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Community in Chinese Street Music: Sound, Song and Social Life

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Community in Chinese Street Music

Sound, Song and Social Life

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Romanisation and Names

The *pinyin* system is used throughout to romanise Chinese names and terms.

The Chinese order (surname followed by given name) is used for Chinese names. Exceptions are non-Han names (which are also romanised using *pinyin*), and the Chinese names of scholars writing in English who use an inverted order in their own publications.

Some of the names of *jiqing guangchang* participants have been changed.

Statement of Copyright

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Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

On my regular visits to a miniature park at the foot of the Great Yangtze River Bridge in spring 2014, I sometimes came across a small business owner called Wang Qiang. We met several times at the amateur music shows that took place in the park each day. I was there at the early stages of my PhD fieldwork, becoming acquainted with these performances, and he was whiling away lazy afternoons enjoying the music. In his forties and married, Wang split his time between the family home back in his native Qingdao on China's northern coast and here in Wuhan, the giant capital city of Hubei province in the centre of the country. His watch and accessory business had been based in the city for more than two decades. When in Wuhan, Wang was able to live the life of a bachelor and, each time we met, he joked mischievously about the freedom he enjoyed being far away from his wife. As we strained to carry on our conversation over the loud music that filled the park, some of the young women who were performing at that afternoon's shows approached us to offer cigarettes and bottles of iced tea and to exchange a few words. It was no secret that this hospitality and attention from the women performers was among the main attractions for Wang in spending afternoons in this park, and he teased me more and more each time we met about how I too seemed to be getting drawn in as a regular.

In fact, as well as in the park here, I was already getting to know several similar shows taking place in various other parts of Wuhan. I was still trying to build up a picture of how widespread performances of music in the city's public spaces were. "You ought to go to the Hankou river side – there's lots of this kind of thing happening over there," Wang said, raising his voice and cupping his hand to his mouth to make himself heard. I found this recommendation puzzling. My experience of these performances had already taught me to seek them out in settings quite unlike those I knew I could find in Hankou, at the riverbank opposite. On this hazy afternoon, that district was just visible across the Yangtze – the river is more than a mile wide here. It is home to Wuhan's turn-of-the-century foreign concession areas, and the boulevard of western European-style buildings that used to house international banks and trading headquarters had now become one of the city's main centres for upmarket nightlife. I had seen the stage shows in the glitzy nightclubs over there and the jazz-infused duos entertaining customers in foreign-owned bars. The contrast between these slick commercial performances and this afternoon's park show was stark. Most evidently, there were no bouncers or expensive cover charges here to control who could join the audience. What we were watching was far less exclusive, with regular spectators like Wang Qiang constantly being joined and left by members of the public stopping to listen for a while as they passed by. The flow of people entering this small green space – including those simply

taking a shortcut through it – meant that activity was constantly shifting, and in this respect, it felt simply like an extension of the adjacent streets.

In further contrast to those nightlife settings, the surroundings here displayed the same scruffy functionality as the ordinary public territory around them. The small park had been neglected so that its grass borders were now bald strips of dusty earth, and the paving that made up most of its area was cracked and littered. Wang and I were perching on a low wall that surrounded a circular space raised up slightly in the park's centre. This space seemed to have been designed as a stage, as if in a mini amphitheatre, but it was certainly not meant for the kind of performance we were watching. It was far too large to be filled by the solitary singer currently occupying it, and to me she seemed detached from her audience and slightly out of place. She was not the only singer performing in the park at that moment, however. In fact, six shows were in progress simultaneously, filling its every corner. Most were making do with spaces even less suitable. Two groups were squeezed back-to-back into one patch of pavement, and two others occupied the sections adjacent to the busy roads running along the park's edges. Around each informal stage was gathered a loose circle of a few dozen spectators sitting on pink plastic stools, stood leaning against trees, or squatting on their haunches. The majority were older men, who stared blankly towards the singer, while clouds of cigarette smoke drifted up around their motionless bodies. My impressions of the performances I encountered here and elsewhere were dominated by the rough-and-ready quality of their production, and the lethargy that seemed to affect the spectators. Nonetheless, audiences almost always gathered around in significant numbers.

"But is there any *caogen* (grassroots) music at that Hankou riverbank?" I asked doubtfully in response to Wang's recommendation. I was interested in finding more examples of the kind of musical activity taking place in the park, rather than those more formally-organised events. It was perhaps understandable, though, that like many other people I would eventually speak to at events of this kind, my companion was perhaps more concerned with presenting the music of his adopted home in the most impressive light possible, by steering me towards performances in more 'refined' settings. Later, I would also come to understand that his suggestion may have been borne out of the contrasting ways in which we each categorised these performances. I instinctively placed the park events and nightlife shows in quite divergent classes, focusing upon the dissimilarity of setting, levels of professionalism, and degrees of public accessibility. Despite these differences standing out for me, some less obvious commonalities were evidently enough for Wang to casually align the park performances with nightlife shows. Mainly, this seems to have been for want of more formal or established ways of understanding their place in wider musical culture. I was interested to note that for most performers and audience members I spoke to, no particular name came to mind by which to describe this kind of park show as a genre. On the

microphone, rather than referring to any category label, participants mainly used the names of their individual stages. When I talked to them on a one-to-one basis, they often relied on the most general level of description, such as 'singing and dancing' (although dancing was never more than a minor part) or 'amateur performances', to outline what they did. Indeed, this amateur status was usually highlighted apologetically. Did they want to avoid making too much of their practices by not giving them a formal label? Those I spoke to certainly revealed little interest in or appreciation for being part of a practice or tradition with any wider resonance beyond their own activity. Friends of mine from Wuhan and elsewhere in China had no real sense of the events I described to them, and even when I showed them video clips, they could only guess that the music must be part of wedding celebrations or be similar one-offs. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that I was not the only one finding it hard to pinpoint exactly where this kind of performance ended and other kinds began.

My curiosity about the events, however, was only increased by this ambiguity in the boundaries of my field of study and how they seemed to be firmly under the radar of the general population. I was intrigued, in particular, that these shows seemed to be thriving despite appearing to inspire so little fervour in the ways in which participants identified with them, let alone in any impact they appeared to have upon the wider world. Scholarship often presents music and musical activity as totems around which identity is formed, and often the messages expressed through association with music are palpable and galvanising for insiders and outsiders alike. Here though, I thought of the 'hidden musicians' that Ruth Finnegan (1989) found in the amateur ensembles of Milton Keynes. Perhaps I had found a form of music-making in which not only the musicians but the very activity itself was effectively invisible. These events seemed to be hidden in the plain sight of a major city's public spaces.

Ill. 1.1: A park performance, with the foot of the Great Yangtze River Bridge visible in the background (photo: 15 May 2014).

Conditions did not make it easy to pursue these complexities with my companion Wang, however. As if we had been in one of those nightclubs across the river, hearing clearly the other end of our shouted conversation was a challenge. By now, we had moved to one of the groups positioned by the road (see Ill. 1.1). Just beyond it, enormous container vessels on the Yangtze sounded their horns, while trains periodically rattled past on the giant bridge above, and a diesel generator was chugging away next to us to power the show. The event's speakers were placed in a formation that mirrored the shape of the audience group, effectively encircling the singer and enveloping her in the sound. The equipment was old and struggled to cope with the demands of overcoming the sonic competition all around, periodically cutting out for a few seconds before someone was able to manipulate a loose connection back to life. On days with light rain, an organiser's umbrella propped open over them was the sole form of protection for the speakers and other electrical equipment. Only when the rain was heavy were the shows cancelled. Feedback often screamed out as off-stage singers absent-mindedly moved too close to a speaker with a microphone in hand.

Even during the normal course of the music, the aural effect for the spectator was intense. The extensive reverb and echo applied to the singer's high-pitched nasal vibrato and the crashes of an electric drum kit's cymbals produced an uncomfortable distortion, intensified by its amplification to a high volume. Being positioned just within the circular range of the speakers, virtually all background sound was drowned out for Wang and I. Passers-by and even the singers themselves put fingers in their ears when they moved too close. I watched as one performer crossed over to the sound desk in the middle of a song to turn down the volume, only for one of the event insiders, an organiser seated near the desk, to turn it back even higher. It was as if he was asking: "how can we compete and demonstrate our energy by playing soft music?" I gestured to Wang Qiang that I needed respite from the sound, and retreated a few steps out from immersion in the sphere of the group's speakers. Immediately I found relief from the peak of the onslaught. This music was no longer masking all of the other sounds echoing around the park and off the tall buildings surrounding us. Despite this, though, my ears still did not find any real let-up. Instead, now they were met by a cacophony of six songs playing simultaneously in different corners of the space, loaded on top of the commotion of the city. Minutes of this intense sound, combined with the inescapable cigarette smoke, began to batter my senses. After an hour or two at any of these performances around the city, I would always feel thoroughly dazed – apparently more so than most of the people around me.

There were a few other points in this afternoon's proceedings in which the ambient sounds of the park were briefly allowed back into mind in a similar way. These usually came as the music paused for a changeover of singers. Every stage employs between around five and fifteen performers, each of whom sings two or three songs in a row before passing the

microphone onto the next. A typical session sees the full series of singers rotate through two or three times in order. This roadside show's emcee, a man in his forties, was addressing the crowd animatedly during one of these pauses. His patter reached a climax as, with a flourish, he called out "Yang Liu!" the name of the next singer to take to the makeshift stage[1]. As is customary, there was no obvious response from the audience, and certainly no applause or cheering. A few seconds later the emcee called again, and the music of the neighbouring stages began to seep back into consciousness. I was beginning again to register the sense of respite that accompanied a halt to the loudest music. The audience around me continued to stare impassively at the empty stage, but by now the emcee was struggling to hide his frustration, as he called out again: "Yang Liu, *meinü* (beautiful lady), please come to the stage!" Eventually Yang did appear, hurriedly squeezing herself through the bodies towards the centre of the circle. She had been busy fraternising with the audience and lost track of her place in the rota as she was called. She paused to put down her handbag and fumble with a mobile phone, plugging it into the PA system, before the park's cacophony was again concealed when the device came to life playing the backing track to her song.

Yang appeared younger than most singers, especially as unusually this group included a couple of performers in their forties. In fact, like the majority of her colleagues, she was actually in her twenties and perhaps only the 'teenage' style of her baggy sportswear and baseball cap made her stand out among those dressed more conventionally in smart casual wear. It also caught my attention, however, that what she began to sing was not the more usual upbeat classic popular or folk-style song from the 1980s, 1990s or early 2000s, but a pop ballad that had been a nationwide hit only a few years earlier. *Wode gesheng li* (In my song), was originally released by Qu Wanting. Yang sang along to this recording's backing track as it slowly built from a relatively gentle beginning with a lone piano, towards its climax with a full band and strings. I had heard Qu's version before, and Yang's rendition here was matching my memory of the hit performance quite closely. As she sang to the track, the show's backing band found itself temporarily redundant and joined the audience in sitting back to listen. In fact, this would become a familiar sight. Most of the informal stages both in this park and elsewhere in Wuhan had a live band, comprised primarily of an electric keyboard and electric drum kit, and often also featuring a saxophone or sometimes a guitar or a trumpet. I noticed that they almost never played continuously throughout the events, however, but regularly fell silent like this when singers chose to sing to a backing track, as

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[1] Yang Liu is the singer's full name. Others are known around the events by nicknames or diminutive versions of their given names. I explore the significance of these linguistic conventions in Chapter 4. Throughout the thesis, however, I make no attempt to standardise how I refer to individuals, instead replicating whichever form of name I heard used for each person in the field.

Yang had done. Indeed, at some events, the band played so infrequently that its role seemed mainly limited to providing the interludes of a few bars that mark the transitions between some of the songs.

In an article analysing underground music in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou, Liu Chen (2014) uses the same song, *Wode gesheng li* – in particular a Sichuan-dialect parody of it – as an illustration of prevailing cultural perceptions being subverted through popular music. This version of the song, by the band Yishi, is said to self-consciously identify with 'low culture' and minority concerns, to encourage solidarity among Guangzhou's migrants, and to attempt to challenge the perceptions of rural newcomers held by established urban dwellers. Although it shares an almost identical backing track with Qu's recording, the text is rendered in a strikingly different style, being half sung and half spoken in a folk-like voice that contrasts with the polished enunciation of the original. In fact, not only does it stand out from the commercial version, but it does so equally in comparison with the performance by Yang that I was listening to in the park in Wuhan. Her version could only be described as 'straight'. The singer's attitude was earnest, and there were no obvious traces of parody or self-conscious subversion. Indeed, by the time I had attended dozens of similar performances in Wuhan, it had become clear to me that this orthodox approach was entirely the norm. It was quite evident that challenging conventions of expression or prevailing ideology simply was not part of the spirit of these events.

Later that afternoon, Wang Qiang recommended to me watching one of the popular singing contests currently on television: "if you're interested in amateur music you should have a look at *Zhongguo hao shengyin* (The voice of China) – they can sing really well." I was reminded of recent interest in these shows among scholars of Chinese popular music. For some, such as Anthony Fung (2013), they provide a platform for an apparent rise of non-mainstream ideological expression through music. Fung profiles Li Yuchun, whose victory in 2005's *Chaoji nüsheng* (Supergirl) propelled her, he argues, into a 'new wave' of Chinese pop. Li's success was among the first in China to result from home audience voting, and this led to the singer becoming associated with "democracy, universal referendum and popular deliberation in China" (ibid.: 81). In addition, she has also gained a reputation for challenging gender norms and prevailing portrayals of femininity by presenting a tomboy image and choosing to sing songs stereotypically associated with masculine characteristics. If Li is said to be at the forefront of this new wave, though, it was clear to me that the performances on the streets of Wuhan, on the other hand, were clearly aligned with the conservative. I found no evidence in my contact with performers here, nor in their choice and presentation of songs, to suggest that they pursued any strong personal engagement with such ideological issues. Certainly this was not a part of any 'official' ethos of the events as a whole. Thus, in simplistic binary terms, the performances in Wuhan's public spaces would

be understood far better as mainstream than alternative. I was intrigued to explore, though, how by leaving aside some of the divisive ideological issues that have captured the attention of scholars, and instead focusing on an apparently mundane and inclusive social activity, more modest – but perhaps still highly complex – realities of life in contemporary China might be revealed.

Indeed, unlike those taking part in televised talent shows, motivation for the singers performing in the park today was not about finding a platform to express their personal views, nor did it involve fulfilling dreams of a high-profile performing career. Instead, singing at this afternoon session was just one part of their daily routine and, when it ended, most would move onto other shows in locations around the city for an evening performance. There were none of the nerves or elation of competition here, just a sense of purposeful routine. The activity at our stage was already drawing towards a close, and Wang led me around the park to catch the tail end of some of the other groups' events. The place was still bustling and we had to weave between bodies as we circulated, while Wang exchanged familiar words with several singers that we passed. He was clearly well-known in the park, and despite a deliberately casual manner, he seemed to be enjoying the extra attention of having me as a foreign friend. I had already heard Wang talk about his business and how it had taken him on trips to over forty countries, but today he was able to impress the women by telling them we had been chatting half in Chinese and half in English. In fact, his English barely covered a few words. We walked by close to the emcee of one of the groups, who immediately picked me out as an unusual audience member. In comical fashion he shouted out one word at me on the microphone over the singing: "*meiyuan*!" (dollars).

If I was in any doubt, the emcee's light-hearted greeting was an indication of exactly where the underlying driving force for that day's performances lay. These singers were performing for money. Indeed, the situation was the same at every one of the events I came to be familiar with across Wuhan. As songs progressed at each of these stages, one by one a steady flow of men would emerge slowly from the crowd, approaching the singer as she continued to perform. Each of these men presented her with a sum of money – a tip – before merging back into the gathering. It seemed to me incongruous that although almost all of these givers came towards the stage with a nonchalant, even detached expression, their presentations of these money gifts would take one of a number of ritualised forms, some of them quite elaborate. I quickly came to think of these money-giving practices as a defining feature of the spectacle of shows across the city. Sometimes gifts would come so thick and fast that I found my attention fixated on the crowd's activity and completely distracted from the music.

The most common giving ritual involved presenting the tip along with a flower, usually a red rose (Ill. 1.2). Individuals would approach of their own volition at any time

during a song, holding a bank note, and picking up one of the long artificial stems that were waiting at the front of the performance area. Both would be handed to the singer, who would acknowledge the gift as far as possible while singing, and hold the flower for a short time before eventually depositing it back into the bunch. In other locations, I found it more common for money to be given in a similar manner without the flower, or simply for audience members to catch the singer's eye and wait for her to approach to collect the cash. Among the most theatrical forms of giving, however, would see the men go to an off-stage organiser to exchange their cash gift for the equivalent in small-denomination bank notes, before throwing these hundreds of notes into the air above the singer's head. The confetti would float down in an impressive display around her. Organisers would then immediate descend upon the stage to collect the notes, ready for them to be counted and used again by the next giver.

Ill. 1.2: An audience member delivering a cash tip, by presenting the singer with a flower (photo: 15 May 2014).

I had already noted during my time in Wuhan that beggars who played musical instruments for their subsistence, along with the occasional busker I found around the city, would generally receive gifts of a single 1 or 5 *yuan* note (equivalent to roughly 10 or 50 pence each) from those members of the public passing by who chose to give. This afternoon in the park, however, the value of single gifts never fell into this relatively lowly range, and instead they varied from 10 or 20 to several hundred *yuan* a time. At evening sessions, I noticed, stakes were raised even higher. Tips here generally came in multiples of hundred-*yuan* notes, with significant gifts of several hundred being commonplace. The highest single

offering I observed during my entire experience in the field reached 2,000 *yuan*, and there were occasionally others topping 1,000. I heard some suggestions that they could even go as high as 10,000 *yuan* in exceptional circumstances. Having collected these sums during a performance, singers would hand the money to a cashier, who would record the takings on behalf of the group's main organiser, the boss (*laoban*) or group head (*tuanzhang*). This individual informally employed the team of people responsible for the shows, consisting not only of the singers, backing musicians and an emcee, but also a small team of general assistants charged with setting up the performance space and maintaining the smooth running of the events.

Depending on the arrangements at individual stages, 70 or 80 per cent of the total made by each singer throughout the session would be redistributed back to them as they left the venue at the end. Along with other costs of staging the shows and the organiser's profits, the remainder would cover the fixed fees given to the backing musicians and others; 90 *yuan* per session was the going rate for each instrumentalist during my stay in Wuhan. According to typical estimates from those around me at the events, then, an average singer could earn a monthly total of around 10,000 *yuan*. This figure seems conservative considering that I regularly saw singers leaving even the less-lucrative afternoon sessions with 600 or 700 *yuan*, and several times singers reported their disappointment at only achieving a haul of 200 or 300 for a day's show. As I will explain later, however, in order to achieve this kind of income, significant levels of personal expenditure would usually be required from the singers themselves. Nonetheless, these figures still compare extremely favourably with, for instance, the typical monthly salaries I noted advertised for entry-level jobs in restaurants and shops during this period – between 2,000 and 3,500 *yuan*.

As I sat watching the events end in the park that afternoon, I found the role of money both bewildering and intriguing. Not only were these sums far beyond what was seen in all other street music situations and in other similar informal leisure contexts that I was familiar with, but they were also out of proportion with the wider costs of daily life in the city. Even the very smallest tips given at evening sessions could buy a cinema ticket, a drink in an upmarket bar, or perhaps a full meal for two people in some mid-range restaurants. The larger sums were truly significant amounts of money to be offering in such circumstances. It puzzled me still further to look at the audience surrounding me, and to see not one member tapping a foot to the beat or obviously stirred by the music at all. Barely any spectators, too, were exchanging more than a few words with those around them. Simply, no one in the park really seemed manifestly to be enjoying themselves very much. Even the performers at these shows were repeatedly downplaying the events as 'amateur' in the conversations I was having with them. Their settings were inarguably second-rate, and the equipment was definitely inadequate. How could they possibly, then, really warrant such extraordinary

rewards? I resolved to keep a close eye upon givers, assuming that at least some of them must be shills (*tuo'r*), event insiders pretending to offer money in order to stimulate real gifts. I was, of course, assured that this was not the case, but by carefully studying the behaviour and the sheer number of givers, I was eventually convinced that this phenomenon could, at the very most, only account for a small proportion of the practice. I spoke to givers themselves and other audience members around me, and was urged not to be surprised that ordinary individuals should occasionally give gifts of a few hundred *yuan*, considering the state of China's contemporary consumer economy. Nonetheless, with their prominence in the shows' spectacle, and my lingering doubts about their incongruity, it was clear that these money-giving practices were a central part of understanding the performances.

In Wuhan, I came across a few other public musical gatherings in which participants used similar money-related practices in their activity. Small groups of people dancing for pleasure in some other of the city's green spaces passed the same kind of flowers between them as they moved. Here they were simply props – tokens of admiration and affection among fellows – and no money was involved. Occasionally, I met other kinds of groups whose aim *was* to attract money from passers-by, however, and some also displayed giving rituals that were very similar. A group playing Chinese musical instruments in a larger park, for instance, sent one of their members around to people in their vicinity, actively offering the chance to present one of these flowers in exchange for a small tip. The custom of performers being rewarded or thanked with gifts is established historically in the culture of Chinese opera (ZXZBW 1993). Indeed, I noted that the contemporary groups performing local opera genres at community centres for Wuhan's pensioners invited tips with a collection pot at the foot of the stage. Gifts in these circumstances, though, were far smaller and much more in proportion with daily costs than those I was observing in the park and elsewhere, where the repertory was popular song.

In fact, the money-giving practices here show many parallels with those seen in various other popular musical contexts, including some in the Chinese cultural sphere. There are reports of similarly large sums of cash being passed to singers in various elaborate ways in karaoke lounges and dance halls in both Singapore (Tan 2013) and Taiwan (Hsin 2012). Similar practices have been discussed in other locations around the world, too, particularly in Southeast Asia and Africa. These are often staged performances of popular music genres that occur during events to mark personal and collective celebrations[2], and sometimes they are religious rituals involving quite different musical genres (Qureshi 1986). Explorations of a number of topics of social significance have emerged from observations of these practices.

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[2] See Miller (1985), Waterman (1990), Salamone (1997), White (1999), Wallach (2008), Mitchell (2011, 2015), Bader and Richter (2014).

They include gender relations, sexuality, personal and social validation, conflict, rivalry and competition, as well as numerous other facets of the interpersonal connections between performers and audiences. Many of these perspectives became increasingly relevant as I learned more about the social background to the giving of gifts on the streets of Wuhan. As my contact with singers that afternoon suggests, besides the two or three chances to take the stage during a session, the majority of an individual performer's time would be spent in a hospitality role, circulating among the audience. In all crowds, I found the vast majority of members to be male, and most appeared to be either in middle-age or pensioners. I gradually assembled a list of the kinds of people I came across: common office workers (*shangban zu*), the occasional young labourer (*dagong zai*), small traders (*xiaoshang fan*), foremen (*baogong tou*), small businessmen (*shangren*) and retired staff (*tuixiu zhigong*). I also met several police officers enjoying the events, both on- and off duty, and I even heard it said that some government officials (*ganbu*) took part. Once or twice at some of the higher-end shows, I also came across agents from the media business, who told me that they were scouting for talent suitable for various kinds of shows that their companies were involved in. A minor proportion of those present tended to be from other demographic categories too, including women of similar ages, and parents or grandparents looking after young children. Weekend afternoon sessions would tend to attract a greater variety of listeners, as passers-by were at leisure to stop and linger.

Regardless of the timing and the setting, however, singers could always be found roaming among their audience. They were constantly alert and ready to spot familiar faces and to make new acquaintances, offering the gift of a cigarette or a bottle of soft drink, but rarely staying long with one individual before moving on. I gradually came to understand, however, that these gifts represented only the tip of an iceberg of investment made by performers in order to reap the cash returns that intrigued me so much. I began to be invited by performers to join them and groups of fellow audience members for dinners that would fill the time between afternoon and evening sessions. After these evening performances, more groups of spectators would share taxis to go on to late-night snacks or karaoke sessions, following an unwritten rule that all would be paid for by the singers. It was during these gatherings away from the performances themselves that singers and audience members would begin to get to know each other on an individual basis. As more mature interpersonal relationships began to develop, singers would ply their potential benefactors with material gifts of more substantial value: cartons containing multiple packets of cigarettes, items of clothing, and so on. Perhaps this helps to explain why some participants raised doubts to me about the longer-term sustainability of the shows. Not only were older generations considered much more open to participation in this behind-the-scenes activity and ready to give tips than their younger counterparts, but there was also concern about the advance of

more formal alternative kinds of entertainment taking away even this older generation. The better-off elements of society – bosses and business owners – were thought already to have been lost to increasingly ubiquitous forms such as Karaoke Television (KTV).

Singers themselves, on the other hand, tended to come from less privileged backgrounds. One such performer, Alian, was now in her mid-thirties, and had been making her living by performing for the last four or five years. Initially, she had decided to move away from her family on the high plateaus of Guizhou province because of difficult financial circumstances – she had been working in a furniture factory. She eventually ended up in the southern city of Maoming, where she was performing as part of a professional song and dance troupe (*gewutuan*). The job allowed her the chance to sing with some renowned performers, although taking it meant leaving behind a son of only eight months old. Indeed, it was only a few months before we met that she had chanced upon the opportunity to come to Wuhan through a network for performing artists on the QQ online social platform. Over a tearful lunch one day, Alian told me of her doubts about continuing with this hard and unstable way of life, relating her longing to be reunited with her husband and son, by then three years old. Indeed, within weeks she would be called back home as her husband and mother-in-law – herself unwell – were struggling to cope after the child had an accident and injured his hand. Although performing in Wuhan afforded her some freedom to make this kind of trip home quite often, it was clear that were she to stop making money she would have to move on again. Alian explained to me that she simply required enough to live slightly more comfortably than if she were doing a manual job (*dagong*).

For the moment, though, Alian relied on the occasional cigarette at times when she needed to repress unhappy feelings. Perhaps the habit was in keeping with her speciality these days for singing rock (*yaogun*) songs, rather than the music requiring a national or ethnic singing style (*minzu changfa*) that she had enjoyed years earlier. Now, she was clearly most comfortable covering songs such as *Nufangde shengming* (Life in full bloom), a hit of one of China's most prominent rockers, Wang Feng, or even sometimes accompanying herself on the drums. Like almost all of the singers around Wuhan's events, her performing career was founded on an enthusiasm for singing that originated in childhood, rather than on any formal training in music. Indeed, the humbleness of Alian's education was apparent to me when, on occasions, I asked her to help me by writing in my notebook the name of certain songs I had heard, and she struggled to recall how to write some common Chinese characters.

In keeping with the all-important imperative to maintain a certain image in front of the audience, I never saw Alian, nor any of the other women smoke at the performances themselves. Alian's manners and rapport with spectators, however, stood out in particular from the norm. Indeed, she appeared to reap handsome rewards on many occasions.

Particularly memorable was the evening that she celebrated her birthday during one evening's performance. As she sang for the first time that night, the stage quickly became flooded by the money literally thrown on from all sides. Some of the men around me had been preparing their gifts even before the event got under way that night. Alian made a show of shaking the hand of each money-giver several times during the rest of the evening, and she later sent out group and individual text and online messages thanking her benefactors, apologising for making them break the bank (*pofei*), and for not being able to enjoy as much time with each as she wished. Unlike several other singers I had contact with, she would never ask directly or place pressure on audience members for tips. Instead, Alian put her success down to the quality of her singing, and she was confident that her honesty as a person shone through. Indeed, she received very good tips from the moment she first arrived in Wuhan, with none of the delays that afflicted many singers in a new location. Usually, new singers first had to work hard to establish relationships with potential supporters before money would eventually begin to flow. Nonetheless, even for Alian, thriving at the shows certainly did not come easily, and was the result of sustained efforts. I came to think of the regular messages I received from her as evidence of a personal marketing machine. Acquaintances among the audience would be informed whenever there was a special show coming up, usually when the birthday of a singer was being marked that evening or an unusual act was joining them. Whenever I met her away from the performances, too, she would be on the phone to the next individual arranging a meal even before we had parted. She was also one of several singers to tell me that having days off through illness was unthinkable; every session missed was a wasted opportunity to spend time with their 'fans' (*gemi*).

I was less appreciative, however, of the efforts made by another pair of performers I encountered. Yinzi and Longzi were a set of identical twins in their early twenties who sang at another stage. As in Alian's case, the setting for their arena was quite different from those I had seen in the park. These were far better equipped, and as I explain in detail in Chapter 2, were examples of the most permanent kind of setup among Wuhan's events (see Ill. 1.3). While performing, the twins projected a single seamless persona, one that played up a naïve innocence. They always dressed in identical outfits and sang breezy tunes with a childlike quality. The songs they sang had titles such as *Yi ge mamade nüer* (A mother's daughter), or *Nongjiade xiao nühai* (Little peasant girl). It was my impression, however, that a more ruthless approach to making their living was concealed beneath. Unlike Alian, who exuded a genuine quality, a sense of self-interest seemed transparent to me in the twins. They were quick to emphasise that having graduated from what they called a 'performing arts college' (*yishu xuexiao*) they were therefore operating at a level above their 'amateur' peers. My own judgement, however, was that their performances were consistently among the weaker at

their stage. Conversations, too, were dominated by them describing difficulties in their lives. They talked about the poverty of their family left behind in Jingzhou, another city in Hubei province located a few hours away, and how they were regularly left in tears after shows when the level of income they achieved did not match what they thought an enthusiastic reception from their audience deserved. I understood these conversations simply as bids for my pity, and with it my cash tips. Indeed, the more vocal of the twins, Yinzi, answered many of my questions with phrases that I began to think of as mantras, often using a variation of "you will have to slowly understand" to avoid them. I was frustrated at the difficulty in penetrating their apparent reluctance to reveal how the events really worked.

Ill. 1.3: The arena in which the twins Yinzi and Longzi performed (photo: 11 May 2014).

Eventually, I began experimenting with ways to make the twins open up. I gave them cash tips a few times at the point in the evening when they would get together to perform a unison duet. In general at the events, I was wary of relying upon this strategy, attempting to strike a balance between participating actively as an ordinary member of the audience, while not wishing to compromise my primary position as a researcher by becoming drawn into relationships mediated by money. In this case, however, these experiments were rewarded with a direct insight into the influence of money over relationships involving performers. While ordinarily, Yinzi and Longzi left me largely alone as I watched the shows, as soon as I gave tips, however, they would switch to a proactive

attitude, coming over to spend time chatting, and opening up to my questions. Perhaps my experience paralleled those of typical audience members I saw them fraternising with, who may have been drip fed attention and company in exchange for their gifts.

I learned that the recruitment of the new singers who regularly joined the events often came about through the personal connections of existing participants. These channels sometimes brought new performers who quickly became established at their events, and at other times they were less successful. As my time in the field reached its later stages, Alian introduced me to two young women, obviously several years her junior. They were both also from Guizhou province but had arrived in Wuhan far more recently. She referred to them as her 'sisters', although in Chinese culture these familial labels are used very liberally, so it was never fully clear to me exactly if and how they were related. One had already begun singing at Alian's stage a few days earlier, and the younger, Juanjuan, told me over dinner that although she had arrived in Wuhan only that very day, the plan was for her also to take to the stage immediately. I was surprised to learn that she had never sung in public before. Alian's stage, being one of the larger and consistently most popular shows of its kind across the city (see Ill. 1.4), would be expecting a few hundred spectators for that night's show. This would truly be an intense debut. Several other singers told me of being in similar situations at the beginning of their careers performing in public in Wuhan, albeit most were in far less pressurised circumstances. Nerves and inexperience tinged their early performances, before quickly they became more assured. As events transpired on this occasion, I was not surprised when later in the night Juanjuan never appeared on the stage, and in fact, she was destined not to make the leap to a new career in performing at all. I suspected, however, that the intimidating environment of the show, which seemed highly unsuitable for a novice, would have been a factor in her apparent retreat.

Ill. 1.4: The arena in which Alian performed (photo: 11 May 2014).

Performance arenas like this one, where there was a fixed stage and a permanent structure over the audience, in fact only accounted for the settings of four groups in Wuhan, all of which were clustered in one location. I eventually found more than a dozen active groups around the city, and the rest could be found in far less impressive settings: parks, derelict corners, sometimes city squares or even ordinary street corners. All were united by being in freely-accessible public space and attracting a casual audience that nonetheless had a core of committed members. At their most basic street-corner level, the organising team would set up a host of equipment afresh prior to each afternoon or evening session, including the PA system, usually some form of mat or box to act as a temporary stage, lighting, audience seating and sometimes canopies to shelter the spectators. At all but those few permanent stages, this equipment would, of course, have to be taken away again at the end of the show.

Jiqing guangchang

As I have already noted, an important feature of these public-space performances across the city is the lack of an obvious focus – a clear rallying point or explicit folklore – to encourage its participants to identify strongly with the activity. Equally, there is little evidence that the shows have found any significant levels of understanding or awareness in the wider population of the city. Just like various other kinds of activity in the public space, the performances might hardly seem worthy of a second glance to the average citizen. Perhaps this should be little surprise considering that the 'scene' – if anything so solid exists – consists of only a handful of manifestations while the city, on the other hand, is home to around ten million people. It follows naturally, then, that the events should not be prominent

enough for the scholarly world to have specifically noted their existence. Indeed more generally, it is perhaps worth noting that the dynamics of ethnomusicology in China are often quite different from those in some other parts of the world. The term 'ethnomusicology' itself does not seem to map exactly onto an equivalent discipline in China. One label sometimes used as a translation is *minzu yinyuexue* (literally ethnic/nationalities music studies). This seems to describe well the study of the 'traditional' and ceremonial musics of the country's diverse ethnic groups (Yang 2003), but leaves little room or encouragement for less orthodox objects of investigation. The present research might be one such object.

The term 'street music' seems an appropriate starting point to describe these events. Although most of the shows in Wuhan do not strictly take place on the streets, this label does imply the informality and publicness that are key features here. From this point onwards, however, I choose to refer more specifically to the scene encountered in Wuhan as a whole as *jiqing guangchang.* This is a term that seems originally to have been attached to a kind of live singing found in the public squares of another Chinese city, Fuzhou (Sheng 2013). Events here continue to the present day, but differ quite radically from those in Wuhan. They involve collective singing, have been adopted by local government support structures, and are harnessed for the purposes of adult education (Li et al. 2009). I am interested in the quite different kind of events taking place in Wuhan, however. I apply the term regardless of the sometimes significant variety that I have already noted exists between individual events in the city, particularly in their physical settings. Everything I call *jiqing guangchang*, though, is united on a basic level by its accessibility to the watching public, a central repertory of Chinese popular and folk-inspired songs, and the customs of audience members presenting cash tips to singers. The term is recognised by musicians and organisers actively involved in the shows. It is, however, not necessarily used by more casual participants, nor is it typically heard in the day-to-day activity of the events, and it is certainly not in the lexicon of a wider public. *Jiqing guangchang* literally means 'passion square'. Here, the 'passion' is not of a romantic or sexual kind, but instead holds connotations of fervour and excitement. The 'square' refers to the feature of city architecture, the public plaza, and this notion can be understood as effectively covering all of the different kinds of locations in which events take place.

In one sense, it may be problematic to use the term *jiqing guangchang* as an umbrella to cover these performances, even those in which the phrase is only of secondary prominence in the lexicon of the people involved. It risks criticism as a deployment of language not wholly faithful to the experience of participants, perhaps by implying a greater connection among performances than might actually be felt by the average performer or audience member. I conclude, though, that this shortcoming is unavoidable. Clearly

establishing the boundaries of the field, even if it implies a more solid break than may occur to some participants, is a fundamental necessity. Likewise, to have a consistent way of referring to that which falls within those boundaries is simply practical. It must be borne in mind throughout, though, that *jiqing guangchang* is only the best available term. If it seems to be used in a committed way in this thesis, it should not be taken to mean that all those involved share commitment to it.

Similarly, the observations above are not meant to imply that street music, in other guises, is an entirely foreign topic in Chinese-language scholarship. The experience of one scholar, Luo Qin, whose doctoral research explored street musicians in the United States (Luo 2001), has in fact stimulated some interested in China's own public-space music practices. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, there has followed work by Qing Ke (2013) on the street music of Guiyang, the capital of Guizhou province; Wang Tao (2004), about Beijing's buskers; Zeng Suijin (2002), who addresses issues of individuality in relationship to begging and busking; and Jiao Qing (2005), who explores the history and social value of street performers. In English-language work, too, street performance has received some limited attention. This comes, for instance, in studies of outdoor Cantonese opera performances in Singapore and Hong Kong (Chan 2005; Lee 2009; Wong 2016).

In addition, the public spaces of the city of Wuhan itself have been the subject of some limited scrutiny. Jiang Haining (2003) and Yang Minghui (2006) have conducted preliminary explorations into the street music of a particular corner of Wuhan, known as Jiqing Street (Jiqing *Jie*). This area has been locally renowned since the mid-1990s for a dense concentration of restaurants and eateries, and teams of street musicians on hand to entertain diners at their open-air tables. This musical entertainment is said to have begun with one itinerant performer from Anhui province, Ma Qiao, who in the mid-1990s chose this corner as his location to busk, singing and playing the *erhu* fiddle. Gradually, companions from his native place came to join him, and the number of eateries at the spot increased in tandem with the arrival of more and more musicians (Yang 2006: 20). The area eventually became known for musicians and ensembles of various kinds mingling among the outdoor dining tables, presenting patrons with a list of their repertory, selections from which they would play for a small fee. At one time, sixty musicians and singers would entertain crowds of diners each evening (Jiang 2003: 25).

When I visited in 2014, however, I found the situation to be quite different. To capitalise on the area's popularity, parts of the network of small lanes that used to characterise Jiqing Street had by now been redeveloped into the Jiqing Folk Custom Street (Jiqing *Minsu Jie*), a complex of new-built mock-historical buildings lining a series of pedestrianised walkways. It was obvious, though, that a few years after this development, it had not been a success. Each time I visited, it was almost deserted, with empty units

outnumbering those that still housed a small selection of unremarkable snack chains. Nearby, though, there were still a number of the old restaurants with outdoor tables permanently positioned under canopies. It was here I found that, while diners continue to be entertained by musicians at Jiqing Street, the area today revealed only a hint of its former vibrancy:

> A trio of singers with an acoustic guitar and maracas performs to a single group of diners eating among a sea of empty tables. The guitarist's fixed smile looks strained as they perform a latin-style version of the song *Beijingde jinshan shang* (On Beijing's Jin Mountain), and then move onto Zhou Huajian's *Pengyou* (Friends), the song currently featuring on a television advertisement for a brand of spirits. Across the street a *dizi* (flute) and *erhu* duo entertain another table. A *pipa* (lute) soloist sits unoccupied, however, chatting lazily to an exponent of the local Hubei *dagu* storytelling genre. Even these few musicians are under-occupied with there being so many vacant dining tables.[3]

Other kinds of street music, however, play far more prominent roles in the city's regular social life. Perhaps the most visible of all informal street leisure activities is square dancing (*guangchang wu*), an activity that is ubiquitous not just in Wuhan but in cities all over China. As I discuss in Chapter 2, I found over fifty of these groups operating regularly in one particular central area of the city measuring approximately 3km x 4.5km. Each one involves between a handful and nearly a hundred people, mainly older women, arranged in rows, conga-style lines, or ballroom-like pairs to perform dance routines along to booming pop records for exercise and enjoyment. As is perhaps implied by the common word *guangchang* in their name, *jiqing guangchang* might in some ways be thought of as an extension of this *guangchang wu* phenomenon. At the very least, they occupy similar cultural territory. Both are manifestations of a tendency recognised by anthropologists (Yun 2004) for leisure in Chinese societies to take place among strangers in public spaces more than at home. There is also an obvious overlap in the music that they play. Square dancing is beginning to attract the attention of researchers, who investigate growing public debates surrounding noise-pollution controversies (Wang Qianni 2015; Wang Yifan 2015), but in general, the phenomenon is still underexplored.

Similar cultural links might also be drawn between *jiqing guangchang* and karaoke. Although in Wuhan, as in other locations across China and beyond, karaoke mainly takes place behind closed doors in commercial KTV centres, I noted the existence of several karaoke stalls that also set up each night on street corners. They draw small crowds of passers-by who might stay to sing two or three songs having paid 10 *yuan* to the organisers. In fact, a *jiqing guangchang* event might easily be confused for this kind of karaoke session,

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[3] Sections of indented text throughout this thesis, when not direct quotations, are ethnographic description and comment based on my field notes.

at least until the observer notices that singers at the former get paid rather than pay for the pleasure. Existing literature, however, mainly addresses karaoke as it occurs in bars (Adams 1996; Drew 2001), and in those private KTV rooms more common throughout East Asia (Otake and Hosokawa 2001). Later in this introduction, I outline how scholars have used karaoke as a window onto a certain kind of Chinese nightlife entertainment involving sex consumption. As far as analysis of the act of performing in karaoke is concerned, though, perhaps the most prominent themes for discussion concern the expression of gender identities in performance (Wong and Elliot 1994; Drew 1997; Baranovitch 2003). As I explain in the course of the thesis, directly relevant issues such as gendered song choice are largely moot in the *jiqing guangchang* context. Instead, I mainly evoke comparisons with karaoke performances in conjunction with the literature of performance studies (Schechner 1988), to show how stage and audience set-ups can influence the ethos of events.

Alongside karaoke and square dancing, *jiqing guangchang* might also be said to inherit certain characteristics from a culture involving teahouse (Wang 2009), brothel (Leng 1991) and street (Wang 2003) singing, various kinds of which have prevailed at different times throughout history in China. Indeed, while there are relatively few buskers on the streets of contemporary Wuhan, it is quite common to encounter groups and individuals with various kinds of instruments playing together for pleasure, or simply practicing. In these cases, the choice of open-air corners as their venues simply reflects the convenience of the public space, rather than any deliberate efforts to seek an audience or to attract any form of rewards. This is unlike busking studied in certain other countries and contexts, where the activity is at the centre of discussions of politics and the construction of sense of place (Tanenbaum 1995).

Themes

The experiences that I have presented so far involving *jiqing guangchang* events and their participants highlight several of the key issues explored in this thesis. These issues cluster around a central theme, community. With the continuing urbanisation of China, and changing lifestyles bringing alterations to music and the ways in which it is encountered, it seems to be of enduring significance to focus attention upon emerging urban music-making contexts, and to prioritise an understanding of how they are developing along with contemporary lifestyles. As I outline below, discourses in the study of music and beyond have persisted in aligning shifts towards urban living with isolation, and associating an urban experience of music – particularly popular music – with detachment from interpersonal meaning. *Jiqing guangchang* is an urban form, yet on the surface at least, it seems to bring people together in such a way that embeds the experience of music in face-to-

face contact and interpersonal relationships. Perhaps then, after all, music activity enabled by the circumstances of city living can indeed reflect features of community that are often more associated with other living circumstances. The full implications, however, of these community discourses and of this context for experiencing music are varied and require deeper scrutiny. Thus, the main task that lies ahead in this thesis is to examine precisely how community experience in the contemporary Chinese city is reflected and fostered by these performances.

The thesis is structured to address this question by scrutinising, in a chapter each, three sides of *jiqing guangchang* that inform the understanding of community in this context. These approaches are brought together and weighed up in the final chapter, in which I seek to conclude on the usefulness of the notion here. In Chapter 2, the window onto community is exploring the locations of the performance events throughout the city and their relation to other activity in their surroundings. This involves examining the performance settings in an immediate material sense and assessing the music not by highlighting its representational meanings, but by considering its sonic and material characteristics within the context of other sounds and features of the immediate environment. Each of these approaches is intended to illustrate how *jiqing guangchang* interrelates with the wider life of the city around it in a geographical, material, sonic, social, political and interpersonal sense. Clues are contained within the use of space, material and sound as to the events' relationship with community, for instance in how conflict and the sharing of space is managed, and in the balance between institutional and grassroots definitions of public life and public space.

In Chapter 3, the issue of community's institutional and grassroots aspects continues to provide part of the approach to the concept. Here, a detailed assessment of the music and the form and content of performances complements the non-representational approach to the musical sounds from the previous chapter. I illustrate various aspects of the musical repertory, how it is created, learned, adapted and received on the streets. I put this towards an understanding of community by considering the content, economic background and transmission system behind the material in terms of popular and folk generic categorisations, both of which have been closely associated with discourses relevant to community. In Chapter 4, the lens through which community is examined is the social life surrounding the events. In this chapter, understanding the interpersonal and wider cultural dynamics involved in the central practices of giving money probes the relevance of the concept of community as it is understood to involve intensive interpersonal interaction, belonging to shared causes, and certain patterns of asymmetry in relationships between people.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I seek to bring together the different approaches to community employed in the preceding three chapters. I assess these findings in light of common discourses that have shaped how the notion is understood. I weigh up my observations from

jiqing guangchang, both those that show the concept of community reflected and fostered in the performances, and areas in which the notion seems less useful. Here, I revisit in more theoretical detail the issues of place, spatiality and materiality, temporality, society, individualism and collectivism, economics, belonging, and individual representations. Perhaps inevitably with so many facets of the concept considered, a picture of community in *jiqing guangchang* emerges that is complex, multifaceted and ambiguous. I argue that no single interpretation of community should be applied to this context and taken as a definitive indicator of the concept's usefulness or otherwise. Instead, the multiplicity of perspectives and the ambiguity that it generates should be embraced. As a result, I conclude by drawing together some of the underlying themes that have been weaved into my argument throughout the thesis. I return in particular to certain ways of approaching the relationship between public and intimate modes of social exchange (Warner 2002; Dueck 2007, 2013a, 2013b), arguing that to organise an understanding of community along the lines of dualities does not best serve my attempts to interpret *jiqing guangchang*. Reconsidering many of these approaches in a way that acknowledges dialecticism, synergy and multiplicity is perhaps a way of reconciling features that on first glance might seem inconsistent or contradictory. Furthermore, I argue that this approach might be usefully transferred to other musical contexts, allowing musical community to be considered in a way that is more comprehensively grounded in theory than may sometimes be the case. Negotiating a better path through the multiplicity of ways in which community can be understood may provide scholars with a common foundation from which to speak of musical community in all of its variety.

(i)   Community

> Despite our groundbreaking access to China since the 1980s, including the vast
> countryside, one is still easily beguiled by the glossy images of modern
> metropolitan culture displayed in the media. So a reminder of the enduring
> values of local communities is apposite. (Jones 2013: 26)

In his research on several forms of ritual and folk instrumental music in China, Stephen Jones frequently reflects upon the depth and variety of the nation's musical practices. He highlights, in particular, long-standing rural traditions that he argues go under-recognised in representations of Chinese music's diversity (Jones 1995, 2004, 2007). It is hard to disagree with one of the messages behind the quotation from Jones above, that Chinese music research should aim to present and consider an illustrative balance of locations, populations and practices. Later in this introduction I highlight what appear to be limitations of this kind in scholarship surrounding Chinese *popular* music in particular,

explaining why this is significant for the current project, and offering several senses in which my work is meant to contribute to its diversity. Looking in more detail at Jones' concerns, however, there emerges a further – more central – sense in which this study responds to the issues that he raises. Occurring occasionally throughout his scholarship are value judgements – offered unapologetically – making clear Jones' stance on what he presents as two categories of culture: on one hand the rural and traditional, and on the other, the urban and modern. At one point, for instance, Jones describes sceptically the introduction of an urban practice to a northern-Chinese village called Gaoluo: "also in 1997 a gaudy flagship for modernity finally invaded Gaoluo: two or three families bought video-CD karaoke machines. For the first time loud Chinese pop music polluted, or perfumed, the village air, wannabe singers paying 5 *mao* for each song" (Jones 2004: 319).

The way in which Jones frames these cultural contrasts encapsulates some of the issues at the heart of this thesis. Returning to the passage I quoted at the very start of this section, the duality he invokes to illustrate imbalances in typical pictures of Chinese music does not in fact involve urban and rural music cultures per se, nor the images that are attached to each in the scholarly or general imaginations. Instead the contrast that he draws is more explicitly between "modern metropolitan culture" on one hand, and "the values of local communities" on the other. Jones has thus slipped the notion of community into the rural/urban equation. The juxtaposition that he presents seems to imply that urban culture and community values are in some way contradictory ideas; they are, after all, assigned directly parallel positions within this snippet of analysis. Comparing the two, however, inspires various questions about the relationship between urban culture and community. Are the two mutually exclusive or found at opposite ends of a spectrum, as may be implied here? Can a practice, situation or experience therefore only reflect one or the other, and not both simultaneously? In other words, should (local) community be thought of only as a rural phenomenon? Or more pertinent to the present city-focused research, are urban practices remote from or incompatible with notions of (local) community? Should city culture even be viewed as community's natural antithesis?

A critical reading might accuse Jones' approach of being coloured by nostalgia. A rural experience – one that is perhaps idealised and has certainly retreated from prominence in the contemporary world – is held up as community's zenith, and it is assumed that urban culture and community do not naturally converge. The significance of these and similar issues is felt widely, emerging in various areas of research. One commentator notes, for instance, that in each of the fields of sociology, history, philosophy and political science, the idealisation of past forms of living, especially rural ones, has amounted to no less than a "leit-motif of the current intellectual age" (Gusfield 1975: 87). Another suggests that mourning for an apparent decline of community has "provided one of the more consistent

themes of social commentary and public discourse," and has persisted for more than a century (Day 2006: 181). Similarly, in Chinese music, the scholar of Taiwanese pop Marc Moskowitz argues that the concept of community – in particular its apparent loss – is a significant ingredient of music's meaning in many circumstances in contemporary urban Chinese life. At the heart of his monograph is a suggestion that one of pop music's central roles is to provide an outlet for negative feelings linked to wider issues: "urbanisation and the break-down of community as well as familial and religious authority, combined with a growing capitalist infrastructure, have in some sense been liberating, but they have also left many feeling isolated, lonely, and unsatisfied" (Moskowitz 2010: 53).

In the Chinese context, of course, any discussion of community must be understood against a background of Confucian thought, in which it is considered a core value (Rowe 1989: 346). My approach is to draw from a certain cluster of scholars (King 1985; Stockman 2000) offering a more critical perspective on the connection between Confucian theory and social reality than is sometimes found in the literatures of Chinese sociology and psychology (Bond 1991; Sun 2013). Rather than assuming a deterministic relationship, I try to acknowledge that the Confucian legacy is far more complex and its teachings less cohesive than often implied. Ethnographic studies (for instance Jankowiak 1993) may be more effective than theoretical or lab-based tests at revealing the link between treatise and practice.

Likewise, as Moskowitz's passing reference above to its "break-down" exemplifies, community is a concept intuitively understood and commonly referred to in the social analyses that often accompany studies of music (for example Chernoff 1979; Small 1998; Cooley 2005). It is, however, also a term whose complexity is not always fully explored. Does urbanisation have to be synonymous with the break-down of community? In which ways have contemporary lifestyles enabled new forms of community? These and many more questions are at the heart of this thesis. Indeed, they have become increasingly central in a recent avenue of more critical approaches towards music and community. In one of the most thorough dissections of the concept as a tool for ethnomusicologists, for instance, Kay Kaufman Shelemay highlights the need for updated understandings of the notion for contemporary circumstances. As a result, she makes a direct appeal for "more, not less, discussion of musical communities" (Shelemay 2011: 382). This thesis responds, in particular, to her call for well-informed and deliberately considered interpretations to be applied when using the concept in understanding music.

The uneasy relationship that is often assumed to exist between community and urban contexts is a theme that runs throughout. I draw upon some significant alternative approaches to the city and community. One influential thesis involves the proximity between different groups of people in city social life. This proximity, it is argued, can fortify a sense

of belonging by drawing out awareness of difference and even by stimulating conflict between groups. Originating in the work of Georg Simmel in the early twentieth century (Simmel 1922 (1955)), these ideas have been developed in areas directly relevant to this research. In particular, the historian William Rowe (1984, 1989) uses them as a basis to argue that certain features in the geography and demographics of Wuhan since at least the nineteenth century have meant that the notion of community carries stronger meaning in this city than most others in China. Another alternative approach to city and community can be traced to Émile Durkheim, whose work has inspired exploration of the division of labour in modern society. This phenomenon is said to breed mutual dependence, and with it a kind of community solidarity unlikely among more homogeneous groups (Durkheim 1893 (1960)). These two schools of thought combine to challenge features of the 'nostalgic' approach. For instance, instead of being the antithesis to community, the individualism that is sometimes taken as another hallmark of city life can also be thought of as a constitutive factor of close group experience. The potential heterogeneity of dealings between people in urban contexts might cause residents to identify strongly with wider social systems. Thus, I acknowledge that it is far from sufficient to understand community as a phenomenon dependent upon resemblance and traditional kinship.

The multifaceted understanding of community in *jiqing guangchang* that I intend to present, however, demands that I proceed from inclusive theoretical foundations. Thus, my intention is to broaden out the discussion even further, not only to consider a range of approaches to community and place, but in fact, towards a still more comprehensive picture of community's shifting implications. Among the other central themes thus requiring attention is the interpretation of community in relation to the notion of society. This distinction arises from the late-nineteenth-century German terms *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellchaft* (society) (Tönnies 1887 (2001)), and is a formulation said to have provided "the major framework within the poles of which sociologists have set their discussions of human associations and social changes" (Gusfield 1975: 1). The terms encourage social life to be understood along the lines of either informal or of bureaucratic organisation. These discourses also overlap with two other notions that have been major themes for debate among historians and social theorists studying urban China: civil society and the public sphere. These terms refer to phenomena recognised by Hegel in the nineteenth century and developed by Habermas (1989; Calhoun 1992). Like community, both can be seen as intermediate territories of free organisation and debate, located between the individual and the state (Pelczynski 1984: 11), but without perhaps carrying the same focus on close interpersonal interaction as the term community may do. Some scholars consider these concepts less relevant to Chinese societies than to the social circumstances and philosophies of their roots in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe. In particular, they point to the

emergence of a literate bourgeoisie here, and the concurrent conceptualisation of a distinct private realm (Wakeman 1993; Stockman 2000). For others, the increasing presence of intermediate organisations and individual rights in China means that despite some differences, the notions are nonetheless useful in analysing Chinese societies (Yang 1994). In particular, scholars highlight the close equivalences between ideas of publicness and the Chinese term *gong*. The connotations of both have evolved in a complex manner over history, at various times being associated with government authority, involved in distinctions with the private realm, or being synonymous with collectivity and communality (Rankin 1986; Rowe 1989, 1990).

Underpinning this and indeed many of the other versions of community is sense of belonging, and this returns to strong territory for ethnomusicological studies of music and community. Here, much attention has been paid to how music can encourage people to feel at one with others, perhaps through stirring emotions as part of the rituals at the symbolic heart of community (Turino 1993; Reijnders et al. 2007). Indeed, other kinds of music that provoke intense collective emotional responses, such as the jazz improvisations analysed by Monson (1996; see also Cook 2013), bring to mind the idea of *communitas* (Turner 1969). This version of community as a fleeting and intense oneness provides another perspective from which to analyse *jiqing guangchang*.

Collective behaviour and psychology account for some of the ways of approaching what Georgina Born summarises as "the individuation and aggregation of experience" (Born 2013: 29) – the processes by which people are divided and brought together. Equally important may be work examining the role of ideology. In many contexts, playing music in public forms part of a struggle for recognition and power among religious, ethnic, or political groups. These phenomena have notably been explored with relation to the construction of place by Martin Stokes (1994). A rich literature emerges, too, from various parts of the world in which Muslim populations have used sound in the fostering and expression of solidarity. Andrew Eisenberg (2013) and Charles Hirschkind (2006) highlight respectively the call to prayer in some Kenyan cities, and sermons recorded on cassettes in Middle Eastern urban centres. Each is cited as a factor in two similar phenomena, "Islamic communitarian privacy," and an "Islamic Revival," which both see private religious spaces forged within a wider public context. Other scholars have discussed responses to similar issues in places such as Switzerland (Bohlman 2013) and Singapore (Lee 1999), where neighbours have been disturbed by these sounds and authorities have perceived them as threats to the inclusivity of national citizenship.

The study of public-space music, then, seems particularly urgent when the communities producing it have strong agendas for change, subversion, the radical transformation of identities, or the escape from repression. Music, however, is an equally

significant part of the mundane contexts that represent more universal everyday experience: in shared offices (Dibben and Haake 2013), hospital wards (Rice 2013), underground train carriages (Cook 2013), factories (Jones 2005) and bedrooms (DeNora 2000). The *jiqing guangchang* context shares many facets of the routine quality pervading these scenarios. In each one, sound and music function as tools in the completion of a task, the catalyst for a certain activity, or the characteristic backdrop to a prescribed set of relationships. In the kinds of public space I investigate in Wuhan, however, activities and relationships are far from prescribed, and can involve people of various social backgrounds going about a limitless range of business in the normal street. As the theorist of publicness Michael Warner (2002) suggests, public-space music is like other forms of expression in recruiting a specific kind of audience; its locations, timings and practices specify to some extent the kinds of people that generally participate in or hear it. In streets open to all, though, as well as its core audience, this music reaches thousands of people who receive it unwittingly, accidentally, or reluctantly. Ordinary public streets play host to a mixture of classes, ages, genders and lifestyles, and its music is, in many cases, no more than a background to a range of other activities. Engagements with music in these spaces are perhaps the most representative of the multiplicities and contradictions of *public* life. Thus, where I deviate from Stokes is in viewing identities from a more mundane perspective. Instead of focusing on larger questions such as ethnicity, my focus is on the micro-level identities of everyday life.

Indeed, as I have already noted, *jiqing guangchang* performances themselves exude a mundane quality, manifest not only in their settings and circumstances, but also in the underwhelming collective responses – money-giving practices aside – that they provoke. In many respects, the city's society is relatively homogeneous. Significant ethnic, religious, linguistic or political tensions are not a prominent part of public life here. Despite being a destination for migrants from over China, almost all share Han ethnicity and speak a similar language, and there is very little diversity in terms of fervent political loyalties. Public-space music is simply not a vehicle for the expression of intensely emotive and divisive agendas. Instead, Wuhan is a city full of conflict on a more intimate and mundane level. It is not unusual to encounter verbal and even physical disputes in public, strangers are generally treated with mild hostility, and interpersonal tension characterises much public interaction. Indeed, Chinese popular literature reserves a significant place for analysis of the personality characteristics of people from particular regions and cities. Wuhan's residents often come out as defined by their aggression and mistrust (Yi 2003).

Study of the city's public-space music does not, therefore, highlight intensity, transformation and transcendence, but a more domestic and routine version of collective life. It is worth emphasising again, then, that this research seeks a different angle on the issue of belonging and ideology. Here, minority identities and galvanising ideologies are less

important than a kind of collective participation that is mundane, mainstream, habitual or even reluctant. Indeed, although perhaps less familiar in scholarship, this kind of context may well be more representative of typical experiences of music than those in which it is thrust into more urgent or ideologically charged environments. Perhaps there is a danger of the picture being distorted by scholars focusing on exceptional, underground or minority cases, which they have sometimes attempted to describe using alternative terms to community, including 'subcultures' (Slobin 1993), 'musical pathways' (Finnegan 1989), and 'scenes' (Peterson and Bennett 2004). I particularly acknowledge the strength of Mark Slobin's approach. He clearly highlights the overlapping of three levels of culture: *subculture*, *superculture* and *interculture*. This becomes significant as I assess the collective experience in *jiqing guangchang* as a product of local, national and pan-Chinese influences. I also take Slobin's (1993: 23) lead in attempting to keep a "multiple viewpoint" in balance during my comprehensive discussions of community in this context. Finnegan's work, too, is a leading illustration that a whole spectrum of different kinds of music-making can be treated as "equally worthy of study on their own terms" (Finnegan 1989: 7). I aim to develop from her concentration on musical practices rather than texts, showing that musical sounds and the significance of acoustic properties can be the link between these two phenomena.

Nonetheless, I remain loyal to the term community in this thesis. Primarily, this is because it avoids mystifying the marginalised or politicised. Furthermore, my approach to the *jiqing guangchang* context takes heed of a warning from Christopher Waterman: "the ethnomusicologist, eager to demonstrate the importance of music in human life, may easily claim too much for it" (Waterman 1990: 213). In broadening rather than narrowing my approach to community, I seek a humbler set of implications. I try to avoid any insinuation that finding community to be meaningful in the *jiqing guangchang* context is a vindication, or that where it is less meaningful should be considered a deficiency.

