

BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES OF CHINESE AND WESTERN MUSICAL
LANGUAGE: A HARMONIC AND FORM ANALYSIS OF CHEN QIGANG'S
LA JOIE DE LA SOUFFRANCE (2017) IN REFERENCE TO THE
COMPOSITIONAL INFLUENCE OF OLIVIER MESSIAEN

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Chen Qigang (b. 1951) is one of today's most representative and prolific Chinese composers. His works are regarded as setting a standard of excellence among Chinese composers in the twenty-first century. Like many Chinese composers of his generation, Chen combines in his works the traits of both Chinese traditional music and Western musical language. *La joie de la souffrance* (The Joy of Suffering) for violin and orchestra, composed for the Shanghai Isaac Stern International Violin Competition in 2016–17, is one of his mature works that not only represents one of the great achievements of fusing Chinese and Western musical languages, but is also a major addition to the venerable tradition of Chinese concertos. By analyzing *La joie de la souffrance* as the nexus of old and new, East and West, I hope to provide not only insight into a valuable work of the twentieth-century violin concerto repertoire, but also a glimpse into some of the musical influences of a Chinese composer working in France in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. By extension, I hope to shed light on some of the factors, trends, and developments that have influenced Chinese composers in the early twenty-first century.

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INTRODUCTION

Chen Qigang (b. 1951) is one of today's most representative and prolific Chinese composers. His works are regarded as setting a standard of excellence among Chinese composers in the twenty-first century.¹ Like many Chinese composers of his generation, Chen combines in his works the traits of both Chinese traditional music and Western musical language. *La joie de la souffrance* (The Joy of Suffering) for violin and orchestra, composed for the Shanghai Isaac Stern International Violin Competition in 2016–17, is one of his mature works that not only represents one of the great achievements of fusing Chinese and Western musical languages, but is also a major addition to the venerable tradition of Chinese concertos.

By analyzing *La joie de la souffrance* as the nexus of old and new, East and West, I hope to provide not only insight into a valuable work of the twentieth-century violin concerto repertoire, but also a glimpse into some of the musical influences of a Chinese composer working in France in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. By extension, I hope to shed light on some of the factors, trends, and developments that have influenced Chinese composers in the early twenty-first century.

Significance and State of Research

This dissertation considers *La joie de la souffrance* as a fusion of musical languages. It is therefore helpful to situate Chen's concerto among works of its kind, specifically the concerto genre and among the works and biographies of Chinese composers of Chen's

¹ See, for example, Wennan Wang, "Moonlight Shadows and Night Thoughts (Symphony No. 1) and an Analysis of Qigang Chen's Extase II" (DMA document, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 2012), 106.

generation, often referred to as the “New Wave.”

The cornerstone of modern Chinese national music is undoubtedly the *Butterfly Lovers* concerto for solo violin and orchestra (1959) by Chen Gang (b. 1935) and He Zhanhao (b. 1933), which expertly adapts characteristics of traditional Chinese music to the violin with Western compositional techniques. Despite its cutting-edge status as an attempt to incorporate Chinese music into the Western mainstream, however, the musical language of *Butterfly Lovers* is backward-looking in its form, texture, and harmonic language. Nevertheless, people in China and overseas still treat the *Butterfly Lovers* as the dominant masterpiece of modern Chinese national music, even sixty years after it was composed. This attachment to an archaic standard is regrettable, since it hinders the development and modernization of Chinese traditional music and expansion of contemporary repertoire. Moreover, several generations of Chinese composers have done their best to expedite the process of modernization in Chinese traditional music, prominently the group known as the “New Wave,” represented by Tan Dun (b. 1957), Chen Yi (b. 1953), Chen Qigang, and others.² Most of these composers went abroad, received a systematic (and Western) musical education, and contributed many excellent works. Although not as widely acclaimed as *Butterfly Lovers*, their works have brought to the repertory some signs of a new era. *La joie de la souffrance*, for example, undoubtedly inherited some traits of *Butterfly Lovers*, such as respect for melody and a lyrical tune; but it broadens the adoption of Chinese cultural elements and takes advantage of Western harmonic technique to enrich the music texture and

² Subaiou Zhang Carter, “Integration of Chinese Traditional Music in Contemporary Violin Works by Ma Sicong, Chen Yi, and Bright Sheng” (PhD diss., Boston University, 2021), 16.

express the inner meaning of the music.

Unlike many other composers of the “New Wave,” such as Tan Dun and Chen Yi, who studied in the United States of America, Chen Qigang chose to study in France, as a student of Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992). His studies with Messiaen differentiated his music language and style, to some extent, from his colleagues and inspired him to explore the influence of French musical languages—as represented by Messiaen’s musical style and techniques—in modernizing Chinese traditional music.

Scholarship on New Wave composers has blossomed in the last ten years. The focus of research may vary, from the introduction to a composer’s (or composers’) style to emphasis on a particular genre or instrumental repertoire. What these studies have in common, however, is that they all, in one way or another, attempt to elucidate the fusion processes between Chinese musical concepts and Western compositional techniques. This general characteristic is clearly shown in Wei Jiao’s overview of several of Zhou Long’s piano works (2014), in which the indigenous or local musical elements that shape their composition are explained.³

Alex Preston Wise’s dissertation is perhaps the best example of a study focused on a genre. Wise uses the *Butterfly Lovers* violin concerto to consider the rise of the “Chinese Concerto,” comparing this particular concerto with three newer works by contemporary Chinese composers, and analyzing the form, harmonic, and melodic content to illustrate the

³ Wei Jiao, “Chinese and Western Element in Contemporary Chinese Composer Zhou Long’s Works for Solo Piano *Mongolian Folk-Tune Variation* and *Pianogongs*” (DMA document, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2014). For a discussion of piano works by other New Wave composers see Chan Ngan Nei, “Exploring Chinese Folk Musical Elements in Three Piano Works by Tan Dun, Bright Sheng, and Chen Yi” (DMA document, University of Georgia, 2022).

points of fusion between East and West in their music.⁴

Three other dissertations explore the expansion of the violin repertoire by representative Chinese composers from different time periods of the twentieth century. “They consider influences such as Chinese folk, literature, and aesthetic elements, the historical context, and the composers’ educational background.”⁵ Particularly interesting is how Xiang He traces Western influence across five generations of Chinese composers in introducing the music of Chen Yi. By comparing two different works, Xiang is able to illustrate changes and developments in Chen Yi’s fusion process of Chinese and Western musical languages.⁶ These studies provide methodological models that I have used in this dissertation for a comparative examination of Chinese and Western musical languages.

Attention to Chen Qigang and his compositions began in the 1980s. But although almost forty years have passed, serious scholarship on him began to appear only after 2010 and his works still remains relatively limited, perhaps due to his relatively small oeuvre. The scholarly literature ranges from mostly descriptive—introducing his life and works—to more analytical. Su Hui’s recent dissertation provides an overview of Chen Qigang’s career and general musical characteristics, such as his Chinese music aesthetics and the formal structures and references in his works, all in the context of his social background and personal experience.⁷ Some analytical studies elucidate Chen’s use of Chinese pentatonic scales and

⁴ Alex Preston Wise, “The Rise of the Chinese Concerto: A Look into the Developments of Chinese Traditional Instrument Concerti with Western Orchestra” (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2018).

⁵ See Carter, “Integration of Chinese Traditional Music” and Jiang Xinyi Monica, “Development of Violin Repertoire by Chinese Composers in the Twentieth Century: Works by Li Siguang, Ma Sicong, Yang Baozhi, and Li Zili” (DMA document, University of Wisconsin, 2022).

⁶ Xiang He, “Selected Works for Violin and Piano by Chen Yi: Western Influences on the Development of Her Compositional Style” (PhD diss., University of Nebraska, 2010).

⁷ Su Hui, “陈其钢中国式表达及其当代音乐创作的风格趣向研究” [Chen Qigang’s Chinese style expression,

tend to focus on characteristic musical techniques, such as orchestration, approach to form, or tonality, including the mixture of a Chinese pentatonic scale with harmonic techniques influenced by Messiaen, such as the added notes technique and polymodality.⁸

Although these writings narrate the compositional techniques, they seldom explain the purpose of Chen's compositional design, how the techniques or materials can be interpreted, how they give larger meaning to the music, or the reasons for his choices: for example, discussing a specific key or harmony in order to present a music theme/motif, or how the motifs work in order to create a formal structure. One exception is Yang Ruihan's study (2020), which relates Chinese musical philosophy to some of Chen's choices in his best-known orchestral work, *Wu Xing*.⁹ Yang interprets, for example, the significance of Chen's various uses of the pentatonic scale as a way to depict contrasting "conditions of water."¹⁰ Without exploring these inner connections, as Yang has done, musicians and audiences are left with an incomplete understanding of Chen's music and its symbolic associations. This is the gap I seek to fill in the present study.

