Three Piano Chamber Music Works of Chen Yi: "Night Thoughts", "Romance and Dance", and "Tibetan Tunes": An Aesthetic and Structural Analysis, with Suggestions for Performance

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THREE PIANO CHAMBER MUSIC WORKS OF CHEN YI: “NIGHT THOUGHTS”, “ROMANCE AND DANCE”, AND “TIBETAN TUNES”:
AN AESTHETIC AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS, WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE

By

Yueh-Yin Liao

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2014
THREE PIANO CHAMBER MUSIC WORKS OF CHEN YI: “NIGHT THOUGHTS”, “ROMANCE AND DANCE”, AND “TIBETAN TUNES”: AN AESTHETIC AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS, WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE

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Three Piano Chamber Music Works of Chen Yi: “Night Thoughts”, “Romance and Dance”, and “Tibetan Tunes”:
An Aesthetic and Structural Analysis, with Suggestions for Performance

Abstract of a doctoral essay at the University of Miami.

Doctoral essay supervised by Dr. Paul Posnak.
No. of pages in text. (159)

The focus of this essay is a discussion of three chamber music works of Chen Yi, noted female Chinese American composer. In this essay, I will examine Chen Yi’s skill in integrating musical and cultural characteristics from Eastern and Western cultures. The three selected works are Night Thoughts for flute, cello and piano, Romance and Dance for violin and piano, and Tibetan Tunes for violin, cello and piano, all composed between 1995 and 2007. It is the intention of the author that this essay will bring these beautifully conceived works to the greater attention and appreciation of the musical community, ultimately introducing them to a wider audience.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the faculty of University of Miami Frost School of Music, specifically my advisor, Dr. Posnak, as well as committee members Professor Nancy Zavac, Dr. Dorothy Hindman, and Professor Tian Ying for their guidance and assistance with my doctoral essay. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Dennis Kam for his knowledge, inspiration and extensive assistance in the process of researching the three selected chamber music works of Chen Yi. I would also like to thank Professor Glenn Basham for sharing his knowledge in violin performance and string music.

I would also like to thank my musician colleagues, Leah Carl, CJ Young, Chia-li Yu, Yun Jung Jung, and Dr. Pamela Schultz for inspiring discussion about relevant musical ideas and for their talent and skill in rehearsing and performing some of these works with me. I would like to thank William Langton, the Alexander String Quartet and San Francisco State University Music Department for their support of my performance of Chen Yi’s Romance and Dance. Furthermore, I would like to thank the distinguished composer and the subject of my paper, Dr. Chen Yi, for her encouragement as well as the materials that she shared with me for inclusion in this project.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their support; my piano teachers, Dr. Chung-Wen Tsai and Dr. Victoria Neve who have inspired me to be a pianist and encouraged me in the process of completing my doctoral study; and the Alexander String Quartet who opened a door for me to appreciate the beauty and value of chamber music.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION
Background

The integration of musical and cultural characteristics from Eastern and Western cultures is a passion of this author, which inspired this research project on Chen Yi’s compositions. Chen Yi (b. 1953) is part of the post-Revolution generation of Chinese composers who were educated in both China and the United States, and who have successful careers in the Western world. Like other contemporary Chinese composers such as Zhou Long, Tan Dun and Bright Sheng, Chen Yi studied with Chou Wen-Chung, professor and Department Chairman of the Music Division at the School of the Arts at Columbia University in New York City. Chou Wen-Chung (b. 1923) grew up in China where he studied music, literature and science. In 1946, he furthered his education in the United States, where, as a music student, he studied with such respected scholars and composers as Warren Storey Smith, Nicolas Slonimsky, and most notably with Edgard Varèse, with whom he became closely associated.¹ Chou believes that Chinese aesthetic ideas parallel twentieth-century Western compositional ideas, and he devoted his music to exploring the possibilities and limitations of space, texture and timbre. He believes that Chinese and Western musical cultures share many of the same qualities:

…we have now reached a stage in which the beginning of a re-merger of Eastern and Western musical concepts and practices is actually taking place…I believe the traditions of Eastern and Western music once shared the same sources…²

² Ibid., 13-14
In many types of traditional Chinese music, the production of individual tones is the central focus and is often more emphasized than either melody or harmony. A single note can produce very subtle yet complex nuances of variations in pitch, volume and timbre, reflecting the inflectional nuances of the Chinese language. A great number of symbols and instructions indicating pitch and applied technique have been found in ancient surviving scores with outdated notation. In the case of ch’in music, for example, different finger techniques are notated precisely to produce a variety of nuances on a single note. There are existing documents and literature which provide an understanding of the philosophy and aesthetics underlying this music and clarify details regarding performance. As thorough as written traditions may be, not everything can be communicated through words. Elements such as the spiritual quality of this music cannot be fully explained through words or symbols. This level of understanding requires aural learning traditions. Improvisation is part of this performance style and is what brings individuality to the performance. Since melody is given as a structural framework, it is up to the player’s imagination to choose the pace of the music, the length of each note and the space between sounds.\(^3\)

The chamber works selected for this study are *Night Thoughts* for flute, cello and piano, *Romance and Dance* for violin and piano, and *Tibetan Tunes* for violin, cello and piano, all composed between 1995 and 2007. When listening to Chen Yi’s music, one will hear musical influences from both the East and the West. Important Chinese elements found in Chen Yi’s music include a variety of tonal qualities, timbres and

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rhythms, an application of various embellishments of notes and the clear articulation of phrases, a touch of pentatonic sound mixed within melodies and harmonies, and a vivid expression of images or emotions. Influences from traditions of Tang poetry (A.D. 618-907) and storytelling can be heard in her energetic, festive rhythms, and in her lyrical treatment of melody. Two of the philosophical concepts reflected in her music are Buddhism and Taoism. The spiritual quality and serenity heard in Chen Yi’s music are influenced by similar concepts in Buddhism, and the concept of continuous change and the beauty of nature sounds - inherent in Chen Yi’s music – are ideas found in Taoism.

**Purpose**

Through the process of examining the amalgamation of Eastern and Western elements in Chen Yi’s compositions, analytically and aesthetically, the author hopes to assist performers in understanding the spirit of her work and the Chinese cultural aesthetics underlying her musical notation, in order that they may more meaningfully interpret her music in performance. Moreover, the author hopes to encourage more musicians and audiences to listen to, better appreciate, and perform the music of contemporary Chinese composers.

The goal of this doctoral essay is to provide performance suggestions for three selected chamber music works composed by Chen Yi, taking into consideration those aspects perceived to be most significant to her work. The research covers Chen Yi’s educational background and life experience, the relevant influence of philosophy and religion, Chinese aesthetic aspects, instrumental effects, programmatic tendencies, folk music usage and atmosphere. Following an introduction featuring biographical
information, the author will present an analysis of the music and performance aspects of the music, including the way in which knowledge of aspects of Chinese aesthetics and philosophy affect performance. The works examined in this study were selected from Chen Yi’s body of work for two primary reasons. First of all, piano trios and duets are two of the most prevalent forms of the piano chamber music literature. Secondly, there are very few existing sources devoted to Chen Yi’s piano chamber music works. The bibliography reveals several useful sources regarding her solo instrument and large ensemble works; however, there is a distinct lack of primary and secondary sources that discuss her piano trio and duet works.

The author will endeavor to discover what Chen Yi wishes to express through her compositions, musically, emotionally and intellectually. This undertaking is especially provocative when one considers the experience of hardship and pain she endured in her childhood during the Great Cultural Revolution. Apparently, she did not hold on to the grief or anger from those years; rather, she transformed those life experiences into music which is beautiful and approachable.

**Motivation for the Study**

Chen Yi’s music interests this author for many reasons, primarily for the exchange of Chinese and Western ideas, the influence of philosophy and religion, the programmatic element, the use of folk music, and the delicately-textured atmospheric quality of her compositions. Many attempts have been made by Chinese composers to interweave Chinese musical traditions and contemporary compositional techniques.
Among these many works, Chen Yi’s music, although not the most complex, is colorful, kinetic and sophisticated music, full of imagination and energy. Chen Yi’s compositions are unique, combining elements of traditional Chinese music with Debussy’s impressionistic palette and George Crumb’s post-impressionistic modernism. Her music also exhibits a Bartokian folksy style, and she loves to tell stories, often incorporating programmatic references.

The three pieces that are the subject of this study were composed originally for Western instruments, and demonstrate Chen Yi’s effort to achieve Chinese sounds and timbres through the use of Western instruments. Performers must use different techniques and special effects to imitate the intended sounds as closely as possible.

There are few resources about Chen Yi’s chamber music whether performances, recordings or research papers. Therefore, there is a need to document and describe the influences in Chen Yi’s chamber music works, such as original Chinese folk music melodies, Chinese theatrical music as well as traditional Chinese instruments and underlying extra-musical ideas that Chen Yi used as references in some of her compositions.

Although music of the East sounds substantially different from music of Western heritage when folk music materials and instruments are involved, there are nonetheless certain similarities. Tonal inflection, referring to varying the pitch of a specific note, is used both in Chinese music and in certain types of Western music. For example, in jazz, bending a pitch within a range of less than the interval of a minor second is often heard. The function of playing blues scales and blues-inflected notes add color and emotion to
the music. Tonal inflection can also be heard in some types of Jewish music and Middle-Eastern music.

As stated earlier, a noteworthy characteristic of Chen Yi’s music is the manner in which she interweaves Chinese tradition and contemporary compositional techniques into her works. Chen Yi’s approach to timbre, harmony, rhythm, Chinese folk melodies, and cross-cultural fusion, and her application of Chinese aesthetic performance techniques to Western instruments, combine to make her compositions sound both Chinese and attractively accessible to Western listeners.

During the 1920s and 1930s, many Western-trained Chinese composers tried to create a synthetic style by combining Western harmony and Chinese melody; even though most were recognized in China, they were largely ignored in the West. This failure to gain recognition in the West was perhaps due to their failure to discover fundamental principles that connect musical, visual, and literary arts.⁴

In the viewpoint of this author, Chen Yi has discovered and embodied in her music the fundamental principles referred to by Chou Wen-Chung. This essay will illustrate that by the end of twentieth century her music had overcome this failure of recognition.

Delimitations

Chen Yi has written forty compositions for chamber ensembles, eighteen of which are chamber works with piano. This essay will be limited to three selected piano chamber works. The first two works are *Romance of Hsiao and Ch’ in and Dance* for Violin and Piano, composed from 1995-98, and *Night Thoughts* for Flute, Cello and Piano, composed in 2004. These two works were selected for their demonstration of Chen Yi’s blending of Chinese cultural ideas and materials with Western tradition and Western instruments. The third selected work is *Tibetan Tunes* for Violin, Cello and Piano, which is based on two Tibetan folk tunes, composed in 2007. This work reflects a mixture of Buddhism with Tibetan and Chinese cultural elements, as well as Chen Yi’s compositional philosophy of cross-cultural fusion.

Chen Yi primarily composes programmatic music, in keeping with the Chinese program music tradition. The descriptive titles of these works give audiences and performers a basic idea about the music. However, without an understanding of Chinese culture, Chinese philosophy or Chinese customs, one may not be able to fully appreciate the music. This essay will briefly illustrate the ideas, the history and the cultural background related to these titles.
Chapter 2

BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

Chen Yi, born on April 4, 1953, was raised in Guangzhou, China, in a family of intellectuals. At that time, during the first half of the twentieth century, Western musical culture was popular among the Chinese middle class.\(^5\) Her music study began early, at age three. She was influenced by the piano and violin music of Western composers, and was introduced to traditional Chinese music as well. In her interview with John de Clef Piñeiro, she recalled the important influence of Chinese musical culture:

…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…\(^6\)

Chen Yi’s life has been influenced by her native culture, which she perceives as part of her own self-identity, and all of which is reflected in her musical compositions. However, in her teen years, the Great Cultural Revolution movement occurred and drastically changed her life. She was separated from her family, and had to perform forced labor in the Chinese countryside. The Cultural Revolution began in 1966, during which time Chinese intellectuals and people who had been exposed to Western culture became targets for relocation and hard labor in the countryside, and for public criticism. Undoubtedly, what she endured during this separation period contributed to the emotional

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and intellectual experiences that would become an integral part of her personality, her character and certainly, her music.

During the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), all works of music, art and literature were banned and artistic works were created only to promote the Communist ideology. Intellectuals, and anything ancient, Western, or characteristic of the social middle class were targets of the revolutionary movement. While millions of young Chinese, including Chen Yi, were sent to rural areas to learn from the peasants, those young Chinese who had learned to play Western instruments found a way to extend their talents and skills. They joined folk music ensembles, and served as members of performance groups, such as song-and-dance troupes.

After the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, Chen Yi returned to school and was accepted at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, following a competitive application process. She continued her musical studies and decided to major in composition. She spoke about her choice to become a composition student in an interview with John de Clef Piñeiro:

I chose composition because it had been my dream. And since making that decision, I have taken composition seriously as my profession, though I must admit that it is still a mysterious realm for me to explore.


9 John de Clef Piñeiro, “An Interview with Chen Yi.”
During her studies at the Central Conservatory, she received recognition and won several prizes for her solo concertos, chamber ensemble works, and choral and orchestral works. In 1986, she was admitted to study composition with Chou Wen-Chung and with composers such as Mario Davidovsky at Columbia University. After Chen Yi moved to the United States to study with Chou Wen-Chung, she began experimenting with tone color and with various combinations of Eastern and Western instruments in an ensemble. For example, Song in Winter (1993) is written for harpsichord, di and zheng. Di, also known as the dizi, is a Chinese transverse flute made of bamboo, and zheng, known as the guzheng, is a twenty-one stringed, plucked instrument made of wood, similar to the Western zither.10

The most important composer and professor to influence Chen Yi has been Chou Wen-Chung (b. 1923), a Chinese-born American composer. He chaired the Music Division of the School of the Arts at Columbia University from 1969 to 1989, and was founder and director of The Center for U.S.-China Arts Exchange at Columbia University, an agency for the promotion of cultural understanding between both cultures, founded in 1978.11 Chou cared about his homeland very much, and in 1977, when the higher education system resumed in China after the end of the Cultural Revolution, he brought books, scores and recordings of American music with him on a visit to the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, and gave lectures there. Later, many young Chinese composers came to study with him at Columbia University, and they were

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10 Lau, 41-55.
11 Chang, 40.
strongly influenced by his teaching of Chinese philosophy, culture, music, art forms such as poetry, calligraphy and painting, and Western contemporary music.

Chen Yi earned her doctorate in 1993 with a piano concerto as her doctoral project.\textsuperscript{12} Since then she has been a prolific composer, producing various compositions for band and wind ensemble, chamber ensemble, instrumental solo, and orchestra, as well as vocal and choral works. In addition to increasing performances of her works, Chen Yi has received a number of prestigious awards and commissions. She is presently a professor of composition at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Dance.

In Chen Yi’s view, a composition reflects a composer’s cultural and psychological makeup.\textsuperscript{13} Similarly, John Vinton says, in explaining Chinese music:

…a composer’s studies in both Western origin and non-Western origin musical cultures will influence one’s own techniques and aesthetics.\textsuperscript{14}

Chen Yi stated her opinion regarding a composer’s cultural responsibility:

…in my music there is Chinese blood, Chinese philosophy and customs. However, music is a universal language. Although I have studied Western music extensively and deeply since my childhood, and I write for all available instruments and voices, I think that my


\textsuperscript{13}John de Clef Piñeiro, “An Interview with Chen Yi.”

musical language is a unique combination and a natural hybrid of all influences from my background…

Among the prestigious awards and commissions that Chen Yi has received are fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1994, the Guggenheim Foundation in 1996, and the Lieberson Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1996. She was awarded the Lili Boulanger Award from the National Women Composers Resource Center in 1993, and the Adventurous Programming and Concert Music awards from ASCAP in 1999 and 2001. Many acclaimed foundations, ensembles and orchestras in China, Germany, Singapore and the United States have commissioned works from her and offered her grants, including The Rockefeller Foundation, The New York Philharmonic Orchestra, The Metropolitan Wind Symphony, The Women’s Philharmonic, Chanticleer, The Peninsula Women’s Chorus, and the Chicago A Cappella Choir. She served as composer-in-residence for the Women’s Philharmonic, for the male chorus, Chanticleer, and for the Aptos Creative Arts Program, all in San Francisco, from 1993-96. She served on the Composer Advisory Board of the American Composers Orchestra, and served on the Board of Directors of Meet the Composer, Chamber Music America and the International Alliance for Women in Music. Moreover, she has been a co-editor of Music From China Newsletter, an English and Chinese bilingual publication introducing traditional and contemporary Chinese music to musical scholars and the broader musical community.

