My Musical Language

The Formation and Development of My Evolutionary

Transcultural Creative Approach

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Abstract

This study, the author's self-reflection when reviewing the ideological and material evolution during the writing of her portfolio pieces, aims to facilitate a crosscultural understanding of her musical contributions as a Western, "cultured" Chinese composer. It includes her extensive ethnomusicological study of Chinese *Sanxian* music, Tianjin folk music, and Tianjin narrative arts. This culminates in her intercultural compositional practice, primarily based on these musical genres, contextualised in Contemporary Chinese music aesthetics.

The research is presented in two parts. *Part I:* **Chapter 2, My View of Styles and My Musical Nature** is the author's statement of her current musical nature through self-reflection on the historical and cultural influences on her professional training to date, supported on one hand by the musical aesthetics embraced by representative contemporary Chinese composers and, on the other, by Chinese indigenous music traditions. *Part II:* **Chapter 3, My Compositional Methodologies** summarises that author's analysis of her composition as research practice. It starts with **Chapter 3.1 The Link Between Music Dialects and Contemporary Compositional Language,** in which she explores her contemporary reinterpretation of *Sanxian*—a Chinese instrument that accompanies all narrative arts yet is unfamiliar to contemporary musicology; and it continues with **Chapter 3.2 Integrating Programmes**, in which she reviews the employment of non-musical implications of her writing process that are dually influenced by Chinese narrative traditions and Western programme music. The thesis culminates with Chapter **3.3 Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction**, which contains the author's technical analysis of each portfolio composition. Concluding with the realisation, gained through the course of the degree, of the congruities between Chinese musical dialects and western contemporary sensibilities, and summarising the advantages and deficiencies in these working methods, a future of further research and development beckons.

Key words: Music Composition, Style, Transcultural, Contemporary Music, Chineseness, Indigenous, Westernisation, Music Dialects, Humanism, Programme Music, Narrative Arts, *Sanxian*, Improvisation, Tianjin, Chinese Dance, Music Motif

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List of Compositions

Title	Instrumentation	Period of Composition	Duration
The Eternal Circle	**A chamber piece for Woodwinds** (2 Flutes, 2 Clarinets)**, Strings** (2 Violins, 1 Cello, and 1 Contrabass)**, Piano and Timpani**	**Initial version: September 2016–April 2017; Revision: September 2020**	**19'50''**
That Day	**A piece for solo** *Sanxian*	**Initial version: April–August, 2020 The latest version: March, 2021**	**ca. 28 minutes**
So Close, Yet So Far Away	**A clarinet solo**	**Initial version: November 2019–February 2020; Revision: September 2020**	**13'40''**
Marionette	**A fantasy for solo violin**	**Initial version: February 2020–April 2020; Revision: July 2020**	**10'16''**
My Clay Figurines	**A traditional trio:** 1 Erhu; 1 *Sanxian*, and a pair of Bamboo Clappers	**May–June, 2019**	**7'14''**

Taiping Drum	**A traditional chamber piece for strings and percussion: Traditional bowed strings:** 1 Banhu, 1 Erhu; **Traditional plucked strings:** 1 Soprano *Sanxian*, 3 (Alto) *Sanxian*, **Percussion instruments: 1 Snare Drum, 2 Triangles, 1 Bass Drum, 1 Castanet, 1 Tam-tam, and 1 Wooden fish**	**September – October, 2018**	**6'51''**
Experimental Sketches for Voice in the Folkloric Tradition	***Ephemeral Serendipity* An improvised piece for *Sanxian* and voice**	**20 August 2020 Revision: April 2021**	**5'47''**
	***A Pure Serene Music:* A musical diary for *Sanxian*, Abacus (or Chopsticks) and children's recitation**	**5 September 2019**	**ca. 2'30''**
	***Buddhist Song of Bairenjing* A mini chorus accompanied by Percussion** (Wooden fish, Tam-tam, Snare Drum, and Bass Drum), **Oboe, Cello, and Contrabass**	**23 July 2017**	**3'32''**

Gang Xiang	**A traditional ensemble of plucked strings and Percussion: 2 *Sanxian*s, 1 Huapen Drum, 1 Bian Drum, 1 Pai Drum (Large size), and 1 Chinese Bass Drum**	**Initial version: December 2017; Revision: April 2018**	**7'20''**

Contents of the Accompanying Audiovisual Materials

Some scores have undergone revision and thus differ from the original recordings. The audio CD contains recordings of most of the pieces presented in this folio, with the exception of *A Pure Serene Music* in *Experimental Sketches for Voice in the Folkloric Tradition.* Due to the Covid epidemic, this has not been recorded.

The Eternal Circle in this CD is a recording of the initial version of the score, as completed in 2017. I included this version in the CD because it expresses the rhythm and melody in a way that is closer to my intention. The piece underwent significant revisions in 2021. The recording that corresponds to the updated score (which I analysed in this portfolio) is the first piece on the DVD, as performed by the York *Chimera Ensemble* at the Sir Jack Lyon Concert Hall on 13 June 2021.

Audio CD

1.*The Eternal Circle*
11'44''
An audition recording by the Department Orchestra, Tianjin Conservatory of Music
Conducted by Gao Song (Conductor)
15 October 2018
    * This program is supported by *China Art Fund (2019).*

2. *That Day*, an experimental solo piece for *Sanxian*
ca. 24'38"
Recorded by Gao Yizhen (*Sanxian* Artist)

Technical supervision by *Sanxian* Research Commitee, Central Conservatory of Music

25 September 2020 (Section I); 3 November 2020 (Section IV); 15 May 2021 (Section V)

   * This work was commissioned by the *Sanxian Committee,* Central Conservatory of Music, in 2020. It has been significantly revised in 2021 and 2022 which differs the recording from the submitted score.

3. *So Close, Yet So Far Away,* for solo clarinet

13'40''

Recorded by Jérôme Comte (Clarinetist)

2 October 2020

   * This work was created for the Jérôme Comte workshop in 2019.

4. *Marionette,* a fantasy for solo violin

10'16''

Recorded by Hannah Roper (violinist)

29 July 2020

5. *My Clay Figurines,* for traditional trio

7'14''

Recorded by Qiao Rui (*Sanxian*), Wu Mai (Erhu) and Guo Jiabao (Bamboo Clappers)

10 October 2019

   * This work was supported by the *China Art Fund* (2019) and commissioned by Department of Dance, Tianjin Conservatory of Music, in 2019.

6 (1). The Musical Material of *Taiping Drum:* The Slang Spoken by Tianjin Dialect

0'19''

Contributed by Hongyun Wang, Tianjin Conservatory of Music

9 July 2022

6 (2). *Taiping Drum*: a Chinese traditional ensemble

6'51''

Recorded by the Department of Folk Music, Tianjin Conservatory of Music

10 October 2019

* This work was supported by the *China Art Fund* (2019) and commissioned by the Department of Dance, Tianjin Conservatory of Music, in 2019.

7. *Experimental Sketches for Voice in the Folkloric Tradition*: a musical diary

Ephemeral Serendipity

5'47''

Recorded by Zhao Taisheng, Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Hong Kong

10 June 2021

* This work was commissioned by Zhao Taisheng (Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra) and Choreographer Li Ye (Tianjin Conservatory of Music) for *The 13th Chinese Dance "Lotus Award" Classical Dance Competition (第十三届中国舞蹈"荷花奖"古典舞比赛).*

8. *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing*

3'32''

Recorded by the Departments of Vocal Music, Folk Music, and Orchestra, Tianjin Conservatory of Music

10 December 2017

* This work was supported by the *China Art Fund* (2019)

9 (1). The Musical Material of *Gang Xiang: Gang Xiang* Performance of *Tianjin Nankai Folk Art Troupe*

4'41''

Contributed by *Tianjin Nankai Folk Art Troupe*, Tianjin, China

December 2017

9 (2). *Gang Xiang* for two *Sanxian*s and Percussion

7'20''

Recorded by the Department of Folk Music, Tianjin Conservatory of Music

16 November 2019

    * This work was supported by the *China Art Fund* (2019)

DVD

The items on the DVD—*Taiping Drum* and *In Desperate* (developed from

Ephemeral Serendipity) — differ from my original scores in that dance

performances required them to undergo revision (or editing) in order to meet

the choreographer's needs.

1. *The Eternal Circle*

19:50

Performed by *York Chimera Ensemble*, *Sir Jack Lyon Concert Hall*, University

of York

Conducted by Kieran Crowley (Conductor)

13 June 2021

    * This rendition is consistent with the score in the portfolio

2. *Taiping Drum (鱼跃莲花)*

4'40''

Jingu Yangko Tianjin Folk Dance Gala (津沽秧歌天津民间舞蹈专场晚会),

Department of Dance, Tianjin Conservatory of Music

Choreographers: Huang Cen; Chen Xiaohang

10 December 2021

    * This performance was supported by *The Application and Innovation of*

Tianjin Municipal Education Commission's Social Science Major Project "JinguYangko" (天津市教委社会科学重大项目"津沽秧歌"的应用与创新) (2019) and The Practical Teaching of "JinguYangko"—Key Cultivation Project of Tianjin Teaching Achievement Award (天津市教学成果奖重点培育项目'津沽秧歌' 的实践教学) (2019)

3. *My Clay Figurines*

6'00''

Wu Yan (吾言), Department of Dance, Tianjin Conservatory of Music

Choreographer: Gao Yuman

13 December 2019

> * This performance was supported by *The Application and Innovation of Tianjin Municipal Education Commission's Social Science Major Project "JinguYangko" (天津市教委社会科学重大项目"津沽秧歌"的应用与创新) (2019); and The Practical Teaching of "JinguYangko"—Key Cultivation Project of Tianjin Teaching Achievement Award (天津市教学成果奖重点培育项目'津沽秧歌' 的实践教学) (2019)*

4. *Ephemeral Serendipity*

5'29''

Performed by Zhao Taisheng, *Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra*

25 May 2021

> * This performance was commissioned by Zhao Taisheng (Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra)

5. *In Desperate*

6'58''

Recorded by Tianjin Dance Theatre, Tianjin Conservatory of Music

Choreographer: Li Ye

Sanxian Performer: Zhao Taisheng

29 June 2022

> * This performance was commissioned by Zhao Taisheng (Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra) and Choreographer Li Ye (Tianjin Conservatory of

Music) for *The 13th Chinese Dance "Lotus Award" Classical Dance Competition (第十三届中国舞蹈"荷花奖"古典舞比赛).*

* The music has been significantly revised for dance; thus, it is notably different from the score which I analyse in this portfolio. For the revision process and programme notes of the dance repertoire please refer to **Appendix 4**.

Acknowledgement

From the initial to final piece of musical composition, through the zigzagging selective process of research topics to the completion of this doctoral dissertation, my four-year journey at the University of York finally comes to an end.

The realisation of seven complete compositions and three experimental sketches would not have been possible without the painstaking efforts of Professor Ambrose Field and Professor Thomas Simaku. Ambrose is generous and tolerant. He offered immense encouragement in overcoming my difficulties and the confidence to attempt new challenges in the early stages of my doctoral journey. Thomas's rigorous academic standards and exceptional requirements prompted me to demand the utmost of myself as well as complete immersion into academic life. My huge thanks also to my internal examiner, Professor William Brooks. Either criticism or affirmation from him is pertinent. His honest reactions are the rungs on the ladder of my progress. My research would not have been realised without the strict demands and informative support of these mentors. Working with them has been a rewarding, stimulating, and unforgettable life experience.

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My sincere thanks to some extraordinary musicians: clarinettist Jérôme Comte, violinist Hannah Roper, the outstanding *Sanxian* educator Professor Longjian Tan, *Sanxian* artist Yizhen Gao, Taisheng Zhao, and the excellent Chinese-American composer couple Professor Chen Yi and Professor Zhou Long. Thanks also to *Ensemble Intercontemporain*; *The Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra*; *The Quatuor Diotima*; *Ligeti String Quartet*; *The Sanxian Research Committee, Central Conservatory of Music*; *The Dance Department of Tianjin Conservatory of Music*; *The York Chimera Ensemble*; and many others. Their kind support in performance, research, and organisation was fundamental to my creative journey.

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Finally, I would like to express appreciation and love to my mother for her companionship during the whole period of my doctoral journey and for her limitless care and support academically, financially, and spiritually.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the seven complete compositions and three experimental sketches and accompanying commentary that constitute this submission are solely my work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, they contain no work previously published or submitted by another person in pursuit of degree or diploma from the University of York or any other institute of higher education.

Word count: 89,885

Here begins an exploratory journey into the evolution of my musical language.

Chapter 1. Prelude

1.1 A Casual Conversation with My Readers

As a Chinese composer, I spent my entire adolescence in the motherland, nurtured and nourished in traditional culture. Travelling to another shore to study for my doctorate, my mind wanders and asks:

> "Who am I?"
>
> "Where should I position my compositional orientation?"
>
> "How am I to bridge Chinese musical dialects with contemporary sensibilities to present my individual voice?"

These are the questions that linger in my mind and have thus become the focus of this doctoral study, both theoretically and practically.

Approaching the end of my doctoral journey, as I review the steps I have made along my creative path, I realise imperceptibly that I am no longer the artist I set out to be. However, the footprints of my past study are clearly preserved in my work. They constitute my doctoral compositional trajectory, both specifically and on a general basis. I consider:

> "What are the steps I have taken?"
>
> "How do I embody them in my compositions?"
>
> "What will be my focus in the deeper research ahead?"

These questions, and more, I hope to answer in the following narrative and analysis.

1.2 Significance

This analysis and summary of my musical language is a comprehensive reflection of my theoretical studies and creative practice, which I investigate here in order to precisely focus the areas of my future research.

Initially, I will discuss my transcultural life experiences and circumstances. I will explore the components of my creative voice, modes of thought, and compositional methodologies. I will reflect on issues of personal identity, my cultural foundations, and expectations for my professional path ahead.

Secondly, I will present a comprehensive survey of "my musical language." My aim is to share with other scholars and the international audience an alternative view of traditional Chinese culture and to appeal for greater attention to rare musical instruments and genres. My strong desire is to encourage more artists to extend their creative tentacles towards their fragile cultural beauty in order to preserve and facilitate such endangered cultural legacies.

Thirdly, I will provide a precise interpretation of my musical journey in order to provide a clear road map of my musical growth. Reflecting on the influences behind a piece, I am increasingly aware of the differing factors leading to its success or failure; this will provide a broader perspective for my further exploration.

Finally, I will make an analysis and summary of my working methods and completed compositions at the different stages of their development. This will hopefully act as an important aid in my future musical research and exploration.

1.3 Literature Review

As I am a young composer, there has not yet been any published response to my work. This section is therefore a record of the research I have used in my career so far.

In the process of writing it, I have discovered various items of research which reiterate and support the arguments I make here. These valuable theoretical references substantiate my own practices in the fields of **compositional techniques, artistic style, musical history,** and **cultural inheritance.**

I. The first category includes conflicting critical arguments concerning musical style. These valuable research materials contain stylistic analysis of such figures as Qigang Chen, Tan Dun, Wenjing Guo, and other post-colonial Chinese composers. Included also are transcripts of interviews with those composers who have influenced me most significantly. These contain insights into their creative process, biographical data, and anecdotal evidence; regarding Qigang Chen, they include "My Concept of Style (我的风格观)" by Qigang Chen; "Going out of Contemporary Music and Making One's Own Way (走出 '现代音乐', 追求自己的路)" by Qigang Chen; "Music Can't Be Fake--An Interview with French-Chinese Composer Chen Qigang (音乐, 玩不得半点虚假——旅法作曲家陈其钢访谈)" by Xuelin Mei; and several other textual and audiovisual sources.

An in-depth analysis of this whole area of study is found in **Chapter 2,** in which I discuss my personal musical style and philosophy. Much of the information used for my writing here is informal and anecdotal in nature and does not include comprehensive analyses of the composers' work. Nevertheless, I hope to capture something of Qigang Chen's aesthetic views in this thesis as I simultaneously discuss the aspects that have impacted my own ideas.

II. The second category concerns regional culture and religious philosophy. Deeply inspired by specific regional culture and religious beliefs in my musical expressions, I supported my study by collecting over eighty articles with a cultural focus. These include the research papers related to Tianjin music that supported my *National Art Fund Project* in 2019; they also musical and historical research materials related to Buddhism and other religious and cultural groups.

Amongst these articles are analytical theses on regional and religious culture, largely placed in the Tianjin metropolitan area of Northern China, such as "The Inheritance and Development of The Tianjin Folk Dance (天津地区民间舞蹈传承发展研究)" by Hongyun Wang and Shuxin Wei; "The Research and Practice Process of The Tianjin Folk Dance 'Go To The Dock' (天津民间舞蹈 '走码头' 的创作研究与实践过程)" by Yuman Gao; "Music Development of Tianjin Ditty (天津时调音乐发展考)" by Chen chen; "The Musical Research of The Tianjin Tune (天津时调音乐研究)" by Ying Fu; and others. They also include articles in Buddhist, Taoist, and other religious and philosophical studies, as well as analyses of composers whose work has been inspired by regional culture or religious beliefs: "An Analyzes on The Application of Tibetan Buddhist Music in The Contemporary Mongolian Music Works (试析藏传佛教音乐在当代蒙古族音乐创作中的运用)" by Mengshi Yu; "An Analysis of Wenjing Guo's Music Piece *Echoes of The Heaven and The Earth* (郭文景 *天地的回声* 音乐分析)" by Mang Li; "On the Harmony of Humanistic Spirit and Technical Thought of Pre-Qin Confucians (论先秦儒家人文精神与技术思想之和谐)" by Zhi Wu and Dan Yu; "Buddhism and Its Contributions to Culture" by Yung Dong; "Quieting The Mind, Manifesting Mind: The Zen Buddhist Roots of John Cage's Early Chance-Determined and Indeterminate Compositions; (with) Motion Alarm I Ching. (Original composition)" by Mark Douglas Nelson; "Where the Heart Beats: John Cage, Zen Buddhism, and The Inner Life of Artists" by Kay Larson; and many other relevant articles.

I intend to use these references to further illustrate the forces that have inspired my creative thinking: cultural, artistic, and philosophical. In this chapter I will attempt to summarise my creative journey, its intent and ambition, with an objective criticism of the resulting work, and with particular attention paid to possible similarities between my work and others. On a personal level, I hope to gain insight into the recurring themes and characteristics of my work in order to navigate with greater clarity and purpose the music-making ahead.

III. The third category includes approximately 140 academic articles on compositional methodology. This is subdivided into sections on thematic development and orchestration.

In the specific area of thematic development, I draw on four specific sources of academic theory.

i. An explanation of thematic *Deconstruction and Reconstruction* and analyses of previously conceived works. The representative papers include:

A Derrida Reader: Between The Blinds, edited by Peggy Kamuf; "The Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Tan Dun's Writing Revealed in the *Ghost Opera* (从＂鬼戏＂看谭盾作品中的解构与重构)" by Taiyong Hou; "The Deconstruction and Reconstruction of The Pentatonic Scales—A Discussion of the Pitch Mode, the Superposition, and the Measurement of The Pitch Dynamic of The CSU I – III Pitch Sequences (五声的解构与重构——对 CSU I - III 音集叠加音高模式及音高结构力值测定的探讨)" by Liang Liu; and "Towards Hypertextual Music: Digital Audio, Deconstruction and Computer Music Creation" by Sam Britton.

ii. Analysis and criticism of works inspired by Chinese and Oriental musical traditions and motifs:

"Isang Yun's Musical Bilingualism: Serial Technique And Korean Elements In Fünf Stücke für Klavier (1958) and His Later Piano Works" by Ko

Eun Lee; "A Study of Pentatonic Technique and Connotations in *Iris dévoilée* by Chen Qigang (陈其钢 蝶恋花 五声性技法及意蕴探究)" by Xingyue Zhu; "Exploration of "New Sound" in Tan Dun's Works—Take the example of Pasakaria: The Secret Words of Wind and Bird (谭盾作品中的 '新音响' 探索——以 帕萨卡利亚：风与鸟的密语 为例)" by Xi Yuan; "Vocal Music: by George Crumb" by Brian Fennelly; "Britten and The Far East: Asian Influences in The Music of Benjamin Britten" by Christopher Mark; and other analytical studies concerned with the use of Oriental elements.

iii. Biographical and anecdotal studies of textural and audiovisual data that have significantly influenced my music:

"Broken Silence" by Rene; "Wang Xilin, Human Suffering, and Compositional Trends in Contemporary China" by John O Robison; "The Works of Kaija *Saariaho,* Philippe Hureland and Marc-André Dalbavie—Stile concertato, stile concitato, stile rappresentativo" by Damien Pousset, Joshua Fineberg & Ronan Hyacinthe; "The National Music of Russia: Musorgsky and Scriabin" by M.D. Calvocoressi and A. Eaglefield Hull; "An Interview with Wenchen Qin (Part I) (秦文琛访谈录) (上)" edited by Renping Qian; and others.

iv. Studies of Programme Music in both indigenous Chinese and other musics, such as "Pictorial and Literary Evocations in the Programmatic Music of Liszt and Debussy" by Siying Song; *Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture* by James Luther Adams; "Expressionism and Ultimate Reality: Paul Tillich's Theology of Art" by Joseph L Price; "Isomorphic Synesthesia: The Basic Link Between Musical Sound and Its Performance Object (同构联觉——音乐音响与其表现对象之间转换的基本环节)" by Haihong Zhou; "Musical Narrative in Ethnicity: Taking Yao's 'Narration' as an Example (族性中的音乐叙事——以瑶族的 '叙歌' 为例)" by Zhaorong Peng; "The Narrative Function of Ethnic Music (民族音乐的叙事功能)"; "The Narrative Tradition of National Music (民族音乐的叙事传统)" by Zhaorong Peng and Lingling He; and other relevant articles.

These multifaceted analytical items are closely related to my themes and my developing methodologies. They provide strong theoretical support for the analysis of my work.

I have collected over a hundred related papers on the subject of orchestration. As unusual instruments with specific regional characteristics are widely used in my work, these papers concern their usage in comparable works by other composers as well as crucial materials that provide me with a strong theoretical basis regarding historical inheritance, instrumental characteristics, and performing techniques. These are mainly focused on ethnic instruments of diverse regions, including China, Japan, Korea, Turkey, and other "non-western" countries.

These papers include a historical summary of the development in particular instruments as well as their function in performance. As the *Sanxian* is central to my work, I will focus on its wide-reaching influence in my compositions.

The papers I have collected include different studies of *Sanxian:*

i. Items concerned with *Sanxian*'s developing history and notations include "A Study on the Origin and Development of the *Sanxian* in China (中国三弦源流考)"; "A Study on the Origin and Development of the *Sanxian* in China (Continuation) [中国三弦源流考(续)]"; "Trial Translation of Two Kinds of *Sanxian* Scores in Ming and Qing Dynasties (Part 1 & Part 2) [明清两种三弦谱试译(上)(下)]" by Yaohua Wang; "Becoming a Tradition: Re-inventing The *Sanxian*" by Hei-tung Chan; "A Brief History of *Sanxian* (三弦史略要)" and " The History of *Sanxian* (三弦史话)" by Zhenxian Wang; "Historical Research on 20th-century Chinese *Sanxian* Music (20 世纪以来的中国三弦音乐史研究)" by Xiaojuan Zhang; "On the Historical Evolution of *Sanxian* (论三弦之历史沿革)" by Serendaoerji; and many other similar items.

ii. Regarding instrumental characteristic and performing techniques, the following are representative items: "The Variations of Timbre and Sonic Quality in *Sanxian*'s Performance (三弦演奏的音质及音色变化)" by Jiansheng Xiao; "A Study of The Timbral Diversity of The Chinese *Sanxian* (中国三弦音色的多样性之研究)" and "The Beauty of Chinese *Sanxian* Music (中国三弦音乐之美)" by Longjian Tan; "The Instrument of Longjian Tan (谈龙建的乐器)" by Jianjun Meng; and others.

iii. Papers on specific musical applications include: "The *Sanxian* and The *Sanxian* Solo Piece '十八板 (Shí Bā Bǎn: Eighteen-beats)' (三弦与三弦独奏曲十八板)" by Longjian Tan; "The Application and Features of The *Sanxian* in Tianjin Qǔyì Music (三弦在天津曲艺音乐中的运用及特点)" by Yizhen Gao; "Notes on Mongolian Sanxian's Historical Materials (蒙古三弦史料札记)" by Wulanjie; "弦声鼓韵总相随--Han Baoli, a famous *Sanxian* Performer and Quyi Musician（弦声鼓韵总相随——记著名三弦演奏家，曲艺音乐家韩宝利）" by Yujie Yang; "A *Sanxian* Master's Perspective on The Sanxian Accompaniment Art of Northern Quyi—A Musicological Recognition of Learning The *Sanxian* from Xiaoxiang Ma (从一位弦师透视北方曲艺的三弦伴奏艺术——师从马小祥习琴的音乐学体认)" by Chu Chen, and so on.

At present the study of *Sanxian* is primarily limited to its historical and cultural significance, with little analysis of its contemporary use. I hope to use my work as an example of its ability to impact artistic thinking. This will include a detailed description of how *Sanxian* has affected my creative thinking in general, together with a technical analysis of each piece.

1.4 Research Methodologies

This study is composed of complementary practical and theoretical aspects, both conducted mainly through qualitative research, supplemented by quantitative research. The dominant methodologies are:

Fieldwork: This comprises my collection of Chinese music dialects and interviews with contemporary Chinese composer Qigang Chen and *Sanxian* artists Longjian Tan, Taisheng Zhao, and Yizhen Gao.

Music Practice: This refers mainly to my creative process, including the creation of musical scores and audio-visual outputs, together with written records concerning audition, modification, performance, and other practical approaches.

Induction: This includes my inferences about and summary of the concepts of "Sinicisation" in music, including discussions and conclusions regarding musical dialect, contemporary musical language, the composer's individual voice, narrative music, and other terms that form part of my own creative milieu.

Comparative Research: This refers not only to comparisons of musical expression and compositional techniques through geographic, historical, cultural, and other influential aspects but also to the data I have compiled about present-day *Sanxian* teachers, active performers, annual student recruitment, and the number of existing *Sanxian* contemporary works.

Case Studies: This comprises my technical analyses of my specific musical outputs.

1.5 Theoretical Path

This paper analyses my use of musical language during my doctoral study. It includes notes on style, a review of my creative ideological transformation, an analysis and summary of my methodology for thematic development, and the link between indigenous musical dialects and contemporary musical language.

The dominant research methodologies include: literature and textual readings (including musical scores and audio databases); analyses of individual compositions on both technological and social or cultural levels; and comparisons between Chinese and Western musical cultures and philosophies. This discussion also includes references to other fields of study, such as ethnomusicology, anthropology, philosophy, dance, aesthetics, and philology.

This thesis is an attempt at an objective and comprehensive analysis of my work from a research perspective. It examines my cognitive understanding of history, culture, and society through the lens of my thematic conceptions. In conclusion, I will describe the balance of artistic instinct and compositional techniques in a detailed description of my writing methods. This includes the prominent use of programmes (non-musical referents) and improvisation, in addition to "cultured," precise notation.

Embedded in all this is an evaluation of the philosophical ideas behind certain compositional techniques that I examine in order to suggest the next stage of my post-doctoral research and career.

1.6 Research limitation

Despite extensive research and exploration into the sources, influences, and methodology used in the creation of my work, this thesis is inevitably a somewhat subjective analysis of my music. It is not a definitive description of my personal style or the work I anticipate ahead of me; indeed, it is limited to just a few examples of my compositions so far. As a composer at the beginning of my career, I hope to evolve and transform in response to my exposure to new life and art.

My analysis of musical programmes is subjective. This topic is by nature a personal one, intended to provoke a diverse and unique response from both creator and audience. Similarly, although this thesis is interdisciplinary, covering the fields of ethnomusicology, anthropology, philosophy, dance, aesthetics, and other subjects, these references are used to support my main subject: my creative style and compositional methodology.

As a non-native speaker of English, I have found it both challenging and rewarding to express my feelings in a second language; this is redoubled by the essential paradox inherent in describing music in literary terms. I hope however that something of my creative personality is clearly expressed in what follows.

1.7 Primary Tasks

This thesis is divided into this **Introduction** followed by four chapters (numbered sequentially)**: My Views of Style and My Musical Nature; My Compositional Methodologies (The Link Between *Musical Dialects* and *Contemporary Musical Language*; Integrating Programmes; Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction); "Coda" (Final Conclusion).** The **primary objectives** of the whole are as follows:

To discuss the generational factors that have influenced my **"creative style"** through analysis of the historical and social milieus of my transcultural growth and background, intended to illuminate the resulting impact these have had on my stylistic views and compositional vocabulary.

To attempt to summarise my methods of **connecting indigenous musical dialects with contemporary compositional languages** and to investigate the desirability of linking these two contrasting musical expressions.

To explain the tradition of "programmes" in music in both Chinese and Western cultures and to describe how these catalyse my musical expressions in narrative, pictorial, and other aspects—that is, precisely how I use my pre-set programmes to "structure" my work.

To consider the utilisation and role of *Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction* through individual analysis of my compositions.

Finally, I **outline my plans** for future research and composition.

Chapter 2. My Views of Style and My Musical Nature

Preface. Interviewing Qigang Chen

I would like to begin my discussion of this topic by presenting my interview with French-Chinese composer Qigang Chen, whose upbringing was similar to mine and who has significantly impacted the formation of my musical nature through both his music and the thoughts behind the sounds.

January 2023
University of York

Author: I have read a few of your interview articles. "Going out of Contemporary Music and Making One's Own Way," "If Music No Longer Functions as a Source of Communication Then It Would Die—To The Younger Generation," et al., are inspirations for both my music and my thesis during my Ph.D. As a young composer who is also experiencing the Western music training and currently hoping to develop transcultural composition-as-research projects, I would like to ask Mr. Chen a few questions specifically on the topic of "musical style." [陈老师的几篇采访文章例如《走出现代音乐，追求自己的路》《不与人沟通的音乐只能死亡》等是我博士期间创作及论文写作方向的启发之源. 作为同样在西方求学以及希望在此开展跨文化研创项目的年轻作曲者，我想针对 "音乐的风格" 向陈老师请教几个问题.]

I remember you once said that "music won't survive if it does not communicate with people." In that case, what music do you think is able to communicate with people? As a composer, how are we to write music if we hope to maximize the empathy from the audiences (under the different cultural backgrounds, political and religious systems, etc.)? [陈老师曾说过 "不与人沟通的音乐只能死亡." 那么，陈老师认为什么样的音乐具备与人沟通的功能？面对经验性认知不同的观众（比如来自不同的文化背景，体制，宗教制度等)，如何写作才能引起最大程度的共鸣?]

Qigang Chen: These articles you mentioned were written nearly twenty years ago. Inevitably the views then were somewhat extreme due to age and experience. I would be more inclusive when reviewing these matters today. [你引述的文章都是将近二十年前的，由于阅历和年岁的不同，那时难免会有些偏激之处. 如果今天再看待这些问题，可能会更加包容.]

But regardless of forms and genres, music that lacks feature and

authenticity won't be convincing. [但无论什么类型的音乐, 没有个性和真诚就会缺乏说服力.]

Artistic creation is unlike the catering industry. In catering, we must cater to another's pleasure—it is not only does the chef himself think it is delicious but also the chef makes the customers like it. A dish goes for nothing if the customer doesn't enjoy it. This is characteristic of a service industry. Creating artwork is different from service. Service-oriented works can be seen as "entertainment" but not "art." Art represents a spiritual pursuit, and it does not make room for pandering. [艺术创作不是做餐饮, 必须要有投其所好的一面, 不能仅仅厨师自己觉得好吃, 要让顾客喜欢吃, 顾客不喜欢吃, 你做也是白做, 这是服务行业的特点. 艺术创作不是服务行业, 服务性的作品可以叫娱乐不叫艺术, 艺术是精神领域的追求, 没有投其所好的空间.]

I hope to receive the audience's understanding and recognition, and I have been upset by this also. But eventually whether others understand my work is serendipitous—it depends on our spiritual distance, and this has nothing to do with cultural differences. [我也很希望得到大家的理解, 认可, 也为此苦恼过. 但最终, 别人对我的作品是否理解取决于听者与作者心灵之间的距离有多大, 这甚至与文化差异都没有关系, 这件事可遇而不可求.]

The profession of composition is very special—it is not easy for most others to understand—even a bit on the edge. Even by colleagues, to be fully understood is almost impossible. If you always seek for other's approval, or hope your music will be recognised by your colleagues, teachers, or authoritative organisations, that is not composing. [作曲的职业是非常特殊的, 一般人不容易理解. 能够理解得沾一点边已经不容易, 完全理解几乎不可能, 即便是同行. 如果总想着自己的创作能被人接受, 或者获得同行, 老师, 权威机构的认可, 这就不是创作了.]

Author: Regarding the recent upsurge in people's attention to "transcultural music making" in the academia, may I ask for your view of "transculturality" in music creation? ["跨文化音乐创作"在近来学术界受到广泛推崇, 我想请问陈其钢老师如何看待音乐创作中的"跨文化"?]

Qigang Chen: Today people are in a significant transitional period, in which cultural integration and information exchange are highly developed. We are inseparable, sharing mutual benefit and reciprocity. The great transformation in our lifestyle and communication coupled with the notable changes in China makes our outlook an important issue. Sadly, in recent years, China and the West have been gradually drifting apart, and we may be returning to a parochial pattern that is mutually isolated and unacceptable. [今天的人类处在一个巨大的转型时期, 文化信息交流和交融高度发达, 你中有我, 我中有你, 互补互利, 互不可少. 人类的生活方式, 沟通方式在巨变, 再加上中国的巨变, 这两个巨变加在一起, 视野就变得非常重要. 但可惜得是, 中西方这些年正在渐行渐远, 我们可能又在重新退回到互相隔绝的, 互不接受的, 相对狭隘的格局中去.]

We are all human beings with flesh and blood, despite the different

countries and cultures we are from. This commonality provides an unshakable foundation for music creation. As a result, humanity is dominant when it comes to self-expressing. We may or may not integrate Chinese elements, as long as we maintain the principle that all elements should contribute to courageous humanistic expressions rather than just being cosmetic. [无论是哪国人，哪种文化，我们都同是有血有肉有情感的人，这个共性为人类的音乐创作，提供了无可撼动的基础. 所以，在表现我们自己的时候，首要的是作为人的感觉，如果有中国元素可以，没有也未尝不可，原则是所有元素必须有助于作为人的大胆表达，而不是装点门面.]

The soul of a real artist is initially humanistic, and then cultural, and finally can be turned into an ethnicity or a nation. Transculture is great, and it's OK also if it's not (transcultural). [真正的艺术家，灵魂首先是人性的，其次是文化的，最后才轮得上民族和国家. 跨文化固然好，不跨文化也没有问题.]

Author: May I ask, Mr. Chen, whether your music is transcultural? If so, then in what aspects is this reflected? [我想请问陈其钢老师认为自己的创作属于跨文化音乐吗？如果是，它体现在哪几个层面？]

Qigang Chen: I'd probably be unrealistic to say it doesn't belong to any of the categories. [我要是说不属于任何一种大概不符合实际.]

The path of life I have traveled determines the multi-cultural impacts I have encountered, especially traditional Chinese and French culture. It's all part of becoming who I am. [我人生走过的路，决定了我受到了多元文化的影响，尤其是中国传统文化和法国文化. 这些都成了我之为我的一部分.]

I think it is influenced and manifested through all aspects, when it applies to your question. But we cannot assert which aspect specifically belongs to what culture. These combine and become what "I" should be like, and only in this way do I feel comfortable. [一定要说哪些层面，我想各个层面都有影响和体现，但不能完全分开说这个层面就是这个文化的，那个层面就是那个文化的. 对我来说，这些已经变成了 "我" 就应该是这样的，只有这样的我才觉得是舒服的.]

Author: How do you define your music style? [您是如何定义自己的创作风格的?]

Qigang Chen: I once said in an interview that when a person is spiritually liberated, what he expresses and feels will have a strong personality, and the "style" will be there. If he has been well nurtured in his mother culture, if he is talented and well educated (there are very few such people), his works must have a nature that particularly belongs to himself. The combination of such individual expression and refined artistic skill will inevitably form a style, which may be the representative style of a specific region and period after a few years, decades, or centuries. [我曾经在一篇采访文章里说到，当一个人精神解放的时候，他所表现的自己感受到的东西本身就带有很强烈的个性，风格也就存在其中了. 如果这个人受过很好的本民族文化教育和薰陶，如果他有才能，如果他受了良好的教育（这种人极少数），他的作品肯定就带有一种非他莫属的个性. 这种个性的表现和高度的艺术手法

相结合，必然形成一种风格．这种风格说不定在若干年，几十年，几百年之后，就是当时，当地有代表性的风格．]

My highest aim for my writing is to authentically express myself without external influence or constraints. After being nurtured by traditional Chinese culture, I then experienced over thirty years of cultural impact from the west. My music is determined by who I am: the collision and fusion of western rational and eastern perceptual thinking, a result of integrating Chinese and the West. [我对自己写作的最高标准就是要真诚地表达我自己，不受任何外在因素的影响和制约．在我受到中国传统文化的熏陶之后，又接受了三十多年的西方文化的影响，我的创作取决于我现在这个人：西方理性思维与东方感性思维的碰撞与融合，是中西结合的产物.]

2.1 My Views of Musical Style

2.1.1 What is "Style"?

A few examples will illustrate the term "Style" as used by different thinkers and scholars. Early in the eighteenth century, Louis Buffier concludes that "Le style c'est l'homme meme (The style is the man himself)."[1] In the book *Aesthetics Lectures on Fine Art*, Hegel described the meaning of "style" in a somewhat casual manner: "Here style as such means the idiosyncrasy of the artist, completely ascertainable in his mode of expression, the way he turns his phrases, etc."[2]

Paul Tillich, a German-American philosopher believed that what we term "style" is the over-all form which, in the particular works of every particular artist and of every particular school, is still visible as the over-all form; and this over-all form is the expression of that which unconsciously is present in the artist's self-interpretation of this period.[3] Following a

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[1] Comte de Buffon, Georges Louis Leclerc, *Discours sur le style,* (Hatier, 1921): 88. Also see：J. Piveteau, "Georges-Louis Leclerc, count de Buffon," *Encyclopedia Britannica,* accessed April 12, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Georges-Louis-Leclerc-comte-de-Buffon.

[2] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics Lectures on Fine Art,* Vol. 1, (1998): 293.

[3] Paul Tillich, "Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art," *Christianity and the Existentialists,* Ed. Carl Michaelson, (New York: Scribner), 128-146. (This was prepared for Religion Online by Ted and Winnie Brock,

discussion on the religious nature of art, Joseph L. Price further describes "style" as "the manner of presentation of a particular form-content. As such, style is the element which generates fundamentally religious impressions like disruption (as in 'Guernica') and harmony (as in Raphael's 'Madonna and Child'), and which stimulates the respective consequent feelings of alienation and peacefulness."[4]

And finally, American theorist Leonard B. Meyer gives an explanation which is closely related to music: "Style is a replication of patterning, whether in human behaviour or in the artifacts produced by human behaviour, that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints. An individual's style of speaking or writing, for instance, results in large part from lexical, grammatical, and syntactic choices made within the constraints of the language and dialect he has learned to use but does not himself create. And so it is in music, painting, and the other arts."[5]

English Dictionaries also give broader definitions of this term, such as "a way of doing something, especially one that is typical of a person, group of people, place, or period; a special quality that makes a person or thing seem different and attractive; particular features of art that are found in a group of artists who lived and worked at the same time";[6] or, again, "a particular procedure by which something is done, a manner or way; a distinctive appearance, typically determined by the principles according to which something is designed..."[7]

My own understanding of "style"—specifically as applied to artists—can be expressed in a somewhat rough way: "We may regard 'style' as a representation of the aesthetic orientation. It reflects an artist's spiritual

https://www.scribd.com/document/6551686/Existentialist-Aspects-of-Modern-Art.)

[4] Joseph L. Price, "Expressionism and Ultimate Reality: Paul Tillich's Theology of Art," *Soundings* (1986): 484.

[5] Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology*, (University of Chicago Press, 1996): 3.

[6] "Style," *Cambridge Dictionary,* https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/style

[7] "Style," *Lexico English Dictionary,* https://www.lexico.com/definition/style

temperament and creative personality, encompassing recurring surroundings, significant experiences, and ideological sensibilities."

2.1.2 My Understanding of Musical Style

Chinese-based scholars generally have certain misunderstandings about the musical style of Contemporary Chinese composers. When talking about "Chinese style," people commonly equate the "style" that has been formed in Chinese classical and folk music with the "style" in modern Chinese composers' work. [人们在谈到 "中国风格" 时，常常将中国传统和民间音乐已经形成的风格与创作中的中国风格混为一谈.][8] In addition, due to ideological differences between China and Western society, as well as to Chinese political requirements for scholars, we may discover that interpretations of "Chinese style" are insufficiently objective when reading Chinese academic papers. As a Chinese composer, I was regularly blamed for "lacking Chinese tastes" in my music during the years of study in my motherland. For years I could not help but wonder whether I was indeed a "competent" Chinese composer. Is it necessary that I should label a musical composition as " a Chinese piece" in my mind, ahead of writing, in order to emphasise a specific "national boundary" in my music? Inevitably, I have been inspired by Chinese traditions during my creative process; nevertheless, defining my writing style as "Chinese " or "bilingual" music according to geographical location and the musical genres I have employed in my writing seems to lack objectivity.

I am inspired by the phrase "One flower, one world, one leaf, one Bodhi," in Buddhist Scriptures, as I seek answers to such questions. This phrase implies that a flower is a universe, as is also a person. Every physical existence is a cosmos combined with various smaller physical incarnations

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[8] Qigang Chen, "My Concept of 'Style'," *Musical Lover* ("陈其钢, "我的 '风格' 观," *音乐爱好者*) 3 (1994): 33.

travelling in different trajectories. Musing on this, I suddenly realised that perhaps it is not appropriate to define a "cosmic nature" by something as simple as a fixed pattern. Just like musical writing in general, my own current work as a composer may be described cosmically as a "synthesised impression" based on the track of my personal life experiences and various works — some completed, some still in progress, and some yet to be discovered. I intend, therefore, my submission to be rich and variable, with multiple angles and full of unknowns.

I. The Nondeterminacy of Musical Style

> "Considering one's pursuit of musical style"—This question is an eternal project for students and teachers in musical conservatories, also for freelance composers. And perhaps it will never be solved ["对于风格的追求"—其实, 这个话题无论对作曲学生, 作曲教师还是自由作曲家, 都是一个永远的话题, 而且是一个永远解决不了的难题.]"[9]

A more specific definition (of "style") that certainly applies to music is "a particular manner or technique by which something is done, created, or performed." (Merriam-Webster 2007).[10] But from this we discover the difficulty in defining one's writing style both concisely and specifically; such definitions are so broad and vague that we will only make progress if we deconstruct style into more specific components.[11]

Some scholars have also carried out data-based research or drawn formal divisions in order to create definitions. In a paper entitled "Tag integrated multi-label music style classification with hypergraph," the authors observed that "a piece may match more than one, even several different styles" and proposed a multi-label classification method which takes into

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[9] Qigang Chen, Wen Zhang, " The Exploration of Music Writing Style—Record of Qigang Chen's Lecture," *Journal of Tianjin Conservatory of Music* (陈其钢, 张问, "音乐写作风格探索—陈其钢讲座实录," *天津音乐学院学报*) 3 (2017): 5.
[10] Roger B. Dannenberg, "Style in music," In *The structure of style*, (Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg, 2010): 46.
[11] Ibid., 45.

account not only the music style correlations but also the music tag correlations.[12] This study seems irrelevant to the discussion of style in music, however; it seems instead to confirm that musical style — particularly in modern compositions — is difficult to establish conclusively. Like a composer's multifaceted personality and shifting perspectives, it is ever-changing, dependent on the subject of the work, the author's life experiences, and his individual technique and means of expression.

II. The Transculturality in Chinese Music

> As time goes by, when looking into the changes in music you will find that all composers are deeply influenced by society. In other words, each society and era has an individual style. [你只要看时间的推移，音乐的变化，就知道所有作曲家都是深受社会影响的．所以就是一个社会一种风格，一个时代一种风格.][13]

> "The style of Chinese traditional music was gradually formed by ancient Chinese through thousands of years of exploration. [中国传统音乐的风格是中国古人在几千年的摸索中逐步形成的.]"[14]

Objectively speaking, being a member of today's society, in which international economic, trade, and cultural exchanges are extremely widespread, even if we deliberately evade the influences of "western musical elements," a large proportion of these "external factors" are subconsciously and unavoidably integrated into our musical works.

Even the musical genres that we used to consider to be "absolute Chinese" (such as traditional court music, folk music, opera, etc.) contain certain cross-cultural features.

For example, early in the Tang Dynasty (over a thousand years ago), eight of the "*Ten Kinds of Music (十部乐)*"[15] were from Sindhu (today's India)

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[12] Wang, Fei, Xin Wang, Bo Shao, Tao Li, and Mitsunori Ogihara, "Tag Integrated Multi-Label Music Style Classification with Hypergraph," (In *ISMIR*, 2009), 368.

[13] Keju Zhang, "Interview with Composer Chen Qigang," *Music Lover* (张可驹. "'概念' 替代出路，其实没有出路（下）作曲家陈其钢访谈," *音乐爱好者*)(2019): 27.

[14] Qigang Chen, "My Concept of 'Style'," 33.

[15] *Ten Kinds of Music (十部乐)*: The name of a musical genre. A set works in the *Yanyue* of

and Goryeo (today's North Korean Peninsula). Through a process of cultural collision, these pieces were gradually integrated with various Chinese folk music and court song and dance. Thus new varieties of song and dance—*Zuobuji (坐部伎)*[16] and *Libuji (立部伎)*[17]—were born. During the same period, popular tunes widely known among folk peoples were gradually introduced to Tianjin; "some were integrated with the local music due to the social intercourse between artists, businessmen, and literati from all over the country and thus gradually developed into a new variety of *Quyi* — the *TiānjīnShídiào* (天津时调: a genre of Chinese narrative art, also called *Tianjin Tune*) [经过往来南北的艺人，商人，文人广泛传播，其中一部分曲调与地方音乐相融合，逐步发展成为的新的曲艺品种]."[18]

Similarly, regarding the Peking Opera, with which we are well familiar, its symbolic tones—*Xipi* and *Erhuang*—obviously do not originate in Beijing [京剧的主体性，标志性腔调西皮与二簧（黄）显然不起源于北京].[19] Archaeologists and

the Tang court in the early prosperous Tang Dynasty, it is also a large-scale collection of Chinese and Tartar music since the *Wei, Jin*, and *Six Dynasties*. It is also called the *Shibuji (十部伎)*. The *Ten Kinds of Music* includes *Yanyue Ji, Qingyue Ji, Xiliang Ji, Tianzhu Ji, Koreo Ji, Kuici Ji, Anguo Ji, Shule Ji, Kangguo Ji,* and *Gaochang Ji.* (乐种名称. 初盛唐宫廷燕乐中的一套主要节目，是对魏晋六朝以来中外胡汉音乐的一个大型汇集与总结，在隋代"七部伎"和"九部伎"的基础上扩充而成. 又称十部乐. 十部乐包括《燕乐伎》《清乐伎》《西凉伎》《天竺伎》《高丽伎》《龟兹伎》《安国伎》《疏勒伎》《康国伎》《高昌伎》.) 袁禾，＂十部伎，＂*中国大百科全书* accessed 20 Jan 2022, https://www.zgbk.com/ecph/words?SiteID=1&ID=63020&Type=bkzyb&SubID=102097; 刘尊明，＂十部乐，＂*中国大百科全书，* accessed 10 Jan 2022, https://www.zgbk.com/ecph/words?SiteID=1&ID=246684&Type=bkztb&SubID=526.

[16] *Zuobuji (坐部伎)* represents the ceremonial music and dance shows with sitting musicians. Chinese court music - Yan music (feast music) of the Tang Dynasty which Corresponds to the *Libuji (立部伎)* (中国唐代宫廷燕乐（宴乐）. 与立部伎对应). 袁禾，"坐部伎，" *中国大百科全书,* accessed Jan 20th, 2022, https://www.zgbk.com/ecph/words?SiteID=1&ID=63116&Type=bkzyb&SubID=102097

[17] *Libuji (立部伎)* is the ceremonial music and dance shows with sitting musicians. Chinese court music - Yan music (feast music) of the Tang Dynasty which Corresponds to the *Zuobuji (坐部伎).* It is performed in an open venue, the performance is magnificent with a strong lineup that contains 64-180 dancers (中国唐代宫廷燕乐（宴乐）. 与坐部伎对应. 在开阔场地表演，规模宏大，煊赫壮阔. 舞者少则 64 人，多可达 180 人). 袁禾，"立部伎," *中国大百科全书,* accessed Jan 20th, 2022, https://www.zgbk.com/ecph/words?SiteID=1&Name=%E7%AB%8B%E9%83%A8%E4%BC%8E&Type=bkzyb&subSourceType=000003000013000006

[18] Chen chen, "Music Development of Tianjin Ditty," (Master's Thesis, Tianjin Conservatory of Music, 2013) 陈晨, "天津时调音乐发展考," (天津音乐学院硕士论文, 2013), 5

[19] Jun Li, Xiaolan Wang, " The Origin of Peking Opera in Qi Rushan's Vision," Journal of North China Institute of Water Conservancy and Hydropower (Social Science Edition) (李军,王晓兰, "齐如山视域中的京剧起源," *华北水利水电学院学报 (社科版)* 6 (2011), 81.

scholars have offered diverse viewpoints for its origin. These, which include Hubei, Anhui, Jiangxi, and Shanxi provinces, reveal the multi-stylistic nature of this art genre.[20]

Then again, some of what we call "traditional" (or "ancient") Chinese instruments are employed in multi-regional folk performances. About the *Sanxian*, Professor Longjian Tan concludes: "Traditional musical genres and the specific style of musical works are the decisive factors that affect *Sanxian* performance. As the saying goes—'Proficiency in one type of *Sanxian* music does not mean you grasp the artistic sensibility of another,'—and this reveals a humanistic feature of *Sanxian* that crosses and supports the value of the difference between music genres, ethnicities, and geographic areas." ["传统乐种以及音乐作品的特定风格是影响三弦演奏艺术的决定性因素，三弦运用的广泛性，以及三弦在不同乐种，曲种，剧种中所呈现出来的艺术个性却也构成了 '会弹奏此三弦者未必会弹奏彼三弦' 这种具有典型性的人文特征，它跨越与支撑了乐种，曲种，剧种，地域，民族的独特价值而存在着."][21]

The transcultural phenomena revealed in these examples not only fully reflect the generosity and inclusiveness of ancient China but also prove that most sorts of music genres were no longer "pure" after this historical process: the regional individualities of traditional music in their original forms were weakened due to cultural mutual influences and gradually formed into a diversified "new musical language." They are evolving even now. Perhaps we should neither purely accept nor deny that this "new music" is Chinese music; or, perhaps, we could say today's "Chinese music" is a multi-stylistic musical genre with various regional elements formed by thousands of years of cultural integration and accumulation.

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[20] For details please refer to the item - Jun Li, Xiaolan Wang, " The Origin of Peking Opera in Qi Rushan's Vision," (李军,王晓兰, "齐如山视域中的京剧起源"); Yao Meng, "A Summary of the Origin of Peking Opera Music," *Jiannan Literature: Classic Reading* (孟瑶, "京剧音乐的起源综述," *剑南文学: 经典阅读*) 1 (2013): 175.

[21] Longjian Tan, "The Beauty of Chinese Sanxian Music," (Lecture, Liaocheng University School of Music and Dance, May 24, 2022)[谈龙建, "中国三弦音乐之美," (讲座, 聊城大学音乐与舞蹈学院, 2022 年 5 月 24 日)].

Regarding the nature of Contemporary Chinese musical works, a few well-known composers and musical critics also have expressed views and conclusions.

Cultural theorist Homi Bhabha advanced a type of third-space hybridity, based on a definition of Chinese (Hong Kong and Macao) musical works. He believes that the catalyst of "bilingual" musical formation is the influence of war and colonisation in modern times; colonisers and the colonised absorbed each other's culture and in the process formed this new type (a 'third space') of music.[22]

American-Chinese composer Tan Dun once used the formula "1 + 1 = 1"[23] to describe his music, which could be interpreted as "one hundred percent of Chinese elements plus one hundred percent Western elements is equal to one hundred percent Tan Dun's own music."[24] He said: "What is one plus one? . . . When you ask the artist, the answer will undoubtedly be one plus one makes one. It is a penetration; when one thing penetrates with another into a new thing it makes a creation. . . . For example, the remarkable feature of Bach is counterpoint. I think what I see and sense in Bach's counterpoint is neither between notes nor musics. I believe what I see, when it comes, is the counterpoint between cultures and, then, the counterpoint between space-time and different space-times. As a result, you suddenly find that this "counterpoint" is nourishment Bach has offered to me, which makes me feel that my creation is osmotic. ["1+1 等于几?...你去问那艺术家，艺术家当然是

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[22] "With the development of many decades, this early "musical translation" had been transformed and de-categorized into other forms, and one of them is explained as "third-space hybridity" by musicologist Homi Bhabha. "Third-space hybridity" means that the colonizer and the colonized "interact to construct their new subjectivities", and this process of cultural negotiation should be natural rather than artificial, because "all cultures are continually evolving through the experience of negotiation." Susan Ming, "A balanced Eastern and Western music is the key to Modern music development," *2017 NCUR* (2017), 535. Also see Tong Cheng Blackburn, "In Search of Third Space: Composing the Transcultural Experience in the Operas of Bright Sheng, Tan Dun, and Zhou Long" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2015), 29.

[23] Lbid., 159. Also see: Susan Ming, "A balanced Eastern and Western music is the key to Modern music development," 535.

[24] "A balanced Eastern and Western music is the key to Modern music development," 535.

1+1 等于 1 喽, 它就是一个渗透, 只有当一个东西跟另一个东西渗透成一个新的整体的时候, 它甚至是全新的创作…比如说巴赫, 最重要的是对位, 我觉得我在巴赫的对位里边想到的看到的不是音跟音的对位, 也不是音乐的对位, 我觉得我看到了是文化跟文化的对位, 然后时空跟不同时空的对位, 然后你就突然发现, 这种对位是因为巴赫的源泉里面给了我一种养分, 而使得我觉得我的创作是 Osmosis, 是渗透"][25]

Qigang Chen believes, "Music Nationalism is not our subjective wish as composers but is determined by our education and life experience, which is then expressed through 'our own voice.' Our creative styles cannot and should not be the same. Music creation of an era, as a whole, will constitute a style; this is the inheritance from and development of the previous era and also the result of contemporary cross-cultural (national and ethnical) exchanges. Whether people subjectively accept it or not, this whole will constitute a part of Music Nationalism." ["民族风格不是作家的主观愿望, 而是由作曲家所受的教育和生活感受决定, 由作曲家独有的音乐语言表达出来的. 每个作曲家的创作风格不可能也不应该一样, 而一个时代的创作必然构成一种总体风格, 它是前时代语言的继承和发展, 也是同时代不同国家民族语言交流的结果. 不论人们主观上承认与否, 这个总体将构成民族风格的一部分."][26]

For myself, as a Chinese musician who received a Western classical music education and who has been listening to the works of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Debussy, Stravinsky, and other Western composers since childhood, it seems inappropriate to say that my compositions represent "Chinese music" solely; but neither should I classify my works as in the tradition of "Western music" just because that has deeply influenced my musical thinking. Chinese traditional culture has penetrated my soul as a "collective unconsciousness," which provides an indelible imprint in my

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[25] "Tan Dun Answers the Question of 1+1=? (谭盾解答 1+1 等于几的难题)," *bilibili,* accessed Jan 20th, 2021, https://www.bilibili.com/s/video/BV11r4y1T7Pa.
[26] Qigang Chen, "Regarding the Award-winning Works," *Journal of Central Conservatory of Music* (陈其钢, "从获奖作品谈起," *中央音乐学院学报*) 2 (1987): 22.

music. At the same time, the different historical experiences of earlier composers offer me various creative ideas and writing patterns. Even the writing process of each piece is regularly filled with unknowns and variability. Like many other composers, I frequently encounter a gap between intention and result; I desire a certain effect which turns out another to be another, different one. Writing a piece is full of mysteries and surprises; once the first note drops onto the score the completed work starts to differ from our plans.

2.1.3 My Concept of Musical Style

My writing process encompasses four principles regarding musical style:

The first is to stop pursuing an "exact" definition of one's writing style. We might sometimes connect the phrase "musical style" with specific technical or historical features; however, it is an elastic expression, made so in part by constant shifts of both external and internal environment, in an eternal process of exploration. Since I seek to be a never-ending pathfinder, I believe it is counter-productive to define "my" musical style.

Second, music should be authentic. "Regardless of forms and genres, music that is lacks feature and authenticity won't be convincing. . . . Art represents a spiritual pursuit, and it does not make room for pandering."[27] My life experience has taught me that music can be regarded as a psychological language; only if the composer uses an authentic, personal language will it produce sparkling spiritual collisions and emotional resonances with an audience. The basic properties I require of my compositions are to explore the potential function of communication and to maintain a musically authentic nature.

Thirdly, writing techniques and expressions are valuable only if they are positively aligned with the composer's inner voice. Simply

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[27] This is a quote from Qigang Chen. For full text please refer to the "Preface" of this Chapter - Interviewing Qigang Chen.

displaying complexity of notation and musical material is essentially meaningless. Instead of proving how advanced my compositional techniques are, or how rich are the multi-regional features of the score, I seek to use such properties to create a larger space for the imagination, so as to enhance the hearing experience of an audiences and realise a finer expression of my intrinsic sentiments.

Finally, innovation is crucial. To keep moving with time, absorbing inspirations from our national culture but not being bound by it, is a life project for most of us. In Chinese there is a phrase called "*海纳百川有容乃大*," which means "*be tolerant as the sea into which all rivers flow.*" In other words, be adaptable to change; keep an open mind, learn different musical languages, and attempt new techniques multi-culturally. Both traditional musical dialects and avant-garde expressions are useful only as long as they are appropriate to my musical requirements. My recent pieces could be described as a "synchronised combination" of Chinese-derived melodies and twelve-tone equal temperament, with an ensemble that mixes Asian instruments — especially the *Sanxian* (*三弦*) — with Western orchestral instruments, an attempted juxtaposition of Asian and Western musical structures, and a flexibility created by alternating among monophony, polyphony, tonal and atonal music, and other textures and devices. By mixing these contradictory elements I am attempting to embrace an innovatory attitude and to break established patterns. This multi-linguistic approach allows the presentation of "my music" to flow intuitively.

I also believe it is possible to express one's religious views through music, sometimes deliberately and sometimes in an unconscious way. Being in contact with the traditional philosophies found in what we call "The Five Classics and Four Books (四书五经)"[28] since I was very young, my views on

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[28] "The Five Classics (wujing) and Four Books (si shu) collectively create the foundation of Confucianism. The Five Classics and Four Books were the basis of the civil examination in

creativity have inevitably been influenced by these texts. I express these through the concepts I call "Worldview," "Secularism," "Seclusion," and "Transcendence." These basic philosophical terms are a means of summarising my musical views from a deeper and wider perspective.

I.   The concept of "Worldview".

The meaning of "Worldview (观世)" is expressed in Chapter 25 of The *Lotus Sutra*, which is to observe and experience the reality of life:

> At that time the bodhisattva Inexhaustible Intent immediately rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, pressed his palms together and, facing the Buddha, spoke these words: World Honored One, this Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds—why is he called Perceiver of the World's Sounds? The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Inexhaustible Intent: Good man, suppose there are immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of living beings who are undergoing various trials and suffering. If they hear of this Bodhisattva Perceiver of the Word's Sounds and single-mindedly call his name, then at once he will perceive the sound of their voices, and they will all gain deliverance from their trials. [爾時. 無盡意 菩薩. 即從座起. 偏袒右肩. 合掌向佛. 而作是言. 世尊. 観世音菩薩. 以 何因緣. 名観世音. 佛告無盡意菩薩. 善男子. 若有無量百千萬億衆生. 受諸苦惱. 聞是観音菩薩. 一心稱名. 観世音菩薩. 即時観其音聲. 皆得 解脱.][29]

"观世音" refers to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's Compassion and Salvation: "When living creatures encounter immense disasters and distress, as long as they ask for help, then the 'goddess of mercy' will arise. She

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imperial China and can be considered the Confucian canon. The Five Classics consists of the Book of Odes, Book of Documents, Book of Changes, Book of Rites, and the Spring and Autumn Annals. The Four Books are comprised of the Doctrine of the Mean, the Great Learning, Mencius, and the Analects." Thomas A. Wilson, "Five Classic & Four Books," *Cult of Confucius and The Temple of Culture,* accessed 2010, https://academics.hamilton.edu/asian_studies/home/culttemp/sitepages/fiveclassics.html#:~:text=The%20Five%20Classics%20consists%20of,%2C%20Mencius%2C%20and%20the%20Analects.

[29] ShinMeiDOkuJoh, "Lotus Sutra Chapter 25: Myo Ho Renge Kyo- Kannon Kyo," *Internet Archive Wayback Machine*, accessed Jan 31st, 2009, https://web.archive.org/web/20200216231040/http://myohorengekyokannonkyo.blogspot.com/

observes, listens and feels their pain. And offers them love and mercy." ["观世音，指观照世间一切持名求救的音声，引申为无刹不现身地循声救度众生的精神，也就是观世音菩萨的慈悲救世精神."][30] Inspired by this, I apply "Worldview" concepts to my compositions, attempting to "observe" sounds which reflect both the cold and warmth of life, to recognise and hear the innermost voice of every living creature. I seek to gather impressions from external beings and transform these to a personal mental image, which then flows out through musical "bodies".

The social situation is part of the environment from which the music springs. Existing in its own time, to some degree, it nevertheless reflects a specific historical period of our collective life experience. Those great works that endure are generally of an affecting nature. They move the listener as they reflect the composer's insight into warmth and hardship, happiness and misery.

The "Worldview" concept is a basic principle in my composing process. I keep requiring myself to explore different aspects of life and to seek the emotional connection of living creatures, so as to realise the "pure music" which naturally surrounds us. I believe, as Ward Beecher states:"Music cleanses the understanding, inspires it, and lifts it into a realm which it would not reach if it were left to itself."[31]

II. The concept of "Secularism (or This-Worldliness)".

The theory of "Secularism (入世)" reflects the Confucian philosophy of social participation and responsibility. I regard the core spirit of "Secularism" as the duty to offer enlightenment to the audience through my compositions.

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[30] Geng Zhou, "The View and Aesthetic Interest of Buddhist Music," *Journal of Tianjin Conservatory of Music* (周耘, "佛教音乐观与佛乐审美意趣," *天津音乐学院学报*) 4 (2016): 5
[31] "Henry Ward Beecher," *goodreads,* https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1282489-music-cleanses-the-understanding-inspires-it-and-lifts-it-into, accessed 1 Nov 2022.

"Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life,"[32] Ludwig van Beethoven reportedly said.

Music sustains, rewards, enriches, and carries us through life. People are more easily connected through real-life experiences. Music can be an epochal portrait or a regional sketch. Humming a beloved song with old friends carries the memory of demolished locations arising from shared experiences, a touch of tacit understanding unconsciously revealed on their faces, a non-erasable trace of time and space.

In my desire to fully understand and continue to work as a competent inheritor of traditional art, I endeavour to travel across cultural boundaries, seeking different facets of life; only by becoming deeply involved with the world can I catch the most vulgar, casual, and slovenly "secular voice." To discover, capture and restore people's most authentic voices—which have been consistently suppressed with the mask of authority—becomes a driving force to continue my creative journey in these desperate times, a beam that streams across the dark chaos.

> If music no longer functions as a source of communication then it would die [不与人沟通的音乐只能死亡].[33]

I seek inspiration for my music from many sources. The simplest rustic sounds, the stirrings of the natural world, my own secular experience—all these combine, I hope, to make my individual voice.

III. The concept of "Seclusion (or Other-Worldliness)"[34]

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[32] Ludwig van Beethoven Quotes. BrainyQuote.com, BrainyMedia Inc, 2022. https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/ludwig_van_beethoven_153098, accessed June 11, 2022.

[33] This quote is the title of an article by Qigang Chen, "If Music No Longer Functions as a Source of Communication Then it Would Die—To The Younger Generation," *People's Music* (陈其钢, "不与人沟通的音乐只能死亡 - 致年轻一代," *人民音乐*) 11 (2004): 12.

[34] "Confucianism is the philosophy of social organization, and so is also the philosophy of daily life. Confucianism emphasizes the social responsibilities of man, while Taoism emphasizes what is natural and spontaneous in him...Because it 'roams within the bounds of society,' Confucianism appears more this-worldly than Taoism, and because it 'roams beyond the bound of society,' Taoism appears more other-worldly than Confucianism. These

Buddhism[35] and *Taoism* in ancient China were mainly based on the philosophy of "Seclusion (出世)"; both emphasise "breaking away" from the fetters of the secular world through religious practice.. "Seclusion" can be understood as the restoration of natural order in order to approach the "truth" of our existence. It requires us to exclude artificiality and to surrender to purity, adopting and a less sophisticated world view.

After periodically experiencing "Secularism"—seeking multiple inspirations, studying others' compositions and critical thinking, surveying market demands, and so on—I sometimes feel drowned out by these externals and crave a private peace. To find "one's own voice" while remaining distinct from the clamour of others in the modern world, who proclaim the benefits of certain technologies for a specific piece, it is necessary to keep a clear, independent mind. My intention is not to become reliant on social preferences or the demands of commerce but to remain faithful to the original impulse of writing and to remain artistically true to what I regard as "an everlasting faith". Confucius said: "For in music, more than other things, there should be nothing that is pretentious or hypocritical." ["唯乐不可以为伪."][36]

Compared with "Worldview" and "Secularism," "Seclusion" emphasises the essence of truth and purity in music and lifts it to a spiritual

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two trends of though rivaled one another, but also complemented each other. They exercised a sort of balance of power. This gave to the Chinese people a better sense of balance in regard to this-worldliness and other-worldliness." Youlan Feng (冯友兰), *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (Simon and Schuster, 1948): 22.

[35] "Early (Indian) and Mahayana Buddhism appeals to the view of 'Seclusion' which devalues the worldly life, yet this is not held in all Buddhist schools. In fact, both early and Mahayana Buddhism have the same emphasis on 'This-worldliness.'" ("虽然无论是早期(印度)佛教还是大乘佛教中都有贬低世俗生活意义的出世言论, 但并不是佛教都持这种立场. 实际上, 在早期佛教和大乘佛教中, 都同样有重视世俗生活, 要求入世的言论.") Weiqun Yao, "Comparing the Concepts of 'Other-worldliness' and 'This-worldliness' in Chinese, Western, and Indian Philosophy," *Shenzhen Social Science* (姚卫群, "中西印哲学中的 '出世' 与 '入世' 观念比较," *深圳社会科学*) (2021), 137-138.

[36] "Confusionism·Liji·Yueji 33," *Chinese Text Project,* https://ctext.org/dictionary.pl?if=gb&id=10140, accessed 1 November 2022.

level. Perhaps, as composers, we might regard this as a reminder to return to one's deepest pursuit, the musical revelation of one's innermost authenticity.

IV. The concept of "Transcendence"

"Transcendence (超越)" originates from Taoism,[37] as expressed by a famous ancient Chinese philosopher named Zhuang Zi. He divided music into three categories: Sounds that are "Human (人籁)," "Terrestrial (地籁)," and "Celestial (天籁)."[38] We may regard sounds that are "human" as the music of human society, sounds that are "terrestrial" as the natural music existing in our physical world, and sounds that are "celestial" as an eternal voice, beyond physical nature, that exists in one's mind in various aspects. From my experience and my intuition, I understand sounds that are " human" to be a combination of "Worldview" and "Secularism", sounds that are "terrestrial" to be "Seclusion", and sounds that are celestial to be "Transcendence."

Musically, "Transcendence" has been deeply connected to spiritual dimensions. Music of this type can even become our spiritual food in specific circumstances. It has the ability to heal; it brings us enlightenment, helps us escape the pain of the physical world and enter the spiritual realm of peace and love.

> Music is one of our most powerful gateways to connect to our spiritual nature—our divine source—the unseen, as well

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[37] "Transcendence" has been described in Western religions and philosophies somewhat differently. Wesel Stoker concludes "Culture and Transcendence; A Typology" by summarising "four examples of how a specific philosopher, theologian, writer, or artist gives content to a type or form of transcendence." See: Wessel Stoker, "Culture and transcendence: A typology," In *Looking Beyond?* (Brill, 2012):26. However, the term "Transcendence" in this thesis refers to the ideas that "were refined, discussed and written about most explicitly and most often in the context of Daoism." See: Benjamin Penny, "Immortality and transcendence," In *Daoism handbook* (Brill, 2000):109.

[38] 子游曰: "地籁则众窍是已，人籁则比竹是已. 敢问天籁." 子綦（qí）曰: "夫吹万不同，而使其自己也，咸其自取，怒者其谁邪!" (*庄子·齐物论*) [Ziyou said: "'Terrestrial sounds' are those produced by the earth's apertures; while 'human sounds' are those that come from a vertical bamboo flute. What then are 'celestial sounds'?" Ziqi answered: "When the wind blows across the land, it makes a myriad of different apertures produce varied sounds. Such sounds are made naturally by those apertures. What else could rouse them to create such sounds?" [Zhuangzi], "Sounds of Nature," in *Key Concepts in Chinese Through and Culture,* https://www.chinesethought.cn/EN/shuyu_show.aspx?shuyu_id=3651

as to the universe around us and those other divine beings that inhabit it with us.[39]

People throughout history would instinctively seek help from their God when in desperation. We can learn from so many sources that music is a connection between humanity and faith in God. In addition to understanding "Worldview", "Secularism", and "Seclusion", to reach the level of "Transcendence" is the ultimate aim of my lifetime.

Conclusion

"Style is the slowly evolving product of maximum personal liberation and creative freedom; it's an environmental combination of innumerable individual characteristics." ["'风格' 是在个性极大解放，创作极端自由的环境中逐步产生的，是无数 '个人风格' 在某种文化环境中的结合体."][40] For years, I asked what decisive factors produced my views of creative style. Finally, I found my answer:

An artistic creator's individuality.

So, what are the underlying forces behind this individuality? What makes us special?

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[39] Frank Fitzpatrick, "Music and Spirituality," accessed 16 Nov 2012, https://www.frankfitzpatrick.com/music-and-spirituality/

[40] Qigang Chen, "My Concept of 'Style'," 33.

2.2 The Important Factors in Stylistic Formation

2.2.1 The Influence of Objective and Subjective Factors on a Composer's Creative Style

I believe both objective and subjective factors in life inevitably impact a composer's artistic creations.

As examples of this, the most influential Chinese composers to me in the earliest days of my writing career were Chinese-American composer Tan Dun and Chinese composer Qigang Chen. Each of them followed a unique life track which laid a specific "foundation" for their writing style.

I. The role of objective factors in one's creative life

i. The "Cornerstone" of stylish formation—one's social context

The unique background that characterises the foundation of a composer's creative style includes the time and location of their birth, their cultural traditions, and their social status.

In the same way as the "collective unconsciousness," a cultural tradition which is formed in a specific historical period has an unavoidable impact on a composer's creative thinking, value judgments, and aesthetic orientation. Social status and social relations also influence the personality and expressive forces in a composer's career.

Tan Dun grew up in an average family in Changsha City, Hunan Province, China, where the ancient Chu state was situated. Chu is known for its prevalent folk customs about witchcraft, which have been handed down to the present time. People sing and dance as a way of worshipping "supernatural spirits" in festivals. Thus, the state gradually formed a new musical genre — *Nuo Theater* — and this specific musical genre strongly influenced Tan Dun's composing career, especially in its an earlier stages.

We seem to hear "different souls talking to each other"[41] in his piece *Ghost Plays*, which is about the reappearance of his childhood memories.

