

A new approach to applying ancient style elements to modern Chinese choral music

by

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Abstract

When Western music was introduced to China after the feudal government collapsed, Chinese compositions utilizing Western methods increased. In 1905, Li Shutong, who first introduced Western music theory to the Chinese, composed *Spring Outing*, which marked the beginning of a trend of Chinese choral writing. But for a long time, Chinese choirs stayed at the level of singing in unison or rounds. Nowadays, with the establishment of numerous chamber choruses and community choruses, choral music has become one of the most popular music forms in China. In order to satisfy the increasing demand, composers began to find inspiration from Chinese traditional music or ethnic music. Thus, many different choral compositional styles were formed. This report will introduce one of the most popular styles, “ancient style”, and analyze two choral pieces in this style, in order to enhance understanding of Chinese choral music.

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Chapter 1: Chinese Ancient Style Choral Music

1 The concept of Chinese ancient style choral music

The first thing to declare is that the Chinese ancient style choral (CASC) music discussed here refers to ancient musical styles created by contemporary composers and not existing works by ancient musicians (before 1911). According to the interviews with composers, conductors and singers about the definition of CASC music, most of them state: in choosing lyrics, they prefer the use of Chinese ancient poems or archaic poems by modern people of high quality. For musical material, they prefer the use of Chinese traditional modes. To sum up, the definitions of CASC music are as follows.

- a. Choral works composed or adapted by contemporary composers
- b. Lyrics based on ancient Chinese poems or imitations of ancient poems (but works without lyrics exist)
- c. Mainly in the style of literati music (see 2. What is literati music)
- d. The compositional approach is based on modern Western compositional theory combined with Chinese musical elements.

This paper discusses the works that meet the above four conditions always present.

2 What is literati music

Literati is an ancient Chinese term for intellectuals, also known as 士 (shi), who mostly studied the Confucian classics, mastered the ideology of society, and were the creators and disseminators of knowledge. They had an important influence in the society of their time, not only in ideology and culture, but also in politics.

Literati music is simply the music composed by the literati class. Feng Guangyu states:

Literati music has been around for a long time. However, people's views on what literati music is have not been consistent throughout the ages. Some believe that literati music is the music produced in the literati class, and is the music created and enjoyed by the literati of the intellectual class in various periods of ancient times. Some propose that literati music is the traditional music created by the intellectuals with certain musical and cultural cultivation in successive generations, mainly the music of words and tunes and the music of the Qin.¹

Literati music has a unique literary quality, which is essentially different from the dance or regional influences of folk music. First, folk music is created by the people at the bottom of society in the spare time of labor life, while literati music is created by the literati class. Secondly, the

¹ Feng, p.12.

content of expression is different. Folk music expresses working people's labor and production life, as well as opportunities for socialization. Literati music expresses criticism of current affairs, reflection on daily life, as well as concern for the separation of the classes. Most importantly, literati musicians regarded their music as a method of exploring the spiritual world. For example, the famous ancient music of Qin, 高山流水 (*High Mountain and Flowing Water*), whose source is unknown, is beyond the depiction of the beauty of mountains and rivers and is a profound realm where the human spirit and nature become one.

These are the characteristics of CASC works too. Therefore, literati music is mostly used as the basis or material for CASC works.

Figure 1. Qin's picture



3 Why choose literati music

The four major types of traditional Chinese music are literati music, folk music, religious music, and court music.² As an important part of Chinese traditional music, folk music not only has a great advantage in terms of quantity, but also has intrinsic high value. In addition, because China is a multi-ethnic country, the music of each ethnic group has developed more richly and become diversified through the process of exchange with the music of other ethnic groups. Therefore, folk music is a great treasure for contemporary Chinese choral music creation.

However, due to the diversity and complexity of musical materials, choral works adapted from folk music are difficult to unify in terms of language and style and need to be studied in a separate category. For example, there are differences in the tonal and rhythmic characteristics of the music of the Miao ethnic group in the southwest compared to that of the Uyghur ethnic group in the northwest. Uyghur music is highly danceable, in which the distribution of syncopation and accents is clearly related to their folk dance. In order to preserve rhythmic characteristics, most choral adaptations of Uyghur music focus more on vertical harmonic rhythms. But most of the Hmong's music is composed of "la do mi sol", which has the characteristic of horizontal extension.³ Therefore, in choral adaptations, composers mostly use polyphonic texture to highlight

² Feng, P12.

³ Jiang

the melodic extension of Hmong music. In recent years, Hmong choral compositions have gained many awards in the international arena, which is enough to show its choral potential.

Folk music includes not only the music of various ethnic groups, but also the “Talking&Singing” music of folk artists and Chinese Opera. The high narrative Talking&Singing music is created by street performers who compose various stories into small songs to solicit passers-by, accompanied by drums and Sanshin or other instruments. For example, “Taiping Geci” are a kind of Talking&Singing music with the characteristics of northern dialect. Its melody is basically fixed, but the lyrics can change for different stories. What’s more, it is always accompanied by the tapping sound of two bamboo boards.⁴

The Chinese opera, which originated in the Spring and Autumn Period (B.C. 770-B.C. 476), gave folk music a dramatic form of performance. The Peking Opera, developed in the late Qing Dynasty, became the most representative Chinese folk music in the international arena. In recent years, there are many Chinese choral works that are based on opera and Talking&Singing music, but because of their linguistic and dramatic characteristics, it is difficult to fit perfectly with the choral form, and they are often evaluated by audiences as “nice but unconventional”.

Although folk music also derived from ancient time, in the Chinese context and musical category, they cannot be defined as ancient style music. Therefore, in the discussion of this paper, choral works adapted from folk music will be excluded.

⁴ “Taiping Geci.”

Similarly, classical Chinese religious music and court music are extremely ceremonial in nature. As such, the elements and styles of religious and court music are seldom used in the compositions of contemporary Chinese choral works. Because of the strong influence of traditional Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism in China, it is easy to find hidden elements in the ancient style music. Some composers also deliberately insert Buddhist chant into their works to enrich the content while enhancing the sounding effects. For example, the composer Cui Wei's 在我的伤口幽居 (*In My Wounded Seclusion*), include lyrics from Kurama Gyatso (1683-1706). The first half of the work is a typical contemporary piece only with few religious elements. However, in the second half of the work, the composer uses a repeated motive of the female voice to create atmosphere, and the tenor and bass sing Buddhist chant in fifths at the same time. The music takes on a dramatic tension that is unutterable. This shows that religious music elements may have a strong artistic impact, and their presence can dilute or overwhelm the work. Therefore, religious and court music elements are in a separate category from CASC music.

All in all, the only category that fits the style and demands of ancient style choral music is that of literati music. Therefore, in this paper, the style of ancient style choral music is mainly based on the music of literati.

4 The characteristics of CASC music

According to previously mentioned interviews with composers, conductors and singers, the most difficult question to answer was, “What are the characteristics of CASC music?” They could

only give me abstract answers, such as “artistic conception”, “elegant”, “Liu-bai⁵” and other Eastern aesthetic implications.

Wei Cui, born in Tianjin, China, is one of the most famous female Chinese choir composers. There is a chivalrous spirit present in her compositions. Her melodic material is natural and simple, but her harmonic writing is full and rich in tension. Wei Cui stated in the interview: “An important point of CASC music is to be 传神 (Chuan-shen). Chuan-shen here refers to the composer's need to use musical language to convey the deeper emotions behind the lyrics. For example, in Wen Yuchuan's female choral piece 相见欢 (*Xiang Jian Huan*), the climax of the piece appears in “胭脂泪，相留醉，几时重”. The literal meaning of the texts is: “a flower with rain is like a beauty's tears with rouge. Flowers and the people who admire them are nostalgic for each other, since they don't know when will meet again.” Yet the implied meaning is that the poet Li-Yu (937-978) misses his homeland. The composer writes the voices in the same octave, chasing each other, and intertwining with each other. When the music reaches the climax, the composer tonicizes the key center from E major to d minor only for two measures in order to express the sadness and depression in the poet's heart.

Some composers believe that the definition of CASC works should be broad if it applies to Chinese antiquity lyrics and conveys Chinese cultural connotations. As mentioned in the interview with PanXing ZiMin, CASC works must be based on the interpretation of the texts, conveying the

⁵ Means leave imagine blank space for audience

cultural connotation behind the texts, rather than simply writing a melody in pentatonic, such as Eriks Esenvalds' *Ancient Prairie*. Esenvalds uses an ancient Chinese poem written by Juyi Bai (772-846), as the text with modern Western harmony. The composer chooses to emphasize the scenery on the prairie instead of depicting the sorrows of the separation of the poet and his friend. The literary technique used here is called 比兴(Bi-Xing). The ingenious combination of music and poetry makes listeners feel the deep sadness when friends are separated, but the sadness is deeply buried in their hearts and does not want to be revealed. This kind of expression is an important characteristic of Chinese culture —含蓄(Hanxu), of only allowing the reveal of a hint of emotion, deeply hiding them in their heart. Therefore, some scholars believe that works carrying Chinese culture can be regarded as CASC music. However, more people think those works cannot be regarded as CASC works, because they firmly believe that only works sung in Chinese can be regarded as CASC works.

意境 (artistic conception) is the most mentioned word, and this is an important concept indispensable in Eastern aesthetics whether in music, painting, or literature. Conceptually, the artistic conception can be defined as the artists' use of their methods to form an aesthetic atmosphere. The composers who compose CASC music prefer using sound to create peculiar atmospheres, which convey varied emotions, either sad or happy. Sometimes the emotions are determined by the audiences when they hear the music.

The composer's understandings of the artistic conception from the texts determine the artistic conception of their music. 水调歌头 (*Shui Tiao Song Tou*) is a famous nostalgic poem by Su Shi (1037-1101). Most composers create a warm atmosphere when they set music on this poem. However Singaporean composer Yan Furong takes a different approach. He tastes fear from the

poem, so his mixed choir work *Shui Tiao Ge Tou* create a horrible and even terrifying atmosphere. He uses the piano's plucking to make a pierce dissonant sound, which is an arrow shot into the dream of the protagonist in the poem. Then the protagonist wakes up in panic and exclaims: "*When did the bright moon first appear? Wine-cup in hand, I ask the blue sky.*" There are more other examples, such as PanXing ZiMin's 夜宿山寺 (*Sleep in the Mountain Temple*), which is also a poem depicting the scenery of a temple in the mountains in a quiet night. The music also dresses in a horror coat, that the composer uses dense tone clusters, creating tension atmosphere, as if God would be awakened by the singing in the night.

Nowadays, there are some unapproachable ancient works. Composers tried their best to rebuild the ideal ancient era in their hearts. It was an era full of art and philosophy, and people at that time seemed only to need art to fill their lives. True CASC music should reflect the life scenes of ancient people. In fact 诗经 (the book of song), the majority source of texts of CASC music, is the book that reflects the real scene of the people's ordinary lives at that time. For example, 绿衣 (*Green Cloth*) was a sigh of a husband when he mourned his deceased wife. The nostalgia was caused by seeing the cloth that was made by his wife, thinking of silk, then thinking of his deceased wife. The composer Feng Gongrang uses Chinese traditional modes to create a cold and sad atmosphere, which may deeply move audiences.

5 The difficulty

During the interview with the conductors and singers, it is true that they had the same confusion about the interpretation of CASC music. As a person who grew up under the influence of traditional Chinese culture, the understanding of the details of traditional music comes naturally.

When many people were asked if they could tell the details of CASC music, no one could describe it accurately in words.

This is how one conductor described the difficulties he encountered while rehearsing a CASC piece:

“One of the difficulties I encountered was one of the simplest dotted eighth note. I believe that dotted notes in ancient music should not be simple dichotomies but should be a more complex subdivision structure and changes the degree of subdivision depending on the texture. I didn't know exactly how to let my singers understand what I was thinking during rehearsals, so I told them a story and ask them to imagine the status of the character in that story before singing that dotted note. Magically, they understood what I was trying to express right away.”

This shows how culture can influence people so deeply that they often make changes intrinsically. This presents the problem of how to let people who are not influenced by Chinese culture understand these concepts during rehearsal. This still needs to be solved.

For the composers' concerns, they stated that the most difficult part during composing was to create artistic conception in music. Many composers prefer the use of tone clusters to create an acoustic atmosphere, which conveys the mood. However, one of the singers interviewed replied:

“We have sung Wei Cui's San-Nong, which is a very impressive piece, but at the same time a very difficult piece. For example, in the middle of the work, the rapid clusters transition and piano arpeggios alternate with each

other, which really create a unique acoustic effect. But firstly, for novice singers, finding pitch is the most difficult problem. Secondly, singers are not very clear about why the composer wrote it this way, resulting in not knowing how we can express the correct mood the composer wants to express.”

