

**Selected Pieces by**  
**Six Taiwanese and Chinese Composers of the Twentieth Century:**

Ty-Zen Hsiao, Shui-Long Ma, Fan-Ling Su, Kwang-I Yin,  
Chen Yi and Tan Dun

Ting-Yao Huang

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Robin McCabe, Chair

Thomas Harper

Christina Sunardi

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Ting-Yao Huang

University of Washington

**Abstract**

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Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Robin McCabe  
School of Music

Music of the twentieth century and music by Taiwanese and Chinese composers are two areas underrepresented in classical repertoire. With the goal of increasing exposure for Taiwanese and Chinese composers and for contemporary music, this dissertation presents a collection of selected pieces by six composers of the 20th century, including Taiwanese composers Ty-Zen Hsiao (b. 1938), Shui-Long Ma (b. 1939), Fan-Ling Su (b. 1955) and Kwang-I Yin (b. 1960), as well as Chinese composers Chen Yi (b. 1953) and Tan Dun (b. 1957).

These six composers were born between 1930 and 1960. Their compositional styles display many of the compositional techniques that characterize this diverse period, ranging from post-romanticism and neo-classicism to serialism and minimalism. This dissertation not only presents detailed biographical information on the six composers, but also enhances students' understanding of the historical time period in each of these composers' various home countries. In addition, features of selected pieces by the six composers are discussed through the use of extensive musical examples. This dissertation itself develops a breadth of musical and technical ability as well as explores pedagogical applications.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures		iii
Chapter I:	Introduction	1
Chapter II:	Ty-Zen Hsiao (1938-2015)	4
	Selected Pieces	5
	<i>Eternal Hometown</i>	6
	<i>The Fairest Flower</i>	10
Chapter III:	Shui-Long Ma (1939-2015)	15
	Selected Pieces	17
	<i>Suite Taiwan</i>	17
	<i>A Sketch of the Rainy Harbor</i>	20
	<i>Piano Pieces on Chinese Folk Tunes for Children</i>	22
Chapter IV:	Fan-Ling Su (b. 1955)	26
	Selected Pieces	28
	<i>Temple Festival Suite</i>	28
	“Procession of the Deities”	29
	“Crossing the Fire”	32
	“Predicting the Future”	34
	“Carrying the Palanquin”	37
	“Taoist Exorcist”	39
Chapter V:	Kwang-I Ying (b. 1960)	43
	Selected Pieces	46
	<i>Moods</i>	46
	“Ying-Yang”	47
	“Nocturne”	50
	“Playfully”	52
	“Expressed”	54
	“Momentary”	56

Chapter VI:	Chen Yi (b. 1953)	60
	Selected Pieces	62
	<i>Yu Diao</i>	63
	<i>Small Beijing Gong</i>	66
Chapter VII:	Tan Dun (b. 1957)	69
	Selected Pieces	71
	<i>Eight Memories in Watercolor</i>	71
	“Missing Moon”	73
	“Staccato Beans“	76
	“Ancient Burial“	78
	“Sunrain”	80
Chapter VIII:	Conclusion	85
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	87

## LIST OF FIGURES

### Chapter II: Ty-Zen Hsiao (1938-2015)

II-1: <i>Eternal Hometown</i> mm. 1-3	7
II-2: <i>Eternal Hometown</i> mm. 10-11	7
II-3: <i>Eternal Hometown</i> mm. 20-23	8
II-4: <i>Eternal Hometown</i> mm. 24-25	8
II-5: <i>Eternal Hometown</i> mm. 32-33	9
II-6: <i>Eternal Hometown</i> mm. 40-47	9
II-7: <i>The Fairest Flower</i> mm. 1-6	11
II-8: <i>The Fairest Flower</i> mm. 7-12	12
II-9: <i>The Fairest Flower</i> mm. 7-12	12
II-10: <i>The Fairest Flower</i> mm. 22-26	13
II-11: <i>The Fairest Flower</i> mm. 33-36	13

### Chapter III: Shui-Long Ma (1939-2015)

III-1: "The Temple" mm. 1-4	18
III-2: "Religious Procession" mm. 32-34	18
III-3: "Lion Dance" mm. 5-8	19
III-4: "Lantern Festival" mm. 142-149	19
III-5: "Rain" mm. 1-6	20
III-6: "Harbor View in Rainy Nights" mm. 1-8	21
III-7: "The Girl Who Picks Seashells" mm. 1-4	21
III-8: "At The Temple Gate" mm. 1-2	22
III-9: No. 5 "Little Golden Oriole" mm. 9-12	23
III-10: No. 11 "The Jasmine Flower" mm. 4-9	23
III-11: No. 18 "The Sorrows of The Shepherdess" mm. 29-32	24
III-12: No. 21 "The Embroidered Purse" mm. 1-9	24
III-13: No. 24 "The Swallow" mm. 5-9	25

### Chapter IV: Fan-Ling Su (b. 1955)

IV-1: "Procession of the Deities" mm 1-4	30
IV-2: "Procession of the Deities" mm 9-14	31
IV-3: "Crossing the Fire" mm. 1-8	33
IV-4: "Crossing the Fire" mm. 16-23	34

IV-5: “Predicting the Future” mm. 1-7	35
IV-6: “Predicting the Future” mm. 8-19	36
IV-7: “Predicting the Future” mm. 8-19	37
IV-8: “Carrying the Palanquin” mm. 1-6	38
IV-9: “Carrying the Palanquin” mm. 13-21	39
IV-10: “Taoist Exorcist” mm. 1-6	40
IV-11: “Taoist Exorcist” mm. 13-18	41
IV-12: “Taoist Exorcist” mm. 34-36	41

#### Chapter V: Kwang-I Ying (b. 1960)

V-1: “Ying-Yang” mm. 1-7	48
V-2: “Ying-Yang” mm. 8-18	49
V-3: “Nocturne” mm. 1-10	50
V-4: “Nocturne” mm. 11-13	51
V-5: “Playfully” mm. 1-12	52
V-6: “Playfully” mm. 13-17	53
V-7: “Playfully” mm. 18-30	53
V-8: “Expressed” mm. 1-7	54
V-9: “Expressed” mm. 8-17	55
V-10: “Momentary” mm. 1-16	58

#### Chapter VI: Chen Yi (b. 1953)

VI-1: <i>Yu Diao</i> mm. 1-2	64
VI-2: <i>Yu Diao</i> mm. 5-6	64
VI-3: <i>Yu Diao</i> mm. 24-27	65
VI-4: <i>Guessing</i> mm. 1-8	65
VI-5: <i>Small Beijing Gong</i> mm. 1-4	66
VI-6: <i>Small Beijing Gong</i> mm. 13-15	66
VI-7: <i>Duo Ye</i> mm. 89-94	67
VI-8: <i>Duo Ye</i> mm. 150-154	68
VI-9: <i>Small Beijing Gong</i> mm. 17-20	68

#### Chapter VII: Tan Dun (b. 1957)

VII-1: “Missing Moon” mm. 1	74
VII-2: “Missing Moon” mm. 1	75
VII-3: “Missing Moon” mm. 5-9	76
VII-4: Melody from Hunan folk song <i>My New Sister-in-Law</i>	77
VII-5: “Staccato Beans” mm. 1-22	77

VII-6: “Staccato Beans” mm. 26-41	78
VII-7: “Ancient Burial” mm. 1-3	79
VII-8: “Ancient Burial” mm. 9-14	80
VII-9: “Sunrain” mm. 1-6	81
VII-10: “Sunrain” mm. 7-24	82
VII-11: “Sunrain” mm. 25-27	82
VII-12: “Sunrain” mm. 30-47	83
VII-13: “Sunrain” mm. 54-60	83

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# Chapter I

## Introduction

### Background

I was first introduced to Taiwanese composers as an elementary school student in Taiwan, playing “*The Temple*” from *Suite Taiwan* by Taiwanese composer Shui-Long Ma. I loved the music and my interest was piqued. Unfortunately, that was the only Taiwanese composition in my piano repertoire. It is not difficult to understand why I ignored Taiwanese compositions for so long. From a very young age, musicians are taught to play and listen mostly to music by the select few great composers who are honored in history, and those composers are primarily European.

When I left Taiwan and came to the United States, I realized that these obscure Taiwanese and Chinese composers were important. There was much to explore about their music. The sheer amount of unexamined territory remains daunting, but this makes the journey more exciting and also provides the opportunity to unearth a chunk of music history that has previously been ignored.

### Motivations

When I began the project, I had not narrowed my search to a particular time period. However, most Taiwanese and Chinese composers only began to thrive in the twentieth century. This coincides with my intention for this dissertation to cover more ground, as

twentieth-century music is another area far too neglected in mainstream pedagogy. In most cases, the only repertoire that the student encounters is that presented by his or her teacher. Unfortunately, many music teachers today introduce little or no contemporary music, due to their unfamiliarity with the repertoire. Students will have less bias against dissonance and non-traditional rhythms when these concepts are introduced in the early stages of learning. One of my goals for this dissertation is to provide access to musicians who will expand their knowledge of contemporary Taiwanese and Chinese repertoire by playing music from a different culture. At the same time, they will learn essential skills and techniques particular to this repertoire.

An additional purpose of this study is to increase the prominence of the piano works of Taiwanese and Chinese women composers. One of my students, a beginner with two years of piano, was assigned a piece by a woman composer not long ago, and her score only listed the composer's last name. She could not recognize the name of the composer and asked me, "Who is this fellow?" She assumed it was a man! It is hard to believe how quickly such stereotypes develop and strengthen over time.

Introducing children to women composers will diminish the gender boundaries that have hovered around classical music for centuries. Several of my female students show more interest and affinity toward women's compositions. Hearing and playing music by women seems to spark further enthusiasm and curiosity in them. The music that pianists play at a young age will impact the development of their learning. Introducing pieces by

women to beginning students will help to diminish their prejudices about male versus female issues.

## **Outline**

There are eight chapters in this dissertation. Chapter I provides introductory materials, including background, motivations and outline for this dissertation. Chapters II through VII pertain respectively to the six selected composers and their works chosen for this dissertation in terms of their historical context and compositional techniques. Chapter VIII is a conclusion.

The existing studies on the works of Taiwanese and Chinese composers primarily focus on identifying musical elements in terms of compositional styles. Instead of containing in-depth analysis and theory of the works in the collection, I would like to focus on the pedagogical study of works, as well as Western, Taiwanese and Chinese cultural influences in the development of these composers' musical lives, hoping to inspire musicians to learn and understand Taiwanese and Chinese compositions more comprehensively and with an emphasis on application. Thus, following the brief biography at the beginning of each of these composer-oriented chapters, there is a description of each piece and a discussion of its pedagogical applications.

## Chapter II

### Ty-Zen Hsiao (1938-2015)

#### Background

Ty-Zen Hsiao is one of the most important contemporary composers of Taiwan. He was born in the southern city of Kaohsiung, and at the age of five, he began private piano lessons with his mother. Ty-Zen Hsiao began his formal music training at the National Taiwan Normal University where he studied both piano and composition.

In 1963, Ty-Zen Hsiao married and devoted himself to teaching music at a high school. After two years of teaching, he moved to Japan and studied music at the Musashino Music Academy. After completing his studies in Japan, Ty-Zen Hsiao returned to Taiwan and began his professional music career as a college professor, solo performer, and composer.

In 1977, due to the financial failure of his wife's jewelry business, Ty-Zen Hsiao moved to Atlanta to live with his sister. In the following year, he moved to Los Angeles. The large Taiwanese immigrant population there engaged Ty-Zen Hsiao in musical activities that provided him with many opportunities to promote Taiwanese music. He started to arrange traditional Taiwanese folksongs and compose Taiwanese art songs.

In 1986, Ty-Zen Hsiao began studies in composition at University of California, Los Angeles and graduated with a Master of Music degree in composition in the following year. Following his graduation, Ty-Zen Hsiao experimented with large-scale compositions such as symphonies and concertos, and became the first Taiwanese composer to compose both a violin concerto and a cello concerto.

During the eighteen years that Ty-Zen Hsiao resided in the United States, he dedicated himself to the mission of composing Taiwanese art songs. His vast contributions to Taiwanese music were acknowledged by the Humanities Award from the Taiwanese-American Foundation in 1989. After Ty-Zen Hsiao's return to Taiwan in 1995, numerous concerts, lectures, and recordings were dedicated to his music. A corporate organization called the Hsiao Ty-Zen Music Foundation was created to promote his music, organize associated musical activities, and publish his compositions. In 2002, Ty-Zen Hsiao suffered a stroke. To aid his recovery, he moved back to the United States from Taiwan, and remained in Los Angeles with his family until his passing on 24 February 2015, at the age of 77.