Similarly, Qigang Chen has said: "Maybe this has something to do with the training I received since I was little. Take the poetry 'How long will the full moon appear? Wine cup in hand, I ask the sky'[42] as an example. This seems to have no relation to music, yet, through my expression, the poetry links with music—there are *Laosheng* and *Pingtan* in the singing devices, which come from what I was taught as a child." ["可能这与我从小接受的训练有关系. 譬如 "明月几时有, 把酒问青天," 仿佛同音乐没有关系, 但我表达的时候, 就非常有关系. 在这样的声腔构思中, 其实什么都有, 有老生, 也有评弹, 很多是从小受到的熏陶."][43] Influenced by a different life background, his music has a relatively more elegant and regular appearance compared with that of his college classmate, Tan Dun. Chen was born into an artistic family in Shanghai and spent his childhood mainly in Beijing, China. His upbringing offered him an intrinsic fusion between the southern and northern Chinese cultures, which is reflected in his music. As audiences, we find that in his compositions, such as *Iris Dévoilée (Iris Unveiled)* and *Er Huang* there remains both the lingering charm of Peking Opera and "the imagery of the oriental artistic concept he attempts to express by borrowing the material of *Kunqu* in the piece *Eternal Joy.*" ["在作品《万年欢》中他借用昆曲曲牌的素材来表达作品想要塑造的东方意境的画面感."][44]

Wenchen Qin, another well-known Chinese composer, has said: "I

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[41] Composer Tan Dun had this to say about his *Ghost Opera*: "This is a piece using very ancient theatrical methods to approach a modern idea, linking the different kinds of territory across media and across lives, and across decades, and let all those souls talk to each other." "Tan Dun (B. 1957) Ghost Opera for String Quartet and Pipa, with Water, Stone, Paper and Metal," *Chamberfest Cleveland,*
https://chamberfestcleveland.com/tan-dun-ghost-opera/
[42] Yingwenbashi, [bilingual], (英文巴士, [双语] 苏轼 水调歌头, *微文库*), translated by Xuanchong Xu (许渊冲翻译), accessed April 1st, 2018, https://www.gushiciku.cn/dc_hk/106381763
[43] Zhang Keju, ""Concept" Alternatives Way Out, Actually No Way Out (Part I), Interview with Composer Chen Qigang," Music Lover [张可驹. ""概念"替代出路, 其实没有出路 (上) 作曲家陈其钢访谈," *音乐爱好者*] 12 (2019): 29
[44] Meimei Zhu, "On Qigang Chen's Application of Operatic Elements in Music Creation," (PhD dissertaion, Nanjing Arts Institute, 2018) [朱玫玫, "论陈其钢音乐创作中对戏曲元素的运用," (南京艺术学院博士论文, 2018)], 44

have a special affection for Chinese instruments as I've been learning them for a long time. I've played the Erhu for ten years and have also learned the Chinese flute, *Sanxian*, and a little *Morin Quur*, but I perform none of these well. I failed the entrance exam of the Erhu subject and turned to music composition." ["因为我自己学习民乐器的时间很长，所以对民乐非常有感情. 我拉了 10 年二胡，吹过笛子，弹过三弦，会拉一点马头琴，但都没干成事儿，考二胡(专业)也没考上，然后就学作曲了."][45] Deeply affected by his childhood experience, both of his albums *Towards a Far Place —30 Pieces for Chinese Instruments* and the *Suona* concerto "*Calling the Phoenix*" reflect his exploration of new timbres for Chinese instruments through different instrumentation and musical textures.

Whenever I discover a composer's early life and environment and then return to a piece, I am always affected by a sense of an inimitable creative source, an exclusive gift granted through life to an artistic creator.

ii. The "breadth" of stylistic formation—one's life experiences

I believe that, as Charlie Jones writes, "You will be the same person in five years as you are today except for the people you meet and the books you read."[46]

Life experiences determine the breadth of a composer's work. Musical creations are more or less comprised of one's regional tastes and historical circumstances. As far as an artist is concerned, in addition to the repetitive patterns of daily life, one's cultural accomplishments accumulate with growth; in particular, experiencing historical change acts to elevate compositional impressions. By looking back at a composer's previous compositions, we can discover that specific life events grant a multifaceted

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[45] "An Interview with Wenchen Qin (Part I)," *China New Music Year Book 2012,* ed. Renping Qian, (Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2015) ["秦文琛访谈录（上），" *中国新音乐年鉴2012,* 钱仁平主编, (上海音乐学院出版社，2015)], 363.
[46]"Charlie 'Tremendous' Jones," *goodreads,*
https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/48905-you-will-be-the-same-person-in-five-years-as

nature and a greater tension to a composer's work. The creative richness is somehow proportionate to one's cultural insight.

"This satisfaction is like enjoying a piece of hot chilli chocolate after eating the best seafood" ["我觉得这种满足感就是好像吃最好的海鲜以后外加辣椒巧克力"],[47] said Tan Dun in an interview while reviewing his intention to combine martial arts with percussion music from Sichuan Opera and a violoncello, used to imitate the sound of the *Erhu*, in composing the music for the Oscar-winning film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.*

As an ambitious teenager who played a broken violin with three strings, he was accepted by the top music conservatory after the ten years of the Cultural Revolution. He was a small-town guy who had never heard a symphony until college, yet he has lived half of his life in Manhattan as a Chinese musician of great international reknown; he was a maverick weirdo who spent half a year just researching the different sonic possibilities of a special stone from 3.6 billion years ago;[48] he was a bold innovator who hoped to combine classical ballet with *Gongfu* music.[49]Tan Dun's multifaceted dramatic life experience presages the unpredictability and infinite possibilities of his work. A synchronicity that seems impossible in others' eyes is, nevertheless, perfectly integrated in his work.

As I discover more and more the stories that lie behind the work of composers, I cannot help marvelling at the footprints that life unintentionally leaves on one's artistic creations.

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[47] "Born for Music - Tan Dun," *Yang Lan Official Channel* ("为音乐而生 - 谭盾," *杨澜访谈录*) 2012(067), accessed July 10, 2017,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbqaDJ4DuJg&t=569s

[48] Tan Dun: " I spent six months trying to figure out if the sound of this 3.6 billion-year-old stone was 'Boom' or 'Bah' (我花整整六个月, 就是为了确定这块 36 亿年的石头出现的声音是 '嘣' 还是'吧')." Ibid.

[49] Tan Dun: " I want to derive a ballet trilogy from the martial arts trilogy. Because ballet is withering away, it will be gone in ten years if we continue to ignore it. I always feel that it would be an interesting future if I combine my martial arts trilogy with ballet (我要从武侠三部曲衍生出芭蕾三部曲. 因为芭蕾正在消亡之中, 如果再不注重, 再过十年就没了. 我总觉得把我这个武侠三部曲和芭蕾结合在一起的话, 可能是很有意思的一个未来)." Ibid.

II. The role of subjective factors in one's creative life

i. Personal nature versus creative characteristics

> "*He had his inner landscape, and obviously that manifested itself not only in the music but in his flying—because he was passionate about the flying. He was a sensitive guy. He had a huge heart. He always looked for the emotional throughline in the movie. He looked for the emotion first, and he figured out how to enhance that, musically...*"[50]

> —James Cameron, director of *Titanic*

I would like to initiate this topic with a study of the outstanding composer of film music James Horner.

At the age of thirteen, I imagined myself an onlooker in a castle on a lofty mountain, gazing at young lovers as they make a secret commitment. The sea melts into the sky as ships drift into view…

"In addition to talent, what is it in a composer's work that can evoke such profound emotion in one?"

I pondered this question repeatedly until unconsciously discovering the following fragment in Tan Dun's WeChat account:

> While composing music for *Titanic*, flying and making wooden toys are Horner's favourite ways to decompress. . . .Now he forever flew away in his plane and left his wooden toy—*ship and sea wave* —with his agent Mike on the desk [听说他在为电影 *泰坦尼克号* 作曲时，最喜欢的休闲解压方式，就是开飞机兜风和做木头玩具玩儿…如今他开着飞机走了，但他的木头玩具 - *海浪与轮船，*仍放在他经纪人麦克的桌上.][51]

This somehow answered my doubts over the years, inadvertently, naturally, and honestly; it was a unique reflection of an artist's individual

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[50] Tim Greiving, "He was a good friend, and he was very funny': Hollywood director James Cameron on working with Titanic, Avatar and Aliens composer James Horner," *150 Royal Albert Hall,* accessed September 27th, 2017, https://www.royalalberthall.com/about-the-hall/news/2017/september/he-was-a-good-friend-and-he-was-very-funny-hollywood-director-james-cameron-on-working-with-titanic-avatar-and-aliens-composer-james-horner/

[51] Tan Dun, "人走了，魂还在," *WeChat official account of Composer Tan Dun,* accessed August 31st, 2015, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/WqeFxiDgWbLeTT5CUzXV4g

nature. Although we cannot arbitrarily equate a creative style of work with one's personal characteristics, we have to recognise the existence of connections, since we can often detect imprints left by one's personal characteristics upon one's work.

As examples, consider two Chinese composers I am familiar with. The first is a typical scholar with a phlegmatic temperament: composer Qigang Chen's music impresses audiences with refined and cultured appearance; all the toughness is wrapped in a gentle shell and slowly released along with its gradual transformation. In order to challenge his own nature, he once attempted to write a fierce symphony, *Luan Tan*, which took him several years to complete. On the other hand, composer Liu Yuan is good at imitating others' characteristic behaviours. I remember, as a child, sitting at a table watching him imitate the characteristics of people he knew. We laughed for so long! My father became bashful and a little irritated when Liu Yuan caught him in the act of concealing a yawn and proceeded to imitate him perfectly. This playful character and imitative skill are also found in Liu Yuan's works. In the symphony sketch *Train Toccata* he imitates the sounds of the train whistle and its movement, gradually varying speeds, as well as suddenly inserting in the middle section an imagined story about a couple's farewell. His rich imagination and his ability to imitate, both part of his personality, are naturally reflected in this music, which seems eventually to bring us to a "departure station."

A general understanding of one's personal nature is essential for a relatively objective comment on one's creative style. Ask a composer out for a cup of tea and have a relaxed chat and you may see amazing results.

ii. The empirical individuality of one's life versus the ideological depth revealed in one's work

"Music is an outburst of the soul."[52]

- Frederick Delius

Like the wrinkles on one's face, the empirical individuality of one's life is marked as wrinkles on a composer's inner spiritual surface. From there, it naturally spills onto the score.

While listening to Shostakovich's *Symphony No.7*, we seem to hear Nazi soldiers' footsteps; and when hearing *Finlandia*, by Sibelius, we may somehow feel the oppression, struggle, and resistance of a nation. In Beethoven's work, we can discover the Classicism inspired by Haydn and Mozart, the heroism evoked by the *French Revolution*, the emotional upheavals of a turbulent life, the suffering of the deaf, and so many more physical and emotional encounters.[53]

"Invisible voices exist in everyone's inner space" ["每个人心里都有 '看不见的声音'"],[54] said Qigang Chen while describing a representative generation of contemporary Chinese composers that includes Tan Dun, Qu Xiaosong, and Guo Wenjing. "My university classmates are amazing. Their voices are entirely unique except for one thing—the legacy of the *Cultural Revolution*. Some were overwhelmed by this burden of life, yet, some became even more courageous." ["我觉得我们这班同学是很了不起的一帮人. 每个人的性格都很不一样, 但有一点是相同的: 说起来, 都有 "文革" 那段历史给我们留下的烙印, 包袱, 有些人因为这个包袱抬不起头来, 有些人变得更有胆"][55]

We must recognise that a generation of outstanding modern Chinese composers are concentrated in those graduates from 1977. They

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[52] "Frederick Delius Quotes," BrainyQuote.com, Brainy Media Inc, 2022, accessed June 14, 2022, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/frederick_delius_205824

[53] Please refer to: Kerman, Joseph, Alan Tyson, Scott G. Burnham, Douglas Johnson, and William Drabkin. "Beethoven, Ludwig van." Grove Music Online. 2001; Accessed 15 Jun. 2022. https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000040026.

[54] "Qigang Chen: 'Invisible voices' exist in everyone's inner space," The 8th Beijing International Music Festival Series Report, Beijing News, (陈其钢: 每个人心里都有 "看不见的声音," 「第八届北京国际音乐节系列报道」, 新京报), accessed October 26th, 2005, http://ent.sina.com.cn/x/2005-10-26/0646876008.html

[55] Ibid.

have lived in drama since birth, a sequence of tribulations evoked by *The Great Leap Forward* movement, *The Great Famine*, and *The Cultural Revolution*, followed by the dramatic, unexpected brightness called *Reform and Opening up*. It may be that they are unfortunate, from the usual standards for happiness in life. However, from an artistic perspective, these ups and downs left them with a profound ideological awareness; as a result, together they constitute a remarkable and innovative generation that has been selected and favoured by history.

I ask myself: "What about me? Where shall I go?"

2.2.2 The Factors That Influence My Musical Style

I have never considered what my exact writing style is, let alone explored the intentions behind my musical nature. As a person who seeks to consistently grow and expand, I love the challenge of seemingly impossible new ideas. I am something like a piece of blank paper, wildly allowing "grotesque" new contours to be sketched and colours sprinkled on. However, as I approach the end of my doctoral study, look back at the writing I have done so far, and examine each piece I have written, I am surprised to recognise some characteristics that seem to be inadvertently present in all my work. Their content and sensibility is inseparable from my life experience.

What is this experience?

I. My multi-cultural upbringing - The "Cornerstone" of my stylish formation.

My life background drops an indelible imprint of "Chinese sensibility" on my score.

What we call "Chinese sensibility" is in fact a multicultural collection

revealed in interdisciplinary realms. Early in the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States Periods, regional cultures in China gradually emerged and formed through the battles, immigration, and integration among different states ["中国的地域文化是在春秋战国时代列国相争，民族迁移融合的条件下逐渐显现而形成的"].[56] As Xiusheng Qi writes:

> In the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Periods after the Xia, Shang, and Western Zhou Dynasty, the five and a half centuries of development formed more than a dozen relatively stable regional cultures with rich connotations in China: The *Yan* and *Zhao* Cultures in Hebei, the *Sanjin* Culture in Shanxi, the *Prairie* Culture in Inner Mongolia, the *Qilu* Culture in Shandong, the *Central Plains* Culture in Henan, the *Sanqin* Culture in Shanxi, the *Ganlong* Culture in Gansu, the *Bashudian* Culture in Sichuan and Yunnan, the *Chu* Culture in Hunan and Hubei, the *Lingnan* Culture in Guangdong and Guangxi, the *Wu* and *Yue* Cultures in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, etc. During that time, Chinese culture mainly formed into seven cultural circles: the seven regional cultures, namely *Qilu, Jingchu, Sanjin, Qinlong, Wuyue, Bashu,* and *Barbarian* Cultures of the surrounding ethnic minorities, etc. [夏，商，西周以后， 经过春秋战国五个半世纪的发展，在中国广袤的土地上形成了十数个具有丰富内涵，相对稳定的地域文化. 如河北地区的燕赵文化，山西的三晋文化，内蒙古地区的草原文化，山东的齐鲁文化，河南为中心的中原文化，陕西的三秦文化，甘肃的甘陇文化，四川，云南的巴蜀滇文化，两湖的楚文化，两广的岭南文化，江苏，浙江的吴越文化等.[57] 春秋战国时期中华文化主要形成了七大文化圈,也就是七大地域文化，即齐鲁文化，荆楚文化，三晋文化，秦陇文化，吴越文化，巴蜀文化和周边少数民族的夷狄文化等.][58]

The "Seven Heroes" — *Qi, Chu, Yan, Han, Zhao, Wei* and Qin, the seven states that originated in the Warring States Period — have varied cultures and customs, extending even to different clothes and accessories.[59]

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[56] Xiusheng Qi, " Multiculturalism and Talents in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period," *Journal of Liaocheng University: Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition* (齐秀生, "春秋战国时期的多元文化与人才," *聊城大学学报: 哲学社会科学版*) 6 (2005): 84.

[57] Ibid., 84. also see: Xiangcai Meng, Xinsheng Hu, *Qilu Thought and Cultural History* [M], (Shandong University Press, 2002) [孟祥才，胡新生，*齐鲁思想文化史* [M]，(山东大学出版社，2002)].

[58] Ibid., 84. also see: Xueqin Li, *Eastern Zhou Dynasty and Qin Dynasty Civilization* [M], (Relics Press, 1991) [李学勤，*东周与秦代文明* [M]，(文物出版社，1991)].

[59] Xiaoyu Wu, "The General Situation and Development of Music and Dance in the Spring

The music and dance associatied with the court (雅乐舞),[60] with secular society (俗乐舞),[61] and with ethnic minorities[62] individually reflects the culture and social functions of different states in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period.[63]

This multicultural, colliding fusion is vividly revealed in an interview in which Tan Dun explained his collaboration with director Yimou Zhang on the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*:

> Hostess: You said it was a battle between States *Chu* and *Qin*, right? [你说过这是一场楚秦交战，是吧？]
> Tan Dun: Yimou is from *Qin* State. I am from *Chu*. *Qin* and *Chu* were enemies (in ancient times). He is very, very confident and artistically proficient. And as a musician, I also have my own world and artistic skills. [艺谋是秦国人，我是楚国人，秦楚是敌人嘛．他非常非常地自信，也非常非常有艺术手段．我是搞音乐的，我有自己的世界，也有我自己的技巧．][64]

In addition to that, the multi-ethnic and regional character of greater China also results in a notable linguistic diversity: Mandarin, Cantonese, Southern Fujian Dialect, the Hakkas, the Tibetan, Korean, Mongolian, Miao, Xinjiang, and so many more dialects are from totally different language systems. Even within Mandarin there are huge variations in accent due to geographic differences. The *low-level tone (低平调)[65]* in the Tianjin dialect

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and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period," (Master's Thesis of Shanxi Normal University, 2019)[吴晓雨，"春秋战国时期乐舞概况与发展，" (陕西师范大学硕士毕业论文, 2019)], 6.

[60] The *Court Music and Dance (雅乐舞)* is mainly used for sacrificial and educational activities of the nobles in different countries.

[61] The *Secular Music and Dance (俗乐舞)* refers to the folk dance of the lower class in different regions, including the *Nu Music (女乐)* from various states, The *Chu Dance (楚舞)* of the *Chu*, and the *Clog Dance (响屐舞)* of the *Yue*, etc.

[62] The ethnic minority Music and Dance mainly includes (北方的萨满乐舞-分布在中亚及我国内蒙古、新疆、甘肃一带，主要是游牧为主的草原地区的民族)；(南方的傩舞－源头产生于中原地区，后扩大到广大的南方地区，表演形式十分丰富)；以及(西南地区的铜鼓舞－利用铜鼓来为舞蹈带来更多的神秘色彩，通常是来祭祀天地、祭祀神鬼、祭祀祖先等). Ibid., 23-24

[63] This is my conclusion according to this paper：Xiaoyu Wu, "The General Situation and Development of Music and Dance in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period (春秋战国时期乐舞概况与发展)".

[64] "Born for Music－Tan Dun" ("为音乐而生－谭盾"),
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbqaDJ4DuJg&t=569s

[65] For a more detailed description of the low-level tone and how I apply it in my composition, please refer to Chapter 3.3.6.2, Deconstruction and Reconstruction.

exaggerates its amusing nature more than in the Beijing dialect (Mandarin) located next to it. This causes the musical features in Tianjin to differ from those in Beijing, a circumstance that I later employed in my compositions.

My father's hometown is Shandong, China, where the ancient state of Lu is situated. My mother is a typical Pekingese, from a region which in ancient times belonged to the Yan state. I was born and spent most of my childhood in Guangdong Province, the ancient Nanyue Kingdom. Thus, I behaved like a pure Cantonese: I spoke Cantonese as my first language, I enjoyed singing Cantonese nursery rhymes with my friends, I had steamed vermicelli roll for breakfast every morning, and my favourite foods are from the menu of typical Cantonese "morning tea." I was often taken to *Kongfu Tea* by adults, and the background Cantonese music *Yue Theater* still partially occupies my mind.

Due to my parents' work we spent much of my adolescence moving around. Later, at the age of 16, I was accepted by the *Central Conservatory of Music* in Beijing, where I spent an unforgettable decade as an undergraduate. I dated a typical Beijing guy and, from spending so much time with him, I gradually began to speak and act like a real Pekingese—spending my weekends at the stalls in the old "Alleyways (胡同儿)," fascinated by the sellers hawking until they were evicted by the urban management officers; and walking through the cultural quarter, where the sound of the *Peking Opera*, beloved to the older generation, is inescapable. I often took the city railway to Tianjin to collect the folk tunes and imitate the accent there; these primitive sounds haunt me still and have made their way subconsciously into my music. Also, working as production assistant for contemporary musical festivals, I was exposed to a wonderful clash of time and culture: sitting in the concert hall of the modern university, built on the site of an ancient Chinese palace; enjoying the Western 'sounds' produced by the music of foreign artists.

As my life status has been somewhat nomadic since childhood,

when asked by a new friend where my hometown is, I usually hesitate for a while and then say: "Wherever I am is my hometown." All these mixed, contradictory cultures, experienced since childhood, have heightened my awareness of the diversity in creative thinking, and this in turn has brought a "multi-regional" cornerstone to the foundations of my work.

II. A family status similar to Qigang Chen

Born into an artistic family—both my parents are professors of music and choreography—I was unavoidably influenced by Western music since infancy. Before I could speak, I was listening to classical symphonies and watching classical ballet as part of my daily routine. My parents were enthusiasts of ancient Chinese culture, so I would regularly hear the gentle sounds of *Guqin* music floating from their study while I played in the living room. I watched my mother rehearse her students in typical folk-dances of specific regions, and I absorbed the rich folklore that accompanie these, discovering how it exists within the fabric of the dance itself. My childhood home provided me with a professional and diverse musical training, and this, passively, subconsciously, established stylistic diversity as fundamental to my work. In it, you may perhaps discover the rustic Chinese folk sensibility, the contradictory combination of improvisation with rigorous design, the fusion of the contemporary dance with Chinese classical and folk traditions, and a literacy somewhat reminiscent of Qigang Chen. All these are my unerasable memories of home.

III. Exploring in solitude: the "undertone" of my music as a cross-cultural Chinese only child

Art is a perfect all-round presentation. [艺术必须是完美地,全方位地呈现.][66]

The key word here is "solitude", which, like a sweet melancholic

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[66] Keju Zhang, "Interview with Composer Chen Qigang," 25.

melody, runs through my portfolio. This solitude originates in part from the emotional fluctuations I have encountered as a Chinese only child, the geographical differences encountered in my multi-regional upbringing, and the barriers to understanding between Chinese and the Western cultures I encountered in my later research.

There is an obvious sense of the paradoxical coexistence of stillness and struggle revealed in the bittersweet phrases and abrupt dynamic shifts in many of my pieces: *That Day; So Close, Yet So Far Away; Ephemeral Serendipity; The Eternal Circle; Marionette,* etc. This, I believe, can be traced back to my status as an only child.

> My son was born under the one-child policy, so all our ideals
> and pursuits were built around him.[67]
>
> —Qigang Chen

Due to "family planning", a policy implemented by Chinese government in 1979, my generation has a distinctive but common name: "The Only Child." Having neither brothers nor sisters, we are expected to carry alone the infinite expectations of our family. We passively accept the care and values of our parents from a very young age.[68] We are a generation with a more self-focused orientation than that of our parents, with their siblings,[69]

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[67] Greg Cahill, "Political Turmoil & Personal Tragedy Inform Composer Qigang Chen's Emotional New Violin Concerto," *Strings,* accessed October 16, 2019, https://stringsmagazine.com/political-turmoil-personal-tragedy-inform-composer-qigang-chens-emotional-new-violin-concerto/

[68] "The Chinese singletons I knew often told me that the mixed messages they felt they were receiving from their parents caused them stress and confusion. The problems Chinese parents experienced while trying to socialize their children resulted mainly from the difficulty of constantly adjusting to (political, economic, and demographic) changes, rather than from the children's singleton status per se." Vanessa L. Fong, "Parent-child communication problems and the perceived inadequacies of Chinese only children," *Ethos* 35, no. 1 (2007): 86.

[69] A study has described the nature of the Chinese "Only Child" generation: "Our general pattern of results suggests that only-child Chinese have a more self-focused orientation than sibling-child Chinese. That is, our results pertinent to only children were consistent with cross-cultural results usually obtained in populations in which the cultural outlook stresses attention to the unique attributes, needs, preferences and desires of the individual." Qi Wang, Michelle D. Leichtman, and Sheldon H. White, "Childhood memory and self-description in young Chinese adults: The impact of growing up an only child," *Cognition* 69, no. 1 (1998): 92.

yet we are destined to meet the expectations imposed by our older generations.

As a member of "The Only Child" generation, I have no memories of playing games in the yard or sharing secrets with my siblings. I cannot imagine a carefree adolescence without the persistent anxiety of monthly exams. In my work, then, there is perhaps a sense of loneliness, of isolation, alongside occasional rebellion, persistent ambition, and determination. This is, perhaps, the legacy of being an "only child" of China.

The loneliness manifested in my music also originates from my somewhat nomadic childhood. The unpleasant discrimination I experienced during my early "transcultural" experiences is possibly the earliest factor that shaped my musical path.

In the early 1990s, migration in China was uncommon.[70] Born into a northern Chinese family and spending my childhood years in the southernmost area, linguistic differences and my physical appearance and personality distanced me from the Cantonese.[71] Rejected by my peers and

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[70] Research shows a significant increase in migration after the year 1995: "Take China's fourth (1990) and fifth (2000) population censuses and the two 1% population sampling surveys in 1987 and 1995 as examples: from 1982 to 1987, the scale of population migration was 30.533 million; from 1985 to 1990, it increased to 34.12.8 million; after entering the 1990s, the scale of population migration reached 36.42.6 million from 1990 to 1995; and from 1995 to 2000, it reached to 131.22.37 million ("以我国1990年, 2000年第四, 第五次人口普查和1987, 1995年两次1％人口抽样调查资料为例: 1982～1987年间人口迁移规模是3053·3万; 1985～1990年增至3412·8万; 进入90年代后, 人口迁移规模1990～1995年间达3642·6万; 而1995～2000年则为13122·37万") De Wang, and Hui Ye, "A Review of Chinese Population Migration Research After 1990," *Journal of Demography* (王德, and 叶晖, "1990 年以后的中国人口迁移研究综述," *人口学刊*) 1 (2004): 40.

[71] In addition to my own personal experience, the existence of geographical discrimination in Guangdong (China) can be confirmed in journal papers. For example, an article published in 2005 reads: "Various degrees of geographical and identity discrimination was raised in many places due to the imbalance of regional economic development and the intensification of the gap between the rich and the poor. This can be seen in the nicknames given to non-locals by the local people. . . . The coastal area of Guangdong is relatively developed and richer than the north, which is why the Cantonese call the people from other places as northerners. ("随着区域经济发展的不平衡和贫富分化的加剧, 很多地方都不同程度地对外地人产生了地域和身份歧视, 这在对外地人的称呼上就可以看出来. . . .广东沿海比较发达而且比北方富, 所以称其它地方人为北方人.") Jun Chen, "'Do not discriminate against non-locals' should be written into the citizen's code," *China Youth* (陈军, "'不得歧视外地人' 更应写进市民守则," *中国青年*) 19 (2005): 11.
In the short story "Northern Girl (Beimei), The Love that May Hurt Has no Results (北妹, 受伤的爱没有结果)," the author goes straight to the point in the first sentence: "'Beimei—Northern Girl.' The Cantonese also call it 'Laomei,' with disdain, which indicates some racial

facing strict demands as the daughter of an intellectual family, solitude became a familiar companion. Late at night in the solitude of my room, with the house sleeping and creaking with the weight of my family's history, music became my best friend. Music was an outlet for my emotions, a means of expressing my deepest feelings.

Now, however, the loneliness I encounter is triggered, I believe, by differences in culture, lifestyle, and ways of thinking. As Chinese-American composer Chou Wen-chung writes in the article "Whither Chinese Composers" ["华人作曲家何去何从"]:

> What then is Chinese music today? Is it music by a Chinese composer that emulates the music of the modern West? Or is it music that merely imitates or copies music of the present or past?[72]

As a transcultural composer, the loneliness encountered in the difficulty I have in communicating my musical aims to musicians from different cultures has brought me enormous challenges.

> I often feel that I am a person who lives in the gap between China and Europe. In Western society, people think I am not 'avant-garde' enough. But when I come back to my country, people say that I am not traditional enough, I am not easily understood by others (在中国和欧洲之间，我常会感到我是在夹缝中生活的人．当你到那个社会时，那里的人会说你不是先锋派，你不够先锋．可你回到这个社会时，人们会说你不够传统，你不容易被人理解).[73]

In my professional study, I feel several contradictions as I facing doubts from the outside: When putting myself in the Western realm, ought I struggle to cater to the aesthetic standards of Western music or ought I seek an individual path? Should I follow the established systems and terms (the

discrimination in my opinion ("'北妹'，广东人称之为 '捞妹'，而且神色露出鄙夷与不屑. 在我看来，大有点 '种族歧视' 的味儿.") Qiu yu, "Northern Girl: Wounded Love Has No Results," *Superior Life* (秋语, "北妹: 受伤的爱没有结果," *优越生活*) 3 (1996): 34.

[72] Wen-chung, Chou, "Whither Chinese Composers?," *Contemporary Music Review* 26, no. 5-6 (2007): 502.

[73] Qigang Chen, "Going out of Contemporary Music and Making One's Own Way," *People's Music* (陈其钢, "走出' 现代音乐' 追求自己的路," *人民音乐*) 6 (1998): 6

twelve-tone system; deviations; precise notation, etc.) that are regarded as authoritative in the West or fully respect those "unrefined" scales, tunings, and performances found among "outsiders"? When positioning myself in Chinese musical society, in which "the lingering conservative concepts there do not advocate 'individuality'" ["我们在观念上有些纯属保守的东西，个性在国内不是很提倡的"],[74] do I stay within the confines of traditional Chinese music or learn from other genres and seek new compositional languages? How innovative can I be yet still respect traditions and origins?

These, and many more contradictions linked to loneliness, are driving forces in my continuing musical exploration.

IV. I want to be courageous like them

Twentieth-century Chinese[75] are more or less driven by social and political upheavals, especially the most significant: the promotion of Western ideas by the May Fourth Movement;[76] the ascendancy of Nationalism after the establishment of PRC;[77] the silence required of apolitical art during the Cultural Revolution;[78] and the emergent and prosperous New Wave

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[74] Ibid.

[75] "Chinese Music" here does not mean music that emphasises Nationalism; it means the new music that was created after the May Fourth Movement in 1919.

[76] After the May Fourth Movement in 1919, Chinese musicians "praised the advantage of the West and imported a variety of Western technologies, educational practices, and cultural institutions while condemning traditional Chinese institutions and practice." Nevertheless, due to the reformers' overly servile attitude towards Western ideas and their radical denial of Chinese traditions, "New Music composers failed to explore and develop Chinese traditional musical resources (Chen Tianhua 陳天華 is one of the few exceptions; however, his contributions were limited), becoming totally Westernized. This not only cut it off from its traditional Chinese roots but also made it inferior to Western classical music." Ou-fan Lee, "A Critical History of New Music in China, Music/History/China Studies," (2011): 168.

[77] "After the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, officially sanctioned music in China was primarily produced to serve revolutionary or nationalistic purposes, with lyrics focused on celebrating Chairman Mao or the Communist Party of China." Xue Dong, "A Performance Guide to Tan Dun's Elegy: Snow in June," (PhD diss., University of Toronto (Canada), 2020), 10.
"Chinese composers' exposure to modern music was restricted to only Soviet Union composers." Therefore, Chinese composers were compelled to compose ideological works employing folk, nationalist, and ethnic materials that also reflected European styles and musical techniques of the nineteenth century." Wen-Chung Chou, "Whither Chinese Composers?" *Contemporary Music Review* 26, no. 5/6 (2007): 506. Also see: Xue Dong, "A Performance Guide to Tan Dun's Elegy: Snow in June," 10.

[78] During the Cultural Revolution, "the mythological and fantasy elements of traditional

movement in the post-revolutionary period.[79] From these, we, as Chinese musicians, may be aware of our subconscious dependence on collectivism (or nationalism). Individuality, for many of us, seems to be bound up with collective values. As Qigang Chen said: "In China they are always talking about our national style, the style of our nation, of our race...That is paradoxical. In China you learn to be social, subservient to everyone. If necessary, you must be at the disposal of society."[80] Perhaps one could claim that artists in China are so patriotic that they are willing to sacrifice themselves and give up their creative freedom.[81] Nevertheless, undeniably, there are an appreciable amount of works courageously telling "the truth" that have been created by post-twentieth- century Chinese composers.

"I do have concerns about the consequence of 'speaking the truth,' and I find it extremely frustrating to waste time on projects likely to be censored. Not particularly proud of my stance, I am the more sympathetic to the millions of Chinese who have to live with censorship. If they appear indifferent to outsiders, I suppose it is because they have no choice or they don't know they have other options."[82] Thus says composer Xilin Wang, from the writer's Hong-Kong-based outsider position in the article "A Critical

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Peking Opera [were] replaced in Model Opera with narratives based on party-related parables from contemporary political life." "A Performance Guide to Tan Dun's Elegy Snow in June," 14.

[79] Ever since the Post-Cultural-Revolution Era, "an important figure in this post-revolution musical identity was the Chinese-American composer, Chou Wen-Chung (周文中). Thanks to his extensive involvement with this then-young generation and the developing musical life of Chinese conservatories, Chou became a leading influence. Arriving in Beijing in 1977, Chou was ideally positioned to provide what would become the most influential and successful generation of composers with a much-needed modernist direction. Chou also shared his highly abstract modernist compositional techniques and aesthetic principles of individuality, and this influenced the nature of this burgeoning intercultural synthesis. This movement is now known as *xinchao* or New Wave. The most prominent composers from the New Wave include Tan Dun (谭盾), Chen Yi (陈怡), Zhou Long (周龙), Bright Sheng (盛宗亮), Qu Xiao-Song (瞿小松), Ye Xiao-Gang (叶小纲) and Guo Wen-Jing (郭文璟)." Ibid. 18.

[80] Rene, "Broken Silence," *Docsonline,* accessed April 3rd, 2020, https://www.docsonline.tv/broken-silence/

[81] Ou-fan Lee, "A Critical History of New Music in China, Music/History/China Studies," (2011):170.

[82] Hon-Lun Yang, "A Symphony to reflect on the Path of Communism," *The Oxford Handbook of Music Censorship*, ed. Patricia Hall (Oxford University Press, 2017), 465.

History of New Music in China, Music/History/China Studies." Wang's *Symphony No.4* was canceled just a few days prior to its performance, scheduled for December 8, 2000, because it reflects on the path and downfall of communism in the twentieth century.[83] The introductory note has never been published, since it reflects the performance history of the work and Wang's suffering during the Cultural Revolution.[84] The *Symphony No.3* (Op. 26, 1990), another profoundly tragic work that took twenty-two years to complete, was initially composed during Wang's encounter with political persecution in 1968 as a meditation on this miserable history for some time in the future.[85] However the writing of the second movement was deferred until 1989, after the outbreak of "The Tiananmen Square protests and massacre"; in this Wang embodies the crying and shouting by the victims mixed with the shots of political men, "the killer dancing over the bloody bodies," "the political man celebrating the success of the battle"[86] and many more tragic moments that truly happened during the incident. This is a profound demonstration of his intentions, expressed in his own words : "I want to express the suffering of contemporary people and the evil of their oppressors."[87]

No wonder that composers have to make certain compromises in order to publish under so strict a censorship; yet, in addition to Wang, other composers have expressed their authentic views (and the outsider positions of people from other countries) through music. For example, I was surprised to discover that Tan Dun's initial impulse for his *Elegy Snow in June* (for cello

[83] Ibid. 463.

[84] Ibid. 465.

[85] Jincheng Huang, "Wang Xilin-Chinese Shostakovich. Research on Wang Xilin's Musical Life and Musical Achievements," (Conference paper, ICADCE 2017: In 3rd International Conference on Arts, Design and Contemporary Education, Atlantis Press, 2017): 162.

[86] John O Robison, "Wang Xilin, Human Suffering, and Compositional Trends in Twenty-First Century China93," *Asian Musicology* 30 (2019): 128.

[87] John O Robison, "Wang Xilin, Human Suffering, and Compositional Trends in Contemporary China," *Wang Xilin's Music World (王西麟的音乐世界),* https://www.wangxilin.org/john-o-robison-wang-xilin-human-suffering-and-compositional-trends-in-contemporary-china/

and three sets of percussions) was actually the Tiananmen Square riots. In this piece, he also borrowed a thirteenth-century Chinese drama about a woman wrongly executed to depict the injustice, which also happened in June. In his own words: "Her blood does not fall to earth, but flies upward; a heavy snow falls in June and a drought descends for three years."[88]

Elsewhere, Qigang Chen has said: "My father was the head of the Academy of Arts in Peking. He was sent to some kind of concentration camp . . . where co-workers from all kinds of institutions were interned. My mother was in the same camp. I couldn't visit them for a number of months. I was attending music-school. There was a lot of violence at the time, also in our school. Many elderly people who lived near the school were taken into custody. It was said that they used to be . . . large landowners or landlords. Students would beat these people to death sometimes."[89] From listening to many of Qigang's works, I deeply sympathise with his encounter with social upheavals, specifically at the climax (bars 547–558) of the piece "The Invisible Voice," in which the musical theme is eventually presented in full by the whole orchestra, with the six vocalists respectively crying out the lyrics in French, English, and Chinese Pinyin: "Father, mother, grandpa, grandma, where are you . . .?" I was overwhelmed by the sound of agony, which conveys not only the historical reality but also his compassion for the sufferings of people:

> When you have experienced intellectual and psychological control and harm of this kind, when you have felt what it is to have no control over your own destiny, when you have for so long been able to see nothing in the future but darkness, and especially when those in positions of high political and moral authority have denounced you, leaving you no choice but to be silent and bear it . . .[90]

[88] Please refer to: Courtney Daniell-Knapp, "A program of works by Samuel Adler, Edison Denisov, Tan Dun, and Reynaldo Ochoa Tuesday, March 19, 1996 8: 00 pm Lillian H. Duncan Recital Hall," (1996).

[89] Rene, "Broken Silence." https://www.docsonline.tv/broken-silence/

[90] Greg Cahill, "Political Turmoil & Personal Tragedy Inform Composer Qigang Chen's Emotional New Violin Concerto," *Strings,* accessed October 16, 2019, https://stringsmagazine.com/political-turmoil-personal-tragedy-inform-composer-qigang-chens-emotional-new-violin-concerto/

Chou Wen-chung has explained that the "[A Chinese composer) is an all-round philosopher-artist (*wenren*), who composes idealistically about nature and larger issues rather than personal emotions, and often shares a moral responsibility for, as well as influence over, the society with scholars, painters, calligraphers and poets."[91] When Chou wrote this, I was a member of the young-composer generation; I hoped to be competent to be called a literati, someone who dared to take moral responsibility and speak for people through my music. Nevertheless, my early life did not smite me hard enough to Ignite my humanistic concern . . . until 2020, when the global epidemic was a great awakening for me. As a student in England, I experienced the isolation of withdrawal from daily life routines, as well as witnessing the worldwide difficulties caused by the economic standstill. At home, in China, the unprecedented tightening of the political environment after 2020 has been manifested in even stricter control of speech and increasing diplomatic crises. Here are recordings from Shanghai during the lockdown from April 18th, 2022 to May 22nd, 2022:

> "Now that Weibo posts from Shanghai government have turned off the comment function . . ."
> "I also need a better policy informed from above, so I can have an answer for my residents, but the reality is there is nothing . . ."
> "I have my own home, you can't stay at home. But I can't even go back home."
> "Gotta beat it to death?" (said by a witness on 6 April 2022, when in   Putong District a Corgi was killed on the street after its owner was isolated) [92]
> "China, Shanghai, what the hell is going on now? What's wrong with our policy? What's wrong? My child is sick but she couldn't get the treatment; she was kicked out of the hotel. What if she is really sick and dies?" (26 April 2022: outside the door of Shanghai Tongren Hospital, the mother took her child

[91] "Whither Chinese Composers," 502.
[92] "Call for April (Recordings of the Shanghai Lockdown in 2022) [四月之声 (2022 中国上海封城录音集)]," *Youtube,* accessed April 23, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQ_U6Ol_njo

to seek medical treatment after being rejected by many hospitals) ["中国，上海，现在是怎么了？我们的政策是怎么了？是怎么了？这个孩子身上有病，她就是得不了，得不到治疗，从酒店一直踢出来. 如果孩子身上真的有病，死了怎么办？;" (2022.4.26 上海市同仁医院门外，母亲带着孩子求医被多家医院拒绝)]

"Look, they're going to get this barbed wire and make us a concentration camp here!" (29 April 2022, Shanghai "Compulsory isolation": A community was forcibly compressed by a barbed wire fence; the residents protested that their home had been turned into a concentration camp.) ["你看还要弄这个铁丝网，把我们当集中营了这里!;" (2022.4.29 上海 "硬隔离"：某小区被强行上电网，居民抗议称小区被当作集中营)];

"No one has ever come to ask or send us any supplies." (4 May 2022)

"The train drivers stranded in Shanghai Pudong have not eaten or drunk for more than a month." ["从来没有人来过问过，没有人来给我们送过什么物资;" (2022.5.4 滞留上海浦东的火车司机们，已一个多月没吃没喝了)];

"They suspect that someone is playing 'The Internationale,' as it is now criminal for us to play 'The Internationale.'" (5 May 2022: Shanghai citizens were summoned by the police for playing "The Internationale" on their balcony.) ["就是他们怀疑有人放《国际歌》，现在放《国际歌》都是罪了;" (2022.5.5 上海市民因在阳台播放《国际歌》被警察传唤)].[93]

Though I had previously been apolitical, it became impossible during this time for me not to reflect on wider social issues. A yearning for justice, democracy, and freedom is, I believe, now manifest in my work. This is presented mostly by a tension and a contradictory "osmosis" between Impressionism and Expressionism, as I hope to evoke in my music the inherent oppositions between idealism and practicality, compromise and struggle. My solo works *Marionette* and *That Day* are musical monologues born in the reclusive nights during the lockdown, and my dance work *In Desperate (穷途)* is a statement of my resentment and resistance, as a member of the class of Chinese intellectuals, to power politics; it borrows the story of an ancient Chinese poet—Ruan Ji—who pretends to be drunk in

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[93] "Call for May (五月之声 - 向 '四月之声' 致敬)," *中国数字时代, Youtube,* accessed May 27th, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWJgaQrzg4E&t=71s

order to avoid serving a brutal ruler.[94]

2.3 My Musical Style

I write intuitively and choose whatever writing technique is appropriate to convey my inner hearing to a listener. If I were to choose a different time and place to write, this piece would become another, inevitably influenced by the change. A famous Tang Poet once wrote: "不识庐山真面目，只缘身在此山中," which means: "We cannot recognize the true face of Mountain Lu because we are on it." As a composer, it is impossible for me to analyse my own work entirely objectively. It may well require more time before my compositional languages can be evaluated by others through objective analysis. What I can do is to sum up the most obvious features in my compositions by recalling the circumstances in which they were written, striving for greater empathetic resonance.

2.3.1. The Internationalisation of Musical Dialect

I.   The unintentional presence of Chinese characteristics in my music

Because I have been immersed in Chinese literature and music since early

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[94] This is a commissioned work for dance, the music of which is adapted from one of the pieces in the portfolio, *Ephemeral Serendipity.* Both the music and the dance were collaboratively designed by the choreographer Ye Li and the Sanxian performer Taisheng Zhao. The program note is:
> Ruan Ji (210-263 AD) is an unparalleled talented poet living in the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties, an era of civil war and political chaos. As a liberty seeker, he refuses to serve the ruler's authoritarianism and thus could only survive by pretending to be drunk. He often rides a donkey, venting his dissatisfaction and resentment of the unrested social circumstances by aimlessly crying aloud when reaching the end of a road. This repertoire metaphors the current situation of Chinese intellectuals through narrating a "show to survive" hiding under Ruanjin's drunkenness. The infertile yet stubborn donkey here indicates his inner struggle of being powerless by encountering the cruel reality but still devoted to his belief. The creative team hopes to express the protagonist's emotional conflicts, a desire for redemption under the oppression of power politics under the undisciplined mask.

The adapted piece will not be analysed in this commentary, but a video of the dance will be made available as supplemental material.

youth, my initial creative inspiration is inevitably influenced by traditional culture, and this in turn is reflected in my music.

What are these influences?

i. Many pieces in this portfolio evidence a glaring use of Chinese pentatonic scales, folk ditties from my fieldwork, and ancient literati music excerpts. Works that were developed by devising core motifs based on the Chinese pentatonic scale include *The Eternal Circle* (2017, 2021), *So Close, Yet So Far Away* (2020), and *That Day* (2020-2021). Each of these is mainly developed from three or four notes in the scale, using interval *deconstruction and reconstruction*; these are adjusted to form complete music themes that are neither mechanical nor emotionless.[95] Pieces that borrow tunes from folk-derived or literati music are *Ephemeral Serendipity* (2021), *My Clay Figurines* (2019), *Taiping Drum* (2018), *Gang Xiang* (2017, 2018), *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing* (2017), and *A Pure Serene Music* (2019), some of which are more like "translations" of the original music sources than newly (re)created ("Westernised") music. Indeed, in *Taiping Drum* and *Gang Xiang*, specifically, I rejected the techniques—timbral, semitonal, microtonal, and other approaches—which I have frequently applied in my later works that are considered to be more "Western Contemporary." In this way, I hoped to keep as much as possible the features of Tianjin music and Tianjin Dialect intonations.[96]

ii. My growing knowledge of *Sanxian* music and the contemporary development of practice-based research have significantly impacted my musical expression. Beyond the compositions that are explicitly for *Sanxian*, aspects of sound that derive from *Sanxian*'s

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[95] Please see Chapter 3.3.3 *Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction* for precise explanations of the term--*Deconstruction and Reconstruction*. The detailed analysis of the individual pieces please refer to Chapter 3.3.3.1; 3.3.3.2; and 3.3.3.3.
[96] For more detailed analysis to my use of these musical elements, please see 3.3.3 *Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction* of this book.

timbral diversity, together with specific regional music characters behind the sound[97] are also applied in my other instrumental pieces and contribute to the creation of my compositional vocabulary.

Examples are abundant. In *That Day*, a piece for solo *Sanxian*, I attempted to discover new sounds that are "beyond *Sanxian*'s tradition" by applying contemporary techniques that are frequently used on Western string instruments, such as playing under the bridge, scraping on the python skin cover, and knocking on the sound box (or fingerboard), and combining these with the elegant, noble sensibility of Chinese literati music. In another *Sanxian* solo piece, *Ephemeral Serendipity,* the first and last sections reveal a timbral approach to sound with overtones and *after-tones (余音)*—the latter a subtlety of *Sanxian*'s sound. These are combined with unusual playing techniques and percussive effects to create an effect of "vertical boundaries," with shifting "mystic" colours and atmospheric, pitch-free "noise." In the central section, the *Sanxian* performer creates his own improvisation,[98] one that reflects the singing features of The *Puzhou Chenzi (Pu Opera 蒲劇)*[99] of Shaanxi Province

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[97] *Sanxian*'s timbral feature and expressiveness are formed by the different musical genres in which they are employed. Professor Longjian Tan, a Chinese *Sanxian* educator once spoke in a lecture: "For Chinese *Sanxian,* the diversity of sound originates from the diversity art, while the diversity art is formed by the diversity of music genres from both traditional Chinese and Contemporary... The *Sanxian*'s individuality is presented by the construction and artistic specification, performance technique, musical style, and sound colour of which the music genre it is in. Thus, it forms the *Sanxian* family characterised by performance and timbral diversity (中国三弦音色的多样性源于中国三弦音乐艺术的多样性, 而中国三弦音乐艺术的多样性源于中国传统乐种和现当代音乐的多样性...各个（音乐）种类的三弦都拥有独特的, 属于本乐种的器形规格, 艺术规范, 演奏技法, 音乐风格, 声音色彩, 从而形成了以演奏艺术的多样性与音色多样性为特征的三弦类族)." Longjian Tan, "The Charm of Chinese *Sanxian* Music," (lecture: *Liaocheng University School of Music and Dance Art Practice Week,* Liaocheng University, Liaocheng, May 24th, 2022) [谈龙建, "中国三弦音乐之美," (学术讲座: 辽城大学音乐与舞蹈学院艺术实践周, 2022 年 5 月 24 日)].

[98] According to the introduction given by the performer, Taisheng Zhao, he participated in *Puzhou Chenzi (Pu Opera)* performances in Shanxi province ever since he entered drama school. moreover, as a Shanxi native, the strong character of the *Pu Opera* is revealed naturally in his improvisations.

[99] "Named after its popularity in Puzhou (now Yongji area), *Pu Opera* is a representative art form in the southern area of Shanxi Province. *Pu Opera* is characterised by its agitated singing style with a raised ending called 'hook singing' (蒲剧因流行于蒲州 (今永济一带) 而得名, 是晋南地区一种极为重要的艺术形式. 蒲剧唱腔激越, 尾音上挑, 称 '勾腔')." Yang Gao, "A Study on The Rhyme of Chinese *Pu Opera*," (Master's Thesis, Shaanxi Normal University, 2020) [高扬, "传统蒲剧用韵研究," (陕西师范大学硕士论文, 2020)],1.

as well as the Northern Shaanxi improvisational singing *Xintianyou (信天游),*[100] in which singers "freewheelingly express their shifting moods by subtly fitting ornamentations to the melody." ["不受约束，随心所欲，随着歌手心境的变化而变化，在旋律上巧妙地加花添彩"][101] The frequent use of *Sanxian* downward glides in the works *Taiping Drum* and *A Pure Serene Music* reflects my desire to present the unique language intonation—the *Low-level-tone (低平调)*—of the Tianjin dialect. I believe this was subconsciously influenced by my familiarity with the use of *Sanxian* in Tianjin *Quyi* (a Chinese Narrative art genre), gained from my experience living there for sixteen years. In the piece *My Clay Figurines*, I borrowed the melodic structure and performance form of the *Sanxian* accompaniment in *Tianjin Kuaibanshu (天津快板书),*[102] featuring the *Tianjin Clapper* performer to best present the delightful, playful character of the *Sanxian* accompaniment conveyed in the folk *Tianjinkuaibanshu* performance. The use of *Sanxian* in *Gang Xiang* was inspired by *Sanxian* accompaniments in Tianjin *Quyi*, in which it leads the tempo and builds the structure of the piece. I attempted to "restore" the performance form and sound effects of "Wenwuchang (文武场)"[103] in traditional *Wu Hu Gang Xiang*

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[100] "The 'Xintianyou' is an improvisational singing formed from the labour and life of the folks and popularised in the area of Yulin, Yan'an, in northern Shaanxi province (信天游，是产生并流行于陕北延安榆林一带，在民间生产生活中即兴歌唱的一种艺术形式)." Lili Yao, "A Perspective of the Characteristics of Folk Culture and Art in Northern Shaanxi from the 'Xintianyou'," (姚莉莉, "从'信天游'透视陕北民间文化艺术的特征," *黄钟: 武汉音乐学院学报*) 4 (2003): 48.

[101] Ibid., 49.

[102] "*Tianjin Kuaibanshu* is a *Quyi* genre characterised by a rough humour that delivers a strong folk sensibility. It was derived from the reform and development of the *Dashuzi*—a *TiānjīnShídiào* genre . . . Formally formed in the 1950s, *Tianjin Kuaibanshu* skillfully featured the Tianjin dialect and adopted its singing specifically from the *Shulaibao* (a narrative art in the northern area of China derived from beggars) and the Jiezi board performance in *TiānjīnShídiào*, integrating with these the tune of *Dashuzi* from *TiānjīnShídiào*, accompanied by the *Sanxian*." ("快板书是一种以粗旷、明快、幽默为风格，且具有浓厚生活气息和地方风味的曲艺。快板书是将天津时调"大数子"进行改革、发展而演变来的 . . . 20世纪50年代正式形成，这种快板巧用天津方言，并采用数来宝的数唱方式及快板书所用的节子板的表演方式，同时配以天津时调中"数子"的曲调，用三弦伴奏"). Mingze Sun, "On the Inheritance and Development of the Art of *Tianjin Kuaibanshu* [J]," *Home Drama* (孙铭泽, "谈快板书艺术的传承与发展[J]," *戏剧之家*), 2018 (20): 40.

[103] "Wenwuchang" here means the instrumental accompaniment to a Gang Xiang performance. "Wenchang" means the traditional Chinese string and wind instruments, while the "Wuchang" here refers to percussions ("文武场" 指器乐伴奏. "文场" 即管弦乐，"武场" 即打击乐). Shuxin Wei, "Research on The Historical Development and Art Form of 'Gang Xiang' in Tianjin Area," (Master's Thesis, Tianjin Conservatory of Music, 2019) [韦舒馨, "天津地区"杠箱"艺术历史沿革与艺术形态研究," 天津音乐学院硕士论文, 2019), 23.

(五虎杠箱) performance by using two *Sanxian*s in combination to present the rhythmic structure and to create an acoustic contrast with the percussion.

iii. My understanding of and references to Tianjin local music and *Quyi* provide a subtle "taste of Tianjin" to my compositions.

The influence of *TiānjīnShídiào's* musical style and performance[104] on my music creations is considerable. Beyond the *Sanxian,* the piece *Taiping Drum* contains a *Banhu* (a specific Chinese fiddle commonly used instrument in Chinese Northern *Quyi*). The theme of the piece is tonally "translated" from the intonation of a slang expression pronounced with a Tianjin accent that highlights the *low-level tone* in the Tianjin Dialect, thereby exaggerating its amusing nature, in contrast to the high-pitched Mandarin Chinese.[105] *A Pure Serene Music* applies the performance form of *TiānjīnShídiào* by featuring *Sanxian* as an accompaniment to poetic recitation.

Still more broadly, beyond the impact of Tianjin Narrative Art, I also employ stylistic characteristics of Tianjin's *Mazu (妈祖文化), Wharf (码头文化),* and *Folk（民俗文化）* Cultures,[106] as revealed in the Tianjin folk music

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[104] *TiānjīnShídiào* is a *Quyi* (narrative art) genre in the Tianjin metropolitan area in northern China that embodies a language-music dynamic featuring *low-level tone* (language intonation), improvisation, and *Qupai* (fixed melodic structures to accommodate different lyrics) with *Sanxian* accompaniment.

[105] Please see section 3.3.3.6, *Taiping Drum*, for a more specific explanation of the *low-level tone*.

[106] The *Wharf, Mazu,* and *Folk* Cultures are Tianjin's dominant three cultural forms.

The *Wharf Culture* officially originated in the Ming Dynasty along with the prosperity of water transports in Tianjin. "The commercial exchanges through the wharves increased the development of the city and provided a favourable environment for the creation and transmission of art. . . . The wharf has become an entertainment place where various arts converge and artists contest with each other through their performances. . . . The *Wharf Culture* portrays people's life and goes on to provide a hotbed for the emergence and development of art." ("码头的商贸往来不仅带动了城市的发展，也为艺术的产生，传播提供了有利的环境...码头成为了各门艺术的融汇之地，艺人们争相斗艳的娱乐之地...码头文化折射出人民生活的真实写照，继而又为艺术的产生，发展提供了温床.").

"The *Mazu Culture* (religion) originates in Fujian, China, and was later introduced to Tianjin in the early Yuan Dynasty. . . . Due to the gradual development of Tianjin's water transport industry, people in the sailing business began donating money for temple buildings to worship the *Mazu* and pray for her blessing for their safety when going to sea." ("'马祖文化'（信仰）最初产生于我国的福建地区，在元代初年开始传入天津...由于天津漕运业的逐步发展，航海商民为求马祖保佑出海平安，便开始捐资修建庙宇来供奉妈祖.") Relevant forms of folk-art performance were gradually formed after that.

audiovisual data which I collected during my fieldwork. For example, the melodic and rhythmic materials of the piece *Gang Xiang* are inspired by an audio excerpt from my documentation of the Tianjin Nankai Folk Art Troupe performance. The structure of the *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing* borrows the procedures of the Buddhist ceremony and the frequent sudden changes of rhythm from the Gongs and Drums performance at the *Tianjin West Pier* (天津西码头). In this piece, I attempted to reflect on the *Tianjin West Wharf* workers' optimistic attitude towards life, despite years of toil and a lack of entertainment, by combining contrasting presentations to the melody that pervades the entire work, beginning with a smooth lyricism and, later, accelerating suddenly. In addition to applying folk materials, in order to express the typical nature of Tianjin people, namely "'Ge Er' (the gift of the gab and a sense of humour) ['哏儿' (能说会侃懂幽默)],"[107] I also tried to frequently feature short slide-up or slide-downs, accompanying the abrupt shifts in speed and dynamic that occur in many of my works.

iv. Many genres in Chinese folk and court music are commonly associated with non-music programmes and characterised by narrative contents. Similarly, my approach to programmatic composition in music reveals both my individual perspective and creative impetus and my audiences' different understandings, especially of music for dance. This, I believe is significantly influenced by our shared Chinese narrative

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The *Folk Culture* originated from the Tianjin people's custom of paying particular attention to festival celebrations, "which were specifically formed by people's long-term work at sea while being eager to reunite with families on the New Year's Day after travelling outside all year round. As a result, a large number of folk New Year celebrations occurred." ("这与旧时人们长期从事海上工作有着直接的关系，常年在外漂泊的日子，促使人们渴望在年节之日与家人团聚. 因此，大量的民俗活动就在年节之日的庆祝中应运而生.") The *Folk Culture* also encompasses certain performance forms from the *Wharf* and *Matsu* Cultures, such as The *Gang Xiang* and *Baireniing Yangko (百忍京秧歌)*.

The explanations above are partially referenced from： Hongyun Wang and Jie Zhang, "Interpretations to the Art Forms of Tianjin Folk Dance," *Journal of Tianjin Conservatory of Music* (王鸿昀, and 张洁, "天津地区民间舞蹈艺术形态考释," *天津音乐学院学报*) 4 (2017): 115–116.

[107] Ruwei Tan, "Tianjin Dialect and Folk Culture," *Collection* (谭汝为, "天津方言与民俗文化," *收藏*) 1 (2014). 68.

tradition.

Many of my pieces—*The Eternal Circle, That Day, So Close, Yet So Far Away, Marionette, and My Clay Figure*, to list just a few—are programmed before they are created, and most of them follow preset complete or fragmented storylines. I imagine myself as a storyteller, narrating my tale to my audience through music instead of words.[108]

v. The musical motifs and religious concepts of my works are mostly inspired by *The Book of Changes (I Ching), Buddhism, Taoism,* and other ancient Chinese classical literature.

For example, my chamber piece *The Eternal Circle* is inspired by "The Impermanence" ("无常观") in *Buddhism* and "One For All" ("万物归一") in *Taoism*. My clarinet solo *So Close, Yet So Far Away* builds from a minimalist theme, develops into something sharper and more complex, and finally returns to harmonic simplicity, reminiscent of the beginning but with greater tonal layers; in this way I attempted to embody the *Taoist Philosophy* of "Yin, Yang," which can be understood as "Conflict and Union." In the violin solo *Marionette*, a sharp, gradually intensifying entry smoothly transforms into a fierce musical expressivity, combining intense rhythmic patterns, harsh tones, and unpredictable stops.

It is obvious that Chinese sensibilities from both folk and literary traditions account for a large proportion of my PhD works, even those that might seem less directly inspired. Neverthess, since the early twentieth century, the colonial impact on Chinese music has been enormous. The insistence on "total Westernisation" has effectively removed the roots of the Chinese tradition,[109] making these Westernised "noises" an equally undeniable part of my artistic identity. Without more critical research into specific indigenous art forms, the Chinese elements in my current works can

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[108] Please see section 3.2, *Integrating Programmes*, for a precise analysis of how I integrate programmes into my music writing.
[109] Ou-fan Lee, "A Critical History of New Music in China, Music/History/China Studies," (2011): 169.

only stand for my subjective interpretations of folk materials. They can be critically judged to be an example of the post-colonial manifestations of "Chinese music" conveyed through my "Westernised" musical vocabulary and personal expression.

II. The "diluted" Chinese nature of my musical compositions

Although objectively influenced by growth, background and life experience and subjectively impacted by personality and aesthetic views, a "Chinese" sound has steadily and imperceptibly infiltrated my musical language. However, this has been diluted by years of Western musical education, with the compound gradually transformed into a new form: an internationalised musical dialect, with which I represent my individuality in Western society. This can be seen in several ways.

i. I enhance dissonance by using Chinese folk-derived materials, together with Western contemporary musical concepts and writing techniques in musical motif design and development.

This approach was initially inspired by Kaija Saariaho's *Nocturne* for Violin solo (1994) and *Duft* for Clarinet solo (2012), György Ligeti's *Sonata for Solo Cello* (1948-1953), Thomas Simaku's *Soliloquy II* for solo Cello (2001) and *Soliloquy VII* for solo Clarinet (2020), Michael Ellison's *String Quartet No.2* (2002), and many other Western composers' works, in which they "play with materials" and strike a balance between sound and "noise." Their techniques were "implanted" in my music primarily through embedding dissonance in the pentatonic-based materials that are intrinsic to Chinese "harmonious" music aesthetics.[110]

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[110] "'Harmony' is an important concept in Chinese music aesthetics. Early in the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046-771BC), people emphasise that music originates from nature. They believe music should be as peaceful and still as nature and one should govern the body and the country through 'harmonious' music; Confucianism believes that only in a peaceful state of mind can we realise the 'Osmosis' of the aesthetic subject and object; Taoist Ji Kang believes the fundamental characteristic of music is 'harmony.' And this 'harmonious' characteristic is formed by nature and controlled within the music itself." ("和，是我国音乐美学思想的一个重要概念：西周强调音乐来自自然，应该像自然那样平和，始终，又应该以平和适中的音乐治

This can be seen in the musical impulses of the following pieces:

That Day:

Figure 2.3.1-1 Musical impulse: *That Day*

My Clay Figurines:

Figure 2.3.1-2 Musical impulse: *My Clay Figurines*

So Close, Yet So Far Away:

Figure 2.3.1-3 Musical impulse: *So Close, Yet So Far Away*

The "implantation" of intervals that are considered "dissonant" (semitones, tri-tones, etc.) and frequent shifts between performing techniques weaken the identifiably pentatonic-based auditory effect. Though this I hope to increase the inner tension of the music and create a larger imaginative space for my audience.

I am also inspired by Chinese composers Qigang Chen and Tan Dun, who enhance dissonance in mostly pentatonic, folk-derived musical

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身，治国；儒家认为只有保持感性的中和，不过激，在一种平和的心境中才能达到审美主体客体的结合；道家的嵇康认为音乐就其自身来讲，其根本的特性就是和谐，而这种 "和" 的特性来自于自然，为音乐自身所具有.") Yan Xu, "Music Aesthetic Thoughts of Ancient Greece and China's Pre-Qin Period," *Literary Education*: Medium Volume (徐岩, "古希腊与中国先秦音乐美学思想之管见," 文学教育: 中) 4 (2010): 103.

"The music aesthetics thought of 'harmony' profoundly affected Chinese aesthetics." ("以 '和' 为贵的音乐美学思想根深蒂固地影响着中国人的审美世界.") Deqing Zhou, "The Pre-Qin Confucian Music Aesthetic Thinking of 'Harmony'," *Journal of Weinan Normal University: Comprehensive Edition* (周德清, "先秦儒家以 '和' 为贵的音乐美学思想," 渭南师范学院学报: 综合版) 5 (2013): 48.

materials—specifically in *Reflet d'un Temps Disparu* (1996) and *Er Huang* (2009) by Qigang Chen, and in *Elegy: Snow in June* (1991) by Tan Dun. I have embodied their compositional technique in the atonal development of musical motifs by deconstruction in the middle sections ("development" sections) of my pieces. I use this primarily to add mystique to the original thematic appearance and increase musical tension and impetus. *So Close, Yet So Far Away, That Day,* and *The Eternal Circle* are prominent examples of this.

Designing and developing a motif based on the twelve-tone system is another frequent feature of my work. The basic motif of my violin solo piece *Marionette* is comprised of a half diminished seventh chord and a major-minor seventh chord (with a chromatic semitone on the fifth of the chord). These aggregates create musical tension in order to dramatise the female puppet's resistance in an atmosphere of gloom and foreboding. The relatively harmonious pentatonic quality reveals itself only sporadically during this development process, symbolising the crushing of the 'true ego' beyond recognition.

ii. I frequently use piano and other Western instruments in my orchestration.

The only pieces in my portfolio orchestrated entirely for Chinese instruments are *My Clay Figurines, That Day*, and *A Pure Serene Music*. All my other pieces, including the Chinese Chamber piece *Taiping Drum*, use a wide range of Western orchestral and percussive instruments. I explore the instrumental potential by implementing various unusual performing techniques.[111]

iii. I draw lessons from Western contemporary musical technique for the concept of auditory effect design.

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[111] For a more precise discussion of orchestration, please refer to **Chapter 3.3, *Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction*.**

The pitch organisation in much of my work not only uses the motivic techniques I call *Deconstruction and Reconstruction* (see **Chapter 3: Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction**), but also expresses the work's auditory atmosphere through the design of harmonies and modes.

I listened to the music of Western Classical, Romantic, and Impressionist composers (Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy, Liszt, Ravel, etc.) every night before bed in my childhood, and I was trained in Western harmony, counterpoint, musical analysis, and orchestration during my conservatory study. When I compare these with the influence of melody-based linear thinking and improvised performances, I find I adhere more closely to "vertical" concepts and "structural thinking" in my compositional process—that is, I structure the range of pitches before beginning the compositional process of a new section or seeking a proper harmonic connection that best meets my inner auditory imagination. Then, within the selected range, I further adjust and develop the monosyllabic and harmonic formations which have been "structured" beforehand. It is notable that in many of my compositions, the central musical theme is developed from a simple motif, the full theme of the piece revealing itself only slowly as I write and fully realised only in the work's climactic passage.

iv. I attempt a kind of "timbral structure."

In my early professional work, I was unable to break through the limitations of using only melody, rhythm, and harmony to convey precisely what I heard in my head. Challenging myself, I attempted to use of timbral variation to create a better coherence between monophony and harmony, a concept that was initially inspired by the Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho's concept of "timbral structure."[112]

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[112] "To qualify the traditional conception of timbre's and harmony's respective functions, I would say that the function of timbre is considered as being vertical and that of harmony as horizontal. Harmony therefore provides the impetus for movement, whilst timbre constitutes the matter which follows this movement. On the other hand, when timbre is used to create musical form it is precisely the timbre which takes the place of harmony as the progressive

My timbral designs are both monophonic and paragraphic. This is sometimes evident in a contrast between a sustained or rapid repetitive tone formed by timbral variations, such as in the clarinet solo *So Close, Yet So Far Away*, the violin solo *Marionette*, and the *Sanxian* solo *That Day*. There are also dynamic changes in these variations, usually to create greater musical tension. Timbral designs are also evident in the structures of my pieces. Some of my compositions are arranged into sonic paragraphs by the contrast of tone clusters. My aim has been to create richer layers that underlie the music and create an impression of polyphony on several levels; this is especially important for solo instruments and serves to expand the melodic line in some way.[113] For example, there are three different presentations of the theme in the *Sanxian* solo piece *That Day*: the tone in the first presentation is soft; in the second it flows smoothly; in the third, it builds in energy and emotion. I incorporated unusual *Sanxian* performing techniques in order to bring timbral contrast to each thematic presentation.[114]

I am also inspired by the inclusive attitude revealed in some composers' works. I have been strongly affected by their intercultural approach, in which they either develop (Westernise) the indigenous elements or shape the "exotic (non-Western)" features to suit Western contemporary sensibilities. For example, in *Ancient Voices for Children* (1970), George Crumb's "eclecticism is evident in the deliberate juxtaposition of such disparate elements as quotations from Bach and Mahler and the pervading orientalism of the modal and rhythmic content of much of the music, as well as the tuning and timbres used to project these ideas."[115] In Michael Ellison's *Elif*, for kemençe, kanun, and chamber ensemble (2003), one finds an intercultural approach that combines the artistic characteristics of Turkish

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element in music." Kaija Saariaho, "Timbre and Harmony: Interpolations of Timbral Structure," *Contemporary Music Review* 2, no. 1 (1987): 94.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Please see section 3.3.2, *That Day*, for a detailed analysis of my timbral approach.

[115] Brian Fennelly, "Vocal Music: by George Crumb," *Notes* 29, no. 3 (1973): 560–61.

Muqam and artistic concepts from Western modernity; Ellison balances the "issues of notation versus oral transmission" in folk-derived music tradition by specifying "the conductor follows [the] singer" to realise a coordinated "disintegration" of instrumental sounds and timbres.[116] Two other works by contemporary Chinese composers—Wenchen Qin's *Pipa Words* (2006) and Lei Liang's *Against Piano* (1999), inspired me by the way they maximise timbral layers in solo instrumental writing and synthesise the sheer diversity of our present resources into a more organic and well-ordered whole.[117]

Yet—as Professor Chan Hing-yan also suggested—along with my increasing interest in contemporary music sounds, in my later works, the conspicuous richer timbres and formless structures resulting from an overly obvious Westernisation have erased "my inherent musical nature"—the indigenous characteristics (such as the rhythmic changes in Chinese folk music, operas and *Quyi*) that are featured in my earlier, "immature" pieces. This suggests to me the value in returning to the "home-derived" sounds in my future writing to create a better "osmosis" between the East and the West.

2.3.2. The "Visualisation" of Music

My childhood transcultural musical education contained both a Chinese narrative tradition and experience with Western programme music. Together, these have given my music certain visualisation characteristics. These are not fixed, however; the images in my works are formed from the personal imaginations of both music creators and music appreciators, each in

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[116] Michael Ellison, "A Few Considerations on Transcultural Music-making Today," The *4th International Conference on Performing Arts (ICPA)* (Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2022), accessed November 10th, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0l5FG-RHEY

[117] George Crumb, "Music: Does it have a Future?," *The Kenyon Review* 2, no. 3 (1980): 117. Also see: Herdlicska Flavia-Maria, "George Crumb: Expressiveness and Timbral Exploration in *Vox Balaenae* and *An Idyll for the Misbegotten*," *Lucrări de Muzicologie* 32, no. 2 (2017): 113.

response to their individual understandings of either a completed piece or of a stimulus that lead to musical creation.[118]

I am aware of my unconsciousness desire to associate music with non-musical events or images: when hearing the musical theme of the movie *Brave Heart (1995)* by James Horner, in the first phrase I imagine the sky; in the second, endless fields of grass; then, as the third phrase begins, a magnificent ancient castle appears to me. When listening to the violin solo *Nocturne* by the composer Kaija Saariaho, I imagine myself walking alone on a stormy winter night, sensing the thin coating of ice floating on the river surface illuminated by the streetlamps, a faint silver light flickering on the ripples.

Such subconscious connections between music and specific scenarios provides artistic inspiration for my own writing. In *So Close, Yet So Far Away*, I am wrapped by the darkness, a beam of light flickering in the distance; the coda of '*The Eternal Circle*' reflects my glimpse of the momentary splendid glories of life, like coincidentally viewing a meteor crossing the sky in a tranquil night. *Taiping Drum* describes a celebratory scene at a local event, girls in traditional uniforms, wielding fan-like drums as they dance. *My Clay Figurines* depicts a handicraft artist's dream of his figures coming to life as loving children. *That Day* was structured by a pre-compositinal storyline in my mind, each section corresponding with a scene taken from the legend of The Sixth Dalai Lama, who bravely broke his statutory shackles for the pursuit of an inward calling.

In my writing process, the music itself and those non-musical attachments mutually influence each other through an ever-changing chronological order and content. When I review an earlier work from an audience's perspective, my changed empirical cognition, due to accumulated life experiences, results in a different reading of the music. Most interestingly,

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[118] For detailed analysis, please refer to **Chapter 3.2 Integrating Programmes**

I once considered the piece *Ephemeral Serendipity* to be "absolute music," since it was written using pure structures without any attached programme. Recently, however, it was given a "story" by a choreographer, who linked it with the legend of an ancient Chinese literati—Ruan Ji, who pretended to be drunk in order to seek freedom. A dance work—*In Desperate* (*穷途*)—was created by following the choreographer's personal reading of the music.

2.3.3 The Prevalence of "Vertical Boundaries" In My Work

I recall my previous supervisor, Professor Ambrose Field, telling me: "In your music, something unexpected usually occurs and then disappears. It leaves us with a sense of 'Vertical Boundaries.'"

