

# **Listening to Chinese Music**

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This article is an English translation of part of the book *Listening to Chinese Music* 《中國音樂導賞》 edited by Chuen-Fung Wong (黃泉鋒) and published by the Hong Kong Commercial Press in 2009 as a project of the Chinese Music Archive of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. With the permission by the Chinese Music Archive, this article is uploaded onto the Education Bureau's website for teachers' and students' reference. As for the recordings of selected music, please refer to the CDs accompanying the printed copy of the Chinese version.

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## Foreword

It is heartening to see the completion of the English edition of *Listening to Chinese Music* edited by Prof. Chuen-Fung Wong (黃泉鋒) of Macalester College, Minnesota. A very timely publication in Chinese music, it is significant to point out that the book is written and edited by scholars of the younger generation in post-1997 Hong Kong. Regardless of their differences in academic and musical backgrounds, the common ground they share is that they are products of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). All of them have first-hand experience in post-secondary teaching. Furthermore, most are committed performers of Chinese music in various genres. It is important to have solid academic training as well as practical know-how in writing a diverse and broad subject such as Chinese music. Its Chinese edition (2009) has been well received in Hong Kong. Reprinting twice, we are honoured to be invited by the Education Bureau of the Hong Kong Government to translate five chapters of this meaningful and very much needed book into English.

Addressing the English readership, it is inexpedient to translate the book directly from Chinese to English. It requires more rethinking and further explanation to those who do not have much background in Chinese history, culture and music. At this juncture, the experience and expertise of Mr. Tsui Wan-ching (徐允清) fit perfectly. Mr. Tsui, in addition to be an outstanding music alumnus of CUHK, furthered his studies in historical musicology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the Royal Holloway, University of London. Since his return to Hong Kong, he has been teaching both Western and Chinese music, and has been actively participating in the exchanges in academic conferences. We are grateful to his willingness of undertaking this important task. Last but not least, I would like to thank Dr. Tse Chun-yan (謝俊仁), the advisor of the Chinese Music Archive, for his unfailing support, efficient planning and coordinating, seeing this project from its very beginning, the Chinese edition, to the completion of the present English edition. Thanks should also go to Ms. Li Wai-chung (李慧中) and Ms. Janet Chui Shing-yan (崔承恩), our former archivists, without whose administrative support, this project could not have been possible.

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## Translator's Preface

*Listening to Chinese Music* (中國音樂導賞) is an introductory book on Chinese music written by four young scholars, Prof. Chuen-Fung Wong (黃泉鋒), Dr. Chan Chak-lui (陳澤蕾), Mr. Yeung Wai-kit (楊偉傑), and Mr. Wong King-chung (王景松). It is written in an easily readable way and at the same time informative and stimulating. It is indeed an honour for me to be invited by the Education Bureau of the Hong Kong Government and the Chinese Music Archive of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to translate five chapters of this book into English.

My translation is indebted to the pioneering academic writings of Profs. Bell Yung (榮鴻曾), Stephen Jones, Chan Sau-yan (陳守仁), J. Lawrence Witzleben, Yu Siu-wah (余少華), Frederick Lau (劉長江), Maria Chow Mai-wah (周美華), as well as numerous translators of CD liner notes and concert programmes that I am not able to name one by one. My heartiest gratitude goes to all of them.

The translation policy adopted in this translation is as follows:

1. Order of the family name and given name for Chinese names: generally, if the name is in romanisation, the family name comes first, followed by the given name. An exception is the author's name Chuen-Fung Wong (黃泉鋒), which is in the reverse order, as he specifically requested so. As for Chinese persons using Christian names, the Christian name comes first, followed by the family name, like Richard Tsang (曾葉發) and Clarence Mak (麥偉鑄).
2. *Hanyupinyin* (漢語拼音), the romanisation system currently employed in Chinese Mainland, is used for historical names and names for persons from Chinese Mainland.
3. Endeavours have been made to find official names for persons from Hong Kong. However, as there is no standard romanisation system for person's name in Hong Kong, in the cases that the official names are not available, either names used in English academic writings (like Wong Jyt-seng 王粵生) or *hanyupinyin* is employed (like Fang Yan-fen 芳艷芬 and Chen Jin-tang 陳錦棠).
4. The years of the Chinese dynasties, which are not given in the Chinese version of this book, are added in this translation for the easy reference of foreign readers.
5. Generally, “Beijing” is used for 北京. However, when referring to 北京大學 or 燕京大學, “Peking University” is used, as this translation has already been used widely.
6. In Chapter 6 (Cantonese Opera and Narrative Singing), *hanyupinyin* is used for technical terms in music, as this is the policy adopted by the Education Bureau of the Hong Kong Government. I have endeavoured to provide an English translation for these terms in the first

time that they appear.

7. For the lyrics in Chapter 6, generally only synopses in English are provided, instead of translating the lyrics sentence by sentence. The reason is that it is extremely difficult to translate poetic lyrics. Even if this is done, a lot of footnotes explaining the connotations of the poetic images or allusions are required. Moreover, the target readers of this translation are teachers and students preparing for the Music Examination of the Diploma of Secondary Education of Hong Kong. Most of them are supposed to be able to read Chinese.
8. Square brackets [ ] are used to show that something is added or altered by the translator. For example, in Listening Guide 6.5, [Nanyin] is added after “Naamyam” to show that the latter is equivalent to the pinyin “Nanyin”. Sometimes [sic] is added to show that something seems unlikely or is clearly incorrect with the original (“sic” is the Latin for “thus”). For example, in Listening Guide 1.2, “[sic]” is added after the title of the record “Traditional Instrumental Pieces of WEI Chung-loh” since the present translator thinks that this title can be better phrased as “Traditional Instrumental Pieces Performed by WEI Chung-loh.”

Many persons have offered me help in this translation project and I would like to extend my warm gratitude to them. I would first like to thank the four authors for reading drafts of this translation, clarifying certain points, and supplying further information. Dr. Tse Chun-yan (謝俊仁), Mr. Yeh Cheung-shing (葉長盛) and Mr. Woo Shing-kwan (胡成筠) have made important suggestions for the improvement of the drafts. Ms. Cilea Lee Siu-ying (李小英), Mr. Leung Wing-kin (梁永健) and Mr. Tiger Liu (廖兆文) have provided assistance to me. Mr. Victor Cheng (鄭偉滔) generously lent me CD recordings. Ms. Guo Xin-xin (郭欣欣) helped to type two music examples. Last but not least, Prof. Michael E. McClellan, former Head of the Music Department, Chinese University of Hong Kong, always answered my queries on English usage promptly. It is of much regret that he did not live to see the completion of this project.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Prof. Chan Sau-yan (陳守仁) and Prof. Joseph S. C. Lam (林萃青) for initiating my interest in Chinese music through their stimulating teaching in my undergraduate years at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Mr. Tsui Ying-fai (徐英輝), Mr. Pak Tak-wan (白得雲), Prof. Yu Siu-wah (余少華) and Mr. Victor Cheng (鄭偉滔) all have provided great helps to me in my teaching of Chinese music courses in the past two decades, and I am most grateful to them.

Tsui Wan-ching  
March 2013

# Chapter 1 Modern Chinese Orchestra

By Yeung Wai-kit (楊偉傑)

English Translation by Tsui Wan-ching (徐允清)

Nowadays, most people first encounter Chinese music through performances of the modern Chinese orchestra. However, the Chinese orchestra is in fact modeled on the Western orchestra and has a history of several decades only.

What is “Chinese music”? People with different origins, nationalities and cultural backgrounds may have different answers to this question. Nowadays, the “Chinese music” that we are most frequently in contact with may be orchestral music. For example, in some Hong Kong movies, especially the martial art movies, famous Chinese orchestral pieces like *Fishermen's Song on Eastern Sea* (東海漁歌) (CD 1-1), *Pioneers* (闖將令), *Generals* (Sichuan Province) (四川將軍令), *Ambush from All Sides* (十面埋伏), *Dagger Society Suite* (小刀會組曲), *Heroes Conquer the River Dadu* (英雄們戰勝了大渡河), etc., are being used. In fact, Chinese orchestral music is a type of new music. Traditional Chinese music is generally in small ensembles.

In the circle of Western classical music, orchestras are generally called “philharmonic orchestra” or “symphony orchestra.” These different names are mainly used to distinguish two or more orchestras in the same city, just like “The London Symphony Orchestra” and “The London Philharmonic Orchestra.” In the circle of Chinese orchestra, the name of an orchestra reflects the political and sociological situations in which the orchestra is in. In Hong Kong and Macau, it is called “*zhongyuetuan*” (中樂團, Chinese orchestra). The Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (香港中樂團) is the only professional Chinese orchestra in Hong Kong, which was under the management of the former Urban Council after its professionalisation in 1977. “*Zhongyue*” (中樂), meaning “Chinese music,” is a neutral term politically. In Singapore, the Chinese orchestra is called “*huayuetuan*” (華樂團, orchestra of the ethnic Chinese). “*Huazu*” (華族, the Chinese tribe) is the name given to Chinese people in Singapore, and this name implies that Chinese is only one of the nationalities in this multi-

cultural country. In Chinese Mainland, the Chinese orchestra is called “*minyuetuan*” (民樂團, people's orchestra) whereas in Taiwan, it is called “*guoyuetuan*” (國樂團, national orchestra).

## Section 1 The Rise of the Modern Chinese Orchestra

The history of the modern Chinese orchestra dates back to the early twentieth century. After the May Fourth Movement (五四運動, 1919), Chinese people were eager to develop new ways of thinking in the 1920s. There was no exception in the field of music. In this era, various music societies were formed, including the Great Union Music Society (大同樂會) of Shanghai, the Society for the Advancement of National Music (國樂改進社) and the Music Society at the Peking University (北京大學音樂研究所) of Beijing. The National Conservatory of Music (國立音樂專科學校) of Shanghai, inaugurated in 1927, is the first music school established by the government in China.

From the mid-twentieth century on, Chinese orchestral music has become the most popular type of Chinese music. The Chinese orchestra is made up of various kinds of Chinese instruments, like the *dizi* (笛子), *sheng* (笙), *suona* (唢呐), *pipa* (琵琶), *guzheng* (古箏), *yangqin* (揚琴) and *erhu* (二胡). There are also instruments that were newly invented, like *zhonghu* (中胡), *gehu* (革胡), *liuqin* (柳琴), various sizes of *ruan* (阮) and wind instruments with added keys. In order to form the orchestra, each type of instruments is made in different sizes, and is divided into high-, middle-, and low-registered instruments. The number of each instrument is also expanded.

If you listen to *Fishermen's Song on Eastern Sea* (東海漁歌), you will find that the dynamics of this piece is much stronger than in traditional Chinese ensemble music, like Cantonese music (廣東音樂) and *jiangnan sizhu* (江南絲竹). There is also more variety of timbre and more changes of tempo and texture. Traditional performance venues of Chinese music, like tea houses and private residences, are not able to accommodate such a big orchestra. This type of music can only be performed in concert halls or theatres.

## Section 2 Instruments Used in the Modern Chinese Orchestra

There are different ways of classifying musical instruments. The classification reflects people's different concepts of music in different eras. Traditionally, Chinese people divide musical instruments into eight categories (八音) according to the materials of which the instruments are made. These eight categories are metal (金), stone (石), silk (絲), bamboo (竹), gourd (匏), earth (土), membrane (革) and wood (木). The modern Chinese orchestra was first formed in the early twentieth century. Its instruments are divided into four families according to their ways of playing: wind instruments (吹管), plucked string instruments (彈撥), bowed string instruments (拉弦), and percussion (打擊). Following the model of the Western orchestra, the instruments in each family are subdivided into high-, middle-, and low-registered instruments.

The instruments used in a modern Chinese orchestra generally include the followings:<sup>1</sup>

Wind instruments:	<i>bangdi</i> (梆笛), <i>qudi</i> (曲笛), <i>xindi</i> (新笛), <i>dadi</i> (大笛), soprano <i>sheng</i> (高音笙), tenor <i>sheng</i> (次中音笙), bass <i>sheng</i> (低音笙), soprano <i>suona</i> (高音唢呐), alto <i>suona</i> (中音唢呐), tenor <i>suona</i> (次中音唢呐), bass <i>suona</i> (低音唢呐), soprano <i>guan</i> (高音管), alto <i>guan</i> (中音管), bass <i>guan</i> (低音管)
Plucked string instruments:	<i>pipa</i> (琵琶), <i>yangqin</i> (揚琴), <i>guzheng</i> (古箏), <i>xiaoruan</i> (小阮), <i>zhongruan</i> (中阮), <i>daruan</i> (大阮), <i>sanxian</i> (三弦), <i>konghou</i> (箜篌)
Bowed string instruments:	<i>gaohu</i> (高胡), <i>erhu</i> (二胡), <i>zhonghu</i> (中胡), <i>gehu</i> (革胡), bass <i>gehu</i> (低音革胡)
Percussion:	<i>timpani</i> (定音鼓), <i>paigu</i> (排鼓), <i>dagu</i> (大鼓), <i>xiaogu</i> (小鼓), <i>dabo</i> (大钹), <i>xiaobo</i> (小钹), etc.

Modern Chinese orchestras are mainly found in places in which there are communities of Chinese people, including Chinese Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. All Chinese orchestras are made

<sup>1</sup> The families of instruments being used in modern Chinese orchestras of different regions are more or less the same. The instruments used in the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra are given here as an example.

up of instruments grouped in the above four families, although the actual instruments being used may be different in different orchestras. For example, in the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra and the Taipei Chinese Orchestra (台北市立國樂團), the bass string instruments being used are *gehu* (革胡) and bass *gehu* (低音革胡), whereas in the Singapore Chinese Orchestra (新加坡華樂團), the cello and double bass are being used. In the China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra (中國廣播民族樂團), *liuqin* (柳琴) is used as the high-registered plucked string instrument, whereas in the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, the *xiaoruan* (小阮) is used. Two instruments may have the same function, although their appearances are different.

In addition to the above regular instruments, some instruments may be called for in specific occasions. These instruments include *banhu* (板胡), *jinghu* (京胡), *yueqin* (月琴), *xun* (埙), *bianzhong* (編鐘), etc.

### Section 3 The Characteristics of Chinese Orchestral Music and Its Genres

Improvisation is an important feature in traditional Chinese instrumental ensemble playing. In playing *jiangnan sizhu* (江南絲竹) and Cantonese music, all the performers of the ensemble are playing the same skeletal melody, but each one of them is ornamenting the melody in its own way. This process of ornamenting is called “*jiahua*” (加花, literally meaning “adding flowers,” i.e., decorating the main melody). In the performance of modern Chinese orchestral music, however, the performers are playing exactly what is written on the score under the direction of the conductor. Generally the performers are not allowed to “add flowers” in the way that one is supposed to do in the traditional way of playing.

When modern Chinese orchestra began to flourish in the early twentieth century, the repertoire was mostly arrangements of *sizhu* pieces, like *Moonlight over the River in Spring* (春江花月夜). Since the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949, the modern Chinese orchestra, with different groups of instruments performing together, has become a political symbol, representing the harmonious existence of different ethnic groups in this unified country. “*Minzu yuetuan*” (民族樂團, people’s orchestras) were formed in different regions of the

country. Pieces arranged or composed for these orchestras have appeared in great numbers.

The pieces for modern Chinese orchestra are mostly programme music, depicting some specific persons, events or landscapes. Most of them are in single movement, divided into several sections. Multi-movement symphonies are rare. These pieces are either arrangements or newly composed pieces. A large number of them are arrangements, as arranging pre-existing pieces is a convenient way to solve the problem of the lack of repertoire for this performing medium.

Peng Xiu-wen (彭修文, 1931-1996), the founding Music Director of the China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra (中國廣播民族樂團), arranged a large number of Chinese and Western pieces for modern Chinese orchestra in the 1950s and 1960s, among them are *Stepping High* (步步高, 1954, a piece of Cantonese music by Lü Wen-cheng 呂文成), *Dance of the Yao People* (瑤族舞曲, 1954, a piece for Western orchestra composed by Mao Yuan (茅沅, 1926- ) and Liu Tie-shan (劉鐵山 1923- )), and *Dum Dum* (達姆・達姆, 1959, an Algerian folk song).

To compose new pieces is another way of expanding the repertoire. Famous newly composed pieces include *Terra Cotta Warriors Fantasia* (秦兵馬俑幻想曲, 1979) (CD 1-5) and the suite *Twelve Months* (十二月, 1984-1989) by Peng Xiu-wen (彭修文), *Spring Suite* (春天組曲, 1979) by Gu Guan-ren (顧冠仁), *The Beauty of Yunnan* (雲南風情, 1982) by Kuan Nai-chung (關迺忠) and *Tales of the Walled City* (城寨風情, 1994) by Chen Ning-chi (陳能濟).

Concerto is a popular genre of Chinese orchestral music. Concertos in Western classical music are generally in three movements: a fast first movement in sonata form, followed by a slow second movement and a rondo finale. Chinese concertos are freer in form. In addition to the Western format, there are quite a number of pieces written in the form of suite.

*The Butterfly Lovers Concerto* (梁山伯與祝英台, 1959) is a classic piece of Chinese concerto. It is composed by He Zhan-hao (何占豪, 1933- ) and Chen Gang (陳鋼, 1935- ) for solo violin and the Western orchestra. It has been transcribed for various solo instruments, including the *gaochu* (高胡), *erhu* (二胡),

*pipa* (琵琶), *liuqin* (柳琴), *dizi* (笛子), xylophone (木琴), etc.

Other famous concertos include the *erhu* concertos *The Great Wall Capriccio* (長城隨想) by Liu Wen-jin (劉文金, 1937- ) and *Red Plum Capriccio* (紅梅隨想曲, 1980) by Wu Hou-yuan (吳厚元, 1946-1999), the *pipa* concerto *Little Sisters of the Grassland* (草原小姐妹, 1973) composed collectively by Wu Zu-qiang (吳祖強, 1927- ), Wang Yan-qiao (王燕樵, 1937- ) and Liu De-hai (劉德海, 1937- ), the *pipa* concerto *Hua Mulan* (花木蘭, 1979) by Gu Guan-ren (顧冠仁), the *zhongruan* (中阮) concerto *Reminiscences of Yunnan* (雲南回憶, 1987) by Liu Xing (劉星, 1962- ), the *dizi* concerto *The Sorrowful and Desolate Mountain* (愁空山, 1992) by Guo Wen-jing (郭文景, 1956- ), and the *huqin* (胡琴) concerto *Fire Sacrifice* (火祭, 1995) by Tan Dun (譚盾, 1957- ).

#### Section 4 The “Improvement” of Chinese Instruments

In a traditional *sizhu* (絲竹) ensemble, there is generally only one player for each type of instrument. The modern Chinese orchestra is formed by expanding the *sizhu* ensemble, with the model of the Western orchestra in mind.

The blending of different sonorities in a Chinese orchestra is not as good as that in a Western orchestra. It is due to the fact that each Chinese instrument has its distinctive timbre. Moreover, there are more than one temperament in Chinese instrumental music due to different constructions of the instruments. In order to develop the modern Chinese orchestra, many Chinese musicians have tried to “improve” the performing capability, timbre and appearance of Chinese instruments. As a result, the research on the “improvement” of musical instruments has developed as an important branch of Chinese music.

The distinctive timbres of some Chinese instruments may be lost by this “improvement” of instruments. It may be difficult to strike a balance between “the improvement for the new direction” and “the preservation of tradition.”

Lü Wen-cheng (呂文成, 1898-1981), a maestro of Cantonese music, is a pioneer in the “improvement” of Chinese musical instruments. In the 1920s, he invented the *gaoihu* (高胡) by replacing the silk strings of the *erhu* (二胡) by

steel strings, and by raising the tuning of the *erhu* to a perfect fourth higher. The *gaochu* also differs from the *erhu* in the way that it is being held between the two thighs of the player in performing. The *gaochu* has then become the major instrument of Cantonese music and Cantonese opera, and was later incorporated into the Chinese orchestra.

In the 1950s, Yang Yu-sen (楊雨森, 1926-1980) of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music transformed the cello and double bass into the *gehu* (革胡) and bass *gehu* (低音革胡) respectively by changing their shapes and by mounting snake skin on the enlarged, round resonating chambers. These two instruments have become the bass bowed string instruments of the Chinese orchestra. The “*ge*” of “*gehu*” has the meaning of “improvement.”

The bass *matouqin* (低音馬頭琴) and bowed *ruan* (拉阮) used in the China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra (中國廣播民族樂團) and the Central Chinese Orchestra (中央民族樂團) are similar instruments to the bass *gehu*. In appearance, they look like “Chinese” or “folk,” but are in fact having the same function as the double bass. The *zhonghu* (中胡) is an alto instrument invented in the 1950s. Its shape is similar to the *erhu*, but its resonating chamber is bigger, its pole longer and its range lower. Its role is similar to that of the viola in the Western orchestra.

Modeling on the Western flute, the *dizi* (笛子) has been transformed by adding joints for the sake of modulation, and by adding holes to form the 7- and 9-holed *dizis*. In the 1960s, Zhao Song-ting (趙松庭, 1924-2001), a maestro of the *dizi*, tied *dizis* of different keys together and thus invented the *paidi* (排笛). In the late 1970s, Cai Jing-min (蔡敬民, 1939- ) of the Nanjing Arts Institute (南京藝術學院) added metal keys to the bamboo *dizi* and invented the *xinzhudi* (新竹笛) to facilitate modulation in the twelve-tone equal temperament. In the early 1980s, Yin Wei-he (尹維鶴, 1940- ), a *dizi* player of the Hubei Province Song and Dance Troupe (湖北省歌舞團), invented the “double *dizi*” (雙音笛). Later, the *suona* (嗩吶) and *guan* (管) with added keys were invented.

In each section of the Western orchestra, the instruments are divided into different registers. For example, the string section consists of the violin, viola,

cello and double bass, each of them having its own range. The modern Chinese orchestra is built on this concept of “consort.”

In traditional Chinese music, there is no such a “consort” concept. In *jiangnan sizhu* (江南絲竹), for instance, the only bowed string instrument is the *erhu* (二胡). There are no middle- or low-registered instruments of this type. In order to adopt the “consort” concept of the Western orchestra, the *zhonghu* (中胡), *gehu* (革胡) and bass *gehu* (低音革胡) were invented. Plucked string instruments are rarely found in the Western orchestra. The only regular member of this group is the harp, and only occasionally would we find the lute or the guitar being used in an orchestral concert. The traditional Chinese plucked string instruments were not made to form a consort. In order to develop the Chinese orchestra, new instruments were invented.

There are pros and cons for the “improvement” of Chinese instruments. Does this revolution really bring about “improvement”? Or does it destroy our tradition?

## Section 5 The Development of Modern Chinese Orchestra

The modern Chinese orchestra has flourished in Chinese Mainland since 1949. With the support of the government, “*minyuetuan*” (民樂團, people’s orchestras) have been established throughout the country. This performing medium has become the mainstream of Chinese music, and the number of new compositions for this medium is ever increasing. In Hong Kong, modern Chinese orchestras were first established in the 1950s and there have been many amateur groups. In 1977, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (香港中樂團) was professionalised and under the management of the former Urban Council. This incident shows that the Hong Kong Government considers Chinese orchestral music as the representative genre of Chinese music.

The Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra has commissioned many composers from Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong to write new compositions for this performing medium. This commission system has established a platform for composers mainly trained in Western compositional techniques to experiment with Chinese

instrumental writing. *The Insect World* (昆蟲世界) (CD 1-6) and *Autumn Execution* (秋決) by Doming Lam (林樂培, 1926- ) are experimental works of the late 1970s. Symphonies No. 7 and No. 8 by Chan Wing-wah (陳永華, 1954- ), a composer of mainly symphonic works, are written for the Chinese orchestra. In recent years, Chinese orchestral works tend to use Western avant-garde composition techniques and experiment with special sound effects. This is in contrast to the practice in earlier works, in which the melody is the main focus of the composition.

From the founding of the Great Union Music Society (大同樂會) to the present, the Chinese orchestra has a history of almost a century. It has become the mainstream of Chinese music.

The development of the Chinese orchestra has led to the emergence of large-scale compositions and the “improvement” of Chinese instruments. In order to reflect critically on this development, we need to understand traditional Chinese music. Modern Chinese orchestral music is only one type of Chinese music, and not the only type. In Chinese Mainland, the ideology favouring the “large size” leads to a loss of deserved attention to the smaller traditional Chinese ensembles. The “improvement” of Chinese instruments has also led to a change of the timbres and appearances of these instruments in pursuit of a “harmonious” sonority in the Western sense. Has this “improvement” destroyed our own culture? This is worth our reflection.

## Listening Guide

### 1.1 *Fishermen's Song on Eastern Sea* (東海漁歌) (CD 1-1)

#### Information of the Recording

Orchestra: Shanghai Chinese Orchestra (上海民族樂團)

Conductor: He Wu-qi (何無奇)

Title of the Record: *The Martial Themes* (武林春秋) (ROI, 1996)

Recorded in 1960

#### Listening Guide

*Fishermen's Song on Eastern Sea* is a piece for Chinese orchestra composed in 1959 by Gu Guan-ren (顧冠仁, 1942- ) and Ma Sheng-long (馬聖龍, 1933-2003). This piece is based on folk materials from the Zhejiang (浙江) province and depicts the scenery of the Eastern Sea as well as the life of the fishermen. It is divided into four sections: “The Ocean at Dawn” (黎明時的海洋), “Fishing at Sea” (漁民出海捕魚), “Victory over the Storm” (戰勝驚濤駭浪) and “Joyful Return” (豐收歡樂而歸). Sections 1 and 2 are recorded on CD 1-1.

<b>Section 1 “The Ocean at Dawn” (黎明時的海洋)</b>	
0:00	The orchestra first plays an introductory passage. Then the <i>qudi</i> (曲笛) brings out the theme of the introduction. Later, the music gathers momentum and the conch shell (海螺) joins in, imitating the sirens of the ships.
2:12	The plucked string instruments play a light-hearted passage. The bowed string instruments and the winds then play the main theme alternately, depicting the scenery of the harbour in the morning.
<b>Section 2 “Fishing at Sea” (漁民出海捕魚)</b>	
3:51	The main theme is restated in a slower tempo.
5:12	A fast melody is played by the winds and percussion, depicting the scene of fish-catching.
<b>Section 3 “Victory over the Storm” (戰勝驚濤駭浪)</b>	
5:49	There are calls and responses from the <i>suona</i> (唢呐) and the human voice, imitating the fishing songs sung by the fishermen.
6:12	With the accompaniment of the plucked string instruments, the bowed string instruments play a passage imitating the sound of the strong winds and waves. The music played by the wind and percussion instruments depicts the danger in fishing.

#### Section 4 “Joyful Return” (豐收歡樂而歸)

8:11	The <i>bangdi</i> (梆笛) plays a varied reprise of the theme of the introduction. Then a fast passage alternates with the main theme. The piece ends with a fast passage.
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### 1.2 *Moonlight over the River in Spring* (春江花月夜) (CD 1-2, CD 1-3)

#### Information of the Recordings

##### 1. *Pipa Solo* (CD 1-2)

Performed by Wei Chung-loh (衛仲樂) (*pipa*)

Title of the Record: *Traditional Instrumental Pieces of WEI Chung-loh [sic]*  
(衛仲樂演奏曲集) (ROI, 1996)

Recorded between the 1930s and 1960s

##### 2. Ensemble (CD 1-3)

Orchestra: China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra (中國廣播民族樂團)

Conductor: Peng Xiu-wen (彭修文)

Title of the Record: *Moods of the Seasons* (春花秋月) (ROI, 1999)

Recorded in 1990

#### Listening Guide

The Great Union Music Society (大同樂會) was founded by Zheng Guan-wen (鄭觀文, 1872-1935) in Shanghai in 1920. This Society was an amateur group with an aim in researching and learning Chinese music.

The activities of the Great Union Music Society were influenced by the “progressive” thoughts of the May Fourth Movement. A number of maestros taught in this Society, including *pipa* maestros Wang Yu-ting (汪昱庭, 1872-1951) and Cheng Wu-jia (程午嘉, 1902-1985). *Moonlight over the River in Spring* (春江花月夜) is an arrangement of the *pipa* piece *The Moon over Xunyang* (潯陽夜月).

The recording of CD 1-2 is a solo *pipa* performance by Wei Chung-loh. Wei had a close relationship with the Great Union Music Society. He was a student of Zheng Guan-wen and an early member of the Society.

The recording of CD 1-3 is performed by an ensemble. The instruments used in this ensemble are the same as those of a *sizhu* ensemble, but had been expanded. In the 1950s, this piece was arranged for the Chinese orchestra by Qin

Peng-zhang (秦鵬章, 1919-2002) and the composer Luo Zhong-rong (羅忠鎔, 1924- ). (Qin Peng-zhang was a conductor who had studied with Wei Chung-loh in the Great Union Music Society.)

The readers may compare these two performing versions of the same piece.

### 1.3 *Instrumental Guide to the Chinese Orchestra* (管弦絲竹知多少) (CD 1-4)

#### Information of the Recording

Composer: Kwan Nai-zhong [Kuan Nai-chung] (關迺忠) (1939- )

Orchestra: Kaohsiung City Chinese Orchestra (高雄市立國樂團)

Conductor: Kwan Nai-zhong [Kuan Nai-chung]

Narrator: Xiao Ya (蕭亞)

Title of the Record: *Instrumental Guide to the Chinese Orchestra* [sic] (管弦絲

竹知多少) (HUGO, 1992)

Recorded in 1992

#### Listening Guide

In the repertoire of Western orchestral works, there are several educational pieces aiming at introducing the instruments of the orchestra. One example is *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* by the British composer Benjamin Britten (1913-1976).<sup>2</sup> *Instrumental Guide to the Chinese Orchestra* [sic] (1985) by Kuan Nai-chung, a former Music Director of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (1986-1990 in service), is an equivalent piece for the Chinese orchestra. This piece, making up of variations based on the folk song *Jasmine* (茉莉花) from the Jiangsu (江蘇) province, is divided into six sections featuring different instrumental sections: the theme, wind instruments, plucked string instruments, percussion, bowed string instruments, and the coda. It is performed by the Chinese orchestra and a narrator.

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<sup>2</sup> Other pieces functioned at introducing the instruments of the Western orchestra include *The Carnival of the Animals* by the French composer Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) and *Peter and the Wolf* by the Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953).

Section 1 The Theme	
0:00	After an introduction played by the <i>dizi</i> (笛子), the whole orchestra performs <i>Jasmine</i> once, and then the narration begins.
Section 2 Wind Instruments	
1:56	The <i>bangdi</i> (梆笛) plays Variation 1 of <i>Jasmine</i> .
2:27	The <i>qudi</i> (曲笛) plays Variation 2.
3:11	The <i>sheng</i> (笙) plays Variation 3.
4:40	The <i>suona</i> (唢呐) plays Variation 4.
5:45	The <i>guanzi</i> (管子) plays Variation 5.
Section 3 Plucked String Instruments	
6:59	The <i>liuqin</i> (柳琴) plays Variation 6.
7:22	The <i>yangqin</i> (揚琴) plays Variation 7.
8:13	The <i>pipa</i> (琵琶) plays Variation 8.
9:08	The <i>ruan</i> (阮) plays Variation 9.
10:13	The <i>sanxian</i> (三弦) plays Variation 10.
10:51	The <i>guzheng</i> (古箏) plays Variation 11.
Section 4 Percussion	
11:51	A transitional passage is played by the following instruments successively: <i>xiaotanggu</i> (小堂鼓), <i>xiaobo</i> (小鉸), <i>xiaoluo</i> (小鑼), <i>tangluo</i> (堂鑼), <i>diluo</i> (低鑼), <i>bangu</i> (板鼓), <i>bangzi</i> (梆子), <i>timpani</i> (定音鼓), and <i>xylophone</i> (木琴).
Section 5 Bowed String Instruments	
13:04	The <i>erhu</i> (二胡) plays the theme.
13:51	The second half of the theme is played by the <i>gaoihu</i> (高胡).
14:08	The <i>zhonghu</i> (中胡) plays Variation 12.
14:43	The <i>gehu</i> (革胡) plays Variation 13.
15:13	The bass <i>gehu</i> (低音革胡) plays a transitional passage.
Section 6 The Coda	
15:49	The whole orchestra plays Variation 14.
17:56	The <i>bawu</i> (巴烏) plays a melody, and then the whole orchestra rounds up the piece.

## 1.4 An Excerpt from *Terra Cotta Warriors Fantasia* (秦兵馬俑幻想曲) (CD 1-5)

### Information of the Recording

Composer: Peng Xiu-wen (彭修文, 1931-1996)

Orchestra: Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (香港中樂團)

Conductor: Yan Hui-chang (閻惠昌)

Title of the Record: *Terra Cotta Warriors Fantasia* (秦兵馬俑) (Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, 2002)

Recorded in 1990

### Listening Guide

*Terra Cotta Warriors Fantasia* is a classic of modern Chinese orchestral work written in the 1970s and 1980s. The composer had not yet seen the terra cotta warriors found in the mausoleum of the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty when he wrote this work, and he based on imagination in composing the music. CD1-5 is a recording of the first section of this piece. The readers may imagine the magnificence of the terra cotta warriors when listening to this piece.

## 1.5 *The Insect World* (昆蟲世界) , The First Section, “The Busy Bees” (勤蜂嗡嗡) (CD 1-6)

### Information of the Recording

Composer: Doming Lam (林樂培, 1926- )

Orchestra: Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (香港中樂團)

Title of the Record: *In Search of Chinese New Music: Works by Doming Lam* (尋找中國新音樂：林樂培作品集) (Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, 2006)

Recorded in 2006

### Listening Guide

Doming Lam experimented with some special sound effects when he composed *The Insect World* in 1979. In that era, most Chinese orchestral works focused on having beautiful melodies. What Lam did was an experiment of the avant-garde music. Listen to the first section of *The Insect World*, “The Busy Bees,” and see how Chinese instruments imitate the sound of the bees.

## Extended Knowledge

### 1.1 The Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra (香港中樂團)

When the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra was established in 1973, it was a semi-professional orchestra supported by the former Urban Council. It was professionalized in 1977 with Ng Tai-kong (吳大江, 1943-2001) acting as the first Music Director.

Up to now, there have been four Music Directors for the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra: Ng Tai-kong (1977-1985 in service), Kuan Nai-chung (關迺忠, 1986-1990 in service), Henry Shek (石信之, 1993-1997 in service) and Yan Hui-chang (閻惠昌, 1997-present). In 2001, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra Limited was established.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the performers of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra are from Hong Kong, Chinese Mainland, Taiwan and Singapore. Renowned musicians of this orchestra include Wong On-yuen (黃安源, *huqin* player, former Concertmaster, Assistant Conductor and the Principal of the Bowed String Section), Hsin Hsiao-hung (辛小紅, Principal Erhu), Hsin Hsiao-ling (辛小玲, Principal Gaohu), Wang Chi-ching (王梓靜, *pipa* player and the Principal of the Plucked String Section), Sun Yong-zhi (孫永志, *dizi* player, the Principal of the Wind Section), Choo Boon-chong (朱文昌, *dizi* player), Tam Po-shek (譚寶碩, *xiao* player), Cheng Tak-wai (鄭德惠, Principal Sheng), Guo Ya-zhi (郭雅志, Principal Suona), Yim Hok-man (閻學敏, Acting Principal, Assistant Principal, and Principal Percussion), etc.