Another difficulty that composers have expressed is how to combine poems with music in a more subtle way. Since Chinese Mandarin has its own tones, these tones become an influential factor when composing. Yet some composers use the tones of Chinese Mandarin to create music that is somewhere between singing and speaking, just like Talking&Singing music mentioned in chapter one. This kind of work is more difficult for choir conductors and singers, because the tones are difficult to represent in notation. In most cases it is shown by drawing a glissando arrow, but these glissandos are not quantifiable in pitch and therefore difficult for singers to interpret them.

6 Current situation

Today choral music flourishes in China. Composers are given more opportunities to practice their thinking and understanding of CASC music. In the current market, CASC music occupies a relatively large proportion of choral music. Composers stated in the interviews that about 4-5 out of 10 commissioned works are CASC works.

For the conductors, they expressed that if they want to commission music, they will give priority to CASC works, because great CASC works are easier to gain spotlight in competitions, both in terms of difficulty and aesthetics. Professor Ren Baoping, who is a judge of various choral competitions in the world, has said in the interview that CASC works often get high scores in competitions, because their acoustics are often fresh and interesting, and it is also difficult to sing.

Most composers stated that they have been commissioned to compose CASC works, and they are happy to compose CASC works for three reasons: first, the process of composing CASC music is more interesting than others, as they can learn a lot of relevant knowledge besides music, mostly related to history. Second, the creation of CASC music is actually closer to the creation of modern music without the constraints of formats. Composers can freely use their imagination. Third, the revival of traditional culture brings new economic benefits, and composers can earn more money by composing CASC music.

However, in the international arena, the acceptance of CASC music is relatively low for two reasons: first, because Chinese pronunciation is too difficult to learn. Second, composers write CASC music with strong understandings of Chinese culture, and foreigners who do not know Chinese culture could not understand the intentions of the composer's effort. Therefore, contemporary Chinese composers are looking for new ways to internationalize CASC music and make such works gain more international recognition and performances.

7 Conclusion

CASC music is a new genre of contemporary Chinese choral composition that can be infinitely developed, and it is a style that is distinct from other national and ethnic styles and captures the spirit of Chinese culture.

However, there are many people who scoff at CASC music and considers it incomparable to the artistic height of Western music, such as German and Austrian classical music. They think that classical music develops musical ideas to the extreme, while CASC music wastes musical ideas, as they often end after only a little display of musical ideas. This can be attributed to one's

understanding of the music. The treatment of musical ideas in CASC music is not a waste, but a unique charm, which is Liu-bai. It creates an infinite space of imagination. What CASC music brings to the listener is not only effective in the concert hall, but also with infinite possibilities of extension that can be recalled. Just like the poet Juyi Bai wrote in the 长恨歌 (the Everlasting Regret), “*Ever since time began, affection leaves nothing but regret, which lasts forever.*”⁶, which is the spiritual quality that CASC music should possess.

⁶ 此恨绵绵无绝期 (Translation by Chenyu Sun)

Chapter 2: Source of CASC Music's Inspiration

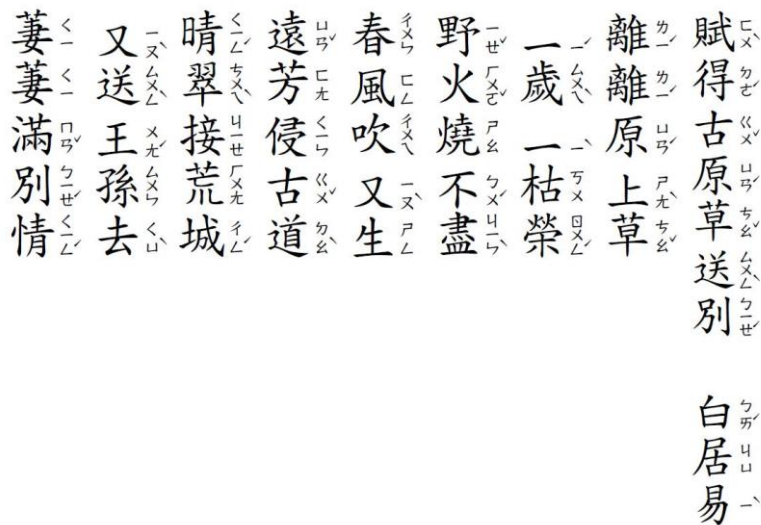
1 诗 Shi

诗(Shi) means “poem” in Chinese. Unlike Western narrative poems, which starting from the Spring and Autumn period with the “Shi-Jing”, Chinese poetry is rarely purely narrative. From the very beginning its aim is expressing personal emotions. Hegel once asserted that “there is no epic poetry in China”, and Lu Xun also believed that “since ancient times, no long epic poem has been heard of”. However, narrative poems do exist to some extent in China, such as 孔雀东南飞(*The Flight of the Peacock to the Southeast*) and 木兰辞(*Mulan Rhetoric*), which are recorded in the “Yue-Fu”, and 长恨歌(*The poem of the Long Hatred*) by the Tang poet Bai Juyi. More specifically, narrative poems in China combine both narrative and emotional expression. These narrative poems have, to some extent, inspired later generations of artists. For example, Wang Wei's 送元二使安西(*Sending Wang Er to An Xi*) inspired later musicians to compose a piece for the Qin called 阳关三叠(*Yang Guan San Die*), which has been adapted to several different versions of choral pieces by many contemporary composers.

Nowadays, more choral composers discard the original melody of those ancient poems and use the lyrics with new melodies which are more suitable for choral interpretation. Some composers also dramatize the poem to fit the scene it depicts. For example, there are also composers who use the tones of the poem as it would have been recited to create works, such as Chen Yi's *Four Tang Poems*, of which 赋得古草原送别 (Fude Prairie Farewell) is a typical example. When mentioning these works composed using the tones of recitation, it is important to

mention the pronunciation of ancient Chinese. The pronunciation of ancient Chinese is different from modern Chinese pronunciation and has many intonations that modern Chinese does not have, so composers can use ancient pronunciation to create unexpected effects.

Figure 2. Bai Juyi’s *Fude Prairie Farewell*



In addition to Chinese composers, European and American composers have also used Chinese poems as lyrics. Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, for example, uses German translations of several famous poems by the Chinese poets, like 李白(Li Bai) and 杜甫(Du Fu) of the Tang Dynasty. As well as the poems by Bai Juyi mentioned above, Latvian composer Esenvalds has also composed choral works in English translation as one movement called “Ancient Prairie” of his piece “*Whisper on the Prairie Wind*”.

1.1 诗经 Shi-Jing

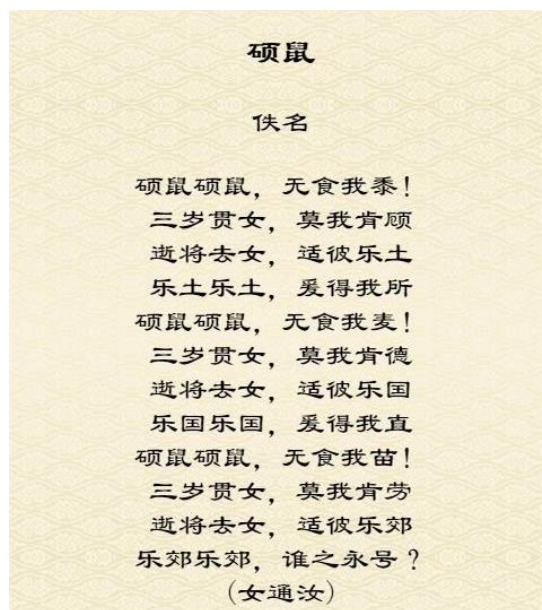
诗经 (the book of songs) was collated and edited by Confucius and his students during the Spring and Autumn period is the first book of folk songs in China. At that time, melodies were

passed down aurally and were not notated. Contemporary composers use these poems to create new music. There are 311 poems in the book but 6 of which only have titles but no content. Some scholars believe those 6 pieces were lost in history. The rest of the poems are divided into three sections, 风 (Feng), 雅 (Ya) and 颂 (Song).⁷

“Feng” is the most important section of Shi-Jing and contains 160 pieces from 15 vassal kingdoms. Love, marriage and family life are the main topics. Like 关雎 (Crying Ospreys), it depicts a story of a young couple from their acquaintanceship to their marriage. And 氓 (Man), narrates a tragedy that a young girl married to a man but one day found he didn’t love her anymore. Nevertheless, objection of class exploitation is also a non-negligible theme in “Feng”, such as 硕鼠 (Big Rat).

⁷ “诗经 (Shi-Jing).”

Figure 3. Example of Shijing - Big Rat



The reason why Shi-Jing became Confucian classic and left such an influence in Chinese culture was not only its precious ideological value but also its artistic value. Most of the poems in Shi-Jing are four-word poems, meaning each line of poems only have four characters. Textures overlap repeatedly. Although the melodies are lost, one can speculate that the music is written in strophic form.⁸

Unlike Shi-Jing, 楚辞 (Chu-Ci) is another collection book of folk songs, but it especially focuses on folk songs in southern China, the Chu vassal kingdom. Despite it being a collection book, Qu Yuan's (B.C. 343-278) poems comprise the main body of the book, such as 离骚 (Li-

⁸ Chen and Chen, p.34.

Sao), 九歌 (Jim-Ge). Qu Yuan uses magnificent words and an unfettered imagination to give these poems a strong expressive force and rhythm. But because the lengths of its sentences are uneven and uses uncommon words, the choral music adoption of Chu-Ci's poetry as lyrics is rare in contemporary China.

1.2 乐府 Yue-Fu

汉乐府 (Han music bureau) is an institution that manages secular music, like folk songs, banquet music, etc. Compared to Tai-Chang (music bureau in charge of ceremonial music), Yue-Fu's music are more various and fuller of life.

According to 汉书 (History of Han Dynasty), there are 138 folk songs collected by Yue-Fu during the Western Han Dynasty (B.C.202-A.D.8), but most scholars argue that most of Yue-Fu songs were collected during the Eastern Han Dynasty (A.D.25-220). Guo-Qian-Mao was a scholar who lived in the Song Dynasty (A.D.960-1279) and collected more than 5000 poems from the Han Dynasty to Tang Dynasty (618-907). Those poems, also used as lyrics, are divided into twelve categories: *Jiao-Miao Songs*: for governmental ceremonies; *Yan-She Songs*: for governmental banquets and hunts; *Gu-Chui songs*: derived from northern foreign music, focusing on wind and percussion accompaniment of song; *Heng-Chui songs*: military music; *Xiang-He songs*: northern folk songs from Han Dynasty to Western Jin Dynasty; *Qing-Shang songs*: southern and northern folk songs in Wei Jin North-South Dynasty; *Wu-Qu songs*: dance music; *Qin-Ge songs*: songs with Qin (Chinese traditional plucked string instrument); *Za-Ge songs*: songs about a diversity of common life events; *Jin-Dai songs*: life in Sui and Tang Dynasty (581-907); *Za songs*: ballads and

quatrains; *Yue-Fu poems*: written by poets in Tang Dynasty.⁹ This taxonomy of Yue-Fu poems is still used by current scholars.

There are two famous Yue-Fu poems called: “Two Pearls of Yue-Fu”, which many scholars have expressed great esteem for their profound social ideological significance and extremely high artistic achievement. One is 孔雀东南飞 (the Peacock Flies to the Southeast) and another is 木兰辞 (the Ballad of Mulan) which is the well-known story of Mu Lan. Unfortunately, the melodies are lost in history, otherwise we could appreciate how the ancients used music to express such magnificent and impressive stories. These stories give inspiration to current artists to create fresh new works of art.

2 曲牌 Qu-Pai and 词牌 Ci-Pai

In the ancient time, in order to facilitate the audience to choose which to sing or play, the host of performance place would write the tune’s name on the wooden board, resulting a special music form, Qu-Pai. “曲 (Qu)” means tune, and “牌 (Pai)” means wooden board. Qu-Pai is a general musical form containing both instrumental and vocal music. Among them, the vocal Qu-Pai has an inseparable relationship with the 词牌 (Ci-Pai), which is expressed in the 辞海 (Ci Hai) as follows:

⁹ Chen and Chen, P63.