Some analyses mention the French music language, represented by Messiaen's influence on Chen, yet they seldom discuss the relationship between these two composers. In

and research on the style and interest of contemporary music composition] (DMA diss., 上海音乐学院 [Shanghai Conservatory], 2022). All English translations from the Chinese writings cited in the present dissertation are my own.

⁸ See Li Yannan, "Cross-cultural Synthesis in Chen Qigang's Piano Composition *Instants d'un Opera de Pekin*" (DMA document, University of North Carolina, 2012); and Isaac Ormaza Vera, "A Comparative Analysis of Selected Works by Chen Qigang: *Wu Xing*, *L'Eloignement*, and *Luan Tan*" (DMA document, University of Southern Carolina, 2022).

⁹ Yang Ruihan, "Musical Idiom and Cultural Expression: Harmony, Timbre, and Gesture in Qigang Chen's *Wu Xing*" (DMA document, Rutgers University, 2020).

¹⁰ There are several ways he applied to describe the various states of water. For example, the transparent or pure condition of water is represented by the pentatonic scale, while the non-pentatonic scales, or other scale systems, represent a static or turbid form of water. Moreover, by the further interaction with other elements, music would get richer characteristics.

fact, little has been written on Chinese composers who were either influenced by Messiaen (or other French composers) or had a French study experience similar to Chen Qigang. We must fill in the gaps by seeking inspiration in studies on Messiaen's influence on composers of other nationalities, such as Luckow on Quebecois composers¹¹ and Montandon on Toru Takemitsu (1930–1996).¹² The shortage of resources that engage with this facet, especially with regard to instrumental works by Chinese composers, is yet another reason why I chose *La joie de la souffrance* as my topic.

¹¹ Heather White Luckow, “*La Marque du maître: Messiaen's Influence on Quebecois Composers Serge Garant, Clermont Pepin and Andre Prevost*” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2011).

¹² Susannah Violet Montandon, “Olivier Messiaen's Influence on the Violoncello Works of Toru Takemitsu” (DMA document, Louisiana State University, 2015).

CHAPTER 1

CHEN QIANG AND HIS *LA JOIE DE LA SOUFFRANCE*

1.1 An Overview of Chen Qigang and His Musical Characteristics

Chen Qigang was born in 1955 in Shanghai, China. He was nurtured in an art-loving environment. His father was a famous painter and calligrapher, and his mother was a musician. Influenced by his parents, Chen Qigang studied calligraphy and painting as well as Kunqu Opera and Peking Opera from childhood. As he has mentioned, the initial tune of *La joie la souffrance* comes from one of his favorite childhood songs. Later on, Chen Qigang played clarinet; and after graduating from middle school, he served as an orchestra player, conductor, and composer in Beijing. In 1977, he enrolled in the Composition Department of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, studying composition with Zhongrong Luo (b. 1924), one of the best-known Chinese educators and composers in the twentieth century, who also taught composers Tan Dun and Chen Yi. Professor Luo, influenced by his own teacher, was keen on studying Hindemith's music theory and tried to explore the common ground between the Chinese pentatonic system and modern serialism music. In 1983, Chen Qigang was selected by the education ministry of China to study abroad after he won the first prize in a national composition competition. During his five-year study in France (1984–88), he worked with Messiaen, to the surprise of the Chinese music community, given that most Chinese compositions students chose to study in the United States. All these influences have contributed to Chen's musical language: (1) the artistic environment in his family nurtured his interest in Chinese traditional music and art, (2) the studies at the Beijing Music Conservatory gave him a start on mixing Eastern and Western compositional techniques,

especially influenced by his teacher Luo in the theory of combination of Chinese pentatonic system with the twelve-tone musical system, and (3) the guidance of Messiaen improved and enriched his musical language.

After his studies in France, Chen Qigang's music career took off. By the end of the twentieth century, his works had become widely recognized and published. Yandi Yang has written that "Although the number of performances of his works is not abundant, their quality is exquisite and elaborate. The premieres of almost all his works have attracted great attention."¹³ In 1987, Chen won two international composition competitions in Germany and Italy for his works *Dream Journey* and *The Source*, respectively. In 2004, he was hired as composer-in-residence by the Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra, the first non-French musician to be given this honor. After his engagement with this orchestra finished, he returned to China and accepted various commissions, both international and domestic, including an invitation to serve as music director for the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

Chen Qigang's educational background and life experience shaped his personality and his music characteristics. Guanlu Zheng writes that "The term *modern literati* [文人] might be the best classification for his personality and musical characteristics: a personality like a gentleman of the domestic music community, a lifestyle as a hermit, artistic works of the highest standard, and a spring-like way of dealing with his music inheritance."¹⁴ Here

¹³ Yandi Yang, "陈其钢论" [Chen Qigang], *人民音乐* [People and art], December 2021, 3.

¹⁴ 观炉 郑 [Guanlu Zheng], "变异与重构造: 陈其钢《逝去的时光》《悲喜同源》变奏技法研究" [Variation and reconstruction: A study of variation techniques in Chen Qigang's *The Lost Time* and *The Same Origin of Sadness and Happiness*] (master's thesis, Jiangxi Normal University, 2020), 2.

“gentleman” implies his introversion and “spring” his dedication to the traditional Chinese musical language.

As one of the outstanding contemporary Chinese composers of his generation, Chen Qigang fully exploits the elements of Chinese traditional music, in which Chinese folk tunes have a core position, and his harmony is a combination of modern Western languages and the Chinese pentatonic system. Although some similar techniques and concepts can be found in the works of other musicians, Chen has his own unique logical arrangement, “elegant but soulful, subtle but implicit.”¹⁵ Chen Qigang’s reprocessing of traditional Chinese music materials could be read as an expression of an underlying appreciation for family and country. His musical traits reveal his calm attitude to life and a great passion for musical composition, and through the “reprocessing” of traditional Chinese music materials in his works, his appreciation for his family and country is vividly expressed. In the past ten years, his musical characteristics have been undergoing a subtle change, becoming more restrained.¹⁶

1.2 Background Information on *La joie de la souffrance*

La joie de la souffrance was initially dedicated to the Beijing International Music Festival in 2013 and became the required piece for the Second Shanghai Isaac Stern International Violin Competition in 2016–17, when Chen reflected that “It took half a year to brew and seven months to create and complete this difficult 24-minute work.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Zheng, “Variation and reconstruction,” 2.

¹⁶ Yang, “Chen Qigang,” 5.

¹⁷ Chen Qigang said this in an interview after the violin competition. See <https://wenhui.whb.cn/third/yidian/201808/30/210611.html>; accessed 25 November 2022.

As the literal meaning of the title suggests, this composition is inspired by the composer's perception of life and reflects his own situation, but the motivation behind *La joie de la souffrance* is more direct. Chen's 29-year-old son met with a car accident and passed away in Zurich, Switzerland in 2012. The composer recalls that he cried almost all day during that period, suffering the pain of the loss. He then put his thoughts on gain and loss into this work.

The initial melody of *La joie de la souffrance* is from an ancient Chinese piece of music "Yangguan Sandie," derived from the poem "Send Yuan Ershi to Anxi" by Wang Wei (701–761), a poet in the Tang Dynasty. Chen mentioned that the reason he chose this melody was not only because "Yangguan Sandie" is his favorite song, but because it describes an eternal topic of life: the parting, the sadness at farewell, and expectation for the future. As Chen said in an interview: "I want to express not only simple feelings through this work, but also to express the inseparable twins of sadness and joy; through the joy and compassion, all the feeling will sublimate into one unity, which is the great love in the world."¹⁸

1.3 Reasons for Selecting this Work for the Isaac Stern International Violin Competition

As the required piece for the Second Shanghai Isaac Stern International Violin Competition, *La joie de la souffrance* inevitably had to contain some challenges. Besides the standard virtuosic part, one of challenges is the collaboration with the orchestra, since there are many irregular and complex rhythmic patterns along with a fast tempo. Musicians need to

¹⁸ Interview by journalist of *Xinming Evening News*. See <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1610279744255647235&wfr=spider&for=pc>; accessed 27 March 2023.

be precise in following the pulse and rhythmic changes in both solo and orchestra parts, while, at the same time, the more challenging aspect musically is understanding the work's meaning. From a listener's point of view, and because of the triple structure of this composition, the music journey is like waking up at the end of a song but entering a new dream in each musical section. As Chen Qigang said in an interview, the intricate and mixed emotions in the *La joie de la souffrance* are difficult for players in their twenties, and this is one of the reasons why it was chosen as a required piece.¹⁹ Chen Qigang did not even want to provide any program notes for the violinists, just hoping that they could interpret the music from their own understanding. In his opinion, playing new music is the best way to show players' ability. Like jade, players are unshaped at the beginning, but can end up displaying the most dazzling sparkle.