In order to solve the problem of the lack of repertoire for the Chinese orchestra, Ng Tai-kong established a system of the commission of new pieces

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<sup>3</sup> Xia Fei-yun (夏飛雲), a professor of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, had been the Conductor-in-Residence of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra from 1992-1993. The former Urban Council intended to appoint Peng Xiu-wen (彭修文), the Principal Conductor of the China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra (中國廣播民族樂團), to be the Music Director of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra after the contract of Henry Shek (石信之), its third Music Director, expired. However, Peng passed away in December 1996. Yan Hui-chang (閻惠昌) was then appointed as its fourth Music Director. Since October 2003, Yan's title has been changed to Artistic Director and Principal Conductor.

and the arrangement of existing pieces. This has become a characteristic system of this orchestra.

Throughout the years, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra has commissioned and arranged more than 1,700 pieces of different styles, including *The Insect World* (昆蟲世界) (CD 1-6) and *Autumn Execution* (秋決) by Doming Lam (林樂培), *Journey to Lhasa* (拉薩行) by Kuan Nai-chung, *Tales of the Walled City* (城寨風情) by Chen Ning-chi (陳能濟), Symphony No. 8 (*This Boundless Land*) (蒼茫大地) by Chan Wing-wah (陳永華).

In 2006, the project *Cadenzas of Hong Kong* (香江華采) was launched as a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Orchestra. In this project, many local composers were commissioned to write pieces to depict the eighteen districts of Hong Kong.

## 1.2 The Maestro Conductor Peng Xiu-wen (彭修文) and the China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra (中國廣播民族樂團)

When one talks about the China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra, the first person he or she thinks of would be Peng Xiu-wen. Peng worked in this Orchestra from its founding in 1953 until his death in 1996, and exerted a significant influence in its development.

Peng established the four-section setting of the modern Chinese orchestra, i.e., the winds, plucked strings, bowed strings and percussion. He composed and arranged a large number of pieces for the Chinese orchestra, including *Drums in Celebration of a Bumper Harvest* (豐收鑼鼓); *Hong Kong, the City Never Sleeps* (太平山下不夜城); the tone poem *The Flowing Water* (流水操); and the revolutionary *jingju* (Peking opera) excerpt *The Tumultuous Cloud* (亂雲飛). He also arranged quite a number of folk songs from other countries, like the Indonesian folk song *Bengawa Solo* (美麗的梭羅河), as well as Western classical pieces, such as *Carmen Suite* by Georges Bizet (1838-1875), *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881), etc.

The China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra had performed in Hong Kong under the baton of Peng Xiu-wen. Peng had also been a Guest Conductor of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. He was supposed to take up the position of Music Director of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra in 1996, but unfortunately

he passed away before being able to take up this position.

The China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra was an organisation under the China Broadcasting Arts Troupe (中國廣播藝術團). In 2003, it was combined with the Chinese Orchestra of the Chinese Film Orchestra (中國電影樂團民族樂團) to form a performing group of nearly one hundred players. Its current Music Director and Principal Conductor is Peng Jia-peng (彭家鵬, 1965- ), who is also the Music Director of the Macao Chinese Orchestra (澳門中樂團).

There have been many famous performers in the China Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra. In the early years, there were *dizi* players Liu Sen (劉森, 1937- ), Jian Guang-yi (簡廣易, 1944-2000), *pipa* player Yu Liang-mo (俞良模), *liuqin* player Zhang Da-sen (張大森), *huqin* players Wang Yi-qin (王宜勤) and Wang Guo-tong (王國潼). Nowadays, most of its members are young performers, including *huqin* players Jiang Ke-mei (姜克美) (Principal) and Zhang Fang-ming (張方鳴) (Assistant Principal), *pipa* player Chen Yin (陳音), *yangqin* player Zhang Gao-xiang (張高翔), *dizi* player Hou Chang-qing (侯長青), etc.

### **1.3 Yuen Shi-chun's Reconstruction of Ancient Instruments and Improvement of Instruments**

Yuen Shi-chun (阮仕春), Research and Development Officer (Musical Instrument) of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, is the foremost innovator in the construction of Chinese plucked string instruments.

Yuen's work on Chinese plucked string instruments focuses on two aspects, namely the reconstruction of ancient instruments and the improvement of instruments. He has reconstructed ancient instruments like the *ruanxian* (阮咸) of the Tang Dynasty, the bent-neck *pipa* (曲項琵琶) and the five-string *pipa* (五弦琵琶). He has also constructed the *liuqin* with two resonating chambers (雙共鳴箱柳琴) and a series of *ruanxian* (阮咸). Nowadays, the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra is using this series of *ruanxian* and has replaced the *liuqin* (柳琴) by *xiaoruan* (小阮).

In recent years, Yuen has been focusing on the improvement of bowed string

instruments. He has replaced the snake skin of the *huqin* (胡琴) by the eco-friendly PET products and thus constructed a series of eco-*huqins* (環保胡琴).

#### 1.4 *Wenqin* (文琴), the Extreme of Instrument “Innovation”

One aspect of the “improvement” of Chinese instruments is the construction of instruments with high, middle and low registers. Another aspect is the search for a unified sonority of different instruments. There is still another direction, namely the construction of instruments with multiple functions. The *wenqin* (文琴), invented by Wen Zheng-qiu (文正球) (see the photo on p. 15 of the hardcopy of this book in Chinese version), is an example.

The *wenqin* combines the following instruments: the *erhu* (二胡), *tiqin* (提琴), *sanxian* (三弦), and the harp. In addition, there is an amplifier. Other instruments built in a similar way include the “multiple-function *dizi*” (多功能笛) invented by Xu Guo-ping (許國屏, 1940- ), the “*banhu* with two looping cords” (雙千斤板胡) invented by Ding Lu-feng (丁魯峰, 1943-2008).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See the website of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra:  
[http://www.hkco.org/big5/learning\\_inst\\_2b\\_2\\_tc.asp](http://www.hkco.org/big5/learning_inst_2b_2_tc.asp).

## Glossary

<i>banhu</i> (板胡)	A bowed string instrument in which the resonating chamber is made of a coconut shell, with a wooden board adhering on the front. It is an accompanying instrument for operas in the Shaanxi (陝西) province. Solo repertoire has been written for it since the 1950s.
<i>concerto</i> (協奏曲)	A musical genre in which a solo instrument or a group of solo instruments is accompanied by the orchestra.
<i>gehu</i> (革胡)	Low-registered bowed string instruments invented by Yang Yu-sen (楊雨森) of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in the 1950s. The <i>gehu</i> and bass <i>gehu</i> are modeled on the cello and double bass respectively. Their shapes are like other <i>huqins</i> (胡琴) and their big resonating chamber has a snake skin mounted on it. The “ <i>ge</i> ” in Chinese means “innovation” or “improvement.”
programme music (標題音樂)	A type of music expressing specific contents, which are explained by the composer in a programme or a title. Chinese instrumental music and orchestral works are mainly programme music.
<i>sheng</i> (笙)	A Chinese wind instrument. In the traditional eight categories of instruments (八音), the <i>sheng</i> belongs to the gourd (匏) since part of it is made of gourd. When air is blown through the instrument, the vibration of the reeds inside produces sound. Different lengths of the bamboo rods produce different pitches. <i>Sheng</i> is a multiphonic instrument and is mainly used in <i>yayue</i> (雅樂, “elegant music”), northern <i>chuida</i> (吹打, “blowing and beating”), and <i>jiangnan sizhu</i> (江南絲竹). It also plays chords in modern Chinese orchestral music.
<i>suona</i> (噴吶)	A double-reed wind instrument imported from the Middle East in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 C.E.). It is mainly used in folk festivals, wedding, funeral and northern <i>chuida</i> (吹打) music.
<i>xun</i> (埙)	An instrument made of clay and is oval in shape. It is mainly used in <i>yayue</i> (雅樂).

## Chapter 2 Instrumental Solo Tradition and Its Changes

By Wong King-chung (王景松)

English Translation by Tsui Wan-ching (徐允清)

One of the most important developments in Chinese instrumental music of the twentieth century is the flourishing of the solo repertoire (see Table 2.1). There is a common misconception that Chinese instrumental solo tradition has a long history because Chinese instruments are ancient. In reality, only the *guqin* (古琴), *pipa* (琵琶) and *guzheng* (古箏) have a long history of solo repertoire. Other Chinese instruments, including the *erhu* (二胡), only began to develop their solo repertoire in the 1920s or later. Since 1949, there have been newly composed pieces for the *yangqin* (揚琴), *liuqin* (柳琴), *sheng* (笙), *dizi* (笛子), etc., that differ from traditional solo pieces. New pieces have been written for the *guqin*, *pipa* and *guzheng* as well. Such examples include *Little Sisters of the Grassland* (草原小姐妹, 1973) for *pipa* by Liu De-hai (劉德海) and others, *A Battle against the Typhoon* (戰颱風, 1965) for *guzheng* by Wang Chang-yuan (王昌元).

**Table 2.1 Important Chinese Instrumental Solo Pieces**

<i>Dizi</i> (笛子)	<i>Three, Five, Seven</i> (三五七), <i>Flying Partridge</i> (鷓鴣飛), <i>A Trip to Gusu</i> (姑蘇行)
<i>Sheng</i> (笙)	<i>The Phoenix Spreads Its Wings</i> (鳳凰展翅), <i>A Melody from Shanxi</i> (晉調)
<i>Suona</i> (噴吶)	<i>Hundreds of Birds Paying Tribute to the Phoenix</i> (百鳥朝鳳)
<i>Guanzi</i> (管子)	<i>Driving the Donkey</i> (放驢)
<i>Pipa</i> (琵琶)	<i>Ambush from All Sides</i> (十面埋伏), <i>On the Frontiers</i> (塞上曲)
<i>Guqin</i> (古琴)	<i>Flowing Water</i> (流水), <i>A Piece from Guangling</i> (廣陵散)
<i>Zhongruan</i> (中阮)	<i>Reminiscences of Yunnan</i> (雲南回憶)
<i>Liuqin</i> (柳琴)	<i>Spring on Yi River</i> (春到沂河)
<i>Guzheng</i> (古箏)	<i>Lotus Emerging out of Water</i> (出水蓮)
<i>Sanxian</i> (三弦)	<i>Eighteen Beats</i> (十八板)
<i>Yangqin</i> (揚琴)	<i>Festive Tianshan</i> (節日的天山)
<i>Erhu</i> (二胡)	<i>A Fine Evening</i> (良宵), <i>Reflection of the Moon on the Second Spring</i> (二泉映月), <i>The Great Wall Capriccio</i> (長城隨想)
<i>Gaohu</i> (高胡)	<i>Birds Go Back to Forest</i> (鳥投林)
<i>Banhu</i> (板胡)	<i>Triumphant Return of the Red Army</i> (紅軍哥哥回來了)
<i>Zhonghu</i> (中胡)	<i>On the Grassland</i> (草原上)

“Traditional” and “modern” Chinese instrumental solo pieces differ in their styles in composition and performance practice. The development of the solo repertoire of *erhu*, *dizi*, *pipa* and *guzheng* will be introduced in this chapter, with a focus on their compositional techniques and performance practice. The changes from the “traditional” to the “modern” solo repertoire will also be discussed.

## Section 1 Liu Tian-hua (劉天華) and the Modern *Erhu* Solo Pieces

The twentieth century is an important epoch in the development of the Chinese instrumental solo repertoire. This development has been influenced by various thoughts. The May Fourth Movement (1919) brought about the thinking “Chinese in essence, Western in practice” (中學為體、西學為用) and led to the movement of the “improvement” of Chinese instruments, and the writing of solo pieces for Chinese instruments. Intellectuals of this period discussed these issues actively and put them into practice. Liu Tian-hua (劉天華, 1895-1932), a pioneer in the development of the *erhu* solo repertoire, is a good example of this kind of intellectual.<sup>5</sup>

Liu Tian-hua was born in Jiangyin (江陰) of the Jiangsu (江蘇) province. He actively took part in the areas of performance, music education and composition. In 1912, Liu came to Shanghai and worked in the Western Shanghai Open Theatre (滬西開明劇社) while at the same time learned orchestral instruments and the piano. He was in despair in 1915 as his father had passed away, and he was sick and jobless. In such a circumstance, he began to compose *Sigh of Ailment* (病中吟) (CD1-7) which was finished around 1918. In the

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<sup>5</sup> Liu Tian-hua played an important role in the development of traditional Chinese instrumental music. *Erhu* player Hua Yan-jun (華彥鈞), or Abing (阿炳) (1893-1950), is another important figure in the *erhu* solo tradition. Hua Yan-jun's father was a Taoist monk. Hua was in contact with Taoism and began to learn music when he was young. He became blind when he was 35, and then became a street musician in Wuxi (無錫). He had the nickname “Abing the Blind” (瞎子阿炳). In the 1940s, musicologists Yang Yin-liu (楊蔭瀏, 1899-1984) and Cao An-he (曹安和, 1905-2004) visited Abing and recorded his performance in 1950, and thus his *erhu* pieces have been preserved. His three *erhu* pieces, namely *Listening to the Pines* (聽松), *Reflection of the Moon on the Second Spring* (二泉映月), and *Chilly Spring* (寒春風曲), and three *pipa* pieces, namely *Waves Washing the Beach* (大浪淘沙), *The Departure of Lady Zhao-jun* (昭君出塞), and *Dragon Boats* (龍船) were recorded. Among these pieces, *Reflection of the Moon on the Second Spring* is the most famous one.

following decade, he learned the *erhu*, *pipa*, *guqin*, *sanxian* (三弦), and began to familiarise himself with traditional Chinese genres like *Kunqu* (崑曲), *sizhu* (絲竹) and *luogu* (鑼鼓). In 1927, he began to learn the violin and composition in the Music Department of the Peking University (燕京大學) of Beijing, and established the Society for the Advancement of National Music (國樂改進社) with an aim to improve Chinese music. Unfortunately he died untimely at the age of thirty-seven from a disease while he was doing field research.

In 2000, the film *Liu Tian-hua* (劉天華) was launched in Chinese Mainland. The protagonist is Chen Jun (陳軍), a fourth generation *erhu* student of Liu Tian-hua. The film talks about the sorrowful days of Liu in 1914 when he was jobless, sick and under the trauma of his father's death. He could only express his sadness by playing the *erhu*. A new hope came when he received an appointment letter from Cai Yuan-pei (蔡元培), the Vice-chancellor of the Peking University. This film recounts the compositional process of many of Liu's famous pieces, including *Moonlit Night* (月夜), *Bird-calls in the Mountain* (空山鳥語) and *A Fine Evening* (良宵), and ends with a performance of *March towards Brightness* (光明行) in a concert.

The film *Liu Tian-hua*, in recounting the life of Liu and the stories of his *erhu* compositions, depicts vividly the era in which there was an influx of Western culture. Liu proposed an “improvement of Chinese music.”<sup>6</sup> In addition to reconstructing the *erhu* and improving its playing techniques, he composed ten *erhu* solo pieces and thus created a solo tradition for this instrument which was till then only an accompanying instrument to Chinese opera or an instrument in Chinese instrumental ensembles. Liu also wrote three *pipa* solos, one instrumental ensemble piece, forty-seven *erhu* études and fifteen *pipa* études. He founded the Society for the Advancement of National Music (國樂改進社) with some friends and proposed an improvement of Chinese music. His life is an epitome of the development of Chinese music in the twentieth century.

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<sup>6</sup> Liu Tian-hua was not the first one to propose the improvement of Chinese music. Fei Shi (匪石, 1884-1959) published an article entitled “On the Improvement of Chinese Music” (中國音樂改良說) in Vol. 6 of *Zhejiang Tide* (浙江潮) (June 1903) in which he proposed “the improvement of Chinese music by imitating Western music.”

The era in which Liu Tian-hua lived, i.e., the early twentieth century, is an age in which Chinese and Western cultures met. The intellectuals in this era were aware of their role in the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures. In the article “The Beginning of the Society for the Advancement of National Music” (國樂改進社緣起), published in the first volume of *The New Music Tide* (新樂潮) in June 1927, Liu Tian-hua and others wrote, “Nowadays there are people learning Western instruments and singing, but this is confined to the elite circle. There is still a long way to go before music is popularised among the laymen.”

In that era, the type of music that the elites learned was Western classical music. Chinese music was being neglected. Liu and others thought that the reason was that “the government does not promote it, and Chinese music is not taught in school. Parents object their children’s learning of Chinese music and the society looks down on it. Chinese music is played by low-ranked musicians only. This is a depressing situation.” The opinion of Liu and others shows clearly the low status of Chinese music in the early twentieth century.

The neglect of Chinese music by the Chinese in the early twentieth century prompted the intellectuals to improve Chinese music. Liu Tian-hua founded the Society for the Advancement of National Music with some friends and published the *Music Magazine* (音樂雜誌). The objectives of the movement of “improving Chinese music” were to popularise music education and to revolutionise Chinese music by modeling on Western music. They aimed at changing the way of thinking of Chinese people and bringing new hope to the country. They thought that music could play an important role in raising the self-esteem of Chinese people and in establishing a cultural identity.

There is a close relationship between the improvement of Chinese instruments, the establishment of the solo repertoire, and the rise of the Chinese orchestra (see Chapter 1). In the early twentieth century, most intellectuals thought that Chinese instruments had the following shortcomings: the volume was low, the range was narrow, the construction and making of instruments were not standardised, and the instruments did not facilitate modulation. Because of these shortcomings, Chinese instruments did not meet the need for performing newly composed pieces. As a result, from the mid-twentieth century on, instrument makers have been experimenting in raising the volume of the

instruments (like replacing the silk strings with the strings of the violin), enlarging their range (like increasing the number of strings), adding auxiliaries to the instruments (like keys and springs), and adopting the Western twelve-tone equal temperament for the sake of modulation (like changing the positions of the frets on the *pipa*).

One of the aims of the “improvement” of Chinese instruments is to facilitate the performance of newly composed pieces that require new performing techniques. This concept is modeled on the aesthetics of Western classical music. Traditional Chinese instruments are mainly high- or middle-registered instruments, and bass instruments are lacking. In order to perform pieces in the concept of Western consort music, with soprano, alto, tenor and bass voices, many bass instruments, like the *daruān* (大阮), *zhōng hú* (中胡) and *gē hú* (革胡), were newly invented.

*Sigh of Ailment* (病中吟, 1918), the first *erhu* piece by Liu Tian-hua, represents the fusion of compositional concepts of Chinese and Western cultures. This piece is written in ternary form (A-B-A) with a coda. The third section reuses materials of the first section. Liu also adopts some playing techniques of the violin in composing this piece, like the repetitious slurs.

*Sigh of Ailment* adopts a Western formal structure and the technique of phrasal expansion found in Western music. The slurs found in the second section and the coda resemble violin music. This piece is a good example of the idea of “Chinese in essence, Western in practice.” In this way, Liu Tian-hua has raised the status of *erhu* from its role of an accompanying instrument in Chinese opera and *sizhu* ensemble to a solo instrument, and has caused a fusion of Chinese and Western music. That is the reason why people call the *erhu* “the Chinese violin.”

## Section 2 New Pieces for *Dizi* (笛子)

When the Chinese Communist Party was in power in 1949, it followed the cultural policy of the former Soviet Union in proposing that “art and literature should be in the service for the workers and farmers” (文藝為工農兵服務). Mao Ze-dong (毛澤東) encouraged the artists to “take Western concepts and adapt

them to the context of China, and to take ancient concepts and adapt them to the current situation” (洋為中用、古為今用). Music materials from the past and present, from Chinese to Western were taken to serve socialism. As a result, musicians were sent to rural areas to collect folk music,<sup>7</sup> which was then transcribed and published. In this way, a large amount of music materials were available to composers. The composers then composed a large number of solo pieces by mixing Chinese folk music with Western European compositional techniques.

*Dizi* (笛子) is a transverse flute made of bamboo. There are six holes which are covered by the fingers in playing, and another two to four holes for the unleashing of air. Sound is produced by blowing air over one of the holes. There is a thin membrane (笛膜, *dimo*) covering another hole. The membrane enhances the brightness of the timbre.

Modern *dizis* are generally divided into two types. The *bangdi* (梆笛), a high-registered *dizi*, is mainly used in accompanying northern *bangzi* opera (梆子戲). The *qudi* (曲笛), a middle- or low-registered *dizi*, is mainly used in accompanying southern *Kunqu* (崑曲).

Many solo pieces for the *dizi* are arrangements from folk music. Renowned *dizi* performers Feng Zi-cun (馮子存, 1904-1987) and Lu Chun-ling (陸春齡, 1921- ) have created quite a number of *dizi* pieces by arranging folk music. Feng Zi-cun was an experienced accompanist in a genre of northern narrative singing called *errentai* (二人台). In the 1950s, Feng created

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<sup>7</sup> “Collecting poems” (採詩) was a way to understand the folk custom, practice, attitude, and the strengths and weaknesses of government policies in the Zhou Dynasty (c. 1100-256 B.C.E.). The “poems” collected were mainly “*feng*” (風, that is, “folk songs”). Therefore, the collection of folk songs is called “*caifeng*” (採風). Since the mid-twentieth century, there have been active activities of “folk song collection” with the support of the government. Since the late 1970s, various parties of the government, including the Cultural Ministry, People’s Committee, and the Arts Association, have actively organised field research activities throughout China to collect folk music in order to preserve it. About 300 volumes of folk music have been published under about ten titles, including *Anthology of Chinese Folk Song* (中國民間歌曲集成), *Anthology of Chinese Opera* (中國民間戲曲音樂集成), *Anthology of Chinese Instrumental Music* (中國民族民間器樂集成), *Anthology of Chinese Narrative Singing* (中國民間曲藝集成), *Annals of Chinese Opera* (中國戲曲志), *Annals of Chinese Narrative Singing* (中國曲藝志), *Anthology of Chinese Story* (中國民間故事集成), *Anthology of Chinese Song* (中國歌謠集成), *Anthology of Chinese Proverb* (中國諺語集成), *Anthology of Chinese Folk Dance* (中國民間舞蹈集成). In these publications, there are transcriptions of the folk music and academic studies.

the renowned solo *dizi* piece *Wubangzi* (五梆子) by ornamenting *Pengbangzi* (碰梆子), an instrumental fixed tune from the folk music of Hebei (河北).

*Wubangzi* is developed from folk music by a method called “adding flowers” (加花). “Adding flowers” is a common way to expand phrases in Chinese music. It means increasing ornamentation on the skeletal melody. Ornamenting the skeletal melody in a reduced manner is called “subtracting flowers” (減花).

Traditional music is mainly disseminated by oral transmission. If there is a score, it only records the skeletal melody. The musicians are expected to improvise upon the skeletal melody in performance according to a certain style or performance practice. There is flexibility in the length of the phrases and the number of musical notes.

*Wubangzi* is divided into four sections. Each one of them is ornamenting the skeletal melody in its own way, and the tempo is getting faster and faster.

Feng Zi-cun and Lu Chun-ling have raised the status of *dizi* from an accompanying instrument in opera and folk music to a solo instrument by arranging folk music and fixed tunes. What they have done for the *dizi* is similar to what Liu Tian-hua had done for the *erhu*.

Lu Chun-ling and Feng Ci-cun have created two different styles of *dizi* music, namely the southern style and the northern style respectively. This is due to their different backgrounds, namely performers of *jiangnan sizhu* (江南絲竹) and *errentai* (二人台) respectively. In the process of arranging, they have also created new techniques of the *dizi*, including single-tonguing, double-tonguing, triple-tonguing, flutter-tonguing and various finger techniques, like *da* (打, a lower ornamental note played between two notes of the same pitch) , *die* (疊, an upper ornamental note played between two notes of the same pitch) , *zeng* (贈, a short ornamental note added at the end of the principal note) , *chan* (顫, trill) and *feizhi* (飛指, the fingers of one hand move to and fro quickly over the holes while another hand is holding the instrument).

CD 1-8 is a recording of *Wubangzi* arranged by Feng Ci-cun. Listen to it and get a flavour of a solo *dizi* piece arranged from folk music.

As stated above, the cultural policy of the Chinese government emphasises

that art and literature should serve the propaganda of socialism. There have been a large number of newly composed pieces serving this need since the 1950s. These pieces generally make use of traditional materials and depict the life of ordinary people, with titles suggesting the ideology of “new music,” “new government,” and “new China.”

*New Tunes of the Herdsman* (牧民新歌, 1966) (CD 1-9), a piece for solo *dizi* composed by the *dizi* player Jian Guang-yi (簡廣易, 1944-2000) while he was living in Inner Mongolia, makes use of the large-scale folk song (長調民歌) from Inner Mongolia, and employs modal changes found in Western classical music. It employs different techniques of the *dizi* to depict horse riding.

The use of “new tunes” in the title of this piece shows that it is a kind of new music. This kind of new music combines Chinese and Western elements to depict the “new” life of the Mongolian under the “new Chinese government.”

From the above examples, we can see that the *dizi* solo repertoire in the twentieth century shows similarities to the *erhu* solo repertoire in the way of arranging and composing. They only differ in the materials being incorporated.

The early *dizi* music not only employs Western form and compositional techniques, but also combines the traditional way of phrasal expansion (“adding flowers”) with compositional techniques of Western classical music. This has become a new tradition. The appearance of this new solo tradition is in close connection with the political environment of twentieth-century China.

### Section 3 *Pipa* (琵琶) Music

Chinese traditional instruments *pipa* (琵琶) and *guqin* (古琴) have a rich repertoire of solo pieces. The *guqin* will be discussed in Chapter 4. This section focuses on *pipa* music, both traditional music and new music created in the twentieth century. Traditional *pipa* music is divided into “civil pieces” (文曲) and “martial pieces” (武曲).

“Civil pieces” express sentiments and depict moods, with a focus on the change of tone colour. These pieces are generally slow. One example is *On the Frontiers* (塞上曲). “Martial pieces” are generally descriptive and narrative.

The tempo is generally fast and there are more dramatic changes in tempo. *Ambush from All Sides* (十面埋伏) is an example.

*Pipa* music dates back to the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-581 C.E.), Sui (581-618 C.E.), and Tang (618-907 C.E.) Dynasties. However, most of the traditional pieces performed today are from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 C.E.). In the Qing Dynasty, a number of *pipa* scores were published. The oldest existent one was edited by Hua Qiu-ping (華秋蘋, 1784-1859) and others, and has the title *Pipa Scores* (琵琶譜, 1819). Other published *pipa* scores include *New Scores of Thirteen Multi-sectional Pipa Pieces of the Northern and Southern Schools* (南北派琵琶十三套大曲新譜, 1895) edited by Li Fang-yuan (李芳園), *Ancient Tunes from Yingzhou* (瀛洲古調, 1916) edited by Shen Zhao-zhou (沈肇洲), *Mei Yan Pipa Scores* (梅弇琵琶譜, 1936) edited by Xu Zhuo (徐卓), *Yang Zheng Xuan Pipa Scores* (養正軒琵琶譜, 1926) edited by Shen Hao-chu (沈浩初), *Pipa Scores* (琵琶樂譜, 1934) edited by He Liu-tang (何柳堂). These scores are important primary sources of *pipa* music and confirm that the solo *pipa* tradition had already been well established before the twentieth century.

*Bright Spring, White Snow* (陽春白雪) (CD 1-10) is one of the most popular traditional *pipa* pieces, and was published in the *pipa* scores edited by Li Fang-yuan (李芳園) and Shen Hao-chu (沈浩初). This piece is an ornamented version of the traditional piece *Old Six Beats* (老六板). It uses the structure of “exposition-continuation-change-conclusion” (起承轉合) commonly found in Chinese literary works. It expands the melody by using typical traditional Chinese music techniques (see Chapter 3). Try to understand the characteristics of the structure “exposition-continuation-change-conclusion” by listening to this piece.

Many traditional Chinese pieces are constructed by ornamenting (“adding flowers” 加花) a skeletal melody. This skeletal melody is called the “mother piece” (母曲, the original piece).

*Old Six Beats* (老六板), or *Old Eight Beats* (老八板), is the most popular “mother piece” in traditional Chinese music. There are 68 beats (or 68 bars) in this

piece.<sup>8</sup> Performers may “add flowers,” vary the rhythm, and expand the phrases when performing it, and thus new pieces are created.

*Medium Ornamented Six Beats* (中花六板) and *Slow Six Beats* (慢六板), famous pieces of *jiangnan sizhu* (江南絲竹), are derived from *Old Six Beats* (老六板) with different degrees of ornamentation. Refer to Chapter 3 for the musical structure of *Old Six Beats* and its use in *jiangnan sizhu*.

#### Section 4 *Zheng* (箏) Music

*Zheng* (箏) and *pipa* (琵琶) are plucked string instruments. Many people mix up *zheng* and *qin* (琴) due to their similarity in shape (see Chapter 4).

Similar to the *pipa* and *qin*, the *zheng* has a rich repertoire of traditional solo pieces. In the twentieth century, it has undergone a revolution and there have been many changes to the repertoire. Many pieces have been written by using new techniques and compositional concepts.

*Zheng* music has a long history of different regional styles, schools and solo traditions. Famous schools include the Shandong (山東), Henan (河南), Chaozhou (潮州), Kejia (客家), Zhejiang (浙江), Fujian (福建) and Shaanxi (陝西). The music of these different schools is affected by their dialects and regional vocal music, and differs in the way of “adding flowers,” tuning, use of glissandi, timbral changes and so forth.

There is a rich repertoire of *zheng* solo pieces in the twentieth century. Traditional pieces are created from folk music and there are schools of the Shandong, Henan, etc. *An Evening Song from a Fishing Junk at Sunset* (漁舟唱晚) (CD 1-11) is an arrangement of an ancient piece. From the 1940s and 1950s on, there have been many newly created solo pieces, such as *A Battle against the Typhoon* (戰颱風) (CD 1-12). The readers will find the differences between traditional pieces and newly created solo pieces by listening to them.

*An Evening Song from a Fishing Junk at Sunset* and *A Battle against the*

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<sup>8</sup> There are different versions of *Old Six Beats*. One is in 68 beats while another one is in 60 beats.

*Typhoon* are respectively representative works of traditional pieces and newly created pieces. In the former piece, there is a continuous *accelerando* in the fast section. Its first section is in the *sol* mode (徵調式) while its second section is in the *do* mode (宮調式). In this aspect, it is in the style of traditional music. The compositional technique of *A Battle against the Typhoon* is modern. In its third section, the technique of theme and variations is employed, and there is an increase in rhythmic intensity, depicting the scene of pier workers working under the strong wind and heavy rain.

Similar to the *erhu* (二胡), *dizi* (笛子) and *pipa* (琵琶), there has been a big increase in the number of solo pieces for the *zheng* after 1949. Some pieces use contemporary compositional techniques. *Ming Mountain* (溟山, 1991) by Wang Zhong-shan (王中山) is based on folk music from the Hunan (湖南) province but the use of harmony is in modern style.

## Section 5 Solo Tradition and Traditional Solo Repertoires

What we mean by “solo tradition” in this chapter refers to the performance practice and musical style of a particular instrument. Before the twentieth century, the concept of “traditional solo” refers to the repertoires of the *qin* and *pipa*. These repertoires have their own melody writing practice, musical form and a long history of score transmission.

As for other Chinese instruments, such as the *erhu* and *dizi*, they were mainly used in traditional ensemble, Chinese opera or narrative singing before the second half of the twentieth century. They only began to develop a solo tradition in the mid-twentieth century.

From the mid-twentieth century on, all kinds of Chinese instruments have undergone big changes in their shape, timbre and repertoire. Composers and performers have adopted the aesthetics, timbres, tuning system and formal structures of Western classical music. They have “improved” the instruments, composed music of the solo repertoire, and established a new system of aesthetic value and musical style for the solo tradition.

In the past twenty years, examination systems for Chinese instruments have been established. There are now examinations offered by the Central Conservatory

of Music (中央音樂學院), the China Conservatory of Music (中國音樂學院), and the Shanghai Conservatory of Music (上海音樂學院) for almost all kinds of Chinese instruments used in the modern Chinese orchestra. The set pieces for these examinations number to over a thousand in total. Nowadays, in Chinese Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South East Asia, numerous Chinese instrumental classes are offered in tertiary institutes, primary and secondary schools, and by amateur groups. It is now essential to learn the solo pieces in learning a Chinese instrument, and the transmission of Chinese instrumental music has been based on this solo tradition.

## Listening Guide

### 2.1 *Sigh of Ailment* (病中吟) (CD 1-7)

#### Information of the Recording

Composer: Liu Tian-hua (劉天華, 1895-1932)

Performer: Jiang Feng-zhi (蔣風之, 1908-1986)

Title of the Record: *Centenary Commemoration of the Birth of LIU Tian-hua, 1895-1995* (劉天華：誕辰百週年紀念專集 1895-1995) (ROI, 1994)

#### Listening Guide

*Sigh of Ailment* describes the composer's suffering of the uncertainty about his future. It was first sketched in 1915 and was finished around 1918. It describes the composer's depressed state due to his poverty, illness, the situation of jobless, as well as his struggle for the unfulfilled desire. The piece is written in ternary form with a coda. The tempi of the sections are in the order slow-fast-slow-fast. In listening to this piece, note the changes in tempo as well as the markings of slurs.

Section and Description of the Music	
0:00	Section A, slow  There is a <i>ritard.</i> at 2:59, and then the first tempo is resumed.
3:12	Section B, faster  There is an <i>accelerando</i> at 3:38, and then the music slows down at the end of this section.

3:52	Section A, slow  etc. Materials from the first section reappear in the beginning of this section.
4:38	Coda, fast  etc. There is a <i>ritard.</i> and a descending glissando of a twelfth near the end. A few trills end the piece.

## 2.2 *Wubangzi* (五梆子) (CD 1-8)

### Information of the Recording

Performed by: Du Chong (杜沖) (solo *dizi* 笛子) and the Ensemble of Shanghai Musicians (上海音樂家小組) (*sheng* 笙 and percussion 敲擊)

Title of the Record: *Fernleaf Hedge Bamboo under the Moonlight: Selected Chinese Wind Pieces* (月光下的鳳尾竹：中國吹管樂精選) (ROI, 1993)

Recorded in 1993

### Listening Guide

This piece is an arrangement of the Hebei folk instrumental fixed tune *Pengbangzi* (碰梆子) arranged by the *dizi* performer Feng Zi-cun (馮子存). Its score first appeared in *Selected Dizi Pieces by Feng Zi-cun* (馮子存笛子曲選) published by the People's Music Publisher (人民音樂出版社) in November 1958.

*Wubangzi* is a representative piece of the *bangdi* (梆笛). It is in variation form and is divided into four sections. Different sections are based on the same tune, but they differ in the rhythm, tempo and dynamics. Various kinds of tonguing and finger techniques are exploited in this piece. In listening to this piece, note the variations in the first eight bars of each variation, and the gradual increase in tempo and the changes in mood created by the different blowing and finger techniques.

Section and Description of the Music	
0:00	Theme (The First Section)  Begins slowly, and then gets faster.
1:11	Variation 1 (The Second Section)  A rather fast <i>moderato</i> . The tempo gets a little bit faster at 1:41.
1:54	Variation 2 (The Third Section)  <i>Allegro</i>
2:22	Variation 3 (The Fourth Section)  A very fast <i>allegro</i> .

### 2.3 *New Tunes of the Herdsman* (牧民新歌) (CD 1-9)

#### Information of the Recording

Composer: Jian Guang-yi (簡廣易, 1944-2000)

Performed by: Jian Guang-yi (*dizi* 笛子) and the Traditional Orchestra of the Central Conservatory of Music (中央音樂學院民族管弦樂團)

Title of the Record: *Fernleaf Hedge Bamboo under the Moonlight: Selected Chinese Wind Pieces* (月光下的鳳尾竹：  
中國吹管樂精選)  
(ROI, 1993)

Recorded in 1993

#### Listening Guide

This piece for solo *dizi* was composed by the *dizi* performer Jian Guang-yi (簡廣易) in 1966 when he was living in the Inner Mongolia. The

accompaniment was written in collaboration with Wang Zhi-wei (王志偉). This piece is based on tunes of Inner Mongolian folk songs, and the solo *dizi* depicts the scenery of the grassland of Inner Mongolia.

