

The Fusion of Cantonese Music with Western Composition Techniques:

Tunes from My Home

Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano by Chen Yi

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze *Tunes from My Home*, a Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano by Chinese-American composer Chen Yi (b. 1953), as well as to provide a performance guide from a collaborative pianist's perspective. Of Cantonese origin herself, Chen Yi composed several works inspired by Cantonese music, including this trio. Chen Yi composed this trio between 2007 and 2008 and dedicated it to her long time friend pianist Pan Xun, who is also of Cantonese origin. Inspired by this shared Cantonese heritage, Chen Yi incorporated within this work three well-known Cantonese tunes, Cantonese instrumental techniques and sonorities, and elements of the *shifan luogu*, a wind and percussion ensemble often used in traditional Cantonese music. Coming from the same region as the composer, the author of this paper feels connected with this piece, and as a collaborative pianist, has the opportunity to introduce Cantonese music to a wider audience through the piano trio. Chapter one introduces the motivation for this study. Chapter two provides a brief biography of Chen Yi. Chapter three introduces the history, the scales, and the instruments of Cantonese music as well as other Cantonese influences on this trio, especially the three tunes. Chapter four includes a detailed analysis of each movement in terms of the form and application of the tunes and rhythms of Cantonese music. Chapter five shares the author's experience of approaching and interpreting this piece in an appropriate style based on her Cantonese roots. The conclusion evaluates the significance of the fusion of Cantonese music with Western compositional techniques in this piece.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I believe that language can be translated into music. Since I speak naturally in my mother tongue, in my music there is Chinese blood, Chinese philosophy and customs. However, music is a universal language. Although I have studied Western music extensively and deeply since my childhood, and I write for all available instruments and voices, I think that my musical language is a unique combination and a natural hybrid of all influences from my background.

-Chen Yi¹

I came to the United States from China in 2011 to continue my music education. Moving away from my home country gave me a better opportunity to appreciate the mother culture that I grew up with. Dealing with homesickness, I started to listen to various genres of music from the Canton area and realized the beauty of the language combined with the Cantonese tunes; this would probably never have happened if I were still living in Canton. Since my childhood, my Western classical piano training and Cantonese origin have allowed me to absorb inspiration from both sides, although my parents used to only allow Western classical music to be played at home. Slowly, I became aware that Western classical music and the Cantonese culture are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This idea was validated the first time I heard the piano trio *Tunes from My Home* by Chen Yi.

Both the composer Chen Yi and I come from Guangzhou, traditionally called Canton. This populated city in southern China has a history of over 2,200 years and has served as a major port since the Tang Dynasty (AD. 618-907). As an adjective, “Canton” is still used to describe the people, language, cuisine, and culture of Guangzhou and its

¹ John de Clef Piñeiro, “An Interview with Chen Yi,” *The New Music Connoisseur* 9, no.4 (Winter 2001):28.

surrounding area. The Cantonese language is my native tongue, as is the Cantonese music. I felt connected with this piece once I heard the first five notes of the first movement, as I recognized the tune Summer Thunder right away.

As one of the most prominent Chinese-American composers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Chen Yi devoted her efforts to blending Chinese and Western musical elements into her works of various genres, including orchestral works, solo works for instruments, choral works, and chamber music. However, she has incorporated Cantonese musical elements within just a few pieces, including a piano concerto, the orchestral work *Humen Symphony 1839*, the violin solo *Memory*, and this piano trio *Tunes from My Home*. This trio is a work that speaks with the language that the composer is most familiar with; it is also the language that I feel most evokes Cantonese origins. As a collaborative pianist, this piano trio lets me share with my audience a side of my own Cantonese musical culture, within a familiar genre in the chamber music setting. Especially today, the Cantonese culture is declining in the Canton area, and the younger generation does not want to embrace Cantonese culture nor the language. Because of this, I am moved to introduce the beauty of Cantonese music to a wider audience through a standard Western chamber music setting.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY OF CHEN YI

Chen Yi was born in 1953 in Guangzhou, China, a city which has been a major port to most foreign traders in history, as well as a point of cultural exchange between the East and West. Although she is from a family of doctors, she and her siblings were encouraged to appreciate Western classical music and learn Western musical instruments at a very young age. Her parents collected records of various genres of Western classical music, including solo instrumental pieces, orchestral works, and operas. They also regularly took her and her siblings to recitals and concerts of Western classical music. In her youth, she had the opportunity to attend local orchestral concerts and hear visiting soloists from outside countries such as France, England, and the Soviet Union.² She started her violin training when she was three years old, and throughout her childhood played through almost all of the major European classical violin repertoire including the concertos of Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Wieniawski, Sibelius and Prokofiev, concert pieces by Sarasate and Saint-Saëns, all of Paganini's 24 Capricci, and Bach's six unaccompanied works for violin.³ Aside from her violin training, she studied music theory and Chinese folk songs. It was not until she began working with one of her most important mentors, Mr. Zheng Zhong, that she started composing

² John de Clef Piñeiro, "An Interview with Chen Yi," *The New Music Connoisseur* 9, no.4 (Winter 2001):28.

³ Ibid, 28.

seriously.⁴ Both of her siblings later became professional musicians in China; her sister, Chen Min, a child prodigy,⁵ is currently the principal pianist in the China Philharmonic Orchestra, and premiered Chen Yi's composition, *Duo Ye*. Her brother, Chen Yun, currently serves as concertmaster in the China Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 1962, the political situation was becoming grave between the government and the intellectuals. In 1964 the government demanded that the music should be revolutionary, national, and popular, which accelerated the decline of European classical music over next decade.⁶ These changes led to the culture revolution. From 1966 to 1976, the ten-year Cultural Revolution halted Chen Yi's music studies. This movement was an attempt to purge the country of much of its cultural and intellectual identity in an effort to transform China from capitalism to communism. European Classical music, art, and literature was banned, because of an assumed association with capitalism. Red guards searched people's homes and took away anything they deemed threatening, including antiques, books, art works, or musical instruments that were regarded as bourgeoisie. They also persecuted teachers, academics, scientists, artists, and musicians, who were all considered to be rivals of the peasant and the working class. High schools, colleges, and universities were closed, and the students regarded as "educated youth" were sent to live and work in remote areas for years, to be re-educated by the peasantry. As was the case of many intellectuals, Chen Yi's family was also persecuted. Their home was searched,

⁴ Chen Yi, "Tradition and Creation," *Current Musicology* 67/68, (Fall 1999): 59, <https://currentmusicology.columbia.edu/article/tradition-and-creation/>.

⁵ Cheryl Ann Melfi, "An Investigation of Selected Works by Chen Yi" (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 2005), 18.

⁶ Richard: Curt Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 110.

and any items related to Western culture were taken away. They were forced to self-criticize in front of the public, and were exiled to a remote area to perform labor. Chen Yi was sent to the countryside as a laborer when she was a teenager, apart from her family. For twelve hours a day she had to carry stones and mud over mountains to help build battle castles.⁷ This life as a laborer lasted two years.⁸ During this difficult time, she kept her violin with her and continued making music, if only the revolution songs that were allowed in the labor camp. She would rearrange the revolution songs with advanced violin technique taken from the standard Western classical music repertoire, and played for local farmers after they had worked during the day. Regarding this period of her early life, Chen Yi wrote,

A positive aspect of this experience was the wider knowledge I gained of the life and music of my motherland and its people. I started thinking about civilization, and about the value of the individual's life and the importance of education. I even tried to educate the poor kids in the village. The more I 'touched the ground,' the more I learned from the common people, who have carried on the rich Chinese culture for thousands of years.⁹

After returning home to Guangzhou, Chen Yi served as concertmaster of a local Beijing Opera Troupe Orchestra, and for eight years performed revolutionary operas. She also orchestrated and composed music for this forty-piece orchestra of mixed Western and Chinese instruments.¹⁰ In 1977, when the Cultural Revolution ended and universities

⁷ John de Clef Piñeiro, "An Interview with Chen Yi," *The New Music Connoisseur* 9, no.4 (Winter 2001):29.

⁸ Chen Yi, "Piano Concerto. (Original Composition)" (D.M.A diss., Columbia University, 1993): 4.

⁹ Chen Yi, "Tradition and Creation," *Current Musicology* 67/68, (Fall 1999): 59-60, <https://currentmusicology.columbia.edu/article/tradition-and-creation/>.

¹⁰ John de Clef Piñeiro, "An Interview with Chen Yi," *The New Music Connoisseur* 9, no.4 (Winter 2001):29.

reopened, Chen Yi was one of the top applicants admitted to the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, where she started her systematic study of Chinese traditional music and Western classical music techniques. Her study and training at the conservatory helped her to discern what musical language was natural and related to her. She wrote,

I could see what is natural—it's so close to my native language and the customs of my daily life! I felt that if I were to create my music in a language with which I am most familiar, using logical principles that are related to nature, then my compositions would be very natural in emotion and powerful in spirit. This is my ideal.¹¹

The musical education at the conservatory consisted of Western classical music techniques and Chinese traditional music. In the Western techniques portion, students needed to take multiple classes including advanced ear-training, tonal harmony, form analysis, counterpoint, orchestration, and a heavy load of piano lessons. Students also needed to take Chinese traditional music courses that covered singing Chinese folk songs from all provinces and ethnic groups in their local dialects, playing traditional instruments of all kinds, whether by plucking, bowing, blowing, or drumming, the history and styles of local operatic singing, and the narrative music *quyi*.¹² In addition, students went to the countryside every year to collect folk songs and complete detailed presentations of the collection results.¹³

¹¹ Yi Chen, "Tradition and Creation," *Current Musicology* 67/68, (Fall 1999): 60, <https://currentmusicology.columbia.edu/article/tradition-and-creation/>.

¹² *Quyi*, a type of musical storytelling that is half spoken and half sung.

¹³ Chen Yi, "Tradition and Creation," *Current Musicology* 67/68, (Fall 1999): 59, <https://currentmusicology.columbia.edu/article/tradition-and-creation/>.

