results sound at once familiar and new and inventive (and very Chinese on top of that). No lack of fun, fire, passion, vocal juggling and superb virtuoso playing on this disc, which – with only 41 minutes of music – is fully worth its price.

Tibetan Folk Songs. Tibetan Music vol.4. 1 CD, r. 1993-4, TT 57’31”. Wind records, TCD-1604, 1995. (5F, #14, Lane 130, Min Chuan Rd, Hsin Tien, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC.) Fax 886-2–2218.9485. E-mail: micpadv@ms11.hinet.net

This is one of a series of six CDs devoted to genres of Tibetan traditional music. Fine sound quality, and there is attractive music on a number of tracks, but the accompanying documentation in the CD-booklet is poor and the set-up of the entire project reveals an egalitarian – if not condescending – outlook on Tibetan culture. Lines about
‘music of primitive simplicity and magnificence’ ought not to be found in a contemporary anthology, and surely most Tibetans would protest the portrayal of their songs and dances as ‘gems of Chinese music’. Names of singers are sometimes indicated, but only in Chinese, and for locations we rarely get anywhere beyond the name of a district, if such information is provided at all. There are (partial) translations of some of the lyrics, but only in Chinese, no Tibetan texts, though Tibetan scholars were co-involved in the project. The recordings (for the entire series) were made by the musicologist Mao Jizeng from Beijing, assisted by local researchers, in 1993-94. The notes contain many errors, and the classification of the folk songs shows the limitations of a Chinese traditional scholarship not in touch with international developments in ethnomusicology. To what extent the selection of vol.4 is really representative for Tibetan folk songs remains open to question. Do ‘robber’s songs’ really constitute such an important genre that they merit a separate listing (we get one example of such a song). Do children’s songs really form an old genre? Where is the line of separation between ‘labour songs’ and ‘pastoral or mountain songs’ (‘sung in the fields during or after work’)? What has happened to one of the most appealing genres of Tibetan folk songs, layi (love songs), of which not a single example is included? The sound of the recordings is surprisingly clean, which suggests that most singers were actually invited to come to governmental bureaus of culture for their performances. There they wouldn’t have performed layi, at least not spontaneously, the genre being too sensitive for indoor display. Surely it wouldn’t have been difficult to record layi in the field? Given the relative sparsity of commercial recordings of Tibetan music, any contributions in this field must be welcomed, and the compilers of this series can be congratulated for their efforts and all their work. The other CDs in the series focus on religious music, dance songs, opera, court and instrumental music, and ballads and minority music. But the need remains for a more authoritative and more carefully documented anthology, one that is more reliable, more thorough and more thoughtful in its set-up and accompanying information.


Francis Corpataux is a profesor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Sherbrooke in Quebec. As a musician with a professional interest in teaching methods and in children’s music, he visited Southwest China in 1995 with the aim to research children’s songs among minority peoples of the area. He also collected (folk) music by grown-ups, and his fieldwork resulted in the Arion CD, probably one of the first commercial recordings of tribal music of the Miao and Dong to be released by a Wester-
minority cultures. For interesting samples, try the bamboo tubes and *lusheng* on track 12, or the love song with yodelling by two 12-year old girls on track 26.


Dongjing music. Where Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist culture meet. 1 CD, TT 68’09”. Field recs. Zhang Xingrong, Yunnan, 1992-3. PAN CD 2058, 1998. PAN, P.O.Box 155, 2300 AD Leiden, the Netherlands. Fax +31-71-5226869, E-mail: paradox@dataweb.nl

These two albums offer generous selections of Dongjing music, a serene and solemn genre of vocal and instrumental (semi-)ritual ensemble music from Yunnan province. Both discs have excellent recording quality, and elaborate liner notes with ample background information (plus many interesting photographs); they are major (in fact superior) alternatives to the CD series of Dongjing music published by JVC in Japan in 1995 (discussed in this journal on pp. 195-197). The Nimbus CD was recorded in the
UK during a British tour of one particular group of Dongjing musicians, the Dayan Ancient Music Association. The recording sound is bright, clean and spacious, and the performances are first-rate and enjoyable. The music of the Dayan ensemble is frequently reminiscent of the refined silk and bamboo music of teahouses in southeast China, albeit with a more prominent role for various types of percussion, and with (in some pieces) the added element of solemn vocal hymns. Dongjing music is rooted in an amalgam of Daoist, Buddhist and Confucian ritual traditions, shaped musically according to local fashion. Beautiful and remarkably sophisticated music, at once ‘folky’ and deeply devout and spiritual.

For purely musical reasons, one may easily favour the ‘concert’ sound of the fine Nimbus CD, a very recommendable disc. For more local atmosphere and for the actual sound of this type of music in the field, one can turn to the PAN CD, which is broader in scope in that it provides a survey of Dongjing music from five different cities and counties. The field recordings for PAN were made by the eminent musicologist Zhang Xingrong of the Yunnan Art Institute, between March 1992 and February 1993.

Qin Music on Antique Instruments. 1 CD, rec. 1998, TT 67’29". Dept. of Mus., Univ. of Hong Kong. Produced in conjunction with exhibition ‘Gems of Ancient Chinese Zithers’, HK Univ. Museum (1998). Dept of Mus. Univ. HK, Pokfulam Rd. HK. Fax 852-2858.4933. E-mail: irene@hkuce.hku.hk

More than just a fine collection of qin recordings accompanying an exhibition of old instruments, this CD is a profession of musical faith, and a quiet homage to Madame Tsar Teh-yun (Cai Deyun), the leading qin performer in Hong Kong now for nearly half a century. All the players on this disc (Lau Chor-wah, Sou Si-tai, Tse Chun-yan, Shum Hing-shun and Bell Yung) are, or were at some time, her students, and most of them confess to the quiet and superbly controled playing style of Master Tsar. Bell Yung also studied with Yao Bingyan, and contributes to the CD one piece learnt from master Yao, and another one learnt from Tsar Teh-yun. Under Madame Tsar’s influence, numerous qin players in Hong Kong have become champions of playing on silk strings, and they believe in strict adherence to the elder gene-
ration masters’ playing styles. The music on this disc illustrates this, and serves as a refreshing antidote to many qin CDs with polished conservatory-style performances (mostly on instruments with steel strings) that have emerged on the Chinese Mainland in recent years. Nearly all items on the CD are well-known pieces from the qin repertoire, played and recorded numerous times before, but the performances are first-rate, from Tse Chun-yan’s beautiful rendering of Shui xian cao to Bell Yung’s wonderfully capricious Huaxu ge. There is one new piece, Tse Chun-yan’s ‘Composition in Yifan mode’, which captures some melodic features of Cantonese music. But the extra value of this disc is primarily that it provides the listener with an opportunity to hear, in living sound, a fascinating array of antique instruments, many dating from the 10th to 12th centuries. The book of the qin exhibition, too, is a must for all qin freaks. [In Chime 13/14, planned for the end of 1999, we expect to review a vast number of commercial qin recordings.]