This piece is divided into five sections: 1. a broad introduction; 2. a sentimental *adagio*; 3. a lively *allegretto*; 4. an *allegro largamente*; 5. a *presto animato*.

In listening to this piece, note the ornaments of the intervals of a second and a third, the triple-tonguing technique used in the third section and the change of mode from the *la* mode (羽調式) to the *do* mode (宮調式) in the middle of the piece.

Most modern pieces for Chinese instruments have Western tempo and expression marks, which are not likely to be found in traditional pieces. Traditional pieces more often have programmatic subtitles.

	<b>Section</b>	<b>Description of the Music</b>
0:00	Introduction ( <i>ad. libitum</i> , broad)	In <i>la</i> mode (羽調式). The scenery of grassland is portrayed by imitating the large-scale folk song of Mongolia (蒙古長調), with the <i>dizi</i> playing ornaments of the interval of a third, and the use of free rhythm and harmonics. The <i>zhonghu</i> (中胡) imitates the <i>matouqin</i> (馬頭琴), a Mongolian bowed string instrument, with glissando of the interval of a third.
1:33	<i>Adagio</i> (slow, sentimental)	The main theme. The sleigh bells (馬鈴) and the Chinese woodblock (木魚) imitate the sound of horse gallop. The melody of the <i>dizi</i> has a Mongolian flavour, playing trills and <i>dayins</i> (打音, a lower ornamental note between two notes of the same pitch) of the intervals of a second, a third or wider ones.
2:54	<i>Allegretto</i> (a little faster, lively)	The herdsmen's horse riding is depicted by triple-tonguing of the <i>dizi</i> , accompanied by the sleigh bells and the Chinese woodblock.
3:51	<i>Allegro largamente</i> (proudly)	The melody played by the <i>dizi</i> is a drawn-out tune. The music is in <i>do</i> mode (宮調式), in contrast with the preceding <i>la</i> mode (羽調式).

4:27	<i>Presto animato</i> (more animated)	The music returns to the <i>la</i> mode. The neigh of the horse is depicted by the flutter-tonguing (花舌) and <i>feizhi</i> (飛指, the fingers of one hand move to and fro quickly over the holes while another hand is holding the instrument) of the <i>dizi</i> (4:46). The piece ends with rhythmic figurations of demisemiquavers played by the <i>dizi</i> .
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## 2.4 *Bright Spring, White Snow* (陽春白雪) (CD 1-10)

### Information of the Recording

Performer: Lui Pui-yuan (呂培原, 1933- )

Title of the Record: *Three Variations of Plum Blossom: Pipa: LUI Pui-yuan* (梅花三弄 : 呂培原琵琶獨奏) (ROI, 1993)

Recorded in 1993

### Listening Guide

*Bright Spring, White Snow* (陽春白雪) is also called *The Ancient Tune of Bright Spring* (陽春古曲). It has a lively flowing rhythm and depicts the season in which the winter has gone and the spring is coming, the flowers and grasses are budding and the whole world is having a rebirth. The most popular version of this piece is transmitted by Li Fang-yuan (李芳園) and Shen Hao-chu (沈浩初) and the number of sections varies from ten to twelve. This version is known as *The Large-scale Bright Spring* (大陽春).

The recording of this piece accompanying this book is based on a version transmitted by the *pipa* performer Wang Yu-ting (汪昱庭) and consists of seven sections. It is also called *The Small-scale Bright Spring* (小陽春) or *Fast Bright Spring* (快板陽春). It is developed from the traditional tune *Old Six Beats* (老六板) and is in the form of “exposition-continuation-change-conclusion” (起承轉合) (see Chapter 4). Every section begins with materials from *Old Six Beats*. This way of unifying a piece by employing similar materials at the beginning of different sections is called *hetou* (合頭, literally “unified head”).

In listening to this piece, note the technique of *hetou*. The following score compares the beginning phrase of *Old Six Beats* and *Bright Spring, White Snow*.

The beginning 16 beats of the folk tune *Old Six Beats*:



The beginning of the first section of *The Small-scale Bright Spring* transmitted by Wang Yu-ting:



	Section Title	Structure	Description of the Music
0:00	Be the Best One (獨佔鰲頭)	Exposition (起)	A variation of <i>Old Six Beats</i> (see the score above).
0:30	The Wind Blowing the Lotus (風擺荷花)	Continuation (承)	The tempo gets a little faster. This section begins with the notes from <i>Old Six Beats</i> (a technique called <i>hetou</i> 合頭).
0:57	A Bright Moon (一輪明月)		
1:22	Buddhists Sitting in Deep Meditation (玉版參禪)	Change (轉)	The rhythmic intensity gets lower at 1:35.
1:50	The Sound of Horse Galloping (鐵策板聲)		
2:19	Music from a Monastery (道院琴聲)	Conclusion (合)	The tempo gets faster. There is a series of harmonics (泛音), producing the effect of “large and small pearls falling on a jade plate” (大珠小珠落玉盤) described by the poet Bai Ju-yi (白居易) of the Tang Dynasty.
2:39	The Cranes Crying on the Eastern Bank (東皋鶴鳴)		
			The tempo gets even faster. The <i>hetou</i> technique is used again. In the coda beginning at 2:58, the tempo gets slow and then accelerates till the end of the piece.

## 2.5 *An Evening Song from a Fishing Junk at Sunset* (漁舟唱晚) (CD 1-11)

### Information of the Recording

Arranged by: Lou Shu-hua (婁樹華, 1907-1952)

Performer: Wang Zhong-shan (王中山)

Title of the Record: *Zheng Concerto and Other Pieces of WANG Zhong-shan*, Vol. 2 (王中山古箏獨奏專輯 (二) : 岳飛) (ROI, 1997)

Recorded in 1995

### Listening Guide

*An Evening Song from a Fishing Junk at Sunset* (漁舟唱晚) is an arrangement of the ancient piece *Returning Home after Resigning* (歸去來辭) arranged by the *zheng* (古箏) performer Lou Shu-hua (婁樹華) of the Henan (河南) school in the 1930s. The title comes from two sentences from the prose *Foreword to the Emperor Teng Pavilion* (滕王閣序) by the poet Wang Bo (王勃) of the Tang Dynasty. These two sentences are translated as “An evening song from a fishing junk at sunset resonates in the shores of Peng and Li” (漁舟唱晚，響窮彭蠡之濱).

This piece depicts the scenery of the returning of fishing junks to the shores at sunset with the fishermen singing. It is divided into two sections and a coda. The first section is slow, the second section is fast while the coda is freer in tempo. In listening to this piece, note the change in tempo in the second section.

	<b>Section</b>	<b>Description of the Music</b>
0:00	Section 1 (Slow)	A beautiful melody in pentatonic scale in the <i>sol</i> mode (徵調式).
2:46	Section 2 (Fast)	A 22-bar passage (2:46-3:17) is repeated twice (beginning at 3:17 and 3:32 respectively) with the tempo getting faster and faster.
3:55	Coda (Free Tempo)	The piece ends in the <i>do</i> mode (宮調式), giving the audience a feeling of incompleteness.

## 2.6 *A Battle against the Typhoon* (戰颱風) (CD 1-12)

### Information of the Recording

Composer: Wang Chang-yuan (王昌元, 1946- )

Performer: Wang Zhong-shan (王中山)

Title of the Record: *Zheng Concerto and Other Pieces of WANG Zhong-shan, Vol. 2*  
(王中山古箏獨奏專輯 (二) : 岳飛) (ROI, 1997)

Recorded in 1995

### Listening Guide

*A Battle against the Typhoon* (戰颱風) is a piece for solo *zheng* (箏) composed by the *zheng* performer Wang Chang-yuan (王昌元) in 1965. It depicts the struggle of pier workers against the typhoon.

This piece is divided into five sections. In listening to this piece, note the depiction of the strong wind and heavy rain in the second section with the use of glissando (刮奏), as well as the variation technique used in the third section.

	<b>Section</b>	<b>Description of the Music</b>
0:00	Section 1, Fast	Music with strong momentum, depicting the work of pier workers.
0:34	Section 2, Freely	A depiction of the typhoon with abundant use of glissandi.
1:08	Section 3, Fast	A depiction of the struggle against strong wind and heavy rain. Variation technique is employed, with the use of different rhythmic motives.
3:03	Section 4, Moderate tempo	Another scene of the struggle against the typhoon, with the melody in the high register and the tempo moderate. This section is in contrast with the preceding and following sections.
4:13	Section 5, Fast	Reappearance of the materials of the first section, depicting the resumption of normal work of the pier workers after the typhoon.

## Extended Knowledge

### 2.1 The Society for the Advancement of National Music (國樂改進社)

Liu Tian-hua (劉天華) and thirty-four persons from the music circle founded the Society for the Advancement of National Music (國樂改進社) in 1927. The objective of the Society was to improve and popularise Chinese music. In its inauguration article, the Society's members proposed “to do research on Chinese music with the help of Western music.” In the article “The Beginning of the Society for the Advancement of National Music” (國樂改進社緣起) published in the first issue of Vol. 1 of *New Music Tide* (新樂潮) (1927), they wrote, “We have to keep the essence of our national music but at the same time accept the influence of foreign music. We aim to open a new page of Chinese music by mixing Western and Eastern elements.”

This Society proposed to improve Chinese music with the help of Western music, and to create a new kind of art form. Its proposed activities include interviewing maestros of Chinese music, preserving existing pieces, scores and instruments, recording performances and transcribing the music. They also proposed to build archives and libraries to preserve Chinese instruments and books on Chinese music, and to adopt a worldwide universal notation system in the publication of Chinese music.

They also proposed to do research on the improvement of Chinese instruments, to make publications in order to popularise Chinese music, to establish music schools, and to found research institutes aiming at creating a new kind of Chinese music.

As the Society for the Advancement of National Music did not receive support from the government and the society, among its objectives, only the publication of a music magazine called *Music Magazine* (音樂雜誌) was realised. After the passing away of Liu Tian-hua, even the publication of *Music Magazine* came to a halt. This Society aimed at revolutionising Chinese music. Their proposals show the reflections of Chinese intellectuals on their own culture at a time of the influx of Western culture.

Another aim of the Society was to raise the self-esteem of Chinese people by popularising Chinese music. Its idea of “improving Chinese music” was not a “complete westernisation,” but rather a “fusion of Chinese and Western cultures.” The “improvement of Chinese music” was realised in the twentieth century in the improvement of Chinese instruments, the publication of music scores, the composing of new pieces, and the establishment of music conservatories.

## 2.2 The Early Improvement of *Gongche* Notation (工尺譜)

Liu Tian-hua (劉天華) combined Western music theory and Chinese music according to the doctrine “Chinese in essence, Western in practice” (中學為體、西學為用). In the article “The Beginning of the Society for the Advancement of National Music” (國樂改進社緣起, 1927), he wrote, “[We aim at] improving the notation [of Chinese music] so that the worldwide universal system will be used. We hope to record the details of performance on the score, publish systematic music scores so that people can use them as learning materials. We also hope to establish factories for making instruments and to improve Chinese instruments.”

The improvement on the notation of Chinese music and the improvement of Chinese instruments are important contributions made by Liu Tian-hua. In that era, Chinese music was most commonly notated in *gongche* notation (工尺譜). (See Chapter 6 for the way in which *gongche* notation works.) Liu incorporated the ways of notating rhythm and fingerings in staff notation into *gongche* notation, and thus established a better notation system. His notation of *New Year's Eve* (除夜小唱) (see p. 26 of the hardcopy of this book) is an example of the combination of Western and Chinese notation systems. He used Chinese words from *gongche* notation to notate the pitches, the beat notation system (叮板, *dingban*) from Chinese music to notate the beats, and the rhythmic notation system and the slurs found in Western music to notate the rhythm, articulation and phrase structure.

## 2.3 *Erhu* (二胡)

The *erhu* (二胡) is also called *nanhu* (南胡, “southern *hu*”), distinguishing it from the northern *huqins* (胡琴) like *jinghu* (京胡). The *erhu* is traditionally used in *jiangnan sizhu* (江南絲竹), an ensemble genre popular in the area of Shanghai (see Chapter 3). The pole of the *erhu* is made of wood, and there is a snake skin mounted on its resonating chamber. The *erhu* has two strings. The performer plays with a bow in the right hand, while the left hand stops on the strings. Different from the violin, the *erhu* does not have a fingerboard. The performer’s fingers press on the strings when performing it. It is commonly believed that the family of *huqins* originated in foreign countries (and thus has the name “*hu*” (胡)), and they were brought in China in the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127 C.E.).

The improvement of the *erhu* in the twentieth century focused mainly on the timbre and volume. Before the twentieth century, *huqins* mainly used silk strings, and thus the timbre was mellow and the volume low. People seeking the improvement of Chinese instruments believed that *huqins* were not satisfactory because of their mellow timbre and low volume, and thus replaced the silk strings by steel ones. In this way, their volume increases and the timbre becomes brighter. (A similar situation was found in the *guqin* (古琴). See Chapter 4.) Moreover, the reformers also changed the position of the looping cord (千斤) so that there are more left-hand positions, which means that the range of the instrument is enlarged. In the past some thirty years, there have been experiments on building different shapes of the resonating chamber. In the 1920s, Lü Wen-cheng (呂文成, 1898-1981) replaced the silk strings of the *erhu* by steel strings, and raised its tuning. In this way, the *gaochu* (高胡) mainly used in Cantonese music nowadays was invented. Recently, there have been experiments on replacing the snake skin of *huqins* by chemical substances so that the volume becomes higher and the quality of the instrument is improved.

## 2.4 *Pipa* (琵琶)

There are two versions for the origin and meaning of the word “*pipa*” (琵琶). The first one is that the instrument is similar in shape to the fruit loquat (枇杷, *pipa*) and thus has this name. The second one is that “*pipa*” represents two different ways of plucking strings. “*Pi*” (琵) is outward plucking and “*pa*” (琶) is inward plucking. In the Sui Dynasty (581-618 C.E.), “*pipa*” (琵琶) was a generic term for all plucked string instruments, including the *qinhanzi* (秦漢子) of the Qin and Han Dynasties (221 B.C.E. – 220 C.E.), the *ruanxian* (阮咸) , *liuqin* (柳琴) and *yueqin* (月琴), etc.

In ancient time, *pipas* were divided into “straight-neck *pipa*” (直項琵琶) and “bent-neck *pipa*” (曲項琵琶). The straight-neck *pipa*, having a round resonating chamber, has its origin in China. Examples include the *qinhanzi* and *ruanxian*. In the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589 C.E.), the bent-neck *pipa* was imported to China from Persia through Uyghur (the present Xinjiang 新疆). This kind of *pipa* had a pear-shaped resonating chamber. It was held horizontally and plucked with a plectrum in playing.

The *pipas* being used in the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368-1911 C.E.) had a pear shape and a bent neck. Normally there were four *xiangs* (相, frets on the neck) and thirteen *pins* (品, frets on the fingerboard). Silk strings were being used. The *pipas* being used nowadays normally have six *xiangs* and twenty-four *pins*, and have a straight neck. The four strings are either steel strings or strings with a steel core covered by nylon. As a result, their volume is higher than that of traditional *pipas*. The strings are either plucked with real or artificial fingernails. Except the *pin* in the highest pitch, the *xiangs* and *pins* are arranged in a way that twelve-tone equal temperament is produced.

## 2.5 *Guzheng* (古箏)

The *guzheng* (古箏), or simply *zheng* (箏), is a plucked string instrument in which one pitch per string is produced in performance, as opposed to the *erhu* (二

胡) and *pipa* (琵琶) in which different pitches are produced on one string by pressing the fingers on different positions. The tuning of the *zheng* is in pentatonic scale.

The *zheng* has its origin in China. It is commonly believed that it was popular in the Qin State (秦國) of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.E.) and the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.E.), and was thus also called *qinzheng* (秦箏). The early *zhengs* had five strings. Most *zhengs* in the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) and the Wei State (魏國) of the Three Kingdoms Period (220–265 C.E.) had twelve strings. The *zhengs* used in some particular regions, like Kejia (客家), Chaozhou (潮州), and Zhejiang (浙江), have sixteen strings. Nowadays, most *zhengs* have twenty-one strings and have a comparatively wider sound board (see the photo on p. 39 of the hardcopy of this book). Traditionally, silk strings were used in the *zheng*. Nowadays, the strings being used are mostly steel strings or strings with a steel core covered with nylon.

From the 1940s on, the *zheng*, like many other Chinese instruments, has continuously been “improved” and “developed.” Traditional *zhengs* have been altered to adapt to the need of playing music in the twelve-tone equal temperament. In the 1960s, a kind of “modulating *zheng*” (轉調箏) was invented in which a pedal was added to the 21-string *zheng* in order to facilitate the playing of chromatic notes. There is also the “butterfly-shaped *zheng*” (蝶式箏) in which the traditional *zheng* is divided into the left half and the right half, with a *yueshan* (岳山) joining the two halves. One half is used to play music in traditional pentatonic scales, while the other half is used to play music in heptatonic and chromatic scales. However, these two types of *zhengs* have never been very popular in solo or orchestral performances. The “improvement” of the *zheng* has been in the same direction as many other Chinese instruments.

## Glossary

functional harmony (功能和聲)	An important composition technique used in Western classical music from the 17 <sup>th</sup> to the 19 <sup>th</sup> centuries. In this system, there is a relationship between different chords of a key, and each chord progresses in a certain direction towards the tonal centre.
<i>hetou</i> (合頭)	Literally meaning “unified head.” A technique in which different sections of a piece begin with the same or similar melodic materials.
<i>jiahua</i> (加花)	A term from traditional Chinese music, literally meaning “adding flowers.” When a player is ornamenting a skeletal melody in performance, he is said to be “adding flowers.” If the ornamentation is in a reduced manner, it is called “subtracting flowers” (減花, <i>jianhua</i> ).
<i>pin</i> (品)	The frets on the sound board of the <i>pipa</i> (琵琶).
ternary form (三段體)	A structural form in Western music. A piece in ternary form is made up of three sections in the A-B-A format.
<i>xiang</i> (相)	The frets on the neck of the <i>pipa</i> (琵琶).

## Chapter 3 *Jiangnan Sizhu* (江南絲竹) and Cantonese Music (粵樂)

By Yeung Wai-kit (楊偉傑)

English Translation by Tsui Wan-ching (徐允清)

Traditionally, Chinese instrumental music is mainly a kind of ensemble music. There are various genres in this kind of music. Since the major instruments used in these genres are bowed string, plucked string and wind instruments, these genres are called “silk and bamboo music” (絲竹合奏) (traditionally, the strings used in Chinese instruments are made of silk, and the wind instruments are made of bamboo). “Silk and bamboo music” is closely related to Chinese opera and narrative singing. Many “silk and bamboo” instrumental groups are developed from ensembles used to accompany Chinese operas. *Jiangnan sizhu*, an ensemble genre originated in Shanghai, Zhejiang (浙江) and southern Jiangsu (江蘇), and Cantonese music (粵樂), a genre originated in southern Guangdong (廣東), were popular throughout China. These genres have also been brought to different parts of the world by Chinese emigrants. They are representations of Chinese culture and history for those Chinese people who would like to trace their cultural root.

There is a close relationship between *jiangnan sizhu* and Cantonese music. Many maestros of Cantonese music in the twentieth century were familiar with *jiangnan sizhu*, and they employed tunes and music materials of *jiangnan sizhu* in composing Cantonese music. These two genres have common features in their performance practice and structure. They represent some characteristics of Chinese music in the aspects of form, mode and melody. Other important *sizhu* genres include *Fujian nanyin* (福建南音), *Chaozhou xianshi* (潮州弦詩), etc. The following discussion will focus on the characteristics of *jiangnan sizhu* and Cantonese music.

### Section 1 Characteristics and Changes of *Jiangnan Sizhu*

“*Jiangnan*” (江南) literally means “south of the river”. The river refers to

Changjiang (長江). *Jiangnan sizhu* is a genre of ensemble music flourished in the south of Changjiang, particularly the coastal areas, including southern Jiangsu (江蘇), Anhui (安徽), Shanghai and Zhejiang (浙江). The history of *jiangnan sizhu* can be dated back to the mid-nineteenth century. There is a close relationship between *jiangnan sizhu* and the silk and bamboo music of *shifan* gongs and drums (十番鑼鼓) and *shifan* drums (十番鼓) popular in Wuxi (無錫) of the Jiangsu province. The subsequent absorption and changes helped to create the present genre of *jiangnan sizhu*.

The melody of many pieces of *jiangnan sizhu* is familiar to Chinese people of the present generation. Listen to an excerpt from *Dance of a Golden Snake* (金蛇狂舞) (CD 1-13) performed by a modern Chinese orchestra and the traditional *jiangnan sizhu* piece *Fan Obliterates Gong* (凡忘工) (CD 2-1), and you will discover their close relationship.

When the present writer started to learn the *dizi* (笛子) in Hong Kong, *Old Six Beats* (老六板) was an obligatory piece to be played at an elementary level. Having progressed to a certain level, we were required to learn *Song of Joy* (歡樂歌) (CD2-2) and *Street Procession* (行街). When I was studying at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (香港演藝學院) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學), I learned *Medium Ornamented Six Beats* (中花六板) and *Four Together, As You Please* (四合如意). Therefore, popular *jiangnan sizhu* pieces from Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang are in fact familiar to students learning Chinese instruments in Hong Kong.

## 1. The Combination of “Silk” and “Bamboo”

“Silk” (絲) represents string instruments, and “bamboo” (竹) represents wind instruments. Commonly used instruments in *jiangnan sizhu* include string and wind instruments, as well as percussion instruments like *paiban* (拍板, clapper), *biqigu* (荸薺鼓, water chestnut drum)<sup>9</sup> and *bangzi* (梆子,

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<sup>9</sup> *Biqigu* (荸薺鼓), also called *diangu* (點鼓), is a popular percussion instrument in *jiangnan sizhu*. It is usually used with the clapper (拍板) to mark the beats.

woodblock). The leading instruments of *jiangnan sizhu* are the *erhu* (二胡) and *dizi* (笛子), and the secondary instruments are the *pipa* (琵琶), *yangqin* (揚琴), small *sanxian* (小三弦) and *sheng* (笙), etc. The percussion marks the tempo and the beat. Refer to Table 3.1 for the main “silk” and “bamboo” instruments used in *jiangnan sizhu*.

**Table 3.1**

**The Main “Silk” and “Bamboo” Instruments Used in *Jiangnan Sizhu***

String Instruments	Wind Instruments
<i>Erhu</i> (二胡)	<i>Dizi</i> (笛子)
<i>Fanhu</i> (反胡)	<i>Xiao</i> (簫)
<i>Pipa</i> (琵琶)	<i>Sheng</i> (笙)
<i>Qin Qin</i> (秦琴)	
Small <i>sanxian</i> (小三弦)	

## 2. The “Eight Famous Pieces” of *Jiangnan Sizhu*

There are many pieces in the genre of *jiangnan sizhu*. Among them, eight are particularly popular, namely *Medium Ornamented Six Beats* (中花六板), *Three Six* (三六), *Street Procession* (行街), *Song of Joy* (歡樂歌), *Cloud Celebration* (雲慶), *Four Together, As You Please* (四合如意), *Slow Six Beats* (慢六板), and *Slow Three Six* (慢三六). They are called “The Eight Famous Pieces of *Jiangnan Sizhu*” (江南絲竹八大曲). Several of these pieces have similar titles since they are developed from the same “mother piece” (母曲, *muqu*) through “adding flowers” (加花, *jiahua*). The “mother piece” means the original tune.

*Old Six Beats* (老六板) is the most famous and popular mother piece. It is called “Six Beats” since there are sixty beats in this piece, or the equivalence of sixty bars in modern notation. *Medium Ornamented Six Beats* (中花六板) and *Slow Six Beats* (慢六板) are both developed from *Six Beats*. *Three Six* (三六) and *Slow Three Six* (慢三六) are in the family of *Three Six*. Table 3.2 lists the relationship of the “Eight Famous Pieces” and their mother pieces.

**Table 3.2**

**The “Mother Pieces,” “Eight Famous Pieces” and Related Pieces in *Jiangnan Sizhu* (Adapted from Witzleben (1995:64))**

Mother Piece	<i>Six Beats</i> (六板)	<i>Three Six</i> (三六)	<i>Four Together</i> (四合)	<i>Song of Joy</i> (歡樂歌)
Eight Famous Pieces	<i>Medium Ornamented Six Beats</i> (中花六板)  <i>Slow Six Beats</i> (慢六板)	<i>Three Six</i> (三六)  <i>Slow Three Six</i> (慢三六)	<i>Four Together, As You Please</i> (四合如意)  <i>Street Procession</i> (行街)  <i>Cloud Celebration</i> (雲慶)	<i>Song of Joy</i> (歡樂歌)
Related Pieces	<i>Old Six Beats</i> (老六板)  <i>Fast Six Beats</i> (快六板)  <i>Ornamented Six Beats</i> (花六板)  <i>Medium Tempo Ornamented Six Beats</i> (中板花六)  <i>Double Ornamented Six Beats</i> (花花六板)  <i>Triple Ornamented Six Beats</i> (三花六)  <i>Fragrant Wind Tune</i> (薰風曲)	<i>Three Playings of Plum Blossoms</i> (梅花三弄)  <i>Ornamented Three Six</i> (花三六)  <i>Three Six Beats</i> (三六板)  <i>Original Ban Three Six</i> (原板三六)  <i>Plum Blossoms Three Six</i> (梅花三六)	<i>Four Together, As You Please</i> (四合如意)  <i>Four Together Beats</i> (四合板)  <i>Original Ban Four Together</i> (原板四合)  <i>Ornamented Ban Four Together</i> (花板四合)  <i>Street Procession, Four Together</i> (行街四合)  <i>Street Procession, Three Six</i> (行街三六)	

*Medium Ornamented Six Beats* and *Slow Six Beats* are developed from *Old Six Beats* through a process called “*fangman jiahua*” (放慢加花, literally “making slow and adding flowers”). Similarly, *Slow Three Six* is developed from

*Three Six* through a similar process.

If we listen to pieces of *jiangnan sizhu* casually, we may find that they are more or less the same. However, different performing groups have different approaches to the way of “adding flowers.”

The pieces of *jiangnan sizhu* use a metrical system called “*banyan*” (板眼). The “*ban*” (板) is a strong beat while the “*yan*” (眼) is a weak beat. The patterns generally found in *jiangnan sizhu* are “one *ban* followed by one *yan*” (一板一眼) (similar to the  $\frac{2}{4}$  time found in Western classical music) and “one *ban* followed by three *yans*” (一板三眼) (similar to the  $\frac{4}{4}$  time).

For example, the metrical pattern of *Old Six Beats* is “one *ban* followed by one *yan*.” *Medium Ornamented Six Beats* is developed from *Old Six Beats* to “one *ban* followed by three *yans*” through the process of *fangman jiahua*.

### 3. Heterophony in *Jiangnan Sizhu*

In performances of modern Chinese orchestra, there are more than one player for each type of instrument, and the musicians are expected to play according to the notated score. In contrast to this situation, there is generally only one player for each type of instrument in the performance of traditional *jiangnan sizhu*. Improvisation is an important feature in performing this genre and interactions among different players in the ensemble are essential. All the players of the ensemble are performing the same skeletal melody (骨幹旋律), but each player will add extra notes through a process called “*jiahua*” (加花, literally meaning “adding flowers”).

The way of “adding flowers” varies in different performances. For example, if the *erhu* (二胡) player is “adding flowers” in a highly ornamented manner, the *dizi* (笛子) player will “add flowers” in a reduced manner (減花, literally meaning “subtracting flowers”). If the *pipa* (琵琶) player is performing in a high register, the small *sanxian* (小三弦) player will play in a lower register. This kind of co-operation is a common practice in the performance of *jiangnan sizhu*.

The simultaneous performance of a skeletal melody by different instruments

with different ways of “adding flowers” and “subtracting flowers” creates a texture called “heterophony” (支聲複調). Figure 3.1 illustrates how heterophony works.

**Figure 3.1 Old Six Beats and Its Ornamented Versions**

1=D 2/4

Line a      33 6.2 | i    5.6 | i    6.1 | i.3    2 | 33 6.2 | i    5.6 | i    3.2 | i    6.5 |

Line b      33 6.123 | i.6 5356 | i.7 6.1 | 1235    2 | 33 6.123 | i.6 5356 | i    3532 | 1216 5 |

Line c      33 6.123 | 1216 5356 | 1216 651 | 1235 2.5 | 33 6.123 | 1216 5356 | i.2 3532 | 1216 5 |

The melody of Line a in Figure 3.1 shows bars 1-8 from *Old Six Beats* (老六板). This is the skeletal melody. Line b is a melody ornamented by the process of “adding flowers.” Some beats originally having two quavers are now having four semiquavers, or having a dotted rhythm. Line c is even more ornamented. The number of notes in Lines b and c is more than that of Line a, but they keep Line a as the skeletal melody.

#### 4. *Jiangnan Sizhu* in Hong Kong

The type of traditional Chinese instrumental ensemble music predominant in Hong Kong is Cantonese music. *Jiangnan sizhu* is not as popular as Cantonese music. In the early years, *pipa* performer Lui Pui-yuen (呂培原, 1933- ) and his instrumental group gave some performances of *jiangnan sizhu* in Hong Kong. In the late 1970s, *erhu* maestro Tang Liang-de (湯良德) moved from Beijing to Hong Kong and was in charge of the Chinese Music Section of the Music Office (音樂事務統籌處). *Jiangnan sizhu* thus began to flourish in Hong Kong. Most students of Chinese instruments in the Music Office have had a chance to learn *jiangnan sizhu* since then.

There is training on *jiangnan sizhu* at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Wong Chi-chung (王志聰), the teacher in charge of this training

in the Academy, is a former student of Tang Liang-de. There was also a Chinese instrumental group at the Music Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong which was supervised by J. Lawrence Witzleben (韋慈朋) who studied in Shanghai. Witzleben retired from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2007.

Witzleben (1951- ) is a renowned ethnomusicologist with a focus on Chinese music. In the late 1970s, he studied for his Master's degree in ethnomusicology at the University of Hawaii, and the area of his thesis is the *gaochu* (高胡) used in Cantonese music. He came to Hong Kong to learn the *gaochu* with the maestro Loo Kah-chi (盧家熾). Subsequently he learned *jiangnan sizhu* in Shanghai for writing his doctoral dissertation. He learned the *erhu* (二胡), *dizi* (笛子), *zheng* (箏), etc., as well as the performance practice and style of *jiangnan sizhu* at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. In 1995, he published the book *“Silk and Bamboo” Music in Shanghai: The Jiangnan Sizhu Instrumental Ensemble Tradition* (江南絲竹音樂在上海). This book has become an essential reading for students doing research on Chinese music both in China and abroad.

## Section 2 The Development of Cantonese Music

“Cantonese music” (粵樂) generally refers to the music flourished in the Guangdong (廣東) province. Broadly speaking, “Cantonese music” includes different kinds of vocal and instrumental genres popular in Guangdong, and there is a close relationship between these genres. People in Hong Kong may not know the instrumental piece *Autumn Thoughts by the Dressing Table* (妝台秋思), but they are familiar with “Sacrifice of the Princess” (香夭), a duet sung by Princess Chang Ping (長平公主) and her husband Zhou Shi-xian (周世顯), from the Cantonese opera *Princess Chang Ping* (帝女花). The melody of “Sacrifice of the Princess” is actually borrowed from *Autumn Thoughts by the Dressing Table*.

Although *jiangnan sizhu* and Cantonese music seem to be two distinctive genres, they are in fact closely related. Many maestros of Cantonese music used

to live in Shanghai. The inventor of *gaohu* (高胡), Lü Wen-cheng (呂文成), always traveled between Shanghai and Hong Kong. We can discover traits of *jiangnan sizhu* in the compositions written by him. For example, *Stepping High* (步步高) and *Autumn Moon over a Calm Lake* (平湖秋月) are developed from *Song of Joy* (歡樂歌). Moreover, some *sizhu* music is used in Cantonese music and Cantonese opera. For instance, “Sacrifice of the Princess” is developed from *Autumn Thoughts by the Dressing Table*, whereas “Reunion” (劍合釵圓) from the Cantonese opera *A Story of the Purple Hairpin* (紫釵記) is developed from *Moonlight over the River in Spring* (春江花月夜).

The Cantonese opera *Princess Chang Ping* performed by Yam Kim-fai (任劍輝, 1912-1989) and Pak Suet-sin (白雪仙, 1926- ) has become a cultural artefact of collective memory of Hong Kong people. This opera was premiered by the Sin Fung Ming Opera Company (仙鳳鳴劇團) in 1957 and has been very popular since then. The most famous tune of this opera, “Sacrifice of the Princess,” is well known to Hong Kong people. This tune originates from the *pipa* civil piece (琵琶文曲) *Autumn Thoughts by the Dressing Table* and was arranged as a duet in this opera by the maestro Wong Jyt-seng (王粵生, 1919-1989). This arrangement perfectly exhibits the characteristics of Cantonese music. The first sentence of this duet, “The falling flowers fully hide the moon.” (落花滿天蔽月光), has been re-texted as “I have no money for buying a bun, and am afraid that my wife would scold me if I borrow money from someone else.” (落街無錢買麵飽，借錢又怕老婆鬧), and has become very popular. *Autumn Thoughts by the Dressing Table* has thus become an essential piece to be learned by all performers of Cantonese music.

The narrow definition of “Cantonese music” refers to an instrumental genre popular in the area of the Pearl River Delta, including Guangzhou (廣州), Taishan (台山), Hong Kong, Macau, etc., since the mid-nineteenth century. There are other instrumental genres in the Guangdong province, such as *Chaozhou xianshi* (潮州弦詩) and *Kejia hanyue* (客家漢樂). However, the “Cantonese music” that this chapter refers to is limited to the genre popular in the Cantonese speaking area, and *Chaozhou xianshi* and *Kejia hanyue* are excluded from the following

discussion.

Cantonese music has a history of some one hundred years. It is comparatively new when comparing to some old genres. Nevertheless, it has flourished liberally in China and abroad. During the Chinese New Year, the piece *Stepping High* composed by Lü Wen-cheng (1898-1981) is frequently heard in Hong Kong and the Chinatown of San Francisco. The piece *Dragon Boat Race* (賽龍奪錦) by He Liu-tang (何柳堂, 1872-1933) is played in the Dragon Boat Festival (端午節) every year. Cantonese music is heard regularly in TV shows, radio programmes and films.

To a certain extent, Cantonese music is a symbol of Chinese music to Chinese people in China and abroad. It has been popular in the coastal areas of China. Quite a number of maestros in Cantonese music lived in Hong Kong and Shanghai. They performed this genre in entertainment clubs, and made recordings that contributed to the popularity of Cantonese music. The following sections introduce the instruments used in Cantonese music, its temperament, modes, and the way of “adding flowers” (加花). Finally, another section is devoted to the relationship between Cantonese music and *minyue* (民樂), and the development of Cantonese music in Hong Kong.

## 1. Instruments Used in Cantonese Music

Cantonese music and *jiangnan sizhu* are instrumental genres for ensembles, and their main instruments are *sizhu* instruments (絲竹, i.e. string and wind instruments).<sup>10</sup> The main string instruments used in Cantonese music are the *gaoihu* (高胡), *erxian* (二弦) and *yehu* (椰胡), whereas that used in *jiangnan sizhu* is the *erhu* (二胡). There are differences in the musical style of these two genres due to their different disseminated areas and the languages spoken in these areas.

The instrumental ensembles used in Cantonese music are divided into “hard bowed” (硬弓) and “soft bowed” (軟弓). They are differentiated by their timbres.