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15 John de Clef Piñeiro, “An Interview with Chen Yi.”

Chapter 3

CHEN YI’S COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

Influences

The most distinguishing characteristic of Chen Yi’s music is her ability to blend authentic Eastern elements with Western compositional techniques and instruments. The Eastern influences that pertain directly to the three pieces investigated in the study are derived from the areas of aesthetics, philosophy, religion, Chinese instruments, programmatic music and folk music. Each of these subjects dates back hundreds, or even thousands of years and is still integral to Chinese artistic culture. Many programmatic and highly atmospheric aspects of Chen Yi’s works are inspired by Eastern influences. The specific aspects of aesthetics and philosophy in her works derive from the ancient tradition of the Chinese literati, especially poetry, as well as aspects of Confucianism and Taoism. Religion refers to the influences of Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism. Ancient Chinese and Tibetan instruments, as well as folk tunes, play a substantial role in Chen Yi’s compositional output, and are described and discussed in this chapter as well. The presence of specific programmatic and atmospheric influences are also identified.

The Influence of the Chinese Literati and Philosophy

Chinese musical art is not limited to abstract musical expression, but often includes references to other art forms such as literature, painting, poetry, martial arts and philosophy, among others. Conversely, expressions of and discussions about other art
forms also have musical references. This concept can be traced back to the literati tradition in China. Chou Wen-Chung states that his view of aesthetics and philosophy involves traditional Chinese art forms. This statement below, reflects one of the important concepts in ancient Chinese culture, one which is influential in his teachings regarding the way in which music affects emotions:

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.\(^\text{17}\)

In Chinese tradition, literati (men of letters) were models of society, and people looked up to them with great respect. They were taught in the system of Confucianism, mastering the four arts of calligraphy, painting, \(ch\,\text{'in}\) playing (a Chinese musical instrument) and chess playing. Edward Ho describes, in his work *Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour*:

…Chinese literati music cannot be studied properly without relating it to other art-forms, for it involves extramusical elements and is a social phenomenon that embraces other artistic activities such as poetry, literature, painting and calligraphy.\(^\text{18}\)

The origin of the art of Chinese calligraphy can be dated back to the Bronze Age as the earliest form of Chinese characters which were carved on oracle bones. Calligraphy played an important role in Confucius’ ideal of teaching and had a social function in the circle of literati. It was during the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) that the


\(^{18}\) Edward Ho, “Aesthetic Considerations in Understanding Chinese Literati Musical Behaviour,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 6:1, (May 2008): 35-49. [http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/remf19/6/1#.U1A2WV7yvZs](http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/remf19/6/1#.U1A2WV7yvZs) or [http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09681229708567260#.U1A0J17yvZs](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09681229708567260#.U1A0J17yvZs)
art of calligraphy matured and flourished. This art form has continued to develop and evolve throughout Chinese history.\(^\text{19}\)

\[\text{… calligraphy exhibits the essential elements of beauty of balance, proportion, variety, continuity, contrast, movement, change and harmony through different shapes and line formations.}\(^\text{20}\)

The aesthetic foci of brush strokes, structure of characters and balance of space all reflect the degree of technical skill and the inner spiritual quality of the artist.\(^\text{21}\)

Calligraphy is often accompanied by painting, but musical compositions inspired by calligraphy are more unusual. Two contemporary works are Chou Wen-Chung’s *Cursive* and Chen Yi’s *Dance*.

Calligraphy is also related to dance for it conveys the beauty of the body and movement. The movement of completing each brushstroke is connected smoothly from the first stroke or dot until the last. The momentum of continuity is a reflection of calligraphers’ artistry and aesthetic beauty. Chen Yi applies this idea in the rhythmic development of her composition *Dance*\(^\text{22}\).

The great philosopher of ancient China, Confucius (551-479 B.C.), approached music in a humanistic way and believed that good music affects mankind positively. Confucianism deals mainly with the needs of the social order, and establishes the relevance of music to society. From Confucius’ point of view, learned people, or literati, observed and learned from art forms such as calligraphy, painting, and dance.


\(^{21}\) Little, 374-375.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.,
must practice music and play instruments in order to achieve self-cultivation of virtue and moral perfection. In the book, *Yue Ji*, Confucius’ concept of education began with the study of poetry and ceremonies and finished with the study and practice of music. He also discussed the connection between humanity and nature:

> Music is an echo of the harmony between heaven and earth…From that harmony all things receive their being…Let there be an intelligent understanding of the nature and interaction of heaven and earth, and there will be the ability to practice well both ceremonies and music.

In Confucius’s philosophy, people’s behaviors will be regulated and emotions guided through the influence of music. This aspect is similar to Buddhism’s view of music. When music is moderate, people become harmonious. When music is aggressive, it will turn people’s behavior mean and disgraceful. The instrument, *ch‘in* is associated with the Confucian philosophy and is a means for self-expression and connection with nature. People who practice Confucius’ teaching are often skilled *ch‘in* players. Confucius himself was a great *ch‘in* player.

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**Chen Yi’s Application of the Chinese Literati and Philosophy**

Chen Yi’s *Night Thoughts* incorporates the Chinese traditional aesthetic concepts of literati music, along with Taoism philosophy. The piece creates a ghostly and

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melancholy mood, and is based on an eponymous poem written by one of China’s most famous poets, Li Po (Li Bai), from the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618-907).

The poem is a five-character-quatrain, and is very popular due to its sensitive character and expressiveness. In the anthology of 300 Tang Poems, thirty-four of Li Po’s poems were included. There are two significant reasons for Chen Yi’s use of a Tang poem in Night Thoughts. First, the art form represents one of China’s golden periods in its intellectual development. Second, Li Po’s poetry represents a style of romanticism combined with Confucianism and Taoism.

Chinese poetry became a well-established literary form and was a social phenomenon of the literate classes during the Tang dynasty. Poets like Li Po, as well as all elite educated men and women of the Tang dynasty, were required to master this art form. The poetry of the Tang dynasty is highly regulated, refined, sophisticated and beautiful. Visually, the poems look perfect in length with characters that are balanced and parallel. Tonally, the characters and phrases rhyme beautifully. Chen Yi’s work, Night Thoughts, transforms the beauty of this Tang poem into balanced phrases and rhythmic and melodic flow that emulates the rhymes in the poem. It creates a true “musical visualization” of the sounds of night. The beauty of this Tang poem lies in its capability to express deep emotions within a limited number of characters, its relations to other art forms by using metaphors, following the proper order of words while maintaining a balance of tones, and finally, its feeling of spontaneity. Chen Yi’s Night Thoughts transforms the inner thoughts embedded in the poem into expressive musical language and articulates what was intently on the poet’s mind through her own musical language. In the “Great Preface” to Shijing, also known as “The Book of Songs”, 
speaking in pitches is recommended to express thoughts in more complex, emotional situations.\textsuperscript{25} The emperor of the golden age of antiquity, Shun (2255-2206 B.C.), told his music minister: “Poetry is the expression of earnest thought; singing is the prolonged utterance of that expression...”\textsuperscript{26}

When words are not enough, singing is used to express the next degree of more emotionally stirred feelings.\textsuperscript{27}

Chen Yi herself includes a copy of the poem and her own translation of the poem in the prefatory material of the printed music. Her translation of \textit{Night Thoughts} follows:

\begin{quote}
On couch bright moon shone, \\
Thought frost on the ground, \\
Raised head facing bright moon, \\
Lowered head dreaming of home.
\end{quote}

Translation by Chen Yi.\textsuperscript{28}

The reason that Chen Yi chose \textit{Night Thoughts} as the inspiration for her piece of the same title was not only due to its popularity but also because of its association with people and nature. Unlike the traditional role of literature, which emphasized how people


\textsuperscript{28} Chen Yi. \textit{Night Thoughts}. (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Co.,2004), i.
should behave, and how society and the political system should operate, the poetry of the Tang dynasty deals with the relationship of humans to their surroundings. Tang *shi* (poems) usually project vivid images with metaphors; scenes of nature, a historical event, a legend, a scenic location or a story. This close connection with nature is the equivalent of the ideas found in Chinese instrumental program music. The specific characteristics of Taoism in *Night Thoughts* are the imitation of sounds of nature and the use of silence as part of the music.

**The Influence of Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism**

The philosophy of Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism is a broad and complex subject which involves different traditions and ethnic groups. The author will introduce the origin and development of Buddhism briefly in order to address a number of philosophical ideas relevant to this project.

Tibetan Buddhism is known for its close relationship to Chinese Buddhism. Buddhism originated in India and gradually spread to neighboring countries such as China, Korea, Japan, Thailand, Tibet and Mongolia. As the religion confronted new ethnic groups and adapted a variety of influences, Buddhism gradually developed into a religion of great diversity in traditions. However, the core structure of Buddhism remains the same. The history of Buddhism in Tibet can be traced back to the third century C.E. when Indian Buddhism and Tantrism first reached Tibet. Later, Chinese Buddhism was

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30 J. Lawrence Witzleben, 473.
introduced to Tibet from China by a Tibetan emperor during the seventh century.\textsuperscript{31} Buddhism absorbed Tibetan regional traditions and customs, and became popularly accepted and well respected by the people of Tibet. Among the many Buddhist teachings, the primary goal for all practitioners is to attain Buddhahood and to become enlightened and awakened to one’s true nature. There are many different levels of spirituality and different levels of tests for attaining the quality of ultimate spirituality. The journey to attain Buddhahood is full of difficulties. Although this journey can be very challenging, the reward of becoming fully liberated and mindful is great.\textsuperscript{32} Buddhism became well accepted by the Chinese as it addresses some questions that are not answered by Confucianism.

The ultimate goal for all practitioners of Buddhism is the liberation from suffering. One who fully understands life will awaken and concentrate on cultivating inner virtue. Through gaining wisdom and understanding, deepening insight, and meditating on the heart, one will become enlightened and attain Buddhahood.\textsuperscript{33}

Music is part of the Buddhist liturgy, in the form of prayers, hymns and mantras. Music in Buddhism is based on the concept of creating sounds that are associated with religious faith and devotion. Traditional Buddhist literature avoids using music for


sensory satisfaction. Its purpose is to enhance the progress towards spiritual enlightenment.

There are two types of Chinese Buddhist music, reciting and singing. Reciting is the recitation of texts. It is characterized by syllabic phrases and short patterns which resemble speech. Singing is more tuneful with obvious melodic contour. There are long melodic lines with many notes in the style of melismas.

The religious music of Tibetan Buddhism is used in praising the *sutras*, also called chanting and instrumental music. The purpose of this music is to help performers transcend the everyday world and find the path to spiritual enlightenment. Chanting music is important in the religious music of Tibet, and is often sung as a choral ensemble without accompaniment or with instrumental accompaniment. This kind of music is often related to the content and image of the *sutra* texts. Instruments are used to create sounds that represent nature and natural phenomena such as the sky and mountains. The sound of the chanting is very loud, deep and low. The fundamental tone is so low that it can reach two octaves below middle C. The melodies are specific as to speed and rhythm, and tonal rises and falls, in order to suit the chanting of *sutra* texts.

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34 J. Lawrence Witzleben, 327-328

35 J. Lawrence Witzleben, 328.


37 *Tibetan Mysteries*, performed by Monks of the Dip Tse Chok Ling Monastery, Interra Records, SOW 90182, 1999, 1 compact disc.

38 J. Lawrence Witzleben, 480.
Chen Yi’s Application of Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism

The first movement of Tibetan Tunes was inspired by a Buddhist custom, but it is not religious or ceremonial music. The music has a spiritual quality and is intended to showcase performers’ virtuosity and spiritual understanding. The opening of the first movement of Tibetan Tunes begins with violin overtones. These long-duration overtones are reminiscent of a type of Tibetan Buddhist chanting, also known as overtone singing. Tibetan overtone singing features a deep, low, fundamental pitch, plus one of its natural harmonic partials. People in central Asia and Tibetan Buddhist monks have practiced this type of overtone singing and chanting for centuries. This type of singing was originally conceived by people in these areas in reaction to natural sounds in their living environment, such as running water and whistling winds. Through chanting, one is able to transcend the duality of body and mind and to experience a deeper state of being.

Chen Yi’s Tibetan Tunes deals with a goddess in Tibetan Buddhism, and with the composer’s own cultural background in Chinese Buddhism. The title of the first movement of Tibetan Tunes, Du Mu, is a Chinese translation of the Tibetan Tara, denoting a religious motherly figure. As a result of the close relationship between Chinese Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism, several names of Buddhas and Buddhisattvas (the female form of Buddhas) can be seen in either or both Buddhist texts. In the Tibetan language, Tara has many meanings, the mostly commonly used of which are “eye” and

“liberation.” In the Chinese language, “Mu” means mother and “Du” means liberation or liberating.40

The Influence of Traditional Chinese and Tibetan Instruments

Chinese instruments are classified according to the principal materials from which they are made, which give Chinese instruments their unique tone color and timbre. The classification system is called the bayin “eight sounds” system. The eight categories are metal, stone, silk, bamboo, gourd, earth, skin and wood.41 A number of traditional instruments are influential in Chen Yi’s works. These instruments, as well as their cultural significance and their use in traditional Eastern musical settings, are described below.

The *dizi* is a Chinese wind instrument, held sideways like the Western flute. The *dizi* has a similar structure to the Western flute, but has six finger holes, an embouchure, a special membrane hole and two holes in the end of the instrument to correct the pitch. There are many types and sizes of *dizi* and each one of them features a distinct sound. The size alters the sound and the key of the instrument itself. The short *dizi*, with a crisp and bright sound, is popular in northern China while the longer-bodied *dizi*, with a mellow and lyrical tone, is popular in southern China. In addition to different sizes, the *dizi* is also made from different materials. Traditionally, the *dizi* is made of bamboo which gives the instrument its characteristic mellow, soft and buzzing sound. Some of


the *dizi* use membrane to further resonate and amplify the sound while some do not. The *dizi* is one of the principal Chinese musical instruments and is popularly played in many kinds of Chinese folk music and Chinese opera. The *dizi* is capable of expressing a variety of emotions and *dizi* players are expected to express varying emotions by changing the sound quality, or timbre. They are also expected to imitate the human voice, animals, and essentially, all of nature. Embellishment and ornamentation of the melody also play an important role in *dizi* performance technique.

The *dizi* is found in the “bamboo” category, according to the Chinese system of instrument classification. Although jade *dizi* are not uncommon, the instrument is usually made of bamboo, which gives the *dizi* its mellow sound quality.

Besides its mellow tone quality, the *dizi* has a distinctive timbre, created by the vibration of the air against a membrane. The membrane vibrates when air travels into the pipe, producing rich harmonics and a buzzy timbre. The *dizi* does not have a big sound like the Western flute. This resonating effect is one factor that makes the timbre and sound in Chinese music differ from that of Western music. The frequent changes of timbre and the roughness of the *dizi* sound are characteristic of traditional Chinese *dizi* music.

Another traditional Chinese instrument made of bamboo is the *hsiao*, which resembles the Western clarinet. The *hsiao*, also in the bamboo category, can be traced back to ancient times. It looks like a vertical flute and is an end-blown instrument. The instrument is most often made of bamboo although jade is also used to make the modern
type of *hsiao*, invented during the Han period (206 BC-220 AD).\(^{42}\) The bottom of the instrument is open but the top is closed due to the natural growth of the bamboo. It is called an end-blown flute as the air splits directly on the mouthpiece when the instrument is played, similar to one blowing air into an empty bottle to create a sound.

