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CROUCHING TIGER CELLO CONCERTO - A MELDING OF FORM AND CONTENT FOR THE CONCERT STAGE

Xiaohang Yu

University of Kentucky, xyu229@g.uky.edu

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Xiaohang Yu, Student

Benjamin Karp, Major Professor

Dr. Lance Brunner, Director of Graduate Studies

CROUCHING TIGER CELLO CONCERTO -
A MELDING OF FORM AND CONTENT FOR THE CONCERT STAGE

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS PROJECT

A DMA Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the
College of Fine Arts
at the University of Kentucky

By
Xiaohang Yu
Lexington, Kentucky
Director: Benjamin Karp, Professor of Violoncello
Lexington, Kentucky
2021

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ABSTRACT OF DMA PROJECT

CROUCHING TIGER CELLO CONCERTO - A MELDING OF FORM AND CONTENT FOR THE CONCERT STAGE

Tan Dun's *Crouching Tiger Concerto* for Amplified Cello and Orchestra is not only one of the most frequently performed cello concerto of the recent past; it also demonstrates Tan's masterful synthesis of artistic forms from the Chinese and the Western art music traditions with visual media that extends beyond the concert-hall. The music for this concerto was initially composed as part of the score for Ang Lee's film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, itself a landmark blend of Chinese cinema with Western technique. The score broke boundaries, combining Western orchestral music with traditional Chinese instruments and thematic material. This melding of a wide variety of influences is typical of Tan's oeuvre and reveals the depth of his personal experience; his works include references to childhood experiences in the Hunan province, soundscapes suggested by his many years of struggle in New York City, and instrumentations that reflect his interest in environmentalism.

Performing the *Crouching Tiger Concerto* can be a challenging undertaking. Each movement expresses musical ideas both Chinese and Western, while simultaneously mirroring the emotions of the film clips that Tan selected for display behind the performance. This paper will explore these connections, suggesting ways in which an aspiring performer can bring out the most important details of each section of the concerto. It will also give suggestions for navigating some of the unique technical challenges of the solo cello part; glissandi, use of a guitar pick, and amplification. The music of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* had an indelible impact on me as a young child, single-handedly cementing my future as cellist, and I am glad, twenty years later, to be able use my experiences learning this piece to help others who are approaching it for the first time.

KEYWORDS: *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*, Cello Concerto, Tan Dun, Film Music

Xiaohang Yu

(Name of Student)

01/25/2021

Date

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By
Xiaohang Yu

Benjamin Karp

Director of DMA Project

Lance Brunner

Director of Graduate Studies

01/25/2021

Date

DEDICATION

To

Yihao Zhang, my undergraduate cello teacher, who encouraged me to go to the United States to pursue further studies.

Steven Elisha, who made a positive difference in my music life, and inspired me to pursue the DMA degree after my master's degree.

Benjamin Karp, who is passionate about music, and shared that passion with me.

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https://issuu.com/scoresondemand/docs/crouching_tiger_solo_cello_33553)

CHAPTER 1. *THE 2000 ACADEMY AWARDS: BEST ORIGINAL SCORE*

1.1 Biography of Tan Dun

Tan Dun, a Chinese-born American composer, is best known for his scores for the films *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Hero*, and *The Banquet*. He has also made an incredible mark on many types of concert music, including opera, symphonic music, chamber music, and multimedia work. Major orchestras, festivals, and opera houses have presented Tan's music throughout the world. Recently he premiered his work on the internet; in 2008, Google and YouTube commissioned Tan to compose an Internet Symphony as a part of the YouTube Symphony Orchestra project. This four-minute symphony has reached over twenty-three million people in two hundred countries.¹

As an inhabitant of multiple continents, Tan has always infused his work with a balance of elements from Chinese and Western cultures. "What Tan Dun composes is 'world music,' music that brings together everything that you had always wanted to hear. The composer Tan Dun is therefore a citizen of the world, a man who can blend all styles."² Indeed, Western art music has been merged with elements from Chinese art since the early-nineteenth century. Puccini, for example, uses of a Chinese folk song in the aria "La sui monti dell'est" from *Turandot*. Tan's approach to using the materials of his Chinese heritage is deliberate, and he does so by expanding the genre and instrumental limitations of the Western art tradition while working from within. He is also deeply dedicated to environmental protection and has endeavored to raise awareness of global environmental issues through his work. His music about nature, such as the triptych *Earth Concerto*,

¹ *Official Biography*, <http://tandun.com/about/official-biography/>

² NRC Handelsblad, *The Netherlands*, <http://tandun.com/compositions/>, 2003

Water Concerto and *Paper Concerto* allows the voices of these natural elements to communicate through music.

1.1.1 Early Life

Tan Dun was born in 1957 in the Hunan province of China. During Mao's cultural revolution (1966-1976), Tan was forced to stop pursuing his dream of being a musician and was sent to work as a rice planter after he graduated from high school. Because of this, Tan did not receive any professional musical training and schooling, but he taught himself to play some Chinese string instruments as well as violin while working on the People's Commune. This experience gave him a chance to join the local Peking opera theatre as a violinist and arranger, a position which gave him his earliest experiences as a composer. Tan was admitted to the Central Conservatory of Music at the age of nineteen, where he became acquainted with Western art and contemporary music for the first time. During his time there, he became fascinated by avant-garde composers such as Edgard Varèse, George Crumb, and Chou Wen-chung.

Tan is known as one of the four great talents composers to come out of the Central Conservatory of Music, along with Xiaogang Ye, Xiaosong Qu, and Wenjing Guo. He composed his first symphonic work *Li Sao* in 1979. It caused controversy because of Tan's use of uncharacteristic instruments such as Chinese hand drums and the vertical bamboo flute. In 1983 he received international recognition, as winner of the Weber Prize for his string quartet *Feng Ya Song*. This was the first work by a Chinese composer to win an international prize since the Communist Revolution. Throughout his career he has

constantly hunted for new ideas and innovations with which to surprise an audience, and this drive quickly made him the leading composer of avant-garde music in China.

1.1.2 Life in United States

In 1986, Tan moved to New York City to work on his doctoral degree at Columbia University with Chou Wen-chung, a student of Edgard Varèse. Because of Tan's limited income, he was forced to busk, playing violin on the street to earn money to pay his tuition and living expenses. Even though this life was difficult, he never gave up on his dream to be a composer.

In 1989, still at Columbia University, Tan composed his first opera, *Nine Songs*, which demonstrated his interest in merging elements of multiple musical cultures. This full-length stage work derives both its text and musical materials from poetry by the ancient Chinese poet Qu Yuan (c. 340-278 BCE). In Tan's setting Qu's poems are sung in both Chinese and English and are accompanied by a small ensemble of Western and Chinese instruments. His second opera, *Marco Polo*, won the 1998 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition and is another great example of Tan's ability to merge different cultures. The portions of the score that represent the life of Marco Polo use Western orchestral instruments, while he adds Chinese instruments to indicate the location visited by the traveler and the people he meets.

In his later career, Tan has expanded the scope of his experimentation to create novel works for multimedia and orchestra, as well as his concept of organic music that was explored in the concerti for earth, paper, and water. Most recently, Tan Dun was named as Dean of the Bard College Conservatory of Music.

1.2 Story behind *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*

The film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, released in 2000, was directed by Ang Lee and scored by Tan Dun. It has won over forty awards, and was nominated for ten Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Art Direction, and Best Original Score. This film also features a large cast of internationally famous Chinese actors, among them Chow Yun-fat, Michelle Yeoh, and Zhang Ziyi.

“[It] is a kind of dream of China, in particular a China that probably never existed except in my childhood imagination. As a young boy I was inspired by the martial arts movies that I grew up with and by the novels of doing my homework. So, it was a dream come true when a Chinese-made film was released that combined these childhood inspirations so perfectly.”³

Ang Lee said. Indeed, many in China shared this experience; *wuxia pian* (films about martial chivalry) is a favorite genre in Chinese cinema, because it engenders the idea that everyone has a hero inside of them. The story of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* fits squarely into this traditional framework. It is set in the eighteenth century during the Qing dynasty and combines a love story with a fantasy-adventure centered on a legendary sword named the Green Destiny.

