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1 Sam Hui: An Introduction

In the 1960s, the immersion of Sam Hui's music marked a new era of Canto Pop. Sam Hui's music career started from singing the cover version in his early stage to later his own compositions. The use of instrumentation in his music was heavily influenced by the western popular music culture. Drum sets, electric guitar, bass guitar and keyboards were used in recording sessions. Beyond all doubt, the history of western popular music and Canto Pop, respectively, revealed that the Beatles' music was the first to start the globalization of western popular music while "Sam Hui was the first artist, singer and musician to start the localization of band sound in Hong Kong." (Wong, 2007)

In this article, several songs of Sam Hui are analyzed to allow students and teachers to gain a better understanding about the characteristics of his popular music. The selection of his songs for analysis is based upon the historical timeline of popular music in Hong Kong. The analysis focuses on five basic music elements: pitch, rhythm, timbre, texture and form. As the interpretation of these five basic music elements varies in different periods and musical styles, in this study, pitch refers to *melodic contour*, rhythm refers to *groove*, instrumentation refers to *combo section*, timbre refers to *overall sound*, and form refers to *introduction*, *verse*, *chorus*, *interlude* and *coda*.

Basically, Sam Hui's music can be divided into two dominant musical styles, Canto Pop and Canto Rock styles. In this article, six songs are selected and analyzed to demonstrate the harmonic structures, forms and musical styles of his music in different periods of time.

2 Musical Styles: Canto Pop & Canto Rock

2.1 Canto Pop

According to Ho (2003), Canto Pop “has developed since the early 1970s with a demand from Hong Kong audiences for popular music in their own dialect, Cantonese. Cantonese is one of the most widely known and influential Chinese dialects. It is spoken in the southern provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi, as well as throughout South East Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand”.

Under the influence of the western popular music, Canto Pop began to develop in the 1970s. In 1973 and 1974, two pioneered Canto Pop songs “A Marriage of Laughter and Tears” 《啼笑姻緣》 and “Tower Ballad” 《鐵塔凌雲》 were composed by Joseph Koo and Sam Hui respectively.

Canto Pop songs such as “Tower Ballad” 《鐵塔凌雲》, “From the Heart of a Loafer” 《浪子心聲》), “Impression” 《印象》 are very good examples to demonstrate the originality of localized popular music to be sung in Cantonese and composed by local composers. These songs are usually sung in a natural singing tone and accompanied by acoustic guitar with combo section. The chord progression is simple and easy to recognize such as I, vi, ii, IV and V. The content of the lyrics can be political, social or depiction of love stories.

Under the influence of the Beatles, and Simon and Garfunkel, the compositional techniques used in Canto Pop basically focused on melody construction, chord progressions, guitar accompaniment and AABA form. Besides, Sam Hui incorporated some hot social issues in his compositions that were widely known by the public

through mass media at that time such as TV, radio and newspapers. Sam Hui's music was an integration of western popular music and local content.

The singing style of Canto Pop was developed in the 1960s. Sam Hui stressed that the style of singing these songs should be in natural tone and "less is more" (Ng, 2007, p.89). "In the 60s and 70s, I listened to the pop rock band such as Simon and Garfunkel and Don Mclean. Their singing style was really natural. The way they sang was just like telling a story in the song. Sam Hui adopted this singing style in his music and his audiences loved this." (Ng, 2007, p.91)

The natural singing style became the trademark of Sam Hui's music and later the style of singing Canto Pop. Sam Hui also emphasized that the intonation of Cantonese words had to be accurate and had to match with the pitches, as in the case of singing Cantonese operatic songs. This requirement later became one of the guiding principles for the singers, composers, lyricists and record producers in the 1980s.

2.2 Canto Rock

In the 1960s, the Canto Rock had a strong impact on the popular music scene in Hong Kong. Together with the influence of the Beatles, local youngsters started to form their own bands and compose their own rock 'n' roll music. Bands such as Teddy Robin and the Playboys, Sam Hui and the Lotus were some of the most prominent bands during this period.

The localization of the band sound then evolved into a new way of producing records in the music industry. This is called *process creativity*. *Process creativity* is defined as a production cycle of songwriting, lyrics writing, arranging, recording and

performing. In this production cycle, composers, lyricists, arrangers, musicians and record producers can make changes, amendments, enhancement to the recorded song in the album until the song becomes a final creative product.