The *hsiao*, an instrument popular among the elite class, is known for its unique, mellow tone quality and its resemblance to the human voice. The *hsiao* has traditionally represented the call of the phoenix and Confucius’ teaching of the humanistic spirit. According to ancient legends, the phoenix, a mystical animal, only appears when the country and its people are in harmony. Pipes made of bamboo were used to create the call of the sacred animal-like bird. When Confucius first heard the sound of the *hsiao*, he was so moved that his mind became calm and his earthly desires were taken away.\(^{43}\) These characteristics make the *hsiao* suitable to play with the *ch’in*, a fretless Chinese zither,\(^ {44}\) which is also a quiet instrument associated with the spirit of humanity.

Below, the use of the *ch’in*, an instrument in the silk category, is described:

> In the music of temple and palace the melodies were sung, supported in unison by flutes...the fast moving zig-zag sequences of zither sounds provided notes which, with the exception of the first note of each four-note (zig-zag) pattern, differed so distinctly from the slow flowing melodic line that the impression of accompaniment became clearly noticeable. The sounds of the zithers were supported by the notes of the mouth-organs...\(^ {45}\)

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The sound of the ch’in is melancholy, soft and restrained, and as a plucked-string instrument, ch’in players produce various articulations, through plucking and vibrato with different fingerings, and also apply various techniques to sustain long passages of notes. Although the modern ch’in has metal strings to increase its volume, silk strings are also still used to preserve authenticity. The ch’in has long been associated with an atmosphere of spiritual enlightenment and music of programmatic meanings. Confucius’ teaching included the ch’in as a tool for learned and philosophical men and women’s self-cultivation and spiritual enlightenment. The ch’in is often employed as an accompanimental instrument during performances of ceremonial music for its beautiful tone and cultural implications.

The ch’in, in Chinese culture, a symbol of excellent moral and ethical qualities, justice and graciousness, has a unique arrow-like appearance which was designed to imitate a virtual, ancient animal, the phoenix, and is made to resemble the animal’s head, neck, shoulder, waist, tail and legs. The phoenix, described as a bird-like creature, with some body parts of a snake and a fish, is one of the four Chinese mythical animals. Its connection with the ch’in adds to the instrument’s significance in Chinese culture by giving it a status reserved for the most revered attributes. As the dragon is a symbol of masculinity and the emperor, the phoenix - the feminine counterpart of the dragon -

symbolizes the empress, female energy and beauty. From these perspectives, the *ch’in* is perceived as an instrument with feminine characteristics in its sound.\(^47\)

While the *ch’in* has a cultivated place in Chinese civilization, the *erhu* and the *jinghu* are popularly accepted folk instruments from the *huqin* family. The word *huqin* is a general term for Chinese bowed string instruments or Chinese fiddles, most of which have two strings.\(^48\) The *erhu* and *jinghu*, both in the “silk” category, share similar features but with varying shapes, sizes and distinctive sounds. The *erhu*, a two-stringed bowed instrument, has a mellow, delicate and expressive, almost yearning, human-voice-like sound. The *erhu* is also known as the “Chinese violin”; however, unlike the Western violin, it is placed on the lap and held vertically by its long neck. The *jinghu* is smaller in size, has a brighter tone color than the *erhu*, and is the principal melodic instrument used to accompany singers in the Beijing opera.

The characteristic sound of the *erhu* comes from the construction and materials of the instrument: a resonator box made of wood and covered by python skin, and a very short distance between the two strings. The instrument consists of a long, vertical round neck with two tuning pegs at the top end, and a small resonator box, at the bottom end. The vibration through the animal skin produces the characteristic sound of the *erhu*. The *jinghu* is different in that its neck and resonator box are constructed of bamboo.\(^49\)

\(^{47}\) Reed Andrew Criddle, 44–70.


Since the *erhu* has no fingerboard below the strings, the pressure from the finger on the strings is one of the principal techniques of *erhu* playing. With no fingerboard or frets, the *erhu* player creates sound by touching the strings with the fingertips at different positions and by sliding up and down along the strings. This feature of the instrument yields the freedom of an enriched variety of pitch inflections and allows the *erhu* to imitate the human voice and nature sounds. The left hand technique is similar to that of most Western stringed instruments and includes techniques such as sliding, vibrato and bending pitches. The strings are tuned to the pitches d and a, an interval of a perfect fifth. The bow, made of a hardwood stick and horsehair, is set between the two strings, unlike the Western violin’s bow which is held over the strings and separated from the instrument itself. These features allow the player to change strings more easily and to be able to play melodic lines more smoothly.

Due to the *erhu*’s expressive human-like tone quality, it is used as a solo instrument, both with and without accompaniment. Although the instrument seems simplistic, virtuosic performance techniques have been developed for playing it. The *erhu*’s range of repertoire includes music for weddings and funerals, transcriptions of folk songs, operas, dramas and other types of instrumental music. In addition to unaccompanied solo *erhu* music, there is repertoire for the *erhu* in combination with various types of traditional Chinese instruments, as well as with Western piano and orchestra.\(^50\)

Tibet, as part of its rich history of music, has a variety of its own wind, stringed and percussion instruments. The *xiongling*, also known as the *gzhung-gling*, is a wind instrument, a type of end-blown flute made of wood or bamboo. This instrument shares similar features with the recorder, such as the mouthpiece. The Tibetan bamboo flute is similar to the Chinese *dizi*, also made of bamboo and held sideways.

The *zhamunie* (sometimes spelled as *Sgra-snyan*, meaning “pleasant sound”), also known as *dramyin* or *dramyen*, is a traditional plucked string instrument from regions around the Himalayas, and was popularly used in Tibet. This wooden instrument, often colorfully painted, has a hollow resonator covered with an animal skin, a long neck without frets and a carved animal head (horse or dragon) at the top of the neck. Although this lute-like instrument comes in different sizes, in general, it has a shape like violin with three to seven strings and can be played with a plectrum or be finger-plucked, similar to the guitar. This instrument is used in folk music to accompany dances and songs.

**Chen Yi’s Application of Traditional Chinese and Tibetan Instruments**

The *dizi* and the *hsiao* are the inspirational instruments in Chen Yi’s composition *Night Thoughts*. Chen Yi uses the Western flute to depict the sound and timbre of the

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51 J. Lawrence Witzleben, 472-478.


dizi and hsiao by applying various twentieth-century techniques such as tremolos, trilling glissandos and flutter-tongue (See Examples #). The flute imitates the bright and high-pitched sounds of the dizi as well as the mellow and lyrical quality of the hsiao (See Examples).

Example 3.1. Chen Yi, Night Thoughts, mm.13-14. Passage with flutter-tongue.

Example 3.2. Chen Yi, Night Thoughts, mm.33. Passage with trilling glissado.

Example 3.3. Chen Yi, Night Thoughts, mm. 1-4. Passage of the bright and high-pitched dizi sound)
Example 3.4. ChenYi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 79-81. Passage of the mellow medium register *hsiao* sound

![Flute Example](image)

The composer also uses the flute to transmit the programmatic tradition of the two traditional bamboo instruments. In addition to the quasi-lyrical melodic lines, characteristic gestures and fragments in the flute part mimic the sounds of nature, describing the mood and scene of the music. The pure tone color of the Western flute transmits the human singing quality in the lyrical lines in the composition. Considering the unique timbre and performance techniques of the traditional instruments, Chen Yi creates the sounds and the silence of the night, such as animal noises and the breeze, as well as the quiet and mysterious mood of the poem, through combinations of the instruments of the flute, cello and piano (Example 3.5-3.8).


![Example 3.5](image)
Example 3.6. Chen Yi, Night Thoughts, mm. 27-28. Breeze in the night.

Example 3.7. Chen Yi, Night Thoughts, mm. 1-4. Mysterious mood.

Example 3.8. Chen Yi, Night Thoughts, mm. 18-20. Mysterious mood.

The first movement of Romance and Dance, Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in is written for Western musical instruments reproducing the style and sound of the two traditional Chinese instruments, the hsiao and the ch’in. Those two instruments are often
played together as they are compatible in terms of tone color and volume. The hsiao and ch’in compliment each other and produce balanced sonorities as well as well-blended timbres. In Chen Yi’s Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in, she uses the Western instrument, violin, to transform into the lyrical role of the hsiao (Example 3.9). Lyrical melodic lines with gentle contours are featured in this movement.

Example 3.9. Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in” mm. 1-6. Passage of lyrical quality.

In Chen Yi’s Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in, the piano, a Western instrument, is used to depict the ch’in, a traditional Chinese instrument, and its symbolic representation of nature. Ascending sixteenth-note figures in the piano part resemble the cross-string playing of the ch’in (Example 3.10). Chen Yi’s use of the piano to resemble the traditional ch’in through careful articulation markings goes far beyond the mere sound of the instrument to the cultural meaning and metaphoric image of this ancient Chinese instrument. Her careful markings of articulation, dynamics and techniques resemble ancient ch’in scores in which musical details such as how to vibrate the string, which string to be played and stopped, glissando, were written in either words or symbols.54 (Figures 3.1, 3.2 and Example 3.11, 3.12).

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Example 3.10. Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in” mm. 43-46.

Figure 3.1 Chinese prose and symbolic illustrations of a right-hand finger movement.  

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55 Joys H. Y. Cheung, King Chung Wong, ed., *Reading Chinese Music and Beyond*, Chinese Civilisation Centre (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong, 2010), 13.
Figure 3.2 Example of the *qin* tablature and notation. Written in *jianzi pu* illustrating fingering, playing technique, how to vibrate the string and where to stop the string.

The significant cultural factor in the *Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in* is that the *ch’in* is a symbol of the Chinese humanistic spirit, an instrument which was played only by educated people. Chen Yi mimics both the writing and careful articulations of *ch’in* music in her score (Example 3.11 and 3.12).

Example 3.11 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “*Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in*” mm.11-12. Staccato and tenuto markings.

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Example 3.12 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in”, mm.1-3.

Legato marking.

Much of *ch’ in* music describes natural phenomena such as mountains, landscapes and birds flying, and also the transcendence of personal sadness and joy. Although these characteristics are not overtly evident in this piece, the *ch’ in* often serves as a medium for players to find balance between the inner and outer world (Figure 3.3).\(^{58}\)

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Figure 3.3 Intimate relationship between the *ch’ìn* player, listeners and nature.\textsuperscript{59}

“To educate someone, you should start with poems, emphasize ceremonies, and finish with music” - Confucius

Chen Yi’s works incorporate essential cultural elements from Chinese tradition such as philosophy, humanity, literature and arts, which are the values of traditional Chinese culture. Music was one of the four art forms, in addition to Chess, Calligraphy

and Mathematics, that were required of scholars and the aristocracy during imperial China. Moreover, music was one of the Six Arts, also including Rites, Archery, Charioteering, Calligraphy, and Mathematics, that, in Confucious’ philosophy of education, were essential and vital parts of a good education. The subject matter of Night Thoughts (an ancient, admired poem), Romance and Dance (a romantic exchange between traditional instruments) and Tibetan Tunes (tributes to an ancient goddess and a celebratory dance) embodies the pinnacle of these essential cultural elements of Chinese tradition. Additionally, the instruments that are transformed onto Western instruments in Chen Yi’s works carry cultural meanings within them. Traditionally, the dizi and hsiao have a wide range of repertoire and are played in various types of ensembles, both classical and folk. Important aspects of the ch’in are that it was the primary instrument for cultivating learned people, it was used in Confucius’ education system, and it has been rooted deeply in Chinese people’s minds and hearts. Through using the idiom of the ch’in, Chen Yi recognizes the important influence of Confucius, who was a distinguished ch’in musician.

Some Tibetan traditional folk music instruments which helped to inspire Chen Yi’s Tibetan Tunes are the xiongling, the zhāmunie, the bamboo flute and the fiddle erhu. Standard melodies, traditionally played by one or more of these instruments, are quoted or are the inspiration for the material in both movements of Tibetan Tunes.

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60 Kenneth J. DeWoskin, A Song for One or Two (Center for Chinese Studies The University of Michigan, 1982), 55-62.
The Influence of Chinese Programmatic Music

The programmatic tradition can be seen throughout the Chinese culture, especially in art forms such as painting, poetry and music. In program music, there is usually a descriptive title and occasionally a subtitle to relay the inspiration or content of the work which often will also suggest the mood of the work. A descriptive title may also at times influence a performer’s interpretation of a work. Program music of China is often written to imitate or represent elements of nature such as mountains or bird calls, or to describe a story or an event. The programmatic influence is evident in many areas of Chinese culture, especially in the well-known Peking (Beijing) Opera.

There are two types of musical works heard in Chinese operas: metrical melody and labeled melody. The latter was the model for Dance, the second movement of Romance and Dance. The labeled melody form (qupai or paizi) is a fixed tune in which the melodies are pre-existing and the text is adapted or created to fit the musical content.

Chen Yi’s Application of Programmatic Music

The titles of the three selected chamber music works for this project were carefully chosen to depict the content of the works and further, to suggest relationships between extra-musical ideas and the music itself. Each of these three titles, Night

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Thoughts, Romance And Dance, and Tibetan Tunes illustrates a literary idea, tells a story, paints a pictorial scene and evokes emotions.

Night Thoughts reflects the traditional Chinese literati spirit and depicts the substance of the original poem. The descriptive title evokes a vivid image and poetic atmosphere of the night. In choosing this philosophical yet personal poem as her inspiration, Chen Yi invites listeners to enjoy a pictorial and poetic aesthetic experience through her music (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 Chen Yi, Night Thoughts, original text of poem and Chen Yi’s translation.

In Romance and Dance, as the title suggests, each movement tells a love story. In addition, Chen Yi explains in the prefatory notes to the score that the two ancient instruments, hsiao and ch’in, are symbolic subjects of the first movement, while the energy of Chinese calligraphy and ancient women dancing are the underlying inspiration for the second movement.63

The programmatic material associated with the second movement, Dance, is taken from a popular story dating from ancient China. This legend/love story has been adapted by different art forms, including Chinese opera. The title of the opera, “Ba Wan Bie Ji”

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63 Chen Yi, Romance And Dance, King of Prussia (PA: Theodore Presser Co., 2001), i.
(霸王別姬), in the style of the Peking opera, is also known as “Farewell, My Concubine”. The story of this famous opera is about a tyrant, Xiang Yu, and his concubine, Consort Yu, also known as “Yu the Beauty” (202 BC).  

The title *Tibetan Tunes* suggests an ethnic character and folk atmosphere. By naming the first movement for a Buddhist goddess, it suggests a religious connotation and acknowledges the important role of religion in Tibetan people’s lives. The descriptive title and the Buddhisattva image evoke spiritual feelings, even before the listener hears a single sound of the piece. The name *du mu* inspires people’s beliefs of life and reminds people of the delight in life. On the other hand, ‘*dui xie*,’ the second movement, clearly depicts a festive atmosphere, with images of energetic singing and dancing. The title also acknowledges the role of music as a vehicle to express emotions and celebrate life.

**The Influence of Chinese and Tibetan folk music**

Chinese folk music culture is influenced by its large geographical territory with customs and traditions that vary greatly between provinces and cities. All the unique musical traditions as well as cultures of different regions and ethnic groups provide a rich resource, in addition to the main Han culture. One of many great values of folk music is that it is a record of common people’s lives and culture, and expresses feelings with various types of singing, dancing and narrating. The content of this music is enormously

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diverse and often tells stories or celebrates events. The *erhu* and *dizi* are the most common instruments used in folk music.

Folk materials that are relevant to this research include music of the Chinese Peking Opera. The Peking opera, among all regional operas, is the most well-known type of Chinese opera and is also known as *jingju*, meaning “national opera”. It originated in northern China during the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) as a creative exercise for the literati class, and later became popularly adopted in various provinces and regions. Each type of opera has its own particular style due to its geographical location and its particular regional culture and customs. Local folklore and stories, especially nationally-known legends and myths, comprise a rich resource for the music and its content. Many pre-existing melodies have specific titles and are called *qupai* or fixed titled tunes.  