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<sup>10</sup> “Si” (絲, silk) refers to bowed string and plucked string instruments, like the *erhu* (二胡) and *pipa* (琵琶) respectively, as the strings were made of silk in early times. Nowadays, the strings used are mostly made of steel. “Zhu” (竹, bamboo) refers to wind instruments, like *dizi* (笛子) and *sheng* (笙).

The “hard bowed” ensemble has a brighter and harsher sound, whereas the “soft bowed” ensemble has a softer and mellower sound. The instruments used in the former are the *erxian* (二弦), *tiqin* (提琴), *yueqin* (月琴), *sanxian* (三弦) , *dizi* (笛子) and *houguan* (喉管), while those used in the latter are the *gaohu*, *erhu*, *yehu*, *yangqin* (揚琴) , *qinqlin* (秦琴) and *dongxiao* (洞簫).

The “hard bowed” ensemble appeared before the “soft bowed” ensemble. The early “hard bowed” ensemble is also called “*wujiatou*” (五架頭, i.e. “five instruments”). In the 1920s, the *tiqin* of *wujiatou* was replaced by the *gaohu*, and other instruments were reduced to the *qinqlin* and *yangqin* only. The ensemble formed in this way is called *sanjiatou* (三架頭, i.e., “three instruments”). Later, the *yehu* and *dongxiao* were added and thus the “soft bowed” ensemble was formed.

## 2. Modes and Texture of Cantonese Music

The temperament used in Cantonese music is called “seven-tone equal temperament” (七平均律), which is different from that used in Western classical music. In the “seven-tone equal temperament,” an octave is divided into seven tones. Figure 3.2 compares the “seven-tone equal temperament” with the “twelve-tone equal temperament” (十二平均律) used in Western classical music.

**Figure 3.2**

**A Comparison of the “Seven-tone Equal Temperament” and the “Twelve-tone Equal Temperament”**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	#1	2	#2	3	4	#4

In Figure 3.2, an octave is divided into seven portions and twelve portions in the upper row and the lower row respectively. The *fa* note used in the seven-tone equal temperament is a little bit higher than that used in the twelve-tone equal temperament, whereas the *ti* note is a little bit lower. The discrepancy in frequency between the corresponding notes of these two systems is not fixed.

It depends on the experience and mood of the performer. In reality, the notes in the seven-tone equal temperament are not absolutely “equal”.

In Cantonese music, the “mode” (調式) being used is referred to as “*xian*” (線, literally meaning “string”). What we mean by the “mode” of a passage of music refers to the scale being used and its central note. In Cantonese music, there are three kinds of mode, namely the “*zhengxian*” (正線), “*fanxian*” (反線) and “*yifanxian*” (乙反線).

There are two strings in the *gaohu* (高胡). The inner and outer strings are tuned to G and D respectively, and thus the interval of the two open strings is a perfect fifth. When a passage of music is in the *zhengxian*, the notes of the two open strings are sung as “*sol*” and “*re*” respectively. For easy understanding, we may consider it to be in C major. When a passage of music is in the *fanxian*, the notes of the two open strings are sung as “*do*” and “*sol*” respectively. We may consider it to be in G major. In *yifanxian*, the notes are sung as those in *zhengxian*, but the scale being used emphasises “*ti*” and “*fa*” while deemphasising “*la*” and “*mi*”. This mode gives the audience a sorrowful feeling.

Figure 3.3 shows the fingering positions of the *gaohu* in the *zhengxian* and *fanxian*.

**Figure 3.3 Fingering Positions of the Gaoju.**

Fanxian		Zhengxian	
G	D	G	D
1	5	5	2
2	6	6	3
3	7	7	4
4	1	1	5
5	2	2	6
6	3	3	7
7	4	4	1
1	5	5	2
inner string		inner string	
outer string		outer string	

Like *jiangnan sizhu*, the texture of traditional Cantonese music is in heterophony. Every performer of the ensemble is playing the same skeletal melody, but is “adding flowers” in its own way. The practice of “adding flowers” is a major difference between traditional and modern instrumental ensemble playing. There is flexibility to the performance of a piece in traditional ensemble playing due to different ways of “adding flowers” by different performers.

For example, in an ensemble of the “soft bowed five instruments” (i.e., *gaochu*, *yehu*, *yangqin*, *qinqin* and *dongxiao*), every performer is ornamenting the same skeletal melody. If the *gaochu* is playing a highly ornamented melody, the *yehu* will play a less ornamented one, and other instrumentalists also adjust their ornamentation according to the situation. An instrumental group develops a kind of coordination by working together for a long time, but there still will be an element of improvisation in the way of “adding flowers” in each performance.

### 3. Cantonese Music in Hong Kong

Among the various instrumental genres in the Guangdong province, Cantonese music and *Chaozhou xianshi* are the most popular ones in Hong Kong. Cantonese music has a close relationship with Cantonese opera. In fact, the former originates from the instrumental pieces performed in the latter. These pieces are called *guochang xiaoqu* (過場小曲, literally “short pieces played as interludes”). In a broader sense, Cantonese music also includes vocal genres, but nowadays it mainly refers to instrumental pieces. In the past, Cantonese music was mainly played in temporary operatic stages, restaurants and tea houses. In the early twentieth century, due to the popularity of recordings, Cantonese music disseminated quickly to the whole Guangdong province, including Hong Kong and Macau, as well as Shanghai.

To present day listeners, Cantonese music seems to be “music of the previous generation.” In the 1970s, there was a TV programme *Below the Lion Rock* (獅子山下) produced by the Radio Television Hong Kong (香港電台) which used the famous piece *Stepping High* (步步高) composed by Lü Wen-

cheng (呂文成) as the theme music.<sup>11</sup> (Its theme music was later replaced by the song *Below the Lion Rock* (獅子山下) sung by Roman Tam (羅文)). *Stepping High* is nowadays occasionally played in banquets or performed live in shopping malls.

#### 4. The Transmission and Development of Cantonese Music

Since the Communist Party came to power in China in 1949, many traditional music genres have been put on the stage of concert hall in the format of instrumental solos, ensembles or orchestral performances. There have also been many newly composed orchestral pieces in the Western style.<sup>12</sup> During the Cultural Revolution (文化大革命, 1966-1976), the development of all traditional genres came to a halt due to the violent political fights. The flourishing of the “model opera” (樣板戲) inhibited the development of other kinds of musical art. Cantonese music was “orchestralised” (民樂化) and “revolutionised” (革命化) in this period. It was politicised and used as the propaganda of the Communist Party. Pieces created in this period include *A Welcome Rain in a Forest of Banana Trees* (蕉林喜雨, developed from *Rain Falls on Banana Leaves* 雨打芭蕉), *Weaving Out Miles of Rainbow* (織出彩虹萬里長) composed by Yang Shao-bin (楊紹斌), *The Joy of Using the Sickle* (喜開鐮) composed by Liao Gui-hong (廖桂雄). These pieces are orchestral pieces promoting the ideology of Communism. There were very few pieces in the format of traditional Cantonese music. After the Cultural Revolution, the pieces of Cantonese music played in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau were mostly pre-existing pieces or “orchestralised” pieces.

In 1999, Hong Kong composers Law Wing-fai (羅永暉, 1949- ), Richard Tsang (曾葉發, 1952- ), Joshua Chan (陳錦標, 1962- ) and the late art critic Lai Kin (黎鍵) inaugurated a movement called “A Legacy of Cantonese Music” (「粵樂薪傳」運動). In this programme, a series of concerts and lectures were held,

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<sup>11</sup> This information is provided by Wong Chi-wah (黃志華).

<sup>12</sup> Since 1949, all types of traditional instrumental solo and ensemble performances have been called “minyue” (民樂).

aiming at tracing the development of Cantonese music and forward-looking to its future development. The three composers wrote new pieces of Cantonese music in different styles. These pieces are *Autumn Vista on the River* (秋水連天), *A Spring Walk in the Mountains* (山徑春行) and *Desolate Petals on the Guileless Water* (花自飄零水自流) by Law Wing-fai, *Yearning for a Clear Sky* (晴空何處), *Song of Leisure* (施然曲) and *Dai-Lok-Tin* (大樂天, “Song of Great Happiness”) by Richard Tsang, and *Sunset in Mount West Firewood* (夕照西樵山), *Speeding Across the Sky* (騰雲) and *The Joy of Celestial Descent* (仙遊樂) by Joshua Chan (all composed in 1999). We are looking forward to successors to this movement.

## Listening Guide

### 3.1 *Dance of a Golden Snake* (金蛇狂舞) (CD 1-13) and *Fan Obliterates Gong* (凡忘工) (CD 2-1)

#### Information of the Recordings

##### 1. *Dance of a Golden Snake* (CD 1-13)

Orchestra: The Traditional Orchestra of the Music and Dance Troupe of Jiangsu Province (江苏省歌舞剧院民族樂團)

Conductor: Zhu Chang-yao (朱昌耀)

Title of the Record: *Moods of the Seasons* (春花秋月) (ROI, 1999)

##### 2. *Fan Obliterates Gong* (CD 2-1)

Performed by: Shanghai Traditional Music Society (上海國樂研究會):

Zhou Hui (周惠, *yangqin* 揚琴), Zhou Hao (周皓, *erhu* 二胡),  
Tu Bing-rong (屠炳榮, *pipa* 琵琶), Shen Ji-sun (沈繼蓀,  
*zhongruan* 中阮), Shen Ri-xin (沈日新, *dongxiao* 洞簫), Dai  
Shu-hong (戴樹紅, *dongxiao*, 洞簫)

Title of the Record: *Jiangnan Sizhu* (江南絲竹) (HUGO, 1998)

Recorded in 1989

#### Listening Guide

After listening to *Dance of a Golden Snake* and *Fan Obliterates Gong*, you will find that they resemble each other very much. They are in fact closely related. Recordings of the former piece are frequently played in shopping malls in Hong Kong during the Chinese New Year.

*Dance of a Golden Snake* was arranged by Nie Er (聶耳, 1912-1935), who also wrote *March of the Volunteers* (義勇軍進行曲), the national anthem of the People's Republic of China. This piece is based on a *jiangnan sizhu* piece called *Fan Obliterates Gong*, which in turn originates from another *jiangnan sizhu* piece called *Old Six Beats* (老六板). *Old Six Beats* also gives rise to the *pipa* (琵琶) piece *Bright Spring, White Snow* (陽春白雪) (CD 1-10) (see Chapter 2), and was used as the theme piece of an advertisement many years ago.

**The Main Theme of *Dance of a Golden Snake*:**

1=G 2/4

○ 61|56 1|56 43|2 25|52 43|212 44|61 24|2161 5|56 5|55 44|55 2|25 44|61 2|  
42 24|5 56|i si|i6 5|56 54|2 25|52 43|212 44|61 24|2161 5|56 5||

### 3.2 *Song of Joy* (歡樂歌) (CD 2-2)

#### Information of the Recording

Version: a field recording recorded by J. Lawrence Witzleben (韋慈朋) in the Mid-Lake Pavilion of Shanghai (上海湖心亭)

Recorded in the early 1980s

#### Listening Guide

*Song of Joy* is one of the “Eight Famous Pieces of *Jiangnan Sizhu*” (江南絲竹八大名曲). It is developed from its “mother piece” (母曲, the original piece) by a process called “*fangman jiahua*” (放慢加花, slowing down and adding ornamentation).

0:00	The <i>bojigu</i> (鼙鼓) establishes the tempo by a stroke, and then other instruments play the first slow section with an <i>accelerando</i> .
0:54	The second section.
1:35	The second section is repeated with slight changes.
2:13	The third section, in which some materials from the first section reappear.
3:05	The fourth section, in which some materials from the second and third sections reappear.
3:54	The fourth section is repeated.
4:43	Repetition of Sections 1-4 with an <i>accelerando</i> and an ornamentation (加花, <i>jiahua</i> ) of the melody.
7:45	A fast section, a reduced ornamentation (減花, <i>jianhua</i> ) of the slow section.

### 3.3 *New Sound of Sizhu* (絲竹新韻) (CD 2-3)

#### Information of the Recording

Composer: Yang Chun-lin (楊春林, 1953- )

Performed by: Ladies' Ensemble of Chinese Music (華韻九芳小民樂團)

Title of the Record: *Special Edition for the Founding of “Ladies’ Ensemble of Chinese Music”* (華韻九芳小民樂團成立專輯) (ROI, 1996)

Recorded in 1996

#### Listening Guide

0:00	With the accompaniment of the percussion (打擊樂), <i>sheng</i> (笙) and <i>guzheng</i> (古箏), the <i>dongxiao</i> (洞簫) plays the slow first theme.
1:04	A restatement of the first theme is played by the <i>guzheng</i> , while the <i>dongxiao</i> plays a countermelody.

1:40	The <i>erhu</i> (二胡) plays a variation of the first theme.
2:10	The music is played alternately by the plucked string instruments, the <i>erhu</i> , <i>sheng</i> and <i>dongxiao</i> .
2:42	The second theme is stated.
3:11	The <i>dizi</i> (笛子) plays the second theme.
3:37	The <i>erhu</i> and <i>dizi</i> play a transition passage between the slow section and the fast section.
3:57	Begins in a slow tempo, and then accelerates gradually to a fast tempo.
4:57	A fast section, with the <i>erhu</i> and <i>dizi</i> playing an ornamented version of the folk song <i>Jasmine</i> (茉莉花).
5:23	The piece ends with a restatement of the slow first theme.

## Discussion

Although this piece imitates the style of *jiangnan sizhu* (江南絲竹), it is in fact written in a modern *minyue* (民樂) style. Try to compare this piece with *Song of Joy* (歡樂歌) in terms of texture, form, melody, dynamics and timbre.

### **3.4 *Autumn Thoughts by the Dressing Table* (妝台秋思) (CD 2-4)**

#### Information of the Recording

Performed by: Chan Pik-sum (陳璧沁, *gaohu* 高胡), Ng Wai-yin (吳煒然, *yehu* 椰胡), Lung Man-wai (龍文慧, *yangqin* 揚琴), Wong Ling-yan (黃翎欣, *qinqin* 秦琴), Yeung Wai-kit (楊偉傑, *dizi* 笛子)

Live recording provided by Windpipe Chinese Ensemble (竹韻小集)

Recorded in 2008

#### Listening Guide

*Autumn Thoughts by the Dressing Table* comes from a section of the *pipa* (琵琶) piece *On the Frontiers* (塞上曲). In the 1950s, Wong Jyt-seng (王粵生) arranged this piece as the duet “Sacrifice of the Princess” (香夭) of the Cantonese opera *Princess Chang Ping* (帝女花) sung by the Princess (長平公主) and her husband Zhou Shi-xian (周世顯) in *zihou* (子喉) and *pinghou* (平喉) respectively. This recording is an instrumental version of this piece.

0:00	An introduction played by the <i>pipa</i> (琵琶) and the <i>yangqin</i> (揚琴).
0:15	A <i>zihou</i> passage played by the <i>dizi</i> (笛子) and <i>gaochu</i> (高胡), with the accompaniment of the <i>yehu</i> (椰胡), <i>yangqin</i> and <i>pipa</i> .
1:00	A <i>pinghou</i> passage played by the whole ensemble.
1:19	A <i>zihou</i> passage played by the whole ensemble.
1:37	A restatement of the previous <i>pinghou</i> passage played by the whole ensemble.
1:50	A <i>zihou</i> passage, followed by a restatement of the introduction.
2:29	Begins with the phrase at 1:00, and then a new section begins.
2:51	A <i>zihou</i> passage, followed by a restatement of the introduction.
3:16	The main theme reappears, and then the piece ends with a ritard.

### 3.5 *In Celebration of the Good Times* (娛樂昇平) (CD 2-5) and *Birds Roosting in the Woods* (鳥投林) (CD 2-6)

The recordings of *In Celebration of the Good Times* and *Birds Roosting in the Woods* in the CD accompanying this book are performed by the “hard bowed” (硬弓) and “soft bowed” (軟弓) ensembles respectively. Listen to both pieces and distinguish their differences in timbre.

#### Information of the Recordings

##### 1. *In Celebration of the Good Times*

Performed by: Chan Pik-sum (陳璧沁, *erxian* 二弦), Ng Wai-yin (吳煒然, *tinqin* 提琴), Wong Ling-yan (黃翎欣, *sanxian* 三弦), Hui Chun-wai (許俊偉, *yueqin* 月琴), Chan Chiu-yin (陳照延, large size *houguan* 長筒喉管), Lo Wai-leung (盧偉良, small size *houguan* 短筒喉管), Yeung Wai-kit (楊偉傑, *dizi* 笛子)

##### 2. *Birds Roosting in the Woods*

Performed by: Yu Qi-wei (余其偉, *gaochu* 高胡), Yeung Yeuk-chai (楊若齊, *yehu* 椰胡), Peng Yen-zhen (彭燕珍, *yangqin* 揚琴), Lo Wai-leung (盧偉良, *qinqin* 秦琴), Wong Ka-wai (王嘉偉, *dongxiao* 洞簫)

Live recordings provided by Windpipe Chinese Ensemble (竹韻小集)

Recorded in 2008

### 3.6 *Shuangsheng Hen* (雙聲恨) (CD 2-7)

#### Information of the Recording

Performed by: Yu Qi-wei (余其偉, *gaohu* 高胡), Yeung Yeuk-chai (楊若齊, *yehu* 椰胡), Peng Yen-zhen (彭燕珍, *yangqin* 揚琴), Lo Wai-leung (盧偉良, *qinqin* 秦琴), Wong Ka-wai (王嘉偉, *dongxiao* 洞簫)

Live recording provided by Windpipe Chinese Ensemble (竹韻小集)

Recorded in 2008

#### Listening Guide

It is uncertain in which year that *Shuangsheng Hen* (雙聲恨, Double Sorrow), also entitled *Shuangxing Hen* (雙星恨, Sorrow of the Two Stars), was composed. The content of the piece may be about the legend of the stars of cowherd (牛郎) and the weaving girl (織女), lovers who could meet only once a year. This piece is made up of a slow section and a fast section. The mode of the slow section is a mixture of the *yifan xian* (乙反線) and the *zheng xian* (正線). There is a sorrowful feeling in the *yifan xian*, while in the passage in the *zheng xian*, the sorrowful feeling is diminished. The fast section is in the *yifan xian*.

0:00	The first passage, in the <i>yifan xian</i> , is played by the “soft bowed five-instrument ensemble” (軟弓五架頭) led by the <i>gaohu</i> (高胡). This passage ends with a <i>ritard</i> .
0:32	The second passage. There are more rests in this passage, and at 1:07, there is a small climax, which leads to the third passage.
1:26	The third passage, in the <i>zheng xian</i> , begins with the lead of the <i>dongxiao</i> (洞簫). The tempo is slower than that of the previous passage. At first the <i>gaohu</i> takes an accompanying role, while beginning at 1:41, it takes the leading role.
1:59	There are repetitions of phrases performed by the whole ensemble, and another small climax follows.
2:30	The <i>gaohu</i> plays two symmetrical phrases, first softly, and then with a <i>crescendo</i> , preparing for the coming phrase in slow tempo.
3:01	The <i>gaohu</i> plays the last phrase of the slow section with some agitation, and this section ends with a <i>ritard</i> .
3:27	The fast section begins. It is played three times, the first time beginning with the <i>yangqin</i> (揚琴) and <i>qinqin</i> (秦琴) performing in a slow tempo. The <i>gaohu</i> joins in later, and there is an <i>accelerando</i> and an increase of ornamentation.

4:07	The second statement of the fast section. The tempo becomes steady. All the instruments play short phrases, and then there is an <i>accelerando</i> and an increase of ornamentation led by the <i>gaochu</i> .
4:22	The third statement of the fast section. This is the biggest climax of the whole piece, with the <i>gaochu</i> playing very fast notes. The tempo is getting faster and faster.
4:38	After a sudden stop, the whole ensemble plays the last note of the piece in a slow tempo.

### 3.7 Two Versions of *Autumn Moon over a Calm Lake* (平湖秋月) (CD 2-8) (CD 2-9)

#### Information of the Recordings

Performed by: Chan Pik-sum (陳璧沁, *gaochu* 高胡)

Live recording provided by Yeung Wai-kit (楊偉傑)

Recorded in 2008

#### Listening Guide

The following score is a notation of the first seven bars of a piece of Cantonese music entitled *Autumn Moon over a Calm Lake*. It is the skeletal melody. Listen to and compare the two performance versions recorded in the accompanying CD.

#### **An Excerpt from *Autumn Moon over a Calm Lake***

1=G 4/4

33 532 | 1361 235 761 5 | 032 1361 23 761 | 565 3523 5135 6 |

6765 4643 2 053 | 2123 5653 2123 56 | 4643 2356 4532 1 ||

### 3.8 *Spring in the Field* (春到田間) (CD 2-10)

#### Information of the Recording

Composer: Lin Yun (林韻, 1920-2005)

Performer: Liu Tian-yi (劉天一, 1910-1990)

Title of the Record: *Commemoration of the Renowned Musician LIU Tian-yi*  
(劉天一粵樂藝術) (ROI, 1999)

#### Listening Guide

*Spring in the Field* was composed by Lin Yun in 1956. It is the first solo piece written for the *gaohu* (高胡) after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and is accompanied by a small Chinese orchestra.

Listen to and compare this piece with the traditional piece *Shuangsheng Hen* (雙聲恨) in terms of form and instrumentation.

### 3.9 *Singing Koels in the Mount Parker* (柏架鶲鳴) (CD 2-11)

#### Information of the Recording

Composer: Clarence Mak (麥偉鑄, 1959- )

Performed by: Chan Pik-sum (陳璧沁, *gaohu* 高胡), Ng Wai-yin (吳煒然, *yehu* 椰胡), Lung Man-wai (龍文慧, *yangqin* 揚琴), Wong Ling-yan (黃翎欣, *qinqin* 秦琴), Yeung Wai-kit (楊偉傑, *dizi* 笛子)

Live recording provided by Windpipe Chinese Ensemble (竹韻小集)

Recorded in 2008

#### Listening Guide

Besides Law Wing-fai (羅永暉), Richard Tsang (曾葉發) and Joshua Chan (陳錦標), Hong Kong composer Clarence Mak (麥偉鑄) is also enthusiastic in composing Cantonese music. He has composed *A Leaf Heralding the Autumn* (一葉知秋) and *Singing Koels in the Mount Parker* (柏架鶲鳴) (both in 2006) in this category. *Singing Koels in the Mount Parker* depicts the mood of the composer in hearing the singing of koels in the Mount Parker (柏架山), Quarry Bay (鯉魚涌) of Hong Kong when he was hiking there.

0:00	An introduction played by the <i>dizi</i> (笛子), imitating birds' singing.
0:36	The first section with the successive entries of the <i>yangqin</i> (揚琴), <i>qinqlin</i> (秦琴), <i>yehu</i> (椰胡), <i>gaohu</i> (高胡) and <i>dizi</i> (笛子).
1:00	The second section. Some motives from this section will reappear in the third section.
1:41	The third section. There is a call and answer between the <i>dizi</i> and the <i>gaohu</i> .
2:14	The fourth section. A transitional passage.
2:37	The fifth section, performed first by the solo <i>gaohu</i> , and then the whole ensemble performs a transitional passage.
3:00	A repetition of Sections 1-5.
5:02	The piece ends with a <i>ritard.</i> in the last phrase of the fifth section.

## Extended Knowledge

### 3.1 *Erhu* (二胡) and *Dizi* (笛子): “Solo Instruments” Used in *Jiangnan Sizhu* (江南絲竹)

The *erhu* and *dizi* are important instruments used in *jiangnan sizhu*. Usually the *erhu* takes the leading role and shapes the atmosphere of the ensemble.

The inner and outer strings of the *erhu* used in *jiangnan sizhu* are tuned in D and A respectively, with the outer string in a perfect fifth higher than the inner string. The strings of the *fanhu* (反胡) are tuned in A and E, that is, a perfect fourth lower than those of the *erhu*.

The *dizi* has the brightest timbre among the instruments used in the *jiangnan sizhu* ensemble. It has a penetrating tone colour and occasionally takes the leading role. The *dizi* generally used in *jiangnan sizhu* is the *qudi* (曲笛) in the key of D.

Since 1949, the Chinese government has paid much effort in “improving” Chinese instruments and “perfecting” the way of performing Chinese music. Performing solo pieces has become a norm for those learning Chinese instruments (see Chapter 2). Many performers of *jiangnan sizhu* have thus become “solo performers” of Chinese music, and many pieces of *jiangnan sizhu* have been arranged as “solo pieces.” The most renowned “solo performer” of *jiangnan sizhu*, Lu Chun-ling (陸春齡, 1921- ), who has been praised as “the devil *dizi* player” (魔笛), has arranged many *jiangnan sizhu* pieces as *dizi* solo pieces, including *Song of Joy* (歡樂歌), *Street Procession* (行街), *Medium Ornamented Six Beats* (中花六板), *Cloud Celebration* (雲慶), etc. When Lu Chun-ling performed traditional *jiangnan sizhu* pieces with his group (including Zhou Hao (周皓, 1929- ), Zhou Hui (周惠, 1925- ), and Ma Sheng-long (馬聖龍, 1933-2003)), he is very prominent. This is due to his long-term established role as a solo performer.

Many *jiangnan sizhu* pieces have similarly been arranged as *erhu* solo pieces. In the Fourth Shanghai Spring Festival (上海之春), a national *erhu* competition taking place in 1963, there were three solo *erhu* pieces which are

arrangements of *jiangnan sizhu* pieces, namely *Slow Three Six* (慢三六), *Fragrant Wind Tune* (薰風曲), and *Medium Ornamented Six Beats* (中花六板).

### 3.2 New Compositions of *Jiangnan Sizhu* (江南絲竹)

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, various traditional genres of Chinese ensemble music have been “academicised” and changed in the direction of *minyue* (民樂). There has been music training in performing traditional ensemble genres in music conservatories, including *jiangnan sizhu* and Cantonese music. Quite a number of maestros of *jiangnan sizhu* taught in various conservatories, like Lin Shi-cheng (林石城, 1922-2005) of the Central Conservatory of Music (中央音樂學院), Chen Zhong (陳重) of the Tianjin Conservatory of Music (天津音樂學院), Lu Chun-ling (陸春齡) and Wang Yi (王乙, 1919-2002) of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music (上海音樂學院).

The First *Jiangnan Sizhu* Competition was held in Beijing in 1987. The First Prize was awarded to the *jiangnan sizhu* ensemble of the Central Conservatory of Music under the tutelage of Lin Shi-cheng. The piece performed by this group was *A Tribute to the Land in the South* (咏南) composed by Zhu Yi (朱毅).

*A Tribute to the Land in the South* and *New Sound of Sizhu* (絲竹新韻) (CD 2-3), a piece composed by Yang Chun-lin (楊春林) in the 1990s, are new compositions written in imitation of the style of *jiangnan sizhu*. They have a flavour of *jiangnan sizhu* in the aspects of instrumentation, melody, and performing style. However, there is an injection of the style of *minyue* (民樂), like the use of Western harmony and form. The performers have to perform according to the notation and are not expected to ornament (加花, *jiahua*) the melody improvisatorily in the way that is commonly found in traditional performance.

### 3.3 The Performance Venue of *Jiangnan Sizhu* (江南絲竹)

Traditionally, *jiangnan sizhu* was performed in venues like restaurants, tea houses and private residences. Nowadays, it is most commonly performed in concert halls and theatres. It has evolved from a genre for self entertainment and for a small circle of listeners to a genre for the public audience in the concert hall.

The change of the performance venue of *jiangnan sizhu* has led to a change of performance practice. In traditional venues, the performance was more casual, and improvisation was an important feature. In the concert hall, the performance is more formal and serious with some prescribed rules.

Is it a preservation or an abolition of a traditional genre when we perform it in the concert hall? Is it necessary to change the performance practice and musical style when there is such a change of performance venue? These issues are worth our reflection.

### 3.4 A Family Tradition of *Jiangnan Sizhu* (江南絲竹): *Huqin* (胡琴) Maestro Tang Liang-de (湯良德) and Tang's Family

Tang Liang-de (湯良德, 1938-2010) was born in a family of several generations' maestros of *jiangnan sizhu*. He joined the Beijing Xinying Orchestra (北京新影樂團) in 1949, and then became a famous *erhu* (二胡) performer throughout the country. He moved to Hong Kong with his family after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In 1978, he began to work in the newly-established Hong Kong Music Office (音樂事務統籌處, presently called 音樂事務處), responsible for the training of Chinese music. He made a great contribution in the promotion and development of Chinese music in Hong Kong by teaching various kinds of *huqins* (胡琴) in the Music Office, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (香港演藝學院) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (香港中文大學), as well as conducting the Hong Kong Youth Chinese Orchestra (香港青年中樂團). He arranged quite a number of *jiangnan sizhu* pieces as solo, ensemble and orchestral pieces, and composed some new pieces in the *jiangnan sizhu* style, so that students of Chinese instruments and Chinese music lovers in Hong Kong have had a chance to be in contact with and

to understand this Chinese music genre.

Tang Liang-de's brothers and sisters are also maestros of *jiangnan sizhu*. Tang Liang-zhou (湯良洲), Tang Xiu-di (湯秀娣) and Tang Liang-xing (湯良興) are famous *pipa* (琵琶) performers, while Tang Liang-fu (湯良甫) and Tang Liang-zhong (湯良忠) are good at performing *huqins*. Although they are now living in different parts of the world, they did give concerts of *jiangnan sizhu* together in recent years. Since they have been trained together for a long time and each member has a very high performing standard, their performance reached a perfect level of co-operation and interpretation. This family inherits the long tradition of family's musical training in China.

### 3.5 A History of the *Gaohu* (高胡)

The *gaohu* (高胡), also called *yuehu* (粵胡, Cantonese *huqin*) or *gaoyin erhu* (高音二胡, high-pitched *erhu*), was invented in the mid-1920s by a maestro of Cantonese music, Lü Wen-cheng (呂文成, 1898-1981), who was living in Shanghai in that period. Lü learned the violin in the Shanghai Chinese Music Society (上海中華音樂會) with Situ Meng-yan (司徒夢岩, 1888-1954), who was an employer in the Shanghai Jiangnan Ship Building Company (上海江南造船廠). Inspired by the bright timbre of the violin, Lü started to think about changing the timbre of the *erhu*. Lü always performed in Shanghai and Guangzhou. Due to the humidity in the South, the snake skin mounted on the resonating chamber of the *erhu* always loosened its tension when Lü was performing in Guangzhou. To solve this problem, Lü applied more tension on the snake skin, and replaced the silk string of the outer string by a steel one. This has caused a change to the timbre of the *erhu*. After much experimentation, Lü discovered that a loud, sweet and bright sound could be produced when the resonating chamber of the *erhu* was held between the two thighs. This newly-invented *erhu* has a higher tuning than the original *erhu* and thus is called *gaoyin erhu* (高音二胡, high-pitched *erhu*), and later is called *gaohu* (高胡).

The *gaohu* plays a leading role in Cantonese music. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, many Chinese orchestras were formed in

Chinese Mainland, and the *gaohu* has been adopted as a regular instrument of the Chinese orchestra, taking a role similar to that of the first violin in a Western orchestra. The construction and playing method of the *gaohu* differ in different regions. In Beijing, Tianjin (天津) and Shanghai, the players put the *gaohu* on their left thigh in performance, in the same position as that of the *erhu*. There is also a wooden board adhering to the snake skin in order to reduce the noise generated in performing the instrument. In Guangzhou and Hong Kong, the orchestral players of the *gaohu* hold the instrument in the traditional way, i.e., between the two thighs.

### 3.6 Spirit Music (精神音樂)

In the 1920s, Situ Meng-yan (司徒夢岩) first used the violin to play Cantonese music. He also made recordings with Lü Wen-cheng (呂文成). At that time, the violin was called “*fanling*” (梵鈴) or “*fanyaling*” (梵啞鈴).<sup>13</sup>

In the 1940s, there were wars in China against Japanese invasions. In this period, quite a number of Cantonese music ensembles were formed in Shanghai and Guangzhou. These groups regularly performed in dance halls and tea houses. In these ensembles, there was a mixture of Chinese and Western instruments, including the *gaohu* (高胡), *yangqin* (揚琴), saxophone, trumpet, banjo, xylophone, Hawai'i guitar, jazz drum, etc. The timbre and musical style played by these ensembles, different from the traditional ones, were more spirited and uplifting. This kind of music was very popular in that period.

In 1942, an ensemble called “Four Superstars” (四大天王) was formed in Guangzhou by four maestros of Cantonese music: Lü Wen-cheng, Yin Zi-zhong (尹自重, 1908-1985), He Da-sha (何大傻, 1894-1957) and Cheng Yue-wei (程岳威). The kind of Cantonese music played by them was called “spirit music” (精神音樂).

Up to now, the violin and saxophone are still important instruments used in Cantonese music and Cantonese opera. The tuning of the violin used in Cantonese music is in a major second lower than that used in Western music, i.e.

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<sup>13</sup> “*Fanling*” and “*fanyaling*” are literal pronunciation of the word “violin” in Putonghua.

F-C-G-D instead of G-D-A-E. In this tuning, the two highest strings are tuned to the same pitches as the open strings of the *gaohu*. When these Western instruments are used to play Cantonese music, there are some adaptations. The temperament being used is that of Cantonese music, and there is an abundant use of ornamentation in the Cantonese style.

### 3.7 Maestros of Cantonese Music in Hong Kong

There were quite a number of maestros in Cantonese music, and many of them took a dual role of performer and composer. Among the maestros who lived in Hong Kong, the representative ones include Qiu He-chou (丘鶴儔, 1880-1942), Lü Wen-cheng (呂文成, 1898-1981) of the early twentieth century, Loo Kah-chi (盧家熾) and Wong Jyt-seng (王粵生) of the mid-twentieth century.

The instrumental piece *In Celebration of the Good Times* (娛樂昇平) by Qiu He-chou is very popular. It is frequently performed or broadcast during the Chinese New Year or in many celebratory events. Qiu also published six volumes of teaching materials of Cantonese music in the 1930s which have had a profound influence on the development of Cantonese music in Hong Kong.

The image of Lü Wen-cheng does not fit the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party, and thus he has not attained an equal status as Liu Tian-hua (劉天華) and Abing (阿炳), two “heroes” hailed by the Communist Party. Nevertheless, Lü is very important in the development of Chinese music in the twentieth century, especially in the area of *huqin* (胡琴) music. Lü made a great contribution to Chinese music through the activities of constructing and inventing instruments, composing and making recordings.

The current aged people in Hong Kong are familiar with Loo Kah-chi (1916-1996), who was the leader of the Lung Cheung Cantonese Opera Troupe (龍翔劇團) of the Radio Television Hong Kong for many years. His performances were frequently broadcast through the air. In the 1950s, Loo and Wong Ching-kuen (黃呈權, 1911-1967), a famous *dongxiao* (洞簫) and flute performer, devoted much effort in organising competitions of Chinese instrumental music in the Hong Kong Schools Music Festival. This has indirectly brought about the

founding of many amateur Chinese orchestras in Hong Kong. Many members of these orchestras later entered the music profession.

Famous Cantonese operatic *xiaoqu* (小曲, fixed tunes) *Red Candle Tears* (紅燭淚), *Drops of Tears* (絲絲淚), and the popular song *Belle in Penang* (檳城艷) were composed by Wong Jyt-seng. He also arranged *Autumn Thoughts by the Dressing Table* (妝台秋思), a section from the *pipa* (琵琶) piece *On the Frontier* (塞上曲), as the duet “Sacrifice of the Princess” (香夭) in the Cantonese opera *Princess Chang Ping* (帝女花), a classic of Cantonese music. He taught Cantonese operatic singing at the Chinese University of Hong Kong for many years and made a great contribution in the popularisation of this genre.

