The Influences of Eastern and Western Music in Chen Yi's "Percussion Concerto"

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THE INFLUENCES OF EASTERN AND WESTERN MUSIC IN CHEN YI’S
“PERCUSSION CONCERTO”

By

Hsien-Fang Hsieh

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
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A doctoral essay submitted in partial fulfillment of
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THE INFLUENCES OF EASTERN AND WESTERN MUSIC IN CHEN YI’S
“PERCUSSION CONCERTO”

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Chen Yi is a leading female contemporary composer who has won many honors and awards worldwide, and has cooperated with major symphonies and musicians. The Percussion Concerto was commissioned by Evelyn Glennie and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra in 1988. The purpose of this essay is to provide a theoretical and aesthetic analysis, and the influences of Eastern and Western music in Chen Yi’s Percussion Concerto. This essay will examine Chen Yi’s musical integration of her educational and living experience in her composition. Additionally, the author will discuss the cultural influences, structural and harmonic analysis, Chen Yi’s use of Chinese poetry, and the concept of Beijing opera in the Percussion Concerto. Suggested instrumental choices and percussion set-up diagram will also be included in this essay.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## LIST OF EXAMPLES

v

## LIST OF FIGURES

vii

## Chapter

1 **INTRODUCTION**

   - Background ................................................................. 2
   - Problem Statement ..................................................... 4
   - Purpose of the Study .................................................. 7

2 **LITERATURE REVIEW**

   - The Impact of Chinese Art and Philosophy on the “Percussion Concerto” ..... 8
   - Modern Chinese Composers’ Approaches to the Cross-cultural Blend .......... 9
   - Brief Discussion of Selected Chen Yi Works ........................................ 14

3 **METHOD**

   - Research Questions .................................................... 19

4 **GENERAL ANALYSIS OF CHEN YI’S “PERCUSSION CONCERTO”**

   - Movement I: The Night Deepens ..................................... 32
   - Movement II: Prelude to Water Tune ................................ 40
   - Movement III: Speedy Wind ........................................... 48

5 **PERFORMANCE PRACTICE**

   - Percussion Set-up ....................................................... 55
   - Performance Suggestions ............................................. 62
   - Conclusion ..................................................................... 66

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

69
LIST OF EXAMPLES

Example 4.1 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.I “Night Deepens”, mm. 1-7...........33
Example 4.2 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.I “Night Deepens”, mm. 1-17...........34
Example 4.3 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.I “Night Deepens”, mm. 19-23...........35
Example 4.4 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.I “Night Deepens”, mm. 38-45...........35
Example 4.5 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.I “Night Deepens”, mm. 50-52...........36
Example 4.6 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.I “Night Deepens”, mm. 124-127......37
Example 4.7 Chen Yi, *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.I “Night Deepens”,
    *Episode 1, 2, and 3*.........................................................................................38
Example 4.8 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.I “Night Deepens”,
    mm.147-150.................................................................................................39
Example 4.9 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.II “Prelude to Water Tune”,
    mm.9-14 .........................................................................................................44
Example 4.10 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.II “Prelude to Water Tune”,
    mm. 20-26 .....................................................................................................45
Example 4.11 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.II “Prelude to Water Tune”,
    mm. 57-59 .....................................................................................................46
Example 4.12 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.II “Prelude to Water Tune”,
    mm. 1-6.........................................................................................................47
Example 4.13 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.III “Speedy Wind”, mm. 1-4...........49
Example 4.14 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.III “Speedy Wind”, mm. 85-88........50
Example 4.15 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.III “Speedy Wind”, mm. 109-113.....51
Example 4.16 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.III “Speedy Wind”, mm. 121-127.....51
Example 4.17 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.III “Speedy Wind”, mm. 175-177.....52
Example 4.18 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.III “Speedy Wind”, mm. 211-212.....52
Example 4.19 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.III “Speedy Wind”, mm. 109-11......53
Example 4.20 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.III “Speedy Wind”, mm. 326-329......54
Example 4.21 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.III “Speedy Wind”, mm. 354-357.....54
Example 5.1 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.II “Prelude to Water Tune”,
    mm.12-15......................................................................................................62
Example 5.2 Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto*, mvt.II “Prelude to Water Tune”,
    mm.41-42......................................................................................................63
Example 5.3  Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto, mvt.II* “Prelude to Water Tune”,
mm. 32.........................................................................................................................64

Example 5.4  Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto, mvt.II* “Prelude to Water Tune”,
mm. 83-84..................................................................................................................64

Example 5.5  Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto, mvt.III* “Speedy Wind”,
mm. 51-55..................................................................................................................65

Example 5.6  Chen Yi: *Percussion Concerto, mvt.III* “Speedy Wind”, mm. 89-93.........66
## LIST OF FIGURES

| FIGURE 3.1 | Chinese cymbals | 23 |
| FIGURE 3.2 | Peking gongs | 23 |
| FIGURE 3.3 | Japanese woodblocks | 24 |
| FIGURE 3.4 | Chinese temple blocks | 24 |
| FIGURE 3.5 | Chinese tom toms | 25 |
| FIGURE 3.6 | Chinese bass drum | 25 |
| FIGURE 4.1 | Pentatonic scales | 32 |
| FIGURE 4.2 | Table of Music Form | 34 |
| FIGURE 4.3 | Prelude to Water Tune and translation | 42 |
| FIGURE 4.4 | Table of Music Form | 44 |
| FIGURE 4.5 | Table of Music Form | 49 |
| FIGURE 5.1 | Instrumentation of the solo percussion part | 56 |
| FIGURE 5.2 | Instrumentation of tutti percussion parts | 56 |
| FIGURE 5.3 | Suggested Set-up diagram | 58 |
| FIGURE 5.4 | Chinese gong stand | 61 |
Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Western and Eastern musical cultures have developed separately over the centuries and feature a variety of unique musical characteristics, including instruments, forms, modes, harmonies, and concepts of composition. Their aesthetic and structural divergence is broad. However, according to the concept of a global village, a fusion of these cultures has emerged and been emphasized for over twenty-five years.\(^1\) Beginning in 1950, several Asian composers, including Toru Takemitsu (Japan), Unsuk Chin (South Korea), and Chinary Ung (Cambodia), have been exploring new ways to compose and merge Eastern and Western musical elements. Because of the eruption of the Cultural Revolution in China (1966-76), Chinese composers were forbidden to compose until the revolution ended.

Chen Yi’s *Percussion Concerto* was commissioned by Evelyn Glennie and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra in 1998 which is an representative example of how a Chinese composer integrates both Eastern and Western musical elements. In addition to Chen Yi (b. 1953), Bright Sheng (b. 1955) and Tan Dun (b. 1957) stand for this generation of composers, all of whom are students of Chou Wen-Chung.\(^2\) Although each of them has different compositional techniques and styles, they all share a similar cultural identity. Chen Yi, like many "New Wave" Chinese-American composers, struggled to maintain her Eastern cultural identity while working within Western art forms. This paper aims to explore the balance Chen Yi draws between the two cultures, and the essential influences of Eastern and Western music in the *Percussion Concerto*.

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Background

Chen Yi was born in Guangzhou. Her parents were music lovers, giving her a solid musical training and inspiring her passion for music. Her father played the violin and was an avid collector of Western music recordings. He owned recordings of various musical genres, such as operas, orchestral and instrumental pieces. Chen Yi’s mother played piano and listened to countless recordings with her daughter, fostering an environment that helped her develop a love of Chinese folk songs. In an interview with John de Clef Piñeiro, Chen Yi stated:

…my father invited my early theory teacher Mr. Zheng Zhong to teach me music theory and Chinese folk songs. This important mentor told me that, since I drank from the Yangtze River’s water as I was growing up…I could understand Chinese culture better, and should be able to carry on the culture and share it with more people…³

Chen Yi began playing the violin and piano as a child, while she was also introduced to the traditional Chinese folk tunes. Mr. Zhong’s words impelled Chen Yi to preserve the Chinese conventions in her works. In addition to music, Chen Yi also studied Chinese literature and art during her childhood, which influenced her whole life.

In her youth, she studied the violin, yet during the Cultural Revolution, Chen Yi was forced into manual labor with her other middle school classmates. During that time, she could not study and play the instruments. She said that Mozart’s music encouraged her to overcome hardships and gave her hope for the future.⁴ Without having education and

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witnessing the culture recession for several years, she started to realize the importance of music and culture. She got the chance to go back to school after the Cultural Revolution ended.

After studying in Beijing, she went to New York to pursue her doctoral degree in music composition at Columbia University, studying with Mario Davidovsky and another Chinese composer, Chou Wen-Chung, who helped a number of Chinese composers come to the United States and establish their careers. As the student of Edgard Varèse, Chou Wen-Chung was taught to focus on the concept of musical sound, not only as a medium for artistic expression, but also as a physical phenomenon that extends beyond cultural boundaries. Although born in France, Varèse spent a great period of time in the United States. In this respect, Chen Yi, Chou Wen-Chung, and Varèse have similar backgrounds. The three were born and raised outside of the United States but spent most of their time composing works in the United States. Chung influenced the compositional ideas of Chen Yi and others by attributing Chinese elements in their music to their Chinese heritage, encouraging them to integrate Chinese elements into contemporary music.

A majority of Chen Yi’s work features elements of Chinese literature, poems, and philosophy.5

Because I believe that language can be translated into music and because I speak out naturally in my mother tongue, there are Chinese blood, Chinese philosophy, and Chinese customs in my music. However, because music is a universal language, I hope to capture the essence of both Eastern and Western cultures, and to write more compositions that embody my own temperament as well as the spirit of this brave new epoch. I hope to improve the understanding between people from different cultural backgrounds and to further the peace of our new world.6

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These words explain the compositional ideas that Chen Yi applies throughout her works. Chinese tradition informs the composer’s approach to her composition. Moreover, Chen Yi also strives to preserve Chinese tradition even when she spends most of her time composing contemporary music.