2.3 Process creativity

This creative process was further explained by the popular music researcher and classified as *process creativity* (Toynbee, 2000). From the 60s to 70s, Sam Hui wrote numerous songs in rock 'n' roll style by using the *process creativity* such as “Games Gamblers Play” 《鬼馬雙星》, “The Private Eyes” 《半斤八兩》, “The Last Message” 《天才與白痴》, etc. During the creating process of Sam Hui’s music, the composer, musicians and producers could contribute their expertise to the album and the concept was usually initiated by the artists or the executive producers. This collaborative effort was essential and beneficial to the refinement of the creative product. This process also became a very interesting phenomenon throughout the development of popular music history.

Canto Rock music is composed and arranged in this *process creativity* manner whereas all the band members not only play their own part, but also listen to others’ parts. During the recording sessions, the drum set and the bass create the basic rhythm and the guitar fits in the *groove*. The keyboard player might play the chord progressions and the singer would improvise the melody according to the chord change. In this way, the recording session is an interactive creating process among musicians.

3 Music Analysis: The Art of Songwriting

Starting from the 70s and spanning the next few decades, Sam Hui had written a great number of works which reflected the social conditions of the time. Hong Kong underwent an economic depression in the early 70s. The lower working class was living in meager conditions at that time. Sam Hui's song "Money, Money, Money" 《錢錢錢》 reflected the mentality of the general public of wishing to get rich. "Song of Water Use Restrictions" 《制水歌》 reminded people of the time when water supply was restricted to only four hours on every four days. By the end of the 70s, the cost of housing rental, food and other basic necessities rose rapidly but the income of the general public was still relatively low. Sam Hui's song "The Private Eyes" 《半斤八兩》 once again voiced out the dissatisfaction about this situation from the general public.

3.1 “The Private Eyes” (《半斤八兩》)

The musical score for "The Private Eyes" (《半斤八兩》) is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of 48 measures across 9 staves. The harmonic progression is as follows:

- Measures 1-4: Em, G, Bm, Em (Section A)
- Measures 5-8: Am, D, Em, G (Section B)
- Measures 9-11: C, D, G, Em (First ending)
- Measures 12-14: C, D, G, Em (Second ending)
- Measures 15-18: G, Em, C, D, G, Em, C, D, Em
- Measures 19-22: Em, G, Bm, Em (Section A)
- Measures 23-26: Am, D, Em, G (Section B)
- Measures 27-29: C, D, G, Em (First ending)
- Measures 30-32: C, D, G, Em (Second ending)
- Measures 33-36: G, Em, C, D, G, Em, C, D, Em
- Measures 37-40: Em, G, Bm, Em (Section A)
- Measures 41-44: Am, D, Em

This song demonstrates the influence of the Beatles' rock 'n' roll music in the 1970s. Simple chord progression was used and the guitar groove signified the rhythmic drive of the song. In verse A, the harmonic progression is basically I, VI, iv and V in E

minor. In verse B, the chorus part is modulated to G major with I, vi, IV and V chord progression. In rock 'n' roll music, the typical harmonic progression of I, vi, IV and V is widely used in songwriting and arranging.

Sam Hui's compositions are extremely diversified in content. The themes of his songs include social issues, philosophy of life, love and affection. The lyrics are written with a mixture of colloquial and literary styles which appeal to both refined and popular tastes such as "Tower Ballad" 《鐵塔凌雲》, "From the Heart of a Loafer" 《浪子心聲》 and "Impression" 《印象》.

3.2 “From the Heart of a Loafer”(《浪子心聲》)

[A] Instrumental solo on 2nd verse

♩ = 53

3

6

9

12

15

18

[B]

[A]

1. 2.

This song is one of the most popular songs in folk style composed by Sam Hui in the 1970s. Verse A is based on a structure of two 4-bar phrases. Bars 5 to 8 are almost an exact *repetition* of bars 1 to 4. Verse B is the chorus part of the song which carries the main idea of the lyrics. It mainly focuses on some philosophical questions such as “What is life?” and “What is destiny?” Though it is only a 4-bar phrase, it denotes precisely the main idea of the song. Basically, the song is in *ABA* form.

3.3 “Tower Ballad” (《鐵塔凌雲》)

A $\text{♩} = 96$
 E^\flat Cm Fm Gm

5 Cm Gm Cm F7 B^\flat

9 E^\flat Gm Cm Gm Fm

13 B^\flat E^\flat Fm Cm Fm E^\flat

17 B^\flat Fm Gm Cm

B E^\flat Cm Fm B^\flat Cm E^\flat

22 Fm B^\flat Cm Fm B^\flat E^\flat

26 Fm B^\flat Cm Fm B^\flat Cm

30 Fm B^\flat Cm Cm

34 1. 2.

