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CHEN YI'S PIANO MUSIC: CHINESE AESTHETICS
AND WESTERN MODELS

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MUSIC

AUGUST 2003

By
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Sincerely yours, Chen Yi

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>
> Xiaole Li
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an interdisciplinary study of five solo piano pieces by Chen Yi (b. 1953), a leading Chinese-born American composer. Written between 1984 and 2000, these pieces reflect the social and musical movements in particular historical contexts. This research attempts to show how she merges Eastern and Western musical traditions, reflecting a trend toward cultural confluence.

Chapter I states the purpose of the study, gives a historical review and a sketch of Chen Yi’s life. After explaining my approach to this research, Chapter I introduces terms and concepts of Western and Chinese aesthetic thought, as well as Chinese modes. Chapter II briefly discusses selected Chinese piano compositions as a background and possible influences on Chen. The following chapters examine historical backgrounds of the works, the influences of Chinese aesthetics, such as naturalness and terseness of expression, the *Yijing* concept of change, and Western contemporary techniques, such as Bartók’s polymodality and Schoenberg’s twelve-tone method. The theoretical analysis discusses the structure, rhythms, pitch organization, and the sounds of the pieces. The hermeneutic aspects are discovered by investigating the composer’s biographical materials and comparing the pieces.

techniques in *Guessing* and *Ba Ban* by applying both Chinese and Western music theories.

Chapter VII summarizes the pieces in two groups: *Yu Diao* and *Duo Ye* represent Chen Yi’s Chinese national style; *Guessing* is a transitional piece presenting changes in her style. *Small Beijing Gong* and *Ba Ban* represent her blending of East and West with her musical identity as a Chinese-born American composer. The conclusion also discusses Chen’s innovations in developing piano music and some criticism of her compositions. From multiple perspectives, we may gain a better understanding of her music that actively interweaves Chinese and Western musical elements.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In recent years the study of music and musicology has developed to an unprecedented breadth and depth. Those who want to be knowledgeable about the current musical scene must be aware of many profound changes during the last quarter of the twentieth century, such as the rise of popular music in the professional field, the entrance of jazz into the mainstream of American music, the “invasion” of Western twentieth-century techniques into Asian countries, and the rise of Westernized Asian music.

For the first time Asian composers’ music is entering the mainstream of Western classical music. Having broken through the boundaries between nations and cultures, a group of Chinese composers has won international recognition; their works have been performed worldwide and have won top prizes and awards in the West. Chen Yi is one of this elite group.

Her success raises numerous questions. How and why has she risen to the top of contemporary composers in the classical music field first in China and then in the United States? How can she claim that she combines the essences of Eastern and Western musical traditions? Why have American patrons and institutions enthusiastically commissioned compositions from Chen and given her so many awards? How does she reflect the musical trend of cultural confluence? This dissertation touches on these and related matters. After a stream of immigrant European composers left their mark on American music, now is the time for Asian composers to enter the world stage of
classical music and occupy a significant place. This is currently taking place in American music and presents one of the notable stories in contemporary music.

This dissertation is a cultural and analytical study of five solo piano pieces by Chen Yi (b. Guangzhou, 1953). As one of the leading composers of her generation, Chen Yi claims that her music “distills the essence of Chinese and Western musical traditions while attempting to develop new concepts of real music for society and future generations.”¹ She often discusses philosophical ideas and elements embedded in her music. She states,

Although I started learning violin and piano with the standard Western repertoire from an early age, of course I was surrounded and strongly influenced by Chinese culture. I think perhaps a local culture can be best expressed by its natives. The power of ancient totems, the crude beauty of ancient Chinese bronze cups, the exaggerated atmosphere of Han arts, the rhythms of Tang cursive calligraphy, the serenity and otherworldliness of Taoism [Daoism], the sudden epiphanies of Buddhist metaphysics, the open-heartedness of Su Shi’s poetry, the sweet sadness of the poetess Li Qingzhao...can all be reflected in my melodies and rhythms, exemplifying the fine line of Chinese aesthetics.²

Chen Yi has attributed a strong influence in her music to her Chinese cultural heritage, including various Chinese arts and philosophical ideas (Daoist and Buddhist concepts). This emphasis emerged at a time (1993) when Chen was at Columbia University, and the United States and China had resumed relations; the environment was ready to embrace the imported Asian cultures along with more Chinese immigrants and communities toward the new century.

Chen also came to the conclusion that the powerful feeling of ancient Chinese totems—the spirit and rhythmic points of Jingju Bangu (a wooden drum of Beijing opera) and the flowing-water-like huqin (a two-string Chinese instrument) bowing—could be
transformed into highly abstract melodies. She digested their essence and put them in her personalized modern compositions, attempting to create a sort of modified national and ethnic spirit and externalizing it in her music to serve the aesthetic needs of modern society.  

On the one hand, Chen's words show that she has paid attention to various Chinese arts and aesthetics in order to compose music to meet the needs of aesthetic activities in modern societies. On the other hand, her words do not mention systematic consideration of the principles of Chinese aesthetics or of the ideals of eminent aestheticians from different philosophical schools in China's history. Instead, she selects elements from the generally accepted principles of Chinese aesthetics for her personalized style, particularly those that translate well to our modern time and society. Her personal blending of Chinese aesthetic elements with Western techniques is successful and has won recognition in China and in the United States. However, we should avoid categorizing her transformed and modified ethnic spirit or her presentation of Chinese aesthetic elements as equivalent to the body of Chinese aesthetics or as a treatment to all components of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics. Chen Yi's words also touch on the debate of whether music can translate verbal and other meanings.  

As I will try to show, Chen's piano works illustrate a composer's creativity in adopting multiple cultural influences and composing music for the needs of pluralistic societies and multicultural environments. In addition, these works reflect a trend toward cultural confluence.
A. Problems and purpose of the research

Through extensive study and research of the literature on Chen Yi, I have found that existing musicological studies of her do not reflect the sophisticated fusion of influences in her compositions. In the process of her blending of multicultural elements, Chen confronted questions and conflicts; she has treated the problems with personal devices and methods. Many writings on her works focus only on the influence of folk music and on structural analyses, or remain at a superficial level. I will give a review of the literature on Chen Yi in this introduction.

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate how Chen merges influences from Chinese culture, music, and Western techniques and to analyze her solo piano music from multiple perspectives including Chinese philosophical and aesthetic elements, and both Chinese and Western music theories. Chen attributes certain aspects of her compositions to the influence of Chinese aesthetics, the *Yijing* (*the Book of Changes*), and traditional arts such as calligraphy. Because she was brought up in China, she had been taught with a Chinese spirit, and she has intended to weave Chinese aesthetic ideals into her music. However, some of her ideas connecting Chinese aesthetics to her own music may appear to be idiosyncratic and selective. Due to the abstract quality and ambiguity of philosophical ideas, it is difficult to make such points explicit and convincing through her music alone.

Keeping in mind the subtlety of music and debates surrounding aesthetics over the course of centuries, I will discuss how in her solo piano music Chen has developed her musical language and how her music reflects the recent trend toward cultural confluence,
as well as her emotions, and her artistic ideals as they are related to Chinese aesthetic elements.

B. Historical review

Written between 1984 and 2000, Chen Yi’s five solo piano pieces reflect the development of Chen’s compositional style within particular historical, social, and cultural contexts first in China and then in the United States. For example, for the last two decades of the twentieth century, projects of reviving native Chinese musical traditions were carried out throughout China; interactions between Chinese and Western musical cultures have become more extensive and intense. After the fall of the Gang of Four (1976), several historical factors greatly affected Chinese musicians and composers, including Chen Yi.

1. Renewed interest in Chinese folksong and traditional music surged as a reaction to the Cultural Revolution, which had criticized traditional Chinese music as feudal in the categories of “si jiu” (four old things: old thoughts, old costumes, old culture, old habits) and had banned Western classical and contemporary music as “bourgeois.” The Ministry of Culture initiated in 1979 a big project of collecting folksongs in all provinces for a national anthology; according to Antoinet Schimmeldennick, the members of the Musicians’ Association and “tens of thousands of (amateur) folk music collectors are involved in it.” Later the project culminated in the publication of Zhongguo minjian gequ jicheng [China’s Folksong Collections] in several dozen volumes. Chen Yi
participated in this significant movement and studied folksongs and traditional music systematically in her fieldwork.

2. In 1978, the Chinese government adopted an open-door policy and approved a new constitution. The Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] emphasized the goal of Four Modernizations: modernization of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology. A series of foreign policy initiatives including the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the United States and China was announced. The new policies allowed contemporary Western music to be introduced into China; Western composers and professors, including Alexander Goehr, British serialist composer, have been invited to teach at the conservatories in China. Chen Yi studied with Goehr in Beijing and in a workshop in Europe, which enabled her to study the current development of contemporary Western music.

3. Strict political control was relaxed when the 1957 anti-rightist “class-struggle” campaign was condemned and intellectuals received better treatment. As the political criterion was no longer a primary method to judge the value of artistic works, artistic freedom and individuality were given attention and encouragement.

Chen Yi. His writings and teaching on Chinese philosophy, culture, music, and contemporary Western music have exerted a profound influence on Chen. Under these historical conditions, the “new-wave” composers including Chen Yi have enthusiastically revitalized Chinese musical traditions and have used Western contemporary techniques.