### **Selected Pieces**

Ty-Zen Hsiao's art songs have a modern quality that has been infused with Asian flavor by blending Western diatonic, chromatic, and whole-tone elements with native Taiwanese folk elements. His own individual, eclectic style for art songs has caused them to become standard repertory in Taiwan. Ty-Zen Hsiao once said:

“In Taiwanese music history, we have aboriginal music, Chinese music, and Taiwanese folk music. However, we don’t have the development of western tonal music...”<sup>1</sup>

### ***Eternal Hometown***

Ty-Zen Hsiao composed this piece in 1992. The text is selected from Ching-Yu Wu’s poetic album called *Eternal Hometown*. A resident of Canada for more than thirty years, the poet describes himself as a stray bird wandering the world and never flying back home. He conveys his nostalgic feelings by depicting the memories of his childhood.

#### Text of *Eternal Hometown*

Looking at the wide sea,  
thinking of the distant hometown,  
just like a stray bird wandering through the world for 30 years.  
Hometown, oh my hometown!

Smelling the flowers' fragrance,  
the wind blowing from the tranquil hometown,  
one or two bell apple trees are blooming there.  
Hometown, oh my hometown!  
Snow-white moonlight shining,  
rising sun from the beautiful hometown,  
three or four acres of rice plants are in the ear.  
Hometown, oh my hometown!

Listening to the laughter nearby,  
dreaming of the hometown from my childhood,  
five or six dragonflies are flying above the water.  
Hometown, oh my hometown!

Wishing to go to the eternal hometown,  
stepping on the green, green grass,

---

<sup>1</sup> Hua-Jung Yen, *Hsiao Tyzen — Romantic Taiwan Taste* (Taipei: Shih-Pao Publishing, 2002), p. 143.

Time after time, calling from the bottom of my heart,  
Hometown, oh my eternal hometown!

The song is in ternary form, in D major, with a piano introduction. The wave-like piano introduction, constructed of consecutive sixteenth-note patterns, conveys the poet's and the composer's strong yearnings for their hometowns (Figure II-1).

Figure II-1: *Eternal Hometown* mm. 1-3



This piece is a memory of a scene from the poet's hometown. The repetition of the text "Hometown, oh my hometown" at the end of each verse illustrates the poet's sentimentality. The interaction between the lyrical vocal line and the wave-like piano accompaniment expresses the deep feelings of the text (Figure II-2).

Figure II-2: *Eternal Hometown* mm.10-11



In contrast to the first section, the syncopated chordal piano accompaniment creates an animated mood throughout the B section (Figure II-3).

Figure II-3: *Eternal Hometown* mm. 20-23

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics in Chinese: 照 著 是 白 白 的 月 光 — 出 日 是 美 麗 的 故 鄉 —. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment, featuring a syncopated chordal texture. The bottom staff is the bass line, also with a syncopated rhythm. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The music is marked with a forte (f) dynamic.

Picturing scenes of his hometown, the poet is thrilled by images of snow-white moonlight, the rising sun, rice plants, laughter, and hovering dragonflies. However, all of these are so far away that only in a dream can the poet feel close to them. In measures 24 (Figure II-4) and 32 (Figure II-5), there is a descending melodic line with a dotted rhythm in the piano part, marked *ritardando* and *decrescendo*, which seems to depict the sobbing provoked by such strong nostalgic feelings.

Figure II-4: *Eternal Hometown* mm. 24-25

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics: 三 四 甲 稻 仔 在 結 穗 —. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment, featuring a descending melodic line with a dotted rhythm. The bottom staff is the bass line, also with a descending melodic line. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The music is marked with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic, and includes markings for *rit...* and *pp*.

Figure II-5: *Eternal Hometown* mm. 32-33

The musical score for measures 32-33 of 'Eternal Hometown' is presented in a three-staff format. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. The lyrics '五 六 隻 蜻 蜓 在 戲 水' are written below the notes. The middle staff is the right-hand piano accompaniment, and the bottom staff is the left-hand piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment features a wave-like pattern in the bass line, with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking in the final measure.

The poet finally realizes that there is only one hometown in his mind, no matter where he has been or where he is going to be. The wave-like piano accompaniment returns at measure 40 with a hopeful and bright vocal line in a higher register continuing to the end of the song (Figure II-6).

Figure II-6: *Eternal Hometown* mm. 40-47

The musical score for measures 40-47 of 'Eternal Hometown' is presented in a three-staff format. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The lyrics '每 一 處 心 所 在 叶 落 处' are written below the notes. The middle staff is the right-hand piano accompaniment, and the bottom staff is the left-hand piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern in the bass line, with a *f* dynamic marking in the first measure.

故鄉 — 永遠的

故鄉

### ***The Fairest Flower***

Ty-Zen Hsiao composed this piece in 1992. The text was written by Wen-De Lin. After graduating from the Agricultural Engineering Department of National Taiwanese University in 1963, Wen-De Lin went to Canada for studies at the University of Saskatchewan in 1965, and received a doctoral degree there in 1970. He resides in Canada to this day.

#### Text of The Fairest Flower

Tell me, where do you bloom, fairest flower

Never withered, never faded, oh my fairest flower.  
 Forever fragrant, forever beautiful, oh my fairest flower.

The fairest flower whispered to me:  
“Neither in the Rocky Mountains, nor in the Grand Canyon,  
I only bloom in your heart, bloom in the hometown where you long to return.”

The fairest flower.

The piano introduction, consisting of triplet arpeggios, suggests the beautiful movements of the flower in the gentle breeze. The descending scale in the left hand in measures 1 to 6, D—C—B—B-flat—A, sets the mood for the piece. The repetitive D in the right hand at measure 5 is an imitation of the sound of a Chinese plucked instrument, the *zheng*, adding to the poem’s strong nostalgic feeling (Figure II-7).

Figure II-7: *The Fairest Flower* mm. 1-6

The musical score for the piano introduction of 'The Fairest Flower' (measures 1-6) is presented in two systems. The first system shows measures 1-3, and the second system shows measures 4-6. The tempo is marked 'Andantino' with a quarter note equal to 78 (♩=78). The key signature has one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is common time (C). The score features triplet arpeggios in the right hand and a descending scale in the left hand. Dynamics include piano (p), crescendo (cresc.), and piano-piano (pp). The piece concludes with a key signature change to two flats (B-flat major or D minor).

After creating this nostalgic feeling in a piano prelude, the song brings in a recitative-like section (Figure II-8).

Figure II-8: *The Fairest Flower* mm. 7-12

The musical score for Figure II-8 consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line with lyrics '上美的花，請問你，上美的花' and the piano accompaniment. The piano part has a dynamic marking of *p* and tempo markings of *atempo* and *rit.*. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics '開在 哪。' and the piano accompaniment, which includes a joyful ascending sixteenth-note scale in the right hand. The piano part continues with *p* dynamics and *rit.* markings.

Following this section, the music leads into a bright G major section. The poet states that the flower he loves will never wither or fade, and will be fragrant forever. The whole section is full of hope and joy. At measures 14 and 16, the piano responds to the vocal part with a “joyful figuration” of an ascending sixteenth-note scale (Figure II-9).

Figure II-9: *The Fairest Flower* mm. 13-16

The musical score for Figure II-9 consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line with lyrics '我愛伊 永遠 繪故，我愛伊 永遠 繪謝，' and the piano accompaniment. The piano part has a dynamic marking of *mp a tempo*. The second system continues the vocal line and the piano accompaniment, which features a joyful ascending sixteenth-note scale in the right hand. The piano part continues with a dynamic marking of *p a tempo*.

In the following section the composer uses chromaticism (measures 22 and 24) to create a different color and to reflect the text — “The flower whispered to me” (Figure II-10).

Figure II-10: *The Fairest Flower* mm. 22-26

The musical score for Figure II-10 shows measures 22-26. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "我聽見花 偷偷仔加我 講。" in measures 22-24. The piano accompaniment features a chromatic ascending line in the left hand and chords in the right hand. Dynamics include piano (p), piano-ritardando (rit.), and mezzo-piano (mp).

In the text — “the hometown where you long to return” (measures 33 to 36), the piano part changes to an ascending chordal accompaniment in the right hand with tremolo in the left hand. The music leads to a tonal center of C major, reflecting the composer’s passionate love of his hometown and his hope to return to it (Figure II-11).

Figure II-11: *The Fairest Flower* mm. 33-36

The musical score for Figure II-11 shows measures 33-36. The vocal line has the lyrics "你日夜思念的 故 鄉。" in measures 33-36. The piano accompaniment features an ascending chordal accompaniment in the right hand and a tremolo in the left hand. Dynamics include mezzo-piano (mp), forte (f), fortissimo (ff), and piano (p).

## Summary

As a patriotic composer, Ty-Zen Hsiao has created his own individual style by blending native Taiwanese folk elements with western compositional elements such as diatonicism, chromaticism, and whole-tone scales. Art songs *Eternal Hometown* and *The Fairest Flower* are representatives of Ty-Zen Hsiao's compositional style. His understanding of the Taiwanese culture and his skillful melodic writing cause his compositions to be vivid with nostalgic Taiwanese sentiment. His own individual, eclectic style for art songs has caused them to become standard repertory in Taiwan and established a place for Taiwanese art songs in the twentieth century.

## Chapter III

### Shui-Long Ma (1939-2015)

#### Background

The Taiwanese composer Shui-Long Ma was born in 1939 in the city of Ji-long, one of the major ports in northwest Taiwan. Even though he spent much time studying music and painting as extra-curricular activities during his high school years, Shui-Long Ma did not receive formal musical training until the age of seventeen. Three years later, Ma entered the National Taiwan University of Arts, where he majored in composition and minored in piano and cello.

After graduating, Shui-Long Ma began teaching music classes in public schools in his hometown, Ji-long. He also helped organize a new orchestra and directed several school choirs there. Later, Shui-Long Ma received a full scholarship to study composition at the Regensburg University in Germany. When he returned to Taiwan, Ma began teaching composition at several universities. Since then, Shui-Long Ma has won many awards and received commissions from many organizations.

In 1986, Shui-Long Ma was invited to Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania as a Fulbright scholar.<sup>2</sup> After the great success of being the first-ever

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<sup>2</sup> The Fulbright Program is an international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to “increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.”

Mandarin-speaking composer to present a full recital at New York’s Lincoln Center, Shui-Long Ma received invitations from many organizations and presented programs in other major U.S. cities, including Washington, D.C., San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Shui-Long Ma retired from the Taipei National University of the Arts in 2002. He said that the hectic pace of years of teaching and administration wore him out, reducing his creative output. “I’m one of those people who can only do one thing at a time,” he explained.<sup>3</sup> In those days, he brooded constantly over his inability to focus on composition, something he had always viewed as his most important life’s work.

Shui-Long Ma had always demanded much of himself and said that he had yet to create a work that truly satisfied him. “If I had a most satisfying work, it would probably be the one I haven’t yet written,” said Shui-Long Ma.<sup>4</sup> *The New York Times* once praised him for “letting his instruments speak in a European voice but with an Asian mind.”<sup>5</sup> As the popularity of East-West integration in the arts grew in decades, Shui-Long Ma worried that artists were making use of only the most superficial elements of the tradition and failing to preserve its true spirit. He therefore threw himself into efforts to encourage the study and preservation of traditional arts. For example, while at the Taipei National University of the Arts, he taught numerous classes on creativity in the traditional arts such as “Singing the Opera” and “Chanting and Singing in Mandarin”; he also invited

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<sup>3</sup> “Shui-Long Ma,” *Taiwan Cultural Portal*.

[http://www.culture.tw/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=526&Itemid=157](http://www.culture.tw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=526&Itemid=157)

<sup>4</sup> “Shui-Long Ma,” *Taiwan Cultural Portal*.

[http://www.culture.tw/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=526&Itemid=157](http://www.culture.tw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=526&Itemid=157)

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Holland, “Concert: 6 Compositions by Ma Shui-Long.” *The New York Times* (Mar 23, 1987). <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/03/23/arts/concert-6-compositions-by-ma-shui-long.html>

renowned artists — including the Queen of Henan Opera, Chinese cross-talk stars Lung-Hau Wei and Chao-Nan Wu, *Nankuan*<sup>6</sup> artist Hsiao-Yueh Tsai and Taiwanese Opera singer Chiung-Chih Liao — to give master classes at the school,<sup>7</sup> allowing students to have an education more balanced between the East and West, rather than oriented primarily towards the West.