Verse A was written in *question and answer* structure in which bars 1 to 4 is a question phrase and bars 5 to 8 is an answer phrase. This kind of structure is also found

in Joseph Koo's music. The question and answer structure has become one of the style traits in Canto Pop. From bars 9 to 11, it further extends this *question and answer* structure into a 3-bar phrase in bars 12 to 14. Finally, bars 15 to 20, it concludes verse A. In verse B, it was written in *pentatonic* scale in E^b major using the five chord tones such as E^b, F, G, B^b and C to construct the musical phrases.

3.4 “Impression” (《印象》)

A ♩ = 88 C#m F#m C#m

3 C#m B E G#7 C#m

6 F#m E⁷ D#m7(b5) G#7

9 A 2. G#7 C#m B

12 E D#m7(b5) G#7 C#m

15 C Am E F#7 D#m7(b5)

18 G#7 A C#m F#m C#m

21 C#m B E G#7 C#m

24 F#m A G#7 C#m

A simple *melodic motive* is used to construct this song. In verse A, the first two bar phrase (bars 1 to 2) is the *melodic motive*. The *melodic motive* is further extended in bars 3 to 4 as an imitation. In verse B, the eighth note pattern is further developed from this *melodic motive* of the first two-bar phrase as the chorus section of the song. These

kinds of compositional techniques are commonly found in the Classical composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms and Schubert.

In the early 80s, Hong Kong's economy started to boom and people's living conditions had been improved. Songs related to dining, clothing and having fun emerged. The song "Japanese Doll" 《日本娃娃》 reflected the improvement of living standard of the general public in the 80s. In 1985, "Japanese Doll" 《日本娃娃》 was composed when the Japanese trend swept through Hong Kong.

3.5 “Japanese Doll” (《日本娃娃》)

A ♩ = 112 A^b B^bm E^b

A^b A^b B^bm

E^b A^b A^b

B^bm E^b A^b

A^b B^bm E^b

B A^b Fm Cm

D^b E^b Fm

Cm B^bm E^b A^b

Sam wrote this song as a reaction to the influence of Japanese popular music to Canto Pop. Verse A is basically written in ii-V-I progression. The ii-V-I progression is widely used in Jazz and popular music. In Classical music, this harmonic progression is usually used as a cadence in a musical phrase. In popular music, the ii-V-I harmonic progression can be transposed into different keys without any preparation or common chord tones. In verse B, the standard harmonic progression I-vi-IV-V is used and ends in ii-V-I as the perfect cadence.

Entering into the 90s, an emigration trend rose to the peak due to the upcoming of the handover of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China in 1997. Sam wrote "Riding in the Same Boat" (《同舟共濟》) to encourage Hong Kong people to face the political change positively, to have faith in Hong Kong and to stay and build our home here.

3.6 “Riding in the Same Boat” (《同舟共濟》)

♩ = 58

A

D A/C# Bm G

Em D C Bm A A sus4 A

3

D A/C# Bm G

5

Em D C Bm A G A

7

C **B** D

9

Em A

11

G D G A D

13

Em A

15

G D

17

Instrumental solo

19

D Ab Bb x 2

This song was written to celebrate the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997.

In verse A, the harmonic progression is in a *descending bass* pattern from D, A/C#, Bm,

G, Em, D, C, Bm, Asus and A. The *descending bass* progression was commonly used in the Baroque period. The harmonic progression is I – V6 – vi – IV – ii – viib – V (with 4-3 suspension) in D major. Sam Hui modified this pattern with a vii^b chord to create a flattened 7th sound in the music.

4 Score Analysis: The Art of Arranging

The studies of Canto Pop should not only include the art of songwriting, but also the art of arranging. In popular music, music arrangement plays an important role in small and large ensemble writing. Arrangers strive to create music with their own musical personality. There are certain recognizable styles in Sam Hui's music that become models for arrangers. In this section, six arrangements are chosen to demonstrate the main stylistic characteristics of Sam Hui's music from the 70s to 90s.

“The Private Eyes” (《半斤八兩》)

Intro
♩ = 118

A

Maracas

Drum Set

Acoustic Guitar

Em Em Em B

Gr. 1 w / Distortion & Chorus

Electric Guitar 1 & 2

Electric Bass

Organ

The introduction of the song “The Private Eyes” (《半斤八兩》) demonstrates the Canto Rock style in the 1970s. The influences of the Beatles and Elvis Presley are articulated in rhythm section with electric guitar, electric bass and electric organ in unison as a call and the drum set with drum fill-ins as a response in the first four bars of the song. The call and response within the rhythm section was one of the style traits in 1970’s Canto Rock music.