1.2.1 Director Ang Lee

Ang Lee is a Taiwanese-born American film director, producer, and screen writer who has won over a hundred international awards, including two Academy Awards. After graduating from high school, he attempted to attend university to please his father but twice

³ Ang Lee, Richard Corliss, and David Bordwell, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film* (Newmarket Press, 2000), 7.

failed the university entrance exam. Lee then decided to finish his college degree at the National Arts School, where he became interested in dramatic arts. In 1980, Lee completed his studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, earning a bachelor's degree in theater. He hoped to be an actor, but because of his difficulty speaking English he decided to pursue film direction at New York University instead. Lee's first project, the 16mm short film *Shades of the Lake*, won the Best Drama Award in Short Film in Taiwan and his graduate thesis, the 43-minute drama *Fine Line*, won NYU's Wasserman Award.⁴

Notwithstanding these honors, Lee remained unemployed for six years after graduating from NYU. During that time his wife Jane Lin, a molecular biologist, assumed the responsibility of supporting their household. Nevertheless, Lee did not abandon his dream of being a filmmaker and continued to work on his story ideas and finish screenplays for future projects. One of these scripts became his debut film, *Pushing Hands*, which was funded by a Taiwanese studio and became a critical and box-office success in his home country. The film received eight nominations in the Golden Horse Film Festival and Awards and gave Lee the freedom to continue writing and directing a series of Taiwanese films. In 1995, Lee came to the attention of American studios, who hired him to direct three Hollywood films, only the first of which was a financial success.⁵ Thankfully in 1999, Lee's old friend and Taiwanese producer Hsu Li-kong approached him with the idea for a traditional *wuxia* (martial arts) film set in ancient China, to be jointly produced by studios in the United States, Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong. This project would become

⁴ Yukong Zhao, *The Chinese Secrets for Success: Five Inspiring Confucian Values*. (Morgan James Publishing, 2013), P74.

⁵ Irene Shin, "Ang Lee: A Never-Ending Dream," *What Shin Said*, <https://whatshihsaid.com/2013/02/26/ang-lee-a-never-ending-dream/>, Feb 26, 2013.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, the film that cemented Lee's position as a top-tier, international filmmaker.

1.2.2 Ang Lee's Surprise Invitation

Lee was excited about the film, and for its score he wanted to work with a composer who had a similarly multicultural background. Both Lee and Tan were at that time well known in their fields, and had known each other for many years. Tan admits to being surprised that Lee had never approached him to compose for any of his previous films, assuming that the director must not like the avant-garde nature of his music. One day after dinner with Lee, Tan asked, "By the way, who is the composer for your movie *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*?" Lee surprised him by replying with a smile, "I think you are the most suitable person!" Unfortunately, Lee had waited very late in the process to tell Tan, and the composer had only ten days to finish the score. "This is Ang Lee, always bringing surprises," Tan has said. Even with the filmmaker giving him an almost impossible deadline, Tan remained impressed by his friend, who he felt had never lost his heart and spirit.⁶

Tan has also said that working with Lee requires a mixture of emotion and precision. "When you work with Ang Lee you can't just get a key idea, you have to have two things ready in order to be perfect. First it's the passion and secondly it's the mathematics. He doesn't count the music by frames, he counts the music by seconds, and so every second

⁶ 谭盾: 我的音乐梦想无边 [Tan Dun: My Music Dream Without a Border]. The Economic Observer, http://news.ifeng.com/history/special/jingyingpingxuan/houxuanren/201001/0105_9091_1498723_1.shtml. Jan 5, 2010.

has a function of its own movement.”⁷ This attention to detail is obvious in the final score, which is perfectly matched to each moment of each scene it accompanies.

Tan and Lee’s mutual interest in making *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* an example of artistic multiculturalism led to the decision to invite famous Chinese-American cellist Yo-Yo Ma to record the prominent cello solo. Unlike his friendship with Lee, Tan did not know Ma personally and was at first reticent to invite the renowned cellist to take part in the recording. However, once the first recording session was completed, Tan was relieved. Ma’s playing was so perfectly phrased to the orchestral track, the satisfaction was clear on Lee’s face.⁸

Ma’s inclusion was not the only element of multiculturalism in the score. As in his concert repertoire, Tan creatively chose a mix of instruments from the Eastern and Western traditions to represent the complexity of elements in various scenes of the film. A notable point of interest is Tan’s representation of the historical cultures along the Silk Road. For example, in the score’s main love theme, he blends two string instruments, Chinese *Erhu* and European violoncello, to demonstrate the boundlessness of these characters’ feelings.

A year later, the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* became one of the most internationally successful films in history, demonstrating the value to be found in Lee and Tan’s successful cooperation. The film was nominated for ten Academy Awards, including Best Director for Ang Lee, which he won. Tan Dun’s film score was also

⁷ Charis Pasles, “Dialogues with Tan Dun,” *LA Times*, Oct 19, 2001, <http://tandun.com/composition/crouching-tiger-concerto-for-cello-and-chamber-orchestra/>

⁸ Tan Dun, 谭盾跟马友友谈李安: “这是个天才”[Tan Dun Talk about Ang Lee with Yo-Yo Ma: This is a Genius].Tencent Entertainment, http://cnews.chinadaily.com.cn/2016-05/04/content_25039178.htm. May 4, 2016.

nominated and won, an unexpected result for the composer who had only prepared a short speech.

“I prepared something exactly forty-five seconds. ‘My music is to dream without boundaries. Tonight, with you, I see boundaries being crossed. As a classical music composer I’m thrilled to be honored here. *Crouching Tiger* bridged East and West, romance and action, high and low cultures. Thank you, Ang Lee, Yo-Yo Ma, Peter Gelb, Michael Gorfaine, James Schamus, Bill Kong. Thank you, Sony Classical, CAMI and G. Schirmer for their long support. Last, this is for two tigers in my family: my wife Jane, Ian, [my] son, both born in the year of tigers. Thank you, Academy.’”⁹

Indeed, this score is an excellent example of Tan Dun’s mastery of both Western art music and traditional Chinese music, breaking the boundaries of tradition vs. reality, Eastern vs. Western, and artistic vs. popular.

During his years as a struggling busker, Tan often played in front of a bank with another violinist he had met on the street. A little over ten years later, Tan was world-famous after the success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. One day, when he was passing by the same bank in New York, he was surprised to see that same violinist still playing in the same place. After greeting each other, the other man asked, “Where are you playing now?” To which, Tan replied, “In the front of a concert hall.” “Oh, that’s a fantastic place to play, good luck!” Tan waved and said goodbye, feeling so honored and lucky to have found success pursuing his dream of bringing music to the world.¹⁰

⁹ Tan Dun, “Academy Awards Acceptance Speech Database”, <http://aaspeechesdb.oscars.org/link/073-14/>. Mar 25, 2001.

¹⁰ Tianhao Liu, 谭盾：从一个街头卖艺者登上艺术巅峰 [Tan Dun: From a Buskers to the Summit]. http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_ca9b29ec0101j9qn.html, 2013.

CHAPTER 2. *CROUCHING TIGER CELLO CONCERTO*

2.1 Construction

When Tan Dun was asked to write music for the landmark martial arts epic *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, he approached the task by outlining important moments in the film and using them to create a structure for a unified score.

“When you see the score, there are specific lines defining certain parts of the film, certain rhythmic things, these are always mocked up in the score. The most important thing to me when writing a film score is the power of structure. If you want to have a powerful structure, you have to treat the whole piece as one. You can’t write your score out piece by piece, you have to write the whole thing out as one thematic relationship.”¹¹

Because of this structure, the resulting film score lent itself easily to reworking as a concert piece, and after the release of the film Tan reused its themes in his *Crouching Tiger Concerto*.

Written for Yo-Yo Ma who premiered it in London in 2000, this concerto is a unique work for amplified solo cello, percussion ensemble and chamber orchestra. The orchestral instrumentation is simple but creative: alto flute, five percussionists (playing bongos, rototoms, timpani, cymbals, tambourine, and a tam-tam), harp, and strings. To create a meeting of Eastern and Western traditions, Tan prominently features the Chinese talking drum, or tar, in the concerto’s third movement. To add to this instrument’s prominence, Tan directs in the score that the tar soloist joins the cellist in front of the conductor for this movement (Fig. 1).