While still studying at the conservatory, Chen Yi, as a young composer, was already being recognized and won several composition competitions. In 1986, the same year she earned her Master's degree in composition, her piano solo work *Duo Ye* premiered, and a concert of her orchestral works was held at Beijing Concert Hall. It was also in 1986 that Chen Yi came to America to continue her studies with Chou Wen-Chung and Mario Davidovsky at Columbia University. Chou Wen-Chung, a Chinese-born American composer whom she regards as her mentor,¹⁴ influenced her the most. He was the chair of the Music Division of the School of the Arts at Columbia University from 1969 to 1989, and the founder and director of the Center for U.S-China Arts Exchange at Columbia University, an agency for the promotion of cultural understanding between both cultures founded in 1978.¹⁵ Chou is a firm believer that Eastern and Western music share many similar aspects:

It is my conviction that we have now reached the stage where the very beginning of a re-merger of Eastern and Western musical concepts and practices is actually taking place. By 're-merger' I naturally mean that I personally believe the traditions of Eastern and Western music once shared the same sources and that, after a thousand years of divergence, they are now merging to form the mainstream of a new musical tradition.¹⁶

In 1993 Chen Yi earned her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Columbia University. Her dissertation was inspired by a well-known Cantonese tune and she traced the origin of this tune back to the *baban*, a source tune for over a thousand pieces in

¹⁴ Cheryl Ann Melfi, "An Investigation of Selected Works by Chen Yi" (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2005), 18.

¹⁵ "Biography of Chou Wen-Chung," Chou Wen-Chung, accessed October 10, 2017, http://www.chouwenchung.org/biography/biography_p2.php.

¹⁶ Wen-Chung Chou, "East and West, Old and New," *Asian Music*, 1 no.1, (Winter 1968-1969): 19.

Chinese ensemble music.¹⁷ What is more, she revealed that the Chinese *baban* follows the principle of the Gold Ratio and Fibonacci series, which have been applied in Western compositional works.¹⁸ Her dissertation is a great example of applying the philosophy of shared similarities between Eastern and Western music. Almost all her compositions demonstrate these hybrid ideas of the East and West.

As a prolific composer who blends Chinese and Western traditions and transcends cultural and musical boundaries, Dr. Chen Yi was the recipient of the prestigious Charles Ives Living Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2001. She is currently the Cravens/Millsap/Missouri Distinguished Professor at the Conservatory of Music and Dance at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and was elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2005.

She has served as Composer-in-Residence for the Women's Philharmonic, Chanticleer, and Aptos Creative Arts Center from 1993 to 1996 supported by Meet the Composer, and she serves on the composition faculty of Peabody Conservatory at Johns Hopkins University from 1996 to 1998.

She has received fellowships and commissioning awards from the Guggenheim Foundation (1996), the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1996), the Fromm Foundation at Harvard University (1994), the Koussevitzky Music Foundation at the Library of Congress (1997), and the National Endowment for the Arts (1994). Honors include first prizes from the Chinese National Composition Competition (1985, 2012),

¹⁷ Chen Yi, "Piano Concerto. (Original Composition)" (D.M.A diss., Columbia University, 1993): 7.

¹⁸ Chen Yi, "Piano Concerto. (Original Composition)" (D.M.A diss., Columbia University, 1993): 14.

the Lili Boulanger Award (1993), the NYU Sorel Medal Award (1996), the CalArts/Alpert Award (1997), the UT Eddie Medora King Composition Prize (1999), the ASCAP Concert Music Award (2001), the Elise Stoecker Award from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (2002), the Friendship Ambassador Award from the Edgar Snow Fund (2002), and the UMKC Kauffman Award in Artistry/Scholarship and Faculty Service (2006, 2012). She holds Honorary Doctorates from Lawrence University (2002), Baldwin-Wallace College (2008), the University of Portland (2009), and The New School University (2010). She was appointed by the China Ministry of Education to the prestigious role of Cheungkong Scholar Visiting Professor at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music in 2006, and Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Tianjin Conservatory in 2012. ¹⁹

¹⁹ “Dr. Chen Yi,” The UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance, accessed October 10, 2017, <http://conservatory.umkc.edu/faculty.cfm?r=%22%2624%20%0A>.

CHAPTER 3

THE INFLUENCE OF CANTONESE MUSIC

The most unique feature of this piano trio is the fusion of Cantonese music with Western compositional techniques. Without knowing the history of Cantonese music, including the various instruments and their performance techniques and scales, one may not be able to fully appreciate Chen Yi's ability to blend the elements from the East and the techniques from the West. This trio is more than a combination of various Cantonese tunes within Western harmony; instead, the music is a hybrid of the two styles. In addition to the use of three Cantonese tunes, Chen Yi explored the possibility of creating Cantonese timbres and tone colors from the Western chamber music piano trio ensemble.

Brief History of Cantonese Music

The term "Cantonese music" refers to a genre of Chinese ensemble music which was popular in the area surrounding the cities of Guangzhou and Hong Kong, also called Pearl River Delta, in the 1920s and 1930s. The music has been named *Guangdong yinyue* (music of Guangdong²⁰) or *Yue*²¹ *yue*, since the 1930s by non-Cantonese speaking people within China. As a language, Cantonese is one of three main dialects in Guangdong.²² Additionally, "Canton" is widely accepted name of Guangzhou in the Western world.

²⁰ Guangdong, a province of China, located in southern China. The provincial capital is Guangzhou, also well known for Westerners as Canton.

²¹ Yue, is a classical name of Guangdong. It is still being used nowadays as abbreviation of Guangdong.

²² There are main three dialects in province Guangdong: Cantonese, Chaozhou dialect, and Hakka dialect.

More accurately, the term “Cantonese music” is a type of music of the Cantonese-speaking area.²³

Although the term “Cantonese music” did not exist until the 1930s once the music had been widely heard in some of the major cities of northern China, Cantonese music itself appeared approximately a century earlier, when the Cantonese opera began to emerge. The early stage of Cantonese music’s development had a very close relationship with the Cantonese opera.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, when Canton became the major Chinese port in which most trade took place between China and foreign countries, many businessmen moved to the Canton area from the central and northern parts of China. These business immigrants brought their fortunes as well as their own cultures, and paid their local operatic troupes to come to Canton to perform. Gradually, some of the musicians decided to settle in Canton, trained the local population to become performers, and adopted some Cantonese musical elements into the opera. During the nineteenth century, the Cantonese language gradually replaced the original Northern dialect on the stage,²⁴ and Cantonese opera emerged.

Almost during the same period of time, Cantonese music is believed to have appeared, although there are very few scholarly articles written today about the music in that period. Musicians from the Cantonese opera, teahouse musicians, and street artists

²³ Stephen Jones, “Guangdong, Chaozhou, Hakka, and Cantonese Music,” *Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 344.

²⁴ Yung, Bell. *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 9.

began to play music together in bands. Their music combined local folk tunes with melodies from the Cantonese operas and narrative music. Others tunes derived from the central or northern areas of China were blended with local musical elements, and became familiar to the local people. Despite its reliance on folk tunes, local or borrowed from outside of the area, this type of music was often performed as interlude music during the operas. Opera musicians would put words to the music, even though the content was not always related to the operas. This type of music slowly became standard repertoire in its own right as it was frequently performed separately from the operas.²⁵ The local people called this music *guochangqu* (intermezzo), which was believed to be the earliest name of Cantonese music.

In the early twentieth century, some prominent local musicians arranged and composed new pieces. The three Cantonese tunes used in this trio were all arranged or composed during this period of time by celebrated musicians. The name *xiaoqu* (small pieces) was used perhaps starting in the 1920s when noted composers became celebrated.²⁶ Some of these celebrated composers include: Yan Laolie, the arranger of *Hantian lei* (Summer Thunder); He Liutang, the arranger of *Ema yaoling* (Prancing Horses) and the composer of *Sailong duojin* (Racing of Dragon Boat); and Lü Wencheng, who developed the *gaohu*, the leading instrument of the Cantonese ensemble, from the earlier *erhu*.

²⁵ “Cantonese Music,” Cantonese Music and Jiangnan Silk and Bamboo Music, accessed by October 10, 2017, http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/tc/curriculum-development/kla/arts-edu/pd/guangdongyinyue_n_jiangnan_sizhu.pdf.

²⁶ Stephen Jones, “Guangdong, Chaozhou, Hakka, and Cantonese Music,” *Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 344.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Western recording companies developed the recording industry and market in coastal cities such as Shanghai. Cantonese music increased in popularity and developed significantly, and quickly became one of the major musical styles these companies were interested in recording, next to Beijing operas. In the 1920s, recording companies hired Cantonese musicians to record their own albums. These albums sold very well, not only in the Canton-Hong Kong area, but also in Shanghai and other major cities in northern China. Because of the strong album sales in major cities beginning in the 1930s, people outside of the Canton area started calling the music which was performed by musicians from Canton or Hong Kong “Cantonese music.”

Due to the timely inception of the recording industry in China, much of Cantonese music has been preserved. In addition to the melodies written before the 1920s, most of the familiar Cantonese music composed from the 1920s to 1940s was created for the new recording industry and released on albums. The origin of Racing of Dragon Boat's melody is from a musical work composed in the 1930s. Due to technological limitations, each side of an album could only hold approximately four minutes of music; the newly emerging Cantonese music of the 1930s typically has a short formal structure so that it can be played completely on one side of the record.²⁷ These concise melodies attracted audiences from diverse classes and became popular in coastal cities.

²⁷ “Cantonese Music,” Cantonese Music and Jiangnan Silk and Bamboo Music, accessed by October 10, 2017, http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/tc/curriculum-development/kla/arts-edu/pd/guangdongyinyue_n_jiangnan_sizhu.pdf.

Instruments

There are two generations of Cantonese ensembles, from the original *wu jiatou* (five frames²⁸), also known as the “hard bow group,” to the later *wu jiantou* (five items²⁹), or “soft bow group.” *Wu jiatou* and *wu jiantou* can both be interpreted as “five pieces,” or “quintet,” although those names do not reflect which specific instruments make up the ensemble. The early generation *wu jiatou*, a name given to the ensemble before the 1920s, includes the bowed string instruments *erxian* and *tiqin*, plucked string instruments *sanxian* and *yueqin*, and the wind instrument *hengxiao*. In addition to these, the *erxian* played as the leading instrument, and was the main reason the ensemble was called the “hard bow group,” since the *erxian* has tighter bow hair compared to the *gaohu*.