“From the Heart of a Loafer”(《浪子心聲》)

The musical score for "From the Heart of a Loafer" (《浪子心聲》) is presented in a multi-staff format. The key signature is F# (three sharps: F#, C#, G#). The score is divided into two measures, with a 4-measure rest indicated at the beginning of the first measure. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Ac.Gtr. 1:** Plays a series of slurs, indicating a rhythmic pattern.
- F.B. (Electric Bass):** Plays a bass line with notes and rests.
- Rhodes:** Plays a melodic line with notes and rests.
- String:** Features a complex arrangement with triplets and a scale running passage in the first measure, and a more melodic line in the second measure.

The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, triplets, and rests, indicating a sophisticated arrangement.

The song “From the Heart of a Loafer”(《浪子心聲》) demonstrated the pop ballad style in the 1970s. It was the first time that Sam Hui invited the renowned local composer, Joseph Koo, to write the string arrangement for the song. In bar 4, the scale running passage of the string part is used. The triplet idea reminds the orchestral writing in Classical period, in particular with the rocket style in Mannheim orchestra. This arrangement shows how the arranger used string section as an additional arrangement to the combo section in Canto Pop.

“Tower Ballad” (《鐵塔凌雲》)

The musical score for "Tower Ballad" (鐵塔凌雲) is presented for five instruments: D. S. (Drum Set), Ac. Gtr. (Acoustic Guitar), E. B. (Electric Bass), Rhodes (Electric Piano), and Organ (Electronic Organ). The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The D. S. part shows a complex drum pattern with various notes and rests. The Ac. Gtr. part is a simple melody line. The E. B. part provides a steady bass line. The Rhodes part features a series of chords and melodic lines, with some notes marked with an asterisk (*). The Organ part consists of a series of chords and melodic lines, with some notes marked with an asterisk (*). The score is divided into measures, with a bar line at the end of each measure. The D. S. part is marked with a '6' at the beginning of the first measure, indicating a specific drum pattern. The Ac. Gtr. part is marked with a '6' at the beginning of the first measure, indicating a specific guitar pattern. The E. B. part is marked with a '6' at the beginning of the first measure, indicating a specific bass line. The Rhodes part is marked with a '6' at the beginning of the first measure, indicating a specific piano pattern. The Organ part is marked with a '6' at the beginning of the first measure, indicating a specific organ pattern.

Another good arrangement example of pop ballad is “Tower Ballad” 《鐵塔凌雲》. This example demonstrates the use of bass line which aligned closely with the bass drum of the drum set in bar 6 as a standard pop ballad style in the 1970s.

*DS – Drum Set, Ac.Gtr. – Acoustic Guitar, E.B. – Electric Bass, Rhodes – Electric Piano, Organ – Electronic Organ

“Impression” (《印象》)

The musical score for "Impression" (《印象》) is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 1 through 4, and the second system covers measures 5 through 8. The score is arranged for five instruments: Oboe (Ob.), Double Bass (D. S.), Acoustic Guitar (Ac. Gtr.), Electric Bass (E. B.), and Strings.

System 1 (Measures 1-4):

- Ob.:** Measures 1 and 2 are rests. In measure 3, it plays a half note G4, followed by a quarter note F#4 in measure 4.
- D. S.:** Plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with 'x' marks above them, indicating a specific articulation or effect.
- Ac. Gtr.:** Measures 1 and 2 are rests. In measure 3, it plays a half note G4, followed by a quarter note F#4 in measure 4.
- E. B.:** Measures 1 and 2 are rests. In measure 3, it plays a half note G2, followed by a quarter note F#2 in measure 4.
- Strings:** Measures 1 and 2 are rests. In measure 3, it plays a half note G2, followed by a quarter note F#2 in measure 4.

System 2 (Measures 5-8):

- Ob.:** Measures 5 and 6 are rests. In measure 7, it plays a half note G4, followed by a quarter note F#4 in measure 8.
- D. S.:** Measures 5 and 6 are rests. In measure 7, it plays a half note G4, followed by a quarter note F#4 in measure 8.
- Ac. Gtr.:** Measures 5 and 6 are rests. In measure 7, it plays a half note G4, followed by a quarter note F#4 in measure 8.
- E. B.:** Measures 5 and 6 are rests. In measure 7, it plays a half note G2, followed by a quarter note F#2 in measure 8.
- Strings:** Measures 5 and 6 are rests. In measure 7, it plays a half note G2, followed by a quarter note F#2 in measure 8.

