

Politically Influenced Music in Post-Reform China

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Music

September 2014

Abstract

This thesis explores the connection between music and politics in post reform China from the point of view of mass communication, and within the fields of politically influenced folk music in Xinjiang, the rapid development of the 'Chinese Piano Dream', and the popular music on the central stage of the China Central Television Spring Festival Gala. This is preceded by an introduction to the political, economic and cultural changes since the implementation of the Reform and Opening Up Policy in 1978, which have not only challenged China's traditional culture but have also altered her self-image and relationship with the outside world. Chinese politicians have realized that communal value and national identity are no longer based only on closed borders and a strong political ideology. Meanwhile, music remains a propaganda tool since the establishment of the Communist Party of China, and continues to serve the mainstream media, interacting with politics to further the Communist agenda and maintain a favourable image of the Party.

As a native fieldworker from Xinjiang, I enjoy dual identities and perspectives ('emic' and 'etic') as insider and outsider to apply to the research of new folk music in Xinjiang: how it is decoded, disseminated and interpreted by its audience, and how it conveys political messages. With China's rapid economic growth, Western classical music became a new channel of communication between East and West. The renowned pianist Yundi Li is not only a household name but is moreover a symbol of the response to President Xi Jin-ping's call to the nation to chase the 'Chinese Dream' and he also represents China's 'soft power' internationally. My fieldwork with Yundi stemmed from the largest music tour in Chinese history, entitled 'China Piano Dream' (2013), and the 'Emperor - Fantasy' tour (2014), which gave me a unique insight into how Chinese musicians negotiate the political and social expectations placed on them. Finally, a new crossover resulting from collaborations between well-known musicians from Mainland China and Taiwan has had a significant impact on the most viewed television programme in the world: the China Central Television Spring Festival Gala. Mass communication models, audience reception and a semiotic approach to the analysis of musical extracts are applied to interpret the political meaning of the performance.

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1. 'A Lovely Rose' - performed by Wang Hong-wei
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(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7gHGtt0PE>)
2. 'Ben Cao Gang Mu' – a collaboration between Jay Chow and Song Zu-ying
春晚 周杰伦宋祖英 本草纲目
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfgdqZPsz2w>)
3. 'Dance of Spring' – performed by Lang-Lang Piano
春舞
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwLGHXVk19o>)
4. 'Sweet songs to welcome the guests' – performed by Bahargül
视频- 巴哈尔古丽- 甜甜的歌儿迎贵客
(http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjE2MjI3MzI=.html)
5. 'Festival Meshrep in the Passion Square'
激情广场_激情广场_爱国歌曲大家唱走进乌鲁木齐
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfJwD6hOIWE>)
6. 'My Chinese Dream' – performed by Zhang Ming-min [2014 Spring Festival Gala]
2014 央视马年春晚 歌曲_我的中国梦_张明敏
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlEolMPnF7M>)
7. 'My Chinese Heart' – performed by Zhang Ming-min [1984 Spring Festival Gala]
1984 年春晚歌曲-张明敏 我的中国心
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLJggpB3loo>)
8. 'Pi Huang' – performed by Yundi Li
李云迪_皮黄
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7S2-eC7oaNw>)
9. 'Setti Maria and Ivan Dudar' – performed by Tusken
中国好声音 塔斯肯 可爱的一朵玫瑰花
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyAiOpbodDY>)

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to Dr Neil Sorrell and Dr Áine Sheil at the Department of Music, the University of York. Their expertise, advice and support have been extremely valuable, and without them this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my former supervisor Dr Jenny Doctor for allowing me the opportunity to discuss my methodology in the early stages of this work.

Over the past four and a half years I have been extremely fortunate to receive both academic and financial support from a number of different sources. I am indebted to the University of York for the award of an Overseas Continuation Scholarship; to Gilly Howe, Helen Gillie and Catherine Duncan of the Vincent Assistantship of the department for their help; and to the Research Committee of Music for funding me to attend the International Conference on Music Semiotics in memory of Raymond Monelle in 2012, and for special departmental bursaries from Professor Jonathan Wainwright. I have also benefited greatly from the three years of work experience as a College Tutor at James College from 2011 to 2013.

I would also like to thank Professor Du Xiao-shi, Professor Zhang Zhao and Mr Li Chuan for their kind assistance in making the fieldwork possible.

The assistance of my proofreader Jude White has been appreciated; her outstanding professional skills and patience and her warm heart have helped me through the most important time.

I also wish to thank my friends Dr Yao-an Wu, Vicky Li, Dr Ondrej Hovorka and Veronika Hovorkova for their precious friendship and support.

Finally, my special thanks go to my family: my parents and my aunts, for their unconditional love and dedication and understanding; to my family in England, Barbara, Leon, Robin and Toby, for giving me so much love and encouragement throughout the time – I am deeply grateful; and of course, to my husband, Jolyon Aarons, for supporting me, helping me and giving everything that I would value for the rest of my life.

Author's declaration

I, Jingdi Li declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly while in candidature for a PhD degree at the University of York
2. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed
3. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.
5. A part of this work has been given in the form of a paper 'Listening to Popular Music of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala' at the International Conference on Music Semiotics in Memory of Raymond Monelle. University of Edinburgh, 26-28 October, 2012.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background and context to this study

Introduction of the Introduction

Politics has long been recognised and understood to play a decisive role in music, as a political belief of the ruling class throughout Chinese history, according to the ancient school of Confucius in his *Book of Rites*.¹ Music was used as a weapon, during the period of the Cultural Revolution, in the Communist arsenal.² However, can this interplay of music and politics still be observed, by analysing music which is promoted and disseminated by the Chinese media, in response to its alignment with China's mainstream attitude, belief and assertion? This thesis will draw on recent case studies from China's relations with, and representations of, ethnic minority performers, Western music development focusing on the piano and aspects of music from disputed territories, in order to highlight the CPC's fundamental musical preferences and its political orthodoxy.

1.2 The Spring Story

In the summer of 2004, a concert poster was widely advertised in Beijing, in local newspapers, streets, stations and on websites, entitled *Spring Story--The Memorial Concert of the Centenary of the Birth of Deng Xiao-ping: A Large Symphonic Choral Concert* (Figure 1-1).³ The vital figure of this poster, Deng Xiao-ping himself, smiles as the sun rises from the top left, brightening the sky. Deng wears a traditional Chinese suit or Zhongshan Zhuang (simplified: 中山装), usually referred to as a Mao suit in English. On the right, the panorama of Kowloon is captured, giving the visual effect of Deng looking into the distance at Hong Kong. In

¹Li Lan-Jing, 'The Historical Connection Between Music and Politics in China', *Haerbin Normal University*, 2008, 17. Hou Yan, 'Political Explanation on Music by Confucian School from "The Way of Music Connects Politics"', *Journal Of Taiyuan Normal University*, Social Science Edition, 2012, 6.

²Key texts will be discussed in the body of Introduction.

³Xue-jun Zhang, 'The "Spring Story" to be told by Symphonic Music', News, *Entertainment Sina Beijing*, (2 August 2004), <http://ent.sina.com.cn/2004-08-02/0220461064.html>.

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the middle section, Deng's autobiography is laid out in a large, gold, font in front of the Great Wall, alongside the panorama of the southern city, Shenzhen. A few lines of sans font Chinese characters are printed above Shenzhen, in yellow and white, illustrating the purpose of the concert and advertising the time and venue of this important performance. The lower half of the poster features a unified band and choir in military suits, with a national flag as the stage background.



Figure 1-1 The Memorial Concert of Centenary Birth of Deng Xiao-ping: A Large Symphonic Choral Concert of Story of Spring⁴

Many recognisable features pertaining to Deng Xiao-ping's political career were carefully woven together on the poster. Deng Xiao-ping (1904-1997), a revolutionary and statesman, was China's paramount leader who first pointed out that '...the errors committed by Mao during the Cultural Revolution need to be

⁴He-pu Sun, 'The Concert to Commemorate the Centenary Birth of Comrade Deng Xiao-ping (Concert Time 2004-8-6)', *China News Service*, 29 July 2004, <http://www.chinanews.com/news/2004year/2004-07-29/26/465866.shtml>.

corrected'.⁵ Deng was the architect of the Chinese economic reform, raising the official ideology of 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' to the public,⁶ which meant letting China adapt Marxist theory to accommodate her economic system. He also proposed the constitutional principle for the reunification of China, 'One country, two systems'⁷ which was later applied to the handover of Hong Kong and Macau, respectively. The poster has eulogized the above political achievements of Deng Xiao-ping: the successful transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong is reflected in the prosperity of the Central District of Kowloon Peninsula; the strategic decision of economic reform has contributed to the development of Shenzhen, one of the first cities selected by Deng Xiao-ping as the Special Economic Zone after this policy decision. This policy then installed the concept of domestic economic development as the country's priority while increasing its trade with the global world. This has brought China into a whole new era, with a rapid economic climb.

According to the poster, the Chinese People's Liberation Army Naval Song and Dance Troupe, which was funded during the Chinese Civil War as the Chinese Communist Party's official publicity channel, participating in various musical performances during the Cultural Revolution,⁸ also performed in the 'Spring Story' concert. This concert was named after a well-known, Chinese modern ballade, *The Spring Story* (simplified:春天的故事), about the 'second generation of the Chinese leadership';⁹ its melody was also adopted as the theme tune of the documentary *Deng Xiao-ping* in 1997, filmed by China Central Television.¹⁰ *The Spring Story* (lyrics by Jiang Kai-ru and Ye Xu; Wang You-gui music) was originally sung by Dong Wen-hua, a well known, former military singer, in October 1994.¹¹ The song's lyrics dramatized the background story of Deng Xiao-ping's visit to Southern China, and

⁵Xiao-ping Deng, *Selected Work of Deng Xiao-ping*, 1994th ed., vol. 2, 3 vols (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1994).

⁶Yao Chun, ed., "'Market Fundamentalism' Is Unpractical', *Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*, 3 February 2012, sec. Opinion, <http://en.people.cn/90780/7719657.html>.

⁷Xiao-ping Deng, *Selected Work of Deng Xiao-ping*, 1994th ed., vol. 3, 3 vols (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1994).

⁸Zhang, 'The "Spring Story" to be told by Symphonic Music'.

⁹Baiding Ganyue, 'Sing Along the "Spring Story" again at the Eighth Session of the Third Plenary Session of the Communist Party', *News, News of the Communist Party of China*, (12 November 2013), <http://cpc.people.com.cn/pinglun/n/2013/1112/c241220-23519171.html>.

¹⁰Fei Guo, 'The Spring Story', *Shanxi CPPCC Committee of Cultural and History*, 2/12, no. 2 (2002): 1–1.

¹¹Xin-yu Li, 'The Spring Story', *Guang Dong Economy Publishing House* 12, no. 5 (2014): 82–87.

how the economic reform policy decision was made. Deng Xiao-ping was referred to as an 'elderly person' (simplified: 一个老人) who, by 'drawing a circle' (simplified: 圈) around the Southern China sea, defined the Special Economic Zone in the spring of 1979, according to the song. The lyrics later refer to this 'elderly person' returning, in Spring 1994, to the area marked on the map which now has a much different vitality and enjoys phenomenal prosperity. Therefore, the song not only praises Deng's historical visit to the south in the spring of 2012 but also the economic spring that he brought to the whole of China.

The Spring Story is not only the name of the song, as the title came to specifically represent China's economic reform, under Deng Xiaoping's command. This song appeared on various political, musical events on CPC's official information channels, as reported on the CPC's news websites.¹² In 2014, a nationwide live concert was named after *The Spring Story*, together sponsored by Beijing Municipal Publicity Department, the Sichuan Provincial Party Committee Publicity Department and the National Theatre to commemorate the 110th birth anniversary of Deng Xiao-ping, according to 'gequ' (simplified: 歌曲), a mainstream Chinese popular magazine.¹³ *The Spring Story* song opened the concert, located the first section of the concert, to 'set the context of the concert theme'.¹⁴ According to the Sichuan Daily¹⁵ this concert had 'four sections', which are: *The Spring rains* (simplified: 春之雨), *The Spring Sunshine* (simplified: 春之日), *The March of Spring* (simplified: 春之脚步) and the *Dreams of Spring* (simplified: 春之梦).¹⁶ The first two sections described the law of nature concerning the arrival of the spring, referring to natural phenomena, such as, rain and sunshine. It may not be surprising, then, in Han Chinese idioms, that weather is often widely applied as a metaphor to hint at a

¹²Xie Lei & Zhao Juan, eds., 'Sing the "Spring Story" again at the Eighth Session of the Third Plenary Session', CPC's official news site, (n.d.), <http://cpc.people.com.cn/pinglun/n/2013/1112/c241220-23519171.html>.

¹³Staff of 'Popular Songs', "'Spring Story"--the Symphony Concert to Commemorate the 11th Anniversary of the Birth of Deng Xiao-ping at Beijing National Grand Theatre', *Hebei Institute of Arts* 12, no. 8 (August 2014): 45.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵ It is one of the largest newspapers in Deng Xiao-ping's hometown, Sichuan province.

¹⁶Xiao-ling Wu and Chen Le, eds, 'The Commemorate Concert of the 110th Anniversary of the Birth of Deng Xiao-Ping Was Held in Beijing', *Sichuan Daily*, 22 August 2014, http://sichuan.scol.com.cn/dwzw/content/2014-08/22/content_8485929.htm?node=968.

situation, for instance, 'Miserable Wind and Cold Rain' (simplified: 凄风寒雨) and 'Changeable Meteorology' (simplified: 气象万千), respectively, are used to describe a bleak situation and, the 'magnificent sight, or (the situation has) unlimited potential'.¹⁷ Thus, if the political connotation of *Spring Story* is combined with the 'rain' and 'sun', the first two sections can be understood as a subtle narrative of the process of domestic economic reform. It may suggest the country had a difficult start since the implementation of the policy, however, from the difficult 'rainy' past, the situation has been improved and finally met its 'sunny days'.

It is worth noticing the last two sections had almost described the 'spring' as a person, who was 'marching' and was now having 'dreams'. Applying similar arguments to those used in the previous sections of the concert, with their political connotations, it seems ever since, the song *Spring Story* has become part of the most up to date political concept of the Chinese central government: the Chinese Dream concept. It was first raised, by China's current president Xi Jin-ping, in 2012.¹⁸ The dream of spring, after the confident 'march' of the 'spring', might be interpreted as maintaining the high-speed economic growth from the CPC's mainstream value. Furthermore, the meaning of 'spring' may have embraced other concepts, depending on the local political and social context at that time. Two years later, on August 22nd, 2014, 'Another Spring', a poetry symphony concert in memory of Deng Xiao-ping, took place in Shanghai Cultural Square.¹⁹ According to *Wenhui Bao* newspaper, this concert not only featured music performance but also incorporated poetry recitation to '...express the exciting historical picture since the reform,'²⁰ and in particular, '...this concert, has clear characteristics of the time...the song *Chinese Dream* rings the theme of the times, while the poetry reading titled *Continue to Explore* pushed the concert to its climax.'²¹ This official commentary

¹⁷Wang Xing-guo, *Chinese Idiom Dictionary*, 1st ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2010).

¹⁸Xinhua News Agency, 'Xi Jin-ping: Carry on From the Past and Move forward to the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation in the Future', 29 November 2012, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2012-11/29/c_113852724.htm.

¹⁹Shao Ling and Zheng Si-nan, eds, "'Another Spring' --To Commemorate the 110th Anniversary of Deng Xiao-ping's birth', *Wen Wei Po*, 8 October 2014, http://bhwyw.fjsen.com/2014-10/08/content_14993761.htm.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

illustrates the impact of *Spring Story* and the theme of 'spring', reflecting Deng Xiao-ping's vital reforms. Secondly, the media expressed central government's determination to continue acknowledging and exploring Deng Xiao-ping's economic route, as well as supporting a stronger and faster growing economy, while tailoring this ambition to individual Chinese Dreams. Most importantly, the *Spring Story* did not only record the historical event of how economic reform took place, it has evolved from being a code to represent the ideal financial planning of the Chinese government. The intention of borrowing musical context to speak for the current political and economical situation seems like a familiar theme since the Cultural Revolution by the CPC officials from Mao,²² which provokes deeper thinking upon the association between music and politics in China, in particular, from the economic reform until today.

1.3 Existing studies and research methods

This thesis is focusing on music research after the economic reform took place, however, when discussing the connection between music and politics within the historical background of modern China, the wealth of previous research on the Cultural Revolution era might be beneficial in providing an outline for this research. Additionally, research methods and analysis of Cultural Revolutionary musical works will be consulted as a reference. For instance, what methods were applied by musicologists in their research in order to understand the problem, and what category of music was their major concern? In addition to numerous books and articles, recordings also contributed to the study of music produced during the Cultural Revolution. The most representative Mandarin sources were written by Chinese musicologists Dai Jia-fang and Liang Mao-chun, respectively. Dai was one of the first generation of Chinese musicologists of the Central Conservatory of Music, soon after the Cultural Revolution in 1978, and was the former head of the Culture Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Division. Dai's writings emphasised the historical influence of music, applying a critical perspective to musical works

²²Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012).

and artists during the specific historical background in the 1960s. Documenting the life experience and later suicide of his colleague, Yu Hui-yong, a former member of CPC Central Committee and head of the Cultural Group, to uncover the political power of music in that period, might reflect the marshal of PRC, Lin Biao's belief that to '...sing a good song is equivalent to attending an excellent politics class'.²³ He also provided a detailed analysis of the sole example of Western music consumption during the Cultural Revolution era. A piano piece, *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*, which was constructed according to Western compositional techniques, speaks, somewhat, for Chinese traditional aesthetic values and expresses certain political meanings.²⁴ Musicologist Liang Mao-chun from the Central Conservatory of Music, who reconstructed his experience during the Cultural Revolution era as a 'Little Red Guard', noted Han composer Wang Luo-bin from the northwest Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region, and his interpretation of Xinjiang ethnic minority music during the Revolutionary period.²⁵

A number of Western language studies are also accessible. Arnold Perris offers a chapter on Cultural Revolutionary music, within wide ranging sociology studies which include politically influenced music, from the Nazis' use of Wagner to Communist Mao music.²⁶ In exploring the policies and artistic practice of the Cultural Revolution, Isabel K.F. Wong concentrates on revolutionary songs or *geming gequ* and their various political functions from historical and textual aspects, including the education of the Chinese masses which encouraged their sense of patriotism, adopted directly from the Party's directives through application of basic music techniques at that time.²⁷ Barbara Mittler's work made a significant contribution to the understanding of artistic works during the Cultural Revolution, juxtaposing detailed readings along with aesthetic and fieldwork experience on

²³Dai Jia-fang, *Go To Hell* (Beijing: Guang Ming Daily Publishing House, 1994).

²⁴Dai Jia-fang, 'The Analysis of Piano Concerto the "Yellow River"', *Shanghai Conservatory of Music*, no. 2004 (4), 2005 (1) (2005 2004), <http://www.xzbu.com/5/view-2052186.htm>.

²⁵Liang Mao-chun, 'A Research Study on Cultural Revolution Music', *Shanghai Conservatory of Music*, no. 4 (12) (n.d.): 19–27.

²⁶Arnold Perris, 'Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control', *Journal of Social History*, Oxford University Press, 1985, 6–28.

²⁷Isabel K.F. Wong and Bonnie ed. McDougall, 'Geming Gequ: Song for the Education of the Masses', in *Popular Chinese Literature and Performing Arts in the People's Republic of China 1949-1979* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 112–43.

cultural products as lived culture. However, Mittler argues that artists' work during the Maoist era, taking the revolutionary model operas as an example, did not only serve politics, as an ideological supply line, but was also a creature made of both Chinese and Western music. During modern Chinese history, this was a peak time of politicization of music, marking China's modern compositional tradition, which had its roots in folk songs whilst adopting a Western compositional pathway. Therefore, in a way, Western music always existed during the Cultural Revolution era though, on the other hand, Chinese folk music was 'westernised' as a continuation of the modernization of Chinese music in the 20th century; it became the 'New Chinese Music' of Mao, which contained the single purpose of use as propaganda.²⁸

Rachel Harris has contributed the most useful resources on the politics of the staged representation of ethnic music in Xinjiang autonomous region, located in China's northwest frontier. She not only provides a great insight into biographical evidence, gathered from ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, but also explores the connection between their identity and their surrounding communities.²⁹ It is worth noting, when approaching the social function of the music in this ethnically diverse region, Harris also examines the international political environment at that time. For instance, research into Uyghur Muqam, in the 1960s, exposes the political relationship between the Chinese and Soviet governments and became a diplomatic tool to earn support in global affairs. In exploring the current relationship between the ethnic identities of the Chinese minority and their crucial role to the state, Dru Gladney provided the example of the annual musical programme opening session. Usually performed on Chinese state television, on Chinese Spring Festival Eve, by so called 'colourful' ethnic minorities, this example was used to illustrate that the majority Han Chinese refer to their national minorities as the 'Other' and, it was argued that distortion of the 'Others' image helps the state to achieve greater control over Han Chinese.³⁰ By conducting

²⁸Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*.

²⁹Rachel Harris, *Singing the Village: Music, Memory and Ritual among the Sibe of Xinjiang* (British Academy, n.d.).

³⁰Dru Gladney, 'Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities.', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 1994; 53,1 (n.d.).

fieldwork, individual interviews with the ethnic musicians and collecting recordings from the local people's life experience, Helen Rees and Wong Chuen-Fung, respectively, provide more evidence to demonstrate the politically influenced stage representation of Chinese minority music, from southwest Yunnan province to northwest Xinjiang.³¹ It seems that every time ethnic inspired musical work or new folk music 'stereotypes' are exposed or denigrated, from the state's point of view, the first aim is to reinforce the state's stability.

Does music have that much power? Additionally, what is the contemporary political situation in Chinese minority enclaves? Maintaining state security while ensuring the stability of the entire country is observed and promoted as part of the mainstream ideology of the *Harmonious Society*, is analysed by Trine Brox.³² Brox approached the two, possibly, most controversial minority groups of Tibetans and Uyghur who demonstrate the most 'resistance' against the Beijing perspective. Brox provides an introduction to each group's distinctive historical, cultural and religious background, as well as introducing their geographical and social position in order to explain their attitude to mainstream culture in China. Brox also points out that local economic development is '...inseparable from culture and identity', and criticizes the false 'backwards' impression of local cultural traditions, gender relations and lower level of urbanization of the minorities.³³ In reply, J.N. Smith reported that contemporary Uyghur musicians have never given up using music as a tool to unite the Uyghur against the 'Han Coloniser' or reproducing their own national identities through oral and dance formed musical works. Due to the nature of its communicational channel and its unique sense of 'grief', the music message of nationalist sentiment is embodied within Uyghur poetry, which is effectively distributed among Uyghur people from all classes.³⁴

³¹Helen Rees, *Echos of History: Naxi Music in Modern China*. (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2000). Chuen-Fung Wong, 'Reinventing the Central Asian Rawap in Modern China: Musical Stereotypes, Minority Modernity, and Uyghur Instrumental Music', *University of Texas Press Volume 43*, Number 1, Winter/Spring 2012, pp. 34–63 (2012): 31. Ibid.

³²Brox, T. and Beller-Hann I., eds, *On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, n.d.).

³³Ibid.

³⁴Smith, J.N., 'The Quest for National Unity in Uyghur Popular Song: Barren Chickens, Stray Dogs, Fake Immortals and Thieves', in *National Identity and the Politics of Location: Between the Global*

What does Western Art music sound like in 20th and 21st century China, after the Cultural Revolution, and what is its relationship to the outside world? Barbara Mittler's earlier book, *Dangerous Tunes*, serves as an important reference tool in exploring this topic.³⁵ Mittler particularly focuses on the directions and trends through deep, face-to-face observations in researching the so-called 'new music' of China and its 20th century composers, for instance, Tan Dun, Guo Wen-jing and Qu Xiao-song, who has been through the Cultural Revolution himself as well as, later, enjoying a more relaxed Western musical education. Such musicians adopted Western instruments and compositional techniques in expressing their 'Chineseness', after previously embracing Chinese folk music elements in rural China, during the Cultural Revolution. This was in comparison to the most widely researched musicians from previous generations who only received Western music education before the Cultural Revolution. Mittler not only sheds light on aesthetic matters in examining the 'New Music' composers' 'typical features', but also offers an account of a number of political and identity issues within China's disputed territories in Hong Kong and Taiwan, concerning the political role of such music and nationalism in Chinese music.³⁶ By examining well-known 20th century composers, including John Cage, Tan Dun and Henry Cowell, Bonnie C. Wade explains how, together, their music constructs the musical landscape of the world from the East to West;³⁷ furthermore, Frederick Lau discovered that 'Eastern musical elements', from traditional Asian folk music, are equally influential and beneficial in constructing a world music map for Western musicians, during the process when Chinese or Asian musicians were trained in the West and, by disseminating their musical culture, they have also contributed to change the West.³⁸ Popular music plays a vital role in 20th century China, however, anything 'borrowed' from the West

and the Local, ed. Biddle, I. and Knights, V. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 115–41, <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sacs/POP/papers/smith.pdf>.

³⁵ Barbara Mittler, *Dangerous Tunes: The Politics of Chinese Music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China since 1949* (Harrasowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 1997).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Bonnie C. Wade, foreword, xi. Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau, eds, 'Intercultural Synthesis in Postwar Western Art Music: Historical Contexts, Perspectives, and Taxonomy', in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

³⁸ Frederick Lau, 'Fusion or Fission: The Paradox and Politics of Contemporary Chinese Avant-Garde Music', in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* (Wesleyan University Press, 2004).

was originally criticised and, consequently, banned as exemplified by the *Yellow Songs* (simplified: 黄色歌曲). In China this, literally, means ‘pornographic songs’, according to Andrew Jones’s book on Chinese popular music history and urban media culture, because of its commercial nature as well as its challenge against the dominant local ideology and focus on China’s modernity in the world discourse.³⁹

This thesis is beholden to these earlier studies. The introduction will present a glimpse of the kind of material and the overall coherence of the thesis which will then be discussed, in more depth, in later chapters, also presenting its findings and original contribution to scholarship. By describing music during the economic reform as a living experience, first of all, this thesis presents its unique features through original case studies gathered in the past few years.

For this purpose, in the attempt to provide original fieldwork, this thesis juxtaposes material from up to date music productions created and disseminated by the Chinese mainstream media, in-depth interviews, close readings from the previous research, relevant critical references from both English and Chinese literature and, in particular, song analysis which refers to political and social contexts within the new Party line.

Chapter One provides an overview of the related literature and methods from previous research and a general introduction to the relevant music genres and contexts being researched. Chapter Two presents an historical and political background of the Chinese economic reform, in comparison to the arts policy in the Mao period, providing a discussion about what has changed or stayed ever since. Chapter Three focuses on personal accounts of music, gathered during lived experience of fieldwork in Xinjiang, and also discusses the major research method of Mass communication theory. Chapter Four discusses the debates which arose between mainstream Chinese media and English language texts regarding the concept of ‘authenticity’, applying ethnomusicological approaches as well as virtual fieldwork methodology to document the process of local, TV music programme production. Chapter Four also provides a comparative analysis of musical works,

³⁹Jones, A.F., ‘Chapter One: The Orchestration of Chinese Musical Life’, in *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham and London: Duke University Press Books, 2001), 59–135.

referring to relevant political and social contexts and their purpose in disseminating mainstream value. Chapters Five and Six situate Western Art music in 20th-century China, by providing secondary resources and broader fieldwork of music making experience with Chinese pianist Yundi Li, as well as drawing on comparative analysis of different receptions of his recording, to decode the connotation of the symbolised pianist and his music in specific social context. Chapter Seven is a revised version of a previously published paper, first given at the International Conference on Music Semiotics, in 2012.⁴⁰ This chapter focuses on music collaborations between musicians from mainland and disputed territories, by taking a semiotic approach to examining music programming on China Central television. It also provides a comparative analysis of the political impact of music works to reveal the social function of the pop music genre, in post reform China.

The Introduction and the Conclusion to this thesis are primarily based on the historical evidence from the fieldwork conducted by myself during the research period, with representatives from many classes and general backgrounds, for instance, Chinese musicians, scholars, performers, TV production team including freelance workers, government officials and artists' management companies, who directly monitor the music and are responsible for delivering the music to a mass audience. European records and newspapers were also consulted. In order to shed light on what was, and still is, happening on the ground, how music is influenced by politics in post reform China, this thesis deliberately sets out to document experience from the field, taking account of the man made music products in practice, for instance, individual case studies from China's ethnic minority performers, Chinese Western classical musicians and Chinese musicians from disputed territories. It engages with analysis from various theoretical approaches, including elements of musicology, communication theory and semiotics, to help analyse how music is disseminated and received within the circle of communication, and to examine how music production is arguably carried out with certain political intentions since China's economic reform. Finally, this thesis examines how music is

⁴⁰The full title of the paper is *Listening to the Pop Music From CCTV Spring Festival Gala in Mainland China*. It was given at the International Conference on Music Semiotics in Memory of Prof. Raymond Monelle.

presented, and is then consumed in daily practice by a mass audience, by focusing on the music in the remote northwest borderland of Xinjiang, the mainland of China, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan, eventually bringing its influence all the way to the Western world.

1.4 Media Control: Old Versus New

Along with the economic development and modernization after the economic reform, China had also opened its doors to the world. Zheng Li argues that Chinese media has also welcomed its new era, with the arrival of new media technology, such as cable television and Internet.⁴¹ Might this be seen as a challenge to the previous system? Secondly, has support by this new technology affected the music dissemination situation? This thesis also intends to examine music works through communication pathways in the general background of Chinese contemporary media development.

In Zheng Li's article, Zheng notes James Florcruz, a *Time* correspondent, who argues that Chinese officialdom has very little power over its media market, as it is growing rapidly with diverse forms, for instance newspapers, magazines and television shows, and it has become increasingly open and responsive to meet public demand. The quality of press and broadcasts has also been improved, rather than '...a skimpy compendium of sterile polemic and abstruse dogma'.⁴² Zheng Li, however, argues that the pro-democracy movement was responsible for the restriction of retightened China's media control. Its role has broadened, switching from a class struggle machine to an instrument to assist China in entering world discourse with the market economy, as well as competing with other domestic media organisations, since Deng Xiao-ping's economic reform. It seems that the CCP saw political economic development as their first priority, media manifested its role in reinforcing the ideology of uniting the nation, maintaining state stability

⁴¹Zheng Li, 'Media Control in China', in Robert S. Fortner and P. Mark Fackler, eds, *The Handbook of Media and Mass Communication Theory*, 2014th ed. (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), p37.

⁴²Xiao-ping Li, 'Significant Changes in the Chinese Television Industry and Their Impact in the PRC: An Insider's Perspective', *The Brookings Institution*, August 2001, <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/2871/uploads>.

under the leadership of the Communist party on all levels of domestic media dissemination, as well as reconstructing China's international image and global influence. Their debate on the strength of Chinese state media control focuses on its manifesto which indicates if it has become tighter or looser. Additionally, though they both agree that, in a sense, China has become more open than it used to be, in 20th century China, however, a question about control arises, when individuals can host their own opinions and post them to the public through the Internet. How does the Chinese government respond to foreign ideas and influences that travel along with private enterprises? Policy and certain regulations were promulgated to tackle this issue, which can be described as '...an attempt to balance gradual commercialization and modernization with controls protecting the Communist Party's ideological and political dominance.'⁴³ Thus, the media still remains the mouthpiece of the government, disseminating mainstream values and ideology through coded messages and also, providing the platform to accelerate the communication process, to enable more effective understanding of the message. In contemporary China, is music, in particular, subject to the ideological control on the media? Could it be that music dissemination is also a form of ideological control?

1.5 Music Control: Propaganda or Autonomy?

Geremie R. Barmé provides multiple insights into Chinese contemporary culture, from historical, political and cultural aspects, to explain the complex interplay between the distribution of governmental ideology via cultural works and nonofficial culture, when global culture and Chinese capitalist-socialism meet up in the market economy after the economic reform.⁴⁴ Barmé also draws attention to the growth of Chinese, contemporary artistic work designed with governmental core value, referring to this as 'propaganda', arguing that 'television', such as China Central Television, is the key outlet for up-market, media propaganda. Barmé comments on its current situation:

⁴³Li, 'Media Control in China', 700.

⁴⁴Geremie R. Barmé, *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2000).

Even though China remained political repressive, relative economic freedom and certain fiscal imperatives in the cultural sphere allowed for a liberalism that invigorated the autonomous social sphere and increasingly entangled individuals in the crossover realm between official and commercial as well as nonofficial culture.⁴⁵

How much freedom is available among different music genres combined with new technology in the market economy? By engaging with politics as well as contexts of ethnicity, and through in-depth fieldwork with people from various classes, Nimrod Baranovitch sheds light on a specific analysis of the development of Chinese music influenced by foreign countries, Hong Kong and other disputed territories, and representations of ethnic minority music which is dominated by Han Chinese. However, Baranovitch believes the music in China cannot be ‘...divided into the popular and the official spheres’.⁴⁶ Chinese music development, after the economic reform, is reported as a ‘paradoxical and ambivalent’ situation;⁴⁷ this thesis will research into the true face of this ‘contemporary propaganda’ music, in practice and experience, and how it is linked with the current political situation. This thesis will attempt to solve this seeming ‘contradiction’ of living history.

1.6 Overall Coherence of the Case Studies

One inspiration might arise thanks to the above-published work. Politics remains the dominant force for Chinese music dissemination in contemporary China, since the economic reform. This is especially so in mass music works for public consumption which are shaped to suit the political favour such as national unity;⁴⁸ as a politicized entertainment, an education source, these works direct the

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Baranovitch, Nimrod, *China's New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender, and Politics. 1978-1997* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 2003, n.d.).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Gorfinkel, Lauren, ‘From Transformation to Preservation: Music and Multi-Ethnic Unity on Television in China’, in *Music as Intangible Cultural Heritage: Policy, Ideology, and Practice in the Preservation of East Asian Traditions*, ed. Tse-Hei Lee, Joseph, Nedilsky, Lida, and Cheung, Siu-Keung (SOAS, University of London, UK: Ashgate, 2012), 71–89, http://www.academia.edu/1754896/Gorfinkel_Lauren_2012_From_Transformation_to_Preservatio

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mainstream to the ‘harmonious society’ and attempt to reach the ‘Chinese Dream’, the most recent political slogan which was advertised and promoted by the Chinese central government.⁴⁹

In order to investigate this assumption, as well as decode the politically influenced musical message through media consumption, in terms of music styles, three music case studies from the field were chosen, as shown in the following diagram (**Figure 1-2**).

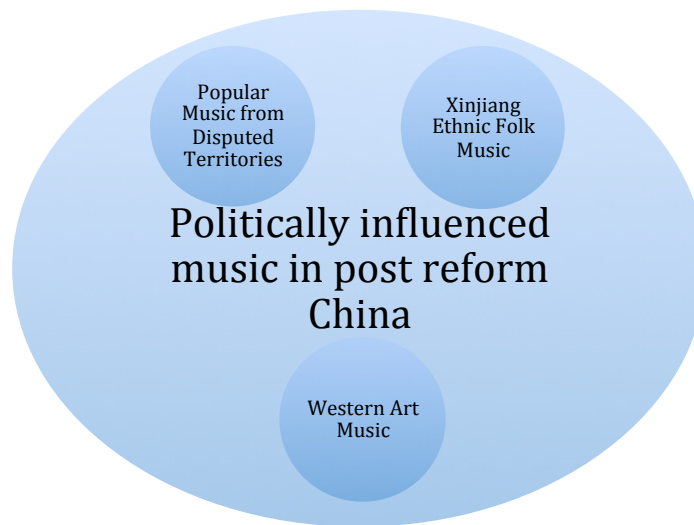


Figure 1-2 Diagram of the case studies of the thesis: the big oval represents the ensemble of all ‘politically influenced music in post reform China’ as a whole, and each small circle represents a selected type of music that were chosen as case studies. First of all, ethnic folk music/folk-inspired (styled) music from Xinjiang, Western Art Music in 20th century China—the piano music in particular and, popular music from disputed territories broadcast on Chinese TV. The small circles are not to scale and their size and mathematical proportion do not contain any meaning.

Historically, neither Western art music nor Pop music is native to China. From previous study,⁵⁰ it can be understood that they were both introduced and

n_Music_and_Multi-ethnic_Unity_on_Television_in_China_. In Keith_Howard_ed._Music_as_Intangible_Cultural_Heritage_Policy_Ideology_and_Practice_in_the_Preservation_of_East_Asian_Traditions._UK_Ashgate.
⁴⁹ Ibid.

influenced by early Chinese musicians who studied in the West, before the Cultural Revolution. Both became widely received since the domestic reform, and quickly developed a consolidated mass Chinese audience. Besides the growing significance of these two forms of music, the process of producing ethnic minority music from Xinjiang, according to the official culture's understanding, is also part of the living history of contemporary Chinese music.

The multiple methods of media dissemination of music cannot be neglected after the economic reform and the arrival of technology of globalization, based on their unpredictable influence and effectiveness of communication. Is the new technology an effective tool for the sender or, rather, does it allow more liberty for the receiver? This thesis will pay attention to documenting the course of events in using the media to consolidate the ruling Party's power and the promotion of its ideology, from central government to local government, through carefully selected music from specific historical eras. This will be combined with fieldwork, a major method which will be applied in the thesis. If music can reflect politics, by listening to the music, using music as a reference, one can understand the policy of the Communist Party China. In addition, monitoring music communication activity in relation to China's administrative division, for instance, from the central government programme broadcasting level, or the nationwide to local government level, can help to reveal and, so, compare regional policy and ideological control.

From the point of view of ideological control or guidance, the above music styles, or in other words, the connotation of the source of those music styles strongly links with China's current Communist Party mainstream values. Building the idealized 'Harmonious Society' in the eyes of officialdom, calls into action the country's stability and national unity of all ethnic groups, especially the unity between Han Chinese and ethnic Chinese people. Focusing on the experience of Xinjiang ethnic minorities performing music, both at local level, during Spring Festival Gala TV broadcasting and the nationwide *Passion Square Concert* by Central Television, which was collected from the field, will help to explain the local policy interpretation on distribution of the political core values. Additionally, in contrast

⁵⁰ Caroline Mason, trans., 'The Origins of New Music (1885-1919)', in *A Critical History of New Music in China*, by Ching-chih Liu (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2010), 23.

with the suppressive attitude towards the limited Western art music in the Cultural Revolution era, later 20th century, Western music is now seen as fostering patriotism as an extension of Mao's concept of '...let the Western things serve us',⁵¹ has been embraced as 'a universal language' to enable international dialogues in the world discourse. As the youngest 'International Chopin Piano Competition' champion, Chinese pianist Yundi Li gains fans from all over the world. My work experience with Yundi, detailed in the thesis, explains how he has developed an image of patriotism through playing the Western classic instrument, namely the piano, to express his Chinese identity worldwide, becoming appreciated by the official culture as a successful example of the state sponsored music education system, as well as representing China's more open image. The last case study, of Central Television Pop music programmes from the disputed territories, on the most watched *CCTV Spring Festival Gala*, is decoded via the message, 'To safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity of stability, as well as to achieve the reunification of China' and can be recognized as a core value, an official interpretation of the Chinese Dream, by the state council information office.⁵²

If considering the results of the music dissemination, the three cases – folk music of ethnic minority performers, Western art music and pop music from disputed territories – have vast individual effects in terms of audience coverage yet link together through the official media network, as well as attracting attention as representative symbols. For instance, the broadcasts of Xinjiang Local Spring Festival Gala covers five autonomous prefectures and six autonomous counties within the province, as well as reaching the whole country via provincial cable television. The attention to the piano can be traced back to the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*, which marked a deep memory for Chinese people, as the only entertainment allowed during the Cultural Revolution, along with the revolutionary operas.⁵³ If that was a form of domestic entertainment, then the triumph of the 14th International Chopin Competition made Yundi Li not only become a household

⁵¹Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*.

⁵²The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 'The White Paper of China's Military Strategy', May 2015, <http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/gfbps/Document/1435341/1435341.htm>.

⁵³Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*.

name in China, but also meant that 'Chinese musicians have earned Western authentication' according to Wei Tin-ge, Head of the Chinese Academy of Music Arts Institute.⁵⁴ As a 'national hero',⁵⁵ he has the largest number of fans of a classical musician in China; over eighteen million Chinese fans on social media Sina Weibo.⁵⁶ This thesis will document work experience with Yundi, including his extensive domestic 'Chinese Piano Dream' Tour, which is a self-interpretation that echoes President Xi Jin-ping's Chinese Dream political slogan. An in-depth interview will also be undertaken, to record behind the scenes information with the composer & producer of his *Red Piano* album, which was given negative reviews by Western critics.⁵⁷

In recent years, negative news and public criticism was also reported about the China Central Television Spring Festival Gala, the most watched programme, on its censorship and public appeal.⁵⁸ However, since its first broadcasts in 1986, it still has an audience of over 800 million each year.⁵⁹ It is a well-known platform for distribution of the official ideology and, through analysing the most influential performances on this programme, such as the first public, popular music performance after the economic reform, delivered by Hong Kong singer, Zhang Ming-min or the collaboration by Taiwan Pop singer Jay Chow and, the propaganda singer/new folk music artist from the mainland, Song Zu-yihng, it is hoped to discover the musical information, and distribution intention, beneath the music itself.

⁵⁴Tin-ge Wei, 'Listening to Yundi Li's Concert "Reporting to the Motherland"', *People's Music Publishing House* 1 (2001): 10–12.

⁵⁵Ran Edited Tao, 'Foreign Media: Yundi Li as a "National Hero" in China', *Xinhua News Agency*, 11 June 2014, <http://column.cankaoxiaoxi.com/2014/0611/399293.shtml>.

⁵⁶Norman Lebrecht, 'Trending.... Yundi Overtakes Lang Lang on Chinese Social Media', n.d., <http://www.artsjournal.com/slippeddisc/2013/02/trending-yundi-overtakes-lang-lang-on-chinese-social-media.html>.

⁵⁷Geoff Brown, 'Yundi: The Red Piano', 17 February 2012, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/arts/music/albumreviews/article3322477.ece>.

⁵⁸Feng-wu Yao, 'Zhao Ben-Shan Criticise the Censors of CCTV Spring Festival Gala In Public', *Ifeng*, 3 February 2012, http://gz.ifeng.com/mingqi/detail_2012_02/03/147581_0.shtml. Ren-kui Wan, 'It Is Hard to Maintain the Rating of CCTV Spring Festival Gala', *China Times*, 22 February 2015, <http://www.chinatimes.com/cn/newspapers/20150222000136-260108>.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

1.7 Findings and Original Contribution to the Scholarship

Deng Xiao-ping and his economic reform policy have not only changed China's political and economic discourse, but also altered China's contemporary culture, which has had a great impact on Chinese music development too. The affiliation between music and politics today maintains a very similar position since Mao Zedong proposed this in Yan'an Art Forum in 1942: to serve politics, music is a tool to install the official ideological essentials, a product to educate or guide the mass audience, and in return, it reflects the political needs of the government.⁶⁰ The development of music in the last thirty years embodies the principles of the economic reform; *gaige kaifang* (simplified: 改革开放)⁶¹ which literally means 'domestic reform' and 'open up to the outside world'. Pop music, rock music, Western classical music and other styles of music arrived in mainland China for thirsty people who begged for a more relaxed and varied cultural life, beyond the sole themed revolutionary music of the Cultural Revolution.

Music exists as an entertainment as well as a portrait of China herself. After a careful analysis of the musical content from the official preferred music works in particular, it is not difficult to draw the conclusion that those music works were designed and promoted as an outlet, through certain channels, to praise and promote official ideology. Musical language was applied as a political lesson to speak up through performance to the targeted audiences. From the coded music sound of encouragement or opposition, China's central political beliefs, from approvals to recent achievements, to internal contradictions and tensions, may be heard.

The progress of modern technology, such as cable TV and Internet, combined with the international culture exchange after the opening up, drastically speeds up the process of revealing conflicts between the resistance of a rebellious, self-oriented Internet audience and the government media outlets. A concrete representation of this conflict can be demonstrated by the stage interpretation of ethnic Chinese music which is used as a sign of cultural diversity between the ethnic

⁶⁰ Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*.

⁶¹ Hang-sheng Zheng, 'Thirty Years of the Economic Reform: Theory of the Social Transformation', *Social Science in China Press*, Social Sciences in China, no. 2 (2009), <http://www.sociology2010.cass.cn/upload/2014/11/d20141126180125145.pdf>.

minorities and the majority, however, this may be modified by the official media taste. The freedom allowed by new technology, with a degree of restriction, on social media or the Internet, however, leaves some space for information exchange which links through to the influential music industry in the fastest and largest economy in the world.

In researching the lived experience of politically influenced music in China since the economic reform, its sounds, images and styles, it will be argued that music in many different forms is seen as a subtle tool to reflect the official ideology of the Communist Party through mass communication processes, both on domestic and global levels. When investigated more closely, the elements adopted to create this music depend on the 'targeted' audience and their culture, which allows a rich collection of variations. More importantly, the content and formality of music which was created thirty years ago, soon after the economic reform, is at variance thus is not the same as it is 'programmed' today, each epoch has its own work to represent its time, and characteristic music can also suggest the local administrative level and divisions of its region. Moreover, similar to the song *Spring Story* which was dedicated to Deng Xiao-ping's economic reform straight after the policy was announced and implemented, new productions of music in various forms will be quickly released, which embody up to date, central political concepts for dissemination among the public, though the individual experience and interpretation might be affected by personal class, political background, ethnicity, educational background and aesthetic value. Interdisciplinary research approaches have been beneficial to this thesis; anthropology, musicology, symbolism and communication theory are all used in this thesis to present the complex picture of music as a political tool to serve the capitalist economy in Communist China.

This thesis suggests that, in order to promote the mainstream Chinese Dream political ideology among all Chinese, China is coming to terms with its Others, and absorbing their musical culture as part of mainstream music. As the three case studies suggest, ethnic minority music is manipulated to maintain national unity as the above literature indicates. However, this thesis discovers that representation of folk styled music in Xinjiang lies in a grey area, where it is seen as other person's music. Western art music is appreciated by a large audience in China; since the

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economic reform, Chinese classical musicians and their achievements have been marked as China's soft power, as a modern world citizen, however, domestically, this is used to foster patriotism. Popular musicians and music, from China's disputed territories, are also seen as a vital part in the process of establishing a shared value and a mutual identity, among all Chinese people.

Chapter 2 The Opening Up and Reform Policy

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the question of how the Chinese government produced its official concept of building an 'harmonious society' will be investigated as, since the implementation of the Opening Up Policy under Deng Xiao-ping, a series of imbalances, in culture, politics and economics, in relation to the rapid economic development need to be addressed. Firstly, a general introduction to the birth of Chinese Economic reform, from historical and political perspectives will be presented. The design of the Opening Up policy, which turned China's focus to a market economy which has helped domestic economy growth, will be considered. A critical discussion of the internal issues directly, and indirectly, caused by the rapid financial boom which led to the official Chinese rhetoric of a harmonious socialist society will then be presented. In examining the possible impact on music production after the economic reform, within this research, a link between music and politics was traced from the historical point of view, consulting accounts on revolutionary themed music and policies during the Maoist era. It will be argued that the need to build a harmonious society is caused by the imbalance in development in comparison to the economy. In order to keep the people informed of current political, economic and cultural development, on both domestic and international levels in 20th century China, the Chinese government has decided to attempt to unite the nation by strengthening its large scale propaganda tool nationwide. The current political tool is influenced by the propaganda art of the Cultural Revolution as, today, music is used as a tool to consolidate the foundation of China's new knowledge-based economy, exploiting 'encoded' music materials. The discourse of harmony provides the principle of official ideological guidance, which might affect certain music works, which will be studied in more detail in later chapters.

2.2 Economic Reform In the late 1970s

The Opening Up and Reform policy was introduced by China's former president, Deng Xiao-ping, at the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, in 1978.⁶² This meeting pointed to the direction of China's future development, that the country should be focusing on its economic building rather than repeating the Cultural Revolution. China began to implement economic policy reforms in the late 1970s, and the policy consisted of two parts: Domestic Reform and Opening Up (to the outside world). This domestic reform was designed as a kind of three-legged stool. It first began in rural areas as a house-contract responsibility system of land co-production. The economic reforms of the second leg involved changing a highly centralised economic system into a socialist market-based economy. The third leg of the stool was political reform; it included the aspects of democracy, for instance the strengthening of the legal system, the separation between government and enterprises, streamlining and improving the democratic centralism system, maintaining the workforce's ability and national unity.⁶³ The term 'open', in a broad sense, mainly referred to the outside world, but it also included internal opening, within China.⁶⁴ China's image has been revolutionised dramatically in the last thirty years, with the estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth from 1978 to 2013 at between 9.5% and 11.5% a year.⁶⁵

⁶² 'Economic Development since Opening Up', *Xinhua News Agency*, accessed 24 July 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-11/20/c_118213989.htm.

⁶³ Deng, *Selected Work of Deng Xiao-ping*, 1994, 2:70–78.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ 'Economic Development since Opening Up'.

GDP(US dollars)	Year	0	1000	1500	1600	1700	1820	1870	1913
China		450	450	600	600	600	600	530	552
Japan		400	425	500	520	570	669	737	1,387
Western Europe		450	400	774	894	1,024	1,232	1,974	3,473
Europe		444	435	565	593	615	667	867	1,510

GDP (US dollars)	Year	1950	1973	1998
China		439	839	3,117
Japan		1,926	11,439	20,413
Western Europe		4,594	11,534	17,921
Europe		2,114	4,104	5,709

Table 2-1 GDP per capita by selected country or region, years 0-1998⁶⁶

Table 2-1 above shows a comparison between the GDP of China, Japan, Western Europe and the world, from the year 1 BC to 1998.⁶⁷ Until the year 1500, China's GDP was either similar to, or greater than, other regions but in 1500, the GDP of Western Europe exceeded that of China by 174 dollars per capita. Between 1820 and 1950 China had almost no economic growth and also reached its lowest GDP in 1950, at 439 dollars per capita. In comparison to the rest of world, Japan's GDP was 1,926 dollars per capita while Western Europe achieved 4,594 dollars per capita. China was one of the poorest countries in the world at that time. In 1998, Japan and Western Europe were the richest areas in the world, with figures of 20,413 and 17,921 dollars per capita respectively, while China only had only about 850 dollars per capita. However, according to the UN's research, after three decades of economic reform policy from 1978, China is 'now the world's second largest

⁶⁶ Carl J. Dahlman and Jean-Eric Aubert, 'China and the Knowledge Economy Seizing the 21st Century' (Washington: The World Bank, 2001), 28.

⁶⁷ The source states '0' to '1998 AD'; as 0 does not exist in the Anno Domini system, this was interpreted to me '1 BC'.

economy' in terms of GDP, while its GDP per capita is also growing rapidly and was 35,083 RMB (Chinese currency, equivalent to 5713.38 dollars) as of 2011.⁶⁸ The following Figure 2-1 illustrates the rapid economic growth in China since 1978.