The later generation, *wu jiantou*, which emerged in the 1920s, was given its new name because all of the former instruments were replaced. *Wu jiantou* includes the bowed string instrument *gaohu* and *yehu*, the plucked string instrument *qinqin*, the Chinese hammer dulcimer *yangqin*, and the wind instrument *dongxiao*. Because of looser bow hair in the leading instrument *gaohu*, the newer generation of the ensemble was known as the “soft bow group.”³⁰

²⁸ Stephen Jones, “Guangdong, Chaozhou, Hakka, and Cantonese Music,” *Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 353.

²⁹ Ibid, 353.

³⁰ “Cantonese Music,” Cantonese Music and Jiangnan Silk and Bamboo Music, accessed by October 10, 2017, http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/tc/curriculum-development/kla/arts-edu/pd/guangdongyinyue_n_jiangnan_sizhu.pdf.

The Cantonese *gaohu* belongs to the *huqin* family of two-string bowed instruments. Created by Shanghai composer Lü Wencheng (1898-1981),³¹ it is a modified version of the *erhu* and was introduced by him to Cantonese ensembles in the 1920s. The *gaohu* has the same basic construction as the *erhu*: a fretless neck with the decorated dragon head on the top, riding on a small resonance chamber, with two strings which the hair of the bow passes between. Compared to the *erhu*, the *gaohu* has a smaller resonance chamber and is covered with snakeskin from the front to back. This smaller shape causes the sound to have more brightness and lightness. Unlike playing the *erhu*, in which the resonance chamber is placed on the left thigh, the *gaohu* is played with the body held between the two knees. Its steel strings are typically tuned to g'-d".³²

A Chinese trapezoidal dulcimer, called the *yangqin*, plays the role of the conductor in the ensemble. The *yangqin* is usually placed in the center, and its player uses two thin handheld hammers as batons to give the tempo. Adapted from the Persian santur, the *yangqin* was introduced into the Canton area during the late Ming dynasty (1368–1644), and became widely used in Chinese ensemble music in both the North and the South. The strings are organized into two groups, on the left and right sides of the soundboard. Each side is comprised of a set of diatonic pitches in an octave. Strings on

³¹ Lü Wencheng (1895-1981) was born in Guangdong but brought up in Shanghai. He moved to Hong Kong in 1932. In an important tour of Beijing, Tianjin, Wuhan, and Guangzhou in 1926, he is said to have adapted the standard *erhu* (from Shanghai music) by substituting a metal string for the traditional silk outside-string, clamping the resonator of the instrument between the knees, and tuning it fifth higher than normal, to g1 and d2. This instrument, known as *yuehu* or *gaohu*, soon became the distinctive voice of the Cantonese music. Lü also developed the now familiar plaintive style, using high positions and expressive portamento. He composed nearly 200 pieces, and was also a fine singer of Cantonese opera.

³² "Huqin," Oxford Music Online, accessed October 10, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/45369?q=gaohu&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit.

one side run across their bridges and are fastened to pins on the other side. In southern China, including the Canton area, traditional tuning requires the *ti* and *fa* to be a perfect 5th apart, *ti* roughly 50 cents flat and *fa* 50 cents sharp based on equal temperament.³³

The *qinqin*, a member of the Han Chinese lute family, is a plucked string instrument with a long fretted wooden neck and distinctively scalloped resonance chamber, often used in both Cantonese and Chaozhou music. The frets of the *qinqin* are set so high that the fingers touch the strings but not the fingerboard of the instrument. This set-up requires great skill from the player to control the intonation and timbre.³⁴

Resembling a vertical flute or clarinet, the *dongxiao* is part of the *xiao* family of bamboo wind instruments, and is the only wind instrument in Cantonese ensembles. The present-day *xiao* is constructed of bamboo, with an inward-sloping notch at the upper end to assist tone production, five frontal finger-holes plus one dorsal thumb-hole, and two or more tassel holes near the lower end. Lengths of the instrument vary by region, the Cantonese being shorter than other regions.³⁵

From the same *huqin* family as the *gaohu*, the *yehu* is an accompanying instrument, but has lower a range than the *gaohu*. The *yehu* is commonly used in southern coastal regions in China; the resonance chamber is made from a coconut shell.³⁶ Many

³³ “Yangqin,” Oxford Music Online, accessed August 21, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/45375?q=yangqin&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

³⁴ Alan R. Thrasher, *Chinese Musical Instruments* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³⁵ “Xiao,” Oxford Music Online, accessed October 11, 2017, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/45374?q=xiao&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

³⁶ *Ye*, literally means “coconut”.

players prefer using silk strings instead of steel strings, to produce a more hollow timbre.³⁷ The *yehu* has various sizes and tunings depending on the area. In the Canton area, is bigger in size and is tuned lower than the leading instrument, *gaohu*.

Scales

In Chinese music theory, scholars have assigned the names *gong*, *shang*, *jiao*, *zhi*, and *yu* to the scale degrees in the pentatonic scale. Thus, *gong*, *shang*, *jiao*, *zhi*, and *yu* are equivalent to *do*, *re*, *mi*, *sol*, *la*, or C, D, E, G, A. Each scale degree can assume the role of the tonic of its respective mode.³⁸ In Chinese notation, *gongche* (notes) are represented by characters: *he*, *si*, *yi*, *shang*, *che*, *gong*, *fan*, *liu*, *wu* represent *sol*, *la*, *ti*, *do*, *re*, *mi*, *fa*, *sol*, *la* or G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G', A'.³⁹ Although the system itself is heptatonic, the great majority of actual melodies are anhemitonic pentatonic. Based on the *shang* (C) scale, the seventh and the fourth degrees *yi* and *fan* (B and F) are called exchange notes, serving as leading or passing notes.⁴⁰

³⁷ Yung, Bell. *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 28.

³⁸ A *gong* mode is *do*, *re*, *mi*, *sol*, *la*; a *shang* mode is *re*, *mi*, *sol*, *la*, *do*; a *jiao* mode is *mi*, *sol*, *la*, *do*, *re*, and etc.

³⁹ Same degrees in different octaves can have different name, for example the fifth degree *he* and *liu*, and the sixth degree *si* and *wu*.

⁴⁰ Stephen Jones, "Guangdong, Chaozhou, Hakka, and Cantonese Music," *Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 355.

Like other types of Chinese music,⁴¹ Cantonese music also uses a pentatonic scale, with two occasionally used notes, the seventh degree and the fourth degree, *yi* and *fan*. Even though the tuning of Chinese musical instruments in general follows the harmonic series, today the general practice of playing Cantonese music is to equate the seven tones approximately with the pitches on an equal tempered piano. Although the piano does not reflect microtones, these seven tones of the Chinese pentatonic scale are G (below middle C), A, a note between B and B flat (exchange note), C, D, E, and a note between F and F sharp (exchange note).⁴²

There are three scales in Cantonese music: *zhengxian*, *fanxian*, and *yifan*. All of these three scales starts on G as the tonal center, since the leading instrument *gaohu* is tuned to G. *Zhengxian*, which translates to “standard string,” is equivalent in usage to the major scale of Western music, although the scale is pentatonic. The scale was traditionally called *he-che*, which are the two scale degrees that the leading instrument *gaohu* is tuned to, hence the name “standard string.” The *zhengxian* scale *he, si, shang, che, gong, liu*, is equivalent to *sol, la, do, re, mi, so*, or G, A, C, D, E, G. It belongs to the *zhi* mode of the pentatonic scale (Figure 1), which is commonly used for bright, lively pieces such as *Summer Thunder*.

⁴¹ Stephen Jones, “Basic Musical Features,” *Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 112-113.

⁴² Yung, Bell. *Cantonese Opera: Performance as Creative Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 15.



Figure 1. *Zhengxian* Scale

In the *fanxian* scale, literally “reverse string,” the *gaohu* remains in the same tuning as *zhengxian*’s, but with *sol* and *re*, or G and D, reconsidered as *do* and *sol*, or C and G. The *fanxian* scale is close to a major scale which uses G as the first pitch. This scale is used for many pieces in the *gong* or *zhi* mode. The *zhengxian* and *fanxian* scales are more pleasant than the *yifan* scale, as the *fanxian* scale resembles the major scale of Western music (Figure 2).



Figure 2. *Fanxian* Scale

The *yifan* scale includes the *yi* and *fan* scale degrees (Figure 3). As mentioned before, these are the seventh and fourth scale degrees, *ti* and *fa*, or B and F. In Cantonese music, *ti*/B tends to be lower while *fa*/F is higher to create a tension with the scale degrees *do*/C and *sol*/G immediately above, respectively.⁴³ The scale *he, yi, shang, che, fan, liu* is equivalent to *sol, ti, do, re, fa, sol*, or G, B, C, D, F, G. Since the B is lower

⁴³ Stephen Jones, “Guangdong, Chaozhou, Hakka, and Cantonese Music,” *Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 355.

than normal and the F is higher than normal, the scale resembles the harmonic minor scale in Western music, and usually gives an impression of sadness.⁴⁴



Figure 3. *Yifan* Scale

Related to the three tunes in this trio, both *Summer Thunder* and *Racing the Dragon Boat* use the *zhengxian* scale, while *Prancing Horses* uses *yifan* scale.

The Origins of the Three Cantonese Tunes

The three Cantonese tunes, *Summer Thunder*, *Racing the Dragon Boat*, and *Prancing Horses*, are probably the best-known of the region, and therefore can evoke vivid childhood memories for the Cantonese people, including Chen Yi. Although all these tunes were written much earlier than most of the Cantonese people living today, they are still considered the signature or representative works of the Cantonese people. Even though many of the Cantonese people have immigrated to other countries, these tunes allow many Cantonese to feel connected with the musical heritage of their homeland. These tunes were composed so long ago that they are often misunderstood as folk tunes. Despite lacking true folk music origins, these tunes reflect the change of seasons, festival activities, and more, just like many folk tunes that relate to the many

⁴⁴ “Cantonese music,” Cantonese Music and Jiangnan Silk and Bamboo Music, accessed by October 10, 2017, http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/tc/curriculum-development/kla/arts-edu/pd/guangdongyinyue_n_jiangnan_sizhu.pdf.

aspects of everyday life for these local people. They may not describe a major event in one's life, but they do become part of one's memory, especially for those who have settled in other countries.