## **Selected Pieces**

The musical compositions of Shui-Long Ma consist of many genres, including works for ballet, theater, orchestra, chamber ensemble, solo piano, voice and also for traditional Chinese instruments. Shui-Long Ma's early piano works — *Suite Taiwan* and *A Sketch of The Rainy Harbor* — reflect the spirit and compositional styles of early Taiwanese contemporary music, in which young Taiwanese composers began abandoning the pentatonic-romantic style of writing, searching for and experimenting with new musical ideas instead.

### ***Suite Taiwan***

As Shui-Long Ma's hometown Ji-Long is the largest port in north Taiwan, there are many temples with which to bless fishermen with prayers for their safety. The images of the statues in local temples and Taiwanese folk music, especially the traditional theater music played constantly around temple areas, all had a great influence on his music.

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<sup>6</sup> *Nankuan* is a style of Chinese classical music originating in the southern Chinese province of Fujian and in Taiwan. The musical characteristic is typically slow, gentle, delicate and melodic.

<sup>7</sup> "Shui-Long Ma," *Taiwan Cultural Portal*.  
[http://www.culture.tw/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=526&Itemid=157](http://www.culture.tw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=526&Itemid=157)

Written in 1966, *Suite Taiwan* contains four individually titled pieces: “The Temple,” “Religious Procession,” “Lion Dance,” and “Lantern Festival.” All these titles are strongly related to the social customs of Taiwan. From the titles of the first two pieces, “The Temple” and “Religious Procession,” one can already imagine the tranquil nature of the music. In the beginning of the first piece, “The Temple,” Shui-Long Ma portrays the temple atmosphere by mimicking the sounds of Chinese blocks used by the monks in their daily prayers. The quarter-note staccatos indicate the Chinese block<sup>8</sup> (Figure III-1).

Figure III-1: “The Temple” mm.1-5



Similar effects can also be found in the final section of the second piece, “Religious Procession,” where eighth-note staccatos appear in every measure, evoking the serenity in the temple with the faraway sound of the Chinese blocks (Figure III-2).

Figure III-2: “Religious Procession” mm.32-34



<sup>8</sup> The Chinese block is a percussion instrument consisting of a partially hollowed rectangular block of wood that is struck with wooden drumsticks or other beaters.

Both “Lion Dance” and “Lantern Festival” are very joyful, entertaining, and rhythmic. The percussive influence is especially noticeable in the “Lion Dance,” in which Shui-Long Ma borrows the rhythmic patterns commonly used by Taiwanese traditional drum ensembles (Figure III-3).

Figure III-3: “Lion Dance” mm.5-8



In “Lantern Festival,” Shui-Long Ma uses glissandi, grace notes, trills, and big leaps to represent people gathering together on the street and celebrating the Lantern Festival, creating a bustling atmosphere with music and dance (Figure III-4).

Figure III-4: “Lantern Festival” mm.142-149



## *A Sketch of the Rainy Harbor*

A northeast harbor of Taiwan, Ji-long has always been famous for its amount of annual precipitation, hence its nickname: “the rainy harbor.” According to the composer’s recollection of his early childhood, he was very fond of watching the rain, and his compositions evoke this childhood memory. *A Sketch of the Rainy Harbor* was written in 1969, three years after the completion of *Suite Taiwan*. The work contains four pieces: “Rain,” “Harbor Views in Rainy Nights,” “The Girl Who Picks Seashells,” and “At the Temple Gate.”

In the first piece, “Rain,” Shui-Long Ma creates an image of the seemingly endless drizzle in Ji-long. The pentatonic writing from measures 1 to 6 produces the light gray-scale color of a rainy day, with the ostinato of two open fifths in the left hand delivering the sound of continuous rain and the uneven 16th notes and the dotted rhythms portraying the dance of the raindrops (Figure III-5).

Figure III-5: “Rain” mm.1-6



In “Harbor Views in Rainy Nights,” Shui-Long Ma also reaches for the tone color of traditional instruments and folk music as his source of inspiration. For example,

figurations of free-running 32nd notes imitate the glissando style commonly used on the *zheng*, a Chinese musical instrument (Picture II-1) (Figure III-6).

Figure III-6: “Harbor View in Rainy Nights” mm.1-5



Other examples showing the influences of visual experiences can be found in “The Girl Who Picks Seashells.” The piece depicts the scenery along the beach, with its opening left hand ascending pattern imitating the light waves pushing up against the shore (Figure III-7).

Figure III-7: “The Girl Who Picks Seashells” mm.1-4



In “At the Temple Gate,” the fast-running 16th note figures are Shui-Long Ma’s attempt at creating the bustling, crowded image of the marketplace around Ji-long’s famous Temple Gate. (Figure III-8)

Figure III-8: “At The Temple Gate” mm.1-2



### ***Piano Pieces on Chinese Folk Tunes for Children***

Shui-Long Ma’s career as teacher and composer also inspired him to write pedagogical works. He compiled thirty-two popular Chinese and Taiwanese folksongs, arranged them for piano and titled the collection *Piano Pieces on Chinese Folk Tunes for Children*. The collection is deeply influenced by the people and the land he loves. In his preface, Shui-Long Ma emphasized the value of folksongs as they are vital to musical development in every culture. He says:

“... I hope this collection will provide a supplement to the teaching materials of our piano music education, so the students will be more familiar with our own musical language from early childhood. As they acquire more knowledge and theory from the Western music system in the future, they will be able to develop our own music culture. That is the main purpose of this production.”

Over the years, *Piano Pieces on Chinese Folk Tunes for Children* has become one of the most influential collections in Taiwan. The contributions Ma made to Taiwanese piano music serve to preserve the Taiwanese musical heritage for future generations of the nation’s musicians. This book can be divided into three groups by the level of difficulty. Similar to Bartók’s *Mikrokosmos*, the lesson number actually coordinates with the development of students’ finger dexterity. The first twelve pieces are for elementary-level students. For example, it is not until No. 5, “Little Golden Oriole,” that the student

starts to build the skill for fast, repeated note figurations through the learning of sixteenth notes in one full beat (Figure III-9).

Figure III-9: No.5”Little Golden Oriole” mm. 9-12



Another important feature is to assist the student in playing contrapuntal pieces. In No. 11, “The Jasmine Flower,” while the right hand plays the smooth, two-bar phrase, the left hand plays the irregular, offbeat counterpart melodies (Figure III-10).

Figure III-10: No. 11 “The Jasmine Flower” mm. 4-9



The pieces between Nos. 13 and 22 are more complicated. Musically, this is the level at which students need to develop various finger touches to create different musical expressions. For example, the last chord in No. 18, “The Sorrows of The Shepherdess,”

requires students to create an “echo” effect with decrescendo, tied-notes, grace notes and fermata at the end of the piece (Figure III-11).

Figure III-11: No. 18 “The Sorrows of The Shepherdess” mm. 29-32



Also, No. 21, “The Embroidered Purse,” offers a perfect example for students to study the musical language of Chinese folksongs, especially through the grace notes placed at the ends of the phrases (Figure III-12).

Figure III-12: No.21 “The Embroidered Purse” mm. 1-9



Most of the pieces after No. 23 are written in a “showpiece” style. They are longer and technically more demanding. Some of the pieces gradually depart from pentatonicism

by incorporating chromaticism borrowed from the Western harmonic system (Figure III-13).

Figure III-13: No.24 “The Swallow” mm. 5-9



## Summary

Shui-Long Ma’s early piano works *Suite Taiwan* and *A Sketch of The Rainy Harbor* reflect the spirit and compositional styles of early Taiwanese contemporary music, during which young Taiwanese composers began abandoning the pentatonic-romantic style of writing, in favor of searching for and experimenting with new musical ideas. Over the years, Shui-Long Ma’s pedagogical work *Piano Pieces on Chinese Folk Tunes for Children* has become one of the most influential collections in Taiwan. The collection is deeply influenced by Taiwan, the people and the land he loves in Taiwan. The contributions that Shui-Long Ma made to Taiwanese piano music serve to preserve the Taiwanese musical heritage for future generations of Taiwanese musicians.

## Chapter IV

### Fan-Ling Su (b. 1955)

#### Background

Fan-Ling Su was born in Hsinchu, Taiwan in 1955. In her childhood, she often sat with her grandmother and listened to an old radio or watched outdoor performances of *Ge Zai Shi* (Taiwanese opera).<sup>9</sup> In addition, her family purchased a record player, and having music in the home gave Fan-Ling Su access to and an appreciation for various recordings of western classical music. Of the styles of music she listened to at that time, her favorite was that of the Romantic composers.

At age ten Fan-Ling Su began taking piano lessons. In 1970 she turned fifteen, the age at which she needed to choose her career path. Due to her family's limited finances, she had to apply directly to a teachers' college instead of going to high school with the goal of entering a university. Once in teachers' college, Fan-Ling Su chose music as her major, with piano as her primary instrument. The facilities of the school, plus the performance opportunities there, helped her improve her piano skills. It was at this time that she confirmed her love for music and chose to pursue it as her career.

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<sup>9</sup> Fan-Ling Su, *The Application of Theory and Creative Concept of Western and Eastern Music* (Taipei: Mei-Le Publishing, 2001), p. 49.

In 1975 Fan-Ling Su graduated from the teachers' college in Hsinchu, and as was the norm, she started the required five years of teaching service without delay. At the same time, Fan-Ling Su began to take classes in music history and musicology as well as additional composition courses. It was during this time that her vocation became clear: She quit her teaching job and accepted a job offer in 1978 to work at a record company, Crystal Sound.

In the beginning, Fan-Ling Su worked as a project manager at the record company. During this time, she observed other composers' use of instrumentation and musical styles, and then utilized the techniques and knowledge in her own music. It did not take long for her to get hired as a contract composer and music producer at the record company. Before leaving the company, she helped Crystal Sound produce many best-selling products, such as "*Singing Time*," an educational recording designed for children. The product received great praise and brought her and the company large profits.

By the end of 1983, Fan-Ling Su decided to study in Austria. In 1985 she was accepted by the Konservatorium der Stadt Wien under the tutelage of Reinhard Portisch. With Portisch's guidance and her further study of electro-acoustic music<sup>10</sup> with Dieter Kaufmann at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Vienna in 1988, her compositions began to be recognized by the public.

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<sup>10</sup> Electro-acoustic music originated in Western art music around the middle of the 20th century, following the incorporation of electric sound production into compositional practice.

Fan-Ling Su has received numerous awards and commissions. She is also a four-time winner of prizes from the Taiwanese Council for Cultural Affairs. In Europe, her composition *Himmel-Erde-Mensch* (for fifteen strings) won the citation of honorable diploma from the 9th International Women Composers Competition in 1989 in Mannheim, Germany; and her orchestral piece *Ba-Gua* won first prize at the composition competition for Komponisten-Bund Austria & das Konservatorium der Stadt Wien in 1992. Her other notable pieces include the piano composition *Zentrifugalkraft-Zentripetalkraft*, performed at the Paris Cultural Center in 1996, and her work *Dress with Golden Threads* for traditional Chinese instruments, performed in Germany and Lithuania in 1999.

Fan-Ling Su currently teaches at three institutions: the National Taiwan University of Arts in Taipei, Fu Jen Catholic University in New Taipei City, and the National Hsinchu University of Education in Hsinchu. She is also an active member of a number of musical organizations such as the Austria Section of the International Society of Contemporary Music.

## **Selected Pieces**

### ***Temple Festival Suite***

Written in 1997, *Temple Festival Suite* consists of five short pieces that display the folklore and religious customs of Taiwanese temples: “Procession of the Deities,” “Crossing the Fire,” “Predicting the Future,” “Carrying the Palanquin,” and “Taoist Exorcist.” In the published scores for *Temple Festival Suite*, Fan-Ling Su provides a brief description of her musical goals in this composition:

*Temple Festival Suite* tries to express in music the affection of people for their land, and sincere devotion to their God. It also attempts to achieve a contemporary appeal and conception through the compositional techniques of modern music.

Fan-Ling Su employs many contemporary techniques in her piano compositions, most notably neo-tonality. Neo-tonality in this context is defined by Stefan Kostka, author of *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth Century Music*, as a “reference to music that is tonal but in which the tonal center is established through nontraditional means.”<sup>11</sup> Neo-tonality is utilized in “Procession of the Deities,” “Crossing the Fire,” and “Taoist Exorcist.” “Procession of the Deities” and “Crossing the Fire” have a tonal center of A while “Taoist Exorcist” has a G tonal center.