¹¹ Charis Pasles, “Dialogues with Tan Dun,” *LA Times*, Oct 19, 2001,

<http://tandun.com/composition/crouching-tiger-concerto-for-cello-and-chamber-orchestra/>

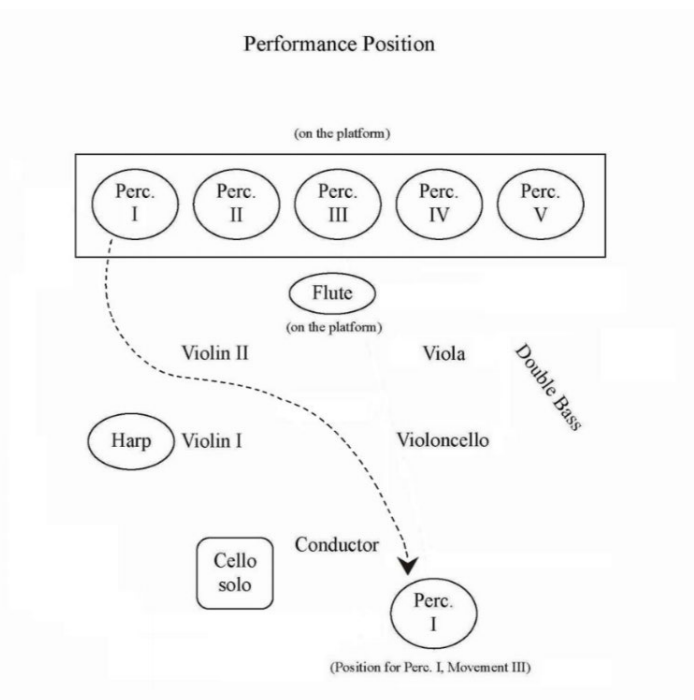


Figure 1. *Crouching Tiger Concerto*: Performance Position

Similarly, the piece combines elements of European concertante tradition with a structure dictated in part by the Chinese landscapes of the film. The concerto has six titled movements, two of which feature cello cadenzas: “Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon,” “Through the Bamboo Forest,” “Silk Road: Encounters” (includes cadenza), “Eternal Vow” (includes cadenza), “To the South,” and “Farewell.” Because of the integral connection between this music and the film for which it was written, each movement of the concerto has a film sequence that is designed to be projected during live performances. “Although numerous concert works have been developed from film scores, this concerto is unique in that it brings the collaborative/creative process full circle. Tan’s film score, written to strengthen and complement the viewing and dramatic experience of the film,

was profoundly influenced by the film’s poetic imagery, complex emotions, and exotic landscapes.”¹²

Indeed, the *Crouching Tiger Concerto* is highly reflective of Tan’s interest in ancient Silk Road culture. The Silk Road was the route connecting East Asia and Southern Europe, established during the Han dynasty around 200 BCE and used until the 1700s. During that time, people from myriad cultures shared not only silk and other goods but also music and instruments. Music along the Silk Road was rooted in local traditions while incorporating elements from the many cultures that passed by, and it is this amalgamation that most inspired Tan. As a master of both Western orchestral works and traditional Chinese music, his *Crouching Tiger Concerto* is a good example of a hybrid between the traditions of two sides of the world.

2.1.1 Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

The solo cello starts the first movement with a short solo introduction that makes important use of rubato, glissandi, and indeterminacy (Fig. 2). By giving the cellist a significant amount of freedom in their interpretation, these measures introduce the improvisatory feeling of much of the solo part and, more importantly, allude to the sound



Figure 2. *Crouching Tiger Concerto*: I. “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon,” mm. 1-5

¹² Tan Dun, *Synopsis of Crouching Tiger Concerto for Cello and Chamber Orchestra*, <http://tandun.com/composition/crouching-tiger-concerto-for-cello-and-chamber-orchestra/>. 2000.



Figure 3. Erhu

of the Chinese *Erhu* (Fig 3). The erhu, also known as the Chinese fiddle, is a traditional bowed, two-string instrument with a timbre similar to the treble range of the cello. The glissandi that Tan marked between the pitches in these measures also effectively mimics the style of fingering used on the erhu.

Like the violin in the West, the erhu is the most important member of the string family of Chinese instruments. However, although violin and erhu are bowed instruments, their playing techniques are completely different. The violin has four strings that are played with the bow or plucked with the fingers from above, while the erhu has only two strings and is played with the bow hairs wound between the strings using both sides of the hair. The violin is played either standing or sitting down with the violin placed on the player's shoulder, while the erhu is played sitting down with the instrument's body on the left leg. Finally, a violin bow is held with the fingers placed on top of the stick, while the erhu bow is held from the side with the hair similar to a gamba or German bass bow hold.

After the cello's introduction, the strings play indeterminate group glissandi while the alto flute takes over the cello's melodic fragment accompanied by a flourish of

bongos. These bongos continue to punctuate the long, melodic winding of the cello and strings over the next twenty bars, as the orchestra builds to the climactic middle section. Here, the strings take on an agitated rhythm that gives support to the soaring cello melody. The violins eventually take over this melody for a few measures, shortly before the cellist begins strumming the strings with a guitar pick (Fig 4). This extended technique is another example of using this Western instrument to imitate a traditional Chinese one.

The Rewapu, a traditional Chinese musical instrument from Xinjiang province with a history that dates back over six hundred years, is one of the most popular instruments of the Uigur group in northwestern China (Fig 5). Because of the frequent cultural

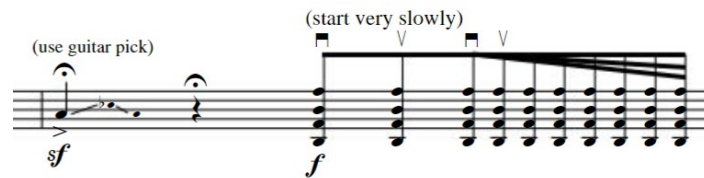


Figure 4. *Crouching Tiger Concerto*: I. "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," mm. 52 (Cello Part)



Figure 5. Rewapu

communications along the silk road, the rewapu is commonly played in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as well. The body of a rewapu is small with a long neck, and its timbre is similar to a Ukulele. To reproduce this unique sound, Tan was highly creative in exploring the use of a guitar pick on the cello’s strings.

The title page of the printed score names this as a concerto for cello, percussion and chamber orchestra, pointing out the important role that the five percussionists play in the work’s construction. The final section of the movement is drawn from a section of the film score titled “Night Fight,” and it combines the cello’s rewapu strumming with a heavily rhythmic percussion solo. This group solo features a repeated unison rhythm (Fig 6) that builds in intensity with instrumentation, dynamics, and increasing tempo markings (130–160 BPM) until the end of the movement.

The musical score for Figure 6 consists of several staves. At the top, it is marked '70' and '♩ = 130'. The staves are labeled as follows: A. Fl., Hp., Perc. 1, Perc. 2, Perc. 3, Perc. 4, and Perc. 5. The Harp (Hp.) part has a dynamic marking of *sf* and notes *(C² D²)*. Percussion parts 1 and 2 play a repeated unison rhythm of eighth notes, with dynamics *mf p* and *p* respectively. Percussion parts 3, 4, and 5 are marked 'use sticks/semi muted'. Percussion parts 1 and 2 also have dynamic markings of *f*. Percussion parts 3 and 4 have dynamic markings of *f*. Percussion parts 4 and 5 have dynamic markings of *fff* and are marked 'Timp. (on frame)'. The score ends at mm. 73 with a tempo marking of '♩ = 60' and a dynamic marking of *fff*.

Figure 6. *Crouching Tiger Concerto*: I. “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon,” mm. 70-73

2.1.2 Through the Bamboo Forest

The second movement is associated with perhaps the most famous scene of the movie, in which two of the main characters fight while flying through the tops of a bamboo forest. The strings and flute begin this movement with an air of anxious mystery,

The image displays a musical score for the second movement of the Crouching Tiger Concerto, specifically measures 36 through 40. The score is arranged in a multi-staff format. At the top, the Flute (A. Fl.) part begins with a melodic line. Below it, the Harp (Hp.) part is shown with a series of rests. The Percussion (Perc.) section includes three parts (3, 4, and 5), each featuring glissando effects. The Violin Solo (Vc. solo) part is marked with dynamic changes from *ppp* to *mf* and back to *ppp*. The Violin I (Vln. I) and Violin II (Vln. II) parts play a rhythmic pattern, with the Violin II part marked *sim.* (sustained). The Viola (Vla.) part has a *mf* dynamic. The Violoncello (Vc.) part features a rhythmic pattern with *mf* dynamics. The Contrabass (Cb.) part consists of a series of rests.

Figure 7. *Crouching Tiger Concerto*: II. "Through the Bamboo Forest," mm. 36-40

The image shows a musical score for measures 64-67 of the second movement of the Crouching Tiger Concerto. It consists of six staves: Vc. solo, Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Cb. The Vc. solo part has a section marked 's.p. (improvise wind's sound)' and 'group gliss.' with a 10-degree glissando line. Dynamics range from mf to pppp. The strings play a rhythmic accompaniment of sixteenth notes.