I didn't feel the same way until receiving some audience feedback on my work. The frequent use of terms such as "sudden", "dramatic", and "conflict" provided me with more objective insights into what my music is like:

> "I'm enthralled. it's beautiful and disturbing and witty. Full of melancholy and alarm. The final notes . . . haunting. And I love how it just suddenly stops. Like life." (Matt Ryan, 2020)

> "While listening to *So Close, Yet So Far Away,* I felt myself walking alone on the village lane beneath the moon on a dark, windy night. Suddenly, a fox, weasel or something like that emerged." ["我听 *So Close, Yet So Far Away* 那个时候就是感觉月黑风高，独自走在乡间小道，然后突然一只小狐狸，黄鼠狼之类的，嗯，就出來了."]

> "I can feel the tension within your music. The two parts (rehearsal marks J and K) in the *Sanxian* solo piece *That Day* coherently express the contradictory combination between the unrestrained, intensive moods and exquisite singing melodies, in which the former part sounds as if I struggled to escape the shackles and announce my being to the world, with the latter narrates my awareness of being

negligible in contrast to this. ["我觉得你的作品很有张力，三弦独奏曲 *仮* 的排练号 J 和 K 段落，前者像是想要挣脱牢笼向世界宣告 "我" 的存在，后者感觉像描述 "我" 的渺小？有张力狂放，又有细腻歌唱的感觉."] (Yaou Zhang, 2023)

"The *Eternal Circle* and *That Day* contain dramatic tension and emotional conflict. Imagine a surfer rushes to the top of the wave in the rough seas and straight into the sky. Suddenly, the sea sound roars and becomes a gentle, still melody. It immediately releases my long-term entanglement and struggle! I'm in tears for the powerful sentiment when I hear the emotional intersections within the music." ("作品 *轮回；仮* 都具有很强的戏剧张力和情绪冲突，仿佛在滔天巨浪的大海上，冲浪者突然冲出浪尖，直入云霄一般，音响从大海的咆哮，瞬间变得温柔体贴，它仿佛从空中传来的声音，又仿佛从内心流淌出的旋律，让人顿时将长久的纠结，挣扎得以释放！每每听到这个情绪的交接点，我都为这强烈的情绪冲击所泪目.") (Hongyun Wang, 2022)

From audience feedback like this, I realised that my music was consistent with Professor Field's "Vertical Boundaries" description. My understanding of this phrase is that there are sudden and obvious contrasts in my music, like unexpected transitions in a film. The formative elements underlying these contrasts are internal tension, strength, and drama. More technically, they include notable breaks between homophonic and monophonic textures, fluctuations of mood evoked by obvious contrasts between musical "paragraphs," collisions between individual phrases, and unexpected changes of texture that arise in performance. Whether a sudden silence post-climax or an abrupt rhythmic tension in a calm, sustained section, such moments are very typical of my compositional process.

The techniques by which I create "Vertical Boundaries" in my work encompass four areas: **orchestration, dynamic variations, rhythmic contrast,** and **timbral differences.**

I. "Vertical Boundaries" formed by orchestration. A typical example occurs in the Chamber piece *The Eternal Circle*. The central theme is introduced in a passionate unison; then, a sudden interruption by a solo violin,

rendering a melancholy cantabile melody brings to the piece a suddenly poignant character. Another example occurs in the middle section of the traditional Chinese chamber piece *Taiping Drum*. As the music gradually reaches its first climax, it is disrupted by a sudden orchestral change from plucked string instruments and *Banhu* to percussion. This explosive sonic effect brings surprise and humour to the piece.

II. "Vertical Boundaries" formed by dynamic variations. Typical examples are found in the contrasts in my piece for solo violin *Marionette*. I deliberately introduce sharp dynamic breaks to illustrate the coexistence of contradiction and resistance in the mind of the marionette.

III. "Vertical Boundaries" formed by rhythmic contrast. Examples include the trio for *Sanxian,* Erhu, and Bamboo clappers in *My Clay Figurines*, the folk chamber piece *Gang Xiang*, and the *Sanxian* solo *That Day*. In *My Clay Figurines* a recurring pattern is the immediate contrast arising from a slow, sustained tone after rapid sextuplets, playful quaver glides, or jumping semi-quavers. These contrasts serve to create a whimsical and vivid image of the figurines. In the piece *Gang Xiang*, a gradually accelerating rhythmic drive creates a consistent force in the music. While listening, the audience first becomes aware the rapid acceleration and then of "Vertical Boundary" evoked by the sudden change in musical texture. In *That Day*, rhythmic contrast also results from the sections: The adagio theme, created by leisurely rhythms, occurs three separate times—at the beginning, middle and end. Interspersed among the adagios are conflict-filled allegros, with continuously developed semi-quavers and ever more intense rhythmic patterns. From these rhythmic contrasts arise auditory "Vertical Boundaries."

IV. "Vertical Boundaries" formed by timbral differences. The clarinet solo *So Close, Yet So Far Away* and the *Sanxian* solo *That Day* can be regarded as representative examples of contrasts arising from timbre. Because I want to convey the timbral effects I hear inwardly as much as

possible in my music, I begin by describing these timbres, section by section, with simple graphics and texts. During the compositional process, I purposely juxtaposed very different timbral atmospheres in adjacent sections, with the aim of providing the music with strong and unexpected contrasts—again an auditory manifestation of a "Vertical Boundary."

The examples mentioned above, coupled with the contrasting, sometimes "opposite" materials I borrowed from multiple cultures, are the most common ways in which I apply the concept of "Vertical Boundaries."

2.3.4 The Contradictory Personalities Present in My Music

The contradictory nature of my music subconsciously reflects of my personality, which, in turn, has been affected by the sentiments and understandings that were formed during my growth: my striving, as a Chinese composer who was born after China's reform and opening up policy in the late twentieth century, to cross the barrier between contradictory aesthetic values and ways of thinking between China and the West; my emotional conflict, as a Chinese only child, between catering to collective expectation or being faithful to my independent pursuit; and, of late, my predicament, as a UK-based Chinese student, "whither I should go" that arises from the oppression of speech in my motherland. These complex experiences and emotions intertwine to create my present "contradictions" and are consistently revealed in my PhD portfolio as an unrest underlying "harmonious," pentatonic-based sources. This is especially the case for pieces that are more expressionistic in nature, as well as in the relatively slower adagios that reveal a graceful heart. The contradictions are as much due to unconsciousness as they are to design. Revealing my psychological

states and assumptions in my composing process, these musical contradictions can be summarised as follows:

I. The frequent use of sustained tones: Long, dignified, sustained tones frequently appear in my works, commonly formed during my pre-planning of a "deliberate arrangement" to present the correct musical atmosphere. The three elements that provide motive force to these static sustained sounds are dynamic variation, orchestral strategy, and rhythmic patterns.

Examples can be found in the allegro sections of the *Sanxian* solo *That Day* and clarinet solo *So Close, Yet So Far Away*, and in the first section of my chamber work *The Eternal Circle*. In all of these rhythmic variations hidden in sustained tones serve as a deep driving force for musical developments. The latent motive power within a continuous pitch is also reflected in my orchestral strategy in the first section of *The Eternal Circle*. I assigned the continuous note (C) to different instruments, by which I sought to increase the auditory space and sonic power of a static single tone. Another instance occurs in bars 3 - 5 of the violin solo *Marionette*, in which I created a dynamic para-curve on the E-flat tone that grows from exceptionally faint to exceedingly strong before gradually diminishing, like a photograph slowly coming in and out of focus.

II. A driving force that lies beneath elegance: I attempt to create a continuous impetus within each "elegant" theme. This is evident in sudden alterations in the initial material, which include changes of duration, dynamic power, and harmonic disposition.

For example, in both the final paragraph of *My Clay Figurines* and the first complete thematic presentation of *The Eternal Circle*, individual events are continuously lengthened. In this way, the audience's inner expectation is enhanced by the musical driving force. Another technique is to

change the tonal state of thematic pitches. This sometimes occurs by means of timbral variations, such as in the final melodious paragraph of *Marionette*; sometimes it is evidenced in the flexible use of textures or tessitura, such as in the shifts between homophony and octaves in the thematic evolution of *The Eternal Circle* and in both the introduction and the coda of *My Clay Figurines*; sometimes It appears as vertical alterations, as in both *Marionette* and *That Day*, where a few single tones are temporarily transformed into intervals and chords. In all of these examples a driving forces is injected underneath the thematic materials.

III. The effect of timbral "weight" accomplished by relying on a lower register.

i. The use of the bass tessitura to enhance dignity: A large portion of my work is written for an instrument's bass register. In the *Sanxian* solo *That Day*, both the beginning (bars 1–20) and the whole allegro in the middle are performed in *Sanxian*'s bass register. In the chamber ensemble *The Eternal Circle*, from the initial adagio (bars 1–47) through the growing climax of the allegro, the thematic material is presented on the cello in the range C–c1, enhancing the sonic richness and internal strength of the piece. In the work *Marionette*, the open string G of the violin extends through a large proportion of the piece and represents my attempt to describe a malevolent force looming in the endless darkness. In the chamber work *Taiping Drum*, I used a group of *Sanxian* playing at their lowest pitch range from the mid-section to the end; this not only brings greater sonic resonance but is also the range in which *Sanxian* is most effective.

ii. The use of instrumentation to enhance musical solemnity: I also attempt to increase the sense of solemnity through my choice of instruments. Instead of the well-known *Pipa, Guzheng,* and *Erhu,* the *Sanxian* is the most frequently used Chinese instrument in my compositions. It takes a

primary role in all my folk chamber music—*My Clay Figurines, Taiping Drum*, and *Gang Xiang*—as it provides a touch of dignity and desolation to the music. A similar practice can be seen in the cello's use in the musical structures of my pieces. In the thematic passage of *The Eternal Circle*, corresponding to the ideology of this work, the fluent, dignified sound of the cello provides the music with a certain solemnity. Similarly, percussion instruments having prominent low frequencies, such as drum, timpani, and cymbal, are widely used in *Gang Xiang* and *The Eternal Circle.* These enhance both the sonic depth and the rhythmic development and support the bass instruments by interjecting a sonic disturbance at certain moments. In all these instances, the use of the bass register not only brings auditory weight and sonority but also enhances the sonic layers and driving force of the music.

2.3.5 Religious Concepts versus Private Views

Earlier, in section **2.1.3, My Concept of Musical Style**, I stated that "it is possible to express one's religious views through music." In my music, religious beliefs are implicitly expressed through the four concepts introduced above:

The concept of "Worldview": My music is inspired by my life experience and my growing awareness of what surrounds me. Especially during the later stages of my doctoral study, the impact of social turbulence and the world's physical and ideological present and future are, I believe, reflected in my music.

The concept of "Secularism": Social phenomena, folk customs, and humanistic sensibilities are expressed in a large proportion of my compositions. I aim to write music that is generally elegant in nature, emotionally expressive, with a strong melodic sense and use of descriptive

imagery. I am more concerned with humanistic landscapes than technical devices. Almost every piece contains a clear, definite thematic melody, often inspired by neglected folkloric or ancient music, a clear reflection of my musical temperament.

The concept of "Seclusion": My music is a means of articulating my authentic feelings. I pay great attention to my inner voice, emphasising my perception of nature while recognising the influence of poetry, film, and literature. I stimulate my emotions through visual and auditory senses, tactile sensation, ideology, and other domains of understanding in order to record, as faithfully as possible, my responses in my scores.

The concept of "Transcendence": My music reflects my regard for religious teaching. This is manifest in my understanding of the concept of reincarnation found in both Buddhism and Taoism and the corresponding relationship between man, nature, and celestial bodies. Works such as *The Eternal Circle* and *That Day* convey my understanding of this concept, reflecting my desire to transform current frustrations into positive behaviours and convey this desire to my audience.

Epilogue

"I don't make music for the world, I make what I like. That music is strongly influenced . . . by my past and my cultural background. My work is not based on a certain theory. And I don't have a motto. I follow my heart."[119]

—Wenjing Guo

"Music can't be fake [音乐容不得半点虚假]."[120] In this chapter of my thesis, instead of defining my compositions through specific nationalism labels or musical forms, I have tried simply to be an honest person, shifting my role sometimes from an "insider" to an "outsider" while reviewing my submitted pieces. I hope in this way to have provided my readers with a contextualised understanding of my stylistic formation as well as a relatively objective view of "who I am." My musical language is not one-sided. It is an inclusive embodiment built upon my transcultural upbringing, evolving through my varying life experiences and in my corresponding empirical and emotional understanding. It does not embody the "exquisite" techniques or "near-perfect" forms regularly found in twentieth-century Western music. Nor can it represent any of the traditional Chinese music genres. It is my individual voice to this day. The *low-level tone* in the Tianjin Dialect, the timbral unpredictability revealed in *Sanxian*'s ornamentation *(after-tone)*, the images of the lifelike clay figurines and the courageous Sixth Dalai Lama and the optimistic Tianjin dock workers embodied in the music—all these are components of my musical nature.

From a historical perspective, standing above our living era to objectively define one's musical style seems unrealistic. Regarding Chinese music, from Court Music that served the feudal aristocracy, such as the previously mentioned *Ten Kinds of Music (十部乐),* to the narrative arts of the

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[119] Rene, "Broken Silence."

[120] Xuelin Mei, "'Music Can't Be Fake'—An Interview with French-Chinese Composer Chen Qigang," *Northern Music* (梅雪林, "音乐，玩不得半点虚假——旅法作曲家陈其钢访谈," *北方音乐*) 8 (2006): 16-17.

lowest classes, such as *TiānjīnShídiào*—all are evolving still, while fusing with various "exotic" musics. Moreover, today's fast-paced, multicultural environment has made it a luxury for us, the still emerging composers, to invest energy into documenting those out-of-date indigenous musics that are sustained by oral traditions. All of these factors have resulted in the hybridization of our so-called folk-derived compositional materials. And even for Western music, the styles we define and discuss at present—"Classicism," "Romanticism," "Impressionism," and many more—were once "Contemporary Music." Similarly, perhaps the musical styles of today will be more clearly defined by future generations.

Critically speaking, given the present globalization trend away from homogeneity and towards "developing individuality," one wonders if it is even possible to truly plot a course toward "sinicisation" and "modernisation"?[121] As a then-young Chinese composer, modern transculturalism is inherently part of my music, which thus is ineligible to represent any regional musics—unless we adopt it as a "hypothesis" built by "adding" cultural labels that correspond to my subjective interpretation in order to "enrich" the "contents" in my composition. Even my own expectations for a given piece will not necessarily be consistent with the results. As a music maker, then, I must accept that the preconceived music programmes, structural designs, and emotional flows made while writing a piece are likely to become unrecognisable later in the mouths of listeners and comments from critics.

In closing: **My creative principles are closely related to where I am from, what I have experienced, and my awareness of these things.** My music reflects my pursuit of a uncategorisable style and my aim to convey inner authenticity through music and the principle that "form serves content." It expresses my life, my environment, and my emotional experiences; it deals

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[121] Ou-fan Lee, "A Critical History of New Music in China, Music/History/China Studies," (2011): 173.

with my relationship with my homeland, my upbringing, and my desire to travel beyond those circumstances; it reflects the legacy of the past and my hopes for the future. It is the narrative of my experience of an isolated childhood, the rich fantasy life I created as a solace, and my sometimes complicated relationship with my family and my country. The traditional characteristics of Chinese music reveal my past; Western music influences my ambition to combine this with my future. This fusion of the old and new, interlocked with my humanistic and emotional concerns, are the hallmarks of my burgeoning "style."

Chapter 3. My Compositional Methodologies

3.1 The Link Between *Musical Dialects* and Contemporary Musical Language

While still in China, I became aware of compositions by writers such as Tan Dun and Chen Qigang. Their works — *Ghost Opera*[122] and *Raise the Red Lantern*[123] — are widely admired, and this provoked my interest in exploring their creative background.

I came to understand that the inspiration for these composers' work lay in musical genres that are generally regarded in my country as "vulgar" and "unsophisticated" — for example, *Peking Opera,*[124] the *Xiangxi Ghost Play,*[125] and the Hebei folk song "Little Cabbage" ["小白菜"].[126]

This led me to ask myself two questions:

(1) As a young composer, am I willing to follow established paths in my work? Or do I attempt to develop a more creative method of writing music?

(2) As an audience member, with what musics do I find a deeper connection? Those that result from a composer's re-imagining? Or those that offer original sources of inspiration?

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[122] *Ghost Opera (鬼戏)* is an exploratory multi-media work for pipa and string quartet composed by Chinese-American composer Tan Dun. Combining Chinese shadow plays, the Hebei folk song "Little Cabbage", and pipa performance with western instruments, Tan Dun attempted to enhance audiences' reception to the music through integrating music with theatrical performance and multi-media.

[123] Directed by Yinmou Zhang and composed by Qigang Chen, *Raise the Red Latten (大红灯笼高挂)* is a Chinese ballet premiered in 2001.

[124] Originating in the mid-nineteenth century in Beijing, China, *Peking Opera* is a nationwide art form that is regarded as a quintessential part of Chinese culture. It is mainly accompanied by a Chinese string instrument, the *Jinghu,* and by Chinese percussion (gong and drum).

[125] *Xiang xi Ghost Play (湘西鬼戏)* is an ancient performance form originally used for religious sacrifice in western Hunan Province, China.

[126] "Little Cabbage" ("小白菜") is a Hebei folk song that is widespread in the central China. It tells the story of a little girl who lost her mother.

These questions provoked further thoughts about building links between *Musical Dialects* and *Contemporary Musical Languages* through establishing "my individual voice." But some conceptual definitions are required before beginning this argument.

3.1.1 Interpretations of *Musical Dialects, Contemporary Musical Language,* and "One's Individual Voice"

3.1.1.1 *Musical Dialects*

In relationship to a region or class, *音乐方言 (或方言音乐)*—literally translated as *Musical Dialects*—can be understood as a phrase people have adapted from the concept of "dialect"[127] in linguistics. In an article "The localization aesthetics on the Development of Shanxi Music Dialect creation," Lu Qiao stated: "The creative development of *Musical Dialects* harmoniously refines the expression of history, culture, and social life. It realises a cultural inheritance through oral transmission."[128] Similarly, Liping Xing defined the Henan *Musical Dialect* as: "An individual musical genre formed in Henan Province (China) through prolonged cultural evolution. A musical dialect with profound humanistic connotations, which is closely connected with the social structure, economic products, natural environment, folk customs, and artistic

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[127] "Dialect (方言) is a form of a language that is spoken in a particular part of a country or by a particular group of people and that contains some words, grammar, or pronunciations (the ways in which words are said) that are different from the forms used in other parts or by other groups." Meaning of Dialect in English, *Cambridge Dictionary* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/dialect

[128] Lu Qiao. Localized Aesthetic of Music Creation to Shǎnxi Musical Dialect," *Modern and Ancient Culture and Creations* (乔露. "陕西方言音乐创作的本土化审美," *今古文创*) 15 (2021): 81.

traditions, as well as the general psychological characteristics and aesthetic taste, of Henan citizens."[129]

I use *Musical Dialects* to refer to idiomatic regional musical expressions. Generally speaking, these can be understood as constituting distinctive "linguistic systems" determined by geographical circumstances; each is a unique system formed of the long-term historical influences, cultures, folk customs and linguistic features of a particular region. In China, each is, to a certain extent, regarded as a cultural label for a specific region. The musical materials from *Xiangxi Ghost Play* and *Hebei Folk Song*—that which inspired the composers previously mentioned—can be regarded as examples of such "linguistic systems."

Existing in all cultures, *Musical Dialects* are of enormous significance and value. Without them, the musical world would lack cultural bases and colours, and composers would lack valuable sources of inspiration. Especially in a multi-ethnic country like China, *Musical Dialects* in some sense reflect the distinctive folk customs of different regions and nationalities. But although widely accepted as novel expressions of regional culture, they is generally neglected and rarely examined in detail.

Why is this?

Musical Dialects remain marginalised from the musical "language system" in common usage. They tend to be regarded as lacking pertinence and commonalities with modern life. Due to cultural and religious differences, they appear to be explicitly relevant only to small, local audiences. Music born of circumstances that are far from the life experiences of most people rarely arouses an artistic synesthetic resonance.

This is sad. Do *Musical Dialects* only belong to a few? Should they be buried in the memory of history?

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[129] Liping Xing. "The Cultural Heritage of the Henan Musical Dialect," *Peony* (邢丽萍."河南方言音乐的文化传承," *牡丹*) 12 (2015): 68.

My answer is NO.

So, how do we link them to a multi-cultural contemporary community, so that more people may enjoy their unique artistic beauties? This question leads to another important concept—*Contemporary Musical Language.*

3.1.1.2 *Contemporary Musical Language* and "One's Individual Voice"

Contemporary Musical Language can be literally understood as music "existing or happening now."[130] This is a music language system that is widely used as a means of communication in contemporary societies. Generally regarded as a means of transcultural communication, in theory, it embraces all styles of regional and aesthetic tastes and evolves through the continuous integration of "one's individual voice" into the broader language, thus provoking ideological and emotional responses from wider audiences than do *Musical Dialects.*

Throughout history, the works of composers who have influenced the world have such characteristics. I was once deeply moved by the Russian "language" conveyed in *Petrushka* by Igor Stravinsky—a language that may arise because "certain portions of the thematic material in *Petrouchka* can be specifically traced to five native folk songs which are available in the collections of Rimsky Korsakov, Tchaikovsky and others."[131] Then again, the special flute timbres in George Crumb's *Vox Balaenae* remind me of the sounds of the *Xun* and the Chinese bamboo flute; being Chinese, I also seem to hear the blurring suspensions produced by the *Guzheng* in the occasional

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[130] Meaning of Contemporary in English, *Cambridge Dictionary,* Cambridge University Press, 2022.
https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/contemporary
[131] Frederick W. Sternfeld. "Some Russian Folk Songs in Stravinsky's Petrouchka," *Notes,* vol. 2, no. 2 (1945): 95-107. (Music Library Association). https://www.jstor.org/stable/890385

ornaments inserted on the cello and inside the piano pizzicatos. In the ballet *The Prince of The Pagodas,* British composer Benjamin Britten reshaped Balinese gamelan music to build key phrases. And his opera *Curlew River* was inspired by Japanese *Noh* music *Sumidagawa.*[132]

These examples make it clear that the *Musical Dialects* used in these compositions, coupled with Western classical (contemporary) musical expressions deliver new artistic sensibilities and cross-cultural significance to the music. As an intercultural listener, I, personally, strongly resonate with these pieces because of the composers' employment of *Musical Dialects*. And, to return to my earlier examples, the composers Qigang Chen and Tan Dun have enthusiastically used *Musical Dialects* as inspirations, yet transformed them into their own "individual voices." However, the unique charm of their creative roots remains present and potent in their re-imaginings.

3.1.*2 Sanxian*--A Distinctive "Musical Dialect" to Me

3.1.2.1 The Classifications and Construction of *Sanxian*

The most distinctive music I have experienced of this kind is that associated with the instrument *Sanxian*. Although among the oldest Chinese instruments, the *Sanzian* is neglected in contemporary music and deserves broader attention.

The *Sanxian* consists of a sound box, neck, scroll, tuning pegs, bridge, and strings. the most commonly used *Sanxian*[133] can divided into

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[132] See Christopher Mark, "Britten and the Far East: Asian Influences in the Music of Benjamin Britten" (2000): 146.

[133] *Sanxian* in China have various branches corresponding to specific musical genres. The two dominant branches are the "曲艺三弦" ("*Quyi Sanxian*") and "音乐三弦" ("concert *Sanxian*"). The *Quyi Sanxian* is old-fashioned, commonly used as an accompaniment to Chinese traditional opera and narrative art. The concert *Sanxian* is widely employed in professional education institutions and concert performances. It was reformed by Professor Jiansheng Xiao on the basis of the *Quyi Sanxian*. In his own words: "After the reform, *Sanxian* sounds

"big" and "small." Regardless of size, the sound boxes are usually made of oval wooden frames, covered by python skin on both sides for better resonance, with strings mounted on a bamboo bridge (see figures 3-1.1 to 3-1.4). The long neck without frets characteristic of *Sanxian* increases the difficulty in performance but provides space for performers to explore timbral subtleties. The head of the instrument is equipped with three tuning pegs individually adjusting the pitches of metal or nylon strings.[134]

The big *Sanxian* (大三弦) was developed from the small one in the mid-nineteenth century by a *Dagu* (大鼓)[135] artist named Sanfeng Ma, who used to perform in Gaoyang County, Hebei Province. The big *Sanxian* is approximately 115 cm long; its tuning varies but is mostly built from intervals of a perfect fourth or fifth. When employed in Chinese orchestras, the most commonly used tuning is G-d-g, and the pitch range is from G to d2 (d3). When used as an alto instrument, mainly in accompanying Chinese Northern narrative arts, the big *Sanxian* is considered to be sonorous, resounding, and echoing.

The length of **the small *Sanxian* (小三弦)** is about 95 cm, and it is generally tuned to c1-g1-c2. It is also colled the soprano *Sanxian* due to its clear and melodious sound. The small *Sanxian* is primarily employed to accompany *Kunqu Opera* (昆曲)[136] and *Suzhou Tanci* (苏州弹词).[137]

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more viable, mellower and fuller, and it has longer *afters-tones* (echoing suspensions). These changes will prevent its timbre being too prominent in an orchestra. This reform also creates better conditions for us to develop *Sanxian*'s performance skills and artistic expressions." ("三弦经过以上的改革后，不但发音灵敏，音色浑厚而圆润、余音长，在乐队中不致音色过于突出，而且为进一步发展三弦演奏技巧、扩大三弦表现力创造了条件.") Jiansheng Xiao. "Reforming the *Sanxian* [J]," *Instrument Technology Newsletter,* 1974 (03): 5-8. [萧剑声. "大三弦的改革[J]," *乐器科技简讯,* 1974 (03): 5-8.]

My current research is mainly focused on the creative practice of the concert *Sanxian*; thus research into and practice of the *Quyi Sanxian* will not be pursued further in this paper.

[134] *Encyclopedia of China*, vol. Music and Dance (April 1989) 1: 561. [*中国大百科全书，音乐舞蹈卷* (1989 年 4 月) 1: 561.]

[135] *Dagu* (大鼓) is an important category of Chinese narrative art popularized mostly in northern China. A *Dagu* performance is led by a percussionist playing the drum or Chinese board. It is
accompanied by *Sanxian*, sometimes joining by other instruments such as the *Sihu* and pipa.

[136] *Kunqu Opera* (昆曲) "is one of the oldest forms of opera performed in China, dating back to the end of the Yuan Dynasty (1271 to 1368 AD) approximately 700 years ago. It dominated

In addition to big and small *Sanxian*, there is a **four-stringed variant**; I am indebted to my friend Taisheng Zhao[138] for pictures of his own instrument and information about the most frequent tunings: G-C-d-g; G-B-d-g; and D-G-d-g. The four-stringed *Sanxian* was invented by Zhenxian Wang, professor of Chinese music at the Central Conservatory of Music, China. Since 1964, Professor Wang has spent twenty-three years developing innovations that have resulted in three generations of instruments. In the article "New Achievement of *Sanxian*'s Reform—the four-stringed *Sanxian*," he summarised the benefits of this new instrument: "it retains our familiar performance style; it is convenient for use in practicing different scales; the sound of chords becomes richer; the reduction of position-changing on fingerings prolongs the echoes of its *after-tones (余音)*; we have extra options to play the same note, and the instrument has more affluent timbres; it

Chinese theatre from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries . . . and is distinct in the virtuosity of its rhythmic patterns. It has been a dominant influence on more recent forms of local opera in China and is considered the mother of all Chinese operas, such as the Beijing opera. In 2001, United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed *Kunqu Opera* a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity." Genfang Chen, and Jiashing Sheu. "An optical music recognition system for traditional Chinese *Kunqu Opera* scores written in *Gong-Che* Notation," *EURASIP Journal on Audio, Speech, and Music Processing* 2014, no. 1 (2014): 1. Also see "*Kun Qu Opera*", *Intangible Cultural Heritage,* United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kun-qu-opera-00004

[137] *Suzhou Tanci (苏州弹词)*, "or Suzhou chantefable, is a style of Chinese professional storytelling that combines singing, instrumental music, and a complex mixture of narrative registers and dialogue." Mark Bender. "Suzhous Tanci Storytelling in China: Contexts of Performance," *Oral Tradition*, 13/2 (1998): 330.

[138] Taisheng Zhao is a *Sanxian* Principal of the *Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra,* a member of the *Chinese Musicians' Association* and the *China Nationalities Orchestra Society,* and a committee member of the *Central Conservatory of Music* Alumni Association (Hong Kong). See "Zhao Taisheng |HKCO."*Hongkong Chinese Orchestra* (赵太生|HKCO." *香港中乐团)，* accessed 2022, http://www.hkco.org/en/About-Hkco/Orchestra-Members/Sanxian-Zhongruan-Daruan/Zhao-Taisheng.html

establishes decent conditions to transcript repertoires from other instruments."[139]
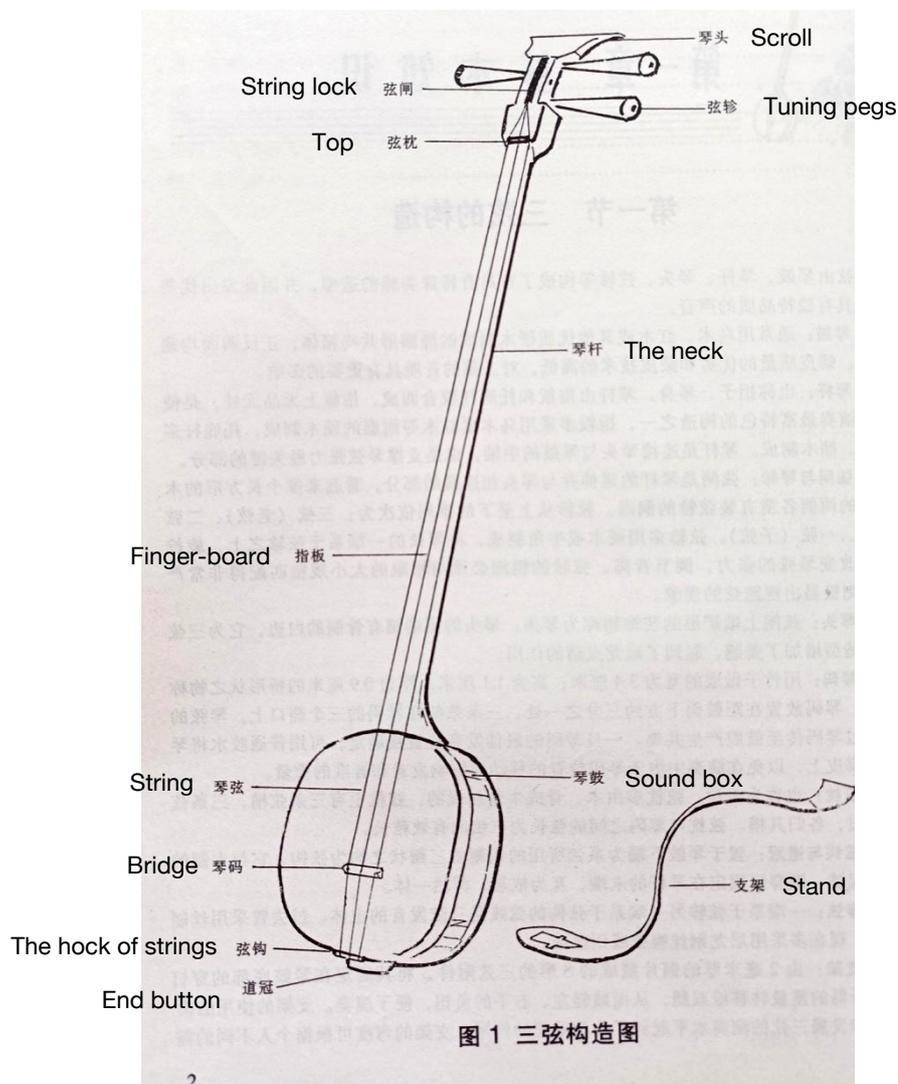
Figure. 3.1-1[140] The construction of *Sanxian*

[139] Zhenxian Wang. "New Achievement of *Sanxian*'s Reform—The Four-stringed *Sanxian*," *Instruments, 乐器,* 1988 (03): 16-17. [王振先. "三弦改革新成果--加弦三弦[J]," *乐器,* 1988 (03): 16-17.]

[140] Longjian Tan, *Introduction and Improvement of Sanxian Learning,* Beijing Sports University Press (2003): 2. [谈龙建, *三弦入门与提高,* 北京体育大学出版社 (2003): 2.]

Three
tuning pegs

Scroll (front)

The two carved vertical lines at the back write: " Designed by Xiao Jiansheng (萧剑声设计)" ; "Made by Song Guangning (宋广宁制作)."

The neck

Scroll (back)

The bridge

Both sides are covered by python skin

Figure.3.1-2 The details of *Sanxian*: The Big *Sanxian*[141]

Figure.3.1-3 The details of *Sanxian*: The Small *Sanxian*

Figure.3.1-4 The details of *Sanxian*: The four-stringed *Sanxian*

3.1.2.2 The Origin and Branches of *Sanxian*

Various opinions have been expressed about the origin of *Sanxian*. Writing in 1991, Professor Yaohua Wang[142] summarised:

> The Chinese *Sanxian* had the Xiantao as the earliest ancestor. In its development, the revised neck and fingerboard were inspired by the Ruanxian, the Pipa, and most importantly, the *Komuz* and the *Zhanian*. Influenced by the Kingdom of Sri Ksetra in the Tang dynasty, the two-sided sound box was covered by snake skin (or python skin). Influenced by the three-stringed instruments in the Wei Jin and Sui Tang dynasties, natural evolution guided the development of the instrument, in addition to the deeply rooted Taoist's thoughts of people during the Tang and the Song dynasties; all these contributed to the confirmation of the basic structure and the characteristics of the instrument. [中国三弦以弦鼗为始祖，在其发展过程中，从阮咸琵琶，尤其是火不思，扎年得到启发而改进了琴杆构造，完善了按弦指板，从唐代骠国等地的乐器吸收了双面樣以蛇皮或蟒皮的琴筒结构，从魏晋，隋唐的三根弦乐器得到启示，顺应乐器发展的自然规律，加之唐宋间道教思想的深入人心，而确立了三弦的基本形态特征.][143]

The instrument appears to have originated in the Qin Dynasty, more than two thousand years ago. Over the course of its history, *Sanxian* developed along many different branches. Its use reportedly spread to Japan "between the latter half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth,"[144] where it was transformed into the *Shamisen (三味线)*:[145]

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[142] Wang Yaohua (王耀华) (1942-) is a Chinese music theorist.

[143] Hei-Yung Chan. "Becoming a Tradition: Re-inventing The *Sanxian*," (M. Phil. Thesis of the University of Hong Kong, 2016): 13. Also see: Yaohua Wang. "A Study on The Origin of Sanxian (Continuation)," *Journal of Fujian Normal University: Philosophy and Social Science Edition* 1 (1992): 123. [王耀华. "中国三弦源流考 (续)," *福建师范大学学报：哲学社会科学版* 1 (1992): 123.]

[144] "Ikemiya Masaji, investigating from the perspective of Omoro ballads, believed that the time when *Sanxian* was introduced into Okinawa should be from the second half of the 15th century to the first half of the 16th century. The earliest clear record of 'Ryukyu people playing shamisen' is in the 'Uejakukan's Diary' (1575); thus, we can deduce that the most reliable estimate is from the second half of the 15th century to the first half of the 16th century." (池宫正治从奥摩罗歌谣的角度来考察，认为三弦传人冲绳的时间应该为 15 世纪后半至 16 世纪前半，王耀华在论著中表明认同这一观点，但出发点是以文献记载为依据，认为最早出现的明确记载 "琉球人弹三昧线" 的史料是 "上井觉兼日记" (1575 年)，故推论得出最为稳妥的时间段是巧世纪后半叶至 16 世纪前半叶.") " Ningning Sun， "Exploring the Historical Origin of Chinese *Sanxian* and Japanese Shamisen," *Drama House* 23 (2016): 59 [孙宁宁， "中国三弦与日本三昧线的历史渊源探

A fret-free plucked-string instrument approximately 100 centimeters long. Its square sound box is composed of four wooden boards and covered with cat (or dog) skin. In Japanese vocal music, the songs that are accompanied by *Shamisen* are collectively referred as "*Shamisen Music*," but this does not include folk songs.[146]

The debate about the exact origin of *Sanxian* continues amongst Asian scholars. Hei Tung Chan, a Hong Kong scholar, summarised the prevailing nine theories about the origin of *Sanxian* through a table (see Figure 3.1-5) in her master's thesis, concluding her summary with a question:

It is clear that the researchers, regardless of their different ethnicities, believe that the *Sanxian* has a long historical background and can be regarded as an ancient instrument. Yet, in their studies, they provide unclear, scarce, or even no references at all (depending on the author) about the whole evolution process of the instrument. This fact leads to the central question of this chapter: how old is the *Sanxian*?[147]

(Please see Figure.3.1-5 on the next page)

究," *戏剧之家* 23 (2016): 59]. Quoted in Yaohua Wang, *The Arts of the Sanxian (II)* [M]. Fuzhou: Strait Art Publishing House (1991): 89 - 90 [王耀华, *三弦艺术论 (下卷)* [M]. 福州: 海峡文艺出版社 (1991): 89 - 90].

[145] The *Shamisen* (or *Samisen*, also *Sangen)*, is a three-stringed traditional Japanese musical instrument derived from the Chinese instrument *Sanxian*. It is played with a plectrum called a bachi. The Japanese pronunciation is usually *Shamisen* but sometimes *Jamisen* when used as a suffix, according to regular sonic principles.

[146] *Encyclopedia of China*, vol. Music and Dance (April 1989) 1: 561 [*中国大百科全书*, 音乐舞蹈卷. (1989 年 4 月) 1: 561].

[147] Hei Yung Chan. "Becoming a Tradition: Re-inventing The *Sanxian*": 21

Figure.3.1-5 Hei Tung Chan's summary of the nine different origins of the *Sanxian*[148]

Here I will stop further speculation about *Sanxian*'s ambiguous origins and will turn to its current distribution and application. The roots of *Sanxian* have remained in China; in different regions and in various ways, these include:

i. The Tibetan *Sanxian:* as general accompaniment to Tibetan Dance—*Xianzi (弦子)*[149] and its variant—*Sanxian Dance.* Inspired by the Tibetan plucked-string instruments *Hobis (火不思)*[150] and *Zhamunie (Dranyen; 扎木聂),*[151] people improved the construction of the neck and finger board in

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[148] Ibid.

[149] *Xianzi (弦子)* also known as *Xianzi Dance*, is one of China's National Intangible Cultural Heritages. Widely spread through Tibet, Sichuan and Yunnan, *Xianzi* is an enthusiastic Chinese folk dance with a strong sense of rhythm. People sing and dance along during a performance. The singing is repetitious, with small changes based on the same melodic structure, while lyrics are mostly improvised by the performers. The Tibetan Sanxian is employed as dominant accompaniment of *Xianzi.*

[150] *Hobis (火不思)* is a transliteration of the Turkish word "qubuz". It is a Chinese folk plucked-string instrument widely spread in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Yunnan. It was introduced into China from Central Asia in the Tang Dynasty. *Encyclopedia of China*, vol. Music and Dance (April 1989) 1: 289 [*中国大百科全书,* 音乐舞蹈卷. (1989 年 4 月) 1: 289].

[151] *Dranyen (扎木聂),* also termed as Tibetan six-string lute "is a representative plucked-string instrument in Tibetan music. In the Tibetan language, '*Dranye*' means 'beautiful and pleasant voice.' It is mainly used in Tibetan song and dance performances as accompaniment,

this specific branch of *Sanxian*.[152]

ii. The Mongolian *Sanxian (shudraga/shanz):* as one instance among Mongolian lutes, the Mongolian *Sanxian* consists of an elm (or sandalwood) scroll, Corbel (or Python) skin, neck, sound box, and wire (or horsehair) strings. It is a large size *Sanxian* with a wide pitch range and various tunings.[153] It is employed as the bass in the music, accompanied by the Mongolian *Sihu (四胡).*[154]

iii. The regions of China mainly populated of the Han: as accompaniment to Chinese Opera and *Quyi (曲艺).*[155] The big Sanxian is commonly employed in Northern "Rap art" (narrative art) while the small is generally used in Southern Operas, *Quyi,* and folk bands.

3.1.2.2 The Reasons Underlying the Limited Development of *Sanxian*

i. The historical position of *Sanxian* art.

Recent modernisation and globalisation have produced a significant change in people's entertainment activities. In China, except for ethnic song and

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sometimes also employed by people for self-entertainment." Liantao Tian. "Tibetan Instruments (V)," *Instrument* 3 (1990):18-19 [田联韬. "藏族传统乐器 (五)," *乐器* 3 (1990):18-19].

[152] Yaohua Wang. "A Study on The Origin of Chinese *Sanxian* (Continuation)," *Journal of Fujian Normal University,* Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition, no.1 (1992): 123 [王耀华. "中国三弦源流考 (续)," *福建师范大学学报,* 哲学社会科学版, 1 (1992): 123].

[153] Li Sha, "Translation and Research of Mongolian Music, Dance, and Narrative—Performing Diverse Identities," (Master's Thesis of Xi'an Conservatory of Music. June 2020), 19 [莎丽, "卡罗帕格 '蒙古音乐舞蹈和口头叙事--表演中的多重身份认同' 译介与研究," (西安音乐学院硕士学位论文, 2020 年 6 月), 19].

[154] *Sihu (四胡)* is a Chinese stringed instrument mainly applied as accompaniments to Chinese narrative art, folk songs, and traditional Chinese operas. It is particularly famous in Inner Mongolia, "people classify it into three categories—the Bass, the Alto, and the Soprano—according to its timbre, pitch range, and construction." Yan Zhao, "Research on Mongolian Traditional Instrumental Ensemble," (Doctoral Thesis of China Conservatory of Music. May 2020), 21 [赵燕, "蒙古族传统器乐合奏研究," (中国音乐学院博士学位论文, 2020 年 5 月), 21].

[155] *Quyi (曲艺)* is an established Chinese narrative art form. Combining speaking with singing, its performance reflects the social circumstances and people's thoughts regarding a specific historical era through vividly narrating a person's life experience.

dance—which remain active in minority areas of limited scope—the music I have described such as *Quyi* has gradually faded from people's vision and is not popular with the younger generation, whose tastes are more firmly focused on contemporary pop, jazz, and American rock music. Since *Sanxian* is the main accompaniment to *Quyi*, it has also slowly faded from our notice. Hence the remaining master artists grow older while younger people are disinterested, and this further contributes to the limitations in exploring *Sanxian*'s inheritance and development.

Ying Fu, a young researcher into Chinese narrative art, attributes the precarious position of *Sanxian* to "the outdated content of folk operas; the atrophied artistic environment of *Quyi*; and the lack of inheritors and aging audiences."[156] Yan Wang, another scholar, notes that the evolution of Chinese folk art is limited by the tradition's conservative mode of dissemination.[157] Their points are valid, but I woud like to suggest two additional factors that have a substantial part in *Sanxian*'s current development crisis.

ii. The limited number of teachers and students.

The scarcity of teachers in musical conservatories and the decreasing number of students choosing this instrument as their major aggravates the problem of *Sanxian*'s position in education.

To support this statement, I contacted three *Sanxian* performers and educators from mainland China and Hong Kong.

Professor Longjian Tan,[158] from the Central Conservatory of Music of China, confirmed the small number of *Sanxian* teachers engaged in Chinese educational institutions:

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[156] Ying Fu, "Research on Tianjin Shidiao Music." (Master's Thesis of Shandong University, May 26, 2015): 78-79 [付颖, "天津时调音乐研究," (山东大学硕士学位论文, 2015 年 5 月 26 日): 78-79].
[157] Yan Wang, "Musical Characteristics and Innovative Development of Tianjin Shidiao," *Music World* 10 (2014): 33 [王燕, "天津时调的音乐特点及其创新发展," *音乐天地* 10 (2014): 33].
[158] Longjian Tan (谈龙建) (1952--) Professor China Central Conservatory of music, China. She was rewarded as "The Best *Sanxian* Artist in China" due to her great efforts on developing and disseminating *Sanxian* music.

An in-text interview with Professor Longjian Tan from the Central Conservatory of Music, China (January 2023):

Author: Hi, Professor Tan! May I ask you about the current numbers of Sanxian teachers engaged in Chinese higher education? My doctoral thesis includes an analytical section to my *Sanxian* works, but I also hope to briefly talk about its construction and educational circumstance. As an authoritative expert in *Sanxian*, information provided by you would be most persuasive. Thanks for your support! [谈老师您好! 今有一事向您求教: 在咱们国家高等音乐院校中, 从事三弦教学的教师人数大概多少? 因为我的论文中的一个关于我写的三弦作品的分析段落涉及到对三弦的简单介绍, 我希望也介绍一下目前中国音乐院校从事三弦教学的大概人数. 您是咱们中国三弦教育家, 这方面的资讯是最有权威的. 故希望得到您的帮助和支援, 非常感谢您!]

Longjian Tan: There are very few, just a dozen or so! [寥寥无几, 也就十几个吧!]

Yizhen Gao, an award-winning *Sanxian* performer who works at Tianjin Conservatory of Music observed that there are just nine teachers of *Sanxian* in seven out of the eleven most famous Chinese musical conservatories. In contrast, the teaching of Pipa and Erhu is widely distributed throughout the educational institutions, numbering many dozens more than for *Sanxian.* In the seven musical conservatories, the total number of students enrolled in the study of *Sanxian* remains only in single numbers, while there are at least twenty students of Erhu and Pipa in each college per year:

An in-text interview with Reader Yizhen Gao from Tianjin Conservatory of Music, China (January 2023):

Author：Yizhen, would you help me with some data? According to your knowledge, how many in-service *Sanxian* teachers do we have in Chinese music conservatories at present? [艺真, 你可以帮助我提供一个大致数据吗: 据你了解, 目前中国的各大音乐学院总共有几个在职的三弦老师? 各个学校三弦老师的分配是什么情况?]

Gao：As far as I know, there are six to seven current in-service teachers in eleven Chinese Music Conservatories, some Conservatories have one (or two) *Sanxian* teachers, and some do not have teachers in *Sanxian* subject. [据我了解，目前的十一所音乐学院共有 6 至 7 位在职三弦教师，有的学院有 1 到 2 名三弦教师，各别音乐学院没有在职的三弦教师.]

Author: Thank you, Yizhen. How many *Sanxian* students can we recruit annually? In comparison, what is the number of students recruited on more familiar instruments like Guzheng, Erhu, and Pipa? [谢谢艺真. 每年我们大致能招几个三弦的学生? 大家更为熟悉的古筝，二胡这些乐器每年的招生人数范围大概是多少?]

Gao：Each music conservatory recruits two students every year. The enrollment range for subjects on mainstream Chinese instruments such as Erhu is between ten and twenty. The difference in the enrollment number in *Guzheng* subject amongst Chinese Music Conservatories and Universities is relatively significant: some recruit single digits per year, while some accept over ten or twenty. [设立三弦专业的音乐学院每年有 1 到 3 个三弦专业名额；像二胡各个院校一般设有十几个名额；古筝专业名额各院校差异较大：有招收个位数的，也有招收十几二十几个的.]

Beginning with these data, I made a statistical chart of the annual undergraduate student recruitment in ten Chinese music conservatories from 2020 to 2022 in the subjects of *Sanxian*, Erhu, Pipa, and Guzheng (Guqin):

(Please see Table 1, below)

Number	Instruments / Conservatories	*Sanxian*			Erhu			Pipa			Guzheng (Qin)		
		2022	2021	2020	2022	2021	2020	2022	2021	2020	2022	2021	2020
1	Central Conservatory of Music	2	2	2	10	10	8	10	10	10	8	8	7
2	Shanghai Conservatory of Music	0	0	1	13	13	14	5	5	5	6	6	6
3	China Conservatory of Music	2	3	3	16	16	16	9	8	8	9	9	9
4	Tianjin Conservatory of Music	2	2	2	15	18	18	8	8	8	10	7	7
5	Shenyang Conservatory of Music	0	0	0	4	13	13	4	4	3	12	13	18
6	Xi'an Conservatory of Music	2	2	2	20	18	18	10	10	10	17	17	17
7	Sichuan Conservatory of Music	0	0	0	7	9	14	7	9	10	19	16	19
8	Wuhan Conservatory of Music	0	0	0	23	23	24	14	14	12	38	38	36
9	Xinghai Conservatory of Music	1	1	1	17	17	11	6	8	9	12	12	14

Comparison of *Sanxian*, Erhu, Pipa and Guzheng (qin) from 2020 to 2022 in Ten Conservatories of Music in China

10	Zhejiang Conservatory of Music	0	1	1	10	12	10	4	5	6	9	11	11
Total Annual Enrollment Nationwide		9	11	12	135	149	146	79	81	81	142	137	144
Total Three-year Enrollment Nationwide		32			430			239			421		

Table 1. Comparison of *Sanxian*, Erhu, Pipa and Guzheng (qin)[159] from 2020 to 2022 in Ten Conservatories of Music in China [160]

[159] Guqin and Guzheng belong to the same discipline in Chinese music conservatories; thus, their student recruitment is sometimes aggregated. If there are not enough outstanding Guqin students in a particular year, the conservatory will usually recruit more Guzheng students instead—or vice versa.

[160] I want to thank Hongyun Wang, the former head of The Dance Department of Tianjin Conservatory of Music, for providing and summarising the data, and Ying Li, Dean of The School of Dance, Xi'an Conservatory of Music, for supplying student enrollment statistics for Xi'an Conservatory of Music..

Sanxian Master performer Taisheng Zhao, who works for the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, provided additional information about *Sanxian*'s present performance and educational circumstances in Hong Kong. Once there were three part-time *Sanxian* teachers engaged in academic institutions; however, these have resigned due to inadequate numbers of students. Zhao is the only part-time *Sanxian* tutor who is employed in primary and secondary schools and also the sole performer (among six or seven in total) who is engaged in professional orchestras. The others contribute to part-time ensembles and perform two to four times per year.

An in-text interview with Taisheng Zhao from Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (January 2023):

Author: Would you do me a favour by providing statistics for my doctoral thesis? In Hong Kong, are there any *Sanxian* teachers engaged in higher education; and if so, how many? What's the number of *Sanxian* performers (referring here to contemporary music, not folk or Chinese Opera) are currently active in professional orchestras? [@趙太生 能否帮个小忙，我需要做一个统计（完善论文用的）：1.香港地区在大学里的三弦老师有吗？有几个呢？2. 在乐团从事专业的三弦演奏的活跃演员（指现代音乐曲目 非戏曲类的）有几个人呢?]

Zhao: In Hong Kong? [香港地區嗎?]

Author: Yes. [对.]

Zhao: In Hong Kong there were three *Sanxian* teachers in universities, but I'm now the only person left still teaching. I am also the only performer who works in a professional orchestra, as there is only one professional orchestra (the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra) here. We have three other *Sanxian* players who are active in non-professional groups; there is a semi-professional ensemble in Hong Kong, which also contains *Sanxian.* To sum up, in Hong Kong we have six (or seven) active *Sanxian* performers at present (emoji : [facepalm].) [香港地區：以前還有 3 個在大學教，現在就我一個. 在樂團從事專業的也是我一個，因為香港就一個專業中樂團，還有三個活躍在非專業團體，香港還有一個半專業團體，也有三弦，所以目前在香港活躍的三弦演奏家也就是 6-7 個人（表情[掩面]）.]

Author: The three teachers who used to work in higher education, were they full-time or part-time? Does that number include you? [这三位（包括您在内）是属于全职大学教师还是半职的呢?]

Zhao: It excludes me; I am a part-time *Sanxian* teacher working in primary and secondary schools. [不包括我,（我）屬半職, 教中小學.]

Author: How do you define "non-professional" and "semi-professional" groups? Do you mean that their programs are technically simpler? What kind of music do they usually play? Thanks! ["非专业团体的及半专业乐团" 是指技术上相对简单些吗? 他们一般演奏什么类型的节目呢? 谢谢!]

Zhao: Their performers generally have jobs. They generally rehearse once a week and perform two to four times per year. [是指都有自己的職業, 利用每周一個時間時排練, 一年有 2 到 4 場演出.]

Author: I see. Sounds like a part-time job. [明白了, 属于兼职性质.]

Zhao: The semi-professional (orchestra) has fixed musicians and pays them a basic salary. [那一個半專業（乐团）, 基本上有固定樂手, 並有基本報酬.]

Author: The three teachers who used to work in higher education have resigned, right? You're the only *Sanxian* teacher currently engaged in educational institutions? [那三位在大学教课的三弦老师已离职了对吗? 目前从事教育的就你一个人了?]

Zhao: Yes. [對.]

Author: May I ask another question? Why did these *Sanxian* teachers leave their university jobs? Due to a shortage of students? Were they full-time or part-time? [想再加问一个问题--之前那三位大学三弦老师为什么走了呢? 是生源不足的问题吗? 他们属于全职还是半职大学教员?]

Zhao: (The three university teachers were) half-time. And yes, insufficient students (emoji : [facepalm]). [(那三位大学的三弦老师属于) 半職; 生源不足（掩面表情).]

Author: (emoji : [daze] [facepalm]) Because of a student shortage? [因为生源不足而离职了[發呆][掩面]?]

Zhao: Yes, but they were also part-time teachers. [是呀，不过他们也是兼职.]

Author: Are there any full-time Zither and Pipa teachers in Hong Kong higher education? Are there more students studying these subjects? [古筝琵琶之类的老师在香港大学里有全职的吗？生源会比较多吗?]

Zhao: There are two full-time teachers (of these subjects) in the Department of Chinese Music in the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the rest of whom are part-time; the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University and the Hong Kong Baptist University also have one or two full-time teachers, and the rest are part-time. We have more full-time teachers in Western music. [演藝學院中樂系就兩個專職老師，其餘都是兼職；香港大學，中文大學，浸會大學也各有一兩個專職老師，其餘都是兼職. 西樂全職老師多一些.]

Author: I see! [收到!]

Zhao: Furthermore, the Hong Kong government has a music coordination office, which also offers music lessons. Previously mentioned--The only two students of mine from the *Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts*, one of whom is accepted as a tutor last year; the other has been admitted as a full-time *Sanxian* performer at the *Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra.* The expenditures of these institutions are relatively low. In addition, over twenty students are learning *Sanxian* in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools. [补充一下：香港政府有一個音樂統籌處，也開班教學，現在有一個我的學生（之前香港演藝學院僅有的 2 個三弦專業畢業生之一，另一個今年考上了香港中樂團全職樂師）做教師，政府部門，所以，收費較低，目前已有中小學生約 20 多人學三弦.]

All these data give us a clear picture of *Sanxian*'s embarrassing educational situation in both Hong Kong and mainland China. As a result, in comparison to well-known Chinese instruments like Erhu, Guzheng, and Pipa, research and development of *Sanxian* has been delayed.

iii. Composers' dereliction of duty.

The existing contemporary music list edited by Yizhen Gao (see Appendix 1) indicates how insufficient has been the field of contemporary

composition in developing *Sanxian*. Only a little over fifty *Sanxian* pieces have been created since the 1950s; this includes approximately thirty solos, fourteen concertos, and eighteen chamber pieces. In most of the concerto and chamber works the *Sanxian* is integrated into an ensemble of Chinese instruments; **in only eleven is it integrated into a Western ensemble.**

Historically, in Chinese music, living composers strive to protect and develop of rare instruments; yet this has not happened with the *Sanxian*. There are two possible reasons for this neglect:

(a) Its timbre is both prominent and distinctive, making integration with other instruments difficult to achieve.

My memory of a special lecture given by Taisheng Zhao at Tianjin Conservatory of Music in the summer of 2019 includes a moment when he joked, "A *Sanxian* can fight an entire orchestra." Perhaps that is somewhat exaggerated; but similar observations have been made by young *Sanxian* artist Rui Qiao, currently working as a *Sanxian* accompaniment at the Dance Department in the Tianjin Conservatory of Music, who remarked that, while rehearsing for the Tianjin Folk Dance project, percussionist Xie Fang frequently requested to be placed at a distance from the *Sanxian* because, to her embarrassment, its prominent sound often overpowered her performance. Undoubtedly, then, the instrument's unique timbral character and sonic volume is off-putting to many contemporary composers. Inevitably the leading voice within a concerto, this means it is often unwelcome in more integrated orchestral ensembles. In works like *Song of Black Earth (黑土歌)*[161] and *Poetry of String, Rhythm of Drum (弦诗鼓韵)*,[162] performed by Taisheng Zhao, even a monophonic melody on the *Sanxian* "stands out" within the whole orchestra.

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[161] *Song of Black Earth (黑土歌)* is a *Sanxian* concerto composed by Shaoxian Feng (1939).
[162] *The Rhyme of String and Drum (弦诗鼓韵)* is a *Sanxian* concerto composed by Hua Wu. It was premiered in 2015 featuring Taisheng Zhao as the soloist.

(b) *Sanxian* is regarded as unrefined popular music.

"One idea stands out, namely the relevance of the *Sanxian* in people's music activities in their daily lives, particularly in the narrative singing performance."[163] " The value of the *Sanxian* was therefore attached to the narrative singing, not to the instrument itself."[164]

Historically used in local tea-houses, theatres, market-places, and brothels as an accompaniment in the Chinese Opera and *Quyi,* it has been difficult to accept *Sanxian*'s transformation into a formal solo or ensemble instrument. Such stereotyped thinking has unfairly suppressed composers who might have pursued reconceptions of *Sanxian*'s aesthetic function. In sum, Due to the triple pressure created by society's neglect, composers' indifference, and radical changes in popular taste, *Sanxian* now confronts great difficulties in development and transmission.

3.1.3 My Creative Practice for *Sanxian*

3.1.3.1 My Unexpected Introduction to *Sanxian*

In 2018, I accidentally heard some musical phrases played on *Sanxian*, and suddenly I found musical inspiration in its desolate, dignified tone evoking flavours of the earth. The way *Sanxian* artists expressed music touched me deeply and immediately.

(Please see Figure 3.1-4, below)

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[163] Hei-Yung Chan. "Becoming a Tradition: Re-inventing The *Sanxian*": 40.
[164] Ibid., 39.

Figure 3.1-4. Folkloric *Sanxian* performance (Modern versus 1880 A.D.)

Since this first encounter, I have come to discover and appreciate the unique character and melodic beauty of *Sanxian*. Its rich expressive power can accurately express specific situations or artistic images shaped to our compositional needs. Thus, I began communicating, with increasing frequency, with the very few *Sanxian* artists that remain. At the same time, I chose it as a main instrument in some of my portfolio compositions; and, in exploring its sounds, I was deeply inspired by its long yet unpredictable *after-tones (余音)*[165].

3.1.3.2 My Applications of *Sanxian After-tones*

After-tone describes the sonic extensions that are generated by the vibration of *Sanxian*'s strings and sound-box (python skin). The effect is somewhat analogous to piano resonances created through the skilful use of the pedals. Yet the "deviations," which like beyond the twelve-tone system, the ambiguities revealed in the echoes, and the cultural implications of the sound

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[165] This is my own phrase, borrowing in part the artist sensibility of a famous Chinese idiom "余音绕梁, 三日不绝" from the ancient book *列子·汤问 (Lièzǐ·tāng wèn)*. With it, I seek to capture a key feature of *Sanxian*'s timbral subtleties. It refers to the long-lasting, varied, and blurred suspensions (ornaments) created by performers' idiosyncratic left-hand fingerings after plucking major pitches. Most of the *after-tones* (especially in regional *Sanxian* music) are improvised, rather than adhering to a precise notation or an exact pitch-interval.

give these after-tones an irreplaceable character, which I would describe as lingering and mysterious.

This individual timbral character results from *Sanxian*'s long neck and fret-free construction. Longjian Tan observes: "It is obviously different from other Chinese plucked-strings, say Pipa, Ruan,[166] Qinqin,[167] Yu-kin,[168] and Liuqin.[169] *Sanxian* in some ways technically overlaps with Chinese bowed-string instruments such as Erhu and Banhu,[170] especially in the use of the left-hand finger pressing." ["(三弦)这与弹拨乐器家族中其它的乐器如琵琶，阮，秦琴，月琴，柳琴等有着明显的区别，而与二胡，板胡等弓弦乐器在左手按音技法上有一定的相似之处"] Longjian continues, "*Sanxian* 'sings' the music; it uninhibitedly imitates human voices, going beyond exact pitches and scale systems." ["这就奠定了三弦不受任何韵律限制、善于模拟人声、善于歌唱的演奏特点."）[171]

After experiencing the compositional and collaborative potentials of *Sanxian* music with different performers, I am more than ever convinced by Professor Longjian Tan's views of *Sanxian*'s timbral diversity:

> In addition to the original condition of the instrument, performers' different playing habits will also change *Sanxian*'s timbres and sonic quality, since everyone has an individual

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[166] Ruan（阮）is a traditional Chinese plucked-string instrument. After its instrumental reformation of 1949, Ruan developed into a family of instruments. Ruans are divided into the high, the small, the middle, the big, and the bass Ruan, according to their shape and pitch range. The Ruan family is welcomed in different types of ensembles and is applied in various musical styles due to its rich expression and harmonious timbre.

[167] Qinqin (秦琴) is a Chinese traditional plucked-string instrument. Originally employed in Guangdong music as an accompaniment instrument with Gaohu and Yangqin, it was later accepted into Chinese orchestras.

[168] Yu-kin (月琴) is a Chinese plucked-string instrument employed in traditional Chinese opera and Quyi as an accompaniment. It has a flat, round (or octagonal) sound-box, with 2-4 strings in total that are made of nylon or metal. Yu-kin is commonly tuned as g-d^1-g^1-d^2; its pitch range is between g and a^3. See *Encyclopedia of China*, vol. Music and Dance (April 1989) 1: 561 [*中国大百科全书*, 音乐舞蹈卷. (1989 年 4 月) 1: 561]

[169] Liuqin (柳琴) is a Chinese folk plucked-string instrument widely used at the junction of three provinces Shandong, Jiangsu, and Anhui. It is used primarily as an accompaniment in *Liuqin* and *Sizhou Opera*. People believe it dates from more than 200 years ago. Liuqin is similar to the Pipa but slightly smaller. Its timbre and performance techniques are related to those of the Yueqin (Yu-kin), which is why it is also called Liu Yue Qin. Ibid., 393

[170] Banhu (板胡) is another Chinese stringed instrument, with a bright and penetrating sound. It is used as an accompaniment in many genres of Chinese opera and *Quyi* performances.

[171] Longjian Tan. "*Sanxian* and *Sanxian* Solo Piece 'Eighteen Bats'," *Instrument* 5 (2003):78 [谈龙建. "三弦与三弦独奏曲 '十八板'," *乐器* 5 (2003): 78].

degree of dynamic control. As a result, each *Sanxian* sings with a unique voice! Even the same instrument would yield diverse timbral effects when played by different people [每个演奏者合理用力的程度不一样，因此三弦的音色各不相同．谈龙建认为，即使是同一把琴，不同的人弹它，都会出现不同的音色，正所谓 '谁弹的琴弦像谁'．]

Variations of the angle, position, strength, and speed of the performer's right-hand technique produces a multitude of timbres on the *Sanxian*. The unpredictability of the *after-tone* is created through the coordination between the right-hand technique and, particularly, the position and actions of our left hands. From this perspective, it is the *Sanxian* player's left hand that holds the rich musical language. As *Sanxian* artists, we need to emphasise our pursuit of beauty, particularly in our left-hand technique, in order to produce high-quality sounds and thus to move our audiences. [演奏三弦时，右手弹拨过程中，不同的角度，部位，重量，指速等均可以造成音色上的很多变化．而对于三弦演奏来说，余音更多的控制在于左手．由此看来，演奏者的左手掌握着丰富的音乐语言．三弦想好听，想打动人心．必须发挥左手技术和强调美的追求.][172]

As a contemporary composer, rather than developing performance skills, I pay close attention to the creative use of after-tones. This is not limited to works for   *Sanxian*; I can also integrate or "transplant" its sound effects, melodic features, and artistic sensibilities to other instruments. Broadly speaking, there are five ways in which I apply after-tones in my current works for *Sanxian* specifically:

i. Fluctuating long suspensions of single pitches.

Commonly employed in introductions, codas, or adagio sections in my works, this type of after-tone creates a kind of "illusion" in the music through its long-lasting and ambiguous extension of a pitch. For example, in my *Sanxian* solo work *That Day*, the after-tones suggest different directions in the last three beats of bar 20 and the final beat of bar 21, while in bar 404 each attack is followed by an upward or downward ornamental extension; in

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[172] Jianjun Meng, "Longjian Tan's Instrument," *Instrument* 11 (2007): 77-78 [孟建军,"谈龙剑的乐器," *乐器* 11 (2007): 77-78].

the coda of the solo work *Ephemeral Serendipity*, the first beat of bar 23 has a similar extension (see figure 3.1-6). As a listener, this application of after-tones seems to offer me a larger space for my imagination.

Figure.3.1-6 Fluctuating long suspensions of single pitches

ii. Connections between continuous yet re-articulated pitches performed at a low volume. These after-tones can be either in accord with or contrary to the direction of the main melody; or they can create a kind of echo between two repeated pitches. They generally occur in adagio sections, but can also appear in introductions or codas, when needed. Examples are found in the latter part of bars 21 and 23 of my *Sanxian* solo *Ephemeral Serendipity* and in bar 276 from the work *That Day* (see figure 3.1-7). I frequently apply this type of after-tone to create a mysterious quality in the music.

Figure.3.1-7 The connections between the continuous yet "deviated" pitches

iii. Brief suspensions during rapid plucking, used to create rhythmic emphasis. Extensively employed in my *Sanxian* ensemble piece *My Clay Figurines* (see Figure 3.1-8), this kind of after-tone controls the rhythm throughout the piece and enriches the musical colour.

Figure.3.1-8 bars 17-20, *My Clay Figurines*

iv. Imitations of linguistic behaviours. I tend to use abrupt single pitches followed by brief after-tones in compositions which have a folk flavour,

as these sounds closely resemble the tones of specific Chinese dialects. A typical example appears at the very beginning of the piece *Taiping Drum,* where I attempted to imitate the Tianjin slang phrase:"太平鼓, 保太平" ("tài píng gǔ, bǎo tài píng) (see figure 3.1-9*.

Figure.3.1-9 bars 18 from *Sanxian* ensemble: *Taiping Drum*

This kind of after-tone is also used by *Sanxian* performer Taisheng Zhao during his Shanxi folk music improvisations in our collaboration on the piece *Ephemeral Serendipity.*

v. Varying suspensions followed by single or continuous intervals (or chords). This type of after-tone was extensively applied in Section IV of my *Sanxian* solo *That Day* (see figure 3.1-10). My purpose was to support coherence among the layers of the music and simultaneously to add fullness to the sound.

Figure.3.1-10 Excerpts from *Sanxian* solo: *That Day* (Section IV: Reality)

My exploration of and fondness for *Sanxian* after-tones has led me to

integrate its musical features into works for Western instruments: frequent transitions between ordinary and air sounds on woodwind instruments (as in bars 126-129 of my clarinet solo *So Close, Yet So Far Away*); string pizzicati followed by varied left-hand positions to create fluctuating pitch extensions (e.g., in bars 123-124 from *The Eternal Circle*); and frequent changes of bowing positions on strings to create smoother connections between diverse timbres (ordinary sound, overtone, vibrato, et al.) or different dynamics (as in the ending of the violin solo *Marionette*) (see figure 3.1-11). These, and more, are examples of my attempts to "transplant" the artistic sensibilities of this specific timbral effect into other instruments.

Figure.3.1-11 My "transplantations" of *Sanxian after-tones*

Undoubtedly after-tones are unique to to *Sanxian* and, essentially, cannot be copied exactly. However, as an ancient instrument with a history of more than thousand years, *Sanxian* has taken on multifaceted artistic appearances. In my work, specifically, it has become something like a cultural messenger, wandering between folk arts and contemporary music.

3.1.3.3 Applications from *Tianjin Kuaibaner (天津快板书)* in My Compositional Practice for *Sanxian*

i. An Introduction to *Tianjin Kuaibaner (天津快板)* and its instruments.

A popular narrative art that originated in Tianjin, China, *Tianjin Kuaibaner* evolved from *Dà Shù Zì (大数子)*,[173] a type of of *Tiānjīn Shídiào (天津时调)*.[174]. As in *Tiānjīn Shídiào,*[175] *Sanxian* is employed as the main accompaniment,

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[173] *Dà Shù Zì (大数子)* is a type of *Qupai* in *Tiānjīn Shídiào*. Performers combine speaking with singing while declaming the poetry. Tones of the *Tianjin Dialect* are added in the performance to give a sense of humour to the music.

[174] Mingze Sun, "The Inheritance and Development of *Kuaibaner* Art," *Drama House* 2018 (20): 40 [孙铭泽，"谈快板书艺术的传承与发展，" 戏剧之家 2018 (20):40].

[175] *Tiānjīn Shídiào* is a representative *Quyi* and *Shuō Chàng* music (narrative art) of Tianjin. Initially it incorporated well-known Tianjin local tunes named in the Qing Dynasty as "时新小曲" (popular tunes of specific eras). In the late Qing Dynasty, people changed their name to

controlling the rhythm and speed of the music.

The artistic qualities of *Tianjin Kuaibaner* can be summarised as rhythmic, fluent, rhyming, amusing, and life-like. Its main props are bamboo clappers (or Chinese clappers), which are composed of the *big board (大板)* and *knot boards (节子)* (see figure 3.1-9, top). The large board is comprised of two arc-shaped bamboo boards, each 19 cm long, 6 cm wide, and 0.6 cm thick. Placed opposite to each other, they are connected by silk inserted through holes on their protruding surfaces. The board that is held in the performer's hand is called the *bottom board* or *plate (底板 or 底片)*, while the other is the *upper board* or *plate (上板 or 上片)* (see Figure 3.1-9, bottom left). The *knot boards* are made up of five arc-shaped bamboo boards, each with two holes and each 12 cm long, 4.1 cm wide, and 0.6 cm thick. The four boards in the front are called the *front boards (前板),* while the fifth is the *rear board (后板)* (see Figure 3.1-9, bottom right). The *front boards* are arranged with the arcs in the same direction, padded with two copper coins between each, and connected with the *rear board* by a silk thread. The inner, concave surface of the *rear board* is opposite to the *front*, and there are no copper coins in the middle.

During a *Tianjin Kuaibaner* performance, the artists hold the big board with the right hand and the small in the left, creating varied rhythms through a well coordination of both hands as they sing a little rhyme in Tianjin Dialect. The speed constantly shifts between adagio, moderato, and allegro, according to the artistic requirements of the performance. Performers also exhibit their proficiencies by throwing and turning the clappers, increasing the audiences' appreciation.