Pure Yangqin. Solo pieces f. Chin. dulcimer, played by Zhao Yangqin. 1 CD, TT 65'33". Rec. 1995 in San Francisco. Fax: 00.1.415.681.8599. E-mail: MOC@melodyofchina.com Web:http://www.melodyofchina.com

Most discs of ‘Yangqin solo’ published in China are in fact recordings of ensemble music with occasional solo passages for the Chinese dulcimer yangqin. Zhao Yangqin, a musician from Nanjing and a prolific yangqin player, now features on a CD that is genuinely ‘solo’, except for some (tastefully) added percussion on a small number of tracks. She comes from a musical family in Nanjing, and was originally taught to play the instrument by her father, Qian Fangping. (Her name is indeed Yangqin, like the instrument.) There is little evidence for a genuine solo tradition of yangqin music in China, except as part of the ‘conservatory style’ music of the 20th century. This is also what we get to hear on Zhao Yangqin’s CD. The selection varies from arrangements of traditional teahouse music from Guangdong and Jiangsu to compositions of the 1930s to 50s (A Bing, Xian Xinghai), plus a few recent works and arrangements of foreign music. The CD brings to light the limitations of yangqin solo: one cannot play sustained notes on this type of instrument, only suggest them by fast tremolos, and this becomes a bit tedious on twelve tracks in succession, even if the performances are as truly fine as the ones on this album.
As a scholar, Laurence E. R. Picken (b. 1909) pursued equally meritorious careers in zoology and musicology. This film, a 50-minute interview with Picken, interspersed with fragments of Chinese and Turkish music, exclusively highlights his activities and achievements as a music scholar. Though it was made thirteen years ago, it covers most of the musical areas that Picken has been dealing with: Chinese music and musical instruments, notably the seven-stringed zither qin, Turkish instruments and Turkish folk music (which he researched in the 1950s), and the well-known Tang Music Project, a major series of transcriptions of Japanese manuscript-sources of Chinese Tang Music, in Western notation (since 1975). The work on the Tang music scores is still on-going. Picken, currently aged 89, lives and works in Cambridge.

Picken’s main areas of musical research are China, Japan and Turkey, but he has also directed his attention to other parts of the Asian world, including Central Asia, South-East Asia and Korea. His writings, which focus, in particular, on historical and organological aspects of Asian music, have established high standards in historical musicology, while laying the groundwork for Western research in the history of Chinese music.

Picken’s life and adventurous undertakings certainly merit a documentary. This could have resulted in a rather more exciting document, in view of Picken’s status as one of ethnomusicology’s major exponents, but also in his qualities of a British gentleman, an adventurer and a controversial music historian, who sometimes maintained a difficult relationship with students and colleagues at home and abroad.

Unfortunately, this film, made in studio conditions by the AV unit of Cambridge University, suffers from a low budget and a somewhat unimaginative approach. It fails to convey the true excitement that Picken and his students must have felt when making their musical discoveries, and does little to highlight the scholar as a man. Carolle Pegg asks her questions in a way that shows that she already knows the answers, and Picken responds accordingly. With no live footage to come with the Chinese or Turkish music – we only get sound fragments accompanied by photos – and with no attempt to interview any of his students or colleagues (friends or adversaries), the film is of limited interest.

Yet it remains one of the few documents of Picken in conversation, and includes a brief (and unique!) guest appearance of his older colleague Joseph Needham, whom Picken met in China in the autumn of 1944. Picken’s brief references to his youth and the accounts of his field research in Turkey and China are illustrated with interesting snapshots. Picken shows some Chinese and Turkish instruments from his collection of 700 instruments, which he donated to the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. We hear (but do not see) him playing a fragment on the qin. In his very articulate English, and in carefully chosen wordings, he provides brief organological introductions to the qin, the erhu (spike fiddle),
various types of Chinese mouth organs or ocarinas, as well as Turkish instruments such as the zither kanun, the fiddle Karadeniz kemençesi, the bagpipes tulum and the flute kaval.

The film ends with a short excerpt from a stage re-creation of the very first Tang music score which Picken and his students transcribed, The Emperor destroys the formations, prepared for performance in Taiwan by F.S. Liu, a student of Picken. She revived an ancient court dance notation to go together with the music, and this was staged by dancers and musicians in Taipei. Pegg’s film came too early to include images of the concert of Tang music held in honour of Picken at the Shanghai Conservatory in November 1990. At that concert a whole series of his music transcriptions were brought alive by Chinese musicians.

One is left to ponder about a film that would have sketched a more daring picture of Picken’s experiences. Surely there is no shortage of materials to select from: his war-time adventures in Chongqing, his travels along the Black Sea coast, his acquaintance with many great musicians in China, Japan and Turkey, his discovery and reconstruction of a hidden corpus of Chinese medieval music in Japanese Togaku — not to speak of his major achievements in Zoology, which have continued well into the 1960s, and have resulted, amongst other things, in a major study on the organization of cells.

Antoinet Schimmelpenninck


In the early 1980s, mainland China saw the emergence of a group of highly talented young composers of avant-garde music. After decades of musical stagnation and violent reaction against Western modern music, China all of a sudden — and much to its own surprise — found itself in the very heart of the international avant-garde circuit. Composers like Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong and Guo Wenjing rapidly established themselves as key innovators in 20th century Asian music. How could China, actually still such a stronghold of musical conservatism, make this formidable leap? In the documentary film ‘Broken Silence’ — set in the triangle New York, Paris and China — we meet five Chinese composers who attest to this fascinating development: Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong, Mo Wuping, Chen Qigang and Guo Wenjing.

All of them have found unique ways of coping with the cultural and political realities of the past and the challenges of the future. All of them share a fascination for Western musical innovation as well as a strong affinity for China’s native musical traditions. Via brief interviews, excerpts from music rehearsals, glimpses of Music Conservatory life in China, and images of rural China, film director Eline Flipse paints a vivid portrait of new Chinese music. She shows how the composers have detected, in the rough and powerful music of the Chinese countryside, a spirit that happily and genuinely infects them: the mountain cries of local farmers, the deep humming and bell ringing of Buddhist worshippers, the battering on gongs and drums in village bands, the intricate rhythms hidden beneath the deafening surface of that music, the special vocal colours of southern dialects, the vocal acrobatics of Chinese
opera. Many of these elements are reflected in their musical compositions, but every individual composer adheres to his own personal alchemy and creates a distinctive style.