One means of portraying Chinese tradition came through the influence of Chinese folk music. As stated earlier, Chen Yi was trained to collect folk songs as a young student, which in turn inspired the use of folk music elements in her compositions. Chen Yi was also inspired by the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, who is famous for collecting folk music and adapting folk elements into his works. Bartok believed that there were three ways a composer could use folk music in composition. One is that you can use the folk melody with the accompaniment. The second is that you could write in imitation of the folk melody- in the folkloric style. The third is that you don't deliberately write in folk music style but your music comes out with the flavor of folk music. In fact, Chen Yi modeled Bartók’s compositional techniques and referred to Bartók’s approaches to folk music in a 2007 interview.

**Problem Statement**

Although extensive research and reviews have been conducted on Chen Yi’s work and life experience, little research and performance practices on Chen Yi’s *Percussion*}

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8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Hoi-Yan Wong, 240.
Concerto have been produced. These limitations restrict performers’ access to this concerto. The Percussion Concerto, is not performed as often, compared to other percussion or marimba concerti by Western composers. In this study, the author has analyzed Chen Yi’s Percussion Concerto in order to examine the convergence of Eastern and Western cultural influences in her music. This concerto combines Chen Yi’s educational background and life experience, including her early life in China and the years after she moved to the United States.

A noticeable Western influence on the Percussion Concerto is its commission by a Westerner. The concerto was commissioned by the renowned Scottish percussionist Evelyn Glennie, with whom Chen Yi has frequently collaborated. In 2002, they worked together on KC Capriccio, originally a piece for a choir and wind ensemble that Chen Yi revised for mixed choir, organ, and percussion. In 2015, Glennie performed Chen Yi’s solo percussion work, Colors of Naobo, at the Edinburgh Festival. Chen Yi’s collaboration with Glennie lead to the incorporation of the Eastern and Western influences into the concerto.

Chen Yi employs a Western model of symphony orchestration in the Percussion Concerto, scoring it for 2 flutes, 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, 3 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 French horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, 3 percussions, and strings. In contrast, Chen Yi suggests the use of Chinese drums, cymbals, and gongs in the percussion parts. In Western countries, many of these Chinese instruments are rare in comparison to the concert tom toms, snare drums, or timpani. Because it is hard to procure these Chinese instruments, there are fewer instrumental choices when performing this concerto outside of Asia.

Percussion, often a significant element in musical performances seeking to represent a fusion of Eastern and Western cultures, is commonly used by Chen Yi in her works. In addition to Percussion Concerto, Chen Yi wrote a solo marimba piece, Jing Marimba (2010),
which has distinctive Chinese melodic and rhythmic elements. Chamber works like *Chinese Fables* (2002), *The Han Figurines* (2006), and *Septet for Erhu, Pipa, Percussion, and Saxophone quartet* (2008) prominently feature percussion. In these works, Chen Yi demonstrates her compositional approach to cultural fusion through the combination of Chinese and Western instruments.

In terms of the Eastern influences, Chen Yi was inspired by Beijing opera while composing her concerto. For over two hundred years, Beijing opera has been the essential expression of traditional Chinese culture. Audiences around the world have enjoyed its lavish blend of percussive music, colorful costumes, lyric poetry, painted faces and jaw-dropping acrobatics. Chen Yi integrates the Chinese traditional opera tune with the Western classical concerto.

In this concerto, the title of each movement is provided in both English and Chinese: I. “The Night Deepens” (夜深沉); II. “Prelude to Water Tune” (水調歌頭); and III. “Speedy Wind” (急急風). Unlike Western music, absolute music does not exist in Chinese music; all works are given programmatic titles. The first movement is based on a tune from a Beijing opera, Farewell to my Concubine. The second movement of the Percussion Concerto is based on a poem by the famous Song Dynasty poet, Su Shi. There are some Chinese melodies throughout the whole concerto. However, Chen Yi is not the first composer who uses that poem in music. Chen Qigang’s *Poeme Lyrique II* (1991) has the setting of the same poem.\(^\text{11}\) The title of the third movement indicates the rhythmic percussion performance in Beijing opera scenes.

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**Purpose of the Study**

The essay will examine how Chen Yi integrates cultural influences and compositional techniques from both Eastern and Western music in her *Percussion Concerto* by analyzing various aspects of this concerto, both theoretically and aesthetically. Through this essay, the author’s aim is to provide scholars resources about the concerto, make performers more aware of the composer’s consideration, including the use of Eastern and Western musical elements, and encourage musicians to perform the concerto.

Knowing the composers’ intentions and the type of sound they want to create are equally essential to a performer. The practical aspect of instrumental choice and stage set-up as well as Chinese influence and analysis of compositional techniques will be studied in the following chapters.
Chapter 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The Impact of Chinese Art and Philosophy on the “Percussion Concerto”

It is common to find the impact of Chinese art in the work of Chinese composers of the post-Cultural Revolution era. Some of those elements are calligraphy and poems; others are Chinese philosophy and aesthetics. Music, however, also includes art forms such as literature, painting, and poetry. Chou Wen-Chung describes this concept:

Contrary to Western practice, Chinese traditional arts theory does not limit itself to the investigation of materials and structure of any particular art form. It is concerned with concept and perception, how philosophy and aesthetics interpret nature, and the human response to nature; and then how such concerns are expressed in each of the art forms.12

Music is an art. In China, the meaning of art is not only an individual expression for a composer, but is related to the whole society, Edward Ho, the author of Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour states:

…Chinese literati music cannot be studied properly without relating it to other art-forms, for it involves extra musical elements and is a social phenomenon that embraces other artistic activities such as poetry, literature, painting and calligraphy.13

In Chinese society, people give high respect to literati because they are well-rounded philosopher-artists who carry moral responsibilities to the society. Confucius (551-479 B.C.), one of the Chinese literati, is considered as the greatest philosopher in Chinese history.


Confucian philosophy has deeply influenced the Chinese culture and society. He had a practical opinion of music, advocating that the role music plays is equal to education.

Chen Yi was influenced by Chinese literature, especially the poetry. The application of traditional poetry can be found in some of her compositions, both choral and instrumental works. Su Shi, famous Song Dynasty poet, is another representative of the Chinese literati who followed Confucian philosophy. Chen Yi selected the poet’s poem, *Prelude to Water Tune* as a reciting text in the second movement of the *Percussion Concerto*. When performing this movement, the performer will recite the text in Chinese. Therefore, knowing the intention of the Chinese poet and the composer would be helpful in explaining the interpretation. According to this article, there are some theories of the twelve *lus* (Chinese temperament) and pentatonic scales in Chinese music. Chen Yi uses traditional Chinese compositional techniques, including twelve *lus* and pentatonic scales in this movement. In addition, while reciting the Chinese text, the performer also plays on Western instruments. This is another example of how Chen Yi maneuvers the possibilities of amalgamating Chinese and Western music.14

**Modern Chinese Composers’ Approaches to the Cross-cultural Blend**

According to the musicologist Bruno Nettl’s opinion, non-Western music has changed under the impact of the West in a number of ways. Many of the modifications can be interpreted as strategies for survival, attempts to evolve aspects of the old system in order to save its essence. They differ by culture, but in common they both address the need to balance

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advantages of old and new.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, Chinese composers of the post-Cultural Revolution era merged Chinese and Western musical elements after they migrated to the United States. They absorbed Western music and established new compositional features through integrating Chinese elements in their works. It was a response to Western music but they preserved their own traditional behavior to form a new style. These Chinese composers’ approaches to the cross-cultural mixture will be briefly discussed in this chapter in an effort to identify the similar impacts of both the East and the West in Chen Yi’s works.

Nettl mentioned three processes of the responses: syncretism, Westernization, and modernization.\textsuperscript{16} Syncretism is the development of mixed or hybrid styles and a characteristic of twentieth-century world music. Westernization results when a non-Western music incorporates central, non-compatible Western traits. In the case of modernization, it incorporates noncentral but compatible Western traits. However, as long as music remains a major symbol of cultural identity, a high degree of musical diversity will continue in existence.\textsuperscript{17}

The development of New Music in China started one hundred years ago.\textsuperscript{18} The expression of New Music was coined by a musicologist, Lu Ji’s article “\textit{Zhongguo xinyaingyue de zhanwang}.”\textsuperscript{19} In ‘old’ Chinese society, music was always linked to court music


\textsuperscript{16} Bruno Nettl, 353.

\textsuperscript{17} Bruno Nettl, 354.

\textsuperscript{18} Ching-Chih Liu, \textit{A Critical History of New Music in China} (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2010), 21.

\textsuperscript{19} Ji Lu, “Zhongguo xinyaingyue de zhanwang.” \textit{Guangming} 1, no.5 (1936): 1.
and literati philosophy, and rested on a humanistic rather than a scientific foundation.\footnote{Xing Guo, 28.} However, New Music era composers, including Chen Yi, absorbed the arrival from Japan and Europe of notations, methods of performance, harmony and orchestration which are quite different with Chinese tradition. Composers then transferred and reformed these Western musical genres. In Liu Ching-Chih’s opinion, his description of New Music as ‘new’ is from the point of view of Chinese musical culture, not from the European perspective.\footnote{Ching-Chih Liu, 11.} Liu had once met a musicologist in Beijing who said something profound to him, to which he remarked, “The phrase ‘modernization of Chinese music,’ which is in current use, actually means the ‘nationalization’ of ‘new’ music.”\footnote{Ching-Chih Liu, 15.}

In \textit{A Critical History of New Music in China} (2010), Liu introduced Chinese composers from 1885 to 2006, and collected the majority of their works. He not only analyzed their compositions, but also discussed the historical influences by the society and environment at that time, including the Anti-Japanese War period, Civil War, Cultural Revolution, and May Fourth Movement. Understanding the historical effects is crucial. Liu argued that before 1945, Chinese composers, critics, and teachers concentrated on how to nationalize the New Music, but neglected the question of how to modernize traditional Chinese music.\footnote{Ching-Chih Liu, 367.} At that time, the foundation of the People’s Republic of China had been established for seventeen years, so it was inevitable that Communism led to changes in art, literature, and music. In 1966, the Cultural Revolution broke out and within ten years, destroyed many cultural and historical assets. Fortunately, the “New Wave,” or post-Cultural
Revolution composers became conscious of New Music in China. As one of the New Wave composers, Chen Yi made a speech at the First Festival of Music by Modern Chinese Composers,

I believe that a musical work can directly embody the accumulated sediment of the psychological make-up of the composers as an individual, and therefore it will represent a particular level, or character, of particular people at a particular historical stage…what we need is to take an overview of human civilization and historical development and reflect deeply upon the effect traditional culture has had on us.24

The composers reformed and created a new chapter in the history of Chinese music by fusing traditional conventions and new compositional techniques to make New Music in China.