"Shídiào (时调)." The melodies of *Tiānjīn Shídiào* are rich and varied and include both Tianjin folk songs and tunes introduced into Tianjin from other regions.

big board

knot boards

the *front boards*   the *rear boards*
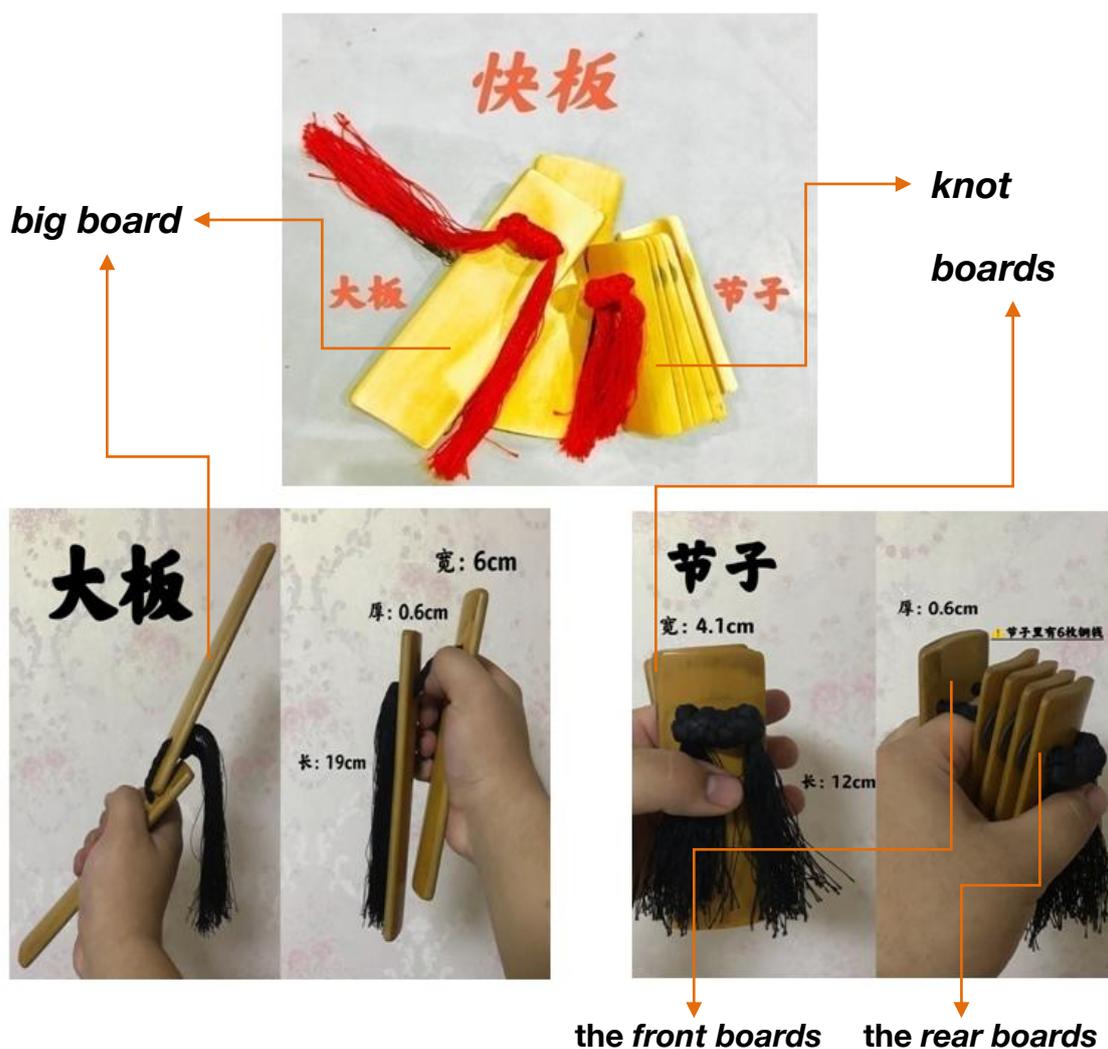
Figure.3.1-12 The form and structure of *Tianjin Kuaibaner*[176]

ii. The Application of Bamboo Clappers in My *Sanxian* Works.

In 2018, I was fortunate to acquire a grant from the China Art Fund in support of my project *The Taste of Tianjin (天津风情).* At the same time, I received a commission from Tianjin Conservatory of Music to write a piece having notable Tianjin Musical aspects to feature in their dance project. I therefore chose *Sanxian* as the main instrument in this piece, *My Clay Figurines.*

This trio vividly depicts the famous handicraft *Clay Figurine Zhang (泥*

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[176] These illustrations were kindly provided by Jiabao Guo, a Chinese dancer as well as performer of the *Tianjin Kuaibaner.*

人张).[177] While writing it, I worked with a mental scenario: Once there was an old man who made clay figurines. In his dream that night, they became his adoring children, excitedly playing around him.

The piece is written for three instruments--*Sanxian,* erhu and bamboo clappers*.* As a common Chinese instrument, the erhu is familiar even to people with only a fleeting knowledge of Chinese music. What is notable in this piece is the innovative use of bamboo clappers, which are central to the percussion of northern Chinese narrative art. These is not "instruments," strictly speaking, and they are generally excluded from formal compositions. In this case, however, to emphasise the Tianjin flavour of the work, I added bamboo clappers to *Sanxian* and erhu to form an instrumental trio (figure 3.1-13).

Instrumentation

1 Erhu 二胡

1 Sanxian 三弦 (or Ruan 中阮)

1 Pair of Bamboo Clappers

Figure.3.1-13 List of Instruments

Although Tianjin bamboo clappers have been rarely used in contemporary works, their historical association with *Tianjin Kuaibaner* allows them to convey a certain humour and regional distinction to my music, allowing me new creative vision. I hope my attempt to use clappers in

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[177] *Clay Figurine Zhang (泥人张)* is a famous coloured sculpture art in Tianjin. "Clay Figurine Zhang" was originally the art name of Mingshan Zhang (the founder), a famous clay sculptor in Tianjin China during the Daoguang period of the Qing Dynasty. Zhang's business has been handed down by his descendants. The sixth generation is currently active. Fan Yi. "Universe In Sleeves--'The Clay Figurines'." *China Auction* 11 (2019): 52 [一凡. "袖里乾坤泥人张," *文物鉴藏* 11 (2019): 52].

contemporary composition will trigger other composers to discover new sounds from folk music materials.

iii. My Attempt to Interconnect *Sanxian* with Contemporary Musical Languages.

Inspired by the role of *Sanxian* accompaniment in *Tiānjīn Shídiào*, I employed it in *My Clay Figurines* as a "skeleton" that underlies the entire rhythm and dynamic. The rhythm, taken from *Tianjin Kuaibaner*, is applied as a main rhythmic motif in the music, but the frequent use of glides and after-tones also conveys a Tianjin accent to the pitches. Instead of a Chinese pentatonic scale, I used twelve-tone temperament but filled it with *Sanxian*'s individual sounds, as I believed that would enhance the expressiveness of the work.

How did I transform *Musical Dialects* into *Contemporary Musical Language* through "my individual voice?" What is the connection between the two in my process of composing for *Sanxian*?

Frequent-used Sanxian performing techniques are plucking, picking, rolling, finger rotating, gluing, pulling, bucking, and beating the strings and body of the instrument (see figure 3.1-15). The tunes are usually based on a pentatonic mode and are monophonic; chromatic intervals and chords are rarely heard in traditional *Sanxian* music.

╲	弹	general plucking
╱	挑	picking
⫽	滚	rolling (continuous strumming)
𣏤	轮	finger-rotating
，	粘音（带起）	gluing (similar effect as pulling)
ꙅ	正扣	bucking
✕	反扣	bucking (in reverse)
⊤	打音	beating
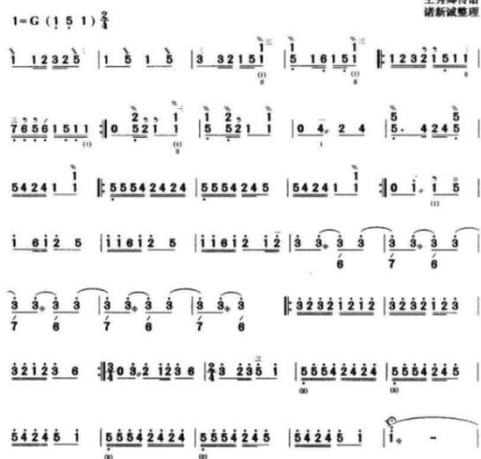
An example of commonly used staff notation for *Sanxian*

An example of commonly used number notation for *Sanxian*

Figure.3.1-14 Common *Sanxian* fingerings and notation[178]

I therefore attempted to create a new vocabulary by adding to the established methods techniques such as beating the board with my palm and simultaneous rotation and glissando. I also increased the frequency of chords and foregrounded atonal writing techniques in order to enrich the timbre and enhance the expressive force of the music (see figure 3.1-16).

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[178] Yi Li, ed., *Shi Ba Ban (Eighteen Bats), Sanxian* Information Website, accessed 7 March, 2022

[李乙改编并演奏. 十八板, 三弦资料网, 2022 年 3 月 7 日],

http://www.yueqiziliao.com/sanxian/2022124664.html.

Xiuqing Wang, *Yue Diao (The Tune of Yue)*, Xincheng Zhu, ed., Sanxian Information Website, accessed 7 March, 2022, [王秀卿传谱, 诸新诚整理. *越调*. 三弦资料网. 2022 年 3 月 7 日],

http://www.yueqiziliao.com/sanxian/2022124693.html.

Rotating while continuous glissando:

Beating the Sanxian body:

Atonal writing:

Figure.3.1-15 Examples of *Sanxian* performing techniques in *My Clay Figures*

Because this was a commissioned work, my explorations were somewhat restricted. They did, however, help me to lay a foundation for my later works, notably *That Day*.

iv. *That Day*: My Exploratory Journey into Contemporary *Sanxian* Writing.

My piece for *Sanxian* solo, *That Day,* was composed during the initial period of lockdown in response to the epidemic of 2020. In it, I attempted to use this unique instrument to express the circumstances confronted by a maverick personality, one constantly seeking to negotiate though a bustling tumultuous world, who tries to make his way back to a sense of his true self.

Since this work was not commissioned,[179] I was entirely free to create without requirements or restrictions. Thus the nature of this work is more spontaneous and freewheeling than in *My Clay Figurines.* I hoped to break

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[179] This piece was started as an uncommissioned work in May 2020. Professor Longjian Tan recommended to Sanxian artist Yizhen Gao that she accept it as a solo commission in August 2020, while I was finishing my writing of its initial edition.

traditional patterns with bolder ideas in excavating the expressive force of *Sanxian* more deeply and extensively. I also attempted innovations in notation and in melodic style, pitch, timbre, and rhythm.

Figure.3.1-16 My online and onsite rehearsals with Yizhen Gao

Notation: To better convey the desired effect, I used a grand staff rather than numbered and bass-clef notation. I also adapted the time notation without bars used in Wenchen Qin's pipa solo, *Pipa Words,* to enable freer textures in the music (see figure 3.1-17).

Figure.3.1-17 Excerpts from Section III of *That Day* (left); excerpts from *Pipa Words*[180] by Wenchen Qin (right)

Moreover, in addition to the existing notation for *Sanxian* (see appendix 2) discussed in my interview with Yizhen Gao (see appendix 3), I employ notation adapted from that for contemporary Western instruments—vibrato, under the bridge, sul tasto, etc.—to offer clearer guidance about my musical objectives to my performers (see figure 3.1-18).

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[180] Wenchen qin, *Pipa Words* (edition sikorski, 8772): 6.

Figure.3.1-18 My use of Western notation in writing for *Sanxian*

Melody. The melodic style of traditional music for *Sanxian* derives directly from Chinese folksong and traditional opera. In order to bring new colours to the music, I use a freer, more contemporary melodic vocabulary (see figure 3.1-19).

Figure.3.1-19 My melodic style In *That Day*

Moreover, traditional *Sanxian* music generally employs a pentatonic scale. My work frequently contains semitones (sometimes decorated through microtonal ornaments) to enhance the listeners' musical imagination (see figure 3.1-20).

Figure.3.1-20 The use of semitones in *That Day*

Timbre. In *That Day* I attempted to vary the tonal characteristics of the musical timbre by accelerating or slowing down the speed with which the string is pressed, altering the performer's finger position when plucking a string, and increasing the use of overtones (see figure 3.1-21).

Figure.3.1-21 *That Day*: Timbral alterations

Special techniques. In order to heighten the surprise in the rhythmic layers of the piece, I call for beating the "body" of the *Sanxian*, holding it at different angles, alternating the level of intensity and varying the methods of plucking, rolling, scraping and rubbing the strings (see figure 3.1-22).

Figure.3.1-22 *That Day*: Special techniques and sounds

Arpeggiation. Because the instrument has only three strings, certain pitch patterns, such as quick arpeggios with more than three notes, are rarely used in *Sanxian* compositions. When I was writing the initial edition of this piece, I clearly remember listening to acoustic guitar music (such as *Solitario* and *Inspirit* played by Yechiel Hasson) over headphones while wandering around the village. Although I neither saw scores for these works nor researched guitar performance, these guitar arpeggios impressed me and were unintentionally revealed in my *Sanxian* writing (see figure 3.1-23).

Figure.3.1-23 *That Day*: Extended arpeggios

Rehearsing *That Day* was a process of constant modification and refinement. Sometimes tedious and frustrating, it nevertheless authentically reveals the links between *Musical Dialects* and *Contemporary Musical Language.* Working with the young *Sanxian* artist Gao Yizhen was a creative voyage of discovery. Our thinking, summaries, and revisions at the end of each collaborative session proved to be unexpected and stimulating.

The revision of *That Day* resulted in several types of changes：

(1) Developing greater timbral range on the *Sanxian*

In "Section V (Purity)" (bars 393–396), my original intention was to use a solo voice—the performer's continuous exhalation of 'Sa...sa....'—accompanied by a sustained bass note produced by open-string strumming on the *Sanxian*. I hoped to evoke the sound of leaves brushing against the ground as they fall. Gao suggested we could achieve this effect using just *Sanxian* and felt that by adding the extra voice we might damage the delicate musical imagery. She created the required sound with a different performing technique—strumming the open-string (G) with the right hand while improvising rubbing on all strings with the left. This produced a dreamier, more desolate timbral effect than the one I had imagined (see figure 3.1-24).

Figure.3.1-24 *That Day,* **bars 393–396: The first version and the modification**

(2) Emphasising "linear" thinking by using more monophonic melody in my writing:

After several attempts, I realised that over-reliance on harmony on *Sanxian* would create a clumsy sonic effect. I changed several intervals to single tones that offer a more coherent, if transient, sense of melody. Bar 404 is an example; the sonic effect of the melody becomes more ethereal when the intervals are removed (see figure 3.1-25).

Previous

Modified

Figure 3.1-25 *That Day*, bar 404: Altering intervals to single tones

Such instances made me very aware of the rich and nuanced monophonic timbre that is possible through varied methods of playing *Sanxian*.

(3) Replacing partially definite notes with indefinite pitches.

What I term the 'intuitive understanding' inherent in Oriental thinking allows a greater use of "Yì Jìng (意境),"[181] particularly in connective and decorative passages. Altering definite pitch notation to encourage non-specific, intuitive expressions and instinctive reactions by performers to

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[181] "Yì Jìng (意境) is a philosophical concept in Chinese ancient poetry writing. [It] refers to an ineffable and meaning-laden artistic space that the poet intently constructs through a combination of his thoughts and feelings with the objects or scene he depicts in his poem." Jia Chai, "Portfolio of Compositions: Developing a Personal Compositional Approach Based on Attributes of Spoken Language," (PhD dissertation, University of York, 2017), 19. Also see Yanfang Tang, "Translating across Cultures," in *Yi Jing and Understanding Chinese Poetry*, Intercultural Communication Studies XXIII:1, (The College of William and Mary, USA), 188.

the music enlarges the sonic "space" for audiences to enter imaginatively. This makes the best environment to hear the distinctive nature of *Sanxian* and to create a lingering sonic effect (see figure 3.1-26).

Previous
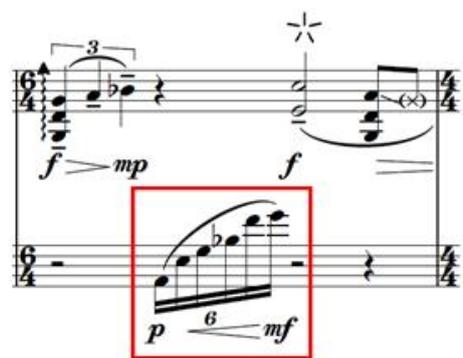
Modified
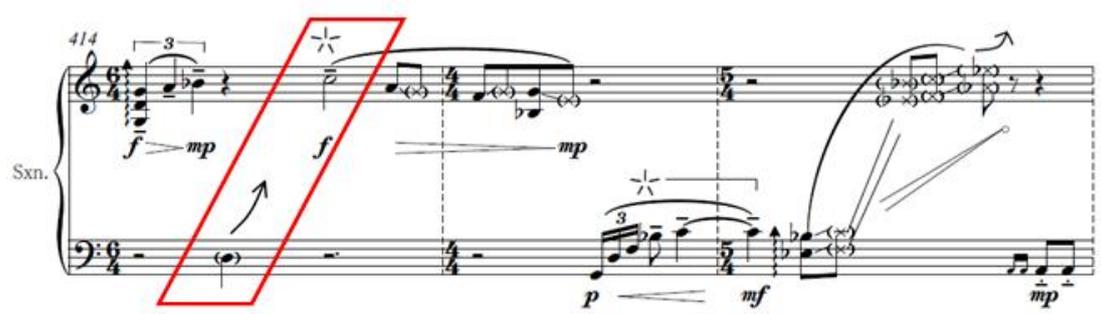
Figure 3.1-26 *That Day*, bars 414–416: Exact pitches changed to intuitive expressions

(4) Altering the finger positions in *Sanxian* performance.

The sonic effects of *Sanxian* can be roughly divided into point-effects and linear effects. Point-effects are generally created by plucking (sparse and dense), picking, hooking, strumming, and other similar techniques (see figure 3.1-27).

／　挑　picking

Ⲥ　勾　hooking

╈

╈　扫　strumming

Figure.3.1-27 Examples of point-effect fingerings

Linear effects are generally created by various methods of finger rotation, using three, four, or five fingers.

⼩　轮指　finger-rotating (five)

⼩　四指轮　four-finger-rotating

⼈　三指轮　three-finger-rotating

Figure.3.1-28 Examples of linear-effect finger positions

The choice of position depends on the composer's sonic expectations. Coherence and lyricism in a melody require consistency in fingering. For example, in bar 294 (Section V), I chose to use finger-rotating followed by plucking. This, however, did not achieve the expected result. After discussion with Gao, I changed the notation to gradually accelerated plucking followed by continuous strumming, thus creating a smooth transition from "points" to "line" (see figure 3.1-29):

Previous

Modified

Figure 3.1-29 *That Day*, bars 433–434: modified finger positions

Conversely, conflicting sonic effects require volatile fingerings and finger positions. In Section IV (bars 344-352), flexible shifting between finger-rotation, strumming, and plucking creates a moment of dramatic conflict (see figure 3.1-30).

Figure 3.1-30 *That Day*, bars 344-352: Conflict produced by frequent shifts of fingering and finger positions

As a transcultural creative artist, I am constantly in search of a balance between the East and the West, between regional materials and contemporary techniques, between perceptions and theories, between collective consciousness and self-exploration. Undoubtedly, when compared with most folk-derived *Sanxian* music, the new notations and sounds I used in *That Day* deliver a "contemporary" sensibility to this instrument. Yet, to many non-contemporary musicians, the term "contemporary" sometimes represents artificiality or obscurity arising from excessive rationality and formalisation. Luckily, by receiving extensive feedback on the effect of this piece from audiences who are from different countries and engaged in diverse occupations, I have been able to pursue a lengthy writing, modifying, and rehearsing process that allowed me to confront both external and internal doubts. From this experience I have learned to stop unconsciously over-pursuing a "contemporary" sound and, rather, to attend more to the inherent beauty of *Musical Dialects.*

v. *Ephemeral Serendipity*: My Attempt to Explore Oral Transmission and Improvised Performances.

Oral transmission (口传心授) refers to the method by which musical knowledge and skills are gained through oral teaching, rather than learning

from texts or scores. In China, this method was initially applied in traditional teacher-apprentice relationships and has been handed down in the form of modern mentoring."[182] "It refers to the basic action of passing information, in this case music, through oral and aural means."[183]

In their roles as inheritors of Chinese music, both folk and academic *Sanxian* performers have a notable preference for the oral transmission of music, rather than reading scores. I discovered notable differences in the musical effects of written notation compared to oral transmission during my rehearsal process. A piece learned purely from notation is always regarded as "rigid"; however, after oral communications, performers comprehend my musical demands and immediately improvise with more fluency and charm. This empirical discovery encouraged me to combine contemporary notation with performed improvisations. I thus attempted to apply some oral transmission in collaborating with *Sanxian* artist Taisheng Zhao on my solo piece *Ephemeral Serendipity.*

Having a rich prior experience with orchestral performing, Zhao is known as courageous and creative and has often been acclaimed as flexible and enthusiastic in his performances. Zhao is from Shanxi and thus well versed in expressing the Shanxi regional style; therefore, in our collaboration, I left large spaces for him to improvise in the music that he was born with.

This piece is based on a continuous upward line. The mid-section—Zhao's one-minute Shanxi improvisation — divides the whole into three sections: the beginning is dominated by a continuous upward glide, while the ending subtly reveals an ancient English song, *Greensleeves*, expressed by *Sanxian*'s after-tones (see figure 3.1-31). Both the beginning and final parts are notated more precisely than the middle section, but in all of them time is written in approximate durations rather than exact beats.

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[182] Jieqiong Zhu. "Multiple Interpretations of Oral Transmission," *People's Music* 6 (2010): 38 [朱洁琼, "'口传心授' 的多重解读 []," *人民音乐* 6 (2010): 38].
[183] Emma E. Patterson, "Oral Transmission: A Marriage of Music, Language, Tradition, and Culture," *Musical Offerings* 6, no.1 (2015): 36.

Figure 3.1-31 *Ephemeral Serendipity,* **the beginning and the end**

I simply noted approximate duration and stylistic flavours in the middle part of the piece, as I hoped to encourage the performer to comfortably improvise "the sound of home" during his performance (see figure 3.1-32).

Figure 3.1-32 *Ephemeral Serendipity*, **my notes for Zhao's improvisation**

Since we were living in different countries, most of our communications were through Zoom, Wechat, and Facebook. I would describe the effect I wanted through voice messages; then Zhao would send a recording based on his understanding of my request; then I would adjust more details through oral transmission (which included text descriptions, voice messages, and humming the melodies) and send these back to him.

Here are some records from our rehearsal communications:

(May 5th, 2021)

Zhao: (Sent over a recording) Here is the first paragraph. Have a listen [(发送录音文件）这是第一段，先听一下].

Author: OK!...At 1'05" should be more fluent, we don't need a pause here [好的! ⋯⋯乐曲 1'05"的地方跟后面接紧不要停顿].

Zhao: OK [好].

(May 8th, 2021)

Zhao: I didn't sing according to what you wrote on your score in the middle section, as I'm not familiar with the song you suggested. I chose a Shanbei (Northern Shanxi Province) folk song "兰兰花". Actually, folk songs from our hometown are similar to those from Shanbei, and the song I chose is easier to express [中间的演唱部分我没有按照你谱子上写的唱，因为我不熟悉那首歌曲，我唱了一首陕北民歌"兰花花." 因为我们家乡这边的民歌风格与

陕北是相似的，并且这首"兰花花"对于我来说更容易表现].

Author: No problem [没有问题]!

(May 12th, 2021)

Zhao: (Sent over a recording) (发送录音文件).

Author: Techniques are great! Just several details in the paragraph before improvisation need to be adjusted: the acceleration before the mid-section (Improvisation) can be extended; please do not stop before your improvised performance; also, can we slow the tempo at the beginning of the piece? I hope to bring more intensity and tension to the music...And we need more expressiveness in your improvisation. For example, the theme can be expressed through string-plucking at first, then we might repeat this melodic structure through tapping the sound-box and fingerboard with our fingertips. It can even be repeated again for fuller expression. The duration of the rhythmic cadenza in the middle can also be doubled...[演奏技术上是完全没有问题的，即兴之前的段落有几个细节可以再把握一下：第一，中段（即兴）之前，音乐渐强的过程可以再拉长一点；第二，中段之前不要有任何停顿：第三，乐曲开头可以再慢一点吗？我希望音乐的强度和速度的张力可以再大些.

另外，即兴的部分，我希望表现力可以再强一点. 比如，主题的第一遍我们用拨弦表现，第二遍用手敲击琴筒和琴骨，主题可以再重复一遍，发展得更充分些. 中间的节奏性华彩也可以再加长一倍的时值……]

Zhao: No problem [好的]!

Longjian Tan believes the sound of *Sanxian* is irreplaceable, rich, and varied. We need to respect its inherent beauty rather than changing it into another sound.[184] This piece was initially meant to be a three-minute, structurally based work built from pitch, timbral, dynamic, and other formalised designs. In this form, I neither explored musical dialects as creative sources nor provided sufficient space for the performer to improvise. In revising this work, my idea of integrating Shanxi regional music with English song was inspired by Tan Dun's chamber-music *Ghost Opera,* in which he combined a Hebei folk song—"Little Cabbage（小白菜）" — with Bach's

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[184] Jianjun Meng, "The Instrument of Longjian Tan," *Instrument* 11 (2007): 79 [孟建军, "谈龙建的乐器," *乐器* 11 (2007): 79].

Well-Tempered Clavier. The revision filled the void in the previous emotionless form with humanistic feelings, and theses not only stimulated the performer's interest in the music but also elicited broader resonances from Chinese listeners.

"I have come to like this work more," Zhao said to me during our rehearsal. "Especially in the modified version, the fusion of Shanxi and English folk songs and the space you left for me to freely express my voice, I think this piece suddenly has more 'content' than before. The work is not large yet exhibits innovative musical forms and techniques for *Sanxian* music (even for Chinese plucked-string instruments). For us performers, 'practice makes perfect.' At this point I play like this, but through constant thinking and practice, I will keep filling in new expressions and elements to the music; this is what I like about it."

After listening to this work, Professor Hongyun Wang, from the Dance Department of Tianjin Music Conservatory, said: "This work is compact and clear. The contradictions, 'conflicts and solutions' revealed in the music are very well devised, and these provide the music with reasonable artistic tension. Especially the integration between the Coda (the ancient English song "Greensleeves") with the main theme (the Northern Shanxi folk song) is seamless and fluent. Moreover, expressing the melodic structure of an English song through *Sanxian*'s timbral subtlety brings us new musical colours. I encourage choreographers from our department to devise a dance repertoire for this piece."

According to Emma E. Patterson, "Oral and notated transmission of music are two traditions that developed to work together. Oral tradition is the medium by which music is created and rests in musicians' minds, and written tradition is the medium that keeps the oral tradition alive, aids the musician's memory, and serves as the means of transmitting musical information

indirectly."[185]

The great charm of Chinese traditional music lies in its established yet ever-changing structure. The "changes" that occur result from "personalisation"— that is, the artist's expressive individuality. In creating and transmitting music, Chinese oral tradition not only shows respect for the music's origin and people's individual artistic understandings but also offers space for our musical re-imaginings. A famous Chinese psychologist, Zhihong Wu, once said: "Highly creative people are generally adept at tolerating ambiguity. When someone over-pursues the sense of control and certainty, it also means this person is relatively poor at adapting ambiguity, which will lead to the loss of creativity."[186]

I have learned that by releasing a modicum of control over the technical details in my composing, I allow a consequent "sense of uncertainty" to bring greater possibilities to my musical creativity. As a result, in June 2022, I replaced all the precise notation in the piece with oral transmission and improvised performances from the choreographer Ye Li and *Sanxian* performer Taisheng Zhao. I became surprisingly aware of the coherence between folk and contemporary music and dance that is achieved by providing enough expressive space for each artist. (For a detailed account of the creative process and programme, please see Appendix 4).

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[185] Emma E Patterson, "Oral Transmission: A Marriage of Music, Language, Tradition, and Culture," 38.

[186] Zhihong Wu. "Ceation II: Tolerance of Ambiguity," *Zhihong Wu's Psychology Course* [武志红, "创造 2: 容忍模糊," *武志红的心理学课*], Accessed 7 Aug, 2021, https://youtu.be/rwl0O3O8Veg.

Conclusion

"En somme, la Beauté est partout. Ce n'est point elle qui manque à nos yeux, mais nos yeux qui manquent à l'apercevoir."[187]

-- Auguste Rodin

Any musical dialect or national instrument has a distinctive personality but also has potential for development. By honouring its tradition but adding new ideas, I hope to bring new life to its ancient beauty. By remembering the past while looking forward to the future, it is possible to create a distinctive but accessible contemporary musical language. I hope to connect people from many different regions with many different backgrounds, both ideologically and emotionally, through the music that results. I also hope to inspire contemporary composers to examine musical dialects and acknowledge their ineradicable place in the world's musical legacy.

Differing instruments, geography and language, cultural concepts, and artistic aesthetics undoubtedly create obstacles in composing with and sharing the inheritance of musical dialects. The challenges this poses are, however, stimulating to me. offering me endless inspiration and the impulse for further contemporary musical creation.

I strongly appeal to all music makers: listen to and protect all neglected musical instruments and genres. Do not allow the process of modernisation to erase centuries of traditional expression.

Listen to the earth!

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[187] Auguste Rodin, *L'art. Entretiens réunis*, Bernard Grasset, (1912): 152-153.

3.2 Integrating Programmes

--My Approaches to Narrative, Pictorial, Impressionist, and Expressionist Music

In addition to the use of Chinese musical dialects, programmes also contribute to the symbolic vocabulary of my current work.

"Programme music," as a general term, refers to instrumental music that involves descriptive or narrative effects created through tone painting, musical figuration, and other techniques.[188] One may have programme music without even so much as a title. If the composer had a programme in his mind while composing, the composition is programme music, whether the programme is revealed or not.[189]

Programme music attempts to excite a mental image by means of an auditory impression. This process can be divided into three categories. First, there is music that attempts to represent sounds not primarily produced by musical instruments, as, for example, the wind, thunder, or the song of a bird. Second, music can attempt to represent in sound visual impressions such as the flight of a bird, the movement of water or of fire, or the tranquility of nature. It will be seen that these two categories are objective and that they also suggest rhythm. The third is music which attempts to symbolize in sound ideas which are entirely subjective and appeal to the intellect, such as love, revenge, or grief—all the emotions, in fact. I scarcely need to point out that the last is of infinitely greater value, musically, than the others.[190]

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[188] Siying Song, "Pictorial and Literary Evocations in the Programmatic Music of Liszt and Debussy," (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 2019), abstract.

[189] Frederick Niecks, *Programme Music in the last four centuries*. Ardent Media (1907), 3.

[190] William Wallace, "The Scope of Programme Music," *Proceedings of the Musical Association* n25 (1898), 140.

3.2.1. The Role of *Stimuli* in My Musical Writing

As a child, certain situations, particular environments, or memorable emotional experiences would both arouse and provoke deep feelings within me. These emotions would stimulate my hearing and I would sometimes subconsciously hum corresponding tunes. Years later I applied these experiences to composition and, surprisingly, discovered **three levels** that I can use in my writing process.

i. In the first level, the use of *stimuli* allows me to express vivid musical ideas with greater efficiency and clarity.

Programme music tends to be applied to longer works that feature more complex descriptive or narrative ideas. Pictorial and literary inspirations are two essential non-musical elements in program music, and these are thus crucial to explore.[191] When creating the overall structure of a composition, I frequently close my eyes in order to recall the visual images that initially impressed me. This use of stimuli leads me not only to compose music with greater emotion but can also to create more authentically realistic scenarios.

Much of my work has been structured in this way. The scenario comes first, and the music is then created to express the story which arose from the use of *stimuli*.

Stimuli—Musical Structure—Technical Details

Because music exists in time, the narrative that emerges guides me in deciding exactly how to shape the music.

This process also allows me to reflect the deep feelings I want to convey in my writing. "Since many of them—program music, motion, character, identity, religious faith—also have obvious emotional connotations, it is reasonable to expect that the structural variables underlying emotional

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[191] Siying Song, "Pictorial and Literary Evocations in the Programmatic Music of Liszt and Debussy," abstract.

expression are largely pertinent to them as well."[192] An emotional journey can be conveyed in a specific musical structure, sometimes unintentionally influenced by a certain period in one's life. Unlike Debussy, whose work "strives to evoke a mood, feeling, or scene instead of expressing emotion or telling a story in music,"[193] the moods created by my day-to-day experiences are projected into my current composition. In my desire to bring every part of myself to the process, from these arise a spiritual nature of music making, in order to communicate on the deepest level with listeners.[194]

ii. The second level concerns musical practice. This is perhaps the most important aspect for performers.

Literary and pictorial representations establish fictional worlds.[195] I am accustomed now to using literary sources—some taken from existing material, some my own composition—as prompts, together with vivid and picturesque phrases as indications on the scores. These, I hope, will guide my performers through the work and suggest to them its more precise meaning.

> "Imagine will you please the experience of riding a horse, its thundering hooves in pursuit of...something. Or someone? An urgent destination."

> "The dust in the air, the wind somehow ethereal in the trees."

This technique allows me to communicate the intent of my work to my performers in what I hope is the most direct and helpful way, especially for the works that contain certain transcultural elements. The performers are thereby encouraged to interpret the music as I intend, as well as to awaken their own imaginations. The performers' intuitive reactions to the metaphorical prompts

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[192] Alfred Gabrielsson, "The Relationship Between Musical Structure and Perceived Expression," *The Oxford handbook of music psychology* (2009): 13.

[193] Siying Song, "Pictorial and Literary Evocations in the Programmatic Music of Liszt and Debussy," 2.

[194] Qigang Chen: "'Music which Cannot Communicate with People Won't Survive' - To The Younger Generation," (陈其钢, "'不与人沟通的音乐只能死亡'——致年轻一代,") *People's Music,* 11 (2004): 12-13.

[195] Kendall Walton, "Listening with Imagination: Is Music Representational?," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, no. 1 (1994): 48.

I use is as important to me as the composition. Their personal connection to the work allows a deeper, more meaningful performance of the music.

iii. The third level concerns the relationship between the music being made and how it is received by an audience.

Music is a rich and complex product of culture.[196] Although musical composition is characterised by self-discipline, no audience is able to replicate another's understanding due to the individual and varied life experiences. I have, however, entitled my compositions suggestively, believing, perhaps naively, that this gives an audience some guidance in receiving my music. I have come to the firm conclusion that listeners' receptions are positively affected by the "three levels" of representation in creating the work.

3.2.2. The Subtle Influences Behind My Use of Programme Music

My approach to programme music has been subconsciously inspired by the experiences and theories of my predecessors. Indeed, in many ancient Chinese writings we discover poetic descriptions of experience:

> Confucius said: "Xiao Shao is a *song and dance* handed down from the Shun era, with such elegant and graceful musical charm like the breeze blowing gently on one's face. Just as the raindrops flow in the wind and drop on the earthly scene...it is so moving, whether in summer nights or in winter mornings."
> [子曰, *萧韶者, 舜之遗音也*. 温润以和, 似南风之至. 其为音如寒暑雨之动物, 如物之动人.][197]

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196 Lawrence M. Zbikowski, "Metaphor and Music," *The Cambridge handbook of metaphor and thought* (2008): 519.
197 Ju Xue (Song Dynasty), "Confucius Jiyu Sikuben. Chapter V. Ziguan (I)", *360 doc. com* [(宋) 薛据,"孔子集语 四库本. 子观第五 (一)", *个人图书馆*], accessed Aug 10, 2021, http://www.360doc.com/content/21/0810/10/52920_990386718.shtml

The sound of music is like shuttling and whirling between the beams of a room, haunting. [余音绕梁，三日不觉.][198]

Boya is an outstanding Qin player, while Zhong Ziqi is an exceptional audience. Boya's music aims to express the climbing of lofty mountains. Upon hearing it, Zhong Ziqi exclaimed: "Wonderful! As towering as *Mount Tai*!"[199] When Boya attempted to express musically the sensory experience of gurgling water, Zhong Ziqi said:"Amazing! *Like a river flowing continuously*!" Zhong Ziqi is always empathetic with Boya's musical expression. [伯牙善鼓琴，钟子期善听. 伯牙鼓琴，志在登高山. 钟子期曰:"善哉! 峨峨兮若泰山!"志在流水，钟子期曰:"善哉!洋洋兮若江河!"伯牙所念，钟子期必得之.][200]

The bass strings clank like a furious storm, the soprano strings tinkle like lovers whispering. Tinkle, tinkle...clang, clang...the interlacing sounds are like mixed pearls falling and scattering on a jade plate. [大弦嘈嘈如急雨，小弦切切如私语. 嘈嘈切切错杂弹，大珠小珠落玉盘.][201]

The above four quotations are from the Spring and Autumn Period 2400 years ago and the Tang Dynasty 1700 years ago. They confirm that Chinese people have been relating music to programmes since ancient times, and they are thus of great significance to both music makers and appreciators. Indeed, we may discover the obvious programmatic practices of Chinese cultivated music, folk songs, traditional operas and *Quyi* in various books, journal articles, and research papers:

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[198] Lie Yukou, "Lie zi · Tang wen (XI)," *Chinese Text Project* [列御寇, "列子·汤问(第十一)," *中国哲学书电子化计划*], ed. Dr. Donald Sturgeon,
https://ctext.org/dictionary.pl?if=en&id=37478&remap=gb
[199] Mount Tai (Mount Taishan) is located near the city of Tai'an, in the center of Shandong Province. It was included in the territory of the States Qi and Lu in the Spring and Autumn Periods of ancient China. Towering at the edge of the North China Plain, the sacred Mount Taishan was one of the principal places where for over 2,000 years the emperors paid homage to heaven. The artistic masterpieces contained within the area are in perfect harmony with the natural landscape. Yan Wang, Peng-hui Li, Hong-li Li, Xiao-huan Liu, and Wen-xing Wang, "PAHs distribution in precipitation at Mount Taishan: China. Identification of sources and meteorological influences," *Atmospheric Research* 95, no. 1 (2010): abstract.
[200] Lie Yukou, "Lie zi · Tang wen (XII)," *Chinese Text Project* ["列子·汤问(第十二)"],
https://ctext.org/dictionary.pl?if=gb&id=37479&remap=gb. This story appropriately illustrates that as a music maker Boya conveys a programme in his mind through vivid performance while, as a lover of music, Zhong Ziqiin intuitively experienced isomorphism with Boya's musical ambitions and intentions.
[201] Bai juyi, "Pipa Song," *www. 52shici.cn* [白居易, "琵琶行," *诗词在线*],
http://www.chinapoesy.com/TangShi167.html

Chinese cultivated music can refer to Guqin music, both instrumental and vocal. Instrumental music includes the Guqin Solos that were created by the ancients; representative works include *Long Xiang Cao*(龙翔操), *Running Water*(流水), *Alcoholism*(酒狂), etc. Vocal music refers to Qin Songs, which are accompanied by Guqin, such as "Yangguan Sandie (阳关三叠)," "Xinghua Tianyu (杏花天雨)," "Yangzhou Man (扬州慢)," etc.[202] Obviously these cultivated pieces all have a descriptive title, and some even imply a narrative or emotional catharsis: the Guqin solo *Alcoholism*(酒狂) tells the story of its creator, Ruan Ji, whose ambition was not consistent with the social values and political rights of his time and who therefore vented his depression and frustration in the music after being beastly drunk.[203] Then again, drawing material from the poem "Farewell to an Envoy on His Mission to Anxi (送元二使安西)" by Wang Wei (王维), the representative song of the Tang Dynasty "Yangguan Sandie (阳关三叠)" narrates the poet's farewell to his friend while simultaneously expressing his deep concern:

> What's got Weicheng's path dust wet is the morning rain,
> The willows near the Hotel become green again.
> I urge you to empty another cup of wine,
> West of the Yangguan Pass you'll see no more of mine.[204]
> 渭城朝雨浥轻尘，客舍清清柳色新.
> 劝君更尽一杯酒，西出阳关无故人.[205]

Influenced by oral traditions, **Chinese folksongs** perpetuate various narrative forms; the content includes historical stories, myths, legends,

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[202] Lin Cheng, "Research on the National Characters on the Musical Theme of the Orchestra 'Yue Zhao Hua Lin'" [程林,"管弦乐 <月照花林> 音乐叙事的民族性特征研究"], (Master's Dissertation, Shanghai Normal University, 2021), 19.
[203] Ibid., 20.
[204] Chinese Poetry Translation: Wang Wei " Farewell to an Envoy on His Mission to Anxi " [诗歌翻译:王维 <送元二使安西> 英文译文], *kekenet.com,* ed. Max, accessed 30 Dec, 2016. http://www.kekenet.com/kouyi/201612/486128.shtml
[205] Three Hundred Poems of The Tang Dynasty. China: Hubei Dictionary Publishing House [部编阅读书系唐诗三百首. China: 湖北辞书出版社], 2019. https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/%E9%83%A8%E7%BC%96%E9%98%85%E8%AF%BB%E4%B9%A6%E7%B3%BB_%E5%94%90%E8%AF%97%E4%B8%89%E7%99%BE%E9%A6%96/otnUDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

ancestral sacrifices, ethical precepts, etc.[206] The emergence of a folk song, from lyrics to music, can be considered as a product of a certain cultural circumstance.[207] Lu Xun once wrote in his article "Men Wai Wen Tan" ["门外文谈"]:

> In the past, people sang as they worked or wooed; however they have neither drafted nor left manuscripts, since they never have imagined selling poetry manuscripts or editing completed works... [有史以前的人们，虽然劳动也唱歌，求爱也唱歌，他却并不起草，或者留稿子，因为他做梦也想不到卖诗稿，编全集...][208]

Edited by ancient fieldworkers, the earliest poetry collection, *Shih Ching (诗经)*, can be regarded as an early example of Chinese narrative music, the original sources of which were provided by folkloric "narrators" from the *Shang* and *Zhou Dynasties*. Along with the establishment of the "folk song collecting" system in the Zhou Dynasty, the artistic specialists (fieldworkers) were sent to the countryside and civil groups for literary collections according to the ruler's needs. The *Shih Ching* was hence produced in response to the specific social circumstance and system in place during that historical period. [中国最早的诗歌总集 *<诗经>* 就是典型的中国叙事音乐的早期案例，虽作为古代"采风人士"所整理后的产物，但其素材源于中国商周时期民间的"叙述者"--早在周朝,就出现了一种名日"采风"的制度，所谓采风即统治者根据需要，遣派一批从事专门文艺创作的人士，到民间进行采访风俗的活动...中国最早的诗歌总集 *<诗经>* 就是这种文化背景和采风制度的产物.][209] Moreover, we can find a programmatic nature and storytelling form in songs from different regions and nationalities:

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[206] Zhaorong Peng, Lingling He, "The Narrative Function of Traditional Music," *Ethnic Art* 1 [彭兆荣，何玲玲，"民族音乐的叙事功能，" *民族艺术* 1] (1994): 188.

[207] Zhaorong Peng, Lingling He, "The Narrative Tradition of Chinese Music," Journal of Guizhou University: *Art Edition* 1 [彭兆荣，何玲玲，"民族音乐的叙事传统，" *贵州大学学报: 艺术版* 1] (1994): 36.

[208] See *The Complete Work of Lu Xun (Volume VI),* People's Literature Publishing House [*<鲁迅全集>* 卷6，人民文学出版社] (1973): 89.

[209] Zhaorong Peng, Lingling He, "The Narrative Tradition of Chinese Music" [彭兆荣，"民族音乐的叙事传统"], 36.

The *Bai*[210] Song mainly narrates the social phenomenon of feudal persecution that people are undergoing, as well as the understandings of nature by the ancient sages. The *Bai* working people created various narrative songs on these topics. [白族叙事歌内容包括封建礼教迫害人民群众和白族先民对天地万物的认识。 白族劳动人民以叙事歌的形式创作了很多反映这一社会现象的故事。][211]

People believe in different versions of the fictional origin of the *Yi* Dance "The Axi Dance in the Bright Moonlight (阿细跳月)."[212] One tells the story that the Axi's ancestor once extinguished the mountain-fire, and The Yi people created the dance in memory of their young leaders Azi and Ae, who led them to save the mountain from fire. ... Another version narrates a "love at first sight" story: a girl named Li Laga unexpectedly met a guy, Zi Yineng, while escaping from an arranged marriage; they danced by the campfire while being happily together ... [一者是阿细祖先救山火说，青年领袖阿自、阿娥带领彝族人民扑灭山火，为纪念两位勇敢的领袖，将救火过程的动作演变成舞蹈...第二种是逃婚偶遇心上人说，一个名叫李拉噶的姑娘在逃婚过程中偶遇小伙兹依能，两人一见钟情，速生爱慕，结为欢好，在篝火前欢快的跳舞...][213]

Evolving from folksong and dance *(歌舞)* and *Shuo-Chang* music (说唱, also called "Narrative art"), which integrate poetry, music, and dance in the pre-Qin Period, the narration in **Chinese Operatic Music** aims to express the linguistic subtleties that are manifested not only in the words but also in the contradictions of   the plot:[214]

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[210] This represents the *Bai* Minority of China. The Bai are an ethnic group with a long and colorful history and tradition who live mostly in Yunnan. There are about 2 million Bai. They live primarily around Dali area of Yunnan. They also live in Lijiang, Bijiang, Yuanjiang, Baoshan, Nanhua, and Anning County of Yunnan Province, Bijie of Guizhou Province, Liangshan in Sichuan Province, and Sanzhi of Hunan Province. Candice Song, **"Bai minority of China,"** *China Highlight,* Accessed Aug. 27, 2021.
https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/nationality/bai.htm
[211] Quansheng Zhao, "The Artistic Feature of The *Bai* Minority Song," *Traditional Music* [赵全胜, "白族民间叙事歌的艺术特色," *民族音乐*] 2 (2005): 15.
[212] "The Axi Dance in the Bright Moonlight" is a self-entertaining folk dance favored by the Yi branches - Axi and Sani (<阿细跳月> 是彝族支系阿细人和撒尼人喜爱的自娱性集体民间舞). *The Collection of Chinese Folk Dances:* Yunnan Volume [*中国民族民间舞蹈集成:* 云南卷], (China: 中国 ISBN 中心, 1999): 238.
[213] Quansheng Zhao, "The Artistic Feature of The *Bai* Minority Song," 28.
[214] Qichao Han, "The Revolution from Chinese Song and Dance to Opera - A Study on the Evolution and Influence of Musical Elements in the Early Stage of Chinese Opera (II)," *Journal of Xinghai Conservatory of Music* 3 [韩启超, "歌舞向戏曲嬗变的轨迹——戏曲形成前期音乐要素的嬗变及影响研究(二)," *星海音乐学院学报* 3] (2012): 39.

"Wang Mingjun," a representative piece of the *Xianghe Ge (相和歌)* from the *Han and Wei Dynasties*, narrates a tortuous story of Wang Yi during the Yuan Emperor Period of the *Han Dynasty*; "Luó Fū Xíng (艳歌罗敷行)", another narrative song and dance, tells the story of a Luofu—a mulberry-picking worker—who wisely refused coercion and inducements from an imperial official by adhering to her husband's plans. [汉魏时期相和歌"王明君"叙述元帝时，王嫱之事，用载歌载舞的形式来表现曲折故事. "艳歌罗敷行"也是一篇叙事歌舞曲…通过具有讽刺喜剧性的矛盾冲突表现了一位美丽的采桑女子如何藐视、拒绝一位企图调戏她的贵官，并通过夸耀自己丈夫的策略，从而摆脱贵官的胁迫.][215]

The *Chalk Circle*, a representative play of the *Zaju* from the *Yuan Dynasty*, tells a story of jealousy, murder, and strife over an inheritance within a rich family in the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127).[216]

Mostly derived from historical romances and novels, *Peking Opera* is adept at expressing political and military struggles within stories framed by historical topics. [较擅长于表现历史题材的政治和军事斗争，故事大多取自历史演义和小说话本.][217]

In **Chinese *Quyi***, music also serves non-music concepts—narratives or emotional expressions—whether in larger works that contain complete stories, like "Chang Ban Po (长坂坡)" and "Da Xi Xiang (大西厢)," or in shorter passages that express emotions and depict scenes, like "Feng Yu Gui Zhou (风雨归舟)" and "Chou Mo Yin Chu (丑末寅初)." [无论是唱故事完整的作品，如 "长坂坡.""大西厢;" 还是仅仅用来抒情, 绘景的小段, 如 "风雨归舟,""丑末寅初," 音乐在其间都是为叙事服务的.][218] In addition to the melodious, suggestive, and lyrical singing, the narratives in *Quyi* are also revealed through various ways of combining speaking with singing, sometimes with the addition of dance. [曲艺

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[215] Ibid.

[216] Wenwei Du, "The Chalk Circle Comes Full Circle: From Yuan drama through the Western stage to Peking Opera," *Asian Theatre Journal* (1995): 308.

[217] "Introduction to Peking Opera of The Five Major Chinese Operas," www.cssn.cn ["中国五大剧种之京剧简介," *中国社会科学网*], accessed 16 March 2011. https://baike.baidu.com/reference/75719/0fee96qKGX_kQeEnpnjVGw4qfiDXl_pVK1z__Fj1fQ 1DUidPTBrbN802MSD1IBcqD4HWH-JHALx9EIZGurb-hUPsLw-wYUCQods8DkE6wvJOSPe J_bdhqg

[218] 蔡源莉, "曲艺音乐的腔词关系与叙事性特征的美学表现," *曲艺* 7 (2015): 21-23.

音乐的叙事性功能不仅体现在富有委婉动人曲调的抒情歌唱，还体现在"半说半唱，说说唱唱，

似说似唱、边舞边唱等手段.][219]

> The orally performed narrative, namely, a form of storytelling called *Suzhou Tanci*,[220] which tradition is often associated with another style of storytelling called Suzhou pinghua (which Blader [1983] terms "straight storytelling"). Pinghua performances, given in the same contexts as tanci, usually feature one performer, concern exploits of heroes, and do not include instrumental music or any but incidental singing.[221]

> The lyrics of *Tianjin Shidiao* are mostly based on social facts that reflect the life appearances and inner feelings of the citizens. [它的唱词多取材于社会事实，反应的是市民的内心情感和生活.][222]

The above examples demonstrate that most Chinese music genres have a notably programmatic nature. In some, we may even sense that, to some extent, the "programme" of the work has overtaken the music itself; that is, music can be considered primariy as a means to express non-musical ideas.

As a Chinese composer, however—one that learned Western instrumental music since an early age—the paradoxical relationship between the two musical systems has caused me to unconsciously deliver complete or fragmented plots in my music, ususally in a veiled manner. I prefer to "tell stories" through music, rather than through words; even in my vocal works, the lyrics are rarely obvious. A brief title often suffices, or a short poem, a picture, or simply a mental image. My use of such concise devices serve as metaphors for the programmes which underlie my music. I work somewhat

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[219] Ibid., 23.

[220] Mark A Bender, "Zaisheng Yuan and Meng Lijun: Performance, Context, and Form of Two Tanci," PhD dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1995), 8.

[221] Mark Bender, "Suzhous Tanci Storytelling in China: Contexts of Performance," (1998): 332.

[222] Ying Fu, "Research on Tianjin Tune in Music" [付颖, "天津时调音乐研究"], (Master's Thesis, Shandong University, 2015), 24.

like Qigang Chen did in *The Invisible Voice*, where the rustic yet touching poetry narrates his own experience and also the personal emotion behind the story:

Grandpa, Grandma, where are you?
Father, Mother, where are you?
I heard your voice In my dream yesterday,
Which took me far away.[223]

In Qigang's own words: "*The Invisible Voice* was written for six voices and Symphony orchestra; the six singers are, however, scattered in the orchestra among the woodwind and brass parts rather than standing at the front of the stage. They sometimes act as part of the woodwind and brass sections, sometimes mixing their voices with these instruments to create new, mixed timbres. This is the first layer of meaning of 'the invisible voice.' Each of

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[223] Qigang Chen, "The Invisible Voice" [陈其钢，"看不见的声音"], YouTube video, posted by "Raintrees," accessed 8 Aug 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5bjXInfDJ4.

Below is the additional information to this piece that was kindly provided by the composer himself during an interview with the author:

Qigang Chen: The conductor of the premiere, Sir Roger Norrington, is very experienced in conducting choral works, and it was him who asked me to write a piece for the German Southwest Radio Orchestra of which he was once the music director. The orchestra was required by Norrington not to play vibrato or trills during the performance during that time, which brought notable difficulties to the string players, however, achieved an extraodinary pure sound effect. [首演的指挥，罗杰·诺林顿爵士在指挥合唱作品方面有很多经验，是他请我为他当时担任音乐总监的德国西南广播乐团而作．这个乐团当时按照诺林顿的要求，演奏时不能颤音或揉弦，这给弦乐声部演奏者带来很大困难，但演奏出的音色非常纯净.]

The vocal part of this piece is very difficult, mainly because the parts are relatively independent with many semitones. Therefore, the singers need to find the pitch in the complex sound played by the orchestre. Besides, this work excludes any traces of the singing styles (mostly Contemporary or Medieval) they are familiar with, which is not easy for them to grasp a proper sensibility of this piece. Especially for the tenor, I was expecting a more resounding, intense effect, but he couldn't achieve. [声乐部分非常难，主要是声部相对独立，半音很多，演唱者必须在复杂的乐队演奏中找到自己要唱的音高．同时，由于他们经常演唱的，或者现代或者中世纪风格的音乐，在这首作品中都没有痕迹，他们不太容易抓住恰当的演唱风格．特别是男高音，我希望他唱得非常高亢，但他不会.]

This is the difficult part that we, as composers, must face in every performance. On the one hand, try to inspire and encourage our collaboraters, and, on the other hand, be tolerate and accept when they fail to meet our requirements. [这是作曲家每次演出必须面对的难点，一方面尽力启发鼓励协调，一方面在是在做不到时包容和接受.]

us keeps an 'invisible voice' in our hearts that will accompany us through the entire life process."[224]

Tan Dun's multimedia harp concerto, *Nu Shu*, contains thirteen movements, each of which has a title: "Secret Fans", "Mother's Song", "Dressing for the Wedding", "Cry-Singing for Marriage," etc. In addition to these titles, each of which individually suggests a programme, Tan Dun has also "preserved yet another musical tapestry of his culture by sharing an ancient women's secret language through the voice of the harp."[225] (see figure 3.2-1 on the next page)

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[224] This is my own translation; for the original source see "陈其钢 '看不见的声音' 首演将亮相音乐节," *北京娱乐新报, accessed 25 Oct, 2005,*
http://ent.sina.com.cn/y/2005-10-25/0145874709.html
[225] Elizabeth Hainen, "Nu-Shu: The Secret Songs of Women—Dramatic Symphony for Solo Harp, Orchestra and 12 Short Music Films by Tan Dun," *Nu Shu Concerto by Tan Dun,* accessed 19 April, 2020, http://www.elizabethhainen.com/nushu-concerto-by-tan-dun

Figure 3.2-1 Pictoral Source of *Nu Shu* Concerto[226]

3.2.3 How Programmes are Embodied in My Musical Compositions

My own approach to programme music reveals an implicit yet composite nature which can be explored in a series of nuanced terms: **Musical Narratives, Pictorial Music, Impressionist Music,** and **Expressionist Music.** These terms can be employed alone or simultaneously, sometimes

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[226] Ibid.

before or along with my writing, sometimes revealed only in the music. The **narratives**—real and fictional stories—are applied to inspire and structure my piece; the occasional addition of **pictorial** sources can depicts an impression, a scenario, or a personal, emotional response to a specific event; my use of **Impressionist and Expressionist** music styles paradoxically yet properly conveys my deep, varying, at times distorted and conflicting feelings while experiencing different life circumstances. In my individual works, all these interact with elements from Chinese musical dialects and with my own religious beliefs.

3.2.3.1 Combining Expressionist with Pictorial Music Interpretation: *Marionette—a fantasy for solo violin*

Completing during the global epidemic in 2020, *Marionette—a fantasy for solo violin* reveals certain characteristics of expressionism. After witnessing so many tragedies caused by plague and by policy, I wrote this piece of music with melancholy, anger, and bewilderment, while still holding a glimmer of hope for a ray of sunlight in the future. These complex feelings are reflected in this work through my frequent use of semitones, exaggerated dynamic contrasts, abrupt stops, and other "unpleasant" devices. As Joseph Price has said: "The value of a work of art is not determined by its beauty, its form, or its content but by its function as a medium for expressing and evoking Ultimate Reality."[227]

Painting and music do not converge by growing similar but meet in a third dimension: both are language.[228] To better realise my musical aims, before writing, I conceived a narrative: a beautiful female marionette is

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[227]Joseph L. Price, "Expressionism and Ultimate Reality," Paul Tillich's Theology of Art." *Soundings* (1986): 481.

[228] Theodor W. Adorno, and Susan Gillespie, "On Some Relationships between Music and Painting," *The Musical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (1995): 71.

controlled by an invisible devil's hand in the dark, being forced to dance against her will. She struggles to escape the shackles. She pursues freedom of both body and soul, even though she knows full well that the price of breaking free would be destruction. I tried to capture this in a poem named *The Marionette* and with an image on the front cover, both intended to guide the interpretation of the performer.

In writing this piece, I attempted to portray my pictorial ideas and emotional expressions through eight discernable compositional techniques, each of which links a musical devices with a non-musical concept.

I. A mood of despair is associated with a descending melodic line

Like many expressionist composers, who used the principle of variation as a device to construct music based on a single idea or motive,[229] the original musical impulse (musical motivation) I devised for this work was simply a major minor seven chord with the fifth diminished (see figure 3.2-2).
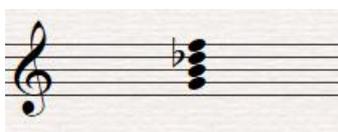
Figure 3.2-2 *Marionette*: The original musical impulse - a major minor seven chord

I was inspired by certain expressionist composers; for instance, Scriabin's Fifth Sonata was written asa single movement derived from the constant repetition of short, motivic blocks (see figure 3.2-3).[230] In *Marionette*, I attempted to express the vicissitudes and uncertainties of the world by lowering the fifth note of the chord, and I used *Deconstruction and*

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[229] Theodor Adorno, *Night Music: Essays on Music 1928–1962*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Wieland Hoban, (London: Seagull Books, 2009): 276-277. Also see: Soomi Song, "The Development of Expressionism in Alexander Scriabin's Piano Sonatas," (PhD dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 2018), 4.

[230] "The Development of Expressionism in Alexander Scriabin's Piano Sonatas," 2.

Reconstruction[231] (see below for a fuller explanation) to maximize the development of minimal material.

Figure 3.2-3 The development of a motivic block in Scriabin's Sonata No.5[232]

The motivic developmental techniques which I frequently use are demonstrated in figure 3.2-4; but, in addition, the slow downward melodic line more precisely evokes the sadness, embarrassment and helplessness of the human race.

Figure.3.2-4 How I develop my musical motif

Schoenberg contends that dissonant chords are not "beautiful," but the ear can gradually become familiarised to them, so that even dissonant

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[231] This refers to my main compositional technique at present, including pitch organisation, timbral adjustments, rhythmic variations, and other aspects while writing a piece of music. I will extend my explanation into each field of this term through analysing my individual works.
[232] Scriabin, *Sonata No. 5, Opus 53* (Piano Practical Editions: January 2021).

chords can awaken "feelings of beauty."[233] To me, the beauty of art does not exist on a sugar-coated surface but underneath, in what might be called "Integrity." I attempted to convey my uncomfortable, somewhat contradictory feelings through composing a dissonant yet paradoxically "fluid" presentation of the music motif, hoping to do this in an authentic way.

II. The manipulated character of the marionette is depicted by a line that is distorted melodically and dynamically.

In bars 33 to 45 (see figure 3.2-5), I expanded motivic intervals and developed them into an undulating, twisted, zigzagging melodic line in an attempt to musically dramatise the passivity of the marionette, controlled and manipulated by other forces.

Figure 3.2-5 *Marionette*: Expanded motivic intervals

Hannah Ropper—the performer of this piece—confirmed my intention, noting that the phrases can be made coherent, though not smooth, with constant changes in bowing position and fingering. This, she said in our rehearsal together, is justified "since she [the Marionette] is forced to do something that she doesn't want to."

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[233] Diego Malquori, "Form, dissonance and life in Schoenberg's expressionist music," *The Musical Times* 159, no. 1942 (2018): 94.

III. Sudden changes of rhythm and timbre are associated with inner emotional conflicts.

"Another dimension of conflict is inner turmoil, or torments of the soul. … Many Expressionist artworks portray some form of conflict, often emotional in character."[234] In *Marionette*, this is evident at the climax. In bars 46 to 52 (see figure 3.2-6), I made frequent changes in rhythm, pitch, and timbre to create a hectic musical passage evoking panic and spiritual loss. I wanted also to convey a sense of the humiliation, self-loathing, and hopelessness the character experiences in the situation. This leads to the powerfully explosive climax, suggesting the struggle to escape and to find freedom from the controlling force.

Figure 3.2-6 *Marionette*: The climax

[234] Donovan R. Walling, "Brainstorming themes that connect art and ideas across the curriculum," *Art Education* 59, no. 1 (2006): 20.

IV. High-density tremolos are linked with images of resistance

After bar 52 (see figure 3.2-7), a continuous semiquaver tremolo follows a sudden silence. The tremolos in this passage are intended to depict how the character struggled and roared to escape the devil's hands, while simultaneously revealing her emotional upheavals, which would be otherwise unknown to the listener.

Figure 3.2-7 *Marionette*: Tremolos and resistance

V. Frequent variations of timbre express the "stumbling" of the injured protagonist.

"Expressionist composers no longer aspiring after the beauty of tonality, they put the utmost importance on tone colour as a device of expressionism."[235] My use of timbre in this piece accords with this: following a sudden silence in bar 68, contrasting timbres are created by the changing the frequency of the bowing, the range, and the player's position on the strings (see figure 3.2-8). In this way I attempted to paint the character's physical injuries, made increasingly worse as she continues to attempt to escape the devil's claws. In my scenario she gradually lurches forward, disheveled, dirty, and bleeding.

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[235] "The Development of Expressionism in Alexander Scriabin's Piano Sonatas," 6.

Figure 3.2-8 *Marionette*: **Contrasting timbres**

VI. Melodic integration is associated with tumultuous but hopeful emotions

In bars 86 to 103 (see figure 3.2-9), several melodic ideas—the up and down glides, upwards ascents downward arpeggios, continuous semiquavers followed by long sustained tones, and irregular alternations between intervals and single tones—combine to become a single, clearer line. I hoped thereby to demonstrate that, although the world might plunge into an abyss of misery, there remains a trace of immortal kindness and hope in one's heart, co-existing and confronting the uncertainties, helplessness, and depression we all might experience.

On a larger scale, this demonstrates the polyphony between impressionism and expressionism in this piece. Based on a pentatonic mode, the hidden, consonant, yet broken melody reflects a ray of hope in my heart, not unlike Claude Monet's Impressionist painting *Sunrise* (Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris): short, broken brushstrokes that barely convey forms, pure

unblended colors, and an emphasis on the effects of light.[236] At the same time, the intersecting dissonances resulting from inserting semitones, glides, or augmented fourths into the pentatonic "consonance" reveals a expressionist character, beset by tumultuous juxtapositions of extreme, conflicting emotions such as ecstasy, anxiety, mysticism, and fear.[237]

Figure 3.2-9 *Marionette*: **Melodic integration and tumultuous emotion**

VII. Circuitous melodic lines are linked to classical dance

At the end of this work (see figure 3.2-10), the circuitous melodic lines create a lingering mood. As I approached this conclusion musically, I was led inadvertently to discover the dynamic characteristics of Chinese classical dance:

"欲左先右，欲前先后，欲上先下，欲开先合."[238]

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[236] Dan Farrant, "What is Impressionism in Music: An Overview," accessed 21st April, 2022, https://hellomusictheory.com/learn/impressionism/#Summary

[237] John C. Crawford, and Dorothy L. Crawford, "Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54, no. 1 (1996), 16.

[238] This is the terminology of Chinese Classical Dance described by Professor Hongyun Wang (former head of the Dance Department in Tianjin Conservatory of Music) during our interview in 2020. The same description can also be found in other academic papers - for example - Jian Liu wrote: "...If we use Chinese Classical Dance Terminology to explain, it is

Explanation: "The core of classical dance of how body fluctuates and undulates in opposites and contradictions the body moving in the reverse direction to the one it will then move in—for example, the accelerating energy before a dynamic and rapid move forward, the apparent physical reluctance before engagement in a move, the flexibility of a body in breeze-like movements of different directions, and the lotus like opening and closing of the body as it responds to the music."[239]

Figure 3.2-10 *Marionette*: Circuitous melodic lines

VIII. The overall structure mirrors the poetry and images that underlie the music.

Finally, on the front page of the score I have included a picture and matching poem which can be regarded as guidance in approaching the music. They can also be regarded as the externalisation of this work's ideology, and perhaps also a bridge for me to communicate with performers and audiences with greater clarity.**[240]**

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the so-called '...欲前先后,欲左先右，欲扬先抑，欲进先退...'" see Jian Liu, "'神选意识' 照耀下的舞蹈体态," *Journal of Beijing Dance Academy* [*北京舞蹈学院学报*] 4 (2002), 12.

[239] This is my own translation of the original description of Chinese classical dance.

[240] The picture with poem is not included here (and in the score in the portfolio) because permission has not been obtained.

Before our rehearsals, Hannah Roper told me that the poem was helpful and suggestive in creating her performance. On another occasion, I was asked by listener, Stef Conner, "whether poetry is followed by musical ideas or vice versa in your writing process?" My answer was: "I first experienced the events in reality that frightened me, which was the initial stimuli. Later I discovered one of my friends posting a picture of a marionette on her social media account which was empathetic with my feeling at that specific time. I therefore attempted to transfer the fragmented images in my mind and my personal emotions into music; this is how I started my writing. During the process, unexpectedly, I saw a poem and another picture of a female marionette, and this offered me extra inspiration to further develop this music."

3.2.3.2 Narrative, Pictorial, and Impressionist Elements in *My Clay Figurines—trio for Sanxian, Erhu, and Tianjin Bamboo Clappers*

Arising in response to a practical stimulus, a commissioned work for dance repertoire, **My Clay Figurines** derives necessarily from the dance and scenario devised by the choreographer. To capture these more strongly, however, I also employed pictorial images as my musical stimuli. (see Figure 3.2-11)

Figure 3.2-11 *My Clay Figurines*: Stage photos[241]

First and foremost, I needed to characterise an old craftsman. I relied on the natural effects created by the instrumental combinations: pitch, force and dynamics. I also devised melodic lines to capture the three-dimensional qualities of the old craftsman who makes clay figurines. I began with a melodious adagio solo on *Erhu* (see figure 3.2-13), depicting the lonely figure of an old craftsman who conceals himself in the shadows while shaping his clay figurines.

Figure 3.2-12 *My Clay Figurines:* The introduction, performed on *Erhu*

I orchestrated the finale of the piece for three players, the key instrument being *Sanxian,* with my intention directed especially on the sustained use of tremolo (see figure 3.2-14). Accompanying this, the faint overtones of the *Erhu,* in a freer rhythm transformed from the allegro section, both embellish and enrich the timbre of the piece. In this way I attempted to depict the old craftsman's mental state of optimism and joy when he wakes from the tender moment with the lovely clay figurines in his dream.

Figure 3.2-13 *My Clay Figurines*: The finale

Another pictorial feature of this piece is the characterisation of the clay figurines. In the mid-section (see figure 3.2-15), I used variations of rhythm and momentum, with dramatic changes that intensify the frequent shifts in pitch organisation and the flexible alternations between musical instruments, to capture the wit, intelligence, ferocity, humour, and specific characteristics of each figurine.

Figure 3.2-14 *My Clay Figurines*: Variations depicting the figurines

In addition to pictorial elements, one might also discover a kind of narrative in this work. "Narrative" extends beyond chronology, however; as Jerrold Levinson's concluded: "There are three crucial elements to narrative: representation, events, and temporal relations. Another recent writer has proposed that a narrative must, in addition, indicate causal relations obtaining among represented events: 'the basis of the narrative connection is that earlier events and/or states of affairs are at least causally necessary conditions, or contributions thereto, for the occurrence of later events in the relevant stories...'"[242]

Thus, *My Clay Figurines* "narrates" a "story" of specific "actors" through three contrasting yet sequential scenes: the lonely night of an old craftsman; a kind of carnival with the clay figurines, seen in dream; his awakening with joy the next morning. But unlike a conventional story, the scenarios that I depict in the music are fragmented, like life-style paintings of the protagonist, giving an Impressionist flavour to the piece.

[242] Jerrold Levinson, "Music as Narrative and Music as Drama," *Mind & Language* 19, no. 4 (2004): 429. Also see: Noël Carroll, *Beyond aesthetics: Philosophical essays*, (Cambridge University Press, 2001),133.

3.2.3.3 A Polyphony of Impressionism and Expressionism: *So Close, Yet So Far Away (2019)*

So Close, Yet So Far Away, for B-flat clarinet, was written in the winter of 2019. I had encountered dramatic changes in my life, and I felt that many things would suddenly slip away when I was about to grasp them. No matter how hard I tried to achieve my goals, the odds seemed insurmountable, and I remained always a step away from satisfying my expectations.

In that year, after experiencing family disruption, a career crisis, a breakup, and illness, I went back to England alone. In a very depressed state, I was unable to find a house to stay in and I found myself in a very remote village far from the city centre. Then, to save money, I stopped using public transportation, choosing instead to walk twenty-two kilometres between the university and my residence. I set off towards dawn and returned under the starry sky, day after day. Winter nights in England are dark, cold, and long. As I walked, I looked at the light coming from the window of a house in the distance. That beam of light seems so close, yet so far away.

Unlike impressionism, which depicts specific scenes or moods, expressionism typically captures tumultuous juxtapositions of extreme, conflicting emotions such as ecstasy, anxiety, mysticism, and fear.[243] In *So Close, Yet So Far Away*, the two approaches are nevertheless entangled with each other: on the one hand, a scenario (a dreamy beam of light shrouded in darkness, the beautiful countryside wrapped in the cold wind); on the other, my emotional fluctuations between desperation and hope. I found my musical impulse in these contradictory elements and attempted to bridge the gap between external impressions and psychological confusions. Musically, I did this in four ways.

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[243] John C. Crawford and Dorothy L. Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music,* (Bloomington, IN*:* Indiana University Press, 1993), 16.

I. First and foremost, I designed sections that would correspond to my contradictory motivations.

This work was structured before writing and is based on informal trilogy corresponding to different scenarios or states of mind. The divisions between the parts are ambiguous, in that the whole is connected by gradual timbral and dynamic changes (see figure 3.2-16). This is in accord with impressionist works that avoided from precise, defined lines in order to capture the movement and essence of fleeting moments.[244] Yet the synchronous, exaggerated shifts in dynamics and timbres reveal harsh, bold expressionist features; they display my inner collapse, in contrast with the beautiful scenes along the country-road.

Figure 3.2-15 *So Close, Yet So Far Away*: the connection between two parts

In the first section, from bars 1 to 42, I developed the musical motif into singing melodic lines (see figure 3.2-17) by means of *Deconstruction and Reconstruction* (discussed below). This section is dominated by these melodic lines; the ambiguous tonality, timbral layers, and sudden dynamic changes describe a distant scene and the lengthy journey towards an unknown destination; the frequent shifts between different performing techniques (slap tongue, overtones, tremolos, etc.) attempt to depict the sudden changes of weather and appearance of wild animals on the way.

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[244] William Gaunt, *The Impressionists*, (Oxford University Press, 1970), 7. Also see Nicole Matthys, "Impressionism: A Comparison of the Stylistic Characteristics of the Movement in Music and the Visual Arts," (PhD dissertation, 2020), 1.

Music motif

Transformation

Figure 3.2-16 *So Close, Yet So Far Away***: the motif and its transformation**

Yaou Zhang, a Ph.D. in Musicology, told me that the sonic effect (specifically at bar 35) reminded her of a similar experience—her feelings of desolation and helplessness when she had to walk a long way for work every day and was constantly shocked by sudden encounters with insects and foxes (see figure 3.2-18).

Figure 3.2-17 *So Close, Yet So Far Away***: bars 35-36, where a listener found a personal affinity with my "programme"**

In the second section, bars 43 to 88 (see figure 3.2-19), with frequent decorative tones, pitch variations, timbre changes, and rhythmic transformations, I shape various short scenarios and psychological changes that occurred along the way.

Figure 3.2-18 *So Close, Yet So Far Away*: section 2, using decorative tones, pitch variations, timbre changes and rhythmic transformations

In the third section, from bars 89 to 133, the musical form returns to melodic lines, as in the first section, capturing times when I walked in the dark night, looking at the distant destination, and the feeling of helplessness and anxiety as I walked, in the knowledge that I would be repeating the journey the next day and the next.

Figure 3.2-19 *So Close, Yet So Far Away*: section 3, which returns to the melodic qualities of the opening

II. Second, I used sudden changes of timbre to suggest the simultaneously dynamic and static nature of my experience

I attempted to create a feeling of simultaneously stopping and starting during my journey. The music depicts the force that holds me back, with rhythmic changes, sudden staccatos against the continuing melodic line, and dramatic shifts in timbre.

Figure 3.2-20 *So Close, Yet So Far Away*: sudden changeS of timbre

III. Third, different modes of performance evoke the physical and emotional temperature, from feverishly hot to freezing cold.

To express the conflicts I felt in pursuing a goal, I encouraged the performer to play with greater tension, creating a feeling of contraction, suspending and pulling the music. On one hand, vibrato, accelerando, and conventional techniques combine to produce a more stable and solid sound (see figure 3.2-22).