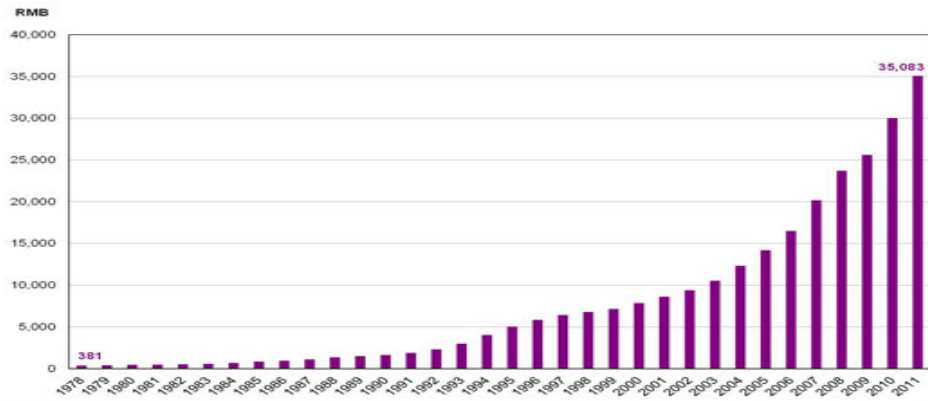


Figure 2-1 GDP per capita for China, 1978-2011⁶⁹

2.3 Daunting Challenges

The Four Great Inventions are considered to be a most important part of Chinese history, vital to world history and, as such, are a source of great pride to the Chinese nation. In every Chinese school history class, young students were taught about these four inventions, comprising the compass, gunpowder, papermaking and printing. However, they were all invented before the year 1500 and, according to Table 2-1 the years before 1500 were the peak era of China's economy from the global perspective. Therefore, could there be a connection between economic achievement and cultural development? If this is so, then after China occupied the second largest economic position, based on the UN's research, China's cultural development might be expected to match its significant economic achievement. One might argue that culture cannot be assessed numerically and development does not happen overnight. The Reform and Opening Up policy has successfully altered China, which has become the world's factory, bringing vast financial benefits to the nation. Therefore, China's cultural achievement could be as

⁶⁸ 'GDP of China' (Unicef website), accessed 25 July 2013, <http://www.unicef.cn/en/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=197&id=811>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

influential on the world as the Four Great Inventions. If the Four Great Inventions were the symbol of China's ancient prosperity, does the modern PR China need something equivalent to those inventions? This will be discussed in the following chapters. Meanwhile, the economic growth also creates many problems for the country. On one hand, the massive economic growth is beneficial to the large population, improving the Chinese nation's living conditions but, on the other hand, it brings various internal challenges to China. For instance, first of all there is damage to and pollution of the natural environment in exchange for economic development, and it also causes overconsumption of natural resources and leads to more concentrated urban populations, exacerbating the potential spread and development of diseases in humans and animals, among other issues. Secondly, there is inequality of wealth between eastern China and western China. The rich-poor divide has separated people into oppositional groups, it breaks the balance of the safety and confidence of society that had existed in China up until economic development began, as peoples' lives have improved at different rates. Thirdly, while not necessarily a feature of economic growth everywhere in the world, as China has grown, corruption has come to widely exist in the government.⁷⁰

Similar arguments have arisen in the report on China's long-term development, commissioned by the Chinese government, entitled *China's Development Strategy: The Knowledge and Innovation Perspective*.⁷¹ The authors also refer to China's internal challenges in the first part of the report: 'major internal challenges that China is confronted with – massive job creation, sustaining high economic growth rates, reduction of income and regional disparities, and environmental issues'.⁷² Sustaining the environment while keeping up economic growth is the most urgent concern to China.⁷³ However, 'the conflict between economic growth and protecting the natural environment and resources has

⁷⁰ 'Summary of Achievements of Opening Up and Reform Policy', *Caogen Website*, accessed 24 July 2013, http://www.caogen.com/blog/infor_detail/10655.html.

⁷¹ Dahlman and Aubert, 'China and the Knowledge Economy Seizing the 21st Century', 35.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Xie Lei, 'Zhang Xiao-de: The Connection between Economic Development and Environment Protection', *Renminwong*, 26 November 2013, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2013/1126/c40531-23662582.html>.

already become the most serious problem.⁷⁴ Without having a healthy, sustainable environment and natural resources, it will be impossible to sustain economic growth as China is still an agricultural economy with a population of eight hundred million farmers; also, it would be difficult to feed the nation with a population of 1.4 billion. A mistake could affect the whole nation and cause disasters as well as starvation. Therefore, a lesson must be learnt from the Great Leap Movement, an economic and social campaign from 1958 to 1961 which resulted in the deaths of between 18 million and 45 million people,⁷⁵ in that policies which will affect the whole nation need to be considered at great length by experts, to avoid potential catastrophe, whereby a policy does more harm than good. Pollution is a contemporary problem that the nation faces, which will require intervention, but also care and great consideration.

The CCP has defined the mission of the Chinese economy as 'common prosperity',⁷⁶ meaning that the wealthier cities or provinces promote the less developed areas in order to achieve common prosperity. In the late 1970s, the Chinese government chose four cities within Guangdong and Fujian provinces as the first SEZs. Shen Zhen, Zhu Hai, Shan Tou and Xia Men were the four cities selected to operate as an export-oriented economy.⁷⁷ This meant Guangdong and Fujian provinces would become the experimental field to test the Opening Up policy by producing goods for export to the world. Xie Shou-hong from Huadong Normal University wrote 'Guangdong is a pioneer area under Chinese reform. The export-oriented economy has developed rapidly, but its regional disparity is very remarkable and the development levels of 21 cities differ greatly from one another.'⁷⁸ The government encourages the SEZs to attract foreign investment and establish privately owned enterprise, and supports their development by

⁷⁴ Xiao-dong Zhang and Tian-he Chi, 'The Chinese Provincial Environment Research in the 90s', *Geographical Research* 20, no. 5 (September 2001), <http://www.cqvip.com/Read/Read.aspx?id=5724331>.

⁷⁵ Frank Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-62* (New York: Walker & Company, 2010), 333.

⁷⁶ 'Common Wealth Is the Basic Principle and Requirement', *CPC Website*, accessed 24 July 2013, <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2013/0422/c49150-21227024.html>.

⁷⁷ 'New Force Being Put into Opening Up and Reform by Expanding SEZs', *China Economy Website*, accessed 24 July 2013, http://www.ce.cn/macro/more/201104/30/t20110430_22394034.shtml.

⁷⁸ Shou-hong Xie, 'A Study on Regional Disparity and Countermeasures of Export-Oriented Economic Development in Guangdong Province', *Sub Science* 17, no. 3 (2003): 41.

introducing specialized policies. The booming economy helped Guangdong and Fujian provinces to become the financially most advanced provinces, ahead of the others. The newest SEZ, in Kashgar, was announced in 2010, and there are now six SEZs in China, as Hai Nan island was also added to the list. Together, five of them are located in southeast China; Kashgar is the most recent and is the only one situated in northwest China. This perhaps suggests an unbalanced economy both between the south and north, and between the eastern and western parts of China.

What factors caused the central government to choose to have a north western city such as Kashgar as the latest SEZ? Kashgar is located in the southern part of China's most north-westerly province, Xinjiang, which literally translates to New Frontier. It is the largest city in south Xinjiang, in the middle of the Silk Road. It had a population of 2,850,000 in 1990, and the local citizens are a mix of Han Chinese and other ethnic groups, however, the local Han Chinese comprises only 7.1 per cent of the population, the rest being mostly Uyghur people.⁷⁹ Since the riots in Xinjiang, on 5th July 2009, the 'central government has been putting more attention and investment in Xinjiang, President Hu Jin-tao admitted the activities of separating Xinjiang from China exists in Xinjiang, therefore, the work in Xinjiang has two major parts: keeping the people safe and improving the economic growth.'⁸⁰ The problems of Xinjiang province will be discussed more in chapter three and four of the thesis.

China must cope with existing environmental problems, finding a way to maintain economic development without overusing natural resources while also creating employment for the many farmers who emigrated to cities after their jobs were replaced by modern machines. Also, there is a need to help balance the difference between the north and south, in order to prevent the country from destabilising.

All in all, it is important for China to face the upcoming challenges in order to maintain economic growth. The government has to sustain the environment as well as keeping up the employment rate, while reducing regional and income inequality

⁷⁹ 'Distribution of Population in Kashgar Region', *Chinese Ethnic People Website*, accessed 25 July 2013, <http://www.mzb.com.cn/html/Home/report/445764-1.htm>.

⁸⁰ 'Special Policies for Kashgar SEZ', *BBC China Website*, accessed 13 July 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/zhongwen/simp/china/2010/06/100627_kashgar_economic_zone.shtml.

to achieve common prosperity. This not only matters to the country's wealth, but also to its national security.

2.4 Building the Foundation for a Harmonious Society

Harmony is translated as '和谐' in Chinese; it consists of two characters and the pronunciation is 'he2 xie2'. This phrase (the English word is more like a phrase in Chinese) was one of the most frequently used in mainstream media in 2006, according to the *Beijing Evening Newspaper*.⁸¹ The linguistic term could be considered as a *sign* of the culture, according to Ian Heath's approach to semiotics, as follows:

Language as a system of signs is modelled on consciousness, and so consciousness itself can be considered to be a sign system'; second: 'as society changes, social values and linguistic values begin to diverge'; third: 'language contains traditional values—this is what is implied in the ideas of social conditioning and social learning.'⁸²

What is a sign? Heath further indicates that 'a sign has two parts: the name of something plus an idea. These parts are termed the signifier and the signified. The sign is a compound of a word that signifies, and the idea in the mind which is the signified.'⁸³ Therefore, a figure can be created as follows:

⁸¹ "'Harmonious Society" – the Most Popular Phrase of 2006', *Sohu Website*, accessed 24 July 2013, <http://news.sohu.com/20070113/n247588375.shtml>.

⁸² 'Language and Society', *Modern Thinker Website*, accessed 25 July 2013, <http://www.modern-thinker.co.uk/6%20-%20language%20and%20society.htm>.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

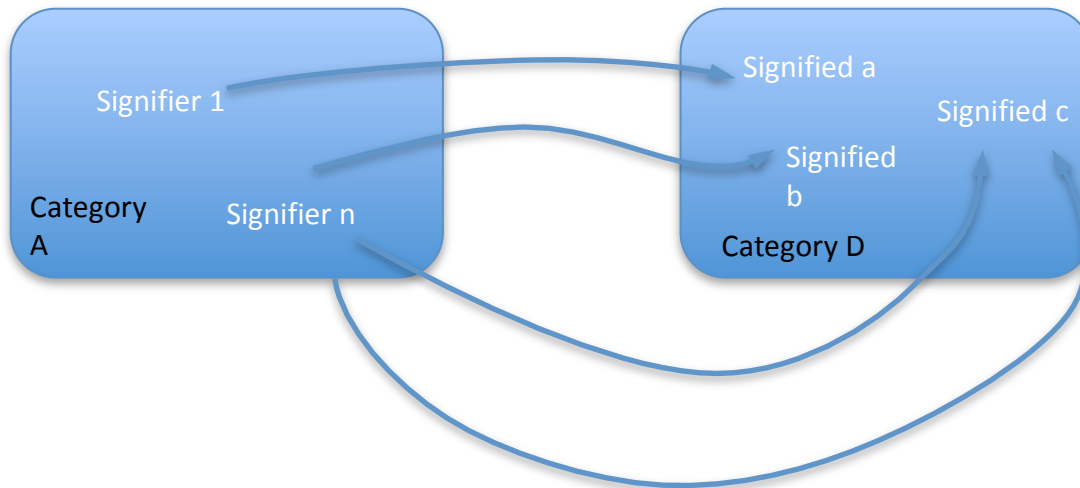


Figure 2-2 The Process of 'Sign'

In Figure 2-2, there are two congregations A and D (or CA and CD for short). Assume in CA there are many signifiers, any of which can represent a 'name', and in CD there are a number of ideas which might correspond, and they are labelled as 'signified a', 'b', 'c' or 'd'. A complete sign requires a signifier from CA and it has an end directly linked to it. So 'signifier 1' and 'signifier n' can both be *signs*. This model can be applied in linguistic studies; for example, Ferdinand de Saussure explains 'the concept or object that appears in our minds when we hear or read the signifier'.⁸⁴ So, when the word 'harmony' is heard, various meanings might come to mind, such as musical 'harmony', or, as in the example given in the Oxford Dictionary, 'delightful cities where old and new blend in harmony'.⁸⁵ The word does not exist without the meaning and the meaning has to communicate with the word to make sense.

It is important to understand the meaning of 'harmony' in Chinese people's minds and in Chinese society. Why is it such a popular word? Perhaps it contains some traditional values, but it is also possible that the meaning of the word has changed alongside the economic growth within the society. Harmony (和谐), from

⁸⁴ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Essentials of Psychology: Concepts and Application*, ed. Jeffrey S. Nevid, 1st ed. (Content Technologies, 2014), 153.

⁸⁵ 'Definition of Harmony', *Oxford Dictionary Website*, accessed 25 July 2013, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/harmony>.

its structure, contains at least two ‘meanings’, ‘和’ (he2) and ‘协’ (xie2). This character, ‘和’, when it serves as a noun and adjective, may mean:⁸⁶

- Peaceful and quiet
- Harmonious, friendly, also specially referring to a harmonious relationship between man and woman
- Coordinated, mild
- Healthy, comfortable personal condition
- Suitable, moderate

‘协’ (xie2) shares a similar meaning in the Xinhua Dictionary to ‘harmonious’, and that is the reason ‘harmony’ was chosen to be the translation. However, 协 (xie2) has its own distinctive meaning,⁸⁷ as 协 (xie2), when used both as a verb and an adjective, also means joint, mediate, assist or obey. So when using 和谐 (harmonious) as one word, literally, the meaning is the assembly of these two separate characters.

Chinese politicians and scholars enjoy combining this word with ‘society’ when an explanation of their political or ideological views is needed. After announcing economic reform to the Chinese nation, the central government focused its attention on domestic economic development until President Hu Jin-tao put the ‘Building a Harmonious Socialist Society’ (simplified:构建社会主义和谐社会) agenda forward in 2006, at the Sixth Plenary Session of the Sixteenth to the whole nation.⁸⁸ One of the most important parts of this meeting was to discuss an article entitled, *Decisions on Building a Harmonious Socialist Society*.⁸⁹ In response to Hu’s talk, the phrase ‘Harmonious Society’, rather than the full version ‘Harmonious Socialist Society’, was quickly introduced to Chinese daily life by the media. It became widely received, partly because the influential early Chinese philosopher, Confucius, had mentioned it 2,500 years ago, in a monograph titled

⁸⁶ ‘Definition of “He-”’, *Xinhua Dictionary Website*, accessed 25 July 2013, <http://xh.5156edu.com/html3/5489.html>.

⁸⁷ ‘Definition of “Xie-”’, *Xinhua Dictionary Website*, accessed 24 July 2013, <http://xh.5156edu.com/html3/3362.html>.

⁸⁸ ‘Building a Harmonious Society’, *People Website*, accessed 25 July 2013, <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/40557/44459/44461/4890703.html>.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

The Commonwealth of Great Unity,⁹⁰ in which he draws a picture of his ideal world for the commonwealth. In order to achieve great unity, Confucius proposed the following in this monograph: 'There is no war, no crime, nor hunger. People respect, and help each other like a family, everyone is equal. The government shall look after people who have disabilities, who are suffering disease and are without close family members; it will provide them with physical and mental support. There are jobs for everyone, so people can earn a living without resorting to crime. If the above situation can happen, by such time that it does, it will be a safe and harmonious world called The Commonwealth of Great Unity.' He emphasized the relationship among people, which is 'equal'; 'the society should be financially strong enough to be able to look after the vulnerable groups; and most importantly, using etiquette to rule a country rather than law is the core of his proposition.'⁹¹ This general explanation, or political view, of Confucius had been planted into Chinese people's minds over generations and might link to the CPC's idea of 'building the Harmonious Socialist Society'. Therefore, how does the CPC interpret it against the background of rapid economic growth?

Hu Jin-tao's interpretation of harmonious socialist society is similar to that of Confucius. He said 'the harmonious socialist society should be a harmonious society which has a democratic legal system, where justice is available; everyone is equal and friendly to each other; it should be a peaceful and safe place where people can thrive and live along with nature.'⁹² Based on these two statements, the two very similar points between Hu Jin-tao's words and Confucius are clear, as they both emphasized the 'equality' aspect; for example, 'people are equal, no one is above'. Hu's 'adapt to nature' argument (in Chinese written as 天人合一 and read as *tian'ren'he'yi*) is not an original idea to the Chinese people as it is from the ancient ideology of harmony between humans and nature of Zhuangzi.⁹³ But Hu's interpretation is considered an extension of that ideology from Zhuangzi. The Chinese government is focusing on economic growth, and hoping to maintain rapid

⁹⁰ Wei Si, 'The Commonwealth of the Great Unity and Zhongyong', *Confucius Research* 3 (1993): 75.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁹² 'Building a Harmonious Society', *Xinhua News Agency*, accessed 24 July 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2005-03/23/content_2732356.htm.

⁹³ Zi Zhuang, *The Complete Works of Zhuang Zi* (Beijing: Wu Gu Xuan, 2012), 53.

growth, but this has caused problems for the natural environment. So, in this instance, Hu's meaning is based on this ancient ideology, calling for sustainable growth without making excessive demands on the environment, so that the current generation, and future generations, can enjoy the gifts of nature. From the economic and environmental points of view, this idea is rooted in the balanced, traditional ideology of *yin* and *yang* (which is deep-rooted in most Chinese people's minds).⁹⁴ Therefore, this is the first meaning of this 'harmony'. The second meaning appears to be less obvious. 'Environment', in Chinese written as 环境, also refers to the general surroundings, which could be understood as a political environment, a work environment or a family environment. People can produce their own interpretation of whichever 'environment' they envisage; this 'depends on their own life experience and beliefs', according to Stuart Hall's interpretation of reception theory.⁹⁵

According to Hall, each person would have their own, unique definition of the 'environment', to suit their purposes, but no matter what the definition, everyone should keep their activities sustainable and consume from it with respect. This comes primarily from ancient historical wisdom, but the economic interpretation suits not only the requirement of Communist economic growth, but also works in almost every personalised version. This is a particularly useful example for applying the semiotic model. The words 'environment' and 'balanced ideas' can be seen as the signifiers. The message is carefully coded by the CPC, using traditional or classic Chinese ideology, to deliver the CPC's modern ideas with political purpose in order to create the ideal situation for promoting economic growth, or, as they explained, to 'further the reform', to help in achieving the harmonious society. Up to this point, the CPC's definition of a harmonious society has been explained in part. However, when examining Confucius/Zhuang Zi's notion in comparison to that of Hu Jin-tao, the biggest difference is that the former barely mentioned political authorities, while Hu Jin-tao ensured that 'socialism' was at the very forefront of his views. This altered the whole meaning of these two 'related' assertions. They looked and

⁹⁴ Jian-cheng Pan, 'China's Economy Has Lost Its Internal Balance of Yin-Yang', *People's Daily*, 21 April 2014, <http://finance.sina.com.cn/china/20140421/033818859985.shtml>.

⁹⁵Hall's related readings can be found in the bibliography.

sounded very similar to most Chinese because the whole argument was rooted, developed and arranged in such a way that most Chinese found it easy to approach and obey from the historical point of view, as a natural development from the ancient philosophers. However, when trying to compare the ancient concept to the CPC's call to the nation, a distinct character of Hu's speech stood out. It is cleverly arranged, from the written point of view of Chinese literature, to paint the premise before the body. In a sense, without 'socialism', there is nothing new from Hu; with it, it is nothing like Confucius/Zhuang Zi. This word made the original concept paradoxical, but on the other hand, it shows the importance of this key word. According to Confucius/Zhuang Zi's work, Confucius and Zhang Zi were almost anarchists due to their political pursuits. Ehile Tao Yuan-ming (317-420) writes that the ideal retreat of a scholar is 'away from the chaotic crowds and politics, hiding themselves in the gardens with nature'.⁹⁶

What is the real meaning of Hu's talk? More than once, the Xinhua news agency and *people* websites and other local state-owned mainstream websites have published related articles and comments on Hu's talk. It might be argued that the most significant character of Hu's call is to ensure everything is based on socialism; this precondition, 'harmonious', here is equivalent to 'socialism' within the CPC's leadership, otherwise it does not satisfy the CPC's definition of a 'Harmonious Socialist Society'. Once this is understood, Hu's second sentence becomes clear: the 'democratic' legal system should be supervised and under the CPC's leadership. Therefore, this 'harmonious' society is not a Utopia, it is modern PR China going through the Opening Up and Reform and becoming a stronger and more civilized nation under the direct control of the CPC. That is the full meaning of Hu's talk.

This concept was widely received in China as that year's most talked about news, even though it seems the opposite of Confucius/Zhuang Zi's assertion. The Chinese population is convinced and persuaded by this new idea, which, although it sounds familiar, is nothing like its forebear, in a sense. Hu's talk is not only tailored to stress the importance of the balance of all the elements in constructing a better

⁹⁶ Yuan-ming Tao, *The Work of Tao Yuan-Ming* (ZhongHua Shujun, 1979), 99.

China during the domestic reform, it also communicates with individual Chinese people to play their own part in 'reform'. Most of all, the purpose is to reinforce the CPC's strength overall. A harmonious society is a two-thousand-year-old sign from the ancient Chinese scholars and retains its magic for every Chinese who knows this. It may be a panacea for the daunting challenges facing post-reform China, but will it function as the CPC predicted or will it provoke critical debate? In response to Hu's 'harmonious talk', the word 河蟹 (pronounced as 'he2 xie4', in English 'river crabs') quickly occupied the Chinese internet;⁹⁷ 'crabs' were chosen because the word has a similar pronunciation to harmony in Chinese but it was also used to mock the media censorship. Also, the symbol for crabs represents hegemony, as 橫行霸道 in the Chinese language literally means 'rampage walking, overbearing', and crabs can only walk from left to right. Local censorship was suddenly tightened after the central government's announcement about building the socialist harmonious society. Several lists of sensitive key words were added to mainland Internet browsers, the Internet user often quoting 'crabs' when they intended to write any content related to the sensitive words which might be blocked. In order to create a harmonious society, the government blocked all the online information, which might stand in the way of the 'harmonious society', including violence, pornography, and politically sensitive messages. The Green Dam Youth Escort software was also introduced to the market for this purpose, under supervision from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, in 2009,⁹⁸ but the plan was delayed due to public reluctance.

Building the harmonious socialist society has long been a hope for the Chinese government, and during the era of Hu Jin-tao 'harmony' related topics and political aims were very popular, irrespective of whether they would bring harmony to Chinese society or were considered 'crabs'. Importantly, the central government has noticed the power of the media and the link between politics and the media, as well as the power of tradition. To China, marketing a government's political aim by

⁹⁷Trine and Ildiko, *On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China*.

⁹⁸'Web Blocking Software Not to Be Forced upon People', *Qq News Website*, accessed 25 July 2013, <http://news.qq.com/a/20090610/000087.htm>.

applying historical quotations, literally, and spread via mass media, is a powerful but subtle tool.

2.5 Music and politics: from King Wu to Mao Ze-dong

When weak but anxious music is played, people are filled with concerns; when smooth, slow, harmonious sound with rich content accompanied by rhythm which has contrast, people feel happy and peaceful; when majestic music becomes popular, people will be able to gain strong willpower; when dignified and honest music is heard, people can produce serious emotion; when hearing gentle and bright sound, people can possess loving emotions; but when music containing less rhythms with a dark and wicked ambition is listened to, it will encourage people to produce adulterous emotions.--

Confucius⁹⁹

Confucius was not the first one to explore the power of music and its effect on people's minds, but he clearly stressed that music can be applied as a tool to influence the mass audience for certain social effects. The presence of music and musicology in ancient China appeared to be a powerful political privilege of the ruling class. Many years later, when Mao Ze-dong became the leader of modern China in the 20th century, the power of music was pushed to the extreme, as represented by the eight revolutionary model operas to be '...shared among eight-hundred million people' (simplified: 八亿人民八部戏).¹⁰⁰ Historically, what was the connection between music and politics in China and, more importantly, what has changed or remained since music was used as a propaganda tool after the Cultural Revolution?

Along the long river of ancient Chinese history, after King Wu of Zhou established the Zhou dynasty, around 1046 BC, he ordered the Duke of Zhou to write a series of *yayue* (simplified: 雅乐), which is Chinese classical music, for example, the *Book of Poetry*. This defined the *Rites of Zhou*, to fulfil the nobleman's

⁹⁹ Confucius, 'Yueji', *Book of Rites* (Beijing: Juanmen Publishing, 2008), 173.

¹⁰⁰Liang Mao-chun, 'A Research Study on Cultural Revolution Music'.

life in terms of ceremonial and ritual purposes.¹⁰¹ The music for ordinary people's consumption was called *feng* (in Chinese 夙).¹⁰² This is perhaps the earliest evidence in written Chinese history to suggest that music was structured as an important part of the state apparatus, chosen by the ruler. The usage of music is varied, purely based on its different genres. In other words, the existence of ancient Chinese music belonged to its corresponding social classes. For the ruling class and the aristocracy, for instance, *yayue*, their specific type of music, apart from its entertaining function, also has two distinguishing applications: either to discriminate the top of the social class from the regular people or as an instrument for class predominance, for example, a law written in music language.

However, the *yayue* system did not prevent the perishing of the Zhou dynasty. 'China attempts to regulate the political and cosmic orders by means of a patterned performance that would structure both these orders simultaneously.'¹⁰³ Music can be a patterned performance, and Confucius was surely a keen promoter of this concept as he enjoyed and understood music: '...after hearing *Shao* music, he couldn't taste the flavour of meat for three months, and said "I can't believe how fascinating the *Shao* music can be".'¹⁰⁴ He appreciated the music not simply out of his personal interest, but because he believed '...music has both ideological and artistic attributes', and encouraged 'the political function of music and rite', because 'music can influence someone from the moral point of view'.¹⁰⁵ He and his students wrote a book named *Record of Music* (in Chinese 乐记), containing eleven articles, as part of the *Book of Rites*, to stress the point. The authors proposed the argument that '...the sounds which have been heard by people are a reflection of people's emotion', this is based on their individual experience. 'Emotion is connected to people's lives; but when the outer environment changes, people's minds will alter along with it, they might hear or feel the sound differently; all

¹⁰¹ David Hinton, *Classical Chinese Poetry: An Anthology* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 104; Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (SUNY, 1999), 217; Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Before Confucius: Studies in the Creation of the Chinese Classics* (SUNY, 1997), 128–132.

¹⁰² Qiao Zheng, *Tong Zhi*, vol. 3 (Zhe Jiang Guji, 2007), 163.

¹⁰³ Dallas McCurley, 'Performing Patterns: Numinous Relations in Shang and Zhou China', *TDR* 49, no. 3 (2005): 135.

¹⁰⁴ *Confucius, Analects*, 124.

¹⁰⁵ Xiao-mei Ren, 'Aesthetic Ideology of Confucius', *Wenxue Zhiye* 9 (2006): 54.

sounds evoke emotional reactions when heard.¹⁰⁶ So, they considered music as an element in the communication process. If one applies the process, outlined in Figure 2.4, the music sounds can be considered as *signs*, because when people hear them (for example, as signifier *n*), based on people's backgrounds and experiences, their mind and emotions will react and change along with them, creating various receptions. If the musical communication process can be called a performance, then, as Richard Schechner pointed out, the '...early Chinese writing on performance is almost entirely concerned with reception'.¹⁰⁷ The music content is also important, but the effect of music on people's minds and how people react to musical changes and environmental changes are the vital concerns. Schechner continues to discuss the psychological connection in people's emotional reaction to music styles.¹⁰⁸ As humans are emotional and easily influenced, or driven, by their surroundings, when the outside world changes it will firstly affect their emotions. This subjective experience is such a personal and changeable one, it might directly influence people's actions later on. So, in this theory, assuming the surroundings can be controlled by selected music sounds, it might be possible to manipulate people's minds and, eventually, create the atmosphere of the preferred society. In short, music can be used as a political tool, enabling the empowered class to rule.

The choice of music material appears to be very important. Playing the 'wrong' type of music might construct signs, which could encourage unwelcome opposition to the ruling class. So the identification and choice of the most ideal music for the designer of the communication process is the next challenge. If the ruling class is aiming for a harmonious society, then, excepting the last type of 'emotion', the rest of the music styles seem useful to serve its political purpose. Therefore, if music's role in supporting the ruling of the masses were to be tested, how might the selected material be shown to work?

The modern history of music works designed, and distributed, as a propaganda tool under Mao Ze-dong, began with the theoretical preparation via Mao's talk at Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, which had established modern

¹⁰⁶It comes from 反音之起...故形于声.

¹⁰⁷ McCurley, 'Performing Patterns: Numinous Relations in Shang and Zhou China', 135.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2013), 120.

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China's cultural and political order since 1942.¹⁰⁹ Three aspects were delivered by Mao Ze-dong: firstly, to ensure and reinforce the position of art and literature as a weapon of the Communist revolutionary career; secondly, China's culture being a mass culture, the masses (the proletariat including workers, soldiers, and farmers) were the audience to be served; thirdly, telling Chinese artists that people's daily life is the recourse for art, and in Mao's opinion, the successful experiences of the international world, the USSR in particular, were also a useful reference for the Communist theme.¹¹⁰ The USSR's huge influence began to affect Chinese society later on, as well as the mass Chinese ideology, especially during Mao's period. The purpose of Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art was to outline the CPC's policy and regulations. When comparing Confucius's opinions on music and Mao's speech on general views of art and literature, the similarity between the two lies in the recognition of the social influence of art, including music. They both agree that the importance of music and the connection between politics and music cannot be denied; therefore, music should be adapted as a political tool to safeguard the rule of those in power. However, because of music and art's dual properties, which are both political and artistic, its content can be tailored to suit the ruling class's ideology and, so, be manipulated. In aiming to interpret Mao's speech, it is necessary to highlight the meaning of 'the masses', as this is the CPC's targeted 'audience' to receive art and literature. In relation to this idea, Hamm explained that 'Mao saw China's population as falling into four classes: the proletariat, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie (China's own capitalists).'¹¹¹ Mao put the four classes at the beginning of his speech, emphasizing the core of the communication process, and taking the CPC as the sender of the process and the four classes as the destined receivers of the process. It seems he considered the proletariat as the priority for the Communist revolution and therefore, as the CPC comprises four classes, according to Mao's opinion the ruling CPC is part of the 'people' and should serve the four classes. However, in reality, as

¹⁰⁹ Jin-wu Chen, 'The Contemporary Significance of Mao Zedong's Speech at Yan'an Forum', *China Social Science* 460 (2013).

¹¹⁰ Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*.

¹¹¹ Charles Hamm, 'Music and Radio in the People's Republic of China', *Asian Music* 22, no. 2 (1991): 3.

Mittler further pointed out, 'state engagement in entertainment culture during the Cultural Revolution was an attempt to establish a monopoly on popular culture.'¹¹² In this sense, music, art, and the arts in general, form a powerful 'weapon' that can be understood as a propaganda tool to serve the ruling class's political aim, to maintain the ruling class's benefits, as well as easing the internal contradictions. Music, or art in general, is a weapon to disseminate the related concepts and revolutionary life of the above classes. Could the concept of class struggle, shown in the later revolutionary works, be considered as 'suitable' for all the people in China, in the Party's view, during the Cultural Revolution? How did it all happen?



Figure 2-3 *Eight-hundred million people sharing eight operas*, by Song Li-ming in 2013. A caricature mocks the musical scenery during the Cultural Revolution era.¹¹³ In this caricature, the artist writes: 'Revolutionary operas represent the red spirits, its magnificent attitude can challenge the river and sea, the determination can shake the heaven and earth. Holding the shining red lantern in my hand, it helps my dad to hunt the evil wolves. Although each character has lofty pride it cannot change

¹¹² Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*.

¹¹³ Li-ming Song, *Once Upon a Time in Xi'an*, 1st ed. (Xi'an: Tai Bai Art Publishing House, 2013).

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their destiny.’ Not only the calligraphy clearly integrates the contents with the revolutionary operas directly, the characters are also the representative figures from the Cultural Revolutionary era. Lead characters from left to right: Railway worker Li Yu-he (*The Legend of the Red Lantern*), PLA officer Yang Zi-rong (*The Taking of Tiger Mountain*), daughter of a tenant/peasant Xi Er (*The White Haired Girl*). Madam Mao is shown standing on a stool, while a member of the Gang is holding the red book (*Quotations from Chairman Mao Ze-dong*), directing the rest of the characters with a stick in her hand, on the left side of the painting.

As the painting shows, the Revolution towards music dramas took place under Madam Mao’s command. In 1964, Mao Ze-dong’s wife, Jiang Qing, gave a simple but powerful speech based on two years of research into current developments within the Beijing Opera.¹¹⁴ She claimed that as a classic, traditional art form opera remained stagnant, handed down through several generations during which time society had progressed. Therefore, in order to remain meaningful to its motherland, the content of opera required fresh blood and more creative works; particularly, based on her experience, she believed that ‘Drama is also political.’¹¹⁵ After that, a number of revolutionary-themed operas were produced on Madam Mao’s orders and she coined the term ‘revolutionary opera’. She insisted on a thorough reform of the traditional Beijing Opera and, during the Cultural Revolution, these operas, together with the ‘Yellow River Piano Concerto’, were the only entertainment resources for 800 million Chinese.

The Legend of the Red Lantern was Madam Mao’s first directorial exploration. The opera originally came from a *Huju* (a variety of Chinese opera sung in the Shanghainese dialect) by Ling Da-ke and Xia Jian-qing. The story was set during the Second Sino-Japanese War, when underground Communist railway workers from Manchukuo secretly supported the Chinese guerrillas while protecting intelligence and fighting against the Japanese military police.¹¹⁶ The most popular arias are, ‘They All Have a Bright Red Heart’ by Li Tie-mei, ‘Lifting the Little Basket and Selling

¹¹⁴ Liang Mao-chun, ‘A Research on Cultural Revolutionary Music’.

¹¹⁵ Ross Terrill, *Madame Mao: The White-Boned Demon: Revised Edition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 90, <http://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=434>; Jingdi Li, ‘China’s “Nora” and Her Red Stage: An Examination of Jiang Qing and Her Contribution to the Development of Modern Revolutionary Opera’ (The University of York, n.d.), 11.

¹¹⁶ Yong-gang Shi, *Jiang Qing and Revolutionary Operas* (Writer’s Publishing House, 2009), 120–153.

Agricultural Products’, by Li Yu-he, and ‘Pay Off the Bloody Debt with Blood’ by Grandma Li (in Chinese this is a respectful title and she is generally referred to in this way). Li Tie-mei is the adopted daughter of the Li family, living with her father Li Yu-he, who is a secret Communist railway worker, and Grandma Li. They are not wealthy so Tie-mei must help with the household and Yu-he sings that ‘she lifts her basket and sells agricultural products to increase the income, also pokes the cinders to warm the house, thanks to her help, someone can help with fetching water and cutting the wood...the child of a poor family knows how to manage a household in early age.’ Listening to this aria, the audience might be impressed by how much responsibility she is undertaking, forgetting that she should be enjoying a happy time at school. However, given the historical context, during wartime, her father Yu-he and ‘many other uncles’ are busy with the revolutionary career. ‘I don’t know their names, but I know they are the same as my father, that they all have a bright red heart!’ In this aria, Tie-mei is singing on behalf of many other teenagers whose families are involved in the secret struggle during the war. After Yu-he was shot by the enemy, Grandma Li sings, ‘... your parents were killed by the devils, and Yu-he is fighting against the Japanese for them, now he has been arrested and is in prison, you must remember this and a bloody debt must be paid by blood!’ His pose when holding the red lantern was a classic symbol which was also painted by Song Li-ming.

Other revolutionary operas or music plays include: ‘Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy’, a story about the victory of the north-east People’s Liberation Army (PLA), on the battlefield in 1926; and ‘Raid the White-Tiger Regiment’, based on the true story of Sergeant Yang Yu-cai, from the Chinese People’s Volunteers Scout Platoon, at the beginning of the Korean War.¹¹⁷ The character, PLA officer Yang Zi-rong, was created afterwards; this heroic figure defeated a group of bandits, his action was standing on the chest of the enemy and this is also shown in the painting in Figure 2.5; *Harbour* (formerly known as *Harbour’s Morning*), comprises stories about the workers from Shanghai harbour and educating the next generation of workers. The only ballet drama ‘White Haired Girl’,¹¹⁸ as shown in the middle of Figure 2.5, is based on the legend of an immortal, white-haired female; it promotes the classic

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Lin Ying, *An Honest Talk about the Red Stage* (Beijing: Sina Publishing, 2014), 78.

view that ‘...old China turns people to ghosts, but the new China turns ghosts to people’.¹¹⁹ The ballet play, ‘Red Detachment of Women’, received a high recommendation from Mao Ze-dong who stated, ‘...the art form is good, the direction is correct’.¹²⁰ What did he mean by ‘direction’? This was the first ballet shown in China, and it followed the revolutionary theme; therefore, the art form was serving the preferred proletariat audience group. The Symphony ‘Sha Jia Bang’ was based on another real life story about a New Fourth Army soldier’s experience in the anti-Japanese war. In order for the CPC to establish the ideological legitimacy of socialist realism in the People’s Republic of China, in 1955 composers of the past were sought as models for contemporary musicians to copy. Xian Xing-hai, who was a Communist and composer of songs for the masses, was chosen for such a purpose.¹²¹ ‘The *Yellow River Piano Concerto* was “created” collectively, and strictly on ideological lines, during the Cultural Revolution in 1970.’¹²² The *Yellow River Piano Concerto* originally came from the *Yellow River Piano Cantata*, lyrics by Guang Wei-ran; the work quickly spread across the whole country, among students, workers, and soldiers, after its first thirty thousand copies were published in *New Music* magazine.¹²³ Madam Mao commented, after watching the premier of the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*, ‘...there will be a great future for this genre, it shows an important development towards Western music and instruments, it also contributes to Chairman Mao’s call to the nation “let the Western invention serve us”.’¹²⁴ Before the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*, pianos were banned completely in China.

Musicologists from both China and the West have produced a great deal of research from various perspectives on propaganda music and culture during the

¹¹⁹ Hai-yan Li, ‘The White Haired Girl: Class and Gender of National Narrative’, *The Chinese University of Hong Kong*, no. N/A (N/A): 110–18.

¹²⁰ Qi Han Edited, ‘The White Haired Girl Moved Mao Ze-Dong’, *CRL Online*, n.d., <http://gb.cri.cn/27824/2012/07/04/6251s3755150.htm>.

¹²¹ Hon-lun Yang, ‘The Making of a National Musical Icon: Xian Xinghai and His Yellow River Cantata’, in *Music, Power, and Politics*, ed. Annie J. Randall (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 102.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 101.

¹²³ The editor in chief of *New Music* was Li Ling, who was the music teacher of Peng Li-yuan, the wife of China’s current president Xi Jin-ping. She is a well-known folk singer.

¹²⁴ In 1964 Mao first wrote ‘yang wei zhong yong’ (in Chinese 洋为中用) to comment on the Central Conservatory of Music. It means critically to accept everything from the West, to let the Western invention serve us.

Cultural Revolution. Chinese scholar Dai Jia-fang and Liang Mao-chun have provided a number of sources in the Chinese language; Dai was among the first generation of music students admitted to the China Central Conservatory of Music, after higher education recovered in 1978. In a similar way to Song, Li-ming implies in the painting that the ‘...stage heroes shown in the picture did not all have a good ending in real life’. Dai presents the ‘dangerous power’ associated with music during the Cultural Revolution era by focusing on the case of his colleague Yu Hui-yong, former head of the Culture Ministry of Music, who had a tragic death due to being close to Madam Mao and the Gang of Four, at the end of the Cultural Revolution. Dai argues that music was highly political, and was as powerful as politics at that time, by quoting Lin Biao, a Marshal of the P.R China that ‘...singing a good song is equivalent to attending an excellent politics class’.¹²⁵ Even so, a politics class should not be a slaughterhouse.

Dai also provides a detailed analysis of the exception to Western music consumption during the Cultural Revolution era, the piano repertoire, *The Yellow River Piano Concerto*, which was constructed according to Western compositional techniques. This concerto somewhat speaks for Chinese traditional aesthetic values, after Madam Mao requested a list of corrections of symbols, such as, adding the song ‘The East Is Red’ and a bamboo flute solo to illustrate working people living alongside the Yellow River, by using this familiar tune and praise dedicated to Mao directly.¹²⁶ Dai’s countryman Liang Mao-chun, from the Central Conservatory of Music, took the approach of focusing on ethnic music of Chinese minorities, based on recalling his life experience as a ‘Little Red Guard’ (simplified: 红小兵), during the Cultural Revolution. Through the Struggle Session,¹²⁷ Liang learned about Xinjiang ethnic minority music, through Han composer Wang Luo-bin’s interpretation.¹²⁸

In exploring Mao’s policies during the Cultural Revolution, and its associated artistic practice, Isabel K.F. Wong provides an account of historical and textual

¹²⁵ Dai Jia-fang, *Go To Hell*, 67.

¹²⁶ Dai Jia-fang, ‘The Analysis of Piano Concerto the “Yellow River”’.

¹²⁷ Stevan Harrell and Jonathan N. Lipman, *Violence in China: Essays in Culture and Counterculture*, Social Science (New York: SUNY Press, 1990).

¹²⁸ Liang Mao-chun, ‘A Research Study on Cultural Revolution Music’.

aspects, by examining the *geming gequ* (simplified: 革命歌曲) or revolutionary songs, of the 1960s. Wong argues that this type of music was used for various political functions, especially for education of the Chinese masses, as well as encouraging their sense of patriotism. The song lyrics were often a direct quotation from the Party's directives, however, translated through fundamental compositional techniques, such as, a basic tune to make it easy to remember.¹²⁹ *Geming gequ* was seen as a good example of political propaganda for mass distribution, to deliver the Party's ideology. Barbara Mittler's work made a significant contribution to the objective understanding of artistic works during the Cultural Revolution; a combined methodology includes juxtaposing detailed readings, along with a rich source of aesthetic insights through fieldwork experience involving conducting interviews with people from different classes who experienced the cultural products of the Cultural Revolution. Additionally, Mittler argues that propaganda art during the Maoist era was 'very successful',¹³⁰ for example, the revolutionary model operas did not only serve politics as an ideological supply line, but offered a chance for ordinary people to be exposed to music as it 'serves the people' (simplified: 为人民服务) according to Mao. Mittler also believes that the Cultural Revolution era was a peak time of politicization of music in modern Chinese history but also that a level of aesthetic accomplishment was achieved. The Cultural Revolution initially established China's modern compositional tradition and continues to be influential today; the music had its roots in folk songs, but adopting a Western compositional pathway. Therefore, she argues that Western music never really disappeared during the Cultural Revolution, but Chinese folk music was somewhat 'Westernised' as a continuation of the modernization of Chinese music in the 20th century. It became the 'New Chinese Music' of Mao, which contained the single purpose of use as propaganda.¹³¹ Thus, folk music has also been influenced and used as propaganda, and the Western Art music tradition is recognised as part of Chinese music.

¹²⁹Wong and McDougall, 'Geming Gequ: Song for the Education of the Masses'.

¹³⁰Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*.

¹³¹Ibid.

Arnold Perris took the Marxist theoretical approach in researching Mao's effective propaganda policy. Perris noted, that Mao discussed the dilemma of employing the universal cultural standards to help the mass audience's understanding that '...popular works are simple and plainer, and therefore more readily accepted by the broad masses of people today. Works of a higher quality, being more polished, are more difficult to produce and, in general do not circulate so easily and quickly among the masses at present'.¹³² This illustrates Mao's awareness that the purpose of each dissemination through art work was to convince the audience of his message made from a simple formula, as well as covering the maximum audience by using popular art forms. Perris further discusses Mao's emphasis on the status of the audience by pointing out 'our specialists in music should pay attention to the songs of the masses',¹³³ in order to produce music that reflects the familiar elements of the mass audience's life; again, this highlighted the role of the receivers by making them feel more connected. In doing so, Mao says '...our gifted writers and artists must go among the masses for a long period of time, into the heat of the struggle, to observe, experience, study and analyse the different kinds of people, all the classes...in music you may apply appropriate foreign principles and use foreign musical instruments. But still there must be national characteristics (simplified: 洋为中用)...Ancient art can still be appreciated by later generations (simplified: 古为今用)...'¹³⁴ As Perris noted, Mao as the 'emperor' of the Cultural Revolution, designed the above fundamental art policies based on Marxism and Maoist factors, which also share the mutual understanding of Confucius's definition of 'good music'. It can be understood to help with maintaining the stability of society, similar to the concept of building a 'harmonious society'.

From the introduction of Maoist policy, regarding revolutionary operas and the piano concerto, it is evident that the connection between music and politics is very strong, and it has been used as a political tool to serve the CPC's political agenda. Art work first served as an important tool for highlighting class struggle: no

¹³² Arnold Perris, 'Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control'.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

matter from which revolutionary opera the hero comes, they all share the same identity, coming from a proletariat background. Also, they must all 'struggle' with the dominant bourgeoisie, as shown in **Figure 2-3**: the 'evil' bandit was defeated under the foot of the heroic PLA soldier; the greedy 'landlord' holding his counting frame was captured and his slaves were set free. Aesthetic experience was also a vital part, and not limited to the Chinese traditional art form only, but it must contribute to Mao's political ideology and be easy to access. As shown in **Figure 2-3**, the red lantern, and the red book which represents Mao's political concepts, are both kept on the top level of the painting, as the 'primary principles' of everything.

The 'stool' that Madam Mao was standing on, in **Figure 2-3**, can be seen as the power authorised by Mao himself, so, important questions arise. Today, after the economic reform in Mainland China, the cultural and political scene must be different from the Cultural Revolution period. People are wealthier; therefore, is it still necessary for music to work as a political weapon for the CPC? Is it still a mass culture designed for ordinary people to consume? Do Mao's political concepts still act as the stool, as fundamental principles for art and music? How might the changes be identified?

2.6 Conclusion

Music works were an important component of Mao's revolutionary career and a political propaganda tool during the Maoist period from Yan'an to the Cultural Revolution. The purpose of political artistic works was to expose and stir class conflict, and to assist the class struggle as part of Mao's revolutionary belief. He believed, to a degree, that the aesthetic format of art is not as important as its political ideological content: the primary concern for propaganda art was to ensure its effective connection with the Chinese proletariat and deliver Mao's message. Representation of foreign artistic formats, such as Western traditional art music, was not completely banned during the Cultural Revolution, as it was interpreted to foster the patriotic sense nationwide.

The fundamental connection between music and politics did not experience a massive change after the Mao era. As a continuation since ancient China, music was

offered a new mission to help maintain state stability and mirror the Communist Party's mainstream ideology which valued the building of a harmonious society through rapid economic growth resulting from domestic reform and internationally open policy. The urgent need to use music to balance and quell the internal issues among Chinese ethnic groups, caused by rapid economic reform among the mass Chinese has determined that the essence of the music will continue its mass culture nature.

It is worth discussing whether, if music was partly used to create the 'harmonious' picture of the communist party, when external influence arrived from outside China in particular along with the economic reform, what impact did it bring to the music? It might also be useful to study individual examples of music style as a reference, to understand China's political situation. Meanwhile, at the receiver's end of mainstream music distribution, has this music been designed to represent Chinese people's lives or, rather, to create an illusion for the audience?

Chapter 3 Politically influenced folk music in the Autonomous Region of Xinjiang

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the representation of Chinese ethnic minority music in Xinjiang will be investigated. By drawing on my experience as a native musician and music student, in Urumqi the capital of Xinjiang, as a reference, the local music dissemination process will be critically analysed, to gain an understanding of how folk music functions in a social context.

The overall political background of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region will first be presented, considering the tension between Han Chinese and Ethnic minorities in relation to the Chinese government's political concept of 'Building the Harmonious Society'. Additionally, the practice of a local folk musician, working with a standard approach to the mainstream music educational regime, will be documented. A detailed critical analysis of a well known 'folk song', referring to relevant political and social contexts, written by the above folk musician who was formerly also my piano teacher, will then be provided. In examining the music meaning for the targeted audience, the music dissemination process is considered as a communicational process, therefore communication theory will be introduced, briefly.

The information conveyed by the music will be discussed in order to understand the current political situation. Can it be seen that the need to maintain stability in the ethnic minority region of Xinjiang is vital to the CCP? Additionally, the music, which carries the mainstream, ideological message to foster a sense of unity, between the majority and the minority has formed its own style. Therefore, the question of whether it is a form of prevalent mass culture, which is inspired by local folk music elements through Han Chinese interpretation, or the minority culture's musical stereotype used as a political tool, will be discussed.

3.2 Breeze through the Field

Not yet a harmonious Society

...Understood as a metaphor, the 'harmonious society' allows for a wide range of interpretations...as some Chinese social scientists have argued, the promotion of 'the idea of tolerance when addressing diversity in modern society'. Even though ethnic conflict is rarely mentioned directly in such discourses...although the regions (Xinjiang and Tibet) where they are concentrated have low population density and their demographic significance is considerably less than the majority Han, the intensity of policies directed at them is indicative of the way they are perceived by Chinese politicians and external observers: as the key to both the stability and the security of the entire country.¹³⁵

As many social scholars and observers noted, some not-so-harmonious sound is heard beneath the Harmonious Society of the Beijing government, emanating from ethnic autonomous regions. Maintaining unity among all ethnic groups seems crucial to the Chinese government. In this part, in order to present an objective reference in relation to my documented fieldwork experience as a music student in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region, I intend to pay a glance at the local contemporary political situation, as well as its connections with staged representations of minority music in this area in particular.

Trine Brox reports that the two, controversial, ethnic minorities which have attracted great attention are Tibetan and Uyghur, both of whom have demonstrated plenty of 'resistance' against Beijing's perspective, because of their distinctive historical, cultural and religious backgrounds as well as their geographical and social positions.¹³⁶ The conflicts between the Han Chinese and the Uyghur people remain problematic,¹³⁷ but this thesis would rather focus on China

¹³⁵ Trine and Ildiko, *On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China*.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ke-lin Niu and Pin He, 'The Summary of Xinjiang Ethnic Relations Since Reform and Opening Up', *Xinjiang University Press*, no. 2 (2009): 76–80. Iliham Tohti, 'Iliham Tohti: Current Situation and

and representations of its 'Others' music, namely, ethnic minorities' music. In soothing the relations with ethnic minorities, according to the official concepts delivered through schools, the 'three inseparables' (simplified: 三个离不开) official ideology, promoted by the government, is key: ethnic minorities are inseparable from Han Chinese, Han Chinese are inseparable from ethnic minorities, and ethnic minorities are inseparable from each other.¹³⁸ This principle expresses how the Chinese Communist Party defines the relationship among all the ethnic groups. The 'three inseparables' concept is also emphasised on local music stages.

In understanding the political background behind local music development, the rich resource on the ethnic music of China's northwest frontier Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, contributed by British ethnomusicologist Rachel Harris, is vastly helpful.¹³⁹ Through the research method of gathering data through fieldwork and face-to-face interviews, Harris not only provides a great insight into biographical evidence, but also explores the connection between the identity of ethnic minorities and their surrounding communities.¹⁴⁰ Importantly, Harris also considered the international political environment when approaching the social function of the music in this ethnically diverse region. For instance, research into Uyghur Muqam development in the 1960s exposes the political game between the Chinese and Soviet governments which affected Uyghur Muqam music, and the attitude of the two governments, the Soviet government in particular, towards this music became a diplomatic tool to earn support in global affairs. J.N. Smith noted that the concept of encouraging national identity through culture forms is not new in Xinjiang, and pointed out that contemporary Uyghur musicians have strengthened rapidly, using music as a tool to unite them against the 'Han Coloniser', as they refer to the Han majority. At the same time, creation of the 'new folk songs' reproduces their own national identity through oral and dance formed

Recommendations of Ethnic Problems in Xinjiang', n.d.,
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1g75BCY7OQWIOEkTMxXhAVkxNwYVsE56bocXJqyP2h8/edit>.

¹³⁸ My peers and I were educated on this idea from a young age, and it regularly appeared on exam papers each term. Dong, 'The 'Three Inseparables' Concept Is Essential to National Unity', n.d.

¹³⁹ Rachel Harris, *The Making of a Musical Canon in Chinese Central Asia: The Uyghur Twelve Muqam*, (Ashgate, 2008). More works of Dr. Rachel Harris will be listed in the resource list.

¹⁴⁰ Rachel Harris, *Singing the Village: Music, Memory and Ritual among the Sibe of Xinjiang*.

musical works.¹⁴¹ This suggests the relationship between the government officials and some of the ethnic minority in Xinjiang is conflicted, and the ethnic group might feel their own identity is challenged and does not fully recognise the mainstream folk music as part of their culture; also music might be used as a cultural and social tool to serve a certain political purpose among Uyghur nationalists.

3.3 Fieldwork at Home

Music in Xinjiang captured my interest before I knew ‘ethnomusicology’ existed. In the late 1990s, I began the formal study of music in Urumqi, the capital town of Xinjiang Autonomous Region, at the Xinjiang Military Song and Dance Troupe under the guidance of a well-known Chinese composer, Liu Shu-min. He accepted me as a student when he was already retired from the Military Troupe but still teaching private pupils, so my formal approach to local music culture began via piano studies. Although the piano is not ‘native’, and possibly regarded as a Western instrument, because of the nature of the music and the popularity and the capacity of expression of this instrument, even in Xinjiang the piano is still a useful tool to assist composers to work. My weekly music lessons lasted for several years until Liu Shu-min’s death.