In Paris we meet Chen Qigang, a former student of Messiaen and possibly the prototype of a Chinese gentleman. The 'French' touch and the aesthetic refinement and technical sophistication of his vocal and instrumental works have little in common with the ever more earthy rhythms, shrieking suonas and primal shouts in the music of Qu Xiaosong and Tan Dun, two composers whom we meet in New York. The sturdy, gloomy orchestral timbre of Guo Wenjing – impressively matched by the eerie atmosphere of his native town Chongqing – is a far cry from the intimate, classical gestures in Mo Wuping's chamber music.

The film follows most of these composers on a concert tour in Holland, with the Nieuw Ensemble, one of Europe's most distinguished ensembles of contemporary music. This group, led by conductor Ed Spanjaard, has been interested in new Chinese music since 1988, when its artistic director Joël Bons visited the Far East and collected some scores and recordings of Chinese composers. This marked the beginning of a remarkable project – an ongoing series of concerts of Chinese music, partly in the framework of major European festivals like those of Donaueschingen, Strasbourg, Huddersfield and Venice.

In 'Broken Silence' we see the composers at work during rehearsals with the ensemble. There are excerpts from two chamber operas, Qu Xiaosong's 'The Death of Oedipus' and Guo Wenjing's 'Wolf Cub Village', which were premiered in Amsterdam in 1994. But we also follow Guo Wenjing (currently living in Beijing) to his native province Sichuan, where he meets a village theatre troupe and attends a Sichuan opera performance. We find Tan Dun – now the most famous of all Chinese mainland composers – in the countryside of Hunan, back in the village where he worked as a youth during the Cultural Revolution. He talks with the village leaders of those days, and listens to local folk singers. He pays a visit to the Taogongmiao, a near-by temple which is locally famous as 'the' place of origin of Hunan opera – there is an opera stage inside the temple grounds.

One composer is shown only in some brief amateur video fragments: Mo Wuping, who died of liver cancer in Beijing in June 1993. He was 34. The film, shot in the autumn of 1994, is dedicated to him. Mo was one of the most promising voices of the young generation. We learn to know him via comments by his young wife Li Shuqin, who lives in Beijing, and via moving excerpts from letters which he wrote to his wife while he was studying in Paris. (The voice reading these fragments in the film is that of poet Duo Duo).

In China, there is a brief guest appearance of Du Mingxin, a composer of the older generation. He happily waves his hands to the rhythm of his own 'romantic' music and makes a noncommittal statement about the energy and daring of the new generation. The fact that, actually, Du and many of his elder colleagues have little affinity with Chinese avant-garde and have opposed it is not expressed very clearly in the film – not to speak of what such an opposition means in a politically charged culture like that of China. To balance matters, Eline Flipse and Erik van Empel have given full reign to the music and to images of Chinese landscapes. The result is a beautiful artistic film rather than a learned documentary. 'Broken Silence' includes a sequence of nearly 25 minutes in which hardly a word is spoken, and where images of local opera, village life and the bustle in Chinese urban areas merge beautifully with the sounds of contemporary Chinese music. Strongly recommended.

Antoinet Schimmelpenninck
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: Burchard Pennink (BP), Cheng Yu (CHY), Chen Qigang (CQ), Chen Xiaoyong (CX), Chen Yi (CY), Emanuele Pappalardo (EP), Guo Wenjing (GW), Marion Pennink (MP), Marnix Wells (MW), Rachel Harris (RH), Su Cong (SC), and ST (Sue Tuohy).

People and Projects

Chan Le, doctoral candidate at UC, Berkeley, has received a Fulbright Dissertation Fellowship (DDRA) to undertake research in Vietnam on quan ho, a texted and complex musical genre.

Cheng Yu spent extended periods in 1996 and 1998 on fieldwork in China for her Ph.D. study (at London University) on Xi’an gugyue. In addition to her research, she is teaching pipa and guqin at the School for Oriental and African Studies in London.

Mercedes Dujunco joined the Ethnomusicology Program at New York University (Department of Music) in September 1998 as an Assistant Professor. She previously taught at the University of Alberta. Her research interests span a range of Asia area specializations (China, Vietnam, Philippines) and include film music, music and politics, folk instrumental genres, and issues of musical nostalgia.

Christopher Evans is working on an M. Phil. thesis at the East Asian Studies Department, University of Leeds, UK, about the history and development of (variant versions of) the guqin piece Pingsha luo yan.

Hugh de Ferranti accepted a position as Lecturer in the Departments of Musicology as well as Asian Languages and Cultures at the City University of New York, from Fall 1998 onwards. Recently he returned from music research in Japan, on a grant from the University of Sydney.

Nancy Guy has accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego. Her dissertation at University of Pittsburgh (1996) was on music and politics in Taiwan. She previously taught at the Univ. of California, Santa Barbara and Western Michigan University.

Nathan Hesselnik has accepted a postdoctoral research position at the University of California, Berkeley, USA. Recently he completed his doctoral studies in ethnomusicology at the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (in Korean music).

Colin Huehns, formally trained as a composer and violinist at Cambridge University and the Royal Academy of Music in London, spent 1997 studying the erhu (Chinese spike fiddle) at the Xi’an Conservatory of Music in China.

Toshiro Kido was awarded the Klaus Wachsmann Prize 1998 (for advanced and critical essays in organology) for his book Reconstructed Music Instruments of Ancient East Asia, Department of Performing Arts, National Theatre of Japan, published by the Japan Art Council, 1994. Committee Chair: J. Kenneth Moore. Committee Members: Tom Vennum, Fred Lieberman, and Sue Carole DeVale.

Fred Lau (California Polytechnical State University, San Luis Obispo) was awarded a stipend to attend a NEH sponsored summer seminar on ‘National Identity in China: The New Politics of Culture’ at the East-West Center and the University of Hawai‘i, 1998. He was granted a sabbatical for the fall and conducted fieldwork in Singapore for his ‘Chinese Music in the Diaspora’ project. This trip was partially funded by a California State University State Faculty Development Grant.

François Picard has accepted a position as Professor in analytical musicology in the Dept of Musicology at Paris IV Sorbonne University.

Helen Rees has accepted a position as Assistant Professor in the Department of Ethnomusicology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Since obtaining her Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh in 1994, she has taught at New College of the University of South Florida.

Dorothee Schaab-Hanke recently finished her doctoral dissertation on the Chinese court theatre from the 7th to 10th centuries at the University of Hamburg. After a one-year stay in Taiwan, she became an Assistant Lecturer in the Chinese Department at the University of Hamburg.

Tan Hwee San works on a Ph.D. study at the Music Centre of the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London focusing on Buddhist music traditions of Fujian. In 1997-8 she carried out fieldwork in Fujian Province, China.