Summer Thunder, was arranged by Yan Laolie⁴⁵ from the popular *guochangqu* (intermezzo), *Sanji lang*, one of the three movements in a traditional suite called *San bao fo* (The three treasures of Buddhism). It was also used as an intermezzo in Cantonese opera, and has become a standard piece in the traditional repertory. Originally derived from Buddhist music, the tune was so frequently performed by individuals that it has evolved from having a more religious meaning to a more secular one. Yan not only adapted the tune into a *yangqin* solo work, but also refreshed the musical character by adding decoration for the melody and by rewriting the rhythm. The tune describes people's excitement when they hear the thunderstorm after a long drought in the summer (Figure 4).



Figure 4 Original Form of the Tune *Summer Thunder*

Racing the Dragon Boat was originally a piece of *sizhu* music from southeastern China. *Sizhu*, literally “silk and bamboo” and also known as *jiangnan sizhu*, is a type of

⁴⁵ Stephen Jones, “Guangdong, Chaozhou, Hakka, and Cantonese Music,” *Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 359.

ensemble consisting of string and bamboo wind instruments which was popular in southeastern China. Later, He Liutang, another important name in Cantonese music history,⁴⁶ rearranged it by adding the *suona*, a type of brass instrument which has an extremely high and bright pitch, and percussion to create momentum in the music. It describes the exciting scene of a dragon boat race during the *duanwu* Festival, also known as the Dragon Boat Festival, held in May in China (Figure 5).⁴⁷



Figure 5. Original Form of the Tune *Racing the Dragon Boat*

⁴⁶ He Liutang (1872-1934) was part of a great amateur family tradition, a pipa-player in Panyu, just south of Guangzhou. Many popular traditional pieces such as Yu da bajiao, Yuqiao wenda, and Ema yaoling were composed by him. In a more innovative style, he composed the influential *Racing the Dragon Boat* (c. 1930), also popular in a 1962 arrangement for large orchestra.

⁴⁷ The *duanwu* Festival is a traditional festival in mainland China, Hong Kong-Macau region, and Taiwan, occurring near the summer solstice. Because of migrants among the Southeast Asian countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesian, people in those countries also celebrates the *duanwu* Festival. The origin of this festival has multiple sources. One of the most well-known stories in mainland China is the festival commemorates the death of the poet Qu Yuan (c. 340- 278 BC). He was the minister of the ancient state of Chu during the Warring States period of the Zhou Dynasty. A cadet member of the Chu royal house, Qu served in high offices. However, when the king decided to ally with the increasingly powerful state of Qin, Qu was banished for opposing the alliance and even accused of exile. During his exile, Qu Yuan wrote a great amount of poetry. Twenty-eight years later, Qin captured Ying, the Chu capital. Qu Yuan was in despair and committed suicide by drowning himself in the Miluo River. The local people, who admired him, raced out in their boats to save him or at least retrieve his body. This is said to have been the origin of dragon boat races. When his body could not be found, they dropped balls of sticky rice into the river so that the fish would eat them instead of Qu Yuan's body. This is said to be the origin of *zongzi*. The dragon boat race and eating *zongzi* are the main activities during the *duanwu* Festival.

The original tune of *Prancing Horses* is from the same *sizhu* (silk and bamboo) musical tradition as *Racing the Dragon Boat*. He Liutang also adapted and arranged this tune as a solo piece for the *pipa*, a plucked instrument which became popular in the 1920s. The music of *Prancing Horses* describes the military strategies of prancing horses from ancient stories depicting the battlefield. The military troop used a particular strategy to confuse their enemies so that they had enough time to escape or re-arrange their course of action. The military troop illustrate the fake scene of lack of food supplies by putting rings on desperate starving horses. The repeating note pattern illustrates the sound of the rings on the hungry horses. The two bending notes B and F from the *yifan* mode also reflect the inflections of the Cantonese language. Sorrow from the *yifan* mode used in this tune contrasts with the excitement from the other two tunes (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Original Form of the Tune *Prancing Horses*

***Shifan luogu*: A Wind and Percussion Ensemble**

Another major influence in this trio is the *shifan luogu*,⁴⁸ which is a traditional wind and percussion genre which flourished in the cities of Suzhou and Wuxi from the southern part of the Jiangsu province, close to Shanghai. According to *Banqiao zaji*, a collection of notes which describes the leisurely life in Nanjing during the late seventeenth century, the genre was already popular in this area during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). It was typical for local folk musicians, Daoist priests, and Buddhist monks to perform this genre of music at funerals, weddings, and birthday parties. The *shifan luogu* was popular in the northern part of China throughout the Qing dynasty, in cities such as Beijing and Tianjing. Along with other musical genres such as *sizhu* music (silk and bamboo music) rooted in the Jiangnan area, it was spread through the area by the court, merchants, opera troops, artisans, and migrants. The *shifan luogu* also spread further south to Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong; several genres in these provinces displayed signs of the transmission from the Jiangsu region. In Canton, the *shifan luogu* is often performed during the *duanwu* festival when the dragon boat race takes place, and has been adapted in Cantonese music.

This ensemble of the *shifan luogu* can be divided into two parts: the wind part and the percussion part. The wind part is usually played by a high pitch instrument, *suona*, while the percussion part is played by various sizes of drums. The percussion part, features a specific way to create phrase lengths called 1-3-5-7 by Stephen Jones. These

⁴⁸ Chen Yi, email to author, November 15, 2016.

digits correspond to the lengths of different types of phrases. In principle, each phrase consists of a given number of eighth-notes and a quarter-note in the end. Thus,

x is a single-note phrase of one beat, a '1'

xx x is a phrase of 3 notes, actually 2 beats, a '3'

xx xx x is a phrase of 5 notes, actually 3 beats, a '5'

xx xx xx x is a phrase of 7 notes, actually 4 beats, a '7'⁴⁹

One might consider them as meters of 1/4, 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4 respectively, with the main accent on the final beat. In practice, the patterns are considerably more ornate.

These patterns are used extensively throughout the final movement.

⁴⁹Stephen Jones, "Southern Jiangsu: *Shifan* genres and Jiangnan Silk-and-Bamboo," *Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 261.

CHAPTER 4

GENERAL ANALYSIS

Compositional Background

Tunes from My Home, one of the few works among Chen Yi's compositions that features Cantonese music, was commissioned by the Pennsylvania Academy of Music to celebrate the grand opening of their new facility in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Chen began composing this piece in 2007, and finished it in June 11, 2008. It was composed for and premiered by the Newstead Trio: Michael Jamanis (violin), Sara Male (cello), and Xun Pan (piano), all members of the Pennsylvania Academy of Music faculty. On the front page of the score, Chen Yi writes,

I have known Mr. Xun Pan, the excellent pianist of the Newstead Trio since he was a child. I have watched him growing up with great accomplishment in his professional career. In recent years I have had the privilege of listening to the newly released recordings of the Newstead Trio. I love their passionate and polished performance in both classical and contemporary repertoires, and admire the three musicians tremendously...Both Xun Pan and I are Cantonese in origin (Southern China). It's natural for me to speak in my native tongue in our trio, to make him smile and feel 'home.' I got the inspiration from the folk Cantonese Music for my work.⁵⁰

It is important to note that in 2009 Chen Yi orchestrated the first movement of this trio and gave it the title of *Humen 1839*. The Guangzhou Symphony commissioned Chen Yi to write a piece to commemorate a historical event in China's history, the destruction of opium at Humen, a suburb of Canton/Guangzhou which shares the same dialect and culture. The first movement of the trio contains three well-known Cantonese

⁵⁰ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano*, (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

tunes and its character seemed appropriate to the purpose of the commission, lending itself nicely to rearrangement as an orchestral work for the commission. Rearranging or re-orchestrating existing compositions is a technique occasionally used by Chen Yi, typically at the request of musicians fond of her music who ask for it to be adapted for their instruments. Some of these arrangements simply substitute one instrument for another, but in others she significantly changes the instrumentation, as she did with *Humen* 1839.

Tunes from My Home

The trio has three movements: Introduction-Nostalgia-Happiness. All three tunes are introduced in the first movement and are recycled throughout the next two movements. To illustrate the joyful celebration of the opening of the music conservatory, the tunes *Summer Thunder* (expressing the joyfulness of seeing rain) and *Racing the Dragon Boat* (describing the exciting scene of the dragon boat festival) make up the two parts of the primary theme of the first movement. These two tunes play a major role throughout the whole piece, while another tune, *Prancing Horses*, serves as the secondary theme and plays a contrasting role in the piece. In the second movement, the tune *Summer Thunder* evolves into the lyrical subject, and the tune *Prancing Horses* occurs as the countersubject. The third movement begins with a running sixteenth-note passage which seems to have no relevance to any of these tunes, but the motive from *Racing the Dragon Boat* is hidden in this passage and is recapitulated with all of the

running sixteenth-note passages on the piano throughout this movement. The spirit of the *shifan luogu* (wind and percussion ensemble) dominates the main body of the final movement, as displayed in the rhythmic pattern of the strings part. Simultaneously, the tune *Prancing Horses* contributes its repeated note pattern to the strings part. The rhythmic pattern and the repeated note pattern provide the foundational material of the main body of the final movement.

The ways in which Western instruments imitate traditional Chinese instruments are a major feature of this trio. In general, the violin, cello, and piano imitate their Chinese instrumental counterparts. Specifically, the violin and the cello imitate the *gaohu* (bowed string instrument), and the piano imitates the *yangqin* (Chinese hammered dulcimer). Another interesting element is the violin and cello imitation of the percussion ensemble made by constantly using down bows to play repeated notes, as well as the piano imitation of the *xiao* (flute-related instrument).

First movement

The first movement (Introduction) follows a modified Sonata form with an exposition (mm. 1-72), development (mm. 73-98), and recapitulation (mm. 99-129). The exposition presents the energetic primary (P) theme (mm. 1-9) and the desperate secondary (S) theme⁵¹ (mm. 22-31). The development inherits the material of the primary theme, but transforms the character by expanding the duration of the notes. The

⁵¹ Chen Yi, email to author, November 15, 2016.

arrangement of the secondary theme in the transition (T) smooths the boundary between the development and recapitulation, allowing both themes to grow organically. The movement ends strongly with a modified version of the secondary theme. (Table 1).