“Procession of the Deities”

There are two different types of temples in Taiwan: Taoist and Buddhist. Fan-Ling Su describes the different deities worshiped in these temples: the Jade Emperor,<sup>12</sup> Taoistic fairies, folklore heroes and heroines who were elevated to the stature of Holiness, as well as Mercy Goddess Buddha<sup>13</sup> and Sakyamuni Buddha.<sup>1415</sup> Temple worship focuses on several themes, including encouraging people to become righteous human beings, providing safety and health to family members, and so on.

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<sup>11</sup> Stefan Kostka, *Materials and Techniques of Twentieth Century Music* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1990), p. 109.

<sup>12</sup> The Jade Emperor is one of the representations of the first god in Taoism.

<sup>13</sup> Commonly known in Chinese as Guanyin or Guanshiyin.

<sup>14</sup> He is believed to have lived and taught mostly in eastern India sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries BC.

<sup>15</sup> Fan-Ling Su, *Temple Festival Suite* (Taipei: Mei-Yueh Publishing, 1997), "Music Interpretation."

The procession of the deities usually occurs during a deity's birthday or during other important Taiwanese festivals. During the procession, a person carries the palanquin of a deity with a group of believers to that deity's birthplace. A Chinese trumpet and drums are used to accompany the procession.

Written in the neo-tonality idiom, the piece commences with its tonal center of A played in the highest and lowest registers of the piano (Figure IV-1). Fan-Ling Su combines Western and Eastern material by placing the two hands far apart in highly different ranges (the high range for the right hand and the low range for the left hand), to portray the Tall and Short Deities that are found in Taiwanese Temples. According to Buddhist religion, these two deities are believed to lead dead criminals to receive their punishment in one of the eighteen layers of hell.

Figure IV-1: "Procession of the Deities" mm 1-4



New pitches, B and Bb, are introduced in measure 3, with A remaining as part of the trill (A—B) at the bottom, and as a member of the sustained double note (Bb/A) in the top voice. The mixture of major second horizontally and minor seventh vertically, with a dynamic of *pp* creates a mysterious atmosphere (Figure IV-1).

In measures 11 to 14, a wavy melodic pattern with new pitches is stated by the left hand, mimicking the rocking motion of the palanquin (Figure IV-2).

Figure IV-2: “Procession of the Deities” mm 9-14

The image shows a musical score for measures 9 through 14 of a piece titled "Procession of the Deities". The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of staves. Each system has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has one flat (Bb). Measure 9 starts with a treble staff containing a sustained double note (Bb/A) and a bass staff with a trill (A—B). Dynamics include *f*, *sempre*, *rubato*, and *p*. Measures 11-14 feature a wavy melodic pattern in the left hand, with dynamics of *f* and *sempre*. The right hand continues with sustained double notes and trills.

## “Crossing the Fire”

“Crossing the Fire” is a spiritual and religious practice that is a highlight of a temple festival. Enchanted believers, caught with spiritual fever, carry the palanquin of the deity as they run over burning charcoal with their bare feet. Since some Taiwanese believe that a burning fire will keep away evil and bad luck, they hope that performing this ceremony will prevent natural disasters from occurring.<sup>16</sup>

This movement is written in three voices with materials that are repetitive in nature. While the composer uses rondo form in this movement, it is not the traditional rondo form in Western music. Instead, this movement is written in rondo form with two alternating primary sections as a representation of the returning dance of the enchanted believers as they perform the fire crossing ceremony.

In measures 1 to 15 of section A, the irregular phrasing of the varied patterns in the top voice depicts dancers dancing around the fire repeatedly (Figure IV-3)<sup>17</sup>. The A section then returns with different pitches and dynamic levels in measures 20, 50, and 68.

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<sup>16</sup> Ming-Ying Lu, *Taiwanese Ceremonies and Customs* (Taipei: Chang Ming Culture Enterprise Co., Ltd., 1998), p. 40-47.

<sup>17</sup> Fan-Ling Su, *The Application of Theory and Creative Concept of Western and Eastern Music* (Taipei: Mei-Le Publishing, 2001), p. 49.

Figure IV-3: “Crossing the Fire” mm. 1-8

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Danza rondo" with a tempo marking of ♩ = 56. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of two systems of music, each with three staves (treble, bass, and a lower bass staff). The first system (measures 1-4) features a treble staff with a rapid sixteenth-note trill pattern, starting with a *pp* dynamic and moving to *p*. The bass staff has a simple two-note ascending motive, starting with a *p* dynamic. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the trill pattern in the treble staff, which reaches a *mp* dynamic by measure 8. The bass staff continues the two-note motive, also reaching a *mp* dynamic by measure 8.

Between the A sections, section B first appears in mm. 16 to 19. This material contains thirty-second note trills and broken octaves in the top voice, repeated notes in the middle voice, and lower voice sequences of two-note motives ascending in sixths. This section conveys a feeling of relaxation after the dancers have completed their emotional dances (Figure IV-4). The B section returns twice more. The first return is in measures 33 to 46, and the final appearance is in measures 64 to 68.

Figure IV-4: “Crossing the Fire” mm. 16-23

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Crossing the Fire" from measures 16 to 23. The score is written for piano and is organized into three systems. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the left and a bass clef on the right. The first system (measures 16-17) features a treble staff with a *pp* dynamic marking and a bass staff with a *p* dynamic marking. The second system (measures 18-19) has a treble staff with *mp* and *p* markings and a bass staff with a *mf* marking. The third system (measures 20-23) shows a treble staff with *f* and *mp* markings and a bass staff with *f* and *mp* markings. The music includes complex rhythmic patterns, such as sixteenth-note runs and triplets, and various articulations like slurs and accents.

### “Predicting the Future”

Some Taiwanese believe that sincere worship will determine their future and help them to make wise decisions. For example, when a person is faced with a difficult and important decision, he can communicate with a deity by throwing divining blocks—two crescent-shaped pieces of wood. If the blocks land with one block facing up and the other facing down, this represents a positive affirmation of the decision. If the blocks land with both sides facing either up or down, this represents a bad sign, and the decision needs to be changed by the person.

The musical form of this movement is comprised of introduction (mm. 1-8), A section (mm. 9-29), interlude (mm. 30-32), B section (mm. 33-63) and conclusion (mm. 64-70). This movement evokes the atmosphere of uncertainty and feeling of anxiety that is created as the person anticipates the result of dropping a pair of crescent-shaped divining blocks. For example, in the introduction, the hemiola effect (mm. 1-5) is combined with the fermata notes (mm. 2 and 4) to show how a person might be looking forward to receiving the answers while fearing that the results could be disappointing at the same time (Figure IV-5).

Figure IV-5: “Predicting the Future” mm. 1-7



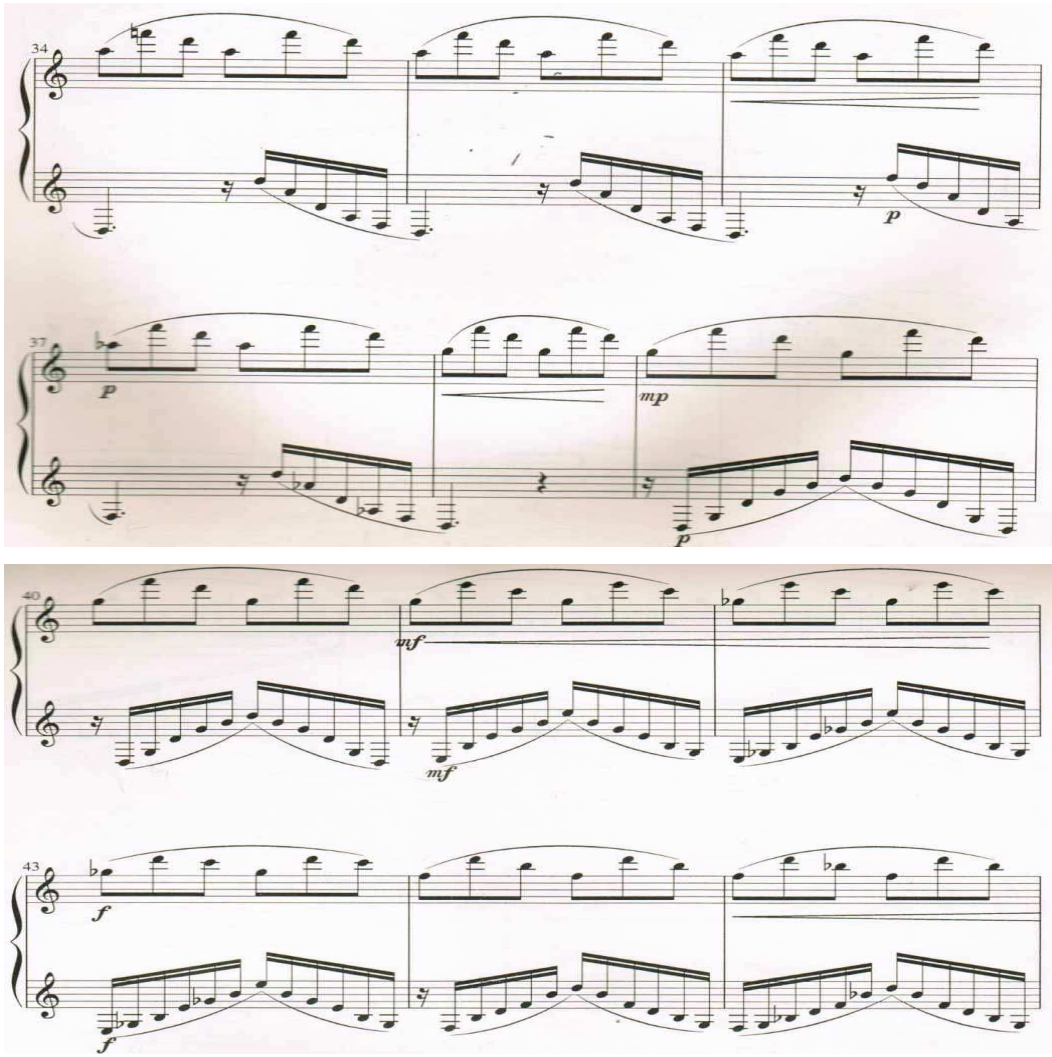
The A section (mm. 9-29) begins with a short melodic idea, starting on the upbeat to measure 10, which is played in both ascending and descending directions in the following measures (Figure IV-6). The melody is repeated at different pitch levels, which can be interpreted as the worshipers asking their questions again and again before casting the divining blocks.

Figure IV-6: “Predicting the Future” mm. 8-19

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Predicting the Future" from measures 8 to 19. The score is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system (measures 8-11) features a treble clef staff with a melodic line of eighth notes, marked with an *mp* dynamic and a tempo of  $\text{♩} = 96$ . A dashed line above the staff indicates an *accel.* (accelerando). The bass clef staff has a *mf* dynamic. The second system (measures 12-15) continues the melodic line in the treble clef and has a *mf* dynamic. The third system (measures 16-19) shows the melodic line in the treble clef with a *mf* dynamic and the bass clef staff with a *f* dynamic.

The B section (mm. 33-63) can be seen as an expanded A section. Instead of featuring an extensive melodic line, this section is more of a display of different harmonies in sequence, cycling through major, minor, diminished, and seventh chords. For example, in measures 34 to 40, the harmony moves through D minor, D diminished triads, and a G major seventh chord (Figure IV-7). The constant harmonic changes represent the complex moods experienced by someone participating in the aforementioned divination experiences.

Figure IV-7: “Predicting the Future” mm. 34-45



### “Carrying the Palanquin”

One of the most sacred temple festival activities is to place a deity in a palanquin and carry it out of the temple in a procession. The purpose of carrying the palanquin in procession around the neighborhood and throughout the town is for the deity to provide protection to everyone in the community. To mimic the rocking movement of the palanquin, Fan-Ling Su uses a one-measure ostinato in the left hand throughout this movement (Figure



Figure IV-9: “Carrying the Palanquin” mm. 13-21



#### “Taoist Exorcist”

The Taoist Exorcist ceremony was performed often when Taiwan was a rural society. During that time, many people did not have enough money to see doctors or to buy medicine. Instead, the Taiwanese would go to Taoist exorcists, who were believed to be able to communicate with the deities, and ask what to do in order to recover or be healed by the deities.