(ii)   Sound and space

The first cluster of territories through which I explore community in *jiqing guangchang* primarily involves sound and space, but also extends into the realms of material and time. As I have noted, in this thesis I aim to challenge certain conventional understandings regarding community and the city. This is partly built on an important distinction between place and space. Into the former category falls the preceding discussion of the urban and rural, whereby a city is an example of an entity whose distinctness from other places – perhaps a village – is imagined just as much along social lines as it is along geographical ones. Often discussions of place return again to belonging, a unifying theme that I have already touched upon. In particular, belonging underpins the 'sense of place' that

might feature in the identity felt by, say, residents of a city. Sara Cohen explores how the symbolic markers of particular places may be embedded in genres and pieces of recorded music (Cohen 2007). She deconstructs the idea of popular bands from particular cities sharing characteristic 'sounds', and ultimately casts doubt on the idea that this relationship between place and music is deterministic in any meaningful way. Another level of investigation into the role of music and the construction of place emerges when musical activities and practices become symbolically representative of a place, either for insiders or outsiders. Torsten Wissman gives an account of the city of Austin, whose cultural and tourism marketing material claims for it the title of 'Live Music Capital of the World' (Wissmann 2014), and this status contributes to identity felt within the city.

My understanding of 'space', on the other hand, involves a microscopic focus upon the material environment, in this case the spread of musical activity across Wuhan, its physical and sonic features, and its immediate surroundings. How this influences social life emerges as secondary implications of these observations. While understanding community in *jiqing guangchang* demands that the role of the events in participants' sense of place be acknowledged, my interest lies less in symbolic than embodied experience. I will show that this approach is, after all, better suited to the *jiqing guangchang* context. As I have already noted, wider group identification is among the least evident aspects of collective participation. Instead, it is more meaningful to see identity negotiated on a face-to-face interpersonal and small-group scale. An important arena for this level of meaning construction to be played out, I argue, is the sonic, spatial and material realities of the events.

Indeed, I consider the space and material of the performance environment here as operating largely in tandem. Both are implicated in the social insights that can be derived from the *practice* rather simply than the symbolism of music-making. Research in the geography of music (Anderson et al. 2005; Wood et al. 2007) explores how the relationship between music and its environment can play a significant part in the integration of the former into ordinary life. Adam Krims, for instance, highlights various patterns in which music helps to shape the spaces of daily activity. The classical section of a CD retailer being physically separated off from the other departments by the material design of a shop is just one way in which genre's rarefied status is played out in "geographical fact" (Krims 2007: xv). In particular, geographers of music have developed upon Nigel Thrift's (2008) non-representational theory, which emphasises transient embodied action over textual meaning. This approach is intended to put space itself in a more central role, capable of influencing and in turn being influenced by activity, rather than simply functioning as its container (Born 2013: 20-1). Notable deployments of this approach include those from George Revill (2004), who applies this theoretical stance to the study of dance, showing how corporeality helps to

shape aesthetic form. Similarly, Paul Simpson (2008, 2011, 2013) creates a comprehensive ecological picture of musical performances, highlighting ways in which all kinds of human and non-human factors affect the impact that street buskers have on their audience, and how responses to localised space shape the ways in which musicians coexist. Physical and social conditions change over time, and thus temporality is bound up with sonic and material influences. Similar theoretical territory is occupied by scholars using actor network theory in the understanding of how musicians and other actors engage with musical instruments (Bates 2012; Roda 2014). This involves approaching both humans and non-human objects as potential "source(s) of action" as they interrelate (Bates 2012: 372). I have come across no work, however, that applies actor network theory specifically to engagements with the spaces of music-making – this may be a fruitful avenue for future research.

That is not to say, however, that analysis of music in a representational or symbolic sense is redundant in this context. The connections that Stephen Feld (1982 (1990)) demonstrates between the music of the Kaluli people and their understanding of life in the forest environment in which they live illustrate clearly the advantages that can be derived from analysing representations of space and material in music. Indeed, it will be necessary to draw briefly upon Peircean semiotics (Greenlee 1973; Turino 1999) to explore how some of Wuhan's public-space music carries specific messages meant to shape the action of those who encounter it. Nevertheless, I see non-representational theory as a key building-block of this way of approaching *jiqing guangchang*. In seeking to understand community in this context, I place primary store upon material "operators" (Simpson 2012), perhaps more so than I do upon social imaginaries existing beyond the immediate physical and social environment, and certainly more so than upon ideologies that are, in the broadest sense, political.

Later in this introduction I will explain in more detail that, as far as the knowledge and techniques I employ in observing and analysing sound and space are concerned, an influential field is that of sound and soundscape studies. Developing from Murray Schafer's (1977) concern for observing and analysing the sonic environment or soundscape, the field has established various means of recording and presenting information about sound as it emerges as a facet of daily experience. I have some concerns, though, about relying heavily upon this field for the theoretical understanding of community. Preoccupations in sound studies with creating outputs in electro-acoustic composition (Wishart 1986) and, in particular, urban design (Lacey 2011) are perhaps indicators that the nature of this field's interest in community has sometimes not been the same as my own. Schafer's work, for instance, is unapologetic in approaching the sounds of the city from an instrumental point of view. He aims to confront what some have judged to be a deterioration of acoustic conditions since the Industrial Revolution to the point that now "the world suffers from an

overpopulation of sounds; there is so much acoustic information that little of it can emerge with clarity" (Schafer 1977: 71). Thus, there is danger of the field straying into similar territory to that which I earlier labelled 'nostalgic', equating favourable social conditions with rural and past forms of living. My interest, on the other hand, is equally strong in assessing where community is *not* a particularly useful concept in contemporary urban life, as it is in analysing where the notion *is* useful.

More recent work in sound studies, however, draws on Feld (1982 (1990)) in ways that demonstrate the potential of this approach for the present study. A focus upon auditory understandings of the environment can inform the configuration of urban spaces in ways that have ethnic, religious and political consequences (Sakakeeny 2010). This is particularly relevant here when effects are felt on an intimate scale, involve understanding how individuals relate to each other in space, and have implications for how public space is conceptualised (Hirschkind 2006). Attention to soundscapes and the mapping of musical phenomena is also beginning to emerge strongly in the study of Chinese music, particularly in relation to transnationalism (Tan and Rao 2016) and Islamic practices (Harris 2013, 2015).

On the other hand, schemes that have emerged to categorise sounds (as *keynote sounds*, *signals* or *soundmarks*) are certainly useful tools for considering how sound itself can be a major part in the fostering of community – "acoustic community" (Truax 1984 (2001): 66). *Soundmark* is a category of sounds said to carry a unique significance for a certain group of people, and thus to act as the primary means by which this group recognises and defines itself. Schafer gives a compelling example of residents living near to an airport being united primarily insofar as they are all negatively affected by the sounds of approaching aircraft (Schafer 1977: 214). In instances in which the soundmark is also music, it may seem less useful to isolate these sounds from the practices of their production and reception. I will argue, however, that it is the centrality of sound (rather than musical practices) that helps to draw boundaries in certain street music contexts in Wuhan. Thus, soundmarks and acoustic community are in fact still useful in helping to shift attention to underlying material foundations for this kind of social phenomenon.

(iii)   Popular and folk music

The second major perspective from which I approach community in *jiqing guangchang* involves analysis of the musical and performative content of the shows. Here, I draw upon discourses surrounding the generic categories of 'popular' and 'folk', and explore the usefulness of applying to this context the connotations regarding community that are associated with each one. Popular music has been implicated in many of the pessimistic

judgements about contemporary urban life highlighted earlier in this introduction, while, on the other hand, scholarship of folk culture and community emerges from roots that treat the two almost as if synonymous. The work of mid-twentieth-century cultural theorist Theodore Adorno (2001) has played a significant part in trends towards viewing popular music through a Marxist lens, those that centre upon the industrialisation of culture and the market commodification of musical creation (Qureshi 2002; Stokes 2002; Taylor 2007). Interpreting popular music in this way has led to concerns that the genre represents a homogenisation of cultural practices and experiences, and that the musical encounter once involving genuine human relationships has become impersonal (Small 1998; Fukuyama 1999). The connection between folk and community, on the other hand, can be traced back to the earliest folk scholarship. The late-eighteenth-century work of German thinker Johann Gottfried Herder, for instance, is often cited to illustrate that folk songs of earlier times were "seen as works of nature rather than as works of art" (Burke 1981: 216). Place thus again takes a key role in defining the community that gives rise to a folk repertory.

If such ideal versions of community ever did exist, however, lifestyles have long developed away from music being bound up in agricultural activity and isolated from outside influences. Thus, I draw heavily upon Philip Bohlman's (1988) attempts to reconfigure understandings of folk music for the contemporary world. I aim to share his "inductive approach, based on observations of musical activity that continues to display many aspects of folk music" (ibid.: xvii), although my primary aim is not to settle on a label for *jiqing guangchang* either as popular or folk music, but to use each as an avenue to approach community. In doing so, I seek to incorporate a method outlined by Gregory Booth and Terry Lee Kuhn (1990), in which the generic boundaries between folk and popular music are deconstructed in order to systematically theorise the commonalities and distinctions between them. What results is an understanding of the economic and transmission systems that underpin each. As Booth and Kuhn acknowledge, and as becomes clear when I analyse *jiqing guangchang* in these terms, understanding the background systems on which different types of music is based should not be taken as a step towards precise classification. Instead, I argue that it does help to bring structure to analysis of the events according to the implications of the two genres.

As might be expected, literature of Chinese folk music as it is normally understood is mainly concerned with details of particular repertories and social contexts. These contexts do not always share common theoretical concerns with the present research (Schimmelpenninck 1997; Tuohy 1999; Jones 2003; Chien 2015; Idema 2015). Perhaps a field more instinctively aligned is that of Chinese popular music. The genre is traced in current literature to the dance halls and cabarets of Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s, a scene said to have initiated not only the development of Chinese pop's basic characteristics, but

also the nation's popular music industry (Chen 2005), and both were shaped by the peculiar set of colonial circumstances prevalent in that context (Jones 2001). The subsequent periods of civil war and Communist revolution on mainland China moved the main industries – and thus shift academic attention – to the politically separate territories of Hong Kong (Witzleben 1999; Ho 2000, 2003; Yau and Wong 2015) and Taiwan (Yang 1993; Yang 1994; Moskowitz 2010). The trajectories of these societies and their respective music industries continue to exert wide-ranging influences upon popular music all over the Chinese-speaking world in the present day.

Scholarly concern with popular music originating on the mainland, on the other hand, has often been related to a single sub-genre, rock music (*yaogun yinyue*). Although rock has arguably enjoyed only relatively limited reach and appeal in mainland society even during the height of its prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the subject has been a major part of scholarship since Andrew Jones (1991) first addressed the apparent saturation of rock with dissident political ideology. Since then, Jones' position has received limited support (Lee 1996), but has more commonly been subjected to robust critique. Some scholars, especially David Stokes (2004), reject outright what they see as the projection onto China of incompatible concerns rooted in foreign societies; perhaps rock and rebellion only go hand in hand in Western cultures. At other times, Jones' arguments have been modified and developed to acknowledge the complex synergy, or perhaps compromise, involved when potentially dissenting rock musicians meet the cultural and market hegemony associated with state agency (Efird 2001; Hao 2001, 2003; Baranovitch 2003; de Kloet 2005). Latterly, a similar relationship has also been explored as it occurs between recent pop stars of a more mainstream appeal on the one hand, and the political and market landscapes of the twenty-first century on the other. Analysis centres upon readings of the imagery contained within lyrics and videos released by these artists, as well as the economic choices that surround their careers (Witzleben 1999; Fung and Curtin 2002; Fung 2008, 2013; Groenewegen 2009).

Unlike the bulk of scholarship in the field of popular music studies, however, the present research is tied to the specificities of one local live performance context. The study of popular music is often concerned less with the interpersonal and group dynamics of local music-making than with matters shaped by national and international-scale processes. Macroeconomics and political ideology are often seen as playing a major part in the production of popular music, and mass mediation and online social existences make the territories on which it is played out highly complex. There is, however, a limited body of existing scholarship that does attempt to foreground the impact of Chinese popular music upon its audiences. Irene Yang (1993), for instance, analyses the musical preferences expressed by female high school students in Taiwan, suggesting that these preferences are

the basis for a consensual definition of the genres involved. More recently, Nimrod Baranovitch (2007) has used both qualitative and quantitative analysis from interviews and surveys of Uyghur university students in Xinjiang to assess attitudes towards politicised elements in the popular music that they encounter in the mass media. Hong-chi Shiau (2009) explores the responses of emigrants from Chinese societies to the music of the preeminent Taiwanese singer Deng Lijun, particularly as they contribute to feelings of nostalgia and the generation of identity. Similarly, Chow and de Kloet (2013) carry out a cross-cultural comparison of modern fandom, analysing online forum posts relating to pop stars both from Hong Kong and from the Netherlands. Each of these approaches is effective in partially shifting attention away from symbolic readings of the popular music industry's products, in favour of understanding the ways in which meaning is actually derived from these texts. Even these studies, however, rarely consider the actual arena for encountering and listening to popular music, and thus may be limited by detachment from the personal and social contexts in which the music is embedded.

As I mentioned earlier in this introduction, another problematic feature of Chinese popular music scholarship involves what I consider to be geographical imbalances. There appears to be a tendency for studies to focus on the music – and the experience of that music – in only a few locations across greater China. Research is almost invariably based in the city of Beijing, or in the non-mainland territories of Hong Kong or Taiwan. Along with Shanghai, these are perhaps the highest-profile places in the Chinese-speaking world. It should not be assumed, I argue, that popular music activity in these locations is more broadly representative nor necessarily of greater interest than that occurring elsewhere. Each one of these places displays various political and cultural characteristics – not to mention extraordinary population sizes – that make them exceptional in the greater picture of Chinese life. I suggest, therefore, that they are not necessarily well suited to representing a popular music experience of the whole nation. The issues important to residents of these elite and culturally distinct places may be highly remote from the experience of music for people living elsewhere. Thus, it is particularly promising that Anouska Komlosy's (2008) investigation of the music and dance scenes in China's south-western Yunnan province not only draws evidence from its capital Kunming, but also from other smaller towns and cities. Likewise, the present study of popular music's reception on the streets of Wuhan affords some attention to a place not usually covered in the literature. Furthermore, it does so in a way that may contribute to a more satisfactory balance between the music of underground or youth movements on one hand, and mainstream forms on the other. Although, for instance, the Yunnan hip-hop scene that Komlosy highlights opens new avenues for exploration, this should not imply that its impact matches more established forms such as classic pop, to which most urban Chinese residents may still be more committed.

By studying a section of musical life in the city of Wuhan, a territory with a lower profile in Chinese music research, I aim to contribute to a fuller representation, one that transcends the existing geographical clusters to which scholarship often relates. In addition, my ethnography does not focus upon the celebrated musicians or elite genres that earlier in this introduction Stephen Jones argued enjoy a disproportionately high profile. Nor does it examine 'traditional' practices that may be becoming increasingly marginal, or youth subcultures that are, by definition, of niche appeal. Instead, it engages with accessible and mainstream music-making whose impact, I aim to show, is felt most strongly in mundane and relatively inclusive domains of social life. My intention is to focus on music's meaning in a form and social context recognisable to a large number of people in contemporary China, yet those that are less familiar in representations of this culture.

(iv)   Social life

The final perspective from which I approach community in *jiqing guangchang* involves understanding the social life of the events, in particular the dynamics of money-giving. It is at this point in the thesis that I tackle the interpersonal and group behaviour occurring between and among performers and audiences, considering how face-to-face processes meet wider cultural customs to create patterns in social life. I am guided by theories of social interaction, most notably the dramaturgical approach employed by Erving Goffman. In *Frame Analysis* (1974), Goffman explores the ways in which an object or happening is experienced by individuals as "constituents of different spheres of reality" (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 35). The distinction, for example, between dreams and literal activity demonstrates clearly that the individual is capable of being "attentive to them in quite different ways" (ibid.). Ken Mullen (1985) takes this mechanism for social analysis as a means of understanding challenges that occur when performances are embedded closely in other social activity. I extend this approach not only by using it to interpret the literal performance of music here, but also in understanding audiences' collective dynamics, economic behaviour, and ethical discourses. The notion of the frame is particularly useful in this context because interpreting *jiqing guangchang's* social world demands an understanding of how the activity relates to surrounding life in each of these four realms.

Thomas Turino's (2008) explorations of music as social life are significant at several points throughout the thesis. The different degrees of collective participation possible in musical performances has a bearing on how *jiqing guangchang* can be understood in generic terms and also economically. I aim to add to this approach, however, by specifically exploring the overlaps and intersections between participation and presentation in musical performance. Evidence from the Chinese street context suggests that a performance event

may straddle, bring together or blur these categories in a multiplicity of ways, each of which may impact upon how the music-making can be understood in terms of community.

My discussions of the economics of the events touch upon various levels, but culminate as I develop ideas from Marcel Mauss (1954 (1974)) and Martin Stokes (2002) surrounding the convergence of economic practices with interpersonal ethical concerns. I adapt these theories for the contemporary Chinese context with reference to Mayfair Yang's study of the 'gift economy' (Yang 1989). This is in combination with the parallels that these ethical discourses display with certain nightlife contexts. Here, asymmetrical gender relations have a bearing upon the sense of personal and social validation that individuals derive from interactions (Prus and Irini 1980; Ronai and Ellis 1989; Wood 2000). Indeed, as I noted earlier, analysis of male and female roles in Chinese karaoke singing and other similar nightlife contexts has provided a canvass for various scholars to make wider points about gender relations and expectations in Chinese culture (Boretz 2004; Zheng 2006, 2013). I give evidence to show that these concerns are highly significant here too, but perhaps in different ways to the contexts of existing work. I focus less upon gendered music choices and more upon gender asymmetry permeating wider roles and behaviours.

It is worth stressing that as well as one-to-one dealings, I also highlight factors influencing collective interactive conditions. I have already noted how ethnomusicologists often draw attention to collective effervescence and communal experience as major contributors to music's potentially formidable social impacts. How do these observations about *jiqing guangchang's* audiences – who seem at once physically unengaged with the music and each other while financially committed to its makers – fit into this well-established picture? The typical spectator on Wuhan's streets is middle-aged or older, so might their apparently unusual way of responding to music hint that age is an important variable not necessarily explored fully in ethnomusicology? Some work has studied the incorporation of popular music into the everyday lives of older people. It tends, however, to emphasise the continuities rather than the differences in music's role in group engagement, when compared with how this functions among younger people (Bennett and Taylor 2012; Forman 2012). Thus, there does not seem to be a thorough literature suggesting that age per se is likely to be the primary factor determining the nature of collective engagement here.

Perhaps rather than age, then, it may be that the low levels of expressivity I have observed are particularly associated with Chinese musical culture. In fact, literature from various fields provides a mixed picture. Some references to the behaviour of music listeners in Chinese societies characterises them as responding in obviously enthusiastic ways to music (Morrison and Yeh 1999; Lai 2004). These observations, however, are countered by another set of anecdotes and findings claiming that people from Chinese societies tend to display restraint, at least when it comes to individual self-expression and music (Hao 2003:

190; Ho 2004; Chen 2005: 120). Additional observations come from cross-cultural studies in the psychology of musical and general everyday experience, and these focus strongly on musical preferences and emotional recognition in music, alongside emotional expression in everyday life. Generally, Chinese people are considered reticent about expressing emotion in public (Gao et al. 1996; Russell and Yik 1996; Matsumoto et al. 2008). It is difficult, however, to apply many of these findings in a way that is meaningful in real music-making contexts, especially as much of this reticence is supposed to involve the expression of negative emotions, which presumably are rarely invoked in music listening.

Perhaps more fundamentally, some scholars might again be accused of drawing too heavily upon Confucian explanations for concrete instances of behaviour in Chinese societies. Many of the studies mentioned above seek to link cross-cultural responses to music with general characteristics of different societies. Chinese societies are characterised as 'collectivistic' and contrasted with those thought of as 'individualistic'. Just as I noted earlier when discussing the place of community in Confucian ethics, there is a growing recognition that such labels are unhelpfully simplistic, especially in overemphasising the extent to which social conditions determine individual action. Even experimental work comparing people from these different kinds of society seems to undermine such claims. Some results show, for instance, significant inconsistencies between Chinese societies in different places (Matsumoto et al. 2008). Experiments might be expected to unearth greater similarities in responses given by people from, for example, Hong Kong and mainland China.

My approach to social life, therefore, involves evaluating the collective experience at *jiqing guanchang* events on its own terms, applying my dialectical approach to reconcile what may appear to be inconsistencies between the experience here and cultural expectations. Social analysis built on the concept of the frame allows me to highlight the multiplicity of factors forming the social experience, and the synergies bringing together different ways of understanding community.

Methods

In the case above, in which I examine the significance for community of certain aspects of collective behaviour among *jiqing guangchang* audiences, I found that a suitably detailed literature of cross-cultural audience behaviour was not available. In this instance, therefore, I chose to conduct a written survey with appropriate musicians that would add context to my observations from *jiqing guangchang*. The results form part of the discussion of collective experience in Chapter 4. This is the only case in which my analysis incorporates information gathered away from the immediate performance environment, or at related activities directly involving its participants. Principally, this study is based upon

observation of the musical performances, records of how they emerge and dissolve at their beginnings and ends, and insights gained by participating in closely connected happenings. While present at performances and other events, I straddled several roles. On one extreme, I participated in ways that were little different from other audience members, watching the performances from among the spectators and thus experiencing a representative range of exchanges with all participants. I interacted with fellow audience members and became one of the known individuals that singers at different events would look out for, chat to, and extend hospitality towards both inside and away from the performance arena.

While my questions and requests sometimes made these exchanges quite different from those between other participants, I sensed that even for some performers that I got to know relatively well, I was still treated as a potential patron like any other. Sometimes this was framed as singers bestowing the favour of teaching me the customs of this unfamiliar social world in the hope of receiving my tips as a reward. It is likely that sometimes they felt able to be more direct with me in their requests for gifts than with other audience members. Nonetheless, I gained a relatively representative experience of the kinds of discourses and modes of interaction that usually took place. Indeed, as I have already mentioned, occasionally I experimented with offering some small gifts to singers, and I expand upon the specific circumstances and insights from this tactic later. For other contacts, I repaid their openness to my enquiries in other ways. One backing musician, for instance, asked me to sing several times at another kind of performance he was involved in, and the novelty of having a foreign visitor taking part obviously reflected well on him. On the other extreme, I settled into the role of trusted outsider with some individuals. I was taken into confidence about information from private lives that was not shared with peers, invited to sit 'backstage' at shows, and specifically told by several singers that they did not expect tips from me.

I used audio-visual recordings of events as a part of my efforts to document the musical material played and to provide examples of performance details that support various parts of my argument, particularly in Chapter 3. My reliance on this technique was limited somewhat by difficult light conditions at most shows. I also found some organisers reluctant to allow the use of recording equipment their events. They generally preferred to keep to a minimum any material whose uncontrolled circulation might embarrass participants or cause trouble with authorities. At the heart of my records, therefore, is detailed observation at well over fifty individual performances, including listings of the songs performed, the responses that they achieved, and notable features of the behaviour of all types of participants and peripheral actors. In addition, I draw upon notes of activity and conversations at numerous meals and various other occasions spent with performers on a one-to-one basis and as part of groups involving audience members, as well as extensive online conversations with various participants.

Bader and Richter warn that in contexts such as this one, in which music is not a rarefied and separate phenomenon but one of everyday life, "the distance necessary for taking into account the ways in which [participants] themselves make meaning of their experiences is neglected by researchers who instead project meanings onto them that conform to their own discursive frames" (Bader and Richter 2014: 169). In the field, I resisted continuing my conversations with spectators and performers into more formal interrogations. I was conscious that extracting these conversations from the contexts in which they normally exist would risk guiding them in directions more reflective of the scholar's agenda than meaningful to participants. I was satisfied that I could gain a good understanding of this particular social world through a level of conversation conducted informally and embedded in context, the details noted with less precision than a recording would achieve. Those involved in *jiqing guangchang* are, after all, not professional musicians trained to analyse their musical and other choices, but instead they approach their work in a manner that chimes more with casual conversation than official dialogue. Regarding, for example, the meaning that the notion of community held for participants, I soon became aware that raising the subject explicitly was virtually guaranteed to destroy the spontaneity of responses. When I did so, informants would hasten to formulate answers that I began to suspect did not represent their usual patterns of thought. Mantle Hood cautions against employing this "witness stand" approach in questioning informants:

> In many societies, if someone is asked a question, he is obliged to answer. Not to do so would be considered rude and might indicate ignorance on the part of the respondent, a loss of face. Whether he knows the answer to the question or whether he understands the question or even whether the question is germane to the subject – in the accepted behaviour of his society these considerations may not even concern him. They are of vital concern to the questioner. (Hood 1971: 219)

Instead, I was guided by more innovative techniques from the social sciences, such as the 'go-along interview' method. It has been shown that there can be qualitative differences in the data generated between, on one hand, conversations held while walking through a city and, on the other, sedentary interviews (Carpiano 2009; Evans and Jones 2011). I found that with extensive access to participants both at and away from the performance event, I could gain the most reliable information by following the natural course of events. While, for example, accompanying one singer as she shopped for stage outfits, she pointed out to me a public information sign of the kind I note in Chapter 2, and volunteered an expression of cynicism about the communitarian values that it espoused. The insights in which I had most faith regularly arose in moments of this kind. Likewise, I took care to note significant features of the language and themes of on-microphone discourse at the events. I noticed, for instance, that the introductions emcees gave to begin shows always

linked the events with topics pertaining to individual health, happiness and prosperity. They rarely mentioned the benefits that associating with others at the performances might bring to members of the audience. As a result of these choices, this thesis contains a minimum of direct quotations from participants.

Alongside singers, band members and emcees, throughout this thesis I focus upon those among audiences who engage most actively in the events. In particular, I refer often to the spectators who participate in the practices of money-giving and who develop relationships with singers. This should not, however, be taken to imply that the experience of these people is representative of all spectators. In fact, the majority engage rarely, if at all, with performers in such an active way. Events simply provide many with an entertaining focal point for a relatively passive afternoon or evening of leisure spent in the area immediately surrounding their home. Indeed, at one event, a good proportion of the audience does not actually gather with the performers in the arena itself, but instead on the nearby Jianghan Bridge that allows them to look down on the show from a high vantage point. This location – found on the fringes of a construction site – is another of the performance spaces that I explore in detail in Chapter 2. These spectators are too far away for performers ever to have direct personal contact or even to acknowledge them on the microphone, and thus they remain entirely separate from much of the performer-audience interpersonal interaction that I discuss. The audience members who engage most actively with the performers might be considered the lifeblood of the events, but nonetheless it must be stressed that they only represent a minority.

To achieve a sense of how far *jiqing guangchang* is known and understood in wider society – beyond even those who participate only on the peripheries – I asked various kinds of non-participants to comment on *jiqing guangchang.* Among them were people leading lives close to the performances such as the holders of stalls nearby, others that I knew and met in Wuhan more generally, and indeed contacts in other places in China. To this end, I also posted messages on local and national online message boards asking for information. While the low level of meaningful replies from the latter source must partly be put down to the idiosyncrasies of online communication, the sum of all of my inquiries consistently led me towards the conclusion that the events exist firmly under the radar.

As I have implied already, observation of performance activity and surrounding social life is not the only method by which I assess the role of community in this thesis. In particular, the approach I outline regarding sound and space relies upon a further cluster of knowledge and techniques, many of which emerge from the field of sound studies. Particularly useful here is the technique of mapping sounds and related activity, both figuratively (Herman et al. 1998) and diagrammatically (Cohen 2012). Sally Harrison-Pepper (1990) in particular employs plans of New York City's Washington Square Park to

great effect in the analysis of leisure and performance endeavours in this localised space. She presents various activities, such as jogging, chess, and mandolin playing, in relation to the physical features of the square (ibid.: 55), stressing the role of spatiality and temporal variety in generating the meanings attached to different parts of the space. She uses similar maps in the understanding of habitual pathways of people using the square, plotting visitors' routes and their interactions with its street performers. She concludes that certain physical features of the space, such as the diagonal walkways which channel visitors towards street performers, directly enhance a sense of community (ibid.: 59-71). Along similar lines, I conducted surveys of the public space of the central portion of Wuhan, covering – to the best of my knowledge – all of the *jiqing guangchang* events active in the city at the time. I recorded the precise locations of any public-space music activity that I encountered in this space, not only live music-making, but also the broadcasting of recorded music to accompany activity such as square dancing, as well as the music emitted by shops and other businesses into the space around their premises. From this information, I was able to produce maps (see Chapter 2) showing the clustering of this activity, and enabling me to discuss the physical, social and temporal features of the environment influencing these patterns. As such, it was also necessary to harness discussions of acoustics, sound diffusion and noise (Truax 1984 (2001)) found in sound studies. Applying this wider lens alongside more traditional ethnographic approaches is intended to form the most comprehensive method possible of approaching community in *jiqing guangchang*.

2. Sound and Space

Music in public life

In this chapter, I address the first of three main approaches to community and *jiqing guangchang* employed during this thesis. I explore the performance events through the lenses of sound, urban public space and material, examining ways in which the immediate environment is an operator in musical and social life here. I seek to understand the clustering of shows in the city landscape, and how each one is embedded in the physical conditions of its surroundings. I also assess the coexistence of these performances with other forms of public-space music-making and non-musical sounds. My larger aim is to understand how these factors shape relationships among people involved, and thus how the environment may be a reason to consider the notion of community meaningful in this context. I begin to relate my analysis here to some key approaches to community, and thus I intend to lay foundations to be built upon when the theme is developed more fully in Chapter 5.

(i) Public space

As I noted in Chapter 1, publicness is one of the main characteristics I use to identify and define *jiqing guangchang*. In due course, it also becomes part of interpreting various discourses of community, especially those involving society and individualism. I set this thread of the thesis running here, though, first by outlining in more detail why I consider publicness central to defining the scope of these investigations. Many musical performances are public in the broadest sense. They are devised, prepared and delivered in such a way that makes them not personal messages aimed exclusively at known individuals, but at an audience that either actually includes strangers or is imagined to potentially include them. This is extrapolated from an approach to public expression from the Habermas-inspired theorist Michael Warner (2002). Various kinds of music-making in Wuhan may fulfil this criterion: shows from touring pop stars at the sixty thousand-seat Wuhan Sports Centre Stadium; various concert programmes at the Wuhan Conservatory of Music; regular gigs at one of China's most prominent rock venues, the six hundred-capacity Vox Livehouse; or those acts entertaining drinkers at various 'music bars' around the city.

In this thesis, however, my attention falls on a narrower range of musical activity. I focus only upon that which occurs specifically in public *locations*, in what is thought of as public space. Instead of stadiums, concert halls and bars, I typically refer to streets, parks and squares. I understand these spaces as being normally accessible to anyone, with individuals not having to pay a fee or to justify their presence in any way, such as through

holding specific permission. For historical geographers Ehrenfeucht and Loukaitou-Sideris (2007), the pertinent feature distinguishing such spaces is the relative freedom that they grant people within them to behave as they please. City streets, for instance, might be thought of as among the places outside of the home with the fewest restrictions on behaviour. That which takes place here ranges from immersion in specific activities, to the creation of what Goffman calls 'orientation gloss', individuals attaching themselves to an activity simply to present the impression that they are engaged legitimately rather than merely loitering (Goffman 1971: 130). The attention of *jiqing guangchang's* participants, too, is invested in various different foci and they show different levels of engagement with the shows. For some of its performers, the activity represents a career and way of life, and many of its spectators are also committed and active. Some audience members, on the other hand, are there mainly to passively kill time, and others are better thought of as passers-by in the midst of other activity but stopping to briefly take part on a one-off basis. Many other people in the *jiqing guangchang* environment, in fact, do not stop at all and instead move on quickly to escape the intrusive sounds. Central to the importance of publicness is my thesis is the multiplicity of accepted behaviour that the notion implies.

I stop short, however, of Ehrenfeucht and Loukaitou-Sideris' position, in which this freedom is taken as even more relevant to defining a given space than legal definitions involving public and private ownership. They argue that private commercial spaces to which any person normally has extensive access, such as shops and malls, can function as public spaces just as much as those in the standard open air (Ehrenfeucht and Loukaitou-Sideris 2007: 106). As this chapter progresses, I do acknowledge the similarities that these privately-owned spaces share with publicly-owned ones and, during parts of the narrative in which there is no need to distinguish between the two, I use 'public life' as an umbrella term. This deployment of the phrase may not necessarily be consistent with common usage. I choose, however, to exclude privately-owned spaces from the main scope of this research for various reasons. First, Ehrenfeucht and Loukaitou-Sideris decide not to recognise that unlike in the case of the normal street, users of these spaces require permission to enter and inhabit them. Evidence of this arises every day at closing time, when implied permission is withdrawn from anyone wishing to go in or remain. Normal streets themselves are, of course, not entirely free from restriction in the behaviour accepted within them, but the kind of constraint here occupies the minimal end of a spectrum. Usually, only the most basic level of regulation set by law and social custom applies in these spaces.

But, while the actions of those in malls and other commercial complexes often seem little different from people in normal streets, in fact, activity here is likely to be more homogeneous, and the range of behaviours permitted narrower. This may barely be noticeable until someone begins to move away from the prescribed range; it is not difficult

to imagine a shopping mall's private security staff quickly intervening if, for instance, a group of amateur musicians without prior permission began to play. Indeed, besides embodied action, the range of *intentions* among people in this kind of primarily commercial space is likely to be narrower than among those in the common street. People entering malls tend to do so for reasons in one way or another connected to the services that the space offers. In a typical street, however, the range of purposes for being there is vast. Unlike in the shopping mall, too, many engage with the public street as a liminal space, finding themselves there simply on the way to somewhere or something else. For these reasons, I choose as the central scope of my exploration of sound and space in this chapter music-making that occurs in spaces not restricted by private ownership[4]. I am interested in multiplicity of intentions, a feature of spaces in which implicit permission to use it cannot normally be withdrawn by any owner. Music-making events here are directly exposed to a relatively unconstrained range of influences in the surrounding environment. They are therefore obliged to deal and coexist with external conditions in such a way that is not directly mediated by the will of any particular person or body with legal authority over it. As I explain later, authority – not only in the form of state or commercial institutions, but also on the level of social hierarchies – is just one of the influences upon music-making in public spaces, but not the definitive one.

At this point, it is also worth briefly contextualising the *jiqing guangchang* phenomenon against some other forms of music-making typically encountered in Wuhan. Below, I paint a picture of musical activity in the various different spaces I have just labelled as hosting 'public life'. This is in an effort to illustrate how the theoretical differences between privately- and publicly-owned spaces actually play out in Wuhan. I intend as well to show how the forms on display at *jiqing guangchang* events share common features with other kinds of music-making, and to demonstrate the alternative entertainment choices to which residents of Wuhan are exposed. Other commercially-orientated or non-monetised live music-making, plus the broadcasting of commercially-produced recordings, are all part of a public life saturated with music meant to fulfil a variety of social functions. The main significance of this contextualisation will become clear later in the chapter, as I discuss how *jiqing guangchang* and other related events interact with each other, with the dynamic flows of social life, and its associated sounds. This has a strong bearing on where the events

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[4] One exception is an indoor *jiqing guangchang* venue that I discuss later in this chapter. Being enclosed, the potential for members of the public unintentionally or serendipitously to encounter the music is greatly reduced. So too is the potential reach of the events' impact upon their wider physical and social environment. In these rooms, the public still comes and goes entirely free of fees or having to justify their presence in any other way. Indeed, the three events that take place here show a high degree of continuity in almost every other respect with those in outdoor venues, and indeed they used to take place outdoors before losing access to original performing spots. I conclude, therefore, that it would be inappropriate to exclude these events from my study.

cluster, and how their sonic content is adapted in different ways to their environment, including that shaped by these other music events.

(ii)   Privately-owned spaces

Wuhan's Optics Valley Square is an enormous new indoor and open-air shopping and entertainment complex that has quickly become one of the city's major social focal points, particularly for the large student populations based at various nearby universities. In commercialised spaces such as this one all over China, temporary stages are constantly erected to host performances that promote certain brands or products. One such event in December 2014 was the heats of Dongfang Satellite television channel's 'Chinese idol' (*Zhongguo meng zhi sheng*), the local version of an international talent show franchise:

> A stage and related paraphernalia converts an outdoor section of pedestrian boulevard into a performance arena for this event, which gives local amateur singers the chance to win through to the televised rounds of the show. It is sponsored by the popular *Kang shifu* brand of instant noodles and, interspersed between singers performing their audition songs on the stage, the hosts set up crowd-participation features, such as speed eating competitions and product give-aways, to promote the snacks. As shoppers casually drift to and from the arena, they are funnelled through areas of stalls piled high with the sponsor's product and teaming with sales promoters dressed in branded outfits.

Behind the layers of commercialism that pervaded this event there also lay a political message. The literal translation of the show's title is 'The Voice of the Chinese Dream', and this phrase echoes the dream imagery used as the rhetorical centrepiece of President Xi Jinping's current national administration. It has been noted that the notion of the 'Chinese dream' is intended to instil a spirit of national rejuvenation in a population facing the challenges of a new phase of economic and social development (Wang 2014). During an earlier period in the Communist Party's national leadership, many forms of entertainment such as Chinese pop music were often loaded with direct political content. Chinese popular music scholar Nimrod Baranovitch (2003) reports, however, that more recently such political messages have begun to appear more on the peripheries of ostensibly non-political content.

In the performances taking place in various kinds of accessible spaces around Wuhan, I found numerous examples in which these reported trends were clearly evident. One was a series of shows also held in December 2014 called 'A hundred troupes, a thousand stages' (*Baituan qianchang*). This series was organised by the city government to take place on various sizes of temporary and permanent platforms around the city centre. It was intended not only to showcase a variety of local amateur performance groups, but also to promote the messages behind slogans such as 'The Wuhan spirit' (Wuhan *jingshen*) and

'The Chinese dream'. These mantras were displayed prominently and repeated often at the performances for the benefit of casual passers-by who formed the majority of their audiences. Another I witnessed was held at a non-commercial public space, a large outdoor arena called the Great riverbank stage (*Jiangtan dawutai*), which is a permanent structure in a riverside park. This event invited local dance groups to compete for the chance to perform at a national-level contest. The show took place before a backdrop dominated by advertising for a credit card offered by the state-owned China Citic Bank, aimed especially at older customers. Alongside this were posters promoting the 'core values of socialism' (see Ill. 2.1).

Ill. 2.1: A dance contest taking place at the Great riverbank stage. Behind the performers is advertising for a credit card, and on the left and right of the stage are banners containing political messages (photo: 25 October 2014).

(iii)   Commercial recordings

Away from these formal performances, a significant facet of the music of public life are the commercially-produced music recordings that are incorporated into citizens' everyday experience. Elderly residents sometimes occupy benches and picnic tables in public spaces for hours at a time, using portable DVD machines to play video recordings of opera, and projecting the sounds out to anyone in the vicinity. Pensioners also move around the city on mobility scooters, listening to similar performances on small playback devices. Members of younger generations, too, sometimes broadcast out pop music while they work or move through the streets on foot, bicycle or roller skates. During the autumn of 2014,

Wuhan was gripped by a fever for a dance track called *Xiao pingguo* (Little apple), by the duo Kuaizi Xiongdi. The song had a very high profile on television and the internet, it gave its name to collections of dance music that filled CD shops, it was heard at virtually every kind of musical performance I came across in public life, and I noted pedestrians all over the city whistling and humming its tune.

Evidently a significant factor in the song's popularity and its deep penetration into public life, however, was its repetitive broadcasting out into the streets by the sound systems of shops and stalls. Shops in Wuhan are, of course, not unique in routinely having music playing within them as part of efforts to manage atmospheres and influence the behaviour of customers (Sterne 1997; DeNora and Belcher 2000; Kreutzfeld 2010). In addition, though, I found many shops and other businesses here playing loud pop music recordings from their thresholds, deliberately causing the music to be heard by those passing outside on the public streets. Thus, not only could they influence customers within their premises, but they were also able to exert a small effect over a wider public. Where music was broadcast by shops and businesses into the public space in this way, I almost always found a certain demographic involved – young people who would wander commercial areas and spend disposable income on spontaneous purchases of food, and fashion accessories. I observed no business offering goods and services of a more 'traditional' kind pumping music into the public space in a similar fashion.

Several specific pieces of music occurred so consistently in the soundscape of Wuhan at this time that they seemed to form a stable and structuring element of the public lives of inhabitants. Loaded with symbolic connotations, they had a direct, almost causal influence upon certain mundane actions in city life. A particular instrumental piece by the American smooth jazz saxophonist Kenny G, for example, seemed to carry a notable resonance. Excerpts of it are, in fact, heard on a daily basis in public spaces all over China. They are played within shops as the time for them to close at the end of the day approaches. The sound rings out through subway carriages, too, as trains pull into their terminal stations. The title of the piece is *Going Home*, and this presumably inspired the original choice for it to be played at these times. The message it carries, however, is not conveyed directly through linguistic reference, but through other kinds of association. The playing of this music is meant to condition a concrete response: when they hear the sounds, customers are encouraged to leave the premises.

I found a similar example in an equally mundane feature of public life, the street cleaning vehicles that constantly circulated the city, spraying water onto the road surface. The high-pressure jets deflected off the tarmac, soaking and spreading mud and debris over the adjacent footpaths. It was an everyday occurrence for pedestrians to be forced into evasive action, taking cover on higher ground or behind the nearest piece of street furniture,

to avoid being sprayed. Fortunately however, each of these vehicles emitted a loud, monophonic tune – one that seemed to be based on the English folk song *Scarborough Fair* – to warn people of their approach. Just like the police siren is for motorists, this tune was so firmly established in the minds of pedestrians that it generated the almost automatic response of scanning the environment for the nearest place to take cover. The connection in the minds of Wuhan's residents, between these sounds and their appropriate responses in embodied action, seem to have been built up by a simple process of repeated exposure. The stimulus – the excerpt of music – is consistently paired with a consequence – the closing of a shop or the soaking of the footpath – and thus the appropriate response is learned. In the lexicon of late-nineteenth-century philosopher Charles Peirce, they are examples of *indexical* relationships between a sign and its object (Turino 1999). The particular musical sounds (a sign) co-occur with a set of behavioural expectations, such as taking cover from street cleaners' jets of water (an object), and the result is for a specific physical reaction to be put into effect. Public space in Wuhan can often seem saturated with music. As well as being a sonic background from which *jiqing guangchang* emerges, I continue to argue as this chapter progresses that these sounds might also be thought of as operators with vitality capable of influencing social life.

(iv)   Other performances in public life

Various other forms also contribute to this saturation. Some I found to be commercial in nature. The opening of a new business, for instance, was usually marked with a ceremony featuring live performances by brass bands, groups of drummers and dancers, or solo singers crooning along to recorded backing tracks. Music might often be part of the normal life of a business, too. Staff at some retailers, for example, would form into lines outside the front of their shop a few times a day, and run through simple choreographed dance routines. These activities were enforced by managers ostensibly to provide shop staff with exercise breaks and to develop team morale. Music was closely linked to commercial practices in many ways on this mundane level. I noted, however, that among my contacts in Wuhan and elsewhere in China, experience of professional concerts and similar larger-scale performances was much less common. Entertainment seemed more orientated towards amateur and participatory leisure activities, including music-making in public spaces. Night markets and after-hours *xiaoye* open-air food stalls were ubiquitous. Streets, squares and parks were always filled with people exercising, playing with props such as kites and spinning tops, calligraphy writing, releasing floating lanterns into the night sky, and playing fairground-style games. Many of these public-space activities were run as petty businesses, with customers paying a modest fee to stall-holders to take part in the activity on offer.

Indeed, I found that much of the musical activity regularly taking place in Wuhan's public spaces also operated according to this model. Indeed, in some Chinese cities, busking is a reasonably well-developed manifestation of the phenomenon (Wang 2004; Jeffreys and Wang 2012). In most areas of Wuhan, however, there were few of the kind of buskers often seen in Beijing and Shanghai, the relatively affluent men and women of student age, singing popular songs with acoustic guitars from printed songbooks. The few exponents of this form I came across in Wuhan were forced to distance themselves from what was a more common sight in the city: elderly, destitute, or disabled individuals singing or clutching an *erhu* as a prop to help them beg for their subsistence. Young buskers emphasised that their activity was of a different nature, often displaying signs with slogans such as "street music, working hard to realise a dream," and "doing my best for my dream" to emphasise that their ambitions were not financial but musical.

Similar practices were extended on street corners by enterprising individuals who set up karaoke stands. Anybody out during the evening could stop to satisfy a desire to make music in public. I highlight these street-side karaoke sessions in particular so as to draw attention to a feature of their physical layout. These set-ups are notable for the contrast they show with those of the *jiqing guangchang* events I introduce below. I found potential karaoke singers often to be shy and reticent, and repeatedly witnessed a partner having to spend several minutes reassuring someone interested in singing before they would eventually volunteer to take the microphone. Perhaps partly as a result, karaoke arenas were arranged – either deliberately or inadvertently – in such a way as to seem as encouraging and supportive as possible to these reluctant performers. The singer would sit or stand at a distance of several meters facing the video screen and speakers, which projected the song back towards them. The singer's attention was fixed upon the screen and the vast majority of the audience took up a position in a rough semi-circle not opposite them, but around them (see Ill. 2.2). The audience group would, therefore, not be shaped to face the singer, but instead to allow as many people as possible to stand at his or her side, bodies orientated together towards the video screen. The physical layout was not a typically adversarial concert set-up but something that might be called more 'communal'; here the singer had the role of the performer, but simultaneously remained part of the audience. They avoided being confronted by the gaze of the crowd and all were immersed in the same sphere of sound.

Ill. 2.2: A street-side karaoke gathering. The singer and the karaoke screen are circled (photo: 20 May 2014).

Similar set-ups found in African performance contexts have encouraged Rainer Polak (2007) to question the solidity of distinctions between audience and performer roles. I explore this point in detail when I return to the same example in Chapter 5, assessing whether it is useful to consider performances as microcosmic versions of larger social systems or phenomena. For now, however, it might perhaps be useful to suggest an alternative reading of this layout and to consider the possibility that humbler conclusions may be appropriate. Rather than being a way of expressing support and collectivity in the experience of singing a karaoke song, perhaps that these singers did not face the audience is simply evidence of a reluctance to be exposed in the limelight. It is very reasonable not to expect these novice singers to be fully comfortable with this aspect of performing. Indeed, the phenomenon was echoed by many of the amateur musicians playing and practicing in parks in Wuhan. I noted that they often turned their bodies to face walls, or otherwise positioned themselves out of clear sight, even though they invariably used amplification equipment and directed this towards a potential audience. Making a spectacle of oneself was apparently not considered a necessary part of performing or expressing oneself in public. Perhaps rather than as the opportunity to briefly imagine oneself as a superstar, a conclusion that some scholars have drawn from their observations of various karaoke singing contexts (Drew 2001; Zhou and Tarocco 2007: 36), a slogan that I noted plastered on the equipment of one group might hint at a different way of conceptualising the activity here: "Music makes you healthy and happy! Let's all sing together to our heart's content!" (see also Mitsui and Hosokawa 1998: 17).

A large portion of public-space music I heard in the city was associated with non-monetised leisure and social activities. The vast majority of this accompanied private or group leisure and exercise. By far the most pervasive of these was 'square dancing'

(*guangchang wu*), in which groups practiced synchronised dances in rows, lines, or couples. I will return below in more detail to these square dance groups, when discussing one remarkable element of their practice, their use of space and co-existence with other groups in close proximity. Another custom in Wuhan, as in other Chinese cities, was for individuals and groups of singers and instrumentalists to assemble in public places to practice their instruments and play ensemble music for leisure. I found a further category of groups operating on a more presentational basis, holding larger regular shows that were clearly meant to draw crowds (see Ill. 2.3).

Ill. 2.3: A non-monetised performance in a public place. This performance features a skilful *dizi* (flute) soloist and team of dancers, who all regularly entertain passers-by in a shopping district (photo: 24 May 2014).

So far in this chapter, I have sought to illustrate the ways in which public life in Wuhan can be filled with music. Whether produced live or broadcast into public spaces in the form of recordings, it creates part of the sonic and social backdrop from which *jiqing guangchang* emerges and to which it responds. Music can be associated with political messages, formal commercialism and petty business, or played purely for leisure. *Jiqing guangchang* is by no means an isolated or highly unusual cultural form, and it harnesses certain formal elements that are more widely familiar. As this chapter progresses, I will draw on the information presented above to understand how *jiqing guangchang* events interact materially and sonically with others around them, and how they situate themselves socially.

Place, space and community

(i)   Sense of place

So far, I have shown that music plays a prominent role in Wuhan's public life, and introduced some of its major manifestations. For the main purpose of this chapter, however, I start to focus upon *jiqing guangchang* events themselves. I intend to draw upon the notion of community as a constant point of reference for understanding *jiqing guangchang* and thus to begin to explore how each one might be a useful tool in considering the other. This not only involves addressing the forms and meanings circulating within the performance arena, but also seeing them in context of these other kinds of music-making as they relate in sonic, spatial, material and temporal terms. As I remarked upon in Chapter 1, place is often a central element in discussions of community and there is a danger that this way of understanding the concept may not be sufficiently scrutinised, or that its centrality be assumed at the expense of a variety of other possible approaches. Here, I begin to outline why in this particular context it might be useful to turn to certain other ways of understanding the notion. I suggest that along with sense of place and other facets of social imaginary, it can also be valuable to take various aspects of material reality as a starting point for an enhanced understanding.

Cities are among the spaces that are often collectively imagined and experienced as distinct *places.* They are fixed in language and in the mind as entities to which certain meanings and responses are attached. They often contain identifiable skylines and characteristic landscapes, and can be synonymous with particular social structures and institutions. Cities also become meaningful through the patterns of everyday life that they play host to, their behavioural norms, dialects and numerous other characteristics of the experiences lived within them. Part of this sense of place, the sense of what it means to be – in this case – a resident of Wuhan might also be formed through music and musical culture. First then, I ask to what extent musical sounds and practices associated with Wuhan play a role in constructing meanings shared on a collective level. Does Wuhan possess any particular musical identity that might have a bearing upon my main task, that of understanding *jiqing guangchang*? In other words, how significant an element should sense of place be in this chapter's analysis?

A starting point from which to approach these questions may be found in musical institutions. In terms of high-level musical education, for example, Wuhan's Conservatory of Music affords the city a status among a small elite in China. Similarly, the rock venue Vox Livehouse has been essential in ensuring that most major tours of China undertaken by non-mainstream popular artists seem to include a visit to Wuhan. As I show in Chapter 4,

among some musicians 'the Vox crowd' is positively iconic, well known for being unusually knowledgeable and enthusiastic. These two institutions, then, may each be significant carriers of a musical sense of place among particular demographic groups. It is reasonable to imagine that they may help to shape the experience of music in ways that the people involved could conceivably think of as distinctly local. On the other hand, there would seem little reason to expect this meaning necessarily to extend beyond the small groups of people directly affected, to the general population. Indeed, institutions of professional music culture like these ones seem particularly remote from street music.

As a result, then, perhaps it is more useful to look elsewhere for ways in which musical sense of place is likely to be significant in this context. One such place could be local musical repertory. As might be expected, geographical factors are drawn upon extensively when various music genres in China are categorised, including for folk songs and instrumental music (Tuohy 1999; Jones 2003). They are, however, also used to generate labels for contemporary musical products. Some anthologies of the popular music canon, such as *The Sound of Qintai* (WYX 2012), are dedicated exclusively to songs from the Wuhan area. In this anthology, there are a small number of songs that directly address local themes. It contains, for example, three versions of *Huanghe lou* (by Zhao Liping, Li Yaguang and Wang Yuanping), which is a song that celebrates Wuhan's most prominent ancient landmark, the Yellow Crane Tower. I heard it performed occasionally at *jiqing guangchang* events. In all of my observation at the shows, though, this was the only such example of directly local themes featuring so explicitly in the musical repertory. Indeed, even these published collections of ostensibly local songs actually include very few whose content links them in such a direct way to the Wuhan area. Instead, the main qualification for a song to find a place in these anthologies is for its writers to originate in or to be connected in some way to the region. As a result, the vast majority of their contents do not address particular local themes or subject matter. On the contrary, it is equally common to find in them works about geographically distant places. One notable example is the song *Tian lu* (Heavenly road), whose lyrics celebrate the building of the railway line crossing the plateaus of Tibet.

Alongside institutions and musical texts, scholars have also shown how musical *practices* can meaningfully contribute to identity construction and a sense of place. Matt Sakakeeny (2010), for instance, makes this claim about 'jazz funeral' processions in New Orleans, in which African-Americans simultaneously commemorate the passing of a fellow while voicing racial solidarity. Among the implications of the repetition of this cultural practice are the self-conscious expression of claims to contested space and the assertion of collective power in certain territories. As a result, the cultural significance of the music and of the city are said to feed off each other. During these processions, musicians respond to the

acoustic conditions of the spaces they encounter, and many of these spaces are also *places* invested with particular meanings for the group of people involved. Can, then, any similar dynamics be found at work in Wuhan, particularly in its street music? Do the practices of *jiqing guangchang* help to shape a sense of the city of Wuhan?

In answer to these questions, first it should be noted that most of the forms I introduced in the previous section – especially the most prominent kinds, square dancing and the broadcasting of recordings from business premises – are national rather than local phenomena; urban spaces all over China are affected by similar sounds. Thus, notwithstanding the local variations and unique meanings that might be attached to them in this city, the expression of self-consciously local significance is not immediately apparent here. *Jiqing guangchang* itself, on the other hand, might actually have a strong claim to being genuinely exceptional to Wuhan. In the city, I got to know Gao Xionghui, a man in his fifties who played the keyboard in one show's backing band. He seemed to have a stronger sense of *jiqing guangchang* as a distinct phenomenon than many others that I met around the events, and he told me that the form had originated in Fujian Province in the mid-1980s (see also Sheng 2013). Musicians working there, but who came from Wuhan and places in nearby Hunan province, subsequently took back the idea to their native places, setting up their first events in the mid-1990s. Gao had been involved in the local amateur music scene for more than twenty years, and told me that he thought the events in Wuhan were the only ones still in operation as of 2014. As I noted in Chapter 1, though, I found most people involved in the shows inclined not to think of them as manifestations of a distinct cultural form, let alone to attach any particular meaning to their relationships with practices occurring elsewhere. I certainly gained no sense in the wider city that *jiqing guangchang* was any more representative or emblematic of Wuhan than other street activities. In fact, there is evidence that street musicians are widely dismissed in China as belonging to the same cultural milieu as beggars (Luo 1998; Zeng 2002: 9; Yang 2006: 21). Thus, it is very difficult to claim that the practices carry any particularly strong resonance among the general public, and that they contribute widely to a sense of Wuhan.

It would appear that searching in this way within institutions, texts and practices provides few strong indicators that musical sense of place is a particularly significant part of *jiqing guangchang*. To do so perhaps also reflects a number of assumptions that may make this approach problematic in the present context. First, considering sense of place in relation to Wuhan as a city assumes, of course, that the city is indeed the primary unit of place that people might identify with. In fact, this choice may be arbitrary. Sense of place could be equally significant in either broader or narrower frames of experience. In certain situations, individuals might, on the one hand, identify with places on the scale of nations or even larger, and on the other, with neighbourhoods or even more localised entities. Secondly,

addressing a musical sense of place among large bodies of people risks falsely implying a uniformity in the ways that individuals respond. While one participant in *jiqing guangchang* might recognise or endorse a sense of place emerging in a certain facet of the events, it is likely that other individuals would have different ideas. These issues are especially relevant here as sense of place is not an explicit discourse that surrounds these events. Without clear evidence coming from the forms and themes reflected upon during the normal course of proceedings, the notion becomes abstract and difficult to test.

I was able to unearth some clues regarding how sense of place was significant on an individual basis, and found that variety between people made the topic far more complex than I may have implied in the discussion so far. My conversations, for instance, with Wang Qiang, the small business owner I met in the park during Chapter 1, would inevitably seem to gravitate towards his opinions on the relative merits of the three districts that make up the city of Wuhan. His tone would become serious as he extolled the virtues of the classical historical sites and educational establishments of one district, Wuchang, over the commercially-orientated areas of another, Hankou. He would regularly ply me with recommendations concerning places to live, work and relax. It was obvious that a socially-imagined sense of place attached to these districts was acutely meaningful to that individual, and that it probably had a concrete effect upon his lifestyle and experience of the environment. Indeed, these three districts of the city, Wuchang, Hankou and Hanyang, are undoubtedly fixed in the lexicon and in the metaphorical map carried around by many locals. Unlike the sub-districts that form them, the three names are a first port of call when describing locations in the city, and their primacy is retained in the fact that each contributes one character – *wu* and *han* – to the amalgam of syllables in its name.

Wang's firm views about these districts, however, were not shared by every participant I encountered. I also met singers for whom a sense of place on this scale of discourse was far less vivid. The career paths of several of the singers – but certainly not all – performing at the best equipped kind of *jiqing guangchang* location had caused them to live in various cities for relatively short periods. Alian, for instance, the singer from Guizhou whom I introduced in Chapter 1, seemed to view her attachment to her performance opportunity in Wuhan as temporary. Half expecting to move away when circumstances presented a better living elsewhere, it was clear that immersion in a sense of Wuhan as a place was in no way a prerequisite for performing success. Alian was living in a modest hotel not far from her group's stage, unable or unwilling to invest in the deposit required to secure an apartment. Her daily life was lived in the space of just a few streets surrounding this accommodation. In the context of the city as a whole this was a tiny corner. Here were found the restaurants in which she entertained her fans or customers during the daytime, the internet cafes in which she downloaded the backing tracks for her performances, and the

beauty salon and fashion markets she frequented in order to maintain her onstage image. As I got to know Alian, I was often surprised about her limited knowledge of Wuhan's geography. Despite, for instance, shopping for new stage outfits being a primary use of her time, she was not even aware that one of the city's main shopping districts lay close by, barely outside of the local territory that she knew. Among significant sociological theories of community, some have idealised the bounded physical spaces supposed to be typical of rural lifestyles in earlier times in history. Those living under these circumstances are said to experience intensely connected social lives. In Chapter 5, I explore the possible parallels between these versions of community and the experience of this one kind of *jiqing guangchang* participant. I assess how a social life relatively insulated from the connectedness of the contemporary city may be reason to recognise community in this facet of *jiqing guangchang* experience.

Overall, however, considering all of the factors that I have just outlined, I am encouraged to look beyond musical sense of place in my search for significant sites of community meaning in this context. The apparent absence of relevant place-centred connections in musical institutions, texts and as an explicit part of the core practices of *jiqing guangchang* leads me to the conclusion that sense of place is not unusually significant here. As I explained in Chapter 1, instead I draw a distinction between place in the socially-imagined sense that I have just been discussing, and on the other hand *space*, taken as a primarily material object of study. I now turn my attention, then, from place to space and to the related realms of material and sound. This is the main focus of the current chapter, and the primary window of this part of the thesis onto community.

(ii)   Non-representational meaning in sound and community

The main thrust of the link that I draw between these realms and community involves what Georgina Born refers to as the "individuation and aggregation of experience" (Born 2013: 29). In helping to foster the connections imagined to exist between people, sound and music allow groups to draw attention to themselves in public spaces, to attract likeminded people to their cause, and to develop a sense of what unites them. On the other hand, groups can use sound and music to withdraw from others, to create, reconfigure, or reinforce physical and social boundaries. Scholars have shown effectively how these processes play out in scenarios in which, through music, groups of people build or express a distinct identity whose origin is extrinsic to this music-making. That which primarily brings these people together and instils a sense of belonging may not be the music itself, but a shared ideology, religion, ethnicity, or some kind of opposition to a particular state of affairs. In Shelemay's (2011) terms, for instance, these are the musical communities based

on the processes of 'descent' and 'dissent'. People involved in these musical communities recognise that they share certain inherited features with others, or that participation emerges from a common opposition to an external entity or situation. As I outlined in Chapter 1, however, in *jiqing guangchang* it is very difficult to identify any such extrinsic factors that might explain why these people assemble at the events while other kinds of people do not take part. That is not to say, of course, that there is nothing separating *jiqing guangchang* participants from non-participants. Indeed, clear commonalities in the ages, occupations and places of residence of those taking part are probably highly pertinent. It is important to emphasise, however, that these likely unifying factors exist on a mundane level that is taken for granted in the course of everyday life. They have very little to do with, for example, the religious or ideological identity issues that scholars have so effectively demonstrated to raise passions and inspire fervent allegiances in various other situations (Hirschkind 2006; Eisenberg 2013). Despite the word 'passion' in the label *jiqing guangchang,* in this particular street music context mundaneness, reluctance and lethargy seem much more appropriate markers.