Chord symbols are provided for the Acoustic Guitar and Electric Bass parts:

- Measure 1:** C#m
- Measure 2:** C
- Measure 3:** Am
- Measure 4:** E
- Measure 5:** F#7
- Measure 6:** D#m7
- Measure 7:** G#sus
- Measure 8:** G#7

Following the success of the string arrangement in the song “From the Heart of a Loafer” 《浪子心聲》, Sam Hui further extended the string arrangement in the song “Impression” 《印象》. In bar 4, the strings are used in a quartet style including the first and second violin playing in thirds with non-harmonic notes. Viola and cello are playing long notes to support the harmony.

“Japanese Doll” 《日本娃娃》

The musical score for "Japanese Doll" is arranged for a band and includes a vocal line. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Xyl. (Xylophone):** Plays a descending diminished scale in the treble clef, marked with a forte (f) dynamic.
- Conga:** Plays a rhythmic pattern in the treble clef, marked with a forte (f) dynamic.
- Drum Set:** Plays a rhythmic pattern in the bass clef, marked with a forte (f) dynamic.
- Ac. Gtr. (Acoustic Guitar):** Plays a rhythmic pattern in the treble clef, marked with a forte (f) dynamic.
- E.B. (Electric Bass):** Plays a rhythmic pattern in the bass clef, marked with a forte (f) dynamic.
- Pno. (Piano):** The piano part is mostly silent, with only a few notes in the bass clef.
- Vocal Line:** A single melodic line in the treble clef, marked with a forte (f) dynamic.

The score is written in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The vocal line is marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The instrumental parts are marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The score is divided into five measures, with the first measure starting at bar 5. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats).

In the 1980s, Sam Hui's music went through a dramatic change in terms of musical style. In bar 5, the use of Latin jazz is demonstrated in the percussion part. The conga plays in samba style. The electric bass aligns closely with the Latin groove in playing root, 5th and octave. Xylophone plays in fourth with a descending diminished scale to resemble Japanese music. The combination of Latin groove and the use of diminished scale in the xylophone contribute a lot to the popularity of this song in the 80s.

“Riding in the Same Boat” 《同舟共濟》

♩ = 58

Piccolo

Snare Drum

Bass Drums

Acoustic Guitar

Electric Guitar

Electric Bass

String Ensemble 1

String Ensemble 2

Synth. String

D

G

Gtr w / Distortion

“Riding in the Same Boat” 《同舟共濟》 starts with snare drum in marching style. This rhythmic drive demonstrates the handover of sovereignty to China in 1997. It seems that piccolo and high strings are used to encourage Hong Kong people that they should face the political change positively. Synthesizer is used to highlight the string ensemble in the arrangement. This kind of doubling was quite popular in the 1990s to overdub the string part with synthesizer to create thicker texture and timbre.

5 Conclusion

As a songwriter, arranger, producer and singer, Sam Hui received the *Hall of Fame Award* by Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong in 2005. Sam Hui established the art of songwriting and the art of arranging in the 1970s with the emergence of composer, Joseph Koo and lyricist, James Wong. These three major figures became the pioneers of Canto Pop in Hong Kong.

Sam Hui has made two major contributions to the Canto Pop music scene in Hong Kong. Firstly, he changed the Hong Kong music scene in the early 1970s when Mandarin pop songs from Shanghai and Taiwan, as well as the Anglo-American pop songs had been the main stream with very few well-known singers performing Cantonese songs. He elevated the standard of Canto Pop which then has become the main stream of Hong Kong's popular music culture and has influenced many other singers who follow his path later.

Secondly, his music reflects the history of Hong Kong culture from 1970s to 2000's. Sam's compositions are extremely diversified in contents. His songs cover social issues, philosophy of life, love and affection. The lyrics are written with a mixture of colloquial and literary style which appealed to both refined and popular tastes of Hong Kong.

Sam Hui was the King of Canto Pop in Hong Kong. Everyone should have felt his passion for music. Everyone should pay tribute to his contributions to the local music scene and appreciate his affections towards Hong Kong people.

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Note: Special thanks to my editorial assistant, Mr. Jerry Lau, for transcribing and notating Sam Hui's musical examples in the learning and teaching package.