Table 1. Musical Form of the First Movement

Exposition	Development	Recapitulation
mm. 1-72	mm. 73-98	mm. 99-129
72	27	31
P—T—S—T——K1	D—T	S'—P'——K2
mm.1-9, 9-21, 22-33, 33-53, 54-72	73-88, 88-98	99-109,110-124, 125-129

The exposition presents the primary theme and the secondary theme. The primary theme (mm. 1-9) is a combination of two tunes: *Summer Thunder* (ST) and *Racing the Dragon Boat* (DB). Chen Yi creatively takes the first two phrases of ST (Figure 7) and DB (Figure 8), combines them, and alternates the resulting four short phrases to create this primary theme: ST1-DB1-ST2-DB2 (Figure 9). The materials from ST and DB are presented in different tonalities.

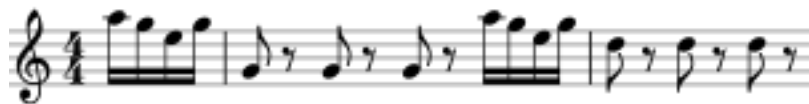


Figure 7. ST1 and ST2



30

Figure 9. ST1 (pick up to m. 1)-DB1 (mm. 2-3)-ST2 (mm. 4-5)-DB2 (mm. 6-8) Played by Violin and Cello⁵²

In regard to phrase direction, the tune ST has a descending direction, while the tune DB has an ascending direction. They combine as four alternating phrases, ST1-DB1-ST2-DB2, to create a larger conversational phrase. Both tunes share an energetic character, as they all describe exciting scenes.

The mixed tonality Chen Yi uses to present this theme is an identifying feature of this movement. The original tunes ST and DB share the same scale of G in Cantonese music (see Figure 7 and 8 above); however, Chen Yi transposed the ST1 and ST2 to the tonal center of A and the DB1 and DB2 to the tonal center of C sharp, creating a new bitonal theme.

The secondary theme (mm. 22-31, Figure 11), taken from the tune *Prancing Horses* (PH, Figure 10), has less momentum due to its gradual melodic progression and even rhythm, in comparison to the primary theme. These two characteristics leave more flexibility and potential to create different characters. The repeated notes in the secondary theme show an agitated character, providing contrast greatly with the primary theme.



Figure 10. PH

⁵² Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

The musical score for Figure 11 shows the Secondary Theme Played by Violin. It consists of three staves: Violin (Vln.), Cello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Violin part begins with a melodic line in measure 23, marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a trill. The Cello part has a pizzicato (pizz.) section in measure 23. The Piano part includes a (loco) section in measure 23 and a forte (f) dynamic. The score is marked with measure numbers 23 and 24.

Figure 11. Secondary Theme Played by Violin⁵³

The tune PH belongs to the *yifan* scale, similar to a natural minor key in Western music. The element that makes the scale sound “minor” differs from that of the West. Instead of depending on the third degree of the scale, a lowered seventh scale degree gives it its signature sound. These contrasting scales and their different tonal colors also help to establish two distinct themes.

The development theme (Figure 12) borrows motives from ST1 and DB1, but extends and re-arranges the note values. This lyrical theme later becomes the theme of the second movement, *Nostalgia*. Compared to the exposition, the development is rather short. It is sixteen-measures long, and contains a pair of parallel phrases: the first phrase

⁵³ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

beginning with the cello and responded to by the violin, and a second phrase with the opposite order. The cello and violin parts start conversationally, then gradually merge into one line in m. 86.

Figure 12. Development Theme Played by Violin and Cello⁵⁴

PH of the secondary theme appears at m. 88 in modified form, as a false recapitulation (Figure 13) which transitions to the actual recapitulation, accompanied by the material from the transition originally heard between the two main themes of the exposition.

These two parts combine and lead to the return of the secondary theme, hallmarking the start of the recapitulation (m. 99). The tunes ST, DB, and PH in both themes remain in their own distinct tonalities, but differ from those originally presented in the exposition.

⁵⁴ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

However, the tune PH' in mm. 124-125 inherits the tonality of DB1' and DB2' (m. 113 and m. 121) to accomplish a united tonality in the end of the movement. The tune PH becomes more prominent throughout the recapitulation.

Figure 13. mm. 88-92⁵⁵

The structure is ambiguous because a key element of sonata form is missing; there is no obvious display of a tonality that contrasts that of the exposition and which resolves

⁵⁵ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

in the tonic of the recapitulation. In other words, neither themes settle in the recapitulation in the same key as they began in the exposition. As a matter of fact, the tonality of this movement presents a mixed tonality even in the beginning of the exposition. In the exposition, the primary themes ST1 and ST2 (Figure 14) share the same key of D, while DB1 and DB2 (Figure 15) share the key of F sharp. The secondary theme (Figure 16) presents the key of E. To display the relationship of tonality between the exposition and the recapitulation more clearly, here are examples of the primary theme and the secondary theme in the exposition:

Figure 14. ST1 and ST2 (Violin and Cello Part) from the Primary Theme⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).



Figure 15. DB1 and DB2 (Violin and Cello Part) from the Primary Theme⁵⁷

Figure 16. Secondary Theme Played by Violin⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

In the recapitulation, the two tunes in the primary theme and the secondary theme remain contrasting in tonality. However, the coda shares the same material as the secondary theme, PH, and inherits the same tonality of DB' (Figure 17). What is more, the same material of PH, in the same tonality, already happened in the false recapitulation (see Figure 13) leading into the recapitulation. Because of this, the secondary theme PH assumes a more important role than the primary theme in the recapitulation. Because the same key is shared by the transition (mm. 88-98), DB', and the coda (material of secondary theme PH, mm. 125-129), I view this movement as being written in modified sonata form.

The image displays two pages of a musical score for a Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano. The left page is numbered 113 and the right page is numbered 121. The instruments are Violin (Vln.), Viola/Cello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The score shows the recapitulation of themes DB1, DB2, and the Coda. The Piano part has a complex rhythmic pattern with many accents. The Violin and Viola/Cello parts have long, sustained notes with some movement.

Figure 17. Recapitulation of DB1, DB2, and the Coda⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

In addition to presenting these two contrasting themes in different keys, Chen Yi reflects sonata form writing by the way she uses and develops motives. In the development, Chen Yi derives the lyrical theme (mm. 73- 79) from motives derived from ST1 and DB1, changing the note values and articulations to create a nostalgic character. Chen Yi also uses material from DB1 and DB2 to develop transitions throughout the movement.

Texture and instrumentation are crucial elements in creating the Cantonese sound of this movement. In terms of texture, this movement features a competition between the strings and the piano. In the exposition and recapitulation, the violin and cello almost exclusively play unison octaves to present both themes, while the piano plays the accompaniment featuring a 32nd note figure with big leaps. In the development, the contrapuntal texture between the violin and cello replaces the unison octaves. The two string parts have a conversation while the piano plays a broken octave figure. It is worth noting that although the piano is generally treated as a polyphonic instrument in Western chamber music, Chen Yi writes a one-voiced piano part for this movement, effectively thinning the texture. Because of the texture, the resulting sound of these three Western instruments effectively evokes the sound of Cantonese instruments.

Another element that gives this movement a distinct Cantonese sound is the tempo modulation, a precisely notated rhythmic passage that reflects the flexibility of tempo in Cantonese music. This tempo modulation is mainly seen within the transition of the piano part. The sixteenth-note passage begins with a group of quintuplets, and its subdivisions increase successively with each added measure to create an accelerando

effect. Specifically, in m.9, the composer employs a tempo modulation by grouping the sixteenth notes into quintuplets, sextuplets, septuplets, and then thirty-second notes, to create an accurately measured *accelerando*. The strings and piano emerge at m. 15 with a thirty-second note figure, and gradually lead to the secondary theme in m. 22. All the motives start debating until a consecutive quintuplet passage derived from DB1 on the piano takes off the energy which has been building.

In terms of the piano writing, Chen Yi does not give any pedal markings in this movement, and instead uses different articulation markings to give suggestions to the pianist, and leaving the pianist with the freedom to decide how much pedal to use. As the piano is frequently more supportive in this movement, the role of the piano is similar to the *yangqin* (Chinese hammered dulcimer) in the Cantonese ensemble. The sixteenth note passage of the piano helps to elongate the long notes held by the strings (such as is the case in the primary theme), and to create harmonic support for the melody of the development section. When the piano is in a low register with a fast repeating figure, Chen Yi marks “dry” to make sure no pedal is used. When the piano is in a higher register, she marks “staccato.” The careful articulation markings in this movement imply the composer’s desire for percussive sound effects from the piano, similar to the *yangqin*.

In terms of the string writing, the composer develops the material in a Western style, but applies typical Eastern practices to handling the texture. This movement generally requires that the strings compete with the piano, just as the *erhu* (the melody instrument) with the *yangqin* (the accompaniment instrument). The piano part monopolizes the sound so much because of the nature of *yangqin*. Even so, the composer

does allow the cello and violin to have their chance to share their unique sound quality during the middle section, and imply the theme of the second movement.

Second Movement

After a first movement in traditional sonata form, Chen Yi continues using Western compositional structures in the second movement. Entitled “Nostalgia,” this second movement is a three-voice fugue-like structure⁶⁰ featuring a subject and texture derived from the development section of the first movement, thus providing further structural unity between the movements. It follows a modified fugal structure: exposition (mm. 1-21), supplementary exposition (mm. 22-37), development (mm. 38-55), and final entry (mm. 56-76) with coda (mm. 77-89) (Table 4.2)⁶¹. Chen Yi writes the development as a section contrasting in texture with other sections in the movement. For example, the development section is homophonic, with a texture dominated by melody and accompaniment rather than the counterpoint of the exposition and recapitulation.