Shelemay suggests a third – overlapping – kind of process that might stimulate musical community: that of 'affinity'. Here, she describes people associating with others because they share similar individual preferences. Thus, cultural forms such as music might become the starting point for group association, rather than its by-product. On the surface, then, this seems better suited to describing the street music situation. It is, presumably, a shared desire to participate in the music event per se that brings people together on the streets of Wuhan, rather than music-making being something incidental to another mobilising force. I argue, however, that even this concept does not seem fully able to describe the most important dynamics of this particular context. People here are more reluctant to engage with others than might be implied when the word affinity is used. They rarely express a strong allegiance to the particular forms and activities on display, at least not on an active level. The commonalities between people do not seem to be specifically valued, nor even reflected upon in a way that translates into efforts to express solidarity. This is a further reason that I find the individuation and aggregation of experience on the streets of Wuhan not necessarily best described using existing models such as Shelemay's. Here, these processes seem to occur most significantly on a non-rational, non-expressed level, and in circumstances that are mundane and rarely inspire fervent responses. I do return to considering Shelemay's processes of descent, dissent and affinity in Chapter 5, as I address in more detail the underlying – if rarely expressed – commonalities between *jiqing guangchang* participants. For now, though, it seems necessary to explore other ways of understanding the modes of association found here. I now ask how community might still be a useful tool even where neither descent/dissent nor affinity seem highly suitable frames. I

argue instead that the material use of sound and space might be thought of as the very stuff of social phenomena such as community, in and of themselves, rather than as a by-product of some other process. The individuation and aggregation of experience might be seen as transcending rationalised senses of belonging, instead resting more upon an embodied and primarily material understanding of experience.

In adopting this approach, first it is necessary to show how a combination of the spatiality, materiality and temporality of the performance environments exerts a significant influence upon music-making. After this, it might be possible to put these observations towards understanding how community is played out upon these territories. The first of these tasks is the point at which I draw upon the key theories and methods employed in the field of human geography. Non-representational theory shifts attention away from texts to action realised in space and through material, and to the agents that exert various kinds of dynamic influence upon activity. At the same time, it helps to move focus away from originators of musical material – the composers and recording artists – whose influence is limited to a domain remote from the street music context. It affords agency to people encountering music as it is fully embedded in everyday life, and privileges how they use it to forge meanings relating to the specifics of these circumstances. Paul Simpson views street performing through a lens in which the people present at a show are just some of the many "operators" capable of influencing the proceedings; the "vitality" necessary to exert an influence is also attributed to a wide range of nonhuman factors, including physical features of the setting, sounds, other bodies, and atmospheric conditions (Simpson 2012). Space is the primary reference point among those geographers who, like Simpson, draw upon the theories of Thrift (2008). In musicological studies, this often translates into considering the 'experience of music' to the most inclusive degree (see Finnegan 2003; Born 2010). As this chapter progresses, I try to acknowledge as full a range of operators as possible that may be involved in producing the experience of music.

Thus, two main theoretical decisions shape the discussions that follow. The first is the choice to shift attention from place to space, and the second to direct analysis from a symbolic reading of music to a non-representational approach. Above, I spoke of the limits in this context of considering sense of place, a facet of symbolic social imaginary. Instead, I approach *jiqing guangchang* in terms of space, whereby the performance environment is first a product of the organisation of material, and only later a site of social meaning. The expression of a rationalised sense of commonality between people is far less prominent in these street performances than it might be in some other contexts. Thus, while music's symbolic content may well be a part of the events, I argue that other modes of experience are at least as meaningful here. Music may be approached just as much as sound as it is as text, and I aim to show how encounter with sound can give rise to interpersonal and group

engagement just as appreciation of symbolic content can. Thus, having explained my rationale for my focus upon sound, space and material, I turn to some specifics of the *jiqing guangchang* performance environment.

Space and material: the *jiqing guangchang* environment

There is a high degree of variety in the space and material of *jiqing guangchang* shows across the city. Some groups set up rudimentary equipment in semi-derelict corners, while others perform in purpose-built and well-equipped arenas. I look in detail at several of these different settings, and explore how the material realities of these spaces and their set-ups influence forms and meanings found at each one. I build upon many of these observations in Chapter 4, as their effects extend to the social life that surrounds and shapes the performances. In particular, these material realities might have a bearing upon the relative levels of success achieved by different events. Later, I examine this in terms of the challenges and threats involved in establishing various forms of frame, a Goffmanian concept referring to expectations for the nature of participation among those involved.

(i)   Jianghan Bridge: a construction site

Among the more modest settings is a space close to the foot of Jianghan Bridge (Jianghan *Yi Qiao*), a road crossing spanning Wuhan's second major river, the Han. The group operating in this location has been forced to adapt to a programme of demolition and renewal that has slowly changed the landscape of their corner of the city over the course of several years. They initially occupied a relatively wide, if unremarkable stretch of footpath beneath a slip road rising towards the bridge proper. Since 2012, however, the space has constantly been evolving; several blocks of wholesale business premises and residences that once lined the street have been demolished and new development has gradually been emerging to take their place. I witnessed the space in three iterations. In November 2012, the row of low-level buildings that were set back slightly from the street had been abandoned but not yet removed, and a temporary wall had been erected close to the road edge to contain the area. The *jiqing guangchang* show took place behind this wall, and thus within the perimeter of the construction site. The performance space, therefore, was constrained by the wall to the front and by the vacated buildings behind. By May 2014, both the buildings within this site and the temporary wall had been demolished, but renewal work had not yet begun. Now, the edge of the site was defined by a blue fence (see Ill. 2.4).
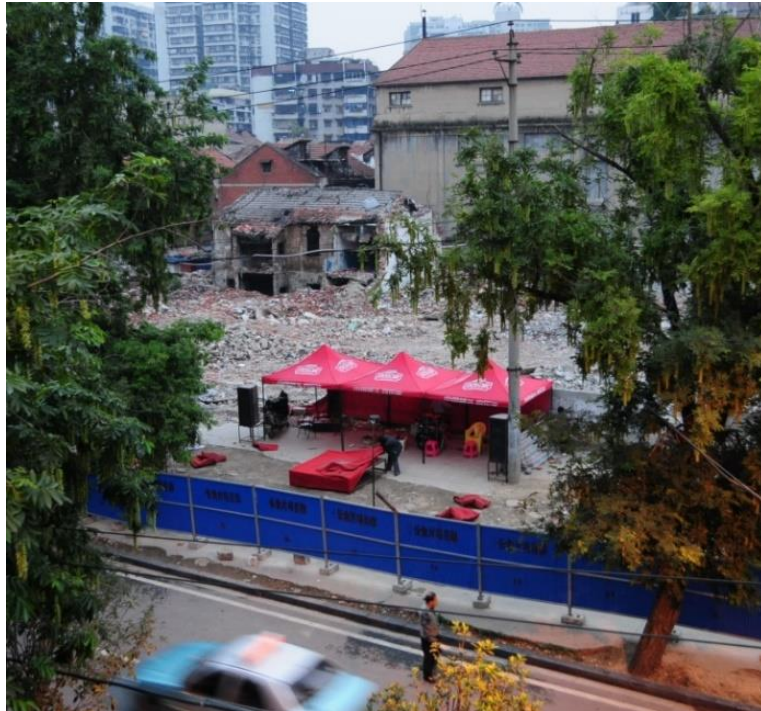
Ill. 2.4: Organisers setting up before a performance within the construction site near Jianghan Bridge. This shows the view from the bridge's rising slip road (photo: 17 May 2014).

When I returned in October 2014, work had already begun to reshape the footpath, and the area of the demolition site – marked by a new temporary wall – had moved back to behind where the stage was normally set up. Now, the group was squeezed in between this wall behind, and the edge of the road in front (see Ill. 2.5). The organisers had now begun to suspend red cloth between the trunks of trees lining the road, and this functioned as a screen to seclude the event from the traffic.
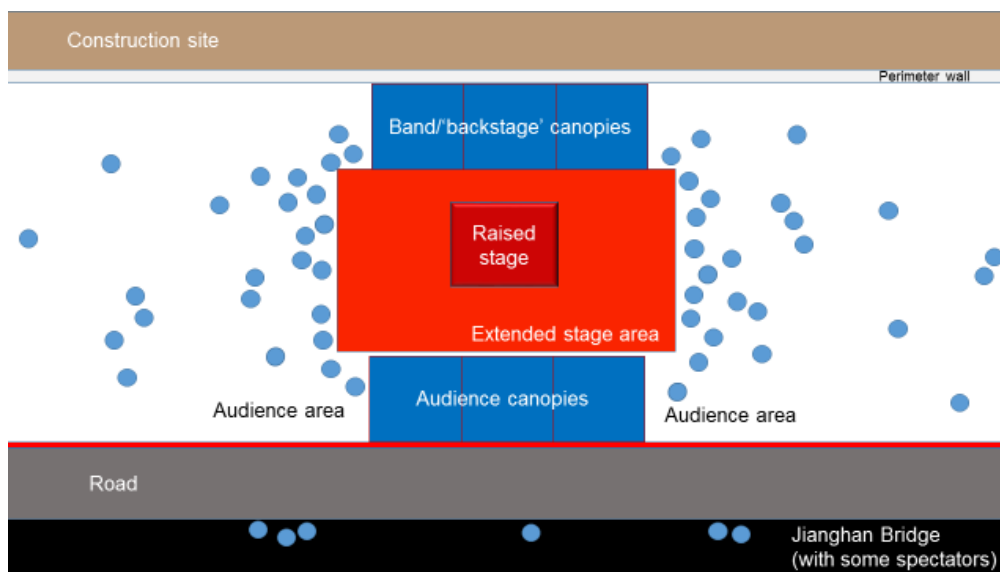
Ill. 2.5: Bird's-eye-view plan of the arena near to Jianghan Bridge (not drawn to precise scale). This shows the latest state of the area that I witnessed, in October 2014.

In all of the iterations that I witnessed, the group and its audience – which consistently peaked in the region of a hundred people – squeezed into rubble-strewn and unusually-shaped spaces. Perhaps the most significant effect of this pertains to the relative positioning of the audience and performers within the arena, and the impact of this upon their interaction. The shape of the space and the way in which the event was set up meant that performers and audience were largely unable to assemble according to the traditional theatrical arrangement in which the two groups are counterpoised facing each other (Schafer 1977: 116-7). Instead, the layout more resembled a 'thrust-stage', with the performer surrounded on three sides by the audience. This form of theatrical architecture is sometimes associated with efforts to promote "warm human exchange" between performers and audience (Tuan 1982: 13). In this case, however, the unusual shape of the available space forced the majority of the audience to gather not in front of the stage but to its left and right. Thus, this set-up in fact intruded upon on the ability of singers to engage with the audience. The performer on the stage was obliged to turn her back to a significant section of the crowd when orientating herself directly towards the other main group. This seemed to adversely affect singers' efforts to afford the highest levels of public recognition to audience members who approached to deliver cash gifts:

> A man moves towards the stage from the left side while the singer, Ajing, is facing towards the audience on the right. He comes from outside of her field of vision and she remains oblivious to his presence for a few moments. The giver stands awkwardly with cash outstretched but cannot make himself noticed. Eventually, another singer who is crossing the arena close to the stage directs Ajing's attention to the man and the gift is finally delivered. This act itself, however, only takes an instant to perform. Under ideal circumstances, Ajing would have made efforts to extend the duration of the interaction with her benefactor. She might have made courteous eye contact as the man approached, bowed in thanks at the moment he handed over the cash, and offered a few words of gratitude timed to fit between lines of melody.

I explain in detail in Chapter 4 how public recognition is an important driver of the money-giving practices in *jiqing guangchang*. On this occasion, however, it was compromised by features of the event's layout. A few times in this arena, too, I noted that when cash givers approached unexpectedly, this caused problems in the actual act of handing over the cash:

> Zhu Dan has already received several gifts in quick succession during this song, and along with the microphone in her left hand, the notes and flowers that she has been given are threatening to slip out of her grasp. When another gift arrives, she is clearly distracted from the singing, and has to reach out to take the money with the hand holding the microphone. This, of course, means a pause in the singing heard by the audience. As this latest gift-giver passes her the money and turns away, several notes escape from Zhu Dan's hand. The brief pause in the singing becomes an extended one, as she has to bend down to gather up the notes again. When she finally restarts singing, notes and flower

stems are splayed out at all angles in her hands and the poise of her performance has clearly been interrupted.

Another potentially significant facet of the use of space and material in this arena is the way in which event organisers distinguish and designate specific functions to certain areas. Here, the stage area is comprised of a raised box covered in red cloth, which is placed in the centre of a larger expanse of ground covered with similar cloth. In each of the iterations of the space that I observed, a row of foldable open-sided canopies was placed directly behind the stage. The live backing band was positioned under these shelters and performed from here, and thus this area too might itself be thought of as part of the stage. Around the band members, however, various other people also took shelter. It was the main place for organisers, off-duty singers and a few guests to sit during the performance. In full view of the audience, the people under these canopies would chat to each other, go through all kinds of preparation, and generally act in a casual way that – in the case of the singers – was outside of their stage personas. Thus, as well as being part of the performance space, the area also functioned as a kind of 'backstage'. It had much of the character of a private place, but one that was "nested" within a wider public one (Born 2013). In fact, I found the lines between front- and backstage regions in all *jiqing guangchang* shows similarly blurred or perhaps not relevant. This phenomenon is addressed in detail at the end of this chapter as I make some conclusions regarding the significance of publicness in Wuhan's public space. In Chapter 4, too, I revisit the idea of nesting during my discussion of frames. In particular, I consider the significance of varying degrees of purity displayed by performance-related frames on the city's streets, showing that this factor is a key influence over the social life surrounding the events.

Among performers at this event, and indeed throughout each of Wuhan's shows, I found stage behaviour almost always to be highly reserved. Singers usually stood in a fixed position in the centre of the stage, barely moving off the spot and showing few signs of bodily engagement with the music. I did, however, witness occasional performances that exploited the space of the arena more fully and in a way that produced remarkable consequences. One performer from Henan Province, Meiqi, combined a rendition of the song *Shei shi wode lang* (Who will be my man) with a lively – and rather raunchy – dance:

> Soon after the song starts, Meiqi jumps down from the raised stage onto the extended stage area at ground level surrounding it, dancing all around the arena and approaching all sections of the crowd. At various places she falls into exaggerated sexualised poses. The crowd is sparked into an unprecedented frenzy of positive responses. In keeping with the ethos of the events, too, this general animation is quickly expressed in the most tangible of forms when dozens of audience members begin offering cash gifts. Instead of passively waiting on stage for givers to approach and deliver these gifts, Meiqi actively circulates around the arena to collect them. Spectators fight to be the next to

gain her attention, waving bank notes in the air. Soon, a member of the organisation team begins following her as she dances to all four corners, holding out a bucket that is quickly filled with money.

The extended stage area around the main raised section usually functions as a buffer between performer and audience, perhaps dampening the intensity of their interaction. When Meiqi broke away from the normal pattern for the use of the space, however, the result was unprecedented engagement and a palpable sense of excitement. Richard's Schechner (1988: 159) formulates the street performance audience as an "eruption," with those in the heated centre showing the strongest engagement. A cooler rim spreads from this central point towards the periphery, and the people in the most distant parts are the least engaged, perhaps even primarily focused on some other concern or activity (Mullen 1985: 190). Schechner's model seems to describe very well how Meiqi's performance was experienced. In this case, men crowding around card schools just beyond the normal fringes of the audience rushed into the arena to share in the excitement with those in the centre, returning to their games when the song was over. The performer exploited to great effect the spatial possibilities of this setting in a way that contributed to the difference between a commonplace performance and a remarkable one. The use of space, of course, was certainly not the only reason that Meiqi's performance sparked such an unusual reaction. In fact, in Chapter 4 I return to her act, assessing the impact of the sexualised nature of its content, and certain features of her personal identity. For now, though, it is worth noting that when I saw Meiqi perform in different locations, physical constraints not present at this site near Jianghan Bridge might have contributed to her performances being far more standard in their content and response than the occasion relayed above. Thus, I argue that this performance shows the use of space as a significant factor shaping how the experience of music can be understood in a comprehensive way.

(ii)   The Wangjiang Building: three indoor stages

During my time in Wuhan, only one location in the city held indoor *jiqing guangchang* performances, and these took place in the Wangjiang Building (Wangjiang *Lou*). On top of this long, narrow structure is built a raised outdoor promenade running along the riverbank close to the Great Yangtze River Bridge. The space is split into three rooms and a channel is cleared next to one wall, effectively forming a corridor that runs along one side of the building's entire length. During shows, this passage between the rooms was filled with a constant flow of people, as spectators and singers circulated within and between each one (see Ill. 2.6). Despite being indoors, then, these three stages were pervaded by a sense of fluidity and transition almost as strong as those outside in normal public streets.

Ill. 2.6: A performance room at one end of the Wangjiang Building. The two men in the foreground on the left hand side are members of the band, and they sit facing the singer's 'stage' space. The position of the camera is marked with the symbol X_1 on the building plan in Ill. 2.8 (photo: 6 November 2014).

In the room at one end of the building, performances did not take place on a stage per se. Instead, the singer performed in a space immediately in front of a large opening in the end wall, whose shutter was raised to extend the space onto an outdoor patio where part of the audience could gather (see Ill. 2.7). Typically, the spectators in this space only saw the singer from a distance; inside the room she usually turned towards the main audience, which was facing the opposite direction to those outside. At the Jianghan Bridge event described above, a section of the audience gathered on the bridge itself and looked down on the performance arena below. Here too, spectators could stand at the edge of the river-side promenade above, turning it into a balcony from which to enjoy the music. The singer was just visible to them when she occasionally turned around to face the audience outside and took a few steps towards them into the open air.

Ill. 2.7: A section of the audience for the same stage as shown in Ill. 2.6. They face the raised shutter at one end of the building and more spectators listen from the balcony above the shutter. The position of the camera is marked with the symbol X_2 on the building plan in Ill. 2.8 (photo 6 November 2014).

Unlike at Jianghan Bridge, where spectators on the bridge itself were too distant to be communicated with directly, those standing on the balcony here often took an active part, sometimes throwing down banknotes for the singers below. Performers and the emcee were thus obliged to monitor this area, calling out thanks to givers as well as occasionally making the effort to be fully visible to them. The emcee, aware that many on the balcony were curious passers-by rather than regular attendees, frequently addressed his patter to the 'new friends' (*xin pengyou*) up there, encouraging them to come down into the main space in the hope that some would be drawn into staying for the rest of the session, or even that new regular visitors might be created. Sometimes money thrown down from the balcony got caught up in paraphernalia attached to the building before it reached the ground, or had to be seized urgently as it was blown off course and there was danger of it dropping into the river. These moments were capitalised upon by the emcee as a source of amusement through which to build the sense of spectacle and light-hearted conviviality. On one occasion, I saw him perform an impromptu humorous routine, exaggeratedly acting out using a broom handle to dislodge a trapped banknote. Equally, however, other passers-by drawn to the balcony by the music and laughter below did not linger, perhaps as the breeze coming off the river caught the stench of the toilets attached to the building. Even the behaviour of musicians was affected in similar ways by the unique characteristics of their surroundings. On one occasion the sunset over the Yangtze River here was so striking that it caused the

saxophone player to put down his instrument several times during songs and stand up to photograph the view using his mobile phone.

The space and fabric of these performance arenas, as well as affecting the behaviour of those acting within them, also had a strong influence over the experience of music on a sonic level. It is far from unusual for *jiqing guangchang* performances to find themselves operating in very close proximity to other groups, and later in this chapter I specifically discuss their clustering and sharing of space. The three stages that occupied the Wangjiang Building, however, suffered perhaps greater levels of interference from the sounds of their neighbours than open-air events did. The design of the building, with parallel walls at a short distance from each other, seemed unconducive for supporting well-defined sound. In the building's middle section, the stage was located in the centre of the room (see Ill. 2.8), with the audience gathered in front and behind. Organisers thus chose to position speakers at either end of the room, both facing towards each other with the stage in between, and therefore producing a cancelling effect that could only have exaggerated the disturbance caused by sound leaking from the rooms on either side. Adding the age and often the unreliability of the technology meant that the sonic environment of these indoor events seemed particularly poor.
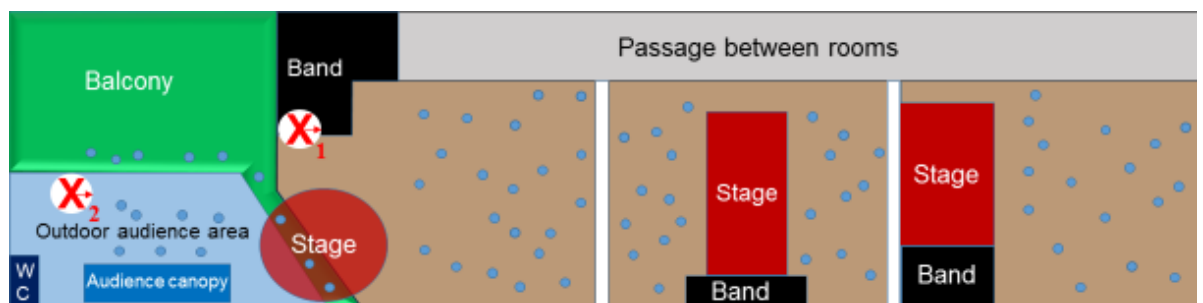
Ill. 2.8: Bird's-eye-view plan of the three indoor stages at the Wangjiang Building (not drawn to precise scale).

(iii)   The Han Riverbank: an unmade road

The unique settings of the various performance events around the city also bring to each one a distinctive set of ambient sounds. These sounds exerted an influence upon the shows that I witnessed. One of the *jiqing guangchang* events with the lowest levels of attendance occupied a small patch of virtually empty land on one bank of the Han River. This was an archetypal liminal space (Bywater 2006), separated from the city proper on one side by a tall wall acting as a flood barrier for the main road behind it, and on the other side by the river itself (see Ill. 2.9). The stage was, in fact, set up on an unlit dirt road made occasional use of by vehicles moving between river port facilities. Although traffic using

this road passed very infrequently, every so often, the performance was punctuated by the arrival of a small truck or similar commercial vehicle, which slowly rattled past on the uneven surface and lit up the arena with its headlights. Moving through at touching distance to those gathered, some members of the audience would have to shift their seats and their feet as the vehicles threaded between audience canopies and the stage. At these moments, attention inevitably diverted from the singer to the vehicle, and the music was temporarily drowned out. Stray dogs were also regular visitors to this out-of-the-way place, and it was not uncommon for a singer to look out across their small audience and see every one of its members engrossed in making sounds to attract one of these passing animals.

Major road

Perimeter wall

Unmade road

Band

Audience canopy

Stage

Flow of vehicles

Audience canopies

River bank
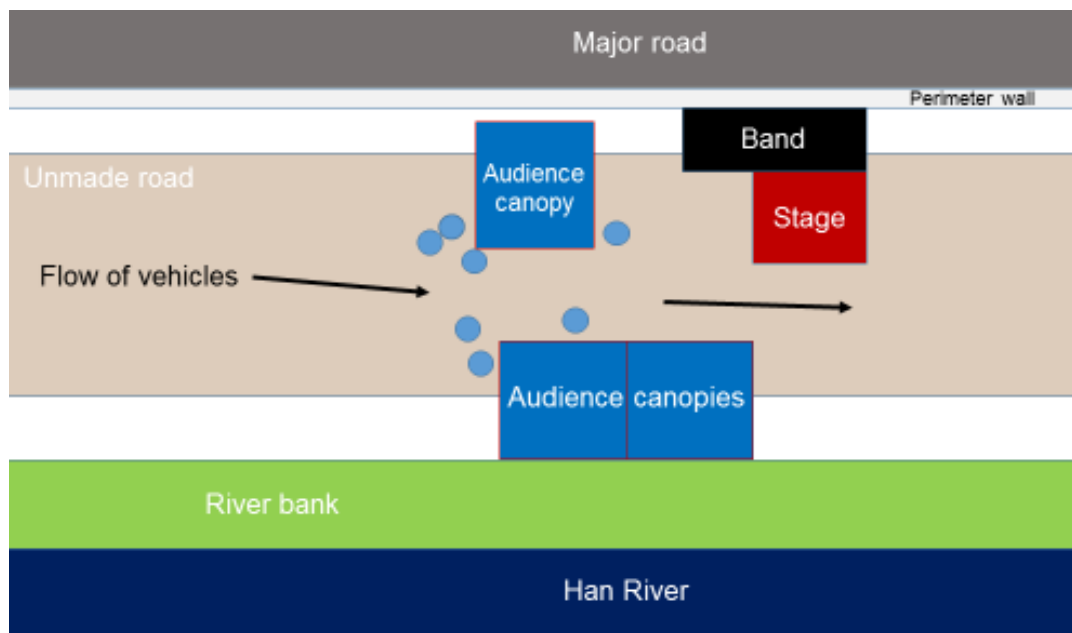
Han River

Ill. 2.9: Bird's-eye-view plan (not drawn to precise scale) of the event taking place on the unmade road running parallel to the Han River.

(iv)   Qingchuan Bridge: four permanent stages

At the other end of the spectrum are arenas for four events buried in the middle of the Nan'anzui Riverbank Park (Nan'anzui *Jiangtan Gongyuan*), near the Qingchuan Bridge (Qingchuan *Qiao*). These four stages, which were mentioned in Chapter 1 when I introduced Alian and the twins Yinzi and Longzi, are the only ones in the city to leave any tangible evidence of their existence that can be seen while the events are not in progress. Whereas at other locations, the show is set up from scratch every day, here I found that all of the equipment was housed at four permanent built arenas nestling between trees in this large green space. The most modern of the four had an impressive range of facilities and equipment, including an advanced PA system with stage monitors, dynamic stage lighting,

multiple giant video screens, smoke machines, a power generation unit housed in a separate permanent structure, and even features in keeping with modern purpose-built facilities, such as illuminated fire exit indicators. Despite this, I consider the performances that took place in these settings, and those in the most basic ones to be fundamentally of one kind. In both cases, the shows were open to all, shared a range of repertory, and were embedded in the same kind of performer-audience relationships. Nonetheless, the relative sophistication of the arenas in this cluster was a key factor in the ability of these events to extend slightly *jiqing guangchang's* effects in unusual directions.

Uniquely, audiences here included a small proportion of relatively high-status individuals, such as local entrepreneurs, media and arts managers, and perhaps sometimes even government officials. It was a setting befitting people of this standing and one in which they could socialise, impress others through conspicuous generosity and intimacy with singers, and develop connections. As a result, a slightly more complex map of the arena emerged, in which social hierarchies were expressed in the specific positions within the space occupied by particular social groups. Typically at *jiqing guangchang* events, the scope for singers to acknowledge and convey respect for an audience member's status was limited to their interpersonal interaction and the exchange of gifts. Here, higher-status individuals, those with a track record of generosity or people otherwise closely connected with the singers, could also be ushered to a special section along one side of the arena. Whereas in the ordinary audience enclosure, spectators would simply stand or perch on plastic stools, here a limited number of comfortable chairs were grouped around tables. It seemed that the tables nearest to the front received the most consistent attention and hospitality from the performers and this was where the very highest-status individuals could be found. In Chapter 4, I introduce a business owner who sponsored the event and was a regular fixture at the very front table.

Similarly, at this cluster of stages, I found gift-giving to be not the inclusive practice that it was elsewhere. At most other events, sizeable tips punctuated a steady flow of smaller gifts whose values were within reach of the average audience member. Here, though, only a few gifts occurred during each song, but almost all were of several hundred *yuan*. Income of this kind had clearly been invested back into the physical setting and other factors, such as the sound system and the skill of the backing band, that made a tangible difference to the quality of the performance. It follows too, that stages in this cluster had developed a reputation and presence in online channels by which performing opportunities are advertised. They were thus able to attract a category of singers from further afield and with greater professional experience. One I met, for instance, introduced herself to me in English as Julie. She told me that she had previously been performing professionally with a band

from the Philippines in the frontline cities of Shanghai, Hangzhou and Xiamen, but that she had taken this job in Wuhan to be closer to her family home.

Equally, these spaces brought challenges to the performer unlike those found at any other *jiqing guangchang* event. I noted in Chapter 1 that the large audiences and formalised settings may have been intimidating, especially for new singers. Here, some of the emcees put far greater emphasis than those elsewhere upon encouraging, reassuring and advising singers during on-microphone conversations between songs. These public exchanges are another feature of the events' social world that I explore in Chapter 4. Furthermore, being fixed and formal entities here, the actual performance spaces – the stages – were much larger than at events elsewhere. This could isolate the singer from the rituals of money-giving at the heart of all *jiqing guangchang* events. Instead of the audience member having personal contact with the singer while delivering cash gifts to her, in this cluster of stages, money was more often thrown onto the stage from the wings, or handed to a member of the organising team to pass on. Nonetheless, just as Meiqi filled the performance space at Jianghan Bridge, the rock singer Alian was able to command this larger stage:

> As she sings, she struts from side to side, gestures powerfully, and with mock-arrogance befitting her rock stylings, rests one boot on the monitor at the front of the stage as the final chord dies away.

On another occasion, Alian surprised the audience by accompanying herself on the drums for the song *Zhu ni ping'an* (Wishing you well)[5]. The novelty of this skill was surely calculated to reap extraordinary financial rewards. What Alian had not accounted for, though, was that the unique layout of this stage may have actually hindered the flow of gifts. In the arena, the drum kit and the guitarist were placed on an elevated gantry to one side of the stage. In the general course of events, this layout must have affected the coordination of the band; one half of its members up on the gantry had to crane their necks to communicate with the keyboard player, located out of audience view in the wings of the stage below. The other events in this cluster had the band positioned at the very rear of their stages, with a large expanse of empty space between them. It was clear that these two categories of performer were not meant to be viewed as a cooperative entity. For Alian, though, her drum performance received absolutely no cash gifts, a scenario virtually unheard of for any song at a *jiqing guangchang* event. It seems likely that part of the reason is that the audience had

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[5] Baranovitch (2003: 158) discusses this mid-1990s track, originally by Sun Yue, as typical of a "sweet, slow, soft" style of song, presenting it as the antithesis of rock music. Alian's persona at her *jiqing guangchang* stage firmly aligns her with rock, and her skills on the drums reinforce this. Thus, there appears to be a divergence in the connotations attached to the same song in two different scenarios. I suggest that this may be evidence that the symbolic readings given by scholars sometimes benefit from testing in the field. In this case, it is clear that the song carries meanings beyond those that may be derived from the text alone.

no established means of delivering their gifts to her in her position high up on the gantry. When she came down to the stage for the next song, the money started to flow again as normal.

Jiqing guangchang performances also seemed to display a sensitivity to the ambient weather conditions and – to a degree – seasonality. Among all of the groups in the city, only the two with fully covered arenas performed on days with heavy rain. During the winter months, when crowds were generally much smaller, events that usually struggled to compete with more successful neighbours chose to cease performances altogether, starting again upon the return of warmer temperatures. The groups that did continue throughout the year's coldest months adapted by preparing their spaces differently. Most attached thickly padded curtains to their overhead canopies and frames, effectively enclosing participants in walled arenas. These small changes to the physical environment encouraged bodies into closer proximity during periods of low temperatures. They also had a significant effect upon the discourses flowing around the events. During the winter, singers and emcees redoubled their efforts to make their customers – the audience – feel appreciated. Expressions of gratitude and admiration abounded for those hardy individuals showing such commitment to attending, and this dedication became a focus to justify plying these potential money-givers with hot drinks. Evoking a battle with the elements was mobilised to the advantage of the singers; they gained capital from an excuse to bombard customers with hospitality. This perhaps strengthened the sense of indebtedness and reciprocity underlying their ability to generate tips. This is another major theme when I explore the social life of the events in Chapter 4.

(v)   Summary and implications for community

In this section, I have introduced how the spaces and material forming the immediate environment of *jiqing guangchang* performances show vitality as operators in the shows. This takes effect through several mechanisms. First, social and musical interactions between participants can be enabled or constrained on a physical level by the layout, ambient conditions or acoustic environment found at events. This might result from the pre-existing conditions that groups encounter, or from the circumstances that they construct through positioning of bodies and objects, or by emitting sound. Another related mechanism involves how events respond on a social level to the influence of conditions and actors originating outside of the performance. The actions of other bodies and environmental circumstances can have an effect on where attention rests, on how certain moods enter the social canvass, and on the discourses that circulate. A third mechanism lies in how space within the arenas is carved up and made socially meaningful. This might be significant in

reflecting and fostering issues of publicness through the approach to front- and backstage regions, or through the establishment and reinforcement of social hierarchy as a facet of the social life surrounding the events.

As the thesis progresses, I argue that these observations may also be useful in understanding the relationship between *jiqing guangchang* and community. I have already suggested that community in this context may be less a feature of extrinsic ideologies or a rationalised and expressed sense of commonality. Instead, I have advocated paying attention to the non-representational or embodied experience of music. The three mechanisms I have just outlined are just some of the ways in which space and material exert real effects upon interactions, social responses to music, and the embedding of music in wider social worlds. Thus, it could be argued that space and material are worthy of being considered not only the setting for social life, but part of the very stuff of which it consists.

Perhaps not always clear from the observations so far is exactly how strongly this is felt by participants and what influence it has upon the success of the performances and of their interactions. Do audiences mind that the sound is poor at the Wangjiang Building events? Is it important that sometimes gifts at Jianghan Bridge are not fully acknowledged? What wider effects does the questionable musical cohesion between performers at the Qingchuan Bridge stages have? When I return to these questions in Chapter 4, I note that, in fact, the dynamics of money-giving seem highly resilient to many challenges of this kind. In some cases, though, other challenges pertaining to the beginnings and endings of shows may be more significant. By Chapter 5, I intend to have constructed several layers of analysis to show that elements such as spatiality and materiality overlap with social life at the events. In this final chapter I use these overlapping observations to reach conclusions about community meaning in this context. For now, however, having focused upon four examples of *jiqing guangchang* settings, the next step is to position these and other events in their wider spatial context. I move away from the local level – the intricate negotiation of particular performance spaces by performers and audience – towards analysing the significance of where and how events are positioned in relation to other geographical and social features of the city.

Space and material: the map of Wuhan

I argue here that this wider spatial perspective might also be a tool for understanding *jiqing guangchang* and community. Marking the locations of performance events on Wuhan's city map shows them in relation to each other and to further features of city life. It is in this way that I intend to understand their place within larger social systems. Referring to the field of sound studies allows me to engage with sound in the non-representational sense I

have already discussed. A multimedia soundscape map, however, which might comprehensively reproduce an environment's sounds, would be of less use here. Instead, I consider the map an analytical tool for achieving specific outcomes: understanding why events occur in places that they do, how their activity is adapted to them, and how they share these spaces.

There can, of course, be weaknesses in the use of maps to indicate matters relating to sound. Two-dimensional representations might, for instance, be poorly suited to indicating its diffusion, particularly on the vertical plane (Wissman 2014). I will show in this section that the reactions among people in nearby buildings is one of the most significant channels through which public music is engaged in wider social life. Almost all residential buildings in Wuhan are at least six storeys high. As a result, a two-dimensional map might not capture all the details pertinent to understanding how sound becomes the focus for conflict between performance groups and local residents. Indeed, throughout this section, I make no effort to differentiate between the loudness, diffusion, or any other quality of the musical sounds, only the positions of the sources producing them. I can, however, try to overcome this limitation by reporting other data concerning the diffusion of sound in public spaces. One indication, for example, compares the magnitude of the sound levels received at different distances from public-space music events in Wuhan. The decibel level at 20 meters from a square dance group is recorded as approximately 76dB. The level falls only as far as 58dB when the reading is taken from the balcony of a ninth-floor apartment found on the perimeter of the square (ZZD 2013). Both readings are far higher than the evening-hours maximum of 45dB stated in Chinese law (ibid.).

Another potential limitation of the maps I employ here is the possible implication they project that activities shown are fixed in one place. As Sara Cohen acknowledges, indicating *trajectories* can, in some cases, be more effective (Cohen 2012: 137). Sally Harrison-Pepper demonstrates how this might be achieved. She effectively tracks and illustrates the movements of members of the public through New York City's Washington Square Park as their movements relate to fixed features of the space and to static street performers. She also presents time-lapse photography to show the gathering and dissipating of crowds (Harrison-Pepper 1990). I choose, on the other hand, to continue presenting traditional maps showing pertinent features at fixed points. This should not give the impression that the *jiqing guangchang* events I discuss are fixed and permanent. In fact, I will explain how many events moved around – whether through choice or coercion – during the periods that I observed their practices. On the map of *jiqing guangchang* locations that I present below, therefore, each indicator should not be thought of as one individual *group*, but instead as one *location* in which a group has been observed. Some of them are shown on one map in multiple locations to acknowledge that they occupied different spots at different

times. Thus, my maps are not a snapshot of a moment in time, nor primarily an illustration of the trajectories and movements of the groups, but instead an indication of where groups can set up in relation to more permanent features of the city. I try to offset any doubt this introduces by specifically relaying details of the movements undertaken by certain stages.

Similarly, where my maps diverge from precedents set by existing scholarship, this is the result of conscious methodological decisions. In one of the most thorough incorporations of the illustrative technique into analysis of popular genres, Cohen (2012) presents maps that are hand-drawn by interviewees. These are meant to show an individual's conceptualisation of their musical environment, rather than directly reflecting the scholar's synthesis of information. Informants pick out the performance venues and other related places that they consider important, as a way of narrating their careers and musical lives. Significant here are the activities and social meanings attached to certain locations and the overlap between neighbourhoods and genres in terms of the socio-economic circumstances of each. As Cohen puts it, this kind of map is a tool in the "micro-sociological" exploration of musical experience (ibid.: 168). My goals, however, are quite different. Whereas Cohen talks about sound and space exerting an influence on a social level and this feeding back – one step removed – into the music experience, I aim to show how the environment affects music and musical activity directly, without socio-economic detail as the intermediary. I am interested in the meaning of spatial, material and sonic properties per se, and take material reality rather than conceptual imaginaries as the object of study. This does not mean I endorse an approach of environmental determinism that might "undermine the agency of the music-makers involved" (ibid.: 158). Instead I try to emphasise that environment and social life are mutually dependent factors in the experience of music in this context.

(i)   Clustering in *jiqing guangchang* events

Holding a *jiqing guangchang* event requires a significant amount of space. Each show relies upon a substantial array of bulky equipment and involves performers, staff and spectators counted in the dozens, and sometimes the hundreds. Performances are held in a variety of the city's more spacious corners, usually in clusters, in which multiple events are set up in close proximity (see Ill. 2.10). As the locations for the events discussed in the previous section might imply, the Yangtze River and the smaller Han River dominate the geography of the central part of Wuhan. The areas around their banks also provide the kind of less built-up spaces ideal for accommodating such large gatherings of people. The derelict spaces and corners of landscaped park land that I have already discussed are all far removed from the city's more typically congested streets and bustling footpaths. While, however, riverbank areas might be obvious locations in which to choose to hold performances, these

spaces are significant for more than simply being relatively secluded and of a suitable size. Instead, a more complex complementarity between the musical practices and sounds of the events on one hand, and the sonic conditions afforded by these riverbank locations on the other is another reasons to think of them as operators with vitality in the events.

Clusters of stages referred to throughout this thesis:

[1] Jianghan Bridge and Han Riverbank

[2] Qingchuan Bridge

[3] Jianghan Road pedestrian shopping street

[4] Jiqing Folk Custom Street

[5] Hanyangmen park and Wangjiang Building

Ill. 2.10: An approximately 3km x 4.5km section of central Wuhan, each pink sphere marking the location in which a *jiqing guangchang* event has been observed.

In Chapter 3, I detail the musical arrangements of the well-known popular and folk songs heard at the events, but at this point, I focus on how some of the music's particular sonic features interact in meaningful ways with the general acoustic environment. Many of the singers considered to be among *jiqing guangchang's* most skilful employ an 'ethnic' or 'national' singing style (*minzu changfa*) to present songs of folk origin. This high-pitched and nasal delivery, usually associated with operatic and folk genres, has an unmistakably piercing effect. Many of the singers unable to carry off this particular technique still show the influences of the style, even when delivering common pop songs. They prefer a sharper delivery to the soft, breathy way of singing that has been equally familiar in the Chinese popular music repertory since it was introduced by the innovative vocalist Deng Lijun in the late 1970s (Baranovitch 2003). Alongside these shrill female voices is backing music whose

main instruments are electric drum kit and electric keyboard. The former is usually the most prominent part of the texture behind the voice, and the keyboard part is often less audible. When this instrument can be heard, its contribution is invariably dominated by its left-hand range, which replicates an electric bass guitar sound. Block chords, arpeggios and fills played in the right-hand range are almost always largely drowned out. After these sounds have been run through a low-quality PA system, and are emitted at a distorting high volume, the overall effect perceivable as it reaches the audience is of a polarised sonic texture. The shrill vocal part soars above a backdrop that – apart from the drums and sometimes the bass guitar sound – is usually indistinct, and whose middle registers are normally only minimally audible.

In Ill. 2.11, I offer a visual representation of the sonic features evident in a typical *jiqing guangchang* performance by highlighting contrasts with a typical commercially-produced studio recording[6]. For street and studio versions of the same song, I present two spectrograms. The first pair (a) shows the intensity of sound energy covering a full range of audible frequencies (spread on the vertical axis), with higher intensity showing as red traces. The second pair (b), two corresponding melodic-range spectrograms, highlights a musically-meaningful frequency range, making background noise less visible and thus picking out more audible musical lines in yellow tones. Each varies over a time of approximately fifteen seconds, represented on the horizontal axis.

The pair of diagrams (a) shows a far greater intensity of sound at lower than higher frequencies in the case of the studio recording, and a relatively even spread for the street version. In other words, the accompaniment is heard far more strongly in the commercial recording than in the street performance. For the street performance in spectrogram (b), the sung melody line can be traced at the higher end of the spectrum, along with the male emcee's slightly lower-pitched interjections, as he elaborates on the final syllables of the sung phrase ("*hei lo lo hei*!"). The analysis shows fainter duplication of these exclamations as reverb is applied by the sound system. In this street recording, the keyboard accompaniment is only audible for a few seconds at the very beginning of the extract, and the musical events showing most strongly below the melody are the regular rhythms of the electric drum part. Accompaniment in the studio version shows with much higher intensity in these lower frequency ranges, indicating a far more balanced musical texture throughout the excerpt.

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[6] Recorded extracts for all musical examples in this thesis are given on the accompanying CD.

Commercial Recording   ***Jiqing guangchang* performance**

Hei lo hei_____ hei lo hei_____ bie ren__ zhong dou zhi de dou____ lo hei_____
嘿 咯 嘿 — 嘿 咯 嘿 — 别 人 一 种 豆 只 得 豆 --咯 嘿
Hei lo hei, hei lo hei Other people plant beans and they only get beans, *lo hei*

(a)   Full spectrograms
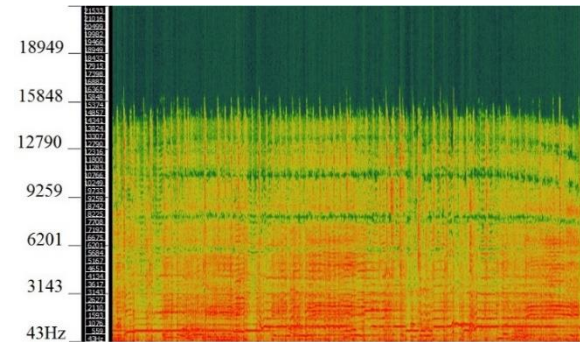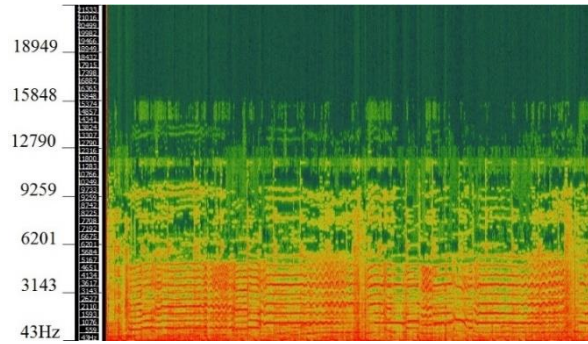
(b)   Melodic-range spectrograms:
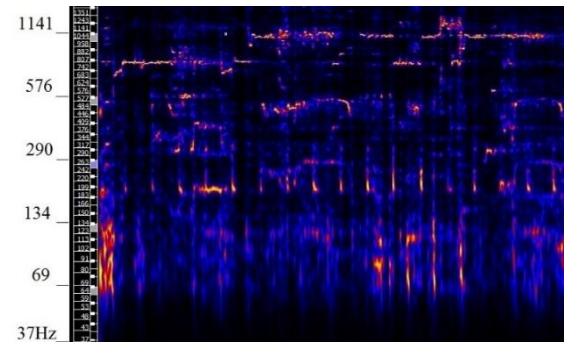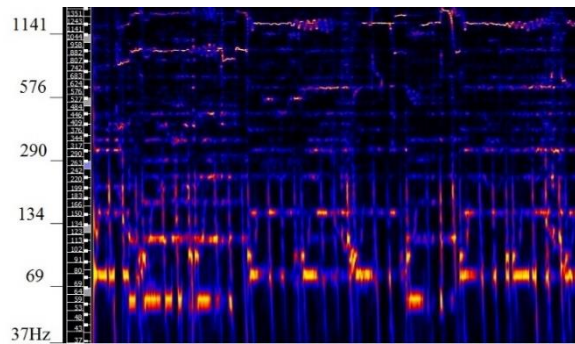
Ill. 2.11: Comparative analysis of two corresponding excerpts from the song *Babai li dongting wode jia* (*Babai li dongting* my home). Left is analysis of a short excerpt from the 2000 commercial recording by Li Qiong (CD track 1). Right is the equivalent passage from a performance in Wuhan by Wenwen on 17 May 2014 (CD track 2).

The way in which sounds combine and diffuse across space depends upon the bands of the frequency spectrum into which each component sound falls. Loud sounds are likely to effectively cover softer ones that occupy a similar frequency range, and lower and mid-range sounds can have a masking effect over the register of frequencies immediately above them. Individual sounds from among several emitted simultaneously are thus more likely to be heard clearly when they are distributed – as the music of *jiqing guangchang* effectively is – in disparate frequency ranges (Truax: 1984 (2001): 81-2). Furthermore, sound waves are able to diffract around obstacles smaller than their wavelengths and thus lower-frequency sounds with longer wavelengths meet fewer objects capable of blocking their diffusion. As a result, they are likely to have a larger range, or *sonic profile*, than higher-pitched sounds in the built-up environment (ibid.: 150).

Amplification equipment is particularly effective at producing low frequency sound waves (Schafer 1977: 117). This is significant when we consider that the pointed ethnic singing style central to *jiqing guangchang* is equally familiar at the handful of performances involving Chinese instruments and operatic genres that also take place around the city. As I have already mentioned, some of these employ similar reward systems as *jiqing guangchang* events, involving flowers and cash tips. *Jiqing guangchang*, however, is much more prominent around Wuhan than these other kinds of performance. It attracts much larger crowds, and appears to be far more lucrative for its performers and organisers. I argue that this might partly be explained by the acoustic factors that I have just outlined. *Jiqing guangchang's* musical arrangements are highly suited to outdoor performance in a modern city. The polarised texture and strong low-frequency grounding of the music affords it a far more pervasive acoustic profile than opera or Chinese instrumental music, even when they are amplified. This means that it can be heard in an environment dominated by low-frequency sounds such as traffic, and as full of obstacles to sound diffusion as a typical city space may be. Sau Chan (2005: 175-6) links the development of Chinese opera's characteristic singing style with the need to project the voice to large crowds in times before electronic amplification. In the amplified era, however, *jiqing guangchang* shows a version of this singing style continuing to be significant for similar reasons, but in a quite different genre of music.

An impressive acoustic profile, however, does not only mean that *jiqing guangchang* events can support large audiences and produce an immersive atmosphere for those within the arena. Crucially for a profit-orientated form of music-making without any kind of formal marketing, the sound of the events functions as their most effective promotional tool. Many of the performances are hidden behind walls, in the middle of parks, or under bridges, and because their sounds are dispersed very effectively over a wide area and audible over the mechanised hum of the city, curious passers-by and casual potential

spectators may be attracted to these lively locations in a way that would be impossible without this centripetal sonic effect. It is in this way that a synergy might be said to come into play between the sounds of *jiqing guangchang* performances and the social practices surrounding them. The very existence of the shows depends on attracting and maintaining a pool of customers prepared to voluntarily contribute cash gifts. I argue in Chapter 4 that the main social practices characterising the events all revolve around ways in which singers encourage the flow of these gifts. Potential givers need to be brought into the arena in the first place, however. Besides word of mouth, I suggest that one of the most effective ways in which this is achieved is through the sounds of events penetrating into the wider city and raising curiosity among the general public. Sounds function as publicity, and the principles of pursuing the widest possible reach and impact for these message are realised literally in the diffusion and inclusivity with which these sounds reach potential customers. It is only through their musical sounds being as widely 'public' as possible that *jiqing guangchang* accesses its lifeblood, the sources of income attracted from far and wide.

This phenomenon was illustrated to me on one occasion in particular, in which I was informed that a certain group planned to set up an afternoon performance event in a new location. I was invited to attend on the group's first day of performing:

> I arrive at the appointed place, which is unfamiliar to me. I find a very busy major road, lined by a featureless space with no obviously suitable performance location. Concerned that I may have come to the wrong place, I begin walking along the road, and I am eventually aware of the low bass sounds of distant music over the traffic noise. Encouraged that I am heading in the right direction, I continue walking towards the sounds of what I imagine to be a large gathering of people, like many other events I have been used to attending. Clearly sonic rather than visual navigation is by far the most effective way of finding the group, just as it is the primary way in which these street performances must initially become known to many of their audience members.

This was a typical outdoor urban area in which traffic sounds drowned out the reverberations of what could otherwise have been perceived as a large acoustic space. The sound of traffic had the effect of bringing, in the words of Philip Tagg (1994), the "acoustic horizon" much closer than it would otherwise have been. Put another way, the traffic disrupted clear perception of other sounds originating further away from the hearer. As a result, the music I could detect stood out prominently as the only significant points of sound that came from further than a few meters away. Following my ears, I quickly came across the group and found that the event was much smaller than I had imagined when hearing their sounds from a distance. A team comprising only four singers and two organisers was struggling hard to maintain an audience large enough to outnumber it. It was clear that their narrow strip of footpath next to a busy bus stop was utterly unsuited to their ends. I learned that emitting an impressive sonic footprint could apparently also be a way of producing an

effect on the wider environment disproportionate to the size and intensity of the actual event. This was confirmed to me when the group immediately realised the unsuitability of this new location and gave up performing there after only two days.

Jiqing guangchang events in riverside clusters, on the other hand, were helped rather than hindered by their environment. Diffusion of sound into the surrounding city is an important condition of events' success and this is enabled by the particular material and spatial characteristics of these settings. A parallel exists in the US city of New Orleans, where historical discourses attach great importance to that urban area's lakes, rivers and canals, and the effect of these in creating what is perceived as the city's unique acoustic characteristics. Sound travels particularly effectively over the city's bodies of water and through the peculiar air currents that they generate (Sakakeeny 2010). While I am aware of no similar discourses in Wuhan, sound can reasonably be expected to carry further across its rivers than through its typically built-up city spaces. For the various events that are located close to the banks of the narrower Han River, this translates directly each evening into a steady flow of spectators crossing its bridges on foot as they descend upon the sources of the musical sounds filling the air. This flow of bodies produces its own momentum and amplifies the effervescent effect and sense of occasion that the sounds generate. Thus, I argue that a combination of musical sounds, social practices and physical settings produces the unique *jiqing guangchang* occasion. These observations demand, in particular, that music's sonic characteristics and their interaction with the specific local environment be emphasised just as strongly as musical practices. They operate on a level separate from the symbolic. Instead, it is the physical makeup of the sounds that functions on a highly practical level to enliven and support the music-making in concrete and indispensable ways.

(ii)   Authority and noise

The practices and sounds of *jiqing guangchang* performances work in tandem with the general sonic environment of the city and also the particular acoustic conditions of their situations to thrive in these riverside clusters. An entirely separate layer of factors, however, is equally relevant to this clustering phenomenon. Selected parts of the riverbanks are used reasonably extensively for recreation during evening leisure time, but they are never nearly as busy as the commercial districts that host Wuhan's core daily public activity. Riverbanks do not see, for example, the same intensity of action as exists around various department stores, dining areas, pedestrian shopping streets and night markets. The constant flow of people in these busier places would generally make them highly attractive to organisers trying to maximise the size of their potential audience. The decision to set up in quieter corners should, therefore, not necessarily be understood as evidence of an active preference

for these spaces. Instead, they are often locations to which groups have retreated following disputes with the local authorities. Organisers have found the locations available to them increasingly severely restricted, and the riverbanks may be unfavourable marginal spaces that they occupy out of necessity.

Mao Yuming first set up her *jiqing guangchang* event in July 2013 (Yuan 2014). Her adult son had developed chronic kidney disease two years earlier, and the ever-increasing financial burden of his treatment quickly consumed her family's modest retirement finances. Determining that she had no choice but to rely upon her own initiative, Mao took an express course in *bianlian*, the art from Sichuan opera of switching between highly decorative face masks in a split second. She began to make the nightly journey across the city to perform near the busy pedestrian shopping street at Jianghan Road (Jianghan *Lu*). Soon she had formed an amateur troupe and her one-woman show had developed into a fully-fledged *jiqing guangchang* event. Mao's cut of the cash tips that her singers earned from their growing audience began to cover her son's monthly 5,000 *yuan* medical bills. In May 2014, however, the local City Management (*Chengguan*), the branch of the police that enforces public order policy, informed Mao that her performances would no longer be allowed at her spot on the concourse outside a major department store. The police had received complaints from local residents about the loud noise, and explained publicly that the high number of spectators blocked the thoroughfare and produced other "hidden dangers" (*anquan yinhuan*) in this densely congested space (ibid.). With little option but to continue, Mao transferred her event to a small square at a street corner facing the newly-developed Jiqing Folk Custom Street mentioned in Chapter 1. She struggled to build a new crowd in this quieter corner of the city, but continued to experience pressure from the City Management to keep volume levels down or face being moved on again.

Mao's experience as a *jiqing guangchang* organiser was not unusual. Zhuang Di was one of several organisers to fall foul of a 2014 city-wide clampdown on street vendors and other commercial street activity, when they were moved on en masse from the small Hanyangmen park at the foot of the Great Yangtze River Bridge. This is the park I described in Chapter 1, and the original location for *jiqing guangchang* when it first arrived in Wuhan, I was told. The reasons given were similar to those confronted by Mao. Often I heard them summarised in discourses circulating at the events as 'disturbing the public' (*raomin*). Zhuang had been in collaboration with a local disabled man, Wan Houyuan, who like Mao, had begun singing on the street a few years earlier when faced with emergency medical bills to save the life of his adopted daughter. Several of the events that had filled this park were able to move into the Wangjiang Building, the three-room indoor space described in the section above, which was only a short distance away. After various failed attempts at finding a new space to satisfy both the demands of her performances and the restriction of the City

Management, however, Zhuang gave up her search and resorted to a new role as singer at an existing stage.

Like many informants who grumbled to me about a system of public administration seen as impenetrable and lacking transparency, her attitude was resigned and stoical. She acknowledged that the City Management was simply implementing policies passed down to them from the government and Communist Party above. Without an underworld background (*heishehui beijing*) or the ability to pay off (*maitong*) officials – a luxury that apparently other event organisers enjoyed – she felt her position to be powerless. What did seem remarkable, however, was that *jiqing guangchang* events apparently fell foul of regulations more than other street music activities. During my spells in Wuhan, for instance, I noticed that several square dance groups continued to gather as normal in precisely the same space from which Mao Yuming's *jiqing guangchang* event had recently been evicted. Yet, while relations with authorities in Wuhan may have been opaque and dominated by obstacles, there was clearly genuine tension between *jiqing guangchang* and other forms of public-space music on one hand, and local residents on the other. In recent years, local and national media have reported various incidents triggered by disputes in which participants and residents have come into conflict. Among the most extreme examples from across the country actually occurred in Wuhan, when one square dance group reported that faeces had been thrown down at them from a neighbouring tower block (ZZD 2013). During fieldwork, I observed more than one incident in which the police were called to events, conflicts flared up between individuals, and objects were thrown.

The main cause of disputes with local residents was noise. Defining noise often involves negotiation over which sounds to consider 'unwanted' and in which situations (Schafer 1977: 183). Judgements take into account the particular set of circumstances, activities and moods in effect at any given moment. This is theorised effectively by sound scholar Michael Butera, who pairs noise with silence at two thresholds of an "intentional listening spectrum" (Butera 2011). Each represents a liminal state of perception, not incorporable into stable experience because the sound either exceeds or fails to meet anticipated levels. It seems useful in this context to acknowledge that definitions of noise are constantly being revised against changing expectations, and form part of a complex web of conflict, negotiation, and shifting circumstances. They may depend on factors beyond simple acoustic qualities of the sounds, such as high volume or harsh timbre. It is likely that residents living near to clusters of *jiqing guangchang* and square dance events are instead disturbed by an "inharmonic interplay" (Wissmann 2014: 54-5) in which several clashing sources of music create an indistinct cacophony.

In the next section I turn particular attention to understanding how clusters of events are able to operate in close proximity to other groups, even though to the outside hearer their

sounds obviously clash. Paradoxically, however, I argue that within the arena itself, high levels of ambient sounds, reverberation and distortion – factors that might be considered as detracting from the purity of the main sonic signal – in fact form an integral part of the musical experience. In the karaoke context, features of this kind have been understood as a welcome levelling influence. The sounds heard by listeners in these contexts are heavily processed and the details of transitions between notes may be masked. Less skilled amateur musicians, therefore, are able to play a successful part in music-making without feeling that what might be perceived as shortcomings in their performances are too clearly audible (Zhou and Tarocco 2007: 53). A similar point was never made explicitly to me around *jiqing guangchang* events. I did observe, however, that whenever I came across a microphone and amplification system being used in public life in Wuhan, whether in musical contexts or when used to project spoken messages in commercial settings, reverberation and echo effects were always applied to the sound. The concept of *re'nao* (fervour and noise) is often highlighted as major cultural reference point in Chinese societies (Chao 2008). It is the product of intense social activity, and might be stimulated by loud and impactful sounds. Indeed, scholars have remarked that in Chinese musical culture, loud sounds are often used immoderately. Ritual processional groups of ear-splitting shawm bands and firecrackers, operatic percussion, and folk singing that is more akin to shouting, are far more representative of the nation's musical activity than its disproportionately-recognised chamber music culture would suggest (Jones 2013). Perhaps the tendency to appreciate impact above clarity and nuance is reflected literally in the sonic effects the technology here is set up to project.

(iii)   Definition of space

Direct conflict over noise is, however, not the only form in which the authorities affect the use of space by street music participants. Just as in many other Chinese cities of a similar standing to Wuhan, messages of a political or public-service nature are a ubiquitous feature of public life. The most common content of these messages during my periods in the field involved the 'Chinese dream', 'Wuhan spirit' and 'core values of socialism' rhetoric mentioned earlier in the chapter. These messages directly exerted an influence upon the acoustic public space of the city; slogans and other spoken forms of rhetoric were broadcast out into the street by police vehicles driving around, by speakers at school gates, and by the PA systems in public transport and large shops. Influence over the city's physical space, however, is perhaps best achieved not by these fleeting aural messages, but by enduring visual ones. Thus, shops and other facilities with a scrolling LED display board or video screen interspersed their own content with these official messages or images. Bus stop

advertising, outdoor hoardings, subway promotional spaces, street furniture, and many other kinds of posters and screens all displayed similar messages (see Ill. 2.12). These visual forms of communication exerted influence over the city's physical space in ways that are particularly significant in public-space musical practices.