Figure 8. *Crouching Tiger Concerto*: II. “Through the Bamboo Forest,” mm. 64-67

and the solo cello finally emerges from the texture in the twenty-eighth measure.

Although its melody at first seems to be a continuation of the flute line, Tan quickly introduces long glissandi in this cello line that creates a conversation between the cello and violins who have been playing short glissandi since the movement’s beginning. The flute then reenters to continue its melody through this complex texture (Fig 7).

The quiet dynamics of these passages add to the mysterious atmosphere of this movement and are meant to sound like the wind in the bamboo and the feet of the fighters flying through it. The strings’ accompaniment becomes violent at m. 56 via a sixteenth-note pattern that is played with only heavy down bow strokes. After this intense section, the movement closes with solo cello improvising rising wind sounds above an aleatoric rain effect in the strings (Fig 8).

2.1.3 Silk Road: Encounters

The third movement, named after the road that connected disparate cultures, takes the blending of Eastern and Western traditions to new heights. The entire third movement is a concertante duet between the cello soloist and a percussionist performing on the *tar* (Fig. 9). The tar, or talking drum, is an ancient drum made from animal skin

Musical score for "Silk Road: Encounters" from *Crouching Tiger Concerto: III*. The score includes five percussion staves (1-5) and one cello solo staff (Vc.solo). The percussion parts are for Cymbal/Timpani (arco), with dynamics ranging from *mp* to *f*. The cello solo part includes markings for *Sul C*, *Sul G*, and *gliss.* dynamics. A note above the first staff indicates: "Note: all 'X' notes should be played on extrem edge of the drum head".

Figure 9. *Crouching Tiger Concerto: III*. "Silk Road: Encounters," mm. 1-4



Figure 10. Tar Player

stretched over a wooden frame that originated in the Middle East (Fig 10). The second Eastern element in this movement is found in the cello solo, the melody of which Tan borrowed from the traditional Xinjiang folk song “Awaguli.” The name *awaguli* is a portmanteau that equates women with beautiful flowers and is also a reference to Middle Eastern tradition.¹³ The first portion *awa* is Uigur for Eve, alluding to the first-created woman in the Abrahamic tradition and thus to the perfection of woman-kind, and *guli* is Uigur for flowers. This English horn plays the melody in the original film score, and on either instrument it provides a beautiful blending of traditions.

Seventeen measures into this movement, the tempo doubles and the strings give a galloping sixteenth-note rhythm, imitating the running of horses over the desert on the Silk Road. When the strings break into a reprise of the folk melody, the cello continues the horse motif in a virtuosic pizzicato. (Fig 11).

The image shows a musical score for measures 39-42 of the 'Crouching Tiger Concerto: III. "Silk Road: Encounters"'. The score is arranged in six staves: Vc.solo (Cello solo), Vln. I (Violin I), Vln. II (Violin II), Vla. (Viola), Vc. (Cello), and Cb. (Double Bass). The Vc.solo part begins with a 'pizz.' (pizzicato) instruction and a '(use guitar pick)' annotation, playing a rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes. The string parts (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., Cb.) enter at measure 39 with a 'p dolce' (piano dolce) dynamic and play a melodic line with triplets. The dynamic changes to 'mf' (mezzo-forte) at measure 41. The Cb. part continues the horse motif in a virtuosic pizzicato.

Figure 11. *Crouching Tiger Concerto: III. "Silk Road: Encounters,"* mm. 39-42

¹³ *Introduction of Awaguli*, <https://www.sin80.com/work/a-wa-er-gu-li>, Aug 2, 2018.

The movement ends similar to how it began; the cello and harp improvise a lengthy cadenza based on fragments reminiscent of the opening material. Actually, this music is based on a part of the original film score named “Desert Capriccio.” Tan reworked it into the concerto, using this duet to represent the Silk Road rider riding slowly into the desert.

2.1.4 Eternal Vow

The fourth movement reworks what probably is the most famous and recognizable portion of the entire *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* score and is the emotional core of this concerto. In the film, this music depicts the impracticable love that exists between the main characters. This movement has also been excerpted and published as a separate piece, which Yo-Yo Ma included on his album *Classic Yo-Yo*. The piccolo and harp duet that opens “Eternal Vow” (see Fig. 12) was originally performed by a rewapu in the film score. Presumably, Tan used the Western instruments here out of practicality, but it is also another symbol of the blend of Eastern and Western traditions. The main theme of the movement is presented by the solo cello (Fig. 13), which repeats this melody four times in different registers accompanied with varied

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Piccolo (Picc.) and Harp (Hp.). The score is in 4/4 time and begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 60. The Piccolo part is written in the treble clef and starts with a dynamic of *mf*, followed by a *mp* section. The Harp part is written in the bass clef and starts with a dynamic of *f*, followed by a *mp* section. Both parts feature intricate, flowing melodic lines with many slurs and ties.

Figure 12. *Crouching Tiger Concerto*: IV. “Eternal Vow,” mm. 1-3



Figure 13. *Crouching Tiger Concerto*: IV. “Eternal Vow,” mm. 1-3 (Cello Part)

orchestral harmonies and textures. The importance of this movement to the concerto as a whole is difficult to overstate. Motives from this melody, in fact, were already heard in the introduction to the first movement.

The movement closes with a solo cadenza that parallels and contrasts the duo cadenza of the previous movement. This cadenza begins by exploring a series of double stops from the middle of the “Desert Capriccio” cadenza and alternates this motive with sighing figures that echo the glissandi from earlier in the concerto. Finally, the sighing figures are combined with a variation of the “Eternal Vow” theme, and the cadenza fades out at the bottom of the instrument’s range.

2.1.5 To the South

A wild, rhythmic call and response opens the fifth movement; the cello presents a new pattern in each entrance and the rest of the strings repeat it. All of these rhythms are notated with different pizzicato techniques: strumming from top or bottom and slapping the strings (notated with +, see Fig. 14). Tan even marks for all the players to “put down the bow” to make it easier to realize the complicated patterns and as a visual signal to the audience of the importance of this new timbre.

Figure 14. *Crouching Tiger Concerto*: V. “To the South,” mm. 1-5

Once this section has reached its climax, the cello switches to playing a longer, rhythmic pattern with the bow. The percussion enter one by one to form a canon before the rest of the strings rejoin, also with their bows. Over this dense texture, the piccolo plays a fast-paced melody that is played in imitation by the cello in a second layer of canon that extends to the movement’s end. Tan places the piccolo high in its range, to bring its sound closer to that of the Chinese *dizi* used in the original film score.

The *dizi* is a traditional Chinese transverse flute, widely used in folk music and Chinese orchestras (Fig. 15). It is usually made of bamboo and thus is often called the



Figure 15. Dizi

Chinese bamboo flute. Its low range has a rich, dusky timbre the clarity of which is highlighted even more in its upper register. It is this piercing but sweet, high register that Tan exploited in the “To the South” portion of the film score, used for a scene in which a young martial arts apprentice battles fluently with a host of much older fighters.

2.1.6 Farewell

The last movement mixes the love theme from “The Eternal Vow” with the duet texture from the end of “To the South.” However, here the cello and piccolo have a true dialogue, each playing their own melodic material (Fig 16). This duet represents the final conversation between the two main characters in the film, whose love, though separated by death, is itself undying.

The image displays two systems of a musical score for the sixth movement of Tan Dun's *Crouching Tiger Concerto*, titled "Farewell," measures 16-23. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system (measures 16-19) includes parts for Piccolo (Pcc), Horns (Hp.), Percussion (Perc.), and Violoncello (Vcabo). The Piccolo part is marked *ff* and *allegro molto*. The Horns part is marked *mp*. The Percussion part includes a snare drum (Timp. (see tick)) and is marked *mp*. The Violoncello part is marked *mf*. The second system (measures 20-23) includes parts for Piccolo (Pcc), Horns (Hp.), Percussion (Perc.), and Violoncello (Vcabo). The Piccolo part is marked *ff* and *allegro molto*. The Horns part is marked *mp*. The Percussion part includes a snare drum (Timp. (see tick)) and is marked *mp*. The Violoncello part is marked *mf*. The score features a complex rhythmic pattern of descending glissandi in the strings, which is repeated as a quasi-ground bass for the entire duration of the movement.