Mr Liu Shu-min’s identity represents a paradigm: an army based composer, serving for thirty years in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, born to an ordinary Han family, but speaking fluent Uyghur after twenty years living within the local Uyghur society. His musical achievement was widely disseminated via stage performances, local television shows, documentaries, music videos, books, CDs, cassettes, stamps, and through private music lessons.¹⁴² His role was to introduce Xinjiang by writing music, especially about minority groups, then putting it on the stage. As an artistic military officer, he never knew how to fire a pistol; all he had was music. His studio was always packed with an audience: usually about ten

¹⁴¹Smith, J.N., ‘The Quest for National Unity in Uyghur Popular Song: Barren Chickens, Stray Dogs, Fake Immortals and Thieves’.

¹⁴²Ke Liu, ‘Discography of Liu Shu-Min’, *Qing Shao Nian*, 2001, 2–259; ‘Obituary of Military Composer Liu Zhu-Min’ (China Military website), accessed 25 July 2013, http://chn.chinamil.com.cn/xwpdxw/whxw/2010-01/24/content_4123994.htm.

students aged from seven to twenty, and the students' parents or sometimes the grandparents as well. My father treated my piano lessons with Liu as a ritual, and it was almost an overwhelming and privileged experience to be his student. Lessons were in a building with poor lighting, located in the courtyard surrounded by music, behind a Russian-style music theatre, the Eight One¹⁴³ Theatre (also known as Eight One Club, simplified: 八一剧场). Much anonymous practising could be heard from instruments on the way to the building, or from the voices of the most celebrated local singers who were serving in this Military Troupe. It was fascinating for a young person who enjoyed listening to the music; one had heard or watched this very performance sometimes via local TV broadcasting, but the practice noise suggested they might be working from the place where I took my lessons. Occasionally we encountered a professional practising for the upcoming show in the long, dark corridor, without a background melody but with a bright, rhythmic tambourine sound. Liu's studio was the heart of musicianship, where the most celebrated artists from the Dance and Song Troupe would discuss the details of a work which, potentially, would have permission to be recommended to the people in Xinjiang, via a most powerful channel deeply rooted in the local culture, and which, most importantly, would engage with the CPC's political ideology, to assist their political aim as a weapon. Liu was not my first piano teacher, but he was the one who enlightened me, a person from a Han background who made me aware of the existence of the unique, Xinjiang music culture. He influenced how I viewed and responded to my native culture by using an unusual approach: teaching me to play Xinjiang music on the piano.

I was allowed to study along with Liu's talented professional pianists; however, because of the nature of his workshop-style lessons, I was invited to spend many hours watching and listening to him teaching different music pieces to others using a very similar route, the Xinjiang themed piano works. One concept within ethnomusicology fieldwork research, from Malinowski, states that '...fieldwork relied on in-person observation and on data gathering through

¹⁴³ PLA Day is on 1st August, or commonly written as '8. 1'

structured interviews'.¹⁴⁴ During the period when I attended his lessons, workshops and rehearsals, I was regularly 'observing' him both as an audience and a performer. Liu had had a distinguished career since the late 1970s. Many songs were composed and performed by him and distributed nationwide, including Uyghur folk-style music such as 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs', and 'Pomegranate Blossom', and songs with Kazakh elements, for instance: 'The Beautiful Heaven Lake'; 'I Love Xinjiang, Xinjiang Loves Me'; 'The Sunset in Ahwuler'; and 'The Song of the Milktea'.¹⁴⁵ He also composed pieces for musical instruments and dance music. He lived in Xinjiang all his life and worked with local artists throughout that time, adapting the local music elements from different ethnic groups and creating a number of new 'folk songs'. These songs are described as being 'new' because they were recorded, although most of his works are still fairly accessible on the local music stage and shared by the people from all ethnic groups in Xinjiang. This will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In a personal sense, the effective 'data collecting' experience from the perspective of ethnomusicology lies in the one-to-one piano lessons with Xinjiang-style piano works, the period when he taught me how to play the 'Dance of Spring', a Xinjiang culture themed, piano work. This was one of his repertoire which most of his students learnt from him and performed in public on various occasions. It was written by Sun Yi-qiang, and Liu considered this piece, among all Chinese piano works, to contain the soul of Xinjiang local culture, which had been mentioned as the principle of the piece. This led me to question why he believed this to be true, and how to play it well, if learning this piece? Liu always asked all of us to sit still, almost like sitting in a concert hall, and whoever was going to play this piece had to walk from the entrance of the room to the piano near the window: less than ten steps but it was such a ritual to us. Liu told us that this is part of learning piano performance, setting the stage mode for the player, with the rest of us listening as 'audience', using objective ears. He always sat to the left of the upright piano, with sharp eyes to judge the technique of the players while holding the scores, and using

¹⁴⁴ Jeff Todd Titon, 'Knowing Fieldwork', in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspective for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 26.

¹⁴⁵ Liu, 'Discography of Liu Shu-Min', 2.

a tiny pencil quickly wrote down useful suggestions in minute detail for the performer and all of us. I can remember that whenever the selected student played the piece in public, Liu always ensured the student was doing it right.

He would never stop the player from playing but, when the piece was finished, the most inspiring and fascinating time was approaching. He was certainly a composer, a pianist, a singer, and a reasonably good dancer for, as he was always repeating to us, dance is part of Uyghur music; music does not exist without dance in Xinjiang. He would speak of the past when, in order to write the music of the ethnic groups, he moved, with the Troupe of artistic soldiers from Xinjiang, from one place to the other, giving musical performances to the local village people when entertainment was rare. According to Liu, most of his widely known works were created during that era, when he was 'living in the field' within the local culture and people, speaking their language, eating their food, celebrating their festivals. He believed the piece 'Dance of Spring' could be understood as a joyful festival where people were dancing, the highlight of which was the horse racing. He maintained that the soul of this piano piece lies in the rhythm on the left hand, as it adapted the traditional Uyghur dancing music pattern, mimicking their tambourine-drum, which could be the sole instrument as the accompaniment played by the male dancer for the female dancer. He described a time, in Southern Xinjiang, when he danced with a tambourine alongside the female dancers. Holding the tambourine required two hands; both thumbs were locked in a ring to secure the instrument while dancing, and the left hand was responsible for the dynamic accent. Because the fingers are near the edge of the tambourine, it makes a rather tense, lower, louder and more pronounced sound compared to the right hand that is holding the side of the tambourine and that, usually, makes a brighter, higher, looser sound on the anti-accent notes. When the dynamic sound was made, it would synchronize with the dominant leg and the point where the dancer would be facing the audience or would pause. Within the Uyghur traditional dance, this instrument is played on its own, as a call for the dancer, to increase the atmosphere before she appears on the stage. Here he pointed out not only the strong connection between the music and the dancing of Uyghur folk music but also the details of the 'real life experience', and so his interpretation became more 'realistic'.

During the demonstration, he would ask the student to play the tambourine part, and he would dance with it, explaining how the music began. He considered the interaction of the female dancers and the kinds of movements they might make to match the music. He demonstrated how, as the horn blew, a group of young men from across the grassland began the horse racing and how, as the music got faster, it represented the heated atmosphere of the horse race. As the music continued, the performers were happy dancing until sunset to celebrate this great festival. Lots of details were described but, for people who could read the score and play with no difficulties in technique, Liu felt the work to be only half complete, believing we should try to impersonate the ethnic people's original performance style and bring it back to the music. Even if the music was written for piano, Liu felt that an understanding of local life was essential in order for the performer to interpret the way it sounded and so that the player should have room for his or her own explanation.

We listened to him, watching him dancing while humming the tune of the 'Dance of Spring', trying to imagine the festival scene, and we learnt that the music contains far more than is written on the score; the scene Liu described was a familiar life experience for us as the local culture was the fusion of Han traditional culture mixed with Central Asian culture. We began to engage with the field, unconsciously, from a young age, by participating in the daily life of Xinjiang, for instance, learning the music by hearing it elsewhere, on the street or in the local institutions, by studying with the local experts, or by spending a summer or a year in a distant community. For example, in my research period while writing about the Uyghur *Twelve Muqum*, I was trying to discover how the minds of the Uyghur people worked in terms of their music. Therefore, in order to do this, I contacted my Uyghur peers from next door, from school, and from the local Uyghur artistic institutions, I attended lectures at Xinjiang Normal University, I met the dancers from Makit Country, and I spent time in the Uyghur neighbourhood, collecting the basic material of Uyghur music.

Researching Xinjiang music is a familiar topic when the researcher has lived for almost twenty years in the region, but does this 'nativeness' serve as an ingredient that might intervene in my being 'objective'? One criticism might be that

emotional factors could affect the researcher's experience in the society or the field. Stock underlines that 'research at home also goes hand in glove with an increasing sense among ethnomusicologists that we should strive for positive social impact'.¹⁴⁶ However, the balance depends on the ethnomusicologist's perspective. From this point, when I look back, I realize that even my former teacher Liu Zhu-min, who offered such a deep understanding of Xinjiang music to me, might have been the one who was 'manipulating' the ethnic music culture, purposely to serve the CPC's political aim. He was compared with the father of Xinjiang folk song, Wang Luo-bin, who collected folk songs from the Xinjiang local minorities and translated the lyrics into Chinese, which helped both the Uyghur people and the Chinese audience to understand the songs, but also changed the originality of the music at the same time. Hearing the songs and experiencing the music helped the audience to develop a better understanding of the value of the local native people, the history of ethnic minorities and, most importantly, their response to the CPC's political ruling, because that reaction can answer what the CPC is also keen to know: if the ethnic group already shares the 'values' of the society? Or did his addition of familiar musical elements into his music, such as names, tuning, allusion and dances which, in Mao's opinion, are 'coming from the proletariat's life', then help transport the music so that it received the recognition of the wider Chinese audience? According to the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, '...the individual was the product of society, with society determining an individual's attitudes and values',¹⁴⁷ therefore Liu's understanding of Xinjiang ethnic music made him fulfil his own compositional works, but the nature of a Chinese PLA soldier, even an artist, would be to value Communism and the 'united' political core. This belief would be deeply planted into Liu's mind and, therefore, would also be 'native' to him but, when listening to his music, watching him teaching, he was so involved that the ethnically influenced music culture became his personal music language as well. He devoted his life to investigating, experiencing, practising and composing Xinjiang folk music, gathering

¹⁴⁶ Jonathan Stock and Chiener Chou, 'Fieldwork at Home: Asian and European Perspectives', in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspective for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 108.

¹⁴⁷ David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, *Musicology: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 87.

the music resources from all over the province. It is not clear if his presence affected the local people when he was living in the field, but certainly his work has been widely distributed and enjoyed. His music from thirty years ago is received as the new folk music which, in this instance, simply means music by a local composer based on local people's real life.

However, since studying abroad, I have realised that my relationship with Xinjiang music has become different. As my parents, my grandmother, and some friends and piano peers are still living in Xinjiang and hear the music as a normal part of daily life, the fieldwork might be more or less related to them but is not to me directly, anymore. I do fieldwork for the purposes of research but when I hear information about Xinjiang it tends to be delivered by them. Nettl pointed out Myers indicates 'in fieldwork we unveil the human face of ethnomusicology and fieldwork is the most personal task required of the ethnomusicologist'.¹⁴⁸ Nettl also explains 'the fieldworker needs to find a niche for himself or herself in the host society, where one is inevitably an outsider, but, if I can put it this way, an outsider of the insider sort.'¹⁴⁹ Many ethnomusicologists highlight the importance of conducting fieldwork; for example, Stock and Chow quoted Blacking's advice that '...to plan for a full year in the field so that we could document every calendric rite and its associated music making',¹⁵⁰ and also quoted from John Van Maanen that '...the fieldworker must spend at least a year in the field, live apart from his own kind, and above all make the psychological transference whereby "they" becomes "we"'.¹⁵¹ It is worth noting that though the period of time a musicologist should spend or live in the field is vital, adapting their way of thinking to the local psychological pattern is also key to the research, thus the researcher's identity will become less 'alien' to the 'insiders'. However, as a native researcher, living in the field for several years and, possibly, having the 'insider' mind, it is almost impossible for me that Liu's 'artificial' folk songs should be defined as the 'new folk music' from the state-owned platform. It is important to note that, as a former

¹⁴⁸ Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology* (University of Illinois Press, 1983), vii.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵⁰ Stock and Chou, 'Fieldwork at Home: Asian and European Perspectives', in *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, ed. Bruno Nettl, 109.

¹⁵¹ Stock and Chou, 'Fieldwork at Home: Asian and European Perspectives', in *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, ed. Bruno Nettl, 108-09.

student of his, and having lived in a culturally and politically dominating society, the understanding of folk music which I learned through him was not of folk music as it has been defined earlier in the chapter, but an altered version of it; his interpretation.

Maybe it is time to be an outsider again, although this perspective is not ideally conducive to the concept of loyalty. However, Jonathan Stock's 'Fieldwork At Home'¹⁵² quoted Rulan Chao Pian's conclusion in *Return of the Native Ethnomusicologist* that 'such research was emotionally difficult and that the native researcher should aspire to the viewpoint of an outsider and to objectivity'. Indeed, it is emotionally difficult to be critical of my piano teacher, but this also raises another important issue of general fieldwork, especially when the researcher is studying their home location, regarding the meaning of 'home'. Can it be the place where the researcher used to live? Assuming home is the native environment of the researcher, for instance, a Chinese person conducting fieldwork in China, then although it is still the motherland to the researcher, in a broader sense, it is also a massive, and therefore impersonal, area. Additionally, looking at my case, being born in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region but learning the local ethnic music via a Han Chinese composer's rearrangements of ethnic minority inspired music, although the composer had a great understanding of the local language and customs, would this 'second hand' condition affect the research? However, it must be taken into account that I also had normal access to ethnic music on a daily basis. My experience of learning the music is not a single case; it is common to most native Han Chinese from middle class families, who share similar educational approaches. However, if comparing the Han or Uyghur to other ethnic groups, if they have never lived in Xinjiang or conducted research there, their understanding might be different, mainly because the field is not a familiar, home location.

Therefore, with this in mind, I have no other choice but to retain my position as a native Xinjianger when researching Xinjiang music topics, due to the general and musical education I was given which shaped my understanding and self-awareness of the cultural environment that is *home* to me and is the major

¹⁵² Ibid,110.

resource of my data gathering. One advantage is that I can document the data in the way it is available to me. For instance, the mainstream music performance I investigated was mainly produced, funded and promoted by state-owned propaganda units like the Singing and Dance Troupe. By presenting all the materials as an insider of Xinjiang with a relatively 'objective' view, I can outline the ordinary insider's self-identity and political stance to outsiders as a reference, if they are conducting similar research from the opposite subject position.

My home province Xinjiang is the *home* and *field* of my research. By being an insider when I was living in, and being educated in, Xinjiang, I carried the perspective of an ordinary Xinjiang native musician towards related topics, but carrying out research far from *home*, from a more objective perspective, means an identity shift as a researcher in the *field*. Both identities are equally important and valuable. The fieldwork I have done in foreign locations will be documented in the following chapter, when I undertake the social role as an observer while facing 'home problems'. How far I can represent the wider realities of the *field* is a question to propose next, perhaps by balancing the perspectives from various identities. As Stock and Chou quoted from Daniel Reed's statement that '...fieldwork is, in reality, just living',¹⁵³ and living in the field, combined with the away-from-*home* experience, offers me a mixture of perspectives. This allows me to collect the original material and view it from an objective perspective that is, perhaps, beyond any dry theory. The comparison of different perspectives may help the researcher and the research object to understand each other better. Any positive or negative impact, which had been brought into the field, can also be evaluated in the smallest detail by the researcher; it can be a lifelong research project, indeed, when living in the *field*.

3.4 The Pyramid of Communication Model of music dissemination

In the first section of this chapter, I presented the fieldwork that I undertook at home, for a long period, which offered me an 'insider' understanding of the local

¹⁵³ Ibid., 110.

culture on a daily basis but that also had a limited perspective compared to the conscious *fieldwork* research I have conducted recently. Since studying musicology while holding an outsider's identity, my research findings are different. As a Han Chinese growing up in Xinjiang, surrounded by the mainstream media, can a researcher still access the field from an objective point of view, using native identity to assist in analysis of the musical content, when accessing local music within its cultural background? This part intends to draw on the theoretical framework of communication theory, in order to assist the purpose of this research.

In examining the music dissemination process, reference might be made to public reviews. Reception theory, or audience reception in the analysis of communications models, has been used to highlight the '...critical response to art, literature and music in terms of public reviews that appear in written or printed sources'.¹⁵⁴ Reception theory is mainly concerned with audience feedback on a specific work so, in order to understand the Xinjiang local music culture and access the effectiveness of a piece of work, I intend to explore the reception of individual responses to that work, created by the sender. A brief theoretical framework on communication should be discussed in order to understand the connections between reception theory and mass communication theory. McQuail clarified that 'the study of mass communication is located within a much larger field of enquiry concerned with human communication', among various communicational processes.¹⁵⁵ The key emphasis of this definition is 'human communication' rather than the more general field of communication theory, which gives attention to the 'information and mathematical process of information' as well as the 'human process of human communication', which originated from Shannon in 1948.¹⁵⁶ Although Shannon's communication theory is not solely designed for human communication, the basic communication process model which he proposed is also suitable for the human communicational process¹⁵⁷ (Figure 3-1):

¹⁵⁴ Beard and Gloag, *Musicology: The Key Concepts*, 153.

¹⁵⁵ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition* (Oxford: Sage Publications, 2000), 6.

¹⁵⁶ Claude Elwood Shannon, 'A Mathematical Theory of Communication', *ACM SIGMOBILE Mobile Computing and Communications Review* 5, no. 1 (2001): 379–423.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

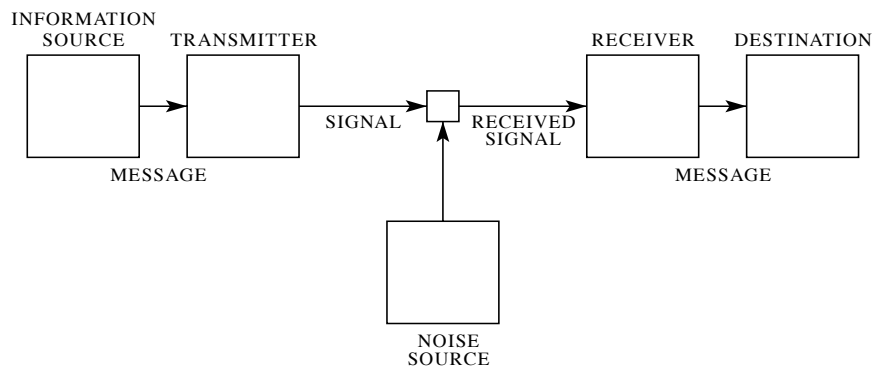


Figure 3-1 Schematic diagram of a general communication system

According to Shannon, any communication system consists of five elements. The first one is *information*, which is a message sequence to be received as a ‘message’ at the terminal end; it contains various types, for instance a telegraph or an one-off message signal such as a phone call or a signal from a radio. The second element is a *transmitter*, which is a physical sending set that can produce the signal to make the message transmittable through the channel. The third element is the actual *channel* for the transmission, which is the platform, and it may be a ‘pair of wires, a coaxial, a band of radio frequencies, a beam of light’ as Shannon indicated. The fourth element is the targeted *receiver*, a collector for the communication; it is responsible for gathering the message with the help of the *transmitter* and will reconstruct the message. The fifth element for the communicational process that Shannon proposed is the *destination*, the object that the message is aiming for, and that can be a person or a thing.

This model can be simplified as a left-to-right one-way process, which is concerned with transmission channels for technical information. Although this model ‘was not directly concerned with *mass communication*’, it was ‘popularized as a versatile way of conceiving many human communication processes’.¹⁵⁸ This model provided a multi-purpose condensed character, which can be applied in

¹⁵⁸ Denis McQuail, *McQuail’s Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 46.

communication discourse. It was further developed by Westley and MacLean (as shown in Figure 3-2).¹⁵⁹

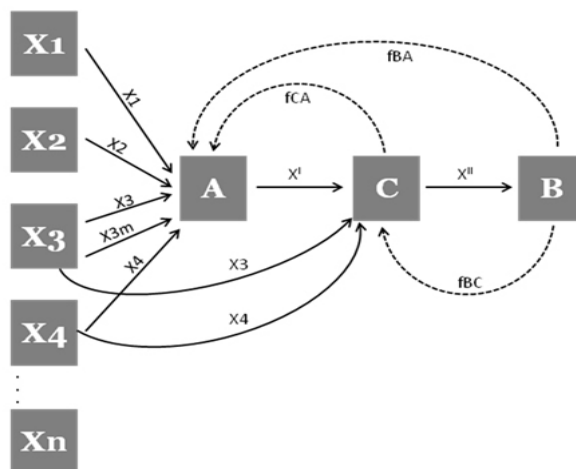


Figure 3-2 Westley and MacLean's Model of Communication :X1, X2, X3, X4 and Xn represent messages; A, C and B stand for the individual receivers. Take message X1's communication for instance: when the message reaches A, this person A then will pass it on to C, and C will transfer it to B. Eventually the message will be flowing among A, C and B. The rest of the individual messages do the same.

In this model, the most significant difference, in comparison to Shannon's information model, is to do with mass communication, which considers the response made by humans when hearing the message they want to hear. Thus, this communication '...begins only when a person receives messages from surroundings. Each receiver responds to messages they received based on their object of orientation.'¹⁶⁰ It is also worth noting that the two communication models are only about one-way transmission, although the Westley and MacLean model has a sort of 'feedback' among the receivers, but the feedback does not connect to the sender of the message. The information has also been altered, compared to the original message, during the dissemination process. McQuail argues that according to Westley and MacLean's model, '...mass communication is a self-regulating process

¹⁵⁹ 'Westley and MacLean's Model of Communication', *Communication Theory Website*, accessed 2 August 2014, <http://communicationtheory.org/westley-and-maclean%E2%80%99s-model-of-communication/>.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

that is guided by the interests and demands of an audience that is known by its selections and response to what is offered'; he also states, however, that this '...might not necessarily reflect the interests of the audience' and '...would not accurately fit a state-run media system'.¹⁶¹ He did not provide any diagrammatic model of 'mass communication', but in comparison to Janoeitz's meaning of mass communication, McQuail's major concern was with the mass of people, when 'the term "mass" denotes great volume, range or extent (of people or production)', while "communication" refers to the giving and taking of meaning, the transmission and reception of messages.¹⁶² He further pointed out '...everyday experience with mass communication...is usually shaped by culture and by the requirements of one's way of life and social environment.'¹⁶³ In other words, he emphasizes the significance of the mass's field of living, and that individuals can be influenced by the society's ideology. In explaining how the mass media was manipulated to suit society's purpose, he underlined the 'large-scale dissemination' by the Church, during the Middle Ages, in the sharing of political and religious awareness and obligations.¹⁶⁴ Thus, mass communication can be distributed and disseminated and the process of mass communication can be controlled, to serve political or other aims. To develop this argument, he referred to the 'relative freedom' of newspapers and the 'strong social control' of film and television as the 'public character with extensive regulations'.¹⁶⁵ McQuail mentions social control as being significant in the mass communication process, as the mass media '...can reach and involve all citizens' in the form of institutional or society-wide communication.¹⁶⁶ McQuail also identifies other levels of communication, from the 'intrapersonal' communication with oneself, through 'interpersonal' communication between two people to the family 'intragroup' level.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 53.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 21–30.

¹⁶⁶ McQuail, D., *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (Sage Publications Ltd, 2010), 10.

¹⁶⁷ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 10.

3.5 Communication through decoded music among all ethnic groups within Xinjiang

Representations of the Ethnic Minority Music in Xinjiang

Thirty years ago, this song became very popular throughout the country, and our native musician Bahargül used her sweet voice to describe the most beautiful landscape of Xinjiang. It is a day worth celebrating for any Xinjiang person, to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the founding of the CPC, in a festival like this; listening to the songs growing up with the new China, and singing them with emotion is the best way to express the joy. The director of the programme is Li Wen, and it will be presented by Chan Jun. The special guests of the talk show who will be attending this edition, the Party Secretary of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Huang Yong-jun, the Secretary of the Autonomous Region Party Secretary, the Party Secretary of the Autonomous Regional Tourism Bureau, the deputy head of the Xinjiang Military Dance and Singing Troupe, the Military Corps choreographer, and the composer's wife will recall the story of the creation of this song thirty years ago.¹⁶⁸

This quotation comes from a broadcast of the local, state owned television, Xinjiang Television Channel 4, regarding the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the founding of the CPC. According to McQuail, it seems a rather 'large-scale' music dissemination towards the mass Xinjiang audience in which questions are put forward, within the social discourse. There are several points to be addressed: first of all, from the communicational point of view, the audience of this communication was set to be as any 'Xinjiang person', which melted the ethnic boundaries, but given a mutual identity, those who consider themselves as a member of Xinjiang, rather than a specific group of Han, Hui or Uyghur. Secondly, the reaction of the

¹⁶⁸ 'Sweet Songs to Welcome Guests Is Playing on Channel 4', *Wangluobin Website*, accessed 24 June 2013, <http://wlb.xj169.com/Article/ShowArticle.aspx?ArticleID=29417>; Xin-liang Zhu, 'Visible Scenery: Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs', Blog, (18 April 2011), http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_75bb0ec50100rkqe.html.

event, in terms of 'emotion', was pre-decided by the media, as 'joyful'; thirdly, in order to increase the effectiveness of this communication, the music performance was perhaps associated with the local cultural custom of Uyghur minorities; as Joanne N. Smith explains, 'song and dance have been integral to Uyghur culture since ancient times and today remain the focal point of Uyghur social life'.¹⁶⁹ Even when the performer is a Uyghur ethnic person, it might be argued that this programme is designed to influence the Uyghur ethnic minority amongst others.

The song describes the joyful life of the people from the Turpan Depression, and their wish to welcome guests to come to visit, according to Xinjiang musicologist Chen Jing, who indicates, within the lyrics' context, 'guest' means 'guests from remote places, outside of Xinjiang' (simplified: 远方的客人), as it was published for the purpose of attracting tourism.¹⁷⁰ Brox indicates, that on one hand 'Ethnic tourism serves both development (by bringing money to minority areas) and the ideological purpose of promoting interethnic friendship',¹⁷¹ but on the other hand, ethnic tourism also has an important political purpose because it is a matter of 'which ethnic identity' was chosen to be presented to public, to form a public impression.¹⁷² Apart from the introduction of the programme within the quotation, those who were invited to attend that event were all local governmental leaders of Xinjiang who were interpreted to be the 'special guests', again, their ethnic identity was seen to be less important than their shared political identities. In contrast, from the Uyghur nationalist perspective, in the case of the Uyghur new folk song¹⁷³ 'I Brought Home a Guest', Smith noted that Uyghur artist Alim referred to the 'guest' in his song, the Han Chinese people, as the 'thieves', or 'coloniser', who had 'stolen the beautiful land of Xinjiang along with its natural resources'.¹⁷⁴ This shows that some Uyghur ethnic musicians realised the need to protect their ethnic identity, by disseminating the message through their music in the Uyghur native language, to

¹⁶⁹Smith, J.N., 'The Quest for National Unity in Uyghur Popular Song: Barren Chickens, Stray Dogs, Fake Immortals and Thieves'.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹Trine and Ildiko, *On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China*.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³I borrowed the term from Dr. Rachael Harris.

¹⁷⁴Smith, J.N., _ITEM CSL_CITATION

{ "citationID": "Zmq6oXL3", "properties": { "formattedCitation": "{\\rtf Smith, J.N., \\uc0\\u8216

express their resistance against the mainstream ideology of Uyghur ethnic representation.

‘Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs’ was composed for the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, in 1985.¹⁷⁵ It was composed and edited by experienced, state-employed composer Liu Shu-min and the lyrics were by An Jing, adapting the ethnic group’s musical elements. It was performed by a well-known ethnic singer, in the Chinese language, and regularly promoted at a society-wide level of dissemination. This piece made Bahargül, a female Uyghur singer, a household name in Xinjiang. The music score of ‘Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs’ from the *Discography of Liu Zhu-min* is written in numbered musical notation in F major for soprano, as shown below:¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵Jing Chen, RO_ITEM CSL_CITATION

{ "citationID": "CxMtEpg", "properties": { "formattedCitation": "Xinjiang Institute of Education 12, no. 3 (March 2012),
<http://www.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?filename=YYDG201203126&dbname=cjfqtotal&dbcode=CJFQ&v=MDY3Mjk5UE1ySTVIWW9SNkRnOC96aFIVN3pzT1QzaVFyUmN6RnJDVVJMNmZidWRwRml6a1VMM05QRFRQYWJHNEg=>.

¹⁷⁶This notation system became popular in China after it was introduced in 1904 by Li Chu-tong, and it was promoted during the Cultural Revolution. In modern China, the numbered musical notation has more users than staff notation. This is written in the text book *Study of Chinese Traditional Music Score*, ed. Wang Yao-hua. Fujian: Education, 1992, 646.

甜甜的歌儿迎贵客

(独唱)

变 静 词
刘 对 民 曲

1=F $\frac{2}{4}$
热情洋溢地 中速

5. 6.6 | 5.225 5 | 5. 6.6 | 5.225 5 | i.7 6 5 | 5365 5 | 2223 5365 |

5. 0 | 2.223 56. | 5645 3232 | 17656 1.37 | 65. 5 | 655 025 | 655 025 |

5.556 i | i7 | 6. | 5.653 | 5.432 | 6323 | 2. 0. | 1.1.12 35 |

坎儿井的流水清， (呢)葡萄园的歌儿多。 吐鲁番的天气
说上几句热情的话， (呢)唱上一曲迎宾的歌。 再请· 亲爱的
留下· 朋友的情， (呢)带走· 欢乐的歌。 吐鲁番的大路

5.645 3232 | 17656 1.37 | 65. 2325 | 17656 1.37 | 65. |

暖朋友 (呢)比不上我心里热， (呢)比不上我心里热。
连回海 (呢)看看我们的好生活， (呢)看看我们的好生活。
(呢)友谊的双手紧相握， (呢)友谊的双手紧相握。

5. 6.6 | 5.225 5 | (5. 6.6 | 5.225 5) | i.7 6 5 |

哎 咪咪咪咪咪咪咪 葡萄一串
哎 咪咪咪咪咪咪咪 白葡萄比不上咱
哎 咪咪咪咪咪咪咪 各族人民

5365 5 | 2.223 5365 | 5. 0. | 223 56. | 5.645 3232 |

歌一串，甜甜的歌儿迎贵客。 欢迎远方的朋友们(呢)
心里甜，感谢党的新政策。 云梯层层高(呢)
爱家乡，各族人民爱祖国。 欢迎回海的朋友们(呢)

17656 1.37 | 65. 2325 | 17656 1.37 | 65. | 5 - |

葡萄架下坐一坐， (呢)葡萄架下坐一坐。
要把丰收献给祖国， (呢)要把丰收献给祖国。
请到新疆来作客 请到新疆来作客。 哎

5 - | 55556 i | 7 | 62i 76 | 5 - | 5. 0 |

请到我们的新疆来作客。

Figure 3-3 The score of 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs'; the lyrics are written in simplified Chinese.

The lyrics of 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs' are in three parts. The translation of the lyrics is as follows:

The water from Qanat Tunnel is crystal clear

Lovely songs in the Grape Valley

The weather in Turpan is so warm and nice

I am feeling so happy

Come and join us

Lots of grapes and lots of love songs

We welcome you, our special guests, with our sweet songs.

The friends who live far away

We welcome you

To sit under the vineyard

Leave your friendship to us

And take our songs with you

Politically Influenced Music in Post Reform China

The roads of Turpan are connected to everywhere

The friendship is cherished in our hands

People from all ethnic groups love their hometown

People from all ethnic groups love their motherland

We welcome you, our special guests, with our sweet songs

Please come to Xinjiang and be our guests

The above lyrics are the translation from the music film version in which only two sections were kept; in the original version, another section was added as follows:

(Dear friend, look at our good life

I feel so happy

Thank you to the good policies from the Party,

We are going to have a big harvest for our country,

We welcome you, our special guests, with our sweet songs

Please come to Xinjiang and be our guests)

The third part of the lyrics, containing the most obvious political reference, was removed completely. This may have occurred for several reasons; for example, the director might have chosen to retain the apparent authenticity of the folk song for people both inside and outside Xinjiang, or, if the third part makes it look more obviously a propaganda song, it might have been thought better to remove the political message.



Figure 3-4 A frame from the *Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs* music film; music by Liu Zhu-min, lyrics by An Jing, sung by Bahargül.

The picture (Figure 3-4) shows the beginning of the musical film.¹⁷⁷ Red roses are treasured by the Xinjiang people as the flower can be seen in many places, and it is also the flower of Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The red flowers are placed around the camera lens to frame a picture of the local Young Pioneers standing in the distance. They are wearing colourful clothes of their own ethnic groups, to highlight their apparent ethnic identities on the screen. In Dru Gladney's similar analysis, Gladney focuses on an example of the annual musical programme opening session which is usually performed on Chinese state television, by the so called 'colourful' ethnic minorities. This is used to illustrate the majority Han Chinese referring to their national minorities as the 'Other' and, by presenting the happiness of the 'Other', Gladney argues that distortion of the 'Others' image helps the state to achieve greater control over Han Chinese.¹⁷⁸ Along with Gladney's discussion, the idea is drawing on a formula of creating the representation of ethnic minority music in Xinjiang, as an interpretation of the mainstream media: perhaps through controlling a series of preferred symbols of ethnic identities, and related features, to paint a joyful picture of the ethnic minorities' life in Xinjiang?

¹⁷⁷ Zhu-min Liu, 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs' (Internet Broadcast on Youku), accessed 25 July 2013, http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMjE2Mjl3MzI=.html.

¹⁷⁸Gladney, 'Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/minority Identities.'

Furthermore, even though these ethnic minority children from Xinjiang might be culturally different, as suggested on the screen, they also share the mainstream ideology which cannot be ignored: the flower bunches in their hands, and the symbol of Communism, namely, red scarves for the Young Pioneers. Children themselves are referred to as the 'flowers of the country' and the 'future of the country'¹⁷⁹ in modern Chinese culture, representing the loyalty of being a Communist. This originally came from the film *Flowers of the Motherland*, which was made in 1955, about student life after the establishment of PR China.¹⁸⁰ The plot was old-fashioned: two, naughty, primary school students who were not wearing their red scarves were spotted by a PLA soldier; the soldier told all the children to help each other. A classmate, Liang Hui-ming, decided to help the two students and through everybody's effort, the two naughty ones became well-behaved and diligent. When they successfully joined the Communist Young Pioneers at the end of the year, they were each given a red scarf after the ritual of the initiation ceremony. Although the film was made long before the Reform and Opening Up policy, the ritual of having Young Pioneers still exists in China, and it is regarded as an honour among students between the ages of six and fourteen.

The picture of children holding bunches of flowers is an important representation of the modernity of the Communist culture in the CPC's point of view, as shown in the following Figure 3-5 and Figure 3-6. From the late 1970s, the eight-cent stamp (Figure 3-5) and the paper cutting work depicting President Xi Jinping (Figure 3-6), illustrate the symbolic importance of such flowers in representing children, especially Young Pioneers, as the new generation who are part of the Communism career, which is regularly mentioned through the mainstream ideology. They are carrying the Communist belief and they represent the future of Communist China. In this sense, the Xinjiang Young Pioneers appearing in the music film might be intended to represent the same meaning. If they are the future of the motherland, it is because they are children good enough to be selected as Young Pioneers who must serve the Communist career to continue their political mission in the future.

¹⁷⁹Originally from the film *Flowers of the Motherland*.

¹⁸⁰*Flowers of the Motherland*, filmed by Changchun Film Group Corporation in 1955.



Figure 3-5 A stamp published for the thirtieth anniversary of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in 1977; the Young Pioneer is wearing the red scarf and holding a bunch of red flowers while the others are holding a lamb, a melon and the *Words of Mao Ze-dong*.¹⁸¹



Figure 3-6 Found in the Chinese Museum of Women and Children, the winning work of the second session of the National Children's paper-cut exhibition on 30th May 2014.

As the 'joyful'¹⁸² music begins with a gradual *accelerando* and *crescendo* of beats, the atmosphere heats up as the Young Pioneers start to run from the distant grassland towards the audience, or camera. The closer the children get, the faster the beat of the music, as the volume also increases.¹⁸³ The sound not only contains an electronic band, but also an element of a typical Uyghur ensemble, according to a non-Uyghur ethnic's eye, represented by a group of traditional folk Uyghur instruments such as the *rubab*, *dutar*, and tambourine; the ensemble 'played' on the screen throughout the whole song. Together with the music, the footage

¹⁸¹ 'Celebrating 65 Years of the Establishment of PR China in Inner Mongolia', *Neimenggu Government Website*, accessed 15 July 2013, <http://www.nmg.gov.cn/>.

¹⁸² As described by Xinjiang TV channel 4's forecast earlier.

¹⁸³ Music sample is attached in the DVD.

presents a massive festival scene in a spectacular landscape, with an especially exotic flavour of the ethnic culture (see Figure 3-7), or rather a corporation embodied with stereotypical Uyghur traditional musical elements? Chuen-Fung Wong, by focusing on the recreation and usage of the Uyghur concert tradition *rewap*, argues 'musical stereotype in minority representation in modern China...has been recreated to constitute a stereotypical portrayal of minorities as joyful merrymakers...minority musicians have selectively co-opted certain stereotyped representation as aesthetic resource for subaltern performance.'¹⁸⁴ If the Uyghur 'dance' and 'ensemble' is read as 'folk music', in Helen Rees's theory, the important role of this type of folk music from ethnic minorities lies in designing social relationships: further to this, certain elements of this music are thought to define a high social status and cultural refinement.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, can it really be argued that, from the ethnic minority's point of view, ethnic folk music is normally played by stereotypical ethnic instruments, their 'joyful' music representing their satisfaction with their modern day music and life? However, as Harris indicates, taking the example of the Uyghur ethnic people's response as a reference, '...the Uyghur districts of Xinjiang's towns, like the DöngKöwrük (Erdaoqiao) bazaar in Ürümqi, are audibly marked by another kind of Uyghur popular music blaring from loudspeakers in every shop.'¹⁸⁶ This indicates that the Uyghur music from the Uyghur society is not the same as the 'joyful' music presented on TV.

¹⁸⁴Wong, 'Reinventing the Central Asian Rawap in Modern China: Musical Stereotypes, Minority Modernity, and Uyghur Instrumental Music'.

¹⁸⁵Helen Rees, *Echoes of History: Naxi Music in Modern China* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2000).

¹⁸⁶ Rachel Harris, 'Wang Luobin: Folk Song King of the Northwest or Song Thief? Copyright, Representation, and Chinese Folk Songs', *Modern China* 31, no. 3 (July 2005): 387.



Figure 3-7 Singer Bahargül is dancing with a group of Uyghur dancers in front of the Flame Mountain in Turpan.

Though the modern Uyghur community now have access to many types of music, this analysis must return to Liu Shu-min's 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs'. After a crescendo led by the flute, the Uyghur musician Bahargül enters the screen wearing traditional Uyghur-crafted clothing. She is smiling and gently dancing, synchronizing with the beat of the tambourine, while surrounded by a group of traditionally dressed female Uyghur dancers. At the same time, the background of the picture presents a distinctive orange colour, from the female dancers' dresses and a range of rocky-mountains behind the performers. The background has suddenly changed, making this place unfamiliar to the audience. The dramatic colour turns from green to orange, from a grand prairie to a rocky desert, from children to female performers; the scene has switched very quickly as the cheerful music goes on. It conveys to the audience that the size of the land is utterly enormous, with its optimistic people living as happily as those performing on the screen. The sudden contrast successfully attracted the audience's attention within the first thirty seconds because of its surprise value. Shannon proposed the idea of measuring the quantity of and comparing communicated messages by 'considering

the message's predictability, in other words, the surprise value or its degree of predictability or unpredictability.¹⁸⁷

The high degree of unpredictability in the contrasting scenes, followed by the 'joy and optimism' spread among the ethnic group in beautiful Xinjiang, represented by the Uyghur in the film, has highlighted the meaning of the music and furthered the political pursuits of the CPC. When Bahargül sings 'Turpan...' the audience recognizes this as a well-known place of interest in Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The Turpan basin is an oasis located in the desert, surrounded by the red sandstone hills of the Tian Shan mountain range called the Flaming Mountains. It is a vital historical city and trading centre, on the Silk Road, and has very hot summers. The Flaming Mountains became famous after the Four Classic Novels¹⁸⁸ were introduced to the world, and they are also described in Uyghur traditional literature. They are said, in *Journey to the West* written by Wu Cheng-en in the Ming dynasty, to be the place that the Monkey King passed through on the way to India, in 627 CE, in order to obtain the scriptures of the Buddha, as the guard of the Xuanzang Monk of Tang. According to *Journey to the West*, the Monkey King is responsible for the extreme heat of the Flaming Mountains as, about five hundred years previously, he knocked down the Bagua Oven of DaodeTianzun from the sky to the place where the Flaming Mountains are located now.¹⁸⁹ In Uyghur legend, a Uyghur hero killed an evil dragon that used to eat the local children, then a brave hero cut the dragon into pieces and they later became the Flaming Mountains. The Qunat Tunnel is an underground project, man-made 2,000 years ago in the Han Dynasty, which changed Turpan from a desert to an oasis.

A previous study, by Rachel Harris, suggested that '...when folk music—here defined as local, contextualized...when it is written down and especially when it takes the form of recorded sound... becomes an article to be manipulated, bought,

¹⁸⁷ Shannon, 'A Mathematical Theory of Communication', 22—3.

¹⁸⁸ Sydney J. Shep, 'Paper and Print Technology', in *The Encyclopedia of the Novel*, vol. 2 (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 596.

¹⁸⁹ Cheng-en Wu, *Journey to the West* (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue, 1997).

and sold.’¹⁹⁰ Can this argument be applied to Greeting the ‘Guests with Sweet Songs’? As the performance suggests, shown in Mandarin, in Figure 3-8:

‘...the weather is warm, but not as warm as my heart (for the guest);
the grapes are sweet in the Valley, but sweeter songs can be heard...’

The two sentences of the above lyrics attempt to express simple messages through similar poetic structures. The first half of each sentence is a general description to highlight the unique climate and speciality of Turpan; the second half of each sentence takes the comparative and synaesthetic writing style, and draws a picture of exotic wonderland of sunshine and fruits, with joyful, friendly local people. Here, the natural resources are used as a marketing tool to attract tourists; the staged friendliness to all guests offered by the song, represented through the ethnic minority performer, is manipulated to contribute to the national, official ideology of unity.



Figure 3-8 A young Uyghur man is dancing with a tambourine in his hand.

Lauren Gorfinkel defines ‘folk music’ as ‘...music-entertainment performances that signify the various state-recognized ethnic people of China. Each of these ways works within the Chinese Party-state’s notion of a “unitary-ethnic state”’.¹⁹¹ Uyghur

¹⁹⁰Harris, ‘Wang Luobin: Folk Song King of the Northwest or Song Thief? Copyright, Representation, and Chinese Folk Songs’.

¹⁹¹Gorfinkel, Lauren, ‘From Transformation to Preservation: Music and Multi-Ethnic Unity on Television in China’.

musical instruments and dance as materials, highlight their own identities in the Other's eyes: two male dancers join the group dance, as the footage changes; one of them is dancing while holding a tambourine (see Figure 3-8), the other is playing the *dutar*. It is suggested in the film that the male dancers are 'playing' the music for the singer and the female dancers. Bahargül is singing in the middle of the group of female dancers; she smiles and interacts with them by dancing gently to the music. She sings:

'The Friends who live far away

We welcome you'

...

As she sings, the scene switches to the grassland, where several white yurts are located. Gorfinkel further pointed out '...folk music...is a music entertainment performance that...reflects changing directions of...contemporary party-state politics'.¹⁹² The picture is informing the audience that this is the home of the local nomads as, in Xinjiang, yurts symbolise Kazak and Mongolian people. As the music continues, more ethnic minorities appear in the scene as ethnic culture elements. The people are standing in a row, dancing happily to the music. The colourful, traditional ethnic clothing, the smiles, the tightly joined hands within the film, all suggest the message of national unity among all ethnic groups, as the line says in the slogan promoted by the government, adding '...we enjoy having our countrymen, no matter what race, what gender they are, we are all living in this peace, for the virtue of the beautiful home'.¹⁹³ This lens offers more convincing information about ethnic groups being the 'joyful minorities', the message is also conveyed to the audience through the performance of the ethnic minority performers: they will experience warm hospitality when they come to visit this land, no matter where they are from.

The national unity theme is intended to be further demonstrated as the camera shows Grape Valley, where smiling Uyghur people stand in front of the

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ 'National Unity in Xinjiang', *Xinhua Website*, 13 June 2014, http://www.xj.xinhuanet.com/2014-06/13/c_1111130067.htm.

vineyard with lots of grapes ready for harvest. Men and women, old and young, mainly Uyghur wearing colourful clothing, are eating freshly picked fruit when, suddenly, a plane, about to land, appears on the screen as Bahargül sings:

*The roads of Turpan are connected to everywhere
The friendship is cherished in our hands'
People from all ethnic groups love their hometown
People from all ethnic groups love their motherland
We welcome you, our special guests, with our sweet songs
Please come to Xinjiang and be our guests*



Figure 3-9 The picture of a landing plane, suggesting Turpan has entered the modern economic age.

According to the Renmin News Agency, Turpan Airport was used for the first time in 2010,¹⁹⁴ which means that the footage captured in the film could not have been taken at Turpan at the time the film was made. However, the plane is only a symbol representing the discourse of local economy progress and modernised

¹⁹⁴ 'Turpan Airport Becomes Operational', *People Website*, accessed 23 July 2013, <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/14562/12105760.html>.

Turpan. Having one of the largest oilfields in China, as the film continuously shows in the footage, Turpan and its people are ready to push development forward with interests outside Xinjiang, so they keep calling through the music and Bahargül's singing to the audience 'please come to our place', supported by the 'enthusiastic' Uyghur dancers, ethnic minorities, and Young Pioneers from all social classes. The music can be seen as an advertisement for the rich natural resources, the friendly people and multiple cultures, and the harmonious society which offer an ideal environment to welcome the *guests*.

3.6 Another approach

This section intends to apply McQuail's three alternative traditions of analysis as approaches, in assisting the case study of the Uyghur folk-style music, 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs'. The first alternative approach proposed by McQuail 'derives mainly from sociology but includes perspectives from history, politics, law and economics', and focuses on 'the effect of social structure and media systems on patterns of content'.¹⁹⁵ This approach can help in analysing the 'fundamental dynamics' of 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs', examining the consequences of this piece, or other Xinjiang new folk music, during the communication process, and the 'social-centric' impact which had been introduced into the society. If the smallest detail of the 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs' music video is taken as a *sign*, would the audience receive the messages? It is necessary to determine whether signs are apparent and, if so, whether they are the same to everyone or can be interpreted according to the individual's identity? The audience within a specific society must be identified and what they can see or hear must be understood. The second approach to be used is the 'behavioural approach', which is rooted in local psychology. The '...primary object of interest is individual human behaviour, especially in matters to do with choosing, processing and, responding to communication messages'.¹⁹⁶ However, the third approach will be applied in this

¹⁹⁵ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 12.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

case, as it is the *'cultural approach'*, that it has 'roots in the humanities, in anthropology and in linguistics'.¹⁹⁷

'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs' is chosen as a special case for several reasons: first of all, the fieldwork with the composer was a precious experience, as mentioned earlier; secondly, this song has been filmed and broadcast nationwide, it helped Liu to gain public recognition and has been promoted via local mainstream media for decades; thirdly, the song has significant characteristics present in almost all the similar new folk music written after the reform in Xinjiang.

If the symbols and *signs* of both the original and the music film version of 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs' are examined without considering the information provided by the same melody, the following can be seen:

Table 3-1 The original version:

Symbols	<i>signs</i>	
	signifier	signified
Names of locations	Qunat Tunnel, Grape Valley	Typical Turpan, hot weather, sweet fruit, an interesting place to travel.
Roads		Convenient transportation.
Good life	Policy, happy people	The local political and economic environment is healthy.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

Table 3-2 The music film version

Symbols	<i>signs</i>	
	signifier	signified
Prairie		Beautiful landscape
Rose	Flower bunches, children with red scarves (Young Pioneers)	Urumqi central government is leading the province; Young Pioneers are thriving like the flowers – they are the future of Communism.
Flaming Mountains	Turpan	<i>Journey to the West</i> , historical city, place of interest.
Grape Valley	Smiling young Uyghur persons	Happy life of the local dominant ethnic group, enjoying playing music and dancing, both men and women, the nation of art.
Yurts	Kazak and Mongolian people	They are friendly and have a joyful life style.
Harvest	Lots of sweet fruit	The harvest of a united nation from all ethnic groups as the economy is developing well and people have a decent life.
Plane		The transportation system is efficient.
Bahargül		Beautiful Uyghur female singer can sing in the Chinese language.
Instruments and dancers of the ethnic groups		The culture is very different; it has a sense of an exotic flavour.

3.7 Conclusion

The music film version employed more symbols from the communicational point of view than the original version, though the latter has more lyrics. The more symbols it includes, the greater the capacity of the information it carries, therefore, the communication effects might be reinforced in the senses. The multi-media format of the film version provides a direct and entertaining channel for the audience to see and hear more coded information, not only coming from the music itself, but also from the visual experience, and the interpretation of the music is carefully decoded by the sender into the film version. To the sender, this communication process is designed to broadcast information to the outside world about Turpan, and even about Xinjiang, through its unique culture influenced by its ethnic minorities, such as its music, dance, history or lifestyle, and to deliver the message of its significant economic and cultural development, in order to praise the leadership of the CPC and to attract tourism or investment. The music was the channel for the audience to engage with the information: the lyrics were in Chinese. The signs of the film appear to suggest the sender's primary political purpose instead of the aesthetic value.

In terms of mass communication process theory, McQuail refers to 'film as a mass medium' that may 'manipulate the seeming reality of the photographic message without loss of credibility' for the wider audience.¹⁹⁸ Thus, the communication would be lifted from an 'interpersonal' level to a 'social-wide' level by the film medium, in the attempt to convey a convincing message. However, the other levels of communication within this music must also be considered, for instance, at the interpersonal level when someone is listening alone, or, if this song is studied in a university, at the institutional or organizational level, because they do not operate independently of each other, even at the highest 'social-wide' level. Even if the music or performance does not precisely reflect the interests of everyone, still, for those living in the region, through mass communication every day embedded

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 23.

within this kind of music, it will shape the ideology and value of the society, according to McQuail.

McQuail's alternative approach to analysis, combined with the semiotic path, has offered an objective perspective from musicology, history, politics, and economics. The analysis of the language and meaning of the music extended to 'particular social contexts and cultural experience'.¹⁹⁹ The dual identity of an anthropology fieldworker and a critical researcher offers a powerful, and broader, view of the nature of the research, both as an insider and outsider. Living in the field and encountering mass communication every day is an effective way of gathering data, by positioning oneself in society within the context; living in the field offers the perspective of looking at the culture from a distance. My early fieldwork with my former piano teacher, the composer of the song, offered me a great understanding of the how folk music is produced by the state owned composer, according to their understanding, by adapting ethnic minority people's musical elements to form the sort of 'folk music' that will be recognised by the official culture, as their 'folk music', which is a grey area, neither belonging to the Han nor the ethnic minority.

The creation of folk music in Xinjiang, for mass distribution purposes, does not necessarily have to come from the ethnic musicians, as a reflection of their life, nor be acknowledged by them. It is a musical body consisting of the stereotypical, ethnic, musical elements to the majority's ears and eyes, to paint an idealised 'fairy-tale' picture of the ethnic people, to demonstrate an overall stability. It seems to be a 'messenger' between the Han people and the ethnic minorities, or the many 'Others', to speak for the majority's expectation but used as a political ingredient to synchronise the state policies, in the language of music.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 13.