Figure 3.2-21 *So Close, Yet So Far Away*: vibrato, accelerando, and conventional technique

On the other hand (see figure 3.2-23), in contrast, I tried to express the indifference and alienation of my experience by using a more extreme technique: air sounds, overtones, continuous trills with cadenza keys under an extremely weak dynamic, and so on.

Figure 3.2-22 *So Close, Yet So Far Away*: air sounds, overtones, and trills

IV. Fourth, changing rhythmic patterns describe my shifting perspective on the destination ahead—sudden proximity, insurmountable distance, the obstacles encountered along the way.

In my view, of music can express a relationship with reality in an almost cinematic way: a long shot, then a sudden close-up, illustrating how we are both inside and outside our own experience as we live it.

I used a rapid, more intensive rhythmic pattern as the musical equivalent of a "close-up" of sudden events along the way or of the emotional changes experienced while making this journey. This gives a different pace, a forward momentum; as the landscape disappears behind me, I move from long shot into close-up.

Figure 3.2-23 *So Close, Yet So Far Away*: a rapid, more intensive rhythmic pattern used as a musical "close-up"

In contrast, I used relatively slow rhythmic patterns to depict a "distant view", smoothing the rhythms out, with long, sustained sounds to

evoke the feeling of a journey with no end in sight. The endless journey is expressed by sounds that correspond to the length of the road in reality.

Figure 3.2-24 *So Close, Yet So Far Away*: relatively slow rhythms provide a "distant view"

Arnold Schoenberg has written: "Beauty exists only from that moment in which the unproductive begin to miss it. Before that it does not exist, for the artist does not need it. To him integrity is enough."[245] Perhaps the frequently changing sharp and somewhat creepy sounds in this piece are not in accordance with my own—and many others'—perception of artistic beauty. Yet these unpleasant elements appropriately convey my inner struggles and my predicament, as well as my deep nostalgia for the good.

3.2.3.4 When Music Tells a Story—How Music Narrative is Embodied in *That Day*, for solo *Sanxian*

That Day was initially composed in May 2020 as an experimental work for exploring the expressive potential of *Sanxian* music. The narrative of this piece was "synthesised" from two elements:

i. The first consists of stylistic and technical elements adapted from other composers and painters of different historical periods and ethnicities: as a child, I loved to read the poetry on the cover pages of Liszt's piano music; I listened to Chopin's ballades while constructing a storyline in my mind; I went to sleep while listening to Debussy's piano preludes. Later, the conflict and dramatic visual effects conveyed in the oil painting *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso

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[245] Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, (University of California Press, 1983), 325-326.

(1881–1973) encouraged me to pursue conflicts in sound and the deep emotional embodiment through music. I was impressed by the experimental spirit revealed in pieces by Geroge Crumb, John Cage, Tan Dun, and Michael Ellison; the exploration of new sounds and the fusion of ethnic sources in their music inspired me to keep seeking new ideas. I also learned to expand my musical expressivity and to enlarge the potential of Chinese elements through research into music by Kaija Saariaho, Thomas Simaku, Qigang Chen, Wenchen Qin, and Lei Liang. All this contributed to the creative process in this piece.

ii. The second are what I call *Stimuli*—inspirations which are not part of music itself. Examples are abundant in music by Liszt and Debussy, to name only two composers; both wrote a large amount of programmatic music and the titles they chose usually suggested pictorial or literary sources.[246]

> "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir" (Sounds and Scents Swirl in the Evening Air) is the fourth Prelude in Debussy's *Preludes,* Book I. The title is taken from the third line of Charles Baudelaire's poem "Harmonie du soir" (Evening Harmony).[247] *Vallée d'Obermann* is an excellent example of Liszt's borrowings from literature and a very individual cycle with literary value.[248] His *Liebesträume* [Dreams of Love], is comprised of a trilogy of piano works inspired by love poems written by the German poets Ludwig Uhland and Ferdinand Freiligrath.[249]

The Stimuli for *That Day* is derived from a famous poem *Believe (信徒 1995),* written by Professor Xuntian He, in which many people find resonances with the legend of the Sixth Dalai Lama:

> On the day, while closing my eyes in the mist of the sacred temple, I suddenly heard the true world of your prayer;

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[246] Siying Song, Pictorial and Literary Evocations in the Programmatic Music of Liszt and Debussy, 5

[247] Ibid. 22.

[248] Małgorzata Gamrat, "Liszt's Experiments with Literature," (2013), abstract.

[249] Kathleen Dunne, "Liszt's Dreams of Love," (2021), Description, https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/srcc-sp21-arts/7/

In that month, I turned around all the prayer wheels, not for the purpose of purification, but for caressing your finger tips;
In that year, I knocked my head for a long time on the mountain path, not for the purpose of pilgrimage, but for pressing near the warmth of your body;
During that life, I turned around mountains, rivers, and Buddhist towers, not for seeking after a better future life, but for meeting you on the way.

那一天，闭目在经殿香雾中，蓦然听见，你颂经中的真言；
那一月，我拨动所有的转经筒，不为超度，只为触摸你的指尖；
那一年，磕长头匍匐在山路，不为觐见，只为贴着你的温暖；
那一世，转山转水转佛塔啊，不为修来生，只为途中与你相见.[250]

As I read the poem, an epic picture with a tempestuous musical sound gradually unfolded in my mind: the character sits alone in front of the temple, and lights a pillar of incense, yearning for his lover from a previous life. Deep in meditation, he traverses buildings, forests, lakes, grasslands, battlefields, life and death, time and space, in order to find that love, that state of purity, the initial yearning for the "ordinary"—the truest self, unfettered by identity.

That *Stimulus* joined with my musical experience to shape my writing process. The narrative in this piece is compounded of fragmented scenes delivered by nuanced timbres while overlapping with the at times exaggerated contrasting sounds that correspond to the character's emotional fluctuation.

This piece is structured into five sections in accordance with this imagined story. Each reflects a certain "scenario," entitled thus:

Section I.   *Meditation*
Section II.   *Pursuing*
Section III.   *Illusion*
Section IV.   *Reality*
Section V.   *Purity*

[250] "The Believer" is a song sung by Zheqin Zhu, composed by Xuntian He and included in the music album "Yangjinma" released by Zheqin Zhu in 1996. I was kindly received the permission from the composer to quote both the original and English translation in my piece.

In the first section of this piece, out of varying trills and forms of after tones and rapid arpeggios, a lingering sound arises. In this section we see Cang Yang Jia Cuo as he meditates and seeks.

The music begins with a continuous sliding tone played by *Sanxian*; thus the lingering that is characteristic of *Sanxian* is immediately established as a prominent feature of the music. The musical mood is sustained as he travels into the solemn hall and, with eyes closed, recites scripture. Thick and dominant strumming intervals and continuous glissandos depict the sand in the wind, as it blows towards his face, across time and space; the ethereal flowing single tones and overtones evoke a sense of the innocence still present in his heart; repeated, rapid arpeggios reflect his physical state as he runs with urgency through a cloud of dense fog … Gradually, beginning in bar 42, a feeling of love emerges slowly (see figure 3.2-26).

Figure 3.2-25 *That Day*: a fragmented theme emerges after ethereal flowing single tones and overtones

The fragmented theme which appears in this section represents a beautiful image of the former lover from his past life, gleaming in the distant layers of mist; However, the sudden changes of rhythm, expanding intervals and dramatic dynamics make clear the obstacles in his path as he pursues (see figure 3.2-27).

Figure 3.2-26 *That Day*: sudden changes of rhythm, expanding intervals and dramatic dynamics

In **Section II**, continuous fast syncopations in the bass connect thick sustained strumming or rotating notes. This is my attempt to capture a sense of the protagonist on horseback, riding across the highlands in bold pursuit of his true love. However, due to his social status at birth, he has led a life without choices; he could not master his destiny from the moment he was born.

I attempted to capture these contradictions in the music. For example, from bar 59 to bar 99, I added in transitions built from small additions (or the reverse); I introduced syncopation and other distortions to the rhythmic patterns; I applied various timbral changes—rolling, rotating, strumming,

trilling, sliding, etc. In performance, I want my players to vary the position of their hands in order to interpret the music with greater intensity and colour—to play across the bridge, or to use their fingertips or the palms of their hands to create various percussive sounds. Moreover, I gradually increased the pitch range to create a richer image: he gallops with increasing speed across the highlands, approaching the spiritual world from which he has been excluded (see figure 3.2-28).

Figure 3.2-27 *That Day*: gradually increasing the pitch range

At bar 100, a sharp percussive sound brings the music to an abrupt stop—his idealistic hopes smashed in an instant by grim reality. Immediately

after, in bars 102 to 227, the music moves in a different direction in ways illustrated in figure 3.2-29: the full development of the timbre and rhythm from overtones, under-the-bridge pitches, and after-tones *(余音)*; the frequent and rapid changes of tessitura; the growing intensity of timbral transitions; and the increasing compaction of rhythmic density. In all these ways I hope to suggest his psychological state.

Figure 3.2-28 *That Day*: musical devices starting in bar 102

Section III starts with free, ethereal melodic lines which are overlaid with overtones. The relatively freer rhythm suggests a romantic scenario: the

protagonist attains freedom from the bondage of his status and dances with his love on the windy highlands, her long sleeves and hemline fluttering in the wind …

Beginning in bar 237, for instance, I used the technique of *Deconstruction and Reconstruction* to divide the theme into an elegant and sustained "line" with countless scattered "points" interwoven within it (see figure 3.2-30). I hoped to convey the "illusory", "idealised," and "surrealistic" pursuit by the coexistence of the various timbral colours, pitch gaps, and rhythmic forms.

Figure 3.2-29 *That Day*: an elegant and sustained "line" with occasionally scattered "points" (the fragmented theme) interwoven

Section IV can be heard as a varied reprise of Section II. The faster, continuous syncopations here correspond both to the fierce conflicts in the real world and to the intense contradictions in one's heart.

In bars 340 to 352, for example, I gradually replaced the single tones and intervals in Section II with chords at a faster tempo (see figure 3.2-31). The use of wider and faster changes of pitch helped me to reflect the dramatic change in the scenario: under the shackles of feudal values, facing his unavoidable identity and irresistible "wheel of destiny" on the endless highlands, he rides recklessly towards his idealistic world, the percussive sound of the horses hooves mirroring his feelings of indignation, agitation and excitement!

Figure 3.2-30 *That Day*: the use of wider and faster changes of pitch

In bars 366-379, different performing methods increase the dramatic conflict in music, reflecting the virtual scenario: tapping the board with fingertips, alternating plucking between the back and front of the bridge, mute-plucking, furious strumming and so on (see figure 3.2-32). Facing an

insurmountable barrier, he experiences all the disputes and destruction in the mortal world, and he witnesses her execution at the hands of the Emperor with enduring grief and melancholy.

Figure 3.2-31 *That Day*: a concentrated use of different performing methods

Finally, in **Section V**, the melodious main theme is realized in its entirety. It is presented twice in subtly different ways, in which I attempted to express the protagonist's deepest innermost feelings—his enduring grief and sadness at the loss of his love, but also his love of self and realisation of his true destiny and responsibility.

The introductory phrase depicts the leaves rustling in the blowing wind on the ground beneath him as he gazes towards the horizon. To create the noisy, wind-like sound I asked the performer to use one hand to rub the strings up and down while, with the other hand, simultaneously strumming the open string (see figure 3.2-33).

Figure 3.2-32 *That Day*: an innovative performing technique for a specific sonic effect

Out of this emerges for the first time the complete theme in all its purity and song-like simplicity. In order to achieve this I chose a simple series of single tones and arpeggios, mixed with *Sanxian*'s after-tones *(余音)*, to

create an atmosphere of sweet melancholy: as he wanders in a meditative state on the endless highlands, yearning for his love, he becomes aware of her soul fluttering in the air around him …

Figure 3.2-33 *That Day*: single tones and arpeggios are mixed with *Sanxian*'s timbral subtleties

The musical theme re-emerges now in a looser, freer way with a split in register and the introduction of after-tones *(余音)*, overtones, and gradual variations between finger-rotation, finger-shaking (吟弦), and tremolo (see figure 3.22-25 on the next page). The floating sound depicts the wind and leaves and dust flying as his soul returns to the temple.

Figure 3.2-34 *That Day*: a looser, freer statement of the theme, enhanced by *Sanxian*'s timbral diversity

When music reaches the **Coda**, a flickering tremolo line gradually fades away and is transformed into several overtones, each of them ending with a lingering after-tone *（余音）* (see figure 3.2-36). This completes the scenario: we return to the present, we relinquish the past and the residue of its memory; and a new story, a new life is about to begin.

Figure 3.2-35 *That Day*: the "lingering" sonic effect in the coda

The narration in *That Day* differs from traditional Chinese narrative music, which is generally based on text and serves a storyline. Moreover, my use of *Sanxian*'s timbral diversity and motifs from Chinese musical dialects differentiates my narrative from that employed by most Western composers. It is probably best to understand *That Day* as a narrative that arises from "my individual voice."

Inevitably, and for a long time, there have been debates about whether music is representational—that is, whether a picture or text enhances

or limits musical understanding. Vera Micznik has stated: "The problem of integrating music and programme contains a paradox. First, whatever form it takes, the programme amounts to an imposition on the listener of the composer's particular extra-musical interpretation of the music, and thus limits musical perception."[251]

I choose to affirm "emptiness" in response to these arguments—that is, non-arising, non-abiding and non-perishing.[252] As Master Sheng Yen said: "[(All things) are varying, malleable, and temporary." ["[任何事物]都在变，都有可塑性，都是临时的."][253] *That Day* is not necessarily telling the story of the Sixth Dalai Lama; rather, these fictional scenes are just a *stimulous* that allows the piece to emerge at a specific time. Music itself is perhaps a container which carries different and varying interpretations to a listener. Only when a listener decides to link the succession of sound events into a plot does he reconceive the musical work as a narrative.[254] If we assume that listeners hear musical successions as story-like because they can find something like actions, thoughts, and characters in music,[255] then it follows that I myself, as a listener, would probably came up with an entirely different (or no) interpretation while listening to *That Day* a year from now. Music as narrative is perhaps best considered to be part of our personal methodology as creative artists, and it is perhaps wise to keep an open mind regarding our musical aims.

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[251] Vera Micznik, "The Absolute Limitations of Programme Music: The Case of Liszt's' Die Ideale'," *Music & Letters* (1999), 214.

[252] Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*, trans. Shenpen Hookham (1994), 85.

[253] Master Shengyen, "Dependant Emptiness (缘起性空)," *圣严法师大法鼓 - 1002*, accessed Feb 2nd, 2012, https://youtu.be/G5-egn0fTlQ

[254] Jean-Jacques Nattiez, "Can one speak of narrativity in music?," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 115, no. 2 (1990), 242.

[255] Fred Everett Maus, "Music as Narrative," *Indiana theory review* 12 (1991), 6.

3.2.3.5 Within *The Eternal Circle*

The Eternal Circle is the first piece I composed after arriving in the UK. It contains aspects of pictorial, impressionist, and expressionist music. The programme underlying the piece is more philosophical than a concrete narrative about specific objects and events. Music here is more like metaphors applied to a disordered set of scenes from my life experiences, imagination, or dreamscapes. Over the months of writing, they emerged randomly by following my rolling circles in life and by evolving insights through different musical presentations of the two themes of the piece and the core notes (C–G–F#–C–Bb) that are employed as the backbones of the sections.

Its initial *stimulus* was a scene which constantly emerged in my mind —the endless loops of origins and terminals in life presented in a spiralling circle, like a tower soaring into the sky, its spire invisible. I saw myself embarked on an endless process of climbing, travelling in circles but slowly evolving. I felt my life here was like the rolling circles, simpler than the one I experienced growing up in a big city. Like a continuous hum, this life was less variable, with repeated physical patterns of travel and routine. I clearly remember my curious self when I arrived, exploring the different landscapes and unknown vistas of this new land. These circles of travel brought new emotions and inspirations.

The piece is preceded by a poem which is intended to be an interpretation of the programmatic title.

Life is a rolling circle without end
An eternal journey, without beginning, without end
From the moment I saw you
I felt the circle begin to roll
And roll
And roll
I felt the circle begin to roll

And roll And roll And roll and....[256]

The *stimulus* is presented In complementary forms: underlying the creative ideas and structural design from a macro-perspective; implemented in the design of the piece's core theme; and informing the composing techniques in each paragraph from a micro-perspective.

The continuous rising "line" I "visualised" before writing represents the "ego" in the eternal circle of life space. I embodied it through a sustained tone, which later came to be key to my musical development. Simultaneously, I drew the lens away in my mind in order to sketch a scenario for the continually spiralling line. And, for greater accuracy in expressing in music the unchanging "ego" which is constantly rising in the "circles", I gradually shifted upwards the sustained tones which dominate each section (see figure 3.2-37); in this way the "ego" represented by the increasingly clear sound seems to rise and dominate.
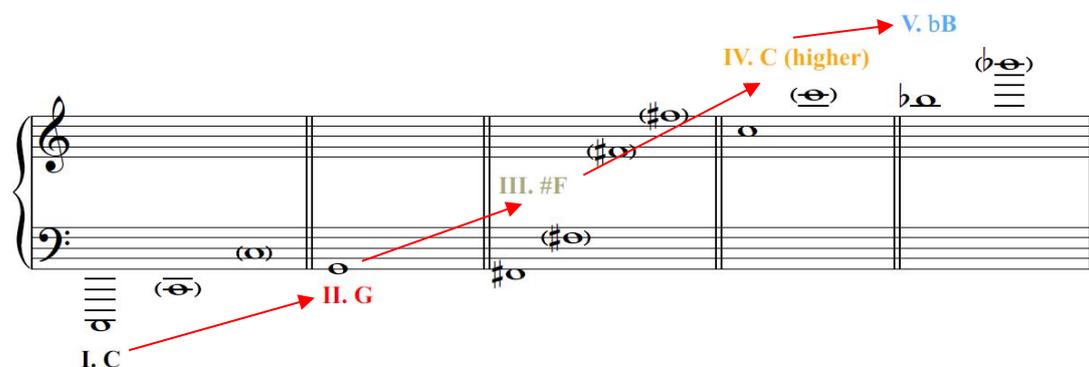
Figure 3.2-36 *The Eternal Circle*: the rising core notes

My use and development of the thematic material in this piece was inspired by Qigang Chen's Cello Concerto, *Reflet d'un Temps Disparu* (1996), in which he takes the overtone melody from *Three Stanzas of Plum Blossoms[257]* as the only theme that runs through his entire piece. Chen

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[256] This poem was collaboratively created by myself and Matt Ryan, project director in Musical Theatre at the *Royal Academy of Music.*

[257] *Three Stanzas of Plum Blossoms* is one of the ten famous pieces of Guqin music. (古曲*梅花三弄*是古琴十大名曲之一). Shuo Liu, " Interpretation of the connotation of the melody of the

generates the "Discovering" theme (Theme II) with an emotional feature of urgent search and desire from the "cellular" of the "Plum Blossom" theme (Theme I). The two themes combine in a contrasting two-part form. [在*逝去的时光*中，作者(陈其钢)以*梅花三弄*的泛音旋律为主题，并作为唯一的主要主题贯穿全曲. 同时陈其钢用 "梅花" 主题的细胞材料，生成了具有急迫寻找，热切渴望情感特征的 "寻觅" 主题。这两个主题构成了一个对比性的二段体结构.][258] I deconstructed and then reconstructed the Chinese Guqin music entitled *Yangguan Sandie* (see figure 3.2-38) into two distinctive musical motives to provide the two main themes of *The Eternal Circle*; both express my emotional states while "rolling in the life circles." In addition to acknowledging Chen's inspiration, my use of an ancient song also aims to suggest Nagarjuna's theory in the *Madhyamika*: the past, present, and future coexist. (please see figure 3.2-37 on the next page)

guqin song *Three Stanzas of Plum Blossoms*," *Art Critique* (刘硕，"古琴曲*梅花三弄*曲调意蕴阐释，" *艺术评鉴*) 4 (2018): 24-25, abstract.

[258] Yang Sun, "A Movement with Echoes Around the Beam—Commentary on Qigang Chen's *Reflet d'un Temps Disparu*," *Journal of Liaoning Institute of Educational Administration* (孙洋，"余音绕梁的乐章—陈其钢*逝去的时光* 评析，" *辽宁教育行政学院学报*) 1 (2011), 104.

Figure 3.2-37 The score of *Yangguan Sandie*[259]

Theme I—bright, harmonious, warm, and affectionate (see figure 3.2-38)—is like beams of sunlight encountered at different times that together consitute an ideal and beautiful image. Thus, by a process of *Deconstruction* and *Reconstruction* (see below), I have transformed material from the climactic moments of *Yangguan Sandie*.

Figure 3.2-38 *The Eternal Circle*: the core notes of theme I

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[259] XiaoFanDaRen, "Yangguan Sandie," *Guoqin Wang* (小范大人, "阳关三叠," *国琴网*), accessed Aug 5, 2015, https://www.guoqinwang.com/pu/1.html

Theme **II**—dark, cold, intense, and chaotic (see figure 3.2-39—suggests a scene in which a dark blue curtain envelops people, manifesting the impact of the real world in an indifferent and restless way. It differs from Theme I in the use of subtle semitone changes of the core notes.

Figure 3.2-39 *The Eternal Circle*: **the core notes of theme II**

As a pictorial source, I created a metaphor for the eternal circle in the shape of a flower; I used this to frame the skeleton of the piece (see figure 3.2-40). The flower heart is the core of the whole piece, the sustained tone. Each petal around the heart of the flower represents a section, which has its own individual characteristics; each of these is intersected by the neighbouring petals, and each corresponds to a specific impression combined with fragmented images (or scenes). The results is a piece in five sections.

Figure 3.2-40 *The Eternal Circle*: **the flower-like musical structure**

I. Introduction: sustained bass C, corresponding to the "ego"

The introduction (see figure 3.2-41) gradually emerges from a continuous single tone. It slowly adds layers, first with rhythmic changes and later with occasional fragments deconstructed from Theme I and Theme. In a literal sense, the scenario can be understood to be my experience of walking to campus each day, with different landscapes and meditative states.

Figure 3.2-41 *The Eternal Circle*: the introduction

II. The first paragraph: sustained C / G (both in the low register), corresponding to the past "ego"

At the beginning of this section (bar 48), the music remains centered on C. However, a mixed, clashing effect, suggesting chaos, arises from disharmonious intervals blurred rhythms and the relatively fuller orchestration. At bar 125 (see figure 3.2-42), fragments of theme I flicker faintly in the murky background for the first time. Reflecting a sudden change of scenario, G replaces C as the continuous core note, with the theme itself as well as the harmonic background are closely linked to the new core. However, the orchestration gradually becomes simpler and purer, unfolding slowly in a

lyrical style that is reminiscent of opening a scrapbook and reliving the memories therein.

Figure 3.2-42 *The Eternal Circle*: **the first paragraph (bars 120)—G replaces C, and thematic fragments appear**

III. The second paragraph: sustained F sharp, corresponding to the present "ego".

At the end of the first paragraph, the music suddenly switches to a new scenario (bars 133–146), with a sudden change in the rhythmic pattern, an acceleration and a long sustained tone that gradually increases in strength (see figure 3.2-43). The core tone shifts from G to F#, and the musical atmosphere increases in tension, suggesting oppression and hidden currents pulling us helplessly forward through time and space. Here I used my usual technique (*Deconstruction and Reconstruction*) to further develop Theme II in both pitch and rhythm. Chaotic pitch organisation, disharmonious aggregates, and multiple rhythms simultaneously suggest the bustling nature of day-to-day life.

Figure 3.2-43 *The Eternal Circle*: the second paragraph (bars 127)—the transition from the sustained G to F#

IV. The third paragraph: the sustained C returns in a higher register, corresponding to the future "ego".

In bars 181 to 203 we reach the climax of the piece (see figure 3.2-44). The discordant sound becomes tense and sharp; then, suddenly, harmony returns as if the sun suddenly had come out, spilling bright light onto our faces. The uncertain rhythm becomes regular, as the main theme is released like a sudden downpour of clean, refreshing rain. Here appears the fullest statement of the melody, in a series of different guises: an enthusiastic outpouring; a celebration of hopes and dreams fulfilled; an excited pronouncement of life's experiences; then a sudden private moment of reflection, simply orchestrated for piano and cello.

Figure 3.2-44 *The Eternal Circle*: **the third paragraph (bar 177)— the sustained C returns in a higher register**

V. Epilogue: sustained B flat, corresponding to the sublimated "ego".

From bars 203, the background tone turns to B-flat. Music here gradually becomes detached and illusory. I used two violins and a cello to play the continuous, alternating downward glides with the crystal-clear timbre created by the high range of the piano. This moment represents the composer, gazing at a meteor as it travels across the star lit sky. As transient as life itself, ephemeral but bright, ordinary but profound.

Figure.3.2-45 *The Eternal Circle*: the epilogue (bars 195)—sustained Bb

The emotional climax of the piece occurs in the final phrases of the music (see figure 3.2-47), with a melody unheard until now. Like words that have been held in one's heart for a long, long time, eventually it speaks out. The dominant Bb pitch seems to correspond to a transformation of the "ego" running through the whole piece, best described by the Chinese expression "万物皆空"—emptiness. Indeed, I feel that it is not quite right to understand this piece as an expression of my understanding of the word *Samsara (轮回)*[260] in Buddhism. It is perhaps more accurate to say that the music is slowly built from my evolving personal understanding of *Samsara (轮回).*

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[260] Samsara originally means "the cycle of death and rebirth to which life in the material world is bound." Please refer to: "Samsara," *Cambridge Dictionary*, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/samsara.
My understanding to this term is the transformation of things in life that builds up the circles.

Figure 3.2-46 *The Eternal Circle*: the emotional climax (bars 211)

Later, I unexpectedly discovered this piece has certain "programmatic" similarities with Scriabin's Fifth Sonata, which some theorists take to be a representative work of "Expressionism." Both were originally accompanied by literary programs[261] and visualized in a circular figure (see figure 3.2-47).

MUSIC AS METAPHYSICS   9
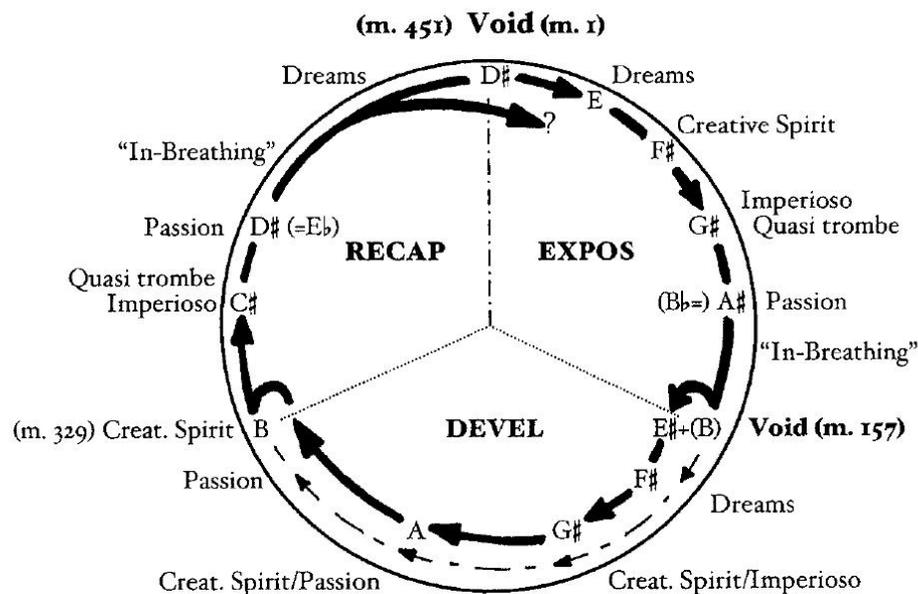
Figure 2. A circular depiction of Skryabin's Fifth Sonata, showing the various themes, bass line steps, and overall sonata-form divisions.

Figure.3.2-47 A circular depiction of Scriabin's Fifth Sonata[262]

Even Scriabin's unexpected changes in tempo and dynamics,

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[261] Jason Stell, "Music as Metaphysics: Structure and Meaning in Skryabin's Fifth Piano Sonata," *Journal of Musicological Research* 23, no. 1 (2004): 12.
[262] Ibid. 9.

fragmented rhythms, and broken melodies[263] are somewhat consistent with my development principles in *The Eternal Circle.* However, rather than seeking to express emotional experience rather than physical reality,[264] like expressionist composers, much of my piece finds inspiration in everyday settings, both natural and social, and tries to capture the sense of "being there."[265] thus *The Eternal Circle* is informed by subtle hints of impressionism: tonal ambiguity, depictions of life, blurred, uncertain, and so forth. Beyond these Western styles of music, however, my use of Chinese ancient tunes and Sanxian after-tones in *The Eternal Circle* suggest that, ultimately, it is best explained as a product of "my Individual Voice."

EPILOGUE

In an article entitled "Isomorphic Synesthesia" ["同构联觉"], Prof. Haihong Zhou writes:

> Isomorphic Synesthesia builds a bridge for the transformation between music and its representational objects, which also inevitably evokes the uncertainty in between. People are empathetic toward multiple things, and conversely, similar psychomotor experiences may also cause associations with a variety of experiences. [...同构联觉即是音乐与其表现对象之转换的桥梁，但这种转换方式也必然决定了音乐与其表现对象之间关系的不确定性。多种事物引起人们相同的心理运动体验，反之，同样的心理运动体验也会引起对多种事物的联想...].[266]

As a creative artist, the programmatic aspects of my music are perhaps most influenced by my cognitive understanding and its evolution. Certain concepts recur—the unerasable Chinese flavour and religious feelings

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[263] Theodor Adorno, "Night Music: Essays on Music 1928–1962," ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Wieland Hoban. (London: Seagull Books, 2009), 276-277.
[264] Soomi Song, "The Development of Expressionism in Alexander Scriabin's Piano Sonatas," (PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 2018), 2.
[265] John Boswell, and Jack Corbett, "Embracing impressionism: revealing the brush strokes of interpretive research," *Critical Policy Studies* 9, no. 2 (2015): 218.
[266] Haihong Zhou, "Isomorphic Synesthesia - The Basic Link of Transformation Between Music Sound and Its Expressive Object," *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music* (周海宏, "同构联觉--音乐音响与其表现对象之间转换的基本环节," *中央音乐学院学报*) 2 (1990): 62.

that are deeply embedded in my consciousness — while others are momentary—the vivid clay figurines that pop up in my head. Still others are enduring yet transient, such as my feelings of disassociation, both physical and mental. Moreover, the onging transformation of my cognition inevitably provokes changes in my musical writing and understanding. I admit that the naive and, in some ways, irrelevant images and scenarios that I present today are purely reflective of how I am feeling currently and will not forever define my musical style. They are a record of a certain, specific time and place, both geographically and emotionally—a kind of entry in a musical diary. Nor do they restrict and limit the listener's response to the work, neither now nor in the future.

In the end, the line between programme and absolute music is blurry and controversial: a piece may have neither a title nor a literary appendix, yet if the composer had a programme in his mind while composing, the composition is programme music, whether he reveals his programme or not.[267] Or perhaps the composer himself did not present any programme for a piece; it is we, as listeners, who subjectively construct a programme while listening. I seem to see images of Baroque architecture as I play Bach's *Goldberg Variations*; I listen to Faure's *Requiem* as if having experienced a "release" of all attachments … And, one year later at this point, I appear to have a different understanding of my own programmes while listening back to the works that are included in this portfolio. This is by no means a repudiation of my original devices and descriptions; it simply opens the door to allow new views of any piece of work.

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[267] Frederick Niecks, *Programme Music in the last four centuries*, (Ardent Media, 1907), 3.

3.3 *Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

—Commentary on eight works

This section contains precise methodological analyses based on *Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction*; together these constitute a review of my PhD work from a technical perspective.

In music, "form" generally refers to the structure and organization of a musical composition.[268] It includes not only the divisions inherent in the skeleton of a piece but also the multidimensional development of music elements (musical phrases, rhythm, timbres, pitch organisation, etc.). As a Chinese person, I am inclined to follow oriental modes of thought that endorse "following one's intuitive awareness" and "grasping holistically"; moreover, my personal preference is first to set out the culture and spirit behind the music. As a result, I have placed the discussion of musical style and expression in the front of this thesis. However, I also accept fully Paul Tillich's view that "form should not be thought of as the opposite of content, as merely the organizing principle for the subject matter, for form is, as he puts it, 'that which makes a thing what it is' . . . its power of being. . . . [Forms] are expressions of the ground of being, from which they derive their existence."[269] Through years of practical experience, I have discovered that *Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction* is an ideal approach to analysing the forms underlying my music and is also the most suitable compositional path for me. This path facilitates a multifaceted creative process, balancing instinct and rationale. It is the key tool that I use to open

[268] Samuel Chase, "What Is Form in Music? A Complete Guide," *Hello music theory,* accessed May, 12th, 2022, https://hellomusictheory.com/learn/form/

[269] Joseph L. Price, "Expressionism and Ultimate Reality: Paul Tillich's Theology of Art," *Soundings* (1986), 483. Also see Paul Tillich, "Protestantism and Artistic Style," *Theology of culture* (1959), 75; and James Luther Adams, "Paul Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion," (1965).

the door between Chinese musical dialects and a professional (Western) compositional vocabulary.

Structure

Structure is a crucial element of music. It describes how different sections in a piece of music are positioned together to form the composition.[270] Jeff Todd Titon states that:

> ...in music, painting, architecture, and the other arts, *form* means structural arrangement. To understand form in music, we look for patterns of organization in rhythm, melody, and harmony. Patterns of musical organization involve, among other things, the arrangement of small- to medium-sized musical units of rhythm, melody, and/or harmony that show repetition or variation. Just as a sentence (a complete thought) is made up of smaller units such as phrases, which in turn are made up of individual words, so a musical thought is made up of phrases that result from combinations of sounds. Form can also refer to the arrangement of the instruments, as in the order of solos in a jazz or bluegrass performance, or the way a symphonic piece is orchestrated.[271]

Structure plays two different roles. As a verb, it refers to a methodology by which a compositional framework is constructed. This includes consideration not only of tonality and harmony but also of dynamic contrasts, tempo changes, timbral variations, and motivic alterations. Beyond regular, unidirectional, fixed and closed structures, it can also include improvisations and free forms that arise but are unnotated. As a noun, structure represents the overall musical form as presented through various organic arrangements of individual sections and phrases.

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[270] Ben Dunnett, "Musical Structures—Musical Structures Lesson 1," *Music Theory Academy,* https://www.musictheoryacademy.com/understanding-music/musical-structures/
[271] Jeff Todd Titon, *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to The Music of The World's Peoples* (Cengage Learning, 2016), 14.

I believe a successful composition is usually made memorable by a fusion of elements which will sustain interest on repeated listening. It must also have a relatively distinct structure. As we generally have limited auditory tolerance, a piece of a certain length without originality and a sense of surprise will cause aesthetic fatigue in the listener. In order to sustain the audience's interest and attention, judging exactly when—at what time—to make a change is crucial in the writing process.

In my own work, I refuse to limit my creative ideas to rigid structural stereotypes; any musical form can be used as long as it meets my creative requirements. My musical work contains both relatively fixed or closed forms and freer, open layouts; thus, both "vertical boundaries" and "hazy embedding"[272] are reflected in my compositions. My structural methodology includes is both pure (abstract) forms and narratives, though narrative structures characterise the majority of the works in my portfolio. In the preparatory stages of my writing, I devise a specific compositional methodology for individual sections, usually derived from the musical narrative; then I order and classify each section with reference to specific creative techniques. This mode of work perhaps derives from two Chinese concepts that have been used for thousands of years: "intuitive understanding" ("直觉体悟") and 和 "overall grasping" ("整体把握").[273]

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[272] "Hazy embedding" is a term I use in this paper to describe a nuanced, gradual varying sonic effect, in opposition to "vertical boundary," discussed earlier.

[273] These terms are my own but are based on the work of other scholars: "The metaphysical transcendental characteristics of the pre-Qin Confucian's humanism led to an advocacy of cognitive processes in inward experience that focuses on holistic thinking and instinctive understanding that initiate intuitive or technical thoughts." ("先秦儒家人文精神中具有形而上的先验特征，这种先验致使先秦儒家倡导向内体验精神的认识过程，侧重整体直觉体悟的思维方式，从而孕育了悟性技术思想.") Zhi Wu, and Dan Yu, "On the Pre-Qin Confucian Harmony of Humanist and technical thought (论先秦儒家人文精神与技术思想之和谐)," *Journal of Northeastern University (Social Science Edition)* 10, no. 5 (2008): 395. "Chinese tradition emphasises cognitive experiences and holistic thinking; that is, it relies on intuitive understanding to vaguely grasp the inherent nature and laws of the object as a whole through perception. Western thinking focuses on science, rationality, analysis, and empirical evidence that relies on logic. Western people understand the nature of things through argumentation and deduction. ... The organic whole has become a major feature of the traditional Chinese way of thinking. Holistic thinking regards man and nature, the order of the human world and the universe, the individual and society, as organic wholes that are inseparable and mutually affect each other." ("中国传统思维

In more concrete terms, my structural methodology is mainly manifested in motivic figures, speed, timbre, and orchestration. As I reflect on my creative experiences, I am increasingly aware that the establishment of structure can provide me with a clear creative 'roadmap'; it helps me to retain a clear mind and improves the efficiency of a long creative journey.

From the perspective of my audience, works that have a distinctive structure usually provide them with a more coherent, satisfying, and memorable musical experience. My initial version of *The Eternal Circle (2017)* has a duration of 12 minutes; nevertheless, the general response of from my audience was a desire for more material and increased running time. Perhaps this exempifies a satisfying aesthetic experience that is effected by a clear musical structure.

Deconstruction and Reconstruction

Deconstruction refers to the detailed dismantling of an established musical source, a process that transforms the source into fragments and the fragments into musical motifs. In the course of starting a new piece, I usually disassemble the musical of a selection of folk music or a musical dialect and transform these into short motives that can be assembled freely. These motifs are like the pieces of a dismantled Lego building. And this perhaps best describes the process of *Deconstruction* in my compositional process.

Deconstruction has connotations of decentralisation, uncertainty, relativity, and disorder. Philosophically, the concept is strongly associated with a French philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), whose work is a response to theories of critical structuralism. Derrida states that

注重实践经验，注重整体思考，因而借助直觉体悟,即通过知觉从总体上模糊而直接地把握认识对象的内在本质和规律. 西方思维传统注重科学、理性、重视分析、实证，因而必然借助逻辑. 在论证、推演中认识事物的本质和规律…有机整体性已成为中国传统思维方式的一大特征，整体性思维把人与自然，人间秩序与宇宙秩序，个体与社会看作是一个不可分割，互相影响，互相对应的有机整体.") Shuneng Lian, "On Chinese and Western Ways of Thinking (论中西思维方式)," *Foreign Languages and Foreign Language Teaching* 2, no. 002 (2002), 42-44.

deconstruction is an "anti-structuralist gesture" as "structures were to be undone, decomposed, disentangled."[274]

However, for me, deconstruction is not used to pursue "fuzziness" or "disorder" or to repudiate established theories; rather, it serves as a convertor between an original musical source and a professional compositional language. I infuse innovative ideas into deconstructed phrases from a musical dialect phrases and use these to build a new structure that expresses my compositional intent. Indeed, Derrida explains that deconstruction involves "a certain attention to structures" and tries to "understand how an 'ensemble' was constituted."[275]

Reconstruction refers to the reorganisation of the fragmented musical materials into a completely new configuration; it combines elements of the original source—that is, the folkloric tradition—and transforms these into a completely new composition. It is like reassembling the parts of the disassembled lego house to build a ship. Rebuilding can serve as a metaphor for reconstruction.

Together, deconstruction and reconstruction constitute an organic process in my creative journey, from original impulse to completed piece. Together, they comprise the disassembly and reorganisation of musical figures, timbre and orchestration, where "musical figures" include rhythmic and pitch organisation and timbre entails the quality and characteristics of sound, including not just orchestration but also tonality, modes, and other affecting sonic elements.

Perhaps more importantly, deconstruction and reconstruction prove a key tool for connecting the musical dialects of my country with a contemporary musical language. Because traditional Chinese pentatonic

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[274] New World Encyclopedia contributors, "Deconstruction," *New World Encyclopedia,* accessed May 23, 2022, https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Deconstruction&oldid=1037706
[275] Jacques Derrida, *A Derrida reader: Between the blinds* (Columbia University Press, 1991), 272.

modes are relatively limited in the range of variation they permit, the use of deconstruction and reconstruction is beneficial in two specific ways. First, it mobilises the inherent potentials of pitch interval and timbre; it enriches the pitch alternatives and timbral layers, thus creating a larger imaginary space for the audience. Second, it repositions out-of-date folkloric sources in a contemporary field, while maintaining the initial, inspirational sounds of the source. The compositional materials thus spring from the original ecological source and can be regarded as preserving the musical "DNA." Thus, no matter how the musical details change, the basic vocabulary is maintained in the new work either explicitly or implicitly.

Relatively explicit outcomes from the use of deconstruction and reconstruction in my work include two national vocal music sketches, *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing* and *A pure serene music*, the national chamber work *Taiping Drum*, and *Gangxiang*, a chamber piece performed by *Sanxian* and a percussion instrument. These works were created in the early stages of my exploration of musical dialects. Their motifs were inspired by the recordings and videos I collected of folk music and local cultural manifestations. Most of this raw material consists of the impromptu singing or folk tunes of labouring people or the proverbial man in the street; these rustic musical sources retain the frankness of people on the lower levels of society. In my writing process, I focused first on extracting a dialectal motif while retaining the original temperament. Then I transformed these motives into completed compositions by means of deconstruction and reconstruction. Figure 3.3-1 contants several examples.

Buddhist Song of Bairenjing

Initial motif:

Initial motif of *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing*

Transformed motif:

Transformed motif of *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing*

A pure serene music

Initial motif:

Initial motif of *A pure serene music*

Transformed motif:

Transformed motif of *A pure serene music*

Taiping Drum

Initial motif:

Initial motif of *Taiping Drum*

Transformed motif:

Transformed motif of *Taiping Drum*

Gangxiang

Initial motif:
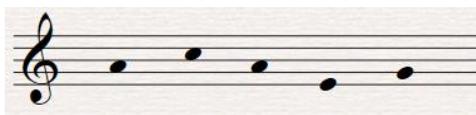
Initial motif of *Gangxiang*

Transformed motif:

Transformed motif of *Gangxiang*

Figure 3.3-1 Initial versus transformed motifs

Less explicit and thereby more implicit is my use of deconstruction and reconstruction in the pieces *My Clay Figurines*, *The Eternal Circle*, *Marionette*, *So Close, Yet So Far Away*, and *That Day.*

As I gradually penetrated the spiritual level of musical dialects, I started to seek a new musical language, beyond the established tonality and form of the original materials. As discussed in chapter II (My View of Musical Style and My Musical Nature), I believe music exists beyond geographical borders. The inheritance of a "Chinese" sound cannot be taken forward by conveying only surface musical features like tonality, harmony, and rhythm. It requires an ideological transmission and spiritual integration, a combination of the national collective consciousness and one's personal artistic understanding. Hence, in these works, instead of directly manipulating the folk musical expressions, I attempted to transform the folk voice more conceptionally. *My Clay Figurines* represents the turning point in my stylistic journey, the moment when musical dialects cease to occupy the foreground. I thoroughly deconstructed a folk melody into individual notes, recombined them and created a minimalist musical motif (see figure 3.3-2).

My Clay Figurines

Initial motif:

Initial motif of *My Clay Figurines*

Transformed musical theme:

Transformed musical theme of *My Clay Figurine*

Figure 3.3-2 *My Clay Figurines*: initial and transformed motifs

Similarly, in designing the themes for other works, instead of employing tunes taken from musical dialects, I used the alternate method of composing cultural concepts. My aim was to rely on my deep and long-held influence and knowledge of folk traditions and translate these into musical motifs. In my current creative process, I am less constrained by specific styles, making full use of minimalist motifs devised by using deconstruction and reconstruction and supported by my inherently Oriental linear thinking and intuitive comprehension. I have been gratified to hear these works described as "traditional," "beautiful," and "empathetic" by an audience of contemporary musical makers from different national backgrounds.

Figure 3.3-3 sets out the motifs and transformed themes of these four works.

That day

Initial Motif:

Formal theme transformed by deconstruction and reconstruction:

Marionette

Initial Motif:

Formal theme transformed by deconstruction and reconstruction:

So Close, Yet So Far Away

Initial Motif:
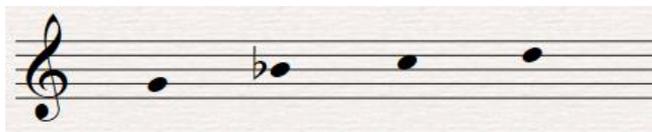
Formal theme transformed by deconstruction and reconstruction:

The Eternal Circle

Initial Motif
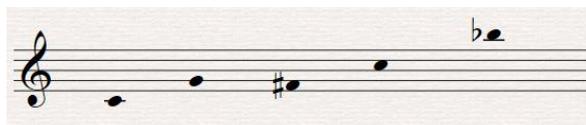
Formal theme transformed by deconstruction and reconstruction

Figure 3.3-3 Initial versus formal themes in my later works

I believe that the process of deconstruction and reconstruction grants me greater flexibility and richer compositional potential; it allows me more

space in which to re-organise material and permits greater flexibility in my working methods. The benefits both textually and sonically have led me to produce work which resonates more deeply with a contemporary international audience.

As I analyse successful works by Tan Dun and Qigang Chen, I realise that, for other composers, too, deconstruction and reconstruction can successfully connect musical dialects with an international musical language.

The *Ghost Opera* by Tan Dun originates from the *Nuo Opera (傩戏)*;[276] in the eyes of modern Chinese youth, this is a hopelessly outdated antique form. Tan Dun intermingles this folk tradition with the theme of the C minor Prelude of J.S. Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier II*, the Chinese folk song "Xiao Bai Cai (Little Cabbage)," the non-semantic syllables (yea, ya, yao) in Shakespeare's "The Tempest," and conversations between Chinese monks. [巴赫（选用第二册*平均律钢琴曲*中的 C 小调前奏曲主题，中国民间传统音乐（民歌 "小白菜"），莎士比亚（引用 "暴风雨" 中的一段台词 - 无语义的声效性音节 (yea, ya, yao)，中国僧侣等之间的对话.）[277]. These seemingly unrelated materials are respectfully deconstructed and reassembled by the composer (see figure 3.3-4).

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[276] "Nuo, is the treasure product of a primitive religious belief; it is a mysterious and ancient ceremony of prevention from disease & bad spirit, as well as the hope for good luck & happiness; it is the oldest, most profound and active intangible heritage of China. It consists of Nuo Etiquette, Nuo theater, Nuo dance, Nuo Customs. In 2006, more than 10 items of Nuo were put into the index of national intangible heritage of China. These items are from Wu An (He Bei province), Chi zhou (An Hui province), Chen zhou and Dong minority (Hu Nan), An Shun and De Jiang and Yi minority (Gui Zhou), Mao Nan and Yao Lao minority. (Gaung Xi), Nan Feng, Wu Yuan and Ping Xiang (Jiang Xi), Zhao Tong (Yun Nan) etc. This proves clearly Nuo theater's importance and value..." See: "Nuo - The Nuo Theatre - The Nuo Culture," *Nuo Culture in China,* accessed April 26, 2010, http://www.nuoxi.com/article/?id=189

[277] Taiyong Hou, "The Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Tan Dun's Writing Revealed in the *Ghost Opera* (从 鬼戏 看谭盾创作中的解构与重组)," *乐府新声: Journal of Shenyang Conservatory of Music* 1 (2008), 41-42.

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                    GHOST OPERA

                      Cast

Now  ·········· String Quartet and pipa
Past ·········· Bach, folksong, monks, Shakespeare
Forever ········ water, stones, metal, paper

                    Synopsis
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                      water

        Bach              folksong

metal        string quartet/pipa        paper

        monks             Shakespeare

                      stones
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                    Libretto