Folk music and folk dance of Tibetan regions are used for entertainment and ceremonial occasions. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

“…folk dances are sometimes performed without the accompaniment of musical instruments, and the performances rely on singing and footwork to maintain the rhythm…The dance steps and body movement were performed according to a stylized routine, and the rhythmic beat was accented by a measured stamp of the foot.”  

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Chen Yi’s Application of Chinese and Tibetan Folk Music

Chen Yi’s deep appreciation for folk music originated during her childhood experience working in a labor camp in the countryside. Folk music is one of the old customs that were banned during the Cultural Revolution. She entertained peasants and soldiers by playing revolutionary songs and folk songs turned into revolutionary-style songs on her violin while living there. She recalls:

It was during that period that I found my roots, my motherland, and really grew to appreciate simple people on Earth. They speak my native language, which I soon discovered was directly connected to Chinese music…

During her studies at the Central Conservatory of Music, she went on research trips to collect folk materials from various regions of China and study them, much like Bartok and Kodaly did in Hungary. In the program notes from a New Music Festival at the University of Louisville in 2011, the composer recalls her experiences with folk music while studying at the Central Conservatory of Music:

…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…

Her view of Chinese folk music continues:

…folk songs are a mirror of people’s daily lives, their thoughts and sentiments, local customs and manners. They are sung in regional dialects and use the idioms of everyday

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speech with their particular intonations, accents and cadences. This correlation between speech and music distinguishes folk songs of one region from another…

Various materials and subjects appear in folk music. For example, the love story is one of the most common subjects found in folk music, especially in folk songs. In folk songs, the melodies are usually set in styles of parallel singing, call and response, and with contrast. The structure of folk songs can be divided into two-phrase structures, four-phrase structures, or five-phrase structures. Four-phrase structure is employed in Romance and Dance. Each of the four phrases has a specific role: introduction, continuation, mutation, and conclusion.

Chen Yi, in addition to directly quoting folk melodies, frequently draws ideas from Chinese folklore. For example, in the composition Romance and Dance, the first movement is an original creation with a southern-style melody and the symbolic instrumentation of hsiao and ch’in to represent characteristic and emotional subjects. The second movement, however, takes pitch materials from a fixed tune of the Peking Opera and portrays the art of Chinese calligraphy as well as folk dancing gestures. In the first movement, rather than simulating the erhu and dizi, she depicts the hsiao and ch’in; while in the second movement, she transmits the abstract subject of the dancing calligraphy and Chinese ancient women dancers to the huqin (erhu). Below are examples of the style of huqin playing from the beginning of Dance. The short bending line between the first two notes (B-E) indicates a quick slide upward to the pitch while the straight line between the two eighth notes (F#-D#) in measure 1 indicates a smoother slide. A passage of fast running sixteenth-notes is often characteristic of erhu playing.

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69 Notes to New Music Festival.
Those techniques are understood by erhu players as part of the performance practice which are also performance practices of the Western violin.


![Example 3.13](image)


![Example 3.14](image)

A similar concept can be seen in Chen Yi’s work, *Tibetan Tunes*, which is inspired by Tibetan folk music and dance. Tibetan common people have had a rich culture of music, especially a variety of folk singing and dance. The great amount of music of various types gives Tibet the name, “village of music.” Although her compositions are written under the influence of folk music, Chen Yi does not simply adapt specific melodic or rhythmic formulas from folk music. Rather, the composer endeavors to elicit the true spirit of the music of the people while imitating traditional instrumental sound on Western instruments. This observation is based on the sound files the composer shared with the author (Examples 3.15, 3.16, 3.17, 3.18, 3.19, 3.20, 3.21).

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71 J. Lawrence Witzleben, 471-474.
Example 3.15 The author’s transcription of folk melody in *Du Mu* and Chen Yi’s application.

Example 3.16 Chen Yi, *Tibetan Tunes*, “*Du Mu*”, mm. 1-6. Chen Yi’s application of the original tune.

The first movement “*Du Mu*” reflects common Tibetan peoples’ lives, and the influence of the Buddhist religion. The composer uses characteristic melodic material in *Du Mu*, taken directly from a religious folk song melody (Example above). Chen Yi’s second movement “*dui xie*” reflects common peoples’ lives through singing and dancing. This work is also inspired by a type of traditional Tibetan folk music of the same title, *dui xie*, which refers to a type of song-and-dance music. It is a performance of singing and dancing with instrumental accompaniment, which originated in western Tibet (Examples 19-21). 

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72 J. Lawrence Witzleben, 475-6.
Example 3.17 The author’s transcription of folk tune in *Dui Xie*.


Example 3.20 the author’s transcription of folk tune in *Dui Xie*. 
Example 3.21 Chen Yi, *Tibetan Tunes, “Dui Xie”,* mm. 11-14. Chen Yi’s application of the original melody of *dui xie.*

*Dui Xie* is a Tibetan word “stod gzhas” in Chinese, meaning “songs from western Tibet”, according to *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music.*

*Dui Xie* is a type of song-and-dance music for social functions, which originated in western Tibet, area surrounded by mountains. The word *Dui* means upper, referring to cities or regions near the source of the Yarlung Zangbo River where this civilization originated. *Xie* means song-and-dance, denoting that *Dui Xie* is a type of song-and-dance music.

Chen Yi’s music has been nourished from her native soil. She has transformed the spirit of Chinese folk songs into her own unique style of music written for Western instruments.

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73 J. Lawrence Witzleben, 472.

74 J. Lawrence Witzleben, 475-6.
Chapter 4

Night Thoughts

… my trio NIGHT THOUGHTS is a lyrical tone poem scored for flute, cello and piano…The inspiration for this music comes from the ancient Chinese poem NIGHT THOUGHTS, written by the great poet Li Bai, in the Tang Dynasty (618-907).  

On couch bright moon shone,
Thought frost on the ground,
Raised head facing bright moon,
Lowered head dreaming of home.

Translation by Chen Yi.  

“As a teenager during the Cultural Revolution in China some thirty years ago, I was sent to the countryside for forced labor work. It was the first time in my life that I realized the importance of education, civilization, and an individual’s value. I often recited ancient Chinese poems in my heart during the dark period, to treasure the lost, to question society, and to yearn for a new future.”

The above statement appears in Chen Yi’s program notes for Night Thoughts, for a performance at the New Music Festival at Louisville University, in 2011.

75 Chen Yi, Night Thoughts, (King of Prussia, PA: Theodore Presser Co., 2001), i.
76 Ibid.
77 Notes to New Music Festival (November 2011).
Chen Yi’s trio, *Night Thoughts*, for flute, cello and piano was co-commissioned for the Virginia Arts Festival, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, La Jolla SummerFest, Chamber Music Northwest, and Meet The Composer’s Commissioning/USA program. The work is dedicated to Heather A. Hitchens, then president of Meet The Composer, for her support of living composers and of new music creation. It was premiered in 2004 at the Virginia Arts Festival, and is published by The Theodore Presser Company.

*Night Thoughts* is typical of Chen Yi’s compositions in several ways. It bridges East and West by weaving elements of traditional Chinese music together with contemporary Western music, and melds these distinctively different styles of music into an original sound. Chen Yi’s use of Western instrumentation exhibits her awareness of twentieth century Western instrumental combinations. She chose one of the most standard formats for chamber music, the piano trio, with flute rather than violin. The instrumentation, with three distinctive individual voices, enhances her use of timbre and tone color. A unique effect is her use of silence very often at the end of sections. Chen Yi begins the piece with a mysterious statement of the theme, which is followed by sections of silence to give listeners an opportunity to digest the mysterious yet dramatic mood. The length of the sections of silence is constantly varied.

The tone poem structure in *Night Thoughts* is the perfect setting for this avant-garde poem, fusing Eastern elements with the Western format. The poet’s personality is strongly linked to his style of poetry, which is romantic, free thinking, unconventional,

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and full of individual expression. A tone poem is a vehicle that allows extra-musical subject matter to be expressed in a composition and to influence the structure of the composition. In *Night Thoughts*, Chen Yi combines the Western compositional style of the tone poem with her musical interpretation of a traditional Chinese poem.

**Chinese influences**

True to ancient Chinese tradition, *Night Thoughts* displays a variety of sounds and atmospheres that are found in nature. The composer does not employ Chinese melodies directly in the composition. Rather, she uses timbral sound, mood and the inspiration of classical Chinese poetry to inculcate the poetic images of a Chinese tone poem.

The programmatic tradition is evident in the title and the poem. It is a tradition in Chinese music, especially *ch’in* music, that the literary content provides the inspiration and suggests the mood of the musical composition. Chen Yi provides her own translation of the Tang poem as a preface to this work which conveys the content and the mood of her composition.

Chen Yi uses the Western flute to assimilate the traditional Chinese *hsiao* and *dizi* sounds, particularly the timbre. Flutter tongue technique is used to imitate the buzzing timbre of the *dizi* with its membrane. The mellow sound of the *hsiao* is transformed by a flute solo in the middle to lower registers of the instrument. Bent pitches and grace notes are used to represent the technique and style of *dizi* playing.

Chen Yi paints a pervasive, sparse, open and static atmosphere through her choice of a slow tempo, sparse harmony, contrasting registers and changing timbres, as well as delicate fleeting melodic and rhythmic patterns. The title of the work is indicative of its
character and mood, which is abstract and mysteriously imaginative. The music creates an impressionistic, nocturnal atmosphere.

One of the many prominent aspects of Chinese music aesthetics is the close association between music and nature, as well as the connection to the inner self that elite men and women from the past found through music. This work displays a variety of sounds that can be found in nature such as bird calls, insects humming and a gentle breeze. In order to imitate and depict these sounds, Chen Yi employs various instrumental techniques such as trills, tremolos, glissandos, sliding, and flutter tongue and trilling glissandos in the flute. Another type of sound that is prevalent throughout the piece is the use of tremolos combined with dissonant harmonies and extended, blurred pedaling to suggest an atmosphere encompassing night, moonlight, a clear sky, a chilly temperature, and homesickness.

In the poem, the poet tells a story as a traveller, describing what he sees, thinks and feels. The music vividly reflects the traveler’s thoughts throughout this journey at night. The opening piano writing imitates the musical language of the ch’in, and represents the poet’s description of the bright white moonlight as it appears to reflect frost on the ground. The harmony of two different intervals of a third sounds tonal but also dissonant. The effect created by a tremolo depicts the prevailing atmosphere of the night sky. The melodic line is constructed of dramatic intervallic leaps up and down, back and forth, and has a quality of sparse, crystal clear sound (Example 4.1)
The hollow, crisp and trembling sonority in the piano writing reflects the poet’s depiction of the cold weather, wondering whether the moonlight is too bright or if it is the frost on the ground that reflects the moonlight so brightly.

The characteristic style of *Night Thoughts*, while distinctively Asian in texture and sound, reminds one of that aspect of Béla Bartok’s compositional style known as “night music.” In Bartok’s “*Out Of Doors*” Suite for piano, ostinato figures slow the piece’s momentum to create a prevailing background with a spacious, mysterious atmosphere (Example 4.2).\(^79\)

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Fast-moving passages and wide leaps create contrast to slow-moving, dissonant cluster chords. Rapidly moving passages are occasionally emphasized by octave doublings in a chromatic manner. In these passages, the dynamic markings are very soft, which further emphasizes the feeling of spaciousness.

Layers of melodic lines overlap one another to create a texture that leads to a heightened energy level, the multiple layers combining to portray an image of the unpredictability of nature (Example 4.3)

Example 4.3 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 35-36.

Specific instrumental techniques indicated by the composer, such as trills, tremolos, glissandos, slides, flutter tongue and trilling glissandos on the flute, add distinctively Chinese qualities of timbres to the score. (Examples 4.4 and 4.5)
Example 4.4 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm.13-14.

Example 4.5 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm.23-24.

One element that gives Chen Yi’s *Night Thoughts* a uniquely Chinese quality is her treatment of the sounds of night: the sound of tree leaves rustling in the wind, the sound of wind blowing through trees (Example 4.1), and the sounds of nocturnal animals and/or insects (Example 4.6). Chen Yi uses short, descriptive motives to suggest the sounds of nocturnal insects and animals, and to depict the night atmosphere.

Example 4.6 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm.6.

These descriptive motives are set with atypical pitches and intervals, possibly inspired by Chinese music and folk music tradition. But at the same time, they sound rather
primitive and raw as they are set with rhythmic irregularity to imitate the abstract sounds of nature.

In this work, Chen Yi uses the flute, the oldest known generic instrument, to represent the sound of the *dizi* and the *hsiao*. The accompanying material for the piano and cello seems sparse and fragmented, and is very soft, providing a balanced resonance that supports the solo flute. Chen Yi’s piano writing in this work is reminiscent of the *ch’in* in terms of the playing technique and the role of accompaniment. At the end of the second section, the cello repeats the solo melody played by the flute, but in another key. This feature is in keeping with the characteristic idea of the tone poem and continues the impressionistic tone color of this section. Chen Yi could be considered the quintessential contemporary Chinese composer. By using various compositional techniques and experimenting with different, imaginative individual instrumental techniques, Chen Yi is able to create unique tone colors that give listeners a strong impression of scenes, sensibilities and sounds of ancient China.

**General analysis**

In *Night Thoughts*, Chen Yi creates evocative sounds through the application of Western compositional techniques to evoke a nocturnal atmosphere with spaciousness, calm, mystery, the noises of insects and the rapid movement of nocturnal animals. Chen Yi achieves this atmosphere by using an *accelerando* effect written in irregular rhythmic patterns with tremolos and trills over a slow ostinato (Example 4.1), short motives occurring in overlapping melodic lines, and most notably, the use of dissonance and cluster chords. Some of these sounds can also be heard in Bartok’s “night music,” for
example, in the third movement of his *Out of Doors Suite*. Unlike abstract music, which directly affects listeners’ emotions and their aesthetic experience, in the programmatic style of night music, the writing is intended to depict the atmosphere of being in the night, with the sounds of nature.

Chen Yi was concerned with the lyricism and instrumental nuance in this work. She conveys the aesthetic beauty of traditional instrumental ensemble performance with specific articulations, dynamics, variations and timbral ranges to emphasize Chinese influenced contemporary ensemble music. Each section has its own uniquely featured characteristics of timbre.

Table 4.1 Table of Musical Form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Measure numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section A</td>
<td>28-46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>47-78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section B</td>
<td>79-102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>103-129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Night Thoughts* is a through-composed work consisting of five thematically related sections. In the Introduction section, the opening piano writing establishes the overall character of the music with an atmosphere of mystery and stillness. Chen Yi uses a prolonged damper pedal to sustain the sonority of the tremolo figures and melodic contour in the high register. She uses an inverted chromatic scale and dissonant chords in
measure 1-3, which become a part of the principal motive of the work (Example 7). This element continues to develop, and evolves into new material which then combines with the already-existing elements. This new material is constructed of a combination of different motives. The composer creates a feeling of instability by inserting a group of quadruplets between groups of triplets in measure 1. This pattern in the piano part is prevalent and reappears throughout the composition much as the ostinato figure does, however, sometimes in different keys and in altered registers. The piano solo is answered by a flute solo, and then rejoins with the cello to conclude the first phrase. The ostinato figure begins with a triplet in eighth notes followed by a group of four sixteenth notes, then back to an eight-note triplet. The group of four sixteenth notes inserted between groups of triplets gives the opening passage a sense of acceleration and instability.

Example 4.7 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm.1-4.

The exposition of the thematic material continues into the next eight measures where the composer uses a flute solo as the leading voice to uphold the lyrical quality of the work while preserving the characteristics of the melodic contour and timbre.
Examples of quasi-lyricism can be seen in measures 2-4 and measures 20-22. In addition to the lyrical tone, the flute solo displays various changes of timbre with the techniques of staccato, flutter tongue and long trill. Examples are found in measures 5-7 and 13-14. The flutter tongue technique is used to imitate the traditional *dizi* sound, which has a special timbre created by its membrane (Example 4.4 and 4.8).

Example 4.8 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm.5-7.