Wong Hoi-Yan’s “Bartók’s Influence on Chinese New Music in the Post-Cultural Revolution Era,” is especially helpful to understand how the Western composer, Béla Bartók, influenced Chinese composers’ music. After the Cultural Revolution in China, more modern Chinese composers appeared. Chen Yi along with Tan Dun and Bright Sheng, are three of the composers among this generation. All of them have similar backgrounds. Chen Yi and Tan Dun went to Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, and Bright Sheng studied at Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Coincidentally, after they graduated from music schools in China, all of them left for Columbia University. Furthermore, the three of them openly traced their stylistic influence to Béla Bartók in various ways.

Bartók is not the only Western composer discussed in the journals, yet the music and writings of Tan and Sheng suggest that Bartók could have overshadowed other Western composers insofar as their influence on Chinese new music in concerned.25

24 Ching-Chih Liu, 744.
The audience of both Western art music and East European folklore are often attracted to Bartók’s music. Chen Yi and Bright Sheng aspired to achieve a similar goal. Even though Bartók was not the only Western composer who influenced the Chinese composers, his in-depth studies in folk music and the extent to which he drew on indigenous folk elements in his music find no parallel among his contemporaries. The article presents how the three post-Cultural Revolution era composers, Chen Yi, Tan Dun, and Bright Sheng were influenced by Western composer, Béla Bartók, by showing social-cultural factors that fostered the influence.

Chinese folk music culture is influenced by its large geographical territory, which includes customs and traditions that vary greatly among provinces and cities. Folk music has inspired Chen Yi since she studied at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. As a composition student, Chen Yi had to collect folk tunes from various regions for research. Once the composer recalled,

…I learned to sing hundreds of Chinese folk songs collected from more than twenty provinces and fifty ethnic groups, and went to the countryside to collect original folk music…

The experience led to her frequent implementation of folklore into her musical works. For

26 Hoi-Yan Wong, 243.


example, Chen Yi used the folk tune, *The Night Deepens*, in the first movement of the *Percussion Concerto*.

One of the reasons that Chen Yi, Tan Dun, and Bright Sheng went to Columbia University to pursue further studies was because of their mentor, Chou Wen-Chung. Chou Wen-Chung has devoted himself to blending Chinese and Western music since he moved to New York and studied with Edgard Varèse. From Varèse, Chou learned a great deal about how artists should look at their tradition critically, absorbing the essence and transforming it to reflect a new concept. Since then, Chou Wen-Chung began to formulate his compositional style. Most of his work uses Chinese characteristics, evident in the titles, voice leading, sonorities and other musical elements. During the 1970s, he started to express his view on what Asian cultures and composers could offer for the enrichment of musical experience for both Eastern and Western audience. He published some reviews and articles to explain his viewpoint and attended some conferences and composers’ forums. In addition, he brought some Chinese composers to the United States. This is the period that Chen Yi started experiencing the musical difference between the China and the United States, becoming a composer who enhanced the combination of both cultures.

**Brief Discussion of Selected Chen Yi Works**

There are many dissertations and essays written on Chen Yi’s works discussing her use of Chinese characteristics, her influence by Chinese culture, as well as her preference for combining both Western and Eastern musical elements in her solo, chamber, and some of her


30 Peter Chang, 38.
orchestral works. The author chose three doctoral dissertations to compare divergent aspects of Chen Yi’s music; one is for Chen Yi’s orchestral works, another focuses on her choral works, and the other discusses her piano chamber works. All of these documents display the musical and cultural influences of Chen Yi’s works.

Guo Xing, Carton Monroe, and Yueh Yin Liao are the authors of these three dissertations. All three devote at least one chapter on Chen Yi’s childhood, early educational background, and life experiences. The first dissertation, *Chinese Musical Language Interpreted by Western Idioms: Fusion Process in the Instrumental Works by Chen Yi*, was written by Xing Guo (2002) and consists of seven chapters. In the first chapter, Guo introduces the phenomenon of cross-cultures in music, followed by a discussion of how Chen Yi’s background and experiences influence her musical compositions. Guo’s dissertation studies eight orchestral pieces and examines the use of pitch, rhythm, and form. As Chen Yi commonly used atonal technique in the majority of these works, Xing Guo examines each piece by analyzing harmony and pitch class, and delineating the areas where Western and Chinese elements are used cooperatively.\(^{31}\) In conclusion, Guo suggests Chen Yi approaches composition from different cultures based on a solid foundation in both Chinese and Western music. Besides, Chen Yi is able to assimilate ideas and principles of Western post-tonal techniques as well as elements from other musical cultures in order to compose music that expresses universal human emotions.\(^{32}\)

The second dissertation is Carlton Monroe’s *A Conductor’s Guide to the Choral Works of Chen Yi* (2009), which is divided into three chapters with a conclusion. Monroe introduces and analyzes several of Chen Yi’s choral works in most of his essay. With choral

\(^{31}\) Xing Guo, 267.

\(^{32}\) Xing Guo, 276.
works based on Chinese poetry, Monroe discovers in his dissertation the reasons for which Chen took many texts from poets:

The themes of loneliness, separation, and suppression and aspects of the poet’s lives parallel Chen’s own experiences of forced labor in the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. It may be that Chen saw parallels in the themes of these poems and her own experiences of forced labor during the previous decade.33

In other words, these poems parallel Chen Yi’s life experience, and the experiences affect her music composition, which can explain why most of the authors spend pages describing Chen Yi’s background. This will help understand Chen Yi’s usage of Su Shi’s poetry in the second movement of the *Percussion Concerto*.

Compared to Xing Guo, Carlton Monroe focuses more on pertinent sections of each work, rather than providing a complete analysis of each piece from beginning to end. He explains how Chen Yi’s approaches to the passages and phrases lyrically. Sets of poems also play important roles especially in choral music. Monroe points out that, Chinese lyrics are challenging to most choirs because choirs are unfamiliar with Chinese pronunciation and diction.34 Reciting and singing are equally significant to playing instruments in the second movement of Chen Yi’s *Percussion Concerto*. Except for texts and vocal sound, the performer needs to balance with instrumental sounds when performing this movement which is more arduous.

The third analysis essay was written by Yueh Yin Liao. Selecting three of Chen Yi’s chamber works, Liao illustrates their respective ideas, the history, and cultural backgrounds.

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34 Carlton Monroe, 24.
Liao argues that Chen Yi primarily composes programmatic music, keeping in line with the Chinese program music tradition. To understand the music well, audiences first need to gain ideas of Chinese philosophy and customs.\footnote{Yueh Yin Liao, 7.} In Chen Yi’s 	extit{Percussion Concerto}, every movement has its own title which supports Liao’s opinion. Unlike Xing Guo, Yueh Yin Liao analyzes the piano chamber works in different ways, focusing on interpretation for performers and the philosophy of each piece. For example, Liao tries to disassemble a phrase into several small fragments to see the relations between the notes or rhythms. Her performance suggestions for each movement are based on her analysis regarding melodic line and balance.

Less information about Chen Yi’s 	extit{Percussion Concerto} can be found, however, especially with regard to the use of percussion instruments. Due to this lack of scholarship, an analysis of Chen Yi’s works will form the most important primary sources in this essay. The most detailed article about the use of Chinese percussion in music is Nancy Rao’s, 	extit{The Tradition of Luogu Dianzi and its Signification in Contemporary Music} (2007), which illustrates the tradition and use of Chinese percussion classics by modern composers.

In Rao’s article, 	extit{Luogu Dianzi} is the soul of the drama and the backbone of almost all of the music in Beijing opera.\footnote{Nancy Yunwha Rao, “Hearing Pentatonicism Through Serialism: Integrating Different Traditions in Chinese Contemporary Music.” 	extit{Perspectives of New Music} 40, no.2 (Summer 2002): 512.} 	extit{Luogu Dianzi} is a musical genre grounded in Chinese percussion instruments. The rhythmic pattern and timbre are the two main elements constituting the character of 	extit{Luogu Dianzi}, making it a unique musical emblem. In Beijing opera, the percussion section consists of four groups of sonorities: drum, clapper, large gong, and cymbal. The drum has a leading role in the ensemble; it is played alone with quick
strokes and rhythm. The last movement of Chen Yi’s Percussion Concerto has a plethora of notes for Chinese drums. Especially at the very end of this concerto, drums and cymbals are played together, producing a large palette of timbre colors which parallels that of the Luogu Dianzi.