Bach:        Prelude
Monks:       Ya O Ya
Folksong:    Xiao bai tsai ya (little cabbage ya)
             Di li huang ya (earth yellow ya)
             San liang suei ya (three or two years ya)
             Mei die niang ya (no papa, mama ya)
             Ya              (ya)
Shakespeare: We are such stuff
             As dreams are made on, and our little life
             is rounded with a sleep.
Bach:        Prelude
Monk:        Ya O
Folksong:    Tsai
             Di
             San
             Mei
             Ya
Shakespeare: Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
             And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
             leave not a rack behind.
Monk:        Ya
Bach:        Prelude
```

Figure 3.3-4 The materials in *Ghost Opera* by Tan Dun[278]

Tan Dun chose his musical motives from themes from very different traditions: Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* (Prelude in c minor) and the Chinese folk song "Little Cabbage." Overall, both melodies go downwards; and, internally, each phrase also starts from a high register and then descends to a lower one [巴赫平均律C小调前奏曲主题和小白菜主题，他们代表着不同的传统。二者旋律走向依次下行，每一个乐句也都由高而低.][279] In the first movement, for an example, Tan Dun noted the common downward trend in the two themes and deconstructed the intervals (major second; minor third) within the phrases to

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[278] Tan Dun, *Ghost Opera* (G. Shirmer, Inc. New York, NY), 3,
https://issuu.com/scoresondemand/docs/ghost_opera_33560/14
[279] "The Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Tan Dun's Writing Revealed in the *Ghost Opera*, 45.

reconstruct the material using different pitches, rhythms, and instrumentation, resulting in new textures and sounds (see figure 3.3-5).

Theme I. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*

Theme II. "Little Cabbage"

Rhythmic variations and connections (see next page)

A new theme

Figure 3.3-5 Tan Dun's *Ghost Opera*: *deconstruction and reconstruction*[280]

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[280] Tan Dun, *Ghost Opera*, https://issuu.com/scoresondemand/docs/ghost_opera_33560/14

Tan Dun's re-creative process breathes new life into both the classical source and the ancient ethnic song, making the previously unacceptable once again popular among modern Chinese professional musicians and also arousing international interest.

Similarly, Qigang Chen's practical and imaginative re-organisation of elements from the *Peking Opera* re-vitalised these sounds, bringing new life to a rustic genre and re-acceptance by both local and international musical enthusiasts. Qigang Chen once said in an interview about his piano concerto, *Er Huang*:

> I just thought, I could only find it [the musical source] from the materials that I feel I most resonate with. So I found the most typical piece of Chinese Peking Opera—the short interlude between verses of the *Er Huang*... [我就想呢，只能是从自己最有感受的音乐素材中去寻找. 所以我就找了中国京剧的最有典型的一个曲牌，叫二黄原板中间的一个过门...][281]

The *Er Huang* melodic structure in this piece is presented in various rhythms, dynamics, registers, and instruments. It is also transformed by the composer into a new theme (see figure 3.3-6 on the next page).

The original melodic structure of *Er Huang*

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[281] Renping Qian, "Report on Compilation of 'China New Music Yearbook' (2009~ 2013)," （钱仁平，"'中国新音乐年鉴' 编撰工作报告（2009~ 2013)"），音乐艺术: 上海音乐学院学报 1 (2014): 153. Also see Siying Zhao, "Research on Qigang Chen's Piano Concerto Er Huang," （赵思颖，"陈其钢 '钢琴协奏曲 二黄' 的研究"），23

The extension of the motif (based on major second and minor third)

Rhythmic variations & repetitions

Figure 3.3-6 Qigang Chen, *Er Huang*: examples of deconstruction and

reconstruction[282]

Deconstruction and Reconstruction, for me, is a phrase that serves as a concentrated summary of a distinctive compositional procedure. It provides a minimal description of the way I split original music dialects into musical parts in preparation for writing, then re-assemble them into a new work. In this way, it becomes possible for obscure music to be reframed by modern aesthetic standards and also to catch the attention of international musicians, leading to greater interest in exploring these neglected musical genres.

Chinese American scholar Guoqiang Cai suggests that "one should expound the universal commonality that springs from one's cultural roots." ["以自身的文化根性出发而阐述人类的普遍性."][283] As I experiment with the process of deconstructing and then recombining elements taken from a folk tradition, I discover the relationship between technical intensity in the writing process and the folk traces in the initial materials. When working at a lower intensity with deconstruction and reconstruction, the music maintains more strongly the characteristics of its initial source. It presents a "figurative" sensory experience: the colour, layers, and tension in the work are relatively limited, thus offering audiences less space to dream. My early works of this kind are *Gang Xiang* and *Taiping Drum,* among others. By comparison, as the intensity of deconstruction and reconstruction increases, the musical expression, tension, nuance, and potential for change in the composition becomes greater. However, because it becomes less faithful to the original material, the sounds of musical dialects in the re-created works are relatively obscure.

My practical use of deconstruction and reconstruction as a methodology has become more consistent thorough my doctoral journey. The analyses that follow in this chapter are thus in reverse narrative, reflecting the

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[282] Qigang Chen, *Erhuang,* (boosey & Hawkes),
https://www.boosey.com/cr/perusals/score?id=1132
[283] Artda, "Decompose: The Characteristics of Postmodernism (分解: 后现代艺术主义特征)," 艺术档案网, accessed May 20th, 2009, http://www.artda.cn/view.php?tid=1840&cid=26

sequence of my work and the chronology of creation. Regardless, all music, whether possessing a high or a low degree of deconstruction and reconstruction, is stylistically unique. As a young contemporary composer, I apply this methodology with an intensity governed by the expressive requirements of the music. The most important thing is to abide by my own creative principles:

Be honest with music and follow my inner calling; and

Be pragmatic, prioritise the optimisation of auditory effect.

3.3.1 *The Eternal Circle*

Duration: circa 18 minutes

First edition: June 2016 - January 2017

Final edition: April 2021

3.3.1.1 Structure

The structure of my chamber orchestra piece, *The Eternal Circle*, was not rigidly programmed; instead, it evolved in a somewhat unpredicatable way. This process can be divided chronologically into four steps (see table 2).

Step I. The *Structure* of pitch ⎤
⎥ **Rationally pre-planned**
Step II. The *Structure* of tempo ⎦

Step III. The *Structure* of musical figuration ⎤
⎥ **Intuitively designed in the course of writing**
Step IV. The *Structure* of orchestration ⎦
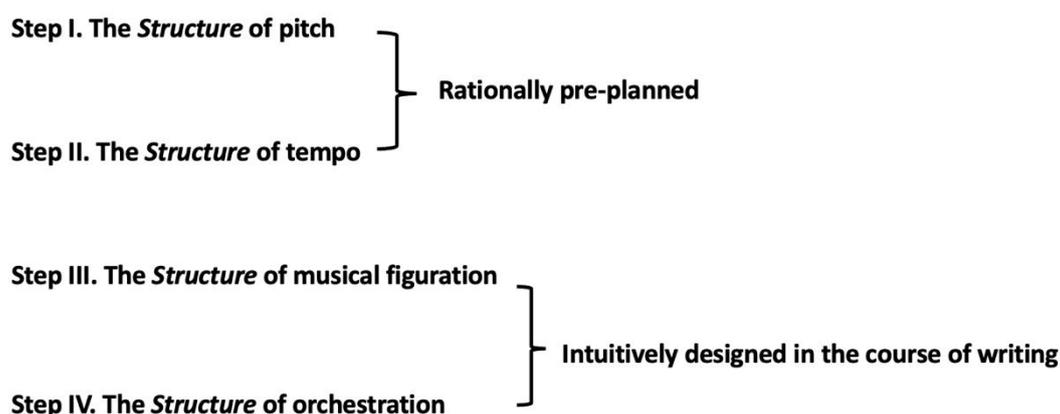
Table 2. *The Eternal Circle*: Structuring steps

The first two steps were sketched out before I began writing. As I composed, except for a few adjustments in aesthetic feeling and musical continuity, I essentially followed the musical structure as planned. For the latter two steps, I sketched and retained a general plan of musical figuration and orchestration; however, as the music developed, I was guided more by my inner hearing, referring to the preset programmes only to ensure the structure of the piece was viable.

I. The pitch structure

The flower-like sketch in figure 3.3.1-1 represents the core structure of this piece. Each petal corresponds to a specific section in the composition, and each section is closely related to a core sustained note which defines the central tone of the section. Simultaneously, in order to convey the sense of spiritual influence on a worldly ascetic, I designed a gradually rising pitch range in advance. Imagine slowly climbing the circular staircase of a tower, endlessly seeking the to reach the top. To evoke this, I chose a core note for each section and arranged these in a sequence of gradually rising pitches. Thus, the work's overal atmosphere would suggest the journey from chaos to the ethereal. The pitch design becomes auxiliary to the musical structure.
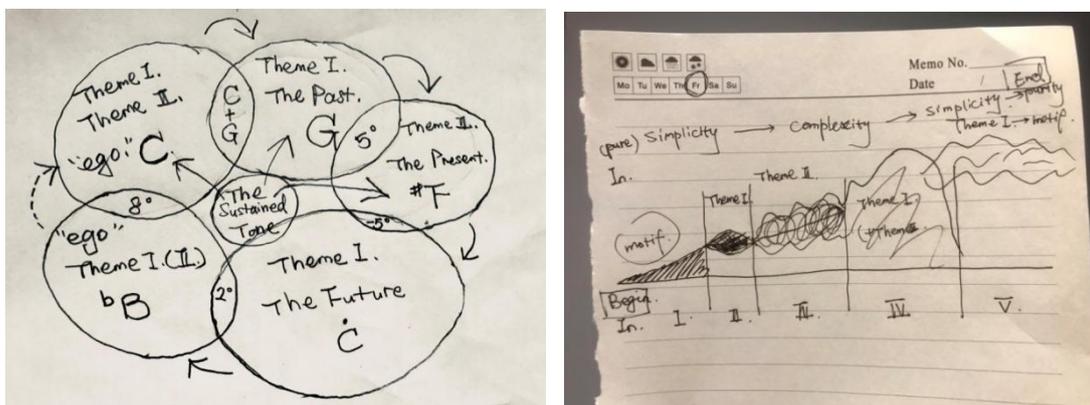
Figure 3.3.1-1 *The Eternal Circle*: designs for musical structure and pitch

I also considered the instinctive "character" of each section as I made the structural sketches for the work. Their multifaceted natures are roughly summarised in table 3.

C		G	F#	high C	Bb
Deep; Intense;		*Melancholy singing;*	*Sharp, Conflicting;*	*Emotional; Elegant,*	*Ethereal; Sweet*
Illusory		*Dramatic shift to*	*Chaotic*	*Lyrical.*	*melancholy;*
A	B	*exuberance*			*Expectant*

Table 3. *The Eternal Circle*: The characters of individual sections

(1) Section I: Core note C. Deep, intense, illusory (bars 1–119)

The core note of this section is a sustained C. The section can be divided into two parts, manifesting a changing musical mood.

Part A (bars 1–47)

The music in Part A is mainly presented in the pitch range between C and C1, so the tessitura is dominated by the bass. However, to more accurately depict the illusory colours in my inner ear, I occasionally modified the sustained bass by introducing the C in a higher range (see figure 3.3.1-2).

Figure 3.3.1-2 *The Eternal Circle*: Section 1, core note C

Part B (bars 48–119)

As the music gradually transforms into Part B, it becomes more intense and clashing. I assigned the sustained bass C to various instruments, intending an organic fluency. Over this, I added a variety of fragmented pitch patterns, which were transformed by the deconstruction and reconstruction of Theme II, and I distributed these in a separate pitch range with an intensive rhythmic pattern. The musical effect here is thereby intensified with the

expansion of the pitch range and the increased rhythmic activity (see figure 3.3.1-3).

Figure 3.3.1-3 *The Eternal Circle*: bars 82-89

(2) Section II: Core note G. Melancholy singing at the beginning, then a dramatic shift to exuberance (bars 120–146)

The music here is closely bound to the central G, five degrees higher than that of the first section. The natural relationship between C- and G-string overtones gives rise to harmonic decoration in a very high range, and pizzicati provide sudden bursts of exuberance (see figure 3.3.1-4).

Figure 3.3.1-4 *The Eternal Circle*: String overtones and pizzicati

(3) Section III: Core note F#. Sharp, conflicting, chaotic (bars 146–180)

This section is closely tied to the core note F#, which departs significantly from the previous C and G. In order to highlight the impact of the changed tonality, I raised the pitch range at the beginning of the section, so that most of the instrumental parts sound above c2 (see figure 3.3.1-5).

Figure 3.3.1-5 *The Eternal Circle*: The raised pitch range

In addition, the intervals in this section overlap, so that they sound both horizontally and vertically. This dense aggregate of dissonant sound provides extreme sonic conflicts (see figure 3.3.1-6).

Figure 3.3.1-6 *The Eternal Circle*: **Overlapping intervals**

(4) Section IV: Core note high C. Emotional, elegant, lyrical (bars 181—203)

The music here reaches its climax. It returns to the core C but in a notably higher range than in the first section. This is evident especially in the first and second presentations of the theme, which are performed in a range above c2 (see figure 3.3.1-7).

Figure 3.3.1-7 *The Eternal Circle*: **The higher pitch range in section IV**

When the theme returns for a third time, it is lowered by an octave, creating a more lyrical feel that is natural to the treble range of string instruments (see figure 3.3.1-8). Thus, the musical atmosphere becomes warm and delicate.

Figure 3.3.1-8 *The Eternal Circle*: **Third presentation of theme in a lower pitch range**

(5) Section V: Core note Bb. Ethereal, elegiac, expectant (bars 203–229)

The final section of the work revolves around the sustained Bb, heard primarily in the pitch range between c2 and c4. Although the pitch content

here is similar to that in the first section, the music has a comparatively more ethereal effect, arising in part from the more extensive use of a higher tessitura (see figure 3.3.1-9).

Figure 3.3.1-9 *The Eternal Circle*: The more extensive use of a higher tessitura

In addition, the indeterminate pitches produced by the downward glides by Violins I and II and the Cello create more sonic layers, thus offering more imaginary space for the audience (see figure 3.3.1-10).

Figure 3.3.1-10 *The Eternal Circle*: Downward glides in the strings

To summarise, the overall pitch structure of this piece shapes a changing sense of harmoniousness, as depicted in table 4. The pre-compositional pitch organisation allows musical contrast to be heard in

both pitch range and in the musical texture, providing the work with a clear structure.

I.(a)	• Extremely harmonious • *1,4,5,8 degrees*
I.(b);II;III	• Extremely disharmonious • *The superposition of semitone, tritone and glides*
IV	• Relatively harmonious • *1,4,5,8 degrees with glides*
V	• Extremely harmonious • *1,4,5,8 degrees*
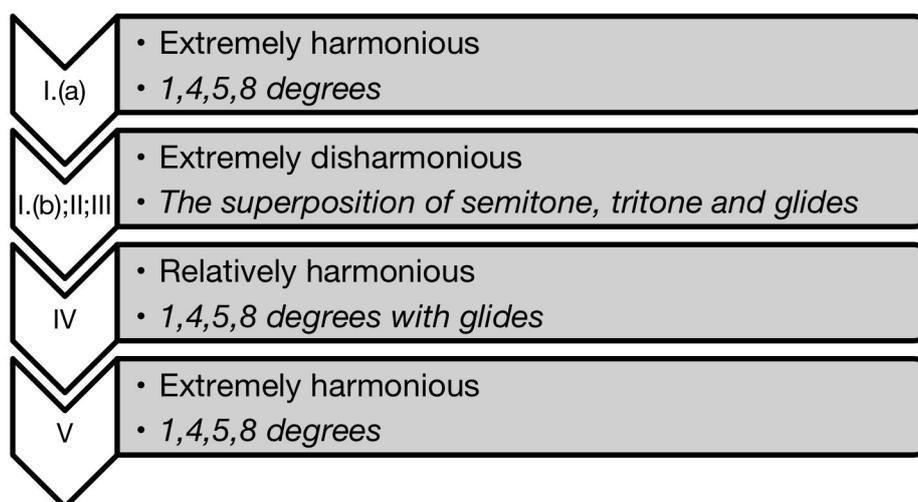
Table 4. *The Eternal Circle*: The changing harmoniousness

II. The tempo structure

I. Sustained C		II. Sustained G	III. Sustained F#	IV. Sustained high C	V. Sustained Bb
A	**B**	1=76-80 1=86-94	1=98-102	1=78-84	1=72
1=60-66	1=116 122-126				

Table 5. *The Eternal Circle*: The *Structure* of Tempo

In order to effectively achieve my expressive intent, I planned in advance the tempi of each section (see table 5). In early drafts, the adagio sections were marked at a slightly slower pace, the allegro sections slightly faster. I instinctively adjusted the rhythm when working with live players. Nevertheless, creating an initial structure for tempo allowed me to focus on

individual passages while simultaneously remaining confident about retaining a sense of the overall musical shape of the piece.

III. Sonic background, themes, and their use

The sonic background and the thematic content are interconnected. The key elements of both are summarised in table 6.

Sonic background			Thematic arrangement	
Straight line	*The Waves*	*Points*	Theme I.	Theme II.
Long sustained tones; Long glides	*Long waves; Short waves*	*Brief single tones; intervals and harmonies*	Lyrical. Composed of three parts	Conflicting intense. A transformation of Theme I.

Table 6. *The Eternal Circle*: The *Structure* of "sonic figures"

i. Sonic background: The structure of the sonic background in this piece is evident both to the ear and to the eye. It includes **three categories**: Straight lines, waves and points. I use them in varying proportions within individual sections of the piece.

Straight lines

This category contains continuous sounds: **sustained tones** (see figure 3.3.1-11) and **long glides** between pitches (see figure 3.3.1-12).

Persistent homophonic notes
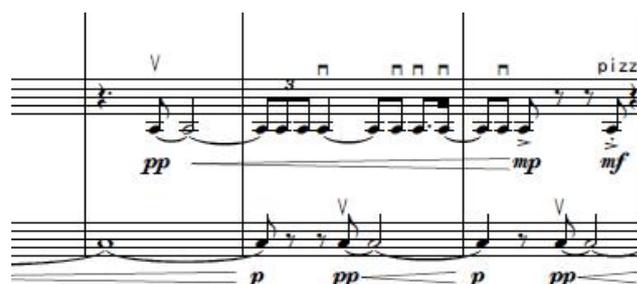
Figure 3.3.1-11 *The Eternal Circle*: sustained tones

In addition to express the ancient Chinese philosophy of "all in one", the sustained tones also are inflected by continuous but changing acoustic effects. They are present throughout the piece, most notably in **Sections I(a), II, IV,** and **V.**

Long glides
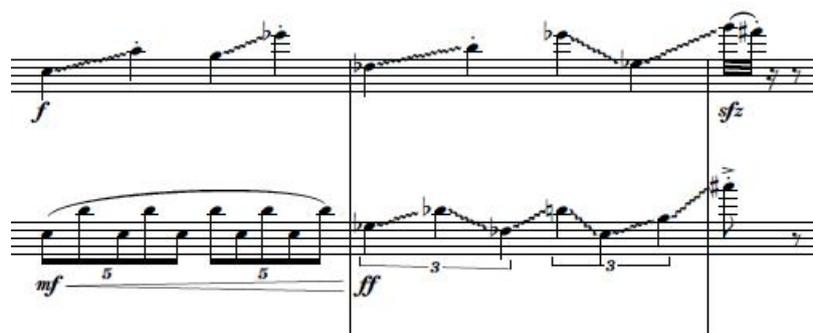
Figure 3.3.1-12 *The Eternal Circle*: **Long glides**

The glides in the "straight line" category include only those with longer durations, usually connecting two notes chosen from the core pitches or motives. They occur initially in the flute part of **Section I (B)** and then return on the string instruments in **Section V.** Acoustically, as the music enters the coda, the use of glides offers a nuance that relieves the monotony of the continuous tones, harmonies, melodic lines, and rhythmic patterns. Distinct from other sections, structurally these glides create an acoustic marker, giving the work a greater organisational coherence.

Waves

In "waves," different pitches continuously create an undulating auditory effect in which quavers, semi-quavers, and fast continuous tuplets create various rhythmic patterns. Occasionally, quarter notes or longer durations are used to deepen the musical expression in individual sections. "Waves" are of two durations, **long** and **short**.

Long waves

A variant of sustained sounds, long wave are generally used in relatively "concrete" sections such as **I(B)** and **III**, and occasionally in comparatively "abstract" sections like **I(A)** and **V** (see figure 3.3.1-13)**.** They enhance the inner intensity of the dominant sustained tones, thus offering the music greater power and fluency.

"Concrete" sections

"Abstract" sections

Figure 3.3.1-13 *The Eternal Circle*: Long waves

Short waves

Short waves in this piece are best understood as debris that has been discarded from long waves. They are brief and variable, performed mainly by woodwind instruments as additions that give other lines distinctive textural flexibility in both pitch and rhythm (see figure 3.3.1-14).

Section I(A). bars 25-29: Woodwinds

Section III. bars 161-165: Woodwinds

Figure 3.3.1-14 *The Eternal Circle*: Short waves

<u>**Points**</u>

Points refer to short single tones or chords, often presented on piano or timpani but sometimes by string pizzicati (and saltandi) or as rapid octave skips in the woodwinds (see figure 3.3.1-15). In this way they simulate the acoustic effect of percussion.

Figure 3.3.1-15 *The Eternal Circle*: Points (Section I (B), bars 101–107, piano; Section III, bars 117–121, string pizzicati and saltandi)

The functions of these point-like events pattern include strengthening the rhythms and "polishing" the sustained tones as the musical unfolds. They are present in every section, expressed in various ways (see figure 3.3.1-16).
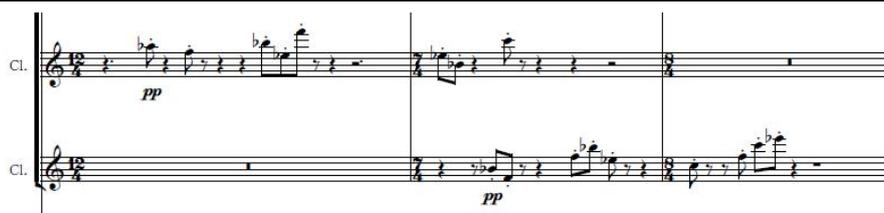
Figure 3.3.1-16 *The Eternal Circle*: **Points (Section I, Strings; Section III, Timpani; Section IV, Piano; Section V, Clarinets)**

In general, these three concepts—straight lines, waves, and points—are only relative. When points are intensively concentrated, for example, they take on a linear or wavy appearance because of the pitch patterns, sometimes suggesting a sustained tone and sometimes a melody (see figure 3.3.1-17).
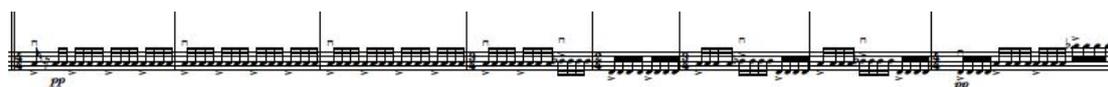
Figure 3.3.1-17 *The Eternal Circle*: **Intensively concentrated points (Section I (B), bars 83–90, contrabass)**

I also distribute these different musical ideas according to the requirements of individual sections. In relatively calm sections, I generally use straight lines, embellished with a modicum of points and waves. By contrast, in dramatic sections, I increase the musical tension with a more extensive use of waves and points. Finally, I create a lyrical effect with wave-like patterns in the following passages:

> **Section I(A):** Straight lines, modest points; **(B):** Waves, points
>
> **Section II:** Straight lines, short waves, and points
>
> **Section III:** Waves and points
>
> **Section IV:** Waves
>
> **Section V:** Straight lines and waves

ii. Themes and their use

Theme I is romantic and lyrical. It can be divided into **three parts** that are introduced successively during the course of the piece (see figures 3.3.1-18 though 3.3.1-20).

Part one
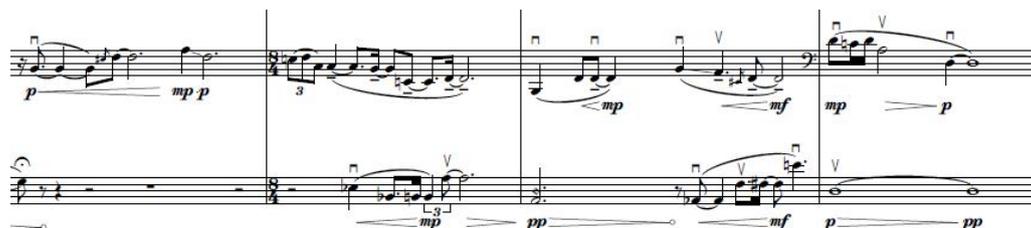
Figure 3.3.1-18 *The Eternal Circle*: The beginning of Theme I (Section II, bars 125–128)

Part two

Figure 3.3.1-19 *The Eternal Circle*: The mid-section of Theme I (Section IV, bars 187–189)

Part three
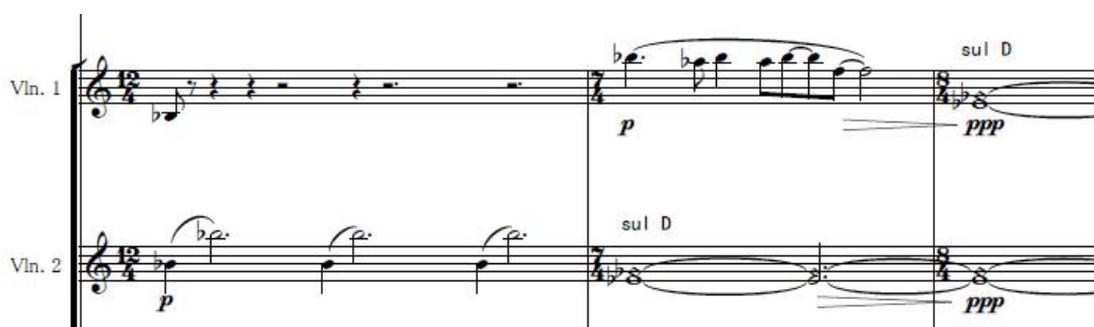
Figure 3.3.1-20 *The Eternal Circle*: The final part of Theme I (Section V, bars 215–217)

These first part initially appears twice, in different textures, in the second section of the work. It recurs in Section IV, at the climax of the piece, where it is followed by the second part. The two form a new whole and are played three times throughout this section. The final part of the theme appears only in the closing section (V), where it symbolises the unfolding of a new life.

Theme II is an adjusted reappearance of **Theme I.** For an in-depth analysis of thematic development, please refer to section 3.3.1.2 (deconstruction and reconstruction as applied to this piece). The discordant intervals of theme II convey intensity and conflict (see figure 3.3.1-21). It dominates the first and third sections of the work.

Figure 3.3.1-21 *The Eternal Circle*: Theme II as presented in this work (Section I (B), bars 82-87, piano)

IV. The structure of the orchestration

In this piece, the instrumentation is symmetric (see table 7). The orchestration, however, is designed to enhance the qualities of each section.

2+2 Woodwinds	1+1 Keyboard and Percussion	2+2 Strings
2 Flutes	1 Timpani	2 Sopranos (2 violins)
2 Clarinets	1 Piano	2 Bass (Cello and Contrabass)

Table 7. *The Eternal Circle*: The symmetric instrumentation

i (a). Section I(A): Core note C

The orchestration here is relatively sparse (see figure 3.3.1-22). Cello and contrabass present the sustained tone, occasionally accompanied by piano and staccati from string and woodwind instruments, imitating the percussive sounds of the timpani.

Figure 3.3.1-22 *The Eternal Circle*: Orchestration, section I(A), bars 1–12

i (b) Section I (B): Core note C

In the second part of the first section, the orchestration becomes comparatively intense (see figure 3.3.1-23). The first half of the section is dominated by a chaotic "sonic wall" performed on woodwind and strings. The second half shifts to a string acoustic background that is accompanied by clear rhythmic points on piano and timpani and supported by the use of woodwinds.

Example from the first half of the section

Example from the second half of the section

Figure 3.3.1-23 *The Eternal Circle*: Orchestration, section I(B)

ii. Section II: Core note G

This section, like the preceeding, falls into two parts orchestrationally. In the first part, a subset of instruments is used. The first appearance of Theme I is polyphonically presented by cello and contrabass, while the misty overtones of the violin in the altissimo range create a nuanced timbral atmosphere (see figure 3.3.1-24). Later, in a short overlap between the parts, different instruments are added to intensify the musical experience.

Figure 3.3.1-24 *The Eternal Circle***: Theme and instrumentation**

In the second part of Section II, the orchestration is stronger and fuller. Both the theme and the musical background are presented by a combination of woodwind and strings, while pizzicati on the contrabass replace the percussion for rhythmic emphasis (see figure 3.3.1-25). Later, the sudden appearance of fast semi-quaver tuplets and demisemiquavers performed on piano, flute, and clarinet, assisted by the prominent timpani, push the music into a crescendo.

Figure.3.3.1-25 *The Eternal Circle*: Orchestration, section II, bars 141–145

iii. Section III: Core note F#

The orchestration here moves from sparsity to intensity (see figure 3.3.1-26). It begins with a continuous tone played by piano and timpani, then gradually adds densely arranged strings together with waves that are

delicately played by woodwinds. The dense orchestration, discordant harmonies and overlaid rhythms crisscross together, creating a chaotic musical web.

Sparsity

Intensity

Figure 3.3.1-26 *The Eternal Circle*: Orchestration, section III, sparsity and intensity

iv. Section IV: Core note high C

The overall shape here is the opposite of **Section III**; in a process of deconstruction, the orchestration moves from intensity to sparsity. The theme is presented three times, each with a specific orchestrational flavour.

The first thematic occurrence is exuberant, expressed on the woodwinds, coordinated with continuous harmonies played powerfully on strings (see figure 3.3.1-27).

Figure 3.3.1-27 *The Eternal Circle*: Orchestration, section IV, bars 181–189

The second occurrence of the theme is a gentle declaration, performed on woodwinds with lyrical arpeggios on cello and piano; the

sustained musical background is created by the violin and contrabass (see figure 3.3.1-28).

Figure 3.3.1-28 *The Eternal Circle*: **Orchestration, section IV, bars 190–197**

Finally, the theme appears a third time as a romantic lyrical melody, heard polyphonically on the cello and piano with occasional informal contributions from violin and contrabass (see figure 3.3.1-29).

Lyrical

Figure 3.3.1-29 *The Eternal Circle*: Orchestration, section IV, bars 198–202

v. Section V: Core note Bb

The bass of the piano dominates this section, accompanied by glides in the string instruments. The woodwinds' high tones supply occasional

rhythmic embellishments. Finally, the pianissimo timpani supports the gradually diminishing strings (see figure 3.3.1-30).

Figure 3.3.1-30 *The Eternal Circle*: Orchestration, section V, bars 217–229

In addition to characterising each of the sections, I used orchestration to emphasise the sectional boundaries of the work (see figure 3.3.1-31). I deliberately increased the orchestration to maximum strength at the junction between sections IV and V**,** creating an abrupt "halt" effect before the next section: a crescendo building to a barely audible downward glissando played by the first violin. By this means I create the auditory experience of a "Vertical Boundary" for the listeners.

Figure 3.3.1-31 *The Eternal Circle*: Orchestration, section V, bars 198–203

3.3.1.2 *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

The motifs of *The Eternal Circle* were produced by applying *Deconstruction and Reconstruction* to the thrice-repeated refrain of a well-known Guqin piece *Yangguansandie—a song of farewell with a thrice-repeated refrain* (阳关三叠). The core idea was extracted from the final phrase (see figure 3.3.1-32); this is a kind of compositional DNA and contains the core notes of four sections of this work. Then my musical themes were built by deconstructing and then recombining the pitches in the core motif (see figure 3.3.1-33).

Yangguansandie (阳关三叠)

D - A - C

C - G - Bb

Figure 3.3.1-32 *The Eternal Circle:* **The formation of the core motif**

Core motif

Motif

Theme I.

Theme II.

Figure 3.3.1-33 *The Eternal Circle:* **The transformation of (core) motifs into themes**

In order to increase the sonic range, I derived the note F# from a sequence of ascending perfect fifths; this was then added to the core sequence (see figure 3.3.1-34). From the resulting five notes I built both the individual themes and the general components of the musical landscape.

The sequence of ascending perfect fifths: C - G - D - A - E - B - (F#)
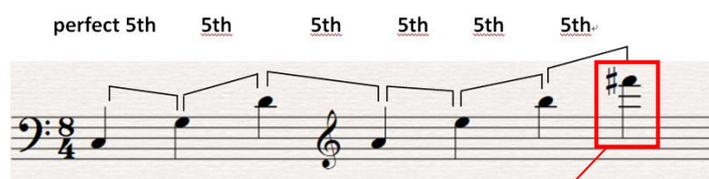
The completed motif: C - G – F# - High C - Bb
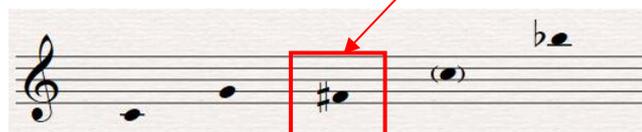
Figure 3.3.1-34 *The Eternal Circle:* **The completed motif**

I. The *Deconstruction and Reconstruction* **of the core motif to produce themes**

Theme I: C - G - Bb - G - F - G - D

Figure.3.3.1-35 *The Eternal Circle:* **Core notes of Theme I**

The interval content of theme I is show in figure 3.3.1-35. It was generated by composing instinctively with the intervals of the core motif. It can be divided into three parts. The first two were obtained from transformations of the interval sequence **C - G – Bb** (see figure 3.3.1-36)**.**
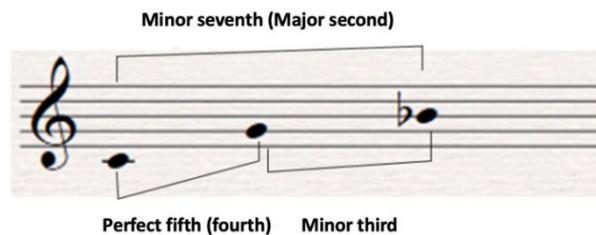
Figure 3.3.1-36 *The Eternal Circle:* **C - G - Bb (Core motif)**

As shown in the figure, we can extract the perfect fifth (perfect fourth), the minor seventh (major second), and the minor third from this three-pitch sequence. These intervals account for all the pitches that occur in the theme (see figure 3.3.1-37).
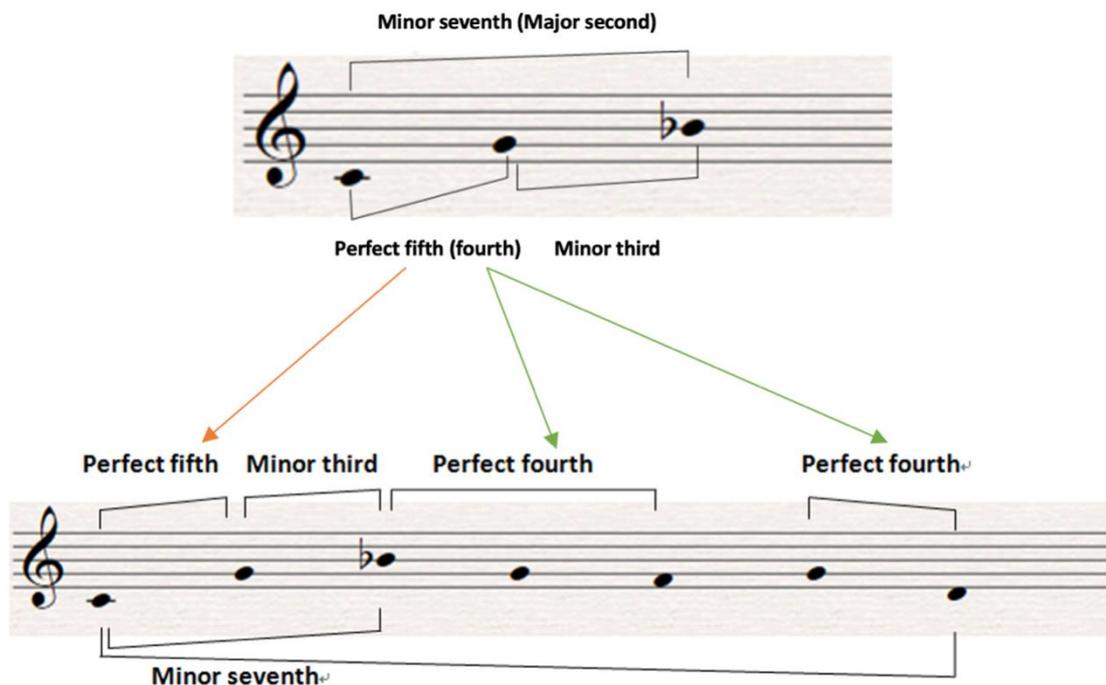
Figure 3.3.1-37 *The Eternal Circle:* The formation of Theme I

Although this may seem systematic, in reality my construction of pitch organisation and rhythm are purely instinctive. As mentioned in sections 2.1 (My Views of Musical Style) and 3.2 (Integrating Programmes), I rely continuously on my inner hearing and the integration of different programmes to reach my compositional goals.

The last phrase of the theme was directly suggested by the thrice-repeated refrain of *Yangguansandie (阳关三叠)* (see figure 3.3.1-38)*.* As the music came to its climax, I intuitively presented this twice, so the music would echo and linger in the audience's imagination.

The origin melody in "阳关三叠" *(Yangguansandie)*

A transformed presentation in *The Eternal Circle*

Figure 3.3.1-38 *The Eternal Circle:* The transformation of thrice-repeated refrain in *Yangguansandie*

Theme II. Eb - Bb - Db - B - C - G

Figure 3.3.1-39 *The Eternal Circle:* Theme II.

Theme II is shown in figure 3.3.1-39. It is made possible by the addition of F# to the core motif, which increases the potential for thematic development because it generates the appearance of semitones and tri-tones. The formative process that led to Theme II is shown in figure 3.3.1-40.

Originates from Theme I: C - G - F# - Bb

Figure 3.3.1-40 *The Eternal Circle:* **The formation of Theme II**

II. The *Deconstruction and Reconstruction* of themes to produce musical backgrounds

Deconstruction and reconstruction were also used to create background sonic patterns: **"lines"** (incuding both straight lines and waves) and **"points."** See the discussion of "sonic backgound," above, where I explain that **"lines"** and **"points"** are my way of "visualising" sonic

characteristics, effects. and functions. In that discussion I treated "waves" as a separate category; in what follows I treat "waves" as a variant of "lines."

a. The formation of "lines"

In the acoustic background of *The Eternal Circle*, "lines" can refer either to a continuous tone or to a wave-like pattern that recurs regularly and includes different pitches. Both are produced by the deconstruction and reconstruction of the pitches contained in Themes I and II.

"Straight lines" most commonly appear as extended versions of the core pitch C in Section I (A) (see figure 3.3.1-41).
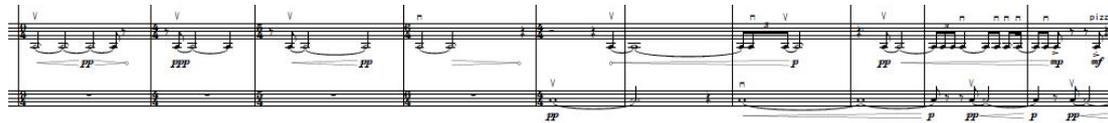
Figure 3.3.1-41 *The Eternal Circle:* "Straight lines," example 1

However, "straight lines" also dominate the following sections, where they result from a durational extension of a specific note taken from the core motif (see figure 3.3.1-42).

Figure 3.3.1-42 *The Eternal Circle:* "Straight lines," example 2

The straight-line, sustained tones can also be inflected by rhythmic repetition, such as in the flute part in bars 4 and 8. Thus the rhythm is enlivened while maintaining the "straight-line" auditory effect (see figure 3.3.1-43):

Figure 3.3.1-43 *The Eternal Circle:* "Straight lines," example 3

More broadly, straight linear patterns can also include glides between different pitches. See, for example, figure 3.3.1-44, which reproduces the Violin II part from bars 21 to 23.

Figure 3.3.1-44 *The Eternal Circle:* **"Straight lines," example 4**

The pitches here include both C and G from the core motif. These were distributed in different pitch ranges and connected by a glissando, thus producing a gliding effect that remains, in a certain way, linear. Later in bar 23, I added a repeated sustained tone. This typifies the process by which I designed varying, flexible "lines."

A related sustained form, "waves," can best be described as a continuous, undulating rhythm applied to varying pitches that are produced by the deconstruction and reconstruction of intervals taken from the motifs.

For example, the timpani part at the beginning of bar 8 of in Section I(A) exemplifies a "long wave" pattern (see figure 3.3.1-45). It is comprised of two notes (C and Bb), extracted from the core motif (C - G - Bb).

Figure 3.3.1-45 *The Eternal Circle:* **A "long wave" pattern**

"Short waves" are more obviously ornamental; in the clarinet part in bars 18-19, a "short-wave" pattern is inserted into a "straight line (see figure 3.3.1-46). The pitches were taken directly from Theme II.
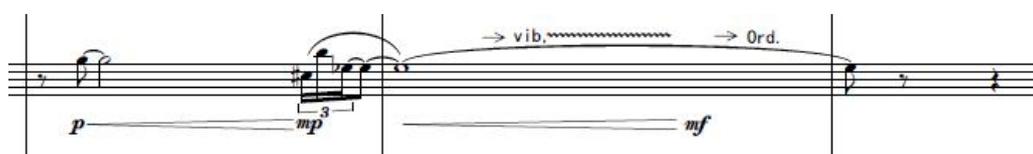
Figure 3.3.1-46 *The Eternal Circle:* **An example of "short wave"**

Later, in the piano part in bars 37-39, the added pedal increases the sonic coherence of a "wavy" effect built from the pitch C and spanning five octaves (see figure 3.3.1-47).

Figure 3.3.1-47 *The Eternal Circle:* **A "wavy" effect**

b. The formation of points

In contrast to "lines", "points" are the concrete remains of musical components after the deconstruction of a motif. They provide *The Eternal Circle* with rhythmic strength, timbral variety, and individual tonal emphasis.

For example, in bar 7 of Section I(A), two clarinets separately alternate rapidly across one or two octaves with the pitch C (see figure 3.3.1-48). This is

a very elemental instance of rhythmic reconstruction based on the deconstructed single tones of the core motif.
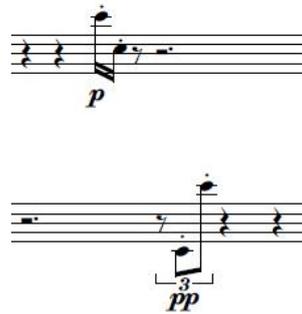
Figure 3.3.1-48 *The Eternal Circle:* "Points," example 1

The "points" in figure 3.3.1-48 are primarily timbral effects. Elsewhere, in bars 15-17, demisemiquaver "points" in the strings, woodwinds, and piano, accompanied by timpani, serve to enhance the rhythmic sense by emphasising each beat in the sustained tone (see figure 3.3.1-49).

Figure 3.3.1-49 *The Eternal Circle:* "Points," example 2

A third example occurs in bars 83-120, where the drumming quavers on timpani, supported by staccati on the piano, are variants of Theme II (see figure 3.3.1-50).

Piano

Timpani

Figure 3.3.1-50 *The Eternal Circle:* **"Points," example 3**

All the pitches in the rhythmic accompaniment here derive from the interval structure of the theme. The persistant pitches in the points help establish the dynamic conflict that charaterises the music of this section.

c. The formantion of musical landscapes

In a broad sense, the "surface" of the music, which consistutes a kind of musical landscape, is also accomplished by the deconstruction and reconstruction of musical materials. The "points" in the sonic background of this piece act to control the rhythm. They are produced by direct employment or superposition of the thematic motifs. "Lines" are formed by the extensional duration of "points", expressed in sustained tones. Themes are also presented in linear form and can best be described as a combination of the continuously evolving "points" and "lines."

"Surface" here refers to an acoustic atmosphere. It can be broken down into musical blocks of varying duration, each of which is composed of points and lines (including musical landscapes and themes) that are inflected by orchestration and the overall tone of the passage. In bars 43-46, for example, because the "wavy" pattern is heard in several instruments

simultaneously, a "surface-like" sonic effect occurs both visually and aurally (see figure 3.3.1-51).

Figure 3.3.1-51 *The Eternal Circle:* **A "surface-like" sonic effect**

A more complex instance appears at the climax (bars 182–189), where the theme, heard on two flutes, is supported by a musical background composed of "wavy" patterns on two clarinets and "straight lines" in the strings. This creates three distinct sonic levels (see figure 3.3.1-52).

Figure 3.3.1-52 *The Eternal Circle:* A "surface" made up of three distinct sonic levels

A similar passage occurs after bar 202, in the coda. Here the string glissandi alternate with "points" or "lines" in different instrumental parts (see figure 3.3.1-53). This is a typical musical "surface" that is created by the addition of various sonic patterns.

Figure 3.3.1-53 *The Eternal Circle:* A "surface" created by the addition of various sonic patterns

As the coda continues, in bar 207 "wavy" piano patterns are added; these form a contrasting auditory effect of simultaneous "wavy" and "linear" activity (see figure 3.3.1-54).

Figure 3.3.1-54 *The Eternal Circle:* A "surface" made from simultaneous "wavy" and "linear" activity

To summarize, it is evident that *The Eternal Circle* is an organic application of deconstruction and reconstruction theory in several ways: first,

elements from a musical source are remade into a basic motif; second, that motif is remade into more extended themes; third, the themes and motifs are deconstructed into "lines" and "points"; fourth, these lines and points are extended into waves and landscapes; and finally, the musical "surface" is made by deconstructing and reconstructing all of the previously generated material.

Conclusion

In **The Eternal Circle**, the structural methodology is not limited to a predetermined path, nor is deconstruction and reconstruction pattern limited to to mere mechanical calculations. All these "abstract" musical concerns are tied to "real" concepts or images. Thus, for example the glissandi at the end of the piece are my personal depiction of a solitary girl who unexpectedly appeared in my dreamscape. In conveying this experience, I sought an empathetic understanding with this lonely figure, attempting to express her feelings through my own eyes, tapping into my sub-conscious, a stream of glides spilt onto my score in a spontaneous meteor-like outpouring. Yet, at the same time, I can return to my composition and see that this same passage results very clearly from the repeated application of a very limited set of procedures. That is, in analysing my creative process, I have come to realise that a full awareness of *Deconstruction and Reconstruction* can also help me to describe rationally what is at first an instinctive use of my own, idiosyncratic musical vocabulary and methodology.

3.3.2 *That Day*

Duration: approx. 28 minutes

First edition: May 2020 – August 2020

Revised edition: October 2021

That Day is a contemporary narrative piece for solo *Sanxian*, inspired by the well-loved poem "信徒" ("Believer"). My research led me to the tale of the Sixth Dalai Lama (Cang Yang Jia Cuo), a tragic love story in which he boldly challenges secular shackles in order to purse his inner calling. Inspired by this, I structured the work by means of a music narrative (please refer to section 3.2, Integrating Programmes) and conceived individually the pitch figures, timbral effects, and dynamic variations in each section.

3.3.2.1 Structure

Narrative Structure

The structure of this work is a musical narrative derived from five fictional scenes that depict the inner emotional life of Cang Yang Jia Cuo (see Table 8). For an explanation of the details, please refer to Section 3.2 (Integrating Programmes). Guided by my sense of the narrative, I assigned each of the five scenes a corresponding tempo before starting to write. From table 8 it is evident that the tempi not only correspond with the scenarios but also result in a five-part structure: **A - B - A - B - A.** The musical atmosphere of the adagio sections is comparably abstract, corresponding to the protagonist's circumstances and mental state. The allegro sections are relatively concrete, emphasising the narrative development of the music.

Sections	I.	II.	III.	IV.	V.
Theme	*Meditation*	*Pursuit*	*Illusion*	*Reality*	*Purity*
Characteristics	Abstract	Concrete	Abstract	Concrete	Abstract
Scenarios	*He meditates in the temple*	*He pursues his inner voice*	*A romantic, illusory "Pas de deux"*	*Cruel reality*	*A realisation of one's true destiny*
Tempi	1=66	1=116-122	1=66;150; 25-28; 132	1=132	1=60-66
Bars	1-58	59-227	228-330	331-392	393-440

Table 8. *That Day:* Narrative structure

Acoustic Structure

I divided the sonic "form" of this piece into four types of "musical landscape" and a single "musical theme" (see table 9). As the artistic conception of this work is relatively abstract, only in Section V (Purity) is the predominant theme fully realised. Elsewhere in the piece the boundaries between theme and sonic background are deliberately blurred.

Musical landscape				Musical theme	
Appoggiaturas followed by long tones	*Long sustained tones*	*Continuous small dotted notes and segments*	*Wavy protracted sounds*	Segmental or suggestive in Sections I - IV	Complete in Section V

Table 9. *That Day:* Acoustic structure

a. Musical landscapes

Four patterns are used to create the musical landscapes.

(1) Appoggiaturas followed by long tones:

"Long tones" here include both sustained single tones and intervals and also single pitches that are repeated with increasing and decreasing speed. These are punctuated with appoggiaturas frequently in the adagio sections to express the distinctive musical mood of a specific passage (see figure 3.3.2-1).
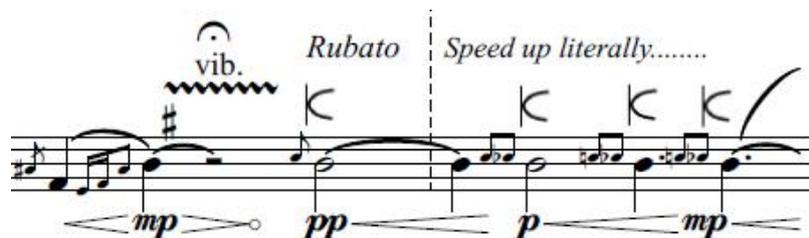
Figure 3.3.2-1 *That Day:* **Appoggiaturas followed by long tones**

(2) Long sustained tones:

Homophonic tones and glides constituted of single notes, intervals, or chords are used mainly to connect passages in both adagio and allegro sections (see figure 3.3.2-2).

Figure 3.3.2-2 *That Day:* **Long sustained tones**

(3) Continuous dotted notes or syncopations:

Dotted notes or syncopation are widely used in the allegro sections in order to convey the sense of a dramatic horseback ride (see figure 3.3.2-3).

Figure 3.3.2-3 *That Day:* **Continuous dotted notes or syncopations**

(4) Wavy protracted sounds:

These sounds are produced by a performance technique and acoustic effect that is unique to *Sanxian*: each time a string is plucked it is followed by a wavy or fluctuating pattern, allowing the sound to linger in a listener's ear (see figure 3.3.2-4). These naturally connect separate pitches by a kind of echo-tone; the sonic effect is illusory and floating, and it is widely used in the adagio sections .

Figure 3.3.2-4 *That Day:* **Wavy protracted sounds**

b. The musical theme

Figure 3.3.2-5 *That Day:* **Complete, "clean" theme**

In figure 3.3.2-5 can be seen a complete, "clean" presentation of the entire musical theme. This is entirely realised only in Section V (Purity); Sections I–IV are more illusory, with the theme subtly suggested but not yet fully realised. In both Section I (Meditation) and Section III (Illusion), the theme is partially and ambiguously revealed but heard only in the timbral background (see figure 3.3.2-6).

The theme in Section I

The theme in Section III

The theme in Section V

Figure 3 3.2-6 *That Day:* **The theme in Sections I, III, and V**

I. Timbres

The timbral aspects of *That Day* were created specifically to exploit the flexibility of the *Sanxian*. After a detailed study the instrument, I realised that it was characterised primarily by its versatile and flexible playing techniques and by the length of the sound created by each articulation.

Thus, in the abstract sections (adagio), I explored fully its protracted tones; in the concrete sections (allegro), I generally emphasised its prominent attacks, accomplished not only by conventional string-plucking but also by extended techniques: knocking on the strings, playing under the bridge, and precise notation of performance locations (see figure 3.3.2-7).

Figure 3.3.2-7 *That Day:* Timbral characteristics in abstract and concrete sections

The timbres in the abstract sections are created by the use of protracted tones, overtones, pianissimo finger-rotating, finger-shaking, and medium and large tremolos. In addition, by transferring techniques, I produced new timbral nuances; these were achieved by linking various patterns of individual fingerings: for instance, connecting the protracted tones after an attack, finger-rotating after a tremolo, or strumming after a slide (see figure 3.3.2-8).

Figure 3.3.2-8 *That Day:* Transferring techniques to create new timbres

The timbres in the concrete sections favour strength over subtlety: monophonic tremolos, repeated strumming, continuous finger-rotating, and so on. These create strong dramatic transitions when they are coupled with extreme changes in dynamic (see figure 3.3.2-9).

Figure 3.3.2-9 *That Day:* Strong timbres with extreme changes in dynamic

II. Dynamics

Indeed, dynamics throughout correspond closely to the timbres used. The abstract phrases are generally pianissimo (see figure 3.3.2-10).

Section I: "Meditation"

Section III: "Illusion"

Section V: "Purity"

Figure 3.3.2-10 *That Day:* **Dynamics in abstract phrases**

An exception occurs in the middle of Section I, where the dynamics enhance several dramatic moments. These correspond to scenarios in the narrative, increasing the musical tension and smoothly connecting the music to Section II (see figure 3.3.2-11).

Figure 3.3.2-11 *That Day:* Dynamics enhancing dramatic moments in Section I.

In contrast, the dynamics in the concrete sections are usually forte (see figure 3.3.2-12).

Section II: "Pursuing"

Section IV: "Reality"

Figure 3.3.2-12 *That Day:* **Dynamics in the concrete phrases**

3.3.2.2 *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

The initial motif of *That day* is: **G - A - C - (C#) - D**, which I rearranged to form the introduction (see figure 3.3.2.-13).
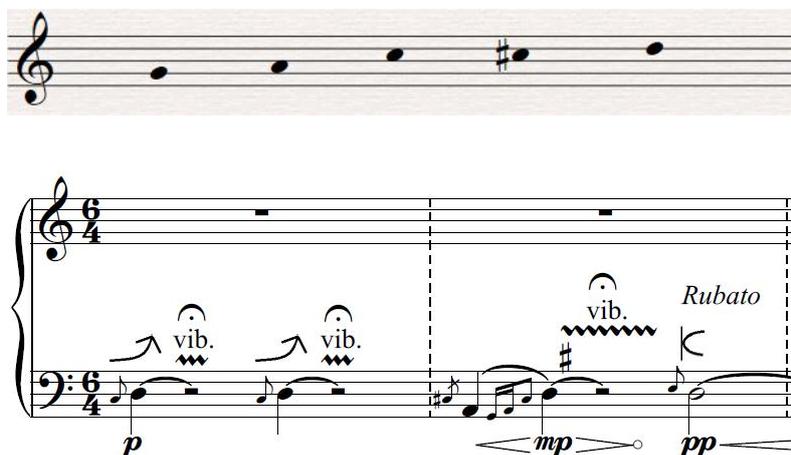
Figure 3.3.2-13 *That Day:* The initial motif, rearranged in the introduction

In the initial motif, the interval between the first and last notes is a perfect fifth. By superposing fifths, as is well known, all the pitches in the twelve-note scale can be derived (see figure 3.3.2.-14).

G - D - A - E - B - F# - C# - G# - D# - A# - F - C - (G)

Figure 3.3.2-14 *That Day:* Superimposed fifths and the chromatic scale

Consistent with my desire for a simple and transparent mode of composing, , I intuitively infused the theme with chromatic pitches (see figure 3.3.2-15

Figure 3.3.2-15 *That Day:* The theme with chromatic infusion

I. The *Deconstruction and Reconstruction* of pitch

The *Sanxian*'s most representative feature is its ability to create long, pedal-like lingering sounds that can be inflected in various ways. Inspired by this, I presented the thematic pitches as stressed beats or core notes, with other pitches and intervals associated with weaker beats, appoggiaturas, and glides. I increased the "illusory" sense of the music by varying the semitones and adding after-tones *(余音)*, a feature of *Sanxian*'s ornamental subtlety, on the sustained notes and glides, creating a microtonal effect (see figure 3.3.2-16).

Adding trills to the *after-tones*:

The *after-tones* sounded in improvised upwards and downwards glides:
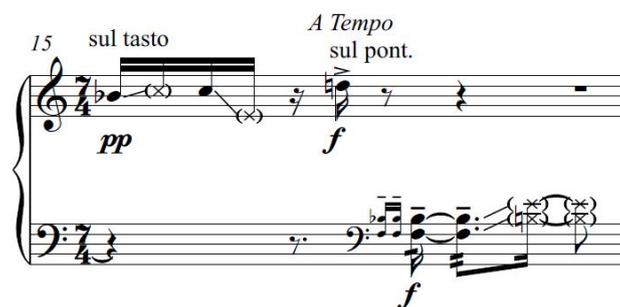
Continuous appoggiaturas:

Figure 3.3.2-16 *That Day: Sanxian*'s ornamentation

This specific sonic form—a concrete pitch coupled with illusory lingering tones—is similar to cursive script in Chinese calligraphy. Cursive script is one of the most well-know forms of Chinese calligraphy and is well known for its unrestrained, free-flowing style. It is notable for its contrast of sparsity and density, which captures the relationship between the illusory and the concrete, the heavy and light, not only revealing a formal beauty, but also reflecting the calligrapher's spiritual feelings. It complements the aesthetic pursuit of ancient Chinese Literati.[284] Figure 3.3.2-17 depicts the cursive script "A Celebration Post" ("节日帖"),[285] written by Xizhi Wang (A.D 303-361) a famous calligrapher during the Eastern Jin Dynasty)

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[284] "*Literati Music*, constitutes the whole of Chinese traditional music with palace music, religious music and folk music. It refers to the traditional music created or participated by intellectuals with high cultural accomplishment in the past dynasties. It mainly includes Qin Music and Ci poetry music. (在中国音乐发展史上，文人音乐与宫廷音乐，宗教音乐，民间音乐共同组成了中国古代音乐的整体架构. 文人音乐主要是指由具有相当文化层次和素养的士大夫阶层参与创作或者传播的传统音乐，其主要分为琴乐和词调音乐)." Meiling Liang, "On The *Literati Music* in Ancient China (浅谈中国古代的文人音乐)," *中国论文网: 政治论文*, https://m.xzbu.com/1/view-15069038.htm

[285] "王羲之草书欣赏 '节日帖'," *书法欣赏*, accessed Nov 8th, 2012, http://www.yac8.com/news/8060.html
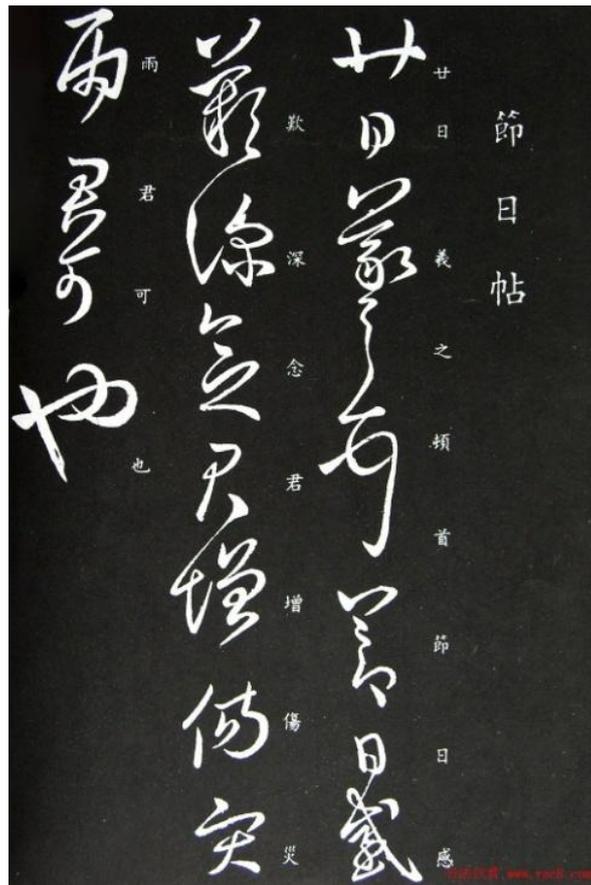
Figure 3.3.2-17 "A Celebration Post (节日帖)," as written by Xizhi Wang

II. The *Deconstruction and Reconstruction* of rhythm
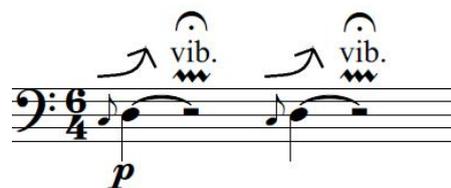
Figure 3.3.2-18 *That Day:* A rhythmic motif in bar 1

Figure 3.3.2-18 shows a rhythmic motif that I transformed into related material by using deconstruction and reconstruction. The elements of the motif are an appogiatura, a sustained tone, and an ornament. The appogiatura and the extended tone can be assigned specific rhythmic values; or the order can be reversed, so that an appogiatura-like gesture follows the sustained tone. Figure 3.3.2-19 illustrates some of the rhythmic patterns that can be reconstructed by adjusting the values and the order.

Figure 3.3.2-19 *That Day:* Reconstructed rhythmic patterns

The appogiatura can also be extended by adding more notes; or it can be moved, so that it is inserted into an extended tone or a phrase (see figure 3.3.2-20).

Adding to the number of decorative notes:

Inserting the decorative notes into a phrase:
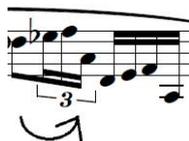
Figure 3.3.2-20 *That Day:* Two further ways to construct new rhythmic patterns

More generally, the motif in figure 3.3.2-18 can be separated into two components: the ornament and the sustained tone. In this general sense, the category of "ornaments" here includes all the *after-tones (余 音),* appoggiaturas, and short notes in this piece. The sustained tones include all the concrete sounds lasitng more than a certain duration. The two form a hybrid—part ornament, part sustained tone—in the use of playing techniques. The following techniques are arranged from slow to fast according to the speed of the action performed.

i. *Finger-shaking (摇指):* A single tone based performing method.

With one finger oscillating the strings in a pendulum-like movement, a coherent sound is formed. The timbre is relatively soft and clear but with a certain driving force, though contact with the string is comparably light. For example, in bars 2-3 (see figure 3.3.2-21), the sonic effect is gentle but with driving power.

Figure 3.3.2-21 *That Day*: Finger-shaking

ii. *Strumming (滚奏/"长毛"):* A relatively concrete, clear technique that can be applied to single tones, intervals, and chords.

Played with a greated degree of string contact, performers can adjust the dynamic by changing the range of their motion. For example, in bars 9-10, the acoustic effect is altered by moving from light strumming to vigorous playing; the result is a musical journey from pianissimo to fortissimo (see figure 3.3.2-22).

Figure 3.3.2-22 *That Day*: Strumming

iii. *Finger-rotating (摇指):* A technique that can be used on single tones, intervals, or chords as adapted by using three, four or five fingers.

The degree of string contact can be either high or low. The timbre is rich and delicate, the sonic effect relatively "abstract" with a flexible control of dynamics. Figure 3.3.23 offers bars 17-19 as an example: The continuous glides performed by finger-rotating produce a flexible dynamic variation, the gradually decreasing rotation at the end of the passage forming a diminishing auditory effect.

Figure 3.3.2-23 *That Day*: **Finger-rotating**

Because of the natural versatility of *Sanxian*, different playing techniques and musical figures naturally produce rhythmic variations. This is especially true when the techniques above are combined into a sequence. Thus, the overall rhythmic shape of *That Day* varies instinctively and gradually, with many smooth changes of tempo and timbre.

iv. A gradual increase in tempo

From the seventh beat in bar 16 through bar 18, a seamless connection between strumming and finger-rotating creates an auditory illusion of acceleration (see figure 3.3.2-24).

Figure 3.3.2-24 *That Day:* Seamless connection between strumming and finger-rotating

Similarly In bars 31-32, pitch variations in the lingering conclusion of protracted tones leads naturally to a quickening of tempo (see figure 3.3.2-25).

Figure 3.3.2-25 *That Day:* Pitch variation of the protracted tones

v. A gradual decrease in tempo

In the last beat of bar 21, the lingering *after-tone* disappears organically, thus causing a natural decrease in tempo (see figure 3.3.2-26).

Figure 3.3.2-26 *That Day:* A lingering sound and decreasing tempo

In bar 264 a gradual transition from finger-rotating to left-hand trill also results in gradually slowing down the speed (see figure 3.3.2-27).
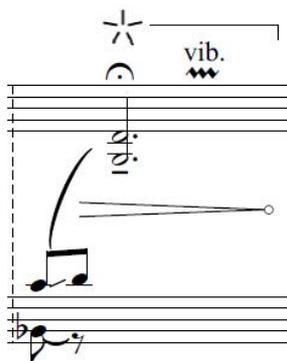
Figure 3.3.2-27 *That Day:* **A shift from finger-rotating to left-hand trill slows the perceived speed**

III. Timbral variation

In my opinion, a notable advantage of *Sanxian* is found in the enriched timbres permitted by the flexibility of performance on the instrument. In *That Day*, I applied that flexibility in at least five different ways.

i. Timbral shifts from clear, high-density sounds to softer, silkier sounds

The transition in bar 14 from string-plucking to string-picking produces a crystal-like effect that contrasts with the previous clearly sounded pitches (see figure 3.3.2-28).

Figure 3.3.2-28 *That Day:* **Timbral shift from clear to silky, example 1**

Similarly, in bars 389-392, fierce strumming of a single tone is gradually transformed   into relaxed, conventional strumming and then into an atmospheric effect in which   the left hand brushes the strings, slowly disappearing (figure 3.3.2-29).

Figure 3.3.2-29 *That Day:* **Timbral shift from clear to silky, example 2**

ii. Timbral shifts from soft, silky sounds to clear, high-density sounds

In bars 42-43, the timbre grows from a faint echo to a clear, present sound, suggesting a photographic lens that gradually comes into focus (see figure 3.3.2-30).

Figure 3.3.2-30 *That Day:* **Timbral shift from silky to clear, example 1**

A similar change occurs in bars 393-403: a gradual transition from illusory sounds to a concrete ones is accomplished by a shift of technique from plucking *(拨弦) to* finger-rotating and finger-shaking. This is enhanced by the use of mutes *(哑弹)* and playing "under the bridge," both new techniques I have employed to extend the timbral diversity of *Sanxian*.

Figure 3.3.2-31 *That Day:* Timbral shift from silky to clear, example 2

iii. Interweaving one timbre with another.

In bars 277-279 I have attempted to interweave *Sanxian*'s overtones (a crystal-like sound) with sustained notes (higher density sounds played by

finger-rotating). I hoped this way to superimpose a series of timbral layers to create a sonic effect (see figure 3.3.2-32).

Figure 3.3.2-32 *That Day:* **Interweaving one timber with another**

iv. Separating diverse timbres for individual development

In contrast to interweaving timbres, in many parts of Section II & III, I concentrate entirely on one particular timbre for fuller development. This both maintains the timbral coherence of a specific phrase or section and leaves

more space for other materials to be developed. Figure 3.3.2-33 illustrates three such passages.

A sharp, percussion-like sound created by *Sanxian*'s "under the bridge" performance:

A crystal-like percussive sound played by *Sanxian*'s overtones:

A fortissimo percussive sound created by continuous plucking and strumming:

Figure 3.3.2-33 *That Day:* Three examples of a fuller development of specific timbral effects

v. combining timbres freely

Having developed timbres individually and separately, one can then combine them to create a climax (see figure 3.3.2-34).

Figure 3.3.2-34 *That Day:* **Combining timbres in a climax**

Conclusion

That Day is based on a narrative, but the musical material is deconstructed and reconstructed from minimal motifs that allow a full exploration of the distinctive sonic effects of the *Sanxian*. I became gradually more familiar with the mysteries of this ancient instrument through continuous communication with my performers in the process of rehearsals, and this informed the refinement of my ideas.

As I review my entire writing process, I realise that many specific and distinct timbral qualities of this work lie beyond mathematical and linguistic description. They were naturally and intuitively chosen through a practical process of writing that was modified for specific musical segments or performance techniques. Creating this work sparked my interest in further exploring the timbral diversity of *Sanxian*.

3.3.3 *So Close, Yet So Far Away*

Duration: approx. 13 minutes

First edition: Nov 2019 – Jan 2020

Revised edition: September 2020

So Close, Yet So Far Away is a clarinet solo composed in the winter of 2019. Before writing, I structured the different sections of the work to correspond to different impressions that had been stimulated by my life experiences. I conceived the pitches, timbres, and tempo of each section to illustrate the specifics of my daily routine.

The planning also entailed extracting four notes from the pentatonic scale to use as the basic motif of the work; this I would deconstruct and recombine to create the main theme. To further enrich the musical landscape, I also applied deconstruction and reconstruction to organise pitch, rhythms, and timbral variations. I also deconstructed the thematic phrases of the work and indirectly revealed them in the musical landscape.

3.3.3.1 Structure

I. Narrative (programme) structure

Guided by my impressions of my daily experience, I structured the work in five sections, corresponding with the fluctuating emotions I experienced each day. (For a detailed description of the programme of this piece, please see section to 3.2: Integrating Programmes.) The tempo structure is based on the narrative structure, since the two are circumstantially inseparable. Table 10 summarises the scenario, characteristics, and tempo of each individual section.

Sections	I	I	III	IV	Coda
Scenario	*The beginning of the path*	*Hasty footsteps on the way*	*Challenges and struggles along the path of my journey*	*The contrast between a hopeful beam of light and the desire to scream*	*The shocking realisation that I am destined to repeat this daily journey*
Characteristics	*Peaceful environment* ← *personal anxiety*	*Urgency*	*Moods that fluctuate with the rolling terrain*	*A secluded village at midnight* ← *extreme fear and anxiety*	*Serenity and surrender to my physical circumstances*
Musical quality	*Struggling towards musical expression*	*Unending motion*	*Forbearance and struggle*	*Collapse and despair*	*Reluctance*
Tempo	Pulse = 60-72	Pulse = 80 *(temporarily slower at* bar 52: pulse = 54)	Pulse = 72 *(temporarily slower at* bar 69: pulse = 36)	Pulse = 66	Pulse = 66
Bars	1-42	43-60	61-88	89-125	126-133

Table 10. *So Close, Yet So Far Away: Narrative* (programme) structure

Section I (bars 1-42): The beginning of the path

Characteristics: A transition between the tranquil landscape and my inherent tension and fear of what lies ahead.

Situation: An expression of my feelings before departure and my dawning unease as I contemplate the long duration of the journey.

Tempo: pulse = 60-72

Section II (bars 43-60): Hasty footsteps on the way

Characteristics: Urgency

Situation: My dogged determination on a seemingly endless journey

Tempo: pulse = 80 (pulse = 54 at bar 52, a temporary dramatic slowdown)

Section III (bars 61-88): Challenges and struggles along the path

Characteristics: Fluctuating moods experienced along with the rolling terrain

Situation: Unavoidable challenges and my inner forbearance and struggles

Tempo: pulse = 72 (pulse = 36 at bar 69, a sudden and dramatic easing of tempo).

Section IV (bars 89-125): A beam of light ahead and my desire to scream.

Characteristics: Rapid transitions between calm and extreme unease.

Situation: The verge of collapse, then a sudden awareness of light in the distance. A glimmer of hope but also desolation at the remoteness of its beam. Despair, then resignation at my circumstances.

Tempo: pulse = 66

Coda (bars 126-133): The chilling realisation that I am destined to repeat this journey day after day.

Characteristics: Serenity and surrender

Situation: Relief at reaching the end of my journey coupled with hopelessness at the knowledge that shortly it will begin again.

Tempo: pulse = 66

II. Rhythmic structure

In this work, the rhythmic structure—that is, the rhythmic characteristics corresponding with each section—can be divided into macro and micro structures (see table 11). The macro structure describes the overall rhythmic characteristics of an entire section; the micro structure describes the rhythmic details or patterns Figures 3.3.3-1 to 3.3.3-5 illustrate the rhythmic qualities of the five structural sections.

Sections	I	II	III	IV	Coda
Macro Structure	Varied Sparse	Consistent Dense	Density ↓ Sparsity	Nuanced Sparse	Density ↓ Sparsity
Micro Structure	Dominated by long tones	Dominated by demisemiquavers	Consistent varying tuplets	Imperceptible increases/decreases in duration	Improvised triplets and long sustained tones

Table 11. *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* Rhythmic structure

<u>**Section I**</u>

Figure 3.3.3-1 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* Rhythmic qualities of Section I

Rhythmic macro structure: Strong rhythmic tension expressed by varied and relatively scattered patterns.

Rhythmic micro structure: Dominated by long tones but supported by contrasting semiquavers, demisemiquavers, or rapid tuplets.

Section II

Figure 3.3.3-2 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Rhythmic qualities of section II**

Rhythmic macro structure: A mixture of consistency and density.

Rhythmic micro structure: Dominated by rapid demisemiquavers but with occasional long tones, quarters, quavers and other less active rhythmic gestures.

Section III

Figure 3.3.3-3 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Rhythmic qualities of section III**

Rhythmic macro structure: A more flexible rhythm than in previous sections; a relatively dense first half is followed by a gradual relaxation.

Rhythmic micro structure: Persistent tuplets gradually disperse with the introduction of dramatic rhythmic changes such as lengthy tones or rapid syncopations.

Section IV

Figure 3.3.3-4 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Rhythmic qualities of section IV**

Rhythmic macro structure: Nuanced, sparse gestures.

Rhythmic micro structure: A smoothly varying effect is created by gradually lengthening or shortening rhythmic durations.

Coda

Figure 3.3.3-5 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Rhythmic qualities of the coda**

Rhythmic macro structure: Varied degrees of rhythmic tension gradually move from dense to sparse.

Rhythmic micro structure: Rhythmic tension created by contrasting demisemiquavers, quarter-note triplets, and long tones.

III. Timbral structure

In addition to melody, harmony, and rhythm, significant musical

tension in a solo piece can be created by using an appropriate timbral structure. An in-depth exploration of the variety of timbres available and a rational plan for employing these grants a solo work additional auditory layers and sonic organisation.

In writing *So Near, Yet So Far*, I investigated different performing techniques on the clarinet, together with the associated dynamic means to create tension even within the constraints of a monophonic composition. I combined these different sounds into individual timbral landscapes that suited the expressive musical requirements of each section. These can be roughly classified in several ways. First, there are two categories that define the transitions between sounds:

The first category: Abrupt changes

This category includes notable, intense changes in the dynamic, sudden timbral changes, or abrupt changes in both dynamics and timbres. The introduction of the work (bars 1-3) is a typical example of my simultaneous use of both techniques (see figure 3.3.3-6).
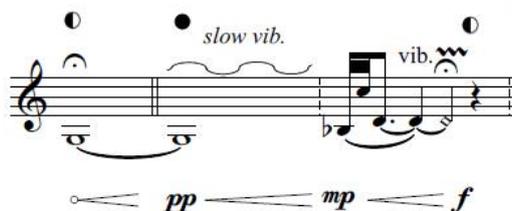
Figure 3.3.3-6 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* Abrupt changes

The second category: Gradual changes

This category includes gradual changes in dynamics or timbres, both tiny and large in scope. For example, in bars 109–115, the timbres express the gradual transformation of a conventional lyric texture into the a narrative of mystery that suggests the initially subconscious sense of light in the distance (see figure 3.3.3-7).

Figure 3.3.3-7 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Gradual changes, example 1**

Another example occurs in the second section, where continuous, rapid dynamic shifts from extreme pianissimo to fortissimo (or vice versa) are supported by technical variations of timbre (see figure 3.3.3-8).

Figure 3.3.3-8 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Gradual changes, example 2**

Timbres may also be classified according to their sonic qualities. Again, there are two categories of sounds:

The first category: Relatively abstract timbral effects

These timbres are generally silky and soft, and they arise from at least three different techniques (see figure 3.3.3-9).

i. Extremely pianissimo

ii. Indefinite pitches

iii. Special performing techniques

Figure 3.3.3-9 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Relatively abstract timbral effects**

The second category: Comparatively stable, solid sonic effects

These timbres are more likely to be loud, and they arise from the converse of the techniques above (see figure 3.3.3-10).

i. Moderate or strong dynamics

ii. Accurately defined pitches

iii. Comparatively conventional performing techniques

Figure 3.3.3-10 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Comparatively stable, solid sonic effects**

By combining and compiling all these characteristics, we can label each section with keywords that supply appropriate descriptions of characteristics and variations of timbre. However, here, as always, composing is not a mechanical activity. The compositional process is not one of either/or decisions. Each section therefore contains several instances of timbres that depart from the intended macroscopic atmosphere. Table 12 uses these keywords to supply a macro description of the timbral characteristics in each section.

Table 12. (See next page)

Sections	I	II	III	IV	Coda
Acoustic variation	*Abrupt shifts; nuances*	*More varied and extreme nuances.*	*Extended and gradual changes; abrupt shifts.*	*Gradually changing nuances* ↓ *More extensive gradual changes*	*Abrupt shifts; nuanced gradual changes*
Timbral characteristics	*Abstract*	*Abstract, hazy*	*Concrete, solid*	*Abstract→Concrete*	*Abstract, dramatic*
Techniques	*Sudden shifts in performing techniques; flexible variations in dynamics*	*Continuous slap tongues + smorzato pianissimo ↓ Fortissimo*	*Transitions between legatos, trills, and key clicks or slap tongues*	*Full melodies ↓ Rapid, dramatic dynamicl changes*	*A shortened reprise of Section I*
Bars	1-42	43-60	61-88	89-125	126-133

Table 12. *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* Timbral structure

Section I

Acoustic variation: Dominated by sudden acoustic changes, with interpolated gradual transformations of amplitude.

Timbral characteristics: Relatively abstract.