Tong Soon Lee completed his Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology at the University of Pittsburgh and recently accepted a Lectureship in Music at the University of Durham, UK.
Andreas Steen (Free University, Berlin), author of Der Lange March des Rock'n Roll: Pop und Rockmusik in der Volksrepublik China (Hamburg, 1996), visited the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1997-8 on a half-year scholarship from DAAD in 1997-8. He carried out research on the early history of the recording industry in China. He is currently preparing a Ph.D. study on this subject.

Jonathan Stock has been appointed to develop a new Ethnomusicology program at the University of Sheffield, UK. Author of Musical Creativity in 20th-Century China (New York, 1996) and World Sound Matters (London 1996), he previously taught at the University of Durham.

J. Lawrence Witzleben was awarded the Alan Merriam Prize 1997 (in recognition of the most distinguished English-language monograph in the field of ethnomusicology published in the previous two years) for his book ‘Silk and Bamboo’ Music in Shanghai: The Jiangnan Sizhu Instrumental Ensemble Tradition (Kent State Univ. Press, 1995).

Yang Mu (Canberra School of Music, Australia) was awarded the Jaap Kunst Prize 1998 for his article ‘Erotic Musical Activity in Multiethnic China’ in Ethnomusicology 42/2. Chair: James Cowdery. Committee members: Judith Gray, Rebecca Miller and Jane Sugarman. The Jaap Kunst Prize ($200) is awarded annually to the best published submission to the journal Ethnomusicology by a person whose primary institutional association or residence is outside of the United States and Canada.

Bell Yung has recently been appointed the Kwan Fong Chair in Chinese Music at the University of Hong Kong, while retaining his post at the University of Pittsburgh. He will split his time between the two by being in residence at the University of Hong Kong during the Fall term and at the University of Pittsburgh during the Spring term for an initial period of three years. Among his responsibilities in Hong Kong is to develop the study and research of Chinese music and to build up its graduate music curriculum. The Music Department at the University of Hong Kong, the only higher institution in the city that uses English exclusively as the medium of instruction, offers both undergraduate and postgraduate training. Its B.A. curriculum is innovative and broadly based, and caters to Hong Kong’s special environment. It offers graduate degrees of M. Phil., and Ph.D. in Musicology and composition.

Huang Xiangpeng (d. 1997)
On the 8th of May, 1997, the distinguished Chinese musicologist and music theoretician Huang Xiangpeng died in Beijing. He was 70 years old. Professor Huang was one of China’s leading scholars in the field of musicology, and the founder of a number of important serial publications issued by the Music Research Institute in Beijing: Chinese Musicology, Chinese Music Yearbook, and Musicology Newsletter. In 1947 he embarked on his musical career as a student of composition in Nanjing. He entered the Central Conservatory in Beijing in 1950 and began his musicological research at the Beijing Music Research Institute in 1958. Between 1985 and 1988 he was the Head of the MRI.

Chen Wulou (d. 1998)
Professor Chen Wulou, one of China’s most prominent scholars in the field of Chinese oral literature died in Yangzhou on the 4th of March, 1998. He devoted a life-time to research on Yangzhou storytelling and related genres of folklore.

Letters

Spelling of Hong Kong and Taiwan names
A rectification of names is in order, as concerns my article on Hong Kong and Taiwan composers in Chime No.9: I make use of pinyin-romanization throughout except for verbatim quotes, certain well-known exceptions such as Chiang Kai-shek, and the names of Hong kong composers which usually adhere to the Cantonese dialect in their spelling and would no longer be recognizable in pinyin. The names of composers from Taiwan are presented in pinyin throughout, only for convenience’s and for consistency’s sake. I am aware of, but do not mean to support, the political implications of the use of this PRC-sponsored system. Notwithstanding, Taiwanese composers do not keep to a consisten method of romanisation and it might have been difficult to recognize their names had I adopted them in their multiple and sometimes confusing forms. I have included all different versions of names known to me in the glossary of Dangerous Tunes (cited in the article) and wish to refer those who are unsure about who I am talking about to that work. A second corrigendum: p. 20, footnote 34 should read: ‘The same device is also used by Ma Shuilong in his Bamboo Flute Concerto (1981) and in “Peacock Flies Southeast” of 1977’.

Barbara Mintler

Institutions and Media

Web sites on Chinese music
The following list of web sites on Internet, concerning (mainly) Chinese music, was originally prepared by Sue Tuohy for ACMR Reports, as part of a bibliography. We are grateful for her permission to reprint it here, with some additions.

includes sound clips, links to associated web sites, recommended readings and a list of contacts throughout England. URL: http://www2.bath.ac.uk/~ensahmk/cms_music.html


Beijing International Jazz Festival. Information on forthcoming events, including artists photos and brief biographical notes. URL: http://www.jazzview.com.cn/jazz99/program.html


Chinascape: Services: Books and Music. Information on locating and ordering books (current and out-of-print) and music. URL: http://peace.wit.com/chinascape/oversea/services/books

Chinese Music. Jin Kangzhong. Information on instruments, songs, music history, dance, and Chinese opera; includes sound clips. URL: http://lorathost.cfa.ilstu.edu/~jikangzhb/

Chinese Music Archive WWW. Chinese University of Hong Kong Department of Music. Information on current and important holdings, history of the archive, and current staff. URL: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/mus/cma/home.htm


Chinese Music Page. Jaideep Ray and Jonathan Tischio. A survey of Chinese music including: traditional (classical), Northwest Wind, folk, ceremonial, pre-war, post-war, turbulent years, urban, and music influenced by the West; includes sound clips and links to associated web sites. URL: http://vizlab.rutgers.edu/~jaray/sounds/chinese_music/chinese_music.html

Chinese Music Page. Xie Nandi. Information on traditional, popular, and ceremonial music; includes sound clips, and links to associated web sites; in English and Chinese. URL: http://oucsace.es.ohiou.edu/~nxie/chinese_music.html


Gu Qin music. John Thompson (Hong Kong) and Yu Hui (Wesleyan University, USA) both set up web sites on their respective research on gqin scores. Chris Evans (UK) set up a general web site about gqin for qin players in the UK and elsewhere in Europe. URL: http://www.iohk.com/UserPages/thompson, http://www.wesleyan.edu/music/student/hyu, http://members.aol.com/cccevans42/gq- ie.htm

Hugo: The Master of Chinese Music. Music company with a catalogue of over 200 Chinese music CD titles (e-mail: apsaras888@msn.com). URL: http://www.hugocdd.com

Korean Music. Robert provine (Durham) set up a web page for the Association for Korean Music Research (AKMR). URL: http://www.dur.ac.uk/~dmu0rcek/akmrpage.htm