Chapter 4 The local mainstream music programme in Xinjiang

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the thesis will explore how folk music elements of Xinjiang ethnic minorities come to feature as a political ingredient of the official culture, to be broadcast on television at local and national levels.

The chapter will be divided into two parts: first of all, the recent controversial performance offered by Xinjiang ethnic singer Tusken, on the nationwide reality television show, the Voice of China, will be discussed. It will be argued that, as the 'Others', the ethnic identity of the musicians from Xinjiang, their culture is recognised as a vital part in modern, Chinese mainstream culture, after the arrival of new media technology, such as, the Internet and the influence of globalisation. The investigation will consider the 'authentic' ethnic features of Tusken's performance of the Kazakh song *Ivan Dudar and Setti Maria*, in comparison to Han singer Wang Hong-wei's interpretation of the song, at the local new year gala.

The second part will investigate the mass square musical event, the Passion Square Concert broadcast by China Central Television in Urumqi, in 2012, considering the need to maintain national unity and state stability, contributed to by both Han and Others from ethnic minorities, as a component of the official ideology. In doing so, an ethnomusicological approach will be applied as a reference, involving fieldwork experience with the production team and the director, combined with virtual fieldwork experience. Additionally, a critical, musical analysis of the concert will be provided.

4.2 Gala Xinjiang music stems from traditional roots

In 2012, the programme *The Voice of China* was imported from the Netherland's original reality television show *The Voice of Holland*, and it quickly occupied the domestic television schedules in Mainland China. The programme has confirmed, as Dennis McQuail indicated, that '...global mass communication is a

reality, and during the second half of the century there has almost certainly been a steady strengthening of the condition that allows the world media audience to receive information and cultural content from other countries and parts of the world.²⁰⁰

Zheng Li argues that the pro-democracy movement caused the restriction of retightened China's media control after it was 'relatively loose'; Chinese media has also welcomed its new era, with the arrival of new media technology, for instance, cable televisions and Internet service.²⁰¹ How does the government respond to this? Could this be seen as a challenge to the previous system, in terms of affecting the previous dissemination situation? Li quoted James Florcruz's argument that Chinese officialdom has very little power over its media market, as it is growing rapidly with diverse forms and it has become increasingly open and responsive to meet public demand.²⁰² The opinions of Florcruz and Li are built on the shared agreement that, along with the economic development and modernization after the economic reform, China had become more open to the outside world in the 20th century.

However, a question about control arises, when individuals can host their own opinions and post them to the public through the Internet. Additionally, how does the Chinese government respond to foreign ideas and influences? Thus, policy and certain regulations were promulgated to tackle this issue, which can be described as '...an attempt to balance gradual commercialization and modernization with controls protecting the Communist Party's ideological and political dominance.'²⁰³ Indeed, when China entered the post-reform era, the existence of China's booming economic growth and wider choices of international media products allowed and encouraged Chinese people to purchase technology, enabling them to receive more information and experience other cultural content from all over the world. However, on the other hand, this trend is also regarded as a '...strong, pervasive, convergent force that erodes the significance of geopolitical

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 239.

²⁰¹ Zheng Li, 'Media Control in China', in *The Handbook of Media and Mass Communication Theory*, 2014th ed. (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, n.d.), p37.

²⁰² Li, 'Significant Changes in the Chinese Television Industry and Their Impact in the PRC: An Insider's Perspective'.

²⁰³ Zheng Li, 'Media Control in China', in *The Handbook of Media and Mass Communication Theory*, 2014th ed. (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, n.d.), p37.

borders, weakens states' power, creates a single globalizing consumer culture, and dissolves local cultures and life patterns.'²⁰⁴ Thus, the media still remains the mouthpiece of the government, disseminating mainstream values and ideology through coded messages and also, providing the platform to accelerate the communication process, to enable more effective understanding of the message.

Therefore, a list of questions are awaiting answers: In contemporary China, is music, in particular, subject to the ideological control of the media? Could it be that music dissemination of the ethnic minorities is also a form of ideological control? How does one view the changing effects offered by globalization at national and regional levels? What role does the state play in this process in order to reinforce its political control? How does the government utilize the mass media tool to disseminate its common cultural identity, for example by shedding light on the theme of 'national pride' in Xinjiang through music messages?

An example can be introduced to discuss the above question, as *Nanfang Daily* reports:

Tusken, a former Kazakh student from Xinjiang University, became a national superstar after providing an extra, two-minute improvised performance of a traditional love song, *Setti Maria and Ivan Dudar*, in the Kazakh language, after being rejected by all the judges at the stage of *The Voice of China* this week. This unofficial a cappella performance received a massive response from the audience, who voted for him to regain a place in the finals. Millions from all over the country who had watched that live performance referred to Tusken's singing as 'the most sincere' and 'full of expression', which comes from a 'real, good', 'authentic' Kazakh musical culture.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ 'The Battles Tusken Good Voice: Instructor Tears More Important than Turning', *Nanfang Daily*, accessed 16 March 2014, <http://www.wantinews.com/news-5096849-The-battles-Tusken-good-voice:-Instructor-tears-important-than-turning.html>.

The Voice of China reality show, is a localised television programme produced by Canxing Entertainment (灿星制作),²⁰⁶ distributed and released by Zhejiang Television, which in many sense shares much similarity with the talent show American Idol, in terms of media distribution. A so-called 'American phenomenon' as Katherine Meizel analysed,²⁰⁷ pointing out that American Idol brings in an understanding of American identity, between multiculturalist and assimilationist, and more importantly, that the 'reality-show diversity among contestants, reflecting the demographics necessary to draw a massive audience, at once supports the multiculturalist tenet that the maintenance of discrete ethnic identity is essential to...the American Dream, everyone singing the same songs along the way.'²⁰⁸ Meizel emphasises the social function of this reality show as being the state stability tool by underlining the multiculturalist attribution, but also draws attention on the mass audience. Therefore, information might be conveyed from the above passages, in the case of the Voice of China: first of all, as Rachel Harris has pointed out, 'Setti Maria and Ivan Dudar' is not an unfamiliar song to most Chinese as it has been cherished and widely received since it was introduced by the 'twentieth-century Chinese composer and folk song collector, Wang Luobin'.²⁰⁹ He collected this song in Qinghai Prairie in 1937; the song is about the love story between a young Russian girl, Setti Maria, and a young Kazakh man, Ivan Dudar.²¹⁰ Secondly, Tusken, the contestant, was identified as an ethnic minority Chinese from Xinjiang according to the newspaper, and he was voted by the audience to return based on his astonishing 'folk song' performance; thirdly, the response from the massive audience which appeared both on the screen and connected through media platforms, seemed to have more power than the actual judges on the stage.

Meizel also proposed an Ethnomusicological approach to talent shows, which will be applied within this research: first of all, research through interviews and

²⁰⁶Can Xing Entertainment, as one of the largest companies in the entertainment industry of China, owned by STAR China Media, SCM.

²⁰⁷Katherine L. Meizel, *Idolized: Music, Media, and Identity in American Idol* (Indiana University Press, 2011).

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*

²⁰⁹Harris, 'Wang Luobin: Folk Song King of the Northwest or Song Thief? Copyright, Representation, and Chinese Folk Songs', 381.

²¹⁰Xing-yi Yan, *Music Biography—Wang Luo-Bin* (Xi'an: Shanxi Normal University, 2010), 37–42.

participant observations; secondly, analysis of televised reality shows; thirdly, commercial recordings related to the show and their contestants; fourthly, critical discourse in print and online materials regarding the artistic styles; lastly, the message board of the show from the official channels.²¹¹

In exploring the connection between the ethnic minority contestant and the music reality show, as Meizel outlined, the fieldwork of the Voice of China was conducted taking account of ethnographic research but further study of multiple *Voice of China* texts might be beneficial, as indicated by Meizel.²¹² I decided to investigate and took the opportunity to attend the filming of European Finals of the Voice of China in London, via a judge and a former winner of the Voice of China in summer 2014, Mr. Li Wei (李维). According to the official introduction on many Chinese sites, Li Wei achieved his fame nationwide through the Voice of China a year ago.²¹³ According to the information on many Chinese websites, he was born in Urumqi and has Russian mixed ethnicity.²¹⁴ I met Li Wei through mutual friends at the local football league in Urumqi, so I was not a complete outsider but someone who enjoyed watching the show on Youtube, habitually, before hand. Through our friends in Xinjiang, I was told Li Wei was already a well-known, local bar performer, who had previously performed at most local bars in Urumqi, for more than ten years.

My fieldwork began with interviewing Li Wei and his manager through the Chinese app Wechat messaging, a mobile app similar to WhatsAppmessenger; this was combined with face-to-face interviews in London, on 11 May 2015, and informal meetings in Urumqi at football pitches with other football fans. The app allows communication, not only through instant text messages but also voice and videos, and it also has a feature that once individual users become 'friends' on Wechat, they can view each other's public posts which only can be seen and commented on among Wechat mutual friends. Li Wei moved to Shanghai for work reasons since he won the show, however, according to his posts on Wechat, he still

²¹¹Meizel, *Idolized: Music, Media, and Identity in American Idol*.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Baidu Baike, 'Li Wei (Contestant of the Voice of China, Season 3)', n.d., <http://baike.baidu.com/subview/149960/4995492.htm>.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

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visits family and friends in Urumqi very often. My meeting with Li Wei and his manager Pigu, in a London café, offered me some official knowledge about how the programme developed, after the success of the previous three seasons in the mainland. Due to the hits on Youtube and domestic sites, there is a massive demand from the Chinese audience who watches the show from all over the world. Therefore, the Voice of China began its overseas auditions in 2015. Li wei was invited to come to London by Emperor Entertainment Group, with the permission of Canxing Entertainment, and served as one of the judges for the European finals, as well as promoting an English song from his new album.

The shooting of footage for the London Finals, at the Bloomsbury Theatre, was a long process; the rehearsal took more than three days without the audience, plus four hours shooting with the audience. However, the whole footage was not broadcast as an episode on TV but was only used as part of the new season's promotional footage, to highlight the European contestants, and the show has an international title, the Voice of 'Chinese'. Li Wei and other judges were sitting on the front row in the theatre, highlighted with spot lights, while the ten Chinese contestants were selected to perform one by one at the Final competition, accompanied by pre recorded background music rather than bands. Accompanying smoke effects on stage, flowers and flashing LED illuminated boards featuring Li Wei's name, in pinyin and character, were held by excited fans, screaming in Mandarin and Cantonese.

It was much easier and quieter to establish a conversation on this topic in Urumqi. Although Li Wei had already released five albums before he entered the Voice of China as a contestant, through the help of our Uzbek friend's father, a well-known local musician from Xinjiang Military Song and Dance Troupe, Li Wei was recommended as the contestant to represent Xinjiang region, for the Voice of China audition in Shanghai. Li Wei signed a nine-year contract with Canxing Entertainment in 2014 and was then promoted as a pop star. On the television, Li Wei introduced himself with a quarter 'Russian blood' and, as soon as the judges heard he came from Xinjiang, they were curious about this ethnic identity; consequently, our friends from the football team constantly joke about this 'unheard of' ethnic identity.

Similar to Meizel's research into the American Idol, in researching the Voice of China, referring back to the original case of Tusken's 'authentic' folk performance of *Setti Maria and Ivan Dudar*, approaches including the analysis of the show, as well as commercial recordings related to the show, will continue to be applied. The lyrics sung by Tusken are as follows:²¹⁵

A lovely Rose,

Setti Maria.

That day when I was hunting in the hills on my horse,

You were singing at the foot of the hills.

The beautiful sound embedded in rosy clouds,

And made me lose my way.

I rolled down from the hillside

Ah...

Your singing embedded in rosy clouds.

The strong Kazakh young man,

Ivan Dudar,

Please come to my home tonight over the river,

You shall feed your horse,

and bring the Dombra.

When the moon rises,

Pluck your strings,

Ah...

We depend on each other,

Singing together under the tree.

²¹⁵ Yan, *Music Biography—Wang Luo-Bin*, 37–42.

What is an 'authentic' performance and what made the audience vote for the 'authentic' performance by the Kazakh singer and beg for the return of their beloved contestant Tusken?

'Authenticity' is a concept which has been contributed to by many scholars, performers and music critics, in the West. An important argument which was contributed by Richard Taruskin, states that 'the performer's main duty is not to the composer, but to the modern audience.'²¹⁶ Indeed, with folk songs such as Setti Maria and Ivan Dudar, which have been performed by generations of musicians, with no composer specified in particular, their popularity might depend on how an individual audience listens to them. Is it even possible to have an 'authentic' performance? According to Taruskin,

Do we really want to talk about 'authenticity' any more? I had hoped a consensus was forming that to use the word in connection with the performance of music-- and especially to define a particular style, manner, or philosophy of performance – is neither description nor critique, but commercial propaganda...²¹⁷

That is to say, an authentic musical performance is something that audiences value, however it arguably only exists at an imaginary level, it is a label or an advertisement which is given by people to encourage audiences to make purchasing decisions. Perhaps 'authenticity' tells us more about what an audience wants rather than the performance itself? This might explain why Tusken's interpretation was widely received and enjoyed; his performance had corresponded to the preference of the audience who watched the music reality show. From the perspective of Chinese ethnic minority youth, they could also see themselves as being represented by Tusken, singing alone on the stage. The image may seem to have a limited function in providing background information for the audience, but it encouraged the audience to focus on his voice, as the programme advertised. Here, the 'authentic' performance was equivalent to a 'realistic story',

²¹⁶Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

²¹⁷David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, *Musicology: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 18.

yet it was also a successful aesthetic communication with the mass audience, beyond culture and any language barrier.



Figure 4-1 Tusken singing *Setti Maria and Ivan Dudar* on *The Voice of China*. A unique feature of the music reality show, the *Voice of China*, is the blind audition process. The judges' judgements are made purely based on the performance of the voice. The appearance of the contestants was only available to the audience both in the studio and those watching them on TV and, the jury who decided to choose the contestants. Tusken brought tears to one of the jury's eyes, Zhang Hui-mei said 'as an ethnic person away from home, your voice makes me think of my remote home'. On the screen, shown above, an instant message from an audience member through the live TV show, says 'I support you, my fellow from Xinjiang!'

This song has also been performed by many Chinese singers from various genres: for instance, Dai Yu-qiang, an operatic tenor, who was the first and only Chinese student of Luciano Pavarotti.²¹⁸ Wang Hong-wei, the champion of the National Young Singers Competition folk music genre, also keeps it in his repertoire. He is originally from Xinjiang, and he is rated as the 'Western Prince of Love Songs' by the mainstream media organizations.²¹⁹ He was invited to perform *A Lovely Rose*

²¹⁸ Midgette, 'Dai Yuqiang, an Opera Superstar Made in China—and Happy to Stay There', *The Washington Post*, 28 June 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/26/AR2009062602164.html>.

²¹⁹ Cai Lin, "'Western Prince of Love Songs' Wang Hongwei Solo Concert Held in Xinjiang', *Tianshan News*, 3 September 2013, <http://www.instant-news.us/news-5335580.html>.

on China's most viewed TV programme in Xinjiang, at the Urumqi Spring Festival Gala in 2014. His interpretation of that song, at the 2014 Urumqi Spring Festival Gala, took a very different approach. As a well-known national singer, his performance was carefully designed: three massive LED screens presented a large background of an endless prairie, and a group of dancers from a local primary school, wearing designer-made, traditional Kazakh-inspired stage costume, with features such as feathered hats and hand-decorated, sparkling sequins, provided the stage effect. Green and yellow represented the most common prairie colours, as an extension of the LED background. Everything presented on the stage had to be suitable for his superior status; Wang wore a fine dinner jacket with an elegant bowtie and was accompanied by a recording of the National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Li Xin-cao. The musical introduction had an abundant sound, which was very formal. Wang Hong-wei sang an operatic aria in the Chinese language, his trained, high-pitched sound having a bright metal colour, emphasizing his operatic technique. The tempo of the song was driven by the orchestra recording, which did not allow freedom for his singing. Nevertheless, he was cherished like a king on the artificial, prairie-like stage. The voice was good, the orchestra one of the best in the country, and the stage had adapted the most advanced techniques, but it did not seem as 'authentic' as Tusken's version. This may have been a matter of the language or the distraction provided by the carefully designed, Western influenced, look. Possibly, the look and stage prevented the lyrics, sung so clearly, from being associated with the singer's identity. In other words, he was 'quoting' another person's story, which might have created the distance between himself and the audience, leading the audience to think the performance was less sincere, but a mainstream performance.



Figure 4-2. Wang Hong-wei is filming the performance of *A Lovely Rose*, in the 2014 Urumqi Spring Festival Gala. The show was broadcast to the whole province. Director: GuangHui; stage design, Liu Gang; Dancers, Urumqi No.5 Primary School; costume design, Ming; photo, XJTV.

Davies argues that a performance becomes inauthentic or “fake” if the artist is influenced by foreign (especially Western) art or ideas...or if he becomes mechanical in his approach to its production rather than working from a sense of spiritual vocation.²²⁰ The operatic singing style is certainly not a Chinese invention but what Wang Hong-wei demonstrated on the stage was, in fact, the so-called ‘national vocal’ singing style, which is closely related to Western operatic singing.²²¹ On 28 April 1956, when Mao gave the influential speech entitled *Let Hundreds of Flowers Blossom, Let Hundreds of Schools [of thought] Debate* (百花齐放, 百家争鸣),²²² to the Communist Party Committee Political Bureau, he offered general guidance about the production of art and science in China. Mao himself advised ‘...critical acceptance towards all artistic works and scholars should have freedom to express their own opinions’.²²³ However, the persecution of those ‘...free thinking scholars and artists’ lasted for ten years from 1966, during the Cultural Revolution;

²²⁰ Davies, ‘Authenticity and Non-Western Music’, 255.

²²¹ Qing Tian and Xiao-xhen Liu, ‘Folk Song and “National Vocal Artistry”, *Art Critiques* 10 (2004): 9.

²²² Barbara Mittler, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*, 7–11.

²²³ ‘Creating Jing Gang Shan Revolutionary Base’, *News of the Communist Party of China*, accessed 23 June 2013, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/33837/2534140.html>.

after the 'political purification', the 'survivors' had learnt what Mao actually meant. The concept of 'national vocal' singing was first mentioned by Professor Zhou Xiaoyan from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, during a local singing contest in the Shanghai region in 1983. As the organizer, she realized that participants might perform various styles of music. For instance, some had recently returned from abroad after the Opening Up policy, and might have learnt how to sing opera. On the other hand, the local singers' most familiar style is folk style, without the 'operatic breathing' control. She, therefore, divided them into three groups entitled 'national vocal' (民族唱法), 'Western (operatic)', and 'tong su' (simplified: 通俗, meaning common, or popular). The 'national vocal' style can be traced back to the 1940s in Yan'an, when no public address system was available and traditional folk singing had limited 'expression' in front of a large audience without an operatic 'breathing' technique. After the Opening Up policy, Western influence arrived, and folk singers adopted the technique to support their volume.²²⁴ But it is worth noting that as there are fifty-six ethnic groups in China, 'national vocal' may not be a collective term for all the folk singing styles using the operatic breathing technique, from all the ethnic groups. For instance, the main feature of authentic Long Song, from the Mongolian ethnic group, requires prolonged notes with vibrato on the key sounds, which creates the 'space' of the mountains and valleys for the audience. This type of singing already has a much greater volume compared to some southern tunes, and this style can be heard across the prairie.

So in comparing the two versions, it might be argued that if Tusken's performance is considered as authentic, and not influenced by outer culture, most importantly, his performance was a reflection of his own identity and connected to many audiences' expectation. Whereas, in the representation of the official culture, delivered by Wang Hong-wei on the state stage, in fact, his vocal artistry stems from the original folk music tune, which is associated with the Communist revolutionary history. This type of 'voice' is created, named, educated and promoted as vital public culture by the CPC and, in return, this 'voice' is celebrated as authentic to the political aims, not to its cultural origins. The sense of

²²⁴ Feng Cheng, 'The History of National Vocal Singing', *Guangming Daily*, 12 December 2011, <http://news.163.com/11/1213/10/7L580KVF00012Q9L.html>.

authenticity also reflects the social status of the singer (or this type of singer) and, even, the status of this type of music within the whole of Chinese society. Cook indicates that 'A piece of music consists of an extended sequence of actions involving a number of agents. Within those musical cultures that employ written symbols – as most do...performance and meaning – represents critical directions that...music is seen as social action and meaning as created by that action.'²²⁵ On this account, the vocal artistry of both Wang Hong-wei and Tusken can be seen as an authentic performance, in different cultural backgrounds to certain groups of people; the decision from the audience on the sense of authenticity is offered by the society from which they come. Music is part of the culture and judgement for that society.

Additionally, any musical materials served in a communicational process with cultural elements, no matter what is 'authentic' within whichever society, may be considered to be coded with cultural elements. Whether or not those symbols can be received as meaningful depends on how this music material is working in the process from the sender and how it is taken by the receivers. The music performance cannot exist as a sign without the receivers.

4.3 The production of Passion Square by China Central Television in Urumqi

When examining the role of music and its social relationships, Helen Rees focuses on the practice of Dongjing music of Naxi minorities, in China's southern Yunnan Province, to discuss the relation of a socialist state to its ethnic minorities as a strong political component. Geremie R. Barmé provides multiple insights into Chinese contemporary culture, from historical, political and cultural aspects, to explain the complex interplay between the distribution of governmental ideology via cultural works and nonofficial culture, when global culture and Chinese capitalist-socialism meet up in the market economy.²²⁶ Barmé also draws attention

²²⁵ Nicholas Cook, *Music, Performance, Meaning: Selected Essays* (University of Cambridge, UK: Ashgate Publishing, n.d.), 302.

²²⁶ Barmé, *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture*.

to the growth of Chinese, contemporary artistic work designed with governmental core value, referring to this as 'propaganda', arguing that 'television', such as China Central Television, is the key outlet for up-market, media propaganda.

Passion Square is a historical, seasonal programme, mainly produced and broadcast nationwide by CCTV's music channel (CCTV-3). Its general director is Zhao Ya-xi from Central Television and it was hosted by Zhang Lei, or Zhang Lu, before its final broadcast on 7 November 2012. It ran in the form of a large-scale, domestic music tour, filled with widespread Communist mainstream music which featured the mainstream political ideology or historical background relating to the selected location. For instance, Jinggangshan (or Jinggang Mountain) is referred to as 'The cradle of the Chinese Communist revolution' from the historical point of view, according to the history of the CPC.²²⁷ In October 1927, the first generation of proletarian revolutionaries led the Red Army to Jinggangshan. They created Ninggang Country as the centre of China's first rural revolutionary base 'encircling the cities from the countryside, seizing the regime with force' (以农村包围城市、武装夺取政权), and opened the characteristic Chinese revolution path, leading little known Jinggangshan to become celebrated in the glorious annals of the Chinese revolution.²²⁸ Therefore, Jinggangshan was chosen to be the first place to host the *Passion Square* concert in October 2005, to commemorate the base of the revolution. Over a thousand audience members and two hundred local performers were involved in that concert, then the programme was edited and broadcast to Chinese audiences all over the world, on several CCTV channels. Statistical records from CSM Research Centre (CSM is the official English name of the state research centre, its Chinese name is 索福瑞媒介研究公司) suggested that 'The average number in the audience of each edition of *Passion Square* is over one hundred million; among two hundred programmes produced by CCTV and broadcast nationwide, it is rated in the top thirty programmes in general, which mainly covers

²²⁷ 'Creating Jing Gang Shan Revolutionary Base'; Ze-dong Mao, *Selected Work of Mao Ze-Dong*, vol. 1 (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1991), 27.

²²⁸ *The History of the Chinese Communist Party 1921-1978*, vol. 2, Central Research Centre (Beijing: Chinese Communist Party History Publishing House, 2011), 24-75.

the audience age group from twenty-five to fifty-five (68.6%).²²⁹ The *Passion Square* series of concerts can also be viewed for free, worldwide, on popular websites such as YouTube; the slogan of the programme is: Let's sing patriotic songs together.²³⁰

Here, the term 'patriotic' is the official definition offered, according to the nature of the programme aimed at 'inspiring the nation's patriotism.'²³¹ Within this context, the word 'passion' represents a strong, excessive emotional attachment to patriotism; 'square' is a simple description of the type of place where the concerts normally took place. However, it can also be considered as a *sign*, as Chinese domestic city squares today represent a symbolic space, standing for a political vehicle where the message flows between the mass of the Chinese people and the government's agenda, as a Communist ritual. A paradigm can be presented: ever since Mao pressed the button to raise the first national flag of PR China, in Tian'an Men Square on 1st October 1949, every morning in the largest square in China, possibly one of the biggest in the world, the national flag rises, along with the sunshine, guarded by thirty PLA soldiers and witnessed by thousands of people from all over the country. An up-to-date calendar of the exact time of the ceremony can be found on the government website about attending the ceremonial ritual.²³² The following pictures, provided by the Xinhua news agency on 1st October 2006, depict Chinese National Day when over 220,000 people attended the flag-raising ceremony in Tian'an Men Square (Figure 4-3, Figure 4-4).

²²⁹ 'The Value of CCTV Spring Festival Gala Is Reflecting the Progress of the Chinese Nation', *CMS Research Centre*, accessed 6 September 2013, <http://www.csm.com.cn/index.php/Account/User/Login?refer=%2Findex.php%2FHome%2FSubscribe%2Fuser>.

²³⁰ 'The Passion Square', *CCTV Website*, accessed 6 September 2013, <http://cctv.cntv.cn/lm/jiqingguangchang/>.

²³¹ 'Passion Square in Urumqi', *Hongshannet*, accessed 4 August 2012, http://www.hongshannet.cn/Topics/node_7080.htm.

²³² 'Timetable of Flag-Raising Ceremony', *Flag China*, accessed 13 July 2014, <http://flag.911cha.com>.



Figure 4-3. The national flag is guarded by the National Flag Soldiers of the PLA in Tian'an Men Square on 1st October 2006.



Figure 4-4. According to Xinhua News, there were over 220,000 people attending the ceremony.²³³

After the domestic reform, along with rapid economic growth, the building of the domestic city squares has played an interesting part in the process of Chinese urbanization. Lu Da-dao, from the Chinese Academy of Science, raises questions in 'City Square Crisis – Is It Another Great Leap Forward?' He also thinks 'The trend of

²³³ 'The Flag Raising Ceremony on Tian'an Men Square', *Xinhua News Agency*, accessed 19 July 2013, <http://news.sohu.com/20061001/n245628675.shtml>.

wasting farming land on over expanding massive city squares is potentially dangerous'.²³⁴ However, for certain ends, having a huge city square in front of the city hall may serve a particular political aim. In referring to the term Square Culture, for instance, proposed by the Chinese former president Hu Jin-tao in 2009, he specifically noted that 'the Square Culture building is a vital component of the country's spiritual civilization (精神文明建设)', is a reflection of the implementation of the important thoughts on 'Three Represents' speech by Deng Xiao-ping, it is also an important symbol of the modernization process.'²³⁵ In attempting to understand the traditional value of the 'square' in Chinese culture, the decision of modern Chinese politicians to expand them from Beijing to second-tier cities also emphasizes the function of this culture within different communities. With regard to the *Passion Square* concert, it must be considered what kind of communication was processed and disseminated, in terms of the political information it contained, and what makes the Square Culture a special cultural form. Lastly, what happened to the *Passion Square* concerts and why were they stopped?

In April 2012, Zheng He, the general director of the Municipal Publicity Department, invited a friend of mine, named Ming, whose family owns a commercial studio for producing stage costume, to be involved in discussions about the preparation for the Urumqi *Passion Square* concert. The programme is co-sponsored by CCTV and Xinjiang Television and supervised by the Publicity Department of the CPC as well as the Central Spiritual Civilization Steering Committee Office.²³⁶ The event was to be '...a gesture to welcome the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China' according to Ming, who was asked to attend several meetings after Urumqi was chosen to host this edition of *Passion Square*. She has worked in the industry for over twenty years, and their studio is one of the most well-known places in Xinjiang province for the design of ethnic costumes. As the provider, they were involved in many other state

²³⁴ Da-dao Lu, 'City Square Crisis', in *Theories and Practice of Regional Development of China* (Shanghai and Beijing: Chinese Science, 2003), 32–35.

²³⁵ Jin-tao Hu, *Building a Socialist Harmonious Society* (Beijing: Central Literature Publishing House, 2013), 107.

²³⁶ See ref. 40.

sponsored events. After several meetings with the director, Ming contacted me while I was in York and suggested I should be involved as a researcher to collect data for my fieldwork because, according to her, the programme is 'one of the most exciting large-scale governmental concerts in the history of Urumqi city'. I was also invited to meet the director in person; two months after the performance in Xinjiang, I conducted a series of interviews and also served as an observer during the rehearsal for the New Year's Gala. My information source regarding the preparation of *Passion Square* was mainly Ming and Zheng; my virtual attendance was a week after the concert was recorded and broadcast to the nation, on 3rd August 2012, along with several million other virtual viewers through the Internet, and the interview with Zheng in October 2012 offered me an insight which will also be documented in this chapter.

Introducing virtual fieldwork as an ethnomusicological approach, on a similar mass scaled television programme research project, namely the American Idol, Katherine Meizel indicates '...extending across physical and virtual space, [it] offers an imprecisely defined field for ethnographic study...'.²³⁷ Meizel also introduces Rice's point that, '...there is no field there; the field is the metaphorical creation of the researcher'.²³⁸ Meizel also provided a list of research methods to assist in study which might be beneficial for this research, for instance: ethnographic research conducted through interviews, analysis of televised show footage, study of related recordings, critical discussion regarding discourse and literature reviews related to the show.²³⁹

Previous research, specifically on the programme *Passion Square*, is rather limited, but Zheng Yu-jie from East China Normal University, in her 2013 dissertation, *A Discussion on the Governmental Role on Mass Cultural Activities in the Development of City Squares*, argued that 'Although there are many spontaneous events organized by the mass people, the significant support and influence comes from the government and local officials who have played a big part.' Examining the *Passion Square* Fuzhou concert, in Fujian province, as case

²³⁷Meizel, *Idolized: Music, Media, and Identity in American Idol*.

²³⁸Ibid.

²³⁹Ibid.

study and discussing the reason why the programme is supported by the state, she also tried to explore public usage of the programme in Fujian.²⁴⁰ From her perspective, from a communicational point of view, the sender's influence apparent in every programme is significant. However, is this the case just for Fujian province, or does it also apply to other provinces for this programme? If dominance from the sender is found to exist widely, I was curious about how this might engage with the Xinjiang local music and culture. If the music performance was directly organized by the central government, it would be interesting to explore how the core political ideology and value might be presented, via the music message, in local culture within Xinjiang. Additionally, given the importance of Square Culture in the staging of the concert, would it accelerate the message flow among the mass audience? If the stage is expanded into the square and into the audience this might have an effect on the whole communication process. The influence on the virtual audience must also be considered. If a link can be drawn between the new trend of encouraging Chinese Square Culture and the unusual attention and effort that the Xinjiang *Passion Square* attracted long before it was due to happen, regarding the predicted effect of these issues, as well as the potential involvement it can cause within society, it might be concluded that whatever music was put onto this stage, in fact, it belonged to the officials. In other words, this performance has been a *ritual* to and by the central government. Zheng further discusses Cook's quotation that:

Ritual and music are seen as the two most important tools for the enlightened ruler with which to govern the populace. They are both equally important because they achieve opposite but complementary aims, each counteracting the negative effects resulting from an excess of the other. While the differentiation imposed by Ritual is needed to allow society to properly function, the harmonizing power of Music is needed to ensure that Ritual does not lead to estrangement. Conversely, the ideal Music is that which itself exhibits the characteristics of Ritual—a well-balanced society should function like a well-balanced piece of music, in which each member

²⁴⁰ Yu-jie Zheng, 'A Discussion of the Governmental Role of Mass Cultural Activities in the Development of City Squares' (MA Dissertation, East China Normal University, 2013), 6–7.

maintains its position in such a way as to allow for the harmonious operation of the whole.²⁴¹

To Confucianism, music is 'ritual', recommended to be applied as a tool to 'ease social conflicts', while five thousand years later, former president Hu Jin-tao pointed out, at the Central Committee of the CPC Provincial meetings in 2005, that 'building a socialist harmonious society is a major task of our Party, from building a moderately prosperous society and creating a new situation.'²⁴² This conveys new aesthetic and historical aspects of the *Passion Square* concert: a modern extension stems from the Chinese tradition of using music performance as ritual. Therefore, that performance of *Passion Square* in Xinjiang, possibly influenced by Xinjiang ethnic culture such as dance, yet with the core values of the CPC coded in, coupled with my relationship with the music and my perspectives both as a fieldworker and virtual attendee, will bring new thoughts into this research.

When Ming first made contact in late April 2012, after a few meetings with the general director, she had been asked to prepare five thousand sets of costume for *Passion Square*, which seemed a huge undertaking. She explained, 'Mainly because of the large audience, who need to wear *Passion Square* themed T-shirts; they are going to be put into ten different audience groups, four hundred people in each. The rest of the costume designing is for the actual performance on the stage: fifty children wearing ethnic clothing, two hundred choir singers, and four hundred dancers from ethnic groups. Artists from more than ten local professional institutions will be involved, and we must ensure the quality of our product.'²⁴³ I was amazed by the potential scale of the upcoming event. Later that day, after it was recorded, I received the following picture from the film director Mr. H:

²⁴¹Ibid.

²⁴²'Hu Jintao Emphasises Understanding the Meaning of Building a Harmonious Society', *Renminwong*, July 2013, <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/1024/3187879.html>.

²⁴³Li, recorded interview, 27 April, 2012.



Figure 4-5. The *Passion Square* concert took place on 3 August 2012. Filmed by CCTV and Xinjiang Television. The audience of about four thousand people were wearing colourful T-shirts with 'Passion Square' (激情广场) written on the front. The event happened in Urumqi, in Nanhu City Square, in front of the city hall where the local government is located. Two large LED screens were placed, one on each side of the stage for the audience. Everyone in the audience was given a national flag to wave according to the command of the supervisor of each audience group. A huge national flag was designed to sit in the middle of the stage, surrounded by pictures of Tianshan mountain range, pine trees, and skyscrapers from Urumqi city. The Arabic-style patterns on the flag can be seen from a distance as a symbol of the Uyghur mosques.

One of the most significant features of *Passion Square* (as shown in Figure 4-5) was the degree of involvement of the local audience. Each group of four hundred wore identical clothing, which may have been simply for decorative purposes or may have further served as a symbol of uniformity. Who were these people? It must be difficult to manage such a large random audience into precise groups; however, if they are a pre-booked audience, the audience then is part of the performance. What about the performance on the stage? I was driven by this unusual kind of performance and decided to speak to Ming and learn the story from her side. Kottack proposed the emic strategy that advises 'Investigate how natives think. How do they perceive and categorize the world? What are their shared rules for behavior and thoughts? What has meaning for them? How do they imagine and

explain things? The anthropologist seeks the “native viewpoint” and relies on the culture bearers –the actors in a culture – to determine whether something they do, say, or think is significant.²⁴⁴

Ming’s reply was surprising and challenged my assumption; the audience was made up from five social categories, as follows: workers, farmers, private enterprise owners, students, and soldiers (in Chinese as 工农商学兵). The idea first originated in 1958, during the Great Leap Forward, as the representative of the proletariat.²⁴⁵ Ming added: ‘The audience was required to wear clothes to match their social status; and additionally, this is Xinjiang, the costume for the people from the ethnic groups had to be authentically designed and produced with high-quality craftsmanship. The amateur artists might be sitting as an audience, but because of the nature of their music culture, as well as the special condition of the Square Culture, they will be performing all the time. I believe that clothes will add more authenticity to their performance as well as the music.’²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ Conrad Kottak, *Anthropology* (McGraw-Hill, 2012), 43–44.

²⁴⁵ *Group work*, ‘As a whole: workers, farmers, private enterprise owners, students and soldiers’, *Labor*, 3-5.

²⁴⁶ Li, recorded interview, 27 April, 2012

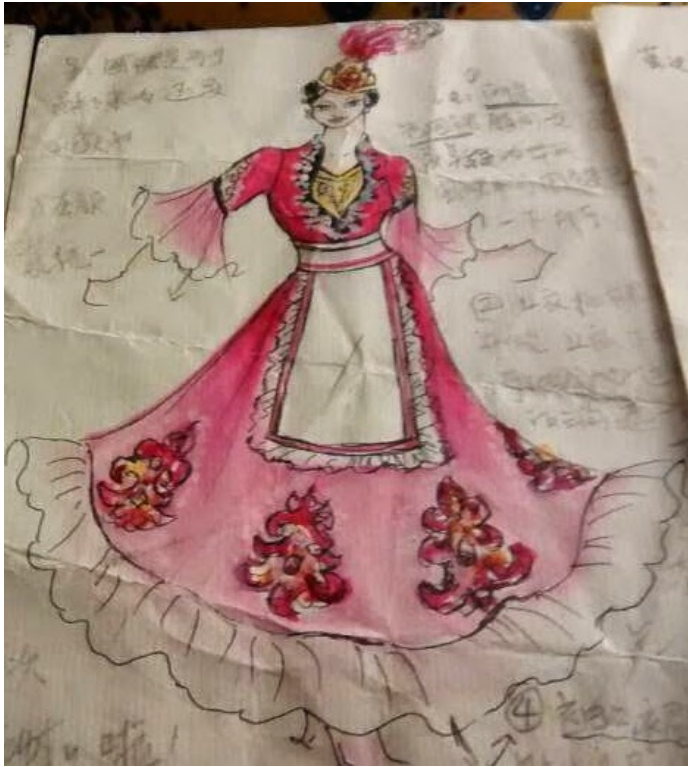


Figure 4-6. Uyghur female dress designed by ZLQ for *Passion Square*, provided by Ming's studio.



Figure 4-7. Mongolian female dress including hat and boots designed by ZLQ for *Passion Square*, provided by Ming's studio.



Figure 4-8. Designed by ZLQ for *Passion Square*, Kazakh female dress provided by Ming's studio.

According to Ming's studio (designer ZLQ), when it comes to the design of ethnic clothes in Xinjiang, colour is the first concern. The Uyghur dancing dress (shown in Figure 4-6) is mainly pink but the sleeves and dress have a gradient part with traditional patterns, highlighted with sequins. This helps the dancers to emphasize shoulder movements while spinning. As can be seen (in Figure 4-7), the feature of the standing collar and the lantern shoulders of the Mongolian dress are most distinct. The dress is outlined with light green as a reference to the prairie. The Kazakh dress (shown in Figure 4-8) is layered with light blue, representing the sky and white clouds; the glass pattern is stitched onto the front, repeating the pattern on the tall, feathered hat. The costumes described above were only a small portion of the ethnic dresses designed for *Passion Square*, and many ethnic identities were revealed, via stage clothing, throughout the performance.

It seems the general director, Ming, and her costume designers were trying their best to make the job perfect. Paying attention to stage costume does not directly connect to the music performance but it was an important part of the production of the *Passion Square* concert. However, the perceptions of those viewing the programme as virtual attendees must be considered. Lawson believes 'In modern parlance, music and ritual embody a liminal relationship',²⁴⁷ and when this state-owned *Passion Square* concert is viewed from an objective perspective, it could be that the experience of the 'authentic' local musical materials had been formed into a typical, Communist publicity ritual, incorporated throughout this modern performance event.

For instance, the choreography and display of *Passion Square* is ritualistically organized. As an overview of the fifty-minute long programme, the proportions of the music in terms of themes were: the first 25 per cent of music performance was related to the ethnic groups, mainly including Uyghur, Kazakh, and Mongolian; the second 25 per cent was 'red songs' (*hongge* 红歌), which are a type of political hymn of the Communist Party; the third 25 per cent was presented by artists from the Military Troupes; and the last 25 per cent comprised other performances, such as, poetry recitation accompanied by music. However, the above four themes were all mixed together when the programme was running, linked by a commentator. In addition, within each theme, the music was coded to serve the needs of the stage, based on its artistic, ritual function. For instance, the first performance of *Passion Square* began with the name of a traditional Uyghur harvest dance, *Meshrep*; it is originally a music genre typically including '...poetry, music, dance, conversation within a structural context' and '...only held on the harvest, weddings, circumcisions, and girls' coming of age'.²⁴⁸ The action of promoting *Meshrep* in such national, large scaled performance might be seen, as Harris suggested, to '...indicate not only

²⁴⁷ Francesca R Sborgi Lawson, 'Music in Ritual and Ritual in Music: A Virtual Viewer's Perceptions about Liminality, Functionality, and Mediatization in the Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games', *Asian Music* 42, no. 2 (2011): 5.

²⁴⁸ Dilber Kahraman Thwaites, 'A Uyghur Meshrep Dichotomy', *Central Eurasian Studies Review* 4, no. 2 (2005): 22; Rachel Harris, *The Making of a Musical Canon in Chinese Central Asia: The Uyghur Twelve Muqam*, SOAS Musicology Series (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 24–25.

strong state support but also a surge of Uyghur national pride in this tradition'.²⁴⁹ The choice to show a Uyghur harvest dance among all the ethnic groups, including Han, emphasized the cultural dominance and status of the Uyghur ethnic group within Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. In the Han's view, *Meshrep* could be viewed as a ritualistic declaration to both Uyghur and other native ethnic groups that 'This performance is a *harvest*, a happy scene of our life, something worth celebrating'. The intention of expressing the 'joyful life', representing the Uyghur minority's life, in the Han's opinion,²⁵⁰ could be visually communicated from the dancers on the stage, separated into two groups according to gender. The communication could also be accessed outside the stage as the performance was expanded; people from other native ethnic groups, visually identified by 'colourful' costume, also joined the dancing scene in the square while holding plates of fruit. Indeed, as the message is sent from the official perspective, it is not only a harvest for Uyghur people, but also a 'harvest' of the national unity among all of them. The accentuated sound of 'Suona', the Uyghur folk-like tune which has a loud and high-pitched leading voice, is also commonly used in a ritualized musical instrument of China, according to Jones.²⁵¹ All the subtle elements suggested this is a traditional festival. The subtitle quickly rolling on the screen, 'In 2012, a series of activities entitled "Let's Sing Patriotic Songs" was continually and extensively promoted nationwide, organized by the Central Publicity Department, the Central Civilization Office and other units, in order to inspire people by enhancing the core values of the society and cohesion of the nation',²⁵² accompanied the 'physical behavior',²⁵³ ethnic music elements, smiling faces and plates of fruit, together weaving a net of the 'common happiness'²⁵⁴ and a sense of 'national unity', as well as 'transfixing the

²⁴⁹Harris, Rachel and Roberts, Sean and Bovingdon, Gardner, (eds.), "A Weekly Meshrep to Tackle Religious Extremism": Intangible Cultural Heritage in Xinjiang', in *Develop the West: Chinese State Development and Uyghur Cultural Resilience, Adaptation, and Cooptation in Xinjiang* (Indiana, 2016), <http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/20987/>.

²⁵⁰Smith, J.N., 'The Quest for National Unity in Uyghur Popular Song: Barren Chickens, Stray Dogs, Fake Immortals and Thieves'.

²⁵¹ Stephen Jones, *Ritual and Music of North China*, SOAS Musicology Series (Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 3–5.

²⁵² Ma, 1'02-1:19 in the *Passion Square* programme presented by CCTV-3, 11 August 2012.

²⁵³ Timothy Rice, *Ethnomusicology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 56.

²⁵⁴Political slogan of National People's Congress, NPC website.

audience through the synchronized power of music and ritual movement'.²⁵⁵ The 'national unity' theme had also been repeated on various occasions during the performance, such as in the song entitled 'We are a United Family of Ethnic Groups', with lyrics by BaiJia-xin and music by XiaokelatiKelimu. The slogan 'National Unity' had been printed onto body banners and was worn by the front row of the audience (shown in Figure 4-9).



Figure 4-9. Front row audience wearing body banners featuring 'National Unity' themed slogans, at the *Passion Square* concert on 3 August 2012, filmed and broadcast by CCTV Music Channel (CCTV-3), 24' 43". Ethnic minority audience might be also sitting in this section, however not wearing their ethnic clothes.

Goodsell argues that 'Rituals constructed inside organizations tend to use specialized language and involve active participation; those directed to outsiders employ lay language and dramatic forms,'²⁵⁶ yet Harris and Norton pointed out that ritual is considered relationally: 'The volume addresses the way in which rituals are a contested space for ethnic identity, social action, resistance, nationalism, and political and state authority and control.'²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Lawson, 'Music in Ritual and Ritual in Music: A Virtual Viewer's Perceptions about Liminality, Functionality, and Mediatization in the Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games', 6.

²⁵⁶ Charles T. Goodsell, 'Administration as Ritual', *International Journal of Public Administration* 20, no. 4-5 (1 January 1997): 161, doi:10.1080/01900699708525227.

²⁵⁷ Rachel Harris and Barley Norton, 'Introduction: Ritual Music and Communism', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 11, no. 1 (1 January 2002): 1, doi:10.1080/09681220208567326.

From 2006, the *Passion Square* domestic concert played the vital role of reapplying *Hong Ge* 红歌 after the Cultural Revolution, at a state-scale mass performance in Jingtangshan. However, the *Hong Ge* concept was first mentioned by Wang Shan-lan in 1958, as a general term representing all Communist themed songs.²⁵⁸ Its more detailed definition is centred around ‘...red songs, the production of the Chinese Communist revolution’; additionally, ‘...it reflected the heroic achievements of the people’s revolution under the leadership of the Communist Party.’²⁵⁹ Coincidentally, *Hong Ge* also directly related to China’s former Minister of Commerce, Bo Xi-lai, before he was found guilty of corruption in 2013. *Hong Ge* was officially recognized as part of the *da heichanghong* (my translation is ‘fight against crime, sing the *Hong Ge*’) movement, which was heavily promoted by Bo himself in Chongqing until later, along with the disappearance of the *Passion Square* concert, Bo began his life as a prisoner. This might suggest the state does not want to be associated with Bo by broadcasting *Hong Ge* on such a level, but because the content of those songs and the ‘time’ and ‘space’ were familiar to a whole generation that had been through the Cultural Revolution, when the music was created and disseminated, it automatically ‘wakes up’ a certain audience by creating a ‘spiritual’ experience, reinforcing political control via the music. *Hong Ge* regularly appeared on the stage of *Passion Square* in the domestic cities, with specific political messages to match the location of the concerts, and in Xinjiang the call to ‘national unity’ required the assistance of the performance from the Military Troupes.

²⁵⁸ Shan-lan Wang, ‘Hunan-Jiangxi Old Soviet Revolutionary Songs’, *People’s Music* 4, no. 12 (1958): 3–7.

²⁵⁹ Sheng-liang Zhang, ‘The Study of Chinese Hong Ge’, *The Writer* 1 (2008): 12–17.



Figure 4-10. The Xinjiang Military Troupes are performing ‘My Snow Mountain, My Checkpoints’, sung by Uzbek singer Xiamili, music written by FengHui and Qiao Mu-sheng, choreographer Wu Mei.

The performance of ‘My Snow Mountain, My Checkpoints’ was introduced by the presenter Ma Yue, saying ‘No matter whether protecting the homeland or defending people against serious natural disasters, the people’s army has the strong backing of all the ethnic groups. Supporting our army is a great tradition of Xinjiang.’ The renowned Uzbek performer from Xinjiang Military Dance and Singing Troup, Xiamil Xiakir and a group of singers were presented on the stage. Xiamil wore military uniform and sang with the dancers. The song described the life of a soldier at the checkpoint on the Xinjiang border from his personal point of view, as he experienced extreme natural conditions to protect the motherland’s snow lotus (雪莲). This unique flower grows in the Tianshan mountain range, above an altitude of two thousand metres; it might be considered both as a symbol of Xinjiang and as a metaphor for the soldiers themselves from the official cultural point of view, who defend the country’s borders in poor conditions, just as the snow lotus survives and thrives. The song lyrics connected smoothly with the presenter’s introduction, which also took the form of a ritualized pattern, regularly used in state-run events. This began by highlighting the upcoming performance with a brief guide, followed

by a major performer, usually a singer with a group of dancers. In order to respond to Ma Yue's introduction, stating the intimacy between the army and the people, here, in Urumqi, the plot is directed gradually from a brief introduction to the music to the visual performance, featuring female dancers from Xinjiang wearing the 'colourful' costumes representing their ethnic minority identities, as well as their 'colourful' life;²⁶⁰ together with a group of PLA soldiers. The identity of a Uyghur girl is marked by her traditional patterned, Atlas silk dress, shown in the middle of the stage, held by the border control soldiers (Figure 4-10). Atlas silk has a history of over two thousand years and was originally introduced along the Silk Road from Hotan.²⁶¹ The use of Atlas silk as a symbol here can serve several political ideologies: first, to highlight the 'support' and 'unity' among the ethnic people; secondly, to illustrate the relationship between ethnic people and the Chinese army; thirdly, Atlas silk speaks for the identity of the Uyghur groups who represent the Autonomous Region of Xinjiang. The message of reinforcement across national unity is between Uyghur ethnic people and the PLA as highlighted, as a response to the controversial political situation in Xinjiang,²⁶² to express the official attitude of the CPC in a musical way. This performance also declared that the snow lotus's blossom is protected by the army, and from the army's perspective, through an international broadcast, via CCTV, it is an official announcement to the outside world of the PLA's sovereignty over Xinjiang. This refers not only to the land but also to the culture, as the traditions of all ethnic groups and the variety of ethnic cultural elements might also bring a sense of honour to Chinese people outside Xinjiang, to inspire the nation to enjoy its culture as a whole, and defend it from invaders, or perhaps, whoever wants to separate Xinjiang from the state.²⁶³ State control of rituals is established, introduced, and widely promoted at all levels of mass communication; Party policies are applied, and reinforced, within the music materials and during the process of dissemination.

²⁶⁰Gladney, 'Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/minority Identities.'

²⁶¹Tamara Chin, 'The Invention of the Silk Road, 1877', *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 1 (2013): 202, doi:10.1086/673232.

²⁶²Trine and Ildiko, *On the Fringes of the Harmonious Society: Tibetans and Uyghurs in Socialist China*.

²⁶³ibid.

As part of the virtual fieldwork, the reception from the audience is also taken into account. Messages from official and nonofficial channels are reviewed and collected through social media, online forums, news websites and newspapers, both at regional and national levels. The feedback about this programme in Xinjiang, was mainly among the local audience through social media, such as SinaWeibo; however through the official channel, the information of the concert was widely advertised on most governmental websites and local news. Feedback was divided into four groups in terms of age group, reported by a mainstream news paper, *Urumqi Evening News*:²⁶⁴

Singing a memory: People are born in the 40s, and 50s

Fu Shu-xiang, wearing a red T shirt, from Xinshi district of Urumqi, came to the reporter after singing the song *Ode to the Motherland*, with tearful eyes, smiled, 'I have been singing this song since I can remember. Whenever I hear this patriotic song, it reminds me of wonderful youthful memories, when I only arrived in Xinjiang. Looking at Urumqi now, the place has changed a lot.'

Singing their Passion: People are born in the 70s, and 80s

Fan Jing-jing, while listening to *Our Country is a Garden*, said 'I used to listen to this song when I was growing up.'

Zhang Fang, 'Our father's generation contributed their youth to build Xinjiang, they are not young today, therefore, we should carry on. These songs are making me very encouraged!'

Sing the Hope: from Little Children

12 year old Zhang Hao-jia said, 'I first heard *Ode to the Motherland* at the Opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008, by Lin Miao-ke. We have very good sportsmen!'

On SinaWeibo, the comments relate not only to the musical performance but also to related information from the local people:

²⁶⁴Li Zhi-gang and Wang Li-na, 'Singing at the Capital City: CCTV Passion Square', 6 August 2012, <http://news.163.com/12/0806/00/886DSQ4300014AED.html?from=tag>.

Politically Influenced Music in Post Reform China

Litehouyi (栗特后裔) comments: Hong ge are good music, but putting their spirit into practice takes time.

Mr Seal comments: EsqerMemet's *Xinjiang is Good* makes the audience go wild!

Lenglengdezhao (冷冷的墨) comments: The climate is too dry in Urumqi this week, why did they disperse the clouds, for some Passion Square thing!

Shuiqudemizizi (水区的米兹紫) comments: This afternoon, Passion Square arrived in Urumqi along with CCTV, bringing a wonderful musical experience.