¹⁹ Interview by journalist of *Pengpai News*. See <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1610281558837700463&wfr=spider&for=pc>; accessed 27 March 2023.

CHAPTER 2

MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF HARMONY AND FORM

La joie de la souffrance is a violin concerto in one movement, combining elements of sonata form with Chinese form. Furthermore, the music integrates Chinese aesthetics in the shape of melodies with techniques of Western orchestration: Most textures in *La joie de la souffrance* are chamber-like in the use of individual instruments, orchestral but lightly orchestrated, not like a “heroic” concerto, or “dramatic” concerto in which solo and orchestra compete with each other. The melodic lines are more like those of a “lyrical” concerto, in which the violin is accompanied by the orchestra as if singing an extended aria. Similar to a piece of program music, *La joie de la souffrance* follows a story that is represented by the title and presented as the composer’s subjective reaction to his personal tragedy.

This dissertation considers *La joie de la souffrance* as a fusion work of different musical genres. As a concrete way of showing Chen Qigang’s particular approach to fusion, the present analysis section fulfills three purposes. First, it introduces the techniques that he employed in the work, such as the Chinese pentatonic system as well as harmonic design built on added-tone chords and choice of orchestration influenced by Messiaen’s musical language and French musical traits. Second, the section shows how these Western techniques are integrated with Chinese musical language. Third, it attempts to explain the ways in which the underlying human theme of *La joie de la souffrance* is revealed by these musical designs. This analysis chapter is divided into two parts: harmony and form.

2.1 The Techniques Used in *La joie de la souffrance*

Before diving into the harmonic analysis, it is necessary to introduce the basic musical

traits of the two music languages that Chen Qigang used in *La joie de la souffrance*. The first is from the Chinese music language, the Chinese pentatonic scale system, “which has a very long history in China.... Although the musical modes of various ethnic groups in China are relatively diverse ... the use of the pentatonic scale is ubiquitous in traditional Chinese music.”²⁰ The basic Chinese pentatonic scale contains five notes (*Gong*, *Shang*, *Jue*, *Zhi*, and *Yu*), similar to the C, D, E, G, and A of the C-major scale in the Western music theory system. The most important interval is the major third between *Gong* and *Jue* (like the C and E), since it can be used to define the key of the scale. The note (*Zhi*), which is a perfect fifth (interval) above the *Gong* note, is one of several ways to find the *Gong* note,²¹ just as the G serves the dominant function of the C scale. The other two subordinate intervals are the perfect fourth between *Shang* and *Zhi* (D and G) and *Jue* and *Yu* (E and A); the other perfect fifth between *Shang* and *Yu* (D and A) can be one of the alternative ways for helping to determine the structure of the scale.

Based on the fixed or settled interval relationship and the independent role of these five notes (*Gong*, *Shang*, *Jue*, *Zhi*, and *Yu*), each of them can establish a specific pentatonic scale by treating one of them as the tonic (main) note.²² (See Ex. 2.1. Because of the different intervals between the tonic tone and the other four notes, each of the five pentatonic scales or mode has a different acoustic effect, in a somewhat similar way to the church modes

²⁰ Chuqiao Guo, “Chinese and Other Asian Influences in Debussy’s Piano Music” (PhD diss., University of Alabama, 2021), 49–50.

²¹ 承瑞 邹 [Chengrui Zou], “五声音阶旋律调式的判断” [The identification of mode and key in the pentatonic system], *音乐探索* [Music exploration], 四川音乐学院, Sichuan Conservatory of Music, February 2002, 31–36.

²² Tonic note: in the Chinese pentatonic system, the tonic note is different from the Western theory system, being the most stable and central note of the scale, around which the rest of the notes move, but not related to the concept of key. In most situations, the last note of the phrase can be taken as the tonic (or main) note.

(Gregorian modes). For example, the *Gong* mode might suggest a feeling of a major key, stable and energetic, as exemplified in the Chinese nation anthem, whereas the *Yu* mode is like a minor key. The diversified acoustic effect of each mode can satisfy Chinese composers' references in their choosing of music style. Of course, the difference in the acoustic sound is a subjective feeling, and by the addition of notes to the scale and different instrumentations, the differences can be minimized.

Example 2.1: Chinese five pentatonic scales (modes)



Another main feature of the Chinese musical language is homophonic texture, which means that the melody is the priority. Instruments “tend to play in unison, and in vocal music, the instrumental accompaniment closely follows the pattern of the singing.”²³ Even in later compositions, “players resort to embellishing the melody and the more skillful ones will embark on extemporization, giving rise to a heterophonic effect.”²⁴ Robert T. Mok emphasizes one of the central differences from Western music in observing is that very few resources refer to the aspect of harmony in the long history of Chinese music.²⁵

Another aspect of the music language used by Chen derives from the Western musical system, mainly influenced by his teacher, Olivier Messiaen. It has been said that less known

²³ Robert T. Mok, “Heterophony in Chinese Folk Music,” *Journal of the International Folk Music Council* 18 (1966): 14–15.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

which specific technique that Messiaen influenced on his students,²⁶ since as an educator he preferred to inspire students to explore their own way through their instinctive talent in musical composition and be themselves. Even so, I hear a French musical flavor, especially in the harmonic references, in Chen Qigang's works.

The composer himself also mentioned in an interview.

Perhaps there was some influence from Messiaen, and perhaps not. It is hard for me to assess my own work in this way. But I do know that Messiaen's love of color deeply influenced me, especially in my music from around 15 years ago, including works such as *Iris Devoilee* and *Wu Xing*.²⁷

In *La joie de la souffrance*, some influence can be observed in the harmonic and rhythmic aspects, related to the arrangement of notes, polymodality, and orchestration, as I will now explore.

2.2 East Meets West

2.2.1 Harmonic Approach, Influenced by Messiaen

From the harmonic aspect, the first point that needs to be mentioned is the arrangement of the chords. As a small music element but widespread in the composition, the chord plays an important role in determining the musical language. Chords in *La joie de la souffrance* are often presented in different ways and combinations, to create multiple musical effects. One such instance is in the first section of the work, in mm. 24, 26–28, 30–31, 35, 44, and beyond, where the thematic materials are connected by a specific chord. Example 2.2

²⁶ Luckow, "*La Marque du maître*," 14.

²⁷ Greg Cahill, "Political Turmoil & Personal Tragedy Inform Composer Qigang Chen's Emotional New Violin Concerto," October 16, 2019; available from <https://stringsmagazine.com/political-turmoil-personal-tragedy-inform-composer-qigang-chens-emotional-new-violin-concerto/>; accessed November 16, 2022.

shows the chord from m. 24 as an aspect of chord design, marked by a red rectangle (the other red rectangles show similar chords).

Example 2.2: Chen Qigang, *La joie de la souffrance*, piano reduction, mm. 21–37

The image displays a piano reduction of a musical score for measures 21 through 37. The score is written for piano and cello. The piano part is in the upper staves, and the cello part is in the lower staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/2. The score is divided into three systems: measures 21-26, 27-32, and 33-37. Red rectangles highlight specific chords in the piano part, while blue rectangles highlight the cello line. Dynamics include p, mp, and ppp. The cello line shows a lyrical ascending line, while the piano accompaniment features static chords.

The cello section, marked by blue rectangles in the example, has a lyrical ascending line, while the harmonies that are formed when the orchestra enters in m. 23 are static. From an acoustic perspective, I hear these chords as creating a tense and nervous effect compared with the flowing but calm characteristics of the cello section. The registration of the chords is spaced over a wide range, which lends them a static status, letting us know that the chord is endowed with some specific function or purpose. Just as shown in m. 24, the chord is mainly

built of thirds but contains a ninth (B D F A C#) and spans two octaves. Such expanded chords with ninths and elevenths are widely used in late twentieth-century music, especially in jazz, to enrich the sonority.