In the Introduction section, another thematic motive is introduced in measure 18, in the piano part. Chen Yi uses a prolonged damper pedal to sustain the bass in combination with chords in the high register. By expanding the line rhythmically and sustaining the sonority, Chen Yi achieves simplicity and linear direction in the section. This new night sound figure has a darker tone, fuller sonority and breathless stillness. Due to the use of a wider range of registers, especially the lower registers in the piano part, the music has a heavy, static, open, hollow and haunting sound. This element also appears later in the piece with different mutations, appearing in different keys and registers, and with varied rhythms (Example 4.9).
Example 4.9 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm.18-20.

Chen Yi marks the end of the first section with a cadential gesture in the flute, a short, silent pause for all the instruments and a stop sign for the damper pedal between measures 27 and 28 (Example 4.10).

Example 4.10 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm.27-28.
In Section A (beginning at measure 28), the lyrical melodic line for the flute in combination with frequently varying timbres in the cello gains the listener’s attention. The focus then shifts to the piano as it imitates elements played by the flute and cello in the previous measures (measure 33-36). Chen Yi doubles the lines in both hands of the piano part while continuing to develop the inverted chromatic scales. (Example 4.11).

Example 4.11 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm.33-36.
The Development section begins in measure 47 with a cello solo, followed by the flute answering in intimate dialogue with the cello’s expressive lines. The importance of the lyrical quality continues, while various playing techniques are used in all three instruments to create colorful timbres (Examples 4.12 and 4.13). This section continues with rhythmic and intervallic repetitive figurations, leading to a climax and the end of the C section at measure 77 (Example 4.14).

Example 4.12 Chen Yi, Night Thoughts, mm. 74.
Example 4.13 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 61.

Toward the end of this section, the piano becomes more present as the only solo instrument, which leads to the next section. The piano writing is an imitation of the sound of the *ch’in*. First, it provides support for the two solo instruments with a balanced sonority and atmospheric harmonies. Second, the fast notes spanning a wide range of registers imitate the cross-string playing technique of the *ch’in*, while the tremolos imitate the strumming technique, also used in *ch’in* playing. Extended pedaling in measure 69, indicated to be held longer than the length of the written note, is intended to imitate the resonance of the strings on the *ch’in*. On the other hand, the pedal sign ends abruptly, immediately after the last note of a passage to imitate how *ch’in* players end sounds by stopping the strings (Example 4.13).

In addition to imitating the sound of the *hsiao*, Chen Yi also applied virtuosic performance techniques to the next section. The beginning of section B features the characteristic mellow sound quality of the *hsiao* through a flute solo in the middle register in measures 79-81 (Example 4.14).
In this section, the piano and cello both provide accompaniment for the flute. In the piano score, Chen Yi reintroduces the motive from the piano part in section A, however, varied in rhythm and pitch, while the cello plays a variety of techniques, including pizzicato, molto vibrato, sliding and trills, to create various timbres (Examples 4.15 and 4.16).

Example 4.15 Chen Yi, Night Thoughts, mm. 86-87.
Example 4.16 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm.91-92.

A piano solo begins the last section and reintroduces the motive from the B section. The rhythmic structure remains the same but in augmentation and the pitches are transposed. The flute restates the material in the piano part from the Introduction section while the cello reintroduces the main theme in the flute part from the previous section. (Example 4.17).

Example 4.17 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm.110-112.

Varying instrumental timbre is the most prominent element of this work. The work concludes with a coda section which reviews these elements and offers further evidence of the importance of this feature. Chen Yi uses specific articulation markings, and also detailed descriptions, to alter the timbres of the flute, cello and piano (Example 4.18).
Example 4.18 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 115-116.

Continuity and fluidity are principal characters which represent nature in this piece. Every section of the piece is connected to the music of the previous section and at the same time, influences the music that follows. Even though new ideas appear continually, every section is related due to the composer’s use of interpolation, in which new ideas are inserted between and blended with old ideas.

**Performance Suggestions**

Soft dynamics are a characteristic feature of traditional Chinese instruments such as the *ch’in, dizi* and *hsiao*, and should be carefully observed in this work, especially when the piano plays the role of accompaniment. The pianist should resist the urge to increase the intensity too early and rather, capture the flow of the melody in the flute, listening closely to the other instrumental lines (Example 4.19).

The flutist and cellist must take care not to cover each other, but still bring out the different levels of dynamic changes (Example 4.20).
Example 4.20 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 47-50.

From measure 115 to the end of the piece, all the instruments and especially, the pianist, should be aware of the dynamic markings. When hitting the lowest strings inside the piano, the pianist should make sure that their resonance carries for five measures with the prolonged pedaling (Example 4.21). The pianist should play fast moving passages which are doubled in both hands with extra delicacy, due to the dynamic marking of *pp* throughout entire passages (Example 4.22). Chen Yi uses specific dynamic markings and written instructions to assimilate the authentic sound of a traditional Chinese instrumental ensemble.

Example : 4.21 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 115-116. Chen Yi’s marking “hitting strings inside the piano”.

Example 4.22
Example 4.22 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 123.

Improvisation is an essential element of traditional Chinese instrumental music. Performers play variations on their melodic lines, frequently altering and ornamenting pitches. Chen Yi achieves the illusion of improvisatory embellishments through her careful use of chromaticism and ornamentation. These decorations can be played quickly, or relished slowly, depending on the context, but a balanced tempo is important for maintaining direction and energy. Musicians should play these improvisatory passages with clear direction and spontaneity. As an ensemble, the musicians must listen to each other closely to stay together during the various free ornamentations (Example 4.23).

Example 4.23 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 27.
The solo section for the flute beginning in measure 79 has an improvisational quality and should be played freely. All the repeated notes should be played with imaginative spontaneity. The flutist should play the rhythm correctly, but not rigidly, to maintain the fluidity (Example 4.18).

A question arises whether a Chinese melody played on Western instruments would sound correct to people accustomed to hearing traditional Chinese music. However, Chen Yi did not actually employ Chinese melodies directly in this composition. She constructed this composition from the single idea of an ancient poem and expanded this single concept to affect every detail of the piece. In the opening, it is important for the pianist to bring out the shimmering sound effect. The tremolos should be played fast, even and lightly in both hands. The back and forth figurations should be played with exact rhythm. Flexible time and overly expressive playing should be restrained here (Example 4.24).

Example 4.24 Chen Yi, *Night thoughts*, mm. 1.
Through the use of contrast in instrumental timbre, sparse instrumentation, subtle dynamic contrasts, and alternation between consonant and dissonant dyads, the composer is able to connect the audience musically with the mood and artistic expressions found in classical Chinese poetry.

The irregular rhythms in some passages can be challenging, especially when another instrument is playing another irregular rhythm simultaneously. It will be very helpful for musicians to practice small sections of the piece and count the beat carefully while practicing together (Example 4.25).

Example 4.25 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 32.

The flutist depicts the sound of Chinese traditional instruments and must understand the aesthetics of those instruments. The flutist should be careful about increasing the dynamic level from *pp* to *p*, and also playing the rest of the passage within the soft dynamic level (Example 4.26). The cellist should be observant in changing dynamic level on one single note (Example 4.27).
Example 4.26 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 29-30.

![Example 4.26 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 29-30.](image)

Example 4.27 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 36-37.

![Example 4.27 Chen Yi, *Night Thoughts*, mm. 36-37.](image)

Changes of timbre, whether obvious or subtle, should be emphasized, especially on repeated notes. The flutist can create these subtle timbral variations by playing the same pitch with different blowing techniques or with different fingerings (Example 4.28). A virtuoso flutist is needed in order to execute all the modern technique indicated by the composer, such as trills, tremolos, glissandos, slides, flutter tongue and trilling glissandos.
This work reflects a tradition of program music in Chinese music literature, especially in *ch‘in* music, where a literary composition prescribes the content and mood of the musical notation. In this case, Chen Yi used a famous Tang poem as preface to an inspiration for *Night Thoughts*. The author suggests to performers that they read the poem, and if possible, in order to understand the background of the poem, that they read about the life of the poet and the style of composition during the time when the poem was composed. Through an understanding of the literary content, performers will be able to interpret this work in a way that makes the literary and musical works correspond to one another as the composer intends, which will greatly enhance the performance.
Chapter 5

Romance and Dance

For Violin and Piano

This two-movement work is a transcription by Chen Yi of her original version of Romance and Dance, composed for two violins and string orchestra. The original version was premiered by Benjamin Hudson and Wolfgang Kussmaul with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, and conducted by Dennis Russell Davies, in 1998.

The material of the first movement, Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in, is original, and is in the style of southern Chinese music, which is melodic and soft. The second movement, Dance, is modeled after tunes from the Peking Opera.

Chen Yi created the duet version, discussed here, for violin and piano in 1999. The work consists of two movements, which were composed separately. The first movement of the duet, Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in, originally composed in 1995, was written for two violins and string orchestra and was premiered in 1996 by Shlomo Mintz and Elmar Oliveira with the orchestra of St. Luke’s, conducted by Maestro Yehudi Menuhin. The second movement, Dance, is taken from the third movement of Chen Yi’s Fiddle Suite, composed in 1997 for a commission from the Fromm Music Foundation for the Kronos Quartet and was written for Chinese fiddles, also known as huqin.

Chen Yi has created several different versions of each movement with different instrumentations. The first movement was transcribed for cello and piano in 1998, and
later for violin and piano in 1999, in addition to other versions for erhu and piano. The fact that the instrumentations are interchangeable brings certain flexibility and life to the music itself. The second movement is also available for huqin with string quartet, quintet, string orchestra or full orchestra.

The musical representations of the Chinese erhu and zither recall the traditional Chinese folk instruments, and the story-telling tradition of erhu players. This work has the quality of program music with literary connotations, the title “Romance” indicating the style of a lyrical ballad, referring to love and sentimental feelings. The instruments, hsiao and ch’in, two distinguished traditional Chinese instruments with unique sounds and representing two different characters, give this piece an ancient flavor.

Movement 1: Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in

Chinese Influences

The Chinese programmatic influence is evident in the title of this work, through which the composer tells a story and reflects her intimate emotions. The title, Romance and Dance has a literary connotation and can be associated with several nationally known Chinese love stories and legends, such as The Butterfly Lovers.80

Individual and personal feelings, especially romantic feelings, were forbidden to be addressed in any musical work during the Cultural Revolution, due to their association with middle class life. For much of Chinese contemporary history, people’s emotions

were tightly controlled by the Communist government. During the Cultural Revolution, original texts of folk music and music of ethnic minorities were also banned. The folk music that survived was transformed into revolutionary songs of praise and patriotism. Following Mao’s death in 1976, the Cultural Revolution came to an end. Deng Xiaoping became the leader of the party and began a series of reforms.\textsuperscript{81} Although it seemed almost too good to be true, people were once again permitted to express personal and romantic feelings through music. Although the Communist government still dictates the culture, control has been loosened and people have more cultural freedom than in the revolutionary period.\textsuperscript{82}

In the Chinese arts, it is common to see cross-references between different art forms. An art work containing metaphoric and/or emotional qualities is considered excellent. In poetry, for example, musical instruments are used frequently as a symbolic image to represent something more abstract, such as a harmonious state or a loving couple. Chen Yi, in this composition, in addition to expressing her own personal emotions, imbues the music with philosophical messages. She not only recreates the sound of traditional Chinese instruments using Western instruments, she also communicates their symbolic and aesthetic values regarding humanity and nature.

Chen Yi’s facsimilation of the sound and performance techniques of the Chinese traditional instruments \textit{hsiao} and \textit{ch’in} clearly demonstrates the Chinese influence in this work. Chen Yi uses Western instruments, the piano and the violin, to imitate the tone quality and lyricism of both of the Chinese traditional instruments.  

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 1-2.
The characteristic features of the *hsiao*, which are its distinctive timbre, narrow dynamic range and a pure tone quality are transferred by Chen Yi to the violin in this work. Most of the violin writing is at a soft dynamic, with only occasional *f* indications. Similar compositional methods are applied to her writing for the piano, particularly regarding articulations, in order to transmit the features of the *ch’in*.

Chen Yi’s instrumentation and symbolic images of traditional Chinese instruments in this work reflect the essential ideals of Chinese aesthetic values. Traditionally, the *hsiao* and *ch’in* are closely associated together in terms of musical materials and repertoire. These instruments are often paired in music for small ensembles, and the repertoire for the *hsiao* and *ch’in* often overlap.

The melodic structure of the first movement reflects the Chinese concept of balance and the harmonious proportion of parts. The melodic contour (falling, rising) moves up and down frequently with small steps and big leaps. However, an ascending line with a big intervallic leap will be balanced by a similar leap in a descending line.\(^3\) (Example 5.1). This concept of balance, from the theory of Yin and Yang, also influences the construction of melody and of accompaniment. When one instrument has long-held notes, the other instrument provides contrast with relatively fast-moving notes. An ascending line will be balanced with a descending line, and vice versa.

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General Analysis

The formal structure of Movement I is shown in the table below.

Figure 5.1 Table of Musical Form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Total Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>43-72</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A'</td>
<td>71-109</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This piece has a structure of A-B-A’ ternary form, but with significant variation in the third section. The form is reflected in the slow-fast-slow structure and in the materials employed in each section. The movement begins slowly with a tempo marking of Andante with a faster tempo in the B section followed by a recapitulation of the A section. The first and last sections are related while the middle section exhibits contrasting materials both melodically and rhythmically.

The primary motivic material for Romance of Hsiao and Ch’in is presented in the opening violin melody (measures 1-6) (Example 5.2). Chen Yi weaves a Western major/minor system, and a pentatonic structure, into the melody. While the melody
implies a key of A major, the last five eighth notes of the melody (B-E-F#-A-C#) outline the sound of an A pentatonic scale. This five-note figure is elaborated further in the B section. A second thematic melodic line begins on the pickup to measure 7 with a distinctive triplet figure (Example 5.3).

Example 5.2 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in”, mm. 1-6.

Example 5.3 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in”, mm. 6-13.

The complete principal theme is stated in measures 1 through 12 in two phrases that are in the style of southern Chinese music. The accompanying piano part also outlines a pentatonic structure, with a focus on quartal harmony and successive leaps of perfect fourths. Several motivic elements from these first 12 measures, including the triplet figure and octave leaps, become featured elements for further development (Example 5.3).

The A section is completed by two elaborated variations. The motives from the principal theme begin to integrate and blend. These variations occur as a sort of echo, as
the two phrases are related by a partial repeat of the opening of the principal theme and by ending with cadential notes from the first phrase, harmonized by a fourth (Example 5.4).

Example 5.4 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in”, mm. 12 and mm. 6-8.

The B section is an elaborated passage of a five-note pentatonic motive from the opening violin melody. Two statements of this motive are presented at the beginning of the B section and the second statement appears in reduced rhythmic values (Examples 5.5, and 5.6). The music begins to move freely around the implied pentatonic scale; however, there is no clear key center. An increasing number of pentatonic figures and quartal harmonies provide the content for the remainder of the B section (Example 5.7).
Example 5.5 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in”, mm. 43-46.
Theme of B section.

Example 5.6 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in”, mm. 48-50.

Example 5.7 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in”, mm. 59-61.

The theme of the B section is constructed of five pitches displaced in octaves with big intervallic leaps (Example 5.5). Contrary to the principal theme, the second theme has a less smooth and balanced contour. Also, big intervallic leaps do not resolve with a
successive, smooth melodic line. While developing contrasting musical ideas and characters, Chen Yi is able to connect all three sections to the ongoing musical development by sharing similar materials as ornamentation and other articulations.

Section B contains new rhythmic motives in addition to the thematic motives taken from the A section. A rhythmic motive introduced eight measures before the B section begins, derived from measure 11 in section A, has a vigorous rhythmic drive and a coloristic effect. It develops into a series of ascending lines with intervals of fourths and octave leaps which begin to break the flow of the music and introduce a new level of energy into the B section (Examples 5.8 and 5.9). Later, the rhythmic motive evolves into a series of syncopated rhythms which bring the music to its climax. Chen Yi maintains fluidity and continuity by integrating the material from the previous section and developing it into a section full of coloristic sound and exciting energy.

Example 5.8 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in, mm. 11-12.
Example 5.9 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Romance of hsiao and ch’ in”, mm. 35-36.