5. Since the 1980s, along with the expansion of ethnomusicology, the American musical environment has become more favorable for musicians coming from different parts of the world, particularly for Asian composers. After the founding of the Center for US-China Arts Exchange at Columbia University, cultural exchange between China and the United States has increased. Since then, American musicians have developed increasing interests in Asian music and culture. Some institutions such as the Folk Arts Programs of the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and The New Music Consort supported or “become important patrons of Chinese-American composers.”¹⁰ The Chinatown Chinese Instrumental Ensemble, Women’s Philharmonic Orchestra, the Chanticleer Chorus, and other groups of musicians commissioned and performed Chen Yi and other Chinese composers’ works. Music festivals in the U.S. and around the world have provided opportunities and inspiration for Chen Yi to compose and perform her pieces. This unprecedented rich cultural and musical milieu has prompted Chen’s merging of Eastern and Western musical elements and inspired her to produce an unusual amount of compositions in a musical language combining elements of Chinese musical traditions with a growing influence of Western techniques.
C. Significance of the study

1. Multiple meanings of the subject

Contemporary composers often confront the dichotomies of nationalism versus cosmopolitanism and traditional versus avant-garde music. How to deal with traditional materials, to modernize one’s own cultural heritage and to develop one’s own musical language are the central concerns of many composers. Chen Yi’s works show interesting responses to these problems.

a. Fusing elements of Chinese aesthetics, Beijing opera (Jingju), Chinese instrumental music, and contemporary Western twelve-tone techniques, Chen Yi has established her career as a composer by distilling elements of Chinese and Western musical traditions and has achieved international recognition.

b. She was the first Chinese woman in China to earn a Master’s degree in composition, she was an important figure among the “new wave” composers, and she was the second composer to win the Charles Ives Award (initiated in 1997), developing her musical style from one mostly based on Chinese musical elements to one adopting more elements of American avant-garde style. This study will discuss the development of her musical language.

c. Occupying a central place in her output, Chen’s solo piano works epitomize her musical thoughts and stylistic development.

2. Need for the study

Under Chou Wen-chung’s influence, Chen Yi plays an important role in a confluence of Asian and Western musical traditions. She is among the most active
composers in contemporary classical music. Therefore, her compositions require a new type of musicological research to reveal the variety of their significance.

a. In the 1990s, several doctoral dissertations were devoted to Chou Wen-chung’s music. They analyzed Chou’s works from different viewpoints and focuses.

Chew Seok-kwee’s *An Analysis of the Selected Music of Chou Wen-chung in Relation to Chinese Aesthetics* (1990) discusses the influences of *Yijing* (*I-Ching*) concepts, qin music, and calligraphy in Chou’s compositions written before 1975. Chew also demonstrates how Chou transformed the symbolic Yin-Yang lines of *Yijing* hexagrams into pitches, intervals, and modes. Chew notes that Chinese aesthetic ideas, such as allusiveness and terseness, play important roles in Chou’s music. In the analysis, to indicate Chou’s sonic design in space, Chew uses Cogan and Escot’s graphic method, which helps to show the register distribution and vertical relationships, but it is not sufficient to show horizontal relationships (legato or staccato, linked or detached), dynamics, and the subtlety of timbres.

From an ethnomusicological viewpoint, Peter M. Chang’s dissertation *Chou Wen-chung and His Music: A Musical and Biographical Profile of Cultural Synthesis* (1995) emphasizes the cross-cultural synthesis in Chou’s compositions. His discussions of historical, biographical, and literary information are helpful in understanding the development of Chou’s compositional style. His analysis is brief, and it focuses on important points, (for instance Chou’s “theory based on the *Yijing*’s reflective principles and the complementary opposition of triads vs. dyads.”) Chang offers criticism of
existing Chou Wen-chung literature and reception of Chou’s works, which are rarely found in the writings about the composer.

Lai Eric Chiu Kong’s *A Theory of Pitch Organization* (1995)\(^8\) integrates several music theories to form an analytical network examining Chou Wen-chung’s early works in the 1940s and 1950s. He combines Chinese music theory and Schenkerian theory to show the interactions of pentatonicism and chromaticism; he also applies the theory of Jonathan Bernard and Robert Morris to analyze Chou’s construction of sonorities in space and timbre. Lai stresses that Chou’s compositions are guided by his idea of cultural fusion and his studies of *Yijing* philosophy and Chinese aesthetics. Because he focuses only on pitch organization, his analysis does not discuss rhythmic and aesthetic aspects of the works.

Kwan Chun-Ming Kenneth’s *Compositional Design in Recent Works by Chou Wen-chung* (1996)\(^9\) is an extensive theoretical study of Chou’s philosophical concepts and their transformations, which form Chou’s modal system based on *Yijing* hexagrams and his rhythms based on the Daoist ratio 1:2:3. Kwan applies Allen Forte’s set-class theory to analyze Chou’s Modal Complex of twelve-tone aggregates while illustrating three levels of structural pitch-organization. Since Kwan’s dissertation focuses on theoretical aspects of Chou’s music, the aesthetic and cultural aspects of Chou’s works are briefly mentioned.

Because Chou Wen-chung has been an influential Chinese-born contemporary composer, the above dissertations, with analyses of Chou Wen-chung’s philosophical, aesthetic ideas, theory, and music, have contributed to the study of Asian-born American
composers’ music. Chou’s works and theories based on Chinese concepts and the *Yijing* have attracted increasing attention and received systematic study. However, the “new wave” Chinese-born composers, who are vigorous participants in global music and have won prizes in international competition, have not yet received systematic study in American musicology.

This group of composers, such as Tan Dun, Zhou Long (Chen Yi’s husband), Chen Qigang, Sheng Zong-liang (Bright Sheng), and Ye Xiaogang, try to present Chinese musical traditions with selective use of Western twentieth-century techniques in their individual languages. Chen Yi, like them, has contributed to the merging of Eastern and Western music; she translates Chinese aesthetics, cultural elements, and idioms of Western music into her personal musical language.\(^{20}\)

Except for *Duo Ye*, which has been analyzed in many articles, Chen Yi’s music for piano solo has not received the study it deserves, and the study of her music is still at an early stage. In-depth studies of Chen Yi’s compositions are badly needed. In order to make a scholarly study of her music, one needs to develop a deep understanding of both Chinese and Western musical traditions and contemporary compositional techniques, as well as Chinese aesthetic ideas in Daoism, folk music, *Jingju*, calligraphy, and other arts. This study is an attempt to meet the need for philosophical, aesthetic, cultural, and interdisciplinary studies.
3. Literature reviewed

a. Dissertations

I found nine dissertations that discuss Chen Yi’s works. Two of them are on her works exclusively. Except for Chen Yi’s own dissertation, which mentions philosophy and aesthetics in the introduction, the others focus on the folksong influence and ethnic (national) elements in her works and on structural and technical analyses. On this subject, interdisciplinary studies which examine philosophical and aesthetic elements have not been developed in the dissertations and analytical writings.

Chen Yi’s dissertation, *Piano Concerto* (1993), discusses the philosophical and aesthetic roots of the popular Chinese folk tune “Ba Ban” (Eight Beats) and her use of its principles to design the structure and developmental techniques of the piece. Her piano and orchestral writings are inspired by Chinese vocal and instrumental music. She uses a fragment of the folk tune, a Chen Yi theme (a five-note dissonant chord), and a twelve-tone row as thematic materials and develops them by combining the variation methods of traditional Chinese ensemble music with the Fibonacci series. At the same time, she merges the influence of Chinese aesthetics with that of Western contemporary composers. This dissertation offers basic ideas, including the philosophical concepts, structure, and techniques for analyzing her *Ba Ban* for piano solo.

Chen Moh-wei’s (Chen Mowe’i’s) *Myths from Afar: Chinese Myths Cantata by Chen Yi* (1997) is an analysis of this multi-media stage work. Although Chen Moh-wei mentions the influences of Bartók, Schoenberg, and others at the beginning of the dissertation, he offers no discussion of the combined influences of Schoenberg and
Bartók in the analysis of Chen’s cantata. Chen Moh-wei gives important information about the background and inspiration of the *Chinese Myths Cantata*, as well as Chen Yi’s use of folk-singing motives, but he does not relate Chen Yi’s cantata to Chinese aesthetics and the influences of Chou Wen-chung and other contemporary composers. The weakest part of this dissertation is its bibliography, which contains only three items. The few footnotes and a slim bibliography give this reader an impression that the author built his dissertation on his interview with Chen Yi and a couple of published sources.

Lei Vai-mong’s *Three Pieces by Contemporary Chinese Composers: Lam Bun-Ching, Chen Yi and Zhou Long* (1990) contains one chapter of biographical information and an analysis of *Duo Ye* for piano solo. She gives a detailed description of Chen Yi’s creative use of folk materials and Chinese traditional methods of rhythmic organization. Bartók’s influence on Chen Yi is significant; Chen’s uses of bitonality and syncopated rhythms are influenced by Bartók. Although Lei mentions the influence of Bartók in a footnote, she does not explore this topic nor the influences of Chinese aesthetics and other composers.

Zhou Jinmin’s *New Wave Music in China* (1993) examines a group of composers who represent avant-garde music in China, but the material on each composer is scattered among various topics. From an ethnomusicological viewpoint, Zhou introduces Chen Yi’s personal experience and the compositional techniques in some of her compositions. For instance, he discusses Chen’s exploration of folk rhythmic structure, “shi fan luo gu” and the potentiality of Chinese tradition in conceptual aspects of Chinese thinking.
Another dissertation, *Immigrant Music and Transnational Discourse: Chinese American Music Culture in New York City* (1993) by Zheng Su de San, explores the ethnomusicological subject of Chinese-American immigrant musicians. Most of her chapters describe immigrant musicians' internal cultural conflicts, their music, and performances in their subculture and community. In a twenty-page section, she describes how Chen Yi studied and composed with the twelve-tone row while experiencing some conflicts. Zheng gives important interviews concerning Chen's successful blending of elements from the East and West but does not give analytical discussions in general or specifically concerning influences of Chinese aesthetics on Chen's works.