Techniques: Frequent sudden changes of technique, including air sounds, slap tongues, overtones, overblowing and other specialist techniques, supported by extreme shifts of dynamic.

Bars: 1-42

Section II

Acoustic variation: Dominated by varying amplitudes of nuances.

Timbral characteristics: Comparatively abstract, illusory.

Techniques: To create strong musical momentum, a continuous use of *smorzato* followed by slap tongue, supported by dynamic shifts from extreme pianissimo to fortissimo.

Bars: 43-60

Section III

Acoustic variation: Dominated by wide-ranged sonic distortions, with interpolated mutations.

Timbral characteristics: Concrete, solid.

Techniques: Essentially continuous transitions between legatos, trills, and key clicks, to create a coherently conflicted effect.

Bars: 61-88

Section IV

Acoustic variation: Dominated by imperceptible distortions that gradually increase in visibility and in the range of transformation.

Timbral characteristics: From abstract to concrete, fluent to exaggerated.

Techniques: Initially (bars 89-95) tranquil in mood, realised by lyrical passages enhanced by trills; thereafter notably more rapid shifts in dynamic,

supported by exaggerated over-blowing to express a scream of anguish.

Bars: 89-125

<u>**Coda**</u>

Acoustic variation: Dominated by gradually, nearly imperceptible mutations.

Timbral characteristics: Abstract and dramatic.

Techniques: Similar to Section but shorter and more compressed.

Bars: 126-133

3.3.3.2 *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

The central motif of *So Close, Yet So Far Away* is taken from a nursery rhyme of my own composition (see figure 3.3.3-11).

Figure 3.3.3-11 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* My nursery rhyme

By deconstructing it through interval calculation, I derived a four-note motif:

G - Bb - C - D

I deconstructed and reconstructed this motif (see figure 3.3.3-12) in the process of writing this piece, applying my method to four large areas: pitch organisation, rhythmic patterns, timbral variations, and musical themes.

Figure 3.3.3-12 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **The central motif**

I.   Deconstruction   and   reconstruction   applied   to   pitch organisation.

a. Treatments of the central motif.

A representative treatment occurs at the start, in bars 1-3, with the four notes distributed in different octaves. The gesture there is presented in variation in bar 29 (see figure 3.3.3-13).
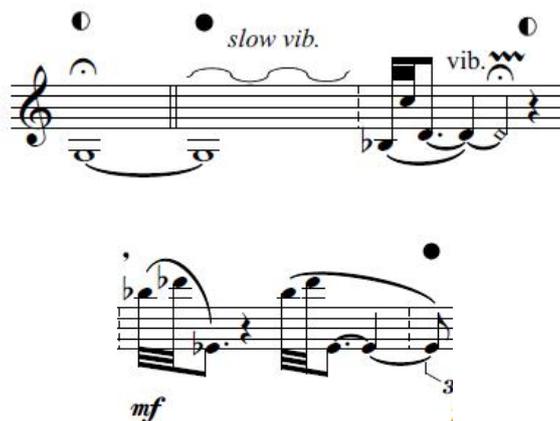
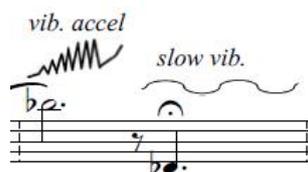**Figure 3.3.3-13** *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **The central motif in bars 1-3 and bar 29**

F - D - C - Bb (The reverse reflection of motif)

In bars 3-4, I presented the motif in inversion, in a different pitch range and in extreme pianissimo, creating a kind of echo of the opening (see figure 3.3.3-14).
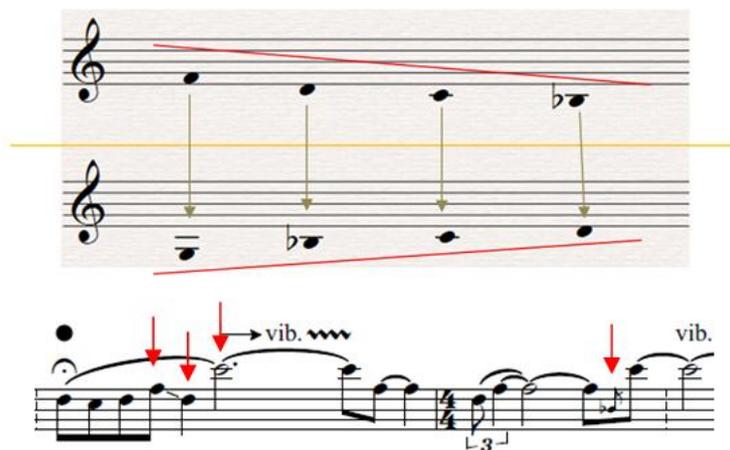
Figure 3.3.3-14 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* Motif in inversion

I extended the inverted motif by adding a minor third after the final Bb, thus producing the Db in bar 7 (see figure 3.3.3-15).

Figure 3.3.3-15 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* the added minor third

The Db forms a semitone with the D that concludes the original motif. This derived interval permits the use of a wider harmonic vocabulary than is generally associated with the Chinese pentatonic scale.

b. Chromatic shifts between passages or sections.

The semitone relationship created by juxtaposing Db with D was widely used to link musical passages or sections in *So Close, Yet So Far Away* (see figure 3.3.3-16). The effect is to weaken the sense of musical mode and tonality, thereby offering the audience greater "imaginary space" within the musical experience.

Figure 3.3.3-16 *So Close, Yet So Far Away*: **Two examples of a semitone link, in bars 19-22 and bars 120-125**

c. Glides and microtones

The semitone link can be transformed into a glide that links two different pitches; in this way, the frequent use of microtones in this work evolves organically. They further enriches the sonic palatte (see figure 3.3.3-17).
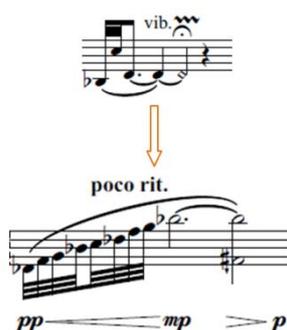

Figure 3.3.3-17 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Glides and microtones**

II. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to rhythmic patterns

The rhythmic pattern produced in bars 1-5 by the motif and its inverse is the source of most of the rhythms found in this piece. The basic rhythmic elements include long tones, brief demisemiquavers, relatively smooth quarter

or half notes, and freely performed triplets. Throughout the work, these are developed through rhythmic deconstruction and reconstruction to create not only continuous, freely performed rhythmic patterns but also abrupt, intense rhythmic events.

For example, the continuous upward demisemiquavers in bar 12 are an extended version of the phrase heard on the first beat of bar 3 (see figure 3.3.3-18).

**Figure 3.3.3-18** *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Continuous upward demisemiquavers**

Similarly, in bars 28-29, lengthy trills followed by two dotted patterns composed of two demisemiquavers and a dotted quaver can be best understood as a retrograde expansion of the same source material (see figure 3.3.3-19). A more free use of retrograde expansion occurs later in the piece (see figure 3.3.3-20)

Figure 3.3.3-19 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Rhythmic retrograde expansion, example 1**
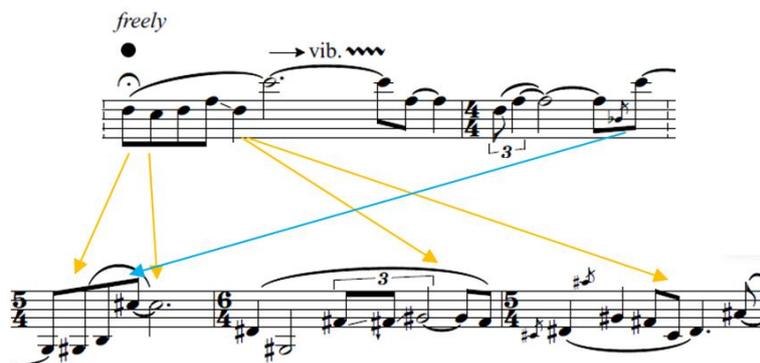
Figure 3.3.3-20 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Rhythmic retrograde expansion, example 2**

Other passages are made by augmentation of the basic rhythmic ideas. The continuous legato quarters, quavers, and triplets in bars 91-93 are an augmentation of similar patterns in bars 4-5 (see figure 3.3.3-21).
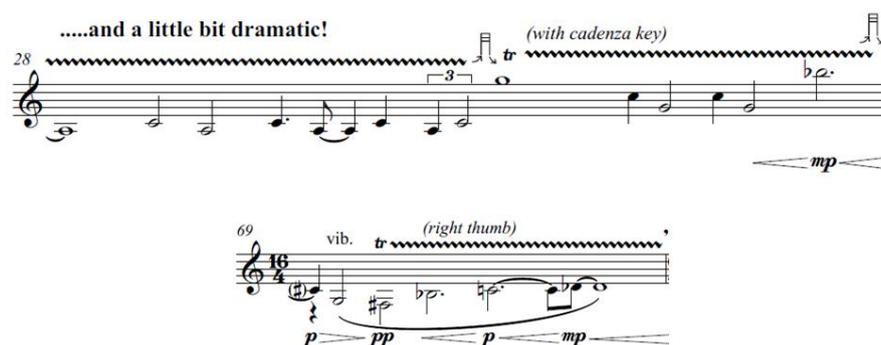
Figure 3.3.3-21 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Augmentation of rhythmic pattern**

Similarly, the appoggiatura-like sonic effect produced by the dotted rhythmic pattern composed of two demisemiquavers followed by a dotted quaver in bar 3 is expanded over time to become the trills that become prominent in the mid-section of the work (for example, bar 28, bar 69, etc.
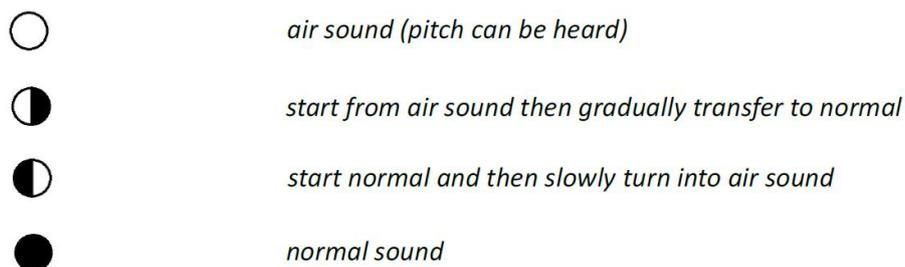
III. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to timbral variations

Timbre plays a non-negligible role in this work. Broadly speaking, I used three types of timbres, though combinations and sequences constitute a
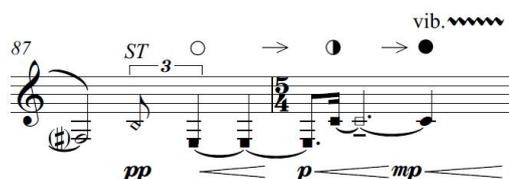
fourth type that is maybe more important in creating timbral effects.

Type 1: Air sounds

These range from air sounds with a faint colouring of pitch through mixed timbres to normal sounds. For these, four different symbols were used (see figure 3.3.3.-22). Often, air sounds are heard in a sequence from no pitch to normal sounds, or vice-versa (see figure 3.3.3-23).


○   *air sound (pitch can be heard)*

◐   *start from air sound then gradually transfer to normal*

◑   *start normal and then slowly turn into air sound*

●   *normal sound*

Figure 3.3.3-22 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* Symbols for air sounds

Figure 3.3.3-23 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* Air sounds in sequence

Type 2: Trills and vibratos

These incude a range of trills, slow vibratos, and vibrato accelerations. Sometimes heard in isolation, these more often occur in sequence (see figure 3.3.3-24).
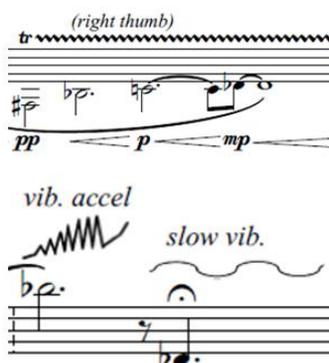
Figure 3.3.3-24 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* Trills and vibratos

Type 3: Special performing techniques

These include key clicks, smorzato, overtones (both single tones and multiphonics), vocalisations, and breath sounds. Diverse notations are used (see figure 3.3.3-25).

Figure 3.3.3-25 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Special performing techniques**

Type 4: Combinations and sequences

Most often, however, the preceding three types of timbres are heard in sequence or in combination, according to the expressive needs of the music (see figure 3.3.3-26).

A sequence of varied vibratos:

A sequence of consistently changing performing techniques:

A combination of vibrato and air sounds:

Air sounds in combination or sequence with other techniques:

A sequence of continuous trills:

A sequence from smorzato to normal sound combined with vibrato:

A sequence mixing slap-tongue and smorzato:

Figure 3.3.3-26 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Timbres in sequence or combination**

IV. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to musical themes

I would like to end this technical summary with a brief thematic analysis. The derivation of the central motif has already been discussed (see figures 3.3.3-11 and 3.3.3-12). But the use of this motif in *So Close, Yet So Far Away* is deliberately non-explicit, existing primarily in the abstract.

The central motif is used most explicitly in Section II, where the initial and fourth phrases of the theme present it to the audience in a

comprehensive use of deconstruction and reconstruction (i.e., extending to pitch, rhythm, and timbre), creating strikingly different musical textures. In bars 43-51, the motif of the theme appears in a sequence of high pitches, which effectively form a separate and distinct instrumental sound. The motif is, however, deliberately subverted by the introduction of a semi-tone at the end. Simultaneously, we encounter its tonal transposition in bars 46–50. Finally, in bar 52 there appears a complete presentation of the fourth phrase of the theme, heard in conjunction with an abrupt diminuendo (see figure 3.3.3-27).

Original motif: G - Bb - C - Db

Its tonal transposition

Bars 46-50

Bar 52

Figure 3.3.3-27 *So Close, Yet So Far Away:* **Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to musical themes**

In this section, then, an entire thematic phrase is repeated and developed by means of tonal transformations. From a technical perspective this is perhaps the best example of use of the creative method I have termed *Deconstruction and Reconstruction.* It was, however, born of my instinctive musicality: a clear, lyrical melody, recombined and deconstructed in order to fully realise my musical sub-conscious.

Conclusion

The structural design of *So Close, Yet So Far Away* was based entirely on a musical narrative. It explored more deeply the use of a solo monophonic instrument, involved multifaceted applications of deconstruction and reconstruction, and opened up to me a path for future practical exploration.

Moreover, collaborating with Jérôme Comte was life-changing. He inspired me to enquire more deeply into traditional concepts of artistic expression and thus to avoid superficial imitation. Since then, I have begun to probe my creative thinking with respect to the musical questions that hang in the air: How can Western musical instruments be used to convey the "lingering" taste characteristic of Chinese art? Is it possible to adequately convey the ancient artistic sensibility revealed in the quotation "余音绕梁三日不绝," which describes metaphorically the reverberating tones in space, the stirring of a musical subconscious, and the space for an audience's silent response? Does history affect this? What are the cultural connotations? Is it possible to reshape such artistically diverse ideas into a form that is acceptable to the Chinese artistic establishment? How is it possible to honour the integrity of differing artistic values?

These questions, which emerged from the writing of *So Close, Yet So Far Away*, have come to form the basis for my further attempts to combine Chinese music sensibilities with Western instruments.

3.3.4 *Marionette*

--a fantasy for solo violin

Duration: approx. 11 minutes

First edition: Mar 2020 - May 2020

Revised edition: July 2020

Marionette was created during the global epidemic in 2020. As witness to so much tragedy, I wrote a song full of melancholy, anger, and confusion but concluding with hope for the future. Based on pictorial stimuli and a musical narrative, I designed the pitch organisation, dynamic changes, and timbral variations according to the musical needs of each section, in order to better describe the marionette, dancing reluctantly in the dark under the control of an invisible force.

By using deconstruction and reconstruction, I enabled a minimal motif of two major-minor seventh chords to gradually shift into relative freedom, especially rhythmically; this, combined with an abundance of contemporary performing techniques on violin, attempted to vividly depict the musical "image" foremost in my mind.

3.3.4.1 Structure

I. Programmatic Structure

The framework of *Marionette* was constructed with reference to the preset figure (the female marionette) and a series of scenes (her various struggles). For a more detailed description, please refer to section 3.2 (Integrating Programmes), above.

Before writing, I roughly summarised the "images" in my mind through the descriptions shown in table 13. These both structure the work and set the tone for each section.

Section	I	II	III	IV	V
Characteristics	*An atmosphere of mystery and gloom*	*A brief elegy*	*A transient elegance*	*Fierce resistance*	*Bitter-sweet melancholy*
Feature	Poetic response	Narrative	Poetic response	Narrative	Poetic response
Scenarios	A barren landscape corresponding to the inner voices of the marionette	The hardships encountered in breaking free of bondage	A reconfiguration of Section I	The distorted physicality of struggling against a controlling force	A second reconfiguration of Section I
Tempo	pulse=66	pulse=102-110	pulse=76	**a.** As fast as possible **b.** pulse=80	pulse=60
Bars	1-32	33-45	46-51	52-85	86-124

Table 13. *Marionette: Programme* Structure

Overall, the descriptions, characteristics, and tempi presented in table 13 conform in a general way to the structure of a five-part song form： **a - b - a - b - a.** However, to more accurately express my inner auditory understanding, the timbres, themes and tempi of this work are not formally based but arise from the arrangement of my desired musical atmospheres and landscapes.

II. Pitch patterns

The pitch patterns in *Marionette* are closely related to the nature of individual sections and can be roughly assigned to two categories: **improvised and conventional**. In general, improvised patterns usually appear in sections of poetic response, while conventional ones appear in narrative sections (see table 14).

Section	I	II	III	IV		V
				A	B	
Pitch patterns	Improvised	Conventional	Improvised	Conventional ↓ Improvised		Improvised

Table 14. *Marionette:* **Pitch patterns**

i. Improvised patterns

My choice of improvised patterns in this work was influenced by both the visual effect of the score and the sonic effect in performance. Working visually, improvised patterns were frequently assembled somewhat randomly and only thereafter organised into specific pitches. This enabled me to create a relatively free auditory effect without obvious constraints.

Figure 3.3.4-1 *Marionette:* Improvised patterns

ii. Conventional patterns

As the term suggests, conventional patterns follow relatively standard, common, and traditional forms. Visually, they are morphologically well-formed and consistent. Their visual shapes are transformed into regular audio output, subjec to a certain restraint.

Figure 3.3.4-2 *Marionette:* Conventional patterns

In each of the sections, pitch material is developed in ways that are consistent with the foregoing observation.

Section I (Poetic): Improvisational

The pitches were chosen freely, often presented with a natural acceleration or deceleration, often enlivened by conjoined *arco* and *pizzicato* sounds, and often melodically or motivically developed in a single musical phrase (see figure 3.3.4-3).

A gradual acceleration:

Conjoined *arco* and *pizzicato*:

Melodic development in a single phrase:

Figure 3.3.4-3 *Marionette:* Pitch patterns in Section I

Section II (Narrative): Conventional

Section II is dominated by continuous semiquavers that depect the unrelenting effort in the narrative (see figure 3.3.3-4).

Figure 3.3.4-4 *Marionette:* Pitch patterns in Section II

Section III (Poetic): Improvisational

Pitches here are relatively sparse, with fluid rhythms that often obscure the bar lines (see figure 3.3.4-5).

Sparse and rhythmically fluid:

Rhythms that obscure the bar lines:

Figure 3.3.4-5 *Marionette:* **Pitch patterns in Section III**

Section IV (Narrative):

<u>**Part A**</u>**. Conventional**

Again continuous semiquavers are written, but now converted into more dense demisemiquavers by the use of measured tremolo (see figure 3.3.4-6).

Figure 3.3.4-6 *Marionette:* **Pitch patterns in Section IV (Part A)**

Part B: **A gradual transformation from conventional to improvisational**

The regular semiquavers gradually yield to more improvisational patterns; or, when they reappear in bars 69-72, timbres and harmonics convey to the audience a somewhat creepy effect (see figure 3.3.4-7).

Figure 3.3.4-7 *Marionette:* **Pitch patterns in Section IV (Part B), example 1**

Thereafter, in bars 72–85, patterns that grow gradually sparser or denser build a bridge to poetic section that follows (see figure 3.3.4-8).

Gradually sparser:

Gradually denser:

Figure 3.3.4-8 *Marionette:* **Pitch patterns in Section IV (Part B), example 2**

Section V (Poetic): Improvisational

Here the pitch patterns resemble those in the first section but are presented with differing and instinctively nuanced, contrasting dynamics. The pitch organisation becomes freer and looser, allowing repetitive, fluctuating melodic lines to emerge, thereby expanding the melodic contours of the first section (see figure 3.3.4-9).

Figure 3.3.4-9 *Marionette:* **Pitch patterns in section V**

III. Timbral Structures

Section I: Abstract, chaotic, nuanced

Frequent, sudden timbral variations are evident in in this section—for example, in bars 3–7 (see figure 3.3.4-10).

Figure 3.3.4-10 *Marionette:* **Sudden timbral variations**

Overall, however, in this section I attempt to seamlessly transform the concrete, natural sounds of the opening into overtones that give a more illusory feeling to the music. I follow this with swift pizzicati in the mid-section, then return to a natural tone, and end with the percussive sounds produced by tapping on the body of the violin. In this transformation, shifts of bowing position help sculpt the timbres in this section (see figure 3.3.4-11).

Figure 3.3.4-11 *Marionette:* **Shifts of bowing position**

Section II: Concrete, distinct

To help create stable and solid timbres in this section, I rely on fast bowing to convey a continuous musical expression (see figure 3.3.4-12). I add occasional pizzicati and shifts of bowing position to provide timbral variation.

Figure 3.3.4-12 *Marionette:* **Fast bowing**

Section III: Abstract, varied

This suddenly dramatic section contains abundant timbral diversity: natural tones, overtones, pizzicati, tapping on the fingerboard or violin body, percussive effects created by stomping on a stool, and more. Frequent

changes of timbre and indefinite pitches combine to create an abstract sonic effect.

Figure 3.3.4-13 *Marionette:* **Timbral diversity**

Section IV: From concrete and clear to abstract and varied

As with the pitch patterns, the timbral qualities of this section differ significantly beween **Part A** and Part **B**.

Part A depicts the marionette's persistent struggle to escape a controlling force. I chose a continuous mode of performance and a reiterative pattern in order to produce timbral stability and solidity (see figure 3.3.4-14).

Figure 3.3.4-14 *Marionette:* **A continuous mode of performance**

In **Part B**, I describe the puppet's escape and collapse as it breaks free from malevolent forces. For this I use swift alternations among overtones, natural sounds, pizzicati, and glides to create a disturbing, distorted sonic effect (see figure 3.3.4-15).

Figure 3.3.4-15 *Marionette:* **A disturbing, distorted sonic effect**

Section V: Abstract, melancholy, dreamy

The timbral atmosphere of this section is similar to that in Section I. In Section I, however, a more prominent use of the musical theme creates a more "linear" acoustic effect. In the final section, to express the coexistence of melancholy and hope in the heart of the protagonist, I linked pizzicati with overtones and/or echoing trills at the end of each phrase (see figure 3.3.4-16).

Figure 3.3.4-16 *Marionette:* **Timbres depict melancholy and hope**

IV. Structural summary

Table 15 summarizes the simple, symmetric structure of this work. The changing musical characteristics of each section enable a smoothly developed process of composition. Simultaneously, the macroscopic division of the work permits greater freedom for detailed tonal design.

Sections	I	II	III	IV	V
Pitch patterns	Free	Conventional	Free	Conventional ➔ Free	Free
Tempo	Slow	Fast	Slow	Very fast ↓ Moderately fast ↓ Slow	Very slow
Timbral characteristics	Abstract and varied	Concrete and consistent	Abstract and varied	Concrete ➔ Abstract	Abstract and varied

Table 15. *Marionette:* Structural summary

3.3.4.2 *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

Deconstruction and reconstruction in this work was primarily applied to pitch organisation and rhythmic patterns. This is evident in the initial passage of the work (see figure 3.3.4-17).

Figure 3.3.4-17 *Marionette:* The initial passage

We can discover **two dominant features** in this passage:

First, **two major-minor seventh chords** (with the fifth lowered), built respectively on D and G constitute the core motif of the pitch organisation (see figure 3.3.4-19).

Chord 1: G - B - Db- F   Chord 2: D - F#- Ab -C

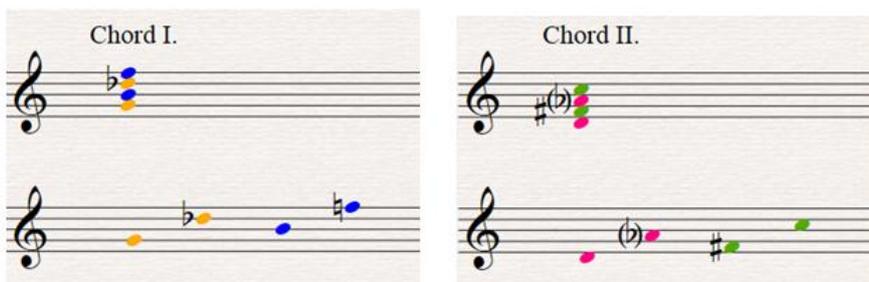**Figure 3.3.4-18 *Marionette:* two major-minor-seven chords**

Secondly, the gradually diminishing rhythmic values are a source of the varied rhythmic forms throughout the work (see figure 3.3.4-19).

Figure 3.3.4-19 *Marionette:* Gradually diminishing rhythmic values

I. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to pitch.

The arithmetic of pitch intervals is a guiding tool in my creative process, roughly standardising the compositional organisation of pitch. Thus, in this case, deconstruction and reconstruction is applied to the intervals of the core motif and is not always applied to the notes themselves.

From the core motif (the two major-minor seventh chords) I derive the pitch organisation of each section. The quality of these two chords is produced by two tritones (see figure 3.3.4-20).

Core motif:

Chord 1: G - bD， B - F   Chord 2: D - A(bA)， #F - C

Figure 3.3.4-20 *Marionette:* **Core motif (vertically and horizontally)**

Moreover, each chord also includes other intervals: major third, major second, and minor seventh.

Major third   **Major second**   **Minor seventh**
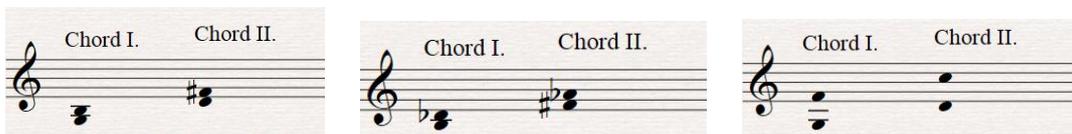
Figure 3.3.4-21 *Marionette:* **The intervals.**

By superimposing the pitches, I gain more options in developing this composition. In effect, I create a "new" scale composed of minor seconds and major thirds by distributing the superimposed chords horizontally (see figure 3.3.4-22).

G - Ab - B - C - C# (Db) - D - F - F# (Gb)
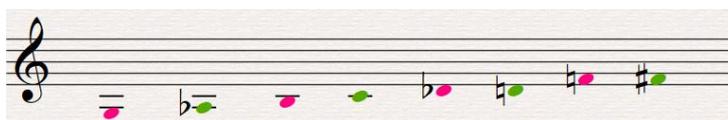
Figure 3.3.4-22 *Marionette:* **Superimposed chords and a "new" scale**

This scale incorporates both sharp auditory effects evoked by dissonant intervals—semitones and tritones—and gentle effects created by relatively harmonious intervals—major thirds, minor thi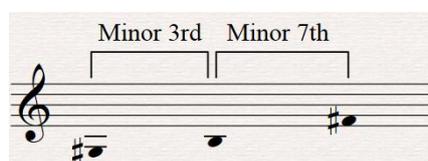rds, pure fifths, and major seconds. I choose among these alternatives according to the individual expressive requirements of each section.

From the above scale, we can extract the minor third and minor seventh to build a relatively bright and harmonious minor seventh chord without the fifth.

G# - B – F#

Figure 3.3.4-23 *Marionette:* The minor seventh chord without the fifth note

The repeated themes in Section III and V of the piece are formed by adding the fifth to this minor seventh chord (see figure 3.3.4-24).

Figure 3.3.4-24 *Marionette:* Adding the fifth to make a theme

Overall, the undulating thematic line, based on the minor seventh chord, represents a glimmer of hope in the dark; and the use of disharmonious intervals (i.e., minor seconds and augmented fourths) brings to the music an uneasy tension and sense of conflict. The use of these ideas is shown below in individual examples extracted from each section.

Section I.

Bar 7 contains a distinctive pattern presented in swift sextuplets and demisemiquavers, a pattern which contains all the intervals in twelve-tone

equal temperament: pure fourth (fifth), major second (minor seventh), augmented fourth (diminished fifth), minor second (major seventh/minor ninth), major third (minor sixth) and minor third (major sixth) (see figure 3.3.4-25). These were produced by applying deconstruction and reconstruction to the pitches of the core motif (see figure 3.3.4-25).
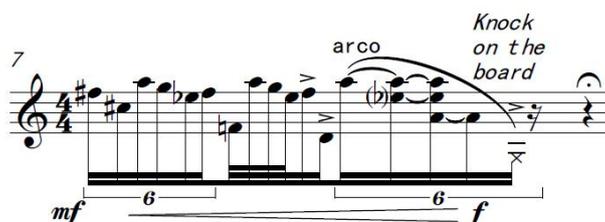
Figure 3.3.4 -25 *Marionette:* **Disharmonious intervals, example 1**

Section II.

In this section, the open G-string functions as a pedal-point; above it, built on the dominant D, a dominant ninth chord is constructed using intervals from the core motif (see figure 3.3.4-26).

(G + D) - F# - A - C - Eb
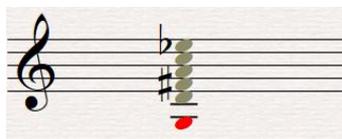
Figure 3.3.4-26 *Marionette:* **Pedal-point G and dominant ninth chord**

The pitch material in Section II mostly uses notes that are present in the dominant ninth chord. These are distributed in different ranges, and extra-chordal notes are occasionally added to enrich the harmonic vocabulary (see figure 3.3.4-27).

Figure 3.3.4-27 *Marionette:* **Disharmonious intervals, example 2**

Section III.

In this section is introduced the principal musical theme (see figure 3.3.4-28).

Figure 3.3.4-28 *Marionette:* **The principal musical theme**

The basic theme is composed of the root, third, and seventh from the minor seventh chord and occupies the first half of this bar. The next two beats of this bar are produced by raising the root by a minor second and lowering the seventh by the same interval (see figure 3.3.4-29). This sudden adjustment evokes an auditory effect of uncertainty.

Figure 3.3.4-29 *Marionette:* **Disharmonious intervals, example 3**

Section IV.

This section introduces discrepancies in the pitch design, offering the audience a contrasting musical experience (see figure 3.3.4-30).

Figure 3.3.4-30 *Marionette:* **Disharmonious intervals, example 4**

Section V.

The pitch organisation here is similar to Section I and includes all the intervals in twelve-tone equal temperament (see figure 3.3.4-31).

**Figure 3.3.4-31** *Marionette:* **Disharmonious intervals, example 4**

However, the full realisation of the theme (the major-minor seventh chords) necessarily entails the use of a relatively simple harmonic vocabulary (see figure 3.3.4-32).

Figure 3.3.4-32 *Marionette:* **A relatively simple harmonic vocabulary**[286]

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[286] Here I should note that this musical phrase is very similar to the beginning of Debussy's *La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin*. This was observed by my internal examiner, Professor William Brooks, who asked: "Are you aware that the first seven notes of this passage quote exactly (even at the same pitch level) the beginning of Debussy's *La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin*? You

II. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to rhythm

All the rhythms in this work are deconstructed and recombined fom the first passage (see figure 3.3.4-33).
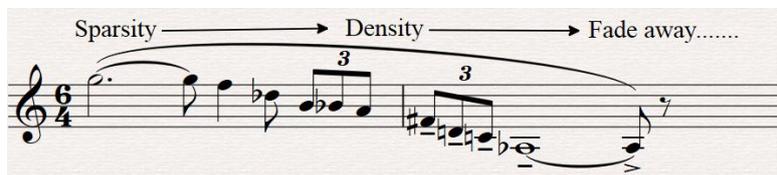
Figure 3.3.4-33 *Marionette:* The first passage

The deconstruction of rhythm is of **two types**. In **type one**, I analysed the acceleration of the first passage, devising longer rhythmic sequences by extending or transforming the core material. In **type two**, I freely selected from the core sequence to form new patterns (see figure 3.3.4-34).

Type one. A denser rhythm pattern made by extending and transforming the core material:

---

should be." To this I replied "Yes, I am; these notes just came intuitively. I once attempted to change them to something else, however, I chose not to change anything as they came out naturally through my instinct—even if they are similar to another piece."

Type two. Examples of new, derived patterns:

Figure 3.3.4-34 *Marionette:* **Deconstruction applied to rhythm**

I also inverted the pattern of the core motif, deriving thereby a variety of rhythms that I used with flexibility in certain phrases (see figure 3.3.4-35).

Inverted core motif:

The core motif linked with its inversion:

A partial selection from the core motif:

Repetition utilising inverted rhythmic fragmentation:

Varied and connected fragments of rhythms:

Figure 3.3.4-35 *Marionette:* Flexible rhythms derived from the core motif

Finally, in key passages I applied deconstruction and reconstruction to comprehensively intermingle aspects of the core rhythm: the initial motif, inverted rhythmic forms, and flexible combinations of single or repeated partial rhythmic fragments.

Figure 3.3.4-36 *Marionette:* Deconstruction and reconstruction used in comprehensively intermingled aspects of the core rhythm

Conclusion

Marionette is a solo work developed from a very minimal motif. Even though both structure and deconstruction and reconstruction were fully employed in creating this work, there is still the faint presence of pentatonic colour in the major-minor seventh chord of the core motif. This was my first exploration of contemporary violin techniques and musical expressions, and hence *Marionette* is of at least symbolic significance in building a foundation for integrating contemporary vocabularies into musical dialects in later compositions.

3.3.5 *My Clay Figurines*

- a trio for Erhu, *Sanxian* and Bamboo Clappers

Duration: approx. 7 minutes

May 2019 - July 2019

The traditional trio work *My Clay Figurines* is a commissioned dance piece, one of the works in the portfolio entitled *The Impression of Tianjin (天津印象)*, which was supported by the *National Art Fund Project for Young Creative Artists* in 2019. As a piece for dance, both figures and scenarios guide the narrative structure of this work. On the basis of this structure, I deconstructed and recombined the pitch organisations and rhythmic patterns of a minimal motif, attempting to vividly convey the delicate charm of Chinese folk art and the ingenuity of traditional artists.

3.3.5.1 Structure

The structure of this work can be found in three domains: **narrative structure, timbral design,** and **pitch organisation** (see table 16).

I. Narrative Structure

Sections	Introduction	Exposition	Coda
Scenarios	*A lonely artist accompanied by his clay figurines*	*The old man dreams that his figures come to life.*	*He wakes from his dream, returning to mundane reality.*
Characteristics	Tranquil, solitary	Exuberant, laughter-filled	Serene contentment
Tempi	pulse=60	pulse=76	pulse=56-60
Bars	1-15	16-88	89-96

Table 16. *My Clay Figurines***: Narrative Structure**

As discussed earlier in section 3.2, my compositional process was inspired by a narrative created by the choreographer in which both preset figures and scenarios provide structural guidance.

Adhering to the devised story, I divided this piece into **three parts**, each corresponding to a specific scenario.

Introduction (bars 1-15): *Tranquil, solitary*

A lonely craftsman pursues his evening routine, surrounded by the clay figurines he has created for years. He falls into solitary sleep.

Exposition (bars 16-88): *Exuberant, laughter-filled*

The artist dreams that the figurines spring to life; thematic variations and changing musical textures are used to describe the joyful relationship between the artist and his creations.

Coda (bars 89-95): *Serene contentment*

The artist wakes to discover the figurines once again inert and lifeless. His heart is, however, full, and his loneliness eased.

Corresponding to the three scenes, the tempi in this work are also in a ternary form:

Introduction: Lento (pulse=60)

Exposition: Instinctive acceleration (pulse=76)

Coda: Lento (pulse=56-60)

The contrasting tempi are conveyed by changes (i.e., accelerandi), that are mirrored by contrasting intensity in the pitch material. The intensity of the exposition part is significantly higher than that of the Introduction and coda, and this can be clearly recognised on the score (see figure 3.3.5-1).

Introduction:

Exposition:

Coda:

Figure 3.3.5-1 *My Clay Figurines:* **Contrasting intensity**

II. Pitch structure (see table 17)

Shapes	Points	Lines
Characteristics	Brief notes or staccato	Melodic lines and long glides
Position	*Mainly usedin the exposition, to increase the humorous atmosphere of the narrative*	*Occurs in all parts for emotional enrichment*

Table 17. *My Clay Figurines:* **Pitch organisation**

Points:

These appear most obviously in staccati, presented with clear rhythms and occurring mainly in the exposition, often enhanced with prominent percussive effects, enhancing the humour of the piece, as is typical of The *Clay Figure Zhang* and Tianjin Music more generally (see figure 3.3.5-2):

Figure 3.3.5-2 *My Clay Figurines:* "Points"

Lines:

Lines include both the melodic themes and glissandi in the accompaniment and thus run through the work in a variety of forms. The relatively concrete melodic material allows me to emphasise the narrative sense of the music (see figure 3.3.5-3).

Introduction:

Exposition:

Coda:

Figure 3.3.5-3 *My Clay Figurines:* "Lines" (melodies)

The long glissandi are widely used as accompaniment in the Introduction and Coda. The artist is expressed with extreme diminuendo. Glissandi also appear in the exposition, juxtaposed with playful rhythmic expressions and varied themes (see figure 3.3.5-4).

Introduction:

Coda:

Exposition:

Figure 3.3.5-4 *My Clay Figurines:* **"Lines" (glissandi)**

III. Timbral structure

The timbral design of this work is determined by the expressive needs of each section. These needs also guide use of orchestration and the distinctive performing techniques of the traditional instruments (see table 18).

Sections	Introduction	Exposition	Coda
Timbral characteristics	*Abstract, faint*	*Concrete, bright*	*Abstract, soft*
Instrumental strategies	The glissandi performed by *Erhu;* Extreme pianissimo glides and trills	A flexibly pitched, rhythmic combination of *Sanxian, Erhu* and *Bamboo Clappers*	Figure rotating, glides and overtones created by *Sanxian,* accompanied by overtones and glides performed on *Erhu*

Table 18 . *My Clay Figurines:* **Timbral variations**

Introduction:

Timbral conception : An abstract timbral landscape expressed with an extremely faint, dim tonality.

Performance strategies : I invited a pianissimo, rhythmically free solo performance on *Erhu*, allowing the player to improvise melodies with moderate additions of glissandi and trills in the middle (see figure 3.3.5-5).

Figure 3.3.5-5 *My Clay Figurines:* The introduction

Exposition:

Timbral conception: A concrete musical atmosphere formed by bright and incisive timbres.

Performance strategies: I flexibly combined *Sanxian, Erhu*, and *Bamboo Clappers*, using various levels of intensity, sonic types (i.e., tonal ranges, pitch arrangements, and rhythmic patterns) and playing techniques, both common and unusual (i.e. arco, staccatos, glides, trills, etc.) (see figure 3.3.5-6).

Figure 3.3.5-6 *My Clay Figurines:* The exposition

Coda:

Timbral conception: Return to abstract sounds with a delicately soft timbral expression, gradually diminishing at the end.

Performance strategies: I use *Sanxian*'s distinctive performing techniques (i.e., finger-rotated glides and overtones), combined with overtone glissandi performed on *Erhu,* with the occasional addition of irregular, extreme pianissimo percussive sounds created on *Bamboo Clappers* (see figure 3.3.5-7).

Figure 3.3.5-7 *My Clay Figurines:* **The coda**

3.3.5.2 *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

In comparison with my other compositions inspired by Tianjin folk music, the influence of the Tianjin musical dialect in this work is relatively weak. The reason, I believe, is my more extensive use deconstruction and reconstruction in this work, which was applied both to pitch organisation and to rhythmic patterns.

I. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to pitch

The core motif of this work consists of a four-notes sequence.

D - E - F - A
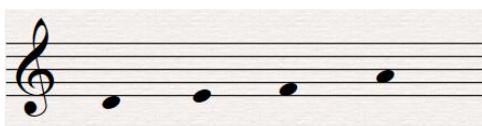
Figure 3.3.5-8 *My Clay Figurines:* **The core motif**

I drew lessons from the rhythmic patterns of *The Tianjin Clapper Talks* (天津快板书), following my musical instincts and reshaping the core motif into musical themes (see figure 3.3.5-9).

The theme from *Tianjin Clapper Talks*:

The theme of *My Clay Figurines*:

Figure 3.3.5-9 *My Clay Figurines:* Drawing on *Tianjin Clapper Talks* for melodic design

Multiple intervals can be extracted from the core motif: major second (minor seventh), minor second (major seventh), minor third (major sixth), major third (minor sixth), and pure fourth (pure fifth) (see figure 3.3.5-10).

Figure 3.3.5-10 *My Clay Figurines:* Intervals extrated from the core motif

Still more intervals can be reconstructed from the above deconstructions (see figure 3.3.5-11).

A - G#; A - C#; D - F#; D - Bb; E - C; E - G#

Figure 3.3.5-11 *My Clay Figurines:* Reconstructed intervals

The new intervals obtained by this method were used to provide altered notes in the theme, thematic extensions, and accompaniments (see figure 3.3.5-12).

Altered notes in the theme:

Thematic extensions:

Accompaniments:

Figure 3.3.5-12 *My Clay Figurines:* **The use of new intervals**

II. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to rhythm

The basic rhythmic motifs of *Tianjin Clapper Talks* are shown in figure 3.3.5-13.

Continuous quavers   **Dotted quaver followed by semi-quaver**
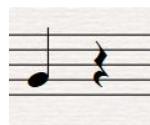
Quarter notes   Dotted crochet followed by quaver (or vice versa)

Figure 3.3.5-13 *My Clay Figurines:* **The basic rhythmic motifs of** *Tianjin Clapper Talks*

Like the intervals, the four patterns above can also be deconstructed and recombined into other rhythmic forms (see figure 3.3.5-14).

Quaver note followed by two semi quavers (or vice versa):

Continuous semiquavers:

Figure 3.3.5-14 *My Clay Figurines:* **Reconstructed rhythms**

The primary rhythmic patterns are widely applied to motivic variations in the mid-section of the work (see figure 3.3.5-15)

Example I.

Example II.

Figure 3.3.5-15 *My Clay Figurines:* Primary rhythmic patterns

Rhythms that allow pitches having longer durations can be produced by further extensions of the dotted values. These are heard mainly in the introductory and concluding sections of the work (see figures 3.3.5-16).

Example I.

Example II.

Figure 3.3.5-16 *My Clay Figurines:* Rhythms having longer durations

Conclusion

In *My Clay Figurines*, deconstruction and reconstruction is applied primarily to pitch organisation and rhythmic patterns. I still seek to write music that is melodically rich; but to serve the choreographic narrative and portray the clay figurines, I aim for simplicity of musical presentation. Hence this work does not display any of my sophisticated compositional methodologies; I hope, however, that it captures my pursuit of spontaneity and childlike wonder.

3.3.6 *Taiping Drum* (A prayer for peace and tranquillity)

--for Chinese Ensemble

Duration: approx. 8 minutes

September – October 2018

The *Taiping Drum* is an unusually shaped, single-sided instrument, widely utilised in folk traditions in Northern China. In musical celebrations, this drum is used in the ritual prayer for peace and prosperity in the coming year.

My *Taiping Drum* is a traditional piece for chamber ensemble. It is one of my *National Art Fund* project's compositions, and it represents my earliest explorations in integrating musical dialects into my compositions. Inspired by the pronunciation of a specific phrase in the Tianjin dialect, I chose a phrase of blessing as the core material for the principal theme and then structured the work by thematic variations. In this piece, my references to the performance traditions— "Intensive bowing accompanied by slow singing" *("紧拉慢唱")*; the melodic development "fish gets on the tail" *("鱼咬尾")*, and the quiet beginning and exuberant ending—are faithful to the original forms and characteristics of Chinese folk art.

3.3.6.1 Structure

I. Overall and subsidiary structures

The Overall Structure

Table 19. (See next page)

Introduction (bars 1- 17)	Thematic exposition (bars 18 – 47)	Connection I (bars 48 – 60)	Thematic variation I (bars 61 – 84)	Connection II (bars 85 – 92)	Thematic variation II (bars 93 – 110)
A landscape impression built from fragmentary themes	Theme I (bars 18 – 35) Theme II (bars 36 – 47)	*Percussive cadenza*	Theme I Penultimate *Climax* (bars 61 – 67) ↓ Theme II (bars 68-84)	*Interlacing instrumental parts; repetitive superpositioning of motifs*	Theme I (bars 93 – 110)

Table 19. *Taiping Drum:* Overall structure

Table 19 summarized the overall structure, which was strictly pre-planned in order to guide the entire creative process. I began with an instinctive reaction to the folk tradition; then I used the scenes prescribed by the choreographer as a guide in designing the macroscopic musical development. Building from tranquillity, a growing sense of excitement culminates in jubilation. I designed the subsidiary structures of this work with pitch patterns, orchestration, dynamics, and tempi that corresponded to fluctuations in expression.

The Subsidiary Structures

Orchestral Structure: Tonal instruments versus **Percussive sounds** versus **Combinations of both**

The innovative quality of this work rests partly in the use of two instruments that are unusual in folk traditions: *Sanxian* and *Banhu*. These are designed to express melody; and in most ethnic musical works, they are used by composers as the featured instruments in concertos, with the orchestra supplying harmonic accompaniment. I wanted to explore outside these established norms, and so I attempted to classify the instruments by their functional characteristics. I hoped thereby to breaking through the monophony typical of traditional Chinese music, which relies on a stereotypical combination of "melody" and "accompaniment."

a. Instrumental Classification

I classified the instruments in two categories: pitched and unpitched. Pitched instruments include both bowed and plucked string instruments.

(I) Pitched instruments:

i. Bowed string instruments—*Banhu* and *Erhu*.

These are typical Chinese bowed instruments (see figure 3.3.6-1). Because they have only two strings, they are unsuited to expressing harmony. Rather, they are used to advantage in presenting single melodies; in *Taiping Drum* their primary function is to highlight the musical lines.

Banhu[287]　　　　　　　　　**Erhu[288]**
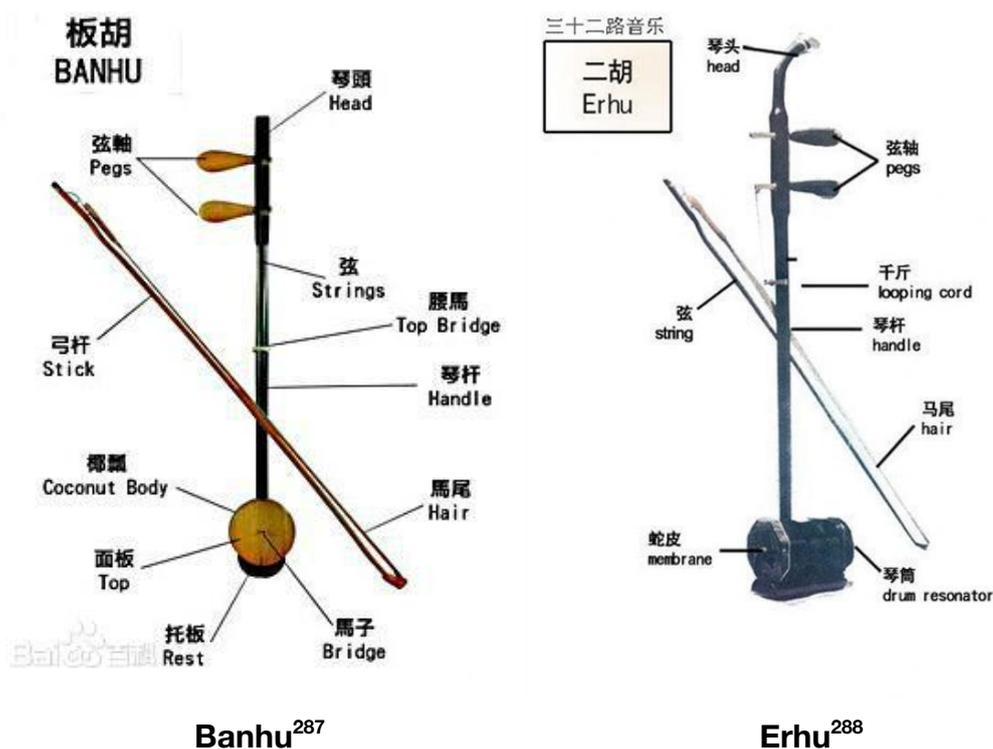
Figure 3.3.6-1 *Taiping Drum:* Banhu and Erhu

ii. Plucked string instruments—three *Sanxian*s and one *Soprano Sanxian.*

All standard *Sanxians* have three strings, which in this case are tuned **G - D - g**. Because the strings are plucked, they can emphasise important pitches with naturally distinctive timbres and accents. *Sanxian* strings are long, allowing the player to create unpredictable *after-tones*. By means of special performing techniques (such as monophonic fingering-rotating, strumming, glides, appoggiatura) a player can form a continuous line, and by extending these techniques in more complicated forms (i.e. continuous strumming/finger-rotating on double tones or chords), a player can build a "sonic wall."

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287 "Banhu" ("板胡"), 快懂百科,
https://www.baike.com/wiki/%E6%9D%BF%E8%83%A1?view_id=2zcygmkdhm6000
288 "Textual and Graphic Explanation of Erhu Construction," 2014, digital image, Study of Music Instruments, accessed April 5, 2020, m.yueqixuexi.com/erhu/20140825121545.html. Also see Yuan Ni, "The Modern Erhu: Perspectives on Gender, Education, and Society in the Development of Erhu Performance," (PhD diss., Kent State University, 2021), 4.

(II) Unpitched instruments—Percussion

In this piece, bass drum, tam-tam, and snare drum combine to create the principal percussion timbres. The bass drum and tam-tam produced low-frequency pulses; the snare drum reinforces this and enhances the acoustic effect. The triangle, castanet, and woodblock serve as "decorative" percussion, providing timbral embellishment for plucked and bowed string instruments.

b. The orchestration of each section

In each of the sections (see table 19) the orchestration has a distinct character.

Introduction: Plucked string instruments of definite pitch dominate this section, instrumental category, interspersed with occasional light staccati performed by bowed strings or by decorative percussion (see figure 3.3.6-2).

Figure 3.3.6-2 *Taiping Drum:* **Orchestration (Introduction)**

Thematic exposition: Plucked string instruments express, relatively subtlely, the thematic material. More evocative passages are played on

plucked instruments, supported by the principal percussion (see figure 3.3.6-3).

Figure 3.3.6-3 *Taiping Drum:* **Orchestration (Thematic exposition)**

Connection I: With the principal percussion instruments as a backbone, finger-rotating glides performed on *Sanxian* create a relatively abstract sonic background. The bowed strings supply a means to shift the tonal range of the continuous, canonic imitation (see figure 3.3.6-4).

Figure 3.3.6-4 *Taiping Drum:* Orchestration (Connection I)

Thematic variation I: A passage for percussion is followed by expressive, cadenza-like writing for the bowed strings. For rhythmic emphasis, I used the plucked string instruments, accompanied by percussion. After the climax of this section, the plucked strings elegantly introduce **Theme II** (see figure 3.3.6-5).

Figure 3.3.6-5 *Taiping Drum:* Orchestration (Theme II in Thematic variation I)

Connection II: Plucked and bowed strings together create broken chords with irregular rhythms; the simultaneous use of various tuplets creates an intensely chaotic auditory picture. The percussion serves to supply a basic rhythm, maintaining a sense of regularity underneath the chaos (see figure 3.3.6-6).

Figure 3.3.6-6 *Taiping Drum:* **Orchestration (Connection II)**

Thematic variation II: This section contains a sequence of three different forms of **Theme I.** The initial presentation functions as a temporary buffer. I decreased the tempo, presented the theme in the alto tessitura of the bowed instruments, and outlined the harmonic and rhythmic support with dotted rhythms on plucked strings. The second statement returns to the original tempo. The *Sanxian* has the predominant expressive role and at the same time provides rhythmic strength, supported by percussion. The final version of the theme is fortissimo, fully orchestrated for the complete ensemble. (For details, please refer to bars 93–110 in the musical score.)

II. Sonic textures: Points, lines, and surfaces

I believe that effective textures depend on exploiting the unique qualities of each instrument. In designing them, an in-depth familiarity is necessary, not only with the positive characteristics of each instrument but also with its limitations. Especially when writing for unusual Chinese instruments, their distinctive timbral qualities and performing techniques must be carefully considered. In *Taiping Drum*, I employed three general textures: points, lines, and surfaces. By pre-planning their usage, my writing can proceed in a more organised manner.

Points

Points articulate the precise rhythmic beats in this work, primarily scored for plucked strings and percussion, with occasional short notes on the bowed strings (see figure 3.3.6-7).

Figure 3.3.6-7 *Taiping Drum*: "Points" articulating precise rhythmic beats

Much Chinese folk-dance music demands deliberate and regular rhythmic control. That partly motivates the use of "points" in *Taiping Drum*; but I also use point-like pitch patterns that I divide into three levels (distant view, medium view, and close view) according to the dramatic scenario of the piece.

"Distant view": This is used especially at the beginning. When the scene depicts a distant view (see figure 3.3.6-8), points are employed to create a musical atmosphere that has a sense of sonic space and rich timbral layers.
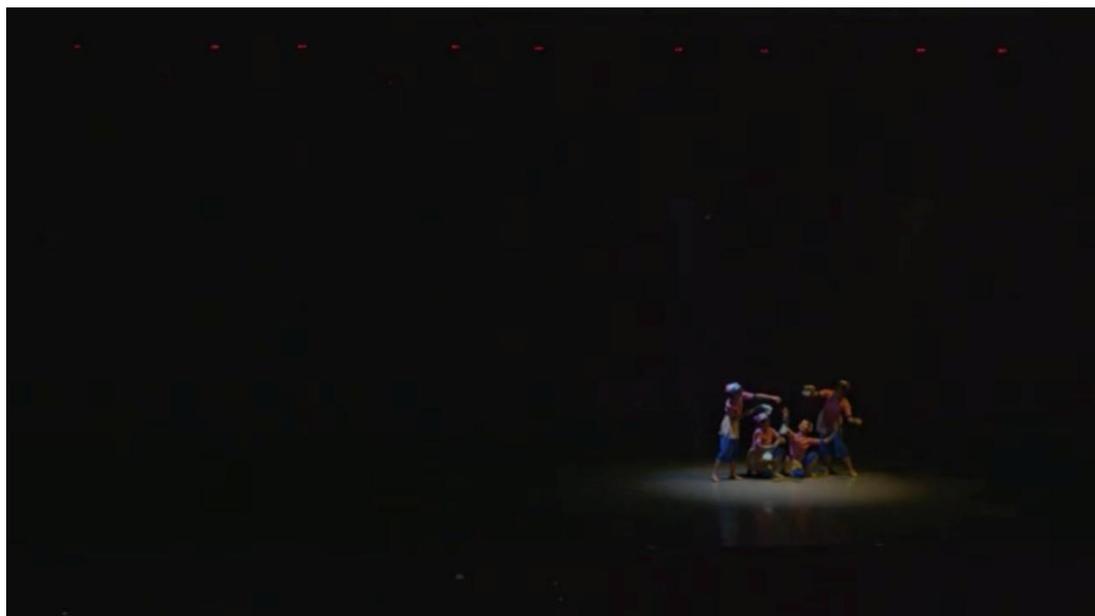
Figure 3.3.6-8 *Taiping Drum:* "Distant view": score and dance[289]

"Medium view": This is used especially in the exposition sections of Themes I and II. In the "medium view," points are gentler and more rhythmically sparse. In accord with the narrative, their use continues in the thematic variations of theme II, notably in the ritardando in thematic variation II.

Figure 3.3.6-9 *Taiping Drum:* **"Medium view:" score and dance**

"Close view": This is found in **Connections I** and **II**, the climax of **Thematic Variation I**, and the second and third thematic presentations of **Thematic Variation II**. Points here are distributed to enhance the excitement of exuberant passages in the narrative. All these passages are

characteristically enthusiastic, evoking the sense of dancers wielding the one-sided drum in a folk performance.

Figure 3.3.6-10 *Taiping Drum:* "Close view": score and dance

Lines

In *Taiping Drum*, lines are used mainly to present the melodies that characterise the principal themes of the piece, both in their original form and

in variations. The material in the latter plays a leading part in shaping the musical structure.

Theme I:
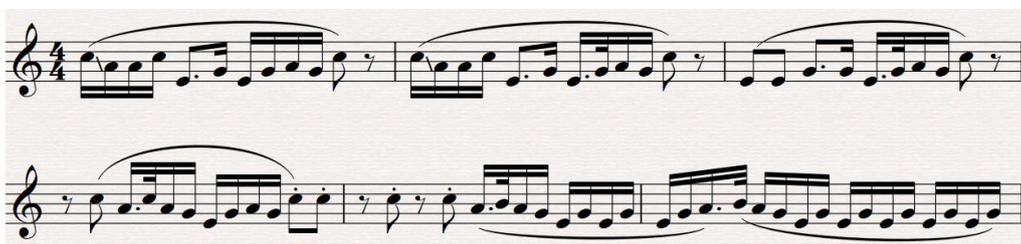
Figure 3.3.6-11 *Taiping Drum:* Theme I

Theme I (see figure 3.3.6-11) is characterised by joyous enthusiasm. I directly transformed the intonation and rhythm of a phrase in *Tianjin* dialect to created the first half of Theme I. Then I developed the second half by using an established folk process— *"鱼咬尾"* (literally translated as "*fish gets on the tail*") that is commonly applied in a game of word association. But "fish gets on the tail" *("鱼咬尾")* is also a common method in developing melody in Chinese folk music, both monophonically and polyphonically. In monophony, it requires that the final note of the first phrase be used as the beginning of the second, as if the second fish bites the tail of the first (see figure 3.3.6-12). In polyphonic works (traditional Chinese opera, folk songs, and instrumental ensembles) singing and "passing parts" entails the performing the climax of one vocal/instrumental section simultaneously with the beginning of another, thus forming an overlapping auditory effect.

Figure 3.3.6-12 *Taiping Drum:* "fish gets on the tail *(鱼咬尾)*"

Because it is key to the creative structure, **Theme I** embraces both presentations and variations. It appears in various ranges with different orchestration and accompanied by varying textures (see figure 3.3.6-13).

Theme I (thematic presentation):

Thematic variation I:

Thematic variation II:

Figure 3.3.6-13 *Taiping Drum:* Theme I and its thematic variations

Theme II is comparably softer than **Theme I**, expressing the sensuality intrinsic to traditional Chinese beauty. It was created by an unsystmatic inversion of **Theme I**, and it generally appears in the thematic variations that follow presentations of the main theme, thus creating emotional contrast (see figure 3.3.6-14).

Theme II (thematic presentation):

Thematic variation I:

Thematic variation II:

Thematic variation III (connection):

Figure 3.3.6-14 *Taiping Drum:* Theme II and its variations

Extensions of **Theme II** that consist of its constituent elements (for details please refer to ***Deconstruction and Reconstruction***, below) appear at the end of thematic variations and connections. They function primarily to introduce variations in the musical texture (see figure 3.3.6-15).

Thematic variation I (extension):

Thematic variation II (extension):

Figure 3.3.6-15 *Taiping Drum:* **The increased thematic variations**

An extended variation in Connection I:

An extended variation in Connection II:

Figure 3.3.6-16 *Taiping Drum:* **The increased variations in Connections**

Surface

The "Surface" of this work is formed when numerous pitches or continuous harmonies combine with multiple instrumental parts to form a sonic wall of sound.

A good example is found in **Connection I**, bars 48–60 (see figure 3.3.6-17). The reverberation of low-frequency percussion forms a sonic "surface" simultaneously with the combination of continuous glides and finger rotating performed by the *Sanxian*. These two contrasting sonic walls are fused by their similar pitches but differ greatly in their timbres.

Figure 3.3.6-17 *Taiping Drum:* **A sonic "surface"**

III. Dynamic contours

Most dynamic shapes support the emotional qualities of the music; hence, overall, they start with ***ppp*** and end with ***fff***, making a gradual transformation from pianissimo to fortissimo (see figure 3.3.6-18).

Figure 3.3.6-18 *Taiping Drum:* The overall dynamic shape

Similarly, each presentation of **Theme I** is characterised by a piano introduction and a forte ending (see figure 3.3.6-19).

Figure 3.3.6-19 *Taiping Drum:* Sectional dynamic shape

The emotional development in this piece is intrinsically linked with these dynamic contours.

IV. Tempi

In *Taiping Drum*, changing tempi are not notated by changes in the pulse; rather, they arise from variations in pitch or rhythm. As with dynamics, tempi are closely related to the emotional journey expressed in the music. I designed slow-to-fast tempi that corresponded with sparse-to-dense pitches, with both created to meet the dramatic demands of the choreography.

In the Introduction, the tempo is defined primarily by the steady quarter notes. This creates a graceful yet informal opening to the piece (see figure 3.3.6-20)

Figure 3.3.6-20 *Taiping Drum:* The graceful yet informal opening

When the theme appears, the rhythms subdivide the quarter notes in a way that naturally accelerate the music (see figure 3.3.6-21).

Figure 3.3.6-21 *Taiping Drum:* The theme and a "natural" accelerando

In **Connection I** (a percussion cadenza), I instructed the players to "instinctively increase the speed," encouraging them to react to the increasing excitement of the dance (see figure 3.3.6-22).
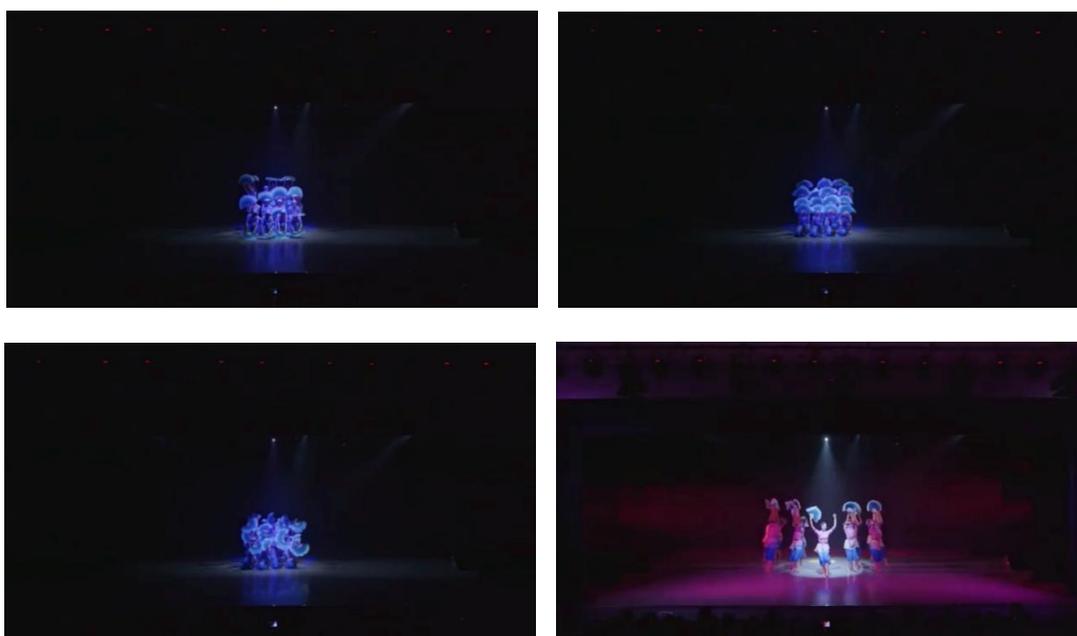
Figure 3.3.6-22 *Taiping Drum:* **The percussion cadenza with instinctively increasing speed (score and dance)**

In **Theme Variation II**, the rhythms are further subdivided, creating a striking contrast and forming the auditory illusion of an abrupt increase in tempo (see figure 3.3.6-23).

Figure 3.3.6-23 *Taiping Drum:* Tempo of Theme Variation II

Overall, the tempi are inspired by a folk performing form called "intensive bowing accompanied by slow singing" *("紧拉慢唱")*. Without changing the notated tempo, I create a sharp contrast by changes in pitch and rhythm, thus strengthening the structural unity of the work.

3.3.6.2 *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

I. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to themes

Taiping Drum contains two themes, both inspired by the Tianjin dialect and created with the use of deconstruction and reconstruction and, also, with the Chinese practice of "intuitive understanding" ("直觉体悟"). I also applied deconstruction and reconstruction to split several thematic variations of **Theme II**, using the material extensively in the sections I described above as "connections."

Theme I.

Theme I is derived from the following sentence in Tianjin dialect:

"太平鼓，保太平，家家户户保太平."

The Mandarin pronunciation is: " *tài píng gǔ, bǎo tài píng, jiā jiā hù hù bǎo tài píng.*"

In English, the meaning is: "The drum of peace delivers joy and tranquility to every family."

As mentioned in Chapter 2.3.1 (The Internationalisation of Musical Dialect), the tones in the Tianjin dialect are different from those in Mandarin Chinese (see figure 3.3.6-24). Ying Fu explains:

> Tianjin is very close to Beijing, and the Beijing Dialect is recognised to be the closest to Mandarin; thus the gap between the Tianjin dialect and Mandarin is not as obvious as for the "obscure" ones of Southern China. Even so, the Tianjin dialect maintains obvious differences in the tones and intonations from those in Mandarin...Its tones [Tianjin dialect) are similar to the Mandarin vocal system, and it also contains four tonal categories—" level tone," "rising tone," "falling-rising tone," and "falling tone." The five-degree chart below exhibits the individual tonal trends of Mandarin and the Tianjin dialect: (由于天津离北京很近，北京话又是公认的最接近普通话的一种方言，所以相比南方各省市晦涩难懂的方言，天津方言离普通话的差距还不是很远. 但即便如此，天津话的语音语调也与普通话有着很明显的差异...在调值方面，(天津话) 与普通话语音系统相通，天津方言中也存在着 "阴平," "阳平," "上声," "去声" 四个调类，下面用五度制图法表明普通话和天津话的调值走向:)"[290]

[290] Ying Fu, " Research on Tianjin Tunes in Music," (付颖. "天津时调音乐研究.") (Master's thesis, Shandong University, 2015): 35-36.

例 1：   普通话：
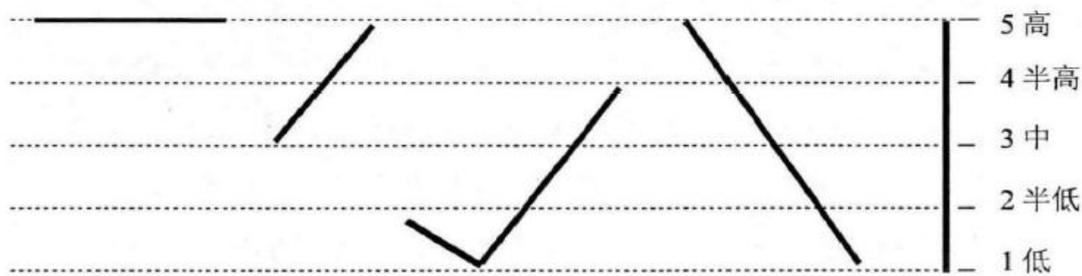
调值^①： 55   35   214   51

调类 ： 阴平   阳平   上声   去声

腔格^②： 高横   高升   降升   高降

[Translation:] Mandarin

Tonal Pitch:[291]   55   35   214   51
Tonal Category: level tone;   rising tone;   falling-rising tone;   falling tone
Melody:[292]   high level;   high rising;   falling-rising;   high falling

例 2：   天津话：
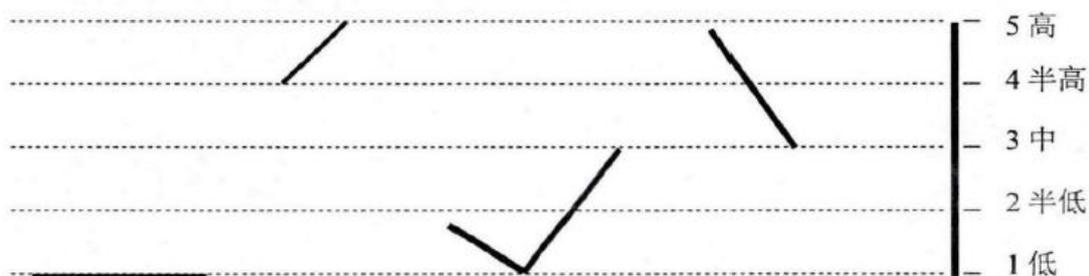
调值： 11   45   213   53

调类： 阴平   阳平   上声   去声

腔格： 低平   高升   降升   高降

[Translation:] Tianjin

Tonal Pitch: 11   45   213   53
Tonal Category: level tone; rising tone;   falling-rising tone;   falling tone

---

[291] "Tonal pitch refers to the height, rise and fall, and the length of the pronunciation of the words." ("调值指字调实际读音的高低，升降，曲直，长短的变化."). Ibid. 35.
[292] "Melody here refers to the sonic pattern formed by restricting the tonal pitch to a specific tone in the singing." ("腔格指唱腔受一定字调调值的制约而相应形成的音型."). Ibid., 35.

Melody: low level;   high rising;   falling-rising;   high falling

Figure 3.3.6-24[293] *Taiping Drum:* **Ying Fu's comparison of Mandarin and the Tianjin dialect**

Ying Fu continues:

> From the above examples, we can recognise that the tonal pitch of the Tianjin dialect is basically similar to that of Mandarin. The typical *low-level tone* (tonal pitch: 11) displays the most significant individuality and it is also the feature that is easiest to be imitated. (以上可以看出，天津方言与普通话的调值走向基本相像，其最显著的不同就是有一个颇具特色的*低平*(调值为 11)*调*，这也是天津话中最容易被模仿的一部分。)[294]

While maintaining the rhythm of the original dialect, I directly converted the tones of the Tianjin dialect (specifically the low-level melody of the level tone and the falling-rising melody of the falling-rising tone) into the musical phrases of Theme I, as shown in figure 3.3.6-25.

295

low level   **high rising**   **falling-rising**   **high falling**

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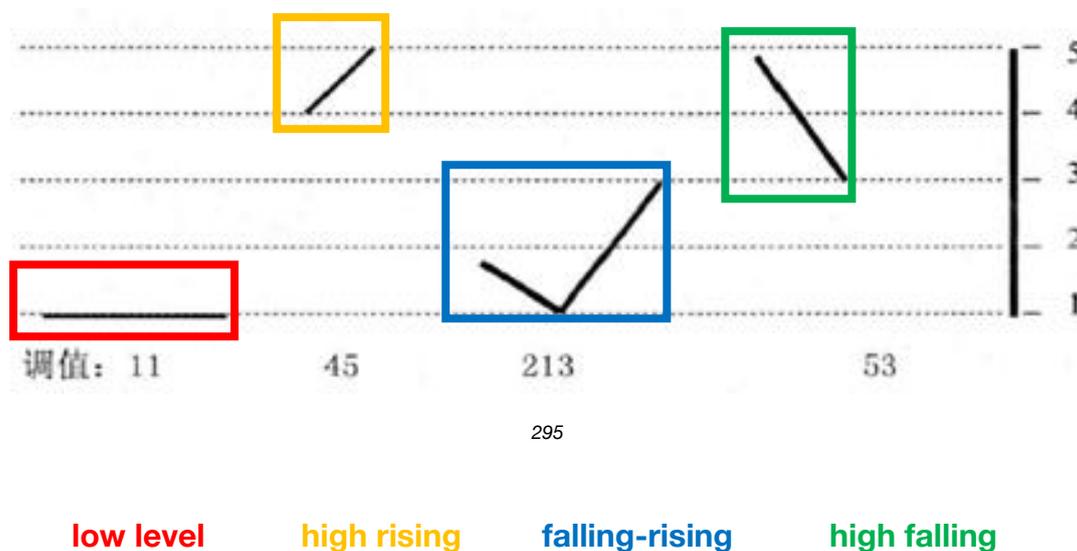
[293] Ibid., 36.
[294] Ibid., 37.
[295] Ibid. 36.

Figure 3.3.6-25 *Taiping Drum:* "Music translation" of Tianjin Dialect

The melody in figure 3.3.6-25 is the first half of Theme I and uses a typical pentatonic scale. I avoided over-deconstruction of the pitch patterns in order to retain the inherent features of the folk ceremony. Semitones, tri-tones, and timbral distortion are rarely applied to this part of the theme.

The second half of Theme I was formed instinctively by combining the embedded intervals with the thematic motifs. Using "*fish gets on the tail*", discussed above, I re-use the end of each passage as the beginning of the next (see figure 3.3.6-26).
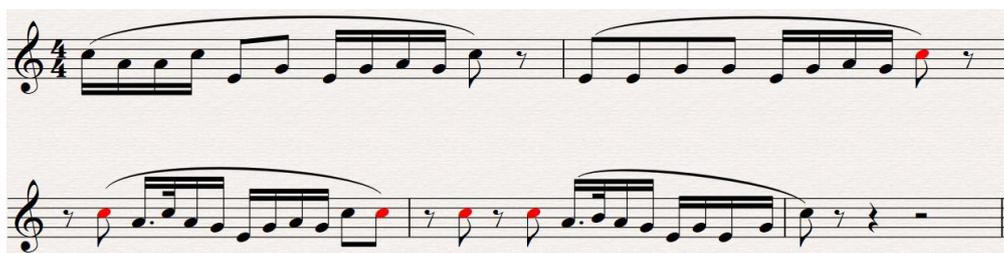
Figure 3.3.6-26 *Taiping Drum:* The second half of Theme I

Theme II.

Theme II was composed intuitively but is also based on the pentatonic mode. This new melody was created by inverting downward material in the opening of Theme I (see figure 3.3.6-27). This was combined with arpeggios performed by plucked strings, a basic technique in the playing of *Sanxian*. It has a lyrical character in deliberate contrast to the exuberant musical atmosphere.

Theme II.
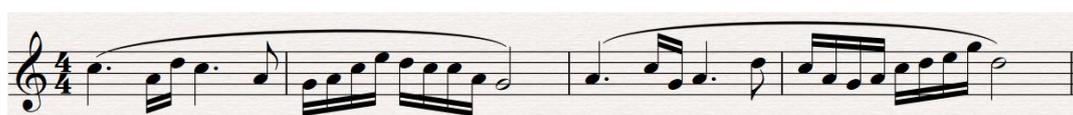
Figure 3.3.6-27 *Taiping Drum:* Theme II

Thematic variations.

Thematic variations are built from Theme II through deconstruction and reconstruction. I split the beginning of Theme II by inserting improvised repetitions, thus forming the pitch material widely used in the connecting, transitional phrases (see figure 3.3.6-28). This also entailed making rhythmic adjustments and altering the tonality in these phrases.
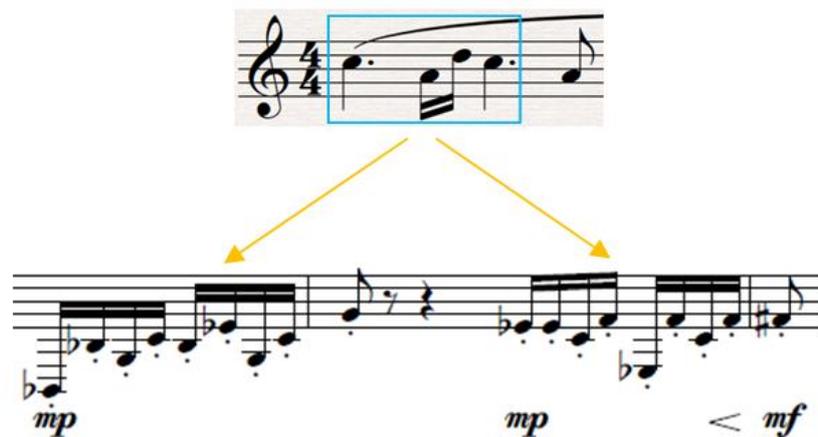
Figure 3.3.6-28 *Taiping Drum:* **Thematic variations**

I. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to the musical background.
Deconstruction and reconstruction were used to shape the different textures (described above): "**points," "lines," and surface."**

In *Taiping Drum* the word *points* refers to brief notes or harmonics that appear in the musical background. These rhythmic events entail reconstructing individual notes deconstructed from Theme I. For example, in the Introduction, the brief, exquisite notes plucked on *Sanxian* are a rhythmic expansion of those used in Theme I (see figure 3.3.6-29):

Figure 3.3.6-29 *Taiping Drum:* **"Points" in the musical background**

Similarly, in musical backgrounds of this piece, the word *lines* refers to new pitch patterns formed by extending the duration of a single point-like sound or by coherently connecting several sounds. *Lines* supply auditory continuity to the overall sonic effect. An example occurs in bar 6 (see figure 3.3.6-30), where I change the performing technique of the soprano *Sanxian* from plucking to finger-rotating. This transforms "Points" into a clear musical "Line."

Figure 3.3.6-30 *Taiping Drum:* **"Points" transformed into "line"**

Another example occurs in the Erhu part in bars 36-40, where a natural connection between continuous single and gliding tones (finger-rotating) creates a typical instance of linear patterns (see figure 3.3.6-31).

Figure 3.3.6-31 *Taiping Drum:* A natural connection between continuous single and gliding notes

Finally, the word *surface* in this work generally refers to the timbral background formed by intensified rhythmic patterns, expanded pitch ranges, or increased instrumentation. This includes strummed *Sanxian,* rolled percussion, and sections scored for mixed ensemble (see figure 3.3.6-32).

Figure 3.3.6-32 *Taiping Drum:* "Surface" as timbral background

Conclusion

Among the earliest works that arose from my interest in exploring the musical folk traditions*, Taiping Drum* can be regarded as a documentary of the indigenous Taiping drum performances. It was composed with only a basic understanding of deconstruction and reconstruction and is therefore technically simpler than my other compositions that are "translated" from musical dialects. While writing this piece, I relied more on rational design than perceptual thinking, with the result that it somewhat precludes personal expressions, concentrating more on the ecological nature of the source material.

3.3.7 *Experimental Sketches for a Folk-music Tradition*

--A Musical Diary

The *Experimental Sketches* are an ongoing series of contemporary vocal pieces inspired by musical dialects, accompanied by solo or ensemble instruments, and characterised by their brief durations and folk-music influences.

In making them, I am recording my spontaneous thoughts and ideas for use as a "musical dictionary" in future; they document my desire for innovation by attempting new musical forms and content but also reveal limitations in my development techniques and in my instrumental knowledge. Thus, they become a driving force for future textual and technical explorations.

The *Sketches* so far include three musical works: *Ephemeral Serendipity, A Pure Serene Music,* and *Buddhist song of Bairenjing.*

3.3.7.1 *Ephemeral Serendipity*

August 15-16th, 2020

Approximately 6 minutes

Ephemeral Serendipity was initially created in a loosely parabolic musical structure, composed of four contrasting timbres of *Sanxian* that are accompanied by the *Sanxian* player's vocal performance of unpitched yells and breaths to enhance the timbral layers and dramatic tension.

A longer version was later commissioned by Taisheng Zhao, from the *Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra.* At his suggestion, I extended the piece by inserting two contrasting melodies—a Shanxi folk song called "Lan Huahua"

("兰花花"), and an old English song, "Greensleeves"—individually at the middle and the end of the music.

Below is the program as edited by Zhao:

一抹朱弦俩叁條，斜抱紫檀叁俩聲，二三弦上漸鼓瑟，三四指中聞嗡鳴；
繚繞異音綠袖子，高亢秦歌蘭花花，拂弦嘈雜角羽急，曲盡心靜月更明。

26/05/2021 月夜記[296]

(English Translation)

Cinnabar sandalwood with three strings, I embrace the *Sanxian* obliquely.

I hear the growing drummings alternating between strings, bit by bit, with the piecemeal pluckings from my fingertips.

The lingering exotic sound Greensleeves interweaves with the resounding Qin song Lan Huahua. The music accelerates then back to tranquility, and the moon seems brighter in the end.

a moonlit night, 26/05/2021

Commission with composer (10): Luyun Ming (UK)
與作曲家（10）：明鷺�د妗（英國）

Ephemeral Serendipity（融・易）

World premiere（世界首演）

Composer's Notes: The *Sanxian* is like an "Encyclopedia" of the Chinese character to me. Its timbral subtlety delivers a "lingering" artistic image that coincides with the inclusiveness of contemporary musical expression. In this piece, I attempt to link the Shanxi folk song "Lan Huahua," the performer's improvised performance, and the English song "Greensleeves" through a continuously varying *Sanxian* glide. I hope the fusion of musical genres that are conveyed by the multifaceted sound of *Sanxian* will deliver my thoughts and blessings to my audiences. (**作曲家的話**：我眼中的三弦，算得上中國人性格的"百科全書."其"餘音繚繞"的藝術意境與現代音樂對音高、音色、

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[296] This poem was written by Taisheng Zhao on the night of May 6th, 2021.

節奏的包容性"不謀而合,"我嘗試著把陝西民歌"蘭花花,"英國古曲"綠袖子
"及演奏家獨有的"直覺"（即興）演奏同時作為靈感加入樂曲中，將持續，
逐漸改變的三弦滑音設想一條"紐帶,"我希望裊裊樂音可以穿越時間和地
域，傳遞理念，承載祝福·）

I. Structure

i. Timbral Classifications and Musical Structure

This piece is structured by gradually varying the four contrasted timbres.

Timbre I is impressionistic, with indefinite tones, generally presented as "mute-plucks" or *after-tones*, that produce an echoing, illusory sonic quality (see figure 3.3.7.1-1.

Figure 3.3.7.1-1 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **Timbre I: Impressionistic**

Timbre II is more elegant, with sonorities created with continuous performing techniques such as "finger-rotating", "finger-shaking," and gently "strumming" (see figure 3.3.7.1-2).