Rao suggested that most of the Chinese composers in the post-Cultural Revolution era have been influenced by Luogu Dianzi, including Chen Yi, Chen Qigang, Guo Wenjing, Bright Sheng, and Tan Dun. Rao provides examples of their works to explain how they shape this material into more expressive connotations in music. They are not limited to the tradition, but extend beyond it. In the article, Rao indicates that Luogu Dianzi is a major portion of Chen Yi’s Symphony No.2 and Percussion Concerto and explains the reasons for using Chinese percussion in these two works.
CHAPTER 3
METHOD

This author intends to explain and analyze the influence of Chinese and Western music on Chen Yi’s *Percussion Concerto*. By doing so, the composer’s compositional ideas and musical features of her concerto will be discussed. The essay contains information about the composer and the concerto, covering Chen Yi’s life experience, the impact of Chinese literature and art, Western structural musical analysis, and the instrumental choices for the concerto.

Research Questions

This essay is meant to address the following research questions:

1. What are the relevant cultural influences from the East and the West in the *Percussion Concerto*?

2. How does Chen Yi incorporate Eastern and Western musical elements in the *Percussion Concerto*?

3. Why did Chen Yi choose Su Shi’s *Prelude to Water Tune* for her composition?

4. How did the commission of this *Percussion Concerto* influence Chen Yi’s instrumentation, and what choices of percussion instruments should be considered when performing the concerto?

The method of this essay includes a careful examination of the score and the author’s observations about how Chen Yi applied both Chinese and Western musical materials to her *Percussion Concerto*. The first research question has been answered in chapters 1 and 2,
where the author consulted existing literature and journals about Chen Yi’s back ground, her use of Eastern and Western musical elements, and the practices of other contemporary Chinese composers who fuse the cross-cultural features. Chen Yi’s early life in China, formal education at conservatory, and exposure to Western contemporary music after moving to the United States have shaped her music. Beyond that, Chinese literati philosophy and aesthetics have also informed Chen Yi’s works.

Chen Yi has infused the spirit of Chinese traditional music into her style, while also transforming it by using Western musical characteristics, including musical forms, orchestral acoustic applications, and Western instruments. Moreover, Chen Yi also added Chinese folksongs to this concerto, while including Western harmony. Some music examples will be provided in order to analyze these applications.

In Chapter 4, general analysis will be provided to answer the second and the third research questions, including the scores and excerpts. Score study is limited to comparison between the orchestral version and piano reduction version to examine Chen Yi’s intentions in the music. According to Chen Yi’s program notes for the concerto, she was deeply inspired by the arts of Beijing opera when composing this concerto. Beijing opera is known for its unique performance, particularly its use of percussion instruments and vocal interpretation. To answer the second research question, the author intends to examine how Beijing opera inspired to Chen Yi’s *Percussion Concerto* by analyzing the four aspects of musical structure: 1. rhythm; 2. pitch; 3. timbre; and 4. textural process. Additionally, the second movement of the concerto, where the performer has to sing, recite, and play the

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instruments at the same time, is challenging to non-native Chinese speakers. Not only are the phonetics in Chinese difficult for them, but singing is uncomfortable for percussionists; therefore, the author will provide some suggestions, such as the explanation of the lyrics, to help the performers. Moreover, the author will generally speak to both Western and Chinese audiences, providing insight as to how the composer interweaves different musical traditions within her work.

Beyond the fusion of Western and Eastern music, the author will examine the conjunction of poem and music, as well as the philosophies of traditional Chinese literati and modern musicians. The author corresponded via emails with Chen Yi, as the composer is currently an associate professor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and is willing to assist with the author’s research on her work. To clarify the intended meaning of this *Percussion Concerto*, contacting the composer is the most effective way to build this essay.

To discuss the fourth research question, recordings and video performances of this concerto will be studied in chapter 5 to develop the analysis. While *Percussion Concerto* was commissioned by Evelyn Glennie and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra in 1998, an album, *Oriental Landscape*, was released in 2002 containing Chen Yi’s *Percussion Concerto* and some other composers’ works. This CD recording was made by Glennie and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Lan Shui. The other recording selected was performed by Jingli Zhang and the Shenzhen Symphony in 2012. Unlike the audio recording of Glennie, Zhang’s video recording, which provide a reference regarding the impact of stage setting on music. As this recording was made ten years after Evelyn Glennie’s version, it provides material for comparison especially since both recordings were commended by Chen Yi. As a result, these are considered accurate interpretations of Chen Yi’s aural vision.
Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the choices of percussion instruments. The choice of instruments affects the sounds, which every serious performer should understand and consider. The solo percussion instrumentation of Chen Yi’s *Percussion Concerto* includes vibraphone, xylophone, marimba, mark-tree, Chinese cymbals (Figure 3.1), Peking gongs (Figure 3.2), medium gong, tam-tam, Japanese high woodblock (Figures 3.3), temple block (Figures 3.4), Chinese tom toms (Figures 3.5), and dagu, also known as Chinese bass drum (Figures 3.6). The cultural fusion of instruments will also be examined. For the cymbals and gongs, the composer specified size of each one. Different brands of cymbals may produce various sounds, even when they are the same size. Therefore, knowing what kind of sounds Chen Yi envisioned is essential to a performer. In addition to non-pitched percussion instruments, there are three keyboard percussion instruments—vibraphone, xylophone, and marimba—which produce melodic lines throughout the whole concerto. The method of maintaining proper balance between drums, cymbals, and keyboard instruments will also be studied.
Figure 3.1 Chinese cymbals\textsuperscript{39}  

Figure 3.2 Peking gongs\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} “Chinese cymbals,” from the Hsian Ting instrument website, accessed August 16, 2016.  

\textsuperscript{40} “Peking gongs,” from the Hsian Ting instrument website, accessed August 16, 2016.  
Figures 3.3 Japanese woodblock\textsuperscript{41}

Figures 3.4 Chinese temple blocks\textsuperscript{42}


Figures 3.5 Chinese tom toms

Figures 3.6 Dagu (Chinese bass drum)


In addition to instrument choices, the performance set-up on stage will also be presented in this essay. The set-up is often based on the ability for the performer to execute smooth transitions between instruments and mallets. What is neglected, however, is the audience's aural perspective which can be affected by the placement of the instruments. How the audience hears the sound in the hall is one of the most significant factors one must consider when preparing the stage set-up. In view of this, charts and lists will be made to compare various stage set-ups.
Chapter 4
GENERAL ANALYSIS OF CHEN YI'S “PERCUSSION CONCERTO”

The *Percussion Concerto* has multiple themes of Eastern and Western influences. The first main theme of the influences is the instrumentation. Chen Yi employs a Western model of a symphony orchestra with Eastern percussion instruments in this concerto. Chinese percussion instruments have the longest history, and may be viewed as the most important of all the Chinese musical instruments. Chinese percussion instruments can be divided into four categories: 1. Drums; 2. Cymbals; 3. Gongs; and 4. Wooden instruments.\(^{45}\)

The drums family includes two different-sized drums, *hsiaogu* (smaller drum) and *dagu* (larger drum). Dagu, or Chinese bass drum, represents the spirit of the Chinese music, takes a leading role during prosperous occasions, such as festivals, religion celebrations, and weddings. During traditional celebratory festivals, large groups of male players hang the waist-drum and dance or march. Their movements are unified by beating a simple and repetitive pattern, which is made up by beating the center or the rim of the drum.\(^{46}\)

Chen Yi utilizes the dagu in the concerto to express the emotional force. The symbol “x” that Chen Yi marks on the score indicates the drum should be played on the wooden edge.\(^{47}\) The alternation of playing on the drum head and the edge associates with changes of dynamics between *piano* and *forte*, generating alluring sounds from the dagu. The rhythmic patterns on the dagu shows the idea of Chinese celebration. Chen Yi states in the program note:

\(^{45}\) Jane Chin, “Curriculum for introducing Chinese instruments in grades four through six.” (M.A. essay, California State University, 1993), 16.

\(^{46}\) Xinn Guo, 192.

When the full orchestra joins in, the dagu is beaten at the center and rim of the membrane and rolled around the wooden edge, in typical Chinese performing style.48

Dagu is one of the most distinct Chinese percussion instruments which represents a cultural and musical impact from the Chinese society. Chen Yi brings the cultural relevance to her work by the use of dagu.

Cymbals have been widely used in court, stage, and dance music since the Song Dynasty. Their sound is clear and bright, and is often heard in conjunction with a small gong to express a relaxed and delightful mood.49 Interpreting as a dialogue in the beginning of the third movement of the concerto, the coordination of cymbals and the small Peking gong is an example of the idea.

Large Gongs are mostly used in open and bright resonance, they are, however, occasionally muffled to produce an altered tone quality. The small gongs provide the most colorful timbres. Played alone, the small gongs create high ringing sounds. These instruments are also responsible for most rhythmic embellishments.50 Gongs are not only the kernel of the Beijing opera, but also are the core of the Percussion Concerto, and are scattered throughout the concerto. Additionally, gongs are the materials that Chen Yi strives to link the artistic, musical, and traditional influences from China within her work.

Moreover, Chen Yi also employs the woodblocks in the concerto, which are categorized under wooden percussion instruments. Woodblocks are originally used in Buddhist ceremonies in China. Music is part of the Buddhist liturgy, in the form of prayers,

49 Jane Chin, 18.
50 Nancy Rao, 513.
hymns, and mantras. Music in Buddhism is based on the concept of creating sounds that are
associated with religious faith and devotion.\textsuperscript{51} While reciting the texts, the prayers usually
play woodblocks to create a monotonous sound. Chen Yi is able to preserve the idea of
religious tradition in the end of the second movement which indicates the imitation of the
Buddhist ceremony.

The second theme of the influences features the Beijing opera. The majority of the
Beijing opera works are composed of several complexly layered elements, including
Mandarin Chinese, conventional stylized movement, \textit{Pihuang} musical language of the song
and orchestral accompaniment, and percussion patterns. One of these elements is Mandarin
Chinese, performed as much for its aesthetic values as for its denotative meaning. This
material affects Chen Yi’s composition. The composer often utilizes the recitation of Chinese
poetry texts into her works, including \textit{As in a Dream (1988)}, \textit{Night Thoughts (1998)}, and also
does so in the \textit{Percussion Concerto}.