Xiaoman Zhang Wardell's 1996 dissertation, *An Examination of Selected Contemporary Works Composed by Means of Numbers* has one section on Chen Yi's Piano Concerto, which discusses her use of the Fibonacci series and golden sections in her piano Concerto. In one section of thirty pages, the writer emphasizes Chen Yi's careful planning of the structure of her Piano Concerto, using the (eight-beat) Baban principle of form to elaborate the folk melody. Chen's proportions match the ratio of 5:3. The biggest climax of the concerto is at the point of 0.618, right after the 84th beat (the large structural beat of the “Ba Ban”) at the beginning of measure 412. The two secondary climaxes for each of the two enlarged Baban forms are also carefully arranged in the measures 274 and 544.

The use of a twelve-tone row and control of the rhythm concern the numbers of the Fibonacci series, displaying a skillful handling of a large instrumental work in a personalized style. Because this dissertation focuses on the numerological aspect of
Chen's Piano Concerto, without mentioning her other piano works, Wardell does not discuss the sound images, other aspects of the concerto, and the influences of Chinese aesthetics, nor the influences of Schoenberg, Bartók, and Chou Wen-chung.

Gregory A. Grove's *Chanticleer: A Brief History of America's Only Full-Time Independent Choral Ensemble and A Survey of Its Repertoire* (1996) contains a six-page section on Chen Yi's choral compositions for the group. After an introductory paragraph about Chen Yi, Grove describes Chen's choral works for Chanticleer, including *A Set of Chinese Folksongs, Three Poems from Song Dynasty,* and *Chinese Myths Cantata.* Grove explains the contents, the genres, and the performances of these works without analytical discussions.

Li Songwen's *East Meets West: Nationalistic Elements in Selected Piano Solo Works of Chen Yi* (2001) is a historical and analytical study of Chen Yi's *Duo Ye* and *Ba Ban.* Li emphasizes that Chen's music "is the product of a unique historical period and social environment"; he gives important descriptions of Chen's experience during the 1970s and 1980s. His criticism of the Chinese government's policies seems to be influenced by Richard Kraus's book *Pianos and Politics in China,* which is insightful but one sided. However restricting the Cultural Revolution may have been, it stressed Chinese national music and hence left a positive influence on Chen (see page 21). For Chen's experience after 1986, Li mainly relies on the information on her website. After offering a survey of general features of Chen's compositions, Li uses pitch-set theory and makes a precise structural analysis of the two pieces. He describes some sound effects of the works from a pianist's viewpoint, such as sounds of Chinese instruments and Jingju
reciting tunes, which Chen compared to Schoenberg’s *Sprechstimme*. Li does not discuss the influences of Chinese philosophy, aesthetics, and other Western composers.

Ting-Ju Lai’s dissertation contains a five-page section on Chen Yi while mainly analyzing Bright Sheng’s piece and presents his own composition *Fly to the Moon*. His dissertation, *A Perspective on Ethnic Synthesis in Twentieth Century Art Music with a Focus on An Analysis of String Quartet No. 3 by Bright Sheng*. Vol. I. *Fly to the Moon* (2001), concentrates on the ethnic synthesis of Chinese sources and Western techniques from the aspects of pitch, rhythm, harmony, and orchestration. He notes that Chen Yi creates pitch collections by combining elements of pentatonic, whole tone, and chromatic scales and uses enlarged “Ba Ban” rhythmic groups in her several works. In Lai’s accounts of ethnic synthesis shared by several Chinese-born composers and their personal devices, he only mentions that Taoism [Daoism] and *I-Ching* [Yijing] have great impact on Tan Dun’s aesthetics and creative process.  

The common features of these dissertations are their emphases on Chinese musical and folksong influences in the works and their reliance on the composer’s program notes, analyses, and descriptions. Certainly, Chinese folksong influences Chen Yi, and her use of Chinese traditional idioms is a central part of her creativity. The common failure of these dissertations is that their bibliographies or sections on Chen Yi are too limited to the extent that they lack materials related to the cultural, aesthetic, and philosophical influences on her. Most of these dissertations were written in the early 1990s when the study of Chen Yi’s works was at an early stage.
b. Master’s thesis: one thesis is found on Chen Yi and her compositions.

Guo Xin’s *Technical Innovation and Stylistic Evolution in Selected Works, 1987-1997, by Chen Yi* is a serious study of six of Chen Yi’s works: *Woodwind Quintet* (1987), *Near Distance* (1988), *Sparkle* (1992), *Piano Concerto* (1993), *Symphony No.2* (1993), and *Qi* (1997). Guo offers insights on the structures of the works, the pitch and rhythmic organizations, and some Chinese and Western techniques, such as “shape” of phrase. Guo’s critical ideas on these works are interesting arguments different from the articles in journals and newspapers. However, Guo neither describes the sound effects and aesthetics of the works on a conceptual level, nor does she discuss the influences of Chinese and Western composers on Chen Yi.

c. With the increasing significance of multiculturalism in the United States, many newspaper and journal articles have reported on the performances of Chen Yi’s works and her distinct personal style. The articles can be categorized in three types:

1. a description of Chen’s life and her contributions to multiculturalism, 2. a musical analysis of one or more works, 3. a music critic’s review of Chen’s compositions, CDs or concerts.

Dee Wedemeyer’s article “A Chinese-Born Composer and Her Own Long March” and Andrew Druckenbrod’s “Chinese Composer Melds Humor with Hardship” represent the first type of articles, describing Chen’s life, career, and works in a unique blending of Chinese and Western musical traditions. The journal articles: Tang Jiangping’s “Tradition is Alive” and Guo Xin’s “Eastern and Western Techniques in Qi by Chen Yi” offer analyses of *Duo Ye* for piano solo and the chamber pieces, *Qi,*
Sparkle, and The Points through using both Chinese music theory and pitch set theory. Their interests are in the structures and techniques; the discussions of sound and influences are limited.

Most newspaper reviews comment on Chen Yi’s highly personalized style, mastery of orchestral forces, and variety of sounds. A few articles, such as John Henken’s “Pairing of Eastern, Western Notions,”{34} does briefly mention the influences upon Chen and that she echoes Mario Davidovsky and Jacob R. Druckman.{35} Marti Bernheimer’s review notes the challenge Chen’s complex music offers and confesses that the audience’s ears were stretched.{36}

Reviewing Chen’s orchestral, chamber, and vocal works, most articles touch on the theme of the merging of East and West. With the exception of some articles by Chinese theorists, the articles are general and superficial. No analytical writings are devoted to Chen’s Yu Diao, Small Beijing Gong, and Guessing for piano solo, which reflect the development of Chen Yi’s personal style.

4. Composer Chen Yi

Chen Yi’s life can be divided into four periods, during which different music and aesthetics (Western classical, Marxist-Maoist, Chinese traditional, and Western contemporary music) have left marks on Chen’s compositions.

Born to a family of physicians in Guangzhou, China, in 1953, Chen Yi started her violin and piano lessons at the age of three. In her early musical education, the influences of Western and Chinese musical traditions were both crucial. As music lovers, her father played the violin, and her mother played the piano. Her elder sister, known as a child
prodigy in piano, was accepted by the Attached Elementary School of the Central Conservatory of Music; her younger brother played the violin. (Later, her siblings became professional musicians.) When the family had meals together, her father would always have her play a phonograph record of Mozart’s music. He said to her, “Ah mei [little sister], after you grow up, if you are able to play your own works, like the great musicians, it would be great!” Her father’s words and the music played in her family during her childhood stimulated Chen’s aspiration to pursue a musical career.37

During the first period (1953-66), when the influence of Western classical music on Chen was dominant, she listened to recordings of Western classical music only and practiced the violin and piano daily. At the same time, Chen was also exposed to Cantonese music and operas from local radio stations and the music around her; the sounds of Chinese instruments and opera singing were imbued in Chen’s mind.38

During the second period, the Cultural Revolution (1966-78), the dominant trend of Marxist-Maoist ideology and aesthetics promoted revolutionary and patriotic music with populist aesthetics. The promoting of Chinese national music including revolutionary songs was carried out in a coercive political environment along with destructive criticism of traditional music. The harsh treatment deprived the intellectuals and students of normal development. During these years, many intellectuals suffered from mistreatment. Chen Yi’s father was suspected of being a foreign spy and was sent to the countryside to work as a doctor. Chen often recalls hardships during the Cultural Revolution. She said that “at home I wore leather shoes everyday, but when I went to the countryside, I did not wear shoes
even for one day."39 When she was fifteen years old, Chen was sent to a mountain area as a laborer. With her violin, she played revolutionary music for the farmers between or after their heavy work shifts; her strategy was to wedge Western etudes between revolutionary songs and to play Western repertoire when she was alone.40 Hardships endured at the time of the Cultural Revolution. Although the daily twelve-hour labor, carrying rocks and sand to the top of the mountain for building irrigation walls, was very hard, playing music helped Chen survive the two years. The work of carrying rocks could damage a violinist’s fingers and cause physical harm; Chen considers the experience a tragedy, but even though she is under no political pressure to say so, she maintains that she turned the tragic experience into a sort of treasure. Because of this experience, she says she began to learn the meaning [value] of an individual life.41 In the intense “re-education,” she worked with peasants, listened to their singing, and she began to understand ordinary people and had contact with folk music.42

By responding flexibly and resourcefully to the ideological coercion and harsh treatment, Chinese musicians and young students, including Chen Yi, were able to profit from contact with folk music and seized the opportunity to develop their musical talent by playing revolutionary songs and performing modern Beijing operas. Li Songwen notes that, “This experience also helped her to gain firsthand knowledge of the raw folk elements in the music of her motherland and ‘the simplicity, the accent, the honesty, and the style of folk culture.’”43

In Chinese tradition, a maxim of Laozi often causes people to think dialectically about catastrophe and good luck. Laozi states that “Good fortune depends on bad
Chinese-born composers including Chen Yi turned their adversity during the Cultural Revolution into the stimulus for reflecting on life and its meanings and into a resource for musical creativity.