Initially, the 词 (Ci) is sung with music. Some musicians composed tune based on Ci, while some poets wrote Ci according to the tune. So people named the tune according to the content of the Ci, that is Ci-Pai or Qu-Pai. But with the time passed, poets mainly filled the Ci according to the tune. Therefore, the tune and the content of the Ci do not necessarily have a connection. After a long time, most of the Ci are no longer sung with tune, so the Ci-Pai of each tune only means literary, phonetic format. These complex relationships leading to some Ci-Pai have different names, and some different tunes share one name.¹⁰

词 (Ci), also known as 词牌 (Ci-Pai), was originally written to be sung with music but finally became a special literary form of poetry. Since Ci was initially wrote for fitting the music, its writing has strict rhythmic limitations, leading to higher literary abilities requirements for poets. However, ancient poets lifted countless Ci in great qualities, especially those poets who lived in Song Dynasty (960-1279).

Unlike Shi, the length of lines of Ci varies. Thus it gives composers more possibilities in their compositions. Music of Ci include not only choral music but also art songs and pop music. One of the most widely spread pop music of Ci is 明月几时有 (*When Will the Bright Moon Be There*), which is composed based on Su Shi's 水调歌头 明月几时有 (Shui Diao Ge Tou: When Will the

¹⁰ 辞海: 艺术分册(*Ci Hai of Art*), p.386.

Bright Moon Be There). As mentioned in Chapter two, Yan Fuyong also composed a mixed choral piece “*Shui Diao Ge Tou*” with the same poetry.

Figure 4. Su Shi’s *Shui Diao Ge Tou: When Will the Bright Moon Be There*

水调歌头·明月几时有

[宋] 苏轼

明月几时有，把酒问青天。
不知天上宫阙，今夕是何年？
我欲乘风归去，又恐琼楼玉宇，
高处不胜寒。
起舞弄清影，何似在人间！

转朱阁，低绮户，照无眠。
不应有恨，何事长向别时圆？
人有悲欢离合，月有阴晴圆缺，
此事古难全。
但愿人长久，千里共婵娟。

There are also more than one version of choral pieces of Li Qingzhao (1084-1155) 如梦令 (Ru Meng Ling). One of the most interesting one is Zeng Yefa’s version. He fused two of Li Qingzhao’s “Ru Meng Ling” into one piece, with the male voice singing “*Ru Meng Ling - Always Remembering the Sunset at the Stream Pavilion*” and the female voice singing “*Ru Meng Ling - Last Night’s Rain and Wind*”. What’s more, this is a pan-naturalism piece. The composer uses an artificial mode to blur the tonality and create a misty mood in the lyrics.

Figure 5. Zeng's *Ru Meng Ling*

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Ru Meng Ling' by Zeng. It consists of five staves. The top four staves are for vocal parts: Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor I (T.I), and Tenor II (T.II). The bottom staff is for piano accompaniment. The score is in G minor (one flat) and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked 'mp' (mezzo-piano) for the vocal parts and 'mf' (mezzo-forte) for the piano. The lyrics are in Chinese characters. The Soprano and Alto parts have the same lyrics: '昨夜雨疏风骤，浓睡不消残酒。试问卷' (Last night the rain was sparse and the wind was fierce, / I slept deeply and the wine was left behind. / I tried to ask the scrolls). The Tenor I part has the lyrics: '常记溪亭日暮，兴尽晚回' (I often remember the stream pavilion at dusk, / When the fun was over, I returned late). The Tenor II part has the lyrics: '沉醉不知归路，' (I got so drunk I didn't know the way home, /). The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

Today, Ci-Pai's literary has overwhelmed its importance in music. In Chinese compulsory education, ancient Shi and Ci accounts for 45.86% of the textbooks.¹¹ Yet in musical education, the Qu-Pai only has a simple introduction. As a result, many students simply know that Ci-Pai is another name of Qu-Pai and that the music has long been lost. However, the scholar Feng Guangyu has collected nearly 100 Qu-Pai in his *中国曲牌考* (Study of Chinese Traditional Instrumental Tune) and translated them into notation for modern scholars to study.

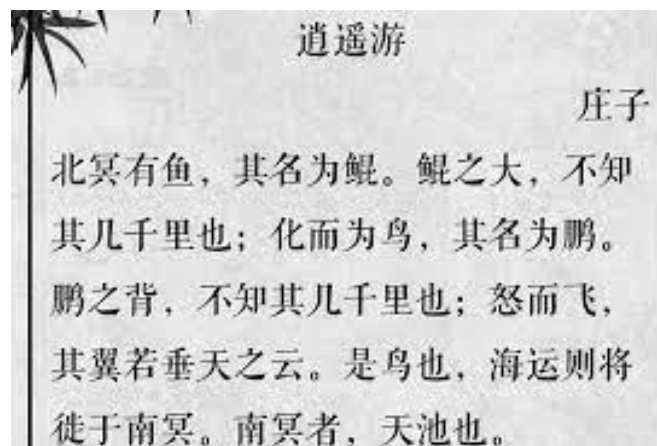
¹¹ Wang, Yang, and Chen

3 文 Wen

文 refers to “article” in literary language, which is an ancient Chinese written language with the characteristics of allusion, counterpoint and neatness of rhyme. Composers in general do not use Wen in composing, because the length of the sentence in Wen is longer than that of Shi and Ci, and more information are contained in it. For example, the CASC musical theater piece 浮生六记 (Six Records of a Floating Life), which was staged in 2021, was adapted from Shen Kuo's (1031-1095) collection of essays of the same name. Because the original text is not suitable for singing, the scriptwriter had to arrange it to fit the music.

Longer phrases with Wen's sentences may make it difficult for audiences to understand the text's meaning due to the polyphonic texture of choral music. But there are many composers who are willing to take the challenge. Composer Chengzhi Jin composed a mixed choral work, “逍遥 (Xiao Yao)”, using Chuang Tzu's (B.C.369-286), 逍遥游 (A Happy Excursion), as lyrics. But he only uses the first half of it since it is too long.

Figure 6. Section of *A Happy Excursion*



Composer Wei Cui also composed a choral piece 兰陵王 (*Lord of Lanling*) based on Wen in 北齐书 (History of Northern Qi). *Lord of Lanling* is a magnificent and epic piece, depicting both the scenes of Lord Lanling during his conquests and celebrations of the victory of the war with his warriors. Because of the varying lengths of sentences and large amounts of narrative passage, the composer has to delete some sentences and pick the important phrases to fit the melody. In order to simplify the understanding of the text, she applied homophonic texture rather than polyphonic. With the accompaniment of drums and shakuhachi, surprisingly, the music got a more dramatic result with these changes and gained great responses from singers and audiences.

4 器乐曲 Instrumental music

Although the flowers of Chinese traditional vocal music bloom lushly, instrumental music occupies a larger garden, since instrumental music was the most important composition among the upper classes and the court. As early as the Li-Yue system of the Western Zhou Dynasty (B.C.1046-771), instrumental music has become an important part of the upper class's education and large national celebrations.¹² Among the literati class, instrumental music was important. During the Spring and Autumn Period, 伯牙 (Boya) and 钟子期 (Zhong Ziqi) became close friends

¹² Xiu, p.23.

because of Qin's music and eventually produced one of the most famous Qin's pieces, 高山流水 (*High Mountain and Flouting Water*), and a tragic story, 伯牙绝弦 (Boya vast string).¹³

As one of the oldest plucked instruments in China, the musicians left many pieces of Qin, such as 高山流水, 广陵散 (*Guang-ling Song*), 酒狂 (*Jiu Kuang*)¹⁴. Because its rhythm is free without fixed pattern, and its tune is singable, the Qin has become one of the most popular traditional instruments that composers are willing to use or reference.

Singaporean composer Zechariah Goh's work 船夜援琴 (*Playing Qin in Boat at Night*) is the one of most successful choral pieces of the Qin's style of music. Goh uses the human voice to imitate the Qin's playing, achieving a magical atmosphere. The text is based on Tang Dynasty's poet Bai Juyi's poetry with same name. However, the passage where the poem appears only occupies a small part of the work and most are devoted to imitating the various playing methods of the Qin. During the rehearsal, some of the conductors would invite a professional Qin player to play for the choir and ask them to imitate the sound of the Qin.

The rhythm of this piece is the most interesting thing. The Qin's music doesn't have fix rhythmic patterns, emphasizing the flow of the music rather than the repetition of strong and weak

¹³ LV, 吕氏春秋·本味 (*The Annals of Lv Buwei-Benwei*).

¹⁴ See "Reduced character notation" in Chapter 5, Figure 21.

beat. There exists a loose beat that is a non-integer divided beat in *搔首问天 (Asking the Sky)*.¹⁵ In order to achieve this effect but to facilitate the rehearsal of the choir, Goh sets the music in 4/4 but breaks its strong and weak pattern, using multi tuplet notes and notes across bar lines to make the rhythm less rigid. Finally, he establishes a seemingly free but structured mathematical music. This rhythmic looseness is another characteristic of CASC music, and it also fits one of the goals of contemporary music, breaking the limitation of traditional rhythmic patterns.

Figure 7. Zechariah Goh's *Playing Qin in Boat at Night* (m.44-47 and m.64)

The musical score consists of four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are '七弦为益友' (The seven strings are a good friend). The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *mf*, *p*, and *mp*, and articulation like accents and slurs. The piano part features a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes.

¹⁵ Ye

S
 — 间 无 古 今 —
 A
f *ff* *mf* *mp*
 dang dang dang
 T
p *mf* *p* *mf*
 n n n n n d n n n n n n n n n n n d n n n n n n n n n n
 B
mf *p* *mf* *p* *mf*
 d n

5 古为今用

In addition to using the original ancient texts, composers also use archaic Shi or Ci written by modern people as text. This archaic literature is often more in line with modern aesthetics and values and contain emotions that are more relevant to the personal lives of modern people. This is 古为今用 (apply ancient ideas to the present).

This archaic literature did not appear suddenly but gradually developed for a long time. Since the New Culture Movement (1915) advocated modern Chinese writing, the literary language has ceased to be the mainstream of literature, but it always held an important position in Chinese education as the way of understanding history and humanities. Literary literature and ancient poetries are mandatory for Chinese College Entrance Examinations. In 2001, a student used literary language in China's Jiangsu Provincial College Entrance Examination's as the essay portion and overwhelmingly gained the full score, which shows that literary language's status is still firm.

When choosing text of music, archaic literature is a main resource. Fang Wenshan, a famous lyricist in China, wrote several lyrics for Jay Chou's pop songs. Taking 青花瓷 (*Celadon*) as an example. The most famous phrase is “天青色等烟雨，而我在等你 (the color of clear sky waiting of misty rain, but I'm waiting of you.)” Fang seems to be describing the sky-clear firing of the celadon that requires waiting for the time of misty rain, but in fact, he is describing the young man suffering of waiting for his beloved. He uses neither completely literary nor completely modern Chinese, which gives the work a sense of straying from the seams of the times. Not only Fang Wenshan, but also many Chinese lyricists have been writing lyrics in this style. The famous group 墨明棋妙 (*Mo Ming Qi Miao*), for example, is an archaic music group whose members have produced a large amount of high-quality CASC pop music.

In choral music, the composers who use archaic literature are not as many as the those who use true ancient literature. There are two reasons: first, the quality of archaic lyrics varies. Some poets indiscriminately use the words and phrases to simulate ancient style but often with the opposite result to what they actually want. Second, there is no copyright fee for the use of real ancient texts. Thus all the income can go to the composer's pocket.

Sometimes, in order to make CASC music easier to be accepted, lyricists modernize and expand the ancient poems. So modern people, especially young singers, can understand music sooner and interpret it better. For example, the text of Pan Xingzimin's 新·清平乐-村居 (*New Qing Ping Yue - Village Life*) comes from a modern arrangement of Xin Qiji's (1140-1207) 清平乐-村居 (*Qing Ping Yue - Village Life*) by Chen Yang. The poet expands the original poetry and adds his own imaginations and understandings, ending up with a fantastic work which is a

combination of antiquity and modernity. And its choral interpretation makes it one of the most approachable pieces for young singers.

Figure 8. Section of *New Qing Ping Yue - Village Life*

The musical score consists of two systems, each with three vocal parts (I, II, III) and Chinese lyrics. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system starts at measure 39. Part I has lyrics: 孩童也笑。花甲仍作老顽童, (Child also laughs. Flower age still as old mischievous child,). Part II has lyrics: 孩童也笑。花甲仍作老顽童, 白发胜垂 (Child also laughs. Flower age still as old mischievous child, white hair wins over hanging). Part III has lyrics: 孩童也笑。 白发胜垂髻。 (Child also laughs. White hair wins over hanging hair bun). Dynamic markings include *mf* and *mp*. The second system starts at measure 44. Part I has lyrics: 白发胜垂头插翎羽扮凤凰, 雏鸡也闹, (White hair wins over hanging head, plumes on head, dressed as phoenix, chicks also noisy,). Part II has lyrics: 髻。啊——凤凰, 雏鸡也闹, (Bun. Ah—phoenix, chicks also noisy,). Part III has lyrics: 啊——凤凰, 啦啦啦 (Ah—phoenix, la la la). Dynamic markings include *f* and *mp*.