Exorcists would usually receive their answers from deities' voices after they performed incarnation, during which the exorcists would dance irrationally while murmuring unintelligible incantations. Since exorcists could talk to deities, they also helped people to find out their personal histories, or to talk with deceased people. The exorcists could even act or talk in a manner that imitated the deceased person in question.

This movement depicts the performance of a Taoist exorcist. For example, in the opening, Fan-Ling Su not only constantly changes the meters between 4/4 and 3/4 (Figure IV-10), but also decorates the chordal texture with displaced accents, such as the sixth eighth note of measures 1, 3 and 5 (Figure IV-10), evoking the erratic rhythmic movements created by the exorcist as he performs the incarnation dance.

Figure: IV-10: "Taoist Exorcist" mm. 1-6



A rising and falling whole tone scale appears twice in measures 14 to 17 (Figure IV-11). These active changes of harmony set the atmosphere for the next significant musical event in measures 18 to 19, a presentation of the fuller version of the melody. The appearance of the full melody can be viewed as the interpreter of the deities revealing the true meaning of the exorcist's words (Figure IV-11).

Figure IV-11: "Taoist Exorcist" mm. 13-18



The polychords in syncopated rhythms in measures 34 to 36 can be seen as a portrait of the unnatural body movement of the exorcist, with *forte* dynamic and accents highlighting the intensity of the traditional dance (Figure IV-12).

Figure IV-12: "Taoist Exorcist" mm. 34-36



## Summary

After receiving numerous awards both nationally and internationally, Fan-Ling Su has become a widely popular Taiwanese female composer. She shows her artistic ability through the fusion of Western and Taiwanese experiences in her compositions. Her piano solo suite *Temple Festival Suite* expresses in music the affection of people for their land, and their sincere devotion to their God. This suite demonstrates that Taiwanese folk materials can not only be elegantly incorporated into instructional piano pieces, but can in this context also retain a sense of the unique cultural roots of the Taiwanese experience.

## Chapter V

### Kwang-I Ying (b. 1960)

#### Background

Kwang-I Ying, a well-known composer and accomplished pianist, was born in Taipei, Taiwan in 1960. She began to take piano lessons when she was eight years old. Her musical talent began to show as soon as she started taking piano lessons. She was accepted by one of the most prestigious music elementary schools in Taiwan, Guangren Catholic School. The music program offered by the school covered both elementary and junior high school levels, and she continued to concentrate on piano performance throughout both levels of schooling.

At school, Kwang-I Ying's mother noticed that the school's theory teachers praised her daughter's talent for writing music for the classes. When she was fourteen, Kwang-I Ying began to also take composition lessons with Tsang-Houei Hsu, a leading figure among Taiwanese composers. He was a teacher who cared deeply about the education of the next generation of composition students.<sup>18</sup>

After entering the National Taiwan Academy of Arts School in 1975, Kwang-I Ying chose composition as her major. The faculty of the composition program at the

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<sup>18</sup> Yujen Chen Tobita. "Historical Background and Pedagogical Analysis of Piano Works by Selected Taiwanese Women." (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 2004), p. 85.

National Taiwan Academy of Arts School dedicated themselves to making a creative, open, and liberal environment for their students. Kwang-I Ying said that these experiences and this open style of learning at school stimulated her creativity tremendously and helped shape her worldview and way of thinking.<sup>19</sup>

After graduating in 1980, Kwang-I Ying decided to take two years to study piano abroad. She was accepted into the piano performance program at the University of Maryland at College Park in 1982. She first studied with Bradford Gowen and later with Thomas Schumacher. As a pianist, she was requested to accompany many instrumental majors and got to know many of the faculty and students well. One of them was cello student Dieter Wulfhorst, who commissioned a cello piece for himself to perform on his recital:

When Dieter first asked me, I thought he was joking, because it is uncommon for students in Taiwan to request composition students to write a piece for their recital, so I thought he was not serious. After I came back from my winter break, he asked me how was the piece going. It was then that I knew he really meant it, and it made me realize that I only had less than two months to write the piece!<sup>20</sup>

The piece Ying wrote for Dieter Wulfhorst was *Fantasy for Cello and Piano* (1987), her first commission. The piece received great praise from the audience, including the university faculty. Once her ability in composition was known, she was asked to write music for various instruments such *Trio No. I* (1989), a commission from the cellist in the

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<sup>19</sup> Yu-Chien Hung. "An Exploration of the Musical Composition Background/Experience, Process, and Pedagogy of Selected Composers in Taiwan." (Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1998), p. 120.

<sup>20</sup> Wei-Der Huang, "Solo Piano and Chamber Music of Contemporary Taiwanese Composers" (D.M.A. diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2001), p. 59.

“Ecco Trio,” Evelyn Elsing; and *In the Mountains* (1988), for trumpet and guitar, commissioned by the trumpet faculty member, Professor Emerson Head.

In 1985, she wrote her first composition for solo piano, *Moods*. The composition won Ying first prizes in the National Capital Area Composer's Consortium Competition and the Helen Wadefield Hoback Composition Competition, both in 1986. Consequently, Ying's career as a composer accelerated rapidly. In addition to the commissions from established musicians, she received a full scholarship to attend the Conservatoire Americain de Fontainebleau in France in the summer of 1988 to study with Alain Louvier, Betsy Jolas, and Andre Boucourechliev in composition, and Idil Biret and Michel Beroff in piano. In the same year, she received an Outstanding Young Women of America Award.

Kwang-I Ying received her bachelor's degree in 1986, followed by her master's degree in 1988, both in piano performance. In the same year, she decided to pursue a doctoral degree in composition at the University of Maryland at College Park. However, pressures of the academic requirements and the composition commissions made Kwang-I Ying tire of her life in the United States, so she finished her doctoral coursework in only one year, then left for Taiwan in 1989. Once she arrived back in Taiwan, she was immediately hired, first as a part-time instructor at Soochow University (1989-1991), and then the following year at the National Taiwan Academy of Arts (1990-1991). In 1991, she received a Doctoral of Musical Arts degree from the University of Maryland at College Park.

In addition to being an active composer, Kwang-I Ying continues to thrive as a pianist and scholar. She was awarded a full scholarship to study with Jean-Bernard Pommier in piano at the Academie de Musique Lausanne in Switzerland in 1987. In 2005, she played her composition *Trio No. 2* at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, and *Dependent Arising* and *Trio No. 3* in 2006 and 2007 in Taiwan. Also, she is the author of *The Structure of Chopin's Nocturnes — After 1849* (1996) and *Cultivation of Music in Five Years* (2008). Kwang-I Ying is currently an associate professor and chair of the music department at the National Sun Yat-Sen University in Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

### **Selected Piece**

Kwang-I Ying's music reflects inspiration drawn from her daily encounters with various subjects and literature.<sup>21</sup> In her latest book, *Cultivation of Music in Five Years*, she discusses how subjects such as numerology, Chinese theatrical music, the Golden Ratio, Morse code, and Buddhism are incorporated in her music.<sup>22</sup>

### **Moods**

*Moods* was written while Kwang-I Ying was still a piano student at the University of Maryland, College Park. This composition won her the first prize in the Helen Wadefield Hoback Composition Competition and the National Capital Area Composers'

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<sup>21</sup> Yu-Chien Hung. "An Exploration of the Musical Composition Background/Experience, Process, and Pedagogy of Selected Composers in Taiwan." (Ph.D. diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1998), p. 121.

<sup>22</sup> Kwang-I Ying, *Cultivation of Music in Five Years* (Kaohsiung: Chuenhui Publisher, 2008), p. 23.

Consortium Competition, both in 1986. It is a set of five delicate solo piano pieces that reflects her feelings and sentiments toward the change to her environment at the time.

Kwang-I Ying stated that the style of *Moods* is very different from her works written prior to her study in the United States:

My writings before *Moods* were also atonally-oriented. What changed was that, when composing the earlier works, I would always create a pattern or a scale for a specific work, and compose based upon the created material. But when I was writing *Moods*, I did not think of any compositional rules or techniques, but just wrote according to how I felt.<sup>23</sup>

These five pieces in *Moods* include “Ying-Yang,” “Nocturne,” “Playfully,” “Expressed” and “Momentary.” Each piece is given a title that reflects an aspect of the composer’s life during the time of her writing. The entire set is built upon chromaticism with wide shifting of registers. Syncopated and off-beat rhythms are used in all five pieces. The writing in “Nocturne,” “Playfully” and “Expressed” contains more extensive melodic passages, while “Ying-Yang” and “Momentary” are rather fragmented melodically.

“Ying-Yang”

In Chinese philosophy *yin* represents the feminine and negative; *yang* means the masculine and positive, and *yin-yang* describes how seemingly opposite or contrary forces are actually complementarily interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world. Kwang-I Ying employs white and black keys, either musically connected to or independent of each other, to present the concept of two opposing forces.

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<sup>23</sup> Kwang-I Ying, *Cultivation of Music in Five Years* (Kaohsiung: Chuenhui Publisher, 2008), p. 125.

This piece is written in free flowing through-composed form. In presenting the Chinese philosophical concept of *ying-yang*, Kwang-I Ying uses the pentatonic scale as the primary sonority to deliver an Eastern flavor. Polytonality is also widely used; Kwang-I Ying often writes one melody played on the white keys and another played simultaneously on the blacks. For example, in measures 1 to 2 (Figure V-1), the linear texture of the white keys is comprised of G5, C3, A4, D2 and E6, pitches from a C major pentatonic scale (C, D, E, G, A). In measures 2-3, this is followed by the black keys in a chordal texture, with pitches from a F# pentatonic scale (G#, D#, G# in the bottom and A#, C#, F# in the top).

Figure V-1: “Ying-Yang” mm. 1-7



Kwang-I Ying shows the contrast between the two forces of *ying-yang* by using different rhythms and textures. In measures 1-7 (Figure V-1), the rhythm used for the white-keys scale are mostly dotted quarter notes and tied or un-tied quarter notes in single-note fashion. These express softness and extensiveness, while sixteenth notes arranged in chordal patterns are used for the black keys to suggest aggressiveness and quickness. However, in measure 9, the two opposing forces are merged when the two tonalities appear together (Figure V-2). Here both black and white keys are played with tremolo in a chordal texture.

Figure V-2: “Ying-Yang” mm. 8-18

The musical score for Figure V-2, measures 8-18, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 8-10) features a piano texture with a treble clef staff containing a scale and a bass clef staff with chordal patterns. Dynamics include *sub. p*, *cresc.*, *ff*, and *fff*. Performance markings include *accel.*, a triplet of eighth notes, and *8va* (octave up) markings. The second system (measures 11-13) shows a more melodic line in the treble clef and chordal accompaniment in the bass clef. Dynamics range from *mf* to *ff* and *dim.*. The tempo marking is *a tempo accel.*. The third system (measures 14-18) concludes with a *rit.* (ritardando) in the treble clef, followed by *a tempo* and another *rit.* in the bass clef. Dynamics include *fff* and *ppp*. The piece ends with a *8va* marking and a dashed line indicating the final octave.

“Nocturne”

Kwang-I Ying has mentioned that *Moods* is a reflection of her feelings, and that "Nocturne" portrays the feeling she had while “sitting by the window during the night, and being surrounded by the evening atmosphere.”<sup>24</sup> This piece begins with a serene, expressive, and melancholic atmosphere to reflect the traditional characteristics of a Nocturne as an homage to John Field<sup>25</sup> and Frédéric Chopin. In measures 1 to 5 (Figure V-3), an ostinato accompaniment is written in straight eighth notes to create calmness.

Figure V-3: “Nocturne” mm. 1-10



<sup>24</sup> Kwang-I Ying, *Cultivation of Music in Five Years* (Kaohsiung: Chuenhui Publisher, 2008), p. 43.

<sup>25</sup> John Field (1782-1837) was an Irish composer and pianist. He was the originator of the Nocturne. He was a pioneer in the development of a Romantic style of piano music that reached its zenith in the works of Chopin.

In measure 2 (Figure V-3), the right hand introduces a three-note descending motive. Variants of the motive appear throughout the piece; for example, the motive reappears in measure 3 (Figure V-3) a half-step higher and with a different rhythm. Also, the A ascending to D and Eb in the inner voice in measure 9 shows another variant of the motive (Figure V-3). It reappears again in the left hand triplet in measure 12. To contrast with the calmness of night, Kwang-I Ying also uses rapid movement of chromatic scales and running patterns in measure 6 (Figure V-3) and measures 11 to 13 (Figure V-4) to show another picture of night, such as the nocturnal quiet being interrupted by sudden wind or rain.