Figure 16. *Crouching Tiger Concerto*: VI. "Farewell," mm. 16-23

Here, the piccolo is written lower in its range and is substituting for the erhu that was used in the original score. Notably the accompaniment in the strings is a seven-measure pattern of descending glissandi that is repeated as a quasi-ground bass for the entire duration of the movement.

2.2 Performance Thoughts

Tan Dun's score and Yo-Yo Ma's effortless playing that echoed in my mind for days after my first viewing of the movie.¹⁴ To accurately perform the *Crouching Tiger Concerto* it is not enough to simply learn the notated music presented in the score. There are many stylistic nuances that Western notation is not equipped to transmit, and a conscientious performer should study the performance on the film soundtrack as well as seek to understand the musical traditions referenced in this concerto. They must also be

¹⁴ When recording for the film's score was taking place, Yo-Yo Ma was unable to travel to Shanghai due to visa problems. Tan recorded the orchestra part, which he also conducted, and Ma's solo separately and edited them together to create the finished soundtrack.

attuned to how the character of the music relates to the plot and emotion of the film for which it was written and should pay close attention to the footage that Tan has selected to accompany live performances of the concerto.

Tan's score calls for amplifying the solo cello, placing the *Crouching Tiger Concerto* alongside Schnittke's first concerto, Charles Wuorinen's *Five*, and Matthew Hindson's *In Memoriam* in the growing field of concerti for amplified solo cello with orchestra. Although this gives these composers more freedom for balancing the solo cello with a larger orchestration, it assigns an extra level of decision making to the soloist who must choose whether to use the recommended amplification and, if so, what equipment is best. Benjamin Karp, Cello professor at the University of Kentucky, has performed the *Crouching Tiger Concerto* multiple times and shared his thoughts on this with me.

“When performing the concerto, I have used amplification, as the composer recommends in the score. I feel it is necessary, both so as not to be drowned out by the percussion battery, but also for the various extended techniques of pizzicato and glissando to be truly effective. It is important to use an acoustic amplifier rather than an electric one. The acoustic will not color the sound of the cello, compressing its range of timbre.”¹⁵

Mr. Karp went on to suggest the best technique and equipment for amplification, saying,

“An external, stationary microphone can be used, but the performer must maintain the same distance between cello and mic for a consistent sound, and external noises are quite noticeable. I have also used a microphone attached to the strings below the bridge with Velcro. These are better, but still noisy and inconsistent.”¹⁶

Finally, he suggests that a piezo ceramic pickup gave him the best results. Although it is installed directly under the foot of the bridge, he claims it did not restrict his movement

¹⁵ Benjamin Karp, email to the author on December 8, 2020.

¹⁶ Ibid.

or damage the varnish of his historic Italian instrument, while still providing a sound that was “realistic, clean, and uncolored.”¹⁷

There are also extended techniques—playing with a guitar pick and slow glissandi—that must be mastered before performing this concerto. Playing pizzicato with a guitar pick takes quite a bit of detailed practice, especially in the quick rhythms required by this piece (see Figs. 4 and 11). To play all the chords and notes at the tempo Tan requires, it is necessary to find the best pick to use and to experiment with the best angle at which to hold and move the pick. When preparing to perform this piece, it is advisable to try as many types of guitar picks as possible to find the best fit for the performer’s playing style. I tried around a hundred types before finding the best combination of stiffness, flexibility, comfort in the hand, and sound quality. I discovered that a thick pick with a large surface area was the most compatible with my cello and playing style. Thickness gives the pick a solid, clear sound, and the larger size makes the pick easier to hold while executing the fast movements required. Although Western music sometimes requires glissandi on the cello, the Chinese style of glissando is quite different. These glissandi should be slow and expressive, and often occur quickly in opposite directions (see Figs. 2 and 8). This requires dexterity and flexibility in the left hand while precise movements will ensure the proper intonation.

¹⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSION

The international success of Tan Dun's score for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* must be due, in part, to its blending of the elements of Western orchestral film scores and the language of the traditional music of Tan's native China "An artist's creation more or less always comes from his life experiences, his imagination comes out this way. My imagination always comes out from my experiences in life. I've been living in the United States for fifteen years, but I was living in China for more than twenty years. All those experiences crossing together is what comes out of my music."¹⁸ This multi-cultural life experience is reflected in all the music that Tan Dun composes, much of which transfers the influence of his upbringing into Western musical forms.

In fact, the *Crouching Tiger Concerto* is far from the only concerto that explores Dun's personal experience in this Western musical genre. For instance, the *Water Concerto for Water, Percussion and Orchestra* was born out of Tan's memories of playing in water as a child, the traditions of bathing and washing in the river in his home province of Hunan, and his feeling that water is the tears of the nature we have polluted.¹⁹ Tan wanted to write a piece that would allow this water to sing, and he composed a concerto that mixes the unique timbre of a performer splashing basins of water with a myriad of other water-based percussion and a Western orchestra. Tan's *Paper Concerto for Paper Percussion and Orchestra* explores one of China's most important

¹⁸ Charis Pasles, "Dialogues with Tan Dun," *LA Times*, Oct 19, 2001, <http://tandun.com/composition/crouching-tiger-concerto-for-cello-and-chamber-orchestra/>

¹⁹ Helen Elmquist, Excerpts from an interview of Tan Dun, May 2007. <http://tandun.com/composition/water-concerto-for-water-percussion-and-orchestra/>

contributions to human society.²⁰ Like water in his earlier concerto, Tan was inspired by the organic nature of paper, which is traditionally made from mashed bamboo, and how he could communicate music by manipulating the subtle sounds of the material. “Paper not only communicates but can transmit creativity in an acoustic way by blowing, rubbing, cracking, shaking, crumbling, tearing, popping, puckering, fingering, hitting, waving, slapping, plucking, whistling, swinging and singing through the paper.”²¹ These concertos demonstrate how Tan’s blend of Western and Eastern traditions can be very personal to him and lead to unique musical expressions.

All Tan’s works discussed here also show how he is a master of extending the traditional Western concert experience. He joins other twentieth-century composers such as Henry Cowell, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and John Cage as a pioneer of contemporary composition that seeks to broaden our understanding of what can be considered music. Unlike these Western composers, Tan’s experiments are enhanced by his wide-ranging life experience as a Chinese native, United States resident, and cultural citizen of the world. In this way, Tan’s career outlines a path that continues to inspire and be followed by other international composers with multi-cultural backgrounds. Tan Dun’s music, grounded in the recollection and transposition of personal and cultural memory, is a model for boundary-less composition that unites audiences worldwide.

²⁰ Helen Elmquist, Excerpts from an interview of Tan Dun, May 2007.
<http://tandun.com/composition/paper-concerto-for-paper-percussion-and-orchestra/>

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PROGRAM NOTES

1. FIRST DMA RECITAL PROGRAM NOTE

10/24/2016

Cello: Xiaohang Yu

Piano: Zixi Ren

Johann Sebastian Bach: Suite for Unaccompanied Cello No.1 in G major, BWV 1007

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Minuets I and II
- VI. Gigue

Robert Schumann: *Phantasiestücke* for Piano and Clarinet (or Cello), Op.73

- I. Zart und mit Ausdruck
- II. Lebhaft, leicht
- III. Rasch und mit Feuer

Nikolai Myaskovsky: Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 2 in A minor, Op. 81

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Andante cantabile
- III. Allegro con spirito

J. S. Bach: Suite for Unaccompanied Cello No.1 in G major, BWV 1007

Although not the first pieces written for the instrument, Bach's six suites were the first substantial body of music for solo cello. The set was most likely written while Bach was working in Cöthen, where he was the Kapellmeister at the court of Prince Leopold from late 1717 to early 1723. Unlike the Weimar and Leipzig periods, the Cöthen years

did not require Bach to focus on weekly church music, which led to the creation of a substantial number of instrumental works—another argument for this dating for the suites. This freedom from writing weekly cantatas was augmented by the amount of enthusiasm and money that the Prince expended, particularly on instrumentalists, which give Bach a number of excellent musicians with which to work, including gambist Christian Ferdinand Abel and cellist Christian Bernhard Linigke both of whom have been proposed as possible performers for the suites.

Like all of the suites, the G major suite is comprised of a prelude followed by six dances. The prelude, almost assuredly the most recognizable piece of cello music ever written, is composed as a three-voice chorale combined into a single line of music through skillful arpeggiation. Each of the dances that follow is a stylized piece based on features of a popular dance style. The Allemande was a slow dance from Germany and was frequently paired with a light Courante from Italy. The Sarabande was a Spanish dance known for its calm and often somber tone, while the Minuets were rustic dances that became popular in European courts and were traditionally performed in pairs. The wildest of the dances was the English jig, which featured stomping rhythms in a fast tempo.