Chapter 3: Introduction of Traditional Chinese Music Theory

1 Traditional music philosophy

Music in ancient China has served an educational function since the Zhou Dynasty (1100-256 B.C.). The musical education during the Zhou Dynasty is not the same as modern disciplinary musical education but is part of the whole system of 礼乐 Li-Yue.¹⁶ In 礼记·文王世子 (Book of Rite-Sons of King the Wen), it is written that

Whenever the three kings taught their sons, they would use Li-Yue. The music is to cultivate the inner; the ritual is to cultivate the outer. The rites and music are staggered in the middle and issued on the outside, so that they also become respectful and gentle.¹⁷

It is clear that the music has the role of “cultivating the inner” in traditional Chinese philosophy. This philosophy continued into the Spring and Autumn Period and influenced various philosophy schools: the most influential of which was the Confucian school led by Confucius and Mencius.

¹⁶ Xiu, p.13.

¹⁷ 礼记-文王世子 (Book of Rite-Sons of King the Wen).

Confucius believed that music was an indispensable part of an educational system. In Confucius' education system, the students could acquire inner cultivation through the study of the Shi-Jing (which would include chanting of string songs) and could be cultivated in areas such as empathy and imaginative ability. For the famous Psalm in Shi-Jing, 关雎 (Guan Ju), Confucius commented, "Joyful but not lustful. Mourning but not sad."¹⁸ He believed that music should be neutral and calm, moderate and restrained in terms of emotional attitude. Yip describes Confucius' philosophy in this way:

Confucian philosophy created a viewpoint that the aesthetics of music did not depend on the melodic flow, harmonic richness, or balanced structural construct similar to those found in western music, but rather on the morality and messages that the texts conveyed.¹⁹

Because the literati class was mostly influenced by Confucianism, their music has the moderate and peaceful quality that is reflected in the music of the Qin. The music of the Qin is calm and elegant, and the musicians' restraint of emotion is evident even in the most intense pieces. They believe that too much emotional expression would only make the music noisy, thus losing the educational quality of the music. Instead, music should leave blank spaces that have the power

¹⁸ Confucius, p.67.

¹⁹ Yip, p.6.

to shock the heart, just like the ink painting technique, “Liu Bai”. It also became the aesthetic code of Chinese music and society.

In CASC music, Liu-Bai and restrained emotions can be found everywhere, although the degree of restraint has tended to be moderate due to modern people seeking to express their emotions through the outside world. Therefore, in CASC music, the composer will sometimes use the contrast of extreme dynamics to express strong emotion. However, the highest climax happens only once, and the coda of the work is usually a calm fade out, rarely having a strong ending. This is because the composer knows that after expressing strong emotions, they must return to peace.

In addition to Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism have also had a deep impact on Chinese society. Confucianism seeks to actively participate in the world, while Taoism, on the contrary, seeks to live with the flow of nature and rule the world by doing nothing. Buddhism seeks to pursue a richer spiritual realm rather than focusing on the immediate life. These opposite philosophies together influenced the Chinese literati class, who revered Confucianism when they were able to realize their ambitions and turned to Taoism or Buddhism to comfort themselves when they found their ideals unattainable. Yet these philosophies have one thing in common which is the pursuit of the construction of their own inner world.

2 Traditional tonal theory

2.1 Traditional pentatonic mode

Five is a special number in Chinese culture. There are many things that are grouped in five, such as 五岳 (five most important mountains), 五脏 (five most important organs in the human

body: heart, liver, spleen, lung, and kidney), 五行 (five basic elements of the cosmos: metal, wood, water, fire and earth). Yip states:

In the book of Yi, many things in the universe are grouped in fives. The number "5" represents balance and control. One might speculate that since the number 5 is so significant, the pentatonic scale is thus the most important musical scale in Chinese music.²⁰

Therefore, the pentatonic scale is the most important and common scale in Chinese music, and the five tones in the pentatonic scale are matched with the five basic elements of the cosmos.

The name of each tone in the pentatonic scale is: 宫 Gong, 商 Shang, 角 Jue, 徵 Zhi, 羽 Yu. The five basic modes of pentatonic scale are named by the first tone's name: Gong mode, Shang mode, Jue mode, Zhi mode and Yu mode.

Figure 9. Tones of Chinese pentatonic scale



²⁰ Yip, 11.

Figure 10. Gong mode



Figure 11. Shang mode



Figure 12. Jue mode



Figure 13. Zhi mode



Figure 14. Yu mode



Although the structures of those modes are different, they share two characteristics:

- A. There only are three major second intervals.

B. There are only two minor third intervals. What should be known is that in the pentatonic scale, the minor third is considered as step wise, therefore there is no room for other notes.

Because of the lack of half steps and tritones, the pentatonic mode doesn't have a clear tonal tendency. Therefore, another method is needed to determine which pentatonic mode a piece is used.

The pentatonic mode can be thought of as consisting of three groups of the following basic tone patterns. These groups are composed entirely of major seconds and minor thirds:

Figure 15. Three basic tone group



Therefore, it can be found that Gong mode is composed of 1+2, Shang mode is composed of 3+3, Jue mode is composed of 2+2, Zhi mode is composed of 3+1, and Yu mode is composed of 2+3. What's more, because all the modes in the figures 10-14 share same "Gong", the system of five modes in this relationship is called the "Same Gong System".²¹

²¹ Sun, p.88.

In CASC music, the pentatonic mode is often used as an important element of Chinese music. For example, Zhang Shichao uses all five modes of the B Gong system in the first movement of his 潇湘八景 (*Eight Sights of Xiaoxiang*). Those five modes in same Gong system can directly modulate to each other by only change the tones' order, resulting a fluent and misty atmosphere.

2.2 Traditional hexatone mode

The traditional Chinese hexatone mode is built by adding one tone to the pentatonic mode: the 清角 (Qing-Jue) or the 变宫 (Bian-Gong).²² The Qing-Jue is a minor second above the Jue, and the Bian-Gong is a minor second below the Gong. It means that there is a half-step in the hexatone mode compared to the pentatonic mode, which gives the music a certain tendency in tonality.

Figure 16. Two hexatone modes



2.3 Traditional diatonic mode

Chinese traditional diatonic mode is built based on the pentatonic mode. Chinese musicians added two new tones in between two minor third intervals. (See the framed tones in figures 17-19)

²² Lee, p.52.

Therefore, in the diatonic mode, the five tones in the pentatonic mode are called 五正声 (five proper tones) and the two added tones are called 二变音 (two accidental tones). Those diatonic modes are listed below:²³

雅乐 **Ya-Yue**: Addition of Bian-Zhi and Bian-Gong to the pentatonic

Figure 17. Ya-Yue mode



清乐 **Qing-Yue**: Addition Qing-Jiao and Bian-Gong to the pentatonic

Figure 18. Qing-Yue mode



燕乐 **Yan-Yue**: Addition of Qing-Jiao and Run to the pentatonic

²³ Sun, p.55.

Figure 19. Yan-Yue mode



Unlike the Western major-minor system, in Chinese traditional music, the diatonic mode is still dominated by the 五正声, with the 二变音 playing the role of ornamentation. For example, although Feng Gongrang's unaccompanied mixed choral work 绿衣 (Green Cloth) is in diatonic mode, the 二变音 are not the main tones and do not appear in the chords, but only act as a embellishments.

3 Traditional Chinese temperament and notation system

3.1 Temperament

Although the temperaments in the Xia (2070-1600 B.C.) and Shang (1558-1050 B.C.) Dynasties lack written descriptions, it is still possible to understand that the music of that time has melody and is not only percussion music based on the excavated musical instruments. Archaeologists found a bone flute in Jiahu from the late Shang Dynasty, which could produce a continuous chromatic scale.²⁴

²⁴ Chen and Chen, p.21.

Figure 20. Jiahu bone flute



With the establishment of the Li-Yue system of the Zhou Dynasty, musicians at that time used mathematical methods, called 三分损益法 (Three-part loss and gain method) to determine the pitches. In simple terms, the three-part loss and gain method is a method to divide the length of a string into three equal parts. They would then remove $\frac{1}{3}$ of the length to produce a pitch, or add another $\frac{1}{3}$ to produce another pitch, and repeated this method until forming a series of pitches. The temperament formed by this method is called the 三分损益律 (Three-part loss and gain temperament). However, there is a significant flaw in this method, which is after using this method 11 times, the pitch produced is different from the pitch that should have been equal before in the octave. To solve this problem, musicians of the Qin and Han Dynasties (B.C.221-A.D.220) tried various solutions such as increasing the number of tones by using the above method or adjusting the distance between each of the 12 tones. The most famous one is the “*Kyofang 60 Tones*”, in

which Kyofang used the first solution to increase the number of tones to 60, and only on his 54th attempt did he obtain a pitch that was very close to the initial pitch.²⁵.

An important music theorist was Zhu Zaiyu (1536-1611) of the Ming Dynasty, who wrote 乐律全书 (The Complete Book of Music and Rhythm), which is one of the most important books of music theory in ancient China. He elaborated a new method of generating rhythms that completely solved the problems arising from the three-part loss and gain method. He used mathematical methods to calculate twelve pitches in an octave in 1584.²⁶

Nowadays, some ancient music ensembles still use these temperaments to perform ancient music such as the Huaxia Ancient Orchestra, which has become very popular on Chinese social media. The instruments they use are authentically restored based on archaeological research, and the scores are compiled by experts from various fields based on ancient scores.

3.2 Notation system

The recording of music in ancient China is generally composed of two methods, oral teaching and score recording.²⁷ Oral teaching is the most popular method, since most of the folk musicians were not well educated. A large proportion of them even did not know how to write, let alone read

²⁵ Chen and Chen, p.88-89.

²⁶ Chen and Chen, p.90.

²⁷ Feng, p.11.

and write down scores. Thus, most of the folk music records were taught and recorded orally. However, when the musicians who recorded the music died, the music was lost. As a result, most of this music no longer exists.

The written record of music is another important form of recording, but different notation systems are used around the world. For example, in Europe, there was the neumes score and a variety of line scores, while in ancient China, there were character notation system such as 减字谱 (Reduced character notation).

Figure 21. Jiu-Kuang's reduced character notation



减字谱 (Reduced character notation) is a special notation system for the Qin. Ni introduced reduced character notation as following:

The Qin notation is composed of a unique kind of character, which is called as reduced character. This kind of characters is made up of some

Chinese radicals which represent different meanings of fingering. People can know how to play the Qin step by step according to the reduced character.²⁸

He also states:

A typical reduced character is composed of five types of radicals which correspond to different types of Qin fingerings:

Finger indicates which finger of left hand to stop the string;

Position indicates the position of finger of left hand;

Left Move indicates the movement of left hand;

Pluck indicates the plucking technique of right hand;

String indicates the string number.²⁹

Figure 22. Example of reduced character



²⁸ Ni, Jiang, and Zhou, p.1.

²⁹ Ibid., p.1.

Reduced character notation may be characterized as easy to write but exhaustive in meaning and simple to write but concise in sound. It records only the playing method and pitches but not the tone names and rhythm. However, no rhythmic notation means the musicians could play the music with their own understanding, resulting in the free rhythmic character of the Qin's music.

Chapter 4: Analysis of CASC Music

1 陌上桑 *By the Roadside Mulberry*

1.1 Introduction

陌上桑 *By the Roadside Mulberry* is one of the most famous poems in the collection of Han Yue-Fu. Although it is only 265 words long, it describes a complete story. The poem can be divided into three main parts. The first part describes Luofu's beauty, the second part describes Shijun (viceroys of the county) who admires Luofu's beauty and makes unreasonable demands and the third part in which Luofu bravely refuses Shijun and boasts about her husband to suppress him. *By the Roadside Mulberry's* use of advanced lyrics, realistic plot, and vivid images reflect the true social situation of the time, making it of great literary and artistic value.

The Chinese young composer Wen Yuchuan composed this piece for the 13th Beijing International Choral Festival and was awarded the outstanding choral work prize. The choral work *By the Roadside Mulberry* has a strong sense of dramatic expression, telling a slightly absurd comedic story that happens on a country road. The entire work is in variation form, and it can be divided into a statement of the theme and four variations, each of which corresponds to a change in the storyline.