⁶⁰ Chen Yi, email to author, November 15, 2016.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Table 2. Musical Form of the Second Movement

Exposition	Supplementary Exposition	Development	Final Entry	Coda
mm. 1-21	mm. 22-37	mm. 38-55	mm. 56-76	mm. 77-89
21	16	18	21	13
S—A—S—K	S—A—S—K	Tune S+P	S—A—S—K	
mm.1-4,5-8,9-14,15-21	22-25, 26-29, 30-34, 35-37		56-59,60-63,64-69,70-76	

In the exposition, the subject, answer, and the subject of the subdominant key are played by the piano, violin, and cello respectively. The four-measure long subject (mm. 1-4, Figure 19) can be divided into two parts: mm. 1-2 is an arrangement of the tune ST, while mm. 3-4 is comprised of new material derived from the source tune ST. Chen Yi arranges the tune ST (Figure 18) mainly by expanding each note's value into various lengths and by adding grace notes. The character of the tune is changed with the use of 5/4 meter in a slow tempo. The range of the arrangement remains the same as the original tune, over one octave (see musical Figure 18 and 19). The second half of the subject (mm. 3-4) derives from the material of the fourth beat of the second measure. This group of sixteenth-notes with a dotted rhythm in the first half of the subject does not exist in the original tune. It is added between the high D and the low E (see m. 2) as a bridge between these two notes. Chen Yi uses this bridge to develop the rest of the subject.

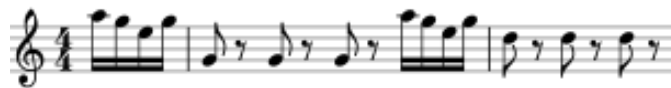


Figure 18. ST



Figure 19. Subject of the Second Movement⁶²

Chen Yi composes the answer in the violin (mm. 5-8) and the restated subject in the cello (mm. 9-12) to be less thematic in the first half by placing the original notes in different octaves (Figure 20) and blurring the outline of the original tune while still accurately repeating the second half of the subject.

⁶² Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

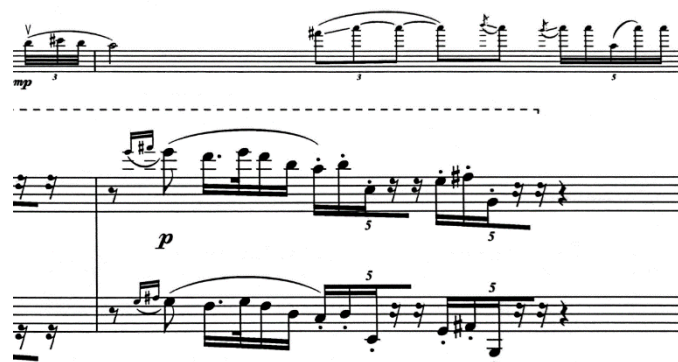


Figure 20. mm. 4-5 of the Second Movement⁶³

In the Figure 20, the violin part at mm. 4-5 repeats the theme in a perfect 5th higher, and ascending in direction rather than descending. In addition, Chen Yi completely replaces the rhythm of the first half of the subject in the violin part and the cello part. She also expands the length of the first half of the subject in the violin and cello part from two measures long to three measures long. The way she writes the subject for each instrument results in the second half of the subject becoming the identifiable part in this movement. The first half of the subject, an arrangement of the tune ST, becomes less important in this movement. The longer but less thematic first half of the subject in the violin part and the cello part, along with the fragmented materials on the piano part beneath, give the exposition an impression of the type of improvisation commonly heard in Cantonese music, but with the inherited complexity of Western fugal texture.

⁶³ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

The strings begin the supplementary exposition by presenting the original version of the subject in unison, after which the cello enters with a response a perfect 5th below (mm. 26-29), and the piano takes its turn stating the subject (mm. 30-34). The identifiable second half of the subject can be recognized in the violin part at m.31 and the piano part at m. 33. The tune ST in its original character is heard afterward in the codetta before the development.

The texture and the phrasing in the development are distinct from other sections. This section has a homophonic texture, featuring the strings playing the tunes ST and PH with piano accompaniment, followed by the same tune played by the piano with string accompaniment. The phrasing of the strings is squared and parallel, accompanied by a hemiola rhythm in the piano part. This thirty-second note hemiola passage in the piano part originally comes from the codetta of the exposition (mm. 18-21). The use of the hemiola rhythm reflects Western music writing, and has little influence of Cantonese music. Furthermore, the thirty-second note passage in the piano part anticipates the *perpetuum mobile* of the third movement.

The final entry of the subject begins with the original version of the subject played by the cello, answered by the piano part at m. 60. The violin joins the cello at m. 64 in a modified version of the subject in the tonic key. The identifiable part of the subject can be recognized in the piano part at m. 63 and in the string parts at m.67.

In general, Chinese musical notation has limitations in regard to depicting accurate pitch and rhythm. In Western music, a tradition of notating music accurately has been developing since the Baroque era, and although some Western composers begun

reawakening the old fashion of letting performers improvise without clearly assigned pitches and rhythms during the twentieth century, the tradition of accurately notating scores is still typical of Western music. In this movement, Chen Yi continues this Western convention of accurate musical notation, but for the purpose of emulating the improvisatory style of Chinese music, including the construction of the subject and the texture between these three instruments. Even though the movement is written as a fugue, a typical Western compositional form, it maintains a flowing and improvisatory effect. What makes the music sound Cantonese is Chen Yi's various rhythmic iterations of the original melody, which she does by creating a "false" downbeat with the application of a 5/4 meter. This maintains the structural flow of the melody of the subject (mm. 1-4). The way she rewrites the rhythm and the melody is certainly not original, and can be found in examples in Western music.

The four-measure long subject is set in an asymmetrical meter, 5/4. The extra beat in every measure provides the opportunity to make an improvisational feeling in the melody possible. If the measure lines are removed, the natural downbeat of every measure tends to fall on notes which occur on the second beat of the 5/4 meter, because that is where the longer notes are placed. Instead, Chen Yi avoids fulfilling the listener's expectation by placing the natural downbeat on the weak beat of the 5/4 meter, letting the final beat be a place to sound flexible.

The grouping of beats in this melody does not fall into either of the typical categories of applied 5/4 meter in Western music, 2+3 or 3+2. In fact, there is no obvious grouping within phrases; the strong beat can fall on any beat in the bar – not just the first.

This uncertainty of the beat creates a very loose feeling of the phrase. It also allows each voice to be independent of the others, so that the whole texture presents three simultaneous monologues from each instrument rather than a conversation between them.

In contrast, the codettas (mm. 15-21, mm. 35-37) and the development are strongly rhythmic, especially in the passage of thirty-second notes seen in the piano part, with two hands sharing the same rhythm but playing different groupings a third apart. This can be interpreted as the foreshadowing of the subsequent perpetual motion third movement. Unlike the conversational spirit of the first movement, the independent nature of the second movement creates the thin linear texture commonly heard in Cantonese ensembles. Separately, the three-voice fugue with its complex rhythm from the Western tradition evokes a Cantonese improvisational feeling.

Third Movement

The third movement (Happiness) is written as a *perpetuum mobile*, or perpetual motion movement. One major source of influence for this movement is the percussion ensemble *shifan luogu*, which, as noted before, is commonly heard during the Dragon Boat Festival in southeast China. Chen Yi brings back the tune of *Racing the Dragon Boat* throughout this movement, but in a more obscure way. Although the title does not explicitly mention the Dragon Boat Festival, the musical material chosen by Chen Yi in this movement evokes both the joyfulness and excitement of the festival.

Table 3. Musical Form of the Third Movement

Introduction		Main Body						Coda (<i>più mosso</i>)			
Pn. Intro	A	B	C	D	E	F		G	H	I	J
mm. 1-36		mm. 37-111						mm. 112-172			
37		75						61			

This movement is through composed and divided into an introduction-main body-coda (Table 3), with the recurring tune *Racing the Dragon Boat* hiding in the repetitive rhythmic patterns and the returning of the tune *Summer Thunder* in the last measure. Chen Yi takes advantage of the repetitive notes in the strings and the running passages in the piano, which allow a build up to the climax at the end of the movement. The introduction begins with a fast running solo passage in the piano (Figure 21), with the tune *Racing the Dragon Boat* (DB) hidden inside, interrupted by an abrupt and segmented figure in mm. 8-9 left hand. In the example, the hidden tune DB occurs at the third beat of m. 2, the first beat of m. 3, the second and fourth beats of m. 4, and the first and third beats of m. 6. The passage continues an octave higher, leading to the tune DB played by the strings (Figure 22).



Figure 21. Piano Introduction of the Third Movement⁶⁴

Vln. *mp*

Vc. *mp*

19

20.

21.

22.

23.

24.

The image shows measures 19-24 of a musical score for Violin (Vln.) and Cello (Vc.). The Violin and Cello parts are written in treble and bass staves respectively. The Violin part is marked 'mp' (mezzo-piano) and the Cello part is marked 'mp'. The music features a melodic line in the Violin and a more rhythmic, chromatic accompaniment in the Cello. The first system covers measures 19-21, and the second system covers measures 22-24. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Figure 22. Tune DB in the Violin and the Cello Part ⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

The hidden tune is built into every sixteenth-note running passage of the piano part throughout the movement, when it interrupts the strings. In the introduction, Chen Yi condenses the tune into a sixteenth-note motive, and inserts it on random beats in the lengthy piano introduction. Because of the evenness of the rhythm and the length of the passage, the motive can hardly be recognized, until the strings reinstate the tune. At rehearsal C (mm. 44-60), the fast sixteenth-note passage enters with the hidden tune DB in the piano part (mm. 54-56, Figure 23). In the example, the last beats of m. 54 and m. 56 in the piano part are the tune DB. Similar passages occur at every rehearsal letter.



Figure 23. mm. 54-56 of the Third Movement⁶⁶

While still hidden in the sixteenth-note passages of the piano part, the motive becomes more obvious in the sections following rehearsal G and rehearsal H, due to its repetition.

⁶⁶ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

It is the consistent repetition of the motive in these sections that helps to build tension to a powerful climax, allowing for a celebratory peak.

Chen Yi further employs the principle of *shifan luogu* by constructing an identifiable rhythmic pattern in this movement, which mainly occurs beginning at rehearsal C and continues to the end of the movement. This fixed phrase appears for the first time in mm. 44- 45 in the cello part (Figure 24), and re-occurs on the same beat and measure of rehearsal D, E, and F, respectively, with little variation.