Robert Schumann: Phantasiestücke for Piano and Clarinet (or Cello), Op. 73

Schumann's three Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet and Piano were written at a time of great productivity for Schumann. Having finished his only opera the previous year, he spent 1849 writing dozens of shorter works, including several small chamber works for a single instrument with piano. These included three romances for oboe, a piece for horn,

and five pieces “in the folk style” for cello. Schumann wrote the Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet in just two days in February, originally titling them “Night Pieces” before borrowing a title he had used for two sets of previous pieces, *Phantasiestücke*. Like many composers of the time, Schumann authorized several of these chamber pieces to be published in versions for different instruments, and the Fantasy Pieces, Op. 73 were published with options for violin and cello as well as clarinet.

The first piece, marked to be played “tenderly and with expression,” is songlike in its dreamy melancholy, though it ends with a breath of hope. The second is much livelier with a playful, positive energy; its central section is filled with serpentine triplets that create a dialogue between the cello and piano. The final piece begins in a frenzy of fiery passion, before a calm middle section recalls the melancholy of the first movement. The ending pushes the player to their limits as Schumann asks it to be played *schneller und schneller* (faster and faster).

Nikolai Myaskovsky – Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 2 in A minor, Op. 81

Nikolai Myaskovsky’s Cello Sonata No. 2 was written in 1948 for the great cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. However, it has not gained the same popularity in the West as similar pieces by Prokofiev and Shostakovich, perhaps because of its use of unabashed romanticism at a time when Western composers were exploring ever newer methods of writing. Notwithstanding this neglect, within Russia Myaskovsky is known as one of the most important composers of the early Soviet era.

Born in 1881, Myaskovsky was raised by his aunt who had been a professional singer. However, it was not until he heard Tchaikovsky’s sixth symphony at age 15 that

he became interested in a career as a musician. Ten years later after working as a military engineer, he enrolled in Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's class at the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, where he became lifelong friends with the youngest member of his class, Sergei Prokofieff. Unlike his younger colleague, Myaskovsky's compositional style remained traditionally romantic throughout his life. After serving again in the Russian army during World War I and then the Red Army following the revolution, he was appointed as a teacher at the Moscow Conservatory where he taught Aram Khachaturian and Dmitri Kabalevsky. He was a prolific composer, finishing twenty-seven symphonies, thirteen string quartets, and nine piano sonatas.

The first movement, which is in a clear sonata form, is a collection of elegant melodies. Throughout the movement the piano and cello trade off the roles of "singer" and accompaniment. Even the development, in many sonatas a climatic section of disquiet, is relatively subdued.

This calm also imbues much of the second movement, but here the climaxes are far more unsettled. The opening melody, almost a lullaby with its lulling rhythm, builds to a feverish ending; the cello crying out over the thunderous piano chords. In the middle section, groups of three notes clash rhythmically with groups of two, creating a different kind of discontent that builds to its own climax before infecting the return of the original melody.

The finale's simple opening gesture, outlining an A minor chord, belies the turbulence of the rest of the movement. Over offbeat chords on the piano, the cello plays a long string of sixteenth notes, played spiccato so that the bow will bounce with each note and allow the player to take an extremely fast tempo. This rush of notes eventually

fades into the second section, in which a slower but still anxious melody builds into a frenzy of cello arpeggios. The sixteenth notes return once more, and eventually the piano takes them up as the cello plays another dark, stormy melody. After repeats of the first two sections, the coda (marked to be played even faster) comes to an abrupt end.

2. SECOND DMA RECITAL PROGRAM NOTE

12/01/2017

Violin: Yu-ting Huang

Cello: Xiaohang Yu

Piano: Patricia Griffith

Felix Mendelssohn - Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49

I. Molto allegro ed agitato

II. Andante con moto tranquillo

III. Scherzo: Leggiero e vivace

IV. Allegro assai appassionato

Johannes Brahms - Piano Trio No. 1 in B major, Op. 8 (1889 revision)

I. Allegro con brio

II. Allegro molto

III. Adagio

IV. Allegro

Felix Mendelssohn: Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49

Felix Mendelssohn was a German composer who was born into a wealthy and renowned Jewish family in Hamburg, Germany in 1809. He died at the young age of thirty-eight in Leipzig in 1847 only a few months after the death of Fanny, his older sister and lifelong musical confidant. Like his sister, Felix was a child prodigy, composing his career-defining String Octet when he was only sixteen years old. The career that followed consisted of more than prolific composition; Mendelssohn also performed on piano and violin, and worked as a conductor, teacher, and concert organizer. His compositions are known for their poetic lyricism and rigorously constructed elegance, a deliberate

combination of Beethoven's structural and harmonic inventiveness with Bach and Mozart's charming perfection.

Although not Mendelssohn's first attempt at a piano trio—he composed at least parts of three others during his early teens—the D minor trio of 1839 is the first of two completed mature works in the genre. The second, Op. 66 in C minor, would follow six years later. Ever the compositional tinkerer, Mendelssohn quickly revised the completed D minor trio after his friend Ferdinand Hiller suggested a few changes to make the piano part more brilliant and in line with the Lisztian style of the decade. Robert Schumann gave the final product a glowing review, praising Mendelssohn as "the Mozart of the nineteenth century." This praise may have been due, in part, to Mendelssohn's use of engaging and memorable melodies throughout the piece as well as the careful balancing of the roles of the three instruments.

The first movement, a sonata form marked to be played agitatedly, is introduced by the first memorable melody of the work. While this theme definitely sounds pleading, it is the syncopations of the piano accompaniment that provide the nervous agitation. This also demonstrates from the forefront the active textures that Mendelssohn writes for the piano throughout the trio. After this opening theme has been built into a frenzied climax, the mood dramatically shifts, and the cello plays a bright, warm second theme to finish the exposition. This theme is much shorter than the first, and the lengthy development soon begins, during which each of the two themes from the exposition are developed in the order they were first heard. They are stated once more in the movement's recapitulation, the opening theme crying out for the last time as the movement comes to a brusque close.

The mood of the following movement could not be more contrasting, marked tranquil and singing. And, indeed, its melody, which flows almost continuously throughout the movement, recalls the lyricism of Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words. To maintain interest, Mendelssohn writes a different texture in each of the movement's three sections. In the first, the piano accompanies itself and then the strings with a constant stream of sixteenth notes. The middle section grows more intense and heavier as the piano switches to repeated chords in rhythms that conflict with the strings' melody. The final section returns to the sixteenth notes from the opening, but now they are primarily played by the strings. For a few measures the melody even disappears as the violin and cello alternate cadenza-like lines before uniting as the melody returns one last time.

After writing the Goethe-inspired scherzo of his String Octet as a teenager, Mendelssohn was known for ingenious whimsy of his scherzi. These humorous movements nearly always have an air of supernatural fantasy in their light, fast themes and inventive textures. Throughout this brief scherzo it is easy to imagine fairies leaping and elves scampering. Here Mendelssohn abandons the traditional ABA scherzo form (the main theme, a contrasting calm section, and repeat of the opening section), instead adopting a monothematic sonata form. Like the first movement, there is an exposition of the scherzo's material followed by a lengthy development and a recapitulation of the opening. However, here there is only a single theme, the entire movement is united by the impish character of the very opening gestures.

At first it appears that the finale will again use this monothematic sonata structure. The entire exposition is based on the passionate opening theme. However, after the

development of this material has begun, a new, songlike theme is introduced by the strings, finally breaking the obsessive, leaping rhythm that has so far pervaded the movement. The calm is soon broken, and the obsession returns. When the recapitulation occurs, the song's promise is fulfilled as it returns at the exact spot where the second theme should occur. It is almost as if the mood of the second movement has returned to finally break the agitation of the trio, which can now end with a gloriously virtuosic flourish.

Johannes Brahms : Piano Trio No. 1 in B major, Op. 8 (1889 revision)

Johannes Brahms was a German romantic composer and conductor born in 1833 to a family of working musicians in Hamburg. His father was a double bass player at the Hamburg Theater and began teaching his son violin, cello, piano, and French horn at age seven. Young Johannes also learned how to edit the theater orchestra's sheet music, giving him his lifelong fascination with the craft of musical composition. In 1853, a twenty-year old Brahms showed up on the doorstep of Robert and Clara Schumann and begged them to take him in so he could study with Robert. The couple immediately recognized his talents as a pianist and composer; Robert championed his music through rave reviews in his influential music journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, and Clara frequently performed Brahms' piano music on her European tours.