1.2 Translation

日出东南隅 照我秦氏楼
The morning sunlight shines on Qin's mansion.

秦氏有好女 自名为罗敷
Whose pride is the lady, the lady Luofu.

罗敷喜蚕桑 采桑城南隅
She likes to raise silkworms and reel silk, so she usually stripes the mulberry leaves which grows to the south.

青丝为笼系 桂枝为笼钩
From the cassia her basket, hangs by a silk ribbon.

头上倭堕髻 耳中明月珠
She has hair neatly braided. Pearl earrings like moonbeams.

缃绮为下裙 紫绮为上襦
Her silk petticoat is yellow, and apron is purple.

行者见罗敷 下担捋髭须
When a pedestrian sees her, he puts down his burden while stroking his beard.

少年见罗敷 脱帽著梢头
When a youth sees her, he doffs his cap and salutes.

耕者忘其犁 锄者忘其锄
The ploughman leaves his plough. The hoer forgets his hoeing,

来归相怨怒 但坐观罗敷
They returned home and complained to each other, because of having gazed on Luofu.

使君从南来 五马立踟蹰
From the south comes a lord in carriage with five horses.

使君遣吏往 问是谁家姝
He surprised, halts and sends one to make an inquiry, "Who is that beauty? And who is her kin?"

秦氏有好女 自名为罗敷
"She is one of the Qins', and her name is Luofu."

罗敷年几何

"And what may her age be?"

二十尚不足 十五颇有余

"Less than twenty, yet more than fifteen."

(使君谢罗敷)³⁰ 宁可共载否

Then the lord condescending and says, "Luofu, will you go with me in my carriage?"

使君一何愚 使君自有妇 罗敷自有夫

"What nonsense you talk, sir! You have your own wife, and I have my own husband.

东方千余骑 夫婿居上头

From the east ride a thousand with him at their head.

何用识夫婿 白马从骊驹

How shall you know him? By the white horse he rides; by the black colt that follows.

青丝系马尾 黄金络马头

Their silk-braided tails. And their gold-braided halters;

腰中鹿卢剑 可值千万余

By the sword at his side with its hilt of jade fashioned for which he paid millions.

十五府小吏 二十朝大夫

At the age of fifteen, he kept prefecture minutes; a scribe in his twenties,

三十侍中郎 四十专城居

At thirty a minister; Now, being forty, he governs a district.

为人洁白皙 鬣鬣颇有须

His skin is so fair and he wears a long beard.

盈盈公府步 冉冉府中趋

He works in the Yamen with step slow and stately;

坐中数千人 皆言夫婿殊

He sits among thousands who own him their best."

³⁰ Omit in the music.

1.3 Pronunciation³¹

日出东南隅 照我秦氏楼
[ɬi tɕu don̩ nan ʏ: dʒau wə tsin ʃi lou]

秦氏有好女 自名为罗敷
[tsin ʃi ju: hau ny zɪ miŋ wui lɔʊ fu:]

罗敷喜蚕桑 采桑城南隅
[lɔ: fu: xi tsan saŋ tsai saŋ tɕʰəŋ nan ʏ:]

青丝为笼系 桂枝为笼钩
[tɕiŋ sɪ wei lɔŋ hɛɔ:i gui dʒɪ wei lɔŋ ɡɔʊ]

头上倭堕髻 耳中明月珠
[tɔʊ ʃaŋ wə duɔ tsi ɬə dʒɔŋ miŋ jyɛ dʒu:]

缃绮为下裙 紫绮为上襦
[hɕaŋ tɕi wei hɕia tɕɔn zɪ tsi wei ʃaŋ lu:]

行者见罗敷 下担捋髭须
[ɕiŋ dʒə tɕian lɔʊ fu: ɕia dan lʏ: zi: hɛɔ:i]

少年见罗敷 脱帽著梢头
[ʃau nian tɕian lɔʊ fu: tuɔ mau dʒɔʊ tɕau tɔʊ]

耕者忘其犁 锄者忘其锄
[ɡəŋ dʒə waŋ tsi: li: tɕʰu: dʒə waŋ tsi: tɕʰu:]

来归相怨怒 但坐观罗敷
[lai gui hɕaŋ jyɛ nu: dan zɔʊ guan lɔʊ fu:]

使君从南来 五马立踟蹰
[ʃi jyn coŋ nan lai wu: ma: li: tɕʰɪ tɕʰu:]

使君遣吏往 问是谁家妹
[ʃi jyn tsian li: waŋ wən ʃi ʃei jia ʃu:]

³¹ Interpretation style reference from Yu, p.38.

秦氏有好女自名为罗敷
[tsin ʃi ju: hau ny: zi: miŋ wei luɔ fu:]

罗敷年几何
[luɔ fu: nian ji: hə]

二十尚不足十五颇有余
[əɔ ʃi ʃaŋ bu: zu: ʃi wu: pɔ ʃɔu y:]

宁可共载否
[niŋ kə goŋ zai fəu]

使君一何愚使君自有妇罗敷自有夫
[ʃi jyn i: hə y: ʃi jyn zi ʃɔu fu: luɔ fu: zi ʃɔu fu:]

东方千余骑夫婿居上头
[doŋ faŋ tsian y: ji: fu: hɕy jy: ʃaŋ təu]

何用识夫婿白马从骊驹
[hə ʃɔŋ ʃi fu: hɕy: bai ma cəŋ li: jy:]

青丝系马尾黄金络马头
[tsiŋ si ɕi: ma wei huəŋ jɪm luɔ ma təu]

腰中鹿卢剑可值千万余
[jɔu dʒɔŋ lu: lu: jian kə dʒɪ tsian wan y:]

十五府小吏二十朝大夫
[ʃi wu: fu: siəu li: ɔə ʃi tʂʰəu da fu:]

三十侍中郎四十专城居
[san ʃi ʃi dʒɔn laŋ si ʃi dʒuan tʂʰəŋ jy:]

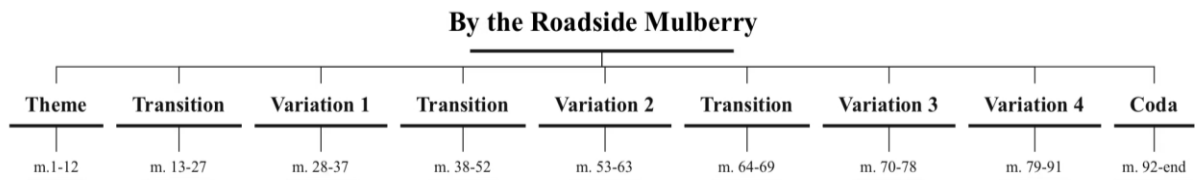
为人洁白皙鬢鬢颇有须
[wei ɔen jie bai ɕi lian lian pɔ ju: hɕɔ:i]

盈盈公府步冉冉府中趋
[jiŋ jiŋ gɔŋ fu: bu: ɲan ɲan fu: dʒɔn tsy:]

坐中数千人皆言夫婿殊
[zɔɔ dʒɔŋ ʃu: tsian ɲən jie jian fu: hɕy: ʃu:]

1.4 Analysis

Figure 23. *By the Roadside Mulberry*'s musical structure



The first section is the theme that corresponds to the debut of Luofu.

Figure 24. Theme of *By the Roadside Mulberry*

Moderato **Theme**

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Piano

秦氏
日出东南隅 照我秦氏楼 啊

u u

mf *mp* *p*

The composer uses staccato and the contrast of long and short notes to depict the appearance of Luofu. In particular, the staccato notes symbolize Luofu's hair ornaments and the way her earrings sway when she walks.

Figure 25. Staccato notes to depict Luofu's figure

Più vivo
leggiero

13

S
青呀青丝为笼系 桂呀桂枝为笼钩 头呀头上倭堕

A
青呀青丝为笼系 桂呀桂枝为笼钩 头呀头上倭堕

T
青丝为笼系 桂枝为笼钩

B
青丝为笼系 桂枝为笼钩

Pno.
leggiero

18

poco rit. **Meno mosso**

S
髻 耳呀耳中明月珠 绡绮为下裙

A
髻 耳呀耳中明月珠 绡绮为下裙

T
头上倭堕髻 耳中明月珠 为下裙

B
头上倭堕髻 耳中明月珠

Pno.

It is noteworthy that the whole work uses quartal harmony structure, which are borrowed from the traditional Chinese pentatonic mode. Each tone in the pentatonic mode can be arranged

by the relationship of fifths. Therefore, this kind of fifth or fourth (since fourth is the inversion of fifth) superimposed chord became one of the popular composing techniques in Chinese ancient style music. This kind of chord has an “empty” acoustic effect, which gives the music an outward tension.

Figure 26. Quartal harmony

The musical score for Figure 26, titled "Quartal harmony", is written in 4/4 time and features four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and Piano accompaniment. The key signature has three flats. The lyrics are in Chinese. The piano part includes triplets and eighth notes. The score is marked with a tempo change to *poco a poco rit.* at measure 23.

Lyrics:
 S: 紫 绮 为 上 襦
 A: 为 下 裙 为 上 襦
 T: 为 下 裙 为 上 襦
 B: 为 上 襦

In the first variation, the confrontation between the triplets and eighth notes becomes the main point of conflict. The flowing triplets symbolize the swaying body of Luofu as she walks, while the steady quarter and eighth notes are the eyes of onlookers who cannot look away when they see Luofu. The polyphonic texture enriches the picture as if one could see people talking about Luofu’s beauty.

Figure 27. Variation 1

Var.1
Tempo primo

28

S
A
T
B

少
行³者见罗敷下担捋³髭须
行³者见³罗敷一捋³髭

Pno.

pp e leggerissimo

32

S
A
T
B

年 啊 见³罗敷脱³帽著³峭头 啊 耕³者忘³其
少 年 见 罗 敷 著 峭 头 忘 其 犁
少 年 见³罗 敷 著³峭 头 锄 者
少 年 见 罗 敷 啊 耕 者 忘 其

Pno.

8^{va} *marcato*

In the second half of this section, another character in the story, Shijun, makes an appearance on stage. It is noticeable that the composer makes use of the dotted notes to change the rhythmic pattern of the former section. This is an imitation of the sound of horses' hooves and corresponds to the fact that Shijun comes on horseback. At the same time, the unstable rhythmic pattern also serves to emphasize that the Shijun arrives with malicious purpose.

Figure 28. Shijun arrives on his horse

Più vivo

38 *Più vivo*

S 使君从南来 五马立踟蹰 使君遣吏往

A 使君从南来 五马立踟蹰

T 使军从南来 五马立踟蹰 使君遣吏往

B 使军从南来 五马立踟蹰

Pno.

The work enters into a dialogue between Shijun and Luofu in the third variation, which is also the most dramatic passage of the whole piece. Here the composer has arranged a soprano soloist to play Luofu and a tenor soloist to play Shijun. The composer recommends that the tenor soloist is asked to recite his text in an unpleasant vocal tone.

Figure 29. Solo is asked to recite his text in an unpleasant vocal tone

The musical score for Figure 29 consists of five systems of staves. The first system is labeled "Var.2" and contains two staves with a single horizontal line on the upper staff. The second system also contains two staves with a single horizontal line on the upper staff. The third system is labeled "Tenor solo: 罗敷年几何?" and contains two staves with a single horizontal line on the upper staff. The fourth system contains two staves with a single horizontal line on the upper staff. The fifth system contains two staves with a piano accompaniment, featuring a melodic line on the upper staff and a bass line on the lower staff, with a slur over the melodic line.

In the beginning, the composer arranged “Luofu” to sing in a sweet voice, while the soprano and mezzo-soprano voices provided warm and beautiful harmonic support below, indicating that Luofu was not offended by Shijun’s question. But in the next phrase, in which Shijun makes an unreasonable request, this angers Luofu. The music briefly moves into a minor key with dark colors expressing Luofu’s anger. But the music immediately returns to the major key in two measures, setting the stage for Luofu’s counterattack to follow.

Figure 30. Dialogue between Luofu and Shijun

54 Soprano solo
 S. Soprano: 二十尚不足啊——十五颇有余啊——
 A. Alto: S.&A. 不足十五颇有余
 T. Tenor: Tenor solo: 宁可共载不?
 B. Bass
 Pno. Piano

Luofu's counter-attack is based on a major key because Shijun has a wife and Luofu has a husband. Meanwhile, the melody here is still a variation on the theme. In the following passage, Luofu begins to boast about her husband.