The image displays a musical score for three instruments: Violin (Vln.), Cello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Cello part (Vc.) is the primary focus, showing a repeating rhythmic pattern marked 'ord.' and 'ff'. The Piano part (Pno.) also features a repeating rhythmic pattern marked 'fz' and '8va'. The Violin part (Vln.) is shown in the upper right, with a measure number '45' indicated. The score is written in standard musical notation with treble and bass clefs, and various dynamic markings.

Figure 24. Fixed Pattern of the Rhythm in the Cello Part⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

Although this fixed phrase is ornate each time, and the ending notes alternate to an eighth-note, it matches the feature of the accented ending note (see p. 24 *shifan luogu*) from the *shifan luogu*. Additionally, the number of eighth-note values presents in this phrase (including the eighth-note rest) is 7, which matches the *shifan luogu* ‘7’ pattern (p. 24).



Figure 25. Pattern of “7” from *Shifan Luogu*

This fixed phrase always begins on the fourth beat of the first and fourth measures, and the first beat of the seventh measure in each section, respectively.

The sections at rehearsal G, H, I, and J feature a note grouping pattern of 5-3-7 consecutively (Figure 26), on a sixteenth-note basis (see p. 24 *shifan luogu*).



Figure 26. Pattern of 5-3-7 in the Violin Part from *Shifan Luogu* ⁶⁸

The uneven number of sixteenth-note figures, along with the tempo marking *più mosso*, which the piano interrupts with running notes, creates intensity and builds up to the climax. The grouping pattern varies from 5-7, 5 and 9. The G and H sections share the same number of measures and the same series of the patterns. The series is 5-3-7, 5-7, 9, 5, 5-3-7, 5-7, 9, 5, 5-3-7 at mm. 112-131. The imbalanced feeling of uneven groups of notes helps to build up the climax. The use of *più mosso* is similar to *stretto*, which is commonly seen in the Western music.

At rehearsal I, the grouping pattern 5-3-7 is presented by the cello in m. 138 and m. 146. At rehearsal J, the pattern expands in the first eight measures. In m. 157, the pattern of 9 occurs in every other measure five times, then contracts the pattern of 5 twice

⁶⁸ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

at m. 165. At the end of the movement, at m. 169, the sequence derived from the DB1 helps to contract the pattern further, the accent ending note of the pattern “7” disappears. Instead, the strings plays a series of the sixteenth-note, following the pattern of 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1, with the tone clusters on piano between the pattern (Figure 27).

The image displays a musical score for measures 169 through 172 of the Third Movement. The score is arranged in three systems. The first system shows the Violin (Vln) and Cello (Vc) staves, both containing sixteenth-note patterns. The second system shows the Piano (Pno.) staff, which features a series of sixteenth-note chords, each marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The third system continues the Piano part, showing a sequence of sixteenth-note chords, also marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 27. mm. 169-172 of the Third Movement⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

This movement features a competition between the vertical percussion-like texture of the strings with the fast running sixteenth-notes of the piano. The strings imitate percussion, playing variations of a set of phrases to create the perpetual motion, while the piano gives interrupting accents on irregular beats of the running sixteenth-note passages. Running sixteenth-note passage appear earlier and earlier when the variation on the strings developed in each section. Again, this practice is similar to the *stretto* in Western music.

The tune DB recapitulates in the first phrase of the strings (m. 20) in the same character as the beginning of the first movement. It then transfers to the piano part and develops into a sequence using the same broken chord texture as the transition to rehearsal B. The other motive, ST, in the last measure, ends the movement abruptly. The main body of the movement is developed by the percussion-like texture of the strings, with the sixteenth-note running passage on piano. While some chamber music works allow for the passing of melodic and harmonic material among players, each instrument in this trio is assigned and adheres to a clearly defined role.

The application of the *shifan luogu* in the string parts builds a hierarchy of the cyclic form for the whole piece. Because of the relevance of the *shifan luogu* sound to the dragon boat race, Chen Yi chooses to reflect its texture in the string parts that corresponds to the tune of *Racing the Dragon Boat*.

CHAPTER 5

A PERFORMANCE GUIDELINE FROM A PIANIST'S PERSPECTIVE

The purpose of this chapter is to share my own experiences about how to approach this piece, and to offer guidance regarding interpretation and appropriate style, as a collaborative pianist with the same Cantonese perspective as the composer. The interpretation should focus on balancing respect for all the instructions that the composer wrote in the score with delivering the spirit of improvisation from Cantonese folk music. Fortunately, Chen Yi gave very specific notations and markings in the score to show the appropriate sound quality and articulation for this style which may not be common in Western instrumental performance. These notations and markings should be the performers' basis from which to present the appropriate style.

As I mentioned in preceding chapters, one of the features of this trio should be the imitation of Cantonese traditional instruments. The strings mainly play the role of the *gaohu* (the bowed string instrument) for the first and second movement, and the role of the percussion in the final movement, while the piano plays multiple roles such as the *yangqin* (a Chinese hammered dulcimer), *qinqin* (a plucked string instrument), and *xiao* (a flute-related instrument). All of her markings serve to produce the sound quality of Cantonese traditional instruments on Western instruments.

Since Chen Yi made great use of grace notes and portamenti to imply the sound effect of the *gaohu*, strings players should take advantage of the detailed markings and pursue the sound of the *gaohu*. As someone with a Cantonese origin, I believe the grace notes and portamenti in the string parts come from the tonal nature of the Cantonese

language, as different tones in the same syllable have different meanings. This inflection of the language has influence on Cantonese operatic singing, as well as the instrumental playing. Especially during the lyrical section in the string parts, the grace notes and the portamenti become crucial to deliver the nostalgic character of the music. In these cantabile moments, the grace note should also incorporate a slide connecting the two notes. String players should take advantage of the nature of their instruments to interpret the music expressively, and perhaps listen to Cantonese opera singers for further inspiration. In the third movement, the string parts have a large passage of repeating notes, which is inspired by the *shifan luogu*, a traditional percussion ensemble. The string players apply consecutive down bows to produce percussive sounds on their instruments.

The *yangqin* and the *qinqin* that the piano mainly imitates in the first and second movements share a clear and crisp sound quality due to their construction and range, although the *yangqin* can produce more sound when the player plays chords or arpeggios. It is likely that the reason Chen Yi put limited pedal markings in the piano part was to let the performers decide if the pedal should be added, and how much pedal should be used due to the appropriate style, timbre, and also the opinion of the ensemble. A very clean performance with restrained pedal will enhance the effect of articulation and distinctly show the different characters, as well as the imitation of the *yangqin* instrument. Due to different playing techniques of the *yangqin*, the use of the pedal and the articulation of the piano during imitative passages depends on what sound effect of the *yangqin* the pianist is emulating. The only two places in the entire score she marked needing pedal are m. 14 and m. 69 of the second movement, which can be interpreted as the imitation of the

yangqin playing arpeggios. However, playing the whole piece without any pedal except in these two measures might not be her intent. Additionally, there are places she addressed clearly to not use the pedal, such as mm. 15-21 and mm. 94-97 of the first movement, where she indicated “dry” in the score, not only for the pedal, but also for the articulation. I interpret these two places as an imitation of the *yangqin*, and the pianist should play the chords with stable but relaxed wrists in order to create its percussive sound.

In addition, Chen Yi used the *staccato* marking to imply that no pedal should be used in certain textures, as in mm. 9-12. These four measures, with the tempo modulation, lead the transition into the secondary theme. Playing these four measures with a faster attack and without any pedal may help in at least two ways. Showing the tempo modulation clearly, which enhances the improvisational style of the piece, and maintaining control of the ensemble in these four measures, as the piano is giving clear beats while the strings are playing tied notes. In my experience rehearsing this piece, the transition in mm. 9-14 can be challenging for the ensemble (Figure 28). Other similar places include mm. 66-70 and mm. 88-91 in the first movement.



Figure 28. mm. 9-14 of the First Movement⁷⁰

What the pianist should do is clean up the pedal if he/she uses any in the preceding measures, and change the articulation at m. 9. Using a faster attack and playing with the finger tips will produce the light percussive sound of the *yangqin*. Because the material at m. 9 comes from the tune DB1 and DB2, the pianist articulating this measure can help the cellist understand the rhythm and recognize the tune in order to enter accurately.

There are some places where Chen Yi put slur markings in the piano part, especially during the lyrical development section (mm. 79-83). Here, the pianist may

⁷⁰ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

consider more pedal changes to avoid excessive ringing, but should make sure the sound does not come out too dry, as the piano accompanies the strings with broken octaves. However, slur markings do not always mean adding pedals in this piece. In the second movement, the pianist should be very cautious about adding pedals in several places which have slur markings. One should always consider if adding pedals helps to produce an appropriate sound, matches the style, and balances well within the ensemble. The subject (mm. 1-4, Figure 29) played by the piano is a typical example.

The image shows a musical score for the first four measures of the second movement. The top system is for the Piano (Pno.) and the bottom system is for the Violin (Vin.). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 60. The piano part features a melodic line with slurs and a broken octave accompaniment. The violin part is mostly silent, with a few notes in the first measure. The piano part is marked with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic.

Figure 29. mm. 1-4 of the Second Movement⁷¹

The pianist may explore different ways to play the subject: with the pedal, without the pedal, or half pedaling and changing it subtly. I interpret that the piano is imitating the

⁷¹ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

xiao (a flute-related instrument) to play the subject. The *xiao* shares similarities with the flute regarding timbre and articulation. Hence, when the piano imitates the *xiao*, the pianist should consider that this instrument does not have pedals, and notes should not be blended if one does decide to add pedals. Alternatively, creating the *legato* by fingers only will effectively imitate the sound of the *xiao*. Another place with slur markings that can be ambiguous when it comes to adding pedals is mm. 22-29, where the piano accompanies the fugue played by the strings. I interpret the piano as imitating the plucked string instrument, *qinqin*. This plucked string instrument usually does not have a powerful resonance, which should be taken into consideration when adding pedals. During the running sixteenth-note figure, I prefer pedaling only the last notes of every group, but only to give a ringing sound and to make sure the notes do not cut off abruptly.

For the only two places where Chen Yi put pedal markings in the score (m.14 and m. 69 in the second movement, example of m. 14, Figure 30), the piano has a descending sequence of thirty-second notes.