Index of Published Multimedia (Chinese Music Archive). University of North Carolina. Sound clips of various types of Chinese music (opera, folk, popular, choral suites, songs of the Cultural Revolution, etc.), classified by style. URL: http://sunsite.unc.edu/pub/multimedia/chinese-music

Lei Qiang: Chinese Traditional Erhu Music. Paul Etch, Oliver Sudden Productions. Advertisement for Lei Qiang’s CD; includes biographical information on Lei Qiang, Liu Tianhua, and music for the erhu. URL: http://www.NetAxis.qc.ca/Oliver_Sudden/


New Directions in Chinese Music. Dennis Rea. Examples of contemporary music from China, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora. URL: http://www.sonarchy.org

(ST)
CHIME Meeting in Heidelberg  Visitors to Luo Zheng’s Exhibition of Chinese Oil Paintings line up in front of the Heidelberg City Theatre. In the middle: senior composer Luo Zhongrong and his son Luo Zheng (Beijing). The exhibition was part of a series of cultural events in the framework of the CHIME Conference ‘Barbarian Pipes and Strings’, held in Heidelberg, October 1998. With over 70 participants, including researchers and composers from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China and the USA, and with an impressive series of concerts of traditional and contemporary Chinese music, this was among the most successful of CHIME’s annual meetings in recent years. A full report will follow in the next issue of CHIME (no.12/13).

Publications

Recent Publications
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) Other parts of Asia.

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. Ethnich traditions and ethnicity.


CHANG, Peter M. – *Chou Wen-Chung and His Music: A Musical and Biographical Profile of*


MITTLER, Barbara – ‘The politics of identity in New Music from Hong Kong and Taiwan.’ In: CHIME 9, 1996, pp.4-45.


MICIC, Peter – ‘Pop Music Commands a Huge Audience Today: An Interview with the Young Composer Li Lifu.’ Chinopera Papers 19, 1996; 95-104.


13. Miscellaneous and conference reports.


KOUWENHOVEN, Frank - 'East Asian Voices: Knotty Questions.' In: CHIME 9, pp. 2-3.


14. Other parts of Asia (selection)


SUTTON, Anderson R. - Record Rev. of: Indonesie, Toraja: Funearailles et Fetes de Fecondite /


Cultural Diversity in Music Education V, Malmö, 15–19 April 1999
The fifth international symposium on Cultural Diversity in Music Education will be held from 15 to 19 April, 1999, at the Malmö Academy of Music in Malmö. The two main themes are ‘World Music and the Classical Canon’ and ‘World Music and National Folk Music’. There will be keynote lectures by Bruno Nettlet and John Drummond. For information, contact: Håkon Lundström, Malmö Academy of Performing Arts, Lund University, Box 8203, 20041 Malmö, Sweden. Fax: +46-40-325480. E-mail: Hakan.Lundstrom@mhm.lu.se

Holids, Ritual, Festival, Bowling Green, 21–23 May, 1999
The 3rd Conference on ‘Holids, Ritual, Festival, Celebration and Public Display’ will take place from 21 to 23 May, 1999, at Bowling Green State University, Bowling green, Ohio, USA. For information, contact: Jack Santino, Dept. of Popular Culture, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403-0226, USA. Tel: +1-419-372.2983. Fax: +1-419-372.2577. E-mail: jsansin@bgnet.bgsu.edu. Web: http://seeing2020.com/holiday/

The phenomenon of Singing, Newfoundland, 2–5 July, 1999
‘Sharing the Voices: The Phenomenon of Singing; International Symposium II’ will be held from 2 to 5 July, 1999, at St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada. For information, contact the symposium committee at: School of Music, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John’s, NF, Canada A1C 5S7. Fax: +1-709-737.2666. Tel: +1-709-737.7486. E-mail: kiadam@mun.ca [Dr. Ki Adams]. E-mail: Brian@morgan.uncs.mun.ca [Dr. Brian A. Roberts]. Web: http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~singing/.

Popular Music and the Media, Sheffield, 8–10 July 1999
A conference on ‘Popular Music and the Media: Television, Video and Film’ will be held from 8 to 10 July, 1999, in Sheffield, UK. For information, contact Steve Neale, Popular Music and the Media Conference, Sheffield Hallam University, Psalter Lane Campus, Sheffield S11 8UZ, UK. E-mail: S.B.Neale@sheffield.ac.uk

35th World Conference ICTM, Hiroshima, 19-25 August 1999
The International Council for Traditional Music will hold its 35th World Conference from 19 to 25 August 1999 at Hiroshima City University, Hiroshima, Japan. Themes are: (1) Learning Music, Learning dance; (2) The Musician/Dancer in Asian Society; (3) Asian Music and Dance Research; (4) Music and Peace; (5) Local Transformations of

Meetings

Chinoperl, 13 March 1999
Global Pop; (6) New Research. Contact: ICTM World Conference, Intergroup Corporation, Nihon Tabacco Bldg., 4-25, Ebisucho, Naka-ku, Hiroshima 730-0021, Japan. Tel: +81-82-246.5955. Fax: +81-82-246.5956. E-mail: hiroshima@intergroup.co.jp. Web: http://www.intergroup.co.jp/

5th International CHIME Conference, Prague, 15-21 September 1999
The 5th annual CHIME Conference, ‘Music in Cities, Music in Villages – East-Asian music traditions in transition’, will be held from 15 to 19 September, 1999, at the Academy of Music, Charles University, in Prague, in the Czech Republic. This meeting, which takes place in the beautiful Liechtenstein Palace in the heart of historical Prague, focuses on musical contrasts between villages and cities in China and East Asia. Generally speaking, in the study of Chinese and East-Asian music, urban genres are more widely promoted and more thoroughly studied than their rural counterparts. Chinese opera, as it can be heard in major cities, is a popular subject of research. But what about rural opera? How does it compare to the urban traditions? The same question can be asked about other musical genres. How does rural religious music compare to urban religious music? What about rural pop versus urban pop? For this conference, we invite original papers and audiovisual materials which highlight musical traditions in China, Taiwan, Tibet, Mongolia, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and adjacent countries. We expect the emphasis to be on rural or urban perspectives, or – ideally – on a comparison of both. In addition to panels and paper sessions, the conference will feature concerts and other music of zither music (zheng, koto, kayagum), and a Chinese Buddhist ritual ceremony held by the Beijing Buddhist ensemble. Subsidiary themes for which we invite abstracts are: 1) Musicians’ biographies; 2) Musical motives in literature and art; and 3) Ancient Chinese music and music archology.