Figure 31. Luofu refuses Shijun by anger

59 Lento Vivo
 S. Soprano: 使君一何愚 使君自有妇 罗敷自有夫
 A. Alto: hm 使君自有妇 罗敷自有夫
 T. Tenor: 使君自有妇 罗敷自有夫
 B. Bass: 罗敷自有夫
 Pno. Piano: sfp

In following transitional section, the composer conceals the original theme in the bass, which contrasts with the soprano lines, ensuring both the extension of the material and consistency with the preceding section. All of this accumulates power for the next two successive variations. This accumulation of power is also reflected in the contrast of tonalities. This section is a tonal insertion, with E-flat as the axis, and the modulation is realized through the enharmonic modulation.

Figure 32. Transitional section

Moderato

The musical score consists of five systems. The first system contains the vocal staves for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are: 东 方 千 余 骑 (Dongfang qianyu qi) and 夫 君 居 上 (Fujun ju shang). The Soprano part has a melodic line with some grace notes. The Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts are more rhythmic, with the Bass part featuring a prominent eighth-note pattern. The second system contains the Piano (Pno.) accompaniment. It features a complex rhythmic pattern with many quintuplets (marked '5') and a dynamic marking of '8^{ma}'.

Figure 33. Enharmonic modulation

The image shows a musical score for a vocal ensemble and piano. The vocal parts are Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The piano part is labeled 'Pno.'. The score is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are in Chinese: '头— 何— 用—— 识—— 夫—— 君'. The score is divided into two sections: the first section is marked 'calmato' and the second section is marked 'Allegro ma non troppo'. A blue arrow points to the beginning of the second section, labeled 'Var.3'. The piano part includes markings for 'calmato', 'espress.', and 'sfp'. The score is numbered 67 at the beginning of each system.

The third and the fourth variations connect seamlessly without transition, and with the use of shorter declaratory phrases the music becomes more urgent. The composer raises the tension of the work by using the event compression technique, thus bringing the music to the climax. Particularly, in the fourth variation, the composer applies two consecutive modulations to further enhance the tension of the music. Here is a quote from the composer during the rehearsal, “I imagined the image of a movie: Luofu aggressively and proudly boasting about her husband and the camera slowly zooming in on Luofu’s lips as she speaks faster and faster.”

Figure 34. Variation 3

71

S
白 马 从 骊 驹 青 丝 系 马 尾

A
白 马 从 骊 驹 青 丝 系 马 尾 黄 金

T
白 马 从 骊 驹 黄 金 络 马 头

B
白 马 从 骊 驹 络 马 头 腰

Pno.

Figure 35. Variation 4

Var.3
agitato con brio

79

S
头

A
头

T
十 五 府 小 吏 二 十 朝 大 夫 三 十 侍 中 郎 四 十 专 城 居

B
十 五 府 小 吏 二 十 朝 大 夫 三 十 侍 中 郎 四 十 专 城 居

Pno.
p *cresc.*

Figure 36. Luofu speaks faster and faster

The musical score for Figure 36 consists of four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The score begins at measure 87. The vocal parts feature lyrics in Chinese: "坐中数千人呐 皆言夫婿殊啦 啦啦啦啦啦—— 啦啦啦啦—— 啦啦啦啦啦". The piano accompaniment includes markings for *cresc.* and *allargando*. A dynamic marking of *ff* is present at the bottom of the piano part. A *8va* marking is also visible in the piano part.

It is worth mentioning that in the fourth variation, the fast 16th notes in the piano part are a variation of the rhythmic pattern of the previous debut of Shijun. The contrast between the unstable dotted notes of Shijun and the stable, fast 16th notes of Loufu's husband, is a contrast between the unpleasant image of Shijun and the magnificent image of Luofu's husband. This is similar to Debussy's *Serenade Interrupted*, in which Debussy uses the contrast of tonal stability to express the different images of the two characters.

Figure 37. Shijun's motive and husband's motive

Figure 37 shows a musical score for three vocal parts: Soprano (S), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The Soprano part begins at measure 38 with the lyrics "使君从南来——". The Tenor and Bass parts have the lyrics "十五府小吏". The music is in a 3/4 time signature and a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat).

Figure 38. Debussy's two motives in *Serenade Interrupted*

Figure 38 displays two systems of piano accompaniment from Debussy's *Serenade Interrupted*. The top system is marked *mf* and features a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The bottom system is marked *Modéré* and *pp lointain*, showing a more delicate and distant texture with a similar melodic and rhythmic structure.

The coda is from m.92-end. Although the original poem has ended, the composer reintroduces the beginning of the poem. The music returns to calm, symbolizing that after the end of the story, everything returns to peace.

Figure 39. The music returns to peace

98 Coda

S *p* 罗敷喜蚕桑采桑

A *pp* u

T *pp* u

B *pp* u

Pno. *p e delicato* 3 15^{ma} *p*

103 *pp*

S 城 南 隅 *pp*

A 啊 *pp*

T 啊 *pp*

B 啊 *ppp*

Pno. *ppp* *ppp*

2 三弄 San Nong

2.1 Introduction

Composer Wei Cui composed the mixed choral work 三弄 (*San Nong*) based on the Qin piece 梅花三弄 (*San Nong of Plum Blossoms*) in 2012. According to the composer's interview, the idea for composing this modern choral piece based on a piece of ancient Chinese music came to her after hearing a Japanese choral work, 追分節考, which was composed by Minao Shibata.³²

The work features a mixed chorus, two solos, piano, tubular bell, Dizi (bamboo flute), and percussion. In the coda, the choir reaches 13 voices. The work opens with unaccompanied chorus. The piano enters on m.99 and the rest instruments enter on m.161. Although there exists lyrics from the original music of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420), it only describes the beauty of the plum blossoms, which greatly limits what can be expressed in this choral piece. The composer, therefore, did not fill in any additional meaningful text but used vowel sounds.

The original music *San Nong of Plum Blossoms* is a Qu-Pai for Chinese Qin, Pipa, Erhu, Dizi, and folk ensembles. The title "*San Nong of Plum Blossoms*" contains the meaning of the expression of the music and the musical structure. The name "梅花 (Plum Blossoms)" refers to the musical image of the plum blossoms, which is used to praise people with noble virtues. The word "三弄

³² Quote from Wei Cui's program note

(San Nong)” refers to the structure of the music. When “弄” is presented as a verb, it refers to the playing of an instrument; when as a noun, it refers to the passage of music. In this piece, “弄” is regarded as a noun, so “三弄” refers to the “three sections”. The Qin version of “梅花三弄” is first recorded in 1425’s 神奇秘谱 (Magical Secret Score), which is a collection of Qin scores compiled by the Ming Dynasty musician Zhu Quan (1378-1448). According to rumors, the piece was originally a Dizi piece composed by Huan Yi of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), which was later adapted into a Qin piece. The whole piece consists of ten sections, with the following sub-titles respectively:

- 1、溪山夜月 (Night Moon on the Mountain)
- 2、一弄叫月，声入太霞 (First Nong Calls the Moon, the Sound Into Taixia)
- 3、二弄穿云，声入云中 (Second Nong Gets Through the Clouds, the Sound in the Clouds)
- 4、青鸟啼魂 (Green Bird Cries Soul)
- 5、三弄横江，隔江长叹声 (Third Nong Across the River, Long Sighs Across the River)
- 6、玉箫声 (The Sound of Jade Xiao)
- 7、凌云戛玉 (Clouds Knocking on Jade)
- 8、铁笛声 (The Sound of the Iron Flute)
- 9、风荡梅花 (Wind Swept Plum Blossoms)

10、欲罢不能 (Endless Echo)³³

“Three” has a unique meaning in many cultures all over the world, such as the concept of “Trinity” in Christianity. In China, Laozi's 道德经 (Tao Te Ching) mentions that “Tao begat one; One begat two; Two begat three; Three begat all things”³⁴, so “three” also has a unique meaning in Chinese culture. Similar to the Western “Trinity”, there are combinations of three in Chinese culture, such as the “Three Talents” which are “the heaven, the ground, and the human”. This concept is taken from 易经 (the Book of Change): “There is the Way of Heaven, the Way of Man, and the Way of the ground, then combine three talents.”³⁵ Chinese ancient people believed that the heaven can be divided into yin and yang; the ground has two characteristics of rigidity and flexibility; the human has two morals of benevolence and righteousness. Thus these “three talents” are the three most creative things in the world. Although there is no documentary evidence to shows that “*San Nong of Plum Blossoms*” is related to the “three talents”, the composer Wei Cui has clearly stated in her program note that she merged “three talents” in “*San Nong*”. Therefore, the analysis of this piece will be divided into three parts: “the Heaven, the Ground, and the Human”.

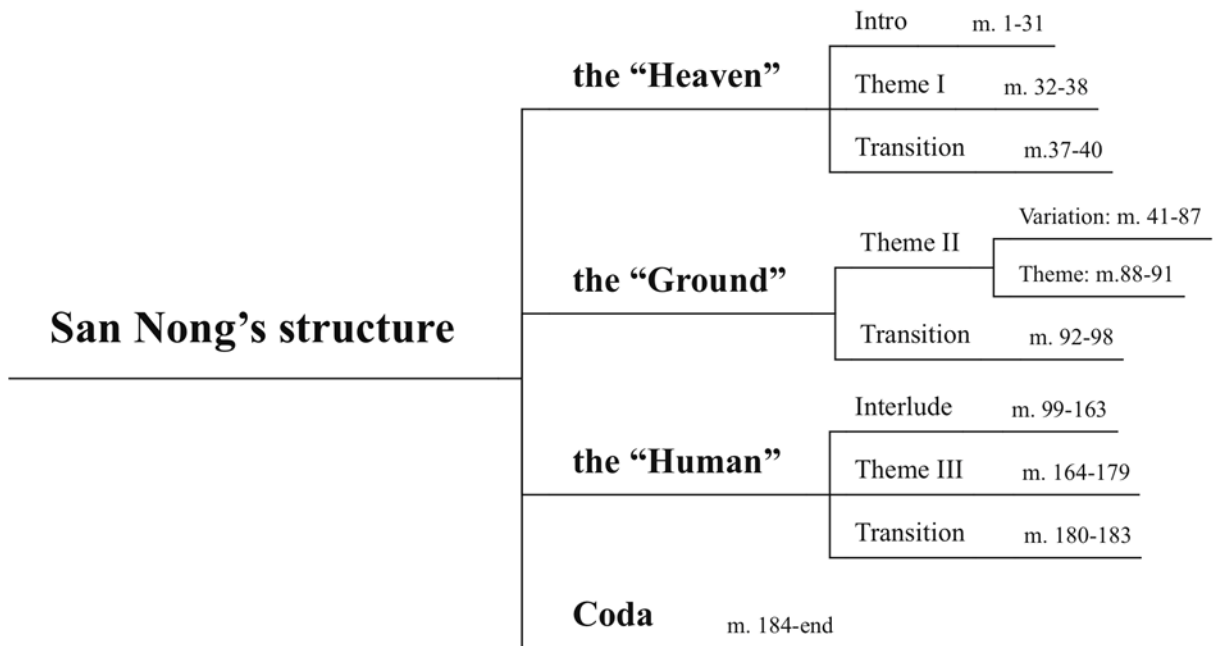
³³ “San Nong of Plum Blossoms.”

³⁴ Laozi, p.94.

³⁵ *Book of Change*, p.96.

2.2 Analysis

Figure 40. San Nong's musical structure



The "Heaven" section:

As it shows in the structural picture, the "Heaven" section includes the intro, theme I and transition. The musical style in this section is natural and simple, with no obvious climax. Wei Cui uses extensive quantities of tone clusters and aleatoric singing to symbolize the "chaos", the blurring of the beginning of the universe. Then she gradually builds rhythm in the A section, which symbolizes the establishment of order in the universe. Finally, the theme of the "San Nong" is formally introduced in section B.

Figure 41. Four tone clusters represent the “Chaos” (m.1-11)

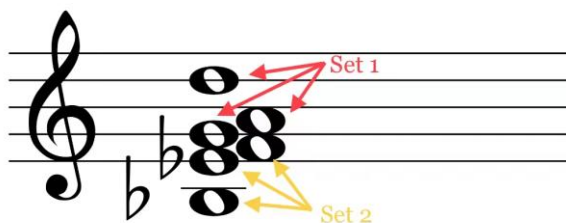
The musical score is divided into three systems, each highlighting a specific tone cluster with a blue box:

- System 1 (m. 1-11):** Labeled "Freely" and "Tone cluster 1". It features a Soprano line with lyrics "da la da la da la da la" and a Bass line with lyrics "m - i - e". Dynamics include *pp* and *fp*.
- System 2 (m. 5-11):** Labeled "Tone cluster 2" and "Tone cluster 3". It features a Soprano line with lyrics "d l d l d l d l" and a Bass line with lyrics "m - i - e". Dynamics include *pp* and *fp*. A "Glossolalia" section is indicated in the Bass line.
- System 3 (m. 11):** Labeled "Tone cluster 4" and "Unison". It features a Soprano line with lyrics "d l d l d l d l" and a Bass line with lyrics "m - i - e". Dynamics include *fp*.