Chen returned to her native city in 1970 when there was an urgent need for players of Western instruments for Modern Beijing operas; she served as a concertmaster and composer for the Guangzhou Beijing Opera Troupe. During these eight years (1970-78), three things seem to have been important for Chen Yi's future compositions,

a. Her mind was deeply imbued with the idioms and the spirit of Jingju (Beijing opera).

b. She wrote incidental music for new operas, which used both Chinese and Western instruments.

c. She paid attention to Chinese string, wind, and percussion instruments and learned to play the *ruan* when there was a need.

Moreover, although few people would recommend repeating the ways of "re-education," the positive attitude of the young musicians, including Chen Yi, enabled them to participate in various activities, including performing and composing in Jingju or singing dancing troupes. Chen wrote, "When I started playing the Chinese tunes, I loved it and felt that it's my own language! I could use my violin to speak out from my own heart!" Chen absorbed the idioms and sounds of Jingju as her native language. Chinese music began to occupy a central place in Chen's mind.

During the third period (1978-86), Chen received systematic training in Western classical music theory and Chinese traditional music theory at the Central Conservatory
of Music. She studied composition with the well-known Chinese composer and educator Wu Zuqiang (b. 1927) and the visiting British composer Alexander Goehr (b. 1932), who was known for his individual use of serial techniques. Professor Wu was the first crucial figure who introduced Bartók’s music to her and influenced her in the use of traditional elements and compositional techniques.

Graduating from the National Music College in 1947, Wu seriously studied Western classical and romantic music at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music in Moscow. Since 1958, he has taught at the Central Conservatory, emphasizing depth of compositional content, development of techniques, and increasing use of polyphonic elements. He also advocates distilling fresh ideas from studying traditions, but not introducing innovations to the point of leaving the listener behind. With the pipa virtuoso Liu Dehai, he co-composed the concerto *Little Sisters of the Grassland* for pipa and Western orchestra. In *Duo Ye*, Chen Yi’s balancing of tradition and innovation may reflect Professor Wu’s influence on her. Wu’s combining of the Chinese instrument, solo pipa, with Western orchestra also left its mark on her compositions. It appears that Professor Wu’s influence has been underestimated.

Chen Yi studied the required courses for a composition major: harmony, orchestration, counterpoint, form, and analysis. Although Chen considers that her music belongs to the category of the Western classical tradition, she has always emphasized with gratitude her coursework in ethnic music and the inseparable relationship between her works and Chinese folk music and regional music. Between semesters, she went to the countryside to do fieldwork and transcribe folksongs. For her courses, she memorized
folksongs collected from fifty ethnic groups and more than twenty provinces and sang them as part of her tests. The course work also included writing papers analyzing the style and structures of folk music, regional operas, and *qu-yi* (the story-telling art in *singing-speech* style). Her research into folk traditions proved useful in her quest to modernizing these traditions, for Chen has, since this period, turned to the vital, rustic qualities of Chinese folk music.

Chen’s studies of Chinese aesthetics, literature, poetry, and other arts contributed to her goal of reviving and modernizing Chinese musical traditions, which reflected the historical and social movement of her time. In intensive classes with Professor Alexander Goehr, Chen studied twentieth-century compositional styles and techniques. The six selected students had “twice a week composition one-on-one lessons with the whole classroom of teachers listening, who were invited from nine conservatories in all major cities of China.” Chen’s study of twentieth-century techniques played an important role in the formation of her avant-garde style. Her use of dissonance and avoidance of conventional tonal plan in *Duo Ye* show the influence of this study.

When celebrating her graduation from the conservatory, she gave a whole concert of her works. Her major works in this period included *Duo Ye* for piano solo, *Duo Ye* No.1 for Orchestra, the Viola Concerto *Xian Shi*, and *Three Poems from the Song Dynasty* for chorus. Her avant-garde style features regional and traditional Chinese musical idioms, careful structural designs, unconventional sonorities (pantonal and bitonal passages), and use of folk idioms.
Chen Yi’s fourth period extends from 1986 to the present. Chen studied contemporary Western music at Columbia University, and she transformed her compositional style from ethnic Chinese to a type of American or Western avant-garde style combined with Chinese elements. After Chen earned her master’s degree, she came to the United States and studied with Chou Wen-chung, Mario Davidovsky, and others. While Chen studied the history of Western music from the early Middle Ages, she also embraced the techniques of contemporary Western music. From 1986 to 1993, she developed her own musical language and a way to express her cultural identity. Su de San Zheng remarks, “Chen Yi’s case offers a fascinating example of complexity in contemporary music culture and cultural identity.”

Chen agrees that Western music had a deep influence on her; the sound of Western compositions became part of her language. At the same time, Chen has been presented as a woman composer from China by the New Music Consort in New York (1992) and in musical festivals in America and in Europe. After experiencing conflict and self-questioning, Chen chose to use the twelve-tone method in imitating the speech-singing of Jingju in her As in a Dream (1988) for soprano, violin, and cello. (This song is the setting of the poem, Ru Meng Ling, by the poet Li Qiangzhao (1084-1151). She adopted atonal techniques in the Near Distance Sextet (1989) to express the conflict between ancient and modern cultures. During her years at Columbia University Chen studied for her doctoral degree in composition; hence she expanded the breadth and depth of her studies in three ways:
a. She investigated the cultural roots, social environment, and humanistic aspects of Western music by attending numerous concerts in concert halls, churches, and parks, and by listening to music on streets and at subway stations in New York City. She believes that one may use sources freely and creatively when studying the origin, development, and results of musical styles or cultures.

b. Under the influence of Chou Wen-chung and Mario Davidovsky, Chen Yi began to see the parallels between Chinese and Western music and to focus on merging the musical elements of the East and West. Although she composes on Chinese subjects, she uses more and more Western contemporary techniques, such as serial methods. Chen said:

My professor Chou Wen-chung at Columbia University used to lecture on new music as well as on ethnomusicology research and would speak about combining Eastern and Western culture... It was like standing at a higher point and gave me the ability to consider not new music versus historical music, not East versus West, but to consider human thought. I began to see similarities in musical styles, aesthetics, customs, feelings, principles.

This led to notable changes in Chen’s musical style from composing works close to Chinese folksongs and aesthetics to composing works for people from different cultures with a growing influence of Western techniques.

c. She drew inspiration from a wide range of sources. In a number of American avant-garde works, Chen features a blending of elements of Chinese folk music and Jingju with twelve-tone themes in atonal contexts. With a Chinese spirit and aesthetics, the rhythms of Chinese calligraphy, the linear motion of melodic lines, and the colors of Chinese instruments are interwoven into Westernized contemporary sounds. As a result,
she has been “successful in gaining ground in the American contemporary music
circle.”

In 1993 she received her Ph.D. with distinction from Columbia University and
became the composer-in-residence for the Women’s Philharmonic Orchestra, Chanticleer
choral ensemble, and the Aptos Creative Arts program, in San Francisco. After teaching
at the Peabody Conservatory, she has taught at the University of Missouri-Kansas City as
the Cravens/Millsap/Missouri Distinguished Professor in Composition since in 1998.

After 1993 Chen’s methods of melding twelve-tone techniques, pointillism, and
Chinese elements became more personalized with an emphasis on expressing a Chinese
spirit and aesthetics. She also explored new sonorities by imitating Chinese instrumental
sounds using the Western orchestra or combining Chinese instruments with the Western
orchestra. Chen has also written for Chinese instrumental ensembles and arranged
several sets of Asian folk songs for chorus. Her major works in this period include the
*Chinese Myths Cantata* (1996), *Qi* for chamber ensemble (1997) and *Ba Ban* for piano
solo (2000). Her mingling of influences (Bartok’s bitonal techniques, Chou’s application
of Chinese aesthetics, Davidovsky’s logical form, Goehr’s combination of modal and
atonal materials, Druckman’s tonal quotation in atonal contexts) forms a personal style
that is eclectic and abstract, reflecting pluralism in contemporary music. Although
Chinese spirit and aesthetics play vital roles in these works, the sound images are typical
of New York avant-garde style. According to my observation, Chen has developed her
musical style from one close to Chinese traditional music and aesthetics to a style with
increasing influence of Western avant-garde techniques and modified Chinese musical elements.

In the process of immigration, Chen Yi has gradually modified her view of her cultural identity. For example, in an interview in 1995, she said that she is not an American composer but a Chinese composer; the contents and style of her music are Chinese. In 1999 Chen Yi became a U.S. citizen; in a forum of NewMusicBox, she wrote,

Since music is a universal language, music composition reflects the precipitation of a composer’s cultural and psychological construct; I think that all musical works composed in the States AND influenced by American culture are considered American music. The modern society, especially the American society, is like a great network of complex latitudes and attitudes, everything exists in equal rights under different cultures (both historical and contemporary), environments and conditions. They keep changing at every moment and interact with others, so that each experience that we composers come across can become the source and exciting medium of our creation. That’s why I don’t have a fixed scope, a frame of styles to expect to hear when someone says “American music.” I am very open to it.

From this statement, Chen appears to consider her music within “a great network” of American music. Facing increasing pluralism and multi-ethnicity in American music, Chen has consciously and carefully constructed her cultural identity by fusing Chinese aesthetics and American avant-garde musical idioms. To many listeners, her musical style seems Westernized; however, she still speaks in her own personal language since she was educated in and has been influenced by both Chinese and Western musical traditions.