Other maestros of Cantonese music who lived in Hong Kong include He Liu-tang (何柳堂, 1872-1933), He Da-sha (何大傻, 1894-1957), Yi Jian-quan (易劍泉, 1896-1971), Shao Tie-hong (邵鐵鴻), Chen Wen-da (陳文達, 1906-1982), Yin Zi-zhong (尹自重, 1908-1985), Fung Wah (馮華), etc.

### 3.8 Yu Qi-wei (余其偉) – A Contemporary Maestro of Cantonese Music

The *gaohu* (高胡) has existed for more than 80 years from its invention by Lü Wen-cheng (呂文成) to the present. There have been many famous performers of this instrument, and the foremost living performer of it is Yu Qi-wei (余其偉), who was born in Kaiping (開平) of the Guangdong province in 1953.

Currently the Head of the Department of Chinese Music, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (香港演藝學院), Yu graduated from the Music Department of the Guangdong People's Arts Academy (廣東人民藝術學院) (the present Xinghai Conservatory of Music 星海音樂學院) in 1975. By his excellent performing technique and musicality, he rose to a prominent position in the 1980s in a short period of time. He has inherited the performing techniques of maestros like Liu Tian-yi (劉天一), Zhu Hai (朱海) and Huang Ri-jin (黃日進). He has endeavoured to amalgamate the characteristics of the *gaohu* and the modern

Chinese orchestra, and has explored to reduce the gap between the two in the aspects of performance technique and timbre. He calls this way of adapting the *gaohu* to the needs of *minyue* (民樂)<sup>14</sup> while at the same time preserving the tradition of Cantonese music “*shuangjian tiao*” (雙肩挑, literally meaning “supporting with two shoulders”).

Yu has a unique view on traditional Cantonese music and modern *minyue*. According to his theory of “*shuangjian tiao*,” tradition and modernity can co-exist, and instrumentalists should be trained in both ways. In 1975, he founded the Yu Qi-wei Cantonese Music Ensemble (余其偉廣東音樂合奏組) to preserve traditional Cantonese music. This ensemble has made a large number of recordings. On the other hand, Yu is active in performing modern *minyue*. He has taken the position of concertmaster in some Chinese orchestras, as well as composed and performed quite a number of *gaohu* concertos in co-operation with composers Qiao Fei (喬飛) and Li Zhu-xin (李助忻). Such works include *Remembrance* (思念, 1977), *Poem on Qin* (琴詩, 1979), *Love for the River Pearl* (珠江之戀, 1980) and *Guangdong Spirit* (粵魂, 1990), etc.

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<sup>14</sup> After 1949, all forms of traditional solo and ensemble music are called *minyue*.

## Glossary

<i>Fan Obliterates Gong</i> (凡忘工)	A music piece of <i>jiangnan sizhu</i> . It originates from another <i>jiangnan sizhu</i> piece <i>Old Six Beats</i> (老六板) by replacing the note “gong” (工, i.e., “mi”) by the note “fan” (反, i.e., “fa”).
<i>fanxian</i> (反線)	A mode used in Cantonese music and Cantonese opera which is in a fourth lower than the “ <i>zhengxian</i> ” (正線). For easy understanding, if the “ <i>zhengxian</i> ” is in the key of C, the “ <i>fanxian</i> ” will be in the key of G.
<i>gaohu</i> (高胡)	A bowed string instrument invented by Lü Wen-cheng (呂文成) in the 1920s. It is commonly used in Cantonese music and modern Chinese orchestra.
“hard bowed” ensemble (硬弓)	A combination of instruments used in Cantonese music. It is made up of the <i>erxian</i> (二弦), <i>tiqin</i> (提琴), <i>yueqin</i> (月琴), <i>sanxian</i> (三弦), <i>dizi</i> (笛子) and <i>houguan</i> (喉管). It has a bright and harsh timbre.
heterophony (支聲複調)	A musical term describing the texture of traditional Chinese ensemble music, including <i>jiangnan sizhu</i> and Cantonese music. When different instruments of an ensemble play the same skeletal melody with different ways of ornamentation (i.e., 加花 <i>jiahua</i> and 減花 <i>jianhua</i> ), the resulting texture is called “heterophony”.
<i>New Sound of Sizhu</i> (絲竹新韻)	A piece composed by Yang Chun-lin (楊春林) in the 1990s. It imitates the musical style of <i>jiangnan sizhu</i> .
<i>qinqin</i> (秦琴)	A plucked string instrument mainly used in Cantonese music and Chaozhou music (潮樂). Its resonating chamber is in the shape of a plum blossom. Its frets are arranged in a way that the “seven-tone equal temperament” is produced.

<i>sanjiatou</i> (三架頭)	“Three instruments,” a term used in Cantonese music. The early ensemble of Cantonese music is called <i>wujiatou</i> (五架頭, i.e., “five instruments”), making up of the <i>erxian</i> (二弦), <i>tinqin</i> (提琴), <i>yueqin</i> (月琴), <i>sanxian</i> (三弦), <i>dizi</i> (笛子) and <i>houguan</i> (喉管). In the 1920s, the <i>erxian</i> was replaced by the <i>gaochu</i> (高胡), which is an instrument modified from the <i>erhu</i> (二胡). The other instruments were replaced by the <i>qinqin</i> (秦琴) and <i>yangqin</i> (揚琴). The <i>sanjiatou</i> was thus formed.
seven-tone equal temperament (七平均律)	A temperament commonly used in Cantonese music. In this temperament, an octave is divided into seven notes. Although it is called “seven-tone equal temperament,” in reality the intervals of the seven tones are not absolutely equal.
“soft bowed” ensemble (軟弓)	A combination of instruments used in Cantonese music. It is made up of the <i>gaochu</i> (高胡), <i>erhu</i> (二胡), <i>yehu</i> (椰胡), <i>yangqin</i> (揚琴), <i>qinqin</i> (秦琴), <i>dongxiao</i> (洞簫), etc. It has a soft and mellow timbre.
twelve-tone equal temperament (十二平均律)	A temperament in which an octave is divided into twelve tones equally. Although this temperament was first suggested by Zhu Zai-yu (朱載堉, 1536-1611) of the Ming Dynasty, the present usage of it in Chinese music was introduced from the West.
<i>wujiatou</i> (五架頭)	“Five instruments,” a term used in Cantonese music. There are two types of Cantonese music ensemble, the “hard bowed” (硬弓) and the “soft bowed” (軟弓). The early “hard bowed” ensemble is also called “ <i>wujiatou</i> ”. (See the entry of “ <i>sanjiatou</i> .”)

<i>yangqin</i> (揚琴)	The dulcimer, an instrument originated in Persia. It was imported to China in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 C.E.). It is also called <i>yangqin</i> (洋琴, literally “zither from a foreign country”).
<i>yehu</i> (椰胡)	A bowed string instrument mainly used in Cantonese music and Cantonese narrative singing. Its resonating chamber is made of a coconut shell with a wooden board adhering on the front side. Its bridge is made of seashells. It is a low-registered instrument with a mellow timbre.
<i>yifan xian</i> (乙反線)	A mode commonly used in Cantonese music and Cantonese opera. This mode emphasises the “ <i>yi</i> ” note (乙, i.e., “ <i>ti</i> ”) and the “ <i>fan</i> ” note (反, i.e., “ <i>fa</i> ”) in the melody.
<i>yueqin</i> (月琴)	A plucked string instrument used in the accompaniment of Chinese opera, like Peking opera (京劇). It is round in shape, with a short neck.
<i>zhengxian</i> (正線)	A mode used in Cantonese music and Cantonese opera. This is the fundamental mode to be used in a performance. The absolute frequencies of the notes used in this mode are to be determined by the singers and the instrumentalists before a performance.

## Chapter 4 The Art of *Guqin* (古琴) Music

By Chuen-Fung Wong (黃泉鋒)

English Translation by Tsui Wan-ching (徐允清)

In traditional Chinese music, ensemble music and solo music are equally important, and there is a close relationship between them. Among the large number of Chinese instruments, only a few have a solo tradition and a solo repertoire. The most well-known ones are the *guzheng* (古箏), *pipa* (琵琶) and *guqin* (古琴). Among these instruments, the *guqin* has the longest history and is the most highly praised by the literati. It has been called “the essence of the art of literati.” Due to the disappearance of the class of literati in the early twentieth century, the interest of the general public in *guqin* music has diminished, and most people are unfamiliar with it. This chapter introduces the music of *guqin*; it explores the role of this instrument in the modern society, and its changes.

The *guqin* has been presented in different ways in our culture. There are many historical incidents and literary allusions that involve this instrument. For example, in the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.E.), there is a story in which Zi Qi (子期) identified “high mountains” and “flowing water” in Bo Ya’s (伯牙) performance on the *guqin*, and thus they became good friends. In another story from the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.E.), Nie Zheng (聶政) entered the royal palace and performed the *guqin* piece *A Piece from Guangling* (廣陵散) in front of the king of Han (韓王). His aim was to distract the King with the purpose of assassinating him in revolt for his killing of Nie’s father. Nowadays, many films and novels that are set in the historical past use the *guqin* as an aural and visual symbol. Therefore, we are not totally unfamiliar with the *guqin*.

The *guqin* is softer than the *erhu* (二胡), *guzheng* (古箏), *dizi* (笛子) and *pipa* (琵琶). Its melody and rhythm are not so easy to catch. As a result, it is rarely used to play popular tunes. The best way to understand *guqin* music is to listen to it. In a quiet environment, try to listen to *Tune for a Pleasant Evening* (良宵引, CD 2-12), which lasts for about three minutes, and imagine a situation in which you watch the clear moon and the bright stars in the sky in a dry and fresh

evening while listening to *guqin* music.

*Guqin* music is not so difficult to catch as we first imagine. Although it is soft, you will find tremendous variety of timbres if you listen carefully. There are three types of tones produced by this instrument: harmonics (泛音), open-string notes (散音) and stopped notes (按音). Harmonics are produced by lightly touching certain points of the string by the left hand, while the right hand plucks the string. It has a pure and light tone colour. The harmonics are mainly used in the beginning and closing sections of a piece. The open-string notes are plucked by the right hand, and it is used only occasionally. The stopped notes are produced by pressing left hand fingers on the string while the right hand fingers pluck it. This kind of tone makes up the largest percentage of notes in a piece. Its variety of tone colours is the most diverse. The ascending and descending glissandi, coupled with the use of different tempi and densities, give rise to the nuances of *guqin* music.

The *guqin* embraces a rich culture of music, literature and history. Among the “Four Arts” (四藝) practised by the literati – the *qin*, chess, calligraphy and painting – it occupies the first place, and has a very high status. Why then today people are so ignorant of it? Why is it not as popular as other Chinese instruments, such as the *guzheng*? Let us begin exploring the reasons by recounting the confusion of the *guqin* and the *guzheng* by the general public.

## Section 1 The Construction of the *Guqin*

“I heard that you play the *guqin* (古琴). Should it be the *guzheng* (古箏)?”

“No, it’s the *guqin*.”

“Should it be the *guzheng*? It is a plucked string instrument, with many strings. Isn’t it?”

“It’s the *guqin*, with seven strings. It is the *qin* that is frequently mentioned in Chinese classical literature.”

“I’ve never heard of it.”

The above conversation is a typical one I have had with many Chinese, both in China and overseas. I think this situation is quite familiar for those who play the *guqin*. The mix up of the *guqin* and the *guzheng* is very common in popular culture.

Scholars believe that this mix up is related to the indifference to traditional culture in contemporary society, leading to people's almost complete ignorance of the *guqin*.<sup>15</sup> People learning other Chinese instruments, such as the *erhu* (二胡), *dizi* (笛子) and *guzheng* (古箏), are far greater in number than those learning the *guqin*. Many people's knowledge of the *guqin*'s differences to the *guzheng* is limited.

Let us first introduce some terminologies of the *guqin*. The *guqin* had a very high status in the circle of the traditional literati. In classical poems and novels, the instrument that the word *qin* (琴) refers to is the *guqin*. From the mid-nineteenth century on, this word has been commonly used to refer to a large number of instruments, both Chinese and Western, such as the *gangqin* (鋼琴, the piano) and *xiaotiqin* (小提琴, the violin). Ironically, we nowadays have to put the word *gu* (古, ancient) before the character *qin* to refer to this seven-string instrument. The measure word for the *guqin* is *zhang* (張). We may also describe the playing of the *guqin* as *fuqin* (撫琴), *caoqin* (操琴), *guqin* (鼓琴) and *caoman* (操缦). To construct the *qin* is called *zhuoqin* (斲琴). The quality and value of a *qin* depend on its history and the craftsmanship of its builder.

The *guqin* is made up of an upper board and a lower board, which are made of two different kinds of wood respectively. It is about 120 cm long. There are seven strings mounted on the surface of the upper board. The first string, the one farthest from the player, is the thickest and has the lowest pitch. The seventh string, the one nearest the player, is the thinnest and has the highest pitch. (Refer to Extended Knowledge 4.1.) The parts of the *guqin* have poetic names. The farthest end at the right is called *chenglu* (承露, “dew carrier”). To its left, there is a bridge called *yueshan* (岳山, “Mount Yue”). The farthest end at the left is called *longyin* (龍齦, “dragon gum”). On the lower board, there are two sound-emitting holes called *fengzhao* (鳳沼, “phoenix pool”) and *longchi* (龍池, “dragon pond”). In between them, there are two short posts called *yanzu* (雁足, “goose feet”), which function at supporting the *guqin*. At the right end, there are seven tuning pegs.

On the upper board of the *guqin*, there are thirteen markers called *hui* (徽)

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<sup>15</sup> Yu Siu-wah (余少華) discusses the use of *guqin* and other Chinese instruments in Hong Kong films and its significance. See Yu Siu-wah, *Out of Chaos and Coincidence: Hong Kong Music Culture* (樂在顛錯中：香港雅俗音樂文化) (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 119-165.

running along the outer edge. These markers mark the positions of the harmonics (refer to Extended Knowledge 4.2 on the principle of the harmonics). The first marker is on the right side near the *yueshan*, while the thirteenth marker is on the left side near the *longyin*. Harmonics are produced by lightly touching a nodal point on the string (i.e., a position of the markers) by the left hand while the right hand plucks the string. The left hand positions of the stopped notes may be on the position of the markers, or between two of them.

For a long time, the *guqin* has been an instrument as well as an object for collection. Quite a number of *guqin* players are keen on collecting *guqins* of good quality. There are two kinds of antique *guqin*. The first kind is a type of archeological object. It is mainly found in mausoleums of ancient emperors, like the one of Marquis Yi of Zeng (曾侯乙) from the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.E.), and the one of Mawangdui (馬王堆) from the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.E. - 220 C.E.). The *guqins* found in these mausoleums are the oldest existent *guqins* that we can find. The other kind is instruments passed down from generation to generation, the oldest extant ones being from the Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.). These *guqins* are extremely rare objects and there are only a few of them.

The dating of the *guqins* is based on the words carved on the lower board and the crack patterns on the surface of the instrument. Many good *guqins* have grand names, such as “Tones Bequeathed from a Sage” (大聖遺音) and “Withered Trees and Dragon Roar” (枯木龍吟) from the Tang Dynasty. The *guqin* regarded by many as the best one from the Tang Dynasty is “Jade Pendants from Heaven” (九宵環佩琴) now kept in the Palace Museum of Beijing. It was made in 715 C.E.<sup>16</sup>

In the past some one thousand years, the *guqin*’s design of seven strings and thirteen markers has not changed.<sup>17</sup> However, there are different styles in terms of

<sup>16</sup> There are some 200 photos of *guqins* from different periods in *Rare Chinese Guqins* (中國古琴珍萃), edited by the Music Research Institute (Beijing: The Forbidden City, 1998). There are also quite a number of photos of rare *guqins* from different periods in *Gems of Ancient Chinese Zithers: Shum’s Collection of Ancient Qin from the Last Millennium* (古琴薈珍：硯琴齋宋元明清古琴展) (Hong Kong: The University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> From excavated objects, we find that the design of the *guqins* before the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E. - 220 C.E.) was different from that of the current one. It is believed that in the early *guqins*, there were five strings and no markers. There may also have been *guqins* with ten strings. In the film *Heroes*, the *guqin* used as an accompanying instrument to the scene of sword dance is of the design of the excavated *guqins* from the mausoleums of Marquis Yi of Zeng from the Warring States

its shape, like the Confucian Style (仲尼式), Plantain Leaf Style (蕉葉式), Evening Cloud Style (落霞式), Chained Pearl Style (聯珠式), Fu Xi Style (伏羲式), and so on. There are more than ten styles, and the most popular one is the Confucian Style (see the photo on p. 75 of the hardcopy of this book). There is no difference in the playing technique on these different styles of shape.

## Section 2. Characteristics of *Guqin* Music

In 1977, space shuttles *Voyager 1* and *Voyager 2* carried the Voyager Golden Record to the space. This record had recorded several dozens of languages in the world as well as different kinds of music, with the aim to communicate with extraterrestrial beings. Among the recordings is a *guqin* piece *Flowing Water* (流水) performed by Guan Ping-hu (管平湖, 1895-1967) on the *Ningwang qin* (寧王琴) from the Ming Dynasty. We do not know whether extraterrestrial beings could appreciate the nuances of this *guqin* piece. But were *guqin* music extinct in this world, even extraterrestrial beings arrive on the Earth in the future, they would not be able to find someone who could appreciate it.

*Flowing Water* exhibits the characteristics of *guqin* music in its melody, texture, rhythm and timbre. Differences in tuning and tonic create different modes in *guqin* music. These different modes arise from the use of different scales, and conjure up different moods for the pieces.

Although it is possible to play multiple stops on this instrument, most *guqin* music is monophonic. This texture facilitates the subtle expression on the rhythm and timbre. The rhythm of *guqin* music is very sophisticated. A *guqin* piece normally begins with a passage *ad libitum*, and then there are passages with a definite beat. It is followed by an extensive, multi-sectional main body, leading to a coda *ad libitum* that rounds off the piece. In *Flowing Water*, the changes of rhythm reflect the moods and contents of different passages. Contrary to Western classical music, the rhythm of *guqin* music changes frequently according to the content of the piece. This is an important element in portraying the mood of the

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period (475-221 B.C.E.) and Mawangdui from the Han Dynasty. It is commonly believed that the design of seven strings and thirteen markers was adopted in the Three Kingdom period (220-265 C.E.) and has been commonly in use since then.

music.

Timbre is another important element in *guqin* music. In *Flowing Water*, a pitch can be produced in different ways. Coupled with ornamentations like *yin* (吟), *nao* (猱), *zhuo* (綽) and *zhu* (注), notes with different timbres are produced. These different timbres create different moods. In fact, the melody, texture, rhythm, metre, and timbre of a piece of *guqin* music are all related to its extra-musical content. *Guqin* player Tse Chun-yan (謝俊仁) writes, “*Guqin* music has a reserved expressive power, and it is quiet and pure. In playing the *guqin*, we do not look for a festive atmosphere or a beautiful melody. Instead, we look for a poetical mood. *Guqin* music is attractive in its lingering tones, rhythmic variety, free rhythm in the beginning and closing passages, unpretentious speeding up, unity of the piece and the nuances in the monophonic texture.” (Liner notes of the CD *The Oil-Lamp Flickered*.)

In playing the *guqin*, it is important to catch the mood of a piece. The performance of *guqin* aims at raising the performer’s morals. It is mainly for self-improvement and sharing with good friends that one plays this instrument. In gatherings of *guqin* performance, the participants are a small circle of close friends who are all able to play this instrument, and there is no passive listener. Although in ancient times, the *guqin* was used in the ceremonial orchestra of the royal palace, and it was occasionally played with the *dongxiao* (洞簫) or used to accompany solo singing, the repertoire of *guqin* is mainly solo music.

We are now going to introduce the notation of *guqin* music and explain how it captures the nuances of the melody, rhythm, timbre, and the mood of the pieces.

### Section 3. *Jianzipu* (簡字譜)

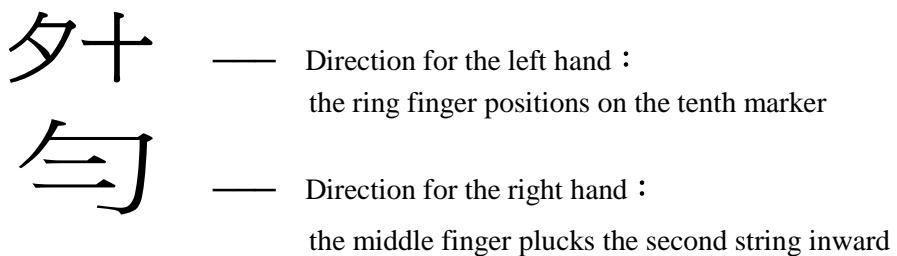
*Shenqi Mipu* (神奇秘譜, “Mysterious *Qin* Score”), the oldest surviving collection of *guqin* music, was compiled in 1425 by Zhu Quan (朱權), the seventeenth prince of the Ming emperor Zhu Yuan-zhang (朱元璋). There are sixty-four pieces and related documents in this collection. Although we do not know how “mysterious” this collection was for the musicians of the Ming Dynasty, the notation of *guqin* music is certainly very mysterious to the general public in the

present time. The first page of the score of *Three Statements of Plum Blossom* (梅花三弄) from the *Chuncaotang Qinpu* (春草堂琴譜), which was compiled by Cao Shang-jiong (曹尚絅), Su Jing (蘇璟) and Dai Yuan (戴源) in 1744, is reproduced on p. 84 of the hardcopy of this book.

Among various genres of Chinese music, *guqin* music has the largest amount of notated scores. To understand *guqin* music, it is essential to understand how its notation system works. The notation of *guqin* music is called *jianzipu* (減字譜, abbreviated character notation), which is made up of radicals of Chinese characters.<sup>18</sup> Different from the staff notation and the cipher notation, it is a kind of tablature and does not directly notate the pitch. It notates the way of playing the instrument: which string to be plucked; which finger to be used; which marker position the finger to be put on; which way of plucking the right hand to be used; as well as a very rough idea on the rhythm. Music details that are most explicitly notated in staff notation, including the rhythm, metre, and dynamics, are not notated in *jianzipu*.

The notation of *guqin* music is made up of ideograms. Like traditional Chinese prose, it is read from the top to the bottom, from the right to the left. Each ideogram is made up of several radicals from Chinese characters. See Example 4.1 for an explanation on how this notation system works.

#### Example 4.1 An Example of an Ideogram in *Jianzipu*



Each ideogram is made up of an upper half and a lower half, representing how the left hand and the right hand play respectively. The number in the upper half indicates the marker on which the left hand finger is to be placed, and the number in the lower half indicates the string that the right hand finger plucks (see

<sup>18</sup> This notation system has a long history and is self-contained (see Extended Knowledge 4.3: A History of *Guqin* Notation).

Table 4.1 for an explanation of the radicals). There are numerous fingerings in *guqin* playing. In the chapter of “Fingerings” in the *Chuncaotang Qinpu*, there are forty-five right-hand fingerings and sixty-seven left-hand fingerings. On p. 84 of the hardcopy of this book, a facsimile of the first page of the section on “Right-hand Fingerings” from this collection is reproduced. Table 4.1 explains some of the fingering techniques. Figure 4.1 shows the first phrase from the piece *Three Statements of Plum Blossom* (梅花三弄) with an explanation of each ideogram.

**Table 4.1 Some Common Symbols in *Guqin* Notation**

Symbol	Original Chinese Character(s)	Pronunciation	Meaning
勾	勾	<i>gou</i>	the right-hand middle finger plucking inward
挑	挑	<i>tiao</i>	the right-hand index finger plucking outward
抹	抹	<i>mo</i>	the right-hand index finger plucking inward
托	托	<i>tuo</i>	the right thumb plucking outward
擘	擘	<i>pi</i>	the right thumb plucking inward
撮	撮	<i>cuo</i>	two right-hand fingers plucking two strings simultaneously
歷	歷	<i>li</i>	a right-hand finger plucking two strings in quick succession
散	散	<i>san</i>	plucking an open string
夕	左手無名指		the left-hand ring finger stopping the string at a specified position
中	左手中指		the left-hand middle finger stopping the string at a specified position
卜	綽	<i>zhuo</i>	a left-hand finger sliding up to a specified position
注	注	<i>zhu</i>	a left-hand finger sliding down to a specified position
十 (left hand)	十徽		a left-hand finger positioning on the tenth marker of a specified string
三 (right hand)	三弦		a specified finger of the right hand plucking the third string
二 (right hand)	二弦		a specified finger of the right hand plucking the second string

**Figure 4.1 Explanation of the *Jianzipu* of the First Phrase of the *Qin Piece Three Statements of Plum Blossom* (梅花三弄)**

荀四勾七勾七荀勾七

一段

The right-hand middle finger plucks the open third string inward.

The right-hand index finger plucks the open fourth string outward.

The right-hand middle finger plucks the open third string inward.

The right-hand index finger plucks the open seventh string outward.

The right-hand middle finger plucks the open sixth string inward.

The right-hand index finger plucks the open seventh string outward.

The right-hand index finger plucks the open fourth string inwardly, and then the middle finger plucks the fourth string inward.

The right-hand middle finger plucks the open fifth string inward.

The right-hand index finger plucks the open seventh string outward.

In *jianzipu*, the rhythm, metre and dynamics are not notated. Some may think that it is not as precise as Western staff notation and therefore is somehow inferior. We may then ask, why has it been used for over a thousand years? Is there an advantage in this notation system so that it cannot be replaced by other notation systems?

It is true that an important function of musical notation is to record and transmit music. Yet, is it necessary to learn notation in order to play music? Music scholars have studied this issue for a long time. In many non-Western cultures, including Chinese culture, it is often not necessary to learn musical notation to play music. In these cultures, students learn music through imitating the teacher's playing. Some Chinese musical genres, such as traditional *pipa* solo, operas and some ritual music, use *gongche* notation (工尺譜) – the Chinese solfège – to record music. The notation only functions as a reminder to the performer and is not precise. This way of transmission of music is known as “oral transmission.”

Since the notation of *guqin* music is not precise in notating rhythm and some other elements that are explicit in staff notation, some may think that it is not ideal

for preserving *guqin* music. This point of view arises from a misunderstanding of the function of *guqin* notation. In this genre, the rhythm, metre, tempo and dynamics are the aspects which allow the individuality of the player to be expressed. The notation is not precise in these aspects so that the players are able to give new blood to this genre from generation to generation. Bell Yung (榮鴻曾), a music scholar on *guqin*, aptly describes the ultimate function of *jianzipu* being not to notate the notatable.<sup>19</sup>

#### Section 4. *Guqin* in the Past and the Present

In the early twentieth century, Chinese intellectuals were influenced by the new cultural waves of the May Fourth Movement (1919) and reassessed the value of traditional culture. Many traditional Chinese music genres were “westernised” and “modernised.” In 1934, *guqin* players Zha Fu-xi (查阜西, 1891-1967), Zhang Zi-qian (張子謙, 1899-1991) and Wu Jing-lue (吳景略, 1907-1987) founded the Jinyu Qin Society (今虞琴社) in Suzhou (蘇州) and organised the first national *guqin* players’ conference with an aim to reflect on the culture of *guqin* and modern thoughts.<sup>20</sup>

When the People’s Republic of China was established by the Communist Party in 1949, its cultural policy followed that of the former Soviet Union. The socialistic cultural view on traditional culture was ambiguous. On the one hand, it considered traditional culture a product of the feudal age, a plaything of the bourgeoisie, and thus was non-compatible with the proletariat (i.e., workers, peasants and soldiers) and should be abolished. Many literati were imprisoned, punished, or even tortured to death. On the other hand, the government was aware that traditional culture was part of people’s life and greatly contributed to one’s identity to a society. It could be used as a tool of propaganda.

Since the 1950s, the *guqin* and other traditional instruments have been criticised and subjected to reforms. Compared to other instruments, the change of

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<sup>19</sup> Bell Yung, “Not Notating the Notatable: Reevaluating the *Guqin* Notational System,” in *Themes and Variations: Writings on Music in Honor of Rulan Chao Pian*, edited by Bell Yung and Joseph S. C. Lam (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 45-58.

<sup>20</sup> See *Jinyu Qin Society Publication* (今虞琴刊 1937), 1937.

*guqin* is comparatively small. There have not been many newly composed pieces for it. Among the newly composed political pieces, the most well-known one is *Xinjiang is Good* (新疆好, 1958), which glorifies the so-called “liberation” of Xinjiang. The *guqin*, like other traditional instruments, has been “professionalised,” and has been put on the stage in concerts in order to serve the general public. Its status has been changed from “a plaything of the bourgeoisie” to “music serving the mass.” However, the *guqin* does not suit the concert stage in its volume, notation, aesthetics and performance practice. Thus the reformers thought that changes have to be made to this instrument. One fundamental change brought to it was its string.

Traditionally, the string of *guqin* was made of silk. In the 1970s, the *guqin* players in China began to use steel string covered with nylon to replace the silk string. There are two reasons for this change. First, there was a shortage of silk at that time, and it was difficult to find good-quality silk to make strings. Second, the cultural policy of the government at that time favoured a professionalisation of music performance and a pursuit of timbre of Western aesthetics. *Guqin* was not favourable as its volume is low, and there were “noises” produced by the movements of left-hand fingers on the silk string. Moreover, the silk string was easily subjected to change in pitch caused by the changes of humidity in the air. Poor strings were also subjected to be broken easily. These were the reasons for making changes to the string. Those people who favour this change think that the steel string does not produce “noises” because of its smoothness, and that it is more durable and is able to produce a greater dynamic range. As a result, the silk string was almost completely replaced by the steel string in Chinese Mainland.

Not all *guqin* players favour the steel string. The timbre of silk string has a mellow and pure quality which evokes an ancient and unadorned atmosphere. The “noises” produced by sliding left-hand fingers on the string are considered part of the sound of the *guqin*. The bright timbre produced on the steel string, although clean and smooth, is not the traditional sound of this instrument.<sup>21</sup> The recording of *Three Statements of Plum Blossom* (梅花三弄) in CD 2-14 is performed on a *guqin* with silk strings.

Although the use of the silk string is demised in Chinese Mainland, it has been

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<sup>21</sup> The American *guqin* player John Thompson (唐世璋) devotedly promotes the use of silk string. See his website on *guqin* (<http://www.silkqin.com/>).

used continuously in Hong Kong and Taiwan. There has been a transmission of *guqin* playing in Hong Kong in the past some fifty years. The most devoted *guqin* teacher in Hong Kong was Tsar Teh-yun (蔡德允, 1905-2007), who moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong in 1950. She trained quite a number of *guqin* players in Hong Kong who have been active in promoting *guqin* music. Tsar was born in Huzhou (湖州) of the Zhejiang province (浙江), and moved to Shanghai with her parents at the age of three. She was versatile in literature, calligraphy and music, and learned the *guqin* under Shen Cao-nong (沈草農, 1891-1972). As China was in turmoil in the mid-twentieth century, Tsar moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong and started to teach the *guqin*. In the 1950s and 1960s, Tsar was active in performing and teaching *guqin* at the Chinese Music Society of the New Asia College (新亞書院國樂會). She trained quite a number of students in a period of over fifty years. In 1998, her students founded the Deyin Qin Society (德愔琴社) in order to promote *guqin* music and the moral of their teacher. In 2000, *Yinyinshi Qinpu* (愔愔室琴譜), a hand-written collection of *guqin* music transmitted by Tsar, was published, and a set of CD recordings of Tsar's performance was released.<sup>22</sup>

## Section 5. The Continuation of *Guqin* Tradition

The May Fourth Movement in the early twentieth century and the establishment of socialism in Chinese Mainland in 1949 brought unprecedented changes to the long tradition of *guqin* culture in the aspects of the design of the instrument, the timbre, the aesthetics and the performance practice. Despite the unfavourable political environment in Chinese Mainland, quite a number of *guqin* players devotedly continued to transmit the playing of *guqin* and to conduct research on *guqin* culture. Besides the above mentioned Jinyu Qin Society founded in Suzhou in the 1930s, Zha Fu-xi and other *guqin* players took the lead in conducting research on *guqin* music throughout the country in the 1950s by collecting *guqin* pieces and scores, making recordings, doing *dapu* (打譜) and cataloguing the pieces. The ~~materials collected were~~ finally published as

<sup>22</sup> Tsar Teh-yun, *Yinyinshi Qinpu*, eds. Bell Yung and Lau Chor-wah (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2000). See also Bell Yung, *The Last of China's Literati: The Music, Poetry, and Life of Tsar Teh-yun* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 2008).

publications and released as recordings. In this way, the tradition of *guqin* has continued. These materials formed the basis for further research and performance.

In a word, music plays an important role in the ever-changing culture of a society. Many people think that *guqin* music is a symbol of Chinese culture because it has a pure and soft timbre, a long history and a unique notational system, and thus has to be preserved. Other people think that *guqin* is a backward-looking instrument and does not fit the modern society. We are able to discern the change of culture and the significance of this change by studying the changing role of *guqin* music.

**Table 4.2 Major Events in the History of the *Guqin***

c. 500s	The earliest extant piece of <i>guqin</i> music, <i>Elegant Orchid in Jieshi Mode</i> (碣石調 · 幽蘭), was notated. This is the only extant piece notated in <i>wenzipu</i> .
1084	The earliest history of the <i>guqin</i> , <i>A History of the Qin</i> (琴史) by Zhu Chang-wen (朱長文), was written.
c. 1200	The earliest extant piece notated in <i>jianzipu</i> , <i>Age-old Sorrow</i> (古怨) found in <i>Songs of the White Stone Taoist Monk</i> (白石道人歌曲) by Jiang Bai-shi (姜白石), was written.
1425	The earliest extant <i>guqin</i> handbook, <i>Shenqi Mipu</i> (神奇秘譜), edited by Zhu Quan (朱權), was compiled.
1673	<i>Dahuange Qinpu</i> (大還閣琴譜), which contains the article <i>Xishan Qinkuang</i> (溪山琴況) by Xu Shang-ying (徐上瀛), was published.
1721	<i>Wuzhizhai Qinpu</i> (五知齋琴譜) was published and widely disseminated.
1876	<i>Tianwenge Qinpu</i> (天聞閣琴譜) was published. It contains the piece <i>Flowing Water</i> (流水) in which the passage of “Seventy-two <i>Guns</i> and <i>Fus</i> ” (七十二滾拂) by Zhang Kong-shan (張孔山) was added.
1934	The Jinyu Qin Society (今虞琴社) was founded by Zha Fu-xi (查阜西), Zhang Zi-qian (張子謙) and Wu Jing-lue (吳景略) in Suzhou (蘇州), and a national gathering of <i>guqin</i> players was held.
1956	A research on <i>guqin</i> music was conducted under the lead of Zha Fu-xi. <i>Guqin</i> pieces were collected throughout the country and interviews of <i>guqin</i> players were conducted.
1958	<i>A Collection of the Extant Guqin Scores</i> (存見古琴曲譜輯覽) edited by Zha Fu-xi was published. It contains some six hundred pieces.
1970s	Steel strings covered by nylon began to be used by <i>guqin</i> players in Chinese Mainland.
2003	<i>Guqin</i> music was accepted as a “Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

## Listening Guide

### 4.1 *Tune for a Pleasant Evening* (良宵引) (CD 2-12)

Listen to *Tune for a Pleasant Evening* (良宵引) and then write a passage in fifty to eighty words to introduce *guqin* (古琴) music and this piece to someone who has never listened to *guqin* music.

#### Information of the Recording

Performer: Lau Chor-wah (劉楚華)

Score transmitted by Tsar Teh-yun (蔡德允)

Title of the Record: *Water Immortal: Qin Solo: LAU Chor-wah*

(水仙操：劉楚華古琴獨奏) (ROI, 1996)

Recorded in 1995

*Qin* used: “Moving Cloud” *Qin* (“移雲”琴) (Song Dynasty) with silk strings

#### Listening Guide

*Yin* (引), the third Chinese character in the title *Liangxiao Yin* (良宵引), *Tune for a Pleasant Evening*), means “an introduction,” and is generally referred to a short piece with simple structure. This piece originates from a folk melody in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 C.E.). In the *Tianwenge Qinpu* (天聞閣琴譜, 1876) compiled in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 C.E.), there is the following description of this piece, “When the weather is dry, the sky is clear and the moon is brightly shining, it is suitable to play the *qin*, to taste the wine and to write poems.”