Ill. 2.12: A typical public-space hoarding displaying the twelve 'core values of socialism' (photo: 22 December 2014).

Some of the most common homes for posters containing this kind of message were the temporary walls and fences erected around building sites, derelict areas, or other places to which general public access was restricted. It was precisely this kind of space that I found to be the most typical locations for *jiqing guangchang* performances. Openings were often crudely established in walls or breaches made in fences to allow participants access to these restricted sites. Spaces that, during the day time, were left physically and socially deserted by the will of the authorities were redefined by the presence of music groups during evening hours. The spots playing host to *jiqing guangchang* events now became viable places for intense cultural activity and leisure (see Ill. 2.13). The definitions imposed upon spaces by the authorities were thus challenged and reconfigured.

Ill. 2.13: A city square cordoned off by temporary fencing. The space is deserted by day (above), but when the fence is breached in the evening a *jiqing guangchang* event can take place (below) (photos: 20 October 2014 and 27 October 2014).

It might be imagined, therefore, that resistance to definitions symbolically and physically imposed upon these spaces by the propaganda-covered barriers was important in the meaning of the shows. I emphasise, though, that I found no significant evidence for this apparent 'subversion' being proactively reflected upon by organisers or participants. It certainly did not seem to arise from any particular ideological commitment or self-conscious intention to express political agendas. Instead, performance events moving into these spaces might at most reflect apathy or disregard when it comes to official intentions. These attitudes seem relatively dormant until official policies interfere with everyday activity, including the staging of music events. I return in detail to these discussions in Chapter 5, when top-down and grassroots ways of understanding public space are incorporated into my larger project of understanding community in this context. Nonetheless, for now it is reasonable to infer from this example that Wuhan's public-space music-making can have the effect of helping to

define and redefine space in ways that might be significant beyond the performance event itself. While this illustration shows musical practices and music-related social life exerting these influences, I argue too that musical sound per se can have similar effects.

Scholars in the field of sound studies have associated the emitting of sound in public with discourses of power relations. This is based on the premise that producing loud sounds can express power, insofar as doing so may reflect the sound-maker's confidence that they will not be censored (Schafer 1977: 76). Comparing the proliferation of sound technologies in contemporary urban life with the more limited tools available in past centuries, Barry Truax has called the modern access to loud speakers a "democratisation" of acoustic power (Truax 1984 (2001): 127). With this kind of equipment, ordinary citizens are now able to affect large numbers of people with their sounds in such a way that only large institutions and authorities may have been able to in the past. I argue that in the context of Wuhan's public space, however, understanding the situation in such politicised terms is not the most useful approach. The experiences of *jiqing guangchang* events that I have already relayed, after all, show that government authorities still retain the indisputable power to move on or to silence the sounds of groups of people in the city space. In this sense, the limits of this 'democratisation' are very clear.

On the level of mundane interpersonal and intergroup relations, however, I find these discourses of sound and power far more meaningful. In fact, on Wuhan's streets it seems that the loudspeaker can wield formidable influence. I witnessed one occasion, for instance, in which one of Wuhan's Christian organisations had attracted a small audience in a public square for a one-off performance of their evangelical songs. Their strummed guitars were amplified to a modest degree. The location for this public performance happened to be just meters away from the spot regularly occupied by a *jiqing guangchang* event. Well in advance of the latter show's beginning, organisers played a pop record at high volume through their vastly superior sound system, drowning out the guitars. Within moments the Christian band had ended their performance and vacated the square. This simple act cleansed the sonic environment and left questions of territorial ownership in no doubt. It seems that controlling the soundscape here can be a key factor in controlling the social activity that can take place within a space.

(iv)   Summary and implications for community

One of the themes running through this section has been conflict; between events and local residents, between citizens and authorities and between different music groups. I do not suggest, however, that either conflict or the need for regulation of public sound are indicative of a failure of community. In fact, the discussions of community in Chapter 5 will

involve specific assessment of conflict's part in the phenomenon. It will become clear that the two are linked more closely than might intuitively be assumed. From the observations in this section, however, perhaps the general point worthiest of emphasis is that *jiqing guangchang's* use of sound, space and material is significant not only within the performance arena, but also in relation to a larger social picture. I have begun to show some ways in which it can shape the use of public space, influence the right to access it, and unlock the power to define it. Dealing with material reality is thus an instrument through which intergroup and even broader relations are played out. I have begun to specifically highlight the role of sound in these processes, and I continue to do so more thoroughly in the next section. So far in this chapter, my first approach focused upon the space within the performance arena itself. I then expanded the frame to consider the positioning and mutual influence of public-space music-making and the wider city, both geographically and socially. In a third way, I now consider the dynamics occurring within a cluster of musical events. I turn to analysis of how events designate and share space together.

Sound

As I noted earlier in this chapter, live music-making events such as *jiqing guangchang* are far from the only sources of music in public spaces. Square dance events, and businesses that broadcast recorded music into the public street are also very prominent. Their distribution around the city, too, displays a high degree of clustering (see Ill. 2.14). Looking at how space is shared within these clusters reveals that sound – in the non-representational sense that I continue to emphasise – contributes to the dynamics of intergroup relations. Just as is the case for *jiqing guangchang*, many sites that host square dances see two or more groups occupying spaces that appear barely large enough for the purpose upon first glance. Sometimes I found it difficult to discern, either visually or sonically, where the boundaries between events were drawn. Dancers on the fringes of two groups might be positioned in very close proximity to each other but engaged in quite different dance routines, and the music emitted by the sound systems of each group can merge in an apparently futile cacophony. Closer observation revealed that the sense of boundary between groups actually functioned in an effective way and this allowed suitable dancing spots, which were at a premium in the city, to be divided very successfully. Focusing on the details of how space is shared and differentiated on this localised scale reveals more about the role played by sound.
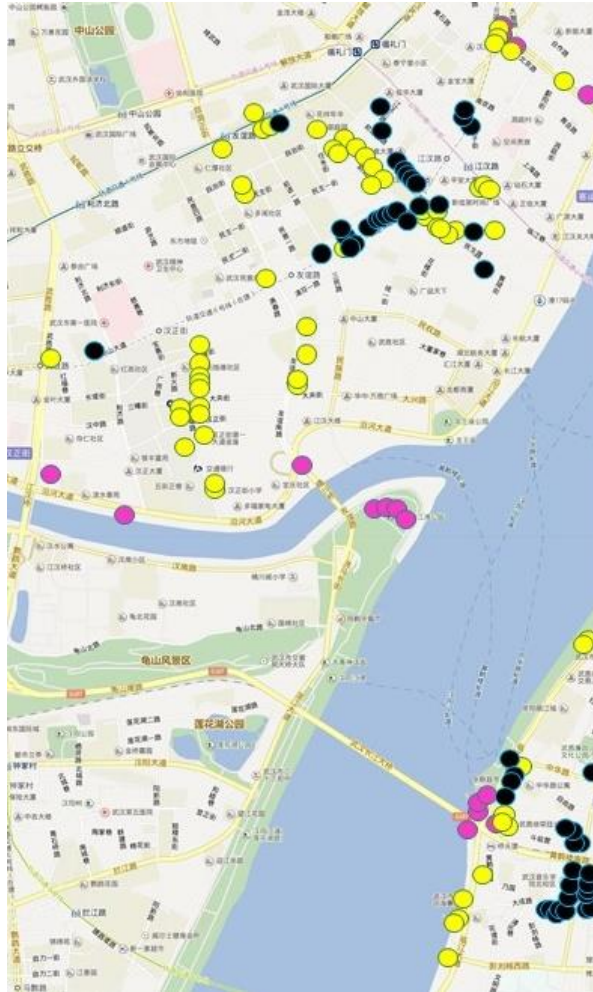
Ill. 2.14: Locations of square dance events (yellow) and businesses broadcasting music into public spaces (black) added to the position of *jiqing guangchang* events.

(i) The *sonic niche*

Ill. 2.15 (below) represents one of the several solutions employed by groups around the city. Two square dance groups occupying a small section of riverside park had their sound systems orientated in opposite directions. Rows of dancers lined up close to each of these sources of music, which were turned up to a high volume. As a result of the directionality of the sound emitted and the loudness, each set of dancers was immersed in a sphere in which their own group's sounds dominated. They were insulated from the potentially disturbing music of the other group. These two features of the sound created a highly effective acoustic independence for each one, despite the physical proximity. By taking just a few steps outside of the primary dissemination zone of one event's sound, the effect would be lost. The sounds of the group nearby would immediately begin to exert a conflicting influence that would severely threaten proper dancing conditions.
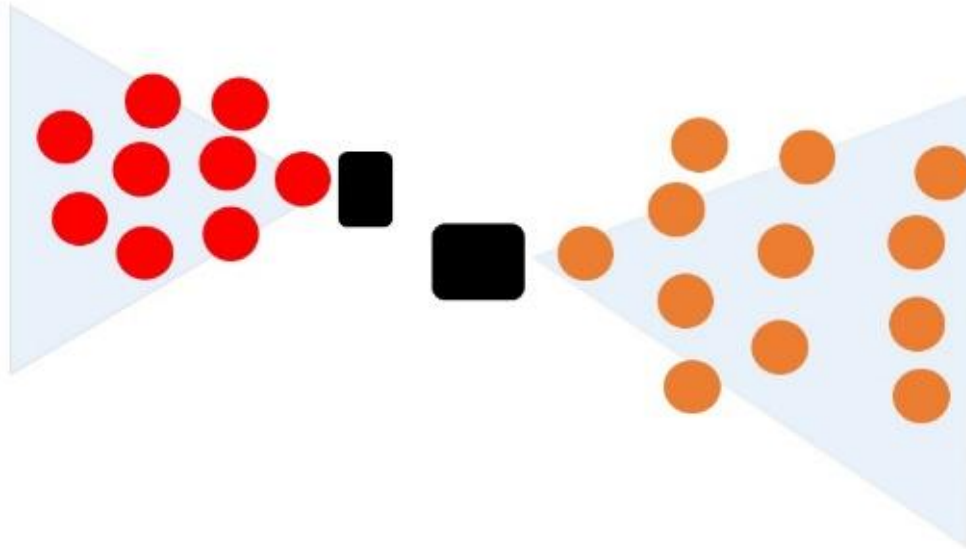
Ill. 2.15: Bird's-eye-view illustration showing how two groups of square dancers are positioned in relation to the diffusion of sound from their respective sound systems.

In other instances, I found the most remarkable feature of the spaces created by musicians to be their permeability to outsiders. My observation of one individual practicing the *dizi* (flute) on a city footpath is representative. He practiced with backing music emitted by a small portable speaker:

> The man plays along with his recorded track, which features a *dizi* part as well as the accompaniment. Sometimes he plays simultaneously with the *dizi* on the recording, and at other times he mimics its phrases at a slight delay. He is clearly listening carefully to the recording and responding closely to what he hears. He chooses to position his speaker on one edge of the footpath, and he stands facing it on the other edge, a few meters away. The width of the path is between the man and the speaker, so a steady flow of people passes through the space between them.

Gesture theorist Adam Kendon has analysed the physical arrangement of different kinds of social interactions, highlighting what he terms f-formations (Kendon 1990). These are spheres in which participants organise themselves according to certain typical patterns. Often, the physical positioning of the individuals involved also influences how space surrounding them is used by other people not directly part of the interaction. In a three-way standing conversation, for instance, an o-shaped space tends to form in the centre of the group of participants. This space is left empty and it would be unusual for someone not involved in the conversation to enter it. The *dizi* player I observed did not seem to create a similar space. Imagining the man and his portable speaker to be the two 'interactants' in this situation, then the sphere of which both were a part was certainly not impermeable to passers-by. Placing himself and his speaker at either side of the footpath meant that others would inevitable enter the musical domain that he had constructed (see Ill. 2.16). He seemed

unconcerned to keep this sphere inaccessible to others. This scenario is typical of musical set-ups I observed in Wuhan, many of which displayed remarkable uses of space.
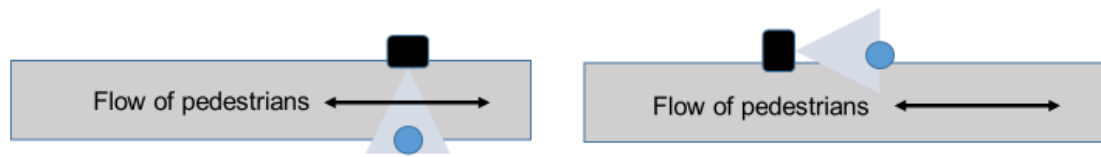
Ill. 2.16: Bird's-eye-view diagram indicating the position of the *dizi* player in relation to his speaker and to the flow of pedestrians (left). An alternative set-up (right) might make it less likely for pedestrians to pass between the musician and the speaker.

Applying the sharing of space through boundaries drawn in sound to understanding community, I theorise the situations described above by introducing what I term the *sonic niche*. This refers to a space appropriated for activities of a sound-sensitive nature. It is a space carved out within a sound environment that threatens the flow of the activities, using the strategic emission of loud and highly directional sound to isolate participants from potential disturbances by means of sound-masking. Many of Wuhan's street music activities survive against a background of sounds threatening to overwhelm their music by creating a small area of space in which their participants can be immersed in their sounds. These sonic niches mean that the activity can be meaningfully enjoyed and that groups can co-exist with others emitting similarly loud sounds. They are thus able to share access to the most favourable spaces left open to them by the authorities. Some of the effect of the sonic niche depends upon the psychology expressed in the so-called 'cocktail party effect'. This is a phenomenon in which the brain is able to focus upon one source of sound among many (see Bronkhorst 2000; Conway et al. 2001; Ebata 2003; Hawley et al. 2004). Various factors, such as the physical proximity of the target and competing sounds and the similarity in their frequencies have a bearing upon the individual's ability to achieve psychological immersion in the target.

Another usage of the term sonic niche, however – this time in the field of sound design – provides a clearer clue as to its potential use for understanding community on the streets of Wuhan. Sound designer Antonella Radicchi advocates the placing of digital audio players around cities to 'enhance' the ambiance of these urban spaces. Devices produce music, other abstract sound and speech to counteract traffic noise. It is the "intimacy and sharing" (Radicchi 2012: 254) Radicchi aims to create with this intervention that highlights how the sonic niche I identify at play in Wuhan may have implications in understanding social bonding and the individuation and aggregation of experience. I explore this below.

The concept also draws upon the philosophy of Don Ihde (2007; Born 2013: 13) and Peter Sloterdijk (de Jong and Schuilenburg 2006: 76), in which similar sonically-constructed

territories are referred to as *spheres*. Whereas the boundaries of these spheres are characterised by Ihde as ambiguous or imperceptible, on the streets of Wuhan the limits seem fairly clearly defined. In this way, the street situation may be similar to when individuals and groups of people immerse themselves in 'private' sounds by, for instance, positioning themselves away from others in an enclosed office, or by listening to music through headphones (Dibben and Haake 2013). The sonic niches forged on Wuhan's streets differ, however, from these other scenarios in two respects. When listening to music in a private office or through headphones, the leakage of sound to those outside of the niche is minimal. For Wuhan's public-space musicians, on the other hand, the wider public is subjected to a cacophony of sounds arising from a series of groups all occupying their own niches. As already mentioned, this means that the public and authorities are often forced to act in response. Secondly, the wearing of headphones or the closing of an office door also functions as an indication to the wider world that those within the niche do not wish to be disturbed. A space has been created that is not meant to be penetrated by outsiders. In this sense, the sonic niche is bound up in the notion of the frame that becomes increasingly central to my observations about community, especially in Chapter 4. As I have already described, however, Wuhan's street musicians are not immune from disturbances from the world around them, the activity outside of their particular niche or frame; they are regularly affected by passing pedestrians, objects thrown in anger, trucks, and stray dogs.

Thus, it seems that the sonic niches constructed on Wuhan's streets are part of a situation whose complexity lies in sound's role in the notions of 'publicness' and 'privateness'. Georgina Born highlights the possibility of different layers of social space forming within the same physical one, what she describes as "nested assemblages" (Born 2013: 26). This means that a private mode of sociability can be forged, for instance, by the use of headphones within the wider public space of a railway carriage. Likewise, a public platform can be entered from an ostensibly private physical space, such as when a personal computer is used to access an internet game or live forum (Cook 2013: 236-7). The sonic niche may be thought of as a tool for understanding similar complexities, and it is one designed specifically to reflect the techniques used by Wuhan's street musicians. At the same time, it is a way of theorising the sharing of space, incorporating various issues which will continue to be significant as this thesis progresses, especially the notion of publicness. It shows how groups negotiate coexistence among themselves to deal with potential conflict, and also to raise the possibility of an inter-group solidarity founded not upon rationalised identification and belonging but upon sound and space. It shows how groups can foster intimacy internally while coexisting in supra-group systems. Thus, it is perhaps the clearest sense yet in which sound and space might be thought of as the very stuff of community, as well as perhaps being its container. As the thesis progresses, I argue that the sonic niche –

along with various related observations to come – can be used as a means of understanding wider public life. It shows how distinctions between insiders and outsiders and between the public and the private might play out in material dealings involving space and sound.

(ii)   Temporal variation

Most of the street music activity discussed so far takes place between the hours of roughly 19:30 and 22:30. This reflects the time of day when most people have leisure time. The general soundscape of the city alters drastically depending on whether its residents are primarily engaged in work, leisure, or sleep. Likewise, the various public-space musical activities, as they are located in the city's physical spaces, co-exist with each other in temporal patterns inspired by these fundamental cycles in the life of the city. Specifically, the city's square dance events are influenced by a particular series of spatio-temporal constraints, partly imposed upon them by another form of public-space music, the recordings emitted by shops and other businesses. The spread of locations for these two forms is shaped by their mutual relationship with the temporally-situated and rhythmic nature of broader social life in the city (see Ill. 2.14).

Like *jiqing guangchang* performances, square dance groups set up on areas of ground flat enough and large enough to accommodate their activity. Unlike in the case of *jiqing guangchang*, authorities seem to leave them relatively free to choose suitable spaces in the central locations most convenient for their participants. The city's widest boulevards, however, are inevitably already claimed by the general bustle of city life, and are filled with road and pedestrian traffic. Indeed, many of the spaces that would otherwise be most suitable for square dance groups are the same locations occupied by the shops and stalls that discharge loud music to attract customers. Thus, streets that are physically suitable are made inappropriate for square dances by the nature of existing activity within them. There is, however, a solution to this inconvenience, in the form of a significant area of the city centre taken up by the Hanzheng Street (Hanzheng *Jie*) wholesale market. This is a nationally-renowned maze of narrow lanes and alleys with businesses dealing in all kinds of household goods and fashions. Significantly, though, the market is contained within a border of larger roads, and these end up being among the spaces in Wuhan most densely filled with square dance groups. Not only are their footpaths of ample width, but by the evening, I found that the market's intense activity had already calmed to leave them in a virtually deserted state. By these hours, there was almost no road or foot traffic on these streets, and there were no restaurants or retailers emitting loud music, just business owners packing up for the night. Thus, they provided the perfect location, both physically and socially, for the dancers to move into.

(iii)   Summary and implications for community

Musicians in Wuhan use sound in particular ways to create intimate spaces in the wider public one, whether these are referred to as niches, spheres, frames or nestings. These spaces are immersive yet permeable and fragile. Earlier in this chapter I identified the multiplicity that public spaces show – in terms of activities, intentions and levels of engagement – as my key interest in these music-making contexts over private ones. I originally relied on a binary understanding of 'public' versus 'private' to define the scope of my research. Having reached this point, however, the approach seems to have been called into question. The publicness of what I have been referring to as 'public space' now seems far less uniform and clear-cut. Indeed, this need to reconsider binary modes of analysis is one of the key points that I take from this chapter and revisit in more detail when I shape my final conclusions about community in Chapter 5.

For now, though, there is also an outstanding need to address the observations I have made so far in broader context. How is the use of sound and space part of a wider cultural picture? What about the modes of sociability in this place means that musicians here need to harness their sonic and material environments in the ways that they do? How do these interpersonal- and intergroup-level observations contribute to the structures of social life and reflect them? All of the processes that I have outlined so far must be seen as occurring in the particular cultural context found in contemporary Wuhan. What follows is an attempt to conclude this chapter by considering the observations made so far against broader expectations concerning public interaction that operate here. Again, I consider these observations an important way of extending discussions of sound and space towards the conclusions on community that come later.

Conclusions

Public-space music in Wuhan at once harnesses, responds to, battles against, ignores, and exerts influence over the spatio-temporal, material, practical and symbolic character of its environment. Sounds heard on the streets are affected by the city's physical geography and its general urban soundscape; they are shaped by the design and social life within their immediate environments; they show the effects of conflict and the agency of authorities; they claim territory, form acoustic boundaries and redefine space; they follow the contours of wider social life along temporal lines; and they directly influence embodied activity in everyday interaction. The illustrations above can be put to use in forging a wider understanding of a set of specifically cultural meanings: what being 'in public' means to

those touched by street music in Wuhan, and how music contributes to the construction of this cultural picture.

(i)   Ontologies of public space

Andrew Eisenberg analyses an incident reported in the Kenyan media in 2006, in which an expatriate living near to the city of Mombasa is frustrated by being woken up each morning by the loud sounds of the call to prayer coming from a local mosque (Eisenberg 2013: 197). She decides to complain to the mosque's imam. When she does so, instead of her concerns being accommodated, a dispute ensues that ends up with her being physically assaulted. According to Eisenberg, the incident is highly illustrative of the potential for people of different cultures to understand in different ways what it means for a space to be public. It develops because the expatriate resident and the local imam employ conflicting definitions of what public space fundamentally is, and thus what kind of conduct is to be seen as reasonable within it. The foreign resident assumes public space to be "ostensibly neutral," so considers the loud sound emitted by the mosque to be an intrusion, and an unacceptable practice in which the concerns of one social minority are pursued to the detriment of wider society. In some cultures, even sound that is considered sacred like the call to prayer can be accused of being noise, and those complaining about it might expect steps to be taken to alter the situation. The imam, on the other hand, sees the sound's sacredness as sufficient basis for its right to be heard over others, and furthermore that any complaint about it should be taken as a profane insult. Thus, at the heart of the incident is what can be described as an ontological dispute. It illustrates that public space can be understood in different ways when approached from different cultural standpoints. The dispute highlights the importance of this issue and of asking similar questions about Wuhan. What precisely does it mean to experience publicness and public space here, and what relevance does this have to community?

(ii)   Wuhan's public space and *jiqing guangchang*

Illustrations from the public-space music of Wuhan unearth three factors that might help to characterise an ontology of public space in the city. The first recognises that in areas with large populations, citizens are often in close physical proximity to others. This observation might seem banal, but its effects permeate most forms of sociality here. In every space of life, including living accommodation, working environments, public transport and leisure areas, people are brought into tight contact with other individuals or groups of people. They might act together in ways that are compatible, or in ways that can be

discordant. People are rarely out of range of being influenced, either positively or negatively, by the sounds made by those around them: apartment residents hear a cacophony of sounds from leisure activities below, car horns enter the acoustic space of staff at work in offices, subway passengers cannot escape the public-service announcements of the authorities and the personal music players of fellow passengers, and park musicians have to deal with the sounds of other park musicians. Wuhan's residents are clearly used to this phenomenon and their attitudes seem to be adapted accordingly. I have shown that musicians deal with these challenges not by seeking to distance themselves from other sources of loud sound, by moving their activities to empty spaces. Instead, they create pockets of territory towards which important sounds are focused, allowing participants to carry on their activity undisturbed by those around them. Thus, the general attitude by which residents accept the proximity and influence of others in their public and even private lives is translated into the specific practices surrounding music. In a city in which public debate surrounding overarching identity issues of ethnicity, religion and politics seems less prominent, life is instead dominated by these intimate-scale, mundane co-existence strategies, whose meaning exists primarily in the personal and small-group realm.

A second factor builds upon an issue that has already arisen several times in this chapter. It involves the conceptualisation of 'public' and 'private' behaviour. Here I draw upon Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analogies, in which certain aspects of the behaviour of everyday life are understood in the terms of a theatrical staged performance. In the theatre, 'front-stage activity' is the performance presented to the audience from the stage. This is a product comprised of polished and stylised activity that results from various kinds of preparation and behind-the-scenes support. All of the elements hidden from the audience, the line-learning, rehearsals, application of makeup, and so on, may be called 'back-stage activity'. When applying this distinction to the arena of everyday life, public places are generally regarded as those in which front-stage activity is most appropriate. Here Goffman argues that people and groups typically present the version of themselves most likely to win social approval. The preparation, maintenance, doubt and conflict that goes into the creation of this version might generally be reserved for private places and situations.

My observations from musical life in Wuhan seem to suggest that this distinction is less meaningful. Similar seems true in everyday public life too. Alongside people showing their best face, it is common to come across others engaging in activity that might, to some, be considered better suited to the intimate realm. Couples have rows; pedestrians spit; parents let their children go to the toilet in full view; supermarket staff eat meals in their shop's aisles; restaurant diners sit among rubbish, ingredients and equipment; passengers openly jostle for seats on public transport; and dental work and massages take place in plain view. Sound is emitted with apparent disregard for its unintended audience: loud street

music and dancing events take place in dense residential areas; kindergartens and schools emit all kinds of sound from their loud speakers; music instrumental lessons are given in music shops open to the public; and individuals listen to personal stereos without headphones. At other times, loud sound is used unashamedly as an instrument for achieving various ends: businesses fill the streets with their music; hawkers call out their wares; outdoor diners order food by shouting across to stalls on the other side of the street; customers make scenes to draw crowds and place pressure on unscrupulous service providers. In each of these cases, individuals apparently see no reason to prevent their personal concerns, pursuits, and activities from affecting others. Any distinction between front- and back-stage activity seems to be seriously eroded in some contexts. Thus, it is entirely in keeping with general social life that *jiqing guangchang* events can be both professional productions, with light shows, video screens, and polished comperes, while at the same time playing host to audience members attending in pyjamas and slippers, musicians smoking while playing, and on-microphone arguments between performers.

My third observation regarding ontology in Wuhan's public space builds upon the first two. Wuhan's public space is densely populated, and its users operate and use sound in ways adapted to this. Rather than seeking physical separation, establishing what I have called sonic niches becomes a common solution to the congested acoustic environment. Wuhan's acoustic public space seems to be somewhere for experiences to be shared. Citizens and institutions approach discharging and responding to sound in a manner unafraid of disturbing or influencing others. Asserting one's own concerns through sound is normal, and interpersonal and intergroup conflict can sometimes be the result. A citizen of Wuhan is prepared to share in the sounds of others and the activities, such as street music, that produce them. On another occasion they might equally be ready to ignore these sounds, or perhaps to conflict or compete with them. The picture is not of a harmonious acoustic public space in which co-existence is comfortable, but one in which disturbance, conflict and contestation are a fact of life. The space is not defined by restriction, but by a variety in sound that hints at a variety in social practices. As I have already eluded to, I intend to build upon these observations in due course. In the next chapter, the point from which I continue similar discussions is the performative content and style of the events. I explore how musical choices combine with features of popular and folk music's economic and transmission systems potentially to bring community into the experience of the music.

3.   Popular and Folk Music

In this chapter, I present musical repertory and performance choices as factors influencing the relationship between *jiqing guangchang* and community. A central concern is understanding the social significance of the genres and forms of music performed at these events. The generic labels popular and folk are my main points of reference throughout the chapter, as each has been linked in particular ways to discourses through which the notion of community is understood. I explore these associations and scrutinise how *jiqing guangchang* performance events embody a mixture of characteristics typically aligned with each of the two genres. I pay particular attention to the economic and transmission systems that shape both the musical material employed here and also the particular ways in which this material is performed in context. These two systems are central to how some scholars have sought to explain the underlying differences between popular and folk music, and I consider how they can be used to understand the events as social happenings. As I have already mentioned, throughout this thesis I seek to move away from representing music as a text extracted from its context. In this chapter, however, I do briefly draw upon examples of more conventional musical analysis. This is to address any concerns about the completeness of an interpretation mainly drawing upon discussion of background social issues. I also aim to show that the results from a text-based analysis support my conclusions surrounding the complexity of *jiqing guangchang's* relationship with the popular and folk genres.

Thus, I continue from Chapter 2 the task of examining community's importance as a concept in understanding *jiqing guangchang*, and vice versa. This time, my approach involves assessing how far the respective community-related connotations of the generic labels popular and folk apply here. The movement to draw boundaries between popular and folk has, of course, been problematized by generations of scholars (Revill 2005), and this has gathered pace in the contemporary era of mass media (Middleton 1990). It is well understood, for instance, that categorising a certain musical form or culture as an example of one or the other is not always possible or useful given the rigidity of this duality, and the long history of social change since fundamental notions were first laid down by the earliest folk scholarship in the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, as far as the specific purposes of this chapter are concerned, I still consider the terms a useful frame of reference. There are two main reasons. First, as I explain in the next section, popular and folk are the primary labels participants use to describe the repertory here. The terms thus play a part in the meanings they make, and so may be involved in how the performance events are understood on a social level. Secondly, the way I draw upon these terms is meant to avoid many of the weaknesses that arise when they are used with the purpose of classifying forms of music. I raise them with the specific aim of drawing out the community-related implications that

these terms carry in as comprehensive a way as possible, not to argue that *jiqing guangchang* should be understood as one or the other. In other words, my main focus is to assess the meaning of community in the production, dissemination and performance of this music; the popular/folk duality is a frame of reference rich in these associations. Later, I put the complexities I discuss in this chapter towards one of the main general conclusions of this thesis, which involves finding ways to transcend binary interpretations in the understanding of performance and community.

Genre

(i)   Generic terms in *jiqing guangchang*: *liuxing* and *min'ge*

The generic distinction involving popular and folk songs is the most significant in the *jiqing guanchang* context. At the events, the term *liuxing* is used in a general way to refer to the former and *min'ge* is the universal term for the latter. *Liuxing* is directly translated into English as 'popular'; this is popularity in a straightforward sense involving high levels of approval and fame. In the language of Chinese popular music scholarship, *liuxing* music has sometimes encompassed underground and officially-discouraged forms, including the prominent experimental rock (*yaogun*) movement of the late 1980s, whose primary figurehead was Cui Jian (Lee 1995: 98). In the contemporary landscape, however, the two seem to be understood as separate. Now in Wuhan, the word *yaogun* is used to describe commercially-orientated soft rock music of artists such as Wang Feng, while *liuxing* specifically describes the mainstream pop idiom. Scholars' suggestions that this word refers to music produced anywhere in the Chinese-speaking world (de Kloet 2005: 230) are also supported by its inclusive usage on the streets.

A variety of material falls into the category of *min'ge*[7] in this context too. On one hand, I heard songs such as *Huangtu gaopo* (Hills of yellow earth) and *Malanhua* (Iris) performed. These belong to a kind of song perhaps most clearly associated with folk; they seem to have been deliberately composed to bring to mind a flavour of local rural lifestyles. Also apparently understood under the *min'ge* umbrella on the streets, however, are more modern-sounding works. 'Campus songs' or 'campus folk songs' (*xiaoyuan gequ*) emerged from Taiwan after a record company's 1977 initiative to recruit university-student musicians

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[7] Sue Tuohy suggests that the term *min'ge* spread in China around the turn of the twentieth century as one of several translations in circulation of the German term *Volkslied*, its English equivalent *folksong*, and the Japanese expression *min'yo* (Tuohy 1999: 48). Songs that have come to be placed in this category often relate to far older forms. *Shan'ge* (mountain song), for instance, is one of the main groups into which Chinese folk songs are usually placed by modern scholars. Some of these songs have been traced to roots in the eighth century (Schimmelpenninck 1997: 20-1).

for their productions (Moskowitz 2010: 34). These songs are at once considered part of a 'folk revival' and also a stage in the evolution process that resulted in contemporary Chinese pop (ibid.: 35). I found it fairly rare to hear Wuhan street singers make reference to *xiaoyuan gequ* when introducing their performances. On one of these occasions, though, a singer did so when announcing *Waipo de Penghu Wan* (Granma's Penghu Bay), a song from 1979:

> The band plays the song's introduction, but before the singer, Yezi, can begin, someone in the small crowd calls out to interrupt. This member of the audience entreats her to sing a song called *Ziyou feixiang* (Flying free) instead. In my experience, it is an unprecedented break from the normal etiquette of the events for a spectator to cause a halt in the music like this. After initially seeming slightly surprised by the interruption, though, Yezi acquiesces with a shy giggle.

This incident perhaps symbolises the relative importance of different kinds of folk repertory in *jiqing guangchang*. The song that Yezi ended up singing, *Ziyou feixiang* (2007), was of a kind far more common than the *xiaoyuan gequ* that she had originally planned. It was one of the songs I heard most often here and at other forms of street music. The same duo that wrote and recorded this song, Fenghuang Chuanqi, were also behind several other of the most common songs I encountered. The music industry and scholars have referred to the stylistic category to which these songs belong as *minzu* (ethnic) or *minzu liuxing* (ethnic popular) songs, although I did not note these terms being widely used on the streets. Artists in this section of the music industry are often defined primarily by the exotic image that they project. Their ethnic costumes belie the fact that some are members of the Han majority nationality and come from the country's major cities (Hao 2003: 197-8; Komlosy 2008: 50-1). In fact, perhaps Chow and de Kloet's term neo-*minzu* is more appropriate for songs of this kind, which combine rap and R&B elements with minority-nationality folk themes and vocal delivery. Mixing apparently traditional elements with on-trend contemporary stylistic features has been common in Chinese popular music since the 1970s (Tuohy 1999: 49; Chow and de Kloet 2013: 17).

Understanding the distinction between popular and folk is more than simply an academic exercise in the Wuhan street context. Instead, it is tied to how music is embedded in the social lives of participants. I found that these categorisations were sometimes a significant factor in meanings derived from the events. Individual *jiqing guangchang* singers, for instance, tended generally to be known to favour either *liuxing* songs or *min'ge*. Much of the difference was crystallised into what were perceived by both performers and spectators as two contrasting singing styles. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the national or ethnic singing style (*minzu changfa*) associated with folk seems to have influenced the way of delivering popular songs too. Nonetheless, I found that a clear break was perceived between the two, and that particular prestige was associated with the former. I noted, for

instance, one conversation in which a singer specialising in the popular end of the repertory was at pains to stress to me that she could also sing in *minzu changfa* if she wanted to. It was clear that having these skills provided a boost to a singer's reputation.

Indeed, listening to performances of *liuxing* songs and *min'ge*, I suspected that much of the distinction felt by participants must have resulted less from stylistic differences than from association to pre-existing labels that might have already been attached to particular songs. I found musical treatments to be not obviously distinguishable according to genre. In fact, as I showed in Chapter 2, the sounds produced by live bands were rarely of sufficient quality for much detailed pitch content to be clearly discernible in the textural range between the voice and the percussion. Even when singers were accompanied by recordings, these usually employed standard disco or ballad treatments from the wealth of commercial versions that exist for songs of all kinds. This hints that the involvement of both kinds of songs in the industrial modes of production and dissemination may complicate the distinction between popular and folk. I begin to explore this issue later in the chapter.

Alongside differences in vocal delivery, though, the divide between the two genres was also felt to some extent in the ethos surrounding the events. Emcees and singers often introduced songs according to these labels, and singers appeared to perceive that their living was dependent upon matching their own orientation towards one or the other with the tastes of an audience. When, for example, singers of *liuxing* songs would quite regularly leave one *jiqing guangchang* event and permanently transfer their membership to another, several times they cited to me the lack of *liuxing gemi* (pop lovers) in the audience of the first event, and vice versa. At the cluster of events near the Jiqing Folk Custom Street that I have already referred to, the contrast between different types of events was clear among two stages that operated back-to-back in the small paved square there. Although neither show was entirely dominated by one genre or the other, there seemed to be a contrast in the general feel of each:

> In the group nearest the road, the atmosphere is conservative. Older songs predominate and there is a middle-aged man who acts as a resident dancer, improvising ballet-infused shapes to accompany many of the performances. One singer even occasionally experiments with selections from Huangmei opera, complete with a recorded backing track featuring a Chinese instrumental ensemble. Meters away, the neighbouring circle invariably has a significantly larger crowd containing a greater proportion of younger people and passers-by. Here they often play music that seems to be from more recent disco hits. The events feature some of the most energetic singers in Wuhan and the male emcee even regularly cross-dresses, putting on an exaggerated persona along with his extravagant female outfit.

I return in more detail to the issue of unusual gender identities in Chapter 4. A pop singer attached to the former group, Yazi (not to be confused with another singer, Yezi),

complained to me of the lack of pop music fans in her audience. She spent much of her time fraternising on the fringes of the other group's spectators, trying to persuade them to transfer allegiance.

(ii)   Less important terms: cantopop, mandopop and *gangtai*

Just as the term *min'ge* covers a large range of folk forms, various other expressions abound in popular and scholarly discourses surrounding Chinese popular music. I found most, though, to be less relevant in the experience of the music on Wuhan's streets. The main English-language terms used by journalists and scholars, for instance, are cantopop and mandopop (or mandapop). I do not use either in this thesis because they are foreign to the local population here and in almost all Chinese societies. I argue that they also add an additional layer of complexity to a field already covered by a range of disputed terms. The word cantopop, for example, derives from the word Cantonese, the English name of the dialect spoken in Hong Kong and some parts of the southern mainland. Some scholars employ it in a commendably specific way to emphasise the importance of linguistic factors in the definitions of some Chinese popular music (for example Witzleben 1999: 243). Applying a linguistically-orientated designation seems potentially useful in the case of cantopop, considering the centrality of the sung dialect to its meaning in cultural and identity terms. Less helpfully, however, this label is sometimes also used synonymously with the term *gangtai*, a Chinese-language word usually referring to music produced not only in Hong Kong, but also in Taiwan (Hao 2003: 186). Mandopop is a derivative term (Witzleben 1999: 251) that is sometimes applied to all Mandarin-dialect popular music regardless of place of production (Moskowitz 2010: 1-2), and at other times purely to Taiwanese products (Fung 2013: 81). It seems, however, to make less sense for use of this dialect to be the factor defining a genre. Mandarin is the pan-Chinese lingua franca, and therefore the dialect itself is not likely to hold the same inherently local significance as Cantonese does.

Likewise, in the field I did not hear any use of the geographically-orientated term *gangtai*, even though it is among the most prevalent in the current literature and there is evidence that it circulates widely in mainland China more generally (Moskowitz 2010: 4). The word *gangtai* is a hybrid of the Mandarin names for Hong Kong (Xianggang) and Taiwan, and is used by citizens of the mainland to refer to popular music produced in these two territories. In the last forty years, music from Hong Kong and Taiwan has become firmly established at the centre of Chinese popular music, and many of the biggest stars on the mainland still come from these places. As a result, it no longer seems as necessary to specifically note this provenance as it may have been when encountering records from these two territories was a new phenomenon. In other contexts, perhaps, the association of the

word *gangtai* with the mainstream pop idiom might be useful in distinguishing this kind of music from underground styles. In *jiqing guangchang*, though, a stylistic orthodoxy is taken for granted, so to specifically highlight it seems redundant. Indeed, I found neither singers nor other participants to be very knowledgeable or concerned about the geographical origins per se of the songs that are sung. Often members of the audience and singers with whom I spoke as performances were in progress were even unable to name the original singer of the songs we were hearing. Instead, I found that many of the labels favoured at the events were less established categories than descriptive characterisations; many songs were introduced, for instance, as *shanggan* (sorrowful) or *shuqing* (lyrical).

(iii)   An out-of-date term*: tongsu*

Tongsu is another important vernacular-based term in the literature and, like *liuxing*, it is translated into English as 'popular'. The specific connotations of this word, however, are that the music is common or contains qualities appealing to the masses, as opposed to those of serious or classical music. While the term may or may not be resonant in wider society, I found it to be only a minor part of *jiqing guangchang's* lexicon. Occasionally, singers used the word among various other category labels, particularly when I asked them to give details about the range of songs they typically sang. Sometimes I heard it, too, when singers and emcees exchanged words on the microphone before and after songs. In these instances, it was in reference to songs whose lyrics contained obviously patriotic themes. *Xuerande fengcai* (The blood red spirit), for instance, was originally sung in 1987 by Xu Liang, who had already become recognised as a war hero for his conduct as a soldier a few years earlier. Its lyrics are fully geared towards the glorification of sacrifice for the national flag. Indeed, similar songs made up a significant proportion of *jiqing guangchang's* repertory.

As a term, though, I argue that *tongsu's* time occupying a useful place in the understanding of Chinese popular music has passed. First, there are discrepancies in its deployment among scholars that seem to muddy its meaning. Some, for instance, use it to refer to music from China's pre-reform era – before economic policy shifts in the final years of the 1970s dramatically changed the country's music industry. Here, it is attached to music akin to "Soviet realist 'workers' songs'" broadcast over loudspeakers in the streets (Hao 2001: 2; Komlosy 2008: 46n). On the other hand, *tongsu* is the key term of Andrew Jones' (1991) influential exploration of music production and mass-media dissemination. This work refers to an altogether different era – the late 1980s – and material much more obviously recognisable as popular music. Jones describes a picture in which state channels were involved at every stage in the music's creation, endorsement and circulation. In this context,

tongsu has been called "officially sanctioned and promoted ballad-type music" (Lee 1995: 98), with lyrics centred upon "socialist ideals and praise of the state" (Moskowitz 2010: 25). A third way of understanding *tongsu* comes from scholars who use it to refer to music showing a more nuanced relationship with the state (Baranovitch 2003; Hao 2003). Here, the label includes the earliest mainland attempts at imitating the *gangtai* music that had begun to circulate illicitly among the population of the People's Republic by the late 1970s. Pioneering songs of this kind, such as 1979's *Xiang lian* (Longing for home), initially received vigorous political attacks, particularly for featuring Western dance rhythms and a breathy singing style (Baranovitch 2003: 16). It was a matter of years before music of this kind would finally break into the mainstream media. In fact, there are some suggestions that it was not until 1986 that *tongsu* was definitively accepted into official public life. It was in this year that it became a category in televised singing competitions, and the first large concerts under the banner were held (ibid.: 18).

It seems, then, that the term *tongsu* is both more prominent in scholarship than it is on the streets of Wuhan, and that it is not always understood in a way consistent enough to make it particularly useful. The basic chronology and the kind of music the word refers to are not always agreed upon, and furthermore, I have not found a place in the literature in which this inconsistency is acknowledged or discussed. My experience on the ground suggests that *tongsu* is best thought of as a historical category, applicable to music whose meaning grew from a unique political background. The political and musical landscape has, of course, shifted since the 1970s and 1980s, but research often still seems to be situated in the circumstances of that time. Almost all contemporary releases are not politicised in the same way, and implications of this kind appear redundant. Thus, it seems odd that even scholarship from the last few years takes *tongsu* as one of the key terms from which to build discussions of Chinese pop (Liu and Cai 2014: 772). Indeed, when I heard the term used on the ground, it seemed to evoke a sense that the songs had reached 'classic' status. Similar expressions such as *jingdian* (classic), and *laoge* (literally 'old song', a phrase containing equally positive connotations) were both applied to all kinds of songs from the 1990s and earlier. Terms have undoubtedly moved on as times have changed, while it seems that some scholarship may risk being left behind.

(iv)   Summary and implications for community

From among a variety of categorisations that could be applied to the kinds of music heard in *jiqing guangchang*, popular and folk are certainly the most meaningful in this particular context, and their interpretation by scholars is less problematic than many of the other most prominent terms. It is worth emphasising that in the field, I found differences in

singing style to be the most significant indicator of how the generic divide is perceived, rather than any other musical feature, provenance, or clear social discourse circulating among participants. I argue that these labels are useful, however, beyond simply describing musical characteristics. Each may be a suitable term of reference from which to approach *jiqing guangchang* events in their entirety as social happenings, looking beyond the perceptions of those involved to understand other ways in which community can be a meaningful notion here. In other words, not only do these performances feature material and performances understood as popular and folk, but they might arise from social phenomena that, although not necessarily reflected upon, may nonetheless form part of what is meant by these terms. Most significantly, the connotations contained within both generic labels intersect closely with discourses of community. Again, it is worth stressing that my purpose is not to suggest that this form of street music should definitively be considered one or the other. Instead, it is to scrutinise exactly what is implied in both musical and social terms by the labels popular and folk, and to assess these community connections.

In Chapter 5, I explore suggestions that the experience of popular music is fundamentally linked to isolation and individualism – apparently the antithesis of the community experience. Chinese popular music has been strongly connected to these discourses. Many of the central points of Moskowitz's monograph on Taiwanese pop, for instance, are based on the observation that its song lyrics are disproportionately orientated towards the themes of melancholy, isolation and disillusionment. This finding seems broadly consistent with what I encountered on the streets. One of the most common images to express these themes in song lyrics involves crying and tears (*lei*). The latter word, for example, appears in the lyrics of 47 of a sample of 187 songs that I collected at the events (and which I introduce fully later). Moskowitz posits sociological explanations for this, suggesting that these songs express "an increasing sense of loneliness and anomie" in Chinese societies (Moskowitz 2010: 52). In the case of mainland China in particular, he identifies a "survival at any costs" ethos, apparently resulting from its population being thrown into a market economy of low wages, corruption and inequality (ibid.: 55). As well as showing the ways in which these themes are represented in the musical text, he touches upon how listeners perceive the encounter with the music as an opportunity lacking in most other social contexts to explore these emotions.

In keeping with my intention to move from the interpretation of musical texts towards a more comprehensive orientation to the experience of music, *jiqing guangchang* events can, of course, be thought of as one of the many contexts in which popular music is performed live. Just as in the arena concerts of pop stars, for example, these performances respond indirectly to the inclinations and processes of the wider popular music industry. Audiences come to the events and react to them from a standpoint of familiarity with songs,

customs, and current trends that they may have first been exposed to through the mass media. In significant ways, though, these events are quite unlike much that is typically studied by scholars of this field. Baranovitch explains that popular music is "an excellent lens through which to examine any society" partly because social trends can sometimes be discerned simply from counting the number of units sold, whether this be copies of recordings or concert tickets (Baranovitch 2007: 61). By contrast, on the streets of Wuhan, far more meaningful than any sales figures of this kind are the real and continuing relationships between participants that engaging with the music stimulates, and the personal interactions that sustain every element of the events, including the exchange of money. These facets of the events provide an overarching theme for Chapter 4. *Jiqing guangchang* clearly has a complex relationship with characterisations of popular music involving cynical commodity exchanges remote from human relationships. Some elements of these events appear to reflect these representations of the encounter with popular music, while in other regards they are quite dissimilar.

Perhaps, then, there should be some hesitation before assuming popular music to be the primary reference point when seeking to understand *jiqing guangchang*. Instead, it could be argued that it is just as reasonable to align these performances with folk music contexts, and to understand them in these terms. I have already outlined how idealised portrayals of folk music-making contexts touch upon concepts that are highly central to how community is understood. While the social contexts that initially made these two concepts almost synonymous may no longer exist, deconstructing what is meant when we refer to folk music culture may still be useful. Analysing *jiqing guangchang* in relation to some of these elements may help in understanding the role of community here. These elements may include close interpersonal contact, sense of belonging, the importance of place, and embeddedness in a wider social system. In the next two sections of this chapter, I turn towards deconstructing the notions of popular and folk music and applying to this form of music-making some of the community-related implications that are uncovered.

The background systems of popular and folk music: economics

In this discussion, I look towards systematic ways of understanding the differences between the two genres, and consider *jiqing guangchang* in this light. My starting point is Gregory Booth and Terry Lee Kuhn's (1990) attempts to bring theoretical clarity to what often seem to be more intuitive distinctions. They highlight, in particular, the significance of the economic and transmission systems behind each. In Chapter 4, I focus upon the economic systems supporting *jiqing guangchang*, and add these observations to my assessments of community in Chapter 5. These discussions are based upon reinterpretations

of Marxist thinking, which challenge – in relation to music, labour and commodity exchange – the idea that the monetisation of encounters with music dilutes the social meaning felt among those involved (Mauss 1954 (1974); Stokes 2002). I launch those discussions here, though, in order specifically to link them to the community-related discourses implied by the popular/folk generic divide. This introduction to my ongoing concern for economic systems is paired, in the next section, with a focus upon the processes of musical transmission, creativity and change affecting the music on the streets. This is in conjunction with Philip Bohlman's (1988) work, which argues that these processes are some of the most important territories on which understandings of folk music can be updated for the contemporary world. I seek to examine how the musical material of *jiqing guangchang* is encountered, shared and adapted throughout its life, from original creation in music industry contexts to assimilation on the streets. Both discussions are intended to demonstrate that any alignment of these events with the popular and folk genres is complex, and they begin to approach what this means for understanding community in the context.

(i)   Forms of patronage and degrees of musical specialisation

For Booth and Kuhn, the system of indirect patronage sustaining popular music is one of the primary defining features of this genre. In this model, professional or specialist musicians are supported financially by small contributions from multiple patrons. The process is mediated through third parties, who provide the facilities for performances or the technology to produce and disseminate recordings. In addition, popular music's primary place in social life is said to be within entertainment contexts. Each of these points is in contrast to folk music, which is understood as being made communally by non-specialists, and embedded in activities that are central to the subsistence of the group of people involved, such as work or ritual. I argue that these distinctions are a useful theoretical starting point for my purposes.

More broadly, of course, Booth and Kuhn's theoretical approach does seem to display certain limitations. Perhaps most obvious is that the model appears not simply to describe ideal types that may not quite be reached in reality, but actually that these idealised versions have been radically transcended in real practice. In many contexts, for example, that which is understood as folk music is commonly encountered through the same channels of indirect patronage as are supposed to characterise popular music. Folk has itself become a category of the music industry, dependent just as much upon this system of indirect patronage as is popular music. It would appear, too, that possible weaknesses in the model have not only been exposed by the latest developments in twenty-first-century society, but that they are also present in various other contexts. The history of some forms of folk music

in China, for instance, appears dependent on a framework of monetisation not incorporated into Booth and Kuhn's model. One scholar, Leng Sui-jin, even concludes that the long history of commercialism in Chinese folk culture means that contemporary popular music – not folk music – is the form displaying the strongest continuities with these traditions. He suggests that Hong Kong and Taiwan popular songs "are the contemporary manifestation of the Chinese urban folk song tradition" (Leng 1991: 27-8), arguing that the *liuxing* or *gangtai* repertories that I introduced earlier in this chapter "show a strong connection with the songs sung by street and teahouse artists throughout Chinese history" (ibid.). Their profit orientation is reminiscent of earlier brothel and restaurant singers' techniques of using costumes and cosmetics to boost their appeal. It might seem, therefore, that Booth and Kuhn's economic account does little to overcome familiar criticisms surrounding the idealising of folk community. Scholars have convincingly argued that viewing folk culture as a feature of isolated rural contexts is outdated (Revill 2005).

Furthermore, it is surprising that Booth and Kuhn see so much significance in distinguishing music with a social function of entertainment from that involved in other activities, work or ritual. While these contextual differences are undoubtedly meaningful, Booth and Kuhn may, however, go too far by seeming to imply that music for entertainment is somehow insulated from wider social life, or that entertainment is a less significant facet of social experience. I argue, instead, that the complexities of social life do not switch off when people pause for entertainment. It stems from the complex dynamics of wider group existence, and can dynamically exert its own influence upon relationships beyond the immediate leisure frame. Indeed, as I will show in Chapter 4, while for most participants *jiqing guangchang* primarily functions as entertainment, its influence still radiates out into a whole variety of interconnected interpersonal relationships and social phenomena. Furthermore, it might also be argued that entertainment is just as much a part of folk traditions as it is of popular ones. *Shidiao*, for instance, is the subcategory of repertory described as "the heart of Han Chinese folk songs" (Han 1989: 121), being the most numerous and best known type. This style of song is strongly associated with entertainment. It has historically been performed at home and in teahouses in both rural and urban settings, by amateur or professional singers, and with instrumental accompaniment. It would, then, also seem unhelpful to assume the function of entertainment to be exclusively aligned with popular music.

In general terms, then, scepticism seems reasonable when it comes to separating popular from folk music by focusing on the entertainment function and the indirect patronage system. Both of these factors seem actually to cross the generic boundary quite freely and to have done so historically. By highlighting them, Booth and Kuhn may simply be reinforcing an orientation to ideal types that have already been accepted as problematic in

various situations. I argue, however, that the work of these scholars is nonetheless particularly useful in deconstructing or analysing the foundations of these ideal types. I am less concerned with using the popular and folk generic distinction in an instrumental way than with considering its repercussions. Understanding clearly what these ideal types imply is central for my purposes. I am most interested in analysing what is meant and perceived in the generic distinction. Thus, I do not intend to discard the indirect patronage model, and indeed now turn to assessing *jiqing guangchang* in these terms. I then go on to do the same with the distinction between specialist and non-specialist musicians.

(ii)   Understanding *jiqing guangchang* in these terms

During events, cash is gifted to singers by audience members on an entirely voluntary basis and with the amount set ostensibly at the giver's discretion. This money does not function as an entrance fee giving spectators the right to listen to the music, nor is there an established system by which special status or preferential treatment of any kind can be officially bought. Formally, every member of the audience has equal status regardless of their generosity. As I show in detail in Chapter 4, the gifts given are often far more than simply rewards for singers' performances. They can become entwined in patterns of reciprocal exchange that not only involve cash, but also various kinds of tangible and non-tangible offerings. Thus, that which gift-givers can expect in return from the singers is not quantifiable or set strictly against market standards. In this way, then, the types of economic exchange in *jiqing guangchang* are quite different from the formally-structured arrangements typically associated with popular music. Furthermore, on Wuhan's streets, support is not anonymised and intermediated as it typically is in the indirect patronage model Booth and Kuhn use to characterise popular music's economic system. Gifts are almost always delivered to the receiver in a face-to-face manner, and these personal acts colour subsequent interactions between giver and beneficiary. In a sense, then, *direct* patronage might seem a more suitable label. Booth and Kuhn associate this form of exchange with the history of Western art music; significant levels of support from single donors would enable individual musicians to sustain their creative careers. There are some notable differences in the *jiqing guangchang* context, though. First, rather than relying on a single wealthy donor, street musicians juggle personal relationships with many of these direct supporters. Secondly, while the patronage is direct in terms of the contact it brings about between two parties, economically, it effectively does go through an intermediary. Having gathered the money personally, singers are obliged to hand their takings to organisers, who redistribute it again at the end of the event after extracting a proportion of the amount. This covers the costs of organising and supplying the facilities, and provides a

profit incentive to do so. In this sense, then, these exchanges might be best be thought of as indirect rather than direct patronage after all. In Marxist terms, the presence of this middle-man points to the production of surplus value and might be said to complete the process of the music's 'commodification' (Taylor 2007: 282). I touch in more detail upon this point in the next two chapters.

It seems, then, that the model of patronage in *jiqing guangchang* shares some similarities with that of popular music, but that this correspondence is limited. When it comes to the distinction between non-specialist and professional music-making, which of the two genres are these events aligned with most strongly? Might this aspect of the street music economic model reflect the folk ideal of involving non-specialist musicians? Again, it appears that the answer is that it does, but only to a limited extent. In some ways, singing on the stage here provides a platform and a façade for developing the relationships that perhaps seem closer to the *raison d'être* for performers' participation than is music-making per se. This is especially true for singers with less faith in the quality of their musical performances and its ability to function as the primary stimulus for remuneration. Occasionally young women I met found themselves working as street singers even though they freely admitted to me that their skills were no more advanced than the average karaoke exponent. In fact, although many were very effective performers, very few claimed to me to have undergone specialist musical training. In this sense, then, perhaps making music is best thought of not as a professionalised undertaking, and instead chiefly as a precursor or enabler for other activity. As an element in the wider event, the music is perhaps one of a range of modes of interpersonal communication and sociability, none of which is obviously dominant in this context. Likewise, because *jiqing guangchang* singers actually spend more of their time at the events in a hospitality role than on the stage, it is difficult to consider them specialists in the sense that a pop star is when they give a concert. They certainly do not carry the same exceptional and mystified status as musicians of this kind. Even an amateur popular musician taking part in an organised gig is rarely expected to perform the kind of supplementary labour that the street singers undertake.

To this extent, then, there is some meaning in evoking the archetypal folk context here. On the other hand, though, the music is not produced communally and there are clearly separate roles assigned in the events to those who are allowed to sing on one hand, and those who are purely audience members on the other. I address Turino's distinction between participatory and presentational performances fully in the two chapters to come. For now, though, I note that despite this apparent role stratification, in *jiqing guangchang* it is also worth highlighting the penetrability of the extraordinary social space of the stage. Spectators can enter to give money, and sometimes do so in a way that draws attention to themselves by dancing or behaving in a humorous manner. Thus, while *jiqing guangchang* may be

entertainment provided by one group of people to another, this should not imply passivity or disconnectedness among them.

Nonetheless, it is still worth focusing briefly on the distinction that does exist between singers and audience members. The contrast is evident when comparing the set-up here with the apparently 'collective' one at the street-side karaoke stand I described in Chapter 2. When *jiqing guangchang* singers are not on the stage, although they mingle in the crowd and thus are able to develop personal relationships, their physical orientation is mainly towards the audience and they do not join the spectators in facing the stage. In spare moments, singers can usually be seen looking out into the crowd, scanning faces for known individuals, or approaching them to offer cigarettes and exchange words. When they are not doing this, they sit preparing backstage, looking towards the audience with the stage in between. Their psychological attention is always primarily with their customers and they function as a team, every performer engaging the audience in one form or another, even though only one of them is actually on the stage at any one time. Singers only rarely stand shoulder to shoulder with the audience and share their focus upon the stage, thus seldom generate a sense of role solidarity with spectators.

In this sense then, the events are far more stratified in terms of social roles than the karaoke stands I described earlier may be, and this creates a sense that the sharing of music is not symmetrical between musicians and audience. This asymmetry persists in spite of the potential for intimate contact between these two groups, and the genuine warmth that obviously sometimes exists among them. Furthermore, perhaps what makes *jiqing guangchang* events more remote from the folk ideal is that they are extraordinary gatherings divorced from any other separate community function. Participants at any given performance do not exist as a group that shares sustained face-to-face contact in any other context not directly related to the music event, and music is the primary reason that they assemble. It is music that is the instigator of the many social relations that events involve, and not the other way around.

Thus, perhaps the strongest conclusion from these discussions of the economic support system is that *jiqing guangchang's* relationship with both the folk and popular ideal types is complex. The events share some similarities with the indirect patronage of popular music, but involve a system of economic rewards based much more on personal relationships than the anonymous exchange of commodities that may be implied. The folk music model also is effective in describing the music's position embedded within a broader picture of social functions. It does not, however, describe the fundamental asymmetry of relations that result from the money-exchange in the events, nor the absence of a clear sense in which the people who participate could be described as a community in any other context. In Chapter 5, I return to weigh up the broader implications of these observations. It is

perhaps becoming clear that neither the popular nor the folk music model is likely to fully describe *jiqing guangchang*. Continuing to explore the connections and deviations, though, follows a path leading towards the alternative conclusions that I propose later in the thesis.

The background systems of popular and folk music: transmission

The archetypal model of folk music has oral transmission at its heart (Bohlman 1988: 12). This is another ideal type whose translation into real practice requires scrutiny. It has been argued that what may be thought of as oral traditions are actually usually affected by various technologies in ways more significant than are often acknowledged. There is evidence, for example, that the history of Chinese folk song is not best thought of purely in terms of oral transmission, but that instead it has been founded upon "intensive interaction between oral and literary forms" (Schimmelpenninck 1997: 191). I examine the transmission systems behind *jiqing guangchang* in order to show how similar complexities play out in this contemporary context, and how again they cause the activity to straddle the boundary between popular and folk. Bohlman argues that folk remains relevant as a conceptual tool despite changes in contemporary society, and cites the processes of creativity and change incorporated into the music's transmission as a key factor. He problematizes what could be called the fetishizing of oral transmission, when it is understood as a deliberate choice or aesthetic tool. Instead, he advocates viewing it as a process closely linked to the constraints imposed upon music-making by historical circumstances, or as Booth and Kuhn summarise the situation, oral transmission is "an economic (and sometimes technological) compulsion" (Booth and Kuhn 1990: 417-8). It is this approach to oral transmission that I develop in the street music context, situating the analysis clearly in relation to the particular compulsions – mainly technological ones in this case – that apply here. It is not one that understands oral transmission as evidence of any kind of 'ideology' of folk culture, but instead one stripped back to the simplest processes of how people hear and reproduce music. I seek to understand how these practices playing out in the *jiqing guangchang* context results in certain continuities and changes being applied to the material.