Chen Yi is also conscious of her status as a female composer. While working at the International Women Composers’ Resource Center at the Women’s Philharmonic
from 1993-1996, Chen Yi not only worked hard to break ground for women in the male-dominated academic field, but she also has recommended many other women composers’ compositions, thus helping them to get grants and residencies. In her cello concerto *Eleanor’s Gift*, Chen pays homage to Mrs. Roosevelt for her contribution to human rights for all people in the world, including the poor, women, and black soldiers in the US Army during World War II. The dreamy passages in her *Ba Ban* may suggest her emotions, which are similar to the sweet sadness in her song *As in a Dream*.

Chen Yi’s compositions have been performed in the United States, Germany, France, and Asian countries. Her works have become increasingly well known, while she has won many honors and awards, such as first prize for her *Duo Ye* for piano solo from the Fourth Chinese National Composition Competition (1984), the Lili Boulanger Award, and the Charles Ives Prize in 2001. Her honors also include awards and fellowships from the Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Civitella Ranieri Foundation, the American Academy of Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Eddie Medora King Award (University of Texas at Austin), and many others.

Jin Jian receptively describes Chen’s path as one “searching for roots in the classics while taking an avant-garde road.” Chen’s developed musical style is expressed through her own distinctive personal language that contains techniques and markers that deliberately signify both Western and Chinese traditions. Figure 1 provides an overview of four periods in Chen’s life.
### Fig. 1. The Periods of Major Influences in Chen Yi’s Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Influences</th>
<th>Instructors</th>
<th>Typical compositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1953-66</td>
<td>Western classical music</td>
<td>Zheng Rihua (violin)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese music</td>
<td>Li Suxin (piano)</td>
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<td>Zheng Zhong (theory)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1966-78         | Marxist-Maoist ideology, revolutionary music |                         | incidental music 
|                 |                                     |                           |                                 |
| 1978-86         | Western classical music, Chinese folk & regional music, aesthetics | Wu Zuqiang, Alexander Goehr | *Duo Ye*, *Xian Shi* Symphony No.1, *Yu Diao*, Viola Concerto |
| 1986-present    | contemporary Western music, Chinese aesthetics, American music | Chou Wen-chung, Mario Davidovsky, Jacob Druckman | *As in a Dream*, *Near Distance*, *Qi*, Symphony No.2, *Chinese Myths Cantata*, *Ba Ban* |

### D. My approach

1. **Historical-cultural approach and theoretical analysis**

   Designing a method or approach for analyzing Chen Yi’s compositions is a challenging and crucial task. The method must be based on the elements integrated in the compositions. As mentioned earlier, Chen Yi’s works were composed during the period of 1984-2000; her music mirrors active interactions between Chinese and Western musical cultures and pluralism of its time. Moreover, Chen frequently discusses elements of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics in her compositions. Therefore, any single conventional analytical mode is unable to reveal the multiple significances and complex fusion of elements in her music.
Fig. 1. The Periods of Major Influences in Chen Yi’s Life

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To achieve thorough understanding of music, recent developments in musicology promote interdisciplinary studies and combinations of methods. For instance, J. Peter Burkholder, professor of musicology at Indiana University and the author of many journal articles, notes that “analysis of this music [such as Mozart’s operas] should rightly entail not only discovering the harmonic, melodic, thematic, rhythmic, metric, and phrase structure, but also recognizing their historical understanding.” He considers the emotional, national or cultural associations, allusions and meanings, and sound effects to be “inseparable parts of the musical web.” While analyzing the techniques and structure it is easy to forget to describe the sound and expression of the music. Kofi Agawu reminds us that “the score provides a reference point from which the analyst reaches out towards one sound-image or another.” Ian D. Bent and Lawrence Kramer also encourage interpretation of musical meanings and different activities in musical analysis. I use both the historical-cultural approach and theoretical methods in my analysis and at the same time engage in interdisciplinary studies, exploring and connecting the philosophical and hermeneutic elements with the sounds of these piano pieces.

2. My method of analysis

Based on the above discussions, my analytical method or approach will apply the concepts of Chinese aesthetics and techniques of Chinese and Western music theories, such as Chinese modal and pitch-class theories, in my analysis. The influences of Chinese music and aesthetics are of primary concern in the analysis. The chapters will also discuss Western composers’ influences in Chen Yi’s solo piano pieces. In the formal
analysis part, I may adopt Schoenberg's twelve-tone method and Allen Forte's pitch class theory to explain Chen Yi's organizations of materials when necessary. Because Chen mingles Western and Eastern musical idioms, I will use a combination of approaches and borrow an interdisciplinary method in analysis. As mentioned earlier, the analysis of each work may vary from piece to piece depending on the needs of the individual work. While I analyze Chen's integration of Chinese and Western influences, the procedures may include the following:

a. the historical, cultural background of the piece and the pluralism of its time,

b. elements of Chinese aesthetics,

c. the influences of Chinese or Western composers,

d. Chen Yi's use of structure, rhythms, and pitch materials,

e. the sounds and timbres in space and time,

f. the referential meanings of the pieces.

3. Definitions:

To treat fully the topic of aesthetics, the subject of numerous philosophical books and articles, would be beyond the scope of this dissertation. The purpose of this section is to introduce briefly the origin and evolution of the term "aesthetics" and to show the relationship between this Western term and the Chinese view of aesthetics, giving a context for its influences reflected in Chen Yi's music.

a. The term "aesthetics" in Europe

The term aesthetics was first used in 1735 by Alexander Baumgarten, German philosopher, "who derived it from the Greek aisthanomai, which means perception by
means of the senses." He adapted the rationalism of Leibniz for the study of aesthetics. The *Routledge Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy* explains the term aesthetics: "As the subject is now understood, it consists of two parts: the philosophy of art, and the philosophy of the aesthetic experience and character of objects or phenomena that are not art." Linda Goehr writes that Immanuel Kant's "initial importance for the aesthetics of music (e.g., his treatise *Critique of Judgment*, 1790) actually derives from his theory of knowledge (1781)." According to Kant, an aesthetic idea is "the representation of the imagination" and "a product of the cognitive acts of a subject," which depends on the cognitive ability to recognize something meaningful.

The romantics emphasized nature as absolute beauty outside of the subjective realm. But Sir Percy Buck, British philosopher, thought that psychology deals with people's aesthetic experience: "Beauty resides in the response to a particular stimulus, in our feelings stirred by this particular object."

In his lectures on the philosophy of fine art (1842-43), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) stated, "Artistic rather than natural beauty is the subject matter of aesthetics, which may thus be called, more properly, the philosophy of fine art. The word Aesthetics in its literal sense is perhaps not quite appropriate here, for its means, strictly speaking, the science of sensation or feeling." He rejected the classical aesthetic concept that "art's perfection consisted in a rational-disciplined 'imitation of nature.'"

According to Gary Shapiro, "Hegel defined the beauty of art as the manifestation of the idea in sensuous form," different from logic and reasoning. He emphasized the inwardness and mental activities embodied in various arts, which catch human visions of
atmosphere, mood, light, and expression. He analyzed the dialectical form and structure of poetry and drama in terms of subjective-objective relations and explicit meanings.\textsuperscript{87} But to him, "music moves further into the inner world by abandoning spatial form altogether . . . and it must be heard sequentially."\textsuperscript{88} Hegel considered that instrumental music lacks semantic content. Thus, instrumental music being incomplete is a lower form of art.\textsuperscript{89} In contrast to Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), German philosopher, held that music could express all meanings, beyond what can be expressed in words. He viewed music as a reflection of man’s experience of the world through presentation of sense, including man’s irrational will and emotions, and as a "means of temporarily escaping finitude via its lack of worldly meaning."\textsuperscript{90}

The German philosopher F. D. E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) developed a theory of hermeneutics, "the art of interpretation," maintaining that the essential aspects of aesthetics are interpretative activities which give senses of beauty and delight through "the mobility of self-consciousness" and knowledge.\textsuperscript{91}

Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904), the most influential music critic and aesthetician of his time, represented formalist aesthetics. He believed that music had aesthetic autonomy in its pure "sonically moving forms," which are independent from extra-musical meanings. He argued that music cannot represent definite thought and feelings; music only presents dynamic properties which are characteristics of emotional states.\textsuperscript{92} In his treatise, he held that the "thematic idea" might be identified as the spiritual substance, but "natural objects and literary or historical characteristics can no more constitute the objective 'content' of music than can emotions."\textsuperscript{93} Hanslick contributed to the scientific
approach in music analysis, investigating the beautiful objects in melody, harmony, rhythm, and technique. However, as Goehr notes “the boundaries between the musical and the non-musical are not absolute as he wished to make them.” He placed the aesthetic value of musical works solely on the structures and thematic materials in opposition to the ideas of program music of the New German composers (Liszt and Wagner), reflecting a trend toward positivist materialism. Notwithstanding certain logical elements in his approach to aesthetics, he was not able to use scientific criteria to judge hermeneutic interpretation of music.

Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii (1828-89), a Russian socialist philosopher, criticized Hegel’s aesthetic theory, arguing that there is no absolute beauty in reality or nature. Chernyshevskii held that human understanding of beauty rests on the relativity of space, time, and class attitude. He proposed the thesis “beauty is life”: “the beautiful is the object which expresses life, or reminds us of life” because “[t]he most general thing that pleases man, and the dearest thing in the world to him is Life.” He emphasized that people with different experience and in various social positions have diverse standards of beauty. His theory has influenced Russian and Chinese contemporary aestheticians.