The meeting will be organized by Charles University, the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for Scholarly Research, and the Academy of Music in Prague, the Czech Republic, in cooperation with CHIME. Abstracts for paper contributions (approximately 15 lines) are welcome until 31 March 1999. For further information, contact Dr. Lucie Olivova or Sanka Fulle at the International Sinological Center in Prague. Address: International Sinological Center, Cetná 20, 116 42 Praha 1, Czech Republic. E-mail: CCK-ISC@ff.cuni.cz

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, Emmichplatz 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 organizes 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, organized by the Chinese Art Academy, the Chinese Musicians’ Association, 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 retrospect and a view of the next century. For more information, contact: Zhang Chunxiang, Beijing Music Research Institute, No. 1 West Bldg., Dongzhimenwai xinyuanli, 100027 Beijing, P.R. China. Tel: +86-1–64674194; fax: 64674416.

Society for Ethnomusicology, 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. E-mail: 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

6th International CHIME Conference, Leiden, 23–27 August, 2000
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 on 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, story-tellers, 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).

Programme committee: 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@ru.nl, or Frank Kouwenhoven at the CHIME Foundation (tel: +31-71-5133.974, fax: +31-71-5123.183, e-mail: chime@wxs.nl).

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; web site: www.quasar.ualberta.ca/isme2000/.

The deadline for submission of articles and news to Chime 12-13 is 20 April 1999.

Composers

For information in this section we depend on the cooperation of composers and composers’ agencies.

Chen Xiaoyong portrayed in concert series
Chinese composer Chen Xiaoyong enjoys continued success in northern Europe, particularly in Germany and Austria. Chen is based in Hamburg, where he hopes to start an electronic studio of his own to-
others. Recent premieres of Chen’s chamber music include *Evapora* (1996, for flute, oboe, violin, cello and piano), and the intriguing and ‘folky’ *Circuit* (1996) for Chinese bridged zither (zheng). Chen’s *Enclosed Events*, a playful work for for flute, cello and piano (1997) was premiered by the Cologne Connection Trio, 19 April 1997 at the Festival Ars Nova of SWF Baden-Baden. *Warp* (1994) for orchestra is Chen’s most often performed work. It was played in March 1997 by the Taiwan Symphony Orchestra (conductor Yves Prin). *Warp* was also played during the New Music Festival in Münster (May 1997), by the London Sinfonietta in April 1998 (chamber version), and by Ensemble 2E2M in Champigny, France. Other recent performances include his 1986 *First String Quartet* (at the New Music days in Hannover February 1997; it is the piece that once made Ligeti decide to adopt Chen Xiaoyong as a student), *Diary I* for piano (1996), *Trío* for recorder, harp and accordion (1997) and *Divergence II* (1996) for ensemble. Chen’s Second String Quartet (1997-98) was premiered in July 1998 in Darmstadt by the Kairis Quartet. (CX)

**Chen Yi at Kansas City Conservatory US**

Chen Yi was recently appointed Professor of Composition at the Conservatory University of Missouri / Kansas City Conservatory of Music. Her music is published by the Theodore Presser Company in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Her works have been recorded on record labels like CRI, Teldec, Nimbus, Delos, Avant, Hugo and New Albion. A new CD with chamber works (to be published by CRI) is in preparation.

Chen Yi co-operated in recent projects with musicians like James Galway (*Flute Concerto*), Evelyn Glennie (*Percussion Concerto, Fall 1998*), and with the Singapore Symphony, the Rascher Saxophone Quartet, the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, the Krones and Ying quartets, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, and others. Recent world premieres include *Golden Flute* by the Duluth Symphony, also by the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra at the 6th International Radio Music Festival in China: *Spring Dreams*, a choral work premiered by the Ithaca College Choir in New York; *Momentum* for orchestra, by the Peabody Symphony Orchestra at its Lincoln Center debut concert in New York; *Fiddle Suite* by the Philharmonic Orchestra of Japan at Suntory Hall, Tokyo; *Romance and Dance* for strings (1998) by the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra in Germany and China; *Baban* (1998) for piano solo, and the Japanese premiere of *Ge Xu* (*Antiphony, 1994*) by the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) Symphony Orchestra with conductor Charles Dutoit in Tokyo after its China tour. Chen Yi’s Second Symphony was recently played by the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC. In November 1998, the Ying Quartet and Mimi Huang premiered *Sound the Five* for cello and string quartet (Rochester NY). The Women’s Philharmonic in San Francisco premiered Chen Yi’s *Cello Concerto* (1998), with cellist Paul Tobias. Various commissioned works (mostly forthcoming in 1999) include *Feng* (Introduction and Rondo) for woodwind quintet, a *Percussion concerto* (commissioned by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra), the choral piece *Chinese Poems, a Concerto for organ and wind instruments*, and a *Violin Concerto*, commissioned by The Women’s Philharmonic for a performance scheduled in 2001. (CY)

**Composers – In brief**

**Chen Qigang** ‘s *Reflet d’un temps disparu*, for cello and large orchestra, had its successful debut at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in Paris on 23 April 1998, with cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the National Orchestra of France conducted by Charles Dutoit. Critics characterized the work as ‘reserved and warm, intimate and expressive’. Chen Qigang is currently working on music for a major theatre play. Other recent premieres of his music include *Énergie Contemplative* for three flutes (1997), first played in Paris in 1997 by *Trío d’Argent*. Numerous earlier works by Chen were played in recent times during orchestral and chamber concerts in Chicago, Grenoble, Lyon, Paris, Taipei and elsewhere. In September 1998, Chen Qigang presided over the jury of the Ninth International Composition Competition of Besançon. Other jury members included M. Marc-André Dalbavie, M.N.A. Huber, Karja Saariaho and M. Marco Stroppa. In 1997 he participated in the Taiwan International Composers’ Symposium together with Chen Xiaoyong, Qu Xiaosong, Korean composer Sukhi Kang and Japanese composer Y.Taira. (CQ)

**Guo Wenjing**’s most recent work, *Echoes of Heaven and Earth* opus 31, for mixed choir and percussion, premiered 22 January 1999 in Amsterdam. The Netherlands Chamber Choir was led by Ed Spanjaard. Guo’s opera *Night Banquet* premiered at the Almeida Theatre in London, 10 July 1998 (see elsewhere in this volume of Chime). Guo’s *Drama* op. 23 for three pairs of cymbals and voices (1995) was recently performed at a concert of Chinese music in Münster. Various works for voices and percussion were played during the recent Chime conference and festival ‘Barbarian Pipes and Strings’ in Heidelberg (October 1998). The Nieuw Ensemble from Amsterdam dedicated several concerts to Guo Wenjing’s music, most recently at the Festival d’Automne in Paris, November 1998. (GW)