Many Chinese literary works have the structure “exposition – continuation – change – conclusion” (起-承-轉-合), and this *guqin* piece follows such a structure. When listening to this piece, note the beginning and ending notes of each section and the use of harmonics, open-string notes and stopped notes.

0:00	Begins with harmonics. The tempo is free at the beginning, and gradually the beats emerge.
0:19	The “exposition” section. Begins on the note <i>do</i> (宮音). The music is quiet and elegant.
0:51	The “continuation” section. Begins with several double stops. The tempo gets faster.
1:26	The “change” section. Begins with the unstable note <i>re</i> (商音), and the tempo gets faster.
1:44	The “conclusion” section. Begins with the unstable note <i>la</i> (羽音) and returns to the stable note <i>do</i> at the end.
2:09	Repetition of the “change” section.
2:25	Repetition of the “conclusion” section.
2:50	A coda with harmonics. The tempo gets slower.

#### 4.2 The Differences of the *Guqin* and the *Guzheng* (琴箏之別) (CD 1-11, CD 2-12)

Listen to the *guzheng* piece *An Evening Song from a Fishing Junk at Sunset* (漁舟唱晚) (CD 1-11) and then to the *guqin* piece *Tune for a Pleasant Evening* (良宵引) (CD 2-12), and compare these two instruments in the following aspects:

1. Timbre;
2. Range;
3. Dynamics.

	<i>Guzheng</i>	<i>Guqin</i>
Design	The board is larger and longer. The resonating chamber is thicker. The instrument is supported by a wooden stand at each end.	The board is smaller and shorter. The resonating chamber is thinner. The instrument is placed on a specially designed table in performance.
Material of the Strings	Steel strings covered with nylon (the strings were made of other materials traditionally, and the materials differ in different regions)	Silk strings (in Hong Kong and Taiwan); steel strings covered with nylon (in Chinese Mainland from the 1970s on)
Number of Strings	21 (the most common one at present); 16 (traditional)	7
Use of Bridges	Movable bridges are placed between the strings and the board.	No bridges
Plucking	Plectra	Fingernails

### 4.3 *Flowing Water* (流水) (CD 2-13)

In the piece *Flowing Water* . . . Sections 2 and 3 depict the slowly flowing streams in the mountainous areas. In Sections 4 and 5, the streams have passed through the mountains, the wind is blowing and waves are emerging. The flowing water is wide and rapid. In the passage making use of *gun* (滾) and *fu* (拂), there is a surge of the river and a roaring of the flood dragon. If you listen attentively, you will feel like sailing in a boat, passing through the Wu Gorge (巫峽) and experiencing the danger of the running water. Different streams are merging into a river and you pass through the mountains rapidly. In Sections 7 and 8, the most dangerous passage is over, and the water flows more slowly, although occasionally there are splashes on the rocks, and circular eddies and bubbles are found in the water. Few ancient pieces can match the vivid depiction of this piece!

- The Epilogue of *Qinxue Congshu* (琴學叢書, 1911-31)

The above quotation is a description of the *guqin* piece *Flowing Water* from *Qinxue Congshu* (1911-31) published in the early twentieth century. This short passage vividly describes the contents of this piece, both the steadiness and the surge of the flowing water.

Music is an abstract art and different performers and listeners may perceive a piece differently. Read the above passage again, and then listen to a recording of this piece, and relate the music to the following four passages:

1. The slowly flowing streams in the mountainous areas.
2. The streams have passed through the mountains, the wind is blowing and waves are emerging. The flowing water is wide and rapid.
3. There is a surge of the river, and a roaring of the flood dragon.
4. The most dangerous passage is over, and the water flows more slowly, although occasionally there are splashes on the rocks, and circular eddies and bubbles are found in the water.

Compare what you perceived with others.

#### Information of the Recording

Performer: Tse Chun-yan (謝俊仁, 1949- )

Handbook: *Tianwenge Qinpu* (天聞閣琴譜, 1876) from the Qing Dynasty

Title of the Record: *The Oil-Lamp Flickered: Qin Solo by TSE Chun-yan* (一閃燈花墮 : 謝俊仁古琴獨奏) (ROI, 2001)

Recorded in 2001

*Qin* used: “Clear Sounding Spring” *Qin* (“玉潤鳴泉”琴) from the Ming Dynasty,

with steel strings covered with nylon

### Listening Guide

The oldest extant score of *Flowing Water* is found in the handbook *Shenqi Mipu* (神奇秘譜, 1425) from the Ming Dynasty. There are some forty versions of this piece in different handbooks, and the most widely transmitted version is the one found in *Tianwenge Qinpu* (天聞閣琴譜, 1876) from the Qing Dynasty and transmitted by Zhang Kong-shan (張孔山). The recording accompanying this book is based on this score.

This piece is divided into different sections, which are clearly marked in the score. Generally each section depicts a certain scene of the flowing water. It is commonly believed that this piece is originally made up of eight sections, and Zhang Kong-shan inserted the passage called “Seventy-two *Guns* and *Fus*” (七十二滾拂) that depicts the surge of the water, and thus enlarging the piece to nine sections. *Gun* and *fu* are right-hand finger techniques. To play glissando from the inner strings to the outer strings by the ring finger is called *gun*, while playing the strings in the opposite direction by the index finger is called *fu*. The passage of “Seventy-two *Guns* and *Fus*” depicts the surge of water by playing *gun* and *fu* seventy-two times.

The history of *Flowing Water* can be traced back to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.E.). It is said that Bo Ya (伯牙) was good at playing the piece *High Mountain and Flowing Water* (高山流水) and Zhong Zi-qi (鍾子期) was good at discerning the depiction of high mountain and flowing water respectively. Sometime in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.), this piece was split into two pieces, namely *High Mountain* (高山) and *Flowing Water* (流水), and the latter piece has developed further in more recent times. In the piece transmitted by Zhang Kong-shan of the Sichuan School and notated in *Tianwenge Qinpu*, there is a cadenza-like passage that fully used the finger techniques of *gun*, *fu*, *chuo* (綽) and *zhu* (注) and vividly depicts the surge and running of flowing water.

“[F]lowing water needs not be deafening. As described in a poem written by LI Bai [李白] of the Tang Dynasty, even the roar of water speeding through the gorges has never drowned out the call of the apes. In the murmuring brook upstream, or the vast river downstream, the river is even more quiet. Yet, behind

the seemingly quiet water lies a powerful force. . .”<sup>23</sup> (Quoted from the liner notes of the CD *The Oil-Lamp Flickered*, p. 5)

0:00		Section 1. The introduction. <i>Ad libitum</i> . Slow and soft. The melody is presented in different registers: high, middle, and low.
0:40	Exposition (起)	Section 2. Begins with harmonics, and followed by stopped notes. The melody is lilting, depicting the clear flowing water.
1:27		Section 3. Similar to Section 2, but the melody is played an octave higher. The tempo is gradually getting faster. The stopped note passage of Section 2 is omitted and only the passage of harmonics is restated.
1:54	Continuation (承)	Section 4. The whole section is in stopped notes, with a beautiful melody.
2:39		Section 5. A continuation of Section 4. The melody is extended.
3:15	Change (轉)	Section 6. This section was inserted by Zhang Kong-shan (張孔山) of the Sichuan School in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and is subdivided into two passages. The first passage extends the previous melody. The second passage uses <i>gun</i> and <i>fu</i> played by the right hand extensively. ( <i>Gun</i> and <i>fu</i> are glissandi played by the ring and index fingers respectively.) At the same time, the left hand is playing <i>chuo</i> and <i>zhu</i> , i.e., upward and downward ornamental notes. The roaring waves and the surge of flowing water are vividly depicted, and this passage forms the climax of the whole piece.
5:41		Section 7. Mainly harmonics. A quieting passage after the surge of the flowing water.
6:02	Conclusion (合)	Section 8. Mainly in stopped notes. A recurrence and further development of the melody in Section 4. There is a short reminiscence of the <i>gun</i> and <i>fu</i> passage which reminds the listeners of the surge of the flowing water.
7:30		Section 9. The final passage. The tempo is getting slower, with glimpses of the melodies of Sections 1 and 4. The music resumes the tranquillity of the beginning, and the piece ends with a short passage of harmonics.

<sup>23</sup> English translation of the liner notes by Ng Ying-wai (吳英卉).

#### 4.4 A Comparison of the Silk String and the Steel String (CD 2-12, CD 2-13)

Listen to the recordings of *Tune for a Pleasant Evening* (良宵引) and *Flowing Water* (流水) again. Silk strings were used in the former piece, while steel strings were used in the latter. Compare the timbre of these two kinds of strings.

	<b>The Silk String</b>	<b>The Steel String</b>
Material	Silk	Steel core covered by nylon
History	From the ancient time up to the 1970s	Began to be used in Chinese Mainland in the 1970s
Durability	Subject to loosen by a change in humidity. Poor strings may be broken easily.	The tension is larger and the strings are more durable. Capable to play pieces with a bigger dynamic contrast.
Timbre	The sliding of the left-hand fingers on the strings produces scratching sound. Its timbre is delicate and pure, offering an ancient soundscape.	There are less scratching sound and the timbre is clear and sharp. When it is played loudly, there is a metallic sound.
Dynamics	Soft	Capable of playing pieces with a comparatively bigger dynamic contrast.
Places	Mainly in Hong Kong and Taiwan	Mainly in Chinese Mainland

## 4.5 *Three Statements of Plum Blossom* (梅花三弄) (CD 2-14)

### Information of the Recording

Performer: Sou Si-tai (蘇思棣, 1949- )

Title of the Record: *Le pêcheur et le bûcheron: Sou Si-tai* (漁樵問答 : 蘇思棣)

(AIMP & VDE-GALLO CD-1214, 2007)

Recorded in 2006

Score: *Chuncaotang Qinpu* (春草堂琴譜, 1744) from the Qing Dynasty

*Qin* used: “Free and Unfettered” *Qin* (“逍遙”琴) with silk strings, constructed by

Sou Si-tai

### Listening Guide

It is believed that *Three Statements of Plum Blossom* is originally a piece for the *dizi* (笛子) from the Jin Dynasty (265-420 C.E.), and was arranged for the *guqin* in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.). Its earliest extant score is found in the *Shenqi Mipu* (神奇祕譜, 1425) compiled by Zhu Quan (朱權) of the Ming Dynasty. This piece is transmitted in some forty collections of *guqin* music.

There are two themes in this piece and the themes are stated alternately. One of the themes is stated three times, and thus the title has the words *sannong* (三弄, three statements). This theme of “Plum Blossom” is made up of harmonics and has a pure quality. It is played in different registers in the second, fourth and sixth sections. The contrasting second theme has a longer melody and more rises and falls, and appears in the seventh and ninth sections.

This piece exhibits strong contrast in the tone colours of the open-string notes, harmonics and stopped notes. It has been praised by *guqin* players throughout the centuries. This piece depicts the strong living power of the plum blossom. The *qin* used in this recording is constructed by Sou Si-tai and silk strings are used.

0:00	Section 1	The introduction. The beats begin to emerge. The notes are mainly open-string notes. The tempo is slow, and the mood is dark and sombre.
1:21	Section 2	The first statement of Theme 1. Harmonics in the middle register produce a pure and light tone colour.
		
2:03	Section 3	A short transition passage between the first and second statements of Theme 1, ending with a <i>hewei</i> (合尾, a repeated ending phrase).
2:28	Section 4	The second statement of Theme 1, with harmonics in the low register.
3:02	Section 5	Undulating phrases, with a melody longer than that of Section 3, ending with a <i>hewei</i> passage.
4:16	Section 6	The third statement of Theme 1, with harmonics in the high register.
4:44	Section 7	Theme 2, the melody is played in the high register. The phrases are longer and with big leaps.
		
6:34	Section 8	A transition passage between Theme 2 of Sections 7 and 9, beginning with flowing glissandi.
7:06	Section 9	Theme 2, beginning with flowing glissandi. The melody is longer than that of Section 7, and a climax is created by the use of glissandi.
8:02	Section 10	The coda in <i>ad. libitum</i> , ending with a passage of harmonics.

## Extended Knowledge

### 4.1 The Tunings of *Guqin*

Unlike some other Chinese instruments, the *guqin* does not have a fixed tuning. The tuning for different pieces may be different. The player has to tune the strings according to the prescribed tuning for the piece before playing it, though there is no change of tuning within a piece. The most common tuning is called *zhengdiao* (正調) or *zhongluyun* (中呂均).

The tuning of *zhengdiao* is equivalent to C-D-F-G-A-c-d in Western classical music,<sup>24</sup> or *sol, - la, - do - re - mi - sol - la* in solmisation. The following table shows three common tunings of *guqin* music.

String	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Zhengdiao</i> (正調)	C	D	F	G	A	c	d
<i>Ruibindiao</i> (蕤賓調)	C	D	F	G	B <sup>b</sup>	c	d
<i>Manjiaodiao</i> (慢角調)	C	D	E	G	A	c	d

Theoretically, there are some twenty tunings in *guqin* music, but a large number of pieces are tuned in *zhengdiao*. Note that the pitches in the above table do not represent absolute frequencies. As *guqin* is mainly a solo instrument, there is no need to match the pitches with other instruments. The notes in the above table represent the relative intervals of the strings. It does not matter, for example, whether the third string is tuned to F or E as long as the solmisation of the seven strings are in the order of *sol, - la, - do - re - mi - sol - la*.

*Guqin* players today who use silk string, which is more fragile, often tune the strings a little bit lower than the pitches represented in the above table to avoid excessive tension.

### 4.2 Harmonics (泛音)

The thirteen markers (徽) on the *guqin* mark the harmonics positions.

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<sup>24</sup> Pitch reference: c is an octave higher than C; d is an octave higher than D.

Harmonics are produced by vibration of a string. When an instrument or the human voice produces a note, there is the fundamental and a series of harmonics. This series is called the overtone series.

As the fundamental note has the greatest amplitude of vibration, we normally only hear this note when a string is vibrating. The amplitude of vibration of the overtones is smaller, so it is more difficult to hear them. However, if the player lightly touches the string at a marker position when the string is plucked, the harmonic note is clearly heard.

The thirteen markers are the positions that divide a string into a certain proportion (see the table below). For example, if an open string is tuned to C, we can get a harmonics of an octave above (c) by lightly touching the position exactly at one half of the string, that is, the seventh marker.

To get the harmonics a perfect fifth above the fundamental, that is, the note G, we have to position the finger at one third of the string, that is, either the ninth or the fifth marker. The table below lists the proportions of the string at the positions of the thirteen markers and the harmonics produced.

Altogether ninety-one harmonics can be produced on the *guqin* (thirteen markers times seven strings). Harmonics is a distinctive kind of notes on the *guqin*. It is very common for pieces to begin and end with passages of harmonics. Other genres that make use of harmonics include throat-singing of Mongolia and Tuva, which produces multiphonic sounds by the use of harmonics, and the monochord music of Vietnam.

Marker	Proportion of the String	Harmonics Produced
13	7/8	c2
12	5/6	g1
11	4/5	e1
10	3/4	c1
9	2/3	g
8	3/5	e1
7	1/2	c
6	2/5	e1
5	1/3	g
4	1/4	c1
3	1/5	e1
2	1/6	g1
1	1/8	c2

### 4.3 A History of *Guqin* Notation

It is commonly believed that the *jianzipu* (減字譜, abbreviated character notation) was first used in the late Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.), although there is no general agreement on the exact year. Before the Tang Dynasty, a kind of notation called *wenzipu* (文字譜, full character notation) was used (see p. 87 of the hardcopy of this book).

It is believed that the *jianzipu* was invented by Cao Rou (曹柔) and Chen Zhuo (陳拙) of the Tang Dynasty. The earliest extant *jianzipu* is found in a collection of poems called *Songs of the White Stone Taoist Monk* (白石道人歌曲) written by Jiang Bai-shi (姜白石, 1155-1221), a poet of the Song Dynasty (960-1279). In this collection, several lines of *jianzipu* are found in the piece *Age-old Sorrow* (古怨). The earliest existing collection of *guqin* music is the *Shenqi Mipu* (神奇秘譜, 1425) compiled by Zhu Quan (朱權) of the Ming Dynasty. In the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368-1644 and 1644-1911 respectively), many scores of *guqin* music were published thanks to the improvement of printing. The *guqin* scores published in these periods number to some 150, and the *guqin* pieces found in them

number to over 3,000.

Before the invention of *jianzipu*, *guqin* music was notated in *wenzipu*. This kind of notation is more complicated. One or two lines of prose are required for notating a single note. *Jianzipu* is a simplified version of *wenzipu*.

The *wenzipu* may already have been in use in the Qin Dynasty (221-206 C.E.). The only extant score of *wenzipu* records a piece called *Elegant Orchid in Jieshi Mode* (碣石調 · 幽蘭) (c. the seventh century). The manuscript is now deposited in a library in Kyoto (京都) of Japan. It is believed that this score was transmitted by Qiu Ming (丘明, 494-590) of the late Southern Dynasty (420-589).

#### 4.4 *Dapu* (打譜)

The *guqin* pieces notated in collections throughout the centuries number to some three thousand. However, some pieces are found in more than one collection. The number of different pieces is around six hundred.<sup>25</sup> One single piece may exist in different versions under different collections. As a result, it is important to specify the collection from which we are using when we talk about a piece, and sometimes the teacher who transmits the piece has to be specified as well.

Among the some six hundred *guqin* pieces, only about one hundred pieces are performable. Why are some pieces not performable? The reason is that the *guqin* score only notates the ways of playing the strings, not music elements like the rhythm, tempo, phrasing and dynamics. To learn these elements in a piece, one has to rely on the teaching by a teacher through oral transmission. This is the reason why some pieces are not performable.

To revive a piece that has not been transmitted, a *guqin* performer has to reconstruct it from the existing score. This process of recreation is called *dapu* (打譜).

In the process of *dapu*, the *guqin* player interprets the rhythm, tempo, phrasing, dynamics and mood of a piece in his or her own way. However, this does not mean that he or she has complete freedom in the recreation. He or she has to

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<sup>25</sup> *A Compilation of Extant Guqin Pieces* compiled by the *guqin* player Zha Fu-xi (查阜西) (Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music, 1958) records the information of a large number of extant pieces.

consider descriptions of the piece, compare different versions, and add, delete or amend certain notes to recreate an appropriate interpretation of it. Through this process of *dapu*, a non-transmitted piece could be recreated.<sup>26</sup> For example, the famous piece *A Piece from Guangling* (廣陵散) was recreated by the *guqin* player Guan Ping-hu (管平湖, 1897-1967) in the 1950s, based on the score transmitted in *Shenqi Mipu* (神奇秘譜).

#### 4.5 The Comprehensive Knowledge in *Guqin* Handbooks

The *guqin* handbooks are comprehensive documents, not just a notation of *guqin* pieces. Most *guqin* handbooks record the essence of a particular school, including what the editors have learned on *guqin* playing, explanations on the finger techniques, the *guqin* aesthetics, the procedures on constructing this instrument, the way of practicing, a history of the particular school and the notation in *jianzipu* (減字譜) of the transmitted pieces.

For example, the *Dahuange Qinpu* (大還閣琴譜, 1673), published in early Qing Dynasty, records the scores of some thirty pieces, as well as an article called *Xishan Qinkuang* (溪山琴況) written by the *guqin* player Xu Shang-ying (徐上瀛, 1582-1662) which discusses twenty-four features (況) that a *guqin* player has to pay attention to when performing the *guqin*:

harmonious (和), quiet (靜), clear (清), distant (遠), antique (古), plain (澹), subtle (恬), transcendent (逸), elegant (雅), beautiful (麗), bright (亮), colourful (采), clean (潔), moist (潤), round (圓), firm (堅), grand (宏), minute (細), smooth (溜), vigorous (健), light (輕), heavy (重), slow (遲), fast (速)<sup>27</sup>

The feature (況) can be understood as the mood, style and aesthetics. *Xishan Qinkuang* fully explains each of these features. For instance, “distant” (遠) refers

<sup>26</sup> For the recreation of pieces through *dapu*, see Bell Yung, “*Da Pu*: The Recreative Process of the Music of the Seven-string Zither,” in *Music and Context: Essays for John M. Ward*, edited by Anne Dhu Shapiro (Cambridge, MA: Department of Music, Harvard University, 1985), pp. 370-384.

<sup>27</sup> English translation by Tse Chun-yan (謝俊仁).

to an imagination beyond the notes; “plain” (澹) refers to the mood of “simplicity” and “loftiness.” These moods and aesthetics are what *guqin* players strive for in playing this instrument.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from discussing these abstract moods and aesthetics, some handbooks use pictures and text to explain clearly the finger techniques. The pictures reprinted on p. 89 of the hardcopy of this book is from the *guqin* handbook *Taigu Yiyin* (太古遺音, 1515), and they illustrate the right-hand finger technique *zuo* (撮) by making an analogy with “the catching of a cicada by a mantis” (螳螂捕蟬).

#### 4.6 A Balance between Tradition and Innovation: An Interview with *Guqin* Player Tse Chun-yan (謝俊仁)

Compared to other Chinese or Western instruments, the *guqin* has very few new compositions. Is it because there are already numerous traditional pieces for this instrument? Or is it because there is a big burden by the long tradition of this instrument that it is difficult to make innovation? With these questions in mind, I interviewed *guqin* player Tse Chun-yan, who has written some new compositions for this instrument.

Tse was born in Hong Kong and learned composition for Chinese instruments with Kwan Sing-yau (關聖佑) in his early years. In the 1980s, he learned the *guqin* with Kwan Sing-yau, Lau Chor-wah (劉楚華) and Tsar Teh-yun (蔡德允). Tse is versatile in *guqin* theory and has composed quite a number of pieces for this instrument, including *The Oil-Lamp Flickered* (一閃燈花墮), *Composition in Shang Mode* (商意) and *The Falling Plum Blossoms* (落梅).

Tse stresses that there were many new compositions for the *guqin* in the past. The reason why very few pieces have been composed in recent times is worth investigating. He thinks that to compose new pieces for the *guqin*, one has to base on tradition. In the literati tradition, the poetic mood is the prime concern for a *guqin* player, and one has to bear three things in mind when composing a new piece:

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<sup>28</sup> For a study on the aesthetics of *Xishan Qinkuang*, refer to Wang Zhi-cheng (王志成), “The Aesthetics of *Xishan Qinkuang*” (《溪山琴況》的美學思想), *Music Research* (音樂研究), 2003/2: 61-71.

1. The expressivity of *guqin* music is implicit; 2. The minute change in timbre is the essence of *guqin* music; 3. There are traditional structures in *guqin* music, like starting with a slow passage and gradually getting faster, the exposition-continuation-change-conclusion structure (起承轉合), and the juxtaposition of phrases of varying lengths.

New elements should be injected in new compositions. Tse believes that new elements can be extracted from traditional elements. For example, the note *bianzhi* (變徵, i.e.,  $^{\#}fa$ ) is used in some of his compositions. This note is found in the scale of *yayue* court music (雅樂音階) of the ancient time. His *Composition in Yifan Mode* (雙乙反調) employs the *yifan* mode (乙反調式) found in Cantonese music.

Tse believes that the emphasis on timbre and texture is a common feature of *guqin* music and modern Western compositions. It is possible to compose new pieces for the *guqin* by learning from Western models, as long as the ideas are borrowed appropriately.

In a word, there is not necessarily a contradiction between innovation and tradition. In Tse's *guqin* pieces, there are always traces of tradition. One example is *The Falling Plum Blossoms* (落梅, 1989) (CD 2-15) for the *guqin* and *xiao*.

Tse writes, “[*The Falling Plum Blossoms*] makes use of *bianzhi* scale (變徵音階) found in traditional music. The writing for the two instruments [the *guqin* and the *xiao*] are in free contrapuntal texture, instead of the traditional unison. This piece expresses the sorrowful sentiment found in a poem by the subjugated emperor Li Yu (李煜, 937-978) [of the Southern Tang nation], ‘Like heavy snow the plum blossoms fall, I wipe time and again but cannot get rid of them all.’ (砌下落梅如雪亂，拂了一身還滿).” (From the liner notes of the CD *The Oil-Lamp Flickered*, p. 6)

## Listening Guide 4.6

***The Falling Plum Blossoms* (落梅, 1989) (CD 2-15)**

### **Information of the Recording**

Composer: Tse Chun-yan (謝俊仁)

Performers: Tse Chun-yan (*guqin*), Sou Si-tai (蘇思棣) (*xiao*)

Title of the Record: *The Oil-Lamp Flickered: Qin Solo by TSE Chun-yan* (一閃燈  
花墮：謝俊仁古琴獨奏) (ROI, 2001)

Recorded in 2001

*Qin* used: “Clear Sounding Spring” *Qin* (“玉潤鳴泉”琴) from the Ming Dynasty,  
with strings having a steel core covered with nylon

## Glossary

cipher notation (簡譜)	A kind of notation invented by the Frenchman Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) in 1742. It uses the Arabic numbers from one to seven to represent the <i>sol-fa</i> names of music. It was introduced to China through Japan in the late Qing Dynasty. In the 1930s, it played an important role in the dissemination of songs in the anti-Japanese invasion movement. Subsequently it replaced the traditional ways of notation in Chinese music – including the <i>gongche</i> notation (工尺譜), percussion pattern notation (鑼鼓經), <i>lülü</i> notation (律呂譜) and <i>gongshang</i> notation (宮商譜) – and has become the most widely used notation in Chinese music at present.
<i>dapu</i> (打譜)	The recreation of a <i>guqin</i> piece by a <i>guqin</i> player based on the notated score. The player has to realize the rhythm, tempo, phrasing, dynamics and mood of the piece in this process.
exposition-continuation-change-conclusion (起承轉合)	A kind of structure commonly used in traditional Chinese literary works. This structure is also used in many pieces of traditional Chinese music.
harmonics (泛音)	A kind of timbre in <i>guqin</i> music (the other kinds being the stopped note and the open-string note). In playing the harmonics, the player lightly touches on certain positions of the string by the left hand while the right hand plucks the string. Its timbre is pure and clear. Many <i>guqin</i> pieces begin and end with passages making use of harmonics.
<i>jianzipu</i> (減字譜)	A kind of notation for <i>guqin</i> music. It is made up of ideograms. Each ideogram is a composite form of radicals from Chinese characters. This kind of notation is a tablature, which notates the ways of playing the strings (such as the fingers to be used in stopping and plucking the string, the position on which the finger is stopping, the

	string to be plucked, and the way of plucking) instead of the exact or relative pitches of the music.
open-string note (散音)	A kind of timbre in <i>guqin</i> music. It is played by plucking an open string by the right hand.
<i>puzi</i> (譜字)	Chinese words that are used in <i>gongche</i> notation (工尺譜) to represent the pitches, such as <i>gong</i> (工) and <i>che</i> (尺).
<i>Shenqi Mipu</i> (神奇秘譜)	The earliest extant <i>guqin</i> handbook, compiled in 1425 by Zhu Quan (朱權), the seventeenth prince of the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuan-zhang (朱元璋). This handbook consists of the notation of sixty-four <i>guqin</i> pieces and a number of important documents on the art of <i>guqin</i> .
stopped note (按音)	A kind of timbre in <i>guqin</i> music. In playing the stopped note, a left-hand finger stops on a string while the right hand plucks the string.
tablature (指法譜)	A kind of notation that notates the way of playing the instrument instead of the exact or relative pitches of the music. Scores of the <i>guqin</i> and the guitar are examples of tablature.
<i>Three Statements of Plum Blossom</i> (梅花三弄)	A <i>guqin</i> piece. It is believed that it was originally a <i>dizi</i> (笛子) piece in the Jin Dynasty (265-420 C.E.) and was arranged for the <i>guqin</i> in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.). The earliest extant notation of this piece is found in the <i>Shenqi Mipu</i> (神奇秘譜, 1425) compiled by Zhu Quan (朱權) of the Ming Dynasty. It is transmitted in some forty extant <i>guqin</i> handbooks.
<i>Tune for a Pleasant Evening</i> (良宵引)	A <i>guqin</i> piece. Originally a folk tune from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 C.E.).
<i>wenzipu</i> (文字譜)	The notation of <i>guqin</i> music used before the Tang Dynasty (618-907 C.E.). It is believed that the subsequent way of notation, <i>jianzipu</i> (減字譜), was invented by Cao Rou (曹柔) and Chen Zhuo (陳拙) of the Tang Dynasty.

*Wenzipu* is more complicated than *jianzipu*. In *wenzipu*, generally one or two sentences are used to notate a single note. *Wenzipu* may already have been present in the Qin Dynasty (221-206 C.E.). The only extant piece notated in *wenzipu* is *Elegant Orchid in Jieshi Mode* (碣石調 · 幽蘭) (c. the seventh century).

## Chapter 6 Cantonese Opera and Narrative Singing

By Chan Chak-lui (陳澤蓄)

(Sections on *Dishui Nanyin* (地水南音) by Chuen-Fung Wong (黃泉鋒))

English Translation by Tsui Wan-ching (徐允清)

Cantonese opera (粵劇) is the predominant genre of *xiqus* (戲曲) in the Guangdong (廣東) province. Artists of this genre have absorbed elements from other regional operas and adapted them to the characteristics of the Cantonese dialect in order to suit the taste of local audiences. In this way, a unique genre has been created.

Cantonese opera is generally called *daxi* (大戲, literally meaning “grand opera”), and it is a genre intended to be watched. Sometimes people call this genre “*chaducheng*” (茶篤撐) or “*duducheng*” (篤篤撐), which are sounds of instruments that we can hear in the performance of Cantonese opera. Why the Cantonese opera is called “*daxi*”? How come “*chaducheng*” has become a synonym of this genre?

In Hong Kong, we occasionally hear and watch excerpts of Cantonese opera being performed in TV shows, charity fund raising events and programmes promoting the caring of aged people. Popular lyrics from Cantonese operas include “the falling flowers fully hide the moon.” (落花滿天蔽月光), “the boat is sailing far.” (一葉輕舟去), “weeping in a misty night under the moon.” (霧月夜抱泣落紅), etc. When we recall excerpts from Cantonese operas, do we think of the lyrics or the melody, or both? Do you know where do the above three excerpts come from?

The stories of Cantonese operas are mainly set in the past. This genre has flourished in Hong Kong and is frequently performed in theatres, halls, singing clubs and TV shows. What changes of style have been brought to this genre by the taste of contemporary people? How do the artists adapt this genre to the changing tastes of the audiences and the diversified situation?

## Section 1 Cantonese Opera – A Highly Adaptable Genre of *Xiqu*

Cantonese opera has absorbed musical elements from Cantonese *xiaoqu* (小曲, fixed tunes), *shuochang* (說唱, narrative singing) and other regional genres.<sup>29</sup> It has in turn influenced modern compositions. For instance, Wut Man-chung (屈文中, 1942-1992), a Hong Kong composer who was born in Sichuan (四川), composed *Fantasy Overture: Princess Chang Ping* (帝女花幻想序曲) in 1979. In the composition *Symphony 1997: Heaven, Earth, Man* (交響樂 1997 : 天地人) by Tan Dun (譚盾), a commissioned work by the Hong Kong Government in celebrating the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China in 1997, some phrases from “The Sacrifice of the Princess” (香夭)<sup>30</sup> are used in the movement “Bell Chimes and the Operatic Performance of Temple Street” (廟街的戲和編鐘). In the Cantonese opera *Princess Chang Ping* (帝女花), there are newly composed tunes, like *Swallows in the Snow* (雪中燕); ancient tunes, like *Autumn Thoughts by the Dressing Table* (妝台秋思) and *Bidding Farewell by the River Qiu* (秋江哭別); as well as *banqiang* (板腔) accompanied by percussion instruments, including the gong and drums. From the incorporation of various kinds of music in this opera, we can see that Cantonese opera is a genre capable of assimilating different genres and is constantly changing.

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<sup>29</sup> Lai Bo-jiang (賴伯疆) states in *A History of Cantonese Opera* (粵劇史) that during the late Ming Dynasty and the early Qing Dynasty, the operas performed in the Guangdong province used “singing styles” (聲腔) of Kunshan (崑山), Yiyang (弋陽) and Bangzi (梆子). These singing styles formed the basis of Cantonese opera. Later, artists adapted these singing styles to the characteristics of the Cantonese dialect, and incorporated different kinds of music to suit the taste of the audiences and the story. For example, in the opera *Song Jiang Kills Yan Xi-jiao* (宋江怒殺閻婆惜), in which Xin Ma Shi-zeng (新馬師曾) played the role of Song Jiang (宋江), the *sipingdiao* (四平調) from Peking opera was employed. In the opera *Story of a Family of Musicians* (紅樓琴斷), in which Xin Ma Shi-zeng sang duets with Zhong Li-rong (鍾麗蓉), a number of Western popular songs and Shanghainese popular songs were used, including *Over the Rainbow*, *Auld Lang Syne*, *When Are You Coming Back?* (何日君再來), *Song of the Four Seasons* (四季歌), etc.

<sup>30</sup> “The Sacrifice of the Princess” is the final scene of the opera *Princess Chang Ping* (帝女花) written by the maestro scriptwriter Tong Dik-seng (唐濂生). This opera was premiered by the Sin Fung Ming Opera Company (仙鳳鳴劇團) in 1957. In this scene, Princess Chang Ping (長平公主) and her husband Zhou Shi-xian (周世顯) return to the Royal Palace after the fall of the Ming Dynasty and bargain with the Qing Emperor in order that the father of Princess Chang Ping, Emperor Chongzhen (崇禎皇帝), would be buried in the Royal Mausoleum, and that her brother would be released from the prison. After the issuing of the imperial edict by the Qing Emperor, they sacrifice themselves by drinking poison under the tree that they first met and made a vow to get married.

## 1. The Music System of Cantonese Opera

Cantonese opera is a genre readily assimilating different kinds of music styles and elements. Throughout its history, the scriptwriters, musicians and singers have absorbed different kinds of melodies, singing styles and instruments in order to adapt to the tastes of the audiences, and to the content and context of the stories. For example, *xiaoqu* from *Kunqu* (崑曲), short pieces of Cantonese music, popular songs and other types of Chinese melodies have been used abundantly. There have been newly created tunes for new operas as well. That is why Cantonese opera has been classified as an integrated genre (綜合體) in terms of music system. In Cantonese opera, the singing passages are classified as *xiaoqu*, *banqiang* and *shuochang*.

The music system of Peking opera (京劇) is in *banqiangti* (板腔體, “the system of *banqiang*”). Its *banqiang* system is divided into *xipi* (西皮) and *erhuang* (二簧). Each *banqiang* has its own pattern in the structure and linguistic tones of its lyrics, as well as its own musical pattern. In performance, the singers realise the melody by following the implicit tune embedded in the lyrics.

In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the music of Cantonese opera only used *banqiang*, and *xiaoqu* was not yet to be employed. At first, only *banqiang* in the *bangzi* (梆子) system was used. Later, *banqiang* in the *erhuang* (二黃) system was absorbed. In that period, an opera only used either the *bangzi* or the *erhuang*, but not both. The operas that made use of *bangzi* were called *bangzixi* (梆子戲), and those made use of *erhuang* were called *erhuangxi* (二黃戲). Examples of the former include *Sworn Brother and Sister* (打洞結拜), *Yang Yan-zhao Accusing His Son* (六郎罪子), and those of the latter include *The Third Wife Raising the Son* (三娘教子) and *Xu Shi-lin Rescuing His Mother* (仕林祭塔).