Twentieth-century aesthetics evolved sophisticated theories connecting music to its contexts of history and society, and with a hermeneutic approach. Theodor Adorno (1903-69), the leading philosopher and musicologist of the German Frankfurt School, noted the freedom and independence in music as the emancipation of the composer’s self and a critique of society. He explored, beyond sensory listening, social meanings of music, such as commercialization of popular music. Although his attempt to analyze
musical form with sociological decoding is less convincing, his theory of social meanings in art forms is his important contribution to modern aesthetics.  

The works of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), German twentieth-century philosopher, and Carl Dahlhaus (1928-89), the influential German musicologist, represent the hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches. They interpreted aesthetic experience as interactions between music and human experience in the world context. The American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey wrote a book on aesthetics, *Art as Experience*. His most important idea is "consummatory experience." He sees aesthetic experience as an interaction between the individual and the world, which "comes to be consciously experienced as a developmental process culminating in the kind of organic integrity and wholeness which makes the event sensed as deeply meaningful."  

Peter Kivy, contemporary American philosopher, has written books on philosophy of music and aesthetics. He discusses basic human faculties, the imagination and the understanding in Kant’s theory, and he responds to the formalism of Hanslick. On the common ground of humanity, people share pleasure while perceiving the beautiful in art works of genius. He writes that music possesses for us emotions as perceived qualities of our sensible experience. Music has the power to arouse emotions such as sadness or happiness; “it makes perfect sense to describe music in expressive terms.” Using persona and tendency theories, he tries to give an analysis of how music moves us emotionally and to show the expressive properties in music, which reflects the non-formalistic practice of musical interpretation.
b. Terms related to Chinese aesthetics:

This study focuses on the influence of Chinese aesthetic elements as referred to by Chen Yi in her writings and as reflected in her music rather than attempting a systematic study of the entire area of Chinese aesthetics. As I will show, Chen’s discussions of Chinese aesthetics share similarities with some Western philosophical concepts mentioned above, including the beauty of music, arts, and natural scenes reflected in her melodies and rhythms as an interaction between an individual and the objects. Since aesthetics is a branch of philosophy, inevitably, I will mention terms from two principal Chinese philosophical schools, Confucianism and Daoism, and eminent philosophers and aestheticians who contributed to Chinese aesthetic ideals. These two schools represent different ways of Chinese thought in their approach to such subjects as studies of the cosmos, human society, and the relationship between them. Confucianism and Daoism not only deal with broad issues of the universe and humanities, they also provide views on beauty (aesthetics) and artistic experience.

Chen Yi may not directly quote from certain philosophers or aestheticians, but she frequently draws ideas from Chinese traditional aesthetic elements. Here, the following criteria determine what is included in the terms related to Chinese aesthetics:

i. representing a major philosophical trend and contributing to Chinese aesthetic ideas,

ii. being somehow related to the section dealing with the twelve Chinese aesthetic elements found in Chen’s music,

iii. serving as a background to show what Chen selects or does not select.
Due to the limited scope of my study, this section is limited to a framework composed of selected aesthetic ideas found in Chen Yi’s music. To give a context for this discussion, I will briefly outline a history of Chinese aesthetics and related terms. Further information on Chinese aesthetics and philosophy may be found in numerous books on the subject, such as Feng Youlan’s *Short History of Chinese Philosophy*,[104] Jiang Xiaodong and Jiang Wanbao’s *Critical Biographies of Chinese Aestheticians*,[105] and Cai Zhongde’s *The History of Chinese Music Aesthetics*. I discuss only the most influential philosophers and certain aesthetic concepts that may influence Chen’s music.

It is commonly understood by Chinese scholars and people that aesthetics is the study of beauty in nature and in arts. There are different definitions for Chinese aesthetics. Wu Kuang-ming, a contemporary scholar of Chinese philosophy, remarks that “For the Chinese, beauty is a sentiment that pervades life and represents a reaching toward the noble, the true, and the right and an uplifting of all life’s interactions. The ugly, the horrendous, the tragic, and the base [the lowness] are utilized to enhance what is beautiful and uplifting. There is no room to indulge in the absurd for its own sake.”[106] The *Great China Encyclopedia* defines the term music aesthetics as the fundamental and theoretical study of the inner laws of music in their entirety from an elevated perspective.[107]

c. A brief review of Chinese aesthetic thought

Aesthetics as an independent branch of philosophy was first introduced to China from the West in the early twentieth century, but Chinese scholars had explored and investigated the meaning of beauty since the Warring States (403 B. C.). The earliest
statements on judging beauty date from the end of the Zhou Dynasty (c. 1122-255 B. C.) in scattered quotations (no books available). The idea of harmony as beauty emerged in the recorded quotations of Hao Wengong. The ideas of li (ritual) and yue (music and arts) appeared, but no treatises on music were found. During the Warring States period, various philosophical schools emerged. Among them Confucianism and Daoism were the most influential.

Confucianism: The Confucian ideas of li (ritual) and yue (arts). Confucianism, traditionally attributed to Confucius (Kongzi, or Kong Qiu 551-479 B. C.), addresses ethical issues, such as the relationship between the individual and society and between man and heaven. According to Cai Zhongde (musicologist and professor at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing), li, yue, ren (benevolence), and zhongyong (golden mean or equilibrium) are the essence of Confucian aesthetic ideas. Li, ritual, refers to people's roles and responsibilities in family and society; the ideal of yue (music and arts) was closely related to li, guided by the political system of the past Zhou Dynasty. Confucian principles became the state official doctrines during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.). Confucius’ central ideas on beautiful music and the arts were embedded in the concepts of zhongyong (golden mean, or equilibrium) and harmony. Harmonious music would move people’s hearts, mold their temperaments, and cultivate them.

However, Chen Yi does not select the idea of zhongyong as a Chinese aesthetic element in her music. This shows her selective use of Chinese aesthetics, for she uses more contrasting and changing elements rather than equilibrium. She writes that “since the vertical form of the notes from the “Ba Ban” theme (a Chinese folk tune) was too
consonant to my ear, I combined the other two pitch materials [a twelve-tone theme and a Chen Yi theme] to create my harmonic language.” She also says that she composes with the twelve-tone method and micro-tones; thus her music can have more variety.

Mengzi, Meng Ke or Meng Tzu, Mencius (c. 372-289), one of the most important Confucian thinkers and educators of the Warring States Period, was born to a poor but noble family. Mencius developed Confucius’ idea of ren (benevolence) and initiated a theory of the goodness (shan) of human nature and the idea of min wei gui, jun wei jing (people being more precious than the king). He believed that spiritual righteousness and loftiness not merely sound, taste, and color delighted people in appreciation of beauty. His inclusion of the spiritual quality as one of aesthetic components was his contribution to Chinese aesthetic thought. Meng Weiyan, writing in the newspaper World Weekly, discusses Mengzi’s emphasis on the people (being more precious than oneself) and compares this with Chen’s Duo Ye that conveys a philosophical idea about the folk.

Daoism, a Chinese way of thought or a religion, was cultivated in ancient China (4th century B.C.) and has been influential in intellectual and artistic circles ever since. Scholars have different views about Laozi (c. sixth century B.C.), one of the founders of Daoism, and are uncertain about his dates and biography. Daoism, known as Lao-Zhuang philosophy, is exemplified by two texts: Daodejing (Dao De Jing or Laozi) and Zhuangzi, which lead to a simple way of life, self-cultivation (de), and maintain the principle of accepting the natural development of events.

Laozi’s book Daodejing or Laozi comments on the universe, politics, military affairs, society, human action, virtue, and culture. The core concepts of Daoism are dao
(the way), *yin-yang* (female-male, or positive-negative), *qi* (vital energy), and *he* (harmony). Daoism guides people in understanding the development of the cosmos and leads people to adjust their action to natural laws. The *Daodejing* states the origin of the universe and the ideas of *yin-yang* and *qi*:

*Dao gives rise to one,*  
*One to two,*  
*Two to three,*  
*And three to myriad things.*  
*The myriad things shoulder *yin* and embrace *yang,*  
*And mix the *qi* [the generative forces] to achieve harmony.*

The central questions in *Daodejing* are how to achieve one's excellence (*de*) and to go on one's pathway following the law of nature (*dao*). Laozi's view of beauty emphasizes spontaneous expression in harmony with nature, as opposed to artificial ornamentation. Zhuangzi (Zhuang Zhou, Master Zhuang, 369-286 B.C.) developed Laozi's thought; his aesthetics emphasized beauty in nature, man's self-cultivation in harmony with nature, and free imagination in expression. Chen Yi often emphasizes naturalness, spontaneity, and imagination (e.g., imagining the dancing lines of calligraphy and the mysterious space in Chinese paintings) in her expression. Her music is closely related to her native language, Chinese folk and traditional music, and custom (see Chapter III, Chinese aesthetics as reflected in *Yu Diao*), mirroring the Daoist aesthetic ideals. She selectively uses Daoist concepts *qi* and *qing gao dan yuan* (freshness and loftiness, lightness or indifference, and distance) in forming her personal expression.

In the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), scholars continued to develop Confucianism and Daoism. Sometimes, they combined the ideas of the two schools while dealing with questions in the areas of the cosmos and society. The new concepts
appeared, such as *tian ren he yi* (the unity of nature and man) in the writings of Dong Zhongshu (179-104 B.C., an influential Confucian scholar) and the cosmic *qi* (energy) described in *Huainanzi* (an early Han Dynasty Compendium of knowledge) compiled by Liu An, a man of letters. Dong emphasized that art was derived from nature; it should conform to nature but is superior to nature, and unites with nature in an individual’s heart.\(^{119}\) *Huainanzi* follows Laozi’s thought but writes that before the formation of the universe, *qi* emerged in the void. The *qi*, essence of life, produced *yin-yang* and formed the heaven, earth, and myriad things.\(^{120}\) Although Chen does not directly refer to Dong and *Huainanzi*, she often combines her feeling with mountain song style and refers to her impression of nature and *qi* as described in her *Qi* quartet (see p. 58).\(^{121}\) Her expression shows the influence of the idea of unity of man and nature, an idea which was early developed by Dong Zhongshu.