(i)   The use of recordings in learning musical material

For some *jiqing guangchang* singers, written scores play a part – albeit a limited one – in the learning process, and several allowed me to study their materials. These singers used printed anthologies of song melodies written in cipher notation (*jianpu*), but their work with these scores took place entirely outside of the performance frame. Keyboard players, on the other hand, occasionally referred to their folders of handwritten material during the actual

playing of songs. They had usually transcribed or copied these from various sources. In my experience, though, they played almost all songs from memory, and the scores were only called upon for unfamiliar pieces. Similarly, I only occasionally saw singers running through lyric sheets backstage, and in very rare instances consulting or reading from notes mid-song. The primary source in the learning process for *jiqing guangchang* singers, however, was existing recordings of the songs. General exposure through the normal channels of modern life – the mass media, public-space broadcasting, and personal listening habits – might account to a large extent for a pre-existing familiarity with many of the famous pop songs that they sang. These are the same influences that mean karaoke participants are able to perform a large repertory of hits with only basic prompting (Drew 2001).

In this way, the learning process parallels the ideal folk model of music assimilation, in which it is incidental to other everyday activity (Booth and Kuhn 1990: 416). Paul Berliner has subjected to detailed scrutiny similar learning techniques used by jazz musicians trying to master complex solos (Berliner 1994: 95-119). In this context, this form of learning seems most significant for providing the basis upon which musicians subsequently progress to creating their own improvised solos. Among *jiqing guangchang* musicians, though, deliberately using a sound recording to learn musical material by singing along or intentionally absorbing the melody is most notable for appearing to rely on similar processes and skills as are at play in typical oral transmission. Unlike in the jazz example, it is a method graspable for practitioners without formal training. I understand it as an extension of the oral tradition, updated for a different technological environment. As a result, it is my conclusion this area is one of the strongest examples of meaningful continuity existing between the ideal folk model and the current situation.

Bohlman highlights several musical traits which, he argues, are the most important cross-cultural characteristics of folk music. Conventionalised markers, the coupling of set elements, and repetition are all features to which I will turn later in this chapter. He suggests, however, that each of these factors emerges as a result of oral processes being the primary means of transmission. This is because they lend themselves to being memorised (Bohlman 1988: 14-15). In fact, the significance of memorisation is the element I take forward into my assessments of creativity and change in folk music. The learning of musical material from recorded performances in *jiqing guangchang* is the means of examining these processes within the contemporary context. In doing so, I also respond to Bohlman's call to adapt conceptions of folk music to suit new social realities: "as the primacy of one form of social organisation recedes, there is a realignment of previous groups and the formation of new groups with completely different social bases" (Bohlman 1988: 128). Among the most pertinent social bases for a realignment of folk music in this case involves the technologies that are integrated into the lives of *jiqing guangchang* participants. The encountering and

sharing of music in mass-mediated forms allows the musical instincts of these people to be served in ways unavailable to members of societies in the past.

In what ways, then, are the processes of creativity and change in *jiqing guangchang* enabled and constrained by this updated form of oral transmission, the use of recordings? In typical oral transmission processes, an individual's ability to perceive and memorise features of new material are important factors in limiting what can be taken away from exposure to it (Bohlman 1988: 19). When the singer re-creates a song to which they have had only limited exposure, or the renderings they have heard have been inconsistent in their details, they are left not only with a high degree of freedom, but also with a necessity to make choices when it comes to their own performance of the same material. How permissible and desirable it is to deliberately deviate from established versions varies across cultures and contexts. A combination of these two factors could result in an individual singer's approach to a song varying to different degrees in terms of rhythm, text, melodic inflections and any number of other features.

On Wuhan's streets, I found it normal for performances to display a high degree of fidelity to recorded versions. I came across, for instance, no performance that changed the lyrics, substantially adapted the melody, or otherwise radically altered a song. There was, of course, some variation in comparison with recorded models, but I seek to illustrate here that the degree of deviation was limited. One performance of the song *Boli xin* (Heart of glass) that I heard at the Jianghan Bridge group is illustrative of the limited extent to which melodic variation typically occurred. In the first verse, the singer Ajing closely replicated the melody of Qi Qin's 1991 recording. When the same material was repeated during the second verse, she added a new inflection in one place and bypassed some small elaborations at two other moments. I present this in a comparison between the recording and the street performance in Fig. 3.1:

Fig. 3.1: Comparison of excerpts from the melody of *Boli xin* from Qi Qin's recorded version (above, original key C major, CD track 3), and a performance by Ajing in Wuhan on 15 May 2014 (below, original key F major, CD track 4).

Ajing's main deviation came in her rendering of the first five syllables of text presented here. She took a slightly more elaborate route towards the destination point on the note E falling on the syllable *ci*. Later on in the excerpt, the artist on the original recording begins to extend the final syllables of some of the phrases (the vowel sound of the word *shou* is rearticulated so that it becomes *shou-ou-ou*, and the word *lian* becomes *lia-an*). Ajing, on the other hand, chose to minimise these embellishments, perhaps partly because in this recording she breaks off from singing at this point to speak a few words in acknowledgement of someone in the audience.

At moments in the music perhaps more central to the character of a song, *jiqing guangchang* singers seemed to take fewer liberties. One such example that I found striking was in the song *Yi sheng wu hui* (A lifetime without regret), which I heard performed numerous times in Wuhan. At one moment in the verse of the original 2012 recording, the vocal line briefly displays an unusual relationship to the underlying meter of the song. Fig. 3.2 shows the culmination of the first melodic phrase (sung by male singer Gao An) significantly pre-empting the downbeat on which a cadence point is reached (on the syllable *guang* and the chord of F sharp):

Hao jiu mei lian luo, xian zai ni guo de zen me＿yang wang bu diao zuo ri de shi＿ guang＿
好 久 没 联 络 现 在 你 过 得 怎 么 一 样 忘 不 掉 昨 日 的 时 一 光
A long time without being in touch, how are you now? I can't forget those times of yesterday...

Fig. 3.2: The vocal line of *Yi sheng wu hui's* first melodic phrase from the recording by Gao An and Hang Jiao (CD track 5).

This is in contrast to the end of the subsequent answering phrase, sung by female singer Hang Jiao (Fig. 3.3), where the final vocal syllable falls exactly on the downbeat (coinciding with the final chord of B, on the syllable *wang*):

Jiu suan ge yi fang yi ran ba ni fang xin shang zhe duan qing zen neng shuo wang＿ jiu wang
就 算 各 一 方 依 然 把 你 放 心 上 这 段 情 怎 能 说 忘 一 一 就 忘
Since in every way I still have you in my heart, with this feeling, how can I simply say 'forget' and it just be forgotten...

Fig. 3.3: The vocal line of *Yi sheng wu hui's* second melodic phrase.

The first phrase is aurally striking, not least because it is unusual in this music for vocal lines to come to rest so unambiguously in advance of the accompanying harmony. As might reasonably be expected at such a distinctive moment, however, no singer I heard in Wuhan prolonged the first vocal phrase. Each faithfully reproduced the original approach.

These two examples are representative of the scope of performers' deviations from recordings in this context. Bohlman remarks that "of the various ways of stabilizing change in oral tradition, none is more effective than written tradition" (Bohlman 1988: 28). A recording might also be considered a kind of 'score'. It is one able to provide a wealth of information that the written equivalent could not transmit with nearly as much precision. Recordings are able to transfer not only the basic elements of a song, but also more detailed nuances. Thus, it might be argued that territories offering potential for variety when a song is passed on orally are fixed more securely when songs are learned by reference to recordings. Perhaps, then, this mode of transmission goes even further than written tradition in its potential stabilising effect, encouraging new interpreters to treat a greater range of parameters as fixed. Furthermore, recordings can be replayed an unlimited number of times, so there is no need for the singer to rely on real-time musical perception or an accurate memory when using it as a learning tool. This is reflected in the language that singers used when I asked them about learning the songs. Some told me that in their free time during the day, they would *nian ge* (learn songs). The choice of the verb *nian* here implies that this learning involves reading or recitation of a text, with perhaps less emphasis on interpreting or experimenting with the material.

On the occasions that individual singers do decide to veer away from what they have heard in recordings, the fixing effect of these texts nonetheless operates as a barrier against these innovations spreading to other street singers. While novelties on the street may be fleeting, recordings persist as unchanging texts and are thus likely to overshadow what potentially could be learned from peers. It might be said, then, that learning from recordings constrains the processes of change on two levels. This is not to say, however, that singers did not break free of these constraints when circumstances permitted. The song *Yuanfen redehuo* (Destiny stirring up trouble) was one of the mainstays of the *jiqing guangchang* repertory during my fieldwork, and the interpretation of one particular singer, Xiao Fang, was infused with an unusual level of emotive expression and powerful vocal techniques. The chorus of the song features the following lyrics:

Dou shi yuanfen redehuo	都是缘分惹的祸	It is destiny stirring up trouble
Rang wo zhaolemo	让我着了魔	Giving me these demons
Qinghai shenchu	情海深处	In the depths of this emotional sea
Wufa qu jietuo	无法去解脱	There's no way to find relief
[…]	[…]	[…]
Dou shi yuanfen redehuo	都是缘分惹的祸	It is destiny stirring up trouble
Rang wo shou zhemo	让我受折磨	Giving me this torment
Qinghai zhizhong	情海之中	In this sea of emotions
Rang wo qu piaobo	让我去漂泊	Making me drift

(*Yuanfen redehuo* by An Dongyang, CD track 6)

Xiao Fang's performance was notable for the particular emphasis she placed on the rhyming syllables at the end of these lines (*huo*, *mo*, *tuo*, and so on), in a way remarkable for contrasting with the understated delivery of An Dongyang's original 2011 recording. She sang the first of these syllables with full force, opening her mouth wide so that the pronunciation of the *huo* sound was distorted to sound almost like *hua*. At the same time, she threw back her head and gradually moved the microphone away from her mouth to balance a voice at full power. On the second and third syllables, the effect Xiao Fang employed was a subtle decrease in volume combined with a wide vibrato. Not only were these innovations unusually vivid examples of the individual nuance sometimes brought by street singers, but this particular performer replicated them with equal energy almost every day for a spell of sessions I witnessed at the Hanyangmen park in May 2014. On no other occasion did I come across an individual singer choosing to perform one song so regularly, and in fact, I found that singers usually did not repeat the same songs very often at all. This repetition allowed me to make detailed observations of Xiao Fang's performances of this song without it being necessary to make a recording. The repetition here is also significant because it coincides with the clearest example I observed of performative innovation spreading between singers. Zhuang Di was the boss of the afternoon session in which Xiao Fang gave these performances and, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, she later took on the role of singer at another stage. I noticed that Zhuang replicated similar vocal techniques when singing *Yuanfen redehuo* there. While she seemed unaware of any connection when I asked her about her approach later, I suspect that both her choice of song, and these specific performance features had been influenced by Xiao Fang's idiosyncratic and repeated performance of this piece in her presence. Thus, it seems that although the potential for singers to influence each other is limited by a greater reliance upon recorded texts, this process is still possible in suitable circumstances.

(ii)   Skills, technologies and real-time adaptation

Further opportunities and constraints regarding creativity and change are linked to certain skills and technologies available to the singers and bands. In the song mentioned above, *Yuanfen redehuo*, the different levels of sound-processing technology available in the studio and on the street makes a noticeable difference to the two versions. It is difficult to image how a street singer could replicate the clarity of note-to-note transitions in parts of An Dongyang's studio performance, which are clearly aided by autotune. His performance seems to emphasise the contrast between these transitions and much smoother glides between other pairs of notes. Elsewhere, similar changes appear in the instrumental accompaniment, too. Deng Lijun's famous song *Wo zhi zaihu ni* (I only care for you) is typical of many of the songs in this repertory in being predicated upon what Allan Moore refers to as period-structure harmony (2012: 85). As I discuss in detail later in this chapter, this kind of writing is charged with a sense of harmonic purpose and direction, and contrasts with alternatives such as harmony that is based on riffs or repetitive gestures. Indeed, it is the sense of harmonic forward-momentum in Deng's performance of *Wo zhi zaihu ni* that became a site of change – perhaps unintentionally – when the same song was performed on the street. During the chorus in Deng's 1987 recording, impetus is produced in three ways. The first is the increase in rate of harmonic change, from one chord per bar in the first half of the chorus (see upper line of chord symbols in Fig. 3.4), to two chords per bar from bar 7 (also in Fig. 3.4), and then a spell during the final two bars in which the chord changes on every beat. The other two mechanisms involve the contrasting of major and minor inflections in bar 7, and the equally unstable chromatic bass progression through bars 9 and 10. I heard the song performed by the group occupying the unmade road on Wuhan's Han Riverbank. The keyboard player, who was responsible for the harmonic playing, employed a much narrower range of chords. This was one of the occasions in which the bass guitar sound produced by the keyboard's left-hand range was reasonable audible. I was able to note large stretches of the same passage in which the tonic chord was barely deviated from (see lower line of chord symbols in Fig. 3.4).

Fig. 3.4: Comparison of the harmony in two versions of *Wo zhi zaihu ni*. The upper of the two lines of chord symbols reflects the way the melody is harmonized in Deng Lijun's recording (CD track 7), while the lower is from a Wuhan street performance by Zhang Sihong on 15 May 2014 (CD track 8).

Comparing the recorded and the street versions of this song shows how the effect of harmonising the same melody differently can be significant. The sense of drive in Deng's version became something much more static on the street. I had reason to suspect that this keyboard player's approach to harmony resulted less from a consideration for the musical effect produced than from the constraints of playing skill. While some keyboard players I met in Wuhan were proficient and experienced musicians, a few had been drafted into keyboard duties by necessity and, to a large extent, were learning on the job. In this case, a telling sign was that this group's keyboard player replicated the same repeating left hand 'bass guitar' pattern regardless of the song, and it would synchronise far more effectively with the drum patterns of some songs than with others. Singers and instrumental musicians alike consistently represented themselves to me as untrained, but this belies their significant skills in several areas of performance. In particular, many of the accompanying bands showed a formidable ability to perform vast amounts of repertory with no preparation, and to adapt in real time to various challenges. In other areas, however, the levels of experience and skill were clearly lower. This should not be overlooked as a factor contributing to the processes of creativity and change.

The area in which I found creative adaptation to the real performance situation to be most significant was song structure. In comparison with melody and other of the more

immediate details of a song that I have just touched upon, a song's detailed formal architecture is perhaps less easily digested through listening to a recording. Whereas varying a melody learned in this way might involve a conscious choice, reproducing every detail of a song's relatively complex temporal construction – the number of times its chorus repeats; where lines recur as refrains; the location of instrumental sections – is not always an easy task, even if it were desirable. I argue that in this area, the learning of songs by recording is not only less likely to produce the fixing effect I have attributed to it so far, but that it also allows more potential for precedents to be consciously overridden in real performance.

In many cases, the original durations of the recorded songs are in the region of three to four minutes. When performed on the streets, however, I found that they were often significantly longer, even regularly extending to more than twice as long. For songs accompanied by live backing music, the singer and band together would decide on the right moment to end the piece. Singers were evidently aware of the response they received from the audience and when this was less positive than expected, they tended to allow the band to finish at a time similar to the recorded versions. Curtailing the embarrassment of receiving very few or no public gifts might be preferable to continuing in the hope of attracting more. More commonly, songs were well rewarded, and the singer and keyboard player would trade hand signals, questioning glances, or even a few words either on or off microphone, agreeing to repeat certain sections of the song. Quite often they would seamlessly go back to the very start and play it over again. Communication of this kind was only really necessary between singer and keyboard player, as other members of the band were simply expected to fall into line. In fact, it seemed quite acceptable for them to sometimes play erroneous material until they were able to catch up. That the role of these other band members was apparently considered subordinate was emphasised to me when I saw that even drummers would sometimes leave the arena to go to the toilet during a song. In these instances, a resting singer would take over by keeping a most basic form of beat on one drum, and this was evidently not of undue concern to the other musicians. In the repertory favoured on Wuhan's streets, many songs do not feature anything more complex than three basic structural components: verse, chorus and instrumental interlude. Verses are rarely sung to different words on their second hearing, and instrumental interludes usually replicate the passages played at the very start of songs as introductions. Thus, it was quite straightforward for the band and singer to go on alternating these three sections until the audience was judged to be satisfied or to have yielded all of the gifts likely.

When performances were accompanied by recorded backing track rather than live band, I found that songs were also frequently extended in similar ways. Singers were generally in control of these recordings, which were usually played through their own smart phone or a similar device connected to the PA system. Thus, when a song was coming to an

end, or sometimes even much earlier, singers could move over to the equipment and reset the song to the beginning, or perhaps move to another track. In a few locations where a third party was in charge of the recording, it was not uncommon to hear singers call out requests to go back to the beginning, or indeed, for the person in control of the music to do this spontaneously. Just as when there was a live band, the singer would pragmatically end the performance when they perceived the right time had arrived, and there appeared little problem in these circumstances for them simply to stop singing at any point, or to cut off the music abruptly. As a result, a notable feature of performances all around Wuhan is for very little emphasis to be placed on replicating the structural integrity of the original song, or making a feature of a sense of progress from its beginning to its end. In addition, some singers performed medleys with transitioning backing tracks prepared in advance. In a continuous flow of similar music lasting up to ten minutes, it was difficult to perceive clearly where one song ended and the next began. Thus, unlike features such as melody and lyrics, the formal structure of a song is an element to which personalised and spontaneous interpretations were extensively applied, and in which the singer had a high degree of autonomy.

In more intricate details of the performance, of course, the use of recorded backing tracks did lead to significant constraints. This was encapsulated to me when Zhuang Di sang *Ruguo ni jia gei wo* (If you gave me your hand). At one moment in her performance, she seemed to make a mistake, apparently coming in too early with one vocal entry, and then having to break off to wait for the recorded backing to catch up. It was only later when I consulted the original recording, however, that I realised this 'erroneous' entry was actually performed intentionally as a joke. What I had heard was Zhuang replicating the original singer, Pang Long, 'accidentally' coming in early. On the record, the singer sighs and canned laughter is briefly heard before the song gets back on track. Had Zhuang chosen to sing this song to live backing, it seems doubtful that she would have replicated the joke, and thus in this case the choice of technology impacted directly on her creative choices.

(iii)   Summary and implications for community

So far in this chapter, I have used several angles to assess the significance of genre in *jiqing guangchang* and community. I began by noting that most of the generic categorisations that might be applied to these forms of Chinese music do not seem particularly central to how participants here understand their activity. The exceptions, however, are the concepts of popular and folk music. Not only do these appear meaningful to people in this particular context, but they are also more widely significant in the understanding of community, as each is associated with the notion in various ways within

academic and wider discourse. Folk culture can be almost synonymous with an idealised and probably inadequate version of the community experience. Popular music, on the other hand, emerges from a modern society that is often characterised as disconnected. This genre is implicated in the bypassing of human relationships through monetised exchanges, and in isolated encounters and experiences with music. I have begun to explore how these community-related connotations actually play out in the street music context. I have based my discussions on a way of theorising the division that involves both the economic support system behind the musical experience and also the systems by which musical material is transmitted and adapted. This is not as an endorsement of these factors as a basis for the classification of music. Instead, it is a starting point to explore a rich yield of relevant implications. This approach may not fully overcome the well-understood limitations of idealising the difference between the two genres. Nevertheless, I suggest that it is still useful to bring them into the analysis. Taking, for example, economic systems as one of the bases for a distinction obliges the scholar to scrutinise numerous ways in which economic factors shape the events. Thus, my main task so far has been to assess the experience of music at *jiqing guangchang* in these terms. This has not been a clear-cut undertaking, and so it is worth pausing here to summarise my findings.

To some extent, indirect patronage seems to be a meaningful label for understanding *jiqing guangchang's* economic system. It has been associated with popular music and criticised for underlying the 'commodification' and 'dehumanisation' of the production of music and of the ways in which people encounter music. These events, then, seem to share something in common with monetised scenarios that are not easily aligned with the notion of community. On closer inspection, however, the economic system here seems to be more complex, and so does the relationship with community. The events display elements in keeping with a system of direct patronage, in which customs of money-exchange actually foster and support interpersonal intimacy rather than bypass it. Thus, it would seem insufficient to fully align *jiqing guangchang* with the non-communal associations of popular music. Similarly ambiguous conclusions might also be drawn from the discussion of musical specialisation. This time, on first glance *jiqing guangchang* shows a certain degree of similarity with the non-specialisation associated with folk music, and this makes it more compatible with typical understandings of community contexts. Then again, various aspects of the role dynamics among its participants, and the way the events are embedded within wider social life seem to weaken these associations.

Another means I have used to deconstruct the implications of popular and folk music in the community debate has been to examine the way music is transmitted. As is the case for economic systems, exploring *jiqing guangchang* in these terms has also revealed a system that defies easy labelling. I have tried to emphasise that the ways in which street

musicians adapt and change musical material reflects their social and technological circumstances. Reliance upon recordings might seem intuitively to align this aspect of the musical experience with the homogeneity, commodification and impersonality of mass-media transmission. In another sense, however, it might in fact be consistent with a folk ethos involving untrained musicians encountering and learning material in the course of everyday activity. Oral transmission is reinterpreted here not as a rigid, ideologically-driven and isolationist process, but one simply reflective of folk musicians' embeddedness in the circumstances of their society. In this way, there seems to emerge a meaningful sense in which the activity of these street singers shows continuity with the ideals of how folk singers might learn and share material.

Associations between *jiqing guangchang* and community are undoubtedly complex when viewed through the lens of the supporting systems behind the popular and folk genres. It has suited the purposes of this chapter to take as a starting point for the discussion the idealised and sometimes stereotypical versions of the two genres, and thus to assume that the notion of community can be understood in similarly black-and-white terms. In Chapter 5, however, I turn attention more fully towards understanding the latter notion more comprehensively, and this is where all of the ambiguous community-related implications from each chapter are brought together and assessed. Next, though, I move briefly onto analysis of some musical features of the material performed on Wuhan's streets. I undertake this as another means of deconstructing the boundaries between genres, and to show that understanding *jiqing guangchang* in the terms of both popular and folk music is not only useful when considering background processes, but also when taking account of the musical text.

Repertory

The observations that follow are based upon a body of 187 songs that I heard at *jiqing guangchang* events all over Wuhan in 2014 (the full list is found in the Appendix). With the exception of some instrumental interludes that I discuss in Chapter 4, all of the music I encountered came from existing repertory and was not originally created by musicians on the street. I assembled this body of songs as the basis to provide background information about the provenance of the material. In the informal and fluid performance context, it was not my intention to collect this information in a highly systematic way. I did not, for instance, take care to ensure a strict balance in the sample according to venue, time, or any other factor; nor did I make it a priority to record the entire programme of songs heard during any single session. Thus, the resulting sample has some clear limitations. Most importantly, the makeup of this list reflects my own capabilities and biases when collecting

song information. This perhaps inevitably includes a greater familiarity with some sections of the repertory than with others, and a dependence on the chance nature of the information I was able to glean from participants and of the details that I was able to record while performances were ongoing. Each may have resulted in certain kinds of songs being overrepresented and others underrepresented. The observations that follow, then, are not meant to provide a comprehensive picture of the music performed at the events, but instead to illustrate some features that may be relevant to their understanding in the terms of the popular and folk genres. For these purposes, then, it is sufficient that this list of songs does represent a substantial body of music that featured in the events.

(i)   Formulae

The material of folk music has been characterised as dependent upon the repetition of musical formulae and the recurrence of markers and conventional passages. In other contexts, this has also been referred to as 'centonization', the recombining of existing musical elements into a 'patchwork' (Hatten 2015: 316). Bohlman explains that "markers may be small – coupling a word with a motif or a few notes – or as extensive as an entire piece" (Bohlman 1988: 15). It has even been speculated that these features may predominate across the folk creations of different cultures (Burke 1978). Their presence seems closely connected with many of the phenomena already discussed throughout this chapter. They are perhaps related to economic conditions associated with folk music-making contexts; being relatively simple and not time-consuming to learn or perform means that the making of formula-based music can readily be incorporated around the primary subsistence efforts of groups of people. Equally significant may be that formulae tend to occur in music that is transmitted orally. They might be thought of as devices that are particularly memorable and thus are suitable, for instance, to open or close stanzas or lines (Bohlman 1988: 16). It is also reasonable to assume that musicians of limited skill might tend to revert to formulae and other established models when attempting to reproduce more challenging material.

Among the contexts in which this analysis has been endorsed is that of Chinese folk songs. In a study of the songs of the Wu area in the country's south east, for example, Schimmelpenninck notes that texts and tunes "are essentially built from 'prefabricated' phrases and motifs" (1997: 197) that combine in a "patchwork" effect (ibid.: 201). Melodies also display the phenomenon of 'seriation', in which units are strung together in repetitive chains (ibid.: 292). In this section, I argue that similar elements can be identified not only in repertory from Wuhan's streets intuitively thought of as folk, but even among the kind of song performed here to which it generally seems appropriate to apply the label popular. I intend to show that, just as for the background systems that I have focused on in this chapter

so far, closer scrutiny of musical material too might be a way of unearthing the complexities of the genre issue in *jiqing guangchang*. This is significant as another angle from which the typical community-related connotations of these two genres might be rethought. In other words, while *jiqing guangchang* events might instinctively be treated primarily as manifestations of popular music, there are a number of different angles from which it could be useful to scrutinise their alignment with the resulting connotations.

(ii)   Formulae in the 'folk' songs of *jiqing guangchang*

Sections of the repertory heard on Wuhan's streets that are most clearly aligned with folk song display elements consistent with the features I discussed above, including melodic formulae. I briefly illustrate this through one subsection of the repertory, several songs understood as *min'ge* that are written to bring to mind the sounds and lifestyle concerns of Tibet. In Fig. 3.5, I give sections of sung melodies from commercial recordings of the songs *Fanshen nongnu ba ge chang* (The emancipated serf sings a song), *Tian lu* (Heavenly road) and *Qingzang Gaoyuan* (The Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau), highlighting moments at which the same formulae of rhythm and melodic contour appear in the three songs.

Fanshen nongnu ba ge chang (The emancipated serf sings a song) by Caidan Zhuoma (1954)
(original key: D minor)

Tian lu (Heavenly road) by Gong Yue (2007)   (original key: G minor)

Qing chen   wo   zhan____ zai   qing qing de mu_____ chang   kan dao shen ying
清 晨 － － 我 站 － － － 在   青 青 的 牧 － － － 场   看 到 神 鹰
In the early morning I stand on the pasture

pi zhe na xia_____guang   xiang yi   pian xiang____yun   fei guo lan____
披 着 那 霞 － － － － 光   像 一   片 祥 － － 云   飞 过 蓝 － －
I see the condor draped with sunlight   Like an auspicious cloud floating across the blue sky

tian   wei____zang jia__ er nü   dai lai__ ji_____ xiang__
天   为 － 藏 家 － 儿 女   带 来 － 吉 － － － － 祥
Bringing good fortune to the sons and daughters of Tibetan homes

Qingzang Gaoyuan **(The Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau) by Han Hong (2001)**
(original key: C sharp minor)

Fig. 3.5: Excerpts from commercial recordings of three Tibet-themed songs (CD tracks 9-11), highlighting melodic formulae (transposed to common keys for the purposes of comparison).

Highlighted in red are passages across the three songs that begin on and return to the same note (an E in all but one instance), moving via a peak pitch that is usually a fifth higher. These similarities operate in tandem with rhythmic parallels, each one showing a variation on a rhythm that builds in intensity in similar ways throughout the passage. Highlighted in blue are another series of formulae, in which a cadence point is reached (on the note A) following a descending pattern, and in yellow are two brief alternating and descending quaver patterns. These formulae are just some of many that could be picked out from sections of the repertory understood as folk. Now I turn towards the body of songs more comfortably aligned with pop to show that musical material constructed through formulae is a feature straddling this generic divide.

(iii)   Formulae in the 'popular' songs of *jiqing guangchang*

How, then, might similar musical formulae be identified in even the apparently 'popular' part of the repertory? I argue that the phenomenon emerges from a particular approach to harmony that dominates my sample of songs. Scholars of popular music including Richard Middleton (1990) and Allan Moore (2012) have discussed in detail two different types of harmony in the anglophone songs that they study. What they refer to as 'open-ended repetitive gesture' involves very short recurring chord patterns – for instance the repeated alternation between two chords (ibid.: 77). Perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, I see musical formulae in my sample of songs stemming not from this repetitive approach to harmony, but instead from the alternative style, one involving 'period structure' (ibid.: 85). This way of writing, which features more elaborate episodes built around the creation of expectation and resolution, accounts for the vast majority of the sample from *jiqing guangchang* events. Moore suggests that this kind of harmonic pattern generally springs from other more instrumental features of the music: "[it] is subservient to the needs of the form, and usually the melody, and will be comparatively unrepetitive" (ibid.: 86). Some of the examples I give below, however, suggest that it seems more appropriate to view my sample from the opposite perspective. In most of the songs, harmony does not necessarily seem to take this secondary role. Instead, using Moore's words, the songs could be thought of as "chord driven" (ibid.: 74). Thus, it is the melodies that appear constrained into fitting the contours of this sense of progress produced by the harmony. They often fall into predictable question-answer phrases that correspond to this structurally-loaded harmony. It is precisely with regard to these characteristics that I argue the concept of the musical formula is very useful in describing many songs performed in *jiqing guangchang*. Because melodies often display this kind of functionality, identifiable units and patterns recur where similar structural demands prevail across different songs.

Fig. 3.6 shows excerpts of melody from fifteen songs in the sample. Each one is taken from the same point, the very beginning of the song's opening verse. These examples demonstrate clear similarities in rhythms, melodic contours and predominant pitches, and I argue that these parallels stem from the functional demands of period structure. The first bar in each of the excerpts labelled a to k, for instance, all feature a dotted crochet rhythm, followed by a string of quavers that, in most cases, runs in a consistent direction towards a culmination on or near the downbeat at the beginning of the second (full) bar. This is followed by an answering phrase (in the third and fourth bars) that either replicates very closely this rhythmic and melodic pattern in some form of sequence (for example in excerpts a, b, c, e, f, h, j), or sometimes deviates in a more significant way while usually still retaining a clear relationship (d, i). In the majority of these examples, the function of the first phrase is

to move from chord I to chord vi, while the second phrase is shaped by the harmony moving to chord V (a, b, c, d, g) or sometimes chord iii (e, f, h and o). The final four excerpts given deviate more significantly from these patterns, but still seem to function in similar ways. The dotted crochet pattern gives way to more rhythmic variety in these examples, but the second half of the opening phrase is usually reminiscent of the quaver pattern. Furthermore, the harmonic progression of these excerpts almost always involves the same overarching movement from chord I to chord V (l, n) or iii (o). The period-structure approach to harmony seems to go hand-in-hand with melodies that have functional roles, and I argue that this may explain the emergence of formulaic patterns.

a) *Yuanfen wuyue* (May's destiny) by Jiang Zhimin (2008)   (original key: C major)

*Jiu suan qian shi mei you guo yue___ ding   jin sheng   wo men dou ceng chi chi___   deng_*
就　算　前　世　没　有　过　约　一　定－　　今　生　我　们　都　曾　痴　痴　一　等
Even if in the past life we never made that promise, still in this life we have both been madly waiting...

b) *Zai xinli congci yongyuan you ge ni* (From now on there is forever a you in my heart) by Chen Xi and Situ Lanfang (2014)   (original key: E major)

Wei shen me   wo men xiang yu wang   luo   wei shen me yao na xu ni dui dai   wo
为　什　么　我　们　相　遇　网　络　　　为　什　么　要　拿　虚　拟　对　待　我
Why is it that we meet online, why is it that you choose this fiction to approach me...

c) *Chi laide ai* (Love that comes late) by Liu Maoshan (1987)   (original key: B flat major)

Yi duanqing yao mai cang duo shao   nian   yi feng xin yao chi lai duo shao_____ tian
一　段　情　要　埋　藏　多　少　年　　　一　封－　信　要　迟　来　多　少　－ 一 天
For how many years does a feeling have to be buried, how many days does a letter have to come late...

d) *Kantou aiqing kantou ni* **(Seeing through love, seeing through you) by Leng Mo (2009)**
(original key: E major)

Ni huan shang le ta mai de xin__ yi__ xiao rong he yuan lai yi yang de_ tian mi
你 换 上 了 他 买 的 新 一 衣一 笑 容一 和 原 来 一 样 的一 甜 蜜
You change into the new clothes he bought for you, and your smile is happy like it was before...

e) *Yuanfen redehuo* **(Destiny stirring up trouble) by An Dongyang (2011)**
(original key: D major)

Bu yao shuo ni xin li zhi you wo bu yao shuo zhe dou shi ni de cuo
不 要 说 你 心 里 只 有 我 不 要 说 这 都 是 你 的 错
Don't say that it is only me in your heart, don't say that it is all your fault...

f) *Zhiyao ni guo de bi wo hao* **(As long as you are doing better than me) by Jiang Shu'na (1990)** (original key: A major)

Bu zhi dao ni xian zai_ hao bu hao_ shi bu shi ye yi yang mei fan nao
不 知 道 你 现 在一 好 不 好一 是 不 是 也 一 样一 没 烦 恼
I don't know if you are well now, and if you are still without worries...

g) *Ganende xin* **(Grateful heart) by Ouyang Feifei (1994)** (original key: F major)

Wo lai zi ou ran_ xiang yi ke chen tu__ you shei kan chu wo de_ cui_____ ruo
我 来 自 偶 然一 像 一 颗 尘 土一 有 谁 看 出 我 的一 脆 一一 弱
I come from chance just as dust does, is there anyone who sees how fragile I am...

h) *Wei ai chikuang* **(Mad for love) by Liu Ruoying (1995)** (original key: A flat major)

Wo cong chun tian zou lai____ ni zai qiu tian shuo yao__ fen kai
我 从 春 天 走 来 一 你 在 秋 天 说 要 一 分 开
I come along from spring, and the autumnal you says that we should separate...

i) *Xueshan Ajia* **(Ajia from the snowy mountains) by Baima Duoji (2012)**
   (original key: E major)

Xue   shan   a_____   jia   o____   yuan yuan de zou   lai____   le
雪   山   阿 － － －   佳   哦 －   远   远   的   走   来 －   了
Xueshan Ajia, oh is coming from a far-away place...

j) *Aiqing wanwan sui* **(Long live love) by Gao An (2011)**   (original key: C major)

Dou   shuo   ai____   qing_   mei   dou   shuo ai   ye rang ren   lei
都   说   爱 －   情 －   美   都   说   爱   也   让   人   累
Everyone says that love is beautiful, everyone says that love is also tiring...

k) *Zhen ai yi shiqing* **(True love's social affairs) by Li Yihui (2008)**   (original key: B minor)

A_____   bu_ gai   a_____   bu_ gai bu gai_ de qing   bian bu gai_ de   ai
啊 － －   不 － 该   啊 － －   不 － 该 不 该 － 的 情   变 不 该 － 的   爱
Ah forbidden...ah forbidden...a forbidden feeling becomes a forbidden love...

l) *Liande xinshi* **(The lotus seed's obsession) by Wulan Tuoya (2009)**
   (original key: C major)

Zhi wei   ni zhuan shen   de__   yi ge__ning shi   wo jiu wei ni qi pan yi bei____ zi____
只 为   你   转   身   的 －   一 个 － 凝   视   我 就 为 你 祈 盼 一 辈 － 子
My gaze is just for you, a lifetime of hopes and prayers are for you...

m) *Shenshen de xihuan ni* **(Like you deeply) by Qiu Niao (2009)**   (original key: C major)

Di   yi   ci kan   jian le   ni   wo   jiu   tou   tou xi huan_ shang ni
第   一   次 看   见 了   你   我   就   偷   偷 喜 欢 － 上 你
The first time I saw you, I secretly knew I had already begun to like you...

n) *Deng ni dengle name jiu* **(Waited so long for you) by Qi Long (2012)**
(original key: E flat major)

Deng ni___ wo deng le na me jiu
等 你 － 我 等 了 那 么 久

hua kai hua luo bu jian ni hui tou
花 开 花 落 不 见 你 回 头

I have waited for you for so long, the flowers have blossomed and fallen and still I haven't seen you back...

o) *Hongchen qingge* **(The ballad of the red dust) by Gao An and Hei Yazi (2011)**
(original key: B major)

Bu zhi___ dao wei le shen_ me
不 知 － 道 为 了 什 － 么

tong ku___ ta tian tian wei zhe wo
痛 苦 － 它 天 天 围 着 我

I don't know why it is that pain surrounds me every day...

Fig. 3.6: The opening bars of the sung verses from a selection of songs performed at *jiqing guangchang* events (transcribed from versions on commercial recordings and transposed to common keys for the purposes of comparison (CD tracks 12-26).

I do not specifically address formulae occurring in the song texts here; to do justice to the prevalence of this phenomenon would surely be beyond the scope of this chapter. There are sufficient melodic and harmonic examples, however, to illustrate that musical formulae occur over a full range of small- and much larger-scale instances. Perhaps the manifestation on the largest scale involves multiple songs that see new words set to effectively identical melodies and harmonies. At two different *jiqing guangchang* events, for instance, I heard singers perform the songs *Zai xinli congci yongyuan you ge ni* (From now on there is forever a you in my heart) and *An Yu xinli you ge ni* (There is a you in An Yu's heart)[8]. Each is a cover version with lyrics in Mandarin of an earlier song, *Yushui wo wen ni* (Rain, I ask you), which was originally recorded in the Hokkien dialect spoken in Taiwan. This reworking seems consistent with observations made in different contexts by several scholars of Chinese popular music about successful conventions being reproduced in subsequent music. One of these observations comes from soon after the birth of the modern popular music industry on the mainland in the 1980s. Members of the first generation of songwriters to work in this system hint to Andrew Jones in interviews that they were strongly influenced by the songs of Deng Lijun, the Taiwanese singer who had recently broken through in China (Jones 1991: 67). Similar processes seem to have continued in

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[8] An Yu is the singer who originally recorded this version. Despite the similarities in the titles of these two songs, their lyrics are entirely different.

subsequent decades, with many successful songs produced in Hong Kong being Cantonese-dialect cover versions of English or Japanese hits. Some songs originally in these languages have had multiple versions circulating at the same time (Ho 2003: 149). Links have been drawn to wider practices in Chinese musical culture, in which the method of setting new words to existing melodies (*tian ci*) is central to various operatic and other genres (Witzleben 1999: 245). Indeed, for almost every song in my sample from the streets of Wuhan, I found multiple commercial recordings by well-known singers. It is also notable that the artists behind some of the songs heard most often at the street events often refer clearly to their own works in their songs. Structural and formulaic similarities are particularly noticeable in the multiple songs performed on the streets that were originally recorded by Fenghuang Chuanqi, Gao An, Qi Long and Chen Rui.

On a smaller scale, there are numerous passages of music covering only a bar or two that occur as formulae across several different songs. Significantly, these tend to be found at certain predictable moments, where they are used to fulfil comparable structural functions. One prominent example among many that I could have chosen is a bar of melody that appears during the excerpt in Fig. 3.7. Here I give the first eight bars of the chorus from the song *Aide daijia* (The price of love). The final two bars of this extract culminate in the open-ended progression from chord ii to chord V. Subsequent to the extract given, there follows a similar eight-bar answering phrase that takes the chorus back to end on chord I.

Fig. 3.7: The first half of the chorus of *Aide daijia*, from a commercial recording by Li Zongsheng (2004), original key D major (CD track 27).

The similarities between these two bars at the end of this extract and equivalent passages in numerous other songs are remarkable. In each case shown in Fig. 3.8, the sung part increases in rhythmic intensity and lingers on the second scale degree in almost identical ways. Also noteworthy is that this pattern always occurs in corresponding points in

a song's structure – the seventh and eighth bars of a verse or chorus. At this moment in each case, the harmony is always identical to that in *Ai de daijia* (with the exception of the final excerpt below, where chord IV is substituted for the initial chord ii). There are many more instances of this particular pattern than the selection of illustrations I give in Fig. 3.8. I have suggested that in many of the songs in my sample from performances in Wuhan, it is more suitable to consider melody as subservient to or constrained by harmony, rather than the other way around. It is significant that the melodic similarities in these examples not only consistently coincide with the same chord pattern, but they also occur at precisely corresponding positions within the structure of a larger unit, a verse or a chorus. As a result, it seems reasonable to interpret them as structurally-derived melodic components.

Zhenxin huan zhenqing (Sincerity exchanged for real feeling) by Zhang Ke'e (2013)
   (original key: F sharp major)

ai   shang   ni   jiu   shi   wo   de   xing   yun____
爱　　上　　你　　就　　是　　我　　的　　幸　　运　　一
...falling in love with you really is my good fortune...
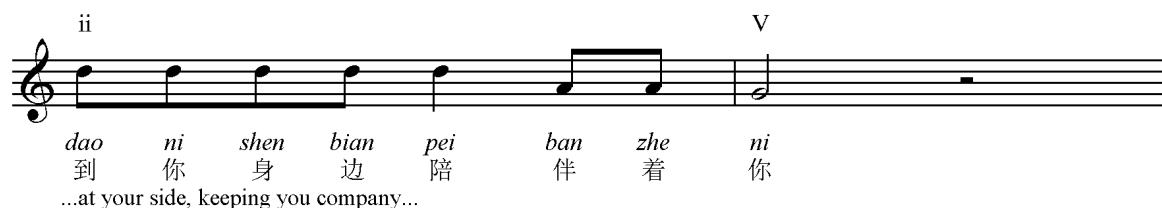
Ouduan silian (Together in spirit) by Chen Rui (2008)   (original key: G major)

yi   qie   dou   xiang   guo   wang__   yun   yan_____
一　　切　　都　　像　　过　　往　　一　　云　　烟　　一
...everything is like cloud and mist passing by...

Dayue zai dongji (Probably in winter) by Qi Qin (1987)   (original key: A flat major)

qin   ai   de   ni_____   bie   wei   wo   ku   qi
亲　　爱　　的　　你　　一　　别　　为　　我　　哭　　泣
...my dear don't cry for me...
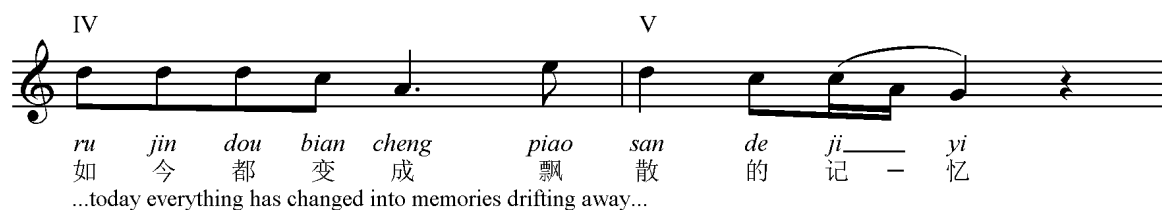
Wangluo zhenqing ye you wo he ni **(True feeling online also includes you and me)**
by Yu Jian (2011) (original key: E flat major)

ii   V

dao ni shen bian pei ban zhe ni
到 你 身 边 陪 伴 着 你
...at your side, keeping you company...

Cuoguo yuanfen cuoguo ni **(Missed my destiny, missed You) by Leng Mo (2012)**
(original key: E major)

IV   V

ru jin dou bian cheng piao san de ji_____ yi
如 今 都 变 成 飘 散 的 记 一 忆
...today everything has changed into memories drifting away...

Fig. 3.8: The seventh and eighth bars of the choruses or verses from commercial recordings of several other songs, transposed to common keys for the purposes of comparison (CD tracks 28-32).

(iv) Summary and implications for community

The illustrations drawing on techniques from conventional musical analysis in this section are intended to support my general argument that the notions of popular and folk music contribute to the understanding of *jiqing guangchang* in complex ways. I am most interested in the implications that apply to my larger project of understanding community in this context through approaching the issue of genre. I have given illustrations that combined and repeating formulae are not features only to be associated with archetypal folk music. The commonalities between songs I have highlighted show that there are some folk-like traits even in the kind of music that is usually understood as popular. This conclusion is, of course, not novel. Booth and Kuhn, for instance, have speculated that the musical details of the popular repertory might be influenced by a similar set of wider social circumstances as are said to shape folk music. They note, in particular, that the short repetitive musical structures suited to the conditions of communal life might also be expected to prevail in a modern society in which there does not seem to be the time or inclination to listen to long and complicated pieces of art music (Booth and Kuhn 1990: 429).

My illustrations, however, would seem particularly relevant to understanding a further social implication that has been drawn from this kind of analysis. Based on his studies of popular music's harmonic structures, Middleton argues that open-ended patterns may be linked to collective participation, while period structures emerge from private

listening practices, although he acknowledges that these categories are not sharply defined and that they relate dialectically (Middleton 1990: 217). My findings may add an additional perspective to this question. First, I have shown that formulaic repetition is not necessarily only associated with open-ended patterns, but sometimes period structures as well. Thus it is perhaps questionable to attempt to align certain types of harmony with certain kinds of music-making. Secondly, considering the background processes at play in the *jiqing guangchang* context has lead me, like Middleton, to question more fundamentally this kind of binary understanding of social influences. I explore this avenue in detail later.

The perceived boundaries between popular and folk music can be scrutinised and perhaps deconstructed from several angles. The economic and transmission systems behind *jiqing guangchang* do not align the events strongly with either genre, and in this section I have attempted to show that labelling the events in terms of the musical repertory can be just as complex. This has significant implication for the understanding of community; it seems clear that in this context, the notion cannot be assumed to align comfortably with the connotations usually attached to either of these two genres. Below, I start to explore a way of reconciling the observations I have made in this chapter so as to acknowledge the complexity of the events' relationship with this genre divide. This is another stage in the foundations for Chapter 5, where I turn towards the community issue in most detail.

Conclusions

(i)   Two phases of *jiqing guangchang*

The main task in concluding this chapter involves finding ways to square a set of observations about the significance of genre in *jiqing guangchang* that are ambiguous and complex. I have yet to definitively explain, too, how these findings might contribute to an understanding of community in this context. In the background systems of economics and transmission that I have explored in this chapter, as well as in the musical features also highlighted, wherever it has been meaningful to align the events with either popular or folk music, other limitations have also arisen to counterbalance these observations. For the sake of the larger project of assessing *jiqing guangchang* and community, then, I now attempt to bring some structure to these ambiguous interpretations.

Inspired by studies dealing with the creation of meaning in the related context of karaoke (Lum 1996), I propose that it is useful to view *jiqing guangchang* as a two-phase process. The first phase involves the production of the musical raw material, the records that karaoke and street performers reproduce. These processes are effectively contained within the separate realm of the general popular music industry, where those involved in the

music's production are employed on the basis of the returns that are achieved from the selling of recordings, concert tickets, and so on. I argue that considering this separately as one phase of *jiqing guangchang* is useful because it is here that most of the strongest reasons to align the events with the community-related connotations of popular music can be tied together. In particular, I am referring to the notions of indirect patronage that influence the shows, and to the stratification of performer and audience roles. Even this phase, however, should not be thought of as entirely remote from folk. Recent scholars are prepared to accept, for instance, that in practice – as opposed to in idealised accounts – folk music and individual acts of creation by distant individuals have actually been much more closely integrated than might have been assumed. For *jiqing guangchang* to rely on musical material produced by people far away from the context is not itself inconsistent with how folk may now be understood (Bohlman 1988: 24).

This first phase, however, is perhaps of subordinate importance in the discussions of genre and community to the second one that stems from it. This second phase involves how the raw musical material inherited from the music industry is encountered and assimilated into the lives of ordinary people. In karaoke, this takes the form of businesses commercialising participation in a particular form of musical experience. In the case of *jiqing guangchang*, it is the unique repertory choices made by performers, how they interpret the material and subject it to the processes of creativity and change that are particular to their circumstances, and how the performances are received and embedded in social lives. These are the sites of some of the most interesting ambiguities in the alignment between *jiqing guangchang* and folk music. On the one hand, it seems to be an overstatement to describe the relatively limited potential for creativity and change in the music here in terms similar to those Bruno Nettl uses to summarise the development of a folk tradition over generations. He calls the gradual reworking and adaptation that occurs in this timescale *communal re-creation* (Bohlman 1988: 24). Perhaps a more meaningful sense in which the *jiqing guangchang* 'tradition' has demonstrated these adaptive processes is in the social practices that surround the music. Participants told me that when events first started in Wuhan in the mid-1990s, audiences were very small, and the gifts commonly given to singers were of the order of 1 to 10 *yuan*. Now, the size of audiences can reach the hundreds, and gifts are regularly measured in the hundreds or thousands of *yuan.* Practices seen in any *jiqing guangchang* performance in Wuhan are not inevitable or arbitrary, but are evidence of the music gradually being assimilated into the unique and dynamic social conditions.

Furthermore, modern scholars have convincingly questioned previous views regarding the ways in which folk music cultures develop. There is now less emphasis placed upon the ideals of bounded and isolated practices, and instead the potential haphazardness of

the processes of encounter and integration are highlighted. The geographer George Revill, for instance, notes the borrowing and assimilation that this implies:

> The practice of folk music in everyday life has always been to a greater or lesser extent a heterogeneous assemblage of local lore, half heard, reworked and partly incorporated musics taken from migrants, travellers, minstrels, itinerant musicians and professional entertainers, church, chapel and printed sources.
> (Revill 2005: 702)

Revill's observations are perhaps most meaningful when considering the relatively organised nature by which musical material is accessed by *jiqing guangchang* participants. All of the songs that are reinterpreted on the streets are picked up from the post-1970s music industry with its structured and ubiquitous channels of dissemination. While individual participants, of course, might encounter these songs in various areas of their daily lives, it is still significant that the songs are likely to come to them in the form of one, or perhaps a handful of recorded versions, not through heterogeneous renderings produced by people of diverse backgrounds. Of any song that one meets in modern urban China, encounters are almost always brought about, in one way or another, by the mechanisms of the music industry in conjunction with the mass media. In this sense, then, the second phase of *jiqing guangchang* seems more constrained than in the folk model. In another sense, however, it displays some significant consistencies. Elements that the events share with the model of direct patronage, and the importance of direct contact between participants that I explore in greater depth in the next chapters means that the experience of music here fits comfortably with descriptions emphasising personalised encounters with music. The reception of music is not formalised, passive or anonymous, nor does it coexist directly with official commerce. Thus, in this way the events are strongly connected with the social implications most fundamentally associated with folk music.

(ii)   'Popularisation' and 'folk-isation'

So, I argue that a useful way of structuring my observations from the various approaches to *jiqing guangchang* in this chapter is to view it as an activity with two distinct phases. An important part of *jiqing guangchang* is the popular music industry that creates its musical material and various other precedents central to the culture of the events. From this starting point, the second phase sees it reflect certain elements of this industry's economic model of indirect patronage, but it equally shares facets in common with direct patronage, or perhaps links to an archetypal picture of folk music embedded as a more incidental part of other communal economic activity. In terms of *jiqing guangchang's* traditions of creativity and change, the events are constrained by their links with the popular music industry,

particularly as recordings play a major role in transmission and learning. There exists a process of selecting and – to a modest extent – adapting the music for real life situations, and more significantly, using the music as a basis for the development of highly personal social practices. In these ways *jiqing guangchang* seems to transcend alignment with popular music.

It is not uncommon for scholars to talk about 'popularisation', a process in which folk repertory is passed through the mechanisms of contemporary society and begins to resemble popular music (Bohlman 1988: 133; Tuohy 2001). Booth and Kuhn describe this as an "inevitable" result of the complex economies at play in the modern world (1990: 431). In fact, there seems to be broad currency in the sense that folk music can cross the border and 'become' popular music. I argue that the two phases of *jiqing guangchang* raise the possibility of pairing this notion with a counterpart that thus far has not achieved the same currency – what might be called 'folk-isation'. This is my own term, and one that I have not come across in any other work. While immediate intuition defines *jiqing guangchang* as popular music, this definition overlooks the complexity of the second phase of analysis. Indeed, while it is encouraging that scholars are increasingly prepared to accommodate a changing picture of folk, it is still notable that this mainly involves broadening definitions so as to accommodate new developments, such as when 'traditional' repertories are commercialised. I find no example, however, in which scholars advocate the opposite: relabelling as folk something that had initially been understood as popular music. I argue, then, that the analysis of *jiqing guangchang* might be enhanced by accepting that the prospect of folk-isation can be just as meaningful as that of popularisation. Turning a familiar concept on its head in this way is meant to emphasise what may typically be overlooked: the meaning generated when apparently detached popular music material is incorporated into real lives.

I do not mean to imply that popularisation and folk-isation are directly opposite processes. In the case of folk-isation, it is significant that recordings from the popular music industry are not replaced by new interpretations on the street, but instead that the two modes of contact with the material might run in parallel in people's real experience. In the processes of popularisation, on the other hand, mass-mediated or formalised contact with music previously thought of as folk might become the primary or only mode by which this material is now encountered in contemporary life. Nonetheless, folk-isation could perhaps still be a useful concept in other situations in which popular music takes on new meanings in various circumstances of contemporary life. One such circumstance could be when popular music products are parodied and circulated for political or social purposes. A potential beneficiary of this approach, for instance, might be any attempt to update for the current era of social media Peter Manuel's account of how cassette technology was used to inspire

social awareness and change in 1980s India (Manuel 1993). Another could be research into more mundane contexts in which popular music is listened to, re-performed or otherwise exerts an influence in normal life. A context of this kind – related to some of the discussions in this thesis so far – is the creation of identity supported by the music chosen for its effect on customers in various kinds of shops (Denora and Belcher 2000). Scholars of music and new media, music and globalisation, or music in everyday life might benefit from incorporating the notion of folk-isation when exploring this kind of new meaning. In particular, the concept emphasises the processes of individuation and aggregation of experience through music that I touched on in Chapter 2. In that chapter and the present one, I have begun to assemble a collection of observations about *jiqing guangchang* and community. I have made efforts to assess the social significance of material aspects of the performance events, and have now done the same with the implications of the genre question. My third way of approaching the task involves turning to the forms, drivers and mechanisms on display in the social life that surrounds and gives rise to the musical performances. This is the subject of Chapter 4.

4. Social Life

In Chapter 2, I considered the sound, space and material of *jiqing guangchang*, and in Chapter 3, discussed the significance of genre in these performances. I began to consider the implications of both in relation to community. In this chapter, I turn to exploring the social life of which the performances are part, the interpersonal experiences of participating in *jiqing guangchang* events. What forms does interaction between participants take and what are its key drivers? How are the events understood to be embedded in wider social systems? A thread running through this chapter is the concept of the frame, an analytical tool used in dramaturgical interpretations of social interaction. A strip of activity might be approached according to several different schemes of interpretation, or frames. Varying expectations regarding interpersonal attention, actions and language may apply depending on which sphere of reality the activity is understood as belonging to (Goffman 1974; see also Berger and Luckmann 1966). It might be normal, for instance, for two individuals to exchange informal language in one sphere of social life and to switch to formal language in another.

The way activity is framed may be significant in understanding the social meaning derived from objects, practices and relationships. The processes and techniques that are involved in establishing and sustaining these frames might also carry social meaning. In particular, I draw upon musicological studies that have introduced the idea of the 'performance frame' to understand how musical activity is embedded in surrounding social life. I consider the idea that performance frames can have different degrees of purity (Mullen 1985). Inspired by this approach, however, I structure the chapter in reference to a further set of frames, four different but related spheres that are significant in the social life of *jiqing guangchang.* Alongside the performance frame, I also discuss the collective frame, the economic frame, and first, the ethical frame. Each one represents my own interpretation of the social life surrounding Wuhan's street music and does not reflect any discourses or representations I came across among participants in the city. I briefly explain here what I mean by each of these labels.

The ethical frame is a way of understanding the kinds of relationship that are established between participants, how this influences the music-making, and what consequences it has for understanding the events in terms of community. I discuss the kinds of language and behaviour that are established in convention, and I take these as indications of key elements of the social relationships within and surrounding the performances. It seems appropriate to use the word ethical because these conventions are evidence of a spirit of virtue that strongly influences key practices. Transitions in the performances, recurring discourses in interactions, and ways in which personal relationships develop away from the

performance arena all contribute to installing participants – both singers and spectators – in roles whose ethical implications are attached to the money-giving practices at the centre of the events. An imperative of reciprocity underlies many relationships, and this relies upon hierarchies of mutual benevolence and support being constructed in numerous ways. It will become clear as this chapter progresses that the ethical frame is at the centre of many of the issues that arise in the other three frames I discuss later. Hence, I spend much of the first half outlining this realm, before these connections begin to emerge in the second half.

When later I do turn to the performance frame, I assess the ways in which the shows are integrated within a picture of wider social activity. How are the performances established and separated from other activity in the environment, so as to bring about certain patterns of behaviour and interaction? How do the events emerge when they begin each day, and how do they dissolve back into non-performance activity at the end? How do they deal with potential rivals to participants' attention that might undermine their activity? I argue that the relative impurity of the *jiqing guangchang* performance frame not only raises challenges and threats to the smooth running of the events, but that it also presents opportunities for performers to exploit direct contact with their audiences, contributing to a spirit of intimacy that is central to social life here. My analysis of the economic frame follows on from discussions I began in Chapter 3. Here, I explore in more detail the forms in which money is exchanged at the events, shifting focus from the wider economic support systems to the interpersonal dynamics of gift-giving. I argue that the embeddedness of the performance frame in everyday life, plus the reciprocal obligations of the ethical frame, contribute to an economic scenario being established in which a set of particular money-related expectations prevail. Finally, in discussing the collective frame, I consider the norms by which audience members relate to each other in ways that transcend one-to-one contact. Certain features of audience group expression suggest that individual rather than collective goals are most significant here, and this will clearly have implications when I turn fully to community in the next chapter.

The ethical frame

> During today's performance, the group is struggling to establish an attentive audience. Pedestrians hurry past in both directions and barely anyone has stopped to listen. Taozi is not a confident singer and she is playing it safe by choosing to sing *Hongchen qingge* (The ballad of the red dust), one of the most widely popular songs on the streets. Still, she feels the need to offer a disclaimer before she begins the song: "I don't sing very well, so don't laugh at me and please support me." Her singing is very shaky; there is no live band here, and she is accompanied by a recorded track played through a smart phone plugged into the sound system. The key of the recording clearly does not suit Taozi's vocal range and she struggles with the low notes at the beginning of the song.

This performance stands out as sub-par in comparison with the four other singers here today, and sure enough, none of the handful of people listening have been moved to give her a gift. Eventually a man emerges from the crowds walking past and he stops to hand her 300 *yuan*. On a day with so little success, such a substantial amount is probably the largest single gift any singer with achieve. The eyes of the other singers light up and one, Zhu Dan, follows the giver as he walks back to his place, finding that he had been watching while perched on the seat of his scooter parked about 20 meters away, unnoticed by everyone. Zhu Dan tries to persuade him to come closer and to join the fledgling audience circle, but he refuses. After the song, Taozi approaches the man to thank him for his gift, and they are in animated discussion for a few minutes, before he rides off on his scooter. A few minutes later I look around for Taozi and she is nowhere to be found. She never returns for the rest of the singing session. What was she discussing with the man after finishing her song? Could her singing performance really have been worthy of that 300-*yuan* gift? Why was the giver not interested in joining the audience to listen to more of the music, instead only briefly watching from a distance? Do incidents like this hint at the reason that in the past people had warned me to stay clear of Taozi? Is this why they called her a *gonggong qiche*, a 'public bus', sexually available to anyone willing to pay?

As soon as I started to become acquainted with *jiqing guangchang*, it was clear to me that the practices by which members of the audience give cash gifts to singers were at the very heart of the events. This system of reward was a prominent feature in the spectacle of the shows, and was clearly a major part of their *raison d'être*. The practices displayed various ritualistic patterns and conventions (which I described in Chapter 1), and it seemed that money rather than music consumed the attention of many of *jiqing guangchang's* participants. In many instances, the fees handed over ostensibly as a reward for performances seemed far out of proportion with what might be expected considering the setting and quality of the shows. While the best *jiqing guangchang* events put on relatively professional presentations in reasonable surroundings, for other performances, the quality and circumstances were virtually indistinguishable from a typical street busker's routine. Nonetheless, the rewards achieved by a single performer presenting two or three songs at *jiqing guangchang* were on a far higher level. How have these practices become such a central part of the events? What motivates this number of givers to voluntarily spend such large amounts so regularly?