In the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, there began to have a mixed use of *banqiang* of the *bangzi* and *erhuang* in an opera. *Xiaoqu* and *shuochang* were also incorporated into this genre. Since *banqiang* forms the largest portion of music in an opera, and the *bangzi* and *erhuang* are the two main systems of *banqiang*, the practitioners of Cantonese opera use *banghuang* (梆黃) to

represent the whole category of *banqiang*.

Besides the *xiaoqu* and the *banqiang*, which are also commonly found in other genres of regional opera, the Cantonese opera also incorporates *shuochang*, which is midway between speaking and singing. *Dishui nanyin* (地水南音) is an example of *shuochang* found in Cantonese opera.

When the music of Cantonese opera became more and more complicated, the script alone was not able to capture all the nuances, and music notation was adopted to assist the actors' singing and the instrumentalists' accompaniment. Opera troupes and operatic singing clubs in Hong Kong generally use *gongche* notation (工尺譜), and beginners are required to learn the notation.<sup>31</sup> In contrast to this situation, the opera troupes in Chinese Mainland mainly use cipher notation (簡譜).

The words used in *gongche* notation of Cantonese opera are similar to those used in Peking opera and *Kunqu*. Chinese words, like *he* (合) and *che* (尺), are used to represent different pitches, in a way similar to the solfège system of Western music. The Chinese words in the *gongche* notation are not pronounced in Cantonese, but in a way close to the *zhongzhouyin* (中州音) (see Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1**

**Corresponding Notes of the *Gongche* Notation (工尺譜) Used in Cantonese Opera and the Western Solfège System (西方唱名) and the Cipher Notation (簡譜)**

譜字	合	士	乙	上	尺	工	反 <sup>5</sup>	六	五	亿	生
粵語 拼音	ho4 [何]	si6 [是]	ji6 [易]	saang3	ce1 [奢]	gung1 [宮]	faan2 [泛]	liu1	wu1 [鳥]	ji6 [衣]	saang3
西方 唱名	sol,	la,	ti,	Do	re	mi	fa	sol	la	ti	do <sup>7</sup>
簡譜	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1

The tonality of Western classical music from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries is divided into major and minor. In Cantonese opera, the melodies in *xiaoqu*, *banqiang* and *shuochang* are employed in a system of modes (調式). Generally speaking, there are four modes used in Cantonese opera, namely

<sup>31</sup> According to Chan Sau-yan (陳守仁), the maestro Wong Jyt-seng (王粵生) insisted that the singers had to learn the *gongche* notation in singing the melody, instead of singing in the “la” syllable or in Western solfège. He thought that this practice kept the traditional flavour of Cantonese operatic singing.

*heche* (合尺), *fanxian* (反線), *yifan* (乙反), and *shigong* (土工). In the terminology of Cantonese opera, the “mode” and the solmisation of the two strings of the *gaoihu* (高胡) are combined to be called “*xian*” (線). If the two strings are sung as *sol-re*, it is in *zhengxian* (正線), or *heche xian* (合尺線). When the mode or the solmisation is not specified in the script, the music is sung in *zhengxian*. If the two strings are sung as *do-sol*, the mode used is *fanxian* (反線), or *shangliu xian* (上六線). If the two strings are sung as *la-mi*, it is in *shigong xian* (土工線).

The solmisation of *yifan xian* (乙反線) is the same as that of *zhengxian*, i.e., the two open strings are sung as *sol-re*. However, in this mode, the notes *yi* (乙) and *fan* (反) are emphasized while the notes *shi* (士) and *gong* (工) are deemphasized. This kind of mode is also called *kuhou* (苦喉) or *meihua qiang* (梅花腔), and it expresses a sorrowful sentiment. In a passage in *yifan xian*, not all *shi* (士) note is changed to *yi* (乙), and not all *gong* (工) note is changed to *fan* (反). It depends on the lyrics and the melodic contour. It should also be emphasized that the pitch of the *yi* (乙) note lies somewhere between the *ti* and *te* (the flattened *ti*) in twelve-tone equal temperament, and the pitch of the *fan* (反) note lies somewhere between the *fa* and *fe* (the sharpened *fa*).<sup>32</sup>

The Cantonese opera was mainly performed outdoors in its early history, and thus the tuning was generally high, with the *shang* (上) note of the *zhengxian* tuned to D or E-flat. In this tuning, it gives a piercing and bright quality. Nowadays, in performances in the theatres, the *shang* note is generally tuned to C or C-sharp. There is also a tuning called “C20” or *dapeng xian* (大棚線). In this tuning, the *shang* note is tuned to a pitch about 20 Hertz higher than that of the middle C. However, occasionally under the request of the singers, the *shang* note may be tuned to B-flat or D. The former tuning is called *changdi yiban xian* (唱低一板線) and the latter tuning is called *changgao yiban xian* (唱高一板線). Therefore, the tuning in Cantonese opera is flexible, and is readily adjustable to the voice condition of the singers and the mood of the passage to be sung.

<sup>32</sup> Huang Shao-xia (黃少俠), an experienced teacher of Cantonese operatic singing, recalled that there was a view that when the Cantonese opera first adopted the *banghuang* (梆黃) system, the *yifan diao* (乙反調) was not yet employed. This mode was incorporated into Cantonese opera by blind artists of the Guangdong province from their *shuochang* (說唱) in *meihua qiang* (梅花腔).

In the early history of Cantonese opera, the *banqiang* was closely related to the tuning and solmisation of the instruments. In that period, there were “Eight Famous Pieces”<sup>33</sup> designed for the training of Cantonese operatic singing. The musician playing the *erxian* (二弦) (the leading melodic instrument) tuned the two strings to *la-mi* (土工) while accompanying *banqiang* in *bangzi* (梆子). Therefore, *bangzi* is also called *shigong* (土工). When accompanying *banqiang* in *erhuang* (二黃), the solmisation of the two open strings became *he-che* (合尺, i.e., *sol-re*). Therefore, *erhuang* is also called *heche*. At first, there was no mixed use of *bangzi* and *erhuang* in an opera. As a result, the solmisation of the two strings of the *erxian* was used to represent the type of *banqiang* being used. However, in modern practice, the solmisation of the two strings is the same for *bangzi* and *erhuang*, i.e., *he-che*. In this regard, the term *shigong* (土工) has two meanings. The first one refers to the solmisation. The second usage is a synonym of *bangzi* (梆子). Therefore, we have to be careful to its exact meaning when coming across this term (see Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2**  
**Modes Used in Cantonese Opera and Their Solmisation**

Mode / Music System	Solmisation	Pitch
<i>shigong</i> (土工) (referring to the solmisation)	<i>la – mi</i>	<i>shang</i> (上) note is closed to B <sup>b</sup>
<i>shigong</i> (土工) (referring to the music system, also called <i>bangzi</i> 梆子)	<i>sol – re</i>	<i>shang</i> (上) note is closed to C
<i>heche</i> (合尺) (also called <i>erhuang</i> 二黃 or <i>erwang</i> 二王)	<i>sol – re</i>	<i>shang</i> (上) note is closed to C
<i>yifan</i> (乙反) (also called <i>kuhou</i> 古喉 or <i>meihua qiang</i> 梅花腔)	<i>sol – re</i>	<i>shang</i> (上) note is closed to C
<i>fanxian</i> (反線) (also called <i>shangliu xian</i> 上六線)	<i>do – sol</i>	<i>shang</i> (上) note is closed to G

<sup>33</sup> According to a speech given by Loo Kah-chi (盧家熾, 1916-1996), a maestro of Cantonese music, the “Eight Famous Pieces” are *The Martial Art of Li Zhong* (李忠賣武), *Bo Li-xi Meeting His Wife* (伯里奚會妻), *Encountering Wu Liu-qi in the Snow* (雪中賢), *Yang Yan-zhao Accusing His Son* (楊六郎罪子), *Recommending He Wen-xiu* (附薦何文秀), *The Betrayal of Han Xin* (韓信棄楚歸漢), *The Death of Lin Dai-yu* (黛玉葬花), and *Bian Cai Exorcizing the Evil Spirit* (辨才釋妖). See Lai Kin (黎鍵), *An Oral History of the Cantonese Opera in Hong Kong* (香港粵劇口述史) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1993), p. 122.

The tuning and the usage of the modes in Cantonese opera have been changing throughout its history. One thing that has not changed is the close relationship between the lyrics and the music. In the following sections, the characteristics of the text in Cantonese opera and the relationship between the lyrics and the music will be explored.

### (1) The Use of Rhyme

Rhymes are used in the text of Cantonese opera. Generally speaking, a piece or a scene uses only one rhyme throughout. Rhymes are used in *banqiang*, *xiaoqu*, *shuochang* and some spoken text, including *kougu* (口古), *luogubai* (鑼鼓白), and *shibai* (詩白). Some rhymes are considered interchangeable. For example, the rhyme “in” (田邊韻) is interchangeable with the rhymes “im” (簾添韻) and “yn” (圓圈韻). In this way, there are more choices of words for the scriptwriters in writing the text.

### (2) The Use of Words in Even Tone and Oblique Tone

The lyrics of the *banqiang* and *shuochang* in Cantonese opera is made up of couplets. In each couplet, there is an upper line (上句) and a lower line (下句). The last word of the upper line must be in the oblique tone (仄聲), i.e., either the rising tone (上聲), going tone (去聲) or the entering tone (入聲). The last word of the lower line must be in the even tone (平聲). In this way, the ending musical notes of a couplet are set in a way that is balanced and satisfactory. Monotony in the melodic line is thus avoided.

### (3) Matching of the Melody with the Tones of the Lyrics

Cantonese is a tonal language. That means that the same phonetic sound could represent different meanings by pronouncing it in different tones which differ in pitches or contours. For example, the phonetic sound “yi” could mean “clothes” (衣) or “meaning” (意), depending on the tone in the pronunciation. The melody of a singing passage in the *banqiang* and *shuochang* in the Cantonese opera is realised

by the singer by following the implicit melody of the lyrics.

There are nine tones in the Cantonese dialect. These nine tones are grouped into four categories: the even tone (平聲), the rising tone (上聲), the going tone (去聲), and the entering tone (入聲). The even tone, the rising tone, and the going tone each is subdivided into the upper tone (陰) and the lower tone (陽) according to the pitch in pronunciation. The entering tone is similarly subdivided into the upper, middle, and lower tones. Since Cantonese is a highly tonal language, the singers of Cantonese opera have to realise the musical melody of a singing passage by following the implicit melodic contour of the lyrics. In the profession, this way of realising the melody is called *luzi* (露字, literally meaning “exposing the words”). See Table 6.3 for the commonly used implicit pitches of the nine tones in Cantonese.

**Table 6.3**  
**The Nine Tones of Cantonese**

Tone	Example 1	Example 2	Pitch
Upper Even	衣	推	<i>gong</i> (工)
Upper Rising	倚	倒	<i>che</i> (尺)
Upper Going	意	政	<i>shang</i> (上)
Lower Even	疑	權	<i>he</i> (合)
Lower Rising	以	以	<i>shang</i> (上)
Lower Going	義	後	<i>shi</i> (士)
Upper Entering	益	一	<i>gong</i> (工)
Middle Entering	醜	百	<i>shang</i> (上)
Lower Entering	葉	日	<i>shi</i> (士)

The pitches shown in Table 6.3 are commonly used in *zhengxian* (正線). The actual pitches used in a singing passage may change in different modes and in different contexts. The same word may be sung to different pitches in different sentences. The words in the upper rising tone and the lower rising tone are pronounced with an upward glissando. Therefore, they must be sung with a relatively low beginning pitch, which then glides to the pitches indicated in Table 6.3. The relationship between the linguistic tone and the musical pitch is a flexible one, and can be adjusted to suit the melody and lyrics. This is particularly obvious in the writing of lyrics for *xiaoqu*.

#### (4) The Beat System

The *banqiang* and *shuochang* in Cantonese opera can be classified by the mode used. For example, *fanxian zhongban* (反線中板) and *yifan muyu* (乙反木魚) are of two different modes. A second way of classification is by the beat system used. The beat system used in Cantonese opera is called *dingban* (叮板). The *ban* (板) is the first beat of a rhythmic unit and the *ding* (叮) represents other beats of the rhythmic unit. For example, the beat system *yiban sanding* (一板三叮) is made up of one *ban* and three *dings*. The three *dings* are called *touding* (頭叮), *zhongding* (中叮) and *weiding* (尾叮) respectively. The beat system called *yiban yiding* (一板一叮) is made up of one *ban* and one *ding*. Although there are words of *kuai* (快, “fast”), *zhong* (中, “moderate”), and *man* (慢, “slow”) in the nomenclature of the beat system names, they only indicate the number of *ding*(s) following the *ban*, not representing the actual tempo of the singing passage. Thus, a passage in *manban* (慢板) is not necessarily slower than a passage in *zhongban* (中板). See Table 6.4 for the beat systems commonly used in Cantonese opera.

**Table 6.4**  
**Common Beat Systems Used in Cantonese Opera and the Corresponding Symbols of Ding and Ban**

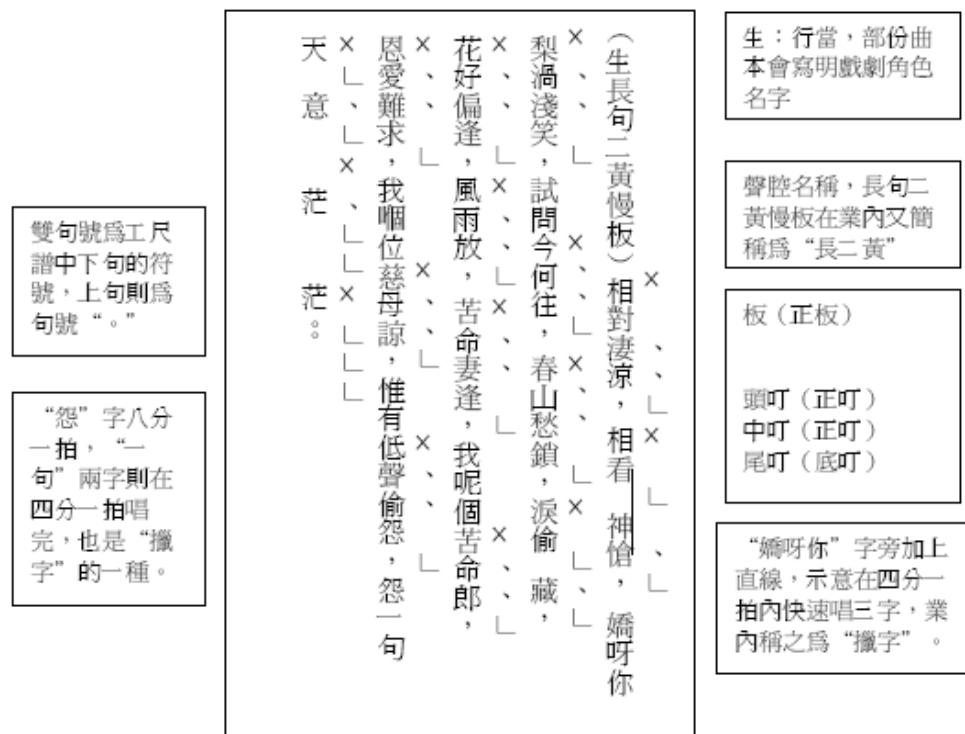
Beat System	Dingban	Metre	Example in the Recording
<i>sanban</i> (散板)	without <i>ding</i> and <i>ban</i>	<i>ad. lib.</i>	<i>shouban</i> (首板) from <i>Zhou Yu Writing a Letter to His King</i> (周瑜寫表)
<i>manban</i> (慢板)	one <i>ban</i> followed by three <i>dings</i> ( x 、 、 、 )	4/4	<i>erhuang manban</i> (二黃慢板) from “Comforting the Wife” from <i>Time to Go Home</i> (胡不歸 · 慰妻)
<i>zhongban</i> (中板)	one <i>ban</i> followed by one <i>ding</i> ( x 、 x 、 )	2/4	
<i>liushui</i> (流水)	with <i>ban</i> only ( 、 、 、 、 )	1/4 or 2/4	

The beats with lyrics falling on are called *zhengban* (正板), represented by an “x” in the notation, or *zhengding* (正叮), represented by a “、”. The beats without

lyrics falling on are called *dibān* (底板), represented by a “x”, or *diding* (底叮), represented by a “—”. See Figure 6.1 for examples of these beats.

**Figure 6.1**

**A Passage from “Comforting the Wife” from *Time to Go Home* (胡不歸 · 慰妻), Illustrating the Notation Used in Cantonese Opera**



In the script of Cantonese opera, there is generally no indication of the pitches to be sung. Only in exceptional cases would we find the pitch notation. Sometimes even the beats are not indicated. The singers and musicians are able to realize the melody and accompaniment according to the prescribed pattern of the specific *banqiang*. Generally the pitches of the *xiaoqu* are not indicated as well, but there may be indications of the beats.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Ding* (叮) and *ban* (板) mark the beats, and percussion patterns are closely related to them. Generally, the *zhangban* (掌板), the principal percussionist, hits the *buyu* (卜魚) on the *ban* and the *shadi* (沙的) on the *ding* in accompanying *banqiang* (板腔). In accompanying *qupai* (曲牌), he or she hits the *dagu* (大鼓) on the *ban* and the *pengling* (碰鈴) on the *ding*. Nevertheless, this is not so strict in performance. For example, the *zhangban* may play *huazhu* (花竹, “ornamented pattern”), which is a more complicated percussion pattern. See Chan Sau-yan (陳守仁), *Cantonese Operatic Singing: A Manual of Wong Jyt-seng* (粵曲的學和唱: 王粵生粵曲教程), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hong Kong: Cantonese Opera Research Programme, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1996), p. 21.

## (5) Line Division

The lyrics of a line of the *xiaoqu* and *shuochang* are generally made up of seven or ten words. There are subdivisions of the line which are called *fendun* (分頓). The scriptwriter writes a line with the prescribed number of words and whose content suits the development of the story. However, certain *chenzis* (襯字), which are extra words, may be inserted in the line. This allows greater freedom for the scriptwriter in writing the text and avoids monotony in the rhythm. For example, the following sentence from the opera *Zhou Yu Writing a Letter to His King* (周瑜寫表) is an upper line of the *shigong shouban* (土工首板), a type of *banqiang*, and it has seven structural words, divided into two subdivisions, making up of four and three words respectively:

看過了書信	心內痛	upper line, ending with an oblique tone
(the underlined word is a <i>chenzi</i> (襯字))		

The following sentences are made up of ten words, subdivided into three, three, two and two words:

俺楊令公	為北漢	南征	北討。	upper line, ending with an oblique tone
恨劉鈞	讒言是聽	誣俺有叛變	謀圖。	lower line, ending with an even tone
(the underlined words are <i>chenzis</i> (襯字))				

The rhythmic pattern of a *manban* (慢板) making up of ten words is as follows:

頓數 [ 頭頓 ] [ 二頓 ] [ 過序 ] [ 三頓 ] [ 過序 ] [ 四頓 ] [ 過序 ]  
 叮板 × 、 、 L × 、 、 L (×L L L) × L 、 L (L×) 、 L L × (L L L)  
 唱詞 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10)

Combining the rhythm with the lyrics, the above example is sung as thus:

× 、 、 L × 、 、 L (×L L L) × L 、 (L×) 、 L L × (L L L)  
 俺楊令公 爲北漢 南 征 北 討。  
 × 、 、 L × 、 、 L (×L L L) × L 、 (L×) 、 L L × (L L L)  
 恨劉鈞 謗言是聽 誣俺有叛 變 謀 圖。

Performance practice changes with time and place. The use of instruments in Cantonese opera also changes.

## 2. Instrumentation of Cantonese Opera

The ensemble accompanying the Cantonese opera is called *pengmian* (棚面, literally meaning “on the front side of the temporary stage”). The reason for using this term is that in the early days, the accompanists were seated on the stage, just in front of the backdrop. In those days, the matinee performances used an ensemble called *sanjiatou* (三架頭, literally meaning “three instruments”), making up of the *erxian* (二弦), *yueqin* (月琴) and *sanxian* (三弦). For the evening performances, one instrument was added, which may be the *zhuqiao tiqin* (竹殼提琴) or the *hengxiao* (橫簫). In the period of the reign of Emperor Xianfeng (咸豐) (1850-1861), the accompanists numbered to seven, and the ensemble is divided into *daguzhang* (打鼓掌, presently called *zhangban* 掌板); *shangshou* (上手, literally meaning “the first player”), who played the *di* (笛), *xiao* (簫), and *yueqin* (月琴); the *ershou* (二手, literally meaning “the second player”), who played the *sanxian* (三弦) and *suona* (唢呐); the *sanshou* (三手, literally meaning “the third player”), who played the *dabo* (大鉸) and *erxian* (二弦). Sometimes the *dagu* (大鼓), *daluo* (大鑼) and *xiaoluo* (小鑼) might be added. In the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China, the ensemble was further expanded (see Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5**

Percussionists Employed in Cantonese Opera during the Late Qing Dynasty and the Early Republic of China

Title	Matinee Performance	Evening Performance	Remarks
<i>shangshou</i> (上手)	<i>di</i> (笛) ( <i>suona</i> 噴呐), <i>xiao</i> (簫), <i>yueqin</i> (月琴)		
<i>ershou</i> (二手)	<i>sanxian</i> (三弦), <i>di</i> (笛) ( <i>suona</i> 噴呐), <i>xiao</i> (簫), <i>dazheng</i> (打錚), <i>chuiluo</i> (吹螺)		
<i>sanshou</i> (三手)	<i>dabo</i> (大鉸)	<i>erxian</i> (二弦)	
<i>sishou</i> (四手)	<i>zhangban</i> (掌板)	<i>dagu</i> (打鼓)	later called “ <i>dagu</i> ” (打鼓)
<i>wushou</i> (五手)	<i>daluo</i> (打鑼)	<i>zhangban</i> (掌板)	later called “ <i>daluo</i> ” (打鑼)
<i>liushou</i> (六手)	<i>dagu</i> (大鼓), <i>erxian</i> (二弦) (assistant)		later called “ <i>dagu</i> ” (大鼓)
<i>qishou</i> (七手)	<i>fabaogu</i> (發報鼓), <i>daluo</i> (大鑼)		later called “ <i>daluo</i> ” (大鑼)
<i>bashou</i> (八手)	<i>zhuqiao tiqin</i> (竹殼提琴)	<i>xiaoluo</i> (小鑼), <i>dabo</i> (大鉸)	
<i>jiushou</i> (九手)	<i>hengxiao</i> (橫簫), <i>daluo</i> (大鑼)		
<i>shishou</i> (十手)	<i>xiaoluo</i> (小鑼), standby percussionist		acts as a substitute musician, has to be able to play a number of instruments

Later, the *houguan* (喉管), *dongxiao* (洞簫), *erhu* (二胡), *yangqin* (揚琴), *qinqin* (秦琴), *yehu* (椰胡) were incorporated into the ensemble. In the 1930s, the accompanying ensemble of opera troupes in Guangzhou and Hong Kong were divided into *zhongyuebu* (中樂部, literally meaning “Chinese instrumental group”) and *xiyuebu* (西樂部, literally meaning “Western instrumental group”). In that period, Western instruments began to be introduced to China, and the accompanying ensemble of Cantonese opera incorporated the violin (being called *fanling* 梵鈴 in the profession), saxophone (being called *seshi* 色士 or *seshifeng* 色士風 in the profession), and xylophone. The gongs and drums used to accompany Peking opera and its percussion patterns were also used in Cantonese opera.

Subsequently the term *xiyuebu* (西樂部) was used to represent melodic instruments, and *zhongyuebu* (中樂部) was used to represent percussion instruments. In the 1990s, some practising musicians thought that it was not appropriate to call the melodic instruments, which consist of Chinese and Western

instruments, as *xiyue* (西樂). They therefore changed the term to *yinyue* (音樂, literally meaning “music”), while the term *zhongyue* (中樂) was changed to *jiyue* (擊樂, literally meaning “percussion”).

## Section 2 Language and Singing Style

Genres of Chinese opera are named by the places in which the genres originated or are popular. Cantonese opera (粵劇) originates in the Guangdong province (粵), and is thus named. However, Cantonese opera is also performed in other areas, such as Singapore and overseas, including Canada, in which there are communities of Cantonese speaking people. We may now understand the term “Cantonese opera” as a genre of opera sung in the Cantonese dialect and which exhibits Cantonese culture. Having said that, we have to emphasize that in its early history, Cantonese opera was not sung in Cantonese. The adoption of this language was caused by the taste of the audiences in the Guangdong province.

Cantonese opera has absorbed different elements from various kinds of arts in order to meet the taste of its audiences and to compete with other artistic genres. It is readily changeable and adjustable. A major change in its history was the adoption of Cantonese as the spoken and singing language, replacing the original language *zhongzhou yin* (中州音, nowadays called *guanhua* 官話). A piece completely sung in *zhongzhou yin* is now called *guqiang yuequ* (古腔粵曲, “Cantonese opera sung in the old language”). The *zhongzhou hua* (中州話) used in Cantonese opera is based on *zhongyuan yinyun* (中原音韻, “the language used in the Central Plain”). In the transmission process, the pronunciation of different languages mixed, and therefore the same word may have different pronunciations.

The Cantonese opera was first performed in outdoor temporarily built stages. Since there was no microphone in that period and the stage was built outdoor, the actors had to sing in a higher key in order that the audiences could hear clearly. The *wusheng* (武生), *xiaowu* (小武) and *erhualian* (二花臉) used the *zuopie baqiang* (左撇霸腔) in order to be more powerful and mighty. The *xiaosheng* (小生) and *huadan* (花旦) sung in a higher key to produce a brighter timbre. The

excerpt of *Zhou Yu Writing a Letter to His King* (周瑜寫表) in the accompanying recording of this book is sung in the *baqiang* (霸腔), or *dahou* (大喉).

The adoption of Cantonese as the main language in Cantonese opera was related to the patriotic movement prominent in the period of the Revolution of 1911 (辛亥革命). Since many patriots were not trained in opera performance and did not speak *guanhua* (官話), the language used in the operas was gradually replaced by Cantonese. In that period, the newly written opera scripts were based on current affairs. The actors expressed their views on current political situations. The body movements were natural, and the costumes they worn suited the status of the characters. However, the performances of the patriot troupes were mainly in speech. There were hardly any singing passages being created.

*Guangqiang* (廣腔) and *guangsang* (廣嗓) denote the use of Cantonese as the spoken or singing language. This switch of language was caused by the replacement of *waijiang ban* (外江班, “troupes from other provinces”) by *shenggang ban* (省港班, “troupes in Canton [Guangzhou] and Hong Kong”) in the Guangdong province. This replacement began in the middle years of the reign of Emperor Guangzu (光緒) (1875-1908). During this period, literati such as Liang Qi-chao (梁啟超), Huang Lu-yi (黃魯逸) and Manshushi Zhuren (曼殊室主人)<sup>35</sup> began to write opera scripts. They based their stories on history, current affairs and social issues. Such operas include *Liang Tian-lai* (梁天來) and *Story of Shan Yun* (山東響馬). In that era, outlined opera (提綱戲) and martial opera (武打戲) were still sung in *xipeng guanhua* (戲棚官話), but the *choujiao* (丑角) had already begun to use *guangsang* (廣嗓) and *guangbai* (廣白).<sup>36</sup> Contents based on folk stories and anecdotes were introduced. Subsequently Cantonese was used more and more in order to suit the taste of the audiences. In some scripts, certain passages were specified to be sung in Cantonese. (See Qiu He-chou (丘鶴壽, 1880-1942), *A New Edition of the Study of Qin* (琴學新編).)

<sup>35</sup> This name is a pen name which literally means “The Master of Chamber Manshu.” – Translator’s note.

<sup>36</sup> Ouyang Yu-qian (歐陽予倩) wrote in *A Preliminary Discussion of Cantonese Opera* (試談粵劇), “The Cantonese opera was originally sung in *xipeng guanhua* (戲棚官話). During the reign of Emperor Tongzhi (同治)[1861-1875], Cantonese was introduced to it. Subsequently Cantonese was used more and more, and then the singing passages were sung in Cantonese as well.”

Cantonese has a mellower and more nasal quality than *xipeng guanhua* (戲棚官話) and is not compatible with the bright and harsh sound of the latter. Some *shengjiao* (生角) of that era, including Jin Shan-bing (金山炳) and Zhu Ci-bo (朱次伯), replaced the singing style in *xiaosang* (小嗓) with *pinghou* (平喉) and used more colloquial words to suit the characteristics of Cantonese.

There is a close relationship between the language used and the singing style (聲腔). Many changes were introduced in Cantonese opera when Cantonese replaced *zhongzhou yin* as the performing language. In the 1920s and 1930s, the audiences were eager to watch new operas, and thus many new operas were staged. The actors experimented singing in a new style in performing the standard repertoire. For example, in performing *Mourning for Bai Fu-rong at Night* (夜弔白芙蓉), Zhu Ci-bo sang the passage “Thinking of the Beauty in the Book-Storing Chamber” (藏經閣憶美) in Cantonese and in *pinghou* (平喉). This was appreciated by the audiences as they understood what was being sung. Zhu subsequently further experimented with singing in *pinghou* to match the melodic contour of the lyrics. Later, most *wusheng* (武生), *xiaowu* (小武), *xiaosheng* (小生) and *shengjiao* (生角) used *pinghou* in their singing and spoken passages.

In the 1930s, maestro singer Xue Jue-xian (薛覺先, 1904-1956) greatly appreciated the singing style of Zhu Ci-bo. He also invented a new singing style which inspired singers of the following generation and has become the standard singing style of the role of *sheng* (生).

Xue's contribution is not limited to the invention of a new singing style. As early as 1924, he proposed the abandonment of the outlined opera and asked scriptwriters to write down the whole opera. This is the beginning of a reform of the Cantonese opera. Although an opera with script may not necessarily be better than an outlined opera, this practice did begin a new phase in the development of the Cantonese opera. Xue also travelled to Shanghai to watch performances of *Kunqu* (崑劇), Peking opera, *shuoshu* (說書), *dagu* (大鼓), *fengyang huagu* (鳳陽花鼓), and learned quite a number of folk tunes from the provinces of Jiangsu (江蘇) and Zhejiang (浙江), as well as some elements of the Peking opera, including the martial art of northern operas and their percussion patterns.

In May 1927, Xue returned to Guangzhou from Shanghai and performed for the Tian Wai Tian Troupe (天外天劇團). In these performances, he made use of what he had learned in Shanghai, and “amalgamated the characteristics of northern and southern operas, and created new tunes with the mixed use of melodic and percussion instruments.” He incorporated the violin (called *fanling* 梵鈴 in the profession) in the accompanying ensemble, improved the make-up of the *huadan* (花旦) and eliminated some bad practices from the performance.

With the adoption of *pinghou* (平喉), the tonal level used in Cantonese opera singing was lowered (the *do* is lowered from E<sup>b</sup> to C). Subsequently, there were changes in the use of accompanying instruments. Maestro Lü Wen-cheng (呂文成, 1898-1981) invented the *gaochu* (高胡), and Yin Zi-zhong (尹自重) changed the tunings of the violin to a major second lower, that is, to F-C-G-D.

The actor roles in Cantonese opera are closely related to the singing style. In the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, there were ten major roles in Cantonese opera. In the 1930s and 1940s, because of the economic recession, Xue Jue-xian adopted a “Six Major Roles” system (六柱制). The six major roles were *wenwusheng* (文武生), *zhengyin huadan* (正印花旦), *chousheng* (丑生), *wusheng* (武生), *xiaosheng* (小生) and *erbang huadan* (二幫花旦). Of the roles in Peking opera and *Kunqu*, only the *sheng* (生) and *dan* (旦) were retained.

The six major roles are differentiated by the male/female role the actors played, the hierarchy and importance of the actors in the opera. The *wenwusheng* (文武生) is the most important role. He or she is capable of playing a civic and a martial role. It is believed that this term was coined by Liang Shao-hua (靚少華) of the Lei Yuen Lok Opera Company (梨園樂劇團) who would like to hire the famous actor Xin Shao-hau (新少華) to perform in his troupe. Liang used this term to emphasize Xin's prominence. The *xiaosheng* (小生) is the secondary male role and is not as prominent as the *wenwusheng*. The *chousheng*'s (丑生) role is even less prominent and this is a comic role. He always exposes the “ugliness” to create a comic effect. The *wusheng* (武生) is the equivalence of the *laosheng* (老生) and *mo* (末) in Peking opera. The *huadan* (花旦) is a female role from the age of adolescence to the middle age. It is divided into *zhengyin huadan* (正印花旦), “the primary female

role”) and *erbang huadan* (二幫花旦, “the secondary female role”).

The use of *pinghou*, the adoption of the system of “Six Major Roles” and the prominence of the *wenwusheng* are characteristics of Cantonese opera. Because the number of roles in Cantonese opera was reduced, some characteristic singing styles were eliminated. At present, the singing styles of Cantonese opera are divided into *pinghou* (平喉), *zihou* (子喉), *dahou* (大喉) and *roudaizuo* (肉帶左) (also called *yudaizuo* 玉帶左, which is one form of *zuopie* 左撇 mentioned above) (see Table 6.6).

**Table 6.6**  
**The Singing Styles Used in Cantonese Opera and the Roles that Employed Them**

<i>pinghou</i> (平喉)	real voice (真嗓 or 真聲), used by <i>sheng</i> (生) and <i>chou</i> (丑). Example: the excerpt from “Comforting the Wife” from <i>Time to Go Home</i> (胡不歸 · 慰妻) in the CD recording.
<i>zihou</i> (子喉)	falsetto voice (假嗓 or 假聲), used by <i>huadan</i> (花旦) and female roles. Example: the excerpt from <i>The Red Candle Becomes a Buddhist's Lantern</i> (搖紅燭化佛前燈) in the CD recording
<i>dahou</i> (大喉)	mainly in real voice, but occasionally in falsetto voice. The singing style is bold and strong. In the profession, it is called <i>baqiang</i> (霸腔) or <i>zuopie</i> (左撇). Used by <i>sheng</i> (生). Example: the excerpt from <i>Zhou Yu Writing a Letter to His King</i> (周瑜寫表) in the CD recording

The prominent use of *pinghou* in Cantonese opera was brought about by the patriotic troupes, actors like Zhu Ci-bo, and the singers active in the singing clubs (歌壇). In the 1930s, there were “Four Famous *Pinghou* Singers” (四大平喉). They were Zhang Yue-er (張月兒, 1907-1981), Xiao Ming-xing (小明星, 1912-1943)<sup>37</sup>, Xu Liu-xian (徐柳仙, 1917-1985) and Zhang Hui-fang (張惠芳, dates uncertain). They were actively singing in singing clubs, and the recordings they made were more numerous than those of Cantonese opera singers.

### Section 3 The Co-operation between Lyricists and Singers

From the end of the Qing Dynasty to the 1930s, there were many tea houses

<sup>37</sup> This name is a stage name which literally means “Little Star.” – Translator’s note.

(茶廳 or 茶樓) in Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Macau. In these tea houses, there were chambers in which female actors/singers were engaged to sing “The Eight Famous Pieces” (八大曲本) and popular *yuequ* (粵曲, “Cantonese songs”). The singers sang excerpts from famous Cantonese operas as well as newly created pieces for this kind of performance context.