Scxiaodeng comments: I feel so frustrated, Passion Square of the Central Television is taking place at Nanhu Square, there are no tickets for sale, only an organised audience from charity institutions are allowed to get in.

The news on the reception of the Passion Square Urumqi Concert by China Central Television, reported by the state owned news agency, reflected the feedback from various audience members, from different age groups and social classes. The report suggests a generic connection between their individual life in Xinjiang and how this is linked to their emotional experience, which inspired by the musical performance of this concert, in other words, the 'passion' of the audience, is brought on by the music. On Chinese social media, on the other hand, as shown above, not everyone appeared 'passionate' about it. The local users of social media were aware of the music event, but the content of the messages posted online are rarely related to the music. Instead the messages question the difficulty of access to the event as an ordinary prospective audience member and the inconvenience caused by the large-scale music event.

4.4 Conclusion

As Lauren Gorfinkel argues, ‘...Through reinforcing musical styles, visual images and language, it overtly asserts a collective identity wherein all Chinese, no matter what ethnicity, strive together towards the future, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.’²⁶⁵ Folk music in Xinjiang today has been given special, ritualized attributes by the government, depending on the social context in which the music is presented. No matter how it is applied or introduced, music as a shared culture among all ethnic groups remains a vital part of local people’s daily life. Hence, it is the medium that allows people outside Xinjiang to explore its culture, and the channel for Xinjiang people to introduce themselves to the world.

The music material does not necessarily make up the receivers’ minds; the stage and the application of mass communication are the key factors. The feedback from the communicational process is the major concern of the sender, but whether this music ‘makes sense’ or is ‘authentic’ to an individual audience depends on the audience’s identity and perspective on whether a particular interpretation was meaningful to them. Folk-style music, written by a composer inspired by their own fieldwork experience from an outsider’s perspective, serves the purpose of a patriotic glue to join insiders and offers a united common value; at the same time, to outsiders, even at a global level, it is carefully designed limelight to show the prosperity of that nation.

The same piece of folk music, under different conditions and mechanisms, can be coded with different messages to create related signs to attract various audiences: it can sound like a raw ballad, remaining accessible to ordinary people, or a more ‘civilized’, Western influenced ‘aria’, only appearing on the ‘court’ stage, speaking in the voice of the ruling class. However, the emotion invested in the music performance, the native language and story telling by a stranger away from his hometown, persuade the mass audience to believe Tusken’s performance is close enough to their imagined story and accept the performance as a sincere and

²⁶⁵Gorfinkel, Lauren, ‘From Transformation to Preservation: Music and Multi-Ethnic Unity on Television in China’.

'authentic' version, a mutual expectation which was, perhaps, shaped by mass media to begin with.

The question regarding opinion on which version might sound more authentic would depend upon the nature of the consumer. The song belongs to different social classes even within the same social and cultural circumstances. Folk music on public stages in Xinjiang is more than just music. When Tusken sang with nothing but his emotions, he told a beautiful, exotic love story to the ears of the official culture. However, when Wang Hong-wei sang, wearing evening dress, paraphrasing the words and accompanied by the National Orchestra, it resembled a political symbol, a game of power, a kind of sovereignty preached, an endorsement of another nation, and, therefore, it has been seen as high art rather than a simple song.

Xinjiang ethnic minority themed music, as the core of the promotion of official ideology, has been examined, through the ethnomusicological approach of virtual attendance and fieldwork. This examination of a talent show and the state official gala, has helped in the understanding of how folk music and its performers serve as the mouthpiece of the mainstream ideology. The findings have also suggested that the representation of the ethnic minority music serves different meanings depending on the level of the broadcast: the local ethnic music shares the theme of attempting to beautify the relationships between the ethnic majority and minority; while the national or international level broadcast emphasises its role in identifying itself as a promoter of 'diversity'. However, the process of media globalisation and off stage interaction via social media, involving nonofficial culture exchange, will allow more of the audience to approach and appreciate the ethnic minority music that has not been officially styled.

Chapter 5 Chasing the Chinese piano dream: the study of politically influenced Western art music

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the history of Western art music and its connection with politics in post reform China, by focusing on the piano, a Western instrument, and its mass consumption in practice. Its modern political usage will be considered, to diffuse the ideology of uniting the nation and fostering a sense of patriotism by the ruling class in modern China. Additionally, the contrast of Western art music consumption influenced by political demand will be discussed, from being banned by the Communist party in the early age of the Cultural Revolution era, to being encouraged nationwide and, treated as a symbol of patriotism, after the economic reform. How did this transformation happen and why?

In researching the answer to this question, this chapter will be divided into two parts: first of all, the history which indicates the unique political status of the piano will be traced, from the ancient royal court to the Cultural Revolution era, to mark its special modern social function, which serves as the symbol of nationalism for the mass Chinese. In the second part of this chapter, the discussion will proceed from the ‘piano craze’ phenomenon, since China’s economic take off, focusing on China’s national hero, pianist Yundi Li’s sole example. Analysis will be provided in political, historical and aesthetic contexts, uncovering his pianism in order to understand how the piano and this pianist contribute to the mainstream ideology of reformed China, by being framed as the symbol of the patriotic ‘China made Chopin’, as well as a representation of China’s cross cultural, exchange process of modernisation in the world discourse. In doing so, close readings related to musical history in modern China as well as fieldwork with Yundi, undertaken in the last few years in Europe and China, will be documented.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ Wei, ‘Listening to Yundi Li’s Concert “Reporting to the Motherland”’.

5.2 The yellow river soul: it all begin with the piano

According to Yayoi Uno Everett's definition of Western art music, this generally refers to 'composed music: classical and contemporary performed within concert halls affiliated with universities, colleges, and metropolitan centers of European, American, and more recently East Asian countries.'²⁶⁷ China's Western art music history first began with Emperor Wanli, in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), after the Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci visited, and brought a clavichord as a tribute to the royal court.²⁶⁸ In the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), Emperor Kang Xi formed the first symphony orchestra in China, for his own interest.²⁶⁹ Before then, Western classical music was not accessible by ordinary people, apart from the royal court. The first national music institution was founded in Shanghai in 1927 and, after the establishment of PR China in 1950, this was renamed by the CPC as the Eastern Branch of the Central Conservatory of China. In 1956 it became Shanghai Conservatory of Music.²⁷⁰ In 1929, the Chinese composer Huang Zi adopted the Western compositional approach after studying in the United States of America under the supervision of David Stanley Smith from the Yale school of Music, and produced the first Chinese Symphony, *Yearning*.²⁷¹ However, when the second Sino-Japanese War started, in July 1937, this brought the nation into such a chaotic situation that the production of Western-style classical music was almost zero. At this time, the native, anti-Japanese battlefield songs were widespread and welcomed among the citizens, for instance, the *Yellow River Cantata*,²⁷² which was composed by Xian Xing-hai at the CPC's revolution centre in Yan'an in early 1939;

²⁶⁷ Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (Eds), 'Intercultural Synthesis in Postwar Western Art Music: Historical Contexts, Perspectives, and Taxonomy'.

²⁶⁸ Xi-ping Zhang, *Following the Steps of Matteo Ricci to China* (Beijing: Five continent Communication Publishing house, 2006), 98.

²⁶⁹ Dai, 'The Unbreakable Relationship Between Western Classical Music and Emperors in the Qing Dynasty', *Ren Min Newspaper*, 1 March 2014, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmwz/html/2014-03/01/content_1425533.htm.

²⁷⁰ 'The History of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music', *Shanghai Conservatory of Music Website*, accessed 11 June 2014, <http://www.shcmusic.edu.cn/html/intro/xxjj.htm>.

²⁷¹ 'The First Symphony of China and Its Composer', *Wenxuecity Website*, accessed 11 June 2014, <http://bbs.wenxuecity.com/184197058/308377.html>.

²⁷² The *Yellow River Cantata* was composed by Xian Xing-hai in Yan'an in early 1939, lyrics by Guang Wei-ran. The work quickly spread across the whole country, and during the Cultural Revolution, on Madam Mao's demand, it was rearranged as the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*.

the lyrics are by Guang Wei-ran. Xian was also 'Yan'an's leading musical cadre'.²⁷³ The work quickly spread across the whole country, among students, workers, and soldiers, after its first thirty thousand copies were published in *New Music* magazine.²⁷⁴ Mao Ze-dong noticed the extraordinary success of the *Yellow River Cantata* but, during the Cultural Revolution, Western classical music as a whole was negatively treated as a symbol of the West. The most important book on this issue was written by Richard Kraus, entitled *Piano and Politics in China*, in which he produced three key arguments: first of all, 'those who owned and played the piano were urban, prosperous, intellectual, and removed from China's traditional culture'; secondly, 'pianos rose to prominence with Europe's bourgeoisie'; and thirdly, 'the social base in China was weak and vulnerable after the war with Japan'.²⁷⁵ Kraus's above ideas were analysed from social, cultural and political perspectives to try to determine the objective situation in relation to the underdevelopment of Western music, with regard to instruments, and the piano in particular. It seemed impossible to increase the number of owners of the piano in the East, as well as interest in Western music before the 1930s. Many musicians and scholars have illustrated this point; for instance, the music columnist Norman Lebrecht described how 'musicians were forced to leave their instruments' during the Cultural Revolution,²⁷⁶ and not surprisingly, music education, particularly in Western music, had to stop as well. When meeting visiting professor Maestro Tan Dun at Capital Normal University in 2006, he told the students of an experience when he was interviewed by the judges from the Central Conservatory during the entrance exam, after the Cultural Revolution in 1977: 'one of the examiners asked to me play a part of Mozart on the

²⁷³ Richard Curt Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China : Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1989), 40.

²⁷⁴ The editor in chief of *New Music* was Li Ling, who was the music teacher of Peng Li-yuan, the wife of China's current president Xi Jin-ping. She is a well-known folk singer; 'The 60th Anniversary of Yan'an Forum', *People Website*, accessed 11 June 2014, <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/252/8090/>.

²⁷⁵ Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China : Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music*, Preface.

²⁷⁶ Norman Lebrecht, 'A New Cultural Revolution', *Standpoint Magazine*, October 2013, <http://standpointmag.co.uk/music-october-13-a-new-cultural-revolution-norman-lebrecht-china-piano>; Norman Lebrecht, Interview with Lebrecht, Norman after Yundi Li's private recital at Harvey Nichols, Knight Bridge, London., interview by Jing-di Li, 5 April 2014.

violin, I responded “who?”’²⁷⁷ Krauss states that Madam Mao, perhaps, ‘had a soft spot in her heart for piano, which she helped save from Red Guard destruction’.²⁷⁸ Many years later, when Yin Cheng-zong, who gave the first performance in China, again, of the *Yellow River Concerto*, recalled the birth of this concerto, he said, ‘after receiving the positive feedback from the bold collaboration for three days at Tian An-men Square with the Revolutionary Beijing Opera singer Liu Chang-yu, I realized that there might be a possibility to be able to play the piano in China again.’²⁷⁹ Yin cleverly took the Square Culture²⁸⁰ route, which was potentially risky but proved effective at the same time.

In order to convince the government that the piano could be adopted and would represent the mass proletariat, as well as serving the purpose of the Communist revolution, Yin Cheng-zong decided he was going to play at the heart of the Chinese masses, in Tian An-men Square, where hundreds of thousands of people were gathering to listen to him play. Tian An-men Square is regarded as the most vital, ritualized venue within PR China; it was where Mao announced the founding of PR China, with parade ceremonies, in 1949. It is also the base for education in patriotism, and where the flag-raising ceremony is held every morning.²⁸¹ The role of piano performance was still rather limited, however, as the accompaniment of Liu Chang-yu’s Revolutionary Opera, *The Legend of the Red Lantern*, which was a significant ‘group work’,²⁸² and a ritualized red classic production, also under Madam Mao’s supervision, were approved by her and promoted nationwide,²⁸³ the piano’s era was due to start. As the ‘red flag

²⁷⁷Tan Dun gave a talk on his own music career in October 2006 at Music Department, Capital Normal University in Beijing, when I was a second year music student.

²⁷⁸ Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China : Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music*, Preface.

²⁷⁹ Ge-hui Xu, ‘Facing the Celebrities (Republished on Youtube)’, *Ifeng*, 7 October 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7CDBmpq4AI>.

²⁸⁰ ‘Square Culture’ from my translation of *guangchang wenhua* 广场文化.

²⁸¹ ‘The Flag Raising Ceremony on Tian’an Men Square’.

²⁸² ‘Group work’ is a term that can be traced back to the Yan’an era of 1937. Its core meaning was ‘the intelligence from a collective effort, the concentrated wisdom contributed by lots of people’. It was promoted after the economic Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, and was treated as a philosophical development and a cultural aspect. The book *Chinese Contemporary Literature History* by Hong Zi-cheng has provided more details in its resource list.

²⁸³ Related work – please see resource list.

bearer',²⁸⁴ she and the Cultural Revolution Group committed six musicians,²⁸⁵ including Yin, to rearrange the cantata into China's first piano concerto, in the third year of the Cultural Revolution. 'Let the piano speak the Chinese language' the composer said in a letter to Madam Mao;²⁸⁶ in return, she replied, 'keep the tune of the cantata for the piano concerto but remove the lyrics'.²⁸⁷ In this instance, Madam Mao possibly thought that the power of the music was beyond the language, or that music itself can be seen as a type of language. If the involvement of the piano was thought to replace or further the political information of the *Yellow River Cantata*, then what did the piano's involvement mean? The piano, or the *Yellow River Concerto*, must resemble collective meanings, a mutual identity as a qualified Communist, a language beyond words, a sign of nationalism. This encouragement was marked during Mao Ze-dong's talk at Yan'an Artists' Forum in May 1942.²⁸⁸ In the second volume of Mao's selected work, he explained the aim of the forum was '...in order to solve the problem of the Chinese proletariats' artistic developments, for instance, who shall be served by the workers, farmers, and proletariat soldiers? The artistic workers (work) must engage with the class struggle, become familiar with the mass people's life, so the art should serve the mass ordinary Chinese people.'²⁸⁹ This indicates that Mao stressed the 'responsibility' of cultural control from the CPC side, and emphasized the importance of the proletariat class in this process.²⁹⁰ Thus, the piano concerto must be heard by the masses. Additionally, as the 'most expressive instrument among all the Western instruments', when Yin was quoting Madam Mao,²⁹¹ 'if the piano can successfully play the loud sound of the Communist revolution, together with the orchestra, would not it lead to recognition from the West?', he realized that the instrument

²⁸⁴ 'The red flag bearer', a term that was invented during the Cultural Revolution, means the protector of the CPC and also being responsible for carrying the Communists' concept to the mass people.

²⁸⁵ The six musicians were Yin Cheng-zong, Chu Wang-hua, Liu Zhuang, Sheng Li-hong, Shi Shu-cheng and Xu Fei-xing.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ De-rong Zheng, *New China Chronicle 1949-84* (Haerbing: Dongbei Normal University Press, 1986).

²⁸⁸ 'The 60th Anniversary of Yan'an Forum'.

²⁸⁹ Ze-dong Mao, *Selected Work of Mao Ze-Dong*, vol. 2 (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1991), 98-101.

²⁹⁰ George P. Jan, 'Radio Propaganda in Chinese Villages', *Asian Survey* 5 (1967): 305-307.

²⁹¹ Xu, 'Facing the Celebrities (Republished on Youtube)'.

did not matter to Mao Ze-dong and his Party, but that the music was a significant concern. As Hamm suggested, ‘...to Mao Ze-dong, the musical/artistic content promoted by the CPC is “not designed to reflect musical tastes and preferences of the listening audience, but rather to enforce or reinforce political ideologies and to shape or mould images of the state”.’²⁹²

Madam Mao commented, after watching the premier of the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*, that she was rather pleased and confident, saying ‘there will be a great future for this [genre], it shows an important development and understanding towards Western music and instruments; most importantly, it has also contributed to Chairman Mao’s call to the nation “let the Western invention serve us”.’²⁹³ Mao ‘saw China’s population as falling into four classes: the proletariat, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie (China’s own capitalists). The revolution of necessity depends on “...the alliance of the workers and the peasants, because these two classes comprise 80 to 90 per cent of China’s population”.’²⁹⁴ Therefore, the music should be designed and disseminated to suit the audiences from those four classes on the basis of this concern.

If the Communist Party is seen to assume the role of the sender who takes the active position and is responsible for sending out music messages, such as those contained in the *Yellow River Concerto*, and the proletariat are the receiver who passively receive the selected music work from the sender, a basic left-to-right unilateral communication (or one-way) model²⁹⁵ can be set up, as shown below (Figure 5-1):

²⁹² Hamm, ‘Music and Radio in the People’s Republic of China’, 1–2.

²⁹³ In 1964 Mao first wrote *yang wei zhong yong* (in Chinese 洋为中用) to the comment on the Central Conservatory of Music. It means ‘critically accept everything from the West, let the Western invention serve us’; This demand was marked during his talk at Yan’an Artists Forum, 2nd-23rd May 1942.

²⁹⁴ Hamm, ‘Music and Radio in the People’s Republic of China’, 5.

²⁹⁵ William V Haney, ‘A Comparative Study of Unilateral and Bilateral Communication’, *Academy of Management Journal* 7, no. 2 (1964): 128.

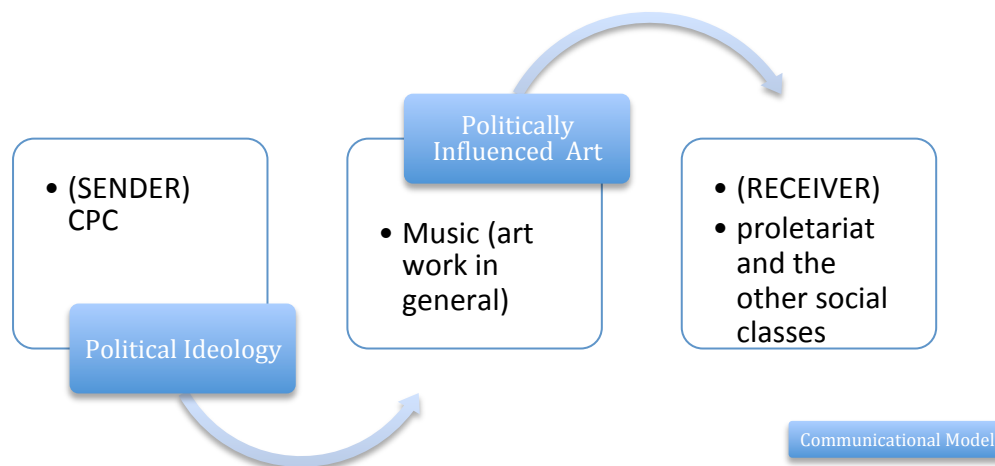


Figure 5-1 The figure shows the typical communicational model during the Cultural Revolution era, when the mass of people was subject to strict cultural control, such as on music and literature. The figure has chosen general politically influenced music work as the ‘channel’ flowing from the sender, the CPC, who designed and inserted political ideology into the work, to communicate with the targeted receiver – the proletariat and other social classes.

Since the *Yellow River Concerto*, Western art music has become a communicational tool between the CPC and the mass of Chinese people; it also serves as the channel linking the two parts, and the platform to present each side’s ideas and feedback. Through promotion of the *Yellow River Concerto*, Western art has become available and accessible to ordinary Chinese people (proletariat), and the piano, the instrument from the concerto, is now not only the dominant instrument of the *Yellow River Concerto*, but the only ‘one thing to play’ in Chinese people’s eyes.²⁹⁶ Yin was recommended to join the Communist Party after his success in playing the *Yellow River Concerto* and becoming a celebrated name in China, and was even ‘received by Mao Ze-dong’, playing to and serving the Communist ‘court’.²⁹⁷ As the first, and only, Western instrument played in China that survived and prospered after the cultural disaster, it has become a symbol representing vitality and flexibility for Chinese people.²⁹⁸ They not only

²⁹⁶ Richard Curt Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China : Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music* (USA: Oxford University Press, 1989), 149.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 133.

²⁹⁸ Yan-li Mou, ‘The Historical Value of the Dissemination of the Yellow River Piano Concerto’, *Yishubaijia* 6 (2010), <http://lib.cnki.net/cjfd/YSBJ201006044.html>.

remembered the pianist but also the melody of *The East is Red*²⁹⁹ which was specifically added into the *Yellow River Concerto* as a symbol of Mao Ze-dong himself.



Figure 5-2. Mao Ze-dong receiving Yin Cheng-zong in 1971.³⁰⁰

5.3 China's Chopin – the patriotic pianist Yundi Li

'China – it is the fastest growing nation in history, but this economic superpower, with a fifth of the world's population, has a cultural agenda too. In the last thirty years, it has enthusiastically embraced Western classical music.'

BBC Four Documentary: *A Hundred Million Musicians: China's Classical Challenge*³⁰¹

After an interview with the prestigious Chinese musician and writer Bao Hui-qiao, in the 1990s, Brahmsdt remarked, 'In the past few years, there has been a piano craze in China...not only in the big cities but also in the countryside...the piano manufacturing business cannot keep up with the demand for upright pianos,' and young pianists from conservatories say 'I practice four hours a day and six hours a

²⁹⁹ 'The Red East' was originally a Shanxi folk song about love and later the lyrics were rearranged as a *Hong Ge* for Mao Ze-dong.

³⁰⁰ *Chineseindc* website.

³⁰¹ 'A Hundred Million Musicians: China's Classical Challenge' (BBC4, 29 July 2014).

day in the summer'.³⁰² Thirty years later, along with the promotion of the *Yellow River Concerto* nationwide, the instrument has been invested with a new brand of Chinese identity. The new 'yellow river', representing post-reform China, is flowing in many Chinese people's minds in the language of the piano, as a new generation of lovers of Western classical music has emerged from China and their achievements have made an impact, globally. Earlier in 2014, I was told by James Ledgerwood, the general manager of Steinway & Sons, Hamburg, that 'China is Steinway's biggest customer. Ten years ago, we only had two staff in Mainland China. But now the conservatories in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, and Xi'an have already become "Steinway" conservatories.'³⁰³ This means that hundreds of practice rooms in China's leading music conservatories only use Steinway grand pianos for training and performance purposes. When I visited my previous college in Beijing, in 2013, a music department in a general university, I saw that eight new Steinway grand pianos were prepared for teaching and another one hundred and twenty upright Chinese self-branded pianos were located in individual rooms for practice. According to Chu, though not alluded to by Ledgerwood, a Steinway is now an ideal decoration for China's *nouveaux riches*.³⁰⁴ A handmade piano, worth £100,000, can not only advertise the owner's wealth but also offer a vivid demonstration of the owner's culturally enriched, globalised mind. Their pursuit of 'high art' could also be interpreted as an affirmation of self-worth and, possibly, a compensation for everything that has been lost since the Cultural Revolution.

However, the previously suppressed desire to learn the piano has now affected all social classes; additionally, it does not stay in China any longer. Hung quoted the piano superstar Lang Lang's words, when he was interviewed by Daniel Wakin of the *New York Times*, regarding the significant trend among Chinese musicians to enrol for study in Western music institutions: 'Two hundred years ago it was Europe. A hundred years ago it was America. Fifty years ago it was Japan.'

³⁰² Howard Brahmstedt and Patricia Brahmstedt, 'Music Education in China', *Educators Journal* 6 (May 1997): 30.

³⁰³ A casual interview with James Ledgerwood on 5 March 2014, at Laeiszhalle Hamburg, Grosser Saal.

³⁰⁴ Wang hong-yu, 'Sell Steinways to the Rich', *Nandu Zhoukan* 27 (2014), <http://m.qikan.com/ArticleContentNew.aspx?codename=ndzk&type=1&issn=0000-0947&year=2014&periodnum=27&titleid=ndzk20142720>.

And now it's China.³⁰⁵ As the world's most highly paid pianist,³⁰⁶ the Chinese pianist Lang Lang can certainly speak with authority on the subject of China's success. Yet it is not only Lang Lang who is a leading 'Chinese name' in this field. According to data collected in 2014, the soloist playing most regularly in the European classical music market is also a pianist, thirty-two years old and Chinese: pianist Yundi Li, also known as Yundi.³⁰⁷ In 2014, solely within China, the official number of his followers was over 15 million, according to his *SinaWeibo* (Chinese social media platform) account.³⁰⁸ In 2013, he completed a domestic tour of thirty cities, in comparison to his record as the most regularly performing soloist in Europe, where the figure is approximately twenty-five concerts per year. Demand to hear him play meant that tickets sold out in twelve minutes in China, including Macau.³⁰⁹ This leads to questions about what has happened in only thirty years, from the piano being a 'banned' Western instrument, to becoming the leading voice of the 'mother river' concerto³¹⁰ and the Chinese nation's favourite. It might be that the piano craze is an additional consequence of the domestic economic reform's cultural impact, but Yundi Li's contribution must also have been significant, for his name to have become equivalent to 'piano' in China. Therefore, how would he review his achievement in terms of the Chinese audience's reaction to his performances?

Tommasini, in a *New York Times* review of Yundi's recital at Carnegie Hall in 2008, argued that 'If Mr Lang is prone to Romanticised interpretations, with phrases milked and tugged for maximum expressivity, Mr Li has been cooler, more straightforward and elegantly restrained', and he admitted that Yundi 'is a

³⁰⁵ Wang hong-yu, 'Sell Steinways to the Rich', *Nandu Zhoukan* 27 (2014), <http://m.qikan.com/ArticleContentNew.aspx?codename=ndzk&type=1&issn=0000-0947&year=2014&periodnum=27&titleid=ndzk20142720>.

³⁰⁶ The information was provided by Askonas Holt when I was doing my field research in 2014.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ 'Li Yundi's Weibo Page', *Sina Weibo Website*, accessed 13 June 2014, <http://www.weibo.com/liyundi>.

³⁰⁹ The domestic box office information is provided by Beijing Poly Theatre Management Ltd; Suzy Klein, 'Freddie Kempf, Yundi', *In Tune* (BBC Radio 3, 24 February 2014).

³¹⁰ The Yellow River is referred to as the 'mother river' of China, and the Chinese nation referred to themselves as *yan huang zi sun* 炎黄子孙 (my translation: the children of the Yellow River and Emperor Yan).

stunningly talented and promising pianist, certainly connected with audiences'.³¹¹ Ivry further indicated Yundi's pianism, stating 'Mr Li achieves poetic depth with Romantic composers like Chopin and Liszt' and, in the same paper, he quoted Goldsmith's opinions of 'Mr Li's "patrician elegance" and exquisite artistry from one of the greatest talents to surface in years, nay, decades'.³¹² However, Tan offered a very different opinion in the book entitled *Gender in Chinese*, arguing that 'both pianists, in their polarized and ethicized performances of gender, resist as well as reify existing tropes in certain public imagination about the "robotic, emotionless" pitfalls of Chinese musicianship'.³¹³ A Chinese politician also provided his point of view while I was conducting fieldwork earlier this year, asking me, 'Jingdi, who do you think is a better pianist, Li Yundi or Lang Lang?' This question, by the Chinese ambassador to the United Kingdom Mr. Liu Xiao-ming, caught me off guard after Yundi's concert at the Royal Festival Hall, London in February 2014. It was a rather difficult question to answer at that moment, as we were surrounded by an entourage from the Chinese embassy. I replied that, as they are very different, it is difficult to decide who is better. I hoped I had answered satisfactorily, but realised immediately that it might be a great opportunity to ask him the same question, and hear the point of view of a Chinese diplomat. The crowd was shocked by my bold gesture but eager to hear what Mr Liu thought.

'I was invited to watch Lang Lang's concert at the Royal Albert Hall in November as well; like you saw, it was packed with seven thousand people, a mainly Western audience. Lang's passion for the piano filled the entire hall and engaged so well with the audience, no matter where they came from. He has this capacity to communicate. But tonight, the hall is much smaller, and the audience is noticeably Asian dominated, mostly young Chinese females, you might have noticed. As for Yundi, he does not talk much on the stage, and he approaches people mostly through his music. Personally, I think Lang Lang is very "open",

³¹¹ Anthony Tommasini, 'A Little Sturm Und Drang Leavens the Usual Pianism', *New York Times*, 12 October 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/13/arts/music/13yund.html?pagewanted=print>.

³¹² Benjamin Ivry, 'Why Yundi Li Got Cut', *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 November 2009, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122790914204065299>.

³¹³ Shzr Ee Tan, 'New Chinese Masculinities on the Piano: Lang Lang and Li Yundi', in *Gender in Chinese Music*, ed. Rachel Harris and Rowan Pease, *Gender in Chinese Music*. (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2013), p. 132–51.

almost like an American person, while Yundi, reserved and poetic, maybe is more suitable for Chinese audiences.’³¹⁴ Mr Liu’s answer appears to coincide with Lebrecht’s summary that ‘Lang Lang is a global brand, Yundi a national dish’.³¹⁵



Figure 5-3. My informal interview with the Chinese Ambassador to the UK, at the Royal Festival Hall, London after Yundi’s concert on 25 February 2014.

Although Mr Liu is not a professional musician or musicologist, his perspective towards the top Chinese pianists might be representative. His opinion might give an insight into a Chinese person’s preference; for example, his appreciation of the ‘poetic’ raises a question about what he meant by the term. This led to consideration about what had helped Yundi, from an ordinary iron-worker’s family, to be seen as the ‘national dish’, despite Lang Lang’s Curtis training background.³¹⁶ It is possible that the Chinese masses found him more accessible because of his pure Chinese educational background before he became famous, and his performance is emotionally more reserved. How did he begin his career as a pianist? A brief biography of Yundi must be given.

³¹⁴ Informal interview with the Chinese Ambassador of the UK, at the Royal Festival Hall London, on 25 February 2014.

³¹⁵ Julia Llewellyn Smith, ‘Lang Lang? We’ve Never Met’, *Telegraph*, 7 June 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalmusic/10863146/Lang-Lang-Weve-never-met.html>.

³¹⁶ Sir David Tang gave an opening speech about Yundi’s early life at a private event in Knightsbridge London, on 5 April, hosted by Mercury Records, 2014.

Yundi was born in 1982 in Chongqing, a second-tier industry city in southern China. It was the time when China's economic situation was just about to improve, but still, according to Yundi, in an interview in the *Telegraph*, buying a piano for his family 'was like buying a house',³¹⁷ with a 'secondhand piano for \$500– forty times his father's monthly salary'.³¹⁸ He moved to Shenzhen Art School in 1993, studying with Professor Dan Zhao-yi, a 'well-known teacher of competition winners', where he gained a full local government scholarship.³¹⁹ They also helped his mother with a job so that she could provide an income.³²⁰ As the first, and most successful, SEZ set up after the Opening Up policy in China, Shenzhen provided the 'refreshing' soil to Yundi's early career.³²¹ After his triumph in Warsaw, Yundi not only became the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference member in his hometown Chongqing, but also a national hero.³²² In 2000, at the age of 18, Yundi Li became the first ever Chinese champion of the 14th International Frederic Chopin Piano Competition.³²³ Ever since, the Chinese state-owned media has contributed towards building up Li Yundi's high profile in China.³²⁴ He was described as the 'paragon of Chinese youth, the pride of the country' by Chinese piano 'Godmother' Zhou Guang-reng, in the *People's Music Journal* in 2000, when he appeared on the cover of that issue.³²⁵ Due to the nature of his domestic training background, he was supported by the Shenzhen government before winning the prestigious Chopin Piano Competition. The self-taught expert, who won the top prize without Western study, massively boosted the confidence of the 'Chinese School', a term proposed by Chinese scholar Wei Tin-ge in 2001 just after Yundi's success in Poland.³²⁶ Additionally, the taking of a gold medal after fifteen years of the Competition also highlighted the 'value' of Yundi's unusual achievement. It is a recognition of his

³¹⁷ Llewellyn Smith, 'Lang Lang? We've Never Met'.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Tan, 'New Chinese Masculinities on the Piano: Lang Lang and Li Yundi', 134.

³²⁰ Qun-shu Gao, 'The Dream Builder - Chapter Li Yundi', 2014.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² See Fig. 2, *Yundi Weibo* website.

³²³ Yin Li and Yun Wen Zhu Yi, *Chinese Piano Myth - Yundi Li*, 1991, 57.

³²⁴ The related academic papers/journals published by the Chinese state-owned publishing house about Li Yundi can be found in the resource list.

³²⁵ Guang-reng Zhou, 'The Paragon of the Chinese Youth, the Pride of the Country', *Piano Artistry*, January 2000, Preview.

³²⁶ Ibid.

understanding of Western high art, his interpretation as an ordinary boy from a normal background who was taught via China's music educational system, by a Chinese teacher. Yet, his understanding of Chopin and his interpretation is 'tested' among the most authoritative jurors, including Martha Argerich, Arie Vardi and Victor Merzhanov; the result can be considered as evidence both of acceptance from the West and recognition of Chinese culture by the top Western musicians and artists.

Wei Tin-ge stated, in *A Report to My Motherland*, that 'Li Yundi's success is the mark of China's highest level of current domestic piano education and performance; when listening to Yundi playing Chopin's music, I almost feel Chopin was Chinese; Yundi's style is easy to approach for us, and it shares Chinese traditional poetry's artistic conception form.'³²⁷ The approach of understanding and performing Western classical music by using Chinese traditional poetry was first proposed by China's most celebrated translator and art critic Fou Lei.³²⁸ His son, Fou Ts'ong, is a well-known pianist and was a third prize winner of the Frederic Chopin Piano Competition in 1955, the first time that a Chinese gained attention at such a high level in an international piano competition.³²⁹ The competition brought the celebrated Fou family fame but also disaster, as, according to Kraus, 'Ten years later this prominent family of bourgeois intellectuals, seemingly well integrated into the new regime, had been destroyed. Fou Ts'ong was in exile, having refused to return to China from his studies in Warsaw, and his parents had become two of the most notorious suicides of the Cultural Revolution.'³³⁰ The anthology of Fou Lei's letters to Fou Ts'ong was kept away from China by Ts'ong. As a leading member of China's literati, his father Fou Lei acted as the cultural mentor of Ts'ong during the time when Ts'ong was preparing for the piano competition. At one time Lei wrote :

11 May, 1955

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ The approach was mentioned in the letters from Fou Lei to his son Fou Ts'ong. The letters were published as a collection named *The Letters of the Fou Family*, Sanlian Publishing House, 1981. The English and French versions were translated by Jin Sheng-hua, Hong Kong Chinese University.

³²⁹ The Fryderyk Chopin Institute website.

³³⁰ Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China : Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music*, 70.

You were criticizing others playing Chopin as ‘cold’...Chopin was a half classical and half romantic (person), so it is quite a challenge for modern youth. On the contrary, we Chinese people don’t have the romantic frenzy in the last century in Europe, our nationality shares the same value as the ‘Olympic Spirit’ (the highest ideals of Greek art). But meanwhile we are not too ‘romantic’, for instance, you can get the idea from those poets from Tang and Han (Dynasty) from Li Bai, and Du Fu. (Li is the most romantic one; however, in comparison to the Westerners, our taste is extremely subtle and exquisite.) So we have natural conditions to express Chopin’s work.³³¹

Lei’s approach involved embracing European music from the Romantic period, combined with the philosophical and aesthetic concerns of ancient Chinese literature as well as their traditional values. Lei expressed his understanding of Chopin’s music as not being too extreme. As Chinese musicologist Zhao Xiao-sheng indicated, ‘unlike Beethoven’s strong personality, those Sonatas such as *Pathétique* or *Appassionata*, by reading the titles of the music, you can possibly tell his personality; Chopin is less direct when he expresses his emotions through music’;³³² Yundi thinks Chopin’s music highlighted the melodies, which is very similar to Chinese traditional music.³³³

Avoiding ‘extremes’, the philosophy of emphasizing ‘balance’ is one of Confucius’s philosophical concepts, which is called *Zhongyong* (中庸) in Chinese; in English it is called ‘Doctrine of the Mean’.³³⁴ It could be said that Chopin’s patriotism (or the patriotism offered by the media in China) also agreed with the traditional and contemporary mainstream value of the state: the emotional attachment of one’s homeland (hometown) is promoted. An article entitled ‘Chopin’s Hometown’ is a must-learn essay for all first year high school students in

³³¹ Fu Lei, *The Letters of the Fu Family* (Beijing, 1981), 107.

³³² Fang-xuan Dong, ‘An Interview with Dr. Zhao Xiao-Sheng’, *Xuanchuan Education*, accessed 12 March 2012, <http://www.dfxj.gov.cn/dfxjw/xjw/jdysjz/userobject1ai20570.html>.

³³³ Rikki Chao, ‘Li Yundi: The International Musical Card of China’, *Chinese Artists* 8, no. 12 (2012): 27–32.

³³⁴ The term *Doctrine of the Mean* is an idea of Confucianism and also a title of the four key books of Confucian philosophy.

China; it is in the Chinese literature text book approved by the state,³³⁵ and it underlines Chopin's patriotism from the educational angle to teenage students, to foster a sense of national pride by indicating 'Chopin's music is the strongest link between the Polish nation and art; his homeland inspired him to compose folk-style music such as 'Mazurek'.³³⁶ *luoyeguigen* (落叶归根) literally means when a plant is dying, the leaves will fall towards its roots, and it is a metaphor to show that when aged, one should return to the place where one was born, as has been the traditional value of Chinese society since the Song dynasty (960-1279).³³⁷ Additionally, in every Chopin score printed in China, a sentence is always printed on the overview: 'Schumann said "Chopin is a cannon hidden in the garden"'.³³⁸ Ordinary people are not likely to associate Chopin with patriotism until the education which introduces it. Within the context of Chopin's situation, the cannon can be understood as a symbol representing revolution and self-independence. The connection between music and Chinese classical literature from a historical point of view is worth noticing. The traditional classic poems are categorized in different genres, such as *shi*, *ci*, and *qu*, and they are all written with specifically required tune patterns.³³⁹ *Qu* is a form of poem but it also means music or melody, so the production of a *qu* normally involves a joint work of music and lyrics. And similarly, in the West, during the Romantic period, various composers had caused the link between the poem and Romanticism to be problematical, for example, in the appearance of the symphonic poems composed by Liszt and Schumann. However, Lei was trying to lead this link directly to the concept of nationalism. Similarities may exist between Chinese traditional literature and the Romantic composers, such as Chopin; however, Lei proposed to view, and to value, the boundaries of Western Romantic music as being the result of 'a mediation of political status and a community's term of self-definition'.³⁴⁰ In other words, according to Lei, the identity of the musician combined with the emotion inspired by 'Romantic

³³⁵ *1st Year Chinese Literature Text Book* (Zhejiang: Jiangsu Educational Group, 2007), 36–39.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ Shi-zhen Wang, 'Mingfengji(鸣凤记) Chapter 38', in *The Transmission of the Lamp Mingfengji (鸣凤记)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian Publishing House, 2009).

³³⁸ Chopin, *The Full Work of Chopin*, vi (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 1992).

³³⁹ *Ancient Chinese Dictionary* (Ancient Chinese Dictionary Group, n.d.), 173.

³⁴⁰ Lei, *The Letters of the Fu Family*, 39.

exaltation' is the fuel of nationalism. Chopin is spoken of as being a patriotic musician; his Romantic thoughts have not always been about love of a female, but have expressed the great extent of his love towards his country and people.³⁴¹ Yundi Li, as the most celebrated Chinese pianist, was chosen to be the ambassador of the Shanghai Universal Exposition in 2010, where he told the public that 'I admire the passion of Chopin's patriotism; this spirit has coincided with Chinese traditional classical poetry for thousands of years, this spirit is also part of the spiritual world. Music without boundaries (大乐无疆), I want to bring joy to the world with music.'³⁴² Yundi also views Chopin's music as being linked with traditional Chinese literature, as Lei proposed, and he was prepared to put this into practice by his own efforts in his performance. He has been received as a musical patriotic icon of China, described by the *Shanghai Daily* as an 'elegant patrician and young romantic whose music is poetry'.³⁴³ Kon, from *The London Insider*, even described his audience in London as containing 'patriotic Chinese fans turning up to catch a rare performance by Li Yundi in the UK'.³⁴⁴ In referring to the audience as being patriotic, the press might simply be referring to support for a fellow countryman, though his performances do attract unusually large groups of Chinese, even in a foreign country. However, a huge portion of Yundi's international programme has contained Chopin's repertoire combined with Chinese folk rearrangements, possibly suggesting that Yundi's performance might provoke patriotic feeling. It may also be possible that his pianism and his interpretation were read by Chinese members of the audience as having a significantly Chinese character. When he was interviewed by *DCA Hamburg*, Yundi also spoke of his wish, and intention, to include more work by Chinese composers in his repertoire, hoping to introduce Western audiences to their work.³⁴⁵ He stated his belief that music may be understood worldwide as 'an international language'.³⁴⁶

³⁴¹ Wang, Chopin: Love of His Country above Anything Else.

³⁴² Hui-feng Yang, 'Li Yundi: "the Chinese Wind" Blowing Between the Black and White Keys', *China Culture*, 17 May 2012, http://cul.china.com.cn/renwu/2012-05/17/content_5014038.htm.

³⁴³ Wang, 'Li Yundi - China's Prince of the Piano', *Shanghai Daily*, 6 September 2010.

³⁴⁴ Boon Koh, 'Review: Piano Maestro Li Yundi, Royal Festival Hall', *The London Insider*, 16 March 2010, <http://www.london-insider.co.uk/2010/03/review-piano-maestro-li-yundi-royal-festival-hall/>.

³⁴⁵ Godbersen, 'Interview with Yundi Li'.

³⁴⁶ Klein, 'Freddy Kempf, Yundi'.

Chopin's music remains the most regularly played, and taught, repertoire in all the best Chinese conservatories and learning it is necessary for any student who wants to master the instrument in Chinese musical institutions.³⁴⁷ Yundi's successful international career, from an ordinary family background, has inspired more parents to support their children to learn the piano as a pathway to understanding Western culture as well as their native culture. Piano music is now a symbol associated with the nation's economic growth, the rise of the middle class and China's acceptance by the West, as well as a sense of nationalism. It is also a language the younger Chinese generation are eager to learn, beyond race and identity. Yundi explained, 'When I am playing on the stage, I can feel the audience are connected with me, they can hear what I am thinking; in China, the typical audience are very young, they get really excited when seeing me, I am treated as a superstar, but in Europe, the age group and the response are very different.'³⁴⁸

Since 2000, Yundi has been involved in performing at the country's most prestigious national events. He was invited three times to play on the most-watched TV programme in China, the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, which attracted over a billion viewers.³⁴⁹ He dedicated a Chinese folk song at the BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] Summit in 2011, when representing China.³⁵⁰ When the red songs (*Hong Ge*) were promoted across the mainland, Yundi published his first Chinese piano album *The Red Piano (Hongse gangqin)*. However, his career in China is heavily connected with the CPC's political situation, ever since the moment he was recommended to participate in the 14th Chopin Piano Competition by the Ministry of Culture. It is possible that Yundi and his piano serve as a new political language to foster the nation's pride, as he now appears to be the state's favourite 'court pianist'. How does he stay closely connected to the Chinese audience, inspire millions of children to play the piano and become the 'Chinese Chopin'?

³⁴⁷ My fieldwork with the lecturers from the Xinjiang Institute of the Arts, Xi'an (Shanghai, Central China, and Sichuan) Conservatory of Music suggested that Chopin's piano works are the most widely taught and performed for piano major students.

³⁴⁸ Godbersen, 'Interview with Yundi Li'.

³⁴⁹ Llewellyn Smith, 'Lang Lang? We've Never Met'.

³⁵⁰ 'Li Yundi Performing at BRICS Conference', *Sohu Website*, accessed 14 June 2014, <http://music.yule.sohu.com/20110415/n305868464.shtml>.

It is a question of Yundi's collective identity as he is not solely a pianist, and each individual self is normally said to be composed of multiple categories and roles.³⁵¹ Firstly, gender classification must be considered, as Smith considers that it is 'universal and pervasive'.³⁵² Parakilas and Loesser both emphasized that the piano is predominantly played by females;³⁵³ however, Ying argues that 'gender imbalance' is part of the world of concert pianists.³⁵⁴ Yundi is commonly described as the 'prince of the piano',³⁵⁵ and Tan applied the 'neotraditional projections of the *wen* and *wu* model'³⁵⁶ to assist in the analysis of the pianist's costume, affectations, and gestures. Tan proposed the *caizi* (fragile scholar: meaning handsome scholar associated with romance) description of Yundi, and traced it from the origin of traditional Chinese opera.³⁵⁷ Although feminism is rising in various areas in China, in the classical music world, performance is still dominated by the male pianist. Yundi has been given the title of 'male God', and has appeared on the cover of fashion magazines, such as *Fashion Bazaar*, *Vogue*, and *COSMOBRIDE* (Figure 5-4). There is no doubt he has been shaped to be a fashion icon in Asia, the female audience forming the majority of his followers. However, in 2012, after the collaboration with a well-known pop star, Leehom Wang, he was involved in news reports suggesting a possible homosexual relationship. This rumour quickly disseminated among Chinese circles, and resulted in the expansion of his audience group.³⁵⁸

³⁵¹ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1993), 4–11.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁵³ Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History* (Dover Publications, 1990), 6.

³⁵⁴ Loo Fung Ying, 'The Issues of Gender Imbalance amongst Concert Pianist: Selected International Piano Competitions', *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research* 3, no. 3 (2013): 221.

³⁵⁵ Tan, 'New Chinese Masculinities on the Piano: Lang Lang and Li Yundi', 140; Llewellyn Smith, 'Lang Lang? We've Never Met'.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁷ Geng Song, *The Fragile Scholar* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 16–18.

³⁵⁸ Wang, 'Li Yundi - China's Prince of the Piano'.



Figure 5-4. Yundi appeared on the cover page on *COSMOBRIDE* magazine in July, 2014.

Consideration must also be given to the pianist's local and regional identity, as well as his social class. As previously discussed, the pianist's regular appearance on state-owned media means that he is first seen as the prestigious, talented court musician, from a working class background, with his 'made in China' brand, who became a world-renowned pianist through his own effort and generous support from the government. As a national hero, he carries the responsibility to spread a positive force, *zhengnengliang*,³⁵⁹ to encourage the younger generations; this is part of building the 'harmonious society', and is in response to the CPC's political concept initiated after the 18th National Congress of the CPC.³⁶⁰ His background and current achievements, including the superstar life style, make him very well connected to all social classes; for example, the 'Red' aristocracies, namely the

³⁵⁹ 'Li Yundi in Chongqing', *Xinhua News Agency*, accessed 31 January 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/video/2013-01/30/c_124300536.htm.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

central Communist members of the Party, have appreciated his pianism since 2000, and the direct, commercial work relationship with brands such as Deutsche Grammophon (DG), Rolex and Benz commands the attention of the bourgeoisie. For the mass audience of the proletariat, or the working class, as the majority of the society, Yundi remains a positive and inspiring project. His story is like a personal 'Cultural Great Leap Forward' movement, to reflect his self-achievement in terms of cultural depth after the reform. A further aspect of the pianist's class identity, in a sense, has weakened the conflicts between classes; the masses enjoy his music and the national pride coming from the common identity, and the ruling class requires his music to be the channel enabling them to associate with the mass audience, as the audience for music now receives specific political messages. His relationship with society is pervasive, but the appearance 'often proves to be deceptive'.³⁶¹ Leading the life of a superstar, living as the 'Chinese Chopin', his audience is massive and diverse, but there may be a deeper reason why this dedicated and patriotic pianist has become a symbol of national pride, therefore more research is needed.

5.4 Conclusion

From the historical point of view, as the representation of the exotic Western art music, the piano was the symbol which represented the privilege of the despotic hierarchy in ancient Chinese history. In 20th century China, the piano offered a different meaning and, though access was limited for the proletariat, it became a symbol of identity recognition through the piano concerto *Yellow River*, as the representation of Western art music. Though this was manipulated to express the Communist Party's political fervour as a tool to join the nation, it encouraged Chinese national pride, according to Mao, and offered a mutual identity to all Chinese people as the children of their mother river, the yellow river, (simplified: 炎黄子孙).

³⁶¹ Smith, *National Identity*, 4–11.

Politically Influenced Music in Post Reform China

The political and social connotation of the piano extended again, after China opened its door to embrace the outside world. Through the bridge of the piano, the Chinese audience might have been helped to hear more Western music while the instrument gained the fervent support of a mass audience across the country, who shared common aesthetic values. Therefore, as a traditional Western music form with mass popularity in China, it was perhaps also a channel for China to communicate with the West, to gain Western notice and acceptance. The piano was promoted to more and more middle class Chinese families after the success of Chinese pianists, such as Yundi Li, across the globe. Additionally, the action of promoting Western art music is seen as a recognition of Other's culture, a demonstration of sharing a modern identity, together, to enhance China's multiple, cultural faces and to illustrate new cultural awareness in domestic as well as international discourses.

Chapter 6 The Red Piano

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the role of Western art music and its musicians, in post reform China, will be explored through focusing on the example of China's national hero, pianist Yundi Li. The discussion will draw on the historical background of contemporary China and the process of Western art music distribution by Chinese musicians, to both domestic and international audiences. Such music is promoted by the Chinese Communist Party, with the intention of delivering political ideology, as well as being a transcultural process to influence the outside world. How does Western art music earn its political symbolism in post reform China? Can Chinese audiences receive the message? Also, how does the West react to this?

In answering the above questions, to establish understanding of how Chinese classical musicians balance political and social expectations against different cultural and social backgrounds, recent original fieldwork experience with Yundi Li will be documented, crossing the field from mainland China to Europe. The chapter will comprise three sections: The first part will document my fieldwork from China to Europe, comparing the different influences of the same music piece played by Yundi during the tour, within specific cultural and social contexts; the value of fieldwork from the original research findings and the effect of identity and 'field' shift, from an outsider to insider, will also be discussed. The second part will focus on the story of Yundi's Chinese recording of the *Red Piano*; the background to the record will be examined, focusing on the Chinese composer Zhang Zhao's technique of transferring Eastern aesthetic values and ideology through Western compositional work form. An in-depth interview will also be provided. The third part of the chapter will discuss the musical dissemination process of *the Red Piano*, together with the Chinese audience's online reviews, in an attempt to answer why and how it has been labelled as the 'red' piano to the public, from the mass communicational approach.

6.2 Fieldwork from home and foreign countries with Yundi: China's new soft power

When examining transculturation of musical culture from an historical context, Yayoi Uno Everett argues, neither ethnic groups nor geography can define the boundaries, '...the dislocation and disjunctures brought on by cultural exchange have profoundly altered the demographics, ideologies, and cultural working of musical practices.'³⁶² Bonnie C. Wade further pointed out that the music of well-known 20th century composers, including John Cage, Tan Dun and Henry Cowell, constructs the musical landscape of the world from the East to West.³⁶³ Additionally, Frederick Lau, argues that the 'Eastern musical elements', that stem from traditional Asian folk music, are equally influential and beneficial in constructing a world music map for Western musicians, during the process when Chinese or Asian musicians were trained in the West and, by disseminating their musical culture, they have also contributed to change the West.³⁶⁴ Since the economic reform, China is not satisfied to have economic trade with the outside world only, musical movements have also tended to coincide with intensive modernisation of Chinese social systems.³⁶⁵

Therefore, there must be a debate: during the process of the cultural exchange in the world discourse, is Western art music China's new business card or, a publicity tool?

President Xi Jin-ping has vowed to promote China's cultural soft power by disseminating modern Chinese values and showing the charm of Chinese culture to the world...the Chinese Dream means the Chinese people's recognition and pursuit of values, the building of China into a well-off society in an all-round way and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese

³⁶²Yayoi Uno Everett and Frederick Lau (Eds), 'Intercultural Synthesis in Postwar Western Art Music: Historical Contexts, Perspectives, and Taxonomy'.

³⁶³Ibid.

³⁶⁴Lau, 'Fusion or Fission: The Paradox and Politics of Contemporary Chinese Avant-Garde Music'.

³⁶⁵Andrew F. Jones, *Yellow Music: Media Culture Colonial Modernity In The Chinese Jazz Age* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001, n.d.).

nation...mass media, groups and individuals should play their roles in displaying the charm to the world....³⁶⁶

Chinese President Xi gave this important speech at a session of members of the Political Bureau of the CPC's Central Committee on New Year's Day, 2014. He mentioned two core concepts, the promotion of cultural soft power and the new political slogan of pursuing the Chinese dream. What is soft power? How does President Xi define it? How does it engage with cultural dissemination to the outside world? And how does it affect the Chinese cultural order? I intend to answer these key questions in this section.