Within a year of meeting the Schumanns and at the age of only twenty-one, Brahms completed and published his first piano trio. A mammoth undertaking, this forty-minute piece was the largest Brahms had yet attempted. It also marked his first foray into chamber music (all of his previous compositions had been vocal or for solo piano), and

he would proceed to write works for all of the traditional chamber groupings. This included two more piano trios written near the end of his life. In 1889, only a few years before his death in 1896, Brahms returned to the B major trio he had composed nearly forty years earlier and extensively revised it, creating an almost entirely new work. He retained some of the thematic material from the first version but entirely replaced large sections of all the movements except the scherzo. This is the only work of Brahms for which we have two separate published versions, and, although the revised version is performed far more often, both trios have their own appeal and reveal much about his growth from a fanciful, experimental young man to a meticulous master of his craft.

The trio's first movement starts with a sentimental theme that rivals Mendelssohn's in its memorability. Like Mendelssohn, Brahms gives this melody first to the cello, before all three instruments build to the theme's rapturous conclusion. The second theme contrasts in almost every way. Instead of a memorable melody, it is defined by anxious textures and harmonic instability. A hint of the opening theme returns but is quickly replaced with an angry fragment of three notes that is passed from instrument to instrument. It is this triplet figure that introduces the turbulent development, and when the opening theme finally returns in the strings it is accompanied by a calmer version of these same triplets. A lengthy tranquil coda stretches out the, by now, familiar opening theme in wave-like ripples before slowly building to the movement's conclusive end.

Much more grounded than Mendelssohn's scherzo, the second movement of this trio retains the traditional ABA format. It is the only movement to which Brahms made only minor changes. The first theme is light and rather folk-like with devious undertones; as usual this is built into a rousing statement with off-beat accents so highly characteristic

of Brahms. The central section features one of the most warmly romantic melodies Brahms ever wrote. A notable change Brahms made to this movement was to add the cello to the piano's melodic line at the climax of this section, adding even more lush warmth to the texture. He also rewrote the end of the movement to include sparkling runs up and down the piano.

The third movement begins in hushed chords and a spiritual atmosphere like a hymn being sung in an empty cathedral. The quiet dialogue between piano and strings slowly becomes interlaced and a melodic section is introduced by the cello. The texture becomes increasingly thick as the atmosphere becomes rich with emotion. The hushed chords finally return, and the hymn is begun again, this time with a flowing descant in the piano's upper register. The movement ends with the nearly the exact same chord as the scherzo, connecting these two central movements into a contrasting pair.

Although the finale begins with the hushed tone of the previous movement, the mood is immediately returned to the anxiety of the second section of the first movement. Even the D major second theme, which tries to bring a contrasting ease, is nervous with an awkward off-beat accompaniment. This mood pervades the entire movement, which is the heaviest of the entire trio. In the end the darkness of the minor-key opening completely overtakes the music, and the trio ends somberly, making it one of the few pieces that begins in a bright major and ends in a tragic minor.

3. THIRD DMA RECITAL PROGRAM NOTE

12/05/2018

Cello: Xiaohang Yu

Piano: Xin Zhang

Piano: Mengying Wan

Johann Sebastian Bach: Suite for Unaccompanied Cello No.3 in C major, BWV 1009

I. Prelude

II. Allemande

III. Courante

IV. Sarabande

V. Bourrée I and II

VI. Gigue

Ludwig van Beethoven: Cello Sonata No.3 in A major, Op. 69

I. Allegro, ma non tanto

II. Scherzo, Allegro molto

III. Adagio cantabile – Allegro vivace

Tieshan Liu & Yuan Mao (Arranged by Jianchun Cai & Jiaze Ma): Dance of The Yao People

J. S. Bach: Suite for Unaccompanied Cello No.3 in C major, BWV 1009

In the baroque period, a suite was an ordered the set of instrumental pieces based on popular dances types. It is believed that Bach composed his *Six Suites for Unaccompanied Cello* between 1717-1723, the same period as he finished the Brandenburg Concertos, the Two- and Three-Part Inventions. Each suite follows the same basic sequence of dance styles each written in binary form: Allemande, Courante,

Sarabande, and Gigue. Additionally, Bach added a prelude to introduce each suite and an extra dance movement before the gigue of each suite. In the first and second suite these are a pair of Menuets, in the third and fourth suite, a pair of Bourrées, and in suites five and six, a pair of Gavottes.

This third suite is written in a heroic and joyful C major. This is partially due to the fact that this key allows the player to use many open G and C-strings, allowing for extra resonance throughout the suite. The Prelude is built from a non-stop sequence of sixteenth-notes, beginning with a glorious descending C major scale, continuing through a harmonically tense middle section, and ending with the same scalar statement with which it began. The following Allemande is of German origin; although Bach wrote both fast and slow versions of this dance, the allemande in this suite is relatively light-footed. The Courante is similar in character to the Allemande and is also light and animated. The Sarabande is extremely slow and peaceful. The first Bourrée is one of the most well-known pieces in the cello repertoire; thanks to its appearance in the first book of the Suzuki method, the opening melody may even be recognized by people who have never heard the rest of the suite. The second Bourrée is an extended, minor variation of the first. The final Gigue is a lively dance with heavy steps, and offers the player some brisk, virtuosic passagework to close the suite.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Cello Sonata No.3 in A major, Op. 69

Beethoven wrote five cello sonatas during his life. The first two are early works, written when he was twenty-six and published as his Op. 5, and the final two were published as Op. 102, twelve years before his death. Between these two pairs of sonatas,

lies the A major sonata composed in 1808 during Beethoven's middle period. Written in the same year as the "Ghost" Piano Trio and the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, Beethoven created a milestone of the cello sonata history with this great work. It is not only a showpiece for both instruments, but also the first sonata in which the two instruments share equal importance.

The cello opens the piece alone, with a quiet, subdued statement of the main theme of this sonata-allegro movement. As the cello settles on a low E, the piano takes over the theme, completing it with a short cadenza. The roles are then reversed, with the piano beginning the theme and the cello taking over the second half with its own cadenza. This sets up the conversational nature that pervades the rest of the movement; the piano and cello constantly trade musical phrases and textures. One of the most phenomenal textures occurs at the climax of the development: the cello roars in fast, low broken-chords, while the piano answers with high broken octaves. It takes many measures for the tension of this dark and stormy passage to subside before the recapitulation can finally occur. In the coda the cello and piano finally are allowed to play an extended version of the opening theme together in five octaves, before another lengthy quiet passage that leads to the movement's final three *forte* chords.

The second movement is the only scherzo in all five of Beethoven's cello sonatas. However, it is an important early example of his experimentation with the scherzo form during this compositional period. Instead of the traditional three-part structure (scherzo-trio-scherzo), here Beethoven employed the double scherzo form (scherzo-trio-scherzo-trio-scherzo-coda) that would later appear in the seventh and ninth symphonies. The theme of the scherzo starts on the third beat of each measure, making it sound like the

pianist's right hand is always coming in early. When the cellist enters, the same musical joke is used.

A beautiful *Adagio cantabile* movement appears as a quasi-introduction to the finale. Its brevity (the movement is only eighteen measures long) has fooled many audiences who expect a much longer slow movement. However, these few measures present an expressive aria for the cello, giving the performers and audience an opportunity to breath after the nervous imbalance of the scherzo.

The last movement, another sonata-allegro form, begins with a four-note motive on the cello derived from the intervals used in the main theme of the first movement. The second theme begins with repeated running sixteenth-note phrases that are passed back and forth between the cello and piano: another connection to the conversational patterns in the first movement. The exposition ends with a brief passage of eighth notes that simply seem to lead to the repeat and later the development. The alternations between piano and cello continue in a brief development that prominently features chromatic manipulations of the opening four-note motive. The recapitulation brings back all the previous material basically unaltered, leading to an extremely long coda that expands on the eighth-note passage that ended the exposition, combining this material with the four-note motive and leading to another final three *forte* chords.

Tieshan Liu & Yuan Mao: Dance of The Yao People

The melody of this piece is originally taken from the festival music of the Yao people, who lived in southwest China. Tieshan Liu transcribed this tune, which was adapted into an orchestral work in 1952 by Yuan Mao.