The conventional stylized movement refers to the characters’ movements of the
Beijing opera performance. The characters are each representative of a particular role
category, and the vocal and physical techniques used in their presentation are therefore
larger, involving greater volume and broader timbre.\textsuperscript{52} However, individual characters are by
no means stereotypical in terms of their values, personality traits, and reactions to the
circumstances in which they are placed.\textsuperscript{53} The same character in essentially the same
situation may be interpreted very differently by different performers, through sometimes

\textsuperscript{51} Yueh Yin Liao, 20.

\textsuperscript{52} Elizabeth Wichmann, “Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Beijing Opera Performance.”
\textit{TDR: The Drama Review} \textit{34}, no.1 (Spring 1990): 147.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
subtle and sometimes explicit variations in verbal, melodic, and percussive composition, and in performance technique.\textsuperscript{54} Chen Yi is influenced by the conventional stylized movement in terms of the use of the instruments in the concerto. The performer has to reach a massive instrumental set up while playing; therefore, the performer is viewed as a “character” who has to use physical motion to help the audience perceive the concerto not only aurally but also visually.

In addition to the language and movement, the main feature of Beijing opera is \textit{Pihuang}. \textit{Pihuang} is a synthesis of local melodies and performing styles, which did not flourish until the second half of the nineteenth century. As a consequence, a set of independent recognizable singing and performing styles was developed by virtue of the creativity and efforts of a generation of leading actors. The local melodies of \textit{Pihuang} came to be distinguished as an independent genre, Beijing opera, with a set of unique characteristics, especially its music, acting style, and stage design.\textsuperscript{55} Beijing opera is regarded as the most representative Chinese performing arts genre, which Chen Yi selects most of the traits from and features them in every \textit{Percussion Concerto} movement.

The third theme of the Eastern and Western influences is related to musical form and theory. Movements one and three imitate Western sonata form; however, the structure of the second movement does not following the traditional Western musical form. The texts of the poem are divided into three sections, which affects the composition. The poetry is highly regulated and refined. Additionally, the characters and phrases rhyme beautifully.\textsuperscript{56} The

\textsuperscript{54} Elizabeth Wichmann, 147.

\textsuperscript{55} Hsiao-Chun Wu, “Ascending the Hall of Great Elegance: the Emergence of Drama Research in Modern China.” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 2016), 22.

\textsuperscript{56} Yueh Ying Liao, 17.
beauty of the poem lies in its capability to express deep emotions within a limited number of characters, and following the proper order of words while maintaining a balance of tones.\textsuperscript{57} Chen Yi carries the cultural meaning of the Chinese poetry by preserving the sections of the original poem. In addition to three sections, the composer inserts a transition for the sake of the musical purpose to make the music flow more smoothly.

From music theory standpoint, the interval of major seventh and pentatonic scales are the core of the concerto. The concept of intervals and tetrachord can be dated back to Ancient Greek music theory, the foundation of Western music theory system, while the pentatonic scale is a symbol of Chinese music (Figure 4.1). Chen Yi combines the Chen Yi’s touch of the Chinese pentatonic sound and the mixture of the Western harmony are noticeable in the concerto. Moreover, Chen Yi also exemplifies Arnold Schoenberg’s atonal language, which is formed by highly chromatic, linear interplay of brief motifs and textural contrasts, while presenting a Chinese folk tune.\textsuperscript{58} The convergence of the different theory systems does not produce cacophonous sounds within her works; instead, leads to Chen Yi’s own unique musical language.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{58} Xinn Guo, 25.
Figure 4.1 Pentatonic Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the scale</th>
<th>Row order</th>
<th>Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gong in C</td>
<td>C D E G A</td>
<td>M2,M2,m3,M2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shang in D</td>
<td>D E G A C</td>
<td>M2,m3,M2, m3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiao in E</td>
<td>E G A C D</td>
<td>m3,M2, m3,M2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhi in G</td>
<td>G A C D E</td>
<td>M2,m3,M2, M2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu in A</td>
<td>A C D E G</td>
<td>m3,M2, M2,m3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Movement I : The Night Deepens

The title refers to the Peking opera tune, *The Night Deepens* found in the Sword Dance scene of the opera *Farewell to my Concubine*. Chen Yi applies the tune in her other works, including the third movement of *Fiddle Suite* in 1997, and the second movement of *Romance and Dance* for violin and piano in 2001. In *Romance and Dance*, the violin opens the movement with a motif which has the fragment of the actual Beijing opera Tune, *B-E-F#-D#-C#*, (Example 4.1). This motif turns to accompaniment when Chen Yi introduces the melody in her *Percussion Concerto*. Unlike the violin and piano version, this concerto certainly displays percussive sound.

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Structurally speaking, the first movement of the *Percussion Concerto* mimics the sonata form with an introduction, as shown in Figure 4.2. In the introduction, the drone notes are marked *piano* on tam-tam, large gong, and middle gong, immerses the audience deeply into the music and the mysterious atmosphere. The segments from the first measure gradually develop with increasing dynamic levels until measure 15, which is the climax of the passage, when the lights are turned on (Example 4.2). The introduction of the movement is similar to the beginning of a typical Beijing opera performance. When the performance of the opera is about to start, the curtain will rise.
Figure 4.2 Table of Music Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure number</th>
<th>Texture</th>
<th>Tempo marking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>mm.1-17</td>
<td></td>
<td>♩=52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td>mm.18-37</td>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>♩=152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm.38-45</td>
<td></td>
<td>♩=54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm.46-57</td>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>♩=108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>mm.58-76</td>
<td>Episodes</td>
<td>♩=120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>mm.77-116</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>mm.117-210</td>
<td>Episodes</td>
<td>accel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recapitulation</td>
<td>mm.211-218</td>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>♩=120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm.219-241</td>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm.242-253</td>
<td></td>
<td>♩=132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>mm.254-262</td>
<td></td>
<td>♩=108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 4.2 Chen Yi, *Night Deepens*, mm. 1-17.

The exposition starts at measure 18, followed by a transition. There are two themes in
exposition. Theme 1 is highly animated and rhythmic; by contrast, theme 2 is a melodic, composed in the style of a folk tune (Example 4.3). The first seven measures of the exposition is a vigorous passage played by solo percussion on Peking gongs, followed by the orchestral entrance at measure 25. The dialogue between the soloist and the orchestra makes the section ebullient. However, this speedy and rhythmic section stops suddenly at measure 38. The music slows down dramatically to 54 bpm and the orchestra sets the melodic phrase with the solo percussionist playing the dagu. This section reflects Chen Yi’s reaction to Eastern culture. The composer introduces the dagu in the exposition, declaring the excitement and delight of the first movement of the concerto. The Chinese dagu plays the same rhythm as the melody but leads the orchestra gradually to accelerate into the original tune (Example 4.4).

Example 4.3 Chen Yi, *Night Deepens*, mm. 19-23, theme 1.60

Example 4.4. Chen Yi, Night Deepens, mm. 38-45.

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At measure 50, both orchestra and the soloist play the melody in unison. The melody serves as theme 2, to be concluded in the exposition (Example 4.5). Furthermore, this is the first time that the solo percussion plays xylophone, a melodic percussion instrument, in the *Percussion Concerto*.

Example 4.5 Chen Yi, *Night Deepens*, mm. 50-52, theme 2.\(^6\)

The development extends between measures 77 and 116; it consists of three phrases. The first and the third phrase are similar transformation of theme 2. By contrast, the second phrase is a percussive and the thematic idea comes from theme 1 (Example 4.6). The transition appears at bar 117, which is comprises three episodes. Chen Yi employs three different instruments, dagu (Chinese bass drum), xylophone, and Japanese woodblock in each of the episodes (Example 4.7). The composers inserts a Western percussion instruments,

xylophone between the other two Eastern percussion instruments, dagu and Japanese woodblock. This is an example of how Chen Yi weaves the musical texture with different cultural influences. It starts from measure 140, the material of theme 2 and episodes recur in this section, thus serving as a transition. It is noteworthy that the phrase found measure 140-146 is written as monody in the piano reduction version, yet the melody is played by both soloist and the first violin in the orchestra version. After three-bars of tutti, the xylophone gradually builds the intensity by increasing the tempo and volume to reach the first climax of this movement at measure 210.

Example 4.6 Chen Yi, *Night Deepens*, mm. 124-127.62

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Example 4.7 Chen Yi, *Night Deepens*, episode 1, 2, and 3.

The texture suddenly changes at 211; the tempo slows down and the Japanese block takes over the melody. The accompaniment continuously plays the intervals of seventh which sends us back to theme 1, indicating the recapitulation. Furthermore, it is made obvious that the recapitulation occurs when the xylophone presents the idea reminiscent of the previous motif. The second climax appears at measure 253 in terms of dynamics and registers, and is followed by a coda. Chen Yi preserves the Beijing opera spirit to compose the coda by using the Peking gongs, a musical decision which corresponds to the one made in the beginning of the concerto.

In terms of harmony, the major seventh and pentatonic scales create a distinctive and dissonant sonority. By putting these musical elements together in one movement, Chen Yi shows her unique ability of fusing both Eastern and Western musical features. For example, while the xylophone plays the restatement of the lyric pentatonic theme 2 at measure 219,
the viola and cellos presents the energetic and motivic ideas of the major seventh as a contrasting accompaniment.

The first entrance of the orchestra is a chord, composed of two major sevenths, D-C♯ and E-Eb (D#). The chord is reiterated for eight measures and descends by a perfect fourth to the second chord, A-G♯ and B-B♭ in measure 35. Episode 1 and 3 in the development section is another example: the accompaniment keeps playing A-G♯ and C-B, this time in rapid rhythms. Major seventh appears throughout the whole movement as one of the most recognizable elements, particularly between measures 147 and 165. In this section, the major seven interval serves as basso ostinato, a support of bustling melodies played by both soloist and the accompaniment (example 4.8).