The definition of soft power, according to Joseph Nye, is that 'A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics...it is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments...You can attract and co-opt them to want what you want – you also need to get others to buy your values.'³⁶⁷ Since the Opening Up and Reform policy, in 1978, China experienced economic growth for two decades. Regarding this, Nye emphasized that 'The rise of China's soft power...is an issue that needs to be urgently addressed.'³⁶⁸ Nye spoke of China's cultural traditions as starting to become an attraction in a global sense, but stressed that this was held back by certain very serious limitations.³⁶⁹ Understanding this, in 2011 the Chinese former President Hu Jin-tao called on the CPC, during its 17th Congress, to '...invest more resources in increasing China's soft power'.³⁷⁰ On this account, the state's top think tank, the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, proposed a critical solution through an analysis of America's soft power. According to Nye's review, the US government, after recognizing criticism of elements of its popular culture worldwide, had worked to counteract this by '...focusing on express high-quality artistic achievements as well as the

³⁶⁶ Xuequan Mu, 'Xi: China to Promote Cultural Soft Power', *Xinhua News Agency*, 1 January 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-01/01/c_125941955.htm.

³⁶⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 5, http://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Soft_Power.html?id=sFNfYvNtw5AC&redir_esc=y.

³⁶⁸ Nye, 'The Rise of China's Soft Power' Op-Ed, *Wall Street Journal Asia* December 29, 2005 (n.d.), http://belfercenter.hks.harvard.edu/publication/1499/rise_of_chinas_soft_power.html.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Jin-tao Hu, 'Increase the Country's Soft Power', *China Daily*, 21 October 2011, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/dfpd/17jlzqh/2011-10/21/content_13949502.htm.

diversity to illustrate that American culture is not only synonymous with popular culture, but also with high culture and elite culture has great appeal and influence.³⁷¹ An article entitled 'Let High Art Embrace the Mass People' was quickly published after that, in the *Guangming Daily* and on the official CPC website, by the permanent president of the National Theatre, Deng Yi-jiang.³⁷²

Two arguments were proposed by Deng to benefit this type of socialist society which has specific Chinese characteristics: that Chinese art should be for the whole of the Chinese population and that the 'National Theatre has the responsibility of promoting high art for mass people'.³⁷³ Additionally, Liu underlined the connection between high art and China's soft power: 'GaoyaYishu [my translation: high art] of a nation (or country) is the essence of all arts, it is a model to represent the nation's aesthetic taste and ideas, it can express the national spirit as well as fostering the nation's pride, it can be seen as a clear influence on politics.'³⁷⁴ Therefore, taking this into account, in the provision of high art, in the National Theatre or elsewhere, the artistic material is part of the communicational process, demonstrating the people's aesthetic preferences and shaping and stimulating the population's sense of identity as a nation. Up to this point, the communication remains within China but beyond this nation, as the highest artistic achievements are introduced to the world, they can carry forward China's national identity and, possibly, communicate its value; hence, the notion of soft power comes into play. The political call for the Chinese dream from Xi Jin-ping is understood, domestically, as a cultural rejuvenation which at the same time helps the Party to locate its cultural regime and discourse within the global situation. If high art is only an implement to help to achieve the Chinese dream in the international world, through China's cultural soft power, then the package of

³⁷¹ Bai-ling Li, 'The Analysis of the National Cultural Soft Power Constructional Path of America', *Contemporary World and Socialism Journal* 6, no. 12 (2011), http://www.cctb.net/llyj/xswtyj/lld/201203/t20120312_32720.htm.

³⁷² 'Let High Art Embrace the Masses', *CPC Website*, n.d., <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/16487789.html>.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Han-zhi Liu, 'The Soft Power of High Art', *Creation and Review* 4 (2013), <http://www.cqvip.com/qk/81401a/201304/45020568.html>.

China's own traditional culture and piano artistry was designed to be read and received as an international language which is potentially popular among people from the West to the East.

According to the *Korea Daily*, the connection was drawn between the soft power of top musicians and that of electronic goods exported from China. The review stated that 'Chinese pianists Yundi Li and Lang Lang were both born after the economic reform, and they helped China to improve its impression on the world with 'Made In China' ...Their achievements in the high art region have added more value yet to the best choice of 'Made in China'.³⁷⁵ In 2013, Yundi Li's themed concert tour, the China Piano Dream Tour, offered over thirty concerts within two months, becoming the largest classical music tour in China. The concerts in the Beijing Worker's Stadium had over ten thousand people attending, and the whole tour attracted an audience of fifty-six thousand.³⁷⁶ It is rare to have such a large-scale tour in China, and two thousand tickets were sold out within ten minutes in Dong Guan city, in Guangdong Province. The stage in the Beijing Worker's Stadium was decorated with colourful laser lights and large LED screens, and he sat in the middle dressed as Napoleon Bonaparte. Was this an unusual, more accessible, commercial application from pop culture, in the promotion of the country's soft power to a national audience? According to McQuail's theory, '...the source does not seek to transmit information or beliefs, but simply to capture the attention of an audience, regardless of communicative effect.'³⁷⁷ That is to say, perhaps, in this case, that the concern for the pianist is purely to attract the communicational influence with the audience, with the assistance of his stage costume in order to achieve certain effects. What is the information he is trying to deliver? On this account, audiences in China can be seen as both participants and the targets of this communicational process. If music as the material is strongly related to the background and previous life experiences of the pianist, therefore 'red piano', as a genre native to China since the *Yellow River Concerto*, can even be translated as

³⁷⁵ Liang Yin, 'China's Soft Power Taking Off', *Korean Daily*, 22 September 2008, <http://gb.cri.cn/18824/2008/09/22/2225s2253443.htm>.

³⁷⁶ Data gathered from my fieldwork with Yundi in 2013.

³⁷⁷ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 360–365.

classic, traditional folk songs and revolutionary tunes. The pianist's interpretation of that, meaning Yundi's cultural identity with the Chinese audience, how they pursue national pride and unity, and the political purpose fed by the CPC, are all reflected and fulfilled in 'Red Piano'. On the other hand, the overseas audience, who are not usually familiar with the meaning of 'red', may view the performance purely as spectators. The word red, to them, may refer to the introduction of a specific Communist ideology, a tune from the Far East, or a taste of Communism provided by a westernized Chinese pianist but with a strong national soul.

6.3 Fieldwork from home and foreign country: a Matter of the Role

In the course of subsequent analysis of materials collected during the research, I have realized that the situation of the national, classical music superstar is more complicated and detailed than I imagined, previously. Several factors have been identified which may apply to most classical musicians though some have specific Chinese characteristics:

1. Yundi is a concert pianist but, in China, top classical musicians, such as Lang Lang, appear to be at the top of the social circle, attending luxury brand launch parties, as well as being present at the most important diplomatic occasions. For instance, a performance by Yundi was required by President Hu Jin-tao at the BRICS summit in May 2011.³⁷⁸ Lang Lang also played at the 2008 Beijing Olympics opening ceremony.
2. Yundi's story inspired millions of Chinese families; young people form a large proportion of his domestic audiences.³⁷⁹
3. Yundi's records are more popular than pop music on the mainland.³⁸⁰ The average cost of a ticket for one of his concerts in a Chinese second-tier city is equivalent to £50, which is in the top range for China.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ 'Li Yundi Performing at BRICS Conference'.

³⁷⁹ During the China Piano Dream Tour, I noticed the large number of teenagers in the audiences, and a sign saying 'children under 1.5m are not allowed in' in each entrance to each of the music halls. Many parents attended the concert even with toddlers, so Yundi decided to host several free master classes, for the young piano learners to attend; 'Yundi Li and the Chinese Dream', *China Daily*, accessed 15 June 2013, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hqgj/jryw/2013-06-15/content_9318374.html.

As a researcher, I wondered what effect the above information might have on Yundi's consideration of his own identity, and on his behaviour as the 'country's pride'? In particular, what is the feedback from the foreign audience about him? In September 2013, I was given an opportunity to have an interview with the pianist for a state-owned publishing house, where I was collecting data for this research.

I arrived at the Poly Theatre after a strict security check and permission to attend Yundi's rehearsal for the opening concert of the China Piano Dream Tour. Yundi arrived with his manager, personal assistants, the manager of the Poly Theatre, journalists and a photographer. At this time Yundi's attitude was extremely serious and professional. I had previously met Yundi in March 2007, at the Poly Theatre which is located in central Beijing both in terms of geography and politics, and where the country's most significant music festivals and programmes take place. I was undertaking a management role as part of my college internship for the third anniversary of the CCTV Music Channel and was asked by the director, Jia Qing-lian, to assist Yundi's performance, Liszt's *No.1 Piano Concerto*, which was accompanied by the National Philharmonic Orchestra and broadcast to the whole nation. As the national hero, Yundi was allocated the Number One Dressing Room. From September 2013, I began to work closely as an observer with Yundi and his team, from his China Piano Dream Tour, in 2013, to his Fantasy Emperor Tour in European countries, in 2014. The following photographs and illustrations were taken during the tour in China.

³⁸⁰ 'Amazon Classical Music Sales Chart in Mainland China: Li Yundi Takes All Top 11 Places', *Sina Weibo Website*, accessed 14 June 2014, <http://ent.sina.com.cn/y/2014-01-03/15114074515.shtml>.

³⁸¹ 'Overpriced Concert Tickets', *Renmin Website*, accessed 28 October 2013, <http://culture.people.com.cn/n/2013/1024/c87423-23309017.html>.



Figure 6-1. Li Yundi playing at the Beijing Worker's Stadium, for over 10,000 people, in 2013. Photo by Yumi studio, provided by Yundi.



Figure 6-2. The audience queuing for his autograph during the China Piano Dream Tour, in 2013. Photo by the author.



Figure 6-3. The map of the largest piano tour in Chinese history. The China Piano Dream Tour lasted two months from September to October 2013, and covered 30 domestic cities. The programme of the concerts normally contained half Western classical pieces and half Chinese folk tune rearrangements from his *Red Piano* album. Photo by Yundimusic.

The domestic series concerts have been extremely successful and have created a ‘Yundi’ effect throughout the country, where people queue for a concert ticket, and queue for a signed record for hours, as Figure 6-2 shows. Yundi invited me to assist his European tour, starting from London in February 2014. I regarded this social participant observation as fruitful fieldwork experience; as Chou indicated ‘Participant-observation is undoubtedly the fundamental fieldwork method of ethnomusicology.’³⁸² However, my experience differed from the historical definition as, although I am living in the West, I am not a westerner; the purpose of entering the ‘field’, essentially, involved being part of the activities happening in the pianist’s professional career as an outsider. Although a world-renowned pianist, he had never worked with a field worker before, so the data I collected and the ‘culture’ I witnessed, studied, and documented was both original and first hand. At the same time, my role had changed automatically; it required me to choose an acceptable social role, as more such roles were available to me, compared to the

³⁸² Chiener Chou, ‘Experience and Fieldwork: A Native Researcher’s View’, *Ethnomusicology* 3 (2002): 456.

China Piano Dream Tour. Therefore, my role was not only an observer, but, additionally, I was from his native land, spoke the same language and had shared a similar music educational background. I participated in his tour as an insider from a foreign field, as an assistant and family friend. However, from the research point of view, Koning pointed out that each researcher '...should decide which role is the most profitable in terms of opportunities to collect useful data; he also must know which roles are open to him on the basis of his competence...depends on his preparation and on his policy in the field.'³⁸³ Indeed, when I was purely 'observing' Yundi's China Piano Dream Tour and conducting interviews, I was watching, collecting data, and interviewing from the different perspectives of the concert's reception, the effect that the music brought into the audience and the society, and the decoded political information which was offered mainly for the sake of mass dissemination. I was in a relatively close position to the research object, still, I was an outsider, therefore, how much of the data that I collected from the pianist, and the people who worked with him, was reliable? In Merton's opinion, it is possibly 'Insider truths that counter Outsider untruths and Outsider truths that counter Insider untruths.'³⁸⁴ The conflict between insider and outsider is significant; in the Europe tour, when I was recognized as an insider, the access to the research object was more open and available, and the role of serving as his translator and assistant offered me the power of special insight into those '...matters necessarily obscure to others, thus possessed of penetrating discernment'.³⁸⁵ For instance, some Chinese magazines were trying to set up telephone interviews while the pianist was working intensively on his film funded by public money, in Hamburg. We were given a question from the press, asking what Yundi's definition of entertainment was, and a meeting was called to discuss his answer. An assistant commented, 'Entertainment is Chopin's *Fantasia Impromptu*, you must enjoy it when it arrives.' He added, '*Fantasia Impromptu* was a well presented piece in the past by Yundi when he had a really successful concert in Hong Kong, lots of people still remember that. And the

³⁸³ Jos Koning, 'The Fieldworker as Performer: Fieldwork Objectives and Social Roles in County Clare, Ireland', *Ethnomusicology* 3 (1980): 417.

³⁸⁴ Robert K. Merton, 'Insider and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge', *American Journal of Sociology* 1 (1972): 11.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

advantage of this piece is that the audience doesn't have to be professional to be able to understand it. This magazine is for mass dissemination, we need to consider who is reading it, and mentioning Chopin would still put Yundi in the high art category and remind them Yundi is the only "Chopin" winner from China.³⁸⁶

However, only two hours later, after the discussion, the editor received Yundi's official definition of entertainment: it was a quotation from Mencius which was 'Entertainment is sharing, the pleasure of playing the music for oneself is not as good as sharing the music with others.'³⁸⁷ The quotation was a very clever solution: first of all, it engaged well with the purpose of the magazine for the mass media, as the idea of 'sharing' can be read as a friendly gesture as well as an encouragement to help people to receive and understand Western classical music from Yundi. It also matches with his general marketing positioning as '...the piano ambassador of Western classical music'.³⁸⁸ Secondly, the quotation from the ancient Chinese philosophy expressed the values held within traditional culture as sharing is considered as a virtue in Chinese society. Thirdly, if analysing this quotation from a linguistic point of view, the character for 'music' (乐) is a heteronym; when it is pronounced as 'le', the meaning is 'happy'. From this sense, it means that music is happiness, and sharing will increase its concentration. The sentence looks neat and meaningful, yet it matches with the mainstream value '...to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' by '...protecting and promoting the traditional culture', according to Xi Jin-ping.³⁸⁹ Later, the magazine printed Yundi's quotation with the pianist's permission, after the group work by his consultants. This might be seen as a good example of publicity for the musician, but even this type of information or strategy may seem secretive to some people, and in the role of researcher, for instance, face-to face interviews might not be as accurate, or reliable, as the researcher might have intended.

³⁸⁶ Jin Li-wang, 'Li Yundi: Chinese Piano Dream', 17 February 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/mrdx/2014-02/17/c_133119746.htm.

³⁸⁷ This is my translation. The original words were '独乐乐不如众乐乐', originally from Mencius•lianghuiwangxia (孟子- 梁惠王下)

³⁸⁸ Klein, 'Freddy Kempf, Yundi'.

³⁸⁹ Jin-ping Xi, 'The Talk of "Revival Road"', *Xinhua News Agency*, 29 December 2012, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2012-11/29/c_113852724.htm.

This is perhaps the advantage of being an insider; the access difficulties would be decreased, and it would allow the researcher to position himself/herself in a relatively objective position, making it easier for the researcher to collect profitable data for the purpose of the research. However, if the living artist feels their data is highly sensitive or related to confidential business matters, then the researcher should be extra careful in respect for and protection of the data. Additionally, the transition of identity from an outsider to insider was subtle but significant. The research objective will not announce the researcher's intention to become familiar with the subjects of the study but the message will become clear, as the research continues; the involvement of the researcher will gradually realize the changing process. When I started to assist Yundi's tour from London, I did not meet him before and after that concert in person, but by the end of the tour, I was acting as his personal assistant. It was a matter of recognition: when the researcher has been conducting the fieldwork for a long time, one must become an insider, but within a work relationship like this, the research subject still regards the researcher as an outsider, or someone inside his society, but not yet an insider.

My role transition mostly happened during the fieldwork on 4th and 5th March 2014, when I participated in the filming of the mainstream charity movie *The Dream Builder - Chapter Yundi Li* by GaoQun-shu. As the translator for the director and the filming team from Germany, I was responsible for interpreting the director's opinions when working with the team, for instance, when preparing the transcript of the film.³⁹⁰ This film selected three leading male figures from separate areas of China: a billionaire Pan Shi-yi; footballer ZhengZhi; and pianist Yundi Li. The three are similar because they all come from ordinary backgrounds, they became successful (possibly wealthy as well) through hard work, and they earned respect from society through kindness and generosity. Director GaoQun-shu, who is a specialist in engaging Chinese patriotism through the international language of films, also enjoys a successful international career. He received the most prestigious Golden Horse award at a film festival in Taiwan, for a film entitled *Tokyo Trial*, which presented the historical trial of a Chinese member of the Judges of the

³⁹⁰The translated original filming transcript by the author can be found in the appendix.

International Military Tribunal for the Far East after the surrender of Japan, after the second World War.³⁹¹ *The Dream Builder - Chapter Yundi Li*, according to the director, required three locations: Chongqing, Shenzhen, and Hamburg. The film was funded and promoted by public money, to interpret the 'Chinese Dream', which is the most popular mainstream political slogan of the Communist government.

The director's first concern was 'How to tell the mass Chinese audience a specific story of a successful Chinese pianist, Yundi, within ten minutes, and make the audience respond to the story and inspire them to chase their own dream'. Gao's answer was to express the common 'attitudes, perception and sentiments'³⁹² that connected to the native Chinese people. The filming locations were key: three cities were chosen, starting with the second-tier city of Chongqing in Sichuan Province, where the pianist was born.³⁹³ Shenzhen, China's first and most successful SEZ was chosen by Deng Xiao-ping himself, and Yundi was fostered and funded by the Shenzhen government when he won the international prize.³⁹⁴ Thirdly, in Gao's opinion, 'When you walk on the streets of Hamburg, you would think, this place has developed so well, people look peaceful and satisfied with their life.'³⁹⁵ Germany's classical music tradition is recognized as a cultural symbol to Chinese people too, a sign of their 'soft power' in the world; Hamburg is also the home of Steinway. This might inspire Chinese audiences to cherish their traditional culture, and develop it to become the Chinese 'soft power' while still opening their minds to the West. Listing the cities to local Chinese people, from a second-tier city to a successful economic zone, Hamburg is the most developed city among the three in terms of economic and cultural development.

In order to demonstrate the power of history and culture, to create a contrast between modern development and historical preservation, possibly inspiring the audience to create their own image of China, the information was expressed and

³⁹¹ 'Tokyo Trial Film Enjoys Big Success', *People Website*, accessed 3 April 2014, http://english.people.com.cn/200609/19/eng20060919_304080.html.

³⁹² Smith, *National Identity*, 20.

³⁹³ 'Yundi Biography', *Deutsche Grammophon Website*, accessed 10 May 2014, <http://www.deutschegrammophon.com/en/artist/yundi/biography>.

³⁹⁴ *BBC News website*.

³⁹⁵ Data collected during the fieldwork in Hamburg.

delivered via language based on Chinese ethnicity, to attract the audience's attention. Historical and symbolic cultural links were highlighted at Hamburg's city hall; this most historic building is located at the centre of a scene in the film,³⁹⁶ where Yundi is standing still in front of it as the camera slowly turns around him. The background changes as the fast traffic flows past, to reflect the peaceful building and Yundi's facial expression which resembles a typical Daoism Master,³⁹⁷ highlighting his 'poetic pianism', as well as providing a contrast to express his inner pursuit of his dream, to be 'peaceful but constantly strive for self-perfection'.³⁹⁸ At the same time he says: 'The experience of studying in Germany made me closer to the soul of the Masters, which also allows me to perform the music from my own understanding as a Chinese...I hope my music will help more people, and make them happy and have a better life.' The transcript clearly shows the thoughts of a patriotic Chinese pianist playing authentic Western classical music in the homeland of Bach and Beethoven as an inspirational story. However, the German film team would not precisely understand the application of the hidden messages, so the communication from the director was translated into simple technical filming terms; at that point, maintaining the communicational separation between the two parts was crucial. Additionally, the 'native point of view' concept³⁹⁹ was present throughout the film: an ideology of nationalism, an ethnographic highlight, as well as an announcement of the success of the rise of the Chinese culture which had earned acceptance from the West after the economic reform. It is also a symbol of China's new international identity, having produced a top pianist in the world rankings, yet still holding the traditional values and culture to be used in educational opportunities. Yundi is labelled as a Chinese pianist poet who is deeply emotionally attached to his family and his teacher in China. This emphasized the 'Chinese Dream' theme from President Xi Jin-ping in terms of a further and wider political understanding. The film provided a powerful opposition to the general

³⁹⁶ Gao, 'The Dream Builder - Chapter Li Yundi', 3'02".

³⁹⁷ 'The inner peace will not affect by the surroundings' is a well-known quotation of the prominent politician and literature figure Fan Zhong-yan from the Song dynasty, taken from his chapter titled 'Yueyang Tower'.

³⁹⁸ The concept of 'a gentleman should constantly strive for self-perfection' originally comes from the *I Ching: Qian* 天行健，君子当自强不息.

³⁹⁹ Titon, 'Knowing Fieldwork', 29.

argument from the West that 'China has no democracy' by uncovering the simple background of a Chinese iron-worker's son who had made his name in the world via work and help from the local state-owned educational system. And his success is read and presented as a great paradigm of the 'Chinese dream come true', of the nation's rejuvenation.

A further difficulty was to do with the flexibility of understanding about role playing as a researcher in this context. The researcher might bring her or his own identity and bias into the field, causing interruption, for instance, in the translation and unconscious suggestions during the filming. I had realized my fieldwork was more than just collecting data when we were all in a foreign country, no matter whether it was in Germany, England or Austria; it was away from the homeland, from the familiarity of the environment of China. It made me think of the common nationality or a shared identity from a musician's perspective. Yundi's team moved like a group of revolutionary guerrillas, carrying Chinese preserved food from Yundi's hometown, Sichuan, to a different city or country every two days, playing the same programme for a different audience, then travelling again. I discovered that, as a pianist, Yundi was not a person keen on building relationships to express himself via the media, which was the opposite of information provided through secondary resources. After the tour in April 2014, when he attended a social event in London which was organized by Deutsche Grammophon as a celebration specifically for him, Yundi was only required to play for forty-five minutes in front of a small audience, but he vanished from the crowd, with his body guards, after the performance. For the whole evening he read scores in the changing room even though he had played the repertoire hundreds of times in the past. It was a great opportunity to be able to express his 'Chineseness' in front of the public relations people, but he was focusing on the performance which was perhaps, on this occasion, the least important.

This is the value of fieldwork. Titon indicated that 'field work is no longer viewed principally as observing and collecting (although it surely involves that) but as experiencing and understanding music', and 'it leads us to ask what it is like for a

person to know music as lived experience'.⁴⁰⁰ The fieldwork with Yundi offered the opportunity to witness the artistic creation of a talented Chinese pianist through a work relationship and, gradually, to discover his pianism from a different angle. This gave the opportunity to see how he is shaped by various people from different backgrounds, such as, the film director or the PR people of luxury brands; and how the picture of the prince of the pianos is interpreted and manipulated by individual groups to serve their own purposes. For instance, Yundi is a Dream Builder; in Chinese society, his tour was given the title of the most important political slogan and, to the people from outside, his face and the trend of the Chinese piano craze were seen as the rise of the Chinese economy. I participated as his assistant when Yundi was interviewed by the *Guardian* in April 2014. We were advised to provide information on topics such as his treatment as a superstar and to 'mention the estimated number of Chinese pianists' by the PR people to alert the local audience to China's development and the thirst of Western culture for Chinese performers. However, when the article was published, and quoted by the Chinese state-owned paper *Reference News*,⁴⁰¹ the numbers read as something different, more like evidence to show domestic economic achievement as well as the soft power that the Chinese hold around the globe. Does he really have a strong belief in the dream of Chinese piano, as the media suggested? Or is it down to marketing skills that he gives a suitable reply? Fieldwork may play a part in uncovering the answer. My data collection went quite well but the difficulties encountered must be mentioned as well.

Earning trust and building 'friendship' was certainly a helpful technique, as Pelgo has highlighted that 'The essence of successful ethnography is a form of behavior that makes the fieldworker a "friend" of the community he studies, and a special friend of a number of persons within it.'⁴⁰² However, when the researcher was recognized as a friend, the access to data would be more easily available, and the research would progress beyond research and become, rather, social

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁰¹ Ran Tao, 'Li Yundi Becomes a National Hero According to the Foreign Press', *Reference News*, 11 June 2014, <http://column.cankaoxiaoxi.com/2014/0611/399293.shtml>.

⁴⁰² Timothy J. Cooley, 'Theorizing Fieldwork Impact: Malinowski, Peasant-Love and Friendship', *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, n.d., 9.

participation. When this is applied in the field, the use of this technique of ‘making friends’ can be tricky, as ‘biased information’ could arise.⁴⁰³ The researcher must balance objectivity with maintaining a good working relationship with the community. Another issue of being ‘friends’ with the research subjects was the possibility of bringing personal influence into the community. Sometimes when the researcher was playing the role of assistant or interpreter, representing the research community in a foreign country, the sense of mutual nationality and ethnicity and role of being a ‘friend’ of the community might affect the researcher’s work. The researcher might find it difficult to balance the role in a foreign country, as the shared language, stereotypes and values could affect everyone involved, though this could help to build a connection between the field worker and the community. However, staying as an insider requires discipline and it may become emotionally difficult for the researcher to document the research from an outsider’s perspective when out of the field.

As the only female in the community, I encountered an obvious separation between the two genders within this fieldwork. Film-making is still a heavily male-dominated area of work, and the leading artists like Yundi and Gao are regarded as ‘male Gods’,⁴⁰⁴ being not only responsible for proposing the Chinese Dream, but also for producing it. As a female researcher of the same nationality as the director and the pianist, a common understanding of the cultural differences between East and West exists, but limited fieldwork could still take place despite gender differences. On this account, the female might remain as a passive ‘outsider’ of an ‘insider’ situation; a kind of weak power that will not be able to achieve much in a short amount of time, leaving information waiting to be discovered.

⁴⁰³ Koning, ‘The Fieldworker as Performer: Fieldwork Objectives and Social Roles in County Clare, Ireland’, 418.

⁴⁰⁴The term ‘男神’ is applied to the tall, rich, handsome and successful man in China.



Figure 6-4. Director GaoQun-shu is explaining his ideas of filming the traffic flows on the street in Hamburg, while asking Yundi to remain still and peaceful. This scene was edited with the footage of the city hall in the film, to create the message of 'inner peacefulness'. Photo by the author.

6.4 Pihuang and The Red Piano

Recording is a concept that has particular relevance to music from the late nineteenth century onwards.⁴⁰⁵ In this section, I propose to focus on the ramifications of Chinese pianist Yundi Li's *Red Piano* record from specific political, social, and cultural aspects. I will also uncover the background ideology and aesthetics to this record through an in-depth interview with the composer and producer Zhang Zhao.

The CPC celebrated its ninetieth anniversary in 2011. In July, the world-renowned Chinese pianist Yundi Li was invited to hold a concert at the National Grand Theatre;⁴⁰⁶ there, he also recorded his first Chinese record, *the Red Piano*. It is astonishing when reading the music of this record: a collection of Chinese piano works that stem from the *Yellow River Concerto*, a propaganda piano piece well-known in China, written during the Cultural Revolution, which remains a necessary

⁴⁰⁵ Beard and Gloag, *Musicology: The Key Concepts*, 156.

⁴⁰⁶ The 1 July is the China Communist Party Day.

piano piece for any Chinese pianist of the Communist court.⁴⁰⁷ *Red Piano* comprises a series of Chinese folk tunes from the southwest border to the northwest frontier; a brand new piece inspired by the traditional Beijing Opera music style, *Pi Huang*;⁴⁰⁸ a few traditional Chinese piano pieces such as *Liu Yang River* and *Colourful Clouds Chasing the Moon*; a revolutionary film theme tune, *Why are the Flowers so Red*, originally written in the 1950s to praise national unity; and lastly, a rearrangement of the *March of the Volunteers*, which is the national anthem of the People's Republic of China. The music chosen for this record heavily features the Communist Party's revolutionary tunes, it covers the theme of 'unity among different ethnic groups', it is a history of the Chinese piano arts and achievement, and it is a combination of a series of westernized Chinese songs played by China's pride, the youngest Chopin winner in history, Yundi Li. The last song of the album makes the whole purpose of this album clear: 'It is a governmental gig for the talented pianist celebrating the 90th birthday of the Chinese Communist Party with revolutionary "red songs".'⁴⁰⁹ The track has a significant Communist concern in it and, therefore, the CD cover might provide more information about this.

The record was named *Red Piano* or *The Red Piano* to suit different markets. The two different designs are shown below (see Figure 6-5):

⁴⁰⁷ Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China : Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music*, 128–131, 161–166.

⁴⁰⁸ *Pi Huang* is another term for Beijing opera. *Pi* and *Huang* represent the basic Beijing Opera tune system. Therefore, according to the convention, Beijing opera can also be named as *Pi Huang*.

⁴⁰⁹ Lu Liu, 'Patriotic Yundi Li Looks to the Motherland for Inspiration', *Global Times*, 28 September 2011, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/NEWS/tabid/99/ID/671615/Patriotic-Yundi-Li-looks-to-the-motherland-for-inspiration.aspx>.



Figure 6-5 *The Red Piano* is the version released for the international market while *Red Piano* is for the Chinese market.

This is the only record of Yundi's specially designed with two names and completely different covers. In the picture on the right, Yundi is sitting at a red Steinway piano in the concert hall of the National Grand Theatre, in Beijing,⁴¹⁰ and the title of the record is written in both Chinese and English. The picture is taken from the seating area, where the massive stage and the pianist can be seen as a picture of a performance. Is it an argot to express the subtle message that Yundi is playing piano on the central stage, which represents the sound of the state, and his music is for the mass audience? However, the design for the international market looks completely different. The stage and all the symbols of performance have been replaced by pure darkness, the same colour as his tuxedo. His white hands are highlighted against the black cover and red sparks come out of those hands. Red sparks are a symbol representing China and its Communist identity. Yundi is playing the red sparks while wearing a Western tuxedo, in darkness. What is the picture trying to express? Could the red sparks also represent the tune of the Communist Party that is played by Yundi in this record?

It might be seen that this record's material and marketing were both trying to synchronize with the general political background of the national celebration of the Party in 2012. Does politics have such a strong influence on music in China? As the

⁴¹⁰ 'The Red Piano', *Soomal Records Review Website*, accessed 14 October 2011, <http://www.soomal.com/doc/10200002435.htm>.

pianist, how does Yundi value this record? The music material is worth noting: if the *Yellow River Concerto* has a significant Communist identity, the new pieces, including the Beijing Opera style piano music entitled *Pi Huang*, composed by Zhang Zhao, might have a similar identity. What are the historical and political contexts of this piece? Previous research has been contributed by Qi and Pan, discussing the analysis from the compositional aspect as well as the performance of this piece,⁴¹¹ however, the examination of the cultural aspect has not been done. In order to do it, I conducted two interviews: one with the pianist Yundi Li and one with the composer and producer Zhang Zhao, in October 2013, in Beijing.

Yundi's own interpretation of *Red Piano* was solely politics related; it had taken him two years to prepare and to select the most popular piano pieces for ordinary people to appreciate. It was also a way of expressing his 'Chinese heart', in that 'Whenever I am touring abroad, the colour can always be seen as an association of the traditional Chinese culture.'⁴¹² Zhang Zhao, a professor from Minzu University of China (Central University of Nationalities), offered me an interview, during which he indicated his opinion that releasing this record had two purposes. The first was to foster a sense of national pride. Domestically, he drew connections between traditional Chinese cultural elements in the pieces from his own compositional works that were in this album. Four of his pieces in *Red Piano* were 'line drawings'⁴¹³ of the Dian Lake in Yunnan, where he came from, and the other mainstream pieces were widespread during the Cultural Revolution or through the time when pianos gradually became popular in China, and had a solid mass base (for interaction with the audience). Secondly, he said that 'Yundi himself is a symbol of modern China, the country's "soft power", according to President Hu Jin-tao.' He went on to explain:

The first time we met at Central Television, I was required to rearrange a folk tune piece for Yundi for the BRICS summit meeting, as a demonstration for China's soft power to be introduced to the top leaders; it was demanded by

⁴¹¹ Lei Qi, 'The Compositional Analysis on Zhao Zhao's Pi Huang', accessed 24 June 2012, <http://wenku.baidu.com/view/72b098f0b8f67c1cfad6b871.html>; Jin Pan, 'Beijing Opera Elements in Performing Pi Huang of Zhang Zhao', accessed 24 June 2012, <http://wap.cnki.net/lunwen-1013141062.html>.

⁴¹²Data collected during the interview in Beijing, 2 October 2013.

⁴¹³A traditional Chinese painting style.

Chairman Hu Jin-tao. No matter how many Chopin prizes we win, Western musicians still won't come to China to learn Chopin. Only if our own music is being recognized by the world, when it can integrate in the world's mainstream culture, will we automatically become the maestros. Yundi and I share this similar concept, and this is the initial idea of having the Red Piano.

From Zhang's perspective, he suggested that the identity of the music he has produced for Yundi and for the mass Chinese audience is seen as a part of the Communist society of China, and it is designed and promoted as a cultural product of the society, which has consciously offered a common value to individual musicians. Therefore, an attitude of showing their own cultural achievements to the outside world, a determination to raise China's international profile, becomes a political task. The musicians' unique social status and self-consciousness are the channels to allow them to access both the masses and the top ruling class. Not only do they share identity and nationality but, most importantly, they speak the 'international' language of music. The Chinese mainstream media have provided the maximum support for the pianist since his childhood and, when invited to play for the president of China, gave reviews like 'the best combination of the West and East' as an official reception of the *Red Piano*.⁴¹⁴ However, Geoff Brown saw it completely differently, stating in *The Times* that 'in *The Red Piano*, where Yundi abandons Chopin and Liszt for a programme of Chinese repertoire...never in the history of piano music have so many notes been played to such dubious effect.'⁴¹⁵

Two very different opinions were offered about the same record. Could the lack of mutual understanding of each other's aesthetic interpretation play a part? It might be that the rising soft power behind the suspicious 'red' Communist influence had made the 'West' slightly uncomfortable. The composer Zhang Zhao offered some insight into his own work *Pi Huang*; although the music is inspired by Beijing Opera, he took the approach of ancient Chinese painting as well to explain the reason why he felt like the 'dubious effect' is needed.

⁴¹⁴ Yang, 'Li Yundi: "the Chinese Wind" Blowing Between the Black and White Keys'.

⁴¹⁵ Brown, 'Yundi: The Red Piano'.

According to Zhang Zhao, *Pi Huang* in fact is a piano piece embracing traditional Chinese cultural elements including music, painting, and philosophy. First of all, a key concept appeared at the beginning of the music, in the fast arpeggio making up bars 5 to 6 (as shown below; see Figure 6-7) , but by using the long-lasting pedal, he was trying to aim for the concept of *liubai* (留白: my translation ‘leaving the blank’), which originally came from traditional Chinese painting. ‘When a Chinese painter is trying to tell people this mountain is very high, he would simply draw the top of the mountain above the clouds, without showing the rest of the mountain; that space of nothing will leave the audience an opportunity to imagine’, Zhang explained. The second concept he learnt and borrowed from painting technique is called *Po Mo* (in Chinese, 泼墨, it literally means ‘pouring the ink’; when a drop of black ink is dripped into a glass of clean water, the diffusion of the ink creates the visual effect of *Po Mo*).⁴¹⁶ The technique is shown in the following painting (see Figure 6-6):



Figure 6-6. The typical two basic concepts of *Liu Bai* and *Po Mo* of Chinese painting. Together, the darker ink creates the visual effect of being closer, and the white area of the river and the mountain, with very light colour, suggests the water is deep and the mountain is far. This further

⁴¹⁶ ‘Chinese Painting’, *National Painting Education Website*, accessed 9 October 2013, <http://www.shw.cn/91shbk/meishushuyu/014.htm>.

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shows the respect to nature from oneself, as humans are small and have limited visual impact.

Painting by Huang You Sheng, provided by Taiwan National Living Arts Centre.

On this basis, the bass of the arpeggio can be seen as the dark ink which made contact with the water and then gradually dissolved.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the piece 'Pi Huang' (皮黄). The title is written in Chinese characters '皮黄' at the top center. To the right, it says '张朝曲' (Composed by Zhang Zhao). The score is written on two systems of staves. The first system is for piano, with a treble and bass clef. It includes dynamic markings such as 'mp', 'p', 'mf', and 'f', and performance instructions like 'Rubato' and 'rit.'. The second system is for voice, with a treble clef and a bass line. It includes the lyrics '1. po mo' and '2. Liu Bai' written in blue ink. The score is marked with a '5' at the beginning of the second system. A pink highlight is drawn under the first few bars of the piano part in the second system, with the label '[原板]' (Original tempo) written below it.

Figure 6-7. The score of *Pi Huang*. *Pi* and *Huang* are the two major tune patterns of Beijing Opera. Therefore, Beijing Opera is also known as *Pi Huang* in China. The score is shown in the first six bars of the piece. *Pi Huang* is specially written for Yundi Li's *The Red Piano* or *Red Piano* record. The score is provided by Zhang Zhao. The highlighted area is the emphasis to express the composer's intention: having the long-lasting sound of the arpeggio to create the effect of the concept of *Po Mo* and *Liu Bai*, to prepare for the general background of the music.

When looking at a traditional Chinese painting, these two techniques largely require the involvement of the individual audience; as *Liu Bai* appears as a physical pause or 'blank' on the score, or 'no colour' on the painting, it leaves the audience to fill in the space with their opinion, and to participate. It is also used as 'an introduction, before the story emerges', said Zhang, to 'let the audience wait for the next'. In my opinion, when Zhang Zhao composed *Pi Huang*, he based it on this application, to create a musical painting.

The other traditional element from Chinese culture that is introduced into this piece is the sound simulation of *Guqin* and *Bangu*. In the music score, the overtone

sound represents the character of *Guqin*'s appearance, as highlighted in the score shown below (in Figure 6-8):



Figure 6-8. Bars 7 to 19 of *Pi Huang*, score provided by Zhang Zhao. The highlighted areas, according to the composer, are a symbol of Chinese *Guqin*. The simulation is related to the overtone, which is a fundamental physical law of the instrument.

The music piece is called *Pi Huang*, and the Beijing Opera does not officially begin until the simulation of *Bangu* is introduced into the music sounding by a range of uniform, rapid staccato, as marked in the score (see Figure 6-9):

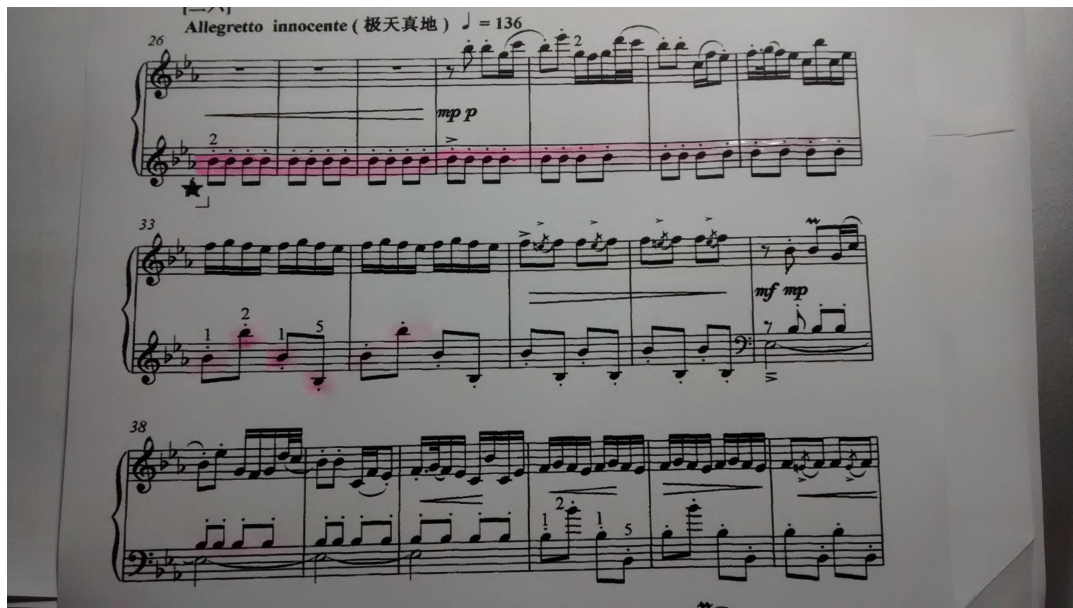


Figure 6-9. The beginning of the middle part of *Pi Huang*, bars 26 to 43, provided by Zhang Zhao. The marked area is a simulation of *Bangu* sometimes called *Guban*, which is a drum with a high-pitched sound. The player of *Bangu* is the conductor of the band for Beijing Opera.

Traditional Chinese cultural elements, such as ancient painting and musical instruments, have been broadly applied to the modern piano work, as expressed in *Pi Huang*. From the compositional aspect, the other pieces from Zhang Zhao in *The Red Piano* include, for example, the adoption of the Chinese pentatonic scale and the simulation of folk songs and instruments. In the second movement of Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997: Heaven, Earth, Man*, the popular Chinese folk melody 'Mo Li Hua' (jasmine:茉莉花) is introduced with 'a beautiful countermelody played on the solo cello', as Yu SiuWah analysed.⁴¹⁷ Additionally, the specific method of piano performance in Chinese pieces also has its own character, such as the pedals as well as the left hand drum to create the authentic sound of *Bangu*. In this piece, the application of traditional cultural heritage, originating from Chinese philosophy, reflected the values of the musician. Ancient ideas from modern Chinese scholars, such as Zhang Zhao, as well as the piano works, were recognized and chosen by Yundi himself as a response to the specific ideology of the social elite of modern Chinese society. Together they used Eastern composition and Western

⁴¹⁷Siu-wah Yu, 'Two Practices Confused in One Composition: Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997: Heaven, Earth, Man*', in *Locating East Asia in Western Art Music* (Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 57–61.

performance to express their new, shared, subtle, free interpretation of the traditional cultural context to deliver a new aesthetic.

6.5 The Communication Model of the musical dissemination of the Red Piano

The last part of this chapter will discuss the musical dissemination process of the *Red Piano*, trying to answer why and how it has been labelled as the 'red' piano for the public, from the mass communicational approach.

Hall argued 'a message must be perceived as meaningful discourse and be meaningfully de-coded before it has an effect, a use, or satisfies a need,' in his essay 'Encoding/decoding'.⁴¹⁸ He proposed a theoretical account on the 'encoding/decoding' communication model for mass communicational purposes. This model has been developed by McQuail in his 'reader communication theory', which takes account of 'people's interpretation or thought process',⁴¹⁹ as well as in a case study conducted by Morley into a UK national television news programme. In his research, he addressed the audience of the programme, *Nationwide*, and the ideological themes which the programme presented.⁴²⁰ In this section, I intend to focus on Hall's 'encoding/decoding' philosophy of the mass communication model, especially by engaging with his classic 'four-stage model of communication'.⁴²¹ This will take into account the dissemination of the *Red Piano* record in China, after examining how the 'message' of the *Red Piano* is encoded from the musicians' perspective, outlined in the previous section, and discussing how the record becomes meaningful within Chinese Communist, political, and social discourse during the course of dissemination, as well as how it is decoded by the mass Chinese audience.

⁴¹⁸ Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, n.d.), 129–131.

⁴¹⁹ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 32.

⁴²⁰ Daniel Chandler, 'David Morley's Study of the Nationwide Audience (1980)', *Visual Memory Website*, January 1997, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/short/morleynw.html>.

⁴²¹The same as 454.

Hall proposed an influential approach, specifically on the study of the receivers during the communicational process, which made a huge impact on media studies: 'the active role of the targeted receivers plays a vital part in the dissemination process, after the message is processed by the sender. The receiver's individual life experience, social context, and discourse play a great part in decoding the message, during a four-stage process model'.⁴²² The four stages provide a logical application enabling the researcher, and the sender, to monitor and examine how the information is connected with the receiver. The four stages as defined by Hall are: production, circulation, use, and reproduction.

Hall suggested that the first step is to create a message and, for mass communication purposes, the ideology of the message must contain at least two sets of ideas from the creator, as well as the society's dominant ideology. What is the connection between these two? Do the creator's beliefs feed the society's core values, so that the message is valid for the sender? Looking at the example of the compositional process of *The Red Piano*, after the face-to-face interview with the composer and producer, Zhang Zhao, and being told how the music pieces were composed through his belief in and passion for traditional Chinese cultural elements from painting, music, and literature, it was evident that these were all marked within the works he produced for the album. The birth of those works was driven by his self-conscious beliefs: the passion for pursuing traditional culture, ever rooted in Yunnan province where he was an ethnic composer born into a musical family, and where he developed his awareness of nature and knowledge of how to express it via music. He specifically dedicated *Pi Huang* to the Chinese pianist Yundi Li, who was taught this piece by Zhang Zhao himself, in order to transmit the composer's original intention. The layers of sentimental value which Yundi offered in *Pi Huang* are a memorial to his beloved father's ancestral home in Yunnan which, by virtue of its picturesque location is like a Chinese painting, but is also his native land.⁴²³

⁴²² Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, 507–509.

⁴²³ The character *yun* 云 of Yundi was named after his native land Yunnan (云南); in Chinese it means 'the south of the colorful clouds'.

The compositional technique employed many symbols to express his personal and emotional sustenance, in response to the ancient traditions of an ideal, well-educated Chinese gentleman (in Chinese *junzi* 君子); for instance, the raw overtone of *Guqin* is a typical instrument for spiritual practice. As the symbols of China's past and current quintessence in the globe, Yundi and Beijing Opera are a powerful combination. The whole piece of *Pi Huang* is a self-portrait of the composer, to express his identity as a celebrated Chinese musician from an ethnic group of the far west, with the significant influence of the country's history and culture, his life and educational background, and his desire to represent himself through the music. The message editing does not end at this point, as that is the character of record production and the active role and freedom in playing which the musicians can enjoy. From my fieldwork experience with Yundi, I was convinced that every music piece recorded by Yundi was chosen by him, and not influenced by any individual or company.⁴²⁴ From the pianist's personal life experience and his education, he retains a strong emotional connection with his homeland and his Chinese identity in the world's discourse; *Pi Huang* is a paradigm of Chinese piano composition. According to Zhang Zhao, the record is mainly for the Chinese audience, therefore choosing a piece named after the Beijing Opera offers easy access to the mass audience. At this stage, concern about mass communication has occurred. As a renowned pianist, he wanted to choose something to express his technique, his musical interpretation, and his understanding of the cultural elements. When he plays *Pi Huang*, he pays much attention to the pedals, creating the *Liu Bai* concept to allow the audience space for their imagination as well as a chance to connect with the composer.

The second stage of Hall's model is circulation, which is concerned with individual audience styles of receiving and circulating information, as they might rely on listening or watching. This stage mostly matters to the sender. Hall worked on the observation of television broadcasts but, in the case of a recording, this experience can be different from the original material as it can provide a more

⁴²⁴When I attended several Deutsche Grammophon work meetings with Yundi as his translator, in London and Austria, I noticed the company can make suggestions about the recording plans, but the pianist can choose freely the pieces he wants to play, the location of the specific studio and producer.

personal and self-service communication; whenever the individual listener wants to hear the music, the action of playing a CD takes a small effort. In the basic process of producing a record like *Red Piano*, in China, with a mainstream pianist of the Communist royal court, his political background cannot be ignored by the record company. To any company, whether EMI or Deutsche Grammophon, commercial profit is the first consideration or business purpose; helping their artist to occupy the world's biggest market from a long-term perspective, under Communist direction, is a particular characteristic of China's economy. Taking the risk of recording a piano album by a former 'Chopin' champion needs a good reason. It is possible that Deutsche Grammophon might decline to help Pollini or Argerich to record an album consisting of a series of folk songs and politically influenced music. However, the music market is still heavily influenced by politics, as Mao pointed out, and it still remains a favourable tool for the Communist rulers, for example, a record marked as red, as Communist, with revolutionary themed music and delicately rearranged folk tunes from before the era of the People's Republic of China up to *Pi Huang*. The music material itself is a hymn, according to Zhang Zhao, from the *Yellow River's* 'struggling to live and fight against the enemy' to the piece rearranged and played as China's soft power during the Golden BRICS conference, on the demand of President Hu Jin-tao.

The record's design details for the domestic market are also massively concerned with the interaction with the audience, while transferring the political identity and status of the record: the specially produced red Steinway, like an emperor positioned in the centre of China's new pride, the National Grand Theatre that faces towards Tian'an Men, the heart and the symbol of China's totalitarianism for thousands of years. This stage is the end of the original message encoding, in preparation for the next stage for the audience to consume.

The third stage, according to Hall, is the use stage, where the actual decoding process takes place during the encounter between the receiver and the message, and how they 'use' it. The power of the sender, such as a record company, has remained invisible up to this point in terms of encoding the music message. However, records like *The Red Piano* enjoy a very special situation. When the record was issued, the state-owned media machine was focusing on the celebration

of the ninetieth anniversary of the establishment of the Communist Party. Yundi was nominated as a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference of Chongqing in January 2013.⁴²⁵ Thus, his large-scale China Piano Dream Tour quickly launched, with the promotion of *The Red Piano* record in each concert hall where his music was to be performed. From the government's perspective, *The Red Piano* was more than a record; it was a collection of mainstream political messages that the officials wanted to communicate to the audience, and to the world. The audience hear them from a CD but see Yundi undertaking the role of a CPC member, while expressing pride in being the nation's hero and touring in each city of China to deliver these ideas, like a musical missionary. The platforms of state controlled internet, television, radio, and newspaper have all prioritized it, to assist the availability of the message during the dissemination, to ensure the communication is effective.

The result was a triple success: in the Chinese Amazon chart, including his *The Red Piano* record, Yundi had the top 10 bestselling records, out of 15; millions of records were bought and listened to. The China Piano Dream Tour attracted audiences of more than 40,000, all over the country.⁴²⁶ He is China's leading artist, with over 15 million followers,⁴²⁷ and he is valued by the central government as a performer at their most important events to represent their political concepts, as a weapon of China's soft power.⁴²⁸ With the influence of the media, the audience will interpret the modern message of *The Red Piano*, just as the *Yellow River Concerto* will recall the memory of the Cultural Revolution for the generation from the 1950s. *Colourful Clouds Chasing The Moon*, *Kangding Love Song*, *Puzzle Tune*, *Mountain Song*, and *Why are the Flowers so Red* are all folk music inspired and were originally film music, eventually featuring as a promotion between the Han and ethnic groups in China, from Xinjiang to Yunnan. *My Motherland* is mainstream court music, to educate the people to 'love the motherland'; it was rearranged from the music in a

⁴²⁵ 'Li Yundi in Chongqing'.

⁴²⁶ Data collected over the fieldwork.

⁴²⁷ 'Li Yundi's Weibo Page'.

⁴²⁸ Yundi was invited to play at the Central Television's Spring Festival Gala in 2013 with Taiwanese magician Liu Qian; in 25 March 2014, he was invited to attend a private session to play for the Dutch royal family during the visit of Chinese current president Xi Jin-ping.

patriotic movie to resist the invasion of the USA during the Korean War.⁴²⁹ The last part of the record is the national song of China, the 'March of the Volunteers'. The whole record is shaped and promoted to educate the mass audience: never forget the struggle the Chinese nation have been through; national unity is based on people from all ethnic groups; be aware of imperialism from the West; love and support the Communist Party and cherish the traditional culture which has lasted thousands of years. The complex message is carefully interpreted and promoted with the media's assistance; even if the original purpose might be free of politics, the discourse might add extra political influence to it. According to Zhang Zhao, after Lang Lang played *My Motherland* at the White House and almost created unnecessary diplomatic trouble between the US and China, President Hu Jin-tao specifically chose 'In That Place Wholly Faraway' as a 'pure folk song from Xinjiang' for Yundi to play at the Golden BRICS conference. However, it is still read and perceived by the audience as a way of expressing China's soft power. The current Chinese First Lady also performed this piece when visiting Russia; the major newspaper of Hong Kong *Takungpao* wrote 'Peng Li-yuan is familiar to Russian people after her performance of 'In That Place Wholly Faraway'.⁴³⁰ The receiving process, based on *The Red Piano*, was complicated, but it played an influential part for the Party's mainstream ideology during the national celebration of the Party.