Figure V-4: “Nocturne” mm. 11-13

The image displays three systems of musical notation for measures 11, 12, and 13. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. Measure 11 features a rapid chromatic scale in the right hand, with a '3va' marking above the staff and a forte 'f' dynamic in the bass. Measure 12 continues the chromatic scale in the right hand, marked '3va' and 'f', while the left hand has a triplet. Measure 13 shows the right hand with a '5' fingering and a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking, while the left hand has a triplet. The system concludes with 'rit.' (ritardando) and 'molto' markings, and a circled '5' in the right margin.

## “Playfully”

This piece is in binary form. In the first section (mm. 1-16), Kwang-I Ying generously uses misplaced accents to create a lively and fun character (Figure V-5). In addition, restless turn-like patterns of ascending-descending figures in the right hand are presented from measure 3. In measure 5, sixteenth notes in the right hand are accompanied by a syncopated rhythm in the left hand. Both measures 8 and 9 are written in sixteenth notes moving in similar motion in both hands.

Figure V-5: “Playfully” mm. 1-12

The musical score for measures 1-12 of "Playfully" is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) is in 2/4 time, marked "Allegro" with a tempo of quarter note = 126. The right hand starts with a *p* dynamic and features a "detaché" instruction. The left hand has a syncopated rhythm. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the 2/4 time signature, with the right hand playing sixteenth notes and the left hand providing accompaniment. The third system (measures 9-12) shows a meter change to 3/8 time. Measures 10 and 11 feature full chords and rests, while measure 12 concludes with a *sf* dynamic and a fermata. The piece ends with a repeat sign.

In measures 10-12, the meter changes from 2/4 to 3/8. Three strong chords are placed irregularly, on beat two in measure 10, beat one in measure 11 and beat three in measure 12 (Figure V-5). Compared to the turn-like patterns, the mixture of full chords and silent rests in these three measures create a humorous surprise. The rhythmic patterns

resume in measure 13 (Figure V-6), with the rhythm changed in both hands to a mixture of eighth and sixteenth notes.

Figure V-6: “Playfully” mm. 13-17



Section B (mm. 17-34) is built on melodic textures presented in two voices arranged contrapuntally (Figure V-7). Here Kwang-I Ying uses other elements in addition to rhythm to show a witty character. For example, the time signature changes frequently in this section from 5/8 to 3/8 or 2/4. The melodic ostinato in the left hand is repeated in mm. 17-21, measures 22 to 28, and measures 28 to 34, with different placement of accents each time. The left hand ostinato accompanies the right hand, which is fragmented and interrupted by rests (Figure V-7).

Figure V-7: “Playfully” mm. 18-30



“Expressed”

Kwang-I Ying stated specifically that “Expressed” contains “personal emotions,” but she could not give a clear answer when people asked her whether the music indicates any turmoil in terms of her personal relationships.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps this is not information or context that the public needs to know. This piece contains two sections. The first section is from measures 1 to 7. The opening of this piece expresses Chopin’s musical characteristics with a melancholy melody in the right hand and a wavy sixteenth-triplet chromatic accompaniment in the left hand (Figure V-8). In measure 2, the motive presented is a three-note descending figure, with the last note having a longer note value (G, F#, A). This type of writing can also be found in “Nocturne” and “Playfully.” Measure 2 of “Nocturne” has G, Eb, D in the melody and measure 17 of “Playfully” has an ostinato of A, G#, C.

Figure V-8: “Expressed” mm. 1-7

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Expressed" in measures 1 through 7. The score is written for piano and is in 3/4 time. It begins with the tempo marking "Largo" and the dynamic marking "mf". The right hand features a melancholy melody with a long note value in measure 2. The left hand provides a wavy sixteenth-triplet chromatic accompaniment. The score includes various dynamic markings such as "pp", "p", and "rit.", as well as articulation marks like slurs and accents. The notation includes sixteenth notes, eighth notes, and quarter notes, with some notes beamed together in triplets.

<sup>26</sup> Kwang-I Ying, *Cultivation of Music in Five Years* (Kaohsiung: Chuenhui Publisher, 2008), p. 118.

The second section of measures 8 to 17 is mainly that of contrapuntal writing. The sixteenth notes that appeared in the first section are replaced by eighth and quarter notes (Figure V-8), so that the rhythmic nature of this section is calmer than the first section. The melody reappears in its original form in the top voice of measures 13 to 14 in its original form, but with different pitch classes in intervallic texture (Figure V-9). Also, in measures 1 to 4 the melody is first presented in *mf*, but the return of the melody has a dynamic of *ff* in measures 13-14, creating the climax of this piece (Figure V-9). In measures 11 to 17, the main melody also appears in the bass in transposition with longer note values, quarter and half notes, where E, G, F#, Ab, F, Bb, A, C, B are in the bass.

Figure V-9: “Expressed” mm. 8-17

The musical score for Figure V-9, measures 8-17, is presented in three systems. The tempo is marked *meno mosso*. The first system (measures 8-10) features a piano part with a *mp* dynamic and a bass part with a *f* dynamic. Both parts contain triplet eighth notes. The second system (measures 11-13) shows the piano part with a *ff* dynamic and a bass part with a *f* dynamic. The piano part includes a triplet eighth note and a sixteenth note, while the bass part has a triplet eighth note and a sixteenth note. The third system (measures 14-17) features a piano part with a *mf* dynamic and a bass part with a *mp* dynamic. The piano part includes a triplet eighth note and a sixteenth note, and the bass part has a triplet eighth note and a sixteenth note. The score also includes dynamic markings such as *dim.*, *rit.*, and *mp*.

“Momentary”

This piece was inspired by the poem *By Chance*, which was written by the Chinese poet Zhi-Mo Hsu:

You and I met one black night at sea,  
Our courses were set, you and me,  
You may think of it yet,  
Better, though, to forget,  
How we shone one on one brilliantly.<sup>27</sup>

This 16-measure piece can be divided into two passages with coda. The first passage ends at measure 6 and the second one ends at measure 10. All three passages are written in similar ways, starting with prolonged notes in different registers. However, passage one and two are written with more active rhythms and end with a rapid, running thirty-second note pattern (Figure 10).

Most of the music is played with softer dynamics, diminishing to *ppp* at the end, which can be seen as a reflection of the images of separation or departure in the poem, especially the thirty-second note pattern that fades away at the end of the piece. However, the syncopated rhythms played with intense dynamics toward the end of passages one (measures 5 to 6) and two (measures 9 to 10) can be interpreted as a depiction of excitement, which paints the phrase "stirred heart" from the text in the original poem.

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<sup>27</sup> Zhi-Mo Hsu, *By Chance*, excerpt translation taken from John A. Crespi, “Form and Reform: New Poetry and the Crescent Moon Society,” edited by Joshua S. Mostow, *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 368.

Many intervals are used in the relationships between the voices, but sevenths and seconds are the main focus in this piece. For example, measures 2 to 3 range from the bottom voice C, up to the middle voice B, up to the top voice A. In measure 7, the first two notes go from F in the bottom voice and then up to G in the top voice. Also, the thirty-second note passage in measure 10 has many sevenths and seconds traveling between the two voices (Figure V-10). The setting in this piece is of long lines interrupted by quick rhythms, which resembles the ideas in “Ying-Yang.” Kwang-I Ying said that the similarity between the two settings was unplanned. However, she stated that her audiences do feel that “Momentary” reflects upon “Ying-Yang,” and serves as a satisfying conclusion to the entire set.<sup>28</sup>

The piece has only 16 measures total, however, making it most distinctive. As the saying goes: less is more. The piece is structured with simple four-bar phrases. A moment is a very brief period of time, and this piece, with its numerous rhythmic, dynamic, tempo and register changes, expresses how brilliance can still be created within a short timespan. Perhaps this piece points out the reason why the moment is so exceptional.

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<sup>28</sup> Kwang-I Ying, *Cultivation of Music in Five Years* (Kaohsiung: Chuenhui Publisher, 2008), p. 83.

Figure V-10: "Momentary" mm. 1-16

MOMENTARY

Lento

*mp*

*ff* *sub. p*

*8va*

*accel* ----- *a tempo*

*8va*

*Freely*

*f* *sup. p* *f dim.*

*8va rit.* *ppp* *dim.*

## Summary

Kwang-I Ying's talent for composition has caused her to become a representative for female composers in Taiwan. In her piano solo suite *Moods*, she draws inspiration from the Eastern religious philosophy of "Ying-Yang," and from emotions associated with her personal life. She does this through her liberal application of Chinese elements, such as Chinese scales, with or without the use of polytonality. This suite leaves large spaces created by atonality for the pianists and listeners to fill in with their imaginations.

## Chapter VI

### Chen Yi (b. 1953)

#### Background

In 1986, Chen Yi became the first woman to receive a master's degree in composition in China. She was also the first woman to give an evening multimedia orchestral concert in the United States, a performance that included orchestra, choir, Chinese traditional instrumental soloists, dancers, and image projection. She holds both a BA and MA in music composition from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, and received her DMA from Columbia University in New York City, studying composition with Wu Zuqiang, Chou Wen-chung and Mario Davidovsky. Chen Yi's music has been commissioned by many renowned musicians and orchestras such as Yehudi Menuhin, Yo-Yo Ma, the Cleveland Orchestra, the BBC and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

During her childhood, Chen Yi, along with her brother and sister, had to study piano and violin in secret. In order that no sound could be heard outside the house, they practiced with mutes on their violins, and with a blanket placed between the hammers and the sound board of the piano.<sup>29</sup> During this time in China, known as the Cultural Revolution, many aspects of life were restricted — playing classical music was actually prohibited!<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Sam Nichols, "An interview with Chen Yi." *Boston Musica Viva*.  
<http://www.bmv.org/ChenYi.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Sam Nichols, "An interview with Chen Yi." *Boston Musica Viva*.  
<http://www.bmv.org/ChenYi.html>.

Chen Yi's family was eventually separated by the government and pressed into forced labor. Chen Yi was sent to the countryside in the Guangdong province of China where she sometimes had to make twenty-two trips in one day up the side of a mountain carrying loads of one hundred pounds.<sup>31</sup> Fortunately, Chen Yi was able to take her violin and to use music to help lift the spirits of those around her when she went to the countryside. Although she was only allowed to play music of the Cultural Revolution, she experimented with improvising her own ideas into those songs.<sup>32</sup> Later Chen Yi played in the orchestra for the Beijing Opera and received formal training in music and composition.<sup>33</sup> Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, Chen Yi has become one of the most important composers of her generation. Even though her experiences during the Cultural Revolution were miserable, she has skillfully turned her experiences into inspiration for musical composition, using those sights, sounds and feelings from the bad times as well as the good.

Chen Yi was brought up to respect and appreciate traditional Chinese music. One of her teachers explained to her that since she "drank from the Yangtze River's water as she was growing up, and was born with black hair and black eyes, she could understand Chinese culture better, and should be able to carry on the culture and share it with more people."<sup>34</sup> Later she spent eight years as the concertmaster of the Beijing Opera and she states that "the singing, reciting, traditional instrumental playing and percussion rhythmic patterns, acting, make-up, costume, stage setting, lighting... everything has left a deep

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31 Paul Horsley, "Woman of Two Worlds." *Kansas City Star*, Mar 17, 2001.

32 Paul Horsley, "Woman of Two Worlds." *Kansas City Star*, Mar 17, 2001.

33 Sam Nichols, "An interview with Chen Yi." *Boston Musica Viva*.

<http://www.bmv.org/ChenYi.html>.

34 John De Clef Piñeiro, "An Interview with Chen Yi." *New Music Connoisseur*, Vol. 9, No. 4.

[http://www.newmusicon.org/v9n4/v94chen\\_vi.htm](http://www.newmusicon.org/v9n4/v94chen_vi.htm).

impression on me. They have influenced me a great deal in my musical language.”<sup>35</sup> Her experiences in the Beijing opera focused on traditional Chinese music and even expanded it. Therefore, Chen Yi defines her compositional style as drawing on traditional Chinese musical language and blending it with Western music. Before the Cultural Revolution she fortunately was able to listen to and learn Western classical repertoire. While being in the countryside, she was only allowed to play revolutionary songs in the countryside, but she improvised on those tunes using virtuosic techniques that she had learned from Paganini and other great classical composers.

Chen Yi is not the only example of Asian-Western fusion in the current music scene. According to James Oestreich’s article in the *New York Times* in April of 2001, which gives an overview of the composers who are working in this general idiom, the best-known East-West musical intersections are Yo-yo Ma’s Silk Road Project, and also the composer Tan Dun for his soundtrack for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, for which he received several Academy Award nominations. However, when Chen Yi received a 3-year (2001-2004), \$225,000 grant from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, she became the Asian-born composer that has received the most press coverage.