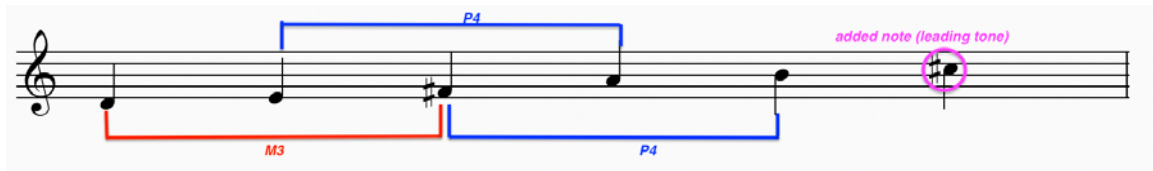
After further analysis, we can see that these chords are designed deliberately and have some specific inner relationships: the adoption of pentatonic elements with an extra leading note, as shown in Example 2.3. In mm. 21–25, the chord (D2, E3, F#6, A3, B5) marked in blue is based on the D pentatonic system, which is an extension of previous melodic material (the cello theme marked in a red rectangle). Unlike the concept of scale in traditional Chinese music, Chen uses linear pentatonic components to build the chord; that is, the scale is used vertically rather than horizontally, as is common in Chinese traditional composition.

Example 2.3: La joie de la souffrance, mm. 21–25

In addition, the chord itself contains three components. First, in Western music of the Common-Practice Period, the chord suggests a D tonal center, since it has a firm interval, the perfect fifth of D2 and A2, in the lower register. Furthermore, the A2 and E3 build more perfect fifths on top of the D2, which has a quintal harmonic structure, marked in green in Example 2.5. Second, in the treble-clef area, the component pitches of the chord come almost entirely from the Chinese D *Gong* pentatonic scale: D, E, F-sharp, A, and B. Third, there is one added note in this chord, the C#5, which can be understood as a leading tone of a D

diatonic scale system, except that that note does not exist in the traditional Chinese pentatonic system. Examples 2.4 and 2.5 show the design.

Example 2.4: D Gong pentatonic system with added note



Example 2.5: *La joie de la souffrance*, mm. 21–25

Musical notation for Example 2.5, measures 21-25. Annotations include: 'Added leading tone' (pointing to F#4), 'D Pentatonic System' (pointing to the D4-E4-F#4-G4-A4 notes), and 'Quintal Harmony' (pointing to the bass line). A diagram on the right shows 'Qigang's chord' composed of three elements: 'added leading tone', 'pentatonic system', and 'tonal bass'.

On his own added notes, Messiaen remarked:

These notes keep a character of intrusion, of supplement ... make a part of the chord, changing its color, giving it a spice, a new perfume ... the bee in the flower! They have, nevertheless, a certain citizenship in the chord: either they have the same sonority as some classified appoggiatura, or because they issue from the resonance of the fundamental.²⁸

From Messiaen's perspective, the added notes play a vital role in enriching the acoustic effect of the existing chord, and more importantly, they can coexist with a chord harmoniously and bring a "live" sense or "emotion" to it, giving composers a resource for expressing the inner feeling of their music.

²⁸ Olivier Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language*, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1956), 47.

Example 2.6 illustrates the added-note techniques in a work by Messiaen. He added an augmented fourth ($D^{\#5}$) to the existing A-major chord of m. 11 and a sixth (G^4) on the B dominant-seventh chord of m. 13.

Example 2.6: Messiaen, *Poèmes pour mi*, No. VIII, *Le collier*, reduction, mm. 11–13

The image shows a musical score for 'Le Collier' by Messiaen, featuring a Soprano voice part and a Piano accompaniment. The score is in 3/4 time and marked 'Modéré, un peu vif'. The vocal line includes the lyrics 'Ah! mon col.lier! Ah! mon col.lier!'. The piano part consists of two staves. Annotations in red and blue highlight specific harmonic features: a red box around the piano accompaniment in measure 11 is labeled 'A chord + Augmented Fourth note', and a red box around the piano accompaniment in measure 13 is labeled 'B Dominant chord + added Sixth note'. Blue arrows point to the augmented fourth note in measure 11 and the added sixth note in measure 13.

We can understand Chen Qigang’s scale and harmonic construction as a desire to blur the boundaries between Chinese and Western music. By adding a leading tone, the music creates a tendency to resolve. Although the components of the chord are borrowed from the Chinese pentatonic system, the extra notes blur the boundary of Chinese and Western musical language, or we could say, weaken the acoustic effect of the pentatonic scale.

In addition to the added-note technique, there is one more approach in the harmonic aspect of combining the two music languages: the employment of polymodality or polytonality—something that scholars have associated with the compositional aesthetic of many French musicians in the first part of the twentieth century. Messiaen inherited this musical characteristic mainly from French composers Debussy and Ravel, then developed it by integrating it with his own musical language by his specific mode (of limited transposition). Like his teacher, Chen Qigang makes use of this technique to create a rich

acoustic world in *Le joie de la souffrance* but combines it with the Chinese pentatonic mode (system), as shown in Example 2.7.

Example 2.7: *La joie de la souffrance*, mm. 87–93

The image shows a musical score for five staves: Solo VI, Fl. & Cl. (Bb), Vln. & Ob. & Tpt, Vla., and Vc. The score is annotated with various Gong Systems in different colors:

- Solo VI:** E Gong System (green), F Sharp Gong System (green).
- Fl. & Cl. (Bb):** A Flat Gong system (red), G Gong System (red), E Gong System (red).
- Vln. & Ob. & Tpt:** A Flat Gong System (orange), A Gong System (orange), B Gong System (orange).
- Vla.:** C Flat Gong System (blue), D Flat Gong System (blue), B Gong System (blue), G Gong System (blue).
- Vc.:** E Gong System (purple), G Gong System (purple).

Each section of orchestration of this excerpt has its own role in setting out the thematic materials independently: the violins, oboes, and trumpets share a lonely distressed or sorrow musical figure, while the violas, flutes, and clarinets have an agitated figure.

Moreover, the key arrangement also has its own category, since it has two directions or orientations: Vertically, several key systems coexist in the same time point. For example, m. 88 contains three sonorities simultaneously: A flat, D flat, and the E *Gong* system, carried by the flutes, violins, and cellos, respectively, marked by different colors in the first two measures of Example 2.7. In the horizontal direction, in contrast, each voice has its own independent key arrangement, the progression of key arrangement of each voice being accompanied by their specific phrase movements. For example, in the violas, although each musical fragment or phrase is comprised of four notes, each has sufficient elements to suggest a typical Chinese pentatonic system. The next four notes, B^{b3}, D^{b4}, F4, and E^{b4}, of

mm. 88–89, can build a D-flat *Gong* system with a missing A-flat, which can be borrowed from another voice. This approach to harmonic design by different orientations makes the key of this musical excerpt uncertain, which I think is the effect the composer wanted to create.

Generally, in the key arrangement of this excerpt, we can trace a shadow of the musical traits from Messiaen or even late nineteenth-century French Impressionistic musical language—what Joseph Machlis calls the “fantasy of the senses,”²⁹ by which the music creates a colorful, sensual, and delicate feeling by the deliberate design in chord and instrumentation. By looking further at the elements of each key system, we can also sense the pentatonic system, in this example and in other corners of *La joie de la souffrance*.

Example 2.8: *La joie de la souffrance*, mm. 202–6

The last aspect of Chen’s music that I trace back to Messiaen is the approach to orchestration, which plays a similar role in shaping the musical characteristics, as we will see

²⁹ Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 110.

in mm. 200–40. Since the music is approaching the end of the first section, it embraces the climax of the emotional release. In order to achieve this mood, Chen uses different orchestration elements to reflect the progression of moods. First, in mm. 2007, solo violin and strings are mainly responsible for the changes, while the winds stay silent. The solo violin starts to stir the motion by the basic triple rhythmic motive in the low register; the strings respond by imitating the music materials, as seen in Example 2.8.