Perhaps these questions fit most closely into the discussion of the economic frame that comes later. They are, however, highly relevant to understanding almost all frames of event social life, including the ethical frame that I assess here. Money-giving practices underlie almost all of the most intimate and significant relationships that the events generate. Studies by Qureshi (1986) and Waterman (1990) are among prominent ethnomusicological investigations of the public presentation of money, and both focus upon the significance of these practices in expressing and validating status. In ritual contexts for the Sufis of India and Pakistan, offering money to those responsible for the music is the primary means of

expressing high status (Qureshi 1986). In the context of jùjú music in Nigeria, Waterman interprets similar practices as "a medium of status negotiation and redistribution" (Waterman 1990: 217). This results from asymmetries in the opportunities different groups of people enjoy to become involved in the practices. Both scholars observe that status concerns relating to money-giving are particularly significant shapers of musical experiences among those of lower standing and financial means. Sometimes they are even the decisive factor in matters as fundamental as whether or not individuals decide to attend a performance, or which performance they attend. To what extent are similar dynamics on display in Wuhan? What other important factors shape these practices? What forms do these asymmetries take in *jiqing guangchang* and what significance do they have for understanding the social world more generally?

The moment an audience member presents a singer with a tip can be thought of as a point of intersection between the musical performance and an extended world of interpersonal interaction and personal relationships. A cash gift from an audience member is often a means by which he can become noticed and establish contact with a singer. As sessions come to an end, nearby eateries fill up with groups of men invited to dinner by singers with whom they become acquainted through the giving of a tip, and similar gifts from the men at subsequent performances maintain these relationships. Singers also spend much of their daytime hours before a performance entertaining members of *jiqing guangchang* audiences, often inviting them for meals on a one-to-one basis. I explore the general social and interpersonal forces that sustain these relationships, and the efforts that both parties make to develop them. They are fundamentally anchored in an ethical frame of reciprocity. A large gift during the performance is rewarded with the singer's attention and company, along with meals and various kinds of return gifts. This circle of reciprocity entwines the two parties together into developing personal relationships. The prospect of this extra-performance exchange is a very significant influence over the interaction that takes place during the event, and much of the contact between singers and audiences is geared toward emphasising and reinforcing this sense of reciprocity.

(i)   Sexuality and novelty

The incident above involving the singer Taozi illustrates a perception that sex is a major factor in *jiqing guangchang's* social world. Several singers alerted me to the suspicion that financial success could be achieved by engaging in sexual relationships with audience members, and they also implied that these practices were more widespread than simply involving a few individuals. In fact, some suggested to me that a majority of their colleagues were prepared to sell their 'dignity and honour' (*mai zijide zunyan*) to generate their tips.

Indeed, quite often an air of innuendo would colour my conversations with audience members, and this illustrated to me that sexual undertones were perhaps recognised more widely. As a result, I was confronted by the possibility that the existence of a hidden sexual world might go a long way towards accounting for the inflated cash gifts that flowed at the performances. Indeed, I had to consider that it might also be an important factor in social behaviour at the events more generally.

Some evidence on the surface of the shows did make sexuality and gender seem like reasonable starting points for my investigations. The asymmetry in the roles that men and women play is obvious; the clear majority of participants in almost every position – emcees, bosses and spectators – are men. Only the role of singer is dominated by women. The way that cash tips are delivered by men to women is perhaps also reminiscent of forms of entertainment in which sexuality is an overt focus. Throughout this chapter, I make reference to research from various contexts involving sex consumption, such as strip clubs, karaoke venues and hotels used by prostitutes. In these places, of course, sexualised behaviour is an important ingredient in much of the interpersonal interaction that takes place. Cash tips are involved, for instance, in a process by which strip dancers and customers exchange real or simulated expressions of sexual interest, and this money becomes bound up with the sense of genuine or imagined sexual possibility that is said to drive the interactions (Wood 2000). There are also suggestions that some women who work in these forms of entertainment use their jobs to make contacts for their prostitution careers, or that they occasionally have sex with customers as a means of supplementing their incomes (Prus and Irini 1980; Ronai and Ellis 1989). Perhaps for some, such as the singer Taozi, *jiqing guangchang* events do also sometimes function as a threshold to a world of informal prostitution. In the field, I did not make particular efforts to establish how common sexual contact between participants actually was. I am more interested in the factors that are understood as meaningful in the social life of the events more generally than with establishing details of participants' private lives. Indeed, although various participants told me that others were involved in these kinds of relationship, I never came across anyone prepared to admit that they were themselves. Sometimes I suspected that self-interest or malicious motivation was at play when an informant denounced other participants, and I never found firm evidence to convince me that anything I was told regarding this topic was necessarily more reliable than hearsay.

In fact, I should stress that in many other respects, I found the overt expression of sexuality to be quite foreign to the activity. In typical shows, this element could only be described as low-key. The personal presentation of *jiqing guangchang* singers, for instance, was always reasonably modest; their clothing fell into the category of normal everyday attire for women in Wuhan, rather than that of stage costume. Occasionally, they would wear unusual outfits in tandem with singing particular songs, but these were never particularly

provocative. One, for instance, wore a soldier's camouflage uniform on the evening that she sang the song *Bing gege* (Army brother). The modest clothing of some other singers was itself notable. The people around one, Wen Juan, described her character in glowing terms. They explicitly excluded her from suggestions that performers were involved in sexual relationships with audience members. While most other singers wore carefully-chosen smart attire, Wen Juan consistently dressed in an unfussy combination of jeans, checked shirt and jacket. She was also the only singer I found ever to reject money offered by audience members with whom she did not wish to be associated. Her appearance reinforced the message transmitted by all elements of her behaviour that her part in the events ended at the most respectable elements.

Thus, I formed two contrasting pictures of the place of sex and sexuality in *jiqing guangchang*. On one hand, much about the shows was conservative and even seemed suitable for a family audience; it was not unusual for a handful of children to be in attendance at any given show. On the other, a deeper layer of sexual possibility was hinted at. Still another set of elements, however, perhaps pointed to a more complex middle-ground. Sometimes this was manifest during more unusual on-stage presentations. Occasionally performers would deviate from the normal routine – simply singing a song – by instead presenting a dance piece. These sometimes threatened to take the shows in relatively raunchy directions. Performers would sometimes gyrate in the style of female stars in pop music videos, or even hint at forms such as lap dancing, by moving suggestively around a chair brought onto the stage as a prop. Perhaps in keeping with a general conservatism among audiences, usually I found that these dances received a lukewarm reception. A few times I even saw emcees driven to interrupt and cut them short, faced with a crowd that could barely be convinced to raise a minimal ripple of applause. In Chapter 2, I discussed a particular act by one performer, Meiqi, that involved dancing as well as singing. I highlighted the notable ways in which she harnessed the space of the arena near Jianghan Bridge to elicit an extraordinary response from the crowd. As I hinted, however, certain other aspects of this performance and of her personal characteristics contributed greatly to this effect too. Her dancing around the arena was of an unprecedentedly raunchy nature, and it included contortions that might not have been out of place at an adult entertainment venue had she not been fully clothed. The audience erupted in delight at her provocative poses and pouting. The singularity of her act was undoubtedly amplified by the fact that Meiqi is a transgender woman. I argue that the ways in which the audience reacted to Meiqi and her extraordinary performance are highly illustrative of the significance of sexuality in the events:

> Bouts of spontaneous laughter arise when Meiqi sits down on the lap of a man in the front row, and the emcee jokes of introducing a new charge of 100 *yuan* per sit. Later this man gives her a cash gift and the audience is delighted again when Meiqi kisses him on the cheek. The emcee whips the crowd into a frenzy, exclaiming excitedly and falling into uncontrollable laughter each time the dancer enters another suggestive posture. Women in the audience clap, smile and offer money, and an unparalleled number of smart phones are held up to film the show. At the end of the dance, a loud groan rises up from the audience and around half of those present immediately stand up to leave.

Rather than responding seriously to Meiqi's provocative presentation, what captivated the crowd was the intense comedy that they seemed to derive from the dance. While little about this show separated it from that of an adult situation, a collective act of definition from its audience entirely diffused this sense and replaced it with a mood of light-hearted fun and comedy. In a history of transgender and effeminate erotic male dance performances in India, Anna Morcom (2013) highlights and examines the real erotic potency of this kind of performance. This is a feature highly consistent with Wu Cuncun's (2004) account of similar performances in Chinese history. For participants in *jiqing guangchang*, however, meaning arose in ways that might be unexpected given this historical background. Perhaps it is the highly public nature of Meiqi's dance in Wuhan that partly explains why the eroticism observed in other contexts was replaced by humour here.

Another factor could be the novelty of these performances. Meiqi had arrived in Wuhan months before, after a spell working in nightlife venues in another provincial capital. The event organiser Zhuang Di had been in charge of the first *jiqing guangchang* event that Meiqi had performed at after arriving, and she helped me to put in context the performances I witnessed. Zhuang was convinced that the unusual audience reactions I saw there did not result from a particular appreciation of her performance, but from the audience's enjoyment of a curious (*xiqi*) spectacle. After a similar initial impact, the receptions Meiqi achieved at Zhuang's event had quickly settled down as spectators began to treat this performer as any other. She was convinced that the novelty would eventually wear off at the event near Jianghan Bridge too. She told me that novelty is a key tool for new *jiqing guangchang* performers or events seeking to establish an audience, but that simply good singing is enough to support the relationships with individuals upon which a successful performing career is sustained thereafter. Occasionally I witnessed singers around Wuhan adding variety to their offerings by showcasing other skills such as playing musical instruments or performing various kinds of dance. One, Yazi, told me that by offering belly dance performances, she was proactively attempting to compensate for lack of singing success. I never saw any of the more unusual performances make an impact similar to Meiqi's, however.

Other incidents I witnessed also brought home the complexity of the role of sex in the social life of the events. Audiences in general, and gift-givers in particular, are mainly made up of people from an older demographic. On one occasion, I saw the unusual occurrence of a much younger man – one of comparable age to the singers – offering a cash gift. He mischievously played up to the crowd as he delivered the money:

> He makes an exaggerated effort to be noticed and meet the eye of the singer as he lingers in the act of handing over a flower. When he merges back into the audience, another singer immediately offers him a stool as a courtesy designed to make him stay longer. The young man sits for a few moments, before picking up his seat and scampering with it to sit down on the other side of the arena, directly in front of the singer and in her eye line. He remains there making a show of being enthralled by her performance, and stays for some time to watch the singers that follow.

Under normal circumstances in which there is a wide age gap between gift-givers and performers, the singer would probably have welcomed such an enthusiastic spectator and actively approached him to develop the acquaintance into a potentially profitable ongoing relationship. It was notable that in this case, however, in which age-similarity removed the usual barriers to conventional romance, the singer avoided all contact with the young man. While the exaggerated displays of sexuality from a transgender performer can be laughed off, those implying a genuine sexual possibility are kept far from the surface of the events. Psychologists and sociologists typically characterise romance and sexuality in Chinese societies as 'concealed' in public, and as verging on 'repressed' internally. This has often been taken as one of the defining features of these societies inherited from the Confucian tradition (Bond 1991; Goodwin and Tang 1996; Zheng 2006; Sun 2013). It seems that public-space musical activity in Wuhan does not contradict the suggestions that sex is among the most prevalent taboos.

Thus, the picture of sex and sexuality as factors in *jiqing guangchang's* overall social life is a little more complex than may first appear. For some of its participants, it may be perceived as a significant element, but it is certainly one largely hidden beneath a far more conservative layer. When the conservatism of the events is challenged by raunchy contributions from transgender performers or by the prospect of real romance, a complexity emerges. Overt expressions of sexuality are either not particularly welcome, or not taken seriously. Thus, I suggest that the primary currency of this social world is not simply sex in the way that it may appear in adult entertainment contexts. Instead, a more important dynamic that I take forward into the discussions that follow is underlying gender asymmetry. Various elements of social life here that are founded upon these gender dynamics serve to reinforce an ethos of morality, benevolence and reciprocity. I argue that this is the real basis for the prominent money-giving practices, and thus it sustains much of the events' social

life. Gender and sexuality may not be silver bullets to explain the social world, but they certainly are factors in the ethical frame that I continue to unfold in stages as this section progresses.

(ii)   Gender asymmetry

Indeed, a major feature of the ethical frame within which *jiqing guangchang* events take place are the particularities of relationships between the men and women participants. As I have mentioned, there are clear distinctions between the roles that are played by members of each gender, and hierarchies among these roles are highlighted by various features of the rhetoric transmitted from the stage to the audience, and by the ways in which parties interact personally. This is also reinforced in *jiqing guangchang's* music, although I argue below that these effects should not be overestimated. A prevailing message is that singers are individuals faced with difficult life circumstances, whose strength and moral credentials in the face of these challenges is only matched by their vulnerability and dependence. The men in the audience, on the other hand, are confronted by constant messages emphasising their role as providers. Performers attempt in various ways to make them feel indebted and that they have a moral obligation to fulfil this role. The prospect, too, of being recognised as saviours plays on desire for self-validation. I explain later that the ultimate effect of this asymmetry can be found in patterns of reciprocity in which singers express their subordinacy by giving small gifts, good wishes, company and validation, while men are encouraged to see cash as their primary way of fulfilling the expectations that this creates.

Asymmetry in the relationship between singer and audience is particularly evident in the terms used to address each in the performance context. Singers are invariably known by diminutive forms of their name or by nicknames. This partly results from a wish among some to remain anonymous to wider society. One told me that she used a nickname so as not to harm her marriage chances, as she worried that the nature of her job would put off potential partners. Another said that her family, who lived nearby, feared being associated with such a shambolic and promiscuous (*luanqibazao*) place as the *jiqing guangchang* stage. Even those without such worries, however, are almost always called by names implying them to be intimates and juniors. This practice is ubiquitous in almost all walks of life in Chinese society. For many, it involves the doubling of one syllable in a name (Dandan, Beibei), adding the word *xiao* (little) before one of the syllables (Xiao Fang, Xiao Fen), inserting the suffix *zi* (Yinzi, Longzi), or the prefix *a* (Ajing, Alian). The differences in the ways that men and women participants are addressed are striking. There were only two senior males that I saw taking part in any performance as singers or dancers, and in contrast,

both of these were referred to as *laoshi* (teacher, master). In wider culture, this term of respect and deference is not gender-specific and can regularly be used to refer to senior people of either sex. Indeed, it is often applied to musicians, and in fact, the members of the usually all-male backing bands were introduced to me by the similar title of *dashi* (great master).

Members of the audience are called *shushu* (uncle) or *ge* (big brother), the standard generic terms used to address senior males that prevail too in wider society. This reflects the general custom of honouring the intimacy of a relationship by evoking familial terms of address. *Shushu*, a specifically male form, is regularly used when addressing the audience collectively. The women who usually make up a small minority in any audience are effectively ignored unless there is specific cause to pick out an individual. In this case, an equivalent term such as *dama* (a term for senior female family members) is used. *Ge* is commonly employed when referring to specific individuals, particularly when thanking them for giving gifts, and most songs end with the singer thanking a list of givers by name: "thank you to Lu Ge, Wang Ge, Hu Ge." When the singer does not know the giver's surname, she substitutes in the word *hao* (good), as in "thanks to *hao dage*" (good big brother), and thus the links between the giving of gifts and morality are again reinforced. Ronai and Ellis note the significance of similar respectful terms of address in the context of strip venues. Strippers in American clubs sometimes call potential customers 'sir', and they suggest that this shows the women deliberately evoking the relationship between a granddaughter and grandfather. In this way, they argue, these workers can persuade their customers to treat them in the respectful way befitting such a relationship. They report that "some accepted the role to such an extent that they acted like grandfathers" (Ronai and Ellis 1989: 280). Several of my informants in Wuhan told me that a similar fatherly or grandfatherly feeling of *qinqing* (the affection between family members) was exactly the kind of relationship singers and audience members often settled into.

Among *jiqing guangchang* audiences, occasionally I came across individuals to whose names were routinely attached the suffix *zong*. A shortened version of the phrase 'general manager', this honorific is reserved for company bosses in the Chinese workplace. One, Liu Zong, was responsible for the only instance I encountered of *jiqing guangchang* being used as platform for advertising. An announcement for Liu Zong's Auto Trade Company scrolled in red letters across the screen behind a performance at one of the best-equipped stages. The miscellaneous services this small business offered to car owners were probably very well suited to the crowds of men likely to be in a position to buy their first second-hand car. The message concluded by suggesting that customers enquire via one of the event's singers, Wang Pengli. When I spoke to Liu Zong later, he told me of his very

good relationship with Wang, and there was clearly business advantage to be gained from associating himself with her.

Liu Zong was one of the most public regular cash givers at this show. He displayed a fatherly demeanour during performances and at meals away from the arena, generously encouraging new singers, and exchanging many hundreds of *yuan* for bundles of cash delivered to fill his table before events even began. I once saw him orchestrate a spectacle to amuse the whole audience, when he handed some cash to a well-known eccentric regular attendee for him to enjoy handing to the singer on his behalf. This older man turned to the audience, displaying the cash above his head and dancing around in delight before handing it over. All the time Liu Zong maintained a nonchalant manner that exuded ease at being in charge. As Qureshi points out about money-giving in a quite different context, that of a religious ritual, "the offering also constitutes the social gesture par excellence for expressing high status and a position of patronage" (Qureshi 1986: 129). The social capital to be gained in similar exchanges is also central to the businessmen entertained throughout China by karaoke hostesses (Zheng 2006). Demonstrating restraint in the face of sexual temptation and control over emotional dealings with women is an important way of proving oneself as a potential business partner. It is not enough for men to simply show they can afford to buy sex with a prostitute, but instead they take hostesses as long-term second wives in a bid to demonstrate that they can harness their personality to dominate a woman just as much as they can their wealth. In perhaps a more understated way, some members of a *jiqing guangchang* audience show that similar dynamics might be involved in their ongoing relationships with singers.

Other elements that are more central to the on-stage performance also contribute to the construction of the ethical frame. Musical interludes, for instance, form part of the process by which one singer's performance ends and gives way to the next singer's time on the stage. These interludes can be a few bars of purely instrumental music, or can feature one or two lines of text sung by the outgoing singer in combination with the emcee. All of the venues in Wuhan share a largely overlapping selection of a handful of interludes, and each band may add one or two unique ones. They often take a short refrain or prominent section lasting a few bars from a well-known song, which the band usually renders at a faster tempo. These short passages of music feature lyrics conveying a positive message of some kind. The most common is formed of an excerpt from a 2005 song by Liu Dehua called *Gongxi facai* (Greetings and prosperity), performed either with or without vocals (see Fig. 4.1). The song's title and refrain share the words of a greeting most associated with exchanges between family and acquaintances at New Year. Another common interlude uses part of Ouyang Feifei's 2005 song *Ganende xin* (Grateful heart).

Fig. 4.1: Interlude based on the song *Gongxi facai*, recorded in Wuhan, 17 May 2014 (CD track 33).

Organisers told me that even the purely musical interludes (Fig. 4.2), without lyrics to express these sentiments, are created by the band specifically as ways of expressing thanks, especially after substantial cash gifts.

Fig. 4.2: Example of an instrumental interlude heard at transitions between singers, recorded in Wuhan, 15 May 2014. These are usually played as fast as possible and include whichever instruments happen to comprise the band at each show (CD track 34).

As I explore later when introducing the collective frame, applause between songs is not a significant feature of *jiqing guangchang*. Instead, these musical interludes help to mark the end of a strip of activity, and they also fulfil a similar function to clapping in conveying appreciation and support. Whereas applause, however, typically sends this message from the audience to the performer, in the interludes of *jiqing guangchang*, roles are reversed so that performers express thanks and appreciation to the audience. This is fully in keeping with the ethos of the events, in which the performer is presented as the subordinate party, and is portrayed as indebted to the other. As such, the interludes represent one of the primary ways in which an important element in the ethical frame is fostered and transmitted.

Songs containing similarly uplifting and altruistic lyrics also make up part of the material chosen in the main music. Performers make efforts to personalise the sentiments of these songs to speak directly to their audience. During a performance of *Jinsheng aide jiu shi ni*, for instance, I saw one emcee make a deliberate point of relating its lyrics to the audience. When the singer uttered the lyrics featured in the song's title – "in this life the one

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I love is you" – he called out "you are all loved ones!" On another occasion, a singer turned her attention to an audience member who had just given a gift and carried on walking towards the exit. She repeatedly spoke the line she had just sung, "we will never part," pleading with him not to go.

It is important to note that while such sentiments are always a feature of the short interludes between songs, in the main performance, the choice of songs is much more varied. This kind of message is just one of a comprehensive range that the music can communicate. Likewise, in relation to the issue of gender asymmetry and gender identity more generally, musical content and choices are perhaps only marginal factors in their construction. I mainly found evidence that song choice and gender identity are not linked very strongly. Participants consistently told me that singers' choices were in no way restricted to material originally performed by women, and that the gender of its original singer was as good as irrelevant to the reception of a song's performance. It was obviously not even considered inappropriate for a woman to sing lyrics that explicitly elaborate the perspective of a man. Alian, the singer of rock songs, told me that her boss encouraged her not to sing so-called 'women's songs' (*nüsheng ge*); her personality was perceived to be less feminine and thus less suited to rendering them. She was not concerned about the difficulties of interpreting a song written for a man, adding that simply being able to appreciate the implied meaning (*hanyi*) of the lyrics opened up any part of the repertory to her.

These observations playing down the importance of gender in song choice stand in contrast with conclusions from some other scholars researching Chinese popular music in other contexts (Fung 2013: 84; Lu 2013: 141). For Tiantian Zheng, for example, one song is emblematic of the gender roles operating in the particular form of karaoke entertainment at the centre of her research, that involving hostesses and their businessmen clients. *Ganbei pengyou* (Cheers friend), whose lyrics centre upon the apparently male domains of drinking, comradeship and wanderlust, is inextricable from "a rebellious, bold, and active masculinity" at the heart of these karaoke gatherings (Zheng 2013: 77). In that context, it would seem unthinkable for a woman to sing *Ganbei pengyou*. On the streets of Wuhan, on the other hand, when I heard a rendition of the very same song given by a female singer, everything about the performance was entirely commonplace. I found no sense that subversion was intended or that the song choice was considered remarkable in any way.

The moment that a spectator gives a cash gift is a key time for ethical sentiments to be transmitted in the asymmetrical way that I have highlighted. Performers draw maximum public attention to the generosity and thus to the superior status of givers, overwhelming them with appreciation. I use a gift at one street-side performance I witnessed to illustrate the anatomy of a typical multi-stage response to a cash tip. During the early stages of this

particular evening show, performers were struggling to grow the small audience and to attract any engagement:

> Eventually, one man puts 100 *yuan* into a container at the front of the stage. He does this unseen by the singer and most others present. The emcee has noticed it, though, and he seizes on the gift as an opportunity to make him centre of attention for a moment. The emcee picks the note out of the container and waves it above his head, thanking and praising the giver repeatedly. While still mid-song, the singer takes this cue to enter the audience circle looking for the giver. The man tries to shy away among the crowds, but others point him out, and the singer hands him a bottle of drink in thanks.

This first stage of the response is followed up when the singer later has another chance to thank and praise givers during a moment of on-microphone conversation with the emcee before leaving the stage. Often they mention individual givers by surname, wishing them prosperity, success in business, long life, health and wellbeing, happiness, and so on. They then broaden out sentiments to include the audience as a whole in this recognition and admiration, perhaps attempting to make a first move in this reciprocal dynamic with spectators who have not yet given. Only occasionally did I hear them link the performances to wider identity issues. After one song, for instance, an emcee congratulated a singer on her performance "bringing with it a good mood, expressing the special qualities of the Chinese people, and a patriotic enthusiasm."

A third stage of recognition for the gift occurs after the singer has left the stage. In this case, the singer approached the giver of the 100 *yuan* to exchange a few words of thanks, slipping a packet of cigarettes into his pocket and placing a stool in front of him, on which the man chose not to sit. At these moments, as well as expressing thanks and praise, singers also constantly apologise and express embarrassment at the customer spending a lot of money on them (*pofei*). This emphasises the sense of indebtedness from which they hope to benefit as the relationship goes on. Often, appearing deferential and concerned for others seems to be an important goal in itself. I heard singers thank the band on the microphone for their support, even though they had just rejected its live accompaniment in favour of recorded backing. In fact, several of these performers told me privately of their dissatisfaction with their stages' live bands. Should a gift be a catalyst for contact details to be exchanged between singer and giver, yet another step in the process of recognition sees similar exchanges continue in the form of text messages and online communication. This can be the first step towards the development of an ongoing relationship between the two. An asymmetry in the language, sentiments and behaviour associated with gender-related roles around the performances appears to be an important factor in how the events are framed ethically. I continue to lay out this ethical frame, now explaining how these

expectations are bound up with two more key ethical elements, reciprocity and first, support and encouragement.

(iii) Support and encouragement

Rather than as reward, incentive, praise, or any similar gesture, cash gifts are almost always described by both parties as acts of support (*zhichi*) or encouragement (*guli*). It is part of an emcee's role to proactively demand both from the audience. Even singers sometimes begin their performance by asking for "lots of support, lots of encouragement." Reading between the lines, these concepts are also strongly connected with money. Gift-givers are commonly thanked for their 'red-money support' (*hongqian zhichi*), in reference to the red 100 *yuan* notes whose presence marks a gift out as substantial. When this level of gift was given, I noted that one emcee usually offered a characteristic personal exclamation: "red money – beautiful!" Another thanked givers for their "enthusiastic *renminbi* encouragement," referring to the Chinese currency, *renminbi*. In these exchanges, the interpersonal realm in which support and encouragement usually operate is conflated with the financial realm. The implication is that the higher a sum of money the greater level of support and encouragement is transmitted. Indeed, I found evidence that some participants had taken on board the connection between money and support. One warned me, "sure, give 10 *yuan* for encouragement here and there, but there's no need to always spend 100 *yuan* because [the singers] make a lot of money."

Part of the mutual support ethos relies on the role of the singer being presented as labour. This seems designed to emphasise the conscientiousness and integrity with which singers go about their business. The vocabulary of those involved suggests that their activity is conceptualised as conforming to workplace-like schedules and structures. Event organisers consider what they do to be 'petty business' (*xiao shengyi*), while the helpers who set up and run the shows are 'members of staff' (*gongzuo renyuan*). Like office workers throughout Wuhan, members of the backing bands at afternoon sessions watch the clock for their time to *xiaban* (get off work), and move onto their evening job, perhaps accompanying another *jiqing guangchang* session, or alternatively playing at a local dance hall. On occasions where other commitments prevent them attending, they talk of the formalities of asking bosses for leave (*qingjia*), before finding other members of the circuit to cover for them. Even the singers characterise their activity as *dagong*, a description often applied to migrant, temporary, or manual labour.

In other musical contexts, sometimes the practicality, tedium and hard work that go into preparing a performance may be downplayed, and instead a sense of mystique is meant to surround the artistry of performing music (Small 1998). That which is valorised seems to

be the "spontaneous ease" of a master performer (Qureshi 2002: 98), while the intensity of training and preparation behind this may or may not be fully recognised (Mason 2013: 441). In still other contexts, the value of labour is more apparent on the surface of a performance. At punk gigs in Mexico, for example, vocalists' physical efforts in producing abrasive sounds are highly valued. It is this effort that is meant to generate the feeling of rage against social conditions – a major part of the punk ethos (Tatro 2014). In *jiqing guangchang* too, labour is drawn attention to rather than hidden, and here it seems specifically to be singers' diligence that is presented as most valuable. They are often associated with the word *xinku* (toiling), and the unspoken implication is that they deserve to be rewarded for this effort. Kaley Mason's (2013) theorising on how labour can be applied to the understanding of world musics seems to describe the situation here very effectively. He emphasises labour's connection to the dignity that arises from others recognising this effort. Thus, its meaning rests in how the importance of action is understood by the performer of that action and by other people affected by it (ibid.: 444). In this case, I argue that the labour of the singers is understood as a gift to be repaid by the audience.

As discussed in Chapter 2, events are usually located in clusters with other stages, and this sometimes forces organisers to display competitive business instincts. On one occasion I witnessed, performers from rival stages entering the area drove the organiser of one of the better-equipped stages to display a message on the screen: "performers not from this stage please leave the arena immediately, please show some self-respect!!!" Assertive expressions such as this one are, however, not always entirely reserved for outsiders. It is not uncommon for emcees, particularly those who are also the bosses of their groups, to publicly scold singers. Usually this means a singer is judged to have failed to live up to her responsibilities, most often when not fully prepared to take the stage at the appointed time. Sometimes in these circumstances, singers are lectured on the microphone about the importance of showing their audience the respect of being prepared, and they accept this with head bowed in a way resembling a child receiving a teacher's reprimand. This reminds the audience in a very public way that they have been let down, heightening the sense that the relationship between performer and spectator is one in which each has responsibilities and obligations to the other. While singers are sometimes on the receiving end of public criticism, it is not unusual for the audience too, as a collective, to be gently scolded by an emcee. Invariably, this results from what the emcee deems to be applause that is not generous enough at the end of a song, and this can also be read as a mild reminder that cash is not flowing to the extent that the singer deserves. Often, these instances coincide with the end of a performance from a new or inexperienced singer.

Personal and on-stage discourse of this kind is also geared towards cultivating a sense of the worthiness of the singers, not only as it arises from their hard work and personal

qualities, but as a result of the bad hand dealt to them by life. Many performers shared stories with me, and sometimes in public, of their difficult backgrounds and life circumstances, and of becoming singers in response to financial pressures. Some had left husbands and children in other parts of the country to find work, others were single mothers, and still more had moved from towns and countryside surrounding Wuhan for better opportunities. Each emphasised the challenging nature of their existence and that the work was tough and uncertain. Some asked me and other participants for advice on how to deal with problems with their children and talked extensively about the costs of healthcare and schooling, even sharing details of their day-to-day expenses. Singers invariably reported that their income from singing was no better than mediocre (*yiban*) and usually rated their current situation as unsatisfactory. That they owned smart phones and tablet computers on which to play their accompanying recordings, and that a few singers even arrived at venues in luxury cars suggests that if for many the life of a singer is not ideal, it should not be assumed that poverty regularly threatens to overwhelm them.

The turnover of performers is high, however. The long-serving accompanying musician, Gao Xionghui, shared with me his experience of seeing young rural women enter the role, initially seduced by the obvious financial rewards of the job, before later realising that the pressures attached make it less ideal. He told me that eventually these women would return to normal professions in search of a job with more dignity (*zunyan*). Along with hinting at the potential pressure to become involved in the hidden world of sexual relationships, Gao was perhaps hinting at drawbacks also experienced by strip dancers, including the "long hours of emotional and physical labour, stigmatization, and distain from outsiders" (Wood 2000: 28). Reports from contexts where sex consumption is part of the entertainment suggest that the women involved risk losing their appeal to customers by revealing that they are married or have children (ibid.: 16). This does not seem to be the case in Wuhan, however. I found singers quite willing to discuss most of these details in one-to-one situations and sometimes also to refer to them in the public communication on the microphone. It is yet another factor in attempting to convince an audience of their worthiness.

Singers invest energy in making the audience feel valued in a provider-beneficiary relationship. Yinzi is one of the twins I introduced in Chapter 1. On one occasion, the emcee's comments to introduce her before a song casually reminded the audience of her hard life:

> While Yinzi is busy setting up the audio equipment in preparation for her song,
> the emcee mentions that the singer is often sick and catches colds regularly.
> Yinzi seems to take exception to this, and breaks off what she is doing to put the
> emcee straight. She stresses that although she was often ill in the past, since
> beginning to perform at this event, she has no longer suffered because she is

> now supported by many 'friends' (referring to members of the audience) who look after (*guanxin*) her.

Yinzi seized this opportunity to make out that the support and protection of friends in the audience had made all the difference to her health. In fact, sentiments such as this one contrast sharply with what she and her sister expressed to me in private. I found them unusually hostile towards their fellow performers, often emphasising to me the competition that they were all involved in for their livings, and using various methods to undermine their colleagues and present a negative impression of their musical and moral worth. A similar attitude was extended to their audience, some of whom they described as "rogues" (*liumang*), and they made it clear that they considered their own morals, skill and performance experience to be far above the event. Of course, the intimacy and good will that is apparent between the parties does not always reveal the full truth of these relationships. I do not assume the ethos of ethical intimacy that I outline in this section to be unquestioningly absorbed. Instead, it is best thought of as the way the events are presented, while responses to it may be complex, personal, and dynamic.

A small number of singers seemed to base their techniques for eliciting tips on projecting self-confidence, sometimes verging on aggression. They would approach members of the audience with far more direct requests for cash gifts. The technique is perhaps based on similar understandings as are held by some of the dancers in strip clubs observed by Wood, that some men like being approached and asked to pay for dances, as it draws upon "this feeling of being important or desired" (Wood 2000: 13). During fieldwork, my personal experience was that often after I had met a new singer, our second interaction would include a request for money, and for some I began to know better, a similar request would occur each time we met at events. Sometimes singers would apply pressure to spectators by using the flowers that are available for them to present along with their cash:

> A performer picks up a flower and sings while moving among the small audience, which stands in a semi-circle. She hands the flower to one man at random. He looks uncomfortable and tries to pass it to a woman nearby, but the singer persists, now singing directly to him and making him the focus of all attention. He is left with little choice but reluctantly to take out his wallet and hand her 10 *yuan*. Satisfied, the singer holds out her hand, demanding the flower back, and then begins circulating among the crowd, ready to repeat the exercise.

The social validation of giving a gift, or at least avoiding the embarrassment of failing to give when all eyes are on you, is surely a part of *jiqing guangchang's* giving culture. Camaraderie and peer pressure are particularly noted in Zheng's (2006) and Boretz's (2004) accounts of karaoke sex consumption in China. For Wood, too, the giving of tips at US strip clubs relies a lot on others witnessing an individual's contact with a dancer: "the

power being affirmed is noticed by others and momentarily distinguishes the customer being attended to from other customers who are not receiving the attention of a dancer" (Wood 2000: 14). This, she argues, puts into perspective the importance of sex in even these overtly sexualised contexts. Instead of sex being the primary currency, perhaps these contexts rely on similar psychological dynamics as are at play in everyday social interactions: "the symbolic capital being collected and displayed is not the stripper['s body] but rather the attention of the stripper" (ibid.). In the *jiqing guangchang* case, it may not be the singer's sexuality per se that is sought, nor even her song, but her attention more generally. Thus, the support and encouragement that are demanded from audience members are important elements of my way of understanding the drivers of *jiqing guangchang's* social life along ethical lines.

(iv)   Reciprocity

I have now partially unfolded the ethical frame that operates in *jiqing guangchang*, and it is worth pausing a moment to summarise before I move onto discuss reciprocity, the factor I see as the culmination of the elements introduced so far. One factor contributing to the ethical frame is the ambiguity with which sex and sexuality play a role in social relations. I have hinted at the significance of attention and social validation as perhaps more important than purely sex as currency. Added to this are the processes by which status expectations are attached to women and men in their roles as performers and potential patrons respectively. I have demonstrated ways in which gift-giving is tied in with ethical behaviour addressing the asymmetries that these role expectations bring up. To complete the equation of the ethical frame, I now add the imperative of reciprocity. I highlight several ways in which the binding of participants in these reciprocal relationships is encouraged and reinforced by forms of communication and interaction surrounding the events.

When not on the stage, singers spend most of their time circulating among the audience, picking out individuals to pause and spend a few moments with. At any performance, they actually spend far less time singing on the stage than they do engaged in this hospitality role. It mainly involves offering cigarettes and non-alcoholic drinks to their customers. Venues are bathed in smoke and cigarettes are a constant feature, seen in the mouths of most spectators, and between the fingers of backing musicians as they play their instruments. Alcohol, on the other hand, is practically absent. The sharing of individual cigarettes is a feature of daily sociality that has the potential to occur in almost any situation and walk of life in China (Rich and Xiao 2012: 258). Giving gifts of cigarettes is common regardless of economic class, and occurs among businessmen, officials, labourers, and even doctors (ibid.: 259). The diversity of this practice, however, does not include women, either in the *jiqing guangchang* context or in wider society. While female singers are the ones to

offer cigarettes to other people, I never saw one smoke at an event. Nonetheless, the importance of this practice was explained to me many times by men in the audience, who told me that offering cigarettes to other people is the primary way of showing good manners (*limao*) and expressing respect (*zunzhong*). Almost every interaction I had with singers I knew involved an offer of a cigarette, and any man in the audience can expect to regularly be approached in this way even by singers with whom they have had no prior contact. While some singers carry a stock of chewing gum as an alternative gift, for a non-smoker, it might mean rejecting these offers at least upon each meeting with some singers, and sometimes repeatedly during the course of a single conversation. Despite knowing that it will not be accepted, even a rejected offer of a cigarette still functions as a polite and attentive gesture, and one that seems worth repeating for the social leverage singers hope it will generate.

The act of exchanging cigarettes often takes a ritualised form. An offer is very often refused initially, and then accepted when pushed a second time or forced into the hand. Sometimes audience members go the lengths of thrusting packets back into a singer's handbag, or making a show of pushing a packet away that has been placed on the table in front of them, only for it to be accepted after the singer has moved on. Stephen Jones calls the ritualised negotiation involved before a gift can be accepted "an important aspect of Chinese culture" (Jones 2004: 250), and scholars of Chinese communication strategies theorise this rejection of offers not as rudeness or self-denial, but as an opportunity for the receiver to express politeness and the giver to demonstrate their sincerity (Gao et al. 1996: 287). Nonetheless, when considered in combination with various other indicators, in the *jiqing guangchang* context, the rejection of gifts is another way for audience members' restraint and control to be emphasised.

Just as they are a popular gift during holidays and special occasions (ibid.), whole packs of cigarettes are also currency around *jiqing guangchang* events. These are given more directly in response to the audience's cash gifts, as singers either hand them to their regular supporters, or to a lesser-known individual that has given a substantial gift. An alternative of roughly the same function is the bottle of soft drink, or, in the winter, a cup of hot drink. Many events have refreshment stalls attached, from which singers buy these gifts on a tab system. These refreshments also function as gestures upon which relationships can be developed. A typical exchange I had with a singer who was a new acquaintance involved an initial conversation, followed by the singer returning a few minutes later, holding out a bottle of drink and with mock formality saying: "He Tianmu, let's make friends[9]." Boxes containing multiple packs of cigarettes are given, along with other gifts of higher value, such as clothes and shoes, when well-acquainted singers and audience members meet away from

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[9] He Tianmu is the Chinese name I used to introduce myself.

the events to share meals. It is in these circumstances that the important information transmitted by the choice of brand comes into effect. When individual cigarettes are given during the performance events, singers tend to carry them around in an unmarked tin or hand them without showing the pack from which they come. On one occasion, a singer offered me a special cigarette from an imported foreign brand, on the condition that I gave her a gift the next time she was to go onstage. Another time, a singer gave me a cup of tea, and proudly announced in a gesture of respect that the tea leaves had come from her own personal stock, from which she herself would be drinking during the afternoon. Gifts of this kind, where an extra message can be transmitted by some special or personal element, may hint to the receiver that he has gained the giver's favour, and this can be another trigger for reciprocity. I also encountered more personal forms of gift-giving; one singer, for instance, drew and painted pictures at home during the day to give to her favoured customers. In fact, giving tangible things is among a range of techniques that provide singers with social leverage to introduce a sense of indebtedness to their relationships with individuals from the audience.

In fact, the very act of singing a song is also framed as a kind of gift by the language that surrounds it. This is achieved by the use of the same verb *song* (to give, to gift) as applies to the giving of cash or flowers. Many singers introduce their performances with phrases such as "I'm going to *song* you all a classic," or "Here is the tune *Xiao pingguo* to *song* new and old friends." This may be in keeping with entertainment sometimes being considered a gift to the deities in Chinese social custom (Chan 2005). A performance is part of the package of favours aimed at creating the pressure of reciprocity that performers hope will lead to a return offering. Reciprocity (*huibao*) is considered a key part of the Confucian legacy often applied to understanding contemporary Chinese societies (Yan 1996). It is useful, however, to compare again this context with that involving dancers and their customers in American strip clubs: "once trust is established, the dancer must promote repeat patronage and customer loyalty. This is done by calling on the norm of reciprocity. The expectation is that the customer will repay friendship, special attention, and favours with money" (Ronai and Ellis 1989: 294). In this entirely different cultural context too, then, it seems that reciprocity is a foundation for relationships. It is even characterised as a *norm* here and by Mauss (1954 (1974)) in his discussion of the cultures of gift-giving, which I return to later as I move onto the economic frame. Rather, then, than seeking to explain the reciprocity on show in *jiqing guangchang* through reference to Confucian doctrine, instead I see this imperative simply as evidence of the emotional energy at stake in this kind of relationship.

(v)   Summary and implications for community

I have placed reciprocity at the culmination of my discussions of the ethical frame. Sexuality is one of the foundations of this social imperative, but in ways that are perhaps more complex than may initially be apparent when interpreting the performance event's forms. I suggest that it is most significant as an element underpinning the pursuit of personal and social validation, particularly as role expectations and hierarchies are constructed upon clear gender asymmetries. Transmitting good wishes, thanks, praise and a sense of indebtedness, as well as being generous with their attention fulfils the performer's side of the reciprocal relationship. This functions as the equivalent to the audience member's cash contribution. Each of these shapes the social world of the events into an ethical frame by making these central money-giving practices understood as manifestations of worthiness and need from the singers, and moral obligation to encourage and support for the audience. The ethical frame is potentially significant in considering *jiqing guangchang* and community for a number of reasons. Participants seem to be bound together in ethical relationships through the meaningful ways in which they share a musical and social experience. In the next chapter, then, I look more closely at the extent to which this aligns the events with community. Do these observations point to *jiqing guangchang* being built upon interpersonal relationships unmediated by institutional society, and thus show that the events are fundamentally communal? Or do they, perhaps, illustrate that meaning is individually rather than collectively focused, and thus the opposite? Below, I continue to outline these themes in preparation for the next chapter, first by discussing the performance frame. This section is significant for the understanding of community here because in it I explain how interpersonal relationships surrounding the event stem from their embeddedness in wider social systems.

The performance frame

While discussing the ethical frame I focused mainly upon the social interaction that surrounds the performance, the language and concepts that occur in conversation between participants and in public discourse. I briefly touched upon the limited role that directly musical content plays in reinforcing some of these ethical elements. In this section, however, I focus more closely upon that which occurs on the stage itself. My main purpose is to demonstrate that the integration of onstage activity with the social environment surrounding it is a key influence upon the kinds of interpersonal exchange that form *jiqing guangchang's* social life. The ways in which on-stage performance is embedded in everyday activity are responsible not only for some of the main challenges to a profitable street performance, but

also some of the main opportunities for its distinctive social world to develop. *Jiqing guangchang* events are closely connected to everyday life in various practical and social ways, and this means that each of these two spheres of activity can exert meaningful influence upon the other. I explain that this stems from an impurity of the performance frame, and give examples of how this is manifest. As has been the case throughout this thesis, here I lay another foundation for the discussions of community that I continue in Chapter 5.

(i)   Frame establishment and dissolution

Some of the clearest illustrations of these phenomena emerge at the beginning and end of performances. At such moments, a negotiation takes place in which a recognisable activity – the performance – emerges and dissolves back into the multiplicity of other goings-on in the public space around it. For those present, particular social meanings materialise, and associated behavioural expectations and conventions come into effect. Frame purity is a concept that Mullen harnesses to highlight the influences and challenges faced in different performance situations, according to the exposure each has to unpredictable elements around them. He notes, for instance, that musical performances in pubs tend to take place among various other activities that might claim the attention of those present, and thus they command a performance frame of lesser purity. Those in concert halls are more likely to be isolated from other activities and therefore retain the concentrated attention of their listeners. Being held in freely-accessible public spaces, *jiqing guangchang* performances seem destined to be understood as occupying the less pure end of the spectrum. Most fundamentally, because there are no explicit restrictions upon access to the shows, attention is always at least to some degree more casual than in a concert hall. Even in the cluster of permanent stages located in the riverbank park near the Qingchuan Bridge, which are the settings with most in common with a concert hall, the audience is still free to come and go at will and there are not the same kind of strict conventions keeping members' attention fixed onto the stage. At the most basic street side locations, I have already illustrated how passing traffic, other shows and general city life can all become noisy distractions.

In a relatively impure frame, then, Mullen notes that beginning a show can be a significant challenge for performers: "rather than merely gaining the attention of a receptive audience, they are actively engaged in the process of creating an audience […] by drawing [people] away from their involvement in other activities" (Mullen 1985: 188). In Chapter 2, I noted the lack of a clear sense of distinction between front- and backstage, particularly in a visual sense. As a result, the start of a performance cannot viably be indicated simply by

singers moving from one place to the other. Various other techniques are required, and performances emerge very gradually. At street-side events, setting up the arena and equipment can last more than thirty minutes, and when complete, this phase merges discreetly into a few minutes of karaoke-style singing, effectively a warm-up activity. Event helpers sing a few songs in a manner quite different from a normal performance during the event proper; their bodies are orientated towards the lyrics screen rather towards an audience and there is clearly no expectation of receiving any tips. These actions, though, see the event beginning to exert a sonic impact upon its surroundings, cleansing the area of potential rivals and alerting gathering regulars and passers-by that the show is imminent.

On the streets, assembling a small, embryonic audience is a key step towards attracting more people, particularly as the level of curiosity among Wuhan's citizens to observe many kinds of public commotion or incident is generally high. When the main event begins, crowds watching *jiqing guangchang* in this kind of street-side setting usually grow in numbers throughout the early stages, to a peak at some point in the middle of the evening. During one session I observed, for instance, the performance began with no defined audience circle, just a few disparate onlookers scattered in the square:

> The emcee and the first singer work extremely hard to inject the performance with energy, taking every opportunity to engage with the spectators and build momentum. They deliver unusually long speeches between each of the first few songs, and regularly call for applause. Thus, by the sheer power of addressing these stragglers in the square as if they were a coherent body, they effectively will this audience into existence. Before too long, a small but defined circle has formed, and gradually over the next half-hour, it grows imperceptibly from this embryonic structure, to the broad ring that is seen there every night.

In frames of this impure kind, towards the end of a performance there is also generally a gradual "deconstruction of the elements of the performance frame" (Mullen 1985: 189-90). Here, the behaviour of performers begins to relax, audiences dwindle, and even the performance arena itself undergoes changes. Singers usually are given two chances to perform, and then during the third and final rotation, many choose to leave early, particularly at afternoon events. This can significantly alter the character of the session's final part, and affects the attention that the performance can command. The mood at these times often contrasts markedly with the energy of the earlier parts of the show, and the behaviour of performers is obviously more relaxed. Off-stage singers no longer energetically circulate among the audience but slump in a chair. Performances are no longer accompanied by constant comments from the emcee, as he becomes distracted by his mobile phone or disappears from the arena entirely for a while. Even backing musicians sometimes casually leave their posts to do other things. By the conclusion of the final song, the only

confirmation necessary that the performance is over is a few casual words from the emcee: "that's the end, see you tomorrow."

At other kinds of *jiqing guangchang* stages in the city, the trajectory of audience size over time is shaped quite differently. At the Qingchuan Bridge stages, audience numbers peak at the very beginning, with packed houses gradually dwindling to sometimes only a handful of spectators at the end. Here, the facilities support the performance frame being established in a notably less gradual way than on the streets. They play pre-show entertainment, including video recordings of television variety shows and other staged galas, and Hollywood action movies. For around thirty minutes prior to the beginning of a performance, these contribute to attracting spectators, particularly those undecided when faced with a choice of several stages. They build sound levels and fix attention upon the front of the arena in preparation for the start of the show. At the allotted time, this entertainment gives way to a highly energised introduction, involving lights, video, and music, and then an emcee's spoken welcome. These openings are intended to focus the attention of an already-gathered audience rather than to create an audience from passers-by, and it is in this sense that performances at these larger venues enjoy a purer performance frame than many others.

Here, other factors contribute to the gradual deconstruction of the performance frame as the end approaches. Singers are kept in the arena by the organisers withholding that evening's earnings until the very end. As soon as the final notes of the last song have sounded, the performers do not hide their eagerness to race to the side of the stage to be first in the queue for the cash to be given out. There are, though, usually not many spectators left to witness this perhaps undignified spectacle, and this may partly be down to the actions of event helpers. By this moment, they have already begun to disassemble the arena in preparation for the end of the show. From sometimes no more than half-way through the performance, these helpers stack up stools as soon as they are vacated by departing audience members, and they gradually take down the canopies and other paraphernalia that make up the performance arena. It is notable, however, that one of the few stages that regularly retains a large audience right until the end is one that employs a less gradual deconstruction of the performance frame. Here, it is only when the emcee announces the final song of the evening that helpers take their cue to begin this packing-up process. Finally, the audience is given its first indication that the event is winding down, and this triggers an exodus that sees the arena going from full to almost empty over the course of a single song. Here, as at several other *jiqing guangchang* events, the very last activity on stage involves all of the singers who had taken part in the show that evening sharing the stage to sing a medley of three or four songs – a final chance for some spectators to hand over gifts.

(ii)   Frame threats: deviations from normal patterns

At any event, it is not unusual for a session to include one or more performers appearing for the first time. As *jiqing guangchang* musicians do not rehearse together, the assimilation of inexperienced performers can represent a source of threat to the normal functioning of the performance frame. Singers are recruited informally, usually by word of mouth, and they are often personally connected in some way to existing singers. Their first performances mainly pass quite uneventfully, the only noticeable feature being that new performers often apologise for nerves, bad throats, or some other factor designed to pre-emptively lower expectations. The emcees also offer particular encouragement, praise or recognition of a pleasing performance. On other occasions, however, their shortcomings can be particularly revealing as to the patterns of activity upon which success usually depends. During one session, for example, a new singer introduced her intention to sing an aria from the Huangmei opera form. This unusual choice caused a delay as it became clear that accompaniment for this repertory had not been prepared:

> The singer and organisers try to negotiate a solution off microphone at the front of the arena, while the keyboard player improvises for a while before eventually falling silent. The emcee tries to quickly re-establish the flow of the performance by suggesting alternative songs, but the singer does not know them. Eventually, she attempts the piece she had initially prepared, with the keyboard player making some efforts to follow her, but the music quickly breaks down.

Backing bands are highly skilled at accompanying a wide range of repertory choices with minimal notice, and audiences enjoy a varied programme. This incident, however, shows that as soon as there is a deviation from the normal script or familiar repertory, the performance cannot continue. This repertory could be considered as falling outside of the established performance frame. The situation was only rescued when the new singer finally announced that she would choose a "modern" song instead, and by singing to the recording on her smart phone, she found herself back to the narrow path upon which *jiqing guangchang* usually runs successfully. Nonetheless, this difficult first performance clearly impacted upon the singer's hopes of integrating into the social life of the event. While established singers typically fill the time between their performances fraternising with the audience, I noted that this new performer was left alone. Failing to successfully negotiate her entry into the performance frame made her unable to integrate socially. During her second turn to sing, she only received one face-saving gift from an event insider, and at its end, simply apologised and left the arena altogether, never to perform there again.

Just as events are forced to deal with these risks when untested singers perform, the extent and regularity with which spectators have access to the stage and the singer during the

performance brings similar potential challenges. In order to pass their cash tips to singers, members of the audience are free to enter the performance space and hand her the money. Despite the rituality of some of these ways of giving, it is quite normal for them to be performed with minimal fuss, the givers not lingering any longer than necessary and usually appearing either cautious or indifferent about being in the limelight. Occasionally, however, eccentric contributors take these opportunities to enjoy the crowd's attention. I noted the way in which one man regularly behaved while giving small gifts at each of the stages clustered near to Jiqing Folk Custom Street:

> He lingers far longer around the singer than almost any other giver, and the act of handing over the cash is highly drawn-out. It involves dancing, grinning, teasing the singer by giving 1 *yuan* at a time, and sometimes 'accidentally' dropping notes on the floor. I have seen the man perform the same act over many nights, and each time the joke has seemed to become more and more tiresome for the performers. The song ends and he has not yet handed over all of the notes in his pocket, so the singer has to start the song again to indulge the man's desire for fun and attention. She tries to speed up his act by joining in with his jokes, snatching each note from his hand as he takes it from his pocket, and this leads him to mock chasing her around the arena. As soon as the last of his notes is eventually given, the track is abruptly cut off.

(iii)   Summary and implications for community

It seems, then, that even the stages with relatively sophisticated settings and facilities do not approach the same level of frame purity as a concert hall performance can. That some shows begin by emerging from the surrounding activity slowly and in gradual stages can be thought of as a deliberate technique similar to those employed by pub performers assembling an audience in challenging circumstances. The equally gradual deconstruction of the performance frame towards the end of the show, on the other hand, is often much more inadvertent. Singers allow the sense of the performance frame to dissipate through the relaxation of their behaviour, and organisers often disassemble the performance space over a long period, so that it gradually returns to its normal everyday state. These features mean that all present are primed from the show's end well before it happens. The performance frame has a significant degree of permeability, and this has the effect of bringing the onstage activity into the social world, rather than separating the two. In this sense, *jiqing guangchang* can be thought of as the antithesis of Ruth Stone's object of study, the music event of the Kpelle in Liberia. This is a "bounded sphere of interaction," considered distinct from everyday life (Stone 1982: 2). Stone shows that this separateness is significant in various ways, including that the people present at an event who do not take on a performance role are considered so peripheral as to not *exist* within the performance frame (ibid.: 83). In *jiqing guangchang*, however, it is important that the sphere of the events expands to allow anyone to participate. While the lack of formal event boundaries

characteristic of the street performance presents serious challenges in establishing and maintaining attention upon the show, the audience's lesser immersion in the performance frame means that when outside intrusions do arise, performances are perhaps more resilient to disturbance than those in purer frames.

Mullen considers the various "elaborate and complex stages of transition" that pub performers employ to begin and end their performances as indicative of "inadequacies of the frame" (Mullen 1985: 190). There is a sense that performers would rather not have to deal with these challenges or that a purer performance frame is considered ideal. In the *jiqing guangchang* context, however, it is less useful to treat this impurity as necessarily implying a deficiency. In this case, influences that diminish the purity of the performance frame are not incompatible with the success of the performance, nor even are they necessarily undesirable. Instead, they contribute to the character and appeal of *jiqing guangchang*. This performance frame is one made meaningful by its close connection with the activity around it. Its purposes are served rather than hindered by the ability of this surrounding world to permeate the performances. Success is built on the accessibility of performers to members of the audience, because it is from intimacy that the personal relationships and ethically-framed money-exchanges stem. For the singers, backstage is effectively an extension of the everyday-life frame, which they share freely with the people who form their audience when they go onto the stage. Not only are performers visible and accessible to the audience when they are not on the stage, but the performances follow the trends of everyday public-space life with which I concluded Chapter 2, by not imposing strict social expectations on what should be hidden from view. Thus, performers do not feel any compulsion to hide a variety of activities, including those involving money, ones in which scolding and conflict are made public, and the many ways in which behind-the-scenes organisation and improvisation is played out in full view.

In this discussion of the performance frame, I have attempted to show how life from outside of that sphere is allowed into the shows, to shape the literal flow of the performances, and also their social ethos. A sense of accessibility is achieved by audience members feeling that singers are approachable, and that they will find a person to whom they can relate. The formality of the stage activity is broken down by this space being penetrable, and by the performers' social space overlapping with that of the audience. The promise of personal contact with singers and the opportunity to see them as relatable people is important to their appeal, and underpins the money-giving practices at the heart of the ethical frame I have already discussed, and also the economic frame that I turn to below. One of the primary ways in which I put these observations towards the main project of understanding community here is to consider the implications of Turino's categories, participatory and presentational performance. This prominent theoretical angle has been

applied widely to understanding music and social life, the theme of the present chapter. It also transcends the chapter in various ways. I made brief reference to it, for instance, when discussing the degrees of musical specialisation in Chapter 3. The breadth of its significance means that I wait until the next chapter for a full discussion. At that point, I show how understanding events in terms of participation and presentation informs various topics relevant to community in music, including the role of interpersonal contact, the social functions of music-making, role stratification and asymmetry.

The economic frame

I first introduced discussions of the economic side of *jiqing guangchang* during Chapter 3. Then, I took a broad perspective on money-exchange at the shows, with the specific intention of illustrating how this aspect ties in with the community-related connotations of the popular and folk music generic question. I continue these discussions here, this time focusing more closely upon the role of money in one-to-one relationships. The economic frame is a tool for understanding how the processes of money-exchange in the performance event are embedded within the wider economic lives of participants. This is significant as these practices are central to the performance, and provide a foundation for many of the interactions and relationships that it engenders. Much in these discussions relates back directly to some of the most fundamental foundations of the thesis that I laid out at the very beginning. There, I explained my intention to examine links that have sometimes been drawn between modern urban musical practices and social alienation. Martin Stokes applies similar scrutiny to this issue, with particular reference to music scholarship's approach to Marxist theory. He summarises the prevalent trends in this field: "capital and the cash economy are often understood as eroding the bonds of sociality that music plays such an important role in forming" (Stokes 2002: 146). Stokes draws on the work of sociologist Marcel Mauss to present alternative possibilities for understanding music via Marx, seeking to avoid the potential pitfall of feeding nostalgic and teleological interpretations. Mauss' studies of gift-giving practices in various societies seem to suggest that commodity exchange need not diminish the significance of emotion and other human factors between the parties involved, and indeed that very often one stems from the other. He summarises these findings: "things have values which are emotional as well as material; indeed in some cases the values are entirely emotional. Our morality is not solely commercial" (Mauss 1954 (1974): 63).

I take this as a starting point for discussions here, adapting it for the situation in hand by factoring in a particular development in contemporary Chinese societies that is theorised by the anthropologist Mayfair Yang. Yang explores the 'gift economy', which is

said to be a feature of many spheres in contemporary Chinese social life. In order to accomplish a business or personal goal, someone in a Chinese society might first offer a gift to an individual in a position to influence the situation, thus attaching a sense of indebtedness to the receiver and a temporarily raised moral status to the giver. The situation is only equalised when the receiver repays the gift in material form or by providing some kind of assistance to help the giver achieve their goal (Yang 1989). These gifts do not carry the same objectivity as do commodity transactions, which are valued directly in terms of the usefulness of the object. In the gift economy "there is no subject-object dichotomy comparable to the owner-property relation in commodity transaction" (ibid.: 38). Personal relationships and interpersonal exchanges facilitated by these gifts carry a weight superior to the monetary value attached to transactions. Conceiving of *jiqing guangchang's* cash tips as part of a gift-based economy shows the exchange of money to be deeply embedded in a cultural system in which moral concerns are important. Rather than neutralising or bypassing interpersonal meaning, these gifts feed such meaning. It would seem, then, that it is not a contradiction to consider *jiqing guangchang's* economic frame to be an important part of its *social* world.

(i)   Frame establishment and exceptionality

On Wuhan's streets, the practice by which audience members give money to performers is known as *dacai*. Various other more generic or euphemistic alternatives are also heard. *Pengchang* (to praise), *xianhua/songhua* (to present flowers), and more colloquially, *diuqian/saqian* (to throw away or scatter money) are all phrases that contribute to what interaction theorists call the 'linguistic objectification' (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 90) of the act of giving. It is an act firmly fixed in the discourses surrounding the events; participants regularly refer to such things in ordinary conversation. It takes on status as a distinct pattern of behaviour, defined and recognised as an episode with its own social significance. The naming of patterns of behaviour highlights precedents for action and facilitates their transmission between people and groups so that they can become fixed into convention. Those who give money on the streets of Wuhan can represent the act to themselves using one of these phrases and therefore do not have to consider, undertake, or look back on each gift they give as something unique, but instead as a socially established strip of activity that can be repeatable without careful thought.

In the normal conditions of wider society, the amount of money needed to buy a commodity or service is set, in part, by market and other economic forces. The value of cash gifts at *jiqing guangchang,* on the other hand, often seems out of proportion with the buying power of the same sums when used in everyday life. Being a linguistically objectified

pattern of behaviour, the giving of a gift might lead givers to justify more easily or to overlook any incongruence that there might be between the value of these gifts and normal commodity transactions. Precedents established by their own or others' previous behaviour might colour a giver's perception of how the value of their gift compares with values of money that they regularly exchange in their everyday lives. Here, I recount an episode from my experiences in the field, analysing my own thoughts and behaviour as a way of illustrating how *jiqing guangchang* exists within a particular economic frame.