The last stage of Hall's communicational process is reproduction. It is the post receiving stage, after the audience have developed their own understanding of the specific work, based on their beliefs. Hall highlighted that the key to this stage is the 'action' after 'they have been exposed to a specific message',⁴³¹ but how might the action from the audience who have listened to the record of *The Red Piano* be evaluated? What will they do after hearing music which was familiar to them during the Cultural Revolution? Musical appreciation is a personal experience, in my view, and the message can be interpreted in various ways depending on the specific situation whenever the audience hears it. For instance, the people who have been through the Cultural Revolution might first recognize the *Yellow River*, and recall

⁴²⁹ *My Motherland* is a household song from the film *Battle on Shagangling Mountain* in 1956.

⁴³⁰ 'Peng Was Singing in a Far Away Place; in Russia', *Takungpao Website*, accessed 22 March 2013, <http://news.takungpao.com/mainland/focus/2013-03/1503770.html>.

⁴³¹ Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, 75–120.

the time when other music was not available; most others might remember the time when they danced, accompanied by the music, at school events when revolutionized music was the only entertainment. When the audience went to Yundi's China Piano Dream Tour concert, those people who had lived through the Cultural Revolution and the economic reform might feel the massive change the country has been through; over forty million children are now learning the piano as a compensation for what their parents' generation had lost. Perhaps this 'action' can be understood as the movement after they hear the music; each time, whenever they hear this record, it has the mark of the modern history of China all compressed on this disc. Will it foster a great sense of patriotism? Will it encourage domestic unity? Or does it have the long-lasting effect of telling the world that China has its own piano works and their pianists can play the music that belongs to their own culture; they can make the piano speak Chinese?

On the Chinese social networking service Douban.com, there are nearly three hundred reviews posted, regarding the album *The Red Piano*.⁴³² The reception is divided: the vast majority of the audience awarded four or five stars. The positive comments are related to Yundi's interpretation of the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*, *Pi Huang*, *Colourful Clouds Chasing the Moon*. The most representative review is by Yvonne, 'I did not like *The Red Piano* to begin with, but I do not agree with the review in the *Times*. After I listened to more of this CD, I developed different opinions of it. I am not surprised this album will receive Western bias because the birth of the *Yellow River* was during the Cultural Revolution; however, I think music does not have to be related to politics, it is up to the individual to decide. Yundi is a pianist, not a politician.'⁴³³ 'Mercury' who voted a three star, says 'I prefer Yundi's interpretation of *The Yellow River* in comparison to Kong Xiang-dong's version; '小沙弥' thinks the album deserves five stars, as it is 'inspiring'; '阳春小白' also gave a five star rating, and says 'Using the piano harmony to simulate Er'hu, Zhang Zhao did a good job! Yundi also plays well!'; 'Jacklyn' reviewed the album, left a five star voting, and also left a message describing Yundi as 'a determined pianist, who is humble, devotes his emotions to the keyboard and, has a patriotic mind (赤子之心),

⁴³²'Reviews of The Red Piano', n.d., <https://music.douban.com/subject/6864152/comments/new>.

⁴³³Yvonne, 'The Red Piano, Romanticism', n.d., <https://music.douban.com/review/5320185/>.

what can be better?' '琳儿—漫索', rated it as five star, comments, 'Beautiful. A combination of elegant Chinese elements and Western art music.'

The only one star review is submitted by '马勒排骨', who left a single word 'Puff'; '南忘山下' did not give a low rating of the music but, however, criticised the political theme of the album, not the pianist, that 'Politics is the enemy of all art, it kills all the imagination and freedom. If we place it under politics, it will alter the artists' mind, and drive him crazy'. Apart from the above selected reviews, it seems the Chinese audience, according to the review, had a relatively positive reception regarding the overall aesthetic experience, including Yundi's performance, the conductors' input and the composer's cross cultural experiment on expressing Chinese tunes through Western instruments in particular. It can be seen that criticism does exist, and it is mostly related to the suspicion about highlighting the Communist political signal, by naming the album as 'red'.

6.6 Conclusion

From the above discussion, some points can be addressed. Since China opened itself up to the world after the economic reform, it has gained foreign acceptance from the world discourse. More importantly, transferring the attractiveness and ideology of its own culture, via the language of Western art music, is encouraged by the Communist Party as a new tool, through the increasing foundation of Chinese fans of Western art music. At the same time, Chinese musicians are also exploring the process of putting their familiar musical elements through Western compositional technique, to set up a conversation with the audience from both China and the outside world, expecting a music, cultural and ideological exchange across cultures.

The music message is eternal and sometimes innocent, but in the discourse of contemporary Communist China, music is an effective tool. Western art music is now employed as a communicational channel to promote Chinese, domestic social discourse as well as serving the role of China's 'soft power' in the world discourse. It is not a matter of the intention of the composer or the pianist: it is offered and

shaped by the political environment. In other words, the music will always offer a close pathway to politics. Hall's communicational model underlined the importance of the receivers; indeed, without them, the communication is incomplete. However, in this case, it must be borne in mind that the Party's will is the dominant force of public mass communication. The politically influenced classical music, or musician, has been encoded with the Party's political ideology to serve the mass communicational process, to seek support and control from the music. The Chinese audience have been considered a vital part of the process, as the message is carefully encoded based on the common belief of the nation, although it might not be directly connected to the musician. Yundi is seen as the red pianist, because he 'painted' that colour with *The Red Piano*.

Chapter 7 Politically influenced pop music in the China Central Television Spring Festival Gala: theoretical considerations

7.1 Introduction

Following the Reform and Opening Up policy, since 1978 the Central Television Spring Festival Gala (also known as the CCTV Spring Festival Gala), a variety show from the state-owned CCTV, has been disseminated to the whole nation annually to celebrate Chinese New Year, which is China's most important festival. According to the BBC in 2014, this programme has become the most watched television show in China, with 700 million enthusiastic viewers nationwide.⁴³⁴ In this chapter, the discussion will consider how the show promotes pop music from disputed territories to the mass audience of China, conveying a patriotic theme.

This chapter will comprise three sections in order to answer this question, additionally, an examination of the semiotic, theoretical concerns of the phenomenon of manipulation, within popular music played at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, will be provided. The first part will take account of mass communication theory, focusing on the content analysis of the Gala's pop music from the communicational point of view. The second part of this chapter will continue discussion of the musical communicational process of popular music from the Gala, focusing on its dissemination end from the receiver's perspective, by introducing the semiotics approach. The third section will shed light on a classic collaboration between a famous mainland folk singer and a Taiwanese superstar at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, in 2009.

⁴³⁴ 'Gala Spectacle for Chinese New Year', *BBC News Asia*, 31 January 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-25973421>.

7.2 Communicational model towards the Chinese from the mainland, Hong Kong, Taiwan and elsewhere

After the implementation of the Reform and Opening Up policy, with the arrival of foreign capital, economic change also had an impact on Chinese culture. Geremie R. Barmé provides a full examination of multiple insights into Chinese contemporary culture, from historical, political and cultural aspects, to explain the complex interplay between the distribution of the official governmental ideology via cultural works, in particular.⁴³⁵ How does the transportation process of official ideology deliver to the mass audience? Barmé, additionally, draws attention to the growth of China, via contemporary artistic work, designed with governmental core value, referring to this as a 'propaganda' product. Barmé argues that 'television', for instance, China Central Television, is the centre of the Chinese official culture, the key outlet for up-market consumers, and is responsible for delivering the media propaganda.⁴³⁶ What message does the Chinese Communist Party want to convey within the propaganda, to be broadcast to all Chinese audiences in the world discourse? A sense of unity, perhaps?

Barbara Mittler offers an account of political and identity issues within China's disputed territories in Hong Kong and Taiwan, concerning the political role of such music and nationalism in Chinese music.⁴³⁷ Guo proposed the argument that the 'CCTV Spring Festival reflects the fundamental change of the transformation of Chinese society: from the public system to the globalized capitalist market';⁴³⁸ the function of the Gala also altered from providing a '...shared entertainment into an established national ceremonial cultural brand.'⁴³⁹ The rapid changes challenged the Chinese traditional and communal identity of the nation: communal identity was no longer only based on closed borders and strong political ideology.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁵ Barmé, *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture*.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Barbara Mittler, *Dangerous Tunes: The Politics of Chinese Music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China since 1949*.

⁴³⁸ Zhen-zhi Guo, 'From the Public Service to Summon the People: Uncovering the 30 Years of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala', *Modern Communication* 10 (2012): 8.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Yun-lei Li, 'The Value Behind the CCTV Spring Festival Gala', *CNTV Website*, accessed 12 January 2013, <http://opinion.cntv.cn/liyunlei/index.shtml>.

Chinese people now share a similar goal to their Western peers, which is to improve their lives economically, following the call of reformist Deng Xiao-ping: 'Let Some People Get Rich First'.⁴⁴¹ As Lauren Gorfinkel argues, '...through reinforcing musical styles, visual images and language, it overtly asserts a collective identity wherein all Chinese, no matter what ethnicity, strive together towards the future, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.'⁴⁴² With its vast audience and place at the centre of China's most culturally significant festival and holiday, the CCTV Spring Festival Gala is an ideal tool for promoting 'harmony' by instilling a sense of common identity and cohesion. First broadcast thirty-six days after the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China,⁴⁴³ it has become an annual event ever since, attracting hundreds of millions of viewers from China.⁴⁴⁴

This four-hour long variety show features family entertainment, together with a '...not subtle' message of patriotism, according to BBC sources.⁴⁴⁵ In doing so, the musical shows of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala not only focus on traditional Chinese musical elements, for instance Beijing Opera or folk music performance, but also try to promote and build a common national identity, especially by promoting pop music from Hong Kong and Taiwan to the mass audience. Related work has been conducted from an historical and communicational point of view in recent years in China, but it rather emphasized the content of the messages: for instance, Zhang, Gou, and Li analysed the documentary on the CCTV Spring Festival Gala by National Geographic, entitled *The Perspective of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala: the Largest Carnival Of China*. They stressed the value of the international level of dissemination of the show, by encoding Chinese culture into the music

⁴⁴¹ 'Let Some People Get Wealthier First – Deng Xiao-Ping', *News of the Communist Party of China*, accessed 16 June 2012, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/34136/2569304.html>.

⁴⁴² Gorfinkel, Lauren, 'From Transformation to Preservation: Music and Multi-Ethnic Unity on Television in China'.

⁴⁴³ Zai-jun Deng, "'The Birth of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala" of In Front of Begonia Flowers', *Beijing Evening Post*, 10 November 2013, http://bjwb.bjd.com.cn/html/2013-11/10/content_124139.htm.

⁴⁴⁴ 'Gala Spectacle for Chinese New Year'.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

performance of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala.⁴⁴⁶ Jin examined the cultural influence of the American–Taiwanese singer Fei Xiang, stating that ‘the performance of Fei Xiang expressed the general emotional attachment to the motherland of people from Taiwan, because of the involvement of the artists from Taiwan Island on this stage, given the specific customs, venue and time when that performance took place’.⁴⁴⁷ Fei sang ‘come back home, you wondering wanderer’ in the song ‘Clouds From Home’,⁴⁴⁸ which retained an amazing consistency with the ideology of the common Chinese identity.⁴⁴⁹

If the music performance delivered by Fei Xiang is considered as the message between the sender and the mass audience, the argument might be drawn from Marshall McLuhan’s observation concerning the resulting message that it is one that is ‘focused on the obvious’.⁴⁵⁰ McLuhan referred to the illusion of what the audience might see of the message’s content; however, in fact, ‘people retained some sense of the whole pattern, of form and function as a unity’.⁴⁵¹ That is to say, a list of concerns are related to the performance but perhaps seem hidden; for instance, what determined the CCTV Spring Festival Gala show to invite singers from Hong Kong or Taiwan; what is the connection between those musical performances and CPC policies, and who had chosen the singers from Hong Kong and Taiwan; what kind of pop music did they perform at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala? Such concerns had all escaped attention, as the content dominated the audience’s attention.

⁴⁴⁶ Guo-tao Zhang, Bo Gou, and Yan Li, ‘Expressing the Chinese Stories and International Communication’, *Modern Communication* 3 (2012),
http://d.wanfangdata.com.cn/Periodical_xdcb201303020.aspx.

⁴⁴⁷ Qian-wei Jin, ‘The Imagination of the Performance from Taiwan on CCTV Spring Festival Gala: A Case Study of Fei Xiang’, *Gehai* 2 (2013),
http://d.wanfangdata.com.cn/Periodical_geh201302020.aspx.

⁴⁴⁸ Fei Xiang (also Known as Kris Phillips), Performed ‘Clouds From My Hometown’ at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala in 1987. The Song Was Written by Xiao Xuan and Tan, with Music by Tan Jian-Chang; Clouds From My Hometown Performance, Youtube, accessed 15 November 2012,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PE1KeGtKe8I>.

⁴⁴⁹ Huang, ‘Xiao Ying: The Core Value of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala Should Maintain the Cultural Identity of the Chinese Nation’.

⁴⁵⁰ Mark Federman, ‘What Is the Meaning of the Medium Is the Message?’, *McLuhan Program in Culture and Technology Website*, accessed 24 June 2013,
http://individual.utoronto.ca/markfederman/article_mediumisthemessage.htm.

⁴⁵¹ Marshall McLuhan, ‘The Medium Is the Message’ In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, pp23-35, pp63-7 (New York: Signet, 1967), 5.

Traditional content analysis, the theoretical application which was defined by Berelson, and refined by McQuail as a research technique, states that while the message might seem unclear to the objective researcher, it might be understood within the researcher's evaluating systems and expressed in a more subjective way.⁴⁵² This assumes the researcher is analysing from an objective point of view; however, McQuail further pointed out that the significant mission of taking account of the connections and relationships between the elements in the text should especially 'take note of what is missing or taken for granted'.⁴⁵³ This explained the research conducted by Jin, above, whose argument was that Fei Xiang was expressing his personal, emotional attachment to the mainland and was representing the uniform opinions and political concepts of a group of Chinese people living in Taiwan. Jin's point was concluded within the performance's text, rather than from an objective angle; in other words, the patriotic role that Fei Xiang was offered by the sender, or played unconsciously via the performance, has been read as that of a real person with that emotion, rather than a stage performance. One should not deny the performer's real intention in playing, but Jin's research result suggested that the audience was convinced by that performance, from the context of the music, and the social and political context of the time when the research is based. As the Ancient Chinese poet Su Shi (1037-1101) stated, 'the true face of Lu Mountain is lost to my sight, for it is right in this mountain I reside.'⁴⁵⁴

How does one apply the theory of content analysis to examine the content of the pop music from Hong Kong and Taiwan played on the CCTV Spring Festival Gala stage? According to Kingsbury and Hart, in applying this technique, it is firstly necessary to do a 'sample' test or to select a 'universe'.⁴⁵⁵ Is the 'sample' part of the 'universe'? Or are they two independent concepts? McQuail's approach is to read it as 'the link between the external object of reference' and 'the reference to it in the

⁴⁵² Bernard Berelson, 'Content Analysis in Communication Research', *Michigan Free Press*, 1952; Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 325–329.

⁴⁵³ Berelson, 'Content Analysis in Communication Research'; Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 325–329.

⁴⁵⁴ Shi Su, 'The Work of Su Shi', ed. Fan-li Kong, *Shanghai: Zhonghua Shuju* 2, no. 69 (2004).

⁴⁵⁵ S. M. Kingsbury and H. Hart, *Newspapers and News* (Putnams, 1937); Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium Is the Message*, 5.

text’;⁴⁵⁶ however, this was drawn as a more vivid picture by Beard and Gloag, using the metaphor of ‘fluid’ and ‘landscape’; in the case of analysing pop music, they saw ‘popular music as a fluid, changing musical landscape that has certain recurring characteristics and concerns but also powerful potential to change as part of a drive...within a discourse’.⁴⁵⁷ The work ‘My Chinese Heart’ was performed by Zhang Ming-min in 1984, the first singer from Hong Kong to perform on the mainland at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala; he became a household name on the mainland after the show.⁴⁵⁸

However, the song was produced and disseminated under specific political discourse and to expose the rigid cultural belief of the society. It was composed by Hong Kong writer Dr Wong Jim, from Hong Kong Chinese University, as a protest about the falsifying of information in Japanese history books.⁴⁵⁹ The same year, in September 1982, Deng Xiao-ping met the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, regarding the handover of Hong Kong.⁴⁶⁰ In this special political context, the cultural atmosphere was still being influenced by the Cultural Revolution; therefore, introducing the voice of Hong Kong to the audience on the mainland, via the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, was rather a risky political mission for Director Huang Yi-he. The world knows what China had been through during the Cultural Revolution, and the opportunity of declaring the ownership of Hong Kong by being ‘open’ to the world, as a reformed new society, was a judgment call at that moment. Diverting the consumer from mainland China towards nationalism, to construct a sense of common identity between Hong Kong and the mainland, was a safe option when the Hong Kong national performer sang at the live show. Within the discourse of multiple political statements, from various directions throughout the world, the mainland and Hong Kong societies and identities were all surrounded by the musical practice of ‘My Chinese Heart’, shaping every individual participant of the

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Beard and Gloag, *Musicology: The Key Concepts*, 134.

⁴⁵⁸ ‘An Interview with Zhang Ming-Min’, *Ent Website*, accessed 22 March 2013, <http://ent.163.com/09/0904/13/5ICCKPC100033JIM.html>.

⁴⁵⁹ Da-li Liu, ‘The Song of Republic of China’, *Shangdong Huabao* 57 (2009).

⁴⁶⁰ ‘Margaret Thatcher Speaking with Deng Xiao-Ping Regarding the Handover of Hong Kong’, *Xinhua News Agency*, accessed 10 April 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/gangao/2013-04/09/c_124554565.htm.

communicational process: the politicians, including China's President Zhao Ziyang,⁴⁶¹ the performer Zhang Min-ming,⁴⁶² and the Chinese audience from the mainland and Hong Kong⁴⁶³ alike. Huang considered that 'the mainland is the mother, and Hong Kong is the child; inviting real Hong Kong people to perform at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala to highlight the theme of "return" was a touching idea'; after censoring Zhang's identity as a factory worker from a Hong Kong factory, he was officially allowed to perform by the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China.⁴⁶⁴ The foreign suit he wore marked his external identity as being 'Western' (as shown in Figure 7-1); however, on stage he expressed his Chinese identity by singing 'although I am wearing a Western suit [as he grabbed his suit in front of the audience as the music continued], my heart is still Chinese'.⁴⁶⁵ The discourse of the music can be expanded to apply to the situation of Hong Kong, meaning that the soul of China will remain, no matter how much it appears to be Western; this patriotic content has been enhanced by Zhang's voice, music and lyrics and, in particular, his accent.

It was the first time for mainland people to hear such imperfect Mandarin, with an unusual Hong Kong accent, on Central television, when he pronounced '怎 (zen3)' as *zhen*; '中 (zhong1)' as *zong*; however, according to Pan Nai-xian, a well-known Chinese vocalist, articulation is one of the features of popular singing from Hong Kong and Taiwan that determined its popularity.⁴⁶⁶ It is a direct reflection of real life, unlike Chinese folk singing that overemphasizes pronunciation; thus it, supposedly, directly expresses the feelings of the singer from his or her world.⁴⁶⁷ This indicates several meanings: first, articulation here refers to the technique of pronunciation when singing has a connection with the life of the singers. Secondly, from his point of view, in analysing the Hong Kong/Taiwan singer's pronunciation,

⁴⁶¹ President Zhao Ziyang learnt this song and became a fan of Zhang Min-ming. Liu, 'The Song of Republic of China', 97.

⁴⁶² 'An Interview with Zhang Ming-Min'.

⁴⁶³ Zhang Min-ming's dress style has become popular in the mainland, as his music has been until now. He was asked to sing again at the 2012 CCTV Spring Festival Gala.

⁴⁶⁴ 'Hu Yao-Bang Is Learning to Sing My Chinese Heart', *Chinaweekly on the Sina Website*, 25 February 2013, <http://news.sina.com.cn/m/2013-02-25/112526352091.shtml>.

⁴⁶⁵ '0' 54" of 'My Chinese Heart' by Zhang Min-ming.

⁴⁶⁶ Nai-xian Pan, *The Secrets of Modern Popular Music* (Shanghai: Shanghai yinyue, 2004), 80.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 77-79.

the approach is to let the real life experience take precedence over the aesthetic pursuit, in comparison to the Chinese folk singing style; for instance, the word is pronounced the way it is spoken in a daily conversation, in the singer's home environment, rather than being influenced by the aesthetic beliefs of the guidance proposed by Mao Ze-dong's speech, at Yan'an Forum in 1942, where he quoted Nikolay Chernushevkey's words that 'Life is the resource of art, but art should be "higher" than life.'⁴⁶⁸ Therefore, by this account, assuming that folk music originates from the everyday life of ordinary people, the aspect of overemphasizing pronunciation to soften the mark of its folklore makes the music less accessible to those very people who created the songs, which seems the opposite of the popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Similarly, music discourse on nationalism is represented through the 'composer's voice' and his ideology as well,⁴⁶⁹ in the popular music performance, delivered by the Hong Kong musician Zhang Min-ming, the internal reference of the political discourse featured an unusual accessibility to the audience, therefore, the external link with society was unambiguous.

⁴⁶⁸ Xiu-mei Ai, 'Why Does Art Come from Life, but Higher than Life?', *Nanjing Normal University Journal* 6 (2006): 142.

⁴⁶⁹ Edward T. Cone, 'The Composer's Voice', *University of California Press* 11 (n.d.): 11.



Figure 7-1. Zhang Min-ming is singing 'My Chinese Heart' on the 1983 CCTV Spring Festival Gala stage. Directed by Huang Yi-he. The movement is at the 0' 54" moment when he sings 'Although I am wearing a Western suit, my heart is still Chinese'. As the subtitle said, 'Although I am wearing foreign suits...'.⁴⁷⁰

To continue the traditional analysis of the content from McQuail's point of view, the frequency of occurrence of the selected content, or sample, therefore will illustrate the 'predominant "meaning" of the text in an objective way'.⁴⁷⁰ This suggested the content of the material was chosen for the purpose of analysis, such as 'a word, a sentence, a unit, an item, etc.'⁴⁷¹ In the case of music research, this can be understood as a motivation, a few bars, a movement or the work from the same composer which can represent the whole picture of the work. Furthermore, using a statistically based research method, the occurrence of the related content needs to be counted; at the same time, the data chosen for the research should be collected from the same discourse system as an objective measurement, for instance, in Zhang Min-ming's recent performances at the CCTV Spring Festival Galas in 2012 and 2014. In 2012, he performed 'My Chinese Heart' again, thirty years after his first performance at the same event; and in 2014, he performed a

⁴⁷⁰ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 325–329.

⁴⁷¹ Kingsbury and Hart, *Newspapers and News*.

different song, 'My Chinese Dream', but read as the 'extension of 'My Chinese Heart'.⁴⁷² Taking the analysis approach, units are selected from 'My Chinese Heart' and 'My Chinese Dream', to look for the internal coherence within these two pieces, focusing on an examination of the structure and ideological systems and evaluating the frequency of the occurrence of the matched content,⁴⁷³ as shown in Figure 7-2 and Figure 7-3.

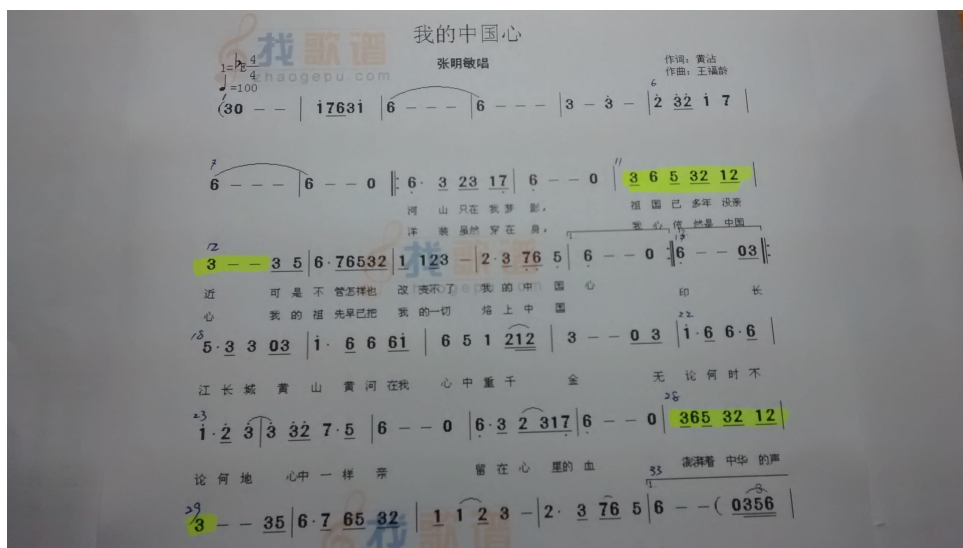


Figure 7-2. The numbered musical notation of 'My Chinese Heart'. Lyrics by Huang Zhan, music by Wang Fu-ling. The highlighted area is the selected content of the content analysis material in this piece.

⁴⁷² Jing-ya Wang, 'Zhang Ming-Min "My Chinese Dream" Composed by Cui Shu', *Xinhua News Agency*, 8 February 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/ent/2014-02/08/c_126099627.htm.

⁴⁷³ "'My Chinese Heart" Music Score from Zhaogepu Website', accessed 23 June 2013, <http://www.zhaogepu.com/jianpu/8351.html>.

Figure 7-3. The numbered musical notation of 'My Chinese Dream'. Music and lyrics by Cui Shu.⁴⁷⁴
The highlighted area is the selected content of the content analysis material in this piece.

In the numbered musical notations in Figure 7-2 and Figure 7-3, the highlighted areas are the selected, individual, examined content for further musical analysis from 'My Chinese Heart' and 'My Chinese Dream'. From an overview of these two songs, 'My Chinese Dream' has a bigger body than 'My Chinese Heart' in terms of musical form: the former song's structure is (A+A'+B)+(A'+C+B) while the latter one has a simple and smaller structure of (A+A+B+A'). Furthermore, the musical fragment from the 'A' part of 'My Chinese Heart' (as highlighted in Figure 7-2) was glued as a sound collage,⁴⁷⁵ appearing in the interlude between the two major sections of (A+A'+B) and (A'+C+B) (as marked in Figure 7-3) in 'My Chinese Dream'. The concept of collage technique exists in a well-known example, in the fourth movement of the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*, when the tune of *The East Is Red* was added to the A' section, on the demand of Madam Mao as a memorial to Mao Ze-dong.⁴⁷⁶ However, in the case of a song with lyrics rather than an instrumental work, not only are the compositional technique and structure concerned, but also the language of that music is a significant section of the content analysis. The terms

⁴⁷⁴ "'My Chinese Dream' Music Score from Tom163 Website', accessed 26 June 2013, <http://www.tom163.net/yuepuku/gequyuepu/wuzigequ/201402/47745.html>.

⁴⁷⁵ J. Peter Burkholder, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001).

⁴⁷⁶ 'The Yellow River Concerto', *Ent Website*, accessed 23 March 2012, <http://ent.163.com/special/00033J17/1969hhxzq.html>.

'langue'⁴⁷⁷ and 'parole'⁴⁷⁸ are the two key concepts proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure, referring, respectively, to 'language as a recognizable system' and 'the individual utterance within that system'.⁴⁷⁹ Taking the example of the interlude from 'My Chinese Dream', this fragment has no *langue*, according to Saussure's theory; but does that mean it has no *parole*? If taken back to the original material of 'My Chinese Heart', the lyrics were 'I haven't been in touch with my motherland, but my heart still belongs to her'.⁴⁸⁰ Why would the composer leave this blank with no *langue*? An assumption is made here: the emptiness of the interlude without any explanation in the form of language, but offered by the words in the first place, is possibly more powerful and effective, being 'where silence speaks'.⁴⁸¹ The music sound is not really silent but this refers to the words. This phrase can be seen as an extremely effective communicational process, when the two parts are equal, and the reconstructed message is read and received exactly as the original signal, not via language, but by the heart.⁴⁸²

Therefore, the composer planted this powerful lyric-free part, borrowed from the other well-known song from thirty years ago, as a glue to join the two parts of the musical form together, and also as a bridge to create a new discourse. The sentence is not pronounced, but the meaning still exists as an important ideology and the system has expanded and embraced new ideological concepts within the general, common identity value system. Through music dissemination, the new message is constructed as the official culture wishes: people from Hong Kong not only have a Chinese heart, but also celebrate the same dream, the Chinese Dream. The interlude of this example is a new form of *langue*, without the shape of words, but introducing a familiar sound to the audience, to bring the correct utterance of mainstream ideology from the previous concept, yet building the new onto it. Returning to the mainland after fifteen years, the perspective of a Hong Kong dweller has altered, especially during the traditional Spring Festival when the family unity theme is stressed in the traditional value system. This mainstream political

⁴⁷⁷ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (London: G. Duckworth, 1983), xi.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 235–237.

⁴⁷⁹ Beard and Gloag, *Musicology: The Key Concepts*, 166.

⁴⁸⁰ See Fig. 7.1, Bar 11-12.

⁴⁸¹ 'Where silence speaks' is the last line of the ancient poem 'Pi' Pa Xing' from Bai Ju Yi (772-846).

⁴⁸² The Chinese idiom to describe a communication like this is *xinyoulingxi* (心有灵犀).

ideology conveyed by the song has been emphasized and approved by President Xi Jin-ping himself, recently, in a letter to the *Takungpao Newspaper*, where he indicated that ‘the fate of Hong Kong, Macao and the mainland has always been closely linked. Hong Kong, with its population of seven million, plays a vital role in achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese dream...’⁴⁸³

In examining the content of the two songs, the overlapping music fragments were identical in terms of melody; however, their existence in different positions within different pieces might lead to overlapping of the meaning system as well as an expansion from the original discourse relating to a specific political and cultural background. The astonishing power of the language within that discourse is not always the same but, together with the music, functions as an effective message to communicate with the audience. This eventually becomes an independent meaning system, without the form of language, but representing the same even deeper meaning within a new communicational process, based on this content. The political scientist Graber pointed out that content analysis is the most widely used method for research into political messages,⁴⁸⁴ though the full range of content analysis approaches will not be listed here; however, McQuail stated that whatever approach is used, the research should take account of the meaning, within the discourse, to the whole society.⁴⁸⁵

The basic model of a mass communication process requires that the message flows from the sender to the receiver. Within this chapter, when focusing on the content analysis of a message, the two-stepped, traditional content analysis approach proposed by Berelson and Hart will be used to analyse research samples, in this case, the appearance of popular music from Hong Kong as a vital part of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala since 1983. The meaning of the music message will be examined by focusing on its genre, musical form, structure and language, especially by establishing a category frame of external reference within the specific social-economic discourse of the content, rather than ‘imposing a distorting ‘meaning-

⁴⁸³ ‘Hong Kong Playing an Important Role in Achieving the Chinese Dream’, *Takungpao Website*, accessed 9 August 2014, <http://news.takungpao.com/opinion/highlights/2013-09/1897565.html>.

⁴⁸⁴ Doris A. Graber, *Political Communication Faces the 21st Century*, 491, accessed 25 June 2013, <http://iksz.fsv.cuni.cz/IKSZ-16-version1-pkd.pdf>.

⁴⁸⁵ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 326–327.

system'.⁴⁸⁶ It is thus concerned with the music content on the CCTV Spring Festival Gala stage, under the category of discourse from the case of Zhang Min-ming, as, for mass communication purposes, the value of this application is that the music text should be studied not only within the native culture, but also within the music itself. The application of popular music as the medium for that message is also concerned with the mass communication effect, as expressing the rather 'informal' gesture of the sender can make the audience, or receiver, feel that the message is more accessible.

Based on the selected content samples, focusing on one specific Hong Kong singer who has twice performed at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, over thirty years, it is worth noticing his appearance was highly connected to the political environment of the central government, from the Post British Hong Kong era to the recent call to the whole nation of the Chinese Dream. This popular music, and its singer from Hong Kong on the CCTV Spring Festival Gala stage, is a symbol being encoded to disseminate the message of general patriotism and the common identity of the nation, across the mainland and Hong Kong, bearing in mind that mass communication emphasizes activity among the audience regarding the original message.

In the following section, the discussion will focus on the most important performance of the national holiday, showing how symbols of political messages are decoded during dissemination and how the music message is reconstructed during the communicational process by the receiver, leading to the concepts of reception analysis and semiotics.

7.3 Semiotics as an approach

In this section, the theoretical approach, semiotics will be discussed in decoding the message of the mass communication process regarding popular music from the CCTV Spring Festival Gala. Message content research is always concerned with language, as it is where it was originally rooted, and it is vital in the decoding

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

process.⁴⁸⁷ Therefore, a key question must be asked: how might semiotics theory be applied in studying popular music within the discourse of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala? The discussion will begin with the musical use of semiotics on popular music.

Semiotics, or semiology, first emerged from Swiss linguist Saussure's work. He refers to semiology as the study of sign; the two key elements created by Saussure are *signifier* and *signified*.⁴⁸⁸ The concept was developed by Pierce, who believed semiotics to be a more complicated system than the 'two elements', meaning 'its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs'.⁴⁸⁹ Therefore, the concept of semiotics was expanded, and the link with music was developed by Nattiez in 1970. Nattiez also defined the two categories in the semiotics of music: firstly, analysis of the acoustic system of signs and secondly, concerning the system of musical notation.⁴⁹⁰ Thus, the link between music and semiotics has been given a specific direction. Dunsby explained that 'for semiotics, music is a cultural or social phenomenon, definable only in terms of its value held in a culture according to a quantitative, qualitative, and analytical interplay',⁴⁹¹ and proposed that semiotics also offers the possibility of measuring the meaning and value of music. Can one apply the semiotics approach to the study of popular music? 'One of the problems is the lack of an analytical method'⁴⁹² yet, because of the nature of traditional music analysis, it is thought to be unsuitable for popular music, as discussed by McClary and Walser.⁴⁹³ Why use the semiotics approach to analyse popular music? Tagg explained that, as the nature, the qualities, and uses of pop music have been an interdisciplinary task, 'a holistic approach to the analysis of popular music is the only viable one if one

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 311.

⁴⁸⁸ de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 65–70.

⁴⁸⁹ Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen, *Sign of Logic: Peircean Themes on the Philosophy of Language, Games, and Communication* (The Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 32.

⁴⁹⁰ Jonathan Matusitz, 'Semiotics of Music: Analysis of Chinese Rock and Pop in the Post-Cultural Revolution Era', *All Academic Website*, 3, accessed 8 November 2012, http://citation.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/1/2/4/8/pages112486/p112486-1.php.

⁴⁹¹ Jonathan Dunsby, 'Music and Semiotics: The Nattiez Phase', *The Musical Quarterly* 1 (1983): 28.

⁴⁹² Peter Dunbar-Hall, 'Semiotics as a Method for the Study of Popular Music', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 11 (1991): 128.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

wishes to reach a full understanding of all factors interacting with the conception, transmission and reception'.⁴⁹⁴ Popular music is a sign because it has many faces and many uses;⁴⁹⁵ therefore 'while the language of semiotics is generally beyond the ken of popular discourse, scholars have found popular culture rich and useful as objects of focus for these tools and methods'.⁴⁹⁶ Matusitz and Zhang have applied semiotics in studies of music from mainland China: Matusitz's paper focused on Chinese rock and popular music in the post-cultural revolution era but before the Opening Up and Reform,⁴⁹⁷ while Zhang presented a study primarily on the discourse of Communist Party political ideology, based on film music samples.

An important conceptual and methodological tool for popular music research and, in particular, popular music study using the semiological method, is the hermeneutic approach advocated by Philip Tagg, who stressed that 'popular music is regarded as a sociocultural field of study'.⁴⁹⁸ Therefore, he proposed the analytical model for popular music: this was mainly concerned with the *time* or duration of the music sample, and then considered other aspects, for example, *melodic, orchestrational, tonality, texture, and dynamic*.⁴⁹⁹ It is worth noting that Tagg still treats music, which in his theory is referred as the analysis object or AO, as the first priority; the detailed analytical mode which is a 'textual analysis' of 'musical factors'⁵⁰⁰ is the application for studying a body of popular music. This approach allows the researcher to have a clear and objective impression of the music itself before looking at the materials within other contexts, or in other words, before the sign occurs. The second concern is still associated with the music body, in terms of the *acoustical, electromusical* and *mechanical* aspects.⁵⁰¹ However, it can be seen as a connection with the dissemination channel from the

⁴⁹⁴ Philip Tagg, 'Musicology and the Semiotics of Popular Music', *Tagg Website*, accessed 1 October 2012, <http://www.tagg.org/xpdfs/semiota.pdf>; Philip Tagg, 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice', *Popular Music* 2 (1982): 44.

⁴⁹⁵ Tagg, 'Musicology and the Semiotics of Popular Music'; Tagg, 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice', 44.

⁴⁹⁶ Eliot Gaines, 'Semiotic Analysis of Myth: A Proposal for an Applied Methodology', *The American Journal of SEMIOTICS*, Summer 2001, 311.

⁴⁹⁷ Matusitz, 'Semiotics of Music: Analysis of Chinese Rock and Pop in the Post-Cultural Revolution Era', 4–7.

⁴⁹⁸ Tagg, 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice', 44–48.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

communicational point of view, as the analysis goes beyond the scores and draws a link between the music within the actual venue of the transmission, the physical distance between the sound resource and the listeners, and how the sound is delivered to the audience by electronic methods.

This method, so far, from the semiological point of view has defined the appearance of the musical terms and the physical conditions which are responsible for disseminating the music to the audience as symbols, in my opinion. It has not yet associated with the outer meaning system, nor paid attention to the verbal or visual meaning. On the other hand, the necessity of going through a checklist might mean that the materials become more accessible to the researcher. In the case of the music materials from the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, the difficulties in applying this method are lack of access to a detailed music sheet or transcript of the performance in the television broadcast; also, it is almost impossible to measure the precise distance between the audience and the performer. How does one adapt this method to suit research that is not from a Western popular music background? Before Tagg proposed the model, he pointed out that 'choice of method is determined by the researcher's "mentality"'.⁵⁰² That is to say, in the case of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, the researcher's views, values and ideology, which had arisen from their historical and social background, or context of the performance would determine the research of signs.

If music can be considered as a 'sign-language', as Monelle indicated,⁵⁰³ and considering that there are signs throughout the performance on the CCTV Spring Festival Gala stage, it does not matter whether the audience's attendance is virtual or physical. Despite the fact that the 'musical signs have been thought of as images',⁵⁰⁴ how the signs can be read and received depends on the audience's 'mental' distance, as well as the researcher's. For instance, to the eye of an etic researcher, in the case of 'My Chinese Dream', symbols appeared on the TV screen from the first moment when the programme was introduced. A number of symbols emerged, such as the red lanterns as the stage background, the theme colour of

⁵⁰² Ibid., 45.

⁵⁰³ Raymond Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (University of Edinburgh, UK, 1992), 204.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 198.

Hong Kong inspired by its symbolic flower, the Chinese Redbud, on the stage, the singer Zhang Min-ming himself as a patriotic figure, the name of the song being a direct quote of President Xi Jin-ping, and the theme melody from 'My Chinese Heart' from 1983 – but these will not become *signs* to the etics researcher. In fact, the Spring Festival Gala itself is a sign, as the Spring Festival is also a sign to the people who celebrated it.

How does the emic researcher and researchers from the same background, connect to the attitudes, ideology, and shared values which had been encoded within this popular music? Starting with the *signified*, how much of the information does the emic researcher need to be able, potentially, to decode some of the compositional work? Secondly, how much of the encoded message can be interpreted in the way it was designed, according to the concepts of the specific cultural context? For instance, if the Spring Festival Gala is taken as a sign, the idea of celebrating the festival nationwide, on television, comes from a deep cultural meaning in Chinese society. Therefore, the festival represents all the ancient traditions which are ritualised within the celebrations of even the smallest family unit, such as lighting fireworks or dinner parties, which are the signifiers of the sign. After thirty years of television broadcasting of the Spring Festival Gala, this is possibly the only such programme available to the Chinese audience. Watching the Gala while conducting the traditions has made the CCTV Spring Festival Gala become a 'new tradition',⁵⁰⁵ and also a signifier of the Spring Festival, along with the fireworks and other traditions. On this account, to an etic researcher, the signs of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala are not directly associated with the musical performance: therefore, in the absence of the traditional culture, the etic view might be blind to them.

In the four semiotic approaches to the study of signs in music proposed by Hatten, the 'markedness', the 'topics', the 'tropes', and the 'gesture' were listed as the major theoretical pathways,⁵⁰⁶ based on examples from Beethoven and Schubert, to explain the mapping of musical oppositions onto cultural oppositions,

⁵⁰⁵ 'Everybody Is Watching the New Year Celebration', *Xinhua News Agency*, accessed 1 February 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/xhfk/2013-01/31/c_124303011.htm.

⁵⁰⁶ Robert Hatten, 'Four Semiotic Approaches to Musical Meaning', in *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 5–29.

as well as combining the topics to produce new meanings, as metaphor in language.⁵⁰⁷ It is worth noting that the approaches were designed and developed based on the study of Western music; however, as Tagg and Clarida underlined, the meaning of music, essentially, emerges through the connotations of sounds and social construction, and the appropriation and amplification of certain meanings associated with these connotations.⁵⁰⁸ Thus, this approach can be simplified as a one-way linear process: sign→text→ social discourse.

In analysing the Spring Festival Gala music from the emic point of view using the above semiotic method, the piece discussed in the last section, 'My Chinese Dream' from 2014, will be used as an example. First of all, the symbols (sound and sound image) from the original transcript of that song must be examined, by conducting textual analysis on its lyrics, melody and, most importantly, its visual transcript within the music text, to discover the meaning, concept or idea that the sign evokes and expresses. Then the ideas referring to the sign, within the political and social discourse from the emic point of view, must be discussed. Thus, a transcript combined with the discussion of 'My Chinese Dream' follows, as shown below.

(1) <TIME Duration> 0.04: [Title] Introduction and information on the forthcoming programme, the composer, the performers' names and region, and the title of the song are clearly indicated on the TV screen, all printed in gold characters on a red background. A group of red lanterns, which are used as household decorations for Spring Festival, can be seen hanging from the roof of the studio,⁵⁰⁹ and a gold kite is projected on top of the stage. Thanks to the technology, the studio blends naturally with the stage like a whole, to bring a sense of home rather than a television programme. Within the text of the programme, the red lanterns, the projection of the kite and the horse decoration for 2014 are, together, the most recognizable signifiers for the Chinese audience, and they represent the traditional,

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Philip Tagg and Bob Clarida, 'Ten Little Title Tunes--Towards a Musicology of the Mass Media', *New York & Montreal, 2003 The Mass Media Musicologists' Press*, n.d., 14, 47, 69.

⁵⁰⁹ 'Red Lanterns of Prosperity', *BBC News*, accessed 10 May 2013, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/1998/chinese_new_year/50400.stm.

cultural aspects of the Chinese New Year.⁵¹⁰ To any native Chinese person, throughout a person's life, these signs can be seen in local markets during the traditional new year, like Christmas markets in some Western countries; the new year themes are created by those signifiers on streets and in shops each year, before the Chinese New Year. They are recognized by almost all Chinese people from all social classes and ethnic groups, from cities to villages.⁵¹¹ The music has not started yet, but the given message has outlined the potential theme of the programme from the government's perspective: 'Chinese dream' was the most popular, mainstream political slogan of the year in 2013,⁵¹² having been promoted by the government at all levels.⁵¹³

When the title of song was introduced on the screen, the nature of this piece clearly spoke for itself: a song carrying out the political voice of the Communist Party. A detail must be noticed: Zhang Min-ming's name has been seen as a symbol, a patriotic symbol from Hong Kong, ever since his performance at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala in 1983, as the first musician who performed 'My Chinese Heart' on the mainland. The name is associated with the set of values of the 'true heart' in Chinese (赤子之心). The concept was first mentioned by the ancient philosopher Mencius (372 BC-289BC), to describe 'the purity of the heart, like a new born child';⁵¹⁴ it is now used to describe someone with a mind of pure goodness, also referred to as patriotism in mainstream culture, such as in the Communist journal.⁵¹⁵ The sign of the title and singer suggested the music has a strong connection with the Communist political proposition.

⁵¹⁰ 'The History of Chinese Kites', *Chinakites Website*, accessed 10 March 2014, <http://www.chinakites.org/htm/fzls-gb.htm>.

⁵¹¹ 'People Celebrating the Spring Festival', *Xunyi Government Website*, accessed 2 February 2014, <http://www.snxunyi.gov.cn/contents/418/24120.html>.

⁵¹² "'Chinese Dream' – One of the Most Popular Words of 2012", *People Website*, accessed 27 June 2013, <http://history.people.com.cn/n/2013/0606/c363490-21758194.html>.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁴ From 'Lilouxia [in Chinese 离娄下]' of *Mencius*.

⁵¹⁵ Jia-yu Zhang, 'Patriotism: A Cherished True Heart', *Zhongzhidangjian (中直党建)*, accessed 17 October 2013, <http://www.zzdjw.com/GB/165259/15919438.html>.



Figure 7-4. The introduction to 'My Chinese Dream' appears on the TV screen.

(2) <TIME Duration>0.05-0.31: the camera moves towards the stage. Zhang Ming-min is standing in the middle of the stage, surrounded by seventy female dancers in light pink dresses. The stage lighting is significantly purple, as shown in Figure 7-5. The overwhelming number of performers gently moving along with the introduction of the music and the striking purple/dark pink colour are signs, although they are relatively subtle in this case, and they catch the attention of the audience. The total number of performers, including Zhang Ming-min, is seventy-one. 'Seven' and 'one' are vital numbers in this context: the first of July is the birthday of the Communist Party of China, and Hong Kong was returned to China on 1st July 1997.⁵¹⁶ Therefore, the number of performers on the stage can be seen as a signifier of that historical event. What does the colour mean on the stage? Is it associated with the theme of Hong Kong as well? According to the *Xinhua News Agency*, the Chinese Redbud was voted as the flower of Hong Kong city in 1965,⁵¹⁷ and the colour of the stage lighting and the female dancers are the same colour as the Chinese Redbud. Therefore, together, these two elements expressed the information, and the meaning, of a declaration of the sovereignty of Hong Kong island, since its handover on 1st July 1997.

⁵¹⁶ 'Hong Kong Returned to China', *History Website*, accessed 1 August 2013, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/hong-kong-returned-to-china>.

⁵¹⁷ 'Chinese Redbud as the Flower of Hong Kong', *Xinhua News Agency*, accessed 25 June 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2007-05/24/content_6145122.htm.



Figure 7-5. The singer and dancers are introduced to the audience through the camera.

(3) <TIME Duration>0.32-0.49: He sings:

‘When I was little, Mom often asked me, What is your Dream? I lift my head and respond, I will devote my youth to the motherland.’

The background screen shows the picture of the Ruin of St Paul’s in Macau, as shown in Figure 7-6. Zhang mentioned the key word ‘dream’ for the first time in this song. The dream can be understood, within the story line provided by the lyrics, as that of a child who has a great love for the country. However, the connotation of that sign, the dream, has been offered a deeper layer of meaning because of the singer’s identity, being a symbol of nationalism and patriotism. In this account, Hong Kong (represented by Zhang) and Macau are both the children of the motherland, and they are willing to support the motherland at her side. Using the metaphor of ‘mother’ to represent the country can make the patriotic theme more accessible to ordinary people. Additionally, the Spring Festival is a symbol of family reunion in most Chinese cultures; *chunyun*⁵¹⁸ is a term to describe the Spring Festival travel period, when a large number of people try to travel home for the festival. Therefore, patriotic education has developed for the whole nation, to

⁵¹⁸ Clifford Coonan, ‘Two Billion Journeys in China’s Own Great Migration’, *The Independent*, 21 September 2006, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/two-billion-journeys-in-chinas-own-great-migration-524853.html>.

blend into the theme of ‘family gathering’ at the time of the Spring Festival. The message comes from Zhang Min-ming, who was chosen for the Hong Kong accent when performing to make the story more realistic.



Figure 7-6. The subtitle says, ‘I worked hard through these years’, along with Zhang Min-ming’s singing.

(4) <TIME Duration>0.50-1.04: Zhang sings:

‘I worked hard through all these years, and gradually proved myself
My Chinese Dream is still in my heart.’

The background LED screen projected a series of Hong Kong landmarks, such as Victoria Harbour and the Bank of China Tower, briefly stopping on the picture of two flags, as shown below in Figure 7-7. Showing pictures relating to the economic prosperity of today’s Hong Kong, the sequence stopped at the scenes of flats in Hong Kong and China, as well as the statue of the symbolic Chinese flower, the Redbud, to emphasize the intention of a sense of ownership from the central government’s perspective, while Zhang is singing and playing the role of Hong Kong in this context. Therefore, he is expressing the message that, as the ‘child’ of China, Hong Kong will share the same dream and values as the mainland. The hook of the

song, along with the lyrics ‘my Chinese Dream is still in my heart’, emerges for the first time as the ending of the first part.



Figure 7-7. The Chinese national flag and the regional flag of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China are both showing on the LED screen, and the golden flower statue of a Chinese Redbud is on the right hand side of the screen.

(5) <TIME Duration>1.05-1:50: intervals enter, with the appearance of the melody of ‘My Chinese Heart’. The numbered notation has introduced the identical melody, which can be found in the highlighted area in Figure 7-2 and Figure 7-3. ‘My Chinese Heart’ is a household tune that has been rated as the most widely broadcast song originating from the medium of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, according to Hunan Television research.⁵¹⁹ The context of the song is most familiar to many ordinary people from the mainland; the connotation of the song, the melody, and the singer together can be seen as a sign of expressing love to the country from a Hong Kong person. The introduction of that specific song, on one hand, according to the writer of ‘My Chinese Dream’, is to express his own respect

⁵¹⁹ ‘The Most Popular Songs of the Spring Festival Gala’, *Hunan Television Website*, accessed 15 May 2012, <http://ent.hunantv.com/m/20110523/916981.html>.

for the earlier classic;⁵²⁰ on the other hand, the content and theme of 'My Chinese Heart' were incorporated into the new song to further the meaning to a deeper level, to adapt the new social and political context of the Chinese dream theme by playing the tune only.

(6)<TIME Duration>1:51-2:20: Zhang sings:

'No matter where you are, Chinese people, from all over the world, the world is praising for you.'

The background LED screen shows the Beijing 2008 Olympics, the opening ceremony firework display, as shown in Figure 7-9. This part of the music is the upsurge of the whole song in terms of the musical range, as well as the meaning. Successfully hosting the Beijing Olympic Games is a symbol representing the achievement of the country. The picture demonstrated the glamorous visual effects of the new buildings and the fireworks, the latter also being an ancient Chinese invention. The whole picture constructs a great sense of national pride, together with the lyrics, to create a call to all Chinese people all over the world. From this point, the meaning of the song has been expanded from patriotism to nationalism towards the Chinese race.

⁵²⁰ 'My Chinese Dream Dedicated to My Chinese Heart', *Sohu News*, accessed 19 May 2014, <http://roll.sohu.com/20140517/n399689613.shtml>.



Figure 7-8. The background LED screen is showing the fireworks above the National Stadium (the blue circle) of the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony, on 8 August 2008. The subtitle indicates the lyrics, as Zhang sings ‘the four seas are connected to each other, as well as the five continents’.

(7)<TIME Duration>2:21-2:39: Zhang sings:

‘The hearts are joined together, the love is fusing, Chinese people are a family who will complete a common dream’.