The last section, beginning in measure 70, is a reflection/return of the A section. This section recapitulates the opening material with imitative activities between the two instruments. Although the structure is contrapuntal, the texture is not heavy due to fewer doublings in the piano part and more embellishments in the melodic lines. The music begins to slow down with less embellished melodies and more single, long notes in measures 96 to 99.

The last few measures of the A’ section feature a violin solo with a very slow and sustained melody. The melody is played in a higher register and the rhythm becomes expanded to create the dénouement. The pitches in the last part of this section, B-G#-F#-E, have a similar intervallic relationship to the pitches of the end of the violin’s principal theme, E-C#-B-A. The composer creates an atmosphere that recalls listeners to the principal theme by using the same material in a transposed key (Example 5.10).
Performance Suggestions

In the A section in which both instruments play melodic lines without the harmonic support of an accompaniment, it is important for the violinist and the pianist to bring out the lyrical quality of the melodies and at the same time, to play the second phrase as a supporting melody. In the opening, the violinist should play the lyrical melody with sweet and gentle expression. When the piano enters and echoes the violin’s main theme, the pianist should listen to the sound carefully and avoid accenting any notes. In measure 3 where the piano part is written in unison two octaves apart, it is important for the pianist to execute the beginning phrase carefully and delicately. Chen
Yi emphasizes the difference in character and function between the upper phrase and lower phrase in her dynamic markings (Example 5.11).

Example 5.11 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of hsiao and ch’ in”, mm. 1-3.

Chen Yi’s use of grace notes and pentatonic scales in the opening violin melody give the performing violinist a clear idea of the music’s Chinese origin (Example 5.12). According to the composer’s email to the author dated September 8th, 2013, the melodic structure in section A is designed in the gentle style of southern Chinese music.84

Example 5.12 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of hsiao and ch’ in”, mm. 6-7.
The next section could present performers with potential fatigue problems. The piano has a sequence of displaced octaves in sixteenth notes crossing between five registers at a fast speed, while the violin part has an extended tremolo passage. The author suggests that the pianist memorize this section and become very familiar with the physical movements. Both performers should avoid tension in the wrists and arms while playing this passage with increasing volume, tempo and movement. Meanwhile, keep in mind that loudness is not the only solution for building up excitement. It is important to bring out the contrast between the fast running sixteenth-note passage in the piano’s left hand and accented rhythmic figures that are played on both violin and piano. Performers should also emphasize the clarity of dynamics and rhythm, especially the syncopated rhythms (Example 5.13).

Example 5.13 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in”, mm. 55-58.

In the B section, the musicians must listen to each other and agree about the tempo in order to build the music’s excitement and always stay together. The melodic pitches are gradually quickened rhythmically, with added colors by the violin’s tremolos, as well as increasing volume and intensity. The piano accompaniment doubles the pitches of the violin part in one hand and adds coloristic sound in the other. The pianist
should give a clear cue on the second beat of measure 59 to make sure the accented notes are played exactly together by both instruments (Example 5.14).

Example 5.14 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in”, mm. 59.

In the last section as the tempo returns to Tempo I and the main theme recapitulates, it is the pianist’s responsibility to set the tempo (measure 69-70). The violinist should recognize the four eighth notes in measure 70 as a cue to state the main theme again.

Although Chen Yi does not indicate it in the score, using the soft pedal is necessary in order to maintain the correct dynamic balance, especially in passages with a \( pp \) dynamic marking. In measure 11, where the piano part has ascending sixteenth notes and a soft dynamic marking of \( p \), the author suggests that the soft pedal may be needed. Also at the end of the first section where the same material appears with the very soft dynamic marking of \( pp \), the pianist should use the soft pedal (Example 5.15). Another spot with a very soft dynamic marking, \( pp \), is in measure 51. The pianist must be aware of the balance here, especially as the violin is playing in the middle register where it is easily covered by the piano’s running octaves (Example 5.16).
Example 5.15 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in”, mm. 35.

Example 5.16 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Romance of hsiao and ch’in”, mm. 51.

The piano in the last section begins a phrase in a lower register to echo and interact with the violin’s main theme. From measure 73, the pianist should use the soft pedal and avoid overpowering the violin line. In addition to listening for the balance and supporting the violinist’s main theme, the pianist should capture the beauty of the piano melody by playing the different articulations delicately (Example 5.17). This is especially true when the piano has the upper melody and plays the main theme (Example 5.18).
Example 5.17 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of hsiao and ch’ in”, mm. 75-77.

Example 5.18 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Romance of hsiao and ch’ in”, mm. 83-84.

At the end of the movement, the violinist should play the high notes with delicacy and focus on the beauty of the sound, which is floating and thin. The author suggests using a little bit of vibrato for the purpose of resonance and color. However, the last note must be played with a straight tone, without any vibrato, as it is a harmonic. The pianist should use soft pedal for the final cadential gesture (Example 5.19).
Example 5.19 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Romance of hsiao and ch’ in”, mm.106-end.

It is important for the violinist to be familiar with the piano part. The author suggests that the violinist and pianist read and rehearse using a full score. For the benefit of good ensemble playing, as there is no harmonic progression to follow, knowing each other’s melodies and rhythms will improve the confidence of collaboration. The pianist should always give cues when needed.
Romance and Dance

For Violin and Piano

Movement 2: Dance

Chinese Influences

In Chen Yi’s program notes, she states:

…the solo violin plays very fast moving lines while the accompaniment plays the supporting dissonant harmonic progressions. This image came from the dancing ink on paper in Chinese calligraphy and the fiery moving gestures of the Chinese ancient women dancers. The pitch material is drawn from Beijing Opera tunes…

In Chinese art, the artists communicate their emotional expression in their art forms, in addition to depicting the outline appearance of an object. Artists commonly include other art forms in their original works and also incorporate metaphoric meanings in their works. Chinese artists believe that a high quality art work should carry many metaphoric meanings and also capture a human quality. So does Chen Yi. Chen Yi’s works exhibits the idea that words and philosophy can be transmitted through musical language. In this movement, Chen Yi uses a Peking opera tune (The Night Deepens), which already has connotations of the beauty of an ancient sword dance and female dancing gestures, plus a famous ancient heroic love story. She adds to the music a metaphor of ink dancing from the art of calligraphy and elevates this work to an even higher aesthetic level.

These metaphoric inclusions give this work a diversity of vivid references and enrich its content. Consequently, performers who gain a full understanding of and appreciation for the background associated with these metaphors will be better able to play this work with authentic flavor and spirit.

Regarding Chen Yi’s calligraphy reference, *Dance* not only has a percussive rhythmic drive, which clearly depicts the image of the ancient primitive dance movements, but she also uses a fluid linear movement which is taken from the aesthetic ideas in the art of calligraphy to connect the energy flow throughout the entire piece.

Chen Yi’s work, *Dance*, also represents the influence of the Chinese program music tradition. The fixed tune entitled 夜深沉 “The Night Deepens” (translation from Chinese), on which her work is based, is popularly known from the Peking opera. The tune tells part of a story about an ancient war and a love story. Chen Yi’s music depicts the character’s spirit, emotions, dancing gestures and the beauty of the movement in the Beijing opera. The yearning vocal quality of the opening melody evokes a sensation of emotional strength and an image of moving gestures. Grace notes and turns ornament the melody to create vivid images of dance movements. The tempo of the piece accelerates as the music grows, and reflects the development of the character’s story line. As the music generates escalating excitement it connects the listeners to the music. This melody has often been employed by composers who have created many types of compositions based on the melodic and rhythmic structure of the original tune.

The piano accompaniment resembles the characteristics of the original tune used in *Dance*, (夜深沉) “The Night Deepens.” The percussive sound in the piano part
resembles the percussion section in the Beijing opera orchestra. The ostinato-like rhythmic pattern, consisting of dissonant pitches, constructed of intervals of major sevenths, octaves and major sixths, in combination with the sharp articulations, create the colorful, percussive timbre of the Beijing opera orchestra. The piano accompaniment supports the music with its dominating rhythmic patterns. In addition to keeping the beat, like the percussion section in the Beijing opera orchestra, the piano accompaniment generates the rhythmic drive and vigorous beats that propel the music forward. The piano part is also responsible for preludes, and interludes, as well as punctuating the singing and action music in the violin part.\(^{86}\)

The melodic material in the violin part is transferred from the \textit{jinghu}, one of the lead melodic instruments in the Beijing opera orchestra. This instrument often doubles the singer’s melodic line, but with varied rhythms and/or embellishments. Many elements in Chen Yi’s music resemble the \textit{jinghu’s} sound and playing technique. The \textit{jinghu}, like many other Chinese bowed string instruments, are known for their lyrical tone, fast tremolos, articulations of slides and trills, fast running sixteenth notes, and cross-string playing. In addition to these characteristic features, the sound of the \textit{jinghu} resembles a female singing voice in the Beijing opera, in which heightened speech and high-pitched singing are featured. All these unique tone qualities and playing techniques of the \textit{jinghu} are reflected in Chen Yi’s violin writing in this movement. Moreover, the composer retains the spirit of the original tune as she adds new melodic material later as

the music develops. Also significant is the interplay of imitation and counterpoint between the two instruments.

This composition reflects Chinese artists’ ideal of translating human quality into an art work; the atmospheric and emotional qualities in this tune and dance also closely associate with the content of the story. The human vocal production of high-pitched singing and speech featured in the Beijing opera is reflected in the violin part. The music also captures the mood and gestures of the dancer.\(^87\) A melodic figure with a large interval leap depicts the lively and spirited mood. Accented pitches, especially consecutive accents, depict the energetic dancing gestures and vigorous steps.

The aesthetic idea of continuous energy flow in the art of calligraphy is also an inspiration for Chen Yi’s Dance. Chen Yi associates the continuous energy flow in the art of calligraphy as a metaphor to make this work more meaningful. Calligraphy, like music, is an art of time. Once the calligrapher begins writing, every movement of the wrist, forearm and elbow is connected and becomes part of the momentum that creates every ink stroke on the paper. This fluid motion causes each stroke to flow from the previous stroke. This feature is reflected in Chen Yi’s use of rhythmic patterns in this movement.

Chen Yi merges the concept of continuous energy flow together with the sword dancing gesture in Dance. Rather than giving the piece a quasi-lyrical quality, she blends a linear line with a continuously evolving rhythmic ostinato figure. The rhythmic ostinatos are transposed to different keys, they appear in different registers and the order

is irregular. As the music grows to a climax, the rhythm becomes complex, very fast and punctuated.

In the author’s email correspondence with Chen Yi, she discussed in depth the tune that she borrowed from the Beijing Opera (also known as the Peking Opera) as well as the traditional Chinese instrument that inspired the original composition of *Dance*.

A uniquely Chinese instrumental sound is evident in the score. Chen Yi transferred the style and sound of a Chinese fiddle to the Western fiddle, or violin. The style of the *huqin* being played is evident, especially in the opening solo violin section, with notated gliding, sliding, accent and tremolo (Example 5.20). In addition, the tone color of the high register pitches is a characteristic feature of the Peking opera high-pitched singing. The composer uses traditional Chinese music performance techniques of grace notes, mordents, syncopated accents and consecutive accented notes to imitate the Chinese sound and performance style in this piece.

**General Analysis**

This movement is constructed from a fixed tune and retains the tune’s general structure, especially in the pace of development of the tune. The opening motive is taken from the *jinghu* melody and appears several times in both instruments. The motivic ideas and rhythmic fragments are imitated, transposed and varied, capturing the flavor and spirit of the original tune throughout the entire movement. The straightforward feature of the original tune is seen in Chen Yi’s imitation of the pace and the accelerating tempo is clearly indicated by tempo changes. The gradual building of intensity in the original tune
is reflected in Chen Yi’s variation of rhythmic patterns and modulations. This movement, despite its melody of Chinese flavor, also displays a contemporary approach in the setting of two different key signatures in the instrumentation, known as dual tonality. The violin part is written in key of E major, while the piano part has no key signature. This is logical for the piano part as its largely accompanimental figuration is written in a highly dissonant and extremely chromatic harmonic language.

The formal structure of movement II is shown in the table below.

Figure 5.2 Table of Musical Form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Thematic Introduction</td>
<td>1-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Variation</td>
<td>20-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>52-171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Recapitulation</td>
<td>171-203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>204-end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section A is an introduction with a virtuosic improvisatory-like solo played by the violinist. The principal thematic material of Dance is presented in two sequential parts. The distinctive characteristics of each part are clear. The first melodic passage is presented as a slow introduction (measures 1-7), and the second as a fast dance melody (measure 8-19). Both are played on violin alone.

The principal motivic material is an imitation of the pitch material of the actual Beijing opera tune (B-E-F#-D#-C#). It is heard in the first two measures in short
fragments of two-note phrases with an ascending interval of a fourth (B-E) and descending interval of a third (F#-D#) followed by another descending pitch (C#) (Example 5.20).


The rhythmic motive is designed to mimic the gradual acceleration of the original tune, with a dotted eighth note and sixteenth note followed by groups of eighth notes and a long passage of sixteenth notes. In addition to the rhythmic diminution, accelerating tempo changes contribute to the forward moving drive in imitation of the original tune.

Chen Yi preserves the authentic Chinese flavor in the opening violin solo by using fragments of pentatonic scale pitches as well as dissonant intervals that are part of her modern compositional language. These elements will be further developed in the movement. The pickup pitch B and the pitch on the first downbeat E are from the E pentatonic scale of E-F#-G#-B-C# (Example 5.20). Selected pitches in the following five measures, C#, F# and D#, also comprise a tonal center of E (Example 5.21). Another implied tonal center of the B pentatonic scale of B-C#-D#-F#-G# is emphasized briefly in the introductory passage through neighboring tones and accented pitches. For example, there are neighboring tones, E-D#, displaced by an octave in measure 10, accented pitches of F# in measure 12 as well as D# in measure 20. F# and D# are the third and fifth degree pitches in the B pentatonic scale (Example 5.22).
Example 5.21 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 4-6.

![Example Music Notation]

Example 5.22 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 10 and mm. 12-13.

![Example Music Notation]

Chen Yi also further captures the characteristic color of Chinese traditional music by setting up a dissonant sonority in the violin solo melody and the piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment enters in measure 21 and introduces two principal motives. One is an Alberti figure in the right hand of the piano part, while the other is an ascending major seventh played by the left hand. The dissonant sonority of the major seventh is also present in the opening violin solo melody. Additional material in the piano part that supports the chromatic nature in the accompaniment can be seen in the third measure (Example 5.23).
Example 5.23 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 21-25.

![Musical notation example](image1)

The B section is comprised of 32 measures, beginning with the violin’s pickup note to measure 20 which is then joined by piano accompanimental figures. The violinist begins by playing small motivic fragments which expand into mutated fragments from the opening theme. The sixteenth-note group of B-C#-D#-C# in measure 37 is a fragment from previous material in measure 13 (Example 5.24).

Example 5.24 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 36-37.

![Musical notation example](image2)

The violinist also introduces a new motive in measures 30-32, which are four pitches played on the violin after the piano part stops, E-G#-C#-B. This four-note motive is also derived from the opening violin melody which was most evident in measure 4 (Examples 5.21, 5.25). The piano accompaniment, in addition to having chromatic passages, borrows figures from the violin part (Example 5.25).


The C section (measures 52-171) is a development section, comprised of imitative contrapunatal writing and modulations of key and rhythm. The piano part is constructed of both piano and violin materials from the B section, which are played imitatively in a transposed key, down a fifth. A further development begins at measure 85 where the piano part imitates and elaborates the gestures from the violin part in a chromatic fashion (Example 5.27). This development features a continuous sixteenth-note mutation and subdivision evolving into sextuplets and then quintuplets in canonic arrangements. Chen Yi uses diatonic and pentatonic scales in octave displacement as a transitional tool to the next development passage.
Further development begins at measure 93. The piano accompaniment restates familiar figures as a transitional passage to reintroduce a violin solo that is reminiscent of the opening thematic melody. The figuration appears in the same key and is imitated an octave lower in the same rhythmic pattern but one sixteenth note apart (Example 5.28).