In the following phase, mm. 208–29, the flutes, oboes, and horns are gradually added in to set out the motivic materials, while the strings and solo violin maintain the same musical figure as before. After a twenty-measure preparation, the musical figures embrace emotional release. In the final phase, mm. 230–44, the woodwinds and brass replace the previous linear musical characteristics with a similar music figure to what the strings had before. Almost all parts of the orchestra build together to create a tense musical character with a rich texture. When the winds join in, the texture becomes denser or more compact, which integrates with the solo violin. Also, the music is raised to a higher pitch range with a broader span for the expressive culmination, when all the voices have the *f* or even *ff* dynamic. Also, this section is arranged in four layers. The main melody is given to the solo violin; the winds and strings are the echo layer of the main melody; the bass section is responsible for the background and finish; and the percussion and harp are the decoration and filling of the layers. All the specific timbres contribute to a multi-picture canvas, as shown in Example 2.9.

Throughout Example 2.9, almost all the voices take part in the final emotion release. Except for the bass voices, almost all the range is filled with fast thirty-second notes, highly dynamic (energetic and forceful), and the different voices are connected compactly but

smoothly. And just because of this release, the music settles down and back, with a sense of relief at the end.

Example 2.9: *La joie de la souffrance*, mm. 235–39

The image displays a musical score for the piece "La joie de la souffrance" (mm. 235–39). The score is organized into four distinct layers, each highlighted with a colored border and labeled with text:

- Layer one:** main melody by solo violin (highlighted in red).
- Layer two:** echo for the main melody by string section (highlighted in green).
- Layer three:** background and finish by bass section (highlighted in blue).
- Layer four:** decoration and filling layer by percussion section (highlighted in orange).

The score includes staves for various instruments: Flute 1 (Fl), Oboe 1 and 2 (Ob), Clarinet in B-flat (Cl (Bb)), Bassoon (Bsn), Trumpet 1-2 (Tpt 1-2), Trombone 1-2 (Tbn), Bass Trombone (B Tbn), Percussion (Perc 2) including Marimba (Marim) and Bongos (BD), Harp (Hp), Piano (Pno), Solo Violin (Solo VI), Violin I and II (VI I, VI II), Viola (Vla), Violoncello (Vc), and Double Bass (Db). The score is marked with dynamics such as *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo), and includes performance instructions like "3 take Bass Cl" and "div" (divisi).

In conclusion, in the harmonic aspect of *La joie de la souffrance*, from the pitch-class and pitch dimensions to the harmonic arrangement, even the orchestration, we can see the shadow of French music. All the efforts enrich the music and reflect the composer's inner world.

2.2.2 Form Design, The Adoption of Triple Structure Form

La joie de la souffrance combines “the most typical sonata form (what we call Type 3 sonatas) [which] articulate an overall rounded binary structure”³⁰ with Chinese traditional notions of form. This piece includes three rotations, which fulfill the Western traditional functions of presenting thematic materials (exposition), elaborating on them (development), and bringing them back for resolution (recapitulation). I prefer using the word “rotation” rather than others such as variation, because the music in each rotation has its own function or identity based on the same initial music materials or theme. Also, the existence of each rotation is not for variation purposes but designed to precipitate emotional release or reveal a specific musical theme. The climax of the piece is located in the usual place in sonata form, at the end of the second (development) rotation.

The sonata structure of *La joie de la souffrance* is not, however, used for dramatic purposes. From the Western perspective, there is no conflict of themes or tonalities in the exposition; contrast and tension are handed out carefully. Consequently, a full recapitulation is not needed. The third section fulfills the resolutive function of the traditional recapitulation

³⁰ James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 48.

but is shorter and lighter than the exposition, being more of a poetic reminiscence of the previous music than a replay of the opening.

From a Chinese perspective, the most salient formal trait of *La joie de la souffrance* is the extensive adoption of a triple concept that both agrees with the threefold sonata division and elaborates upon it. From the note clusters (pitch and pitch structure) to the general form, the concept of tripling is carried out thoroughly; and the three-time rotations permit a certain period or time of “precipitation” and “sublimation,” which is a kind of releasing from the heart for the gain and loss. Just as the composer thought, the emotional release needs a certain time for accumulating and brewing, and it will go to one direction or unity, no matter whether the emotion is happiness or sadness: happiness comprises sadness, also sadness comprises happiness, which also reflects the theme of *La joie de la souffrance*.

Before the formal analysis, it is important to note that Chen Qigang attaches a few descriptive titles for the sections, such as *Solitaire* (Lonely), *Divinement solitaire* (Divinely lonely), and *Excité par des illusions* (Excited by illusions), which are of benefit for understanding his design and ideas. Moreover, these titles also reflect the triple design, as Table 2.1 shows for the first main section (mm. 1–270).

Table 2.1: Descriptive titles in the first main section

Category I		Category II	Category III
mm. 1–50	mm. 51–88	mm. 122–78	mm. 184–289
<i>Désolation</i> (Desolation) <i>Solitaire</i> (Lonely)	<i>Tendrement</i> (Tenderly) <i>Divinement solitaire</i> (Divinely lonely)	<i>Excité par des illusions</i> (Excited by illusions)	<i>Soulagement mélancolique</i> (Melancholy relief) <i>La beauté de la souffrance</i> (The beauty of suffering) <i>La tendresse de la souffrance</i> (The tenderness of suffering)

In the table, category I introduces us to the composer’s inner world, from desolation and loneliness to recognizing the divine quality of the loneliness. Category II finds him wrestling with illusions. And finally, Category III shows him finding relief and seeing the positive side of suffering. Over the following two main sections/rotations (mm. 290–490 and 491–end), the titles show that the music repeats these categories: from *La beauté solitaire* (Lonely beauty, m. 290) and *Danse solitaire* (Lonely dance, m. 308) back to illusion, *Se laisser emballer par la folie* (Getting carried away by madness, m. 356), and finally coming to quietness and relief, *Une lueur de lumière* (A glimmer of light) and *Lointain souvenir coloré* (Colorful distant memory, m. 530). See Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Descriptive titles over the next two main sections

Category I mm. 290 and 308–38	Category II mm. 356–490	Category III mm. 530–end
<i>La beauté solitaire</i> (Lonely beauty) <i>Danse solitaire</i> (Lonely dance)	<i>Se laisser emballer par la folie</i> (Getting carried away by madness)	<i>Une lueur de lumière</i> (A glimmer of light) <i>Lointain souvenir coloré</i> (Colorful distant memory)

These three phases depict the composer’s desolation at losing his son, gradually walking out from the shadows, and starting to understand the meaning of life, loss, and gain.

La joie de la souffrance has two main musical motives, representing happiness and sadness or suffering. Paradoxically, the happiness motive comes along with the titles of desolation and loneliness, whereas the sadness or suffering motive receives the titles of beauty and tenderness, thus showing that the boundary of happiness and sadness is blurred, and that the two states have the same essence.

Furthermore, *La joie de la souffrance* is derived from a piece of *Guqin* music called *Yangguan Sandie*. Yangguan is a place in northwest China that has been a pass between the mainland and a fortress since the Han dynasty. However, in Chinese thought this word refers

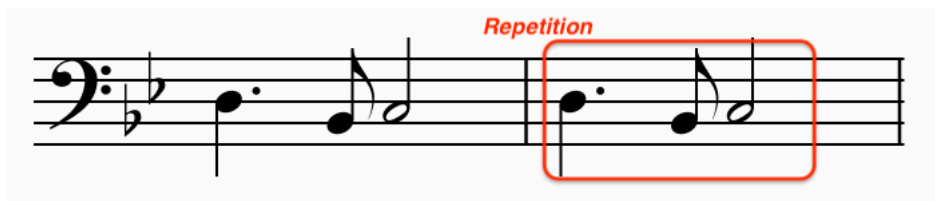
to the sorrow of parting, the basic emotion of this composition. *Sandie* means three parts or sections.

In *Le joie de la souffrance*, the criterion for dividing the music is whether the original main thematic materials and the reinterpretation/variation sections have been completely exposed or not. Examples 2.10 and 2.11 show the original materials of happiness and sadness/suffering from *Yangguan Sandie*.

Example 2.10: Motive of happiness from *Yangguan Sandie*



Example 2.11: Motive of sadness/suffering from *Yangguan Sandie*



The happiness motive has a stable ascending contour, each note being arranged in conjunct motion, since the scenery the poem describes is vigorous and hopeful (the dawn, green willow, and mist). In contrast, the sadness/suffering motive has a dotted rhythm with a fall-rise shape to imitate sighing.