*Yueji* (*Record of Arts and Music*) is one of the most important and systematic writings on arts, music, and aesthetics. Scholars are not certain about the date of *Yueji*. One opinion dates it from the Han Dynasty (73-49 B.C.) It exists in different editions and fragments as a part or a chapter of the *Liji* (total about 7000 words). This treatise summarizes Confucian thought that emphasizes the relationship between ethics and the arts. According to Cai Zhongde, *Yueji* notes the relationships between poetry, dance, and music, which foreshadows the pluralistic meaning of *yue*. *Yueji* also discusses the origin of music, musical phenomena, and aesthetic elements such as *yin-yang*, *ba gua* (the eight trigrams of the *Yijing*), and *yi-xiang* (meaning and image)\(^{122}\). These points will be discussed under Chen Yi’s remarks on Chinese aesthetic elements in this introduction.
During the Wei-Jin and Southern-Northern Dynasties (266-580 A.D.), the development of aesthetic thought may be represented by Ji Kang (223-262 A.D.), Shen Yue (441-513 A.D.), and Gu Kaizhi (346-407 A.D.). Chen Yi often uses the word *shen-yun* (spirit and rhyme) to explain her music. Some aesthetic ideas of Ji Kang, Shen Yue, and Gu Kaizhi may contribute to the pluralistic meaning of *shen yun*. Ji’s ideal of beauty was the quest of freedom in human nature as against the Confucian doctrines of *li, yue, de, and yi* (righteousness). Ji also promoted rational ideas, such as beautiful music expressed in harmonious forms combining rhythm, timbre, and pitch range, which might not be necessarily connected with emotions. Shen Yue’s contribution was to apply the study of tones to poetry. He emphasizes that the rising and falling tones in the spoken language correspond to emotions, rhyme, and structural unity. Gu Kaizhi (348-407 A.D.) was known as an excellent artist, whose paintings depict landscapes in continuity and men with vivid expressions or spiritual characteristics. His work *On Painting* discusses the idea of *qian xiang miao de* (transforming the artist’s feelings into the painting and creating something wonderful and imaginative). This approach reflects the close relationship between the artist’s mind and the aesthetic object, foreshadowing the idea of *shen-yun*.

During the Tang and Song Dynasties (618-1279 A.D.), the golden age of Chinese literature and poetry, the outstanding poets and artists Bai Juyi (772-846 A.D.) and Su Shi (1037-1101) represented certain aesthetic ideals of the time. Bai emphasized the social and realistic functions of poetry. Drawing subjects from contemporary life, his poems praised benevolence and attacked corruption. In aesthetic experience, he expressed deep
emotions and communicated with qi, through which the artist and the listener or reader would be moved and affected. As a talented poet and artist, Su Shi’s aesthetic ideal features the blending of scene and the artist and the unity of content and form. Conveying a soulful expression (chuan shen) was his key point in his grandiose, imaginative, allusive, metaphorical, and virile style. Chen Yi notes that the open-heartedness of Su Shi’s poetry can be reflected in her music. This may be perceived in Chen’s trio Song in Winter for harpsichord, dizi (bamboo flute), and zheng (Chinese zither). This work portrays and praises the pine and bamboo as icons of persistency and sublime spirit against evil trends in a virtuosic style.

During the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Li Zhi (1527-1602), a thinker, and Li Yu (1611-1679), a playwright, were influential. Li Zhi promoted natural beauty and freedom in expression as against conventional restraints. His fundamental theory is “a child-like heart is the true heart;” one who has a child-like heart can create truly beautiful art. Li Yu wrote sixteen volumes of theory on theatrical arts. He promoted a realistic approach to subjects and individuality in expression. To achieve the best aesthetic results, he considered audiences’ needs and customs, stressing the unity of multiple elements of theatrical art, including the structure of a play, inner emotions of characters, music, lights, and staging. Chen Yi’s youthful spirit in her pieces for children coincides with Li Zhi’s aesthetic approach; her consideration of audiences’ needs and customs from various cultures seems to resemble certain of Li Yu’s aesthetic ideas.
d. Contemporary (twentieth-century) Chinese aesthetic thought

Among contemporary aestheticians, Lu Xun (original name Zhou Shuren, 1881-1936) was the most influential figure. To reflect his time, Lu believed that the arts should be derived from life yet reach higher than life. When China was suffering from foreign invasions and oppression in the early twentieth century, he criticized corruption in society and wrote novels and works to awaken the Chinese people to fight against oppression. Lu’s tragic fiction and writings reveal beautiful elements in ordinary people’s lives and the truth of reality, such as the helplessness of conventional ideology, e.g., equilibrium when faced with China’s critical situation. Lu strove to initiate a movement of enlightenment to develop a new national ideology. His *The True Story of Ah Q* represented his thought on social problems and tragedies and inspired Chen Yi to compose her clarinet solo of the same title.131

Zhu Guangqian (1897-1986) was a renowned Chinese aesthetician and the founder of modern Chinese aesthetics. After studying at London University and Paris and other universities (1925-33), he returned to China and introduced Western aesthetics to his country by translating and publishing books and by teaching. Zhu’s theory of aesthetics combines elements of the theories of Hegel, Nietzsche, Schiller, and others, including beauty as a trait of art and aesthetics as a realm fusing intuition and knowledge. After studying Marxism, he modified his theory and tried to unite the subjective and objective realms by relating aesthetics to social activities and artistic experience, which cause intuitive feelings and move on to judging and thinking.132
Zong Baihua (1897-1986) renowned philosopher, poet, translator, and comparative aesthetician, studied philosophy and aesthetics at the Berlin and Frankfurt Universities and was influenced by Kant and Goethe's views of aesthetics. He explored the reflection of man's soul in an artistic realm of color, rhythm, harmony, and order; his writings on aesthetics describe the ethos and meanings of Chinese painting, music, and poetry in elegant and refined language. He made comparisons between Chinese aesthetic thought and Western classical, romantic, and impressionist ideas. Hence, he has been credited with forming a systematic, comparative theory of Chinese aesthetic thought. His comparison of spatial-cosmic feeling in European painting and in Chinese music and the contrast of Western object-subject dichotomy with Chinese yin-yang unity provide examples of creative and specialized research. In an interview with Yan Li, Chen says that she formed a solid Chinese cultural basis when she was in China and that she has a love of Chinese arts and has read many books on Chinese literature, arts, and aesthetics, including the works of Zhu Guangqian and Zong Baihua. All of these directly influence her aesthetic views and composition.\textsuperscript{133}

Li Zehou (b. 1930), a Chinese scholar of philosophy,\textsuperscript{134} has contributed a series of books to philosophy and aesthetics. He writes that Chinese philosophers at the time of the ancient Greeks emphasized the intuitive aspects of aesthetics and its relation to ethics. The different philosophies of Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and others have penetrated and contradicted each other, which has caused waves of arguments in the history of Chinese aesthetics. The characteristics of Chinese thought tend to highlight imagination and the harmonious relationship between human activities and nature.
Aestheticians believe that the human mind is a part of nature and that the union of object and artist is an ideal state.

Li states that contemporary aesthetics was introduced from the West. Nikolay Gavrilovich Chernyshevskii's theory, which was not really highly regarded in the West, has become the foundation of Chinese modern aesthetic classics. Chinese aestheticians have "reformed" Chernyshevskii's theory, holding that beauty exists in social life and experience, which parallels Marx's theory of the essence of social life as practical experience. They critically and creatively, says Li, carry on the Chinese heritage in developing Marxism and Chinese aesthetics with their own national characteristics.

He cultivated his theory based on human social experience, called Human-Centered Philosophy or principal pragmatic philosophy (zhuti xin shijian zhexue, main philosophy of experience).\textsuperscript{135} Li Zehou discusses three levels of aesthetic experience:

a. \textit{yue mu yue er}, (the sense of beauty, the delight of listening and seeing);

b. \textit{yue xin yue yi}, (the satisfaction of mind-heart, the pleasant feeling);

c. \textit{yue zhi yue shen}, (the delight of intellectual intuition and the delight of spirit).\textsuperscript{136}

Although some scholars disagree with traditional ideas on man's nature and aesthetics,\textsuperscript{137} scholars have made generalizations of Chinese aesthetics, such as connecting aesthetic ideals to ethics, promoting self-cultivation, and preference for harmonious sounds. However, the debates concerning pro-\textit{li} or pro-naturalness and whether music carries semantic meanings and emotions continue. Certain generalizations of Chinese aesthetics, such as the preference for harmonious sounds, may not be selected by Chen Yi
as the essence of Chinese aesthetics. Li Zehou’s theory of aesthetic experience may help to explain Chen Yi’s ideas on Chinese aesthetics and help us in listening to and understanding her music. Therefore, one should keep this in mind while comparing the historical and contemporary evolution of aesthetics with Chen’s presentation of this subject in her music.