Example 5.27 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 85-86.

Example 5.28 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 93-98.
At measure 124, imitative activity begins with both instruments playing the accompanimental figure from measure 93 in unison, but now one half-step higher. Although the piano and the violin have been sharing materials, this is the first occurrence of the two instruments playing the same pitch and rhythm together. From this point to the climax of the movement, Chen Yi continues to build the tension by thickening the texture and intensifying the rhythmic activity. The unison activity grows into a sequence of chromatic passages at measures 138-139. The composer transforms the material from measures 85-86 and amplifies its characteristic rhythms of sixteenth notes. The rhythmic structure quickens and expands quintuplets into sextuplets and then thirty-second notes in measure 158 (Example 5.29). This development is followed by a sequence of vividly emphasized triplets (Example 5.30).
The D section is a recapitulation beginning at the pickup to measure 172 (Example 5.31). The motivic materials and thematic statement from the B section return at their full length in the piano part but in a fast tempo (piu mosso). This entire section is a bridge to the E section (coda) in measure 204. The temporal changes in both the D and E sections increase the intensity, connect the flow of the motion and lead the music to its climax. Three extended measures of repeated chords and fast-moving notes following
the restatement amplify the opening \textit{Agitato} mood with its vigorously accented rhythms of triplets and duplets (Example 5.32).

Example 5.31 Chen Yi, \textit{Romance and Dance}, “Dance,” mm. 171-176.

Example 5.32 Chen Yi, \textit{Romance and Dance}, “Dance,” mm. 201-205.

Accented chords interrupt the frenzied rhythmic drive abruptly, and alter the dance depiction radically. Near the end of the movement, the music grows in intensity and excitement with surprising changes of rhythms and texture. This is part of the depiction of arousing strong passion from the dancers and is intended to elicit an emotional response from the audience.
Chen Yi creates the visual image of brushstrokes in the music through her intention of connecting the melodic, linear movement with the harmonic, vertical movement. The pitches in the violin part are extended by tremolos. The sound becomes sustained and therefore creates a linear line in the violin part. The piano part adds density to the texture with its mass of sound from dissonant intervals and chords displaced over multiple octaves. Within the vertical activity, there is a brief change of movement (Example 5.33). The inverted chromatic scale passage also adds to the linear texture and forward momentum to help create various colors, or in calligraphy, different brushstrokes.


Chen Yi expresses her realization of nature through the contrast between long sustained pitches and constantly evolving rhythmic groups and pitch sequences. She presents opposites and likenesses, micro-transformation and contrasting characters, stability and a constantly changing force. At measure 146, the imitative activity in the piano part begins to change its form of energy by switching from a cyclic motion to a diagonal direction while the violin continues its long sustained pitches with tremolos (Example 5.34).
Example 5.34 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 138-139 and 146-147.

Performance Suggestions

At the beginning of the violin part, the arrow notation strongly suggests sliding at a fast speed while the short arch line indicates a slide with vocal quality. As the movement begins, the violinist should take liberty with the first four notes in measure 2, and maintain the legato singing quality while starting to push the tempo forward. Cross-string playing in measure 10 is strongly associated with folk fiddle playing technique, while repeated notes are often found in the standard violin repertoire, for example, in
Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No.5. The figure in measure 16 of Dance is comparable to the opening of Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 (Example 5.35).

Example 5.35 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 8-11; 46-49 and Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, mm.1-4.

Ornaments in this movement Dance should be treated as part of the melody. Short ornaments such as grace notes, should be played before the beat (Example 5.36).

Example 5.36 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 56-57.
Chen Yi does not include damper pedal indications but she is clear about the articulations of accent, staccato, slur and \( fp \), and the duration of crescendos. The pianist should interpret this piece accordingly and avoid using the damper pedal to blend the sounds too often. The composer’s intention is to portray the color of the Chinese opera percussion instruments through the piano and violin. The dissonant ostinato figures in the piano part are meant to provide coloristic effects.

For example, the dynamic marking of \( ff \) in measure 85 does not require damper pedal for it refers to a high level of intensity and excitement in the texture, rather than a blended sound. The rhythmic figure from measures 159 to 166 is depicting a percussion instrument technique (Example 5.37). Although Chen Yi does not indicate a use of damper pedal, the pianist should add a touch of pedal to amplify the resonance of the chords.

Example 5.37 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Dance,” mm. 159-166.
There are times when the pianist should resist the temptation to add damper pedals. For example, the major seventh motivic figure in the left hand in the beginning of the piano entrance at measure 21 is marked with staccatos. The composer transmits the beat-keeping function of the Chinese opera orchestra into the piano part, therefore it is important for the pianist to think like a percussion player, or a drummer, and to keep his or her inner pulse stable and attentive. The percussion section in a Chinese opera orchestra plays the important role of keeping the beat steady and pushing the driving beat forward. Therefore, the staccatos should be dry with very little or almost no pedaling (Examples 5.38 and 5.39).
Chen Yi’s desire for a balanced sound is clearly shown in her carefully written accent marks on dissonant chords. The composer does not want all the chords to be played equally loudly. Rather, she wants the sound to be balanced and have certain inner melodic pitches emphasized. At times she indicates that the top notes in both hands are to be brought out while at other times she wants the outer notes in both hands to be voiced (Examples 5.40, 5.41). The pianist should play these chords with an equal
distribution of weight among the chord tones, but with extra weight given to either the inner or outer melodic line.

Example 5.40 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 164.

Example 5.41 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 204.

The pianist should be aware of the contrapuntal activity and should maintain a good balance between the theme and accompaniment. For example, in the piano part beginning at measure 52, the two hands have different articulations and roles. The piano left hand plays the motive and the melody while the right hand plays percussive accompanimental figures. The author suggests that the pianist plays the tremolo with equally distributed weight and with a fast but quiet wrist motion in the left hand.
The pianist should make a basic choreography of the movement and memorize the physical movements required in the passage for the piano from measures 70 to 75, and from measures 189 to 194. The piano part has repeating phrases of three ascending pitches in intervals of major sevenths in one hand while the other hand plays phrases moving in a contrasting direction and with a different character (Example 5.42).

Example 5.42 Chen Yi, *Romance and Dance*, “Dance,” mm. 70-75.

Chen Yi rarely marks legato and slur phrasing in the *Dance*. Therefore, the legato articulation from measures 76 to 78 should also be applied in measure 195 to 197. The tie on the tremolo figure in measures 65 and 66 should be applied to every tremolo figure that is sustained for more than one beat. The pianist should think of these vertical texture
tremolos as linear moving lines and keep the sound full but not heavy (Example 5.43, 5.44).

Example 5.43 Chen Yi, Romance and Dance, “Dance,” mm. 196-197.

A significant element required for an effective performance of this piece is the unrelenting nature of the ostinato patterns, almost Stravinskian, found in both the piano and violin parts. The harmony is actually secondary, for example, as found in the imitative activity of the ostinato figure beginning at measure 85 (Example 4.45). It is a mesmerizing passage for the listener, due to the physical virtuosity of the performers as they exchange ostinato patterns.
Unlike the standard Western music formula for the climax to occur at the two-thirds point in a piece, Eastern music tends to reach its climax at the end of a work following a long buildup. Both performers need to plan the pace of the music and find suitable tempi for the last section, where the *Piu mosso* and *Agitato* occur.

This composition contains materials that are both familiar and original. According to the composer, the movement is based on an ancient tune that every Chinese person should recognize. It would be highly unlikely, however, that modern Western audiences would know this ancient tune. This composition has virtuosity, emotional quality, symbolic content, excitement and scenic tone painting. The characteristics are reflected and associated with the variety of timbres and the constant modulation of rhythmic patterns. With the writing for two of the most familiar Western instruments, the use of Western compositional techniques, the pentatonic sounds, dissonant harmonies and a dance that propels the development of the music, Chen Yi introduces audiences to a contemporary work that satisfies the taste of modern day audiences and communicates an
ancient Chinese aesthetic sound. Her music is a multidimensional experience, and a great deal of study is required in order to fully appreciate this work.

The contrast between two movements in *Romance and Dance* is clearly defined by the contrasting melodic and rhythmic materials as well as the character and structure of each movement. From the Chinese aesthetic point of view, these two movements have opposite characteristics and reflect very different elements of human nature. The emotional content of *Romance* is sweet and warm-hearted. This is followed by *Dance*, which is intended to heat up the heart-felt feeling and stir the warmth into frenzied excitement.
Chapter 6

Tibetan Tunes

For Violin, Cello and Piano

_Tibetan Tunes_ was written for the New Pacific Trio and was commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University. This two-movement trio, _Tibetan Tunes_, for Violin, Cello and Piano, was premiered at the University of the Pacific Conservatory in 2007. The first movement, _Du Mu_, and the second movement, _Dui Xie_, were inspired by two different types of Tibetan traditional music.\(^{88}\) _Du Mu_ was inspired by the Tibetan folk tune “_Du Mu_” named for a goddess in Tibetan Buddhism, while _Dui Xie_ was inspired by the Tibetan folk song “_Amaliehuo_,” a lyrical folk song accompanied by an instrumental folk ensemble.\(^{89}\)

Movement 1: _Du Mu_

Chinese Influences

The most prominent Chinese influence in this movement is the programmatic tradition as well as the serene atmosphere. Through the music, Chen Yi depicts gestures and images of the Buddhist goddess. In this movement, the composer employs an actual

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\(^{89}\) Chen Yi, _Tibetan Tunes_, (Theodore Presser Co., King of Prussia, PA, 2008).
folk tune to remind listeners of the virtues of the goddess. The female image and characteristics of *Du Mu* are reflected in the melodic line and melodic contour. The gently moving melodic contour and long, sustained pitches symbolize the harmonious state of the goddess. All the short gestures of sixteenth notes and thirty-second notes, as well as the ornaments of trills, mordents, grace notes and slides depict the female goddess’ gestures.

The Chinese atmospheric influence is also evident in this work. Chen Yi’s design of texture and timbre reflects a quality of serenity that speaks to the spirituality of this work. The serene atmosphere is captured in the violin and cello’s open, hollow harmonies of intervals of fifths (Examples 6.1, 6.2, 6.3). The high-pitched harmonics played on the string instruments and the low notes played on the piano together create a wide sound space within which pitches of the harmonic family are generated, creating a spatial sensation.

Another significant inspiration for this work is the influence of Buddhism. In addition to the religious image of Du Mu, the Buddhist philosophical concepts of liberation and enlightenment are components of the programmatic message in Chen Yi’s first movement of *Tibetan Tunes*. The composer employs soft dynamics and a lyrical melodic contour to remind listeners of the feminine and virtuous characteristics of the goddess (Example 6.4). She also uses sustained pitches and high-pitched drones to create a chanting-like sound reminiscent of the rituals and the spiritual state of the goddess.

Example 6.4 Chen Yi *Tibetan Tunes*, “Du Mu,” mm.1-6.
The concept of balance between man and nature in Chinese philosophy is also reflected in Chen Yi’s setting of this movement. Opposites occur in motion and energy, for example, in the still quality of the high pitched drone sound and the activity of the principal theme that changes by micro-level with varying pitch and rhythmic patterns. These opposing types of movement do not compete against each other but rather, they complement each other through interaction and imitation. When one part is quiet, the other moves (example 6.5). In the B section, two opposing energies join together and become one strong force. Chen Yi gives the piano part a busy character to meet the energy level of the section and to balance the texture. Overall, the entire movement is balanced by the characteristics of each section.

Example 6.5 Chen Yi, *Tibetan Tunes*, “Du Mu,” mm. 7-10.
General Analysis

The formal structure of the first movement of *Tibetan Tunes* is shown in the table below.

Figure 6.1 Table of Musical Form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure Number</th>
<th>Total Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1-21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>22-44</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’</td>
<td>44-57</td>
<td>14</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Du Mu* is laid out in a ternary structure. The A and A’ sections are written in the style of a solo melody with accompaniment, while the B section is in the style of a question and answer dialogue between the piano and two string instruments. In the A section, the melody alternates between the cello and the violin. In the A’ section, the principal theme is recapitulated in the cello, outlining the Dorian mode, with variations in rhythm and embellishments. This entire developmental section ends with two short gestures from the B section as a reminiscence in the piano while the drones are played with the violin’s harmonics and the cello’s low C and G (Example 6.6).
The A section is a recreation of the original folk tune, set for the Western instruments, originally played on a Tibetan traditional recorder, the Xiongling. Chen Yi uses the cello and violin to mimic the pure and lyrical quality of the Xiongling.

The other thematic element present in this section is the harmony in intervals of fifths in harmonics sustained over several measures to create a drone effect. According to the composer’s direct reference, the harmonic idea is taken from the pitched percussion
instruments that accompany the xiongling. The soft and consistent drone sound, made by two pitches at the interval of a fifth, creates a sense of tranquility and serenity as well as a spatial sound. The sound space is supported later by the fundamentals in the piano. The drone is varied in timbre by changes of instruments and by changes from sustained pitches to trills (Example 6.7).

Example 6.7 Chen Yi, Tibetan Tunes, “Du Mu,” mm.6-7.

Example 6.7

The principal theme is constructed of a series of short melodic fragments written mostly in seconds and thirds. Although there is a lack of clear cadential chords, a descending melodic gesture most often indicates the end of a phrase, for example, the descending scale B-A-G♯-E-D in measures 1 to 3 (Example 6.8).


Example 6.8
As the piece progresses, improvisational elements appear, especially in the melody. With the basic structure and melodic outline retained, the extent of improvisation appears to be minor, but it is authentic from a Chinese cultural standpoint. Chen Yi employs this feature of improvisation to connect each section of musical development.

The B section is a development section in which new elements are added to existing material to form new melodic ideas and rhythmic flow. In addition to the tranquil quality of the drones and the lyrical melody, this section has a forward-moving force. The texture becomes rich, colorful and much more dense than in the previous section, due to increased imitative activity and octave writing for the strings and the piano as well as continual key changes (Example 6.9).
Chen Yi’s use of new materials in combination with familiar materials is the principal compositional tool employed in this section. The section is built from a combination of old and new melodic fragments. The string parts frequently recall previously stated materials while the piano adds new harmonic gestures (Example 6.10).

The frequent call-and-response writing, as well as imitation between the string instruments and the piano, provide a rich texture in the B section. A monophonic structure is prevalent for the violin and cello, the melodic line frequently doubled in octaves, and for the piano with octave doubling of the melodic material in both hands. Two pentatonic scales, E and D, are present in this section (E-F#-G#-B-C# and D-E-F#-A-B).

The A’ section has the flavor of reminiscence and concludes the movement. The cellist plays a solo passage that recalls the opening section of the movement and has a similar melodic contour. The melody retains its original characteristics; however, the intervallic relationships and the content are changed. The melody is transposed one step lower from B to A and is played an octave lower. The length of the melody is extended through ornamentation, with a step-wise short melodic gesture, grace notes and trills.

In the final eight measures of the movement, the music returns to its tranquil state and serene atmospheric quality. The drone is taken up by the cello and is accompanied
by the violin’s harmonics. The cellist plays the C fundamental pitch and elongates its duration with tremolos in thirds and trills (Example 6.11).


Chen Yi ends the movement in a manner that does not provide a strong feeling of finality. The sound seems not to end but to dissipate and blend with the sounds of nature and the sounds in the immediate space. The only compositional material that could suggest finality is the return of familiar gestures from the B section in the piano part. As
a function of reminiscence, these melodic gestures are transposed a half step down from the D pentatonic scale to a D-flat pentatonic scale while still maintaining the basic structural skeleton (Example 6.12) (measure 54-56).

Example 6.12 mm. 54-56.

Performance Suggestions

The first movement of Tibetan Tunes is a sound painting landscape. It has a spiritual, chanting quality. Although this movement is not technically challenging, effort and study are required to fully understand the meaning of the music and to bring out the flavor of the music in performance.