This piece is written in typical ternary form, consisting of three sections: two slow and one fast. After a solo piano introduction, the cello enters with the slow folk theme, which feels like a man singing a long song while wandering in the mountains. In the central fast section, cello and piano alternate variations of the theme, each instrument receiving opportunities to both lead and accompany the other. This dance-like section represents the Yao People dancing together at their festivals. Finally, the last section returns to the main theme with the cello playing in a higher octave, giving the opening mountain song another character.

These days, *The Dance of Yao People* is one of the best known and most popular Chinese compositions in the world. Many thanks to Dr. Jianchun Cai and Jiaze Ma for their arrangement of this cello and piano edition. Currently Dr. Jianchun Cai is the professor at Shenzhen University, China and Jiaze Ma is a DMA student in University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

4. FOURTH DMA RECITAL PROGRAM NOTE

04/23/2019

Cello: Xiaohang Yu

Cello: Joshua Adam Bermudez

Piano: Xin Zhang

Johann Sebastian Bach: Suite for Unaccompanied Cello No.2 in D minor, BWV 1008

I. Prelude

II. Allemande

III. Courante

IV. Sarabande

V. Menuets I and II

VI. Gigue

Charles Gounod: Ave Maria

Gabriel Fauré: Cello Sonata No.2 in G minor, Op. 117

I. Allegro

II. Andante

III. Allegro vivo

Friedrich August Kummer: Cello Duet in C major, Op. 22, No. 1

I. Allegro

II. Andantino

III. Allegro Scherzoso

J. S. Bach: Suite for Solo Cello No.2 in D minor, BWV 1008

In the baroque period, a suite was an ordered the set of instrumental pieces based on popular dances types. It is believed that Bach composed his *Six Suites for*

Unaccompanied Cello between 1717-1723, the same period as he finished the Brandenburg Concertos, the Two- and Three-Part Inventions. Each suite follows the same basic sequence of dance styles each written in binary form: Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, and Gigue. Additionally, Bach added a prelude to introduce each suite and an extra dance movement before the gigue of each suite. In the first and second suite these are a pair of Menuets, in the third and fourth suite, a pair of Bourrées, and in suites five and six, a pair of Gavottes.

The Prelude opens with a d-minor arpeggio that introduces the technique that Bach uses throughout the movement (and indeed most of the suites in general) for spelling out harmonies note by note rather than all at once as on a keyboard. As the Prelude progresses, tension is built in waves of melodic and harmonic sequences. The first half of the following Allemande drifts away from the home key and combines waves of sixteenth notes with multiple stops that provide rhythmic emphasis. The Courante is a fast dance-like movement, connecting running sixteenth-notes with quarter notes that seem to rudely interrupt the dance's flow. In the Sarabande, the music becomes much slower and peaceful, set in the deepest register of the cello with long-held dissonances. The first of the two Menuets offers a dark dance, immediately contrasted with the sunny second dance (the only major-key portion of the suite). Finally, Bach sets the Gigue in 3/8 instead of the more common 12/8 meter, but his writing still retains the stomping character typical of this English folk-dance.

Charles Gounod: Ave Maria

Ave Maria is by far the most well-known piece of music by French composer Charles Gounod. Often misattributed to J. S. Bach, the work consists of a melody that Gounod improvised, using the first prelude from Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier Book I* as an accompaniment. (The version of the prelude used by Gounod has an extra measure added by a previous publisher who attempted to fix a "mistake" in the prelude's voice leading!) Gounod published his piece in 1853 in a setting for violin (or cello) and piano and titled it *Meditation sur le Premier Prelude de Piano de J. S. Bach*. Although the familiar Latin text *Ave Maria* is often associated with this melody, it wasn't until 1859 that Gounod officially applied this text to the peaceful, meditative music.

Gabriel Fauré: Cello Sonata No.2 in G minor, Op. 117

Gabriel Fauré finished his second cello sonata in 1921 near the end of a long, difficult period in his life marked by increasing deafness. The music of these years was described poignantly in a 1931 review in *The Musical Quarterly*: "The last period of his life, that very tragic period from 1903 to 1924, is marked by compositions of a quite particular style, of a sombre gravity at times, of an austere resignation, more and more closely clipped, laid bare, gaunt almost". True to this description, this minor-key sonata eschews much of the lush romanticism of many of Fauré's earlier works, instead marrying dense, chromatic harmonies that seem to wander aimlessly to tuneful, interminable melodies and simple, repetitive textures.

The opening of the first movement presents a lengthy melody, played in canon by both instruments, joined by a sparse, incessant, accompaniment. This texture remains

unchanged for the nearly one-hundred measure first theme. The second theme introduces a new melody that retains the imitative treatment between the two instruments; the accompaniment in this section is still sparse, but now takes the form of smooth arpeggios. In the central development section, piano and cello continue to alternate varied fragments and motifs from both themes. The recapitulation returns all of the melodies from the opening, but in a different order and with new transitions between them. One of these transitions leads to the coda, which on first hearing sounds like continued development, but finally coalesces into repeated affirmations of the G major ending.

The slow movement is a transcription of Fauré's *Chant funéraire* for military band, written earlier the same year to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of Napoleon's death. The movement begins with the cello playing another long melody, this time with a somber, stately character that is strikingly reminiscent of Fauré's popular *Élégie* for cello composed forty-one years before. A sudden modulation and key change in the middle of this movement leads to an intensely sorrowful statement from the cello, compounded by a thick, dramatically syncopated accompaniment in the piano. After a brief repeat of the opening theme, the movement resolves calmly in C major.

The finale starts with a breathless ascending theme in the piano, answered by a descent in the cello before it repeats the piano's theme. In fact, this melody is a mirrored variation of the opening theme of the first movement. Though the mood is more frenetic, the texture is also quite similar to the first movement, both instruments trading off fragments of melody over a motoric accompaniment. Calm finally interrupts, and the piano presents the second theme, a series of three-measure phrases that seem to fall one into the next. The accompaniment slowly speeds up beneath continuous long phrases in

the cello until the climax combines both instruments in running sixteenth-notes and an eventual return of the second theme. The breathless opening melody is hinted at, but never fully reappears before the fragments of the two main subjects of the movement are merged in the final celebratory coda.

F. A. Kummer: Cello Duet in C major, Op. 22, No. 1

In the early nineteenth-century, two major schools of cello playing were founded in Germany; one in Bonn by Bernhard Romberg (1761-1841), and the other in Dresden by Friedrich Dotzauer (1783-1860). Friedrich Kummer was a pupil of Dotzauer and wrote a great deal of music (both virtuosic and pedagogical) for his instrument: concertino, duets, etudes and arrangements of popular arias. Just like other early classical works, Kummer's Cello Duet in C is tuneful and light. Most likely written for Kummer to enjoy with one of his peers or students, the two cellos are given equal importance in the first movement. In the outer movements, the sections feature each cello in turn, and in the central movement the first cello is soloist for the opening and closing and the second becomes star in the middle.

VITA

Xiaohang Yu

EDUCATION

University of Kentucky - Lexington, Kentucky (USA) Cello Performance DMA(expected) 2020
Georgia Southern University - Statesboro, Georgia (USA) Cello Performance Master 2014
Shenzhen University – Shenzhen, Guangdong (China) Cello Performance Bachelor 2011

ACADEMIC HONORS

2nd Prize of Music Teachers National Association in Kentucky Division 10/2015
Gillis-Clarke String Quartet scholarship recipient 08/2013
2nd Prize Scholarship, Academic Achievement 08/2009
1st Prize – Steinway & Sons Instrumental Contest, Piano Trio, Shenzhen University 03/2010
1st Prize – Second National Pupils Art Performance Contest 08/2007

MUSICIANSHIP EXPERIENCE

String Quartet invited to 22nd Music Festival de Paques in Deauville, France 04/2018
Assistant Principal Cellist, Lexington Chamber Orchestra 09/2016 - present
Section cello of Cave Run Symphony Orchestra 08/2016 - present
Principal Cellist, All College Orchestra, GMEA 03/2013
Summit Music Festival, 2nd chair of cello section and Scholarship Recipient, New York 07/2012
Assistant Principal Cellist, Vienna Strauss Orchestra Tour, China 12/2011
Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra, Intern/ Cello Section, China 2008-2011

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Part time Cello Teacher at Atlanta Summer Festival Academy 07/2019
Graduate Teaching Assistant 08/2017 - 05/2018
Graduate Teaching Assistant 08/2011 - 05/2014