## **Selected Pieces**

*Yu Diao* and *Small Beijing Gong* are two piano solo pieces for children. Although these two pieces were written nine years apart, they were published together as *Two*

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<sup>35</sup> Bruce Duffie, “Composer Chen Yi: A Conversation with Bruce Duffie.”  
<http://www.bruceduffie.com/chenyi.html>

*Chinese Bagatelles*. They both draw upon Chinese opera, each from a specific geographical area. They can be played as a set or individually.

### ***Yu Diao***

*Yu* refers to the Henan province; *diao* means tune, so the title *Yu Diao* means “tune from the Henan province.” The musical ideas in this piece are inspired by the local opera of this region.<sup>36</sup> In teaching this piece it would be helpful to listen to a recording of Henan opera with the student. Several selections in this style can be found on an album called *Introduction to Chinese Opera, Vol. 2*, which was produced on the Marco Polo label in 1996. When interpreting the piece, such listening experiences provide the student with an aesthetic to imitate.

In the first two measures, shifting modality is the element that immediately stands out. In the right-hand, the C-sharp of the first measure is changed to C-natural in the second, and likewise, the F-natural is traded for an F-sharp in the left hand. The setting of dissonance here through the alternation of minor and major exactly delivers the humorous atmosphere that the composer marks at the beginning of the piece.

Many grace notes and ornaments are included in *Yu Diao*, like the one at the beginning (Figure VI-1) and also later in the piece (Figure VI-2). Listening to a recording of Henan opera shows the student the style of this ornamentation and how it differs from Western figurations.

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<sup>36</sup> Composer’s notes in the score of *Two Chinese Bagatelles*, published by Theodore Presser.

Figure VI-1: *Yu Diao* mm. 1-2



Figure VI-2: *Yu Diao* mm. 5-6

*f*

Later in the piece the parallel passages become a technical challenge for the pianist. In this case the right hand writing fits more comfortably in the fingers, while the left hand feels somewhat awkward and also requires more work to produce the same tone quality. A good usage of fingering is helpful to play this section. For example, the last measure in Figure 3 includes offset accents, so the better fingering is to have the third right hand finger and the left hand thumb play those accents, making sure the sound can be heard clearly and loudly. Other fingerings are suggested in Figure VI-3.

Figure VI-3: *Yu Diao* mm. 24-27

The image shows a piano score for measures 24-27 of the piece *Yu Diao*. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first system (measures 24-25) features a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes and a bass clef with a quarter note followed by eighth notes. The second system (measures 26-27) features a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes marked *cresc.* and a bass clef with eighth notes. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. An *8va* marking is present above the treble clef in the second system.

Similarities can be found in another of Chen Yi's piano piece — *Guessing*. The first eight bars of *Guessing* (Figure VI-4) show a simple texture that is reminiscent of the opening of *Yu Diao*. The writing of ornamentation and accents, offset rhythms in the left hand and a recurrence of dotted rhythms all create an uncertain feeling, which exactly fits the title of the piece, *Guessing*.

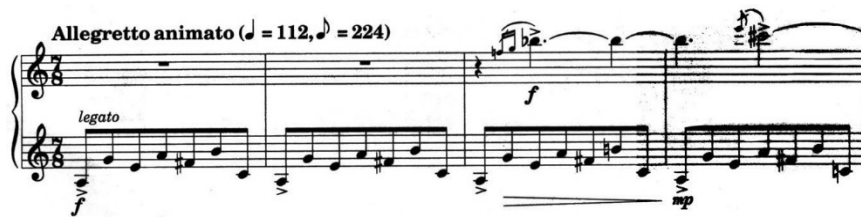
Figure VI-4: *Guessing* mm. 1-8

The image shows a piano score for measures 1-8 of the piece *Guessing*. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The tempo is marked *Scherzando* with a quarter note equal to 120 (♩ = 120). The first system (measures 1-4) features a treble clef with a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, and a bass clef with a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The second system (measures 5-8) features a treble clef with a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, and a bass clef with a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The piece is marked *f* (forte).

## *Small Beijing Gong*

With the use of irregular and syncopated rhythms, this piece is exuberant and the performer must play with rhythmic accuracy to show a certain urgency. In the opening, the left hand starts with a seven-note tone row, which is repeated in each measure throughout the first half of the piece. The 7/8 meter is already a challenge for the performer. The accents in the two hands are not always synchronous, and then added to them are the irregular and syncopated rhythms in the right hand figures (Figure VI-5).

Figure VI-5: *Small Beijing Gong*, mm. 1-4



In measure 13, the melody in the left hand is similar to the style we saw in the previous piece, *Yu Diao*. The basic melodic movement takes place on the eighth note with ornaments, accents and dotted rhythms (Figure VI-6).

Figure VI-6: *Small Beijing Gong* mm. 13-15



However, this example seems like a mere simplification of other passages seen in Chen Yi's more technically challenging writing. The two excerpts below, taken from her piano piece *Duo Ye*, demonstrate a similar texture in the left hand. The right hand has a much more complex rhythm than the one seen in *Small Beijing Gong* (Figure VI-7). Students can learn the rhythm using the following steps. First, write down the beat numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 between the two systems on the music sheet. Secondly, play the left hand part while counting the beat out loud to feel the rhythmic pattern. Then play the right hand part slowly while counting the beat; playing a bit of an accent on the downbeat would also help to understand the complicated dotted rhythm. Lastly, have both hands play together while counting the beat out loud.

Figure VI-7: *Duo Ye* mm. 89-94



In another passage, the left hand is a six-note pattern and is made up of sixteenth notes in a 2/4 bar (Figure VI-8). *Small Beijing Gong* ends with a heavenly clanging following a sudden swoop down into the low register of the piano—the only time the bass clef appears in the entire piece (Figure VI-9).

Figure VI-8: *Duo Ye* mm. 150-154

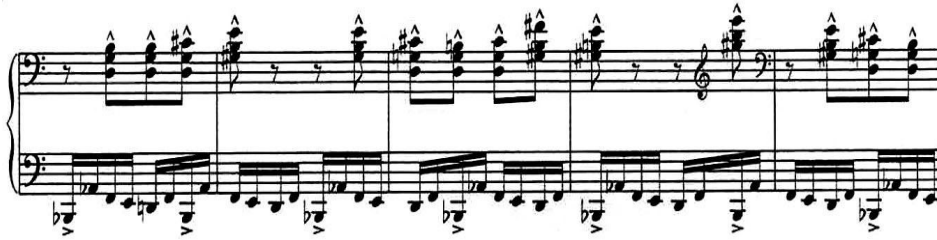


Figure VI-9: *Small Beijing Gong* mm. 17-20



## Summary

Chen Yi's use of ornamentation, accents and offset rhythms in two piano solo pieces for children — *Yu Diao* and *Small Beijing Gong* — draw from her experiences with Cultural Revolution-era Chinese opera. While she has already been recognized with numerous awards internationally, Chen Yi continues to be active as a composer in new music and as an ethnomusicologist in Chinese music, introducing Chinese music, both traditional and contemporary, to wider audience and scholars.

## Chapter VII

### Tan Dun (b. 1957)

#### Background

Tan Dun was born on August 18, 1957 in Changsha, Hunan Province, China. Later, because of Tan Dun's ability to play the violin, he was recruited by an opera troupe as a violinist and arranger. This event alone introduced Tan Dun to a much wider audience. Tan Dun stayed with this troupe until he was granted the prestigious opportunity to study at the Beijing Central Music Conservatory in 1978.

Before the age of twenty, Tan Dun had never heard Western classical music. After entering the conservatory, he was introduced to the world of classical music and he said that he immediately became "a slave for Western classical music by Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, or Liszt."<sup>37</sup> After two years of writing piano and chamber works in this style, Tan Dun set his sights on writing his first symphony, *Li Sao*.

After composing *Li Sao*, Tan Dun became devoted to some music from composers new to him such as Bartók, Messiaen, Boulez, and Stockhausen. He continued to compose music that would push the boundaries. Due to his fame, Tan Dun was soon scrutinized by the Chinese Government for six months in the year 1983, and his music was banned in

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<sup>37</sup> Eline Flipse, "Chinese Classical Composers: Interview Tan Dun," *Youtube*, April 3, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9WBfn1DgDo>.

China under the “spiritual pollution” campaign.<sup>38</sup> Soon, Tan Dun realized that the best way to move forward was to go to the source of much of this new music: the United States.

Tan Dun arrived in the U.S. on January 4, 1986, in order to study composition with Mario Davidovsky and Chou Wen-chung at Columbia University. In his own words: “If I had left China in 1982, I would perhaps not have become the Tan Dun whom I am today.”<sup>39</sup> In addition to being introduced to new styles of composition at Columbia University, Tan Dun had the opportunity to meet many of the most influential classical composers while in New York City. One of the most important friendships that he made was with John Cage. Cage was interested in new timbres, new instruments, and organic sounds. His respect for Tan Dun’s music can be summed up by the following quote:

It is clear in the music of Tan Dun that sounds are central to the nature in which we live but to which we have too long not listened. Tan Dun’s music is one we need as the east and the west come together as our one home.<sup>40</sup>

Today, Tan Dun’s voice has been heard by a wide audience. His *Internet Symphony*, which was commissioned by Google/YouTube, has reached over 15 million people online. *Paper Concerto* was premiered with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the opening of the Walt Disney Hall. His multimedia work, *The Map*, premiered by Yo-Yo Ma and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, has been performed in more than 30 countries. Its manuscript has been included in the Carnegie Hall Composers Gallery. Other important recent premieres include

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<sup>38</sup> Frank Kouwenhoven, "Composer Tan Dun: The Ritual Fire Dancer of Mainland China's New Music," *China Information* 6, No. 3, December 1991, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Frank Kouwenhoven, "Composer Tan Dun: The Ritual Fire Dancer of Mainland China's New Music," *China Information* 6, No. 3, December 1991, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> Marguerite Ladd, "John Cage Quote," *Tan Dun Online*, <http://www.tandunonline.com/images/johncagequote.pdf>.

*Four Secret Roads of Marco Polo* for the Berlin Philharmonic, and the piano concerto *The Fire* for Lang Lang and the New York Philharmonic.

A winner of today's most prestigious honors, including the Grammy Award and the Academy Award (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, 2000), the Grawemeyer Award for classical composition (*Marco Polo*, 1998), *Musical America's* "Composer of The Year" (2003), Bach Prize of the City of Hamburg (2011) and Moscow's Shostakovich Award (2012), Tan Dun has made an indelible mark on the world's music scene with his innovative compositional style that spans the boundaries of classical music, multimedia performance, and Eastern and Western traditions. In 2010, Tan Dun served as "Cultural Ambassador to the World" for World EXPO Shanghai. In 2013, his dedicated work was celebrated when UNESCO appointed Tan Dun as its global Goodwill Ambassador.

## **Selected Pieces**

### ***Eight Memories in Watercolor***

*Eight Memories in Watercolor* was composed in 1978, when Tan Dun was a freshman at the Beijing Central Music Conservatory. The following quote from the U.S. edition of *Eight Memories in Watercolor* explains Tan Dun's sentiments towards this pivotal work:

*Eight Memories in Watercolor* was written when I left Hunan to study at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. It was my Opus One. The Cultural Revolution had just ended, China just opened its doors, I was immersed in studying Western classical and modern music, but I was also homesick. I longed for the folksongs and savored the memories of my childhood. Therefore, I wrote my first piano work as a diary of longing.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> "Tan Dun", *Musical Sales Classical*.  
<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/1561/33556>.

Tun Dun also said:

In 2001, I met Lang Lang, and he told me he wanted to premiere the complete *Eight Memories in Watercolor* in his concerts, for which I am very grateful. I made slight revisions to the work by renaming titles, reordering the pieces, and amending the overall structure according to Lang Lang's suggestions.<sup>42</sup>

This set consists of eight short pieces that shows Tan Dun's ability to paint pictures through composition: "Missing Moon," "Staccato Beans," "Herdboy's Song," "Blue Nun," "Red Wilderness," "Ancient Burial," "Floating Clouds" and "Sunrain."