E. Chen Yi’s remarks on Chinese aesthetic elements

Chen Yi has claimed that through studying Chinese aesthetics over a long period, she established her aesthetic views.138 “Since music is a beautiful thing,” she said “it needs a listener to have the aesthetic experience; it needs to be known and understood by people.”139 As mentioned earlier, Chen’s selective use of Chinese aesthetics is based on her ideas about how to develop and modernize Chinese music traditions. Therefore, the aesthetic elements presented in her works are her reflections and understanding of Chinese aesthetics in a personalized musical language, which may not contain all essential elements of Chinese aesthetics and may not conform to other people’s (such as Wei Tingge, the Chinese critic) views of Chinese aesthetics.

Chen hopes to bring people the feelings of delight, beauty, and awakening which resemble some of the discussions of aesthetics both by Li Zehou and other important aestheticians. Chen has discussed the ideas of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics, such as the relationship between nature and man (see Chapter III). Her music aims to reflect some concepts of the *Yijing* (*the Book of Changes*), *yin* and *yang* (the two positive and negative forces in the universe), *qi* (vital energy), *shen-yun* (spirit and rhyme), *yi-xiang*
(meanings and image), rhythms of calligraphy, and the quality of fluidity. Her literary allusions illustrate her use of Chinese cultural elements as symbols and sources of inspiration. Following an order from general to specific aesthetic concepts, I will discuss the elements of Chinese aesthetics reflected in Chen's works and explain these points in the following paragraphs. Chen uses Chinese aesthetic elements to help distinguish herself from other contemporary composers on the international scene. Her allusions to Chinese instrumental sonorities and rhythms of calligraphy become an important part of her musical language.

1. The relationship between nature and man

In a 1998 interview, Chen talked about the Golden Section, Fibonacci series, and creating musical language related to principles of nature:

If you see the human body, you see a proportion, .618, the ratio between the upper and lower parts of the body. If you look at flower petals or honeycomb made by bees, you see it's the same. The numbers are also that of the Fibonacci series. It's nature! Music is kind of a natural language that expresses human beings' emotion and thinking. If I create my music in a language that I am most familiar with, meeting some principles that are related to nature logically, then my creation would be very natural in emotion and powerful in spirit. I think it's ideal.

The concept of the Golden Section is shared by Chinese and Western thinkers, but the Fibonacci series is a solely Western conception. Chen's words show that she frequently fuses Eastern and Western traditions in her view of nature and naturalness.

Chen Yi has applied these principles, including the Fibonacci series and the Golden Section, to Ba Ban. The above discussion mirrors the Chinese concepts of Dao and the idea of tianren heyi (the unity of nature and man). According to the Yijing, the philosophy of oneness of man and the universe is the foundation of Chinese culture.
Chou Wen-chung discussed the idea of oneness in Chinese aesthetics:

"The identification of oneself with nature or the universe (i.e. dao) is the highest achievement in the spiritual cultivation of man and this is to be attained only through the understanding of the natural power inherent in individual things and in the universe as a whole (e.g. de, virtue)."143 Chen notes that her music combines Chinese and Western musical materials and medium, but the inspirations and ideas behind the pieces (in the disc Sparkle) are mostly Chinese. She dedicated her Qi to Professor Chou Wen-chung on his 75th birthday in 1998, expressing her deep gratitude to his mentorship in her composition concepts and artistic thoughts.144 In Chen's foregoing quotation the link she sees between man and nature is in the same vein as Chou's views as given above.

Zhuang Zi, one of the eminent Daoist masters, used metaphors to describe this oneness, "Heaven and earth are one finger, myriad beings are one horse . . . Only the enlightened know how to comprehend all as unity . . . This is called the way."145

The Daodejing, the principal book of Daoism, states,

The way that can be spoken of, is not the constant way;
The name that can be named, is not the constant name.
The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth;
The named was the mother of the myriad creatures.146

When nature goes its way, people may not see its path and invisible force, but it exists in the universe. Daoism guides people to reflect upon the hidden force that makes nature go its way. Richard J. Smith notes, "The essence of Daoism lay in doing what comes naturally. This meant not striving . . . Where Confucians esteemed ritual and self-control, Daoists valued spontaneity and freedom from artificial constraint."147 Smith emphasizes that Daoism encouraged freedom in expression and artistic creativity.
In many passages, *Daode Jing* tells us:

I do my utmost to attain emptiness;  
I hold firmly to stillness.  
The myriad creatures all rise together  
And I watch their return.\(^{148}\)

In his every movement a man of great virtue  
Follows the way and the way only.  
When the best student hears about the way  
He practises [practices] it assiduously.\(^{149}\)

Because all things are what they are and what they can be, one should simply let them be. Calm as a deep ocean, a Daoist would be alone without being troubled by worldly loss or excited by ordinary gain. The aloof attitude toward worldly desire and appreciation of natural things separates Daoists from the formalist doctrine of the Confucians. Chen Yi states that the serenity and otherworldliness of Daoism are reflected in her compositions.\(^{150}\) Chen Yi’s allusions to Daoist aloofness and otherworldliness may be derived from such ideas as those expressed in the foregoing quotation.

### 2. Chinese ideology of *yue*

Chen Yi states that her music connects to a network-system of Chinese culture because she has absorbed “nutrition” from Chinese poetry, literature, painting, folksong, architecture, sculpture, and other arts.\(^{151}\) This idea of *yue* can be seen in its close relationship to other aspects of Chinese culture and arts, including philosophy. Liang Mingyue, a scholar of Asian music, states that, since ancient times, “the archaic form of the ideograph *yue/le*\(^{152}\) has both extrinsic and intrinsic references. Extrinsicly it pertains to sensuality while intrinsically it embodies all the arts: the performing arts of music and dance, literature, the fine arts, architecture and even the culinary arts as well.”\(^{153}\)
Because of these close associations, Chinese musicians love to use allusions to other arts. For example, both Chou Wen-chung and Chen Yi composed vocal works based on poems from the Tang dynasty. Chen’s *Dunhuang Fantasy* for cello and orchestra describes the fascinating sculptures of the Han Dynasty. Her *Monologue* for Clarinet in B♭ (Impressions on the True Story of Ah Q) depicts her impressions of Lu Xun’s famous novel, *The True Story of Ah Q*. The speech-singing tunes in *Small Beijing Gong* and *Duo Ye* transform the recitatives of Jingju into an expression for the piano. One may find allusions to dance in *Duo Ye* and rhythms of calligraphy in *Ba Ban*. All these examples show the close relationship between music and other arts and the eclectic idea of *yue*.

3. Concepts associated with the *Yijing*

In Chen Yi’s dissertation, she mentions the ancient theory of Eight Trigrams, the basic content of the *Yijing* (the *Book of Changes*) (although she calls the trigrams diagrams). Each trigram consists of three whole or broken lines. The whole lines represent *yang* while the broken lines represent *yin*, which are arranged in different combinations. She notes that “in nature, for example, the diagrams indicate heaven, earth, thunder, [lake,] wind and wood, rain and water, sun and fire, mountain and marsh.”*154* These are the names for the eight primary trigrams in the *Yijing*. Chen connects the sixty-four trigrams to the folk tune “Ba Ban.” She writes, “In practice, people overlap two diagrams to form a six-line diagram and thus get 64 different diagrams. “Baban” has eight 8-beat phrases, plus 4 beats that represent the four seasons, to get the Golden Section, so there is a total of 68 beats [in the folk tune].”*155*
Obviously, these refer to the sixty-four hexagrams in the *Yijing*. The number sixty-four is significant in Chinese traditional ceremonial music (*li yue*); each of the six pieces for Confucius has sixty-four beats. According to Gao Houyong, a Chinese musicologist, some folk musicians think that “Ba Ban” was created according to the order of the eight trigrams—eight times eight makes sixty-four; then, by adding four beats between the fifth and sixth phrases to represent the four seasons, a total of sixty-eight beats results.” In constructing her Piano Concerto, Chen concentrates on the similarity in the numerological systems between the *Yijing* hexagrams and the folk tune “Ba Ban.”

Dating from twelfth century B.C., the *Yijing* was originally a book of divination. In the Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.-24 A.D.), “it became the first of thirteen official classics of Chinese culture.” To explore prophecies for nature and fates of people and events, thinkers and philosophers, including King Wen of the Zhou Dynasty and Confucius, wrote texts and appendices for the sixty-four hexagrams, explaining the whole or divided lines in terms of different levels of denoted and connoted meanings, such as a dragon, a gentleman, and a horse in metaphorical meanings.

According to Henry Wei, a contemporary scholar and translator of the *Yijing*, some people might think that the *Yijing* contains absurd and clumsy syntax because it is a book of divination. It is difficult to understand. Because divination was popular and Confucius promoted it, it became one of the classics of the Confucian school. Nevertheless, the study of the *Yijing* has developed and become an area of study in humanities and philosophy.
According to Cai Zhongde, the *Yijing* consists of two parts: the texts *Jing* and the commentary *Zhuan* called *Yizhuan* or *Shi Yi* [*Ten Wings*],\(^{161}\) which have been found in fragments and have been translated in different editions and perhaps were from different authors, including King Wen of the Zhou Dynasty, his son the Duke of Zhou, Confucius and the Confucian school.\(^{162}\) Although the *Yijing* does not discuss music, the "*Xiang Shang,*" one section of the *Shi Yi*, explains the hexagrams and comments on music. It states that music is the imitation of spring thunder, which is the *yang qi* that brings life to myriad things. Music can bring people happiness; thus our forebears played music to worship and pray to Gods, deities, and ancestors for help. The ideas of music coming from *yang qi* (*yang* vital energy) in nature, imitating nature and for social stability, epitomize the ancient thought about music and influenced the following generations greatly.\(^{163}\)

To give an overview of the *Yijing*, the German scholar Hellmut Wilhelm writes,

the Book [*Yijing*] is based on sixty-four hexagrams, that is, sixty-four six-line figures, each figure or complex being composed of undivided and of divided lines. . . We