Figure 3.3.7.1-2 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **Timbre II: Elegant**

Timbre III is intense, with deeply resonant timbres produced by finger-rotating, strumming, fierce-strumming, and other *Sanxian* performing techniques that have relatively strong dynamic power (see figure 3.3.7.1-3).

Figure 3.3.7.1-3 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **III: Intense**

Timbre IV is ethereal, created with the use of overtones, plucking under the bridge, and extreme pianissimos that produce a sonic effect similar to knocking on glass, a dreamy and ethereal effect (see figure 3.3.7.1-4).

Figure 3.3.7.1-4 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **Timbre IV: Ethereal**

ii. Pitches

The pitches rise steadily from bass to treble (see figure 3.3.7.1-5).

Figure 3.3.7.1-5 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **The core notes**

iii. Orchestration

Orchestration helps to define the timings, which are given in seconds. The timbres are dominated by *Sanxian* and accompanied by the performer's impromptu, unpitched vocalizations and breaths (see figure 3.3.7.1-6).

Performance Notes

Explanation for vocal expressions

The performer is required to add occational improvised exhalations with 's','f', 'Ya', 'Yi' or other idiomatic ways (i.e. a specific dialect) during the performance.

The vocal gestures - 'Yi' 'Ya', and 'Ai' imitates sonic effects in traditional operas

A quick breath

Explanation of Sanxian techniques

scrap the body of Sanxian

clap on the body/strings of Sanxian

mute-play

left-hand vibrato

finger-shaking

finger-rotating

fierce strumming slides

pure slides

a wavy sonic effect

a fierce vibrato for an exaggerated sonic effect

Figure 3.3.7.1-6 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **Orchestration**

iv. Musical Materials

The musical materials include the Shanxi folk song "Lan Huahua" ("兰花花") and the English folksong "Greensleeves" (see figure 3.3.7.1-7).
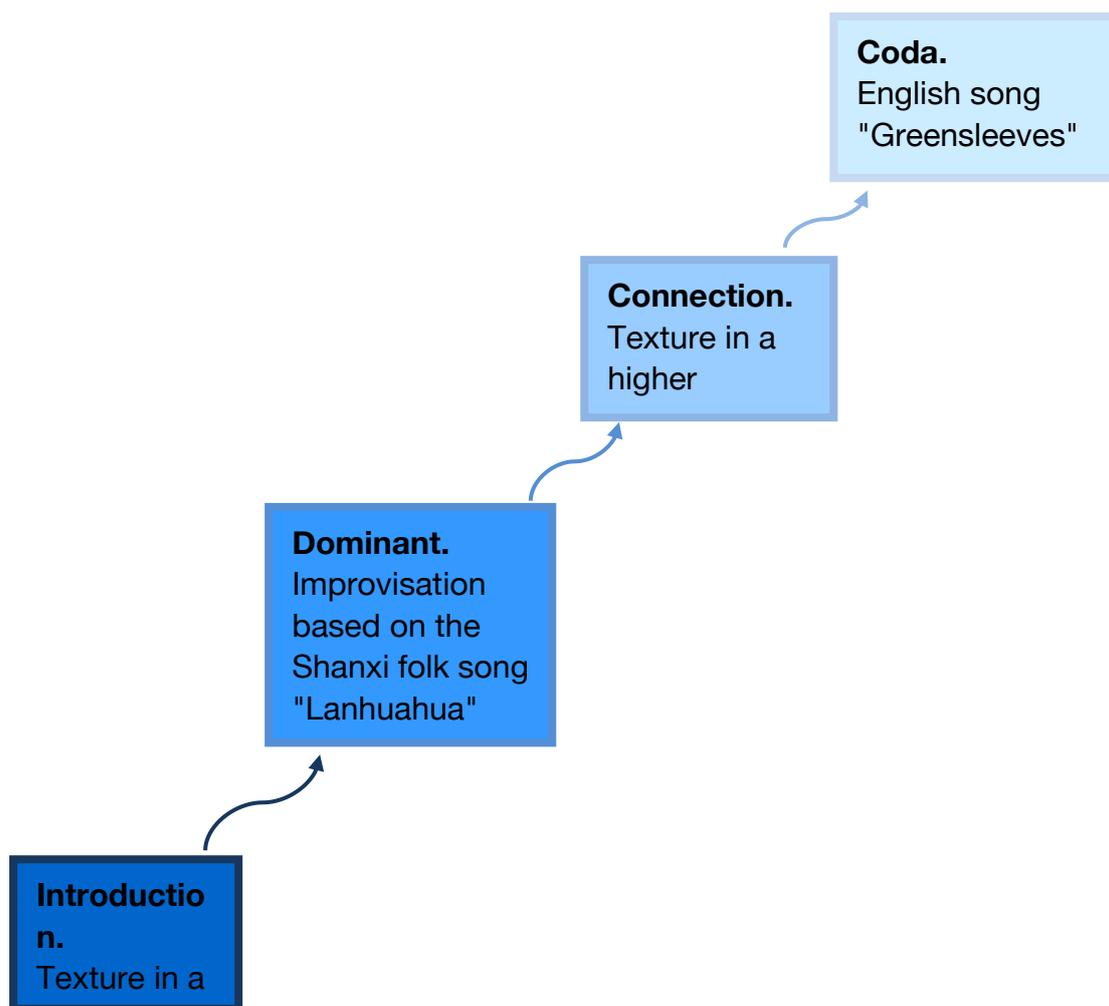
Figure 3.3.7.1-7 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **Musical materials**

II. *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

The **core motif** of *Ephemeral Serendipity* is **B - G - F - E - C#**, which is used both horizontally and vertically (see figure 3.3.7.1-8). In addition, a collection of "hidden" intervals can be derived from the core motif (see figure 3.3.7.1-9).

Figure 3.3.7.1-8 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **horizontal and vertical arrangements of core motif**
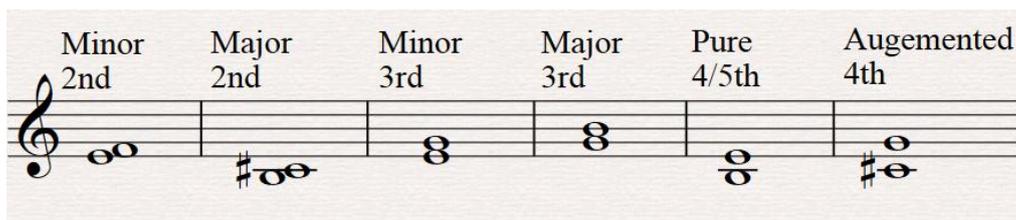
Figure 3.3.7.1-9 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **The hidden intervals in the motif**

The motif first appears approximately 20-40 seconds from the beginning of the piece in glissandi built around its central tones (see figure 3.3.7.1-10).

Figure 3.3.7.1-10 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **The initial presentation of core motif**

Later, the core motif underlies single or multiple hidden intervals presented in horizontal and vertical forms as well as a combination of both forms (see figure 3.3.7.1-11).

Horizontal presentation:
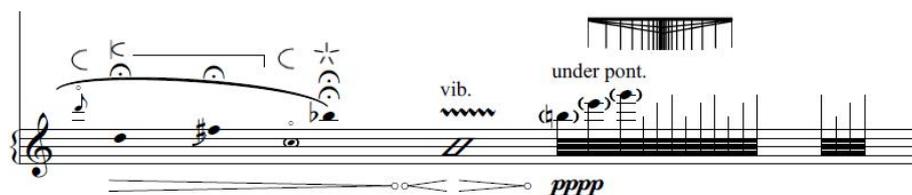
Vertical presentation:

Combined presentation:
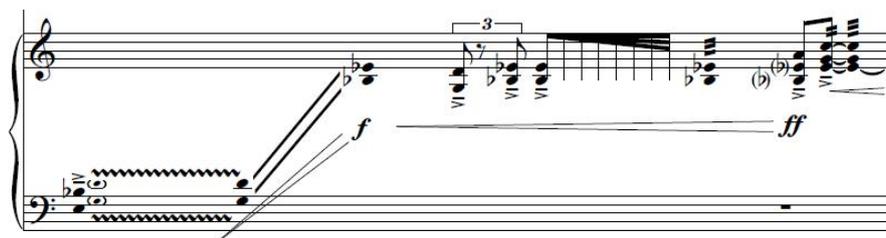
Figure 3.3.7.1-11 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **Horizontal, vertical, and combined presentations of the original motif and hidden intervals**

The microtonal effects are naturally deconstructed with the extensive use of glides that produce additional decorative tones (see figure 3.3.7.1-12). Because the *Sanxian* has extremely long strings and no fretboard, it is somewhat difficult to define the exact pitch position. The inevitable, tiny tonal deviations are used to advantage.
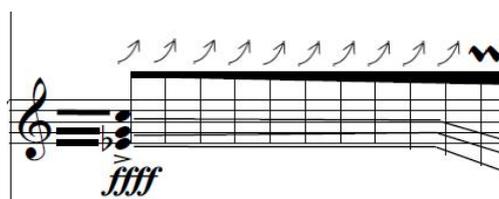
Figure 3.3.7.1-12 *Ephemeral Serendipity:* **extensive use of glides**

3.3.7.2 A Pure Serene Music (2019)

Duration: Approximately 2 minutes

I. Structure

This piece is structured by my junior-high-school memory of a self-devised game. My friends and I devised a rhythmic game for memorising ancient poetry; clapping hands, stamping feet, knocking on tables or pencil boxes or buckets, and thus creating a specific rhythmic pattern useful for memorising ancient poetry and similar to the word chain game, each of us would recite one sentence from the poem. After a complete recitation of the poem, the "leader" uses a broom as an instrument and sings an improvised tune in a musical interlude.

Inspired by this memory, the structure of this musical sketch corresponds to the paragraphs of the poem, with the music here presented as repetitive background. Like the poem, this work is divided into two principal parts: **A and B**.

A	B
máo yán dī xiǎo 茅 檐 低 小 xī shàng qīng qīng cǎo 溪 上 青 青 草 zùi lǐ wú yīn xiāng mèi hǎo 醉 里 吴 音 相 媚 好 bái fà shéi jiā wēng ǎo 白 发 谁 家 翁 媪	dà ér chú dòu xī dōng 大 儿 锄 豆 溪 东 zhōng ér zhèng zhī jī lóng 中 儿 正 织 鸡 笼 zuì xǐ xiǎo ér wú lài 最 喜 小 儿 无 赖 xī tóu wò bāo lián péng 溪 头 卧 剥 莲 蓬

Table 20. *A Pure Serene Music:* **Structure**

The thematic material was inspired by the melodic and rhythmic characteristics of the *Ming and Qing Ditties (明清小调: 或明清俗曲)*[297] in Tianjin, the predecessor of the *Tiānjīn Shídiào (天津时调)*.[298] The theme (see figure 3.3.7.2-1) is presented twice in this piece, accompanied by two paragraphs of poetry.

Figure 3.3.7.2-1 *A Pure Serene Music:* Thematic melody

It is partially presented in the **Introduction, Mid-connection,** and **Coda** of the work. The full musical structure of this piece is given in table 21.

Introduction	A	Mid-connection	B	Coda
Thematic extractions	**Section A** of the poem + Thematic ensemble	Partial Theme	**Section B** of the poem + Thematic ensemble	Partial theme

Table 21. *A Pure Serene Music:* Theme and structure

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[297] "*The Ming and Qing Ditties* refer to art forms that were widely distributed in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. They are initially formed from the *Song and Yuan Lyrics* and from *Xiaoling* (a short form of the *Yuanqu*), and further developed based on Ming and Qing folk songs...Their lyrics are witty, natural, and understandable, revealing the multifaceted daily life of the folks." ("明清俗曲指得是流传于明清时代，由宋元词曲，小令发展而来的，以明清民歌为基础创作的艺术形式…其内容多围绕百姓日常生活展开，表现的是他们的喜怒哀乐. 唱词通俗易懂，充满了风趣和自然"). "The superior geographical environment of Tianjin—in which well-developed water transportation gathers the popular folk tunes from all over the country— provides a favorable condition for the formation and spread of the *Tiānjīn Shídiào*." ("天津凭借其优越的运河和漕运条件，使来自四面八方的俗曲小调汇集于此纷纷传播，为天津时调的形成提供了有利的艺术环境和优越的地理环境.") Ying fu, "Research on Tianjin Tune in Music," (付颖, "天津时调音乐研究,") (Master's thesis, Shandong University, 2015):15.

[298] For an introduction to the *Tiānjīn Shídiào (天津时调)*, please refer to Chapter 2.2 (The Internationalisation of Musical Dialects).

II. *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

Inspired by the original performance of the *Tiānjīn Shídiào (天津时调)*, in which participants stand and sing, accompanying themselves on bamboo clappers *(节子板)*, this sketch Is orchestrated for recitation and *Sanxian*. The clappers are transformed into chopsticks, an abacus, and body sounds (clapping hands and stamping feet) from the reciters. Hence, deconstruction and reconstruction is applied in this work to both instrumental and rhythmic aspects.

i. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to timbre

Deconstruction and reconstruction is applied to *Sanxian* performance techniques in repeated melodic presentations. Typically, different techniques inflect the same pitch in different musical periods with contrasting timbres.

To accomplish this, I deconstructed performance techniques on *Sanxian* into three categories, depending on their timbral effect.

The first category contains normal string-plucking, which produces a rich, deep throaty tonality in a large, resonant space and is used mainly in the primary presentations of the theme in this work (see figure 3.3.7.2-2).

Figure 3.3.7.2-2 *A Pure Serene Music:* Normal *string-plucking*

The second category includes techiques that produce a richer, more intense tonality, with less resonance than the first category. These are widely used in the second half (and especially the ending) of this work (see figure 3.3.7.2-3).

Fierce strumming on single notes
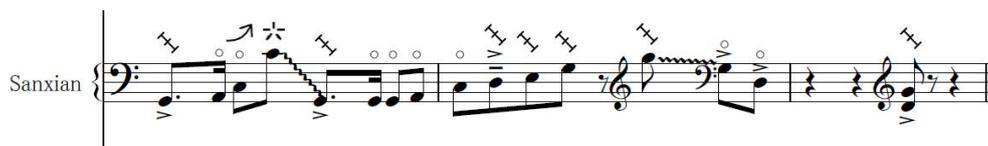
"Concrete" glides and finger rotations

"Concrete" glides   **Finger rotations**
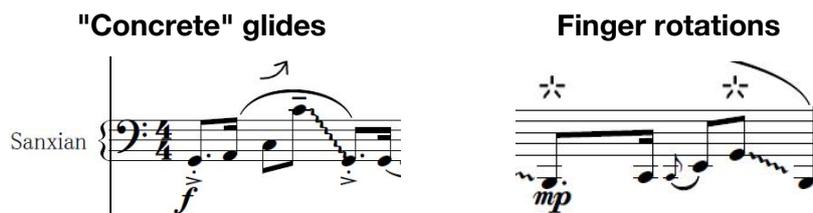
Figure 3.3.7.2-3 *A Pure Serene Music:* **A relatively richer, more intense tonality**

The third category produces a light and elegant sonority, with notable resonance. These techniques are most often combined with traditional string plucking to accompany the recitation, creating an ethereal background sonic effect.

Virtual glides:
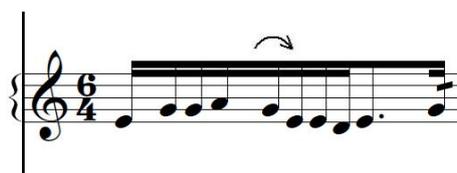
Overtones:
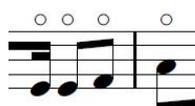
After-tones (appoggiatura):
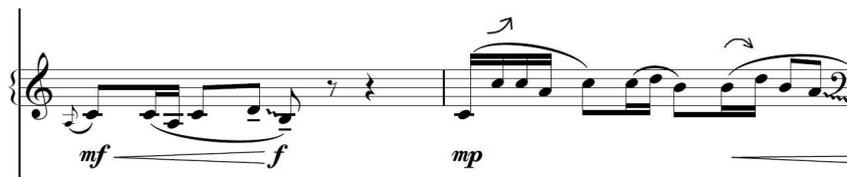
Figure 3.3.7.2-4 *A Pure Serene Music:* **Ethereal background timbres**

ii. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to rhythm

Figure 3.3.7.2-5 *A Pure Serene Music:* **Dotted note followed by two quavers**

The core rhythmic pattern of this work contains a dotted pattern followed by two quavers (see figure 3.3.7.2-5). I deconstructed this foundational rhythm and reconstructed it in different instrumental (or vocal) parts, in at least three ways (see figure 3.3.7.2-5).

Deconstruction I:

Two quaver notes ⟶ durational expansion ⟶ Quarter notes

Reconstruction I: Reconstructed in the spoken material

Deconstruction II:

Reformed by combination

Two quavers and a dotted note ⟶ A quaver followed by two semi-quavers/vice-versa
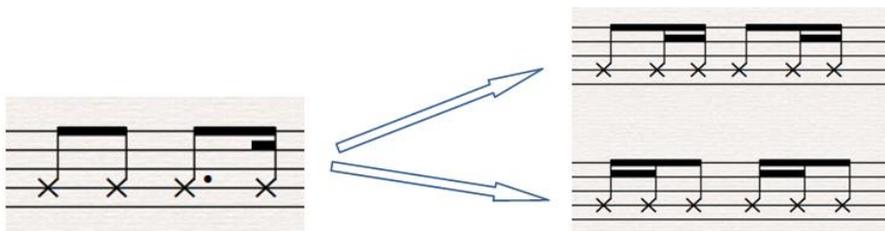
Reconstruction II: Reconstructed in *Sanxian* part
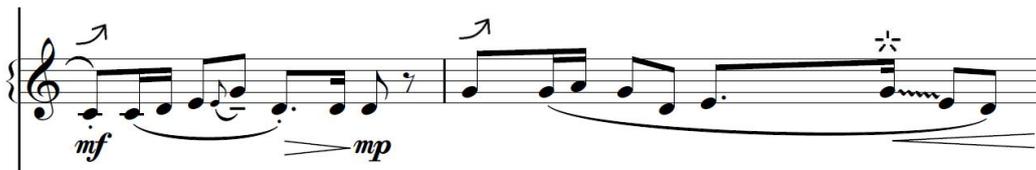
Deconstruction III:

Reformed by combination

Quaver followed by two semi-quavers/vice versa ⟶ Four semi-quavers/Small segmentation
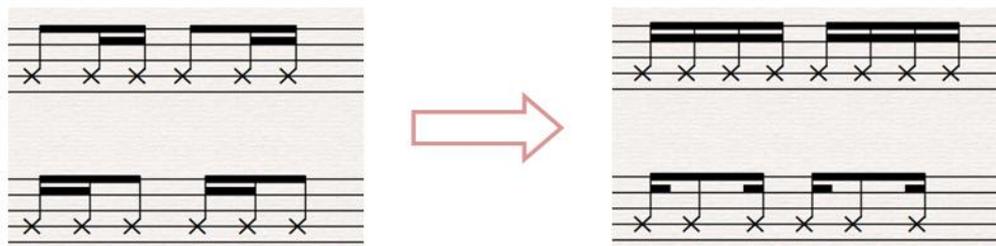
Reconstruction III: Reconstructed in each spoken (instrumental) part:

Figure 3.3.7.2-6 *A Pure Serene Music:* Rhythmic Deconstruction and Reconstructions

Because of the pandemic, *A Pure Serene Music* has not yet been recorded. However, it serves as a preliminary work in the *Tiānjīn Shídiào (天津时调)* music which I plan to complete as part of my future research into musical dialects.

3.3.7.3 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing (2017)*

Duration: Approximately 4 minutes

Buddhist Song of Bairenjing was inspired by the folk ritual *Bairenjing Yangge Dance (百忍京秧歌)*—an integrated art form combining martial arts, traditional opera and folk music, specific to Tianjin, China. According to folk custom, the *Buddhist Song (号佛歌)* is a ceremony of prayer which takes place before a performance of *Bairenjing Yangge Dance*:

> The ceremony of the *Buddhist Song (号佛歌)* has a fixed procedure that has been handed down from age to age... Its strong colour of religion offers people a taste of dignity. Accompanied by unison singing, the solemnity of the *Buddhist Song* ceremony is reflected through the performers' formal dress, neat posture, pious attitude, and the practice of holding the props high in their hands before the *Bairenjing Yangge* activity. (号佛仪式有着固定的程序，且代代相传，不可随意更改...号佛仪式中所演唱的号佛歌曲也是带有浓郁的宗教色彩，演唱时给人严肃庄重之感．号佛仪式中正式的扮相，整齐的站立，虔诚的心态，敬重的高举道具以及统一的演唱号佛歌曲融为一体，将出会前敬拜仪式的庄严肃穆充分地体现了出来．)[299]

The structure of this sketch is inspired by the ritual of the *Tianjin Dabei Buddhist Temple (天津大悲禅院)*, in which I once participated. The Buddhist prayer is divided into three parts, similar to the three-part form (A-B-A) used in musical compositions: the Ceremonial Preparation, Formal prayer, and Transfer of Merits (Parināman；回向) correspond to the Introduction, Exposition, and Coda of this piece.

The use of deconstruction and reconstruction was inspired by the ritualistic procedures of the monks, in which chanting phrases are deconstructed.

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[299] Hongyun Wang, *Research on Folk Dance in Tianjin* (Tianjin People's Publishing House, 2019) [王鸿昀，*天津地区民间舞蹈探究*（天津人民出版社，2019)]，61.

I. Structure

Like the Buddhist ceremony, this work begins with a gradual accelerando and finishes with the diminuendo created by beating a wooden fish. The exposition of this piece is divided into four parts according to the established traditional form (Opening; Inheritance; Transference; and Conclusion (起承转合)) and is performed by three vocalists accompanied by strings, oboe, and percussion. The structure of the work is reflected in its pitch conten, rhythmic character, and orchestration (see table 22).

Table 22. (See next page)

Structure	Introduction	Exposition				Coda
		起 Opening	承 Inheritance	转 Transference	合 Conclusion	
Circumstances	*Ceremonial preparation*	*Prayers*				*Transfer of Merits*
Pitch content	Percussion + Monophony sustained tones	a 羽调式 (The Chinese **"ayǔ"** mode)		Compound mode	a 羽调式 (Chinese **"ayǔ"** mode)	Percussion + Monophony sustained tones
Rhythmic character	*Unsystematically slow*	4/4 3/4		4/4 3/4	4/4 3/4	*Unsystematically slow*
Orchestration	Large Gong; Wooden Block; Baritone	Soprano; Mezzo-Soprano	Baritone	Vocal group; Winds; Strings	Vocal group	Wooden block Fade-in + Pianissimo Large Gong
Bars	1-9	10-64				65-66

Table 22. *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* Structure

i. Introduction (Ceremonial preparation) (see figure 3.3.7.3-1)

Figure 3.3.7.3-1 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* **Introduction**

Pitch content: Unpitched percussion is accompanied by sung, sustained monophony.

Rhythmic character: Unsystematically slow.

Orchestration: A preliminary pianissimo roll on the large gong is followed by the slow introduction of unsystematic rhythms on the wooden fish, joined by a baritone voice.

ii. Exposition (Prayers): Opening (起)—Inheritance (承)—Transference (转)—Conclusion (合)

Opening (起): Exposition of the theme (see figure 3.3.7.3-2)

Figure 3.3.7.3-2 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* Opening (起)

Pitch content: A thematic statement based on the *a-yǔ mode (a 羽调式)*—a Chinese pentatonic mode that resembles C Major but takes the pitch A as a kind of tonic.

Rhythmic character: Using meters of 4/2 and 3/2, relatively sparse rhythms are performed in longer note values (quarter, half, and whole notes).

Orchestration: Mainly written for soprano and mezzo-soprano voices, with occasional accompaniment by oboe and pizzicato cello.

Inheritance (承): Thematic variations and repetitions (see figure 3.3.7.3-3)

Figure 3.3.7.3-3 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* **Inheritance (承)**

Pitch content: Unchanged from the Opening (起), stated in *a-yǔ mode (a 羽调式).*

Rhythmic character: Still primarily in 4/2 and 3/2 meter, and slowly introducing sparse rhythmic patterns.

Orchestration: Building on the Opening (起), the female voices are joined by a baritone.

Transference (转): Thematic development (see figure 3.3.7.3-4)

Figure 3.3.7.3-4 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* **Transference (转)**

Pitch content: The original tonic is raised by a third to form a compound mode.

Rhythmic character: Now using meters of 4/4 and 3/4, rhythms are more active, performed with quavers, semi-quavers, and dotted notes.

Orchestration: The voices, winds, and strings are integrated, to reflect the monks' prayers at the climax of the Buddhist ceremony.

Conclusion (合): Full statement of the theme (see figure 3.3.7.3-5)

Figure 3.3.7.3-5 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* **"Conclusion (合)"**

Pitch content: The same as in the Opening (起), presented in the traditional Chinese mode—the C Gong mode (C 宫调式)—in which A is taken as the root.

Rhythmic character: Same as in the Opening—slow, sparse rhythms.

Orchestration: The voices gradually fade.

iii. Coda (Transfer of Merits) (see figure 3.3.7.3-6)

Figure 3.3.7.3-6 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* **Coda**

Pitch content: Echoing the Introduction, unpitched percussion Is coupled with sustained monophony.

Rhythmic character: Like the Introduction, unsystematic but slowly expressive.

Orchestration: In stark contrast to the Introduction, the use of the wooden fish grows more prominent before a final pianissimo note on the large gong.

II. *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

In this work, deconstruction and reconstruction is applied to the primary components of the source material: rhythmic patterns and pitch organisation.

i. Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to rhythmic patterns

(see Figure 3.3.7.3-7 on the next page)

Figure 3.3.7.3-7 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* **Rhythmic pattern**

The rhythmic prototype in this work is found in the baritone part in bar 9 (see figure 3.3.7.3-7). Because it is characterised by multiplying durations, the rhythmic deconstruction and reconstruction is also developed by multiplying or dividing durations.

Doubled rhythmic values: These are widely used in the strings and in the mezzo-soprano and baritone voices to enrich the timbral background (see figure 3.3.7.3-8).

Mezzo Soprano

Baritone

Strings

Figure 3.3.7.3-8 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* **Doubled rhythmic values**

Halved rhythmic values: These occur mainly in the **Transference** section of this work (see figure 3.3.7.3-9).

Figure 3.3.7.3-9 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* **Halved rhythmic values**

ii.   Deconstruction   and   reconstruction   applied   to   pitch organisation

The core motif of the work is a minor-minor seventh chord (see figure 3.3.7.3-10). From this one can extract intervals of major and minor thirds, a minor seventh and a major second.

Figure 3.3.7.3-10 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* **The core motif**

Deconstruction and reconstruction is applied to various combinations of these intervals. The major/minor thirds are developed primarily in the presentation of the full theme and partially in pitch variations applied to the melody (see figure 3.3.7.3-11).
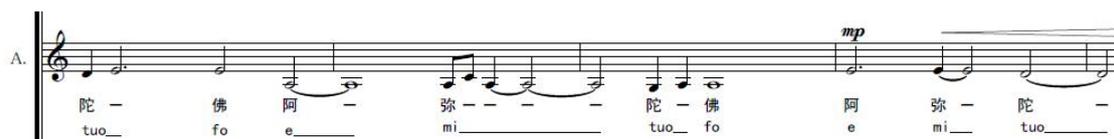
Figure 3.3.7.3-11 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* Deconstruction and reconstruction applied to major/minor thirds

However, the extended theme developed by deconstruction and reconstruction includes pure fourths (fifths) and minor sevenths (major seconds) (see figure3.3.7.3-12).

Figure 3.3.7.3-12 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing:* Intervals in the extended theme

Furthermore, when we keep A as the core tonic but build the chord only with minor thirds, a more varied sonic effect is created by the introduction of tri-tones and semitones (see figure 3.3.7.3-13).
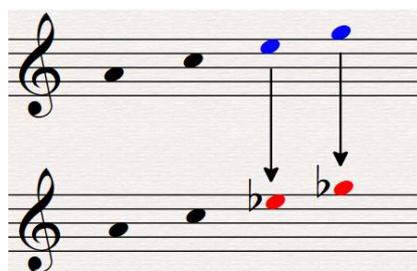
Figure 3.3.7.3-13 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing*: More varied intervals

Finally, in the "Transferring (承)" section of this work, the intervals produced by the deconstruction and reconstruction of pitch organisation are used more widely and freely. They are introduced in individual vocal and instrumental parts, transforming pitches and musical phrases and thereby exploring a wider sonic potential (see figure 3.3.7.3-14).

Figure 3.3.7.3-14 *Buddhist Song of Bairenjing*: **The intervals present in the "Transferring (承)" section**

While examining in detail the creation of this early example in my exploration of Chinese musical dialects, I am tempted to revise this work with greater sophistication. However, it is, perhaps, more valuable in its simplicity as a record of a particular stage of my Ph.D. study.

I hope to draw lessons from this technical simplicity and to retain elements of this approach in my future work. This initial exploration of musical dialects opened a window through which to closely observe and analyse the stylistic integration of Chinese musical dialects with contemporary

compositional languages, thus providing the direction for my later research and composition.

Conclusion

In the three works grouped together as *Experimental Sketches for Voice in a Folk-music Tradition* one can trace my changing understanding of musical dialects over three different periods of my Ph.D. journey. They are testament to my growth and my past, and they suggest how these will connect to my future. The somewhat unbuttoned immaturity of my early compositional expressions fills me with optimism regarding the rewards of further research and practice.

3.3.8 *Gang Xiang*

(An Instrumentalisation of Dockers' Impromptu Working Songs)

--for two *Sanxian*s and percussion

Duration: Approximately 7 minutes

December 2017

GàngXiāng (杠箱) is a traditional art form in China ("杠箱"是一种我国传统的民间艺术形式).[300] Within this art form, the *Tianjin GàngXiāng* is a folk ritual based on the working lives of male porters "脚行"—directly translated as "footmen"—on the wharf in Tianjin, China. They delivered the treasures of the Ming Dynasty to their superiors, and their endurance and humor are characteristic of the lowest classes of Chinese society. In the *Tianjin GàngXiāng*, they briefly enjoy laughter and song as a respite from the sorrow and adversity of their working lives.

Figure 3.3.8-1 *Gang Xiang* performance[301]

Gang Xiang was my first attempt to link a musical dialect with contemporary musical expression. At the time, my structural focus was primarily on orchestration, melody and musical texture.

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[300] Hongyun Wang, *Research on Folk Dance in Tianjin* (王鸿昀，天津地区民间舞蹈探究)，141.
[301] "老北京花会重现端午民俗节," 京华时报，sina 新闻中心，accessed May 28th, 2006, http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2006-05-28/03069045065s.shtml

3.3.8.1 Structure

I. Orchestration

As the earliest example of my contemporary "translations" of musical dialects, my primary concern was how to maximise the authenticity of the source art in its new context. This somewhat limited my imagination, and thus my methods for translating folk influences are relatively superficial. The use of Chinese folk instruments is perhaps the central feature of this work, despite its notably contemporary pitch organisation.

In my research, I collected recordings of original *Gang Xiang* performances. These all use percussion instruments, sometimes in an ensemble that includes folk wind instruments. The music is characterised by a strong rhythmic sense and an improvisational performing style. The sounds vividly express the endless routine, the physical labour, and the resilient attitudes of these men.

I chose to use a "dotted" texture to express the sturdy and tenacious personality of the dockers. Each "dot" is dominated by a percussive effect applied to a principal pitch. This can be seen visually as well as heard acoustically (see figure 3.3.8-2).

Figure 3.3.8-2 *Gang Xiang:* A "dotted" texture

The work is orchestrated for two instrumental groups: Chinese percussion (four drums of various timbres) and plucked strings (two *Sanxians*). This allows the work to be structured both horizontally and vertically.

I. Instrumentation

Percussion (see figure 3.3.8-3)

i. *Huāpén Drum, or Flowerpot Drum (花盆鼓)*

The Flowerpot drum is named for its large surface, small base and receptacle-like shape. It is a close relative of the *Tang Drum (堂鼓)*, also known as *Southern Tang Drum (南堂鼓)*. It can produce varied tones with a deep sonorous timbre, although it is lighter and more delicate than the *Southern Tang*.[302]

ii. *Biǎn Drum (扁鼓)*

Also known as the *Coloratura Drum (战鼓)*, this is among the most popular of all traditional Chinese percussion instruments. Used in many provinces for religious music and traditional weddings, its timbre is low but exceptionally reverberant.[303] It remains a popular instrument in folk song and dance; and, as the sole accompaniment or as the dominant instrument in an orchestral ensemble, it is widely popular in rural China.

iii. *Pái Drum (排鼓)*

Created in the early 1960s, this is a larger member of the *Tang* and *Waist Drum* family, commonly used by Huiquan Cai and Jingming Yang of the *National Orchestra of Central Broadcasting* in folk performances. Consistent with its improvement, the *Pái* is actually five drums of different sizes, each with an individual timbre.[304] In this work, I used one of the largest, for its deep thick tonal character.

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[302] "The History and Performance Techniques of the *Huāpén Drum* (花盆鼓的历史及演奏方法)," *锣鼓镲资料网,* accessed March 8th, 2022,
http://www.yueqiziliao.com/luogucha/2022125147.html

[303] Admin, "The Introduction to the History and Characteristics of the *Biǎn Drum*: An Introduction to the Pictures and Playing Methods of a National Instrument *Biǎn Drum*," *Types of Musical Instruments* ("扁鼓历史与特色简介:民族乐器扁鼓图片及演奏方法介绍," *乐器种类*), accessed April 26th, 2019, http://www.yueqiziliao.com/zhonglei/20191745.html

[304] 小乐君, "Chinese Percussion Instrument - *Pái Drum* (中国民族打击乐器 - 排鼓)," *乐器社,* accessed April 1st, 2018,
https://baike.baidu.com/reference/466502/969bHSEYMPIIerK3m_rvZ5nKCEdf1GCtf2Rfxq-y
DFhXAdYrDS0BOjJQtY7_v2uUv3O3hp6v7kiyNcAgXfnsHNHumMJcEz4h_jKTtA

iv. *Chinese Bass Drum (中国大鼓)*

Widely used in the *Chinese Dagu Performance (大鼓) in Quyi (曲艺),* this instrument is also known as the *Tai Drum (太鼓).* Consisting of leather stretched over a hollow wooden cylinder, it was used historically in ancient Buddhist ceremonies. In *Chinese Quyi,* the *Bass Drum* is the "leader," and it is generally accompanied by *Sanxian.*

Huāpén (or Flowerpot Drum)[305]   **Biǎn Drum[306]**

Pái Drum[307]   **Chinese Bass Drum[308]**

Figure 3.3.8-3 *Gang Xiang:* Percussion

Plucked-strings

Sanxian

The *sanxian* has been described earlier: a three-string Chinese plucked instrument, it is comprised of three parts—a hoe-shaped head, a distinctively

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[305] 乐小编, "定音花盆鼓 DING YIN HUA PEN GU: TIMPANI IN FLOWERPOT SHAPE," accessed June 26th, 2017, *环球乐器博览网,* https://www.e1-gmie.com/2492/

[306] "Biǎn Drum (扁鼓)," *瑞合神佛像艺术中心,* https://www.0933566916.com.tw/product-detail-1033416.html

[307] "Pái Drum (排鼓)," *烟台大众网,* accessed September 15th, 2011, http://yantai.dzwww.com/ytyy/yqdq/mzy/201109/t20110915_6643674.htm

[308] "Chinese Style Red Drum (中国风红色的大鼓)," *3phg. com 三元素,* http://3png.com/a-49192076.html

long neck, and a snake-skin covered body. Exact tunings are problematic because of to its long-string, fret-free nature. The strings of *Sanxian* are tuned **G - d – g**; traditional performance is generally monophonic and focused primarily on the notes of the open strings. Semitones and harmonies are rarely present in traditional *Sanxian* works.[309]

<u>The horizontal structure of the orchestration</u>

The horizonal structure results from timbral contrasts of two types. The first is the obvious contrast between plucked strings (two *Sanxian*) and percussion (four drums). The second is created by juxtaposing different musical textures within one instrumental group. Within the percussion, the contrasts arise mainly from different timbres or rhythmic patterns (see figure 3.3.8-4).

Figure 3.3.8-4 *Gang Xiang:* bars 55-58, percussion

Within the plucked strings, contrasts are created by patterns of harmony and disharmony in melody and rhythm (see figure 3.3.8-4).

Figure 3.3.8-5 *Gang Xiang:* bars 34-40, plucked-strings

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[309] For more details and images, please refer to section 3.1 (The Link Between Musical Dialects and Contemporary Musical Language).

The vertical structure of the orchestration

In planning this piece, I divided the instrumental sections by different timbral effects (see table 23).

Timbre	Pure	Mixed	Pure	Mixed	Pure	Mixed
Orchestration	Percussion	Percussion + Plucked strings ensemble	Alternative performance of Percussion and Plucked string ensemble	Percussion + Plucked strings ensemble	Percussion	Percussion + Plucked strings ensemble
Bar	1-5	14-18	36-39	62-65	117-121	145-148

Table 23. *Gang Xiang:* Timbral effects

II. Melodic structure

In *Gang Xiang*, melodies are performed on two *Sanxians*. One captures the performer Yizhen Gao's improvised performance; the other is my own recreation of the original *Gang Xiang* tune as documented in my fieldwork.

Sanxian **I (Improvised performance):** Yizhen Gao performed an instinctive response to the established percussion, based on a knowledge of traditional *Sanxian* music (see figure 3.3.8-6).
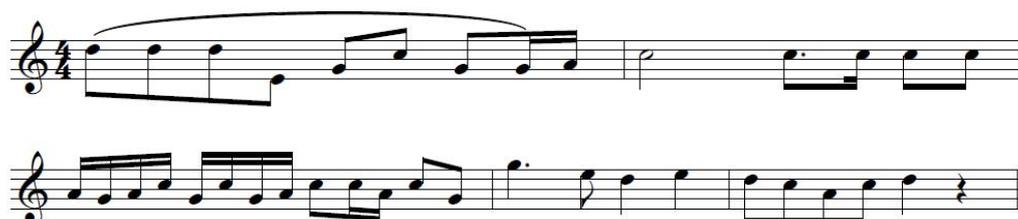
Figure 3.3.8-6 *Gang Xiang:* bars 24-27, *Sanxian* I (Improvised performance)

The improvised tune is dominated by the open strings, **G - D - g,** and is generally characterised by stepwise movement and by single tones, creating a serene and harmonious musical atmosphere.

***Sanxian* II (Recreated tune)**: Using deconstruction and reconstruction of the original *Gang Xiang* music, I wrote a melody that is enhanced by relatively newer *Sanxian* techniques, when compared to the improvised performance. These include large-span jumps, semitones, and arpeggiated intervals, all of which serve to enhance the expressive flexibility of the music (see figure 3.3.8-7).

Figure 3.3.8-7 *Gang Xiang:* bars 24-27 *Sanxian* II (Recreated tune)

As mentioned above (section 3.1: The Link Between Musical Dialects and Contemporary Musical Language), there are unavoidable creative and performative challenges in the use of *Sanxian*. I have discovered that technical simplicity is required in order to bring a sense of contemporary European musical expression to my compositions. However, in this case, I found that neither of the melodies in isolation was satisfying for me. Thus, I juxtaposed them polyphonically to create a richer sonic effect. Moreover, I allowed the keynotes of the two *Sanxian* to differ: *Sanxian* I (Improvised) is G, and *Sanxian* II (Recreated) is A. The major second gap that results allows the two melodies and their rhythmic inflections, in combination, to produce a sonic effect of both harmony and tension (see figure 3.3.8-8).

Figure 3.3.8-8 *Gang Xiang:* **bars 6-11**

III. The scenario structure: of "Opening; Inheritance; Transference; and Conclusion" ("起承转合")

"起承转合" is a Chinese idiom originating in the book entitled *How to read "The Romance of West Chamber"* (*西厢记读法*) by Shengtan Jin of the Qing Dynasty. It sets out a form that is commonly used in Chinese arts:

> "起": The beginning of an artwork;
> "承": A connection between individual subjects;
> "转": A turning point in a musical piece;
> " 合 ": The final expression, generally presented in the traditional musical climax.

I had already decided that there would be a gradual acceleration througout. Within that, I applied the above form to divide the work into four sections, each having a distinct expressive character and each integrating aspects of my creative process. Furthermore, inspired by the dramatic choreography of a Tianjin Folk Dance *The Tenacious Footpace on The Wharf* (*走码头*)*,* I applied the four-part structure to reflect the different working situations of the porters.

i. "Opening" ("起"): "Who am I?"

Section I

Bars 1-13

Tempo: pulse = 68-72

"Who am I?" is an important question when artists depict characters, as it may greatly affect their audiences' understanding of the characters' attributes and situation. Here, that question is addressed by the general musical atmosphere, as reflected in the relatively simple organisation of pitch, rhythm, and orchestration used in the introductory section. Continuous rolls on percussion create a clear rhythmic-timbral effect; these accompany the melody on *Sanxian*, written in free rhythm and with simple pitch patterns. Together, these create the world of the porters and their living circumstances, and they also help establish a sense of time. A period of leisure, as groups of men wait for the next delivery to arrive, is followed by them being disturbed from their half-asleep contentment as the next ship's horn is sounded (see figure 3.3.8-9).

Figure 3.3.8-9 *Gang Xiang*, bars 1-13: "Opening"

ii. "Inheritance" ("承"): "What to do?"

Section II

Bars 14-35

Tempo: pulse = 90

The second section describes the porters at work. The steady quarter notes and dotted rhythms in the percussion evoke the organised march of the dock workers as they carry heavy goods on their shoulders. The witty,

fragmented phrases played by the *Sanxian* represent the improvised songs of the men as they work and reflect their philosophical, optimistic attitude towards life (see figure 3.3.8-10)

Figure 3.3.8-10 *Gang Xiang*, bars 14-18: "Inheritance"

iii. "Transference" ("转"): "What's going on?"

Section III

Bars 36-73

Tempo: pulse = 96-100

In this section, dramatic changes in both musical expression and sonic effect reflect the characteristic "unbuttoned amusement" ("哏") of the Tianjin porters—their individual disputes, games, complaints, attitudes towards work, and mutual solidarity. In the first half, a sonic confrontation between *Sanxian* and percussion instruments creates conflict and anarchy. In the second, superimposed tuplets describe the porters working in counterpoint—or in chaos (see figure 3.3.8-11).

The first half – Confrontation between *Sanxian* and percussion instruments:

The second half – Superimposed tuplets:

Figure 3.3.8-11 *Gang Xiang*, section 3: "Transference"

iv. "Conclusion" ("合"): "When all is said and done"

Section IV

Bars 74-149

Tempo: pulse = 112-116

"Conclusion (合)" is among the most expressive words in Chinese. Its multiple meanings can be roughly classified in three categories:

1. Close; Shut off; Cover.
2. Harmony; Combine; Unite; Integrate; Link; Acquiesce.
3. All; Total; Entire; Completion; Conclusion.

In order to provide a triumphant climax to the music, the orchestration first offers considerable expressive space for each instrument and then

embodies the concept of "Conclusion" ("合") in a performance by the entire ensemble, which includes the two *Sanxians* playing in unison and an expressive Cadenza from the percussion group. The gradual accelerando vividly expresses the frank and broad-minded character of the porters, ending abruptly but with the utmost exuberance (see figure 3.3.8-12).

Bars 94-97:

The exuberant ending:

Figure 3.3.8-12 *Gang Xiang*, section 4*:* "Conclusion"

3.3.8.2 *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

In *Gang Xiang*, deconstruction and reconstruction is reflected primarily in the use of the core motif.

The musical basis for *Gang Xiang* is a spontaneously random folk-art form of a specific region, without fixed musical themes, an impromptu expression and ecologically authentic in its nature. Its typical characteristics can be highlighted by flexibly structuring individual melodic segments. For example, in pitch organisation, the core notes are mainly from the Chinese pentatonic scale (C - D - E - G - A), with an occasional 清角 (F) and 变宫 (B) appearing as passing tones. Similarly, the rhythms are generally in a traditional 4/4 pattern, inflected with various basic rhythmic patterns, such as quarters, quavers, semi-quavers, and syncopations.

Honouring these characteristics, I devised the thematic motif of this work as a two-bar imitative sequence, applying deconstruction and reconstruction to the traditional pitch and rhythmic materials (see figure 3.3.8-13).

Figure 3.3.8-13 *Gang Xiang:* Thematic motif

Then, to create the "Opening; Inheritance; Transference; Conclusion" ("起承转合") structure of this work, I deconstructed and recombined the motif in multiple ways.

"Opening (起)"

In the introduction, this piece establishes the origins of its content by means of a simultaneous presentation of the core motif in various forms, including its free rhythmic extension (see figure 3.3.8-13).

Sanxian II (Recreated), bars 6-13:

Sanxian I (Improvised), bars 6-13:

Figure 3.3.8-14 *Gang Xiang:* A simultaneous presentation of the core motif in various forms

The opening also introduces patterns of varying durations, suggesting further potential for these in the piece (see figure 3.3.8-15)

Figure 3.3.8-15 *Gang Xiang*, bars 1-3: Percussion patterns

Finally, the opening also suggests an awareness of the subconscious "Silence/blank" ("留白") through musical emptiness (see figure 3.3.8-16).

Figure 3.3.8-16 *Gang Xiang*, bars 12-13: "Silence/blank"

"Inheritance (呈)"

In this section I designed the melody of *Sanxian* II by simple pitch transpositions and rhythmic adjustments (see figure 3.3.8-17):

Figure 3.3.8-17 *Gang Xiang:* bars 26-31

Deconstruction of various rhythmic patterns is also applied to the motif and can be seen in individual parts (see figure 3.3.8-18).

Dotted notes created combining two quavers with four semi-quavers:

Quarter and quaver rhythmic patterns: *Flowerpot Drum* and *Bian Drum* (bars 16 - 19)

Dotted notes in reverse: *Pai Drum* (bars 14-17)
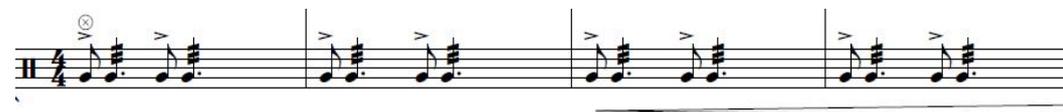
Figure 3.3.8-18 *Gang Xiang:* **Deconstruction of various rhythmic patterns**

"Transference (转)"

Here the *Sanxian* II material is deconstructed into fragmented phrases that are overlapped with the traditional melody, performed on *Sanxian* I, forming a sonic contrast suggesting both confrontation and unity (see figure 3.3.8-19).
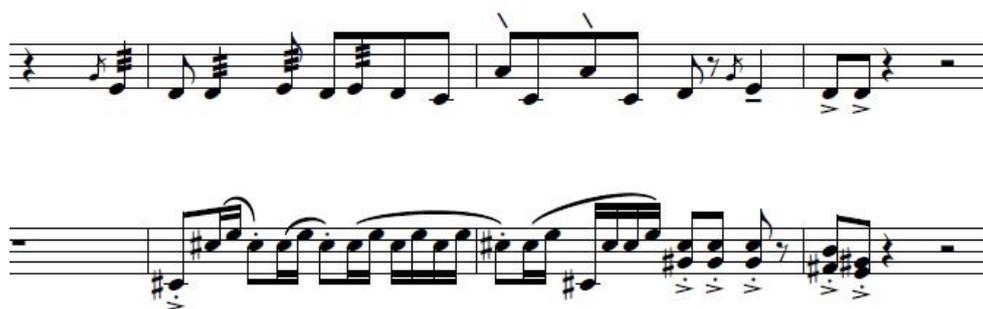
Figure 3.3.8-19 *Gang Xiang:* **bars 37-40**

In addition, I deconstructed the rhythmic part of the melody and assigned it to the percussion to create a sonic confrontation with the *Sanxian* group (see figure 3.3.8-19).

Figure 3.3.8-20 *Gang Xiang:* **bars 44-47**

"Conclusion (合)"

In this, the climax of the piece, musical unity is re-established by recombining various deconstructed musical forms, chiefly accomplished by simultaneous performances of different material on different instruments.

Figure 3.3.8-21 *Gang Xiang:* **bars 135-140**

Conclusion

When writing the piece *Gang Xiang,* my mode of composition was still relatively conservative, due to my then-limited knowledge of unusual folk

instruments. Since then, my use of both orchestration and of deconstruction and reconstruction has been increasingly sophisticated. However, this early creative experience has inspired me to further explore the beauty of these neglected instruments and of musical dialects, a significantly rewarding development in my creative journey.

A Brief Conclusion on *Structure, Deconstruction and Reconstruction*

As I review my use of this creative practice, I uncover the footprints of my Ph.D. journey.

My initial attempts at using this technique were purely concentrated on pitch, rhythm, melody, and harmony. Slowly, however, I have enhanced its use—from creating timbral contrast, through the development of pitch and orchestration, to finally a more nuanced control of solo instruments and greater flexibility in transforming minimal motifs. The progress I have made so far is both rewarding and significant.

Although my primary interest is not in the technique itself, its use in integrating contrasting styles and the consequent improvement in my compositional efficiency has undeniably enriched my means of musical expression. I intend to absorb this technique into my creative journey for greater enrichment, deeper and broader technical exploration, and accumulating experience.

Coda

It is time now to wrap up this lengthy dissertation. In the previous chapters, after giving the historical and cultural, as well as the personal, sentimental, and metaphysical background, I offered intensive descriptions of my current musical practice, contextualised in the milieu of Contemporary Chinese Musical Aesthetics. As a composer writing music, I remember the Buddhist philosophy to "let nature take its course" ("随缘"), and I cherish the authenticity of creative work that is born of instinct and of a specific time and place. Earlier in my career, I maintained an inclusive attitude, wanting to accept the benefits of either indigenous or contemporary musics and of my audience's varied reception of my musical output. But I encountered challenges in intercultural music-making until May 24th, 2022, when a passage written by Professor Longjian Tan in his lecture "The Beauty of Chinese *Sanxian* Music" enlightened me profoundly:

> As we know, to give only a few examples: those who can play *Sanxian* in *Jingyun Dagu* may not be able to play in the *Suzhou Pingtan*; those who perform *Sanxian* in Mongolian musics may not know how to express it in *Yunnan Lahu* minority musics; those who play in *Jiangnan Sizhu* may not be able to handle the *Fujian Nanyin*; those who are expert in *Sanxian* concertos may only know a little about how to express ancient Chinese *Sanxian* music. It is precisely because each *Sanxian* genre individually specifies its 'interest' and art form, adding to the musical techniques, styles, and sounds decided by the specific music genres it occupies, that there is thus formed a *Sanxian* family that is characterised by the diversity of many artist's individual performances and timbres (正如我们所了解的: 会弹奏京韵大鼓三弦者未必会弹奏苏州评弹三弦; 会弹奏蒙古族三弦者未必会弹奏云南拉祜族三弦; 会弹奏江南丝竹三弦者未必会弹奏福建南音三弦; 会弹奏三弦协奏曲者未必会弹奏弦索古曲三弦等类比现象, 也正是因为各个种类的三弦都拥有独特的, 属于本乐种的兴趣规格, 艺术规范, 演奏技

法，音乐风格，声音色彩，从而形成了以演奏员艺术的多样性与音色多样性为特征的三弦类族).[310]

I realised that the current "Chinese" vocabularies used in my works are only superficial excerpts from Chinese indigenous musics that I've heard or documented before, and what I called research into *Sanxian*'s timbral diversity and performance is only the beginning. As a young creative artist, I am still deeply bound to formal designs and techniques that are inspired by contemporary music vocabularies. And I also struggle with, at times, uncontrollably falling into the contemporary "rut" of "over-pursuing techniques, rationality, close-to-perfect structures, and exquisite sounds, but forgetting the essence of art" ("太追求技术，太追求理性，太追求结构，完美，这时往往把艺术本质忘掉了").[311]

My creative journey is like treasure hunting—I keep diving deep into folk traditions and have been overjoyed to discover voices that remain unfamiliar to many of us. I discovered the rustic "sound of home," which I disliked before—the Tianjin regional music and dances hidden in the countryside, the *TiānjīnShídiào* with *Sanxian* accompaniment, and the *Tianjinkuaibanshu (天津快板书)*, which reflects the humorous attitude of the Tianjin folk. All these are closer to the life of the folk than upper-class arts like *Jingyun Dagu (京韵大鼓)*, *Suzhou Pingtan (苏州评弹)*, and *Nanguan (南管)*. Also, with their humble origins unfold a thousand and one untold artist's stories, embodying the cultural anthropological concerns behind the music's sound and performance. However, as folk music, transmitted through oral tradition, they have become incongruous with modern notions of "development" (*fazhan*), a disjunction furthered by a strongly Westernised tendency to privilege notated ("cultured") music over oral tradition. Today, they are in

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[310] Longjian Tan, "The Beauty of Chinese Sanxian Music" [谈龙建，"中国三弦音乐之美"].
[311] Qigang Chen, "Going out of 'Modern music' in Pursuit of Your Own Path," *People's Music* (陈其钢，"走出'现代音乐'追求自己的路，" *人民音乐*) 6 (1998), 5.

danger of disappearance because oral traditions have broken down, with few young musicians now being motivated or equipped to learn the intricacies of these unique genres, while the passing away of representative master performers exacerbates difficulties in transmission and inheritance. I suddenly realised that during my previous folk music reinterpretations, I had never left my role as a contemporary intellectual to be a part of the folks' lives and perceive their truest outlook on family, society, and life. Therefore, I couldn't apprehend that, for these artists, more than a hundred years' historical civilisation underlies the notes they play, with their authentic sensibilities flowing from the flesh and blood of their predecessors.

In the next stage of my creative career, I hope I will not only be a composer who writes music for personal reasons, but rather what Chou Wen-chung termed "wenren": a scholar who critically explores, reinterprets, and transmits indigenous music from a humanitarian perspective.

The path ahead of me is clear.

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Appendix 1. List of Existing *Sanxian* Contemporary Works[312]

Provided by Yizhen Gao, Sanxian Lecturer from *Tianjin Conservatory of Music,* China

(Original Chinese version)

独奏曲

赶车老汉..王振先

鼓声..柴珏

川江船歌..池祥生

边塞之夜..费坚蓉

沙漠之旅..费坚蓉

春晓..周润通

乡音..阎惠昌

秧歌会..侯顺成

蒲乐乡情..李凤山

关中情缘（演奏家作曲）...李凤山 高伟

梦中云南（演奏家作曲）..程 珊

幻想曲（无调性）...张千一

春晓（曲艺、现代）..白浩钰

麦西热普（新疆、现代）..梁文曦

舞幻（现代）..徐晓林

边陲风情（三弦组曲）...杨宝智

工上尺 （无伴奏赋格）..杨宝智

弦语嘈窃（电子音乐）...（作者不详）

如梦（钢伴、现代）..敖翔

蝶泉对歌..尹茂铨

洱海赛龙舟..尹茂铨

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[312] This is a list of new Sanxian compositions written by contemporary composers (mostly in the past ten to twenty years). It does not contain edited folk songs or transcriptions that were initially created for other instruments. For a more complete document that includes edited works since the 1950s, please refer to: Chinese Society of Folk Orchestral Music, *Hua Yue Da Dian · Sanxian Volume,* Composition Section (II) (III) [中国民族管弦乐学会，*华乐大典·三弦卷,* 乐曲篇 （中）(下)] , Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 11, May, 2021.

神秘的澜沧江..夏鼎

蒙古国作曲家作三弦独奏曲（《花马》、《思恋》等十几首新作品，多带钢琴伴奏）

《午后红茶》、《夏日皇宫》等爵士及其他风格的三弦流行音乐

协奏曲

古塞随想（有钢琴演奏谱）（管弦，较传统）...王 征

刘胡兰（钢琴演奏谱）（民管、较传统）...张肖虎 萧剑声

红梅（钢琴演奏谱）（民管、较传统）...黄晓飞 萧剑声

说变（钢琴演奏谱）（管弦、现代）... 刘晨晨

草原（钢琴演奏谱）（民管、较传统）.. 顾冠仁

三弦与乐队协奏曲（钢琴演奏谱）（管弦、现代）...杨 勇

傩（钢琴演奏谱）（民管、现代）... 阎惠昌

诺恩吉亚（钢琴演奏谱）（民管、蒙古族、较传统）... 蒙古族

寒山子的诗（民管、陕西、现代）..郑飞

双档说书人（民管、弹词、较传统）.. 顾冠仁

胡笳十八拍（民管、较传统）..李恒

海神（民管）..（作者不详）

阿勒颇（丝路、民管）..王振威（台）

哈尔滨音乐学院新委约（东北曲艺）..孙小松

重奏曲

柳月辞（三弦与琵琶二重奏）（弹词、演奏家作曲）...江 洋

引子与赋格（三弦与小提琴二重奏）（河南）..杨宝智

赋格（三弦与古筝二重奏）...吴厚元

京韵悠悠（三弦、琵琶与竹笛三重奏）..白浩钰

竹溪辞（三弦、琵琶与竹笛三重奏）（丝竹、复调）...孙小松

秋暮（三弦五重奏）...孙小松

说书（三弦与手风琴）...梁红旗

乱弹（为三弦而作的民族室内乐）... 张晓峰

三番（三弦与弦乐的五重奏）（曲艺）..鲍元恺

边缘（三弦与弦乐的五重奏）...叶小刚

开卯插丁（三弦与四种打击乐）...黄旭

竹枝（三弦与人声）...刘奇琦

(English translation)

Sanxian Solos

Erhai Dragon Boat Race ....…….................... Yinmao Quan

Mysterious Lancang River..............................…….................Ding Xia

Sanxian solos composed by Mongolian composers (a dozen or so new works, including *Hua Ma; Yearning for Love*; et al, mostly accompanied by piano)

Sanxian Modern works, including jazz and other pop music, such as "Afternoon Tea", "Summer Palace", et al.

Sanxian Concertos

Capriccio of an Old City (piano notation) (Symphony Orchestra, Chinese Traditional Style) .... Zheng Wang

Liu Hulan (piano notation) (Chinese Orchestra, Chinese Traditional Style) .... Xiaohu Zhang, Jiansheng Xiao

Red Plum Blossom (piano notation) (Chinese Orchestra, Chinese Traditional Style).. Xiaofei Huang, Jiansheng Xiao

Unpredictable (piano notation) (Symphony Orchestra, Contemporary Style) .... Chenchen Liu

Grassland (piano notation) (Chinese Orchestra, Chinese Traditional Style) .... Guanren Gu

Concerto for Sanxian and Orchestra (piano notation) (Symphony Orchestra, Contemporary Style)... Yong Yang

Nuo (piano notation) (Chinese Orchestra, Contemporary Style) .... Yan Huichang

Nuunzayaa (piano notation) (Chinese Orchestra, Inner Mongol ethnic minority style) .... (The composer is unknown)

Shanzi Han's Poems (Chinese Orchestra, Contemporary Style, inspired by Shǎnxi folk music).. Fei Zheng

Shuang Dang Storyteller (Chinese Orchestra, Chinese Traditional Style, inspired by Su Zhou Tanci .... Guanren Gu

Eighteen Songs of a Nomad Flute (Chinese Orchestra, Chinese Traditional Style) ....Heng Li

Poseidon (Chinese Orchestra) .... (The composer is unknown)

Aleppo (Chinese Orchestra).. Zhenwei Wang (Taiwan)

An Ongoing Commission of Harbin Conservatory of Music (Northeast *Quyi*) ....Xiaosong Sun

Sanxian Ensembles

Liu Yue Words (trio of *Sanxian* and Pipa) (Tanci, composed by performer)... Yang Jiang

Introduction and Fugue (duet for *Sanxian* and violin) (Henan regional style)... Baozhi Yang

Fugue (trio for *Sanxian* and Zither)................................... Houyuan Wu

Rhyme of Beijing (trio of *Sanxian,* Pipa and Chinese flute)............... Haoyu Bai

Zhuxi Cí (trio for *Sanxian*, Pipa and bamboo flute) (Chinese stringed and woodwind instruments, polyphony)... Xiaosong Sun

Autumn Twilight (*Sanxian* quintet)................................. Xiaosong Sun

Storytelling (for *Sanxian* and accordion)........................ Hongqi Liang

Random Play (for *Sanxian* and Chinese ensemble)................... Xiaofeng Zhang

Sān Fān (trio for *Sanxian* and string quartet) (quyi)......................... Yuankai Bao

The Edge (trio for *Sanxian* and strings).......................... Xiaogang Ye

Kai Mao Cha Ding (for *Sanxian,* voice and percussion) .... Xu Huang

Bamboo Branches (for *Sanxian* and voice)........................... Qiqi Liu

The Songs of Chǔ · Dōng Jūn (for *Sanxian*, percussion, and voice)........ Ming Ai

All Sides (*Sanxian* Quartet)... Quan Cui

Prominence (for nine *Sanxian*s).. Haoyu Bai

Three Images of Laughter (trio of Sanxian, Pipa, Zither and Xiao).. Qigang Chen

String Manner (for *Sanxian* and Chinese ensemble)........................ Ping Chang

Rhyme of the Sky (for *Sanxian* and percussion)..................................... Yao Qi

Appendix 2. Notation and Performance Techniques of *Sanxian*

(Original Chinese version)

三弦演奏技法符号[313]

一、　**弦序**（标记在音符的下方）

  Ⅰ   第一弦

  Ⅱ   第二弦

  Ⅲ   第三弦

  （Ⅰ） 空一弦

  （Ⅱ） 空二弦

  （Ⅲ） 空三弦

二、　**指序**（标记在音符的上方）

  1   第一指（左手食指）

  2   第二指（左手中指）

  3   第三指（左手无名指）

  4   第四指（左手小指）

  ♂   左手大拇指

三、　**左手技法**（标记在音符的上方）

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[313] This document is provided by Yizhen Gao. It was originally summarised by Professor Longjian Tan and is currently employed as a main reference for notation by sanxian scholars in their documentation.

⊤　　　　打音

，　　　　粘音（带起）

⩘　　　　吟弦

⩟　　　撇音

ᵒ　　　　　泛音

⌒　　　滑音

tr　　　颤音

十　　　　　煞

⧦　　　　绞弦

▽　　　　拍打指板

四、　右手技法（标记在音符的上方或符杆上）

＼　　　　　弹

／　　　　　挑

⫽　　　　双弹

⫻　　　　双挑

⫾　　　　滚奏

⊂　　　　　　勾

⊃　　抹

☩　　　轮指

┼　　　　四指轮

八　　　　三指轮

/⁂	挑轮
⊂⁂	勾轮
Ⱶ	摇指
⊥	扫
⊥	
⌒	撇
⋀	分
∾	正扣
×	反扣
Ⱶ	摘
L	提
⇕	临（琶音）
⇊	挂 （琶音）
▽	拍打皮面
⚐	轮击皮面
⌐	哑弹（压码）
⊢⊣	伏弦（标记在音符的下方）

三弦定弦法

1、常用定弦：　　　　　又称为硬中弦，多用于当代三弦作品。

2、正调定弦：　　　　　最古老最传统的一种定弦法，多用于传统乐曲。

3、平调定弦： 又称为软中弦，多用于昆曲、江南丝竹等。

(English translation)

Notation and Performance Techniques of *Sanxian*

The Order of Strings (generally marked under the notes)

Ⅰ	The First String
Ⅱ	The Second String
Ⅲ	The Third String
（Ⅰ）	The First Open-string
（Ⅱ）	The Second Open-string
（Ⅲ）	The Third Open-string

The Order of Fingers (generally marked above the notes)

1	The First Finger (the forefinger on the left)
2	The Second Finger (the middle on the left)
3	The Third Finger (the ring finger on the left)
4	The Fourth Finger (the little finger on the left)
♂	The Fourth Finger (the thumb on the left)

Left-hand Performing Techniques (generally marked above the notes)

⊤   Hit the string

,   Rub the string (followed by an additional *after-tone*)

⩕   Finger-shaking

𝄃   Scratching

o   Harmonics

⌒   Sliding

tr   Tremolo

＋   Harsh pitch (a percussive sound played by nails)

⧲   Twisted String

▽   Hit the fingerboard

Right-hand Performing Techniques (generally marked above the notes

or on the stem)

╲   Plucking

╱   Picking

╲╲   Double plucking

╱╱   Double picking

╱╱╱   Rolling

⊂   勾   Reverse-plucking

⊃   抹   Wiping

⁂ 轮指   (Five) finger-rotation

╪   (Four) finger-rotation

人 (Three) finger-rotation

/木 Pick-rotation

ᠸ木 Reverse-pluck rotation

K Finger-shaking

Ϟ Strumming

Ϟ

⟨⟩ Pick/flick (with two fingers on separate strings)

⟋⟍ Opposite-pick/flick (with two fingers on separate strings)

ᢘ String-slap (with your fingers)

ᢘ ✕ Reverse string-slap (with your fingers)

⽊ String-picking (for a mumbling yet sharp sound)

L Nail-picking (for an extremely sharp sound)

⥮ Arpeggio (upward)

⥯ Arpeggio (downward)

∇ Beat the Python skin covered sound-box

木 Rotate on the Python skin covered sound-box with your finger-tips

ᒣ Mute-plucking (press the bridge)

⊢⊣ Continuous wiping (generally marked below the notes)

Sanxian Tuning

Common tuning
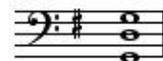
Also known as 硬中弦 (Hard middle string). It is commonly used in contemporary Sanxian works.

Basic mode tuning

An ancient tuning, mostly employed in Chinese traditional music.

Ping diao Opera tuning

Also known as 软中弦 (Soft middle string). It is frequently applied in the *Kunqu Opera, Jiangnan sizhu,* and other Chinese traditional music from the southern area.

Appendix 3. Interview with Yizhen Gao from Tianjin Conservatory of Music

(Date: March 10, 2022)

Author: Dear Yizhen, May I consult with you on a few questions?—Considering the definition of the notation (see Appendix 4) you shared with me last year, I am wondering if it is a traditional *Sanxian* notation? Or a more complete, modern notation after filling in new performing techniques? Was that you who documented the file? (I hope to add an appendix at the end of my thesis as this will offer more information to the readers.) Thank you. [亲爱的，请教请教--去年你发我的这个记谱（三弦记谱），是三弦的传统演奏记谱，还是加入现代记谱后较完整的常用记谱啊？另外，这个文件的整理编辑者是谁呀？是不是你？（因为我考虑在论文后面加附录，感觉这样读者会更清晰）谢谢]!

Gao: This notation was a commonly used contemporary *Sanxian* notation documented by Professor Longjian Tan. We often use it as a reference when editing books (or musical scores). At present, Chinese instruments are mostly written for by means of contemporary notation instead of traditional ones. The traditional notation of Chinese folk music (not only *Sanxian*) represents the *Gongche* notation, which is completely different from the one we currently use. (The notation document I sent you) contains marks of new techniques that are continuously added based on contemporary notation. [这个技法符号表是谈老师做的啊，我们就是在之前编辑书本（或乐谱）的時候拿它来作为一个参照表. 这个技法是当代常用的记谱法，现在，基本所有的中国乐器都是用现代记谱法,不是传统记谱法. 中国民乐（不光是三弦）的传统记谱法都是公尺谱，是和咱们现代记谱法完全不一样的.（文件中的记谱法）是在现代记谱法基础不断加入的一些新技法的标记.]

In the past, the *Gongche* notation was commonly applied in Chinese classical and folk music. Its marks are similar to *Guqin Tablature (减字谱)*, which has an apparently different appearance to the contemporary notation. [民乐的传统记谱法主要是公尺谱，它的技法标记一般是类似古琴减字谱那样的标记，和现代的记谱法是不太一样的].

five minutes later

Gao: (Sent article: Long jian Tan: Two Mutually Corroborated Historical Materials—Musical Scores of *xián suǒ bèi kǎo (弦索备考)* and Qiuping Hua's *Pipa Score (琵琶谱)—Taking High Above the Moon (月儿高)* as an Example) [发送文章: 谈龙建: "两部互为印证的乐谱史料 '弦索备考' 与华秋萍 '琵琶谱'--以 '月儿高' 为例"]:

Gao: Well, for example, this article written about the Gongche Notation—the scores of *xián suǒ bèi kǎo (弦索备考)* and *Huà Qiūpíng* represent

the appearance of traditional notation that is closest to modern times, which is the notation used for Chinese folk music scores before the emergence of the contemporary version. In fact, most of the scores only record the center pitches (the melodic structure without ornaments) and they do not contain marks for specific techniques. This is how the Chinese instrumental music scores look in early modern times (from the late Qing Dynasty to the era of the Republic of China). There are some examples shown in this article [嗯，比如谈老师写的这篇文章里有一些图谱的资料 -- "弦索备考" 以及华秋萍的乐谱就是传统记谱法距离现代最近的样子，就是出现现代记谱法之前民乐记谱的样子，它们都是演奏谱．另外，其实大多数的乐曲记下来的谱子都是一个骨干音谱，没有具体的一些技法性的标记．器乐的演奏谱发展到近代（晚清进入民国时期）就是这样的乐谱，这个在这篇文章里面有一点（谱例）.
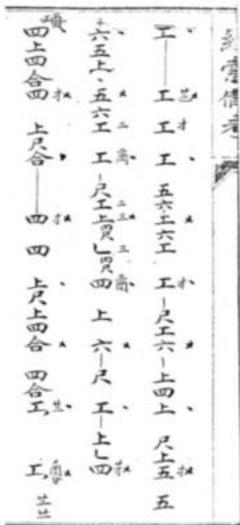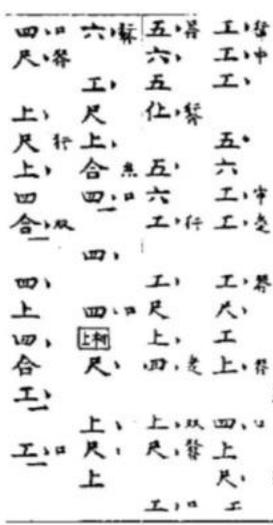
Figure 3.1-29. *Gongche* **Score Examples of** 弦索备考 *(xián suǒ bèi kǎo)* **and** *Huà Qiūpíng*[314]

Gao: Of course, the modern techniques are more or less inherited from the traditional ones, such as the order of fingers—Contemporary notation is marked with the Chinese characters--一二三四 (one; two; three; four) like it was in the traditional notation. Another example is revealed in the marks for rubato sections, which still retain the prototype (of traditional notation). Relatively simple marks that can easily be printed by composing software, also a few symbols such as partial radicals in traditional notation, are partially retained in contemporary notation. [当然，现代的技法符号或多或少有一些传统技法

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[314] Longjian Tan, "Two Historical Materials of Musical Scores That Corroborate Each Other, 'Xian Suo Bei Kao' and Qiuping Hua's 'Pipa Score'—Take 'Moon is High' as an example," *People's Music* 3 (2020): 5 [谈龙建. "两部互为印证的乐谱史料 '弦索备考' 与华秋苹 '琵琶谱'--以 '月儿高' 为例," 人民音乐 3 (2020). 第 5 页].

的沿袭, 比如: 手指的指序, 现代记谱与传统记谱一样标记大写的 (汉字) 一二三四. 另外, 比如说散板的符号, 就还是保留 (传统记谱) 的原型, 一些比较简单的--就是现在打谱软件好打出来的一些符号, 或者是像传统记谱中偏旁部首这样的一些符号, 代记谱中少有保留].

(Date: March 11, 2022)

Author: May I ask you a few questions: When and by whom did the contemporary notation of *Sanxian* begin being used? When was the transitional period from the *Gongche* to Contemporary notation of *Sanxian* [请教: 三弦的现代记谱大致是什么时候, 由谁开始整理的呀? 从公尺谱到现代的五线谱记谱这个过度时期, 大致是在什么年代呢]?

Gao: Sure. It was after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (around 1940). Actually, directly after 1949, after the emergence of professional music conservatories in China, people started to use numbered notation. Besides, the pieces composed in music conservatories during that time were not exactly "traditional music," so there is no so-called "transitional period." Traditional music types are still recorded through *Gongche* scores, such as the *Naamyan* and some other local music [嗯, 就从新中国建立以后吧 (1940 年左右). 然后, 1949 年后中国专业音乐学院音乐院校陆续建立. 当代乐曲开始出现之后, 就直接用简谱了, 中间没有过度时期. 而且先前在音乐学院创作的曲目也不算是传统乐曲, 所以也沒有一个所谓的过度时期. 那些传统乐曲的曲种, 他们还是在用传统乐谱记谱, 比如说现在的南音, 还有一些地方乐种].

In fact, this situation is not limited to *Sanxian*'s notation; all Chinese instruments have more or less been through such developmental process. The establishment of music conservatories provokes the application of numbered notation, as it is relatively simple to understand. Undoubtedly the conservatory-used numbered notation certainly has affected the development of local music and Chinese instruments, especially solo instruments. The current notation has gradually influenced a few traditional music forms, such as the *Bantou qu* music from Henan Province in the central China. These local art inheritors gradually start to use numbered notation as it is relatively simpler to read and people know it better [另外, 这种情况并不仅限于三弦这一种乐器的发展, 所有的民族乐器都是这样的发展历程, 自从音乐学院一建立就开始采用简谱记谱法, 也比较简单. 当然, 现在的音乐学院简谱记谱肯定也会影响到地方音乐民族器乐的发展. 它作为器乐独奏的形式逐渐影响到其他传统乐种, 比如板头曲之类的, 这些当地的传承人现在也慢慢开始使用简谱记谱, 因为比较简单, 大家都比较认识].

Author: Thank you for the information, it is sufficient and helpful. May I finish the interview with two final questions? I am aware of the technical similarities between *Sanxian*, Pipa, Guqin, and some other Chinese instruments, and through translating the Sanxian notation file edited by Professor Longjian Tan, I also discovered that some *Sanxian* left-hand techniques are subtly close to those of Western string instruments. I am wondering if *Sanxian* has ever

adapted performance techniques from other Chinese instruments (Pipa, Guqin, etc.) in its developmental process? Or do they simultaneously affect each other? During Professor Yi Li's[315] research process on *Sanxian*'s left-hand techniques, have we ever learned any techniques from Western string performance? (emoji: [fist-palm salute]) [谢谢! 信息量很足, 很有帮助. 最后请教两个问题: 我通过翻译谭老师的三弦技法表, 发现三弦有许多技法与琵琶, 古琴等其他民族乐器相似, 有部分左手技法与西方弦乐器也有一定类似之处. 三弦的演奏技术在发展过程中是否借鉴过其他中国乐器 (琵琶, 古琴等)? 还是说它们之间是互相影响的关系? 三弦的左手技法是否从李艺先生的研究开始借鉴了一部分西方弦乐技巧? (抱拳)]

Gao: Well, according to my knowledge, Chinese instruments were developed simultaneously and interactively affected each other. As for string instruments, whether they were Eastern or Western, they must have something in common as long as they are played through finger-plucking. Therefore, I think it's very normal for them to have technical similarities [嗯, 因为它们的发展时期, 我觉得是同时期的, 所以我觉得是互相影响吧. 然后, 弦乐器不管是东方还是西方, 它只要是用手去弹奏的乐器, 一定有共通之处. 所以, 它们的技法有相似之处, 我觉得也是很正常的].

Considering your last question: Whether the *Sanxian* left-hand techniques have ever adapted techniques from Western string instruments? My answer is NO. Well, we can only say that Professor Yi Li may have referenced some Western Etudes in *Sanxian* teaching during his research in *Sanxian* learning. Yet in terms of performance techniques, Sanxian shouldn't have referenced these Western instruments [至于最后一个问题: 左手技法是否借鉴西方弦乐器, 我认为是没有的. 嗯, 只能说在一些学习和训练的模式上, 李乙老师指得可能是在教学模式上会借鉴一些西方的练习曲. 但在演奏技法上, 应该是没有借鉴西方这些乐器的].

Author: OK, got it. I don't know whether my understanding is accurate: as a member of string instrument, *Sanxian*'s construction and performing principle are similar to other Chinese and Western string instruments. However, the techniques of *Sanxian* are formulated on the basis of its own structure and sound features [好的, 了解, 不知道我的理解和表达是否准确: 三弦作为弦乐器的一员,

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[315] 李乙 (Yi Li) (1933--2019), a famous Chinese Sanxian performer and educator, Professor of Shanghai Conservatory of music. "The experience of learning violin and Western music theories with violinist Jinluan Zheng had a profound impact on Yi Li's teaching system. Yi Li boldly borrowed the training system and experiences of Western string music in his Sanxian teaching; he took the fingering framework of Western learning as a reference based on the essence of Chinese musical expressions. The violin left-hand techniques such as string-press, hand positions, vibratos, and other fingering combinations are borrowed in Sanxian performance, which notably enriches Sanxian's techniques." Liumeng Zhang. "Yi Li's Artistic Research of Sanxian," (Master's Thesis of Central Conservatory of Music, April 2010): 13. ["曾经师从小提琴演奏家郑金銮学习小提琴和西洋音乐理论的经历给予李乙的教学体系以深刻的影响, 李乙在三弦教学中大胆地借鉴西洋弦乐(大, 小提琴) 的技术训练体系和有益经验, 以西学的指法框架为参照, 以中学的语言精髓为根本. 将提琴的左手演奏技法中的按音, 换把, 揉弦以及指法组合等运用在三弦演奏技法当中, 丰富和提高了三弦演奏技术." 张柳萌. "李乙三弦艺术研究," (中央音乐学院硕士学位论文, 2010 年 4 月): 13.]

它与其他中国弦乐和西方弦乐在构造和原理上具有相似之处. 但三弦的技法是建立在这件乐器本身的构造和音响特征而制定的].

Gao: That was concise and accurate [精练准确].

Author: Thank you. I have learned a lot from you through our practice together in recent years. May I compile our dialogue into a transcription of an interview? I hope to help foreign scholars better understand Sanxian and its characteristics [谢谢亲爱的，跟着你实践这几年我学会了很多. 我可以把我们的对话整理出来做成一个采访记录吗？ 我希望帮助外国学者更加了解三弦和它的特征].

Gao: Of course you can (Emoji [chuckling]) [当然啦没问题(偷笑)].

Appendix 4.

In Desperate

穷途

--Interdisciplinary Practice Research of Traditional Chinese Plucked-lute *Sanxian*

2022

Yue Ming: Today, our strong tendency to privilege notated music in music transmission in addition to our fast-paced lives makes strong Chinese folk features incongruous with Western Contemporary aesthetics. Our oral traditions have broken down. I hope an interdisciplinary approach to indigenous sources under an inclusive, collaborative attitude will facilitate transcultural understanding of folk-derived music genres while respecting as much of the expressive individuality as possible of each artist.

Creative team members:

Composer: Yue Ming (*University of York,* UK)

Chereographer: Ye Li (*Tianjin Conservatory of Music,* Tianjin, China)

Sanxian Performer: Taisheng Zhao (*Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra*, HongKong, China)

Sound Engineer: Yizhe Chen (*University of Bristol*)

Programme Notes: Ruan Ji (210-263 AD) is a poet of unparalleled talent living in the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties, an era of civil war and political chaos. As a liberty seeker, he refuses to serve the ruler's authoritarianism and thus can only survive by pretending to be drunk. He often rides a donkey, venting his dissatisfaction and resentment of the social circumstances by aimlessly crying aloud when reaching the end of a road.

This work presents a metaphor for the current situation of Chinese intellectuals by narrating a "show to survive" hiding under Ruanjin's drunkenness. The infertile yet stubborn donkey here represents his inner struggle: he is powerless to confront the cruel reality but he is still devoted to his belief. The creative team hopes to express the protagonist's emotional conflicts, a desire for redemption from the oppression of power politics that hides behind an undisciplined mask.

Introduction: As an embodiment of the composer's doctoral "composition as research," this work presents an interdisciplinary approach to Chinese Sanxian music development ("Westernisation"). Unlike the frequently used model for dance creation (the instrumentalist performs by following the composer's precisely notated score, and the choreography follows ready-made audio), the music devised for *In Desperate* is a collaboration by three people (the choreographer, *Sanxian* performer, and the composer) to best express each artist's independent consciousness and artistic praxis through a tripartite approach:

I. "One Theme" by "Three Voices": The allusion to Ruan Ji's reveals to us, as contemporary Chinese, our most profound understandings of the turbulent social climax of the period in which he lived: the "cannot help but" feeling of the *Sanxian* artist in Hong Kong; the despair experienced by the mainland Chinese choreographer; and the dilemma of "where to go" by the composer—a UK-based Chinese student.

II. An Heterogeneous Isomorphism Outcome results from featuring individual creative "voices" in one work by giving the composer, *Sanxian* performer, and choreographer space to fully explore their respective professional expertise and metaphysical understanding. The Dancer employs movement from Chinese Han and Tang Classical Dance (in which a body fluctuates and undulates in opposites and contradictions, moving in the reverse direction to the one it will then move in), integrating this with

expression from the folk dance *Bamboo Horse* (a Ming Dynasty (1404) (some said in Tang) dancing-singing form in which performers wear bamboo horses). The *Sanxian* performer shapes the image of Ruan Ji in his mind through the playing and singing of the *Xintianyou* (a folk music genre that originates in the Shaan Xi Province). Responding to the dancer's and performer's unique expressions, the composer bridges the "Xianhe Song" from the Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD) with the Shaanxi folk song "Lan Hua Hua" and applies the idea of "timbral structure" from Western Contemporary music to "create an impression of polyphony on several levels for a solo instrument" (Kaija Saariaho, 2009) and realise the heterogeneous isomorphism of diverse artistic sources.

III. A "Tripartite" Creative Approach:

i. The composer pre-designs the music structure through the score and communicates with the dancer and Sanxian performer;

ii. The dancer and performer individually "create" their performance by adding improvisations into the music structure;

iii. The composer adjusts the creative design through the new inspirations offered by the dancer's performance and the Sanxian player's improvisation to achieve the best possible congruence of the three art forms.

* Due to geographic distance—individually based in York (UK), Hong Kong (China), and Tianjin (China)—this work is carried out through online meetings.