**Joan Huang**’s *The Myth of Leifeng Pagoda* for violin and orchestra was one of four works rewarded a first place in the Women’s Philharmonic 1996 Reading Session Competition (San Francisco). (FK)
Luo Jingjing’s Cicada Slough for chamber orchestra was one of four works rewarded a first place in the Women’s Philharmonic 1996 Reading Session Competition (San Francisco). (FK)

Qu Xiaosong’s opera Life on a String premiered in May 1998 at the Brussels Festival of Arts (see elsewhere in this volume of Chime). It was repeated in Paris and Munich in December 1998. Future performances are scheduled in Holland, Hong Kong and Japan (1999). Qu Xiaosong participated in the Taiwan 1997 International Composers’ Symposium. The Nieuw Ensemble in Amsterdam dedicated three concerts to his music in 1997, featuring Ji no.4 for male voice and ensemble, Ji no.5 for koto, sho and string quartet, Ji no.6 (with Japanese biwa) and other recent works. Various works for cello solo, for ensemble and for percussion group were performed during the recent Chime conference and festival ‘Barbarian Pipes and Strings’ in Heidelberg (October 1998). Qu is now working on numerous commissions, including a major work for the Berlin Radio Choir, scheduled for performance in 1999. (FK)

Su Cong is currently on leave from his teaching post at the Film Academy of Baden-Wüttemberg, Ludwigsburg. In recent years, he has written music for a wide variety of stage plays, television plays and films in Europe, Asia and Canada. He has also produced several new chamber works, including his Third String Quartet (1996) and a Capriccio for cello and piano (1998). His chamber opera Wenn die Sonne aufgeht... (When the Sun is Rising..., 1997) successfully premiered in Mönchengladbach in March 1997. It is based on the story of the Dutch businessman Johannes van Damme, executed in Singapore in 1994 under the accusation of heroin smuggling. The opera portrays this event in the wider framework of long-lived cultural-political tensions between Asia and the West. In his music, Su Cong skillfully combines elements of Asian traditional music with Western avant-garde and romanticism. Future projects and commissions include Fleder Sturm (Strange Storm), a science-fiction musical, and another opera, Cuba Libre, to a libretto by Daniel Call. For a recent article about this composer, see Su Xia’s Xian hua Su Cong (‘Jottings on Su Cong’), in Renmin Yinyue, 1998, 4, p. 2. (SC)

Tan Dun’s opera Peony Pavilion had its début in Vienna in May 1998, in a staging by Peter Sellars. The opera was repeated at the Lincoln Centre in New York. Tan’s earlier opera Marco Polo had its full USA premiere on the 8th of November 1998 (New York City Opera). Marco Polo won the composer several major prizes, including the prestigious Grawemeyer prize (150,000 $), the ‘Oscar’ of classical music, given to recognize an outstanding achievement by a living composer in a large musical genre. Sony’s recording of the opera won several record prizes, both in Europe and Japan. Tan’s Concerto for pizzicato piano and his Cello Concerto had their UK premieres on 5 and 11 December 1998 (the concerto with cellist Anssi Kartunen and the BBC Scottish SO conducted by the composer). Among many other performances of Tan’s works, there was his Intercourse of Fire and Water, for orchestra, in the Holland Festival of June 1997. Marco Polo was performed in the Huddersfield Festival in the UK. The first joint performance of Tan Dun’s Orchestral Theatre Series (nos. I to III) took place on 15 January 1999 in Essen, Germany, with the Essen Philharmonic conducted by the composer. (FK)

Xu Shuya is one of the most distinguished foreign composers in Paris’ contemporary music scene. He worked at IRCAM, and wrote numerous pieces for ensembles like 2e2m, Contrechamps and Ensemble InterContemporain, as well as for major symphony orchestras. The Nieuw Ensemble in Amsterdam dedicated various concerts to his music in 1997, featuring new works like San (for voice, pipa, zheng and ensemble, based on Inner-Mongolian chants), and Recit sur la vieille route, for voice and ensemble. The Dutch Festival of Contrasts of 15 and 16 November 1998 premiered Xu Shuya’s Huitain (1998), a spatial work especially written for the Nieuw Ensemble and the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, which was touring Europe. (FK)

Zhou Long won the BBC Masterprize 1998 for contemporary music for one of his recent orchestral works. Zhou’s music is currently published by Theodore Presser Company in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Recent recordings of his works were published by EMI (performed by the London Symphony Orchestra, sponsored by the Masterprize), the China Record Company, Delos of Hollywood, CRI of New York, CALA and Avant. For recent information about this composer, see also China Review (published by the Great Britain China Centre in London), Summer 1998, p.45 ff., and the Feb. 1998 BBC Music Magazine. (CY)

Zou Hang, a 22-year old student of Ye Xiaogang at the Central Conservatory in Beijing, has won the 1997 Composition Competition of the Gaudeamus Foundation in the Netherlands with his work Eighteen Arhats for 16 instrumental players. He was awarded the sum of 10,000 Dutch guilders. The prize should be regarded as a nominal fee for a future work. The jury, consisting of Robert Platz (Germany), Rodney Sharman (Canada) and Maarten Altena (Holland) praised Zou Hang’s talent, inventivity and courage as displayed in Eighteen Arhats. The work consists of three movements and combines elements of Buddhist music, Peking opera and avant-garde. It was performed by the Nieuw Ensemble, with conductor Micha Hamel co-acting as a chanting monk. (FK)
Performers

Chinese orchestras perform in Europe
The China National Symphony Orchestra, led by Chen Zuohuang, made its London debut on Tuesday 24 November 1998 with a programme of Chinese and Western symphonic music. The Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, an orchestra of Chinese instruments, toured Europe in the same period. This orchestra participated in a Festival in November 1998 in Holland, with a mixed programme of Western (Chopin!) and Chinese traditional works. It cooperated with the Nieuw Ensemble of Amsterdam in a contemporary Chinese work, *Huitain*, written by Xu Shuya (a composer currently based in France).