The score includes five staves: Soprano, Soprano II, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Lyrics are provided for the Soprano and Bass parts. Performance instructions such as "Freely" and "Unison" are present. Dynamics like *pp* and *fp* are used throughout. The four tone clusters are highlighted with blue boxes and labeled "Tone cluster 1" through "Tone cluster 4".

The four tone clusters in the intro are composed in a seemingly random way, but in fact they have an inner logic. The composer chose two characteristic intervals from the original melody, a pure fifth and a major second, and combined these two intervals to form set 1, then inversed them to form set 2. Finally, she connected the two sets on the axis of the major second to form the first cluster. In order to combine those two sets closer, the composer allows the alto voice to sing the notes where set 1 and set 2 are joined, thus blurring with an axis. The next three clusters follow the same logic, changing the intermediate axes: minor third, major second and minor third, which are the basic intervals that make up the pentatonic mode.

Figure 42. Composition of the first tone cluster



Because the soprano's melody in section A doesn't have a firm rhythm, there are several ways to interpret this. For the conductor who is focused on precision to each beat, giving the accurate rhythm to this section is the simplest way to conduct. However, the composer uses notes without stems to record the melody because she wants the melody to be free. Therefore, when conducting this section, there are two options for the conductor: either to leave the lower three voices free, as long as they are correct in the vowel changing point, or to assign an assistant conductor to conduct the lower voices, which ensures that the rhythm of the lower voices is not affected by the soprano's melody.

Figure 43. Section A (m.16-31)

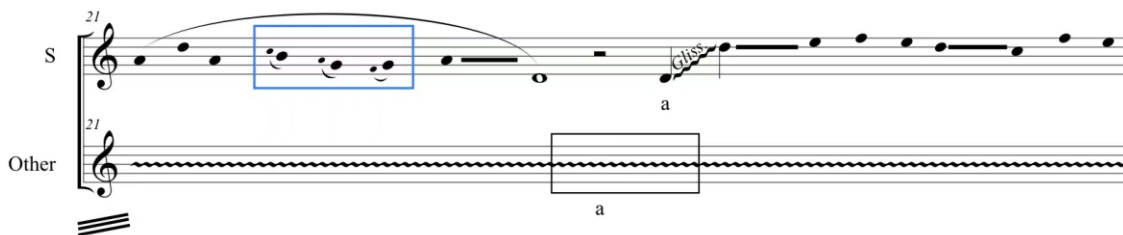
The musical score for Section A (m.16-31) consists of five systems of staves. The first system (m.16-17) includes vocal parts A, T, and B. Part A is in treble clef with a tempo marking of ♩=58. Parts T and B are in treble and bass clefs respectively. The lyrics 'lu' are written under the notes. A box highlights the second measure of this system. The second system (m.18) features a Soprano (S) part in treble clef with dynamics *p* and *f*, and an 'Other' part in treble clef. The lyrics 'a' are written under the notes. The third system (m.21) features a Soprano (S) part in treble clef with a 'Gliss' marking and an 'Other' part in treble clef. The lyrics 'a' are written under the notes. The fourth system (m.26) features a Soprano (S) part in treble clef with a dynamic marking of *f* and an 'Other' part in treble clef. The lyrics 'a' are written under the notes.

The appoggiatura of CASC music can be simply classify into the following three types:

1. the fast appoggiatura
2. slow appoggiatura with accent
3. slow appoggiatura without accent

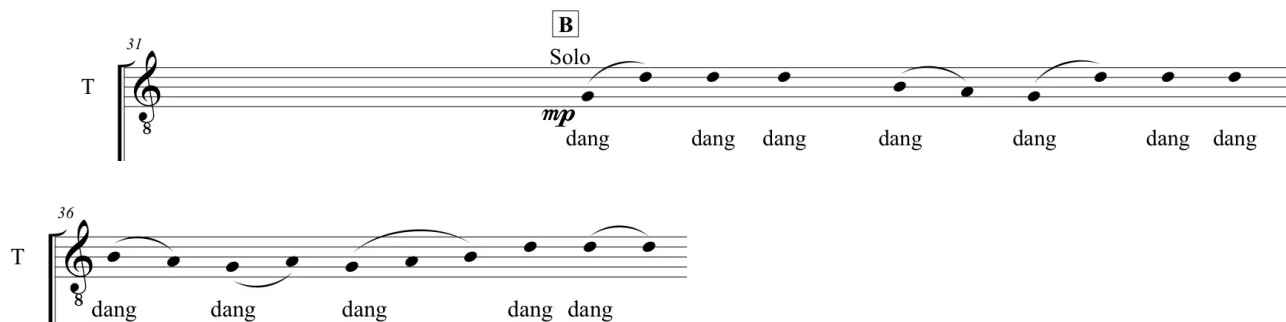
The appoggiaturas in section A are all the first fast leaning notes. Because in a free and rhythmless melody, fast appoggiatura is needed to break the long melodic lines to grasp the audience's attention.

Figure 44. Appoggiatura (m.21)



In section B, the theme of “San Nong” appears for the first time. Comparing the two subsequent themes, the theme in section B is the simplest and most consistent with the original theme, which also corresponds to the quality of “Heaven”. In terms of writing technique, the composer again uses free rhythm to express the melody and uses vowels to imitate the sound of the qin. It again corresponds to the rhythmless style of the Qin.

Figure 45. Theme of *San Nong* (m.31-36)



Similarly, the transitional passage of the soprano solo in m.39, which appears to be a free rhythmic section, is in fact clearly defined by the composer in terms of the relative lengths between

the notes. It makes the music increasingly rhythmically compact and indicates the imminent “Ground” section.

Figure 46. Transition (m.39-40)

The “Ground” section

After a short transition, music enters the “earth” section. According to 易经 (the Book of Change), “the Ground is supportive and natural, only the virtuous can bear the utmost.”³⁶ Therefore, compared to the calmness of the “Heaven” section, the musical images in this section are livelier.

As shown in figure 35, the theme II is divided into two smaller sections, where the variation section is the most dramatic passage of the whole piece. In the variation section, the composer uses the tones of the original music on the G-Gong mode. Measures 39-42 is the introductory passage

³⁶ Hu and Wu, p.4.

of the variation; m.44-72 is the main part of the passage, followed by m.73-75 which forms the coda of the variation, and m.76-87 is the transition of the variation and theme. The composer not only uses the melodic materials of the original piece but also invokes several characteristic rhythmic patterns. The first one is the tied eighth note in m.53 in the tenor and bass voices. It breaks the rhythm which has been maintained before and shifts the stressed tone to the second half of the beat. The second one is the rhythmic pattern in m.54. It consists of a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note following four eighth notes.

Figure 47. Motive in m.53

Figure 47 shows a musical score for tenor (T) and bass (B) voices. The score is in 6/4 time, marked *mp*. The lyrics are: "hen me hen me hen me hen me hong" for both voices. A blue box highlights the motive in m.53, which consists of a tied eighth note followed by a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note. The lyrics under the highlighted section are "hong me me hong".

Figure 48. Motive in m.54

Figure 48 shows a musical score for tenor (T) and bass (B) voices. The score is in 3/4 time. The lyrics are: "hen me hen me hen me" for both voices. The melody consists of a dotted eighth note followed by a sixteenth note, then four eighth notes.

The variation section's texts are also the densest and most complex in the piece. The composer refers to the pronunciation of the Beijing opera, which also appears in her previous choral piece, “才令台 (Tsei-Ling-Dei)”. For the harmony, the male and female voices alternate in parallel fifths, which makes a pure acoustic effect giving the music a forward power. In addition, the sounds

“hong”, “dong” and “hen” create strong and powerful accents. Ultimately, the variation section has the gentle melody of the Qin tune and the powerful strength of the Beijing opera.

The modulation from m.78-87 is worth mentioning. Comparing the three tone clusters in soprano and alto voices, we can find that the composer introduces the Bian-Gong of the hexatone G-Gong mode into the second cluster and removes the G from the G-Gong mode, thus blurring the G-Gong mode’s cluster. Then she lowers the A and D of A-Zhi mode’s cluster modulating to the G#-Jiao mode’s cluster. As a result, the music gradually modulates from G to G#.

Figure 49. Modulational section (m.78-87)

However, the composer does not use G# as the tonic tone in the theme section, but F#, as the top tone of the third cluster. It leads to an interesting tonal mixture in the upper and lower voices. To be accurate, the upper voice is in the Jiao mode of the E-Gong system, while the lower voice is in the F#-Gong mode. Although most of the tones of these two modes are the same, the pitch B plays a different role in each. That is why most singers accidentally sing the B-flat in m.88-91. It

is only after m.92 that the music really modulates into F#-Gong mode. It is clarified by the B-flat in m.94 and 95.

Figure 50. Theme 2 (m.88-91)

The musical score for Theme 2 (m.88-91) is presented in four staves: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The score begins at measure 84 and concludes at measure 91. The key signature consists of three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and the tempo is marked 'Largo'. The time signature is 4/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *mp*, *f*, and *ff*. The lyrics are in Chinese characters and vowels: 'u', 'ye yi', 'hong', 'a', and 'u'. The score features various musical notations, including slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. A box labeled 'E' is present above the Soprano staff at measure 88. The score concludes at measure 91 with a 2/4 time signature change.

In the transition section, the composer references to the Peking opera's elements again. She added several subdivided dotted notes and ornate melismas to make the melody more delicate and beautiful.

Figure 51. Decorated transition (m.92-98)

The musical score for Figure 51 is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 92 to 98. The soprano part (T) begins at measure 93 with a complex, rhythmic melody in G major, marked with 'a' (accents) and slurs. The bass part (B) provides a simpler, more melodic accompaniment, also marked with 'a'. The second system covers measures 96 to 98. The soprano part continues with a similar rhythmic pattern, marked with 'rit.' (ritardando). The bass part becomes more active, featuring a repeating ostinato pattern.

The “Human” section

The beginning of this section returns to the opening harmony but adds the piano which repeats the arpeggios of the pentatonic scale. Unlike the very beginning, the composer does not develop the music on harmony alone but also with texture. For example, in m.104 she introduces a variation of a theme in the soprano solo line, juxtaposed with a repeating ostinato in the tenor and bass.

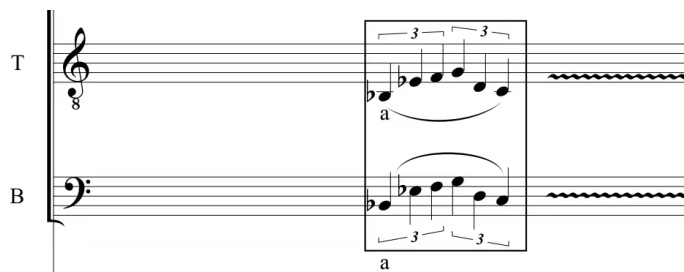
Figure 52. Beginning of “Human” section

Figure 52 shows the beginning of the "Human" section, marked with a box labeled 'F'. The score includes vocal parts for Soprano (S), Soprano II (S II), Soprano III (S III), Alto (A), Alto II (A II), Alto III (A III), Tenor (T), Bass (B), and Piano (Pno.). The vocal parts are marked with *pp* (pianissimo) and *m* (mezzo). The Soprano part has the lyrics "da la da la da la da la". The piano part is marked with *p* (piano). A blue box highlights the first few measures of the vocal parts.

Figure 53. Soprano solo in m.104

Figure 53 shows the Soprano Solo I in m.104. The score is for Soprano Solo I (Sop. Solo I) and is marked with *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *a* (accents). The solo part is marked with *mf* and *a*.

Figure 54. Tenor and bass motive in m.104



Then from the rehearsal mark G (m.114), the music begins accumulating power toward the final climax. Musical tension is continually enhanced by the tenor’s quick sixteenth notes with Beijing opera-like text and vigorous theme variation in the soprano and alto voices.