The footage of a group of people wearing ethnic clothes is shown in the background on the LED screen, as indicated in Figure 7-9. The signs of national unity among all ethnic groups are represented by people wearing ethnic looking clothes; the footage is trying to direct the message in a more specific way than the music. An outlook is captured by the camera for the audience, including the LED screen, and the singer and dancers are all framed on the stage to express the message suggested by the lyrics: all the Chinese, no matter what ethnic groups they are and where they live, will all celebrate this festival like a family and, most importantly, share the common Chinese Dream. This scene also proposed, and expanded, an explanation of the connotation on the subject of the Chinese Dream: perhaps it is the spirit of grand unity across the boundary of ethnicity.



Figure 7-9. As shown above, the subtitle synchronises with Zhang's singing of 'the Chinese people are a family who will complete a common dream'. The background is playing the footage of fifty-five ethnic groups in their traditional clothes, while the dancers are accompanying the singing under dark pink/purple stage lighting. The top and sides of the stage remain dark red.

(8)<TIME Duration>2:21-2:39: The end of the song. Zhang sings:

'My Chinese Dream will never fade, the country's honour is also mine; no matter from where you are, we are family and share the same dream.
My Chinese Dream, it will always be in my heart...'

The hook of the song 'my Chinese Dream, it will always be in my heart' emerges again as the ending of the song. A number of symbols representing the hard power of the country were displayed in the LED screen footage; for example, the Chinese astronauts in space; Tian'an Men and Huabiao (as the picture indicates in Illustration 8.0); pigeons flying above the Great Wall. China expressed its confidence based on the process; for instance, China's space industry is one of the most advanced at the international level; Tian'an Men and Huabiao are the signs of the absolute power of the central government; pigeons taking off from the Great Wall are a call to world peace. This footage is presented from the government's position, to reinforce the message of the power of the Communist Party in the

world, and meanwhile, the hope of building a peaceful and harmonious society, as the Chinese Dream comes true.



Figure 7-10. The subtitles show the lyrics, 'My Chinese Dream will never fade'. The background presents the Tian'an Men Tower and the white jade pillars of Huabiao from Tian'an Men Square.

The signs are everywhere and the meaning is developing as the music continues. The meaning of the music gets deeper and closer to the core of the central government's political concept, until it reaches the end. The signs within the song have covered the following purposes: maximize the mass communication scale, by bringing the idea of the Spring Festival Gala as a tradition to the nation; set the communicational emitter to the greatest volume; based on the preparation provided by the state-owned media machine, highlight the Chinese Dream, as the highest order political slogan from the president. That dream from Xi Jin-ping existed as a sign system with a set of meanings, including the official definition from the government, and a personal understanding. So, before it was introduced to the audience through a song, it already was a mature and solid theory, which was disseminated by the state-owned media machine throughout the country, to all the receivers. Nevertheless, introducing the political concept through symbols, via music, is an effective way of convincing the audience, a way of playing soft power.

The Spring Festival Gala is a new tradition, as part of the celebration of the Chinese New Year. It owns and develops signs during the broadcast, with the

preferred symbols to deliver specific meanings to the audience, to consolidate its political control through entertainment. When the audience has accepted this new tradition, the song encoded with the political message of the Chinese Dream is pushed towards the audience as part of the new tradition, in the form of a popular song from a Hong Kong singer. In doing this, the value of the 'dream' was given the identity of a transition to patriotism but it can be traced back to the traditional ideology from ancient Chinese philosophy. The choice of the singer, Zhang Ming-min, makes a clear, political point representing the central government perspective, to declare ownership of Hong Kong from the first moment he was filmed with seventy-one dancers in purple dresses, with an ordinary Hong Kong person's accent and the stereotypical performance style of Hong Kong pop music singers, giving an illusion to the mass audience that all Hong Kong residents think in the same way. From this point, the signs are communicating with the audience in two forms, in music and visual experience. The verbal meaning is similar to a ballad, telling a story, how 'I' chased 'my' dream through the years, while showing the economic development of Hong Kong. So the connotation of 'I' was more than a person. The two sets of signs (a person and Hong Kong) seem unrelated, but in this context, 'I' was Hong Kong. By calling to all the Chinese to share the same dream across the world, the song has accomplished the transition from a patriotic education to nationalism.

Using the semiotic approach to analyse 'My Chinese Dream', and focusing on the signs and the connotation of the sounds within the specific social and historical background can offer an insight into the music message. All the signs can be read and interpreted within the musical text; however, most importantly, the sound and visual signifiers have further connections with the connotation, within the specific political and social discourse. Thus, the power of content analysis on the meaning provided by the lyrics and melody is limited compared to the approach of semiotics. In order to decode the meaning of the signs of a song such as 'My Chinese Dream', within the complex background, help from sign research is essential, as the meaning of the music is not only written on the score.

From the perspective of semiotics, since its first appearance on the CCTV Spring Festival Gala stage in 1983, popular music could not avoid playing the role of

a machine with a set of political information. The connotation of the music, within the social and political background, does not exist outside this stage as the meaning was provided not just by the musical text but mainly by the stage itself. Popular music on the stage of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala is a music form which speaks the mass language, but which embodies political signs to express the concepts of the central government. Popular music from Hong Kong and other regions, on this stage, is designed to hold a set of signs which can be decoded by the audience; without those signs, there will be no need for popular music on this stage and pop music will not be popular anymore.

7.4 Mainland *Spice Girls* Versus Taiwanese *Bencao Gangmu*

Popular music through the official cultural outlet, arrived in mainland China with the 1983 CCTV Spring Festival Gala, featuring patriotic Hong Kong singer Zhang Ming-min and his song 'My Chinese Heart', as well as Taiwanese singer Fei Xiang and his song 'The Clouds of My Hometown', which also brought a sense of national identity.⁵²¹ Soon after, as Moskowitz indicated, 'in the 1980s and early 1990s, Taiwan's popular music swept across China'.⁵²² As previously discussed, Zhang Ming-min's performance at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala in 2012 was a significant programme which delivered mainstream values and the most popular political slogan of the Communist Party. Has such popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan, which had been performed in the Spring Festival Gala, always been labelled with a favourable political identity by the Communist Party from the mainland? How does the audience receive it today? In this section I intend to focus on a specific collaboration for the 2009 CCTV Spring Festival Gala, delivered by Taiwanese superstar Jay Chou and the well-known folk singer Song Zu-ying. The semiotic approach will be applied to analyse and interpret the encoded messages

⁵²¹ 'Fei Xiang Popular Music in the 1980s', *Sohu News*, accessed 7 June 2012, <http://news.sohu.com/20081204/n261011561.shtml>; 'Viewing Opening Up via CCTV's Spring Festival Gala', *Shangdu Website*, accessed 7 June 2012, http://cul.shangdu.com/recommend/20081211-15227/index_4.shtml.

⁵²² Marc L. Moskowitz, 'Mandopop under Siege: Culturally Bond Criticisms of Taiwan's Pop Music', *Popular Music* 28 (2009): 69.

within China's social and political discourse, from the musical signs within the songs.⁵²³ The following questions will be answered: what connected these two different pieces by singers whose music styles are not related? Who is the target audience during this communicational process and how did the audience interpret it when watching this performance?

7.5 Musical Textual Analysis of the Collaboration

The performance delivered by Jay Chou and Song Zu-ying in 2009 attracted the highest viewing figures of any of the Spring Festival Galas, according to the data from the media research company CSM.⁵²⁴ It was a joint performance, mixed from two individual repertoires performed by two of China's most well-known music stars. Taiwanese pop star Jay Chou, to many of the Chinese audience, is a symbol of nationalism: Jay's original song title *Bencao Gangmu* comes from a Chinese *materia medica* work *Bencao Gangmu*, written in the fifteenth century by one of the greatest Chinese herbalists and acupuncturists in history, Li Shi-zhen.⁵²⁵ Jay composed the music and Fang Wen-shan wrote the lyrics. The performance first led in with Jay Chou's rap singing, accompanied by a mixture of traditional Chinese flute, Western electric guitar and drums. The music sound has a 'typical introduction of Jay's Western styled pop music but with a significant Chinese character', as Zhan states.⁵²⁶ Some pop singers from Taiwan are regarded with 'mistrust' and 'disdain' so that makes the central government fear 'loss of national identity'.⁵²⁷ Jay's intention of expressing his respect for traditional Chinese culture possibly helped him to earn support from the mainland. This was not only done

⁵²³ The original research and the paper entitled 'Listening to the Pop Music within the CCTV Spring Festival Gala' was given at the International Conference on Music Semiotics in Memory of Raymond Monelle by the University of Edinburgh, in October 2012.

⁵²⁴ Kan-zhu Wang, ed., 'China TV Rating Yearbook', *Beijing: Communication University of China*, 2009, 28.

⁵²⁵ 'Introduction to Ben Cao Gang Mu', *UNESCO Website*, accessed 8 July 2012, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-1/ben-cao-gang-mu-compendium-of-materia-medica/>.

⁵²⁶ Pei-ni Zhan, 'The Research of Jay Chou's Effects' (MA Dissertation, University of Taiwan, 2006), 35.

⁵²⁷ Moskowitz, 'Mandopop under Siege: Culturally Bond Criticisms of Taiwan's Pop Music', 69.

through the music, but also Jay wore a shining gold jacket decorated with a Chinese Long pattern, so he resembled an ancient Chinese emperor standing against a red background, and there were also 3D projections of the pieces in Chinese chess. The visually communicated signs of a set of traditional Chinese elements were directly connected to a TV audience of millions. He sang:

‘If Hua Tuo [a famous physician, Bozhou –208AD] is still alive, the idolization of the foreign world would be cured. The national consciousness would be stimulated when foreigners all come here to learn characters. All these herbs are my treasures, I shall recreate history in my own way. If you have time please read the following words...’

The lyrics shown above introduce his ‘Bencao Gangmu’. The words convey a great sense of pride about traditional culture, and the general theme of nationalism can be read through ‘national consciousness’ to more specific cultural items such as ‘characters’ and ‘herbs’, finishing with an appeal to the audience as an encouragement. In the musical text, this part just finished before the hook came in. With the music continually playing, a nine-year-old boy named Hou Gao-jun-jie, wearing identical clothing to Jay Chow’s, joined in as a guest singer while performing a body popping dance. The young boy can be seen as a response to Jay’s appeal to the audience. The identical clothing is a sign, suggesting that Hou, though from the younger generation, shares the same value of national pride. The contrast between Western culture, from the dance moves, and the Chinese theme, serve as an attempt to attract the audience’s interest to listen and watch. The two sang together:

Lotus seeds, goji berries [followed by a list of Chinese medical herbs that share the same rhymes].

I am honoured to take some Chinese herbs...

Jay’s music performance could be taken as a fusion of the East and West, showing the application of Western pop music through rap singing. The music carried on

interval, this is five half notes→four half notes→three half notes; and four half notes→ three half notes, a pattern of 543+43, as a short form.

When Hou started singing, just before the hook of 'Bencao Gangmu' as shown in Figure 7-11, he sang a different clip, from the song 'Spice Girls', instead of the hook of 'Bencao Gangmu', while also break dancing (scores as indicated in Figure 7-12) When Jay became a drummer on the traditional Chinese big drum, enhancing the heated atmosphere, the audience cheered and applauded. As the music gradually approached the hook again, the stage rose up, bringing the original singer of 'Spice Girls', the celebrated folk singer Song Zu-ying, to the audience's applause as she sang the second theme of her own 'Spice Girls' (as shown in bars 9-16, Figure 7-12). The audience screamed and sang along with the performers to the lyrics of 'Spice Girls' as the music continued; however, Jay Chow's 'Bencao Gangmu' remained the background music. At this moment, artists from multiple backgrounds and genres contributed to the performance, when age, gender, singing style and political background all blended into determination to give a passionate, collaborative performance. In analysis, the input from Hou and Song can be viewed as a typical collage technique; a detailed examination of the two pieces, which were overlapped within this performance, will follow. First of all, the score of 'Spice Girls', originally performed by Song Zu-ying, and performed by Hou, can be found in Figure 7-12:⁵²⁹

⁵²⁹ 'Song Zu-Ying Singing in London', *People Website*, accessed 8 August 2012, <http://culture.people.com.cn/n/2012/0807/c22219-18681175.html>; 'Spice Girls Score', *Tom 163.net Website*, accessed 5 May 2011, <http://www.tom163.net/yuepuku/gequyuepu/yueyoushangchuan/200605/5551.htm>.

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(伴) 辣妹子辣妹子 辣妹子辣，辣妹子辣妹子 辣辣辣，辣妹子辣妹子
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(独)辣妹子从来 辣不怕，辣妹子生性
不怕辣，辣妹子嫁人 辣不怕，吊一串辣椒 碰嘴巴。抓一把辣椒
不怕辣，辣妹子出门 辣不怕，
会说话。辣妹子辣，辣妹子辣，辣妹子辣妹子 辣辣辣。
辣妹子辣，辣妹子辣，辣妹子辣哟 辣辣辣。

Figure 7-12. Musical score shows the first part of Song Zu-ying’s original song, ‘Spice Girls’. Music by Xu Pei-dong, lyrics by Yu Zhi-di. The translation of the lyrics for this part is: ‘Spice girls of red pepper spice girls, hot as pepper. They love peppers as children, they still love them grown up. They marry men loving peppers, peppers put their love to test spice girls, hot as pepper.’

How did Hou replace the hook of ‘Bencao Gangmu’ with the second musical theme of ‘Spice Girls’? If drawing the rhythmic pattern of the first two bars, based on the verbal groups provided by the meaning of the text ‘spice girls of red pepper, spice girls hot as pepper...’, according to the score, it can be summarized as:

2/4 ♪♪♪♪♪♪♪ | ♪♪♪♪♪♪♪ | ...

In comparison, the two summarized rhythmic patterns are notably similar, featuring a shape of syncopation in each bar. Additionally, the connection between the first two notes of this motif within each bar, from the harmonic point of view, is also a perfect fourth. For instance, this is a flow from (E)→(B); moreover, the harmonic flow of the motivation of bars 9 and 10 in Figure 7-12 is (E)→(B)→(D)→(E) and (B)→(D)→(E). In terms of intervals, it shall be five half notes→three half

notes→two half notes; and three half notes → two half notes, a pattern of 532+32, in short.

The answer to the replacement by 'Spice Girls' is becoming clear. The hook of 'Bencao Gangmu' is highly similar to the second theme of 'Spice Girls', both in terms of the rhythmic pattern of syncopation as well as the harmonic flow: a 543+43 model versus a 532+32 model, respectively, based on the above analysis. This means that the two songs share similar acoustic effects. However, apart from the compositional concern of the musical text, the two pieces are not related in terms of the verbal meaning; additionally, the two pieces were originally contributed by singers from different genres. Therefore, despite the identical musical text, what was the real reason for joining these two pieces on the CCTV Spring Festival Gala stage? The tool of musical content analysis seems to offer little power in answering the question. As Tagg pointed out, 'popular music is regarded as a sociocultural field of study',⁵³⁰ therefore a deeper discussion, from the semiotic approach, concerning the connotation of musical signs within the social discourse might also be introduced in analysing the communicational process.

⁵³⁰ Tagg, 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice', 45.

7.6 A Semiotic Approach for the Collaboration

Song Zu-ying herself can be considered as a symbolic entity in various dimensions, previous work having been conducted on performance, aesthetic and cultural aspects by Chinese scholars in recent years.⁵³¹ However, as little research has been done from a symbolic angle, the following questions will be asked: What message do her songs convey about the musical, social and political discourse of China? Does this affect the collaboration with Jay Chow?

In researching the questions, I intend to begin by considering her identity. According to Zhang and Li, Song Zu-ying's stage performance presents the 'traditional value of Chinese culture' as well as marking 'the highest level of Chinese national styled singing'.⁵³² Li further indicates that 'Song Zu-ying's performance highlighted the inner unity of nature and music technique'.⁵³³ These arguments suggest that Song Zu-ying is recognized as a national level artist; her performance is not only valued from the musical aesthetics perspective, but also from the ancient philosophical point of view. Zhang and Li stated that 'Song's performance expresses her understanding of ancient Chinese wisdom of "balance" and the respect of nature'.⁵³⁴ That is to say, the philosophical concept of *tian ren he yi* (in Chinese 天人合一, meaning 'the nature and the human is a whole')⁵³⁵ can be seen in her performance. 'Spice Girls' is one of her favourite pieces and it is also a self-portrait to describe the local females from Hunan Province and their love of spicy food. The lyrics and music come from ordinary Chinese people's life; having real life experience of living in the Hunan countryside and enjoying the spicy meals of her hometown helped her to express this identity through her gestures, pronunciation and body language, to offer a sense of reality in the performance yet separating her

⁵³¹ Na Li, 'The Aesthetic Studies of Song Zu-Ying', *National Tradition* 6 (2009): 109; Qi Li and Zhi-chang Pan, 'Singing and Politics: An Analysis from Song Zu-Ying', *Eastern Forum of Nanjing University* 3 (2006): 63; Li Zhao, 'Some Thoughts after Song Zu-Ying's Performance in Foreign Countries', *Music and Dance* 4 (2012): 88.

⁵³² Xiao-feng Zhang and Yi-bo Li, 'The Singing Style of Song Zu-Ying from Aesthetic Approach', *Cultural Forum of Heilongjiang University* 9 (2001): 53.

⁵³³ Li, 'The Aesthetic Studies of Song Zu-Ying', 109.

⁵³⁴ Zhang and Li, 'The Singing Style of Song Zu-Ying from Aesthetic Approach', 55.

⁵³⁵ This classic concept has been widely discussed in Confucianism, Daojia and Buddhism in terms of physiology, ethics, politics and society, and many other aspects.

social status as an artist from the mass proletariat. Her countryman Mao Ze-dong was also from Hunan Province, where the first military uprising of the PLA took place.⁵³⁶ The local culture, as well as Communist culture, are both heavily associated with red peppers: once Mao joked, 'spicy peppers are the real food of revolutionaries'.⁵³⁷ And yet, although a folk singer, Song Zu-ying received her Western operatic training from one of the most prestigious music colleges in Beijing.⁵³⁸

Therefore, she offers many key features, being an ideal artist from the preferred background, with the right voice within the Communist cultural discourse, and her name being a symbol of the voice of the central stage of the CPC. Furthermore, her connection with the CCTV Spring Festival Gala was also a paradigm which identified her vital role as court singer, the queen of mainstream folk singing styles who was also promoted by the state as a national hero in the film *National Heroes of China* and as soft power to the world, marking her as a successful Chinese female.⁵³⁹ Since her first performance at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, Song performed annually for the next twenty-four years as the event's finale.⁵⁴⁰ She was the first Chinese singer to give a concert at Wiener Musikverein, which was broadcast nationwide,⁵⁴¹ and was also assigned the mission to hold a concert at the Royal Albert Hall, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Great Britain.⁵⁴² Therefore, Song Zu-ying and her music can be considered as a sign that is associated with the country's most important cultural and political events, that embraces the political information inside and expresses that message to the audience in the language of music. Her

⁵³⁶ 'The Riots in Hunan', *China.com Website*, accessed 22 June 2012, http://www.china.com.cn/xhgm/2011-09/05/content_23352409.htm.

⁵³⁷ Fu Qi, *Mao and His 'pepper Revolution' Theory* (360 Library data), accessed 6 June 2012, http://www.360doc.com/content/10/0501/09/535749_25662857.shtml.

⁵³⁸ 'Concert in China Conservatory of Music by Song Zu-Yang', *Edu.163 Website*, accessed 16 June 2012, <http://edu.163.com/12/0624/17/84PH98EK0029314V.html>.

⁵³⁹ 'Song Zu'ying Selected to Perform in the Film of China's History', *China.com News*, accessed 10 October 2012, http://news.china.com.cn/txt/2010-10/23/content_21185130.htm.

⁵⁴⁰ Zhi Wang, 'Song Zu-Ying Talks About Her Performance of CCTV Spring Festival Gala for the Last Seventeen Years', *Chongqing Evening Post*, 6 February 2007, <http://news.qq.com/a/20070206/000854.htm>; 'Song Zu-Ying Will Miss the Year of the Horse in 2014, She Had Been Performing on the Stage for Twenty-Four Years', *163 News Website*, accessed 5 June 2012, <http://news.163.com/14/0115/16/9IL4ENSH0001124J.html>.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴² Zhao, 'Some Thoughts after Song Zu-Ying's Performance in Foreign Countries', 87.

artistic work in the form of folk music, in reality, is a tool to connect with the ordinary people but is encoded with the aesthetical belief of the Communist Party. In return, as the singer who is responsible for producing the Hymn of the Communist Party, her work is offered power and authority by the Party; it is the state's high art. The music text is never as important as her appearance on the stage, especially in the case of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala when millions of Chinese are watching the programme from all over the world, and it is the time to announce the concept, the belief of the Communist Party, to the whole world.

How does one view the collaboration, in 2009, between Song Zu-ying, as a folk singer, and Jay Chou, who is seen as a pop star? How did Jay come to feature as the tool to express mainstream ideology, from the view of the Communist Party of China? When examining Jay Chow's music style as a pop singer, it is worth noting that he has a distinct way of expressing his Chineseness through his music. He is Taiwanese and is one of the most well-known pop singers in Asia; his records are distributed throughout the Chinese population worldwide.⁵⁴³ His pop song 'Songfeng Po' was based on the traditional Chinese tuning system;⁵⁴⁴ 'Huo Yuan-jia' is named after a famous patriotic Kong Fu master of modern Chinese history; 'The Tea Made by Grandpa' described a history of the tea ceremony; 'Her Hair is Like the Snow' has adapted the Chinese traditional *Guzheng* to play the role representing the female figure of the story. Additionally, the lyrics of all the above songs were written by Fang Wen-shan, who excels at using symbolism to create imaginary historical scenes of Ancient China and traditional culture by adding the allusions and symbols of well-known characters from Chinese Classic literature, such as in the *Butterfly Lovers*⁵⁴⁵ and in 'Her Hair is Like the Snow'. How does Jay express his Chineseness through his performance to the audience? According to Hall, 'a message must be perceived as meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded before it has an effect';⁵⁴⁶ therefore, how does an ordinary audience perceive the message of Jay Chow's ideology through his music? On China's largest question-

⁵⁴³ Zhan, 'The Research of Jay Chow's Effects', 27, 39.

⁵⁴⁴ *Po* is equivalent to *qu pai*, which is a generic term for a fixed melody being used in Chinese traditional music.

⁵⁴⁵ It is the Chinese version of Romeo and Juliet, and is the tragic love story of Liang Shan-bo and Zhu Yin-tai.

⁵⁴⁶ Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, 92–94.

and-answer website Zhihu (知乎), under the title of 'Discussion on Chineseness Feature of Jay Chow's Work', user Liu Biubiu commented that 'When the drum beats and the folk instruments are introduced, Jay Chow's *Huo yuan-jia* (English name of the song: *Fearless*), makes me think of Jet Lee's movies; standing on the stage waiting to fight against a foreigner! The most surprising thing is when Jay sings '...clear memory fades away with the time' in the Beijing operatic style, it makes the figure of Master Huo Yuan-jia become vivid in my head again!'⁵⁴⁷

Hall proposed the four codes of the communicational model. First of all is the hegemonic code which, in this case, means that during the dissemination of Jay Chow's performance, when the audience is viewing the TV programme, those who are familiar with Jay Chow's music style already, or are interested in his pop style (possibly the younger audience), will receive the message of Chineseness, the sense of national pride and patriotism through his lyrics and the stage activity, such as playing the traditional red drum during the performance of 'Bencao Gangmu'. This already builds up knowledge of Jay Chow's music as the reference code. This process operates well for the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, as there were few other choices on TV⁵⁴⁸ and most family and local televisions were providing the same programme during that four and half hours; therefore, the music show, within that three minute performance, has a strong hegemonic position to express it to a large audience group. The second code, in Hall's opinion, is the professional coding.⁵⁴⁹ This coding works in tandem with the first coding; for instance, when people are watching Jay Chow and Hou Gao-jun-jie's performance, as they hear the lyrics they can read the top layered information of national pride from the surface. However, this code requires the encoder's precise control in enhancing that hegemonic code. For this reason, every detail of the programme which was intended to connect with the audience needed quality control of visual, sound and all other aspects. This, perhaps, is the most important coding in the collaboration of Song Zu-ying and Jay Chou. The design involved in joining the two songs and the two well-known

⁵⁴⁷ Zhihu Forum: Discussion on Chineseness Feature of Jay Chow's Work', n.d., <http://www.zhihu.com/question/23466149>.

⁵⁴⁸ 'Song Dan Dan Is Calling for Reform to the Spring Festival Gala', *Youku Website*, accessed 25 February 2014, http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XNjYzMDQ5MzZM2_v_165672904.html.

⁵⁴⁹ Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, 19.

superstars has a connotative intention: the duration of the performance is the process to make the signs work, to expand the connotation of the symbols inside the musical text, as the lyrics indicated: '*I am proud of the herbs, and will take Chinese herbs*' or '*peppers are hot*'. The actual meaning was not just inside the lyrics and the festival dance; the most important meaning of the collaboration was the perfect connection of the two songs and the joined hands of Jay Chow and Song Zu-ying, two singers from different musical genres providing one piece of flawless song. The symbol of the nation's pride, and possibly one of the most important singers to the Communist Party of China, holding the hand of Taiwan's most famous singer sent an obvious message from the encoder: that Taiwan is part of China, it will return to China and the two parts will become one! This is the exact message the encoder needs to ensure is received, based on the political viewpoint of the Communist Party, according to its official position in public.⁵⁵⁰ The music was carefully selected and edited in the way that the hook 'Bencao Gangmu' was naturally replaced by 'Spice Girls'. The reaction of the local audience, seen on the TV, when the hook disappeared and was sung by Hou, showed that the audience was not surprised at the difference; only when Song Zu-ying appeared as the authentic singer of her own work, with the background music of 'Bencao Gangmu', was the audience amazed by this unusual performance and gave enormous applause. The third code provided by Hall's theory is the negotiated code,⁵⁵¹ which stressed the freedom of the code itself. This is similar to the performance of Song Zu-ying, this time, who only performed for two bars in terms of musical context; however, the information in her performance and the meaning in 'Spice Girls' were beyond what was written on the music score. Her presence, joining in and completing his song with her tune and voice, was the purpose of that programme. The last code is referred to as the globally contrary code,⁵⁵² it allows 'a viewer perfectly to understand both the literal and connotative inflection given to an event, but to determine to decode the message in a globally contrary way'.⁵⁵³ This

⁵⁵⁰ 'Taiwan Was Part of China Historically', *Xinhua News Agency*, accessed 6 May 2012, http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2003-01/24/content_705074_5.htm.

⁵⁵¹ Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, 19.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

opposite effect offers the least result to the encoder, being associated with the value and identity of the audience. Generally speaking, the message of the collaboration between Song and Jay, within the Spring Festival background, might produce the opposite effect of the proposed result that the sender wished. The four codes have provided a useful tool in interpreting the signs, and possibly resolving the myth, of this classic collaboration, and have also offered an insight into how the political concept in the message is encoded within the music materials.

7.7 A concern of the Audience

Rethinking the communicational process in the collaboration between the Taiwanese pop singer Jay Chow and well-known folk singer Song Zu-ying from the mainland provided a flawless musical event at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala in 2009. The cultural approach helps with decoding the political message which connected the audience through the music dissemination process, in China's particular social, political and cultural context, and this process also gives meaning to the performance. From the communicational perspective, a question from the audience's point of view has arisen to complete the process. That is, what does the audience think about this collaboration? The answer to this question is possibly provided by media reception research, as it emphasizes the study of audience⁵⁵⁴ as 'interpretive communities', acknowledging that some cultural products, seen as connecting, will never meet the audience physically. Also, according to Radway and Lindlof, the audience conducts the social rules and activity within its own circle.⁵⁵⁵ The audience of the Spring Festival Gala performance represents the vital other side of the communicational process and, as McQuail proposed, the encoded media, or musical, text has to be read through the perception of the mass audience. Thus, meanings are reconstructed based on the information provided; during the process, the audience is not thought to play a passive role. The content of the data should be able to shed light at a deeper level.⁵⁵⁶ This method has indicated the direction of

⁵⁵⁴ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 367.

⁵⁵⁵ Jake Hermes, *Re-Reading Popular Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 66–67.

⁵⁵⁶ Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory 4th Edition*, 367.

the reception study of the musical content of the Spring Festival Gala: that, considering the communicational process as a whole and that the effectiveness of dissemination depends on various conditions, the reception still might not be perceived as might have been expected. A further reception study into a specific music work from the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, focussing on social discourse and situational parameters in particular, may serve to build upon the conclusions drawn from this research.

7.8 Conclusion

The above discussion has shown that Others, musicians from China's disputed territories, are manipulated as an important component, to express the state's mainstream ideology, to foster the sense of belongingness, to maintain its state stability, as well as to earn emotional support among all Chinese, all over the world. In order to unite the Chinese nation, across the mainland and disputed territories, the Communist ideology continues to pursue the Chinese Dream.

The Chinese Communist Party wants to reinforce the message of their parental figure in the Chinese world, through popular music entertainment, for example, to establish their authority regarding the core values for being a Chinese person. It is also used as a social glue, to call for unity among Chinese ethnic people, as a sort of resistance towards globalization, and perhaps, Westernisation. The experiment of applying the combination of semiotics and communication theories as the method within this chapter, has offered a new microcosmic view, to help to monitor the interaction and form a deeper comprehension of small details of musical elements and suggestions from the performance within its corresponding cultural, political environment. The combination of theories has also helped to grasp the actual communicational effects from the macro view, by considering music materials as a tangible message from a distance, to analyse the music travelling through stage performance, via mass distribution.

There is a Chinese saying: 'Fixed barrack, floating soldiers' (铁打的营盘流水的兵). It literally means, the troops will always be there but the soldiers will be

replaced from time to time. On the Communist central stage, on Chinese New Year's Eve, the pretty faces and household names of the super stars might alter along with their pop songs and flashing stage effects, but the music theme shall remain. In order to unite the Chinese nation, across the mainland and disputed territories, the Communist ideology continues to pursue the Chinese Dream.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the relationship between music and politics in post reform China, from the mass communicational approach. Since the Opening Up and Reform policy was implemented in China in 1978, the country now looks and feels very different to its pre-reform era. Chinese politicians have realised that communal values and national identity are facing great challenges, after the Opening Up and Reform policy had a huge impact on China's social, economic and political discourse. Therefore, the Communist Party was eager to continue to apply music as a propaganda tool, to consolidate its political agenda since the establishment of the Party but, also, with a further determination to build a harmonious society in the post reform era. Meanwhile, the state-owned media retains its regular interaction with politics. This thesis mainly features three different genres of music: folk music from the field of Xinjiang; the Chinese Dream of the piano; and popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan, on the stage of the Central Television (CCTV) Spring Festival Gala. The study also sought to explore the author's dual identities and perspectives when conducting fieldwork as a native researcher in China. The literature on mass communicational theory, semiotics and critical musicology offered the theoretical applications to analyse how music content is decoded, disseminated and interpreted by the mass audience and, most importantly, how it delivers political messages. The study sought to answer three questions:

1. How does politics influence folk music from Xinjiang?
2. How does politics interact with Western classical music?
3. How does politics affect popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan?

The main findings are chapter specific and will be summarized within the respective chapters; this section will synthesize the findings to answer the study's three research questions.

How does politics influence folk music from Xinjiang?

First of all, a discussion stemmed from Harris's definition of Xinjiang folk music, of its significant character, and of it being intensively politically manipulated. Fieldwork with local state-employed composer Liu Zhu-min and his nationally promoted work that described the joyful life and praised the leadership of the Communist Party was introduced to examine the new folk music in Xinjiang. Secondly, in examining whether the local public stage is becoming a medium for expressing national political order, a comparison focused on performances of a Kazakh minority song at the Xinjiang local Spring Festival Gala by a Kazakh singer and a mainstream Chinese folk singer. Fieldwork experience with the gala's director, on another local patriotic live music show, *Passion Square*, was also undertaken.

A theoretical framework was applied to support the above original research, as follows:

- a. The identity shift from the emic researcher to the etic researcher in the field. Having the identity of a long-term insider had offered an insight into the local music but limited the research from an objective point of view. The mixture of living in the field⁵⁵⁷ combined with the away-from-home experience offered a much wider perspective.
- b. The three-step discussion on communication theory of Shannon,⁵⁵⁸ Westley and MacLean⁵⁵⁹ and McQuail,⁵⁶⁰ to ensure the application of mass communication theory as the tool to examine mainstream media and assist in the analysis of 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs' from several angles and perspectives, such as sociology, history, politics and economics, to focus on the effect of social structure and media systems on patterns of content. McQuail believes the scale of the media is key; therefore, the theory has been applied to compare the scale of the communication as well as in analysis of the local Spring Festival Gala's audience and the case study of *The Voice of China*.

⁵⁵⁷ Stock, 'Fieldwork at Home', in *Shadows in the Field*, 110.

⁵⁵⁸ Shannon, 'A Mathematical Theory of Communication', 379-423.

⁵⁵⁹ Communication Theory website.

⁵⁶⁰ McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, 46.

- c. Taking the music and the music video as signs, interpretation from the perspective of local people, as well as someone who is not native to the music, was discussed.
- d. The musicological perspective of *Structuralism* was applied in examining 'Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs', considering the language, the scene settings, the instruments, the dance and performers, as well as the music: whether it was composed, or formed, in line with the authentic, local, aesthetic belief.
- e. Examination of the reception of *Greeting the Guests with Sweet Songs* by the local mainstream media, to demonstrate the political manipulation of the song to praise the leadership of the Communist Party.
- f. The concept of authenticity was considered, along with the structure of the music video; related aspects were discussed in decoding the music message, such as its relationship with language.
- g. Ritual and music. The origin of the 'square culture', and the act of adopting Uyghur ritualised music, dedicating it to the *Passion Square* concert and the formation of a new ritual for the Party.

With the assistance of the above theoretical applications, this study has concluded the following about the influence of politics on Xinjiang music:

The definition of the new Xinjiang folk music has expanded. Currently, folk music in Xinjiang is, largely, consumed by the local people; it is produced by living musicians, continuing the oral tradition, and is promoted by the state. It has a significant character in the life of Xinjiang, but has become both a hymn to the Communist Party's leadership and an expression of the mainstream view of the joyful life of the minority people in Xinjiang.

Moreover, holding both insider and outsider identities when conducting fieldwork might have provided a less biased and more powerful, broader and more comprehensive critical understanding of the music. Thus, the researcher should live in the field and embrace the nature of the research, as well as looking at the culture from a distance. The early fieldwork with my previous piano teacher had acknowledged my understanding of his artistic achievements. However, the work

itself does not always reflect the manipulation of a piece of music, or that the sender who controls mass communication is the power engine, which means its political manipulation might also alter the music's identity.

McQuail's approach, combined with the semiotic pathway, has provided useful tools to be able to analyse the music materials during the dissemination process. During the Chinese New Year holiday, to people in Xinjiang, watching the music programmes on state-owned TV stations, a sense of national unity among all the ethnic groups is specially stressed, and promoted as a core political ideology of Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

Lastly, the idea of incorporating authentic cultural elements is a vital element to make the performance more convincing to the audience and to foster a sense of honour by reminding them of their identity. Additionally, authenticity can be defined based on the context and cultural background of the performance, as in the case of Wang Hong-wei's court singing for the state media, in comparison to Tusken's performance as a native Kazak person. 'Authenticity' within a music performance such as the *Passion Square* concert is also related to the stage costume, which marks both the social status and the identity of the audience, to build a stronger connection as a sign of national unity.

How does politics interact with Western classical music?

The discussion began with a brief history of the piano and its connection with the Chinese royal court, moving forward to the Cultural Revolution when the instrument started to thrive as a symbol representing the Communist revolution, through the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*. Pianist Yundi Li, referred to as China's national hero, has led the massive national trend of piano fever ever since *The Red Piano* in 2012 and *My Piano Dream* in 2013 were labelled as signs of nationalism and patriotism in China. Fieldwork with Yundi, as well as the interview with the producer Zhang Zhao, aimed to document the aesthetic and political factors behind his work; cultural theory was introduced to determine how concealed information was added by the mainstream media, beyond music.

A theoretical framework was applied to support the above original research, as described below:

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a. The identity switch and role changing in the field⁵⁶¹ resulted from being an etic researcher at home and an emic researcher in foreign countries; gender issues were also encountered in the field.

b. An examination of the opposite receptions from the UK⁵⁶² and China⁵⁶³ of Yundi's *The Red Piano* referred to Chinese traditional, aesthetic beliefs in providing an explanation; discussion of its Chinese interpretation determined the reception of the record by the mainstream media in China.

c. The concept of the recording *The Red Piano* has particular relevance to China's specific political, social and cultural ramifications that have more recently given rise to issues concerning the marking of China's international status, and to bringing a sense of nationalism and patriotism to the nation.

Therefore, by investigating the data collected in the field and the theoretical applications this thesis has concluded the following to explain how politics influences classical music, especially piano music, in China.

As very recent research, the aim was to focus on China's most representative pianist on the topic of piano and politics, to contribute to the continuation of the ideas in Kraus's book *Piano and Politics in China* since 1989.⁵⁶⁴ In contrast to Kraus's macro research, rather, this thesis had assistance from the concepts of fieldwork experience of data collection, combined with communicational analysis and critical musicological discussion, which together offered a powerful insight from various perspectives. This not only allowed the research to take place on the macro scale, but also offered the opportunity to examine the question on a microscopic scale. This provided a more precise examination of the research in comparison to the vast number of secondary resources in the case of a state-owned media system, and, more importantly, enabled the critical processing of the secondary resources as a reference in seeking the answer.

⁵⁶¹ Chou, 'Experience and Fieldwork: A Native Researcher's View', 456. Koning, 'The Fieldworker as Performer', 417. Meron, 'Insider and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of knowledge', 11. Brown, 'Yundi: The Red Piano', *The Times* (17 February 2012).

⁵⁶² Brown, 'Yundi: The Red Piano', *The Times* (17 February 2012).

⁵⁶³ Yang, 'Li Yundi: "the Chinese Wind" Blowing Between the Black and White Keys', *China Culture* (17 May 2012).

⁵⁶⁴ Kraus, *Piano and Politics in China*.

This thesis has found that in cases when the media system exists as a solid sole operation (as in a state-owned system), when the pre-existing data was limited and influenced by the mainstream culture from the home field, then off-field data collection (i.e. away from the original culture) has become crucial. Looking at the same research object away from the field might help the researcher to access it via a different discourse when the existing media system is not playing the dominant role. Assessing the reality of the scene, for instance, by examining how the raw data is gradually offered meaning by the media and the dominant social discourse, then returning to the field of the producer's original home perspective and investigating how the structure of the music functions from that perspective, and its relationship with linguistic, native aesthetic beliefs and meaning, allows the researcher the opportunity to witness the development of the signifiers. The value of the foreign field, which has a different discourse although not native to the sign, lies in helping the sign to gain meaning, to become the signifier in the home field. A research pattern of home field→foreign field→home field will allow the researcher to distinguish the innate character of the sign from home, how it is performed away from home, which is the process of taking the shape of the signifier to the home perspective, when it might have a different meaning to the research object and, in the end, how it develops to a set of signified information in the home community. That is the purpose of fieldwork and off-fieldwork, to know the facts of the research object, such as a piece of music; to understand the differences and the relationship between the two fields, where one can be the other's sign; and, finally, to locate how, why and when the meaning is added to the artistic work. Therefore, in the case of Yundi Li and his recording of *The Red Piano* one can say the music is not as 'red' as it sounds, but what makes the piano so 'red' is not how the music was made but, rather, for whom the music was made. There was no doubt that some of the work composed by Zhang Zhao illustrated his personal pursuits and the inspiration offered by traditional culture, but when it was recorded and released to celebrate the Chinese Communist Party's establishment, the recording was expected to, or had to, convey that meaning.

The meaning of the *The Red Piano* is not merely music. To the mainstream media, this recording is forever a monument to commemorate the glorious

revolutionary history, particularly when pianos, a Western symbol, feature as the tool to play the Party's song for its mass people, reinforcing the shared identity of the children of the mother yellow river, stemming from *The Yellow River Concerto*. It also forms a set of signs incorporating the Party hymns from different ethnic groups by illustrating their folk tunes, and the historical backgrounds of music from controversial ethnic areas, throughout Communist history. Folk songs came from Xinjiang,⁵⁶⁵ Tibet⁵⁶⁶ and, in order to mark the holy land of the Communist Revolution, Hunan Province,⁵⁶⁷ and its leader Mao Ze-dong, a strong ending to the recording, in the sense of marking the mainstream ideology and purpose of its publication and promotion nationwide, occurred with the rearrangement of the Chinese national anthem *March of the Volunteers*.

The manipulation of Western classical music is seen as a complex circle but it has an accurate inner structure; from the paradigm of Yundi and his *Red Piano* recording, one can see that, first of all, Western classical music is seen as a whole set of signs to promote mainstream ideology. The connotation of Yundi is as signified information, to pronounce the multiple triumph of the economy and education, marking China's rising status in the international discourse; yet his pianism and background are promoted and read as a preservation of traditional Chinese culture. Within the mass communicational process, as a musician who speaks the language of music, the political aims are encoded into the musical text and disseminated to the mass audience within the overwhelmingly dominant power of social discourse. During this mass communicational process, at this level of dissemination, the connotation of the aesthetic value of the music text gradually completed the transformation, incorporating within it the sense of nationalism and patriotism. The circle does not stop there: the meaning of the signs continues to develop, expanding the signified but always embracing mainstream ideology and

⁵⁶⁵ *In the Place Wholly Faraway* from *The Red Piano*, in Chinese 在那遥远地方 originally collected by Wang Luo-bing from Xinjiang, rearranged on the demand of former President Hu Jin-tao to demonstrate China's soft power at the Golden BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) Conference in 2011, by Zhang Zhao, according to the interview with Zhang in September 2013, in Beijing.

⁵⁶⁶ Remote Shangri-La from *The Red Piano*.

⁵⁶⁷ *Liu Yang River*, rearranged from a well-known revolutionary themed song from Hunan, as a metaphor to praise Mao Ze-dong.

keeping active interaction within the mass audience, such as during a national tour of *The Chinese Piano Dream*.

The complete circle, from the personal, musical experience of listening to the *Red Piano* recording to attending a *Chinese Piano Dream* concert anywhere in China, then encountering news reports of performances at the most prestigious events, is a typical communication scale transmission pattern. It starts from a recording as a self-interaction and alters along with the medium of the musical communication. No matter that it is only a self-examination or a social level broadcast, the information remains the same: only the connotation of the sign grows and so does the meaning. To a Chinese ear, within the specific social discourse, the music of a Western piano piece from a pianist like Yundi Li or Lang Lang is never just melody; it is a pathway, the direct interpretation of the Chinese Dream.

How does politics affect popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan?

This thesis contributed detailed case studies from Hong Kong singer Zhang Ming-min's *My Chinese Dream* and the collaboration between Taiwanese singer Jay Chow and mainland mainstream folk singer Song Zu-ying. Analysis of the communicational dissemination process, applying the semiotic approach, examined the structure and the connotation of the music materials to explain why and how popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan is manipulated to serve the Party's political ideology of instilling a sense of common identity and cohesion, as well as trying to promote and build a common national identity in the Chinese nation across the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan. A number of theoretical tools have been applied to assist the analysis:

- a. The approach of traditional content analysis of communication theory was used to indicate how the political message is encoded into popular music from Hong Kong.
- b. The concept of language and authenticity was discussed with regard to the first performance of *My Chinese Heart* by Hong Kong singer Zhang Ming-min, to express the identity and the ideology of the musician.
- c. The technique of musical analysis offered insight into the harmonic structure of the collage work of 'Bencao Gangmu' and 'Spice Girls'.

- d. The semiotic approach of popular music enabled exploration of how popular music became signs: from its basic musical context, extended to the related specific cultural, political and historical background of the performance; and with added elements such as the performers also as the signs, to form the category and the connotation of the signified.

With the assistance of the above theoretical applications, this study has produced findings on how popular music was influenced by politics:

First of all, popular music from Hong Kong and Taiwan arrived, along with the Reform and Opening Up policy, to interact with the local culture. In order to protect the native ideology and reinforce the sense of national unity and patriotism among all Chinese, as well as announcing the ownership of Hong Kong and Taiwan, the representative cultural products from these regions, such as their popular music, were introduced through China's mass communication platform, the CCTV Spring Festival Gala. Since the emergence in 1983 of popular music from Hong Kong, and the singer Zhang Ming-min, until the most recent work *My Chinese Dream* by the same singer in 2014, the music message, such as its lyrics or musical content, has maintained its close connection with the current mainstream political situation. The dual collage of music and politics through the collaboration between Song Zu-ying and Jay Chow, in 2009, also delivered the signal of the same purpose. The conclusion may be drawn that the mass communicational medium is the sender's major approach to expressing their political concepts. Some popular music, with its ritualised background, has been selected to be shown on the stage, such as at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala. The format and content must serve the function of fostering the nation's unity.

The core concept in applying semiotics to assist popular music study, as Tagg stressed,⁵⁶⁸ lies in the signs and their connotations. However, in this case, it requires deeper understanding of China's own historical and political social

⁵⁶⁸ Philp Tagg offered suggestions after the author's presentation at the International Conference on Music Semiotics in Memory of Raymond Monelle in November 2012.

discourse, observing how music is planted and grown in this environment. Viewing music 'without' its soil, but still focusing on its musical text, by analysing the music materials across the time period, and examining its inner connotation within the social discourse, shows how it interacts with the outer environment and gains meaning from it. Popular music itself is a symbol to mark a new era in China after its Opening Up and Reform policy; therefore, within the mainstream discourse, unavoidably, along with its popularity across the nation in China, it has and will continue to have, its political blood.

Recommendations for future research

This thesis examined various genres of music in post reform China, since 1978, to discuss how music was shaped and presented by Communist political mainstream ideology. The music materials focused on folk music, classical music and popular music, looking at their interaction within the social discourse, with the mass audience, during the communication process. The case studies undertaken largely comprised data from original fieldwork; semiotics and musicological concepts were applied as the theoretical tools to assist the research in those three representative genres. The scale of this research is extensive and multifaceted even when focusing on the above three genres. The Opening Up and Reform policy has changed China's image. The Chinese people have become wealthier and more Westernised than in the pre-reform era, while political control of culture is on-going and affecting many aspects with its subtle approach, when the targeted audience's self-awareness may not yet have detected such control.

Further research is certainly recommended, in the future, into the Chinese audience's reception, across all ethnic groups, to monitor their self-awareness of the political influence on music. The rise of China's middle class since the reform has created a large group of consumers of local musical products, such as musical drama or opera, yet it is also the backbone of China's social stability.⁵⁶⁹ It might be

⁵⁶⁹ Huang, 'On Functions of Middle Class to Social Stability'.

beneficial to investigate how the mainstream media generates the musical products that engage with the interests of China's middle class, to maintain its political control. Additionally, would the control ever lose its power and allow more freedom in the creation of the music works? If competition exists between the sender and the receiver within a communication process, which is likely within a solely dominated social discourse, the methodology presented in this work might offer a useful tool in investigating this idea.

Limitations of the study

This study has offered an evaluative perspective on the topic of music and politics in post reform China. The research was conducted in China and foreign countries, in both Chinese and English, and the methodology relied on theoretical reference to ethnomusicology, musicology, mass communication and semiotics. The combination of the above methods was an experiment, in an attempt to answer the major questions, and it is a complex phenomenon with interdisciplinary concerns, as there were not sufficient references from the methodological perspective for the purposes of this research. As a direct consequence of this methodology, the study encountered a number of limitations, such as how to adjust Western theory to be more suitable for application in China, which might be a consideration in the future. Additionally, gaining access for the purposes of this research was not easy; therefore, this limited access might also mean that more work remains for future research.

Final Words

Music has always been offered an identity as a political tool since the establishment of the Communist Party of China, and its identity continues to serve that function, though subtly expanded with a more complex capacity. The methodology within this research has offered a new approach in examining original, contemporary material from various genres, to demonstrate how music serves as the message

station to express mainstream ideology as the reflection of social discourse. The Opening Up and Reform policy has massively improved Chinese people's life conditions and outlook, while China is also gradually rising globally. This research provides a window to let the world view China's modern political and social discourse via its music; and also, perhaps, reminds the Chinese people to be aware of the scenes outside, through this window.

Appendix

Transcript translated by the author of the film *Yundi Li • Dream Builder*

00:07: <TITLE>*The Piano Poem*

00:14 *Li Yundi was born in Chongqing Dadukou District, 7th October 1982. (The film is showing the Chongqing clip.)*

00:20 <Yundi> *'My father used to work in the steel company.'*

00:24 *'My mom influenced me with music perhaps.'*

00:29 <SUB> *When Li Yundi was four years old, he asked his parents to buy him a small accordion.*

00:30 *'I think it might be some kind of Yuan fen' (Buddhist-related Chinese concept, means 'binding force').*

00:33 <SUB> *He began his road to music.*

<Yundi> *'I saw it in a shop, I think maybe THAT was the beginning.'*

00:38<Yundi> *'Learning the accordion, as well as listening to the music, was the start of my dream.'*

00:42 *'The accordion was the sunshine in a gloomy day' (the weather is always gloomy in Chongqing).*

00:45 <Yundi> *'However, when I heard the sound of a piano.'*

00:47<Yundi> *'It was a whole new world.'*

00:51 *'It allows you to gallop, to thrive in such a wonderful music world.'*

0052: <SUB> *When Yundi was seven, he switched to learning the piano.*

00:54 <SUB> *He then entered the Sichuan Conservatory of Music in that year.*

00:55 <Yundi> *'But sometimes, you can see some children playing, I did feel a bit envious.'*

00:58 <SUB> *He was taught by Prof. Dan Zhaoyi.*

01:00 <SUB> *At the age of 10, Li Yundi won the first prize at a nationwide piano competition.*

01:03 <Yundi> *'But when you started to play on the piano keyboard, you would forget about everything that makes you frustrated.'*

01:05<Yundi> *'So this is the magic of music, and so it attracts me the most.'*

01:10 <Yundi> *'Frankly speaking, I don't have many friends.'*

01:11 *'My best friends are the music scores and music.'*

01:15-20 <Yundi> *'When I was a child, every night before bed, I would listen to Chopin's music. From then on, the music was carved inside my brain.'*

01:23-28 <Yundi> *'I was hoping to play on the stage for as many people as possible; when I was a child, that was the dream during that era.'*

01:29 <SUB> *Li Yundi entered Shenzhen Art School with Prof Dan. (The pic will show Shenzhen.)*

01:39-43 <Yundi> *'Shenzhen is like a newborn baby, everything was so fresh, full of energy.'*

01:45-59 <Yundi> *'I always wanted to make every piece perfect, after I won the top prize in a domestic game.'*

02:01-10 <Yundi> *'Then followed by China International Piano Competition, Liszt International Competition, eventually I participated in the Chopin in 2000.'*

02:14 <SUB> *2000, Li Yundi is playing at the Chopin International Competition at the age of 18.*

02:19-22 <SUB> *Li Yundi became the first winner in fifteen years to be awarded the top prize at the International Chopin Piano Competition, the youngest 'Chopin' champion, and the first winner from China.*

02:24-31 <Yundi> *'I almost never played Chopin before the competition, and to be honest, I wasn't planning to participate, because that year I already did a few major competitions, and was a bit tired.'*

02:33-37 <Yundi> *'Well, I only had three months to prepare for it. Because of the competition, I began to dig into his music world, and engage with his music.'*

02:55-03:06 <Yundi> *'Germany is perhaps the "homeland" of Western Classical music; the land fostered many significant musicians of my favourites, for instance, Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, etc.'*

03:09 <Yundi> *'There are so many historical buildings in each German city, but combined with the modern ones as well, it is a fusion of the past and present – it is like the classical music we are playing today.'*

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03:16-26 <Yundi> 'My study experience in Germany has provide an insight into my favourite musicians' soul and spirit; it also helps me to develop my own understanding of Western classical music.'

THE FOOTAGE WAS FILMED AT HAMBURG CONCERT HALL

03:38 <Yundi> 'Now my dream is to reach more people via my music, make them more happy because of the nature of music.'

03:40 <SUB> Yundi is described as the 'Master of the Romantic Music' in the West.

03:49-57 <Yundi> 'I am building my dream with music, a dream is not a fantasy, it is for real. The passion of music will keep you going, no matter what happens. The dream will become true.'

04:00-10 <SUB> To make your dream come true, requires passion and obsession; the dream builder (Yundi) will walk along with you.

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