The UK Chinese Orchestra
The UK Chinese Orchestra was founded in 1990 by Chinese virtuoso style players, of whom a number are based in Britain. Several of its members enjoy international reputations. The ensemble includes Chen Dacan (*erhu*: two-stringed fiddle), Cheng Yu (*pipa*: four-stringed lute), Xu Pingxin (*yangqin*: dulcimer), Liu Xiaohu (*sheng*: mouth organ, and *dizi*: flute) and many others. The orchestra promotes a broad range of traditional Chinese music genres, and encourages musicians to explore contemporary developments by experimenting with new techniques and styles. It participates in concerts, workshops and popular presentations on a regular basis, catering to a wide audience. Since 1990, the orchestra has appeared at the Edinburgh Festival, the Jersey Folk Music Festival, the Royal Festival Hall in London, and in regional and international festivals elsewhere in Europe. For more information, contact Ms. Cheng Yu at the Centre of Music Studies, School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG, England. Telephone & fax: +44 - 181 - 440.1664. E-mail: yc4@soas.ac.uk (CHY)

Nieuw Ensemble toured China
The Nieuw Ensemble from Amsterdam got enthusiastic responses from audiences in Beijing and Shanghai during its spring 1997 tour of China. The group gave six concerts of new Chinese music. It was the first visit of this major Western ensemble of contemporary music to the People’s Republic. Since 1991, NE has dedicated numerous concerts in Europe to works of Chinese composers. It has premiered major instrumental and vocal works by such artists as Tan Dun, Mo Wuping, Qu Xiaosong, Guo Wenjing, Chen Qigang, and Xu Shuya. The last four composers accompanied the ensemble’s Chinese tour, which was led by conductor Ed Spanjaard. During the concerts, the composers provided spoken introductions to their own works. Chinese listeners responded warmly and
with surprise to the new pieces, of which many had not been performed in China before. According to Joel Bons, the group's artistic advisor, 'the music has once again proved its qualities. Its success is clearly not dependent on some form of exoticism, as some people have suggested in the past.' Among the most successful pieces performed were Xu Shuya's *Dawn on a Steppe* (with the composer chanting in Mongolian style) and Chen Qigang's *Poéme Lyrique II*, which takes its inspiration from Beijing opera. Spanjaard, Bons and members of the ensemble also gave masterclasses to young composers at the music conservatories in Beijing and Shanghai, and discussed (sometimes played) Chinese students' scores. Girl composer Tang Lei in Shanghai was among the fortunate students: she had a chance to hear her own String Trio played by major performers of contemporary music from Europe. The average number of listeners during the concerts was a few hundred. Masterclasses were attended by groups of up to twenty-five people. (FK/MP/BP)

UK Peking Opera Company
In 1996, Peking Opera master Professor Jiang Aibing, and Ione Meyer, a dance teacher who graduated from the Peking Opera School in Beijing, founded the UK Peking Opera Company. This was the first time a Chinese opera master trained a troupe of Brits in London in this traditional Chinese synthesis of script, dance and music. Professor Jiang, an expert in fiddle and drum, but also in singing and choreography, featured as the troupe's trainer and one of its main members until his departure from the UK, last year. The group had its performing debut to full houses in London in February 1997 with excerpts from the Peking Opera *Farewell My Concubine* (the classic play that served as the backdrop of Chen Kaige's well-known film). (MW/RH)

Italian ensemble of new music in Beijing
The Italian percussion ensemble Ars Ludi and soprano Silvia Schiavoni visited Beijing in October 1996 to give lectures and perform Italian and Chinese contemporary works employing electronic equipment. A concert of electronic music took place in the Beijing Concert Hall on 24 October 1996 with works partly written for this occasion by Emanuele Pappalardo, Giorgio Battistelli, Giacinto Scelsi, Qu Xiaosong, Zhang Xiaofu (*Esprit de la Montagne*, for female voice and electroacoustic equipment) and Guo Wenjing (Elegy, for soprano and three percussionists). This was the first musical exchange between Italy and the People's Republic in the field of contemporary music. It was organized as a joint project by Emanuele Pappalardo, Ars Ludi and Zhang Xiaofu, Director of the Centre of Electroacoustic Music in Beijing. The concert was followed, in November 1998, by a visit of Chinese performers to Italy. (FK/EP)
Sydney Sizhu Ensemble
Together with Chinese musicians, the Australian composer and ruan and qin player Tony Wheeler recently founded the Sydney Sizhu Ensemble. The group plays traditional pieces and arrangements as well as Chinese-style compositions written by Wheeler. The group has a flexible instrumentation, using combinations of pipa, erhu, sanxian, voice and sometimes yangqin and dizi. Its most recent concert was at the NSW Government House in October 1998.

Melody of China
Melody of China is a Chinese music ensemble based in San Francisco. It was formed in 1993 by musicians graduated from conservatories and art schools in China. The ensemble promotes traditional Chinese music via public concerts, but it also aims at a synergy between Chinese traditions and the youthful, multicoloured American culture. The group actively participates in courses and lectures for elementary schools and high schools in the San Francisco Bay area. Since 1993, the group has visited more than one hundred schools and public institutions. The ensemble consists of leading instrumentalist Wang Hong, Zhao Yangqin (yangqin), Pu Hai (percussion), Lu Xian (bamboo flute and other wind instruments), Li Linhong (pipa) and Zhang Haiyue (ruan and liuqin). For further information, contact Wang Hong, 2111 43rd Ave., San Francisco, CA 94116, USA. T/F +1-415-681.8599. Email: info@melodyofchina.com Website: http://www.melodyofchina.com

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目录

编者按 — ‘胡笳永鸣’ 有关中国文化和民族主义的几种想法 .......................... 3

一位作曲家的描述：对郭文景的采访 ............................................... 张文厚 (Frank Kouwenhoven) 8

北京古琴研究会 — 当前中国古琴之艰难状况 ................................... 陈玉 (Cheng Yu) 50

镜子般的心和可怜的生活：民和蒙古尔情歌 — 库吉茹 .................................. 朱永康、邵慧民、凯文·斯图亚特 (Kevin Stuart) 62

十五世纪前中国古琴的律制 — 《神奇秘谱》琴律探微 ............................ 杨华 (Yu Hui) 79

艾文斯 (Christopher Evans) 译

崔小松、谭盾和郭文景的新歌剧 ................................................ 张文厚 (Frank Kouwenhoven) 111

有待/无为/摇滚/朋友：北京边缘声音 ............................... 周耀辉 (Chow Yiu Fai)、高伟云 (Jeroen de Kloet) 123

'The Land' 的巡回演出和爵士音乐在中国的兴起 .............................. 雷丹 (Dennis Rea) 129

‘东亚弦乐’ 冬天充满生气的《磬》第三届国际研讨会 .......................... 张文厚 (Frank Kouwenhoven) 139

云南哈尼族八声部传统复音演唱法的新发现 .................................. 张兴荣 (Zhang Xingrong)
李涛 (Helen Rees) 译

云南永宁摩梭人的婚丧习俗音乐 .................................................. 李薇 (Li Wei)
李涛 (Helen Rees) 译

为神或为人？日本 ‘石器神樂’ 的变形 ................................. (Terence Lancashire) 157

由琵琶谱分析出来的歌曲旋律 ......................... 毕堪、倪克松、卫满易 (L Picken, N. Nickson, M. Wells) 172

新书评论 ........................................ 186
新 CD 评论 ..................................... 189
新电影、录像评论 .................................. 213
信息、报告 .................................... 216
本刊文章作者简介 ................................... 235
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