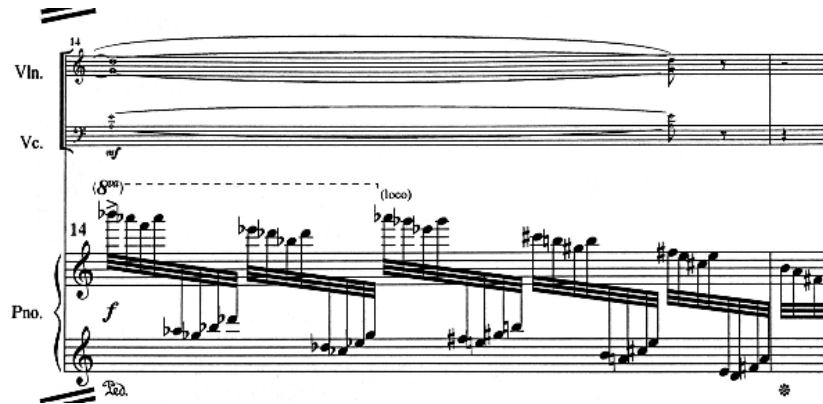


Figure 30. m. 14 of the Second Movement⁷²

⁷² Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

As mentioned above, these two places are where the piano imitates the *yangqin* playing arpeggios. The pianist can keep the pedal down when playing in the high range, but should change the pedal more frequently in the lower range, and make sure to cut off completely in the following measure where the piano presents the tune Summer Thunder (m. 15).

The use of the soft pedal mainly occurs in the second movement for the delicate fugal texture, and can vary among interpretations. However, when the strings are playing harmony and pizzicato and the piano has a comparatively thicker texture (mm. 18-20, mm. 38-47, and mm. 73-76), one should consider using the soft pedal for balance. Even though both hands in the piano part stay in the high range in these three places, the thirty-second note figure can still easily create a competitive sound which covers the strings' thin texture. In this case, adding the soft pedal mutes the sound of the piano and achieves a better balance between these three instruments.

Chen Yi uses accurate musical notation to create illusions of improvisation, which is a feature of traditional Cantonese music. The challenge may occur of how to have a tight ensemble while still feeling improvisational. One similar example in Western chamber music is the second movement of the Strauss sonata for violin and piano. Despite both the violin and piano having complex parts, they must both maintain an improvisational feeling. This improvisational style is reflected in the Chen Yi mainly during the transitions of the first movement and the second movement. In mm. 8-9 of the first movement, the tension is released and gives the audience a feeling of slowing down

by changing the groups of sixteenth notes from sextuplets to quintuplets, then gives an illusion of acceleration by the another change from quintuplets to sextuplets, to septuplets in mm. 10-13 in the piano part. The pianist should shape this passage to inspire the string players' entrance.

The exposition of the second movement is also a great example that demonstrates how musicians must conquer the complex rhythm and texture to accomplish an effortless feeling as an ensemble. In the chapter of analysis, I discussed the compositional techniques Chen Yi applies in this movement to create an illusion of improvisation. The complexity of the rhythm and texture requires that the musicians know each other's parts very well and are always listening in order to be responsive to any subtle change.

When the violin enters at the pickup of m. 5 (Figure 31), the pianist should bring out the second beat because that is one of the motives which occurs throughout the movement.

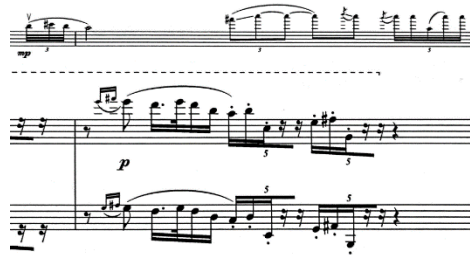


Figure 31. m. 5 in the Second Movement⁷³

⁷³ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

Whoever has this motive should always bring it out, and the other two players should adjust their playing according to how the motive is played. Similar places are the first beat of m. 8 in the violin part, the second beat of m. 9 in the violin part, and the first beat of m. 12 in the cello part. Another tricky situation occurs when none of the parts seem to have an identifiable motive, such as the last three beats of m. 9 and the last three beats of m. 30. In m. 9 (Figure 32), the pianist and the violinist should listen to the cello part which has the longer notes. The cellist also has the responsibility to bring out the triplet with tied notes so that the other two players can respond to it.



Figure 32. m. 9 in the Second Movement⁷⁴

In m. 30 (Figure 33) none of parts have longer notes to rely on, and the fragmented rhythm becomes quite confusing, especially in preparation of the violinist's entrance at the pickup of the fifth beat. In cases like this, whoever has the longest note values of the

⁷⁴ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

three should be the leading voice. Here, the cello part, which has the sixteenth-note quintuplet, should be the one that the pianist and the violinist listen to.

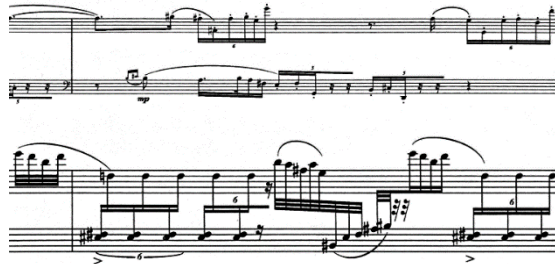


Figure 33. m. 30 in the Second Movement⁷⁵

In the chapter on analysis, I discussed that the application of the grace note in this trio delivers the spirit of the Cantonese style. From a Cantonese's perspective, the timing of the grace note is also crucial, especially in the lyrical phrases. The grace notes will necessarily be more metronomic during the fast passage, yet in the lyrical passages, the grace notes should have a little bit more time than normal in order to imitate the unique pitch bending of the Cantonese instruments. A typical example for the piano is the subject (mm. 1-4) of the second movement. The pianist can consider finger pedaling to hold the grace note longer. For string players, an example exists in the development of the first movement. The consecutive grace notes (mm. 76-78 on the violin and mm. 84-86 on the cello) require the string players to take more time and give more weight to the grace notes, which serves the appropriate style.

⁷⁵ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

In the first movement, the places where the strings play descending portamenti, which evokes the Cantonese operatic singing, across more than one measure will be one of the focuses during rehearsal. Usually, the piano either presents the theme or plays a rhythmic pattern while the strings are playing these long portamenti. In the string parts, Chen Yi marked a quarter beat within the portamenti, reminding the string players to line up with the quarter beats played by the piano. The violinist may watch the pianist's hands, and the pianist should watch the bows of the violin and cello in order to have a tight ensemble.

The third movement is dominated by the piano, and demands a virtuoso technique, as the composer is capturing the energy of the large percussion ensemble in one performer. The pianist needs to play the running sixteenth-note passage at an extremely fast tempo within a strong dynamic level. All of these issues challenge the pianist. What a pianist can do is prioritize presenting the appropriate character of the movement, without being overpowering throughout the movement, and have a plan of how to build up to the climax. The dynamic levels range from *ff* to *fff* throughout nearly the whole movement, as the movement implies the excitement of the dragon boat festival. This is seen by the use of the tune DB and the rhythm from the *shifan luogu*. Considering the form of the movement and the volume limitation of each performer and their instruments, one needs to carefully avoid overplaying throughout the movement, as well as playing without any dynamic contour. What Chen Yi implies by her *ff* marking in the beginning of the piano solo in the third movement is a definite contrast to the second movement, which ranges from *pp* to *f* with extreme delicacy in the fugal texture. The

dynamic markings can be interpreted as a character suggestion more than an actual volume suggestion. The pianist may start this passage one dynamic level below what was written, but with vigorous energy keeping the flowing motion and building a *crescendo*, which also applies to other similar passages in this movement. For example, in mm. 54-61(Figure 34), the pianist should adjust the dynamic to *f* and *crescendo* along with the ascending motion to create shape. Every time the phrase ascends, the dynamic should drop down and the crescendo should restart to reveal more layers of the music.

Figure 34. mm. 54-61 of the Third Movement⁷⁶

At rehearsal B (m. 37, Figure 35), Chen Yi indicates that the strings should keep their bows close to the bridge (*sul ponticello*), which makes a definite contrast to the strings' return to ordinary playing at rehearsal C (m. 44, Figure 35). The use of *sul ponticello* may imitate the sound of the cymbal from the percussion ensemble. It also helps to lower the dynamic level and build up to the climax for the coming *più mosso* section.

⁷⁶ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).



Figure 35. m. 37 and m. 44 of the Third Movement⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Chen Yi, *Tunes from My Home: Trio for Violin, Cello, and Piano* (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Company, 2008).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Tunes from My Home, as with many other works of Chen Yi, reflects her characteristic musical language, “a unique combination and a natural hybrid of all influences from my background.”⁷⁸ What makes this trio a unique work is that it serves as a bridge to introduce Cantonese music to Western classically trained chamber musicians through the genre of a piano trio. The result is that the music reaches wider audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. Chen Yi used Western compositional techniques to develop the Cantonese tunes into the Western formal structures such as the Sonata form, the Fugue, the Perpetual Motion, and the cyclic form throughout the whole piece. This trio inherits the complex structure from the Western musical tradition, which is familiar to classically trained chamber musicians. On the other side, the Western structure serves as a platform to present the main features of Cantonese music to them, such as the timbre of the traditional instruments, the flexibility of the tempo changes, and the bending notes and portamenti that reflect the scales of Cantonese music as well as the inflections of Cantonese language.

When I think of this piece I find that it is a well-structured chamber work that classical musicians can become fond of. Being of Cantonese origin, I believe that this piece delivers the spirit of Cantonese Music and evokes resonance in my heart.

⁷⁸ John de Clef Piñeiro, “An Interview with Chen Yi,” *The New Music Connoisseur* 9, no.4 (Winter 2001):28.

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APPENDIX A

DEFINITIONS OF CANTONESE MUSICAL TERMS

fanxian, resembles the G major scale of Western music.

gaohu, a bowed string instrument.

guochangqu, intermezzo.

qinqin, a plucked string instrument.

shifan luogu, a blowing and drumming ensemble.

sizhu, a silk and bamboo ensemble.

xiao, a flute related instrument

xiaoqu, a type of instrumental music which has short formal structure.

yangqin, a Chinese hammered dulcimer

yehu, a bowed string instrument,

yifan, a mode that starts with G and has being note B and F.

zhengxian, a pentatonic scale starting with G