These two main thematic materials are reinterpreted three times over the course of the composition, Although the music can be divided into three main sections, the form and techniques of each section are similar, with some differences in orchestration, as seen in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: General structure of *La joie de la souffrance*

Rotation/Section I	Rotation/Section II	Rotation/Section III
mm. 1–289	mm. 290–490	mm. 491–end
solo violin and cellos	solo violin and clarinets	solo violin and trumpets

In Section I, comprising mm. 1–289, the first and second thematic materials are mainly interpreted by the solo violin and cellos of the orchestration alternately. In Section II, mm. 290–490, the clarinets take on the role of the cellos and reinterpret the first and second thematic materials alternately with the solo violin. Section III, mm. 491–end, presents the two thematic materials in the trumpets and solo violin.

Beside the general form of *La joie de la souffrance*, the inner structure of each section applies the triple concept. Although each variation is mainly divided into four parts, each of these parts is arranged into three. Since the sections are similar in design, I will mainly focus on the first section for illustration. See Table 2.4.

Table 2.4: The inner arrangement of Section I of *La joie de la souffrance*

	Stage I ³¹	Stage II	Stage III
Happiness motive	mm. 1–20	mm. 21–35	mm. 36–50
Suffering/sadness motive	mm. 51–66	mm. 67–81	mm. 82–121
Virtuosic		mm. 122–78	
Ending (theme combination)	mm. 179–99	mm. 200–44	mm. 245–89

To begin with we need to mention that the materials of each part in the first section may have some overlap; also that the division may vary according to different criteria, although here we will mainly look at the participation of the solo violin and the presentation

³¹ Stage: Similar to the term “rotation,” the criteria for determining a stage come from the musical characteristics, orchestration, and cadences.

of the musical materials. In Table 2.4, we can see that the section has three main parts with an ending section: the happiness motive and suffering/sadness motive with their development, the virtuosic part, and the ending—bearing some similarity to the exposition section in sonata-allegro form (two contrasting themes with an interlude and a closing). Table 2.4 also shows us that the musical materials are employed in three stages. Let us look at the happiness motive (Ex. 2.11) as an example (see Ex. 2.12).

Example 2.12: *La joie de la souffrance*, violin part, mm. 1–5

The happiness motive, the initial musical motive of *La joie de la souffrance*, undergoes a triple development. It is presented by the solo violin in the D (main note) *Shang* system with missing E, judging by the perfect fourth of D–G and the two perfect fifths of C–G and D–A, and the main tonic must be located on D. But the orchestration starts on the G key system, since the following measures are built on a second-inversion D dominant chord, so we can treat the orchestration as being in the G-system area. The music materials in *La joie de la souffrance* are arranged in a stretched-out manner without using the original rhythm. Unlike the way the previous generation of Chinese composers dealt with thematic materials, the sadness/suffering theme of *La joie de la souffrance* is not directly transplanted from *Guqin* music but has its specific logic or design to enable it to be developed over no fewer than fifty measures. Example 2.13 shows the second iteration of this process.

Example 2.13: *La joie de la souffrance*, initial motive, Stage II, mm. 21–34

The second stage of the theme's evolution is played by the cellos. Measures 21–34 are built on the original musical materials but with a further extension: in addition to the original musical theme (mm. 21–24), the music has three consecutive descending sequences, which create a sigh or sorrowful musical figure.

Example 2.14: *La joie de la souffrance*, initial motive, Stage III, mm. 36–58

For Stage III of the musical development, the original *Gujin* music returns in the solo violin section and culminates in the next (sadness/suffering) theme of the work, as shown in

Example 2.14. The music in mm. 36–58 features a three-part progression while maintaining a similar musical characteristic to the previous section for the cellos.

Measures 36–38 present the complete thematic materials, but in the B-flat pentatonic system, followed by a harmonic note in the high register, which is an acoustic imitation of the *Guqin* instrument. The two extension or consequent phrases seem to be the connection or preparation for the sadness/suffering musical theme. After the complete three iterations, the music arrives at a culmination of the thematic transformation in the final material in mm. 51–57.

The outcome of this process is that the theme maintains its basic musical figure to some extent, but also comes with the composer’s own interpretation, which results in a rebirth of the original music. This is one of the formal designs in *La joie de la souffrance*, also applied to other aspects of the music, such as the rhythmic patterns and design of the note clusters, which may be obvious compared with the form design (see Exx. 2.15 and 2.16).

Example 2.15: *La joie de la souffrance*, solo violin part, mm. 115–21

The image displays a musical score for the solo violin part of *La joie de la souffrance*, measures 115 to 121. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a B-flat pentatonic system. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody is primarily composed of eighth-note triplets, with some measures containing sixteenth-note triplets. Measures 115-120 are highlighted with a red box, and measures 115-116 are also highlighted with a green box. The music ends with a half note on B-flat in measure 121.

Example 2.16: *La joie de la souffrance*, solo violin part, mm. 122–28

The image shows a musical score for the solo violin part of *La joie de la souffrance*, measures 122-129. The score is in 4/4 time. Measures 123, 124, 127, and 128 are highlighted with red boxes, showing a three-note cluster motif. The score includes dynamics such as *p*, *mf*, and *mp*, and articulation marks like accents and slurs. There are also triplet markings (3) in measures 124, 125, and 128.

These two examples are both taken from the virtuosic connection part in the first section of *La joie de la souffrance*. Besides the typical sextuplet (3+3) structure in the rhythmic pattern in Example 2.15, the more obvious design is the three-note cluster shown in Example 2.16: the motivic cell remains a fast three-note cluster with an ascending contour but becomes more condensed, with an off-beat rhythmic pattern.

We can find some traits of Messiaen in the rhythmic aspect: the rhythmic cell that we have seen in Example 2.17 and the asymmetrical rhythmic patterns. Messiaen said in an interview that he thought rhythm in music should be based on free and irregular movement³² and achieved “through varying note groupings, measures of unequal and frequently changing duration, and a general avoidance of accent pattern suggested by traditional meter.” Example 2.17 shows a similar approach to rhythm.

³² Samuel Claude, *Conversations with Olivier Messiaen*, trans. Felix Abrahamian (London: Stainer & Bell, 1976), 33.

Example 2.17: *La joie de la souffrance*, solo violin part, mm. 165–71

The image shows a musical score for a solo violin part, measures 165 to 171. The score is in 4/4 time. Key features include:

- Measure 165:** A triplet of eighth notes is circled in red and labeled "Motive Cell".
- Measure 166:** Another triplet of eighth notes is circled in red and labeled "Motive Cell".
- Measure 167:** A triplet of eighth notes is circled in red.
- Measure 168:** An irregular rhythmic pattern is circled in blue and labeled "Irregular Rhythm". It starts on the upbeat and includes eighth-note rests.
- Measure 169:** A quintuple group (3+2) is circled in green and labeled "Quintuple Group". It alternates between arco and pizzicato.
- Measure 170:** Continues the irregular rhythmic pattern with arco and pizzicato.
- Measure 171:** Ends with a triplet of eighth notes.

The excerpt is selected from the virtuosic/connection part. Besides the three-note cell marked by red rectangles in mm. 165–67, we can see an irregular rhythmic arrangement, especially in mm. 168–69. The musical phrase in m. 168 starts from the upbeat, since the downbeats are replaced by an eighth-note rest and a sixteenth-note rest, and the adding of the quintuple group (3+2) design on the last beat of m. 169, which is an extension of the initial triple rhythmic pattern and creates more flow and momentum. Moreover, Chen enriches the musical texture by alternating *arco* and *pizzicato*, which, along with the off-beat-pattern, blurs the rhythmic feeling, all these efforts making the musical phrase more diverse and flexible. Also, when coming to the end of this section, the music meets a longer but freer phrase through the quintuple and septuple notes group structure. See Example 2.18.

In this section, musical registration is expanded gradually in opposite directions, and the texture also becomes more intense through the quintuple and septuple note groups,

accompanied by the gradually stronger dynamic and faster tempo. All these efforts give the music a vivid characteristic, as described by Chen himself in labeling this section *Excité par des illusions* (excited by illusions).

Example 2.18: *La joie de la souffrance*, solo violin, mm. 285–87

Now that we have discussed the harmonic and formal aspect of this composition, there is one more point that needs be mentioned, which is the presentation of the overarching theme that sadness and happiness have the same origin. Here I use three examples for my illustration, one from the musical materials, the other two from the key arrangement.

In *La joie de la souffrance*, the sadness and happiness literally come from one origin: motives A and B (see Ex. 2.19).