The female singers who only sang in this kind of performance venue were called *nuling* (女伶). “The Four Famous *Pinghou* Singers” of this time were all *nulings*. The *nulings* all sang a core repertoire. Xiao Ming-xing (小明星) specifically asked Wang Xin-fan (王心帆, 1896-1992) to write pieces for her which fit her personal singing style. At that time, the text of the core repertoire generally had a sentence structure of 3-3-4, that is, a ten-word sentence subdivided into three, three and four words respectively. The pieces that Wang created for Xiao Ming-xing generally do not follow this pattern, and Xiao sang in a distinctive new style. For example, in *Lamenting for Juan-hong* (悼鵠紅), there was a passage in *yueou* (粵謳, literally meaning “Cantonese song”) which used the metrical pattern of *yiban qiding* (一板七叮, one strong beat followed by seven weak beats). Xiao Ming-xing thought that it was not good and changed it to *qingge* (清歌, literally meaning “unaccompanied song”), and the metrical pattern of *yiban sanding* (一板三叮, one strong beat followed by three weak beats) was employed. Xiao Ming-xing always borrowed literature books to read from Wang, like *Dreams of the Red Mansion* (紅樓夢), and she loved to read poems written by Su Man-shu (蘇曼殊). Wang felt that Xiao Ming-xing understood what he wrote, and that she practised regularly and continually experimented with different singing styles. She was good in interpreting Wang’s pieces, and thus Wang was glad to write new pieces for her.

#### Section 4 The Co-operation between Scriptwriters and Arrangers

In the 1950s, Cantonese opera co-existed with the film industry. Many film stars were Cantonese opera actors. They participated in the film industry in order to earn their livings, and they devoted their passion in performances of Cantonese opera. At that time, Xue Jue-xian (薛覺先) promoted the use of a full script in the

performance of Cantonese opera and rejected the outlined opera. As a result, there was a demand for scripts of new operas. The main opera companies in Hong Kong in that period were the Sun Yim Yeung Opera Company (新艷陽劇團), Sin Fung Ming Opera Company (仙鳳鳴劇團), and the Lai Sing Opera Company (麗聲劇團). The important actors of Cantonese opera mostly performed in these companies. Sometimes it was difficult to find someone playing the roles of *chousang* (丑生) and *wusang* (武生). The leading actor of the Sun Yim Yeung Opera Company was Fang Yan-fen (芳豔芬, 1922- ). Xin Ma Shi-zeng (新馬師曾), Huang Qian-sui (黃千歲) and Chen Jin-tang (陳錦棠) were engaged to perform the role of *wenwushang* (文武生) for this company. The leading actor of the Sin Fung Ming Opera Company was Pak Suet-sin (白雪仙) and its *wenwushang* was Yam Kim-fai (任劍輝). The main actors of the Lai Sing Opera Company were Wu Jun-li (吳君麗) and He Fei-fan (何非凡).

The foremost scriptwriter for these opera companies was Tong Dik-seng (唐滌生), who had widely read Chinese classical operas and dramas. His operas were based on stories from the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties. He injected new blood into this genre and his operas are dramatic and elegant. He was most active in writing Cantonese operas between 1955 and 1959, and his works are still frequently performed nowadays. These works include *Princess Chang Ping* (帝女花), *Tale of the Purple Hairpin* (紫釵記), *Goddess of the Luo River* (洛神), *The Summer Snow* (六月雪), *The Moon Pavilion* (雙仙拜月亭), *The Reunion by a White Hare* (白兔會).

There were fruitful results from the close co-operation between Tong Dik-seng and music arrangers. Tong worked closely with maestros of Cantonese music, including Wong Jyt-seng (王粵生, 1919-1989) and Zhu Yi-gang (朱毅剛, 1922-1981), to create famous *xiaoqu*. For example, *Swallows in the Snow* (雪中燕) from *Princess Chang Ping* was composed by Wong Jyt-seng; *Song from the Barbarian Land* (胡地蠻歌) from *The Princess in Distress* (鳳閣恩仇未了情) was composed by Zhu Yi-gang in the 1960s for the Tai Lung Fung Opera Company (大龍鳳劇團),

to be sung by Mai Bing-rong (麥炳榮) and Feng Huang-nu (鳳凰女)<sup>38</sup>. By the co-operation between Tong Dik-seng and composers, masterpieces were created one after one. Sometimes the musicians suggested some pieces to Tong for writing lyrics. Sometimes the text was written first, and then the musicians created music for it. An example of the latter is *Colourful Clothings* (霓裳羽衣十八拍) from the scene “Rescuing Pei Yu” of *The Reincarnation of Lady Red Plum* (再世紅梅記之脫阱救裴). Examples of the former include “Reunion” from *Tale of the Purple Hairpin* (紫釵記之劍合釵圓), which was arranged by Wong Jyt-seng from *Moon Over Xunyang* (潯陽夜月), and “Encounter” from *Princess Chang Ping* (帝女花之庵遇、相認), which was arranged from one of the “Eight Famous Cantonese Pieces” *Bidding Farewell by the River Qiu* (秋江送別). By his highly creative power, Tong Dik-seng wrote operas of very high standard by employing ancient stories, ancient tunes and elegant lyrics, and his operas suit the characteristic styles of the specific actors.

Tong created a new “classical” style of Cantonese opera and injected new blood into this genre. This was achieved by his close working with musicians and the realisation of the scripts by the actors. He was strong in writing scripts that fit specific actors and their singing styles. For example, Pak Suet-sin and Yam Kim-fai were strong in personal expression, in singing *zhongban* (中板) and *kuaiban* (快板), and in reciting. Many operas performed by the Sin Fung Ming Opera Company were dramatic and had subtle personal expression. There are quite a number of duets in these operas. Wu Jun-li (吳君麗, 1930- ) was strong in martial art and in playing the role of young lady. Tong tailored-made roles for her. Fang Yan-fen (芳艷芬) was good at singing, and Tong wrote many solo passages for her. In this way, the expectation of the audiences was satisfied.

By reading the lyrics cited in the Listening Guides of this chapter, the readers will find that Tong Dik-seng paid much attention in creating couplets that used an elegant language. Such examples include “鴛鴦扣，宜結不宜解；苦相思，能買不能賣。” (A pair of knots should be tied together rather than untied; the sad

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<sup>38</sup> This name is a stage name which literally means “Daughter of the Phoenix.” – Translator’s note.

longing between two lovers will persist and cannot be relinquished.<sup>39</sup>), “足踏蓮台三尺浪，手挽雲端五彩牀。” (My feet are riding the several-feet high waves at the lotus deck; my hand is touching the multicoloured bed on the top of the cloud.<sup>40</sup>). Cantonese is a highly tonal language with nine tones. It is already difficult to write lyrics that are elegant. It is even more difficult to write lyrics that have to fit the drama and the characteristic singing styles of the actors. The two actors that performed the above two passages gave an excellent interpretation in *zihou* (子喉) and expressed the emotion and mood of the characters superbly.

Cantonese opera is highly adaptable to the changing environment and the taste of the audiences. To create masterpieces in a new style, it was necessary for different experts to co-operate and to experiment for a long period of time. These experts had to be well-trained in the tradition, knowledgeable about traditional singing passages and operatic stories, and at the same time had to be flexible, readily absorbing different elements from various kinds of art. It was also necessary for them to be able to distinguish the good from the bad in creating a new style.

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<sup>39</sup> English translation by Tse Chun-yan (謝俊仁).

<sup>40</sup> English translation by Tse Chun-yan (謝俊仁).

## Listening Guide

### 6.1 An Excerpt from *Zhou Yu Writing a Letter to His King* (周瑜寫表) (CD 3-13)

#### Information of the Recording

Singer: Bai Yan-zai (白燕仔)

Title of the Record: *Zhou Yu Writing a Letter to His King* (周瑜寫表) (China Record, 1962)

Year of Recording: Uncertain

#### Lyrics

(白)待我來一觀。  
(鑼鼓白)弟亮有書來拜奉。  
敬達都督小周公。  
自從勞師與動眾。  
假途滅虢也相同。  
既是無才不可動。  
若是無勇莫稱雄。  
卵子焉能擋山重。  
草蛇怎敢敵蛟龍。  
莫要逞能把計弄。  
速速收兵回江東。  
勸都督，須保重。  
應忍氣，莫稱雄。  
從此後，且莫動。  
若不知機，要你命歸終。  
【首板】看過了書信心內痛。

(Synopsis: Zhou Yu is reading a letter from Kong Ming (孔明) which persuades him to retreat his troops.)

#### Listening Guide

Bai Yan-zai was a renowned singer of *dahou* (大喉). In this excerpt, the speech is not accompanied by any melodic instruments. The singer had to produce a resonant sound by using deep breaths. The words are clearly articulated.

Although this is an unaccompanied speech, there are some melodic elements in it, and the singer had to project the words in a certain melodic mode and in an appropriate rhythm. It is in a mid-way between singing and reciting. In the profession, there is a saying that “reciting is even more difficult than singing.” This saying acts as a reminder to the singers that they should be more hard-working on the speech than on the singing passages.

This excerpt is accompanied by the *gaobianluo* (高邊鑼). The speech is rhymed and made up of couplets. After each sentence, there is a percussion pattern (鑼鼓點).

The speech in this excerpt is recited faster and faster, which depicts the anger of Zhou Yu in reading a letter from Kong Ming (孔明). There is a *ritardando* at the end of the speech, on the words “*mingguizhong*” (命歸終, “You will be dead!”). An *ad. lib.* singing passage in *shouban* (首板) follows. This excerpt vividly depicts the anger of the seriously ill Zhou Yu.

## 6.2 A Comparison of the Old Singing Style (古腔) and *Pinghou* (平喉) (CD 3-13 and CD 3-14)

Listen again to the excerpts from *Zhou Yu Writing a Letter to His King* (周瑜寫表) (CD 3-13) and “Comforting the Wife” from *Time to Go Home* (胡不歸 · 慰妻) (CD 3-14). Try not to read the lyrics of the former excerpt when you are listening. Are you able to understand what is being sung? Write down your listening experience in about one hundred words. Compare the instrumentation and singing style of these two excerpts.

## 6.3 “Comforting the Wife” from *Time to Go Home* (胡不歸 · 慰妻) (CD 3-14)

### Information of the Recording

Singer: Xue Jue-xian (薛覺先)

Title of the Record: Commemorative Albums of Xue Jue-xian: Volumes 1 and 2  
(薛覺先紀念專輯壹至貳集) (Bear Music, 1994)

Recorded in the 1940s

### Lyrics

#### 【長句二黃慢板】

相對淒涼，相看神愴，嬌呀你梨渦淺笑，試問今何往，春山愁鎖淚偷藏，花好偏逢的風雨放，苦命妻逢，我呢個苦命郎，恩愛難求，我啞位慈母諒，惟有低聲偷怨，怨一句天意茫茫。(lower line, ending with an even tone)

(Synopsis: The protagonist is thinking of his lover, and sighs that they are not able to be together.)

## Listening Guide

The passage “Comforting the Wife” is completely in *banqiang* (板腔), without *xiaoqu* (小曲). It is a famous scene from the Cantonese opera *Time to Go Home* written by Feng Zhi-fen (馮志芬). It was very famous in the 1940s and was a hit piece sung by Xue Jue-xian (薛覺先) and Shanghai Mei (上海妹)<sup>41</sup>. It has been used as a teaching material of Cantonese opera singing for a long time. In the profession, the singing style of Xue Jue-xian is known as “Xue Style” (薛腔) and it is characterised by its sharpness and clear quality.

*Changju erhuang manban* (長句二黃慢板) is a *banqiang* (板腔) created by Xue Jue-xian. It is characterized by the expansion of the number of words in a sentence and the shortening of the interlude between the upper line and the lower line. In the traditional *bangzi* (梆子) and *erhuang* (二黃) sung in *xipeng guanhua* (戲棚官話), the number of words in a sentence was either seven or ten, and there were not many *chanzis* (襯字). In this passage created by Xue, the number of divisions in a sentence is increased and the interludes are shortened. It thus becomes a long singing passage, and there is more flexibility and freedom in writing the lyrics. The story becomes more dramatic and the development of the plot is quickened. The structure of this passage is as follows:

Introduction (起式): a couplet making up of either four, five or seven words	相對淒涼 (the first division) 相看神愴 (the second division)
Main Body (正文): making up of sentences of seven words, the number of sentences being flexible	嬌呀你梨渦淺笑 試問今何往 春山愁鎖淚偷藏 花好偏逢 <u>咽</u> 的風雨放 苦命妻逢 <u>我</u> 呢個苦命郎 恩愛難求 <u>我</u> 嗰位慈母諒 (the underlined words are <i>chanzis</i> )
Closing Section (收式): normally making up of eight words	惟有低聲偷怨 (the first division) 怨 <u>一句</u> 天意 (the second division) 茫茫 (the third division) (the underlined words are <i>chanzis</i> )

<sup>41</sup> This name is a stage name which literally means “Girl from Shanghai.” – Translator’s note.

## 6.4 Autumn Grave (秋墳) (CD 3-15)

### **Information of the Recording**

Singer: Xiao Ming-xing (小明星, 1912-1943)

Title of the Record: *A Commemorative Album of Xiao Ming-xing* (小明星紀念專輯)  
(Hong Kong: Bear Music, 1987)

Year of Recording: Uncertain

She thought that the pieces that I wrote were better than others, and thus asked me to write some more new pieces for her. She also asked me to write some realistic contents, not something abstract. As her singing was particularly moving, I prefer to hear her singing than others. Therefore, I was very glad to write some more pieces for her.

- Wang Xin-fan (王心帆, 1896-1992)

### **Lyrics**

【南音】飄殘紅淚，哭斷迴腸。為你一杯誤飲，紫霞漿。正有明珠芳塚葬。  
要我薜衣蘿帶，泣在山陽。只有秋菊寒泉，來薦上。等你芳魂來饗，就趁住  
月兒微光。卿呀自你【乙反南音】死耗傳來，我魂魄喪。遺容泣對，似醉如  
狂。

(Synopsis: The singer laments the passing away of his lover.)

### **Listening Guide**

Xiao Ming-xing intended to develop her career in Hong Kong, and specifically asked Wang Xin-fan to write this piece for her. The sentimental voice of Xiao Ming-xing matched the content of its lyrics perfectly and this piece was greatly acclaimed by the audiences of that time. Although the content of this piece is sorrowful, Xiao Ming-xing's singing is not sluggish. Instead, it is flowing, undulating, with a lot of rising and falling. The audiences loved her singing because it was pleasing and had a special character.

In the seventh month of the lunar calendar of 1943, Xiao Ming-xing sang in a singing club located in Jiang Lan Avenue (槺欄路) of Guangzhou (廣州) after an illness. She sang *Autumn Grave* in the Tian Nan Restaurant (添男茶樓). She fainted when she was singing the lyrics "There were only night wind and rain accompanying the beauty." (只有夜來風雨送梨花) and passed away on the following day at the age of thirty. Wu Yi-xiao (吳一嘯), a maestro writer of Cantonese operatic songs active in the 1950s and 1960s, wrote a piece called *The Fall of a Rose in July* (七月落薇花) in memory of Xiao Ming-xing. The plain

speech in the beginning says, “The *Autumn Grave* is the swan song. How pity it is that the rose fell in July!” (一曲秋墳成絕唱，可憐七月落薇花。). This piece was sung by Liang Ying (梁瑛) in the singing clubs and was later released as a recording.

The singers in the singing clubs sang in a more lyrical, undulating and flowing style than the singers in Cantonese opera when singing the *pinghou* (平喉). For example, in the above excerpt, when the mode changes from *zhengxian* (正線) to *yifan nanyin* (乙反南音) in the lyrics “From the moment that you passed away. . .” (卿呀自你死耗傳來), the transition in the singing is very smooth and flowing. This change of mode draws the attention of the audiences and is very expressive.

## 6.5 An Excerpt from *A Wanderer's Autumn Grief* (客途秋恨) (CD 3-16)

### Information of the Recording

Performer: Dou Wun (杜煥, 1910-1979)

Title of the Record: *Naamyam [Nanyin] Songs of Love* (訴衷情：香港文化瑰寶  
杜煥瞽師地水南音精選—1975 年富隆茶樓現場珍貴錄音)  
(Chinese Music Archive, Department of Music, The Chinese  
University of Hong Kong, 2007)

Recorded in 1975

### Listening Guide

*A Wanderer's Autumn Grief* is a famous piece of *dishui nanyin* (地水南音) originated from a poem with the same title in the Qing Dynasty. It was arranged as a piece of *dishui nanyin* during the reigns of the Emperors Jiaqing (嘉慶) and Daoguang (道光) (1760-1851). It talks about a story in which the literatus Miu Lian-xian (繆蓮仙) from Hangzhou (杭州) thought of the prostitute Mai Qiu-juan (麥秋娟) from Guangzhou (廣州). Miu Lian-xian was a real person who was born in Hangzhou around 1766 and later lived in Guangzhou for twenty-six years. The lyrics of this short piece of *dishui nanyin* are elegant and have an ancient flavour. The present recording was recorded by the ethnomusicologist Bell Yung (榮鴻曾), who arranged to have the blind performer Dou Wun performed in the Fu Loong Teahouse (富隆茶樓), situated in Lascar Row (摩羅街) of Sheung Wan (上環),

Hong Kong in 1975. Yung recorded a total of sixteen pieces of *dishui nanyin* sung by Dou Wun, and this recording is one of them.

The structure of the lyrics of this piece is typical of *dishui nanyin*. It is divided into Book I and Book II. Each Book is subdivided into three sections: the introduction (起式), the main body (正文), and the closing section (煞尾). The introduction is short and made up of two sentences: “涼風有汛秋月無邊 / 虧我思嬌情緒好似度日如年” (Winds are blowing, the moon is shining, and the time freezes when I am thinking of you). The main body is the longest section and is made up of a series of quatrains (see below). The closing section rounds up the piece and there is an *accelerando* in it. Similar to the *banqiang* (板腔) in Cantonese opera, the melody of *nanyin* is realised by the performer by following the embedded melodic contour of the lyrics. The lyrics are rhymed, and the cadential musical notes of the last word of the sentences in a quatrain follow a fixed pattern. The linguistic tones of the last word of the four sentences of a quatrain are as follow: oblique tone, upper even tone, oblique tone, and lower even tone.

The mode of a *nanyin* piece may be in *zhengxian* (正線) or in *yifan xian* (乙反線). In this recording excerpt, the *zhengxian* (the pentatonic scale of *sol-la-do-re-mi*) is used. In a passage of *nanyin* in *zhengxian*, the last sentence of a quatrain usually has a cadential musical note on *sol*, which, together with the lower even tone of the last word, gives the audiences a feeling of full closure. Other sentences of the quatrain end on either *re* or *do*, which forms a half closure. The following is a listening guide to the first few sentences of *A Wanderer's Autumn Grief*:

0:00	The instrumental prelude, called <i>banmian</i> (板面). The performer played the <i>zheng</i> (箏) with the right hand, and the <i>paiban</i> (拍板) with the left hand.
0:30	The introduction 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence: 涼風有汛 秋月無邊 (邊: upper even tone, ends on <i>re</i> ) 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentence: 虧我思嬌情緒 好似度日如年 (年: lower even tone, ends on <i>sol</i> )
1:08	The main body, in a series of quatrains 1 <sup>st</sup> quatrain: 1 <sup>st</sup> sentence: 小生繆姓 就係蓮仙字 (字: oblique tone, ends on <i>re</i> ) 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentence: 虧我為憶多情妓女 呢個麥氏秋娟 (娟: upper even tone, ends on <i>re</i> ) 3 <sup>rd</sup> sentence: 佢聲色係性情人讚羨 (羨: oblique tone, ends on <i>do</i> ) 4 <sup>th</sup> sentence: 佢更兼才既貌係兩雙全 (全: lower even tone, ends on <i>sol</i> )

2:12	<p>2<sup>nd</sup> quatrain:</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> sentence: 今日天隔一方難見面 (面: oblique tone, ends on <i>re</i>)</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> sentence: 使我孤舟沉寂晚涼天 (天: upper even tone, ends on <i>re</i>)</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> sentence: 斜陽襯住雙飛燕 (燕: oblique tone, ends on <i>do</i>)</p> <p>4<sup>th</sup> sentence: 我斜倚係蓬窗思悄然 (然: lower even tone, ends on <i>sol</i>)</p>
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(Synopsis: The singer longingly thinks of his lover whom he has lost contact with.)

A complete recording of Books I and II of *A Wanderer's Autumn Grief* lasts for about thirty minutes. The subsequent lyrics are omitted here.

## 6.6 Operatic Passages from *The Red Candle Becomes a Buddhist's Lantern* (搖紅燭化佛前燈) and *Goddess of the Luo River* (洛神) (CD 3-17, CD 3-18)

### 1. A Passage from *The Red Candle Becomes a Buddhist's Lantern* (CD 3-17)

#### Information of the Recording

Title of the Record: *The Red Candle Becomes a Buddhist's Lantern: Selected Popular Pieces Sung by Hong Xian-nu*, Vol. 3 (搖紅燭化佛前燈：紅線女金曲選 (三)) (Bailey Record, 1991)

Year of Recording: Uncertain

#### Listening Guide

The “Nu’s Style” (女腔) created by Hong Xian-nu (紅線女)<sup>42</sup> has become a model of *huadan* (花旦) singing in Guangzhou after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), whereas the “Fang’s Style” (芳腔) created by Fang Yan-fen (芳艷芬) has become a model of *zihou* (子喉) singing in Hong Kong.

Generally speaking, the Nu’s Style is emotional while the Fang’s Style is introverted. The range of “Tears of the Red Candle” is not wide. Hong Xian-nu used ornaments in singing the words in the lower even tone and lower entering tone, thus creating a special undulating effect of these words. This effect aptly matches the sentiment expressed by the protagonist in the opera whose role is first a prostitute but later a nun. She expresses a mixed feeling when thinking of her past lover:

身如柳絮隨風擺，  
歷劫滄桑無了賴。  
鴛鴦扣，宜結不宜解。

<sup>42</sup> This name is a stage name which literally means “Lady of the Red Thread.” – Translator’s note.

苦相思，能買不能賣。  
悔不該，惹下冤孽債。  
怎料到賒得易時還得快。  
顧影自憐，不復是如花少艾。  
恩愛煙消瓦解，  
只剩得半殘紅燭在襟懷。

(Synopsis: The singer sighs for her past romance, and that she is already in her middle age but is still single.)

## 2. A Passage from *Goddess of the Luo River* (CD 3-18)

### Information of the Recording

Title of the Record: *Goddess of the Luo River* (洛神) (original soundtrack, Eng Kin Film Company, 1957)

Year of Recording: 1957

### Listening Guide

*The Red Candle Becomes a Buddhist's Lantern* was written by Tong Dik-seng before his mature style, while *Goddess of the Luo River* was created during the peak of his creative power. In the passage “Sorrow of the Luo River” (洛水恨) from the final act, there are instrumental interludes during which the actor dances. At the beginning of this passage, the *dizi* (笛子) plays an introduction, and the actor sings the lyrics “Misty, boundless and indistinct” (飄飄，渺渺，茫茫) in free tempo. Afterwards, the beats emerge. Many words in this excerpt are sung in short melismas, and the last word “han” (寒, “coldness”) is sung in a long melisma, depicting the leisure feeling of the goddess of the Luo River. This long melisma fully exhibits Fang Yan-fen’s soft, mellow tone quality and her introverted singing style:

飄飄，渺渺，茫茫。  
足踏蓮台三尺浪，(interlude)  
手挽雲端五彩牀。  
縷縷紫煙織髮網，  
六幅湘紗剪衣裳。(interlude)  
別了蒼桑，執掌南湘，  
仙界無台可望鄉，(interlude)  
誓約難忘。  
碧漢銀河無處傍，  
一汀煙月不勝寒。(melisma)

(Synopsis: The protagonist has been sent away to work in southern Hunan, and has to be separated from his lover.)

Hong Xian-nu made a recording of “Tears of the Red Candle” again in the 1990s. The arranger this time was Peng Jia-huang (彭家樞). This recording’s singing is in a more mature style comparing to her recording of the 1950s.

Fang Yan-fen retired from opera performance in 1959. In 1987, she made a recording for the Kwan Fong Charitable Foundation (群芳慈善基金) and the record is titled *A New Recording of Fang’s Style* (芳腔新唱). In this record, she sang “Sorrow of the Luo River” again. The music was written by Wen Zhi-peng (溫誌鵬) and the arranger was Yan Guan-fa (嚴觀發). Compared to the recording made in the 1950s, this recording used more instruments and the arrangement is more “symphonic.” This quasi-symphonic style has exerted a big influence on Cantonese opera performance, and some big opera companies in Hong Kong have developed in this direction.

## Extended Knowledge

### 6.1 A Comparison of *Waijiang Ban* (外江班) and *Bendi Ban* (本地班)

During the reign of Daoguang (道光) (1821-1850) in the Qing Dynasty, the government officials preferred the performance of *waijiang ban* (外江班, “troupes from other provinces”) to that of *bendi ban* (本地班, “local troupes”). As a result, there were more restrictions on the performance of the latter. The *bendi ban* were allowed to perform in the villages only so that the disturbance caused by their loud percussion instruments to the residents was reduced to a minimum.

*Menghua Suobu* (夢華鎖簿) written by Yang Mao-jian (楊懋健) in the Qing Dynasty is an important primary source for the history and performance context of Cantonese opera in that period. In this work, there is a passage describing the differences between *waijiang ban* and *bendi ban*:

*Weijiang ban* are troupes from other provinces. Their performance excels in the music and artistry. The audiences, mostly government officials, watch the opera and listen to the music while having dinner and tasting wine. The dance movement of the singers, who wear costumes, is elegant. The performance of *bendi ban* is not as good as that of *weijiang ban*. There are no literary bases for the stories of the *bendi ban* and their lyrics are not elegant. Moreover, there are fireworks shooting during the period of the *bendi ban* performance and it is extremely noisy. The government officials think that this causes disturbance to the life of the people, and thus restrict the performance of *bendi ban* to the villages. The music played by *bendi ban* is loud, and their costumes and sets are extravagant, which is not matched even by the performances in the capital. . . . Although there are good performances of *bendi ban*, the situation does not favour their performance and they are being suppressed. . . .

From the above quotation, we can see that there was a combat between *bendi ban* and *weijiang ban*. The *bendi ban* tried to outdo *weijiang ban* by having beautiful costumes and sets, and by performing more dramatic stories.

### 6.2 *Dishui Nanyin* (地水南音)

The music of Cantonese opera is divided into three categories, namely the *banqiang* (板腔), *qupai* (曲牌, fixed tune), and *shuochang* (說唱, narrative singing). The *shuochang* originates from story-telling. There are many genres of *shuochang* in China, some famous ones being *Suzhou tanci* (蘇州彈詞) from the South and

*jingyun dagu* (京韻大鼓) from the North.

Genres of *shuochang* in China are generally closely related to their local genres of opera and music. The relationship of *dishui nanyin* (地水南音) and Cantonese opera is an example. In the Guangdong province, the main genres of *shuochang* include *nanyin* (南音), *muyu* (木魚) and *longzhou* (龍舟). They are all sung in Cantonese. Among them, the *nanyin* is most popular and is much used in Cantonese opera. The scriptwriter marks these passages as “*nanyin*” in the opera script.

*Dishui nanyin* refers to the type of *nanyin* sung by blind people. The type of *nanyin* sung in Cantonese opera is sometimes called *xipeng nanyin* (戲棚南音). *Dishui nanyin* is also called *Guangdong nanyin* (廣東南音), to distinguish it from *Fujian nanyin* (福建南音), or *nanguan* (南管), popular in southern Fujian province.

The singer of *dishui nanyin* generally holds a *paiban* (拍板) in his left hand and plays the *zheng* (箏) by his right hand. The *zheng* used in *nanyin* is smaller than the 21-string *zheng* commonly used nowadays, and it is placed on a table in performance. Occasionally the *yehu* (椰胡) and *yangqin* (揚琴) are being used as accompanying instruments as well.

The social status of the artists of *dishui nanyin* is generally low. They are mainly blind people. The male artist is called *gushi* (瞽師), and the female artist is called *guniang* (瞽娘). The traditional performance venues of the *nanyin* were restaurants, brothels and opium clubs. The duration of a piece of *nanyin* ranges from some ten minutes to several dozen hours.

In the early- and mid-twentieth century, *nanyin* was very popular in the Pearl River Delta. In the 1950s and 1960s, there were broadcast programmes of *nanyin* in Radion Television Hong Kong (香港電台) sung by the famous blind artist Dou Wun (杜煥, 1910-1979), accompanied by He Chan (何臣) on the *yehu*. In 1974, they gave a performance at the Hong Kong City Hall. The *nanyin* got out of fashion in Hong Kong in the 1980s with the change of musical taste of the general public.

Famous living artists of *nanyin* in Hong Kong include Tong Kin-woon (唐建垣), Au Kwan-cheung (區君祥) and Yuen Siu-fai (阮兆輝) (Yuen is also a famous Cantonese opera actor). To a certain extent, the *xipeng nanyin* continues the

dissemination of *dishui nanyin*.

Listen to *A Wanderer's Autumn Grief* (客途秋恨) sung by Dou Wun to get a flavour of the *nanyin*.

### 6.3 “Tears of the Red Candle” (紅燭淚) from *The Red Candle Becomes a Buddhist's Lantern* (搖紅燭化佛前燈)

#### Lyrics

身如柳絮隨風擺，  
歷劫滄桑無了賴。  
鴛鴦扣，宜結不宜解。  
苦相思，能買不能賣。  
悔不該，惹下冤孽債。  
怎料到賒得易時還得快。  
顧影自憐，不復是如花少艾。  
恩愛煙消瓦解，  
只剩得半殘紅燭在襟懷。

(Synopsis: The singer sighs for her past romance, and that she is already in her middle age but is still single.)

The composer Wong Jyt-seng (王粵生, 1919-1989) gave the following speech on his co-operation with the scriptwriter Tong Dik-seng (唐滌生) in a talk titled “On the Writing of *Banqiang* (板腔) and *Qupai* (曲牌) in Cantonese Opera” in October, 1986:

“The pieces that I wrote are derived from the lyrics. If Tong Dik-seng said that he would like a sad piece, I would then write a sad piece. I write pieces of different moods, such as happiness, anger, sorrow and joy, according to the moods of the lyrics. There should also be a match of sentiment in performing the accompaniment to Cantonese operatic passages. When an actor recites a passage of *koubai* (口白, plain speech) ‘You will not understand my situation,’ (你不會知道我的處境了), there may be different options for the sentiment expressed. The *zhangban* (掌板, principal percussionist) should catch the mood and give a suitable percussion pattern as an introduction to the singing passage.”

Wong Jyt-seng was a maestro and teacher of Cantonese music and Cantonese opera, and he co-operated with Tong Dik-seng in many occasions in the production of Cantonese operas and films. “Tears of the Red Candle” is such a product. The

singer of this piece was Hong Xian-nu (紅線女, 1924- ), a famous living *huadan* (花旦, young female role) of Cantonese opera. Hong's singing has already established as the “Nu's Style” (女腔). It is characterised by its sweetness, wide range and big leaps. The melody of “Tears of the Red Candle” has subsequently been used in *Tale of the Purple Hairpin* (紫釵記) and *The Butterfly and Red Pear Blossoms* (蝶影紅梨記) performed by the Sin Fung Ming Opera Company, and *The Outburst of a Shrew* (醋娥傳 or 獅吼記) performed by Chen Jin-tang (陳錦棠) and Wu Jun-li (吳君麗). It is obvious that Tong Dik-seng loved this piece very much. It is also notable that the moods of this melody in these different operas are different. Tong wrote new sets of lyrics to suit the contexts and moods. Among the above operas, the ones performed by the Sin Fung Ming Opera Company have established as standard repertoire and are worth watching.

## Glossary

<i>banghuang</i> (梆黃)	A short term for <i>bangzi</i> (梆子) and <i>erhuang</i> (二黃), two main categories of <i>banqiang</i> (板腔) used in Cantonese opera.
<i>banqiang bianhua ti</i> (板腔變化體)	A system used in <i>xiqu</i> (戲曲) in which the music is made up of different <i>banqiangs</i> (板腔).
<i>chanzi</i> (襯字)	Extra words added to the basic sentence structure in <i>banqiang</i> (板腔) and <i>shuochang</i> (說唱). The use of <i>chenzi</i> allows more flexibility and freedom for the writer in writing the lyrics.
<i>dingban</i> (叮板)	The beat system used in Cantonese opera. The <i>ban</i> (板) is a strong beat and the <i>ding</i> (叮) is a weak beat. In accompanying <i>bangqiang</i> (板腔), the <i>zhangban</i> (掌板), the principal percussionist, hits the <i>buyu</i> (卜魚) on the <i>ban</i> , and the <i>shadi</i> (沙的) on the <i>ding</i> . In accompanying <i>qupai</i> (曲牌), he or she hits the <i>dagu</i> (大鼓) on the <i>ban</i> and the <i>pengling</i> (碰鈴) on the <i>ding</i> .
<i>getan</i> (歌壇)	Performance venue of Cantonese operatic singing. In the early twentieth century, the <i>getan</i> was set in amusement parks. Later it was set in Chinese restaurants because there were a greater number of audiences. In this way, the performance was not affected by the weather. In the early days, most performers in <i>getan</i> were prostitutes. In the 1920s, there began to have professional singers in <i>getan</i> .
<i>Guangqiang</i> (廣腔)	The singing of opera and narrative in Cantonese. The melody is realised by singing the lyrics according to the implicit melody embedded in the text.

<i>gushi</i> (瞽師) / <i>guniang</i> (瞽娘)	Blind artists of <i>dishui nanyin</i> (地水南音). Their social status was not high. The male artists are called <i>gushi</i> , while the female artists are called <i>guniang</i> . The main performance venues for this genre in the early twentieth century were restaurants, brothels and opium clubs.
<i>heche xian</i> (合尺線)	Refers to the solmisation of the two strings of the <i>gaohu</i> (高胡) in accompanying Cantonese opera. The solmisation <i>he-che</i> (合尺) is equivalent to <i>sol-re</i> in Western solfège. The term also represents the category of <i>bangqiang</i> (板腔) called <i>erhuang</i> (二黃) <sup>43</sup> which uses this solmisation.
introduction-main body-closing section (起式—正文—煞尾)	A three-part structure commonly found in works of <i>dishui nanyin</i> (地水南音).
old singing style (古腔)	A comparatively old style of performing the speech and singing passages in Cantonese opera. The language used is based on <i>zhongzhouyin</i> (中州音). However, the pronunciation is not fixed, as in the process of oral transmission, there were mixtures with the Cantonese dialect.
<i>qupai liantao ti</i> (曲牌聯套體)	Also called <i>qupaiti</i> (曲牌體). A system used in <i>xiqus</i> (戲曲) in which <i>qupai</i> are used one after one.

<sup>43</sup> In the original Chinese version of this book, “*bangzi*” (梆子) is printed here by mistake. Thanks to Tse Chun-yan (謝俊仁) for pointing out this mistake. – Translator’s note.

<i>shuochang</i> (說唱)	Narrative singing. There are many genres of <i>shuochang</i> in China, some famous ones being <i>Suzhou tanci</i> (蘇州彈詞), <i>jingyun dagu</i> (京韻大鼓), <i>dishui nanyin</i> (地水南音), etc. A genre of <i>shuochang</i> is closely related to the <i>xiqu</i> (戲曲) of that area and other local genres in its musical system and performance practice.
six major roles (六柱)	A system used in Cantonese opera companies in Hong Kong since the 1940s. In this system, there are six principal actors: <i>wenwusheng</i> (文武生), <i>zhengyin huadan</i> (正印花旦), <i>chousheng</i> (丑生), <i>wusheng</i> (武生), <i>xiaosheng</i> (小生), and <i>erbang huadan</i> (二幫花旦).
tonal language (聲調語言)	A category of language in which a phonetic sound may have different meanings when pronounced in different pitches and inflections.
<i>xiaoqu</i> (小曲)	Also called <i>qupai</i> (曲牌). A comparatively fixed melody used in Cantonese opera. In writing an opera, the scriptwriter chooses a <i>xiaopu</i> whose mood matches the development of the story, and write lyrics for it.