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## A Brief Exhibition of Eastern and Western Classical Music

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## Project Significance

The main inspiration for this project stems from growing up as a musician and getting to perform in many different settings and types of ensembles. Music has been an integral part of my life as far back as I can remember. I started playing violin when I was about four years old, and although I don't play seriously anymore, I will always have a soft spot in my heart for it. I learned at a young age that music can be transformative for both the musician and the audience. While working on this project, I got to relearn this and rediscover the love I had for violin.

Being a biology major — especially in the pre-vet route — means that violin has had to take a backseat in my life. When I started thinking about what I wanted to do for my senior project, I knew I wanted to do something music related. I felt like this would most likely be the last chance I'd have to play violin like this again, and it seemed like a fitting way to celebrate the conclusion of my undergraduate experience.

As I've gotten older I've developed an interest in learning more about an ethnic background I was not deeply connected to when I was younger. As a child I primarily studied classical music written by European composers, and I wanted to explore the classical music that existed outside of Europe. This project was a way for me to learn about a cool part of Chinese history, while creating something special that I could share with other people.

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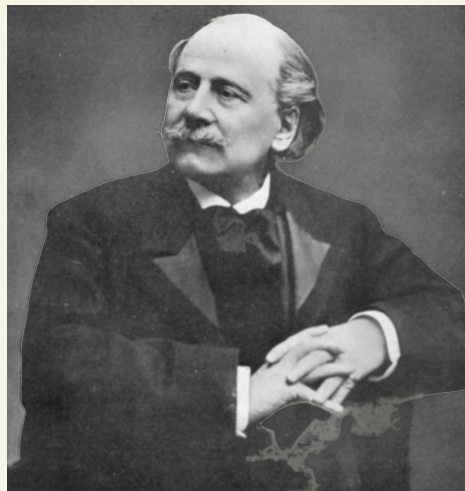


April 22, 2023

Naia Brandt

# Meditation

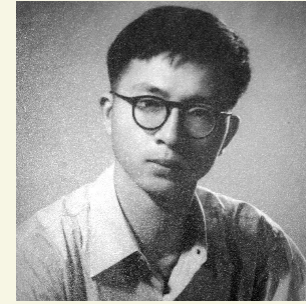
Jules Massenet was a French composer born on May 12, 1842. He is considered one of France's most prolific composers. Over the course of his career he wrote over 30 operas. Meditation comes from Massenet's opera Thaïs, written in 1874. It tells the story of the titular character Thaïs, a proud and haughty courtesan, and Athanaël, a young monk. While attempting to convert Thaïs, Athanaël develops feelings for Thaïs. The Meditation is taken from the opera's second act, during which Thaïs reflects on her life and ultimately decides to follow Athanaël and live a virtuous life.



# The Butterfly Lovers

The Butterfly Lovers originates from an old Chinese folk tale set in the Eastern Jin dynasty (266-420 C.E.). The story is about a young girl named Zhu Yintai, who disguises herself as a boy in order to attend school. There, she befriends and falls in love with another student, Liang Shanbo, who remains unaware of her true identity. After three years, Zhu's father summons her home. Zhu learns that her father has arranged for her to marry a local official's son. Liang visits Zhu's home and discovers that Zhu is a girl. They profess their love for each other, and Liang asks to marry Zhu, but is rejected by her family due to her prior engagement. In his grief, Liang falls ill and dies. On Zhu's wedding day, a massive storm breaks out. While Zhu is on her way to the ceremony, she decides to commit suicide to be with Liang. She and Liang are transformed into butterflies and fly off into the sky, now free to be with each other forever.

# Chen Gang (1935) & He Zhanhao (1933)



In 1958, while studying at the Shanghai Conservatory, Chen Gang (pictured left) composed The Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto along with fellow student He

Zhanhao (pictured below). The main musical elements are derived from a major genre of Chinese opera, Yue Opera, also known as Shaoxing Opera. He Zhanhao contributed the famous melody, while Chen Gang was responsible for most of the composition. Although it was written for a Western orchestra, Gang incorporated stylistic elements from traditional Chinese opera and folk music. One of the violin techniques present throughout the concerto is slides, which are used very conservatively in Western classical music. The techniques in the concerto are meant to mimic the sounds of traditional Chinese instruments, such as the erhu, pipa, and guzheng. This concerto is considered one of the most famous and important violin pieces in Chinese history.