One of the major impacts on Tan Dun's compositional style was the fact that he grew up during the tumultuous Chinese Cultural Revolution, which was a decade-long political movement under Chairman Mao, lasting from 1966 to 1976. During this time, many of the nation's youth were sent to the countryside in order to work in the fields alongside the peasants and learn the importance of the working class. Tan Dun was one of these youth laborers. In these fields, music became for Tan Dun an escape from the labor. He spent a significant amount of time collecting and studying folk songs around the Hunan area during this time. Tan Dun adapted four Hunan folk songs into the first four pieces in *Eight Memories in Watercolor*.

Besides folk music, Tan Dun was also influenced by the philosophy and religion of Taoism. One of the core beliefs in Taoism is called "Tian Ren He Yi," which means "harmony between man and nature." Taoists believe that everything is part of nature and

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<sup>42</sup> "Tan Dun", *Musical Sales Classical*.  
<http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/1561/33556>.

that relationships only exist between nature and everything else. In *Eight Memories in Watercolor*, Tan Dun presents eight watercolor paintings that capture and depict sounds and scenes from nature.

As the title suggests, each individual movement is like a watercolor painting intending to transport the listener to Tan Dun's memory of his hometown and childhood. Watercolor is one of the mediums in Chinese painting. It is not about how much the painting looks like the subject, but about the artistic concept behind the painting. *Eight Memories in Watercolor* epitomizes the vivid watercolor style. In each piece one can find a deeper concept behind the notes. I selected for my compilation "Missing Moon," "Staccato Beans," "Ancient Burial" as well as "Sunrain," which are the first, second, sixth and last pieces in this set.

#### "Missing Moon"

In Chinese culture, the moon has always been related to one's longing for family and home. Since ancient times, Chinese poets have used the moon as a symbol of the longing for one's hometown and the full moon as a representation of family unity. These poetic images have permeated Chinese cultural traditions: there is a festival on August 15th of the lunar calendar, called the Mid-Autumn Festival. On this day, families gather together under the full moon and eat circular moon cakes, another round shape representing family unity. In order to gain an understanding of how important the moon

is in Chinese culture, one needs only to read the following translation of a poem by the famous poet Bai Li (701-762).<sup>43</sup>

### Nighttime Thoughts

So bright a gleam on the foot of my bed  
Could there have been a frost already?  
Lifting myself to look, I found that it was moonlight.  
Sinking back again, I thought suddenly of home.

Tan Dun's "Missing Moon" has only 15 measures and contains two sections. It starts with a one-measure introduction played freely, as evidenced by the lack of time signature and bar lines. The grace notes in the low voice imitate the sound of the *zheng*, an ancient Chinese plucked instrument (Figure VII-1).

Figure VII-1: "Missing Moon" mm. 1



<sup>43</sup> Witter Bynner, "Translations to Nighttime Thoughts by Bai Li", <http://prosp.fy/fz.cn/b/498100>.

Groups of dyads in the introduction create a uniquely pleasant dissonance (Figure VII-2). These dyads are based on either major or minor seconds. By starting these dyads in a higher register before they cascade down to a lower register, Tan Dun paints a picture of moonlight shining down upon the earth and spreading over the ground in cascading light.

Figure VII-2: “Missing Moon” mm. 1



The A (measures 2-7) and B (measures 8-13) sections are written with right hand sextuplets and random notes in the left hand (Figure VII-3). The speedy notes in the right hand imitate the *zheng*'s strumming, and depict running water by mid-night moonlight. The left hand uses plenty of seconds and *acciaccature* travelling between high and low voices, expressing agitation and longing for family and home.

Figure VII-3: “Missing Moon” mm. 5-10

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the piano accompaniment of the piece "Missing Moon" (measures 5-10). Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The treble clef part is characterized by a continuous, rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes, often grouped in pairs and marked with a '6' above the staff, indicating a sixteenth-note figure. The bass clef part provides a harmonic and rhythmic foundation, featuring a mix of quarter and eighth notes, with some measures containing rests. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

### “Staccato Beans”

The theme of this movement comes from a Hunan folk song called “*My New Sister-in-Law*” (Figure VII-4).<sup>44</sup> This story takes place at a wedding and in this particular song, the younger sister of the groom is admiring the beauty of her new sister-in-law.

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<sup>44</sup> Yang Yu, "Compositional Analysis on Piano Suite Eight Memories in Watercolor of Tan Dun" (Ph.D. diss., Northeastern Normal University, 2013), Chapter II.

Figure VII-4: Melody from Hunan folk song *My New Sister-in-Law*

花喜鵲(来)尾 巴 翘(咧), (哎) 哥哥娶了新 嫂  
嫂(咧), (哎 罗 哩 罗 哩) 新 嫂 嫂(咧)。

This piece is in ABA ternary form. After a two-measure introduction, Tan Dun uses the melody of the song directly in this piece and then repeats it one octave higher, later in the piece (Figure VII-5).

Figure VII-5: “Staccato Beans” mm. 1-22

**Allegro Scherzando**  
*mp*  
(the second time faster)  
*f*  
*p*

Tan Dun references beans in the title of this piece as being small, yet having the potential to grow. The staccato element here refers to the endless energy of life. Tan Dun keeps the piece playful by using different registers (Figure VII-6), changing the accompaniment pattern, and thickening the texture, adding accents and *sforzandi*. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that in Chinese the word “bean” has the same pronunciation as the word for “play.” Tan Dun skillfully uses word play in this piece.

Figure VII-6: “Staccato Beans” mm. 26-41



#### “Ancient Burial”

Nuo Drama was one of the most important rituals in Hunan culture. *Nuo* in Chinese means “human struggles.” The purpose of Nuo Drama was to remove ghosts, and it was performed at many ceremonies. In ancient China, it was believed that everyone could use sorcery, like that depicted in Nuo Drama, to control nature and to help rid the body of disease and bad spirits. In picture VII-1, all the dancers are painted with a leopard pattern

on their nude bodies. The ferocious leopard is regarded as the most qualified to drive away devils. This devil-dispelling activity brings all the villagers happiness and good fortune.<sup>45</sup>

“Ancient Burial” is clearly related to the Nuo Drama. It is in ABA ternary form. It starts with a major second ostinato of D and C. This interval shows up in every single measure, mostly in inner voices throughout the entire piece, imitating the steps pushing the ritual procession forward. The half notes in the low voice depict the sorcerers’ singing (Figure VII-7).

Figure VII-7: “Ancient Burial” mm. 1-3



In the B section, the dense texture in both hands creates a sense of tension and unease. Tan Dun uses chords and octaves in the right hand to present the power of staged fighting in the Nuo Drama. In the bottom voice of measures 9 to 14 (Figure II-8) he uses plenty of open fourths and fifths in the chords as a way to imitate the sound of the chime bells<sup>46</sup>, creating the mysterious atmosphere of the ritual.

Figure VII-8: “Ancient Burial” mm. 9-14

<sup>45</sup> *Interact China*, <https://interactchina.wordpress.com/tag/nuo-drama/>

<sup>46</sup> The chime bells are an ancient Chinese percussion instrument. The instrument is made of bronze and has multiple bells ordered by the size. It can be played by multiple people to create harmonies. The chime bells were used mostly in the royal court in ancient China and are rarely seen in folk music. The chime bells represent status and the power of the ruling class.



“Sunrain”

Sunrain is the nickname for a festival celebrated in Hunan province every April called the Water Splashing Festival. On this day, people flock to the streets with buckets that are full of water. They pour water on each other because they believe that this activity brings good luck. People are joyful on this day and they spend all day dancing, running and singing.

This movement is in binary form. From the very beginning, the introduction sets up a fun and energetic atmosphere with four powerful chords imitating Chinese gongs<sup>47</sup> (Figure VII-9). Immediately following this attention-grabbing introduction, the right hand plays major seconds on offbeats from mm. 3-6 (Figure VII-9). The rhythmic pattern of these seconds keeps imitating the sound of the gongs. The left

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<sup>47</sup> The gong originated in China and later spread to Southeast Asia. It comes in the form of a flat, circular metal disc which is hit with a mallet.

hand accompanies the right hand with a broken fifth staccato pattern that imitates playing on different parts of the drum. In Chinese folk music, gongs and drums are always used in combination. The whole texture together creates a very exciting, invigorating festival atmosphere.

Figure VII-9: “Sunrain” mm. 1-6



In the A section, the second phrase (mm. 17-24) repeats the material of measures 7 to 14 one octave higher, and the accompaniment pattern becomes more syncopated. This provides a rocking feeling and adds even more intensity to the piece (Figure VII-10).

Figure VII-10: “Sunrain” mm. 7-24

The musical score for Figure VII-10 consists of three systems of piano music. The first system (measures 7-12) is marked *accel. poco a poco* and *a tempo*, with a dynamic marking of *p*. The second system (measures 13-18) is marked *rit.* and *accel.*, with dynamic markings of *f* and *mf*. The third system (measures 19-24) is marked *a tempo* and *f*. The score features a complex texture with multiple voices in both hands, including chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines.

Next, a transitional sequence of three descending patterns lessening in intensity upon each reiteration sets the mood for the B section (Figure VII-11).

Figure VII-11: “Sunrain” mm. 25-27

The musical score for Figure VII-11 shows three measures of piano music. The melody in the right hand consists of three descending patterns, each starting with a *sf* (sforzando) dynamic marking. The bass line provides a steady accompaniment with chords and single notes.

In the B section, the melody moves between higher and lower registers canonically, continuing to grow in intensity with a crescendo and various *sforzandi*, and comes to a climax in measures 46 to 47 (Figure VII-12).

Figure VII-12: “Sunrain” mm. 30-47

The musical score for Figure VII-12, "Sunrain" mm. 30-47, is presented in three systems. The first system (mm. 30-35) features a fortissimo (fff) dynamic. The second system (mm. 36-41) includes a piano (p) dynamic. The third system (mm. 42-47) includes a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic and ends with a fortissimo (fff) dynamic. The piece concludes with a final chord.

The piece finishes with the chord as heard in the beginning, but this time it is rhythmically shortened in order to heighten the tension and end the piece with an explosive bang. It not only represents the happy ending of the festival but also of the entire suite (Figure VII-13).

Figure VII-13: “Sunrain” mm. 54-60

The musical score for Figure VII-13, "Sunrain" mm. 54-60, is presented in a single system. The piece concludes with a final chord.

## Summary

Tan Dun's musical world has been continuously expanding since he was introduced to Western Classical music in China as well as the avant-grade styles of music in the United States. Although his composer identity has been challenged at many stages, Tan Dun has been able to stay true to his own personal compositional style, skillfully blending folk music and the philosophy and religion of Taoism with Western compositional techniques. Tan Dun's first musical composition, *Eight Memories in Watercolor*, was created when he was studying Western classical and modern music as a response to his longing for the folksongs and memories of his childhood. Many of the recurring themes and compositional devices that we see in his Op. 1, *Eight Memories in Watercolor* continued to establish some of his stylistic tendencies as his musical world has expanded to this very day.

## **Chapter VIII**

### **Conclusion**

After a long struggle in the last half of the twentieth century, Taiwanese and Chinese composers have finally managed to express their individual artistic abilities through musical composition. They have been recognized both nationally and internationally throughout the second half of the twentieth century, have had their works performed around the world, and have received numerous awards such as the Grammy Award and the Academy Award, the International Women Composers Competition Award, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award. Furthermore, more and more current trends, events and evolving perspectives on the past history have led to the realization that Taiwanese and Chinese music has now re-emerged as an influence of growing significance not on the development of Western music.

In this dissertation I have compiled a collection of pieces that are accessible to young pianists and are valuable for piano pedagogy and performance. I have found each piece to be engaging and interesting for both student and teacher. The collection not only develops a breadth of musical and technical ability, and introduces six composers, but also enhances the students' understanding of the historical time period in which the pieces were composed.

The six composers and their selected works analyzed from Chapter II to Chapter VII exhibit effective fusions of Western, Taiwanese and Chinese compositional styles. Piano

teachers can assign these works to introduce certain traditional and contemporary concepts of piano playing. Understanding the colorful cultural background of these pieces will also help students to connect with the music emotionally to play it more expressively, and it will help develop their awareness of the world as a whole.

At the time of this writing I have already taught several of these pieces successfully, confirming that they are compelling pedagogical choices. I plan to continue my work in this field by teaching every piece in the collection, and unearthing complementary works containing more Taiwanese and Chinese idioms. Most importantly, I hope a thorough study of this dissertation will raise respect and recognition for the six composers' contributions to the development of classical music in both the West and the East. Their distinctive techniques, infusing Western compositional components with Taiwanese and Chinese cultural elements, represents an ideal nexus where East meets West!

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