Figure 55. Tenor motive in m.114



The section at rehearsal mark H (m.188) is the most colorful part of San Nong. Wei Cui uses eight different tone clusters to draw an ink painting. These clusters are listed in the following table: (H stands for hexatone mode, P stands for pentatonic mode)

Table 1. Tone clusters from m.128 to m.152

	Tone cluster 1	Tone cluster 2	Tone cluster 3	Tone cluster 4	Tone cluster 5	Tone cluster 6	Tone cluster 7	Tone cluster 8
Mode	A-flat Gong (H)	G Zhi (P)	A Gong (H)	A Gong (P)	D# Jiao (P)	C# Gong (H)	D Yu (P)	B-flat Gong (H)

The table shows that the tone clusters are not functionally connected to each other but are non-functional harmonic substitutions. This non-functional harmonic substitution can be found in many modern composers' pieces, such as Chen Qigang's *Reflet d'un temps disparu*. In order to achieve a symphonic sound effect in *San Nong*, Wei Cui uses continuous change of different vowels to show the timbral variations.

Another interesting thing is that cluster 8 recalls the first cluster in the very beginning of the piece. However, the composer does not stay long on cluster 8 but dissolves it with a *tutti glissando*.

The piano begins with an ostinato of arpeggiated cluster tones followed by the chorus which copies the piano cluster in homophonic fashion. After that the piano immediately plays the next cluster. It is not until the beginning of cluster 4 in m.134 that the chorus divides into two parts (SA/TB), accelerating the change of clusters. I personally think one of the reasons for letting the piano go first is to make it easier for the choir to find the correct pitches.

Figure 56. 8 Tone clusters

The figure displays a musical score for piano (Pno.) and vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) across three systems. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *fz*, *f*, and *mp*. Eight specific tone clusters are highlighted with blue boxes and labeled:

- Tone cluster 1:** Located in the vocal parts at measure 121, marked *f*.
- Tone cluster 2:** Located in the vocal parts at measure 128, marked *pp*.
- Tone cluster 3:** Located in the vocal parts at measure 136, marked *pp*.
- Tone cluster 4:** Located in the vocal parts at measure 136, marked *pp*.
- Tone cluster 5:** Located in the vocal parts at measure 136, marked *pp*.
- Tone cluster 6:** Located in the vocal parts at measure 143, marked *pp*.
- Tone cluster 7:** Located in the vocal parts at measure 143, marked *pp*.
- Tone cluster 8:** Located in the vocal parts at measure 143, marked *pp*.

Inset boxes show piano accompaniment for measures 121, 128, 136, and 143. A note at the bottom right of the third system reads: **)Freely playing glides, 3 singers for each part*.

At the beginning of rehearsal mark I (m.152), the piano alternates on two chords. These two chords are the I and the flat VI of G major, which is the key of the final climax. The subsequent two clusters emphasis D, the dominant tone of G major, as the highest note, once again reinforcing the tonality. Eventually all the tension converges on the cluster at m.161 which builds on D and its overtone column, pushing the music towards the climax, theme III.

Figure 57. Piano motive from m.152

The figure displays two systems of piano music. The first system, beginning at measure 152, consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on top and a bass clef on the bottom. The treble staff contains a wavy line representing a cluster, while the bass staff also contains a wavy line. A rectangular box highlights a specific passage in the bass staff starting at measure 152, showing a sequence of notes: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. The notes are marked with accents and dynamic markings like 'ff'. The second system, beginning at measure 156, also consists of a grand staff. The bass staff has a wavy line, and the treble staff has a sequence of notes: G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. The notes are marked with accents and dynamic markings like 'ff'. The notes are circled in blue.

Figure 58. Overtone column of D

The musical score for Figure 58, titled "Overtone column of D", is set in 4/4 time and begins at measure 161. It features several parts:

- Vocal Parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass):** Each part contains three "ha" syllables. The Soprano part starts with a dynamic marking of *f*. The Alto and Tenor parts also have *f* markings. The Bass part has a *ha* syllable. All vocal notes have accents (>).
- Piano (Pno.):** The piano part features a melodic line that starts with a dynamic marking of *f* and crescendos to *ff* by the end of the measure. The notes include sharps and naturals.
- Percussion:**
 - Susp. C (Suspended Cymbal):** Features a sustained note with a dynamic marking of *f*.
 - Gr. D (Gong):** Features a sustained note with a dynamic marking of *f* and a *sub.p* (sub-piano) marking.

At m.168, the composer modulates the theme to C major, a subdominant of G major. Then she modulates the melody back to G major at m.172, yet the harmony remains on C. That creates a polytonal section until m.179.

Figure 59. Polytonal section from m.172-179

The musical score is divided into two systems, each covering measures 172-179. The first system includes parts for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Bass (B), Piano (Pno.), Suspended Cymbal (Susp. C), and Gong (Gr. D). The second system adds a Contrabass (C) part. The vocal parts (S, A, T, B) are written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and a time signature of 5/4. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The percussion parts (Susp. C and Gr. D) are in bass clef with a 5/4 time signature. The Contrabass (C) part is in bass clef with a 5/4 time signature. The score features a polytonal texture, with the vocal parts and piano accompaniment in different keys. The vocal parts are marked with *mf* and *a* (accents). The piano accompaniment is marked with *mf*. The Suspended Cymbal and Gong parts are marked with *mf* and *p* (piano). The Contrabass part is marked with *mp* (mezzo-piano). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Coda

The composer adds a traditional Chinese instrument, Dizi³⁷, in the coda. Some conductors advise the Dizi player to come out from the back of the audience in order to create a special atmosphere. Therefore, in the hazy harmony of the choir, the Dizi player seems like an ancient gentleman, slowly coming from distance of time.

Figure 60. Melody of Dizi

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the Dizi. The top staff begins with a key signature change marked 'K' and a dynamic marking of *f*. It features a melodic line with a slur and a fermata, followed by a triplet of eighth notes and a *sub.p* marking. The bottom staff starts at measure 188 with a dynamic marking of *mf*, followed by a slur and a fermata, then a triplet of eighth notes, and ends with a *p* marking and a *ppp* marking. There are also Chinese characters '又' and '气压音' (qì yā yīn) above the notes.

The music finally fades out in this atmosphere, eventually leaving only the arpeggios of the piano. It is worthy to mention that the piano concludes on a perfect fourth (C and F), which are the last two notes of the original piece. The composer punctuates the ending for the whole piece in this way.

Figure 61. Ending of piano

The image shows a grand staff for piano (Pno.) with a treble and bass clef. The music is mostly silent, with a final arpeggio of two notes (C and F) in the bass clef, marked *pp*. The measure number 202 is indicated at the beginning of the staff. The date 'Oct. 15 2012 Tianjin' is printed at the bottom right.

³⁷ Dizi is a flute made by bamboo

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Reflection

After nearly two years of research and study I found that there is no strict definition of ancient style music in China. So, when communicating with various composers and conductors the most frequently asked question is: “How do you define ancient style music?” At the beginning, the definition of ancient choral works was simply defined as “choral works with Chinese elements.” However, when the research started the original definition had to be expanded due to new considerations upon examining the compositions in the study.

While selecting works, I came across some pieces that could not be considered ancient style music, folk song adaptations, nor religious music. I therefore categorized them as modern Chinese pieces. Although they have elements of Chinese music, the musical elements they contain are complex and diverse and cannot be described as ancient style alone. An example is Jin Chengzhi’s *净光山晨景* (*Morning View of Jinguang Mountain*). This work covers a great deal of ground. In the first half of the work, chanting-like phrases are used to create the atmosphere of Jinguang Mountain, interspersed with recited fragments that depict a lively scene of the human world. But in the second half of the work, the harmonies of the huge sound blossom with the lyric “日出 (sunrise)”, and the whole mood of the work leaves the human realm and enters a new world. Here’s what the conductor told the group during rehearsals, “The first half of the work is a depiction of the world of humans, but the second half of the work is a departure to the world of bliss and eventual conversion to Buddhism.” Such a work, rich in expression, contains elements of both folk and Buddhist music, and for the composer, he did not compose the entire work as religious music.

Therefore, such works cannot be classified as ancient style music, nor as religious music, nor as folk music, and therefore can only be classified as Chinese contemporary music.

Because of the above characteristics, when defining CASC music, I must focus on those works where the musical elements are pure.

Another thing which confused me is the difference between Chinese-style music and Chinese ancient style (CAS) music. In the process of reviewing literature, I found that Chinese-style music and CAS music are often confused as the same kind of music. For the average listener, any music that contains elements of Chinese musical elements can be called Chinese-style music. The most popular Chinese-style music in the pop music market is archaistic music, so what most listeners recognize as Chinese-style music is CAS music. Therefore, it is important to make it clear that Chinese-style music is not necessarily CAS music. Chinese-style music should include ancient style, ethnic style and other kinds of music with Chinese musical elements.

Today, technology has a trend-setting role, and the emerging artificial intelligences are challenging various fields. These include Google's Alphago's victory over the Go champion and NVIDIA's AIVA, an artificial intelligence, composing a song for the first time.³⁸ The field of art creation, once thought to be only humanly competent, is already being attempted by AI. On November 22, 2021, NetEase Cloud Music's Hi-Senberg Workshop released the first ancient style song 青丝成雪 (*Green Silk Becomes Snow*), whose lyrics and music were both done by AI and

³⁸ "AIVA - The AI Composing Emotional Soundtrack Music."

human collaboration. Although it is just an ordinary song with nothing surprising, the appearance of this kind of music production indicates the coming of the era of low-cost music production.³⁹ Modern music companies do not need to hire a lot of composers and lyricists to produce music. They just need to input the requirements and after a simple human modification, it can become commodity music into the market. The development of artificial intelligence is so rapid that it leads to people having to work hard to not to be replaced by artificial intelligence. I don't know when the artistic creative process like composing can be replaced by AI in the future, but until then, we must make our best contribution to the development of human artistic endeavors.

³⁹ “Green Silk Becomes Snow.”

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Appendix A - The questionnaire of CASC music

Figure 62. Questionnaire p.1

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Questionnaire

- **Q.1** In your understanding, what is Chinese ancient style in choral music?
- **Q.2** Do you think Antiquity Campaign is a current trend in composition?
- **Q.3** Do you think there are outstanding pieces in this style?
 - **If yes, Q.4** Could you please recommend one or two of them?
 - **If not, Q.4** What do you think their problem is?
- **Q.5** Do you think Chinese ancient style choral music have artistic values?
- **As a choral conductor,**
 - **Q.6** Will you choose Chinese ancient style pieces for your choir? And why?
 - **Q.7** What is the difficulty of their rehearsal?
 - **Q.8** During performance, does the audiences react better to this style of work than to other style of work?
 - **Q.9** If you commission works to the composer, would you prefer this style?
- **As a composer,**
 - **Q.6** Have you ever composed this kind of music?
 - **Q.7** (*Skip if the last answer is no*) What is the difficulty during you composing?
 - **Q.8** Does the commissioner prefer this style?
 - **Q.9** Will you compose this style by interesting or only by commissioning?
 - **Q.10** If you want to find lyric of this style of music, do you prefer ancient poems or pseudo-classic poems?
 - **Q.11** Do you think there exist any template of composing this style music?
- **As a singers:**
 - **Q.6** Have you sung any Chinese ancient style choral piece?

1

Figure 63. Questionnaire p.2

Chenyu Sun

- **Q.7** Could you recommend one?
 - **Q.8** In your opinion, what is the biggest difference between such style and other styles?
 - **Q.9** Do your choir often sing this style of music?
 - **Q.10** Do you feel aesthetic fatigue for this style?
 - **Q.11** What is the biggest difficulty during you singing this style of music?
- **Last Q.** Could you please use one word to describe the characteristic of ancient style music?

Appendix B - The summary of the interview

Figure 64. Record of the interview

The interview record

Chinese ancient style choral music (CASC)

- **What is CASC?**

- Use Chinese ancient poem or rhyme verse, or pseudo-ancient poems only in high quality.
- Use Chinese traditional mode (most in pentatonic)
- Express Chinese cultural core

- **The characteristics of CASC**

- In slow tempo
- Free in rhythm (some of them)
- Rich in silence
- Life, elegance, eloquent, artistic conception, strength of character (生活, 雅, 传神, 意境, 风骨)

- **The difficulty**

- *Composition*
 - Hard to accurately express in western notation system
 - Less is more
- *Conducting and rehearsal*
 - How to convey the emotion that composer want to show to the audience.
 - How to let the singers know the artistic conception that composer want to make.
 - Less is more
- *Singing*
 - Language
 - Rhythm
 - Pitches are difficult to sing
 - The feeling is difficult to be accurate