Example 2.19: *La joie de la souffrance*, motives A and B

Chen Qigang goes on to use these two motives in one musical phrase, as shown in Example 2.20. The green rectangle shows a variation of the happiness motive; the blue rectangle, the sadness motive. Especially in the second phrase, Chen combines the two motives without any feeling of conflict, implying that sadness and happiness have the same origin.

Example 2.20: *La joie de la souffrance*, solo violin part, mm. 184–99

The image shows two staves of musical notation for a solo violin part. The first staff, labeled 'Phrase I' and starting at measure 184, contains two measures of music. The first measure is enclosed in a green box and labeled 'Motivation A'. The second measure is enclosed in a blue box and labeled 'Variation of Motivation B'. The second staff, labeled 'Phrase II' and starting at measure 193, also contains two measures. The first measure is enclosed in a green box and labeled 'Motivation A'. The second measure is enclosed in a blue box and labeled 'Variation of Motivation B'. The score includes dynamics such as *p*, *mp*, and *mf*, and time signatures including 5/8, 2/4, 6/8, and 5/8.

Furthermore, the key arrangement reflects the composer’s contradictory state of mind: stable and anxious (see Ex. 2.7). The violin section, oboe, and trumpet are responsible for stating the main thematic materials, in which the key arrangement has stable movement by a semitone or whole tone, A-flat–A–B. In contrast, in the violas, flutes, and clarinets, the key arrangements are more dispersive and diverse, from the C to the G *Gong* system. From the A-flat shift to the E *Gong* system, the two different situations of key progressions by these two voices represent the two musical characteristics, like the contradictory inner world of the composer: desolation comes along with madness.

The second example comes from the key arrangement by the presentation of two thematic materials. As mentioned before, *La joie de la souffrance* is designed in a triple form based on the original *Gugin* music. We may treat the work as a sonatina form (sonata form without a development section) by “relocating” the structure of these two

different/contrasting themes and their development (see Table 2.5). Compared with the first two sections, in which the happiness and sadness/suffering themes are in different pentatonic systems, in the recapitulation the two thematic materials are combined into one pentatonic system.

Table 2.5: The pentatonic key arrangement of *La joie de la souffrance*

	Rotation	Rotation	Rotation
Sadness/Suffering theme		C <i>Yu</i> (mm. 51–65)	B <i>Yu</i> (mm. 308–23)
Happiness theme	D <i>Shang</i> – F <i>Shang</i> – E-flat <i>Gong</i> (mm. 1–50)	A <i>Shang</i> (mm. 184–99)	B <i>Shang</i> (mm. 411–29)

From the perspective of sonata form, Chen Qigang applies a different way of thinking about the returning tonality in *La joie de la souffrance*. In the exposition, the sadness or suffering theme is presented in the C *Yu* pentatonic system, whereas the happiness theme is in the A *Shang* pentatonic system. In the recapitulation, both themes are in the B main pentatonic system. This is different from the concept in traditional sonata form, since the keys of these themes are not affiliated with each other, and both change to the new key system in the recapitulation.

From the perspective of the pitch of the tonic, the tonality of the two themes is unified in the main note (B) of the pentatonic system, and this is just between the A and C pentatonic systems, as a way of reflecting the “unity” of the two tones. In terms of mode, the two themes maintain their respective modes in the exposition, the *Yu* and *Shang* modes, showing that sadness and joy are inseparable.

CHAPTER 3

OBSERVATIONS ON CHANGES AND TRENDS IN MODERN COMPOSITIONS BY CHINESE COMPOSERS

In chapter 2, we looked at the harmony and form of *La joie de la souffrance*, and as a work by a modern Chinese composer, the Chinese music language used in this composition inevitably has some hallmarks of contemporary character. Even more so, since Chen Qigang is a representative and well-known modern Chinese composer, the language and preference in his works are models of study for younger Chinese composers. Therefore, it is necessary to have a broader perspective to understand this composition, especially the musicological perspective. By looking into factors that influenced this type of modern Chinese composition, we can gain some thoughts and inspirations on the trends of development in modern Chinese music composition.

The present chapter is divided into two main sections, the first being analysis of the factors that influence the changes in modern Chinese music composition, including general social background, Chinese government policies, and the composers' experience and preferences, which are the same for other Chinese composers of the same generation as Chen Qigang. The second section attempts to discover the trends in modern Chinese music composition.

3.1 The Social Influence

3.1.1 Perspective from the Global View

As part of world culture, music and its development cannot avoid being influenced by changes in society. There is one term that refers to the changes in our world today,

“multiculturalism,” which is usually used as a description of the diversified phenomena in a society. The terms “multi-culture” and “multiculturalism” already appeared in the 1920s as the result of globalization. Under the rapid development in the economy and other aspects of contemporary society, the connections among countries became increasingly intense and frequent. At the same time, the differences and diversity of the residences, social environments, and life customs of the ethnic groups of the world led to a focus on the consequences of cultural diversity on the public. Also, the variety of social ideology and customs began to break down the limitations of geographic distance. Lixin Wang observes that the discrepancy or difference between the boundaries of cultures and traditions is becoming irrelevant or blurred by the efforts of modern musicians in their hybrid compositions, whether between popular and classical traditions or Western and non-Western ones.³³ As Peter Burkholder mentions, people from different places are becoming familiar with each other’s music, by blending the local scales and singing styles, and imitating the instrumental texture and other efforts, “the widespread availability of music from almost everywhere has facilitated cross-fertilization of all kinds.”³⁴

In the second half of the twentieth century, Chinese traditional music joined this trend. Composers such as Chen Qigang, Tan Dun, and Yi Chen are the pioneers of this trend, as fifth-generation Chinese composers who received training in the systematic and comprehensive Western composition system. Their compositional style is deliberate, using Chinese melodies combined with Western harmony, rhythm, and modern composition

³³ 丽新 王 [Lixin Wang], “奥尔夫音乐教学法的本土化研究” [Research on the localization of Orff Music teaching methods] (PhD diss., Northeast Normal University, Changchung, China, 2012), 21–22.

³⁴ J. Peter Burkholder, *A History of Western Music*, 10th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), 963–64.

techniques. They suddenly rose to international attention as their works broke the restrictions of traditional form, content, and aesthetic concepts used by the older generations of composers.

Although the works of these “New Wave” composers are still not well-enough known to Chinese performers and are largely unknown to Western audiences, they are worthy of being performed by musicians and acknowledged by audiences. Thanks to the lead of these composers, new feelings and “new blood” are being brought to modern Chinese composition. As we have already seen, the Chinese pentatonic system was adopted in the harmonic textures of *La joie de la souffrance*, and certain techniques such as added note and note clusters were “borrowed” from Western musical language.

3.1.2 Domestic Environment

The changes in music in China can be attributed to the changes in the Chinese domestic environment. Because of the political situation in China, musical composition has had a close relationship with politics, especially before the policy of “reform and opening up” in 1978. We can take the *Butterfly Lovers* violin concerto and *Yellow River* piano concerto (written in the same period) as illustrations, as they reflect a Maoist political stance and attitude, and were both written for the tenth anniversary of the PRC (People’s Republic of China) and for the de facto cultural authority at the height of the Cultural Revolution. Ling Quah and Jessica Xiao say explicitly that “*Butterfly Lovers* and *Yellow River* are the product of political propaganda in sentiment.”³⁵

³⁵ Ling Quah and Jessica Xiao. “Classical Music Serving the People’s Republic: Political and National Ideology in *Butterfly Lovers* and *Yellow River* Concerti” (master’s thesis, Rice University, 2017), 65

Especially after 1978, the modernization in Chinese traditional music embraced a period of rapid growth: because of the support of reform and openness, China opened its doors to the world and placed itself on the international stage. With less restriction in social life and rapid growth in the economy, Chinese citizens now live in a more relaxed and freer social environment. Also, people are encouraged to engage in more social activities. At the same time as this change in domestic politics, Chinese musical composition moved into a rapid development stage, in which there is a tendency for Chinese composers to move from what we might call common writing to personal (personality) writing. Common writing in the Chinese environment means that the musical theme has a specific purpose—mostly political propaganda. Personal (personality) writing, in contrast, is free of thematic restriction, so composers can use any theme or resources they prefer, and the purpose of the composition can be personal emotional release, the experience of a journey, etc.