Example 4.8 Chen Yi, *Night Deepens*, mm.147-150.63

In this movement, the pentatonic scale first occurs at measure 50, theme 2 in *Gong* (B C♯ D♯ F♯ G♯). The theme recurs at measure 140, modulating to (E- F♯- G♯- B- C♯) this

time. In the development section, not only theme 2, but also some selected pitches coming from the previous section reflect the pentatonic scale.

**Movement II: Prelude to Water Tune**

The Chinese Song lyric is a poetic genre in which the words or lyrics were written or “filled in” to the matrixes of folk tunes, some of which date back to as early as the 8th century. Su Shi (1037-1101) was one of the most influential writers and poet in Song dynasty. Since he successfully passed the state examination, he was able to become an administrative assistant within the bureaucratic system. During his tenure in the position, he helped legislate the laws to benefit the public. Because Su Shi’s political policy differed from the chancellor's, Wang An-Shi, antagonism developed between them. During his lifetime, Su Shi was exiled several times from the political sphere. His exiles to the obscure villages in the southern region of China surprisingly did not devastate him; instead, they contributed to his remarkable achievement in the arts.

The majority of Su Shi’s monumental work was written during his exiles, including Prelude to the Water Tune. Nature was one of the most popular topics for Chinese poets. Su Shi was mostly inspired by wine and the moon, using his artwork to transform those objects into meanings. In Chinese poetry, the moon is often a metaphor for reunion. Su Shi’s Prelude to the Water Tune was written for his brother, yet another great poet, Su Che. Mid-Autumn Festival, along with the Chinese New Year and Tomb Sweeping Day, are the most

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substantial festivals for the Chinese people. In China, festivals are times for family reunion. The Su family reunion was held for four years because of his exiles from the emperor in 1072. In the fall of 1076, Su Shi was expelled to Mizhou, a place far from his hometown. He kept thinking of his brother while finishing the magnificent work, *Prelude to the Water Tune*. Figure 4.3 shows the context of Su Shi’s *Prelude to the Water Tune*. The English translation is the composer's own linguistic effort. The composer includes a copy of the poem in the preface of the printed music score.

The author has described how Chen Yi presents the idea of fusing both Eastern and Western elements in her *Percussion Concerto*. During the research process, the author found that Chen Yi frequently integrates Chinese poems into her compositions. The blending of poetry and music is not an innovative compositional tool in both Chinese and Western composers; nevertheless, the choice of the particular poem in the *Percussion Concerto* is deserving of discussion. In Chen Yi’s email to the author, she explains:

> “Su Shi’s Prelude to the Water Tune shows a lot of Chinese feelings in philosophy and manner (emotional, sentimental, yet not dramatic, it has a kind of mild sorrow), I like the taste, and also think that people share this mood universally. I love the reciting tune of this poem, with phrases (lines of the lyric) in different lengths, which shape up the musical momentum and direction.”

Those are the reasons why Chen Yi chose this poem for the second movement of the concerto. By analyzing it through this essay, the author endeavors to make more people realize the spirit of the concerto.
**Figure 4.3 Prelude to Water Tune and translation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original texts in Chinese</th>
<th>Original texts in English</th>
<th>Chen Yi’s Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>明月幾時有</td>
<td>Ming yue ji shi you?</td>
<td>How long will the fill moon appear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>把酒問青天</td>
<td>Ba jiu wen qing tian.</td>
<td>Wine cup in hand, I ask the sky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不知天上宮闕</td>
<td>Bu zhi tian shang gong que,</td>
<td>I do not know in the palace on high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>今夕是何年</td>
<td>Jin xi shi he nian?</td>
<td>What time of year would be tonight?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我欲乘風歸去</td>
<td>Wo yu cheng feng gui qu,</td>
<td>Riding the wind, there I would fly,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何似在人間</td>
<td>He si zai ren jian!</td>
<td>On high as on earth, would it be as gay?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>轉朱閣</td>
<td>Zhuan zhu ge,</td>
<td>The moon goes round the mansions red.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>低綺戶</td>
<td>Di qi hu,</td>
<td>Through gauze-draped windows soft to shed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>照無眠</td>
<td>Zhao wu miam,</td>
<td>Her light upon the sleepless bed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不應有恨</td>
<td>Bu ying you hen,</td>
<td>Against man she should have no spite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>何事長向別時圓</td>
<td>He si chang xiang bie shi yuan?</td>
<td>Why, then, when people part, is she oft full and bright?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>人有悲歡離合</td>
<td>Ren you bei huan li he,</td>
<td>Men have sorrow and joy; they part or meet again;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>月有陰晴圓缺</td>
<td>Yue you yin qing yang que,</td>
<td>The moon is bright or dim and she may wax or wane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>此事古難全</td>
<td>Ci shi gu nan quan,</td>
<td>There has been nothing perfect since the olden days,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>但願人長久</td>
<td>Dan yuan ren chang jiu,</td>
<td>So let us wish that man will live as long as he can!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>千里共嬋娟</td>
<td>Qian li gong chan juan.</td>
<td>Though miles apart, we’ll share the beauty she displays.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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A more specific musical analysis of the second movement of Chen Yi’s *Percussion Concerto, Prelude to Water Tune* breaks down into three sections with a transition (Figure 4.4). The accompaniment opens the section A with *sforzando piano* tremolos and small fragments of second intervals.

The soloist comes in at measure 9, takes over the tremolos on marimba within the duration of four measures and starts to recite the poem at measure 12 (Example 4.9). After reciting the first verse of the poem, the marimba plays a pentatonic melody to conclude the phrase. In Chinese music, the arrangement of tempo changes becomes a common device for formal unity and balance. Typically, the music begins at a slow tempo, accelerates section by section to a climax at the fastest tempo, and then returns quickly to the initial slow tempo.67

The second verse of this movement, another example of the tempo changes, starts on the third beat of measure 20, and lasts until measure 26. The music first begins at a slow tempo and accelerates to emphasize two accent words (*jin xi*) and then slows down to the next word (*shi*) in a higher pitch with an accent. However, the music does not stop but accelerates to 69 bpm to conclude the A section (Example 4.10). The soloist switches from marimba to vibraphone and repeats the theme in a different key. Measure 38 presents stable *pianississimo* sextuplet on Peking gongs as an accompaniment to sustain the recitation that reaches the highest pitch (*jian*) of the whole movement. Chen Yi employs a dialogue of the marimba and the accompaniment as a transition to restate the thematic material at measure 43.

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67 Xinn Guo, 35.
Figure 4.4 Table of Music Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure number</th>
<th>Tempo marking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>mm.1-42</td>
<td>$\dot{J}=76$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm.21-27</td>
<td>Tempo changes at each measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mm.28-50</td>
<td>$\dot{J}=69$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>mm. 43-50</td>
<td>$\dot{J}=69$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>mm.51-66</td>
<td>$\dot{J}=69 \rightarrow \text{rit} \rightarrow \dot{J}=69$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>mm.67-90</td>
<td>$\dot{J}=72 \rightarrow \text{rit} \rightarrow \dot{J}=56$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 4.9 Chen Yi, *Prelude to Water Tune*, mm.9-14.\(^{68}\)

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Chen Yi’s use of the climax is to increase the volume, to create more complicated texture, and to repeat the text twice in section B. The performer intensifies the recitation at _forte_ dynamic, while playing the marimba, Chinese tom toms, and Peking gongs in varied dynamics. Several rhythmic groupings occur including sextuplets, eighth notes triplets, quarter note triplets with grace notes, and tremolos in the solo part. The composer employs dotted eighth notes and constant sixteenth notes in the accompaniment. The first three verses
can be viewed as a poetic phrase (*zhuan zhu ge, di qi hu, zhao wu mian*), followed by a new phrase which makes up the next verse (*bu ying you hen*). Chen Yi repeats both texts twice but inserts a single measure between the two phrases with a word (*yo*) by herself. In Su Shi’s original poem, the word *Yo* does not exist, yet Chen Yi adds a *trill* on it. If we consider the *yo* not a “meaningful word” but a “musical sound”, the distinctive bar, measure 59, becomes the connection and leads the music to the apex of the movement at measure 65 (Example 4.11).

Example 4.11 Chen Yi, *Prelude to Water Tune*, mm. 57-59.\(^7\)

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Section C functions as a closing section. Chen Yi simplifies the music by reducing the melodic lines to limited pitches. The section begins with a solo statement by the percussionist, yielding a light and thin texture. Temple blocks emerge in the pick up to measure 68 to simulate the sound of chanting Buddhist sutras. After sustaining eighth notes for seven bars, temple blocks suddenly stop, followed by a monotonous rendering. Accompaniment emerges and exhibits the material of the theme in soft dynamics at measure

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80. The final section is achieved by playing on mark tree and sustaining a long thrill on pitch B on piano to depict the silence of night.

Regarding the harmony, unlike the melodic pentatonic themes in the first movement, the theme of *Prelude to Water Tune* is characterized by Western atonal effect. Chen Yi alters the linear contour while retaining the individual pitches in different voices. The juxtaposition of major second and minor second intervals appears as a complete theme and creates an obscure atmosphere of swaying trees and rustling sound of leaves at night (Example 4.12).

Example 4.12 Chen Yi, *Prelude to Water Tune*, mm.1-6.\(^{71}\)

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Movement III: Speedy Wind

Beijing opera, which is an art form combining singing, speaking, dance-acting, and combat in the play, was formed during the Ching dynasty's rule in Beijing (1644-1912). Music serves the purpose of being the connector of the aforementioned components, often in the form of a transitional implement. Based on Chen Yi’s program note of the Percussion Concerto, Speedy Wind is a fixed rhythmic pattern in Beijing opera percussion performance used in martial scenes. Chen Yi employs the rhythmic pattern in the beginning of the third movement. Upon close examination of the third movement, Speedy Wind, one will find that the author regards the musical structure mimic the sonata form with an opening section (Figure 4.5).