Occasionally during the course of my fieldwork it was appropriate to take a small part in the practices of money-exchange myself, and these experiences highlighted to me the potential for a discrepancy to arise between gift-giving at the events and the normal logic of cost and reward in daily money transactions. When, for instance, I was invited by Alian to a birthday meal that she was holding for friends among regular audience members and other singers at her stage, I decided that it would be appropriate to arrive at the meal with a birthday gift. This decision occurred outside of the immediate *jiqing guangchang* performance frame, and involved buying a present in advance. Choosing an appropriate gift can involve considering a range of factors in order for the gesture to express the desired message. The giver might deliberately or unconsciously take into account various characteristics of the receiver, of their relationship with that person, and the message that the gift is intended to transmit, and then add in an orientation to their normal financial landscape:

> After considering a range of potential presents for Alian, I eventually decide to buy a pair of gloves costing around 50 *yuan*. I hand the gift to her at the dinner. After the meal, everyone in attendance travels together to that evening's performance, and each of the men that had been eating together takes the opportunity to give Alian cash gifts when it is her turn to sing. Influenced by this precedent and my own genuine wish to do so, I temporarily step outside of my scholarly detachment from the economic frame to give her another gift, in the form of 100 *yuan* in cash.

Just as in the case of the performance frame, the degree of frame purity – in this case, the extent to which the economics of the performance are separated from the normal customs of daily life – varies from venue to venue. Each of the individual *jiqing guangchang* events in Wuhan displays its own conventions for the normal value range of the gifts given by spectators. These local conventions seem to be correlated with the time of day in which a performance is held, and the size and sophistication of the performance arena. The largest gifts are seen at evening events in the biggest and best-equipped arenas. The lowest-value gift that would be acceptable on this occasion was 100 *yuan,* around double the monetary value of the pair of gloves I had weighed various factors to choose earlier in the day. Perhaps had convention allowed me a freer hand I would have used the first gift as a

benchmark for the second cash one. As a result, it seemed to me that the expectations of *jiqing guangchang* and of this particular event overrode other elements of my personal economic reasoning.

The two different gifts emphasise that *jiqing guangchang* exists in a distinct economic frame, and one that is not necessary directly compatible with other spheres within which participants conduct their everyday economic lives. The pair of gloves was bought in a frame in which a certain set of social concerns and a comprehensive economic rationale were psychologically ingrained, and in which both were calibrated against a familiar pricing system dictated by market forces. The cash gift occurred in a frame in which *jiqing guangchang's* money-giving conventions had a certain degree of power to override the standards applied to dealings with money in everyday life. Unlike in day-to-day activity, market forces do not serve to standardise and limit the size of a tip here, and when money is involved in the direct human relationships that I have already discussed in the ethical frame, its value can be subjected to distorting influences. These gifts are tightly entwined with personal relationships and interpersonal dynamics.

The peculiar circumstances of the economic frame seem able to divert some attendees slightly from normal personal economic reason, meaning perhaps that the size of gifts is not kept in check as much as may be expected in other situations. Many warned and teased me about being taken in by shows of friendship from singers, one summing up the situation to me: "there is no such thing as a free lunch." In the next breath, the same individuals would reveal that they did not follow their own advice. In particular, one man who told me that he gave 100 *yuan* every evening, and another who had given 1,400 *yuan* to one singer over the previous two days are cases illustrating the dissonances that *jiqing guangchang's* economic frame can perhaps encourage in some. It should be noted, though, that these individuals were in a minority. Perhaps more typical of my experiences at *jiqing guangchang* events were those reluctant or even resistant to engaging with the singers. Many treated them with cynicism, perhaps wary of being manipulated into losing their money. This was even the case for men who had already established some form of relationship with a singer:

> From some distance away on the far side of the audience group, a singer catches the eye of a man standing near me and strides directly over to him in an excited manner. Upon approaching she says to him animatedly: "I saw you! I saw you from all the way over there! Come and stand over here [under the canopy], you won't have to use your umbrella then [it is raining lightly]." The man simply mutters "no need" and the apparently disappointed singer moves on without a further word.

(ii)   Summary and implications for community

From the discussions here and when examining *jiqing guangchang's* economic model in Chapter 3, it seems that the exchange of money behind these performance events might be understood with reference to *transactions*. Wood highlights a relevant distinction between these and other forms of money-exchange when scrutinising cash given by customers to dancers in American strip clubs. There is an apparent dissonance between the pleasure customers derive from the attention of dancers, and the inescapable knowledge that this attention is bound up in a financial relationship between the two. Wood concludes that the men who give money to attract one-to-one contact from the dancers do not understand this cash as being involved in a purchase transaction (Wood 2000: 13), but consider it a reward, gift, or gesture of goodwill. Through these offerings, the men involved might see themselves as entering a relationship in which they act as a provider for the women: "the customer understands himself to be contributing to the dancer's financial security rather than as taking part in a fee-for-service interaction" (ibid.). On the streets of Wuhan, too, cash gifts are certainly more than indicators of a commodification of musical labour, this being a "simplistic" interpretation of Marx and music of the kind that Stokes seeks to transcend (Stokes 2002: 139). Instead, *jiqing guangchang's* economic frame overlaps significantly with the interpersonal obligations and rewards set up by its ethical frame. It is this embeddedness in socially and culturally meaningful systems that I take forward when I place these economic discussions into the equation for my assessment of *jiqing guangchang* and community in the next chapter. I consider the complexity of these observations against discourses of community, asking in particular whether these practices being rooted in interpersonal experience is reason to align the events with community.

The collective frame

In my discussions on the ethical, performance and economic frames, I have mainly focused upon the exchanges and relationships shared between individual performers and specific members of the audience. How, though, can the activity between participants be understood on a collective level? In what ways do crowds respond cooperatively to the music? What implications does this have for understanding the aggregation of experience in *jiqing guangchang*, and how this social world is structured? Here, I note in particular that audiences are almost always undemonstrative in responding to the music. Individuals rarely show any obvious signs of physical engagement beyond simply orientating their bodies towards the stage. Spectators almost never tap their feet or make any other similar rhythmic movements, nor do they dance or sing along, and songs usually end without significant

applause, calling out, or other signs of appreciation. Typically, individuals stay relatively static for long periods and are often fixed in an apparently impassively stance (see Ill. 4.1). They are just as likely to be seen trying to nap with head resting on the table in front of them as they are obviously enjoying the music; it seems that many do not consider shows of polite attention to be among the responsibilities of a street music listener. In this regard, *jiqing guangchang* is like various other forms of street performance I have observed in China. None other in my experience, however, displays such incongruity between generally inexpressive audiences on one hand, and on the other, very healthy audience numbers, and such significant flows of cash. Clearly the muted response from the audience cannot be explained simply as indifference.

Ill. 4.1: The *jiqing guangchang* singer Ajing during a performance. Audience members in the background are typically subdued (photo: 15 May 2014).

(i)   *Jiqing guangchang* audiences in context

The rarity of applause here and in other forms of street performance in China is a phenomenon remarked upon too in other musical contexts, including for instance, silk and bamboo music-making in Shanghai's teahouses (Witzleben 1995: 25). Clapping is not entirely absent from the events, however, but it is usually limited to very brief bursts from one or a few individuals. It is never prolonged, and rarely involves a large proportion of the audience. An exception comes, however, when emcees make direct requests to the crowd for applause (*zhangsheng*). Emcees regularly make these calls, either when they sense that the wider audience is ready to respond enthusiastically, or as they admonish the spectators for not showing enough support for the performer. Sometimes these invitations fall flat, but this seems to lead to little embarrassment, and some even thank the audience for their "encouraging applause" (*zhangsheng guli*) when there has been none.

A few organisers employ props or proxies to stimulate an audible reaction from the audience, or at least to cover up for the lack of one. One has a small toy in the shape of plastic hands that creates a sound when rattled together, and is sometimes able to use it to cue the audience to join in with a smattering of applause. Another stage plays a short burst of recorded crowd commotion through the PA system. Although I never saw either inspire the audience into notably enthusiastic clapping or cheering, it does indicate the usefulness of applause as a device to frame and transition between sections of the performance. From time to time, singers too attempt to stimulate some collective interaction with the crowd, perhaps by clapping above their heads to the beat of the song and asking the audience to join in. Even in the most enthusiastically-received performances, however, I found that only a minority of people did so, and then the audience invariably stopped clapping as soon as the performer did. More often, however, the singers too were highly static. Very few moved from a fixed spot on the stage, and most showed no obvious bodily engagement with the rhythm of the music. When a singer did dance during instrumental sections, it tended to involve slow deliberate movements of a quasi-classical kind. In this sense, *jiqing guangchang* singers take their lead from the modest performance style of pop stars from the 1980s and 1990s (Baranovitch 2003: 145).

In order to contextualise the responses shown by *jiqing guangchang* audiences within wider Chinese musical culture, I conducted a basic survey addressing audience behaviour in other forms of music in the country. I contacted non-Chinese musicians who had performed in Wuhan and widely across the country and asked them to evaluate the audiences they met. In particular, I was interested in how they compared the responses to their music shown by audiences in China with those they played for in other places. The eleven musicians I asked were from various countries in Europe, North America and Australia, and all were solo artists or members of bands. I found respondents who played a range of genres, including punk, indie and psychedelic rock; noise metal and psychobilly; electronic; folk, jazz and new age. Most had played in a range of bars and clubs, dedicated rock venues and theatres, cafes, parks and festivals across China. All of them made music quite dissimilar from *jiqing guangchang's* mainstream repertory, and usually their performance contexts were very different. It is reasonable to assume, then, that the responses of these musicians' audiences is likely to be shaped by demographic factors and customs specific to their own cultural niches, and that these niches may be highly remote from that of Wuhan's streets. The survey was not conducted, however, to directly compare *jiqing guangchang* audiences with those in these other contexts, but instead to find a more general cross-cultural perspective on Chinese popular music audiences. Indeed, the results of this survey provide specific insights directly relevant to my exploration of *jiqing guangchang's*

social life, even if the survey's limitations mean that they should not be taken as generalizable conclusions about broader Chinese musical culture.

Almost all respondents observed that their audiences in China were lively and responsive, either undistinguishably so from those they found in other places, or sometimes to an unusually high degree. This led many to tell me that playing in China provided particularly welcome and memorable performing experiences. Applause, dancing, cheering and screaming, clapping to the beat, singing along, and waving phones in the air were all entirely common responses experienced by these musicians. Some noted that their performances in China had also inspired less common forms of audience response, including conga lines, head-banging and moshing, stage-diving and audience members mounting the stage to dance or shout into the microphone. Often the most positive observations came from musicians who identified their music as "abrasive" or otherwise unusual in style. They found Chinese audiences unusually quick to accept their more extreme characteristics, and noted that these crowds were more likely to combine a sense of fun with the earnestness they usually met elsewhere. Most musicians did, though, highlight patterns of behaviour in China that struck them as unusual in comparison with those of audiences they encountered in other locations. One told me his band found it amusing that applause tended to "ring out fast and in perfect synchronicity." Another agreed that reactions were "one hundred percent as a group, [with] little individual response." Indeed, some of these musicians noted the phenomenon familiar from *jiqing guangchang*, in which audiences only applaud when prompted directly to do so by the performer. One added that his band adapted their normal practices on account of this, making sure to add a break between each song in order to orchestrate this set period of clapping.

It seems from these observations that not all audiences for Chinese popular music respond in such undemonstrative ways as *jiqing guangchang* crowds do. As I have already noted, perhaps neither Wuhan's street events, nor the performances given by these foreign musicians should be considered as in any way epitomising or representative of a 'typical' performance in Chinese musical culture. Many of the non-mainstream contexts in which these foreign musicians play are extraordinary by definition, and inspire staunch dedication from their audiences. At accessible public forms of music-making such as *jiqing guangchang*, on the other hand, crowds can take part on a far more causal basis.

(ii)   Summary and implications for community

The functions of clapping and physical movement in *jiqing guangchang* events reveal several points useful in understanding this audience as a collective body. The apparent lack of contagion between people for clapping in particular indicates that, in this

context, this response is best thought of as an individual action and an expression of personal rather than communal sentiment. The audience does not seem to recognise itself as a collective subject with the ability or inclination to spontaneously organise to produce a highly active kind of collective intervention upon the performance, such as an all-encompassing round of applause or a sustained cooperative rhythmic engagement. Expressions of reception and appreciation take an individual character; the most significant one in this context, of course, is the giving of money gifts. In other contexts within Chinese musical culture, including some described by my survey respondents, collective applause is a convention whose absence would be construed as rude or ignorant, and might threaten the comfortable flow of the performance event. In *jiqing guangchang*, however, this is clearly not the case, although the actions of performers and organisers suggest that it *is* appreciated as a facilitator of transitions.

The relative impurity of *jiqing guangchang's* performance frame seems to be a factor in explaining this disparity. Here, most members of the audience cling more tightly to their primary identities as members of the public, and are less inclined to submit to the behavioural conventions associated with a concert audience, maintaining a distance that keeps them hovering on the verge of the ordinary daily frame. Most audience members show few signs of engagement that would separate them from a passer-by, while some are prepared to highlight their participation only at the specific times that they feel moved to do so. The crowd generally appears to retain the right to keep a distance from the performance frame, with all of its obligations to show politeness and attention. As a result, none of the *jiqing guangchang* participants I spoke to considered the lack of applause and other similar gestures to be anything but entirely normal and reasonable. Just as the gestures of appreciation flowing from the audience to the performers come primarily in individual and tangible forms – mainly cash gifts – the same is true of the shows of thanks that flow in the other direction. Through small offerings and the bestowing of good wishes upon individuals, singers and organisers saturate the events with tangible and linguistic rather than symbolic expressions of gratitude and affinity.

Again, the next chapter is the moment at which I explore the implications of these observations for community, particularly as they hint at the issues of collectivity and belonging that underpin various discourses surrounding the concept. The observations here form part of a picture showing participants' goals at the events tending to be of an individual rather than collective nature. I argue, however, that aligning *jiqing guangchang* with individualism in binary opposition to collectivism does not tell the full story of an ambiguous relationship with these concepts. In fact, these discussions form another contribution, alongside several that have already arisen throughout the thesis so far, to my larger conclusions regarding the limits of binary models in approaching music and

community experience. I add this to dualities discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively those involving public and private realms of experience, and the social backgrounds of popular and folk, as I move towards alternative frameworks for considering the topic.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have used the frame as a tool to illustrate how various facets of *jiqing guangchang* embed these events in a wider social world around them. The performance frame provides perhaps the most literal manifestation of this, and in this section I aimed to show that these public performances are not distinctly separated from that which surrounds them. Various challenges and opportunities arise from the stage activity emerging seamlessly from the world around it, the impurity of the frame meaning that relationships and practices can straddle the two. I argued that this is an important factor in the intimacy – at least the presentation of intimacy – upon which much of *jiqing guangchang's* sociability is based. Performers and audiences have ample opportunity to engage closely with each other, and these interactions take place within a particular ethical frame. The conventions shaping discourse and interaction that constitute this sphere often seem to be based upon underlying asymmetries related to sexuality and gender. The expression of these asymmetries is geared towards generating a sense of reciprocal obligation that installs money-giving practices as the single most important driver of the social life. This reciprocity is also the foundation of the economic frame, the sum of the conventions that apply when people deal with money at the events. I showed, too, that in the collective frame, a combination of money and ethics points participants towards individual goals and exchanges more than collective ones.

The social life of which the events are part is central to my exploration of *jiqing guangchang* and community; the matter is fundamentally one of how people relate to and coexist with each other. I have painted a picture of musical activity that is closely connected to everyday life and that relies upon and fosters interpersonal contact. Instinctively, then, *jiqing guangchang* bypasses the impersonality assumed to be a feature of some contemporary urban music, perhaps aligning it with community in this broad sense. Another implication from the four frames discussed in this chapter, however, seems to be that collective behaviour and event economics are less intuitively aligned with community, perhaps as they see certain barriers placed between people. As I have unfolded these different ways of interpreting the notion of community in this context, various complexities and ambiguities have been revealed. It has become increasingly clear that in order to bring together these angles into meaningful conclusions, it is necessary to take a systematic and theoretical view of the notion of community itself. The chapter that follows, then, addresses

this need by laying out various discourses of community, assessing the observations given so far in a way that might lead me towards a framework for more general conclusions.

5. Community

This chapter develops upon various approaches to community and *jiqing guangchang* that have already begun to emerge, employing a more systematic theoretical focus. I combine various common discourses (although not an exhaustive series) to form a more comprehensive assessment of the notion's meaning in context. This revolves around the key issues of place, belonging, society and individualism, and other realms in which community might be shaped and expressed, including spatiality and materiality, temporality, the representations and rationalisations of participants, and economic processes. At every stage, I consider the direct impact of the choice of musical material and the particularities of its performance upon this social picture. Interpreting community in this inclusive way is, I argue, fundamentally a matter of exploring the interrelatedness of face-to-face activity on one hand, and larger social phenomena on the other. Here I consider Dueck's (2007, 2013a, 2013b) accounts of the synergy between intimate and publicly-orientated modes of sociability in music, extending this scheme of interpretation to several of the key issues mentioned above. I conclude that the ambiguous picture emerging from previous chapters does not prevent community from being a useful notion in understanding these events. Rather, it is essential to acknowledge that a multiplicity in the notion's meaning is a feature of any real collective experience.

The three perspectives from which I have approached *jiqing guangchang* so far touch upon a series of overlapping ways through which to gauge the meaning of community in this musical context. In Chapter 2, I examined the events' relationship with the spaces of which they are part and with the material forms that they take. This instigated a discussion of place, one of the notions whose connections to community permeate various discourses that I explore later. There are clear limits to the relevance of this kind of social imaginary in *jiqing guangchang*, but here I bring in more theoretical details to show how place-based community can in some ways still be a useful tool in this context. Mainly, though, I develop upon this means of interpretation by returning to Chapter 2's focus on the sonic environment. I argue that embodied practices and the mechanisms of interpersonal and intergroup coexistence are more meaningful manifestations of the aggregation of experience here than the typical symbolic approach implied when community is primarily orientated to place.

This also intersects with another element of community theory, one that draws distinctions between top-down and grassroots influences on social life. I show that both levels are involved in defining areas of public space, expressing control of them, and influencing the kind of social activity occurring within them. Again, collective experience emerges from embodied practices and engagement with material reality, particularly as

teamwork, co-existence and conflict are also elements of belonging, another key notion in community discourse. I also build from Chapter 3's exploration of the economic and transmission systems behind these events, especially as analysis develops towards the key concepts of society and individualism. Here, further theoretical discussion demonstrates that belonging is embedded in this discourse too. I assess the extent to which sociability on display is influenced by underlying commonalities expressed through the music of *jiqing guangchang*, while the events are also immersed in the modes of expression and communication schemes that operate on a large-scale social level. I develop these observations by discussing how intimate-level occurrences and interactions combine with conventions and texts whose meaning transcends this immediate context to enable the music and sociability of these events.

Throughout the chapter, my choice of language is meant to problematize the common custom of expressing these issues in terms of the singular countable noun 'a community' or the plural 'communities'. These words mean dealing with entities or with collections of people to which individuals can belong. I prefer to use the uncountable noun 'community', referring to a quality, sense or description of a situation, activity or assemblage. This is one of the foundations for an approach that highlights community's multiplicity, complexity and synergy with other social phenomena. It challenges a tendency to understand community as a body of people defined by the duality of insiders and outsiders.

An alternative to the binary approach

(i)   Publicness

My central concern in this chapter is to propose alternative ways of understanding community, developing upon the binary schemes that tend to frame the discussion. Key theoretical dualities involve local community and urban modernity, community and society, community and individualism, participatory and presentational performance, folk community and popular impersonality, and direct and indirect economic support systems. In earlier chapters, I already began to hint that rigid binaries can fail to incorporate the ambiguities and complexities that the *jiqing guangchang* context has exposed in relation to each realm. In Chapter 2, for example, I spoke of the limitations of a duality between publicness and privateness, arguing that intimate and less intimate spaces are forged in far more complex overlapping ways on the streets of Wuhan. Chapter 3 was arranged so as to deconstruct the idea of a binary relationship between popular and folk music and between

the respective social foundations of each. I emphasised the interrelatedness of these two modes in several ways.

Performance events simultaneously resonate with some elements associated with community in the various discourses that follow, while also reflecting others that are far less easily aligned with the concept. In this complex urban scenario, community does not stand out as an intuitive label, and it is difficult to draw comprehensive conclusions. As several dualities unfold in this chapter, it becomes more useful to consider these community dichotomies in dialectical terms. Analytical concepts are taken not as mutually-exclusive or antithetical pairs, but instead as interdependent and synergetic parts of wider social phenomena. Dueck's approach examines how face-to-face and imagined modes of sociability combine to bring meaning to musical experiences. I show how this understanding can be expanded when the task is a more comprehensive interpretation of the social picture surrounding musical activity.

Dueck's main concept is publicness. He approaches it in a way that deviates from common understandings of the notion, in which it is coupled with privateness. This resonates with observations I have already made about the Wuhan context, where the material layouts of performances and the permeability of different frames of social life also make this distinction between the public and private spheres less meaningful. In its stead, Dueck places publicness on a conceptual plane that also includes intimacy. This refers specifically to sociability and musical contact with others on a face-to-face level. People address each other directly on the basis of their individual identities, rather than as strangers or through technologically-enabled forms of communication. He equates publicly-orientated sociability and expression, on the other hand, with "mass-mediated forms of relating" (Dueck 2013b: 13). Music-making in various circumstances is facilitated by an interplay between these two modes. Intimate encounters are enabled by materials and orientations to generalised public influences and references. Learning materials, musical customs, and mutually-understood allusions can be harnessed by musicians as short-cuts to musical intimacy. In the reverse too, contact on an intimate level can develop ways in which people imagine themselves to be part of wider aggregations. These groups may transcend literal co-presence and the relationships between known individuals. In other words, face-to-face engagements through music and related activity involve materials, practices and forms of expression upon which people can build a sense of larger-scale belonging.

(ii)   Dialectical relationships

My primary aim is to extend this way of conceptualising the relationship between publicness and intimacy so that similar schemes may be applied across the discourses that I

outline throughout this chapter. Dueck describes the two as "intersecting modes of sociability that have come increasingly to constitute one another" (Dueck 2007: 56). I argue that the idea of mutual dependence is one that can be applied to many of the important understandings of community through which I interpret *jiqing guangchang*. Each of the dichotomies of community that I present reflects how individual experience, intimate interaction, and micro-level association relate to macro-level phenomena of social structure, and publicly-orientated practices and expression. Intimate-level exchange between real individuals both exerts influence upon and is shaped by a larger social context. If in the broadest terms, the former is aligned with community and the latter with its antithesis, then here I associate the experience of *jiqing guangchang* with neither one clearly, and instead demonstrate that both are indispensable to the wider picture.

It has already been shown that this approach is useful in addressing all kinds of issues in Chinese music and societies. Baranovitch (2003: 227) labels as "symbiosis" a similar way of understanding the mutual reliance between potentially dissenting popular musicians and the Chinese state. Dualities involving hegemony and locality, and state and society dominate discussions in this field. He gives numerous examples, though, to show how the two parties actually rely on each other for achieving commercial and ideological goals. A similar synergy is apparent in the entwinement of music industry structures with the practices of music listeners. The two combine to shape each other and the musical material that permeates contemporary life in China. This is seen, for example, in how public opinion feeds back into the music industry's products. Artists and producers respond to the ways in which new records are received by amateur musicians as they recreate songs in everyday situations. They work to a deliberate policy of including high numbers of slow songs on pop albums, aware that popularity is affected by karaoke singers' preferences for tracks that are easier to sing (Moskowitz 2010: 11). Indeed, in contexts such as this karaoke one, patterns of behaviour involving music contribute to social norms in a more general sense too. Avron Boretz examines asymmetrical gender interactions in Taiwanese karaoke contexts, for example, concluding that this interpersonal behaviour "establishes and amplifies both individual identities within cohorts, and the hierarchical structure and behavioural norms of the cohort itself." (Boretz 2004: 194). The interactions of which these karaoke occasions are comprised stand in a symbiotic relationship with the public culture of which they are a part. Public space provides another significant arena for social structures and practices to be played out. Florence Graezer (2004: 76) discusses amateur public-space dance groups in China, and suggests that these practices "establish a pattern and a rhythm to the social and cultural life of a locality by proposing and sometimes imposing norms and values governing everyday life," in tandem with wider social forces.

Each example hints at broader implications for understanding the intersection between microscopic-scale interaction and macroscopic-scale social structuring. The musical events on the streets of Wuhan are among the channels that combine to create the meaning of Chinese popular music. On a more fundamental level, too, the codes of cognition and behaviour that are integrated into the lives of participants here are exemplified by, and feed back into the behaviour, social dynamics and symbolism evident in Chinese popular music. In turn, this contributes to the experience of living in this society more generally. Dueck explains that musical sociability is both shaped by and plays a role in shaping social structures:

> The microdynamics of musical interaction stand in a dynamic relationship with much larger social formations, helping to shape forms of publicness and give them their specificity. In short, the subtle intimacies of performance are the very stuff of larger social and political projects of world making. (Dueck 2013b: 142)

This is the theoretical approach that I explore as I now introduce several of the most important discourses and mechanisms of community. I highlight the interconnectedness between many of these discourses, and show that where binaries are typically central in understanding the notion, it is more useful to consider the mutual dependence and interrelatedness of micro- and macro-scale influences. It is in this way that I reconcile a host of ambiguous and complex observations that have arisen throughout the thesis, and I show that considering community as part of wider social systems can make it a useful notion here. This theoretical thread comes to the fore most prominently in later sections on community and society, and community and individualism. First, though, I begin to build some of the intertwining layers of discussion that provide the foundations.

Major community discourses

(i)   Place

Understanding the implications of *jiqing guangchang's* urban setting is among the fundamental goals of this project, and place is a theme that has consistently been central to scholarship surrounding community. It is also an idea that overlaps with almost all of the discourses I discuss in this chapter. Understanding of the notion here is based on the intersection of territory and human relationships. Bounded locations are said to enable close ties between small groups of individuals who are known to each other and are intensely involved in each other's social lives. This version of community has tended to be associated with rural settings, often within the living contexts of earlier times. Nineteenth-century thinkers Herder, Schiller and Hegel were influential in establishing trends for the apparent

self-sufficiency and honesty of relations in these contexts to be contrasted with the supposedly corrupted modern city (Plant 1974: 16). More recent scholarship takes into account forms of community less contingent upon intense interpersonal contact, and thus begins to problematize assumptions surrounding the link between community and place. Nonetheless, features associated with certain kinds of place – if not explained by place per se – have not fully been excluded. Social theorist Graham Day (2006: 183), for instance, picks out "lack of population numbers, homogeneity of social types, and the insulating effects of distance and remoteness" as features central to the thriving of community. The area and population size of cities, their potential heterogeneity, and the apparently weaker connection that people have with the place in which they live have all been taken to cast doubt upon the usefulness of the concept in contemporary life.

Can, then, community in this sense have relevance in a current urban situation, such as that surrounding *jiqing guangchang*? Ruth Finnegan addresses this issue in her study of local music-making in another urban context, the town of Milton Keynes. Her conclusions are that a wider sense of place does not generate the same impact upon interpersonal relationships as it is said to do in the archetypal community scenario. For the amateur musicians here, "the concept of Milton Keynes as a *whole* [was not] of *direct concern* to most people in the everyday conduct of their musical (or other) activities" (Finnegan 1989: 300, emphasis in the original). This is a major factor in her decision against classing the town itself as a community. Clear parallels emerge with my own conclusions in Chapter 2 regarding the significance for street music of the sense of Wuhan as a place. There is very little evidence that this level of localness has a particularly strong symbolic impact here, not least in musicians' choice and delivery of material. I showed that the appeal of the music and of the overall performance is founded upon themes and modes of expression that resonate on a pan-Chinese rather than purely a local level. As a result, there would seem to be no local factor that makes this repertory of music more suited to the context than any other. Thus, it could perhaps be argued that the impact of substituting in any other similarly well-known repertory of music would be minimal. This does not account, however, for the material-level factors that make this repertory an essential factor in the viability of the social occasion. I return to these factors below.

Finnegan also explores, however, the idea that local musical activity can indicate the presence of a kind of micro-level community within this larger context. She assesses whether it is meaningful to consider larger urban areas as comprised of numerous smaller local units to which people feel strongly aligned; in other words, that the city is an "agglomeration of village communities" (ibid.: 299). Ultimately, Finnegan concludes that the size, heterogeneity and complexity of Milton Keynes renders this model not particularly valuable in that context. In one sense, though, the idea of the micro-community is a useful

perspective from which to view some aspects of *jiqing guangchang*. It describes the experience of a particular small group of singers in Wuhan: those whose stay in the city is relatively short, and forms but a single station in a varied performing career. In Chapter 2, I described how the life of one such singer, Alian, takes place in a very limited physical space and revolves around a social life almost entirely centred upon the contacts made at *jiqing guangchang*. While these individuals are intensely invested in the shows, and the performances shape almost all aspects of their life, they seem connected to the social life of the wider city to an unusually low degree. Thus, their experience has much in common with a geographically- and socially-bounded scenario of an idealised community, although it takes place against the backdrop of a much larger and more heterogeneous potential social canvass. It could be seen as a micro-level community.

Parallels occur elsewhere in Chinese music culture. The DJs that Komlosy finds working in the western province of Yunnan, for example, mainly hail from Guangdong province, more than a thousand kilometres away. They are forced by their employers to share motel rooms, in a way that makes for "a very close, almost familial working atmosphere as the company members ate and lived together, in a way reminiscent of Chinese cultural performance troupes of the past" (Komlosy 2008: 62).

Much more commonly in the modern city, however, social lives are more segmented, involving different types of people in a range of places, and as part of a variety of frames in their lives. They might live, work and engage in different leisure pursuits all over the city, and have sporadic and shallow contact with many more people. For the vast majority of performers and audience members in *jiqing guangchang*, I found no reason to doubt that these events were part of lifestyles played out on more varied geographical and social territories. The people with whom they have contact at the events – and perhaps a few directly related activities – may not be part of their lives in other contexts. In addition, even one's local place within the city is a corner shared not only with known individuals but also with thousands of strangers engaged there for a huge variety of purposes. Here, the notion of one's local place exclusively as "an area of common living" (Turner 1969: 96) is not a sufficient description, and the ideas of community that accompany them are also no longer adequate.

I have shown that *jiqing guangchang's* music is an important part of the events' place in this heterogeneous social world. For performers and organisers wishing to attract large audiences, a key strength of the material is its inclusivity. Were a more marginal or lesser-known genre or repertory to be performed, events might begin to appeal to a narrower range of listeners with more specifically-defined musical interests, albeit perhaps deeper ones. As it is, the classic and mainstream pop and folk brings together people who are not necessarily invested in any particular musical subculture, nor even unusually committed to

music pastimes at all. Thus, the choice of material is undoubtedly a factor in sustaining the relative heterogeneity of the social occasion, certainly an intention to foster this ethos. As I explain below when exploring community and ideological kinds of belonging, I do not wish to imply that these musical choices have no bearing upon the types of people that participate. Perhaps they do, though, exclude fewer people and less definitively than many other repertoires might.

Recently, scholars have sought to show how traditional discourses of community and place can be transcended by updated understandings of the transmission of meaning. These newer approaches not only take into account contexts of literal co-presence, but also those in which collective meaning is generated on imagined or ideological levels, often facilitated by mass-mediated communication or online forums. Focus in ethnomusicology has shifted from geographically-fixed communities towards technologically-enabled cross-boundary and diaspora notions (Shelemay 2011). In Chinese music contexts, this has been particularly useful in exploring, for instance, the music-making of Chinese Americans (Zheng 2010), online fandom among Hong Kong residents (Chow and de Kloet 2013), and transnational flows (Tan and Rao 2016).

It is questionable, however, how such developments contribute to the understanding of a field such as *jiqing guangchang.* These events remain highly dependent on actual physical proximity and face-to-face contact between participants, and this insulates them from any radical alterations caused by new technologies. They have virtually no online presence and, in the field, I also found any sense that events belonged to a larger movement to be very limited. Participants of all kinds do move between venues, though, and thus they enter and leave collaborations with different peers at different times. In this sense, some are clearly aware of being involved in an activity larger simply than the immediacy of their current associations. I found no significant evidence, however, of this being specifically reflected upon or expressed. Fundamentally, it is difficult to consider *jiqing guangchang* as part of a movement with a significant sense of boundary-crossing identity; any way in which there exists a *jiqing guangchang* community of solidarity is limited in scope to within the handful of events active across the city of Wuhan. In addition, new technologies are not used significantly to promote or share recordings and other material related to these performances. As I discussed in Chapter 3, musical creativity and change is impacted upon by recordings of musical material that exist independently of these events. Local meaning, however, is not enabled by any new technology operating specifically in the street music context. Thus, it would appear that recent shifts in theoretical approach, although significant for many reasons, have not moved the field appreciably towards the complexities of community relevant in this particular kind of situation.

In this context, then, place is not a factor loaded with ideological significance, and sense of place is rarely a major element of the meaning shared overtly at the events through the music or any other discourse. The social world of *jiqing guangchang*, though, is still one of literal co-presence, and thus community's meaning in this context is based on embeddedness in the physical setting. This is the first instance, then, in which I hint at the interpretive complexities and dialectical relationships that become increasingly central as this chapter progresses. *Jiqing guangchang's* social world is enabled both by a strong orientation to location, while also showing an indifference to a sense of place. As place recurs in other discourses of community that I discuss below, I continue to emphasise that the impact of the events' orientation to their particular locations is felt most strongly not in symbolic but in material senses.

(ii)   Space and material

Indeed, while the discussion above was concerned with place, understood on a social level in which entities such as the city of Wuhan are meaningful, in this section I talk about a primarily material level of *space* – a discussion I began in Chapter 2. I address how community is expressed and shaped through the ways in which people negotiate other bodies, material objects and sounds around them. Earlier, I explained how another kind of public-space music event in Wuhan, the street-side karaoke stand, displays a physical layout that immediately brings to mind a oneness and egalitarianism among participants. Here the singer is physically allied with the audience, with both parties orientated in a similar way towards the karaoke machine's screens. Karin Barber (1997) gives numerous examples from African performance contexts in which differentiation of seating and position within an arena might be said to reflect certain social dynamics, mainly relating to the expression of status. How, then, are issues of this kind played out in *jiqing guangchang*, and how do they relate to community?

There is a significant degree of variation in the layouts across Wuhan's *jiqing guangchang* events. I noted in Chapter 2 that some performance spaces lend themselves more than others to direct individual interaction during the performance itself. In each type of venue, however, direct interaction between performers and audience is nonetheless a key feature of activity at any given time. While one singer is on the stage, others chat with individuals in the audience as they circulate around the arena. For this reason, even at events that most resemble a formal concert scenario, the way participants share space means that all *jiqing guangchang* events encourage face-to-face contact to a large extent. At the same time, however, with the audience being accustomed to expect social contact with singers, it is less common for spectators to meet and engage directly with their peers within the crowd, unless

perhaps they have come to the event with others. In particular, the loudness of the music suits quick exchanges with singers who are constantly circulating, rather than sustained conversation among groups of strangers who find themselves assembled closely in a far more static way. This is another sense, then, in which the particular musical sounds of this repertory and the ways it is performed have tangible and significant impacts upon the wider social world of the shows.

Alongside the use of space and material within the *jiqing guangchang* arenas themselves, during this thesis I have also considered how events relate to the external physical and sonic realities of the city around them. This raises perhaps the most significant sense in which the particularities of events' musical sounds shape the meaning of community here. The popular repertory, instrumentation and singing style function in synergy with the PA equipment, the physical geography of the city, and the acoustic environment in contributing to the inclusive and heterogeneous social ethos that I have already discussed. In contrast to the sounds emitted by other forms of public-space music in the city such as opera performances, these sounds carry effectively through the urban environment, increasing the profile of events and shaping the kind of audiences that participate. The music plays a real role in generating a potentially heterogeneous audience, just as it plays a part in sustaining the ethos of social inclusion, as I explained above.

In addition, "acoustic community" is a term I find meaningful to apply here. It is used in the field of sound studies to refer to a community whose primary underlying commonality is found in the realm of sound (Truax 1984 (2001): 66). It encapsulates events' coexistence with other city activity using sound to create boundaries. In Chapter 2, I discussed this phenomenon through my own concept, the sonic niche. Groups manage to coexist with each other and a host of other potentially competing spatial and sonic interests by dividing limited useful space with boundaries drawn through sound. Where several events involving loud music take place back-to-back in the public space, I argued that it is sound rather than any other factor that is primary in dictating where individuals need to be positioned to belong to a group. Each assemblage of people, united by sharing the influence of highly localised and specific sound conditions, displays acoustic community on a microscopic level. Sound is the primary factor that clarifies, establishes difference, and demands that individuals invest their attention and belonging in one group over another. Below, I talk about belonging and boundaries, and suggest that community is also relevant when these individual music groups are considered from a wider perspective too. They share an interlocking experience, and a stake in each other's existence.

Thus, while the layout of *jiqing guangchang* is such that performers and audience positions do not show the same fluidity as they may do in some African contexts or in the street-side karaoke one, it is still significant that all of the layouts around the city have in

common their ability to enable face-to-face contact between participants. Likewise, considering spatiality, materiality and sound also illustrates that group unity need not only be equated with rationalised identity issues. Collections of people define the boundaries of their group not only on an ideological level, but also practically, including through manipulating their environment. The sonic niche shows that sound and space are basic factors in how collective activity is made meaningful.

(iii)   Ideological and embodied belonging

A facet underlying the sense of place that I have already examined, along with several of the other discourses of community that I turn to later, is belonging. Symbolic realms, and imagined sociability within large groups of people are at the heart of the understanding of community famously espoused by Benedict Anderson (1991). Here, bonds can be felt between people who may never have met. In a national context, for example, citizens may regularly be addressed as belonging to this large assemblage, or they may perceive themselves to be a part. I have already begun to suggest that this kind of rationalised or ideological foundation for belonging is less significant in the *jiqing guangchang* context than embodied or non-representational ones operating between people who know each other or interact directly.

A manifestation of this phenomenon worthy of note here involves how these street performances are treated in the language of everyday life. Scholars have shown how identity both on an individual psychological level (Pelczynski 1984) and a collective cultural level (Gusfield 1975: 36) is highly dependent on recognition and definition from outsiders. The way that groups are defined linguistically can reflect characteristics and exceptionalities that insiders and outsiders recognise. A group's name or other forms of self-designation can contribute significantly to a sense of belonging that a collectivity might inspire.

In this case, my pragmatic decision to refer to the events as *jiqing guangchang* throughout the thesis somewhat masks the lack of coherence in linguistic designation of the activities. I found the term meaningful to some participants and spread across different events in the city. Perhaps more commonly, though, participants referred to the assemblages or locations to which they belonged in the most general terms, such as 'venue' (*changzi*), 'stand' (*tanzi*) or 'stage' (*wutai*). Some events gave themselves specific names[10], which emcees and singers would use while speaking on the microphone. Occasional references to the events I have found in local media suggest that among outsiders too, there is no specific

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[10] These names include *Xingguang yanyi* (Starlight performing arts), *Jianghe da wutai* (The great rivers grand stage), *Wangjiang da wutai* (River view grand stage), *Lanxing da wutai* (Blue star grand stage), and *Gaoyuan shidai da wutai* (The highland era grand stage).

language around which a particularly coherent identity is built. Here again, more generic terms are used. The collectivities and performers are referred to as 'grassroots stages' (*caogen wutai*) (ZX 2014) and 'grassroots artists' (*caogen yishujia*) (Yuan 2014) respectively, while the activity itself is called *maiyi* or *maichang* (performing for a living, literally 'selling art' or 'selling singing') (Ju 2014).

If, though, insiders' and outsiders' awareness of a symbolic network, a body of similar practices, or a larger cultural phenomenon seems rather weak, underlying commonalities still do play a part in bringing participants together and enabling meaning to circulate. In Chapter 4, for instance, I showed the impacts upon *jiqing guangchang's* social life of the predominantly middle-aged and male audience demographic. Gender is one of the more obvious factors influencing the ways audiences and performers relate to each other, manifest concretely in the habits of language used to address people playing different roles, in the sharing of cigarettes and other gifts, and so on. Interpersonal contact is clearly shaped by the personal identities that participants bring to the events, and the meanings exchanged through participation stem from the cultural and social common ground from which those involved approach the activities. Later, I explore various other kinds of linguistic, expressive, cultural and referential commonalities that permeate and underpin shared definition and meaning in all kinds of ways. For now, though, while I acknowledge their presence, perhaps the most important point to make is that these commonalities are not thrust into the foreground as focal points through which to promote a sense of belonging, nor are they used to exclude any particular kinds of people. They are not deliberately reflected upon or featured as totems for identity, instead operating on the same underlying non-representational level that I have explored previously.

Stokes argues that "music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (Stokes 1994: 5). I suggest that one of the contributions of this thesis comes in providing approaches to explore elements of social meaning that are *not* accounted for by these identities and boundaries. An example lies in my interpretation of *jiqing guangchang's* body of musical material. Being largely comprised of classics and particularly popular recent hits, this repertory enjoys perhaps some of the most universal familiarity as it is possible to achieve in a modern urban context in which access to diversity is commonplace. The mainstream reach of the music may generally speak more loudly to some demographic groups over others, but its relevance is certainly not limited to any particular marginal community, underground movement, subculture or counterpublic. *Jiqing guangchang's* musical appeal does not rest upon distinctiveness, isolation, or emotive reference to divisive identity issues. Nor does it strongly emphasise larger issues such as national identity, although this does arise occasionally. There is not an obvious need or demand for musicians

to adapt the songs to make them appeal more to their audience, based on any issue or quality of local or specifically national consequence. Instead, a few sentences from the patter of one event emcee sums up the ethos to which the choice of musical material adds:

> All are welcome to our party (*wanhui*) this evening! We want all lovers of
> *re'nao* (fervour and noise) to come in. Men and women, old and new friends,
> you are all welcome! There's no need to register (*dengji*), don't be afraid: this is
> a place for common happiness (*gongtong kuaile*). (18 October 2014)

The emcee's final remark here about "common happiness" is one of the only instances I found of collective goals being reflected upon at *jiqing guangchang*. A more general inclusivity is the key message in this emcee's introductory speech, and the choice of music fully supports this quality. Songs are highly familiar and circulate through contemporary Chinese society, in the mass media, public space, and in the memories of citizens. Minimising the sense of distinction between insiders and outsiders to achieve this inclusivity does, though, also have a side effect of perhaps reducing the fervour of any affinity felt towards the musical material. In conversation with many audience members at different events, I got no clear impression that connoisseurship for either music in general or this repertory in particular is a prerequisite for participation. While some did speak of their fondness for hearing songs familiar from earlier times in their lives, others actually told me of their preference for eras and even genres of music never played at the events. Other people in *jiqing guangchang* audiences displayed reactions indicating even greater ambivalence to the material. A few looked uncomfortable and stuffed fingers in their ears to block out the loud music, but nonetheless remained in the audience circle.

Thus, it would seem insufficient to assume that the audience is uniformly composed of individuals specifically drawn to this musical material. Even for those ostensibly fully engaged, there are surely different degrees of affinity to this music. Some may consider themselves as entirely endorsing and identifying with the musical choices, while others may accept them passively, or even actively disapprove or resist (Plant 1974). It seems that many *jiqing guangchang* participants find themselves at these events not because they feel a particular connection to this music above other kinds, but simply because it is what is available in their local area. This study can serve as a reminder, then, that a multiplicity of responses, different degrees of attachment and detachment, and a mundane level of personal motivation can also be part of the experience of music, just as much as more coherent dynamics.

I have already suggested a set of ways in which belonging may be found outside of this symbolic or ideological level. In the section above, for example, I concluded discussion of *jiqing guangchang's* material layouts, and the significance of this for distinguishing group

belonging on a material level. Another way in which this belonging takes embodied forms involves focusing upon smaller groups within the activity of a single event. Scholarship in several fields has approached teams of people united by pursuing a common goal as communities, focusing less upon ideological commonalities and more upon shared activity. Education theorist Etienne Wenger, for example, describes these as 'communities of practice' (Wenger 1998). The mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertories that Wenger highlights as characteristic of these groups is found in a range of assemblages, from those pursuing a hobby together, to groups of employees, and even families.

I consider this approach particularly useful in the Wuhan context as it addresses several relevant issues not incorporated into many other versions of community. It allows me to acknowledge that belonging in *jiqing guangchang* rarely saturates the identity of individuals involved. Participants are usually only loosely attached to this activity, potentially along with many others in their social worlds. According to this understanding, people can belong to multiple communities of practice. It also highlights that membership of these communities can have different levels, with an individual being a core member of a few and a more peripheral part of others. Similarly, the notion accommodates my observations involving the weakness of a sense in which belonging is deliberately built in this context. Wenger specifically emphasises that communities of practice rarely have clear self-designation strategies.

The idea of community of practice might be applied in particular to certain groups of performers on Wuhan's streets. There appears to be some sense of friendship and teamwork among singers at each event, although it is one tinged with competition and self-interest. Some clearly look out for each other by providing hospitality to money-givers on behalf of their colleagues when busy, sharing tactical information, or even socialising together away from events. Indeed, as I have already discussed, the family and friendship networks involved in recruitment mean that many participants are linked by webs of existing relationships. On the other hand, I was told by multiple singers that in *jiqing guangchang* there are 'no real friends'. Competition between performers was evident in my dealings with them, particularly as many talked badly of each other to me, and some even actively disrupted the attempts of other singers to befriend their own contacts. Similarly, in the relationships between singers and individual audience members, the use of the term friends (*pengyou*) was perhaps the most common description used in both one-to-one and on-microphone discourse. Singers and audience members often shared playful interactions and jokes:

> The singer ends her song, and as she moves out of the performance space to mingle with the crowd, she spots a man she knows skirting around the audience circle. Accosting him, she issues a mock command: "give me 10 *yuan*," and poses with hand outstretched waiting for the man silently to take out his wallet and hand over the money. As her benefactor then walks on, she playfully slaps him on the back.

Some singers did, though, acknowledge the limitations in the intimacy of these relationships, referring to their audience contacts not as friends but as fans (*gemi*) or even as customers (*keren*). A similarly varied picture is displayed in the relationships among audience members. Characteristic behaviour for spectators is to be relatively still and often to avoid extensive conversation with their peers; in fact, the latter is mainly a necessity caused by the loudness of the music. Spontaneous kindness and concern for strangers is also a feature, however. It is a common habit, for instance, for elderly spectators to help each other up and down steps, and also for people vacating their seat in the audience to beckon someone standing nearby to fill it.

Likewise, I have already noted that I found no symbolic agenda of battling repression, discrimination or disadvantage circulating around *jiqing guangchang*. Instead, conflict seems to arise more on an intimate or mundane level than an ideological one, and so again shows embodied practices and orientation to real people functioning as an important carrier of meaning in the aggregation of experience. Interpersonal interaction among participants within the events is saturated with incidents arising from small-scale tensions:

> A man clumsily bumps the arm of another spectator's chair as he moves a stool into place to watch the performance. The seated man reacts angrily, making an aggressive gesture as the other continues to position his stool nearby. It is quickly apparent that this small incident has disproportionately angered the seated man, and realising this, the other apologises, gives up on placing his stool nearby and instead takes it to the other side of the room to sit down.

Examples such as this add to the low-level and more serious instances of conflict that I have already explained shape the spread of music-making in the city landscape, particularly those involving complaints about noise from local residents. Conflict has itself provided a pillar of community theory. Outsiders being viewed with hostility rather than apathy is taken as a marker of clarity in group boundaries. Perhaps less intuitively, however, there is also suggestion that conflict among groups can build a sense of belonging to larger wholes. William Rowe's social history of nineteenth-century Wuhan, for instance, draws upon early twentieth-century theorist Georg Simmel (1922 (1955)) in making this point. Rowe highlights hostility as an indicator of communal meaning on both of these levels. Not only can tension with external rivals strengthen the sense of belonging within a group, but it can also build a consciousness – between groups or individuals – of their stake in each

other's existence and thus build a wider sense of belonging. In the case of Wuhan, conflict and hostility between residents of the three separate towns comprising the modern city, he argues, has made community a concept strongly relevant to the city's history: "systematic bonds of antagonism and competition held [the three districts] together" (Rowe 1989: 206).

Discussions in this section generally do not seem to point towards musical repertory, self-designation and ideology as major factors in creating focal points for belonging. Most importantly, there are few strong indications that sentiments clearly distinguishing insiders from outsiders are attached to Wuhan's street performances. These discussions may also add a voice of caution to those inclined to emphasise strongly the uniqueness of the contribution made by music to social experiences. Stokes argues that the specific qualities of a given music and dance performance can be key factors in giving events collective meaning. He suggests that "what is important is not just musical performance, but good performance, if music and dance are to make a social event 'happen'" (Stokes 1994: 5). Does the experience of *jiqing guangchang* support Stokes' distinction between the social force of good and bad performances?

On one hand, my conversations with participants who told me about their favourite singers suggest that there is at least some sense of good and bad performance in *jiqing guangchang*. This may be a factor, along with the quality of facilities and other issues, in the large disparities between audience numbers seen at shows within a single geographical cluster. On the other hand, there are various reasons to think of the music here as more significant for its presence than for its particularities. Almost all spectators respond to the music with extreme reserve, and some even commented to me about their indifference to the particular music played. Perhaps most importantly, I found that the practices of money-exchange upon which much of the social activity was founded to be largely divorced from issues of musical aesthetics. I have already shown that music is significant in gathering an audience and sustaining a certain social ethos, and that this depends on particularities on both the material level of acoustics and the symbolic level of musical repertory and performance. It would seem, however, that any endorsement of the power of music's particularities is limited in this context. In other words, it would not be a surprise to find another genre of music or another activity all together sustaining community in most of the ways that *jiqing guangchang* does.

In this section, I have also approached belonging in a second way, one that highlights mutual orientation to an activity. Considering the events in the terms of community of practice emphasises embodied action as the platform on which groups of people can be united. In this way, people are orientated at once to what is shared in the here-and-now, while also drawing upon a deeper level of cultural commonalities. Among the strengths of this approach is its acknowledgment of heterogeneity in ways that individuals

respond to group commonalities. As Dueck puts it, participants in a musical experience "behave in ways that take into account the others around them, whether this involves getting to know them, moving with and around them on the dance floor, or keeping them politely out of frame" (Dueck 2013b: 7). When people come together, they negotiate relationships with each other not only when they engage actively with others, but also when attending to the most mundane and basic necessities of inhabiting a shared space. Here, an ethos of inclusivity in musical and social terms brings people into contact with each other, fostering mutual engagement on a variety of levels and allowing them to display heterogeneous relationships to the collectivity. This is a kind of community that does not rely on strong group affiliation, but on more domestic and mundane co-existence, featuring a multiplicity in interpersonal cooperation and conflict. In this way, city living and urban encounters with music can be understood beyond simply the stereotype of isolation and disengagement, individualism and institutionalism.

(iv)   Temporality

The ideal-type version of community life that I discussed in relation to place imagines that for inhabitants of a bounded space such as a village, interaction between known individuals is an almost constant possibility. In this model situation, social life is saturated by relationships that people share with others immediately around them. They live, work, rest and engage in various other social endeavours while rarely far from potential contact with a finite group of those who are known to them. Here then, the notion of community is applied in an apparently timeless way to the social experience of the people being studied, rather than understood as a quality that can ebb and flow according to specific circumstances and activities. It is a concept that describes a social experience in its entirety, and this is the level for which theory from the social sciences is particularly concerned (Tönnies 1887 (2001); Delanty 2003; Day 2006).

The study of community in *jiqing guangchang*, on the other hand, changes the task significantly. Instead of exploring how the concept can describe the general patterns of living of a group of people, now a much narrower strip of social life is extracted. As I touched upon in relation to place, musical community might involve a combination of forms and media that can be elusive and constantly changing. At one moment, it might find expression in a literal gathering of individuals at a performance, and then continue through the circulation of related material in online or mass-media platforms, or even through a sense of kinship in an imagined or ideological realm. In general, then, a similar question applies here as it did when I discussed place: how can music scholars deal with assemblages whose

continuity might lie in a variety of realms, those whose temporal dimension may not be linear and bounded?

I have already noted, of course, that in the *jiqing guangchang* context, meaning seems to occur most strongly in the here-and-now of the performance events and much less so in any other more enduring form. Events last only a few hours each day, and may account for only a small part of the varied social life of those involved. It is very difficult to pinpoint any particularly meaningful ideological, political, religious, or technologically-based sense in which the literal gathering extends into other realms. In that case, does the concept of community become irrelevant as soon as these people cease being in each other's company? How can community in *jiqing guangchang* persist and develop if it is so contingent on activity embodied in time and space?

To answer these questions, I turn to the idea of *communitas.* This alternative formulation to community was proposed by the anthropologist Victor Turner in the 1960s. It seems to describe well *jiqing guangchang's* here-and-now primacy, combined with its weaker channels for representing a consolidated sense of identity and for exerting a durable impact upon wider culture. Turner explains that the concept diverges from the idea of community in the respective temporal situations of the two. A notable characteristic of communitas is being neither "rooted in the past [nor extending] into the future through language, law and custom" (Turner 1969: 113). Instead, it describes spontaneous and fleeting experiences of one-ness which can transcend institutional structures and social groups. The short-lived nature of their impact and lack of continuation into spheres beyond their own existence in time and space make this a promising idea for Wuhan's street performances.

In various other ways, however, communitas seems to be an unsuitable way of describing the experience here. The mundane, everyday ethos of the events is far removed from the intensity and transcendence that Turner aims to describe. Social occurrences such as hippie 'happenings' that he presents to illustrate communitas are very unlike these street performances. It is hard to imagine *jiqing guangchang's* musical material being particularly associated with any transcendental experience of this kind. Similar sounds are encountered on a daily basis on television and in public life around the city, thus encountering them here would not obviously seem to mark any shift in social territory. Indeed, muted audience responses to the music are far more common than moments of intense inspiration.

Likewise, the momentary casting-aside of social structures and hierarchies that Turner emphasises does not seem to be a particularly relevant way of describing *jiqing guangchang.* The audience responses that I presented in Chapter 4 suggest that status and hierarchy are actually central features here. The flows of social capital that enable the key processes of money-exchange are highly dependent on participants bringing into the

performance frame elements of their 'normal' social identities. I argued in particular that the performance setting being so intimately connected to the everyday frame means that transcendental experiences are fundamentally incompatible with the agendas of participants. I characterised spectators as typically most comfortable clinging to identities from the everyday frame rather than immersing themselves in audience roles. In fact, for some participants, reminders that the performance frame overlaps significantly with social structures and hierarchies are all too evident. Some singers have to make deliberate steps to cover their identities so as not to damage the respectability of their family life, and I met men who were unable to take part as openly as they wished for fear of news reaching their wives. For these participants, it is an unwelcome fact that wider social concerns are not transcended through this street music experience, and they take necessary steps to guard against unwanted consequences.

Nonetheless, despite these significant divergences from the theory of communitas, it is useful to take forward the idea of a kind of community more meaningful in the moment than in terms of any comprehensive social experience. Just as in the section above, parallels in other music-related contexts hint that embodied practice is a territory upon which this understanding of community can be highly meaningful. John Chernoff (1979: 164) describes music-making in certain African contexts as a ritual or gesture of community participation. Community is not primarily a territory, economic collaboration, set of ideas, symbols, or beliefs here (ibid.: 164-5), but the very act of *embodying* these and other ties. Finnegan too arrives at a similar conclusion regarding community in the amateur music of Milton Keynes, noting that it is based on "shared and purposive collective actions" (Finnegan 1989: 305). While the purposive element of this formulation is questionable in the *jiqing guangchang* context, the emphasis on actions reinforces the significance of pre-rational manifestations of collective meaning.

(v)   Participants' representations

The aggregation of experience in this context, I have argued, is often shaped and expressed most meaningfully in the forms and structures of activity, rather than in how they are represented on a collective level. I noted, for instance, that before group belonging is rationalised and understood ideologically, it is experienced through the manipulation of space, material and sound that bring about interpersonal and intergroup coexistence. That is not necessarily a reason, however, to ignore how participants represent the meaning of community on a more individual basis. In fact, various commentators emphasise that community is fundamentally a notion of the way social life is understood subjectively. It should not be mistakenly treated as if part of an empirical reality, or assumed to have an

existence independent of people who recognise it (Gusfield 1975: 25; Cohen 1985: 13). How, then, do musicians, organisers and spectators perceive and rationalise what they do in relation to the various understandings of community that I continue to discuss in this chapter? Do, for instance, *jiqing guangchang* participants believe themselves to be expressing community by taking part in grassroots activity? Do performers approach the events as opportunities to express their individuality or are they conscious of collective goals? To what extent do events make audience members feel a sense of belonging with their peers?

Perhaps, then, the most theoretically satisfactory means of understanding the concept's relevance in this context would be to ask participants about the ways in which they represent the events in their own minds, and to give primary weight to how these issues are expressed in public and private discourse. While I acknowledge the compelling theoretical argument for this approach, however, in practical terms it has some severe limitations in this context. First, there is a danger that this method implies participants' representations to be a singular phenomenon. Instead, representation of a situation can vary from occasion to occasion or from moment to moment, let alone from individual to individual. An additional risk I outlined when discussing my method earlier in the thesis is that representations may be improvised as they are expressed to the researcher, rather than forming a reliable picture independent from the observer's influence. Perhaps most problematically, this approach places faith in informants representing their activity in ways that intersect with the discourses circulating in theory. Are *jiqing guangchang* participants really concerned with the concept of community at all, let alone in the terms of the various theoretical versions that I have outlined?

In relation to these concerns, my experience on the streets of Wuhan is encapsulated by George Revill, as he reports from a similar context involving local music-making. He attempts to test the strength of another set of analytical concepts of a similarly abstract nature to community: "tradition" and "vernacular culture." Revill explains how participants in the events he studies in rural England might represent their experience: "those involved would not recognize themselves as either inventing or participating in any form of tradition or indeed engaging in something called vernacular culture […] They are just doing something for the kids and having a good time in the process" (Revill 2005: 704). Like Revill, I found real representations to be of this immediate and mundane nature, and that community was not a concept at the front of the minds of those involved in Wuhan's public-space musical activity. It was almost never an explicitly central component in discourses flowing at the events, and I often found it to be similarly remote from concerns when I engaged with participants on a one-to-one basis.

Notwithstanding these concerns, however, some common themes in the sentiments participants expressed to me do suggest that community issues may be a limited part of some of the established discourses circulating at events. More than once, for instance, informants explained to me the relationship of the shows to the institutional realm. In particular, they would relate *jiqing guangchang* to events organised in association with the *shequ*, an administrative entity (literally a 'community') into which contemporary cities are divided for the purpose of addressing residents' welfare needs. This terminology may carry significant historical resonance, *she* being a "hallowed concept in Chinese political thought," carrying connotations of grassroots communitarianism and community spirit across various ages in China's history (Rowe 1984: 249, 1989: 95). Most clearly of consequence to my informants, however, was to stress *jiqing guangchang's* belonging to the private (*si*) realm, rather than this institutional one. This distinction becomes particularly significant as I turn now to understanding community's relationship with the realms of formal society.

(vi) Society

Alongside discourses connecting community and place, perhaps the most prevalent way in which meaning has been drawn from the term community – at least in Euro-American traditions of scholarship – has been to approach it in distinction to another concept of social analysis, society. This duality emerges from Ferdinand Tönnies' late-nineteenth-century German terms *Gemeinschaft*, which English-language literature has tended to translate as 'community', and *Gesellchaft*, typically expressed in English as 'society'. In this discourse, community is taken to be a form and quality of social association based on affectual ties, intimate knowledge and the intrinsic value of human relationships. Society, on the other hand, is a description of co-existence in which relationships are deliberately fostered to achieve rational goals in an emotionally neutral way, and which often involve prescribed duties in the dealings between ranks (Tönnies 1887 (2001); Day 2006). The former is often associated with spontaneous and informal activity, and the latter with institutional and government structures. There has also been a tendency for the distinction to be mapped onto those discourses of place already discussed, with this version of community again aligned with idealised rural forms, and contemporary urban lifestyles connected more strongly with a preponderance of societal structures (Delanty 2003: 7).