Harmonic sound effects are an important aspect of this movement, particularly in representing the drones of ancient instruments. The string players face a special challenge in keeping the bow perfectly balanced on two strings for the duration of the harmonics. A pure, straight tone is preferred for playing harmonics. This is especially challenging in measure 7 as well as mm. 15-17. The author suggests that performers keep the bow close to the bridge, which will assist them in achieving the effect of a pure
straight tone. It is also important to have fresh strings, otherwise the double stop harmonics will be very difficult to produce. (Example 6.13)

Lyricism is an important characteristic in this movement. Chen Yi uses linear texture in this movement to move the music forward. This compositional style is reflected in the continual presence of slurs and legato lines throughout the entire movement. In addition to the lyrical quality, another performance aspect to keep in mind is the imitation of singing and chanting. The author suggests that performers hum their melodies first to discern the flow of the melodic lines as well as the drones. It should be taken into consideration that when playing the drone sound, the performer should treat the ties as vocal phrasing and should breathe (musically) at the end of the tied note (Example 2, measure 3). This also applies to the legato phrases. The performer should treat these lines as vocal phrases and incorporate breathing into the playing. The sound may be sustained and tranquil, but the music is live and moving.

Imitating the tone color of the Tibetan recorder as closely as possible is important. The use of vibrato should be limited, and only to change the tone color. A pure straight tone on both the violin and the cello is preferred in this movement. The string players should emphasize different timbres and degrees of tension by changing the pressure and contact point on the bow.

Vibrato should be used to connect pitches and lines, to create a warm color, and to resonate the final pitch of certain phrases. For example, the pitches played by both the violin and the cello in measure 14 should be vibrated to emphasize the dynamic change (Example 6.14). The pianist should take charge in passages such as the following example of measures 13-14, and should lead the forward direction and crescendo dynamic. The violinist and cellist should listen carefully to the timing as well as the increasing volume of the sound and respond to the changes. (Example 6.14)

Chen Yi’s attempts to create a serene mood in this movement can be seen in her specificity about the kind of timbre and sound she wants in certain passages. Performers should pay careful attention to the instructions and articulations. Her indications are the key to the essence of this movement.

For all three instruments, in addition to slurs the indicating *legato* playing and notes in succession held together by the ties, Chen Yi’s tempo marking at the beginning of the movement is *Serenely*, with a quarter = 60. There are *con sord.* indications at the beginning of the piece and *senza sord.* in measure 15, and the composer gives specific instruction regarding the piano damper pedal. For example, in measure 12, she indicates the pedal to be held through measure 20, and a similar instruction in measures 31 and 43 for the pianist to pay attention to the duration of the damper pedal (Example 6.15). In the final phrase in the piano, the composer carefully placed a stop sign for the damper pedal on the next to last note in measure 55 and a new pedal sign on the last note of the measure.
Example 6.15 Chen Yi *Tibetan Tunes*, “Du Mu,” mm.31-32.
Music and dance plays an important role in accompanying traditional Tibetan festivals, both secular and sacred. This movement, “Dui Xie” is modeled on a specific type of Tibetan folk ensemble music and a folk song entitled “Amaliehuo”. This type of song and dance music originated in western Tibet. In dui xie, the same tune is played at the beginning as well as the end of the song. It is a style of singing and tap dancing with instrumental accompaniment. The instruments used to accompany the singing and dancing are folk instruments such as the plucked instrument Zhamunie, the bamboo flute and the fiddle erhu.

“Dui xie” is a Tibetan word meaning “songs from western Tibet.” Although western Tibet is a mountainous region, Dui xie is not mountain pastoral music but has a more social function as a type of song-and-dance music. The word Dui means upper,
referring to cities or regions near the source of the Yarlung Zangbo River. Xie means song-and-dance.\textsuperscript{93}

Chinese Influence

\textit{Dui xie} is a product of Chen Yi’s philosophy blending Chinese and Western traditions, and transcending cultural and musical boundaries. This work exemplifies the importance of folk music in Chinese people’s lives. Chen Yi is portraying the lives of people from different cultural backgrounds, which includes many ethnic groups living in China. \textit{Tibetan Tunes} is about the Zang people, one of several ethnic minorities in China, who reside mainly in the Tibetan region, with some in the Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuang and Yunnan provinces.\textsuperscript{94}

The Chinese influence in this work is strongly reflected in the rich expression of the melody. Chen Yi retains the lyrical quality and expressiveness of the folk melody and interweaves it with a contemporary compositional language of atonality and bitonality as well as the timbres of the Western instruments. The process of this intermingling results in a work with multiple layers, rich textures, colorful sounds, and expressiveness.

The characteristics of a free melodic-improvisatory style can be seen in the uneven length phrases, the abrupt rising and falling motion of the melodic lines, and the


\textsuperscript{94} Brower, Barbara Anne. Johnson, Barbara Rose. Edit., \textit{Disappearing peoples? : Indigenous groups and ethnic minorities in South and Central Asia} (Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA 2009), 221.
ornamentation. Throughout the entire movement, the melodic lines in the violin and the cello have a free-style quality, much like Tibetan singing and chanting. The melodic direction is designed in a free and improvisatory manner. However, an upward phrase is often followed and balanced by a downward phrase. There is usually one pitch that is more significant and accented within a phrase. Some notes are decorated with different types of articulation and ornamentation.

General Analysis

This movement is laid out in a strophic form. A simple diagram below shows the structure of the movement.

Figure 6.2 Table of Musical Form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>Introduction and ostinato I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Section</td>
<td>11-58</td>
<td>Theme One: contrapuntal melody over rhythmic ostinato I and modulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 1</td>
<td>58-80</td>
<td>Theme Two: rhythmic ostinato II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>80-95</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A’ Section</td>
<td>95-124</td>
<td>Theme One: contrapuntal melody over rhythmic ostinato I and modulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episode 1</td>
<td>125-143</td>
<td>Theme Two: rhythmic ostinato II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>143-160</td>
<td>Coda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The prominent thematic material of the *Dui xie* is laid out in the opening piano melody, in two sequential parts. The first melodic passage (measures 1-5) is presented as a fast introduction, and the second (measures 6-10), features a distinctive *alberti* figuration and quintal chord of three pitches (Ab-Eb-Bb). The second motivic material further develops into an ostinato figure and becomes the accompaniment to the violin and cello parts in the A section. Traditional Chinese pentatonic and diatonic scales are woven
into the structure of the melody in the piano opening, most evidently outlined in measure 3 as a D pentatonic scale (D-E-F#-A-B) (Example 6.16).

Example 6.16 Chen Yi, Tibetan Tunes “Dui Xie.” mm.1-3.

In the A section, theme one is presented at the violin’s entrance at measure 12 and is imitated at the cello’s entrance at measure 26. The first seven notes (D-E-A-B-G-F#-E), derived from the opening piano melody, imply a D pentatonic scale and D mixolydian mode (Example 6.17). Above the piano accompaniment, the violin develops the opening theme primarily focusing on a longer and elaborated restatement of the melody. Near the end of the violin melody, the seven-note phrase is heard again, played by the cellist, in a slow rhythm.


The first episode begins at measure 58 and follows the piano’s further development of quartal and quintal chords from the Introduction. (Example 6.18) This contrasting episode has the steady thirty-second rhythm subdivision turn into sextuplets and eighth note triplets. The piano introduces a new but not unrelated motive. The first
eleven beats of the statement (measures 58-61) in the piano produce a new ostinato figure. Unlike the first ostinato figure which is melodically interesting and decorated with grace notes, this new ostinato figure provides harmonic support with its chordal structure. Chen Yi maintains clear, articulated beats in each measure to emphasize the danceable pulses of the *dui xie* music. The pianist and string players need to emphasize the accents and articulations to propel the music forward, playing short staccatos, with no damper pedal in the piano part, to define this sharp and rhythmic dance music. The composer employs persistent sixteenth note writing in the piano part throughout this section to maintain a feverish pitch (Example 6.19). The vivid, fast rhythms lead the movement to its climax at the end of an ascending passage of inverted fourths at measure 80.


The transition section begins when the piano stops at measure 80, where a call-and-response dialogue begins between the violin and the cello. An emphasis on short motivic phrases of D-E and A-B is presented in the transition section (measures 86-87). The motive of D-E is the opening melody on the violin from the A section while the motive A-B is elaborated further in the return of the A section (Example 20).

The A section returns at measure 95, and the piano begins with a recapitulation of the accompanimental material of the first A section, while the violin and the cello enter with a recapitulation of the main theme also from the first A section. Over the piano, the violin and cello restate the slow main theme in unison an octave apart, moving in parallel motion. This linear melodic passage outlines a key of A pentatonic scale (Example 6.20).
The unison passage leads into the second episode, which is principally the same as the first episode. During the vigorous driving rhythm in the piano accompaniment, the violin and cello develop the contrasting theme primarily focusing on elaborating a restatement of the main theme with the assistance of fast running notes grouped in sextuplet thirty-second notes, as embellishments (Example 6.21). The ostinato figure in the piano gradually reduces the number of repetitions and fades away.

In the coda section, the primary motivic figure returns in the piano part as a recapitulation of the theme from the introduction section. Near the end of the movement (measures 155-160), Chen Yi incorporates three different elements from previous sections as final cadential material. The piano quotes the opening material while the cello’s continuous smooth glissandos and the violin’s sustained harmonics create a gradual dissolution and disappearance into the ether (Example 6.22) (mm.155-160).

Performance Suggestions

*Dui Xie* refers to a type of dancing that involves vigorous steps and vivid rhythmic movements. This performance style is buoyant and full of spirit, and later became popularly accepted in urban areas of Tibet.95 Chen Yi carefully notates the articulations of accents and *staccatos*, to contribute to the lively mood at the beginning of the piece. In measure 58, the marking “no ped.” in the piano indicates that the sound should be dry and clear but it should not be too short (Example 6.23).

Example 6.23 Chen Yi, *Tibetan Tunes* “Dui Xie.” mm. 11-12.

As the essence of this composition is the portrayal of rhythm and dance, the author suggests that all three performers listen to traditional *dui xie* dance music and experiment with how it would feel to dance or move to these rhythms; in other words, to feel the sensation of the movement, tension and positions of parts of the body. For example, the pianist, especially, should feel the sense of the physical movement not only in the hands and fingers, but also in the arms and body. Chen Yi is a pianist herself, and she has composed a number of works for solo piano, including a piano concerto. To

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95 http://www.tibettravel.org/tibetan-culture/838.html
perform Chen Yi’s *Dui Xie*, rhythm is not just a conceptual idea, but is an effect that must be translated authentically from the performers to the audience.

Chen Yi incorporates rhythmic and melodic gestures to describe the dance steps in *Dui Xie*. In the opening of the movement, the piano seems to portray female dancers’ small steps and turns while the left hand portrays male dancers’ masculine moves of slow steps and jumps. This duo dance evolves into a unison dance in which the dancers all dance together with growing intensity.

The author suggests that the pianist maintain a steady inner pulse and clear rhythm throughout the entire movement, emphasizing the off-beat accents as well as the dance-like pulses and rhythms. This will also help with the violinist’s entrance in measure 12 (Example 6.23). The pianist must take charge when it comes to changes of mood and the rhythmic patterns. For example, before the mood changes to “vividly” in measure 58, the violin and the cello have long linear melodic lines. When the piano enters, the rhythm must be decisive with immediate clarity.

The two types of rhythmic ostinatos not only function as accompaniment, but also unite the piece (Example 6.24).

Example 6.24 Chen Yi, *Tibetan Tunes “Dui Xie.”*
All together, the repeated rhythmic patterns and melodic contours in the piano part contribute what amounts to a sequence of ground bass and harmony. Performers should always observe the phrasing and articulations when playing these two rhythmic ostinatos, as they should never sound monotonous.

Chen Yi brings the character of dancing and stamping from the dance into her composition. She also uses different timbres to portray the colorful sounds of the accompanying instruments, such as the plucked zhamunie. Performers should observe the dynamic and articulation markings carefully. The persistent dancing movement begins in measure 58 at a p dynamic level. In measure 60, the piano has a p dynamic while both the violin and cello have a pizzicato articulation at a dynamic level of f (Example 6.25). The pianist should carefully observe the p in order for the strings’ pizzicatos sound to be prominent.

Example 6.25 Chen Yi, Tibetan Tunes “Dui Xie.” mm. 60-61.

The musicians should become familiar with each other’s entrances and melodies since the contrapuntal melodic lines for the violin and the cello are extended in length and are highly decorated. It will be helpful for both string performers to know the length
of the sustained notes in each others’ parts to assist them in finding their entrances with confidence in measures 26 through 28 (Example 6.26).


While the violin and the cello imitate each other closely with contrapuntal melodic lines, it is important that they preserve their independent voices. Both string players should maintain a steady inner pulse linked to the rhythmic patterns in the piano.
For example, in measure 31, when one instrument has quarter note triplets and the other has dotted quarter and eighth note rhythms, it is critical for both performers to feel the same steady tempo and pulse together (Example 6.27).


From measure 60 until measure 78, the piano has the short, quiet and persistent rhythmic ostinato figures while the cello and violin punctuate with *pizzicato*, dance-like gestures. The cellist plays primarily on the downbeat while the violinist enters one sixteenth note later. The cellist and the pianist need to stay together with this close-packed rhythmic activity and need to rehearse these places, first slowly, then gradually in tempo. In addition to right hand *pizzicato*, the violinist should also practice the indicated left hand *pizzicato* in measures 61 to 62, and 68 to 70 (Example 6.28).

Chen Yi is clear about what kind of effects she wants to create throughout the movement. For example, she uses an articulation symbol ( pedal point) (a small circle with a short vertical line on top), meaning “snap pizzicato,” in combination with sf to elicit her intended sounds from both string instruments. The cello encounters the “punctuation” symbols earlier, in measures 61 and 62, as well as in measures 68 and 70 (see example 6.29). In measures 75 to 78, both the cello and violin, in addition to the pizz. indication, have the same “punctuation” symbol with sf (Example 6.30). The author suggests that performers pluck the strings with sf intensity and emphasize the pitch with punctuation. The cellist can give the violinist a clear cue for his/her entrances by emphasizing the accented pitches and slides with the indicated intensity.

Example 6.29 Chen Yi, Tibetan Tunes “Dui Xie.” mm. 68-70.

Example 6.30 Chen Yi, Tibetan Tunes “Dui Xie.” mm. 75-76.
During the coda, it will be helpful to rehearse from the full score to become familiar with each other’s entrances. In addition, maintaining a steady beat will help performers execute their individual gestures and lines. From measure 155 to the end, there is a continuous smooth glissando marked by the composer in the cello (Example 6.31). The author suggests that the cellist elongate the period of the sliding passage and its pace for the full length of fifteen beats. Since the violin ends together with the cello, and the last pitch of the cello part is the highest pitch played by the cellist, it is the cellist’s responsibility to let the violinist know when and how to end together. The author suggests that the cellist cue the last pitch and cut off the note together with the violinist (Example 6.31).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In the program notes\(^{96}\) for her composition “Bright Moonlight”, performed at the 2011 New Music Festival at the University of Louisville, Chen Yi touchingly reflects about her inspiration for the piece:

> “…the structure of the poem, which I wrote in English, is borrowed from a fixed form of Chinese ancient poems called “Picking Mulberry with Added Characters.” It is simple and straight but abstract – from outside to inside, from describing landscapes to expressing thinking, from close to distant, from past to future. It’s about contemporary human beings and our yearning; I think it’s timeless.”

Chen Yi is focused on creating a relevant and living music, music that is in a quite real sense the offspring of two different worlds. Her Eastern, Asian heritage is potent and pervasive and unmistakably infused in her sound world, yet she has found herself firmly planted in the West, creating her music for Western instruments and Western audiences. Ultimately, her work is wholly human, timeless, and purely expressive in fully human terms.

Benjamin Britten once said,

> “It is cruel, you know, that music should be so beautiful. It has the beauty of loneliness of pain; of strength and freedom. The beauty of disappointment and never-satisfied love. The cruel beauty of nature and everlasting beauty of monotony."\(^{97}\)

In this author’s opinion, the beautiful and compelling music of Chen Yi should be

\(^{96}\) Chen Yi

much better known in the West, for its unique and enchanting sound blending two cultures and for its power to connect emotionally with the listener.
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