The opening section mimics the typical martial scene in Beijing opera, which functions as a transition and introduction of a new character. Vigorous Chinese cymbals launch the movement at a fast speed and crescendo to the downbeat at measure 4 (Example 4.13). From measure 4-16, the accompaniment plays eighth notes relentlessly, consisting of dissonant pitches of a major seventh (B♭-A and C-B). Chen Yi applies Chinese cymbals, large and medium gongs, Chinese toms, dagu, and Peking gongs in the opening section to build the intensity and connect to the concept of Chinese Luogu Dianzi. The entire section, hence, preserves the features of the Chinese Beijing opera.

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72 Ruru Li, The Soul of Beijing Opera (Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 10.
Figure 4.5 Table of Music Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure number</th>
<th>Texture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening section</td>
<td>mm.1-72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td>mm.73-136</td>
<td>mm.77 theme 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mm.109-120 bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mm.121 theme 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>mm.137-148</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>mm.149-234</td>
<td>mm.163 episode/ fragments from theme 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mm.198 theme 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mm.211 episode/ fragments from theme 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mm.213 episode/ fragments from theme 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mm.221 episode/ fragments from theme 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>mm.225-236</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recapitulation</td>
<td>mm.237-280</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadenza</td>
<td>mm.281-321</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing section</td>
<td>mm.322-389</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 4.13 Chen Yi, *Speedy Wind*, mm. 1-4.\textsuperscript{74}

The exposition comprises two divergent melodic contours, played by the accompaniment and solo marimba. The accompaniment has a linear ascending melody grouped in triplets along with repeated four-measure rhythmic patterns played by the marimba as theme 1 (Figure 4.14). Chen Yi creates an unstable feeling by inserting groups of eighth notes in one voice and groups of triplet in another voice. The texture alters in measure 109. While the accompaniment consecutively plays the flowing pattern, the marimba begins to emphasize B and C♯ by restating trills and mordents (Example 4.15). These twelve measures serve as a bridge to connect theme 1 and theme 2. Chen Yi lays down the theme 2 on marimba at measure 121 (Example 4.16). The theme is from the G pentatonic scale in Yu mode (G - A - B - D - E). The F♯ does not belong to the pentatonic scale, but is interpreted as a neighboring tone. Theme 2 repeats again at measure 129, followed by a transition at measure 137.

Within the exposition, the mixed timbre of strings and winds presents Chen Yi’s application of Western musical influence. The flowing triplets patterns in the accompaniment are produced by the strings and woodwinds, followed by brass. Because the orchestra gradually layers into the linear contour of the patterns, colors of orchestral sonority enhances assorted textures in this section.

Chinese dance music is derived from folk songs. Chen Yi applies the dance music element to the development of the final movement, as seen in the melodies presented by the marimba and the rhythmic patterns exhibited by the dagu. The development features an elaborate dagu passage in the first subsection. The rhythmic pattern, which Chen Yi utilizes in the section, reveals the composer’s application of Chinese tradition in her music. As the movement develops, accents become the most pivotal characteristics. At measure 175, the settings of accents on Peking gongs make the listener hear four groups of four sixteen notes plus an eighth note (Example 4.17). The next section consist of episodes which are elements

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Example 4.15 Chen Yi, *Speedy Wind*, mm. 109-113.\(^75\)

Example 4.16 *Speedy Wind*, mm. 121-127.\(^76\)”

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\(^76\) Ibid.
mostly selected from theme 1 and theme 2 but also contains a new thematic motif, theme 3, at measure 198. Theme 3 is a vivid, four-measured phrase. The metric design of the theme is comprised of multiple meter changes, where an alternating pattern between 2/4 and 3/8 occurs. The rhythmic grouping is followed by a sequence of chromatic passages which has a two-measured concluding attachment. The segment of the attachment is what Chen Yi has taken from theme 1 (Example 4.18). The third subsection in the development, from measure 213-224, combines materials from previous themes. Transition begins at measure 225, containing groups of ascending sixteenth notes and consecutive dissonant intervals of a second, which is a reminiscent of the second movement of the concerto.

Example 4.17 Chen Yi, *Speedy Wind*, mm. 175-177.

Example 4.18 Chen Yi, *Speedy Wind*, mm. 211-212.\(^77\)

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The reappearance of the principal motif at measure 237 is referred to as the recapitulation, although the distribution of the themes are slightly varied. Instead of being following by the principal theme 1, theme 2 is displaced after theme 3. Instead of employing the cadenza section in the first movement as a standard sonata form, the composer applies the exuberant cadenza in the final movement of the concerto. The cadenza section begins with long rolls on the highest Chinese tom tom at measure 281, followed by a virtuosic passage played on the tom toms and Peking gongs (Example 4.19). Chen Yi’s incorporation of different textures, including diverse rhythms and sounds, makes the cadenza more brilliant. The closing section of the concerto is characterized by a rhythmic unison of the solo and the accompaniment part (Example 4.20). Additionally, some of the early motifs recur again in this section. One of the instances is from measure 354-357. Chen Yi uses contrapuntal skills as a tool to bring out the thematic motif again (Example 4.21). As the restatement of Peking gongs and dagu, the music generates escalating excitement in the final section. The concerto concludes with a quintuplet on Chinese tom toms, leading to the last sforzando eighth note on both the solo and the accompaniment.

Example 4.19 Chen Yi, *Speedy Wind*, mm. 303-312.78

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Example 4.20 Chen Yi, *Speedy Wind*, mm. 326-329.\(^{79}\)

Compared to the previous movements, *Speedy Wind* is the one which features percussive and rhythmic patterns other than melodic figures. Therefore, the harmony of this movement is simpler. Tonally speaking, the third movement shows the Chinese folk tune style, characterized by pentatonic scales. For instance, the last four bars at the transition consist of F, B♭, and G pentatonic scales in *Jiao*. Additionally, Chen Yi is able to insert an elaborate passage of a pentatonic scale in *Gong* into the accompaniment part, right before the cadenza starts.

Example 4.21 Chen Yi, *Speedy Wind*, mm. 354-357.

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CHAPTER 5
PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Percussion Set-up

The instrumentation of the concerto is a result of distinct influence of Eastern and Western music. As noted earlier, the Percussion Concerto was commissioned by a Western performer, Evelyn Glennie and an Eastern orchestra, the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. The fusion of a percussionist and an orchestra from divergent cultural backgrounds also affected the commission. The commission strengthened Chen Yi’s inspiration of composing a concerto which integrated musical features from both cultures. In the process of composition, Chen Yi expressed her idea of incorporating Chinese folk percussion instruments and the Western percussion to Evelyn Glennie, who was delighted with the idea. Chen Yi was concerned about the difficulties of finding those Chinese instruments which revealed her awareness of the challenge in requiring the instruments in a Western country.

The instrumentation of the solo percussion part is shown in the Figure 5.1 below. The instrumentation of tutti percussion parts is also provided to be compared in the Figure 5.2. The two figures not only clearly exhibit the instrumental similarity of the soloist and other three tutti percussionists, but also the distinction between them. Chen Yi displays a variety of Chinese percussion instruments on both solo and the tutti percussion parts, but merely lays all the Western melodic instruments, including marimba, vibraphone, and xylophone on the solo part.
Figure 5.1 Instrumentation of the solo percussion part

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Instruments</th>
<th>Eastern Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marimba</td>
<td>Chinese cymbals 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark tree</td>
<td>Chinese tom tom (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibraphone</td>
<td>Dagu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xylophone</td>
<td>Gong (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japanese block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peking gongs (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tam tam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temple blocks (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2 Instrumentation of tutti percussion parts\textsuperscript{80}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percussion 1</th>
<th>Timpani (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peking gong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High suspended cymbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percussion 2</td>
<td>Chinese cymbals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finger bells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suspended cymbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crash cymbals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gongs (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wood blocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snare drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tom toms (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percussion 3</td>
<td>(with bow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peking gongs (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crotales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sizzle suspended cymbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tam tam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temple blocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Claves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bass drum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the difficulty of finding some Chinese percussion instruments in a Western country, the author has found the substitutions for these instruments. Based on the instrumentation, the dagu and the Chinese tom toms are the most unconventional instruments in a Western country. The author suggests replacing the Chinese dagu with a small concert bass drum, and replacing the Chinese tom toms with concert toms. Despite the fact that the concert drums create warmer, deeper, and more “Western” sounds than the original setting, the sounds correspond to the orchestra well. Consequently, Chen Yi approves the substituted instruments. Every performer has the liberty to find their preferred substitutions for the instruments, but should be aware of the composer’s original concept of the combinations of both Eastern and Western instruments.

In addition to substitutions for instruments, mallets choice is another aspect that performers have to be aware of. The composer does not indicate specific types of mallets, giving performers liberty to choose mallets. The primary concern is the sound. To avoid the dampened sounds, hard rubber mallets are suggested for use on Peking gongs, and wooden sticks are suitable for the tom toms. Additionally, two-tone marimba mallets are required to achieve clear sounds on the marimba and the xylophone in a short time. Beyond that, performers have to effectively manipulate the distinct sounds of each instrument according to the music by choosing between yarn mallets, rubber mallets, plastic sticks, and wood drumsticks.