As in many of the discourses that I address in this chapter, *jiqing guangchang's* place in this formulation is complex. I outlined earlier in this thesis that the events are not the only instances of amateurs discharging music into Wuhan's public space for the purposes of leisure and petty business. Street-side karaoke sessions, busking, square-dance groups, and small collections of musicians practicing are all commonly heard in the city. Each of

these forms largely bypasses structures of formal commerce and the hierarchy of state bureaucracy, by virtue of being organised without any kind of direct affiliation to either. In this sense, they stand in contrast to the music played into public spaces by the shops of national retail chains, the one-off marketing shows that similar businesses frequently stage, and the public galas and talent competitions organised by and with government authorities, which entertain while transmitting political and social messages. *Jiqing guangchang* and other similar forms instead rely on informal social relationships for their organisation. The labour of all kinds of insiders, for example, is casual and flexible, and is either undertaken on a voluntary basis or in exchange for cash remuneration. Sums are minimal for everyone but the singers. Likewise, event organisers engage with the wider world through informal channels, relying on word-of-mouth promotion, utilising family and friendship ties for recruitment and, for some, even sustaining themselves through underworld links.

This all occurs against a backdrop in which state influence over leisure has dramatically reduced in China from far higher levels in the first few decades of Communist rule. Friendship circles, sports, recreational and cultural clubs have been blossoming since major reforms to government economic and civil policy in the late 1970s (Davis 1995; Shue 1995; White et al. 1996). These contexts may well be described in similar terms to those Revill applies to the diversity of music-making occurring in England's provincial towns and countryside. He characterises a population "participating in and interpreting […] event[s] in a way which suit[s] their own ends in terms of a set of values distinct from those imposed from outside" (Revill 2005: 697). Indeed, in sound studies, heterogeneity in an urban environment's sound has been taken as an indicator of varied social practices, a phenomenon that some scholars have equated directly with the qualities of community itself (Kreutzfeld 2010).

Part of the significance of street music's grassroots ethos lies in events' use of space, again emphasising the embodied ways in which meaning arises from these discourses of community. In Chapter 2, I highlighted the ways in which some events negotiate and define the spaces that they operate in, and these experiences reflect remoteness from the sphere of societal institutions. Groups tend to use marginal spaces such as derelict ground and unmade roads near homes and river banks, and are increasingly excluded from leisure areas that fall under more formal regulation, such as parks and shopping precincts. Some groups take over areas that are cordoned off for other purposes, or ignore the authorities' attempts to restrict access. This activity might even be seen as a form of resistance to the authorities' definitions of city locations. Like Geoff Baker in his analysis of Cuban popular music, however, I am wary of placing too much weight upon these interpretations. In the Cuban context, Baker scrutinises common discourses regarding the censorship of musicians (Baker 2011), and binaries involving so-called 'underground' and 'commercial' musics (Baker 2012). He

concludes that underground musicians have greater freedom than has been suggested elsewhere, and that they even enjoy degrees of state support: "critics of the Cuban government tend to see censorship everywhere and to overstate the power and the limiting function of the state in the field of culture" (Baker 2011: 3). Likewise, he also shows that underground artists, far from rejecting their music being commercialised, actually explore various ways of generating income that blurs the boundaries between official and informal realms.

My analysis of *jiqing guangchang* suggests that these conclusions may be useful in the Chinese context too. In particular, the subversive implications of the use of space by musicians in Wuhan should not be overstated. Political engagement is actually not very evident in the ethos of these activities, and I found little evidence that participants reflect significantly upon this side of what they do. Likewise, although a few individuals described their activity to me as *minjian* (among the people; folk), I am cautious about interpreting this as evidence that participants attach any particular ideological value to the nonprofessional organisation of their activity. Instead, this term was invariably used in a self-deprecating way, not indicating that legitimacy or pride was derived from these roots. In keeping with other scholars' observations in China (for example Jones 2013: 28), use of the label seems best understood as a humble way of acknowledging a perceived lack of sophistication in their activity, and unworthiness to be called 'professional'. In this sense *minjian* is better allied with another common label circulating in the events, *yeyu* (amateur).

On first glance, then, Wuhan's street shows might easily be characterised as expressions of the will of real people. They see local residents making meaningful interventions into the activity of the areas immediately around their homes, gathering with others with whom they can form lasting relationships, and often participating actively in music in a way that is regular and incorporated into their everyday routines. The kinds of social life that are bottom-up in organisation and are founded upon the emotional energy of personal relationships epitomise the *Gemeinschaft* version of community. In addition, I come to the conclusion that any alignment of *jiqing guangchang* with community over society is again felt most strongly in embodied experience, rather than one given particular meaning on a rationalised and ideological level.

There also exist, however, some compelling reasons to question this alignment. It is at this point that I begin to turn to the main discussion of binary and dialectical modes of interpretation that form the substance of my wider conclusions. First, it is worth questioning the meaningfulness of separating the emotion of community and the bureaucracy of society so sharply. I noted in Chapter 4 that the gift economy is a useful tool for understanding how tasks can be achieved in Chinese social life. This and other manifestations of instrumental relationships (*guanxi*) are mechanisms for overcoming the rigidity of institutional society.

They serve as a reminder that human relationships, interpersonal obligations and morality permeate all kinds of scenarios in which human interaction is involved, not only grassroots ones. It should not be assumed that the societal or institutional world of bureaucracy is remote from the connections, favours, bribes and interpersonal dynamics that this discourse of community equates inflexibly to less official areas of life.

Along with the potential of the bureaucratic world to be influenced by the whims of human relations, it is also important to acknowledge that, on the other extreme, a pure and disinterested picture of communal life is equally problematic. A theoretical simplification of this kind would seem unable to reflect the complexity of real-world situations. Street music events do not exist in a community bubble, fully isolated from the dynamics of institutional society. In fact, the two poles of this discourse are linked far more closely. I highlighted earlier in the thesis, for instance, that despite their apparent autonomy, groups are ultimately dependent on the authorities for their ability to thrive. While emitters of public-space music organise themselves and coexist autonomously, for instance through negotiating sonic niches, this autonomy applies only to a point. The relationship between this kind of activity and the wider public is mediated by the authorities, often in direct ways. It is commonplace for the police to enter the performance arena and to demand on behalf of local residents that the volume of the music be reduced. More seriously, it is far from rare for thriving shows to be barred from their chosen locations and forced to relocate, and I found that this could easily strike a blow from which individual events would be unable to recover. Thus, despite expressing a degree of grassroots independence, ultimately *jiqing guangchang* shows are at the mercy of more powerful entities.

As well as through direct intervention, governmental and institutional impact is also felt in the indirect influences that shape all kinds of modes and conventions of expression by which people communicate in situations such as street performance. The musical material is produced and disseminated through the highly regulated and bureaucratic music and media industries, and some of the events show state TV galas as pre-show entertainment. Thus, they are in no way isolated from the concerns and structures of wider society. In his investigation of the sounds of Islam in Middle Eastern cities, Charles Hirschkind thoroughly deconstructs discourses of purity in self-organisation. With particular reference to the qualities of 'publics' outlined by Michael Warner (which I have already made reference to), he calls the autonomy implied in this kind of interpretation a "fiction," arguing that it:

> […] builds in a structural blindness to the material conditions of the discourses
> it produces and circulates, as well as to the pragmatics of its speech forms: the
> genres, stylistic elements, citational resources, gestural codes, and so on that
> make a discourse intelligible to specific people inhabiting certain conditions of
> knowledge and learning. (Hirschkind 2006: 106)

In this context, then, although a public or community involved in musical activity may appear to be entirely independent, the success of its activity is fundamentally underpinned by a host of basic commonalities that allow participants to share an understanding of the world and to engage with each other.

It is important to consider where these basic commonalities originate. On a fundamental level, one factor worth considering is the language used to organise and carry out the events. The Mandarin dialect and the simplified set of written Chinese characters (*jiantizi*) prevail in this situation not simply as the result of an 'organic' evolution, but due to the deliberate efforts of the government over the last 65 years. Wuhan's public spaces still contain information posters encouraging citizens to use Mandarin at all times. In fact, it is revealing that while the on-microphone elements of *jiqing guangchang* are almost entirely conducted in Mandarin, in behind-the-scenes conversations between insiders and spectators, the Wuhan dialect is widely spoken. Indeed, another occasional deviation from Mandarin at the shows is particularly illustrative of the significance of the language issue. Once or twice I heard singers perform Cantonese-dialect songs, whose lyrics would have been largely incomprehensible to the average Wuhan resident. The expressions of localness in these songs that might be meaningful to audiences in Hong Kong or other Cantonese-speaking areas are essentially lost when the songs are transplanted into a culture unfamiliar with the terms of reference upon which they are based. While these rare forays into a foreign culture are tolerated by the Wuhan audience as a novelty, it would be impossible to base a whole event on texts that do not speak clearly to the majority.

Societal influences permeate these events on several levels, even though their organisation seems tightly aligned with the communal. Behind even apparently highly organic activities, then, there lies institutional influence that means aligning them squarely with this version of community is problematic. People organise themselves and their musical activity in ways that are relatively distant from the more overt structures of contemporary society and may even gently push against them. They are still rooted within these structures, however. How, then, can a balance be struck that allows meaningful conclusions to emerge from this particular discussion? To what extent is community, in this sense as it is distinguished from society, useful in describing *jiqing guangchang*?

The most important factor to consider is that ideal versions of both community and society here are problematic. Events cannot be extricated from the wider society of which they and their participants are part, and this means keeping in mind the complexity of influences acting upon all of the conventions, forms, practices, behaviours, places and materials. In other words, community and society are not mutually exclusive qualities, and it is not useful to think of them upon a spectrum in which a move towards one means a move away from the other. Instead, both are indispensably involved in producing the social

experience around Wuhan's street music. Just as I remarked earlier that public and intimate orientations both enable the other in the experience of music, so here again do micro- and macroscopic levels help to constitute each other, this time in the form of community and society.

(vii)   Individualism

Yet another discourse of similar prominence is one that highlights collectivism as community's key facet. Again, there is an implication that the notion can be understood in terms of what it is distinct from, this time individualism. Community is associated with highly interdependent lives and shared goals, while isolation and self-interest represent its antithesis. The theme of community's complex link to urban lifestyles continues here too, especially in scholarship that highlights segregation and orientation to the self as characteristic of the contemporary city, and often this interpretation attaches a negative judgement to urban living (Freie 1998). This is challenged, however, by an alternative point of view that is more prominent than any countering the other community discourses presented so far. Since Durkheim (1893 (1960)) argued that the division of labour in industrial societies breeds mutual dependence, scholars have taken up the idea of the 'organic solidarity' that this is said to inspire, arguing that it can be more meaningful and robust than the solidarity of kinship on which community is supposed to rest in more traditional forms of life. Among many other things, these arguments have been applied to understanding the development of the modern Chinese city. William Rowe, the historian of Hankou, one of the three historical cities that comprise cotemporary Wuhan, notes that nineteenth-century migration to this and similar places was "liberating" for newcomers, who could break free of the oppressive constraints of their former village attachments (Rowe 1984: 249-50).

So far, I have mainly characterised the orientations of *jiqing guangchang* as individualistic. This arises from a combination of their monetised underpinnings, the tangible and intangible exchanges that flow on a one-to-one level, and the apparent weakness of collective goals and forms of expression. The key practices of money-giving always occur between individuals and not groups of people, and they are bound up in the personal and social recognition that accrues to those involved. Audience responses do not involve a mass coordination of action, and in the realm of rhetoric too, the individual benefits of participation are usually emphasised over any form of group solidarity.

Actually, the situation is far more complex, and scrutinising the binary scheme of interpretation inherent in this discourse helps to reinforce a sense that this kind of approach is problematic. The first reason involves placing the activity in cultural context. Collectivism

and individualism are key concepts in the wider study of Chinese societies, probably more so than for any other of the themes I explore in this chapter. Chinese societies, taken to be those found in various territories of Asia and in diaspora contexts worldwide, have typically been categorised by sociologists and psychologists as showing strong collectivistic inclinations. These observations are often explained as going hand-in-hand with the legacies of Confucian thought (King 1985). Some scholarship, though, scrutinises the directness with which these doctrines actually translate into real-life activity, and go as far as rejecting both the notions of individualism and collectivism as meaningful in the Chinese context. Instead, tradition and ritual have been proposed as alternative pillars (Stockman 2000).

Indeed, the case of Chinese societies seems an ideal candidate for unearthing complexities in the relationships between the two categories. Here, much of the complexity stems from a distinction between in-group and out-group relationships. Interaction with the out-group – strangers and wider society – is typically supposed to be indifferent or hostile in Chinese societies, while among in-groups of family members and close friends, individuals are said to be highly committed to others, and focused on group rather than personal goals. People in these societies, then, might be considered at once neither fully collectively-orientated (as in the first case), nor entirely individually orientated (as in the second). This ambiguity hints that it may be fruitful to think of this relationship too in more dialectical terms. Collective orientation on a microscopic level could be said to emerge from and enable individual orientation on a macroscopic level.

The matter is complicated still further in light of ethnographic research. In particular, observation of altruistic and selfless behaviour among Chinese people acting in public life does not seem to support these theories of out-group hostility. Scholars have even gone as far as applying terms such as "civic community" to Chinese public life (Jankowiak 1993: 164). Likewise, the in- out-group distinction does not seem particularly meaningful in the *jiqing guangchang* context. It is difficult to identify any clear social boundary between insiders and outsiders to these musical events, and there is no sense that participants join a temporary kind of in-group. The strongly inclusive social ethos seems to render any distinction less germane. Participation is actively promoted to anyone in the vicinity regardless of background, and it is in the interests of performers and organisers to remove all boundaries to engagement. I also found no evidence that members of the audience had any notion of people who would not belong. Those I spoke to did not seem to identify the events as meant for a particular kind of person, nor did they tell me of any group that was not welcome. Again, while those that do end up participating inevitably share much in common, the casualness of participation would seem to make any kind of hostility based on social background quite unlikely. Putting this in the language of the argument that I have built so far, it seems less useful to think of individual and collective orientation as mutually-

exclusive modes of sociability, or even as particularly pertinent tools of analysis here. Both, perhaps, may contribute to a more complex picture in real social life. Thus, I consider in- and out-group orientation another example in which polar terms do not describe the experience of *jiqing guangchang* effectively.

Similar conclusions emerge when the directly performative aspects of *jiqing guangchang* are held up against this collectivism/individualism formulation. Turino's distinction between presentational and participatory performances has been relevant at several moments in the preceding chapters. Characteristics of the former include musicians being professional or specialist, and there being a clear distinction between their active role and the passivity of those fulfilling the spectator role. The latter kind of performance is associated with communal music-making in which the production of sound is a collective and active responsibility. *Jiqing guangchang* seems most intuitively to be an example of presentational performance, as specialist musicians are clearly distinguished from another group of people whose main role is to listen. In fact, I have already argued that role stratification is a major pillar of the musical and social life of the events, with Chapter 4 demonstrating that interpersonal interaction between the two groups is largely based upon exploiting various manifestations of role asymmetry to generate self-validating exchanges. I also, however, outlined how the performance frame is particularly permeable here, with on-stage practices being closely connected to surrounding activity. One manifestation of this is audience members playing an active role in the spectacle by entering the performance space to give gifts and interact directly with musicians. Another is that on-stage activity is not insulated from surrounding goings-on, and so factors in the wider environment can serve to influence the attention of participants, or otherwise affect the flow of the shows. It is also significant that the particular musical forms of *jiqing guangchang* also play a part in enabling and encouraging this participation. In the roster of solo singers, spectators have a clear focal point for their attention and gifts. Were the music performed to be of a different kind, for example played by an instrumental ensemble, it is difficult to imagine there being the same kind of potential for interpersonal contact between performer and audience, or indeed the same level of audience participation in the shows. I put this down mainly to practical issues involving the accessibility of performers rather than to the issues of good and bad performance that I discussed above.

These factors all serve to reduce the role stratification to a level far different to those seen in other contexts, such as the ideal concert hall performance. They perhaps afford non-musicians an unusual ability to participate on their own terms, coming and going and giving attention as they please rather than submitting to the conventions imposed by more central actors. Of course, role stratification itself should not be taken as the enemy of community. It would be simplistic to imagine any real-life context in which people engage with each other

without heterogeneity in the roles played. More significant is the extent and variety with which participants of all kinds at *jiqing guangchang* have the chance to participate in each other's experience. These events do not prescribe responses, but instead allow participants scope to engage enthusiastically or undemonstratively, and even to leave the arena at any time they choose. From this perspective, influence over proceedings is concentrated less in the hands of important individuals and is instead shared more evenly on a collective basis.

For these reasons, then, the distinction between participation and presentation too seems less rigid here. Once again, elements aligned with each one enable the other, and the social experience depends upon both. It also seems less meaningful to see *jiqing guangchang's* performative forms as reason to associate the events either with the community of collective orientation, or with the opposite, individual orientation. Neither collectivism/individualism nor participation/presentation are solid categories in this real social context. In certain musical scenarios, it has been shown very effectively that collectivism and individualism coexist and interrelate meaningfully. Chernoff, for instance, describes community as "the forum within which individualism is realised" in the context of African drum idioms (Chernoff 1979: 162), and that communities "build ethnic solidarity and cohesion from individualism rather than conformity" (ibid.). Martin Clayton (forthcoming) also highlights this synergy, stressing "the individual and personal benefits that may accrue through the increased sense of belonging to a collective that musical interactions seem capable of bringing."

As I discussed while theorising about the ontology of public space in the city when I concluded Chapter 2, the pursuit of individual goals is enabled not by social and sonic isolation, but by actors embracing co-existence on a communal basis. In this sense, community is not extraordinary and fleeting as in communitas, but a background condition against which heterogeneity thrives. Thus, it should perhaps not be surprising that community is not thrust into the foreground in the symbolism or rhetoric surrounding the *jiqing guangchang* social world. Instead, it remains understated as a mundane and reliable pillar of the social life that is embodied here.

(viii) Economics

I began discussion of *jiqing guangchang's* economic processes with reference to popular and folk music. Systems of patronage on display at the events – along with the modes by which musical material is transmitted – can be understood as part of a two-phase process involving what I characterised as folk-isation. Musical material created in one context is adapted and made meaningful in another, and these meanings are central to the social life that I discussed in the last chapter. My main conclusion is that the commercial

origins of events' musical material, together with the centrality of money-exchange to their social world, do not necessarily reduce the meaningfulness of community as a notion in understanding *jiqing guangchang*. These economic practices might intuitively align events with the societal (*Gesellschaft*) rather than the communal (*Gemeinschaft*), but in fact, they are better interpreted as illustration of an intertwinement of the two realms in real experience. Once again, intimate-scale interactive dynamics and processes rooted in less personalised or publicly-orientated realms are interdependent.

Economic exchanges emerge from and feed back into interpersonal ones involving face-to-face interaction, emotional energy, moral dealings, and so on. In this light, an antithetical relationship can be reinterpreted so that another duality – this time involving community on one hand, and monetised musical practices and orientations on the other – becomes a relationship of mutual dependence in which the two help to constitute each other. Central to this is understanding that musical products can be both commodities with exchange value, while still being involved in meaningful interpersonal relationships. The gifts exchanged around performances are tied up in the complexities of the dealings between people known to each other on an individual basis, involving the history of their contact, the balance of reciprocal obligation that currently exists between them, and what effect upon the relationship a gift might produce. Another contributing factor is the impact of the moment and manner in which a gift is given, how it is witnessed, and the wider social capital that it can generate.

Similar conclusions can be drawn by relating economic issues to the discussions of community and individualism. The individual orientation of events' money-exchange practices feed off and enable collective meaning. In the discussions of community throughout this thesis, it has been my intention to avoid implicit value judgements about which social phenomena and forms of association are more desirable than others. I am not motivated to *search* for community, but instead to understand *if* it is useful here. Thus, it is worth adding a note of caution about implying particular value in extensive interpersonal interaction. There should not be a romanticised sense that such a phenomenon validates the social experience. Instead, I stress that the economic relationships between performers and audience members are far from evidence of a purity of community spirit and disinterested generosity. In any real social situation, there exists an interplay between different modes of sociability, scales of meaning, and mechanisms of aggregation.

Final Conclusions

Community has often been explained with reference to place, and at other times situated in distinction to society or individuality. It has also been aligned with certain genres of music, and understood in terms of a social situation's insiders and outsiders. To this I have added discussion of other realms in which community might be fostered and expressed, including spatiality and materiality, temporality, economics, and participants' representations. I have outlined ways in which, taken in isolation, these understandings of community resonate in the experience of *jiqing guangchang*, and other ways in which they are less germane. The events display, for instance, a grassroots organisation that seems to align them with the communal over the societal; they enable a kind of frequent and concentrated interaction between participants that is reminiscent of archetypal bounded lifestyles; and they force musical material through a process of folk-isation that brings some features of its economic and transmission systems into line with those associated with archetypal community music-making. Likewise, some features of events' musical material and practices are closely connected to everyday life, and sound is instrumental in drawing barriers between the sonic niches occupied by different communities of practice. On the other hand, however, there are various ways in which existing community discourses seem far less suited to this context. It is difficult to say, for example, that music and sound function here as icons of participants' sense of their local place, and the events' ethos of inclusivity seems at odds with the ideological boundaries that are sometimes taken as the hallmark of community belonging. Similarly, individualistic elements in the behaviour of audiences and in the financial structures behind the events are difficult to reconcile with notions of collective orientation.

To navigate these ambiguities, I recognise that binary forms of analysis are fundamentally limited. The alignment of activities, assemblages and events displaying any of the qualities that I have discussed does not necessarily imply a remoteness from other qualities that might intuitively be thought of as incompatible or contrasting. Instead, a key foundation for the understanding of community, and perhaps other social phenomena in musical experience, should be the synergy that operates between different modes of experience. Community should not be thought as whatever remains when everything institutional, individualistic, impersonal, indirect, popular, mundane, non-partisan, heterogeneous or urban is excluded. Instead, I consider community in *jiqing guangchang* to be enabled by each of these elements – even though they may not intuitively be aligned with the notion – just much as it is by those more commonly associated with it.

Thus, while *jiqing guangchang* is an example of grassroots organisation and it displays elements of resistance to formal structures, it nonetheless works with these

constraints to find a place to operate, to encounter its musical material, and to develop the themes that bring the participants together. Likewise, although much of the motivation at the events appears to be individualistic, these pursuits are only enabled by the events successfully producing a platform of collective experience, mutual orientation and shared definition of space and activity. The deterritorialised products of the national and international music industry (Ho 2003: 144-5) actually serve to stimulate music-making that could hardly be more inherently place-based and bounded in territory than *jiqing guangchang*. The events are at once generic and unplaced, and intensely local, and extracting either element would mean that the other could not thrive. Likewise, the musical material and the ways in which it is performed inspire both indifference but also a crucial sense of inclusivity. The universal and the local, the public and the intimate, exchanges tied to commodities and those rooted in human contact all exist in similar dialectical relationships. Any given social scenario cannot be a pure exemplar of one or other extreme, but in fact may show a complex mix. *Jiqing guangchang's* social world is dependent on both of each pair of concepts, whose manifestations enable and constitute each other. The theme running through the various domains in which I have applied this dialectical or synergetic approach is the mutual reliance of micro- and macro-level processes.

As I reach the overall conclusions of this thesis, it is worth emphasising three key points. I mentioned at the outset that I was inspired to explore idealised versions of community and the tendency of some scholarship to assume that this concept could not be aligned with urban experience. The case of *jiqing guangchang* is indicative that in contemporary Chinese city life, community can be a meaningful perspective to bring to understanding musical experiences. In this sense, I do not necessarily see a clear break between rural musical traditions and contemporary urban musical life. Another important message to emphasise is that community is not only a useful part of the interpretation in situations where issues of minority appeal are represented in a group's cultural expressions. Scholars often highlight the transcendental, binding, subversive or remarkable effects of musical activity. Perhaps more often, though, music is involved in mundane and even forgettable experiences in which the engagement is less committed. These circumstances should not be neglected when seeking to understand music's meaning. Finally, through scrutinising all of the discourses and manifestations of community in this context, I have meant to question the usefulness of valorising the phenomenon. Acknowledging synergy and complexity undermines thinking that, for instance, assumes 'traditional' music to have a monopoly on interpersonal meaning, or that 'elite' or impersonal musics are the only forms to be monetised. In turn, this can serve to expose the futility of assuming some forms or qualities to be more inherently valuable than others.

(i)   Implications for further research

Central to the contribution that I intend to make with this thesis is presenting an approach to music and community that may be put towards understanding a more representative range of musical experiences. Circumstances where fervent belonging makes community a clearly relevant tool have been thoroughly explored. The notion may also be significant, however, in the understanding of musical experiences in other contexts. In contemporary urban situations in particular, ritualised and transcendental music-making bound up with divisive identity issues is far from alone in engendering collective meaning. In fact, this kind of music-making may actually be anomalous in the greater picture of music's place in contemporary life. My analysis, which particularly emphasises non-representational elements, may enhance an understanding of music and community in everyday, mundane or forgettable contexts. These may nonetheless account for a more representative picture of how music is experienced.

The thesis, therefore, develops away from important existing models for approaching musical performance, social life and community. Here I explain how it can contribute to the development of scholarship through further study in other contexts. I intend to add, for instance, to Shelemay's (2011) scheme of understanding musical communities, which categorises them as involving descent, dissent and affinity. Many of the divergences between this and my approach result from my decision to turn away from the notion of musical *communities* as entities, in favour of musical *community* as a quality. This is significant because it encourages understandings to be broadened from a focus upon how people understand themselves as belonging to groups, to a consideration for a richer and more comprehensive range of conditions. My final conclusions involve the benefits of understanding community in terms of synergies and dialectics. I argue that these conclusions could contribute to more effective ways of understanding music's place in social phenomena beyond community. Traditional and modern, global and local, hegemonic and subversive are just some of the themes of current interest to ethnomusicologists whose understanding could incorporate various aspects of the dialectical approach.

Turino begins his influential book on music as social life with an assertion that musical sounds are "often at the heart of our most profound social occasions and experiences" (Turino 2008: 1). I intend this study of *jiqing guangchang* to provoke interest in music's place in occasions and experiences falling outside of Turino's definition of the profound, and to show why these situations are important. It is hard to argue that many of *jiqing guangchang's* participants would consider experiences transcendental, transformative or indispensable. I question any implication, however, that this makes the Chinese streets and other similar contexts less significant as an object of study. Experiences with music in

which these kinds of profundity are not achieved may in fact be just as significant for their commonness. In many situations, music is meaningful as a pillar of typical rather than extraordinary lived experiences.

Thus, future research emerging from this work might explore music in situations where it inspires not strong engagement but *indifference*. Turino's introduction goes on to raise a distinction between music encountered through traditional performance or listening contexts, and that embedded in everyday life in other ways. Music of the kind that might come "wafting through the dentist's office like sonic wallpaper" (ibid.) is made out to be a distinct field of study. Indeed, scholars of music and everyday life have already emphasised music's power as the instrument of shifts and changes in various realms, including personal moods, identities and collective experiences (DeNora 2000). Less work that I am aware of focuses on music in everyday life that does not immediately seem to demonstrate these powerful effects; music that is ignored, inspires boredom (Anderson 2004), or is considered inconsequential. Study of music and indifference could be carried out through examination of various kinds of encounters in a number of locations and contexts. My experiences in China, in particular, convince me that many other street music contexts are relatively insulated from divisive issues of an overtly political, ethnic or religious nature, and are often met with apathy. Despite or perhaps because of these lukewarm responses, such performances might still reveal much about the experience of music that stems from its material realities, those I have begun to explore in this thesis.

I have provided a model for exploring community that could transcend a distinction between traditional and everyday encounters with music. My inclusive and dialectical approach to community has potential to be a mode of analysis common to both types of context. *Jiqing guangchang* is at once an encounter sharing many similarities with the standard performance model, while also showing a similar highly context-dependent multiplicity of response that can accompany encounters with music in everyday life. My concern for multiplicity, synergy and the pre-rational are ways of bringing topics familiar from traditional music encounters (including community) into everyday contexts. This could be extended with similar examinations of other aspects of musical, cultural and social experience, including tradition, change, globalisation, and so on.

To the Chinese context specifically, I have aimed to contribute a scrutiny of certain assumptions that can shape our understanding of music here. In particular, I have questioned the rural/urban divide, as well as various facets of the Confucian legacy that continue to mould approaches. Future work might test my theoretical line in contexts where some of the everyday mundanity of the *jiqing guangchang* context is combined with what I argued is absent here, a strong sense of rationalised belonging. The relative weight of ideological and non-representational meanings in constructing belonging could be tested in contexts where

urban popular music inspires greater degrees of devotion and clearer senses of boundary. Fans of particular Chinese popular musicians, for instance, might associate far more strongly with the music and resulting collectivities. When these groups have been studied, however, the actual embodied practices of the musical encounter are rarely examined in depth. Analysis of niche popular music genres and its performance in subcultural venues such as Wuhan's Vox Livehouse might reveal how the material of sound and space intersect with ideologies of belonging in creating a full picture of collective experience. Likewise, larger-scale popular music performances of a more mainstream kind often attract committed and partisan followings from young audiences. The actual encounter with the music here too may hold potential for exploring the relative significance of pre-rational and ideological issues in group involvement. Extending the dialectical approach to a new set of social conditions, exploring the relationships between embodied coexistence and ideological commitment, and between belonging and indifference are all potential avenues of further research to which I intend this thesis to contribute.

Appendix: List of Songs

Song name	Example recording(s)		Notes
Ai zai tiandi jian 爱在天地间 Love between heaven and the Earth	Zu Hai 祖海 2003		
Aide daijia 爱的代价 The price of love	Zhang Aijia 张艾嘉 1992	Li Zongsheng 李宗盛 2004	M[11]
Aide shijie zhi you ni 爱的世界只有你 In the world of love there is only you	Qi Long 祁隆 2013		M
Aide sinian 爱的思念 Love's longing	Yangjin Lanze 央金兰泽 2008		
Aiqing cuojue 爱情错觉 Love illusion	Wang Ya 王娅 2009		
Aiqing maimai 爱情买卖 Love bargain	Murong Xiaoxiao 慕容晓晓 2009		
Aiqing wanwan sui 爱情万万岁 Long live love	Gao An 高安 2011		M
Aiqing zhe bei jiu shei he dou dei zui 爱情这杯酒谁喝都得醉 Whoever drinks from the cup of love must get intoxicated	Yan Xu 闫旭 2011		M
Aiqing zhuanshuquan 爱情专属权 Love's exclusive rights	Long Meizi & Lao Mao 龙梅子 & 老猫 2011		
An Yu xinli you ge ni 安宇心里有个你 There is a you in An Yu's heart	An Yu 安宇 2010		
Babai li dongting wode jia 八百里洞庭我的家 *Babai li dongting* my home	Li Qiong 李琼 1999		M
Baihu 白孤 Arctic fox	Chen Rui 陈瑞 2007		
Baitian bu dong yede hei 白天不懂夜的黑 The day can't understand the night's blackness	Na Ying 那英 1995		
Baiwan ge wen 百万个吻 A million kisses	Chen Mingzhen 陈明真 1995		
Beijingde jinshan shang 北京的金山上 On Beijing's Jin Mountain	Caidan Zhuoma 才旦卓玛 1972	Han Hong 韩红 1998	M, also played by musicians entertaining diners at Jiqing Street

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[11] M = song heard performed multiple times, by different singers at different *jiqing guangchang* events.

Bie rang wo yigeren zui 别让我一个人醉 Don't let it only be me that's intoxicated	Mei Yuheng 姜育恒 1993	
Bing gege 兵哥哥 Army brother	Song Zuying 宋祖英 1996	
Boli xin 玻璃心 Heart of glass	Qi Qin 齐秦 1991	M
Bu shi yinwei jimo cai xiang ni 不是因为寂寞才想你 It's not because I'm lonely that I miss you	Tao Yuyu 陶钰玉 2009	
Bu xiang huijia de nüren 不想回家的女人 Woman who doesn't want to go home	Da Zhe 大哲 2014	
Bye-bye	Zhang Zhenyue 张震岳 2004	
Chenglide yueguang 城里的月光 Moonlight in the city	Xu Meijing 许美静 1995	
Chi dao 迟到 Arriving late	Liu Wenzheng 刘文正 1981	
Chi laide ai 迟来的爱 Love that comes late	Liu Maoshan 刘茂山 1987	
Chuang matou 闯码头 Going it alone	Da Zhe 大哲 2011	
Chuang wai 窗外 Outside the window	Li Chen 李琛 1999	
Chuanqi 传奇 Legend	Wang Fei 王菲 2003	M
Chuliao ni 除了你 Except with you	Han Baoyi 韩宝仪 1987	
Chun nuan hua kai 春暖花开 Flowers bloom in the warmth of spring	Zhou Yanhong 周艳泓 2001	
Cuoguo yuanfen cuoguo ni 错过缘分错过你 Missed my destiny, missed you	Leng Mo 冷漠 2012	
Da di feige 大地飞歌 Mother Earth *feige*	Song Zuying 宋祖英 1999	
Dayue zai dongji 大约在冬季 Probably in winter	Qi Qin 齐秦 1987	
Dianran yi gen yan 点燃一根烟 Light a cigarette	Li Yuying 林玉英 1990	

Deng ni dengle name jiu 等你等了那么久 Waited so long for you	Qi Long 祁隆 2012	M
Dongfang hong 东方红 The East is red	Li Youyuan (arr.) 李有源 1943	Lin Lin 林琳 2009	
Dong ni 懂你 Understand you	Man Wenjun 满文军 1994	
Er xing qianli 儿行千里 A son who travels a thousand miles	Li Qiong 李琼 1999	M
Fanshen nongnu ba ge chang 翻身农奴把歌唱 The emancipated serf sings a song	Caidan Zhuoma 才旦卓玛 1954	M
Fenhongde huiyi 粉红的回忆 Memories in pink	Han Baoyi 韩宝仪 1985	
Fenmo ren sheng 粉墨人生 A life in regalia	Lingdian (band) 零点乐队 1997	
Fuqin 父亲 Father	Jiangyang Zhuoma 降央卓玛 2007	
Ganbei pengyou 干杯朋友 Cheers friend	Tian Zhen 田震 1997	
Gandong tian gandong di 感动天感动地 Moving heaven, moving the Earth	Yu Tongfei 宇桐非 2007	M
Ganende xin 感恩的心 Grateful heart	Ouyang Feifei 欧阳菲菲 1994	M, also basis for instrumental interlude
Genzhe ganjue zou 跟着感觉走 Following the feeling	Su Rui 苏芮 1988	
Gongxi facai 恭喜发财 Greetings and prosperity	Liu Dehua 刘德华 2005	Basis for instrumental interlude
Gungun Changjiang dong shi shui 滚滚长江东逝水 The rolling Yangtze passing to the east	Yang Hongji 杨洪基 1994	
Guo he 过河 Crossing the river	Pan Changjiang & Yan Shuping 潘长江 & 阎淑萍 1996	
Hao nanren 好男人 Good man	Zhang Gaozhe 张镐哲 2004	
Hao ren yi sheng ping'an 好人一生平安 A peaceful life	Li Na 李娜 1991	
Hetang yuese 荷塘月色 Moonlight on the lotus pond	Fenghuang Chuanqi 凤凰传奇 2010	M

Hongchen qingge 红尘情歌 The ballad of the red dust	Gao An & Hei Yazi 高安 & 黑鸭子 2011	M
Honghu shui lang da lang 洪湖水浪打浪 Waves on Hong Lake	Wang Yuzhen 王玉珍 1959	Song Zuying 宋祖英 2000
Hongyan 鸿雁 Swan goose	Husileng 呼斯楞 2010	M
Houlai 后来 Later	Liu Ruoying 刘若英 2000	
Huainian zhanyou 怀念战友 Thinking of comrades	Li Shirong 李世荣 1963	
Huanghe lou 黄鹤楼 Yellow Crane Tower	Tan Jing 谭晶 2006	
Huangtu gaopo 黄土高坡 Hills of yellow earth	Fan Linlin 范琳琳 1988	
Jiao yi sheng wode ge 叫一声我的哥 Call to you my brother	Bai Zhiyao 白致瑶 2002	
Jin sheng aide jiu shi ni 今生爱的就是你 In this life the one I love is you	Qi Long 祁隆 2013	
Jin sheng xiang ai 今生相爱 Loving each other in this life	Ze Edan & Zha Xicuo 泽尔丹 & 扎西措 2009	
Kantou aiqing kantou ni 看透爱情看透你 Seeing through love, seeing through you	Leng Mo 冷漠 2009	
Kuqi de meigui 哭泣的玫瑰 Weeping rose	Xing Meimei 邢美美 2008	
Lao difang de yu 老地方的雨 Rain in the old place	Lao Ge 老葛 Date unknown	M
Lei man tian 泪满天 Tear-filled sky	Long Meizi 龙梅子 2003	M
Li bu kai ni 离不开你 Can't leave you	Liu Huan 刘欢 1987	M
Lian'ai baifenbai 恋爱百分百 Hundred percent love	Cai Yilin 蔡依林 2004	
Liande xinshi 莲的心事 The lotus seed's obsession	Wulan Tuoya 乌兰托娅 2009	
Likai ni bing fei shi wo yuanyi 离开你并非是我愿意 Leaving you is not what I wanted	Chen Rui 陈瑞 2009	

Liu san jie 刘三姐 Three Liu sisters	Zu Hai 祖海 2009	
Lu biande yehua buyao cai 路边的野花不要采 Don't pick the roadside flowers	Deng Lijun 邓丽君 1973	
Lüdao xiaoyequ 绿岛小夜曲 Green island serenade	Deng Lijun 邓丽君 1976	M
Lü xuanfeng 绿旋风 Green whirlwind	Fenghuang Chuanqi 凤凰传奇 2011	
Malanhua 马兰花 Iris	Alima 阿丽玛 2005	
Meilan meilan wo ai ni 梅兰梅兰我爱你 Merlin I love you	Liu Wenzheng 刘文正 1978	M
Mingtian shifou yiran ai wo 明天是否依然爱我 Will you still love me tomorrow	Tong Ange 童安格 1989	
Mingyun bu shi lulu 命运不是辘轳 Destiny is not a windlass	Wei Wei 韦唯 1991	
Na jiu shi wo 那就是我 That is me	Zhu Fengbo 朱逢博 1982	
Nai he 奈何 How	Deng Lijun 邓丽君 1980	
Ni dui wo tai zhongyao 你对我太重要 You are very important to me	T.R.Y. 2006	M
Ni rang wo gandong 你让我感动 You move me	Chen Sisi 陈思思 2001	
Nongjiade xiao nühai 农家的小女孩 Little peasant girl	Zhuo Yiting 卓依婷 1997	
Nufangde shengming 怒放的生命 Life in full bloom	Wang Feng 汪峰 2005	
Nü fuma 女驸马 Consort	Li Lingyu 李玲玉 Date unknown	
Pengyou 朋友 Friends	Zhou Huajian 周华健 1997	Played by musicians entertaining diners at Jiqing Street
Ouduan silian 藕断丝连 Together in spirit	Chen Rui 陈瑞 2008	
Qizi 妻子 Wife	Tan Jing 谭晶 2004	

Qian nian deng yi hui 千年等一回 A thousand years waiting for your return	Gao Shengmei 高胜美 1992	M
Qiangua nide ren shi wo 牵挂你的人是我 The one who cares for you is me	Gao Linsheng 高林生 1993	
Qingge 2012 情歌 2012 Ballad of 2012	Jin Ze & Xu Jiahui 金泽 & 许佳慧 2013	
Qingren 情人 Lover	Huang Pinyuan 黄品源 2004	M
Qingzang Gaoyuan 青藏高原 The Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau	Han Hong 韩红 2001	M
Qinmi airen 亲密爱人 Intimate lover	Mei Yanfang 梅艳芳 1991	
Qinqin de molihua 亲亲的茉莉花 Dear jasmine	Li Danyang 李丹阳 1999	
Qingqing de gaosu ni 轻轻地告诉你 Telling you gently	Yang Yuying 杨钰莹 1993	
Quan shi ai 全是爱 It is all love	Fenghuang Chuanqi 凤凰传奇 2009	
Rang wo huanxi rang wo you 让我欢喜让我忧 Give me joy, give me anguish	Zhou Huajian 周华健 1991	
Ri bu luo 日不落 The sun doesn't set	Cai Yilin 蔡依林 2007	M
Ruguo ni ai wo jiu bie shanghai wo 如果你爱我就别伤害我 If you love me don't hurt me	Liu Jialiang 刘嘉亮 2004	M
Ruguo ni jia gei wo 如果你嫁给我 If you gave me your hand	Pang Long 庞龙 2007	
Sanbai liushiwu ge zhufu 三百六十五个祝福 365 blessings	Cai Guoqing 蔡国庆 1991	
Shan lu shiba wan 山路十八弯 Eighteen bends on the mountain road	Li Qiong 李琼 2002	
Shandandan kai hua hongyanyan 山丹丹开花红艳艳 The lily blooms a brilliant red	Zhu Fengbo 朱逢博 1972	
Shang bu qi 伤不起 Can't be hurt	Wang Lin 王麟 2011	M
Shei shi wode lang 谁是我的郎 Who will be my man	Yang Zi 杨梓 2013	M

Shenshen de xihuan ni 深深的喜欢你 Like you deeply	Qiu Niao 囚鸟 2009	M
Shenqide Jiuzhai 神奇的九寨 Magical Jiuzhai	Yangjin Lanze 央金兰泽 1999	
Sisi niannian quan shi ni 思思念念全是你 My longing is all you	Gao An 高安 2011	
Superstar	S.H.E. 2003	
Ta bu ai wo 他不爱我 He doesn't love me	Jin Sha 金莎 2012	
Ta lang 踏浪 Splashing about in the waves	Shen Yan 沈雁 1979	
Taihu mei 太湖美 Beautiful Tai Lake	Zhu Fengbo 朱逢博 1978	
Tao ma gan 套马杆 Horse lasso	Wulan Tuoya 乌兰托娅 2010	
Taohua yun 桃花运 Lucky in love	Yang Yuying 杨钰莹 2001	
Tian lu 天路 Heavenly road	Gong Yue 龚玥 2007	M
Tian mimi 甜蜜蜜 Sweetheart	Deng Lijun 邓丽君 1979	M
Tian xia zui mei 天下最美 The most beautiful under heaven	Ha Sang 哈桑 2007	
Tianlai chuanqi 天籁传奇 The legend of nature	Fenghuang Chuanqi 凤凰传奇 2010	
Waipo de Penghu Wan 外婆的澎湖湾 Granma's Penghu Bay	Pan Anbang 潘安邦 1979	Singer persuaded by audience to change selection after announcing song (Chapter 3)
Wan shui qian shan zongshi qing 万水千山总是情 The water and the mountains are my feelings	Wang Mingquan 汪明荃 1982	
Wang ningmei 枉凝眉 Love in vain	Chen Li 陈力 1987	M
Wangluo zhenqing ye you wo he ni 网络真情也有我和你 True feeling online also includes you and me	Yu Jian 玉建 2011	
Wei ai chikuang 为爱痴狂 Mad for love	Liu Ruoying 刘若英 1995	

Weile qing 未了情 Unfinished feeling	Fan Linlin 范琳琳 1992		
Weile shei 为了谁 For whom	Zu Hai 祖海 1998		M
Wo ai ni Zhongguo 我爱你中国 I love you China	Ye Peiying 叶佩英 1979		
Wo ceng yongxin aizhe ni 我曾用心爱着你 I once loved you sincerely	Pan Meichen 潘美辰 1988		M
Wode aiqing wo qinshou maizang 我的爱情我亲手埋葬 Burying love with my own hands	Xiao Yue 晓月 Date unknown		
Wode gesheng li 我的歌声里 In my song	Qu Wanting 曲婉婷 2012	Yi Shi (band) 衣湿乐队 2013	
Wode hao xiongdi 我的好兄弟 My comrade	Gao Jin & Xiao Shenyang 高进 & 小沈阳 2009		
Wode Zhongguo xin 我的中国心 My Chinese heart	Zhang Mingmin 张明敏 1982		
Wo jia zai Zhongguo 我家在中国 My home is in China	Zu Hai 祖海 2007		
Wo shifou ye zai ni xinzhong 我是否也在你心中 Am I in your heart	Gao An & Qiu Niao 高安 & 囚鸟 2008		M
Wo yao baozhe ni 我要抱着你 I want to embrace you	Pang Long 庞龙 2005		M
Wo yong zijide fangshi ai ni 我用自己的方式爱你 Loving you in my own way	Chen Mingzhen 陈明真 1991		M
Wo zhi zaihu ni 我只在乎你 I only care for you	Deng Lijun 邓丽君 1987		M
Wunaide sixu 无奈的思绪 Helpless mood	Han Baoyi 韩宝仪 1987		M
Xia yi beizi bu zuo nüren 下一辈子不做女人 Not to be a woman in the next life	Chen Rui 陈瑞 2005		M
Xianchu nide aixin 献出你的爱心 Give your compassion	Song Zuying 宋祖英 1998		
Xiao cheng gushi 小城故事 Small town story	Deng Lijun 邓丽君 1978		M
Xiao pingguo 小苹果 Little apple	Kuaizi Xiongdi 筷子兄弟 2014		M

Xiaoxiaode xinniang hua 小小的新娘花 Little bridal flowers	Yun Feifei 云菲菲 2007	M
Xiang lian 乡恋 Longing for home	Li Guyi 李谷一 1979	Pioneering Chinese popular song (mentioned Chapter 3), not heard at *jiqing guangchang*
Xiang tian zai jie wubai nian 向天再借五百年 Five hundred years borrowed from heaven	Han Lei 韩磊 2001	
Xiang'ai dao fangqi 相爱到放弃 From falling in love to giving up	Qi Long 祁隆 2011	
Xiangjian hen wan 相见恨晚 Finally meeting	Peng Jiahui 彭佳慧 2002	
Xiangjian wu jishi 相见无几时 Only met a few times	Liu Ziling 刘紫玲 2007	M
Xiangside zhai 相思的债 Lovesick debt	Chen Rui 陈瑞 2009	
Xiexie ni chang jide wo 谢谢你常记得我 Thank you for often thinking of me	Deng Lijun 邓丽君 1977	
Xiexie ni rang wo zheme ai ni 谢谢你让我这么爱你 Thank you for letting me love you like this	Ke Yimin 柯以敏 2005	
Xin yu 心雨 Rain of the heart	Li Bihua 李碧华 1987	
Xin zai tiao qing zai shao 心在跳情在烧 Palpitating heart, feverish passion	Xie Jun 谢军 2007	M
Xuerande fengcai 血染的风采 The blood red spirit	Xu Liang 徐良 1987	
Xueshan Ajia 雪山阿佳 Ajia from the snowy mountains	Baima Duoji 白玛多吉 2012	M
Yao a yao 摇啊摇 Rocking oh rocking	Wang Yilong 王绎龙 2008	
Yeliya nülang 耶利亚女郎 The girl Yeliya	Tong Ange 童安格 1989	
Yi ge mamade nüer 一个妈妈的女儿 A mother's daughter	Caidan Zhuoma 才旦卓玛 Date unknown	Hei Yazi 黑鸭子 2006	
Yi qu xiang song 一曲相送 A song for each other	Tu Yage 图桠格 2011	M

Yi sheng wu hui 一生无悔 A lifetime without regret	Gao An & Hang Jiao 高安 & 杭娇 2012	M
Yidongde xin 驿动的心 Restless heart	Mei Yuheng 姜育恒 1987	
Yiwan ge duibuqi 一万个对不起 Ten thousand apologies	Qi Long 祁隆 2013	
Yiwan ge shebude 一万个舍不得 Hating to part ten thousand times	Zhuang Xinyan 庄心妍 2013	
Yongyuan fang ni zai xindi 永远放你在心底 You are forever at the bottom of my heart	Chen Xi & Situ Lanfang 晨熙 & 司徒兰芳 2014	
You duoshao ai keyi chonglai 有多少爱可以重来 How much love can come back	Huang Zhongkun 黄仲昆 1994	
You mei you yi zhong sinian yongyuan bu pibei 有没有一种思念永不疲惫 Is there a longing that never gets tired	Xiao Yi 晓依 2010	
Yu jia guniang zai hai bian 渔家姑娘在海边 Fishing girl by the sea	Lu Qingshuang 陆青霜 1975	
Yuanfen redehuo 缘分惹得祸 Destiny stirring up trouble	An Dongyang 安东阳 2011	M
Yuanfen wuyue 缘分五月 May's destiny	Jiang Zhimin 江智民 2008	
Yueguang xiade feng wei zhu 月光下的凤尾竹 Phoenix-tail bamboo under the moonlight	Yu Shuzhen 于淑珍 1979	
Yuelaiyue hao 越来越好 Better and better	Song Zuying 宋祖英 2000	M
Yushang ni shi wode yuan 遇上你是我的缘 Meeting you is my destiny	Yangjin Lanze 央金兰泽 2006	
Yushui wo wen ni 雨水我问你 Rain, I ask you	Cai Qiufeng 蔡秋凤 2003	Hokkien-dialect basis for two songs heard at *jiqing guangchang*
Zai du chong xiangfeng 再度重相逢 Meeting once more	Wu Bai 伍佰 2003	M
Zai na taohua shengkaide difang 在那桃花盛开的地方 Where peach blossoms are in full bloom	Dong Zhenhou 董振厚 1980	
Zhen ai yi shiqing 真爱一世情 True love's social affairs	Li Yihui 李羿慧 2008	
Zhende hao xiang ni 真的好想你 I really miss you	Zhou Bingqian 周冰倩 1999	

Zhenxin huan zhenqing 真心换真情 Sincerity exchanged for real feeling	Zhang Ke'e 张可儿 2013	
Zhishao hai you ni 至少还有你 At least I still have you	Lin Yilian 林忆莲 2000	M
Zhizhuo 执着 Persevering	Tian Zhen 田震 1996	M
Zhiyao ni guo de bi wo hao 只要你过得比我好 As long as you are doing better than me	Jiang Shu'na 江淑娜 1990	
Zhu ni ping'an 祝你平安 Wishing you well	Sun Yue 孙悦 1994	M
Ziyou feixiang 自由飞翔 Flying free	Fenghuang Chuanqi 凤凰传奇 2006	M
Zou jin xin shidai 走进新时代 Entering a new era	Zhang Ye 张也 1997	M
Zou tianya 走天涯 Going to the end of the Earth	Ye Beiwen 叶贝文 2010	
Zuguo ni hao 祖国你好 Hello motherland	Zhang Ye 张也 2003	
Zui ai zui hen dou shi ni 最爱最恨都是你 You are the one I both love and hate most	Li Yijun 李翊君 2009	
Zui meide ge'r chang gei mama 最美的歌儿唱给妈妈 Singing the most beautiful song for mother	Jiang Dawei 蒋大为 2011	
Zui xuan minzu feng 最炫民族风 The most dazzling ethnic style	Fenghuang Chuanqi 凤凰传奇 2009	M
Zuo nide ai ren 做你的爱人 To be your lover	Rao Tianliang 饶天亮 2006	M
Zuoye 昨夜 Last night	Chen Rui 陈瑞 2007	

Glossary of Chinese Characters[12]

a	阿	prefix used in diminutive names for *jiqing guangchang* singers
Ajing	阿静	*jiqing guangchang* singer
Alian	阿莲	*jiqing guangchang* singer
anquan yinhuan	安全隐患	hidden dangers
Baituan qianchang	百团千场	A hundred troupes, a thousand stages performance series
baogong tou	包工头	foremen
Beibei	贝贝	example of a diminutive name used to refer to one particular *jiqing guangchang* singer
bianlian	变脸	element of Sichuan opera in which face masks are switched in a split second
caogen	草根	grassroots
caogen wutai	草根舞台	grassroots stage
caogen yishujia	草根艺术家	grassroots artist
changzi	场子	'venue', referring to an individual *jiqing guangchang* event
Chaoji nüsheng	超级女声	Supergirl, a television singing competition
Chengguan	城管	City Management, a branch of the police
Cui Jian	崔健	Figurehead of the late-1980s experimental rock movement
dacai	打彩	to present a *jiqing guangchang* singer with a gift
dagong	打工	to do migrant, temporary or manual labour
dagong zai	打工仔	young labourer
dama	大妈	term for senior female family members
Dandan	丹丹	example of a diminutive name used to refer to one particular *jiqing guangchang* singer
dashi	大师	great master
dengji	登记	to register
diuqian	丢钱	to throw away money
dizi	笛子	Chinese flute
erhu	二胡	Chinese fiddle
ganbu	干部	government officials
gangtai	港台	Hong Kong and Taiwanese (songs)
Gao Xionghui	高雄辉	*jiqing guanchang* keyboard player

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[12] Chinese characters for all of the songs and associated recording artists mentioned in the thesis are given in the Appendix.

Gaoyuan shidai da wutai	高原时代大舞台	The highland era grand stage, the name of a *jiqing guangchang* event
ge	哥	big brother
gemi	歌迷	fan (of music)
gewutuan	歌舞团	song and dance troupe
gong	公	public
gonggong qiche	公共汽车	public bus, slang for sexually promiscuous woman
gongtong kuaile	共同快乐	common happiness
gongzuo renyuan	工作人员	members of staff
guangchang wu	广场舞	square dancing
guanxi	关系	relationships
guanxin	关心	to look after
guli	鼓励	encouragement
Hankou	汉口	district of Wuhan
Hanyang	汉阳	district of Wuhan
Hanyangmen	汉阳门	area of Wuhan with a small park holding *jiqing guangchang* events
hanyi	含意	implied meaning (in song lyrics)
Hanzheng *Jie*	汉正街	Hanzheng Street, a large wholesale market
hao dage	好大哥	good big brother, generic term of address for male audience members
He Tianmu	何天牧	Chinese name used by the author
heishehui beijing	黑社会背景	underworld background
hongqian zhichi	红钱支持	'red-money support', gift containing 100 *yuan* notes
Huangmei	黄梅	Huangmei, a form of opera
Hubei *dagu*	湖北大鼓	local storytelling genre
huibao	回报	reciprocity
Jianghan *Lu*	江汉路	Jianghan Road pedestrianised shopping street
Jianghan *Yi Qiao*	江汉一桥	Jianghan Bridge
Jianghe da wutai	江河大舞台	The great rivers grand stage, the name of a *jiqing guangchang* event
Jiangtan dawutai	江滩大舞台	Great riverbank stage
jianpu	简谱	cipher notation
jiantizi	简体字	simplified Chinese characters
jingdian	经典	classic
jiqing guangchang	激情广场	street music form in Wuhan
Jiqing *Jie*	吉庆街	Jiqing Street
Jiqing *Minsu Jie*	吉庆民俗街	Jiqing Folk Custom Street
Juanjuan	娟娟	potential *jiqing guangchang* singer
Kang shifu	康师傅	instant noodle brand

keren	客人	customer
Lanxing da wutai	蓝星大舞台	Blue star grand stage, the name of a *jiqing guangchang* event
laoban	老板	boss (of a *jiqing guangchang* stage)
laoge	老歌	old song, classic
laoshi	老师	teacher, master
lei	泪	tears
Li Yaguang	李亚光	composer of a version of *Huanghelou*
Li Yuchun	李宇春	singer who came to fame by winning television competition
limao	礼貌	good manners
Longzi	珑子	*jiqing guangchang* singer
Liu Zong	刘总	*jiqing guangchang* audience member and patron
liumang	流氓	rogues
liuxing	流行	popular (music)
liuxing gemi	流行歌迷	pop lovers
Wenwen	雯雯	*jiqing guangchang* singer
luanqibazao	乱七八糟	shambolic and promiscuous
mai zijide zunyan	卖自己的尊严	to sell one's dignity and honour
maichang	卖唱	'selling singing', performing for a living
maitong	买通	to pay off, bribe
maiyi	卖艺	'selling art', performing for a living
Mao Yuming	毛玉铭	*jiqing guangchang* organiser
meinü	美女	beautiful lady
Meiqi	美琪	*jiqing guangchang* singer
meiyuan	美元	(US) dollars
min'ge	民歌	folk song
minjian	民间	among the people, folk
minzu	民族	ethnic (songs)
minzu changfa	民族唱法	ethnic/national singing style
minzu liuxing	民族流行	ethnic popular (songs)
minzu yinyuexue	民族音乐学	ethnic/nationalities music studies, ethnomusicology
Nan'anzui *Jiangtan Gongyuan*	南岸嘴江滩公园	Nan'anzui Riverbank Park
nian ge	念歌	to learn, recite songs
nüsheng ge	女声歌	women's songs
pengchang	捧场	to praise
pengyou	朋友	friend
pipa	琵琶	Chinese lute
pofei	破费	to spend a lot, break the bank
Qingchuan *Qiao*	晴川桥	Qingchuan Bridge
qingjia	请假	to ask for leave
qinqing	亲情	the affection between family members

Yinzi	银子	*jiqing guangchang* singer
raomin	扰民	disturbing the public
re'nao	热闹	fervour and noise
renminbi	人民币	Chinese currency
saqian	撒钱	to scatter money
shangban zu	上班族	common office workers
shan'ge	山歌	mountain song, category of folk song
shanggan	伤感	sorrowful
shangren	商人	small businessmen
she	社	society
shequ	社区	'community', urban administrative entity responsible for citizens' welfare
shidiao	时调	category of folk song
shuqing	抒情	lyrical
shushu	叔叔	uncle
si	私	private
song	送	to give, to gift
songhua	送花	to present flowers
tanzi	摊子	'stand', referring to an individual *jiqing guangchang* event
Taozi	桃子	*jiqing guangchang* singer
tianci	填词	setting new words to existing melodies
tongsu	通俗	popular/common (songs)
tuanzhang	团长	(*jiqing guangchang*) group head
tuixiu zhigong	退休职工	retired staff
tuo'r	托儿	shill
Wan Houyuan	万厚元	*jiqing guangchang* organiser
Wang Pengli	王彭丽	*jiqing guangchang* singer
Wang Qiang	王强	*jiqing guangchang* audience member
Wang Yuanping	王原平	composer of a version of *Huanghelou*
Wangjiang da wutai	望江大舞台	River view grand stage, the name of a *jiqing guangchang* event
Wangjiang *Lou*	望江楼	indoor *jiqing guangchang* venue
wanhui	晚会	party
Wen Juan	文娟	*jiqing guangchang* singer
Wuchang	武昌	district of Wuhan
Wuhan *jingshen*	武汉精神	The Wuhan spirit, a slogan
wutai	舞台	'stage', referring to an individual *jiqing guangchang* event
xiaban	下班	to get off work
Xianggang	香港	Chinese name for Hong Kong
xianhua	献花	to present flowers
xiao	小	little, used in diminutive names for *jiqing guangchang* singers
Xiao Fang	小芳	*jiqing guangchang* singer

Xiao Fen	小芬	example of a diminutive name used to refer to one particular *jiqing guangchang* singer
xiao shengyi	小生意	petty business
xiaoshang fan	小商贩	small traders
xiaoye	宵夜	late-night open-air food stalls
xiaoyuan gequ	校园歌曲	campus songs/campus folk songs
xin pengyou	新朋友	new friends
Xingguang yanyi	星光演艺	Starlight performing arts, the name of a *jiqing guangchang* event
xinku	辛苦	toiling
xiqi	稀奇	curious (spectacle)
yaogun (yinyue)	摇滚（音乐）	rock (music)
Yazi	雅姿	*jiqing guangchang* singer
yeyu	业余	amateur, extra-curricula
Yezi	叶子	*jiqing guangchang* singer
yiban	一般	mediocre
yishu xuexiao	艺术学校	performing arts college
yuan	元	unit of Chinese currency
Zhang Sihong	张四红	*jiqing guangchang* singer
zhangsheng	掌声	applause
zhangsheng guli	掌声鼓励	encouraging applause
Zhao Liping	赵李平	composer of a version of *Huanghelou*
zhichi	支持	support
Zhongguo hao shengyin	中国好声音	The voice of China, a television singing competition
Zhongguo meng zhi sheng	中国梦之声	television singing competition, *Chinese Idol*
Zhu Dan	朱丹	*jiqing guangchang* singer
Zhuang Di	庄笛	*jiqing guangchang* organiser and singer
zi jiqing	子	suffix used in diminutive names for *guangchang* singers
zong	总	General (Manager), honorific used to address bosses
zunyan	尊严	dignity
zunzhong	尊重	respect

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