On the one hand, as mentioned before, the more varied lifestyle provides a chance for Chinese composers and audiences to explore and enjoy more Chinese musical language in their works, and, more importantly, people are expressing a broader acceptance and appreciation of the current approach to composing. As Chen Qigang once said, the creation should not be limited to writing: it is the free choice of each individual's way of expressing himself.

On the other hand, the traditional Chinese music that is attached to various local activities received a great expansion in both scale and scope, leading to a new phenomenon in the public's aesthetics: composers are no longer satisfied with just being an “outsider” in music (or artistic) activities, but are willing to become involved in the process of these

activities and show their individuality to satisfy the psychological need of being admired or identified by others,³⁶ as Xiansheng Zhang speculates. The growth of this psychological demand also leads to the involvement of individual composers' own specialties, experience, and subjective feeling in the music. In doing the present research, I found this trait not only in Chen Qigang's compositions, but also in those by the same generation of Chinese composers, represented by Tan Dun. For example, the violin concerto *The Love* (2009) by Tan Dun reflects the composer's concept of the three stages in human love: passionate love in youth, realistic love in middle age, and spiritual love in old age. The *Monologue* for unaccompanied B-flat clarinet by Yi Chen is a meditation of introspection on the fictional story of the character *Ah Q*.

3.2 Tendencies in Chinese Traditional Music Composition

3.2.1 Further Exploration in Chinese Traditional Music Language

Besides the tendency of common writing turning to personality writing, there are other trends in modern Chinese music composition. The first is the exploiting of Chinese traditional music language. Although the decline of some Chinese traditional music genres is inevitable, in order to adapt to the new social life and people's tastes, these traditional music genres need not only to be preserved but also to receive more development: refined and exquisite. Therefore, Chinese composers are exploring Chinese traditional language further. For example, *Wu Xing* (The Five Elements) by Chen Qigang (1998–99) is a portrait of the

³⁶ 宪生 张 [Xiansheng Zhang], "21 世纪中国音乐的思考与前瞻" [Reflections on and prospects of Chinese music in the twenty-first century], 海音乐学院学报 200 年 3 月第一期 [Journal of Xinghai Conservatory of Music] 1 (March 2001): 17.

five elements of ancient Chinese philosophic theory in musical form. Similar broad approaches to the incorporation of Chinese culture are found in *Water and Fire* by Tan Dun and *Dunhunag Fantasy* for organ and wind ensemble by Chen Yi.

3.2.2 Changes in the Musical Concept: Isolation to Inclusivity

First, we should understand that contemporary Chinese musical culture is not a closed and isolated system. Chinese music is not a pure land, handed down from the ancestors without being interpreted or processed. After more than a century of changes and reforms, modern “Chinese music” is already quite different from “Chinese music” before. In fact, countless concepts and practices of Western music culture have been widely and deeply integrated into Chinese music culture for a long time and combined with the Chinese music tradition. Many such combinations have been taken for granted by Chinese music masters.³⁷ *Butterfly Lovers* is a typical example, in that most Chinese audiences take it for granted that this composition is part of modern Chinese music.

From a broader perspective, each national music, in the general social environment today, has a tendency to emerge into one mainstream called “music of the world”; but, as in a fusion pot, they retain their specific characteristics as they integrate with others during the fusion progress. China, especially in the twenty-first century, is playing an increasingly important role in almost all aspects of the international stage. The younger Chinese composers are also keeping an open attitude to musical composition. We can surely expect

³⁷ 苏 郑 [Su Zheng], “质疑 ‘中国音乐’, ‘西方音乐’: 对二十世纪中国音乐思想两个最基本概念的再思考” [Query in ‘Chinese music’ and ‘Western music’: rethinking the two most basic concepts of Chinese musical thought in the twentieth century], *人民音乐 2001 年第一期* [Journal of People’s Music] 1 (2001): 31.

that Chinese audiences would enjoy various music languages from the rest of world combined with our local music language in the future.

3.2.3 The Commercialization of Music

As a special spiritual wealth in people's lives, music nowadays has been materialized and devalued, entering people's lives through various forms of commercialization. Moreover, musical culture has become a symbol of consumption; and because it "reflects the aesthetic orientation and social psychology" of the music market, the "consumption destination in the music market is inevitable and understandable."³⁸ From this it can be easily understood that the aesthetic and psychological aspects carried by the musical platform affect but also reflect the market orientation in society today.

In an interview,³⁹ Chen Qigang queried a critic talking about the word "market," saying that the most valuable works cannot survive in society if they are kitsch and commercialized. He went on to say there have never been works of art that can live without society and become independent, that can prove their value if not "tested" by society and the market.

This phenomenon may be more obvious in the pop music field than in the classic market. Market orientation nowadays not only sets a standard but also gives a direction, which makes musical compositions be created to cater to people's interest.

³⁸ 芳芳 陈 [Fangfang Chen], "浅谈文化市场对社会审美倾向以及民族音乐的影响" [Brief probe into the influence of cultural marketization on both social aesthetic tendency and national music], *音乐时空 期刊* 006, [Time and space in music] 006 (2014): 192.

³⁹ 观炉 郑 [Guanlu Zheng], "变异与重构造: 陈其钢《逝去的时光》《悲喜同源》变奏技法研究" [Variation and reconstruction: study of variation techniques of Chen Qigang's *The Lost Time* and *The Same Origin of Sadness and Happiness*] (master's thesis, Jiangxi Normal University, 2020), 3.

3.2.4 The Conversion of Imitation to Combination

The modernization of Chinese music between the two world wars was handed a blank sheet of paper. The composition techniques and ideological connotations of contemporary music in China had fallen behind the rest of the world. Compared with the Western music system, which experienced a logical comprehensive evolution, the modernization in Chinese music has been more like a sudden change in response to the impact of external forces.

For the beginning period of modern Chinese music development in the early twentieth century, compositions were built on existing local tunes and designed to “imitate” the acoustic sound of Chinese instruments or Chinese melody (for example, the Peking Opera), while most Western music language or techniques were placed in a subordinate position. This situation is changing now: Chinese music language and Western composition techniques are placed in an equal position. Because of the extensive use of various music languages and sophisticated adoption of composition techniques in modern Chinese music composition, audiences now probably find it hard to define the music genres they hear.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation takes Chen Qigang's *La joie de la souffrance* as the subject of research, systematically looking at its aspects of music theme, form, harmony, and orchestration, in order to familiarize the public with this work.

La joie de la souffrance fuses Chinese music elements with French musical traits. The music themes and tonality of the work are based on the Chinese traditional pentatonic mode, while the harmonic language is rich and varied and the orchestration is exquisite and delicate, a typical trait of French musical language. This kind of integration illustrates why Chen described himself as “a Chinese tree transplanted in France.”⁴⁰ On the other hand, this 24-minute work is the first in which Chen Qigang uses sorrow and joy as the main themes, sharing his deep thinking and understanding of life.

At the same time, from the examples given, it can be seen that Chen Qigang does not use various techniques in pursuit of innovation but focuses on the needs of expression and adopts appropriate technical means according to actual needs, which also reflects the concept that “technology serves content.”

In addition, by observing the current Chinese musical compositions, we can discover a unique value of Chen Qigang's music creation: the attention to the melodies. An important reason why some of the modern music compositions in the twentieth century are generally little accepted by the general public is that these works are too dissonant. In *La joie de la souffrance*, on the one hand, Chen Qigang did not avoid melody and tonality, which ensured

⁴⁰ Chen Qigang, interview, *China Daily*; available from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/fashion/2008-07/08/content_6827746_2.htm, accessed 23 February 2023.

the acceptability of the work; but on the other hand, the composer also actively adopted some creative techniques of modern music to bring out the beauty of his melody. The combination of these two approaches in Chen's compositions can not only be liked by the public, but also highly recognized by professionals.

From a broader perspective, music all over the world is merging into one mainstream called "world music," but still keeping its specific characteristics. The younger Chinese composers need to keep an optimistic and inclusive attitude in musical composition. Also, we need to keep in mind that globalization is a process of the coexisting of unity and diversity: the outcome of nationalization and localization on the basis of contact, conflict, and exchange among different political cultures, beliefs, and national traditions. No country can avoid this trend. The development of musical culture in the world will not possess a balanced situation all the time, since each music genre has its own characteristics and they offset each other. Also, not only fusion between Chinese and Western music: any progression of absorption, digestion, and rebirth made with reference to foreign musical culture is a long and complicated process, and also needs time for practicing and testing. We should keep an optimistic attitude about this process and be patient.

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