The percussion set-up placement is the last part the author will discuss. Essentially the set-up is separated in two categories which can be viewed as both ways, the non-pitched instruments and the melodic instruments, or an Eastern and Western percussion instruments. The soloist has a massive multi-percussion set-up in the Percussion Concerto. Aside from that, the concerto requires the performer to be able to rapidly switch instruments in a short
time. In regard to the cultural amalgamation of Eastern and Western percussion instruments, most of the Eastern instruments are placed in the right side of the set-up; and the Western percussion instruments are on the left side of the set-up. This suggested placement not only separates the East and West but also balances the pitched and non-pitched instruments. Figure 5.3 shows the author’s suggested percussion set-up placement diagram.

Figure 5.3 Suggested Set-up diagram
From the percussionist’s standpoint, for the sake of the quick switch between instruments, the author adds two additional instruments, setting them in front of the xylophone. One is a Japanese high block, which must be played right after the xylophone plays in the first movement. The other is the highest gong, due to the last section of the second movement. The performer stands in the middle of the set-up so that he or she can quickly reach all of the instruments. Peking gongs and Chinese toms have to be placed next to each other because of Chen Yi’s incessant use of connecting gongs and tom toms in this concerto. During the performance of the *Percussion Concerto*, the performer has to execute fast passages across all the gongs and toms. The space between the xylophone, the vibraphone, and the marimba is designed for the second movement. Hence the performer is able to shift between those instruments without moving the instruments in the middle of the piece. The Japanese block, wind chimes, Chinese cymbals, and wood blocks, are grouped as accessories in front of the xylophone.

While performing the concerto, the soloist has to be conscious of where the audience is. Even when switching instruments, the performer has to face the audience. The suggested set-up diagram is designed in terms of that reason. According to the diagram, three big gongs are set in the back of the set-up. Chen Yi utilizes simple rhythms instead of rapid passages on the gongs which allows the performer to play the gongs with one hand and have time to rotate the body rather than turn back to the audience.
The set-up is also related to the cultural influences. According to the diagram, when playing on the dagu, which is the most representative Chinese percussion instrument, the performer has to use large motions based on the Chinese cultural delightful occasions and festivals. Therefore, the dagu has to be placed in the middle of the set-up because it has to be presented in the leading role of to make the audience easily perceive the performer’s unique motions.

Additionally, the Peking gongs are laid on a trap table next to the toms. In addition to that, the performer can hang all the gongs in a stand, but has to fix them firmly so that while playing, the gongs will not move. Hanging all the gongs is the suggested way since gongs are expected to produce bright sounds in Chinese society, especially the celebratory ceremonies. Figure 5.4 illustrates a stand with thirteen gongs on it, which is commonly used in the Chinese traditional orchestra. The goal of this suggested set-up diagram is to help the performers simultaneously achieve the composer’s musical consideration and the cultural influences.
Figure 5.4 Chinese gongs stand

Performance Suggestions

The author offers some suggestions to explain the performance practice issues. The performance suggestions are related to the musical influences from both Eastern and Western cultures. While performing the concerto, the performer has to interpret as an actor, or a character of the Beijing opera. On the other hand, all the physical movements, body language, gestures and reciting have to be perceived by the audience both visually and aurally.

The second movement of the Percussion Concerto is characterized by the artistic symbiosis of playing and reciting. There are three types of recitation in the movement. The first one consists of wide range intervals, including sliding move in upward and downward directions. The soloist has to create unique, incisive sounds to imitate the way that Beijing opera singers perform. Chen Yi’s use of the musical material builds a crescendo to the ascending notes. In contrast, diminuendo is set to the descending passages. The second type is reciting in the lower register, which is represented by the performer’s murmuring. Example 5.1 illustrates the second type.

Example 5.1 Chen Yi, Prelude to Water Tune, mm. 12-15.82

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The first sentence of the poem describes the poet asking how long the full moon will last. In measure 14-15, the three words (ji shi you) stand for “time”. Chen Yi employs a deep whisper to portray a lonely poet who has no one to talk to but the moon. Musically, as part of the first phrase, the following entrance of Japanese blocks depicts the stillness at night. The third type is reciting in the high register. The last phrase of the first stanza illustrates the poet dancing with his shadow on earth. By reciting an ascending phrase and playing tremolos on the highest Peking gong, Chen Yi describes the delightful scene. In measure 38, the rhythmic pattern on Peking gong has to be played softly and steadily to make the passage smooth, yet the reciting voice has to gradually increase the intensity. Chen Yi employs both reciting and percussion parts, setting the accents on the last note so that the highest pitch lands on the word jian. The performer has to make pointed sounds on those accented notes (Example 5.2).

Example 5.2 Chen Yi, Prelude to Water Tune, mm. 41-42.83

Although she indicates specific pitches and glissando marks in the reciting voice, Chen Yi suggests the performer should just recite - not sing. According to Chen Yi’s email to the author, only a few pitches would match the percussion pitches in this movement.84 There are

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83 Ibid.
84 Chen Yi, Email Messages to Author. September 12, 2014- September 17, 2016.
several instances in the movement that respond to the composer’s suggestion. In contrast to using non-pitched instruments to support the reciting voice in the majority of previous sections, Chen Yi presents same pitches on both reciting and vibraphone parts at measures 22, 24, and 32. (Example 5.3). According to the composer’s suggestion, the performer has to “sing” instead of “recite” at these measures. In addition, measures 83-84 make up a melodic phrase which appeared in measure 19 on marimba, serving not only as a recurring motif, but also as the last melody in this movement. Depending on the uses of the phrase, the author would suggest the performer to sing the notes, instead of reciting them (Example 5.4).

Example 5.3 Chen Yi, Prelude to Water Tune, mm. 32.

Example 5.4 Chen Yi, Prelude to Water Tune, mm. 83-84.

In Speedy Wind, Chen Yi explores different timbre and tone colors of Chinese instruments. The Peking gongs are used frequently in this movement. Apart from eliciting normal sounds from the gongs, Chen Yi indicates the “+” sign on the note to achieve a more
“dead” sound (Example 5.5). According to the composer, the “+” sign requires “hand muting.” The performer has to be aware of the muting spots. Since the highest opera gong is smaller than the tam tam, it has to be muted exactly in the center of the instrument to get the proper kind of dry sound. The author addresses the issue of balance in this movement - the solo marimba and the accompaniment should be carefully treated in the exposition because of the narrow register range. The solo range covers C3-E♭5 and the accompaniment covers from G3-B♭5. The middle register of the marimba is utilized, producing a warm and gentle sound. In addition to the close range of both voices, Chen Yi sets the same dynamic, mezzo forte, in both parts. Although the tutti percussion parts in the orchestral version have several notes to fill in the solo part, the performer still has to bring out the accents and the melody without covering the accompaniment part (Example 5.6).

Example 5.5 Chen Yi, Speedy Wind, mm.51-55.
**Conclusion**

Chen Yi’s personal history and training influence her compositional style. It is more than coincidental that the composer absorbs different cultural characteristics and translates them into her own musical language. The *Percussion Concerto* is a representative example that expresses the amalgamation of Eastern and Western elements within her works. While embracing Western contemporary musical features, the composer also holds on to traditional Chinese values and ideas.

The *Percussion Concerto* successfully establishes Chen Yi as a model for musical synthesis. Instead of considering this concerto as a Chinese musical work due to the numerous use of Chinese percussion instruments, the author regards it as a Western concerto with Eastern color for two reasons. First of all, the title, *Percussion Concerto*, is Western. While preserving the Western concerto constituent, the composer titles each movement but not the concerto itself. If Chen Yi intended to compose an Eastern musical work, she would
be able to give the concerto a more specific title that evokes the Chinese programmatic music, other than titling it *Percussion Concerto*.

Secondly, the standard three movements structure of the *Percussion Concerto* is a musical form typically found in Western composition. Within the conventional Western musical structure, each movement of the concerto has its own Eastern traits. The first movement features a traditional folk tune, the second movement portrays the beauty of Chinese poetry, and the third movement presents the martial scenes from Beijing opera. Chen Yi mimics the Western sonata form in the first and third movements of the *Percussion Concerto*. In contrast, Chen Yi inserts various Eastern musical components in the second movement, making it the most “Chinese” movement. Despite of its Eastern component, the second movement still follows the Western concerto features, which is a lyrical and cantabile movement. Chen Yi’s intention in exploring the compatible musical elements between the Eastern and Western cultures is revealed through her elaborate compositional ideas.

Chen Yi’s *Percussion Concerto* highlights the use of Chinese percussion instruments in a leading role in contemporary music. From a percussionist standpoint, the interpretation of performing this concerto has to be exaggerated as if the performer is acting in the Beijing opera; the ancillary gestures and reciting voice help listeners appreciate the music not only aurally but also visually. Accordingly, performers have to profoundly understand the background of the Chinese history, art, poetry, and music. Furthermore, in terms of the percussion set-up, the balance between pitched and non-pitched, Western and Eastern percussion instruments should be considered as well.

The *Percussion Concerto* exhibits a bond between the Eastern and Western musical influences. Therefore, identifying the connection between both cultures through the concerto would help listeners and performers understand distinctive cross-cultural features in music.
The author has eagerly researched the *Percussion Concerto* to explore these varied influences. Additionally, the author hopes this essay can serve as a valuable resource for other composers, performers, and audiences who are interested in the fusion of Eastern and Western music. By using the traditional Chinese musical materials as a basis for composition, Chen Yi’s success rests on her understanding of the values and influences of both cultures. Similarly to the other “new wave” Chinese composers who are musically and culturally bilingual, Chen Yi has the ability to communicate with both Eastern and Western audiences in both cultures.85 Chen Yi is motivated by the love of nature, people, and society and believes that all people can share emotions from art.86 Through the research, the author is convinced that Chen Yi’s music acts a bridge to connect listeners from different cultures.

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85 Peter Chang, 159.

86 Michael Murphy, 33.


Chen, Yi. Email Messages to Author. September 12, 2014- September 17, 2016.


Lu, Ji. “Zhongguo xinyingyue de zhanwang.” Guangming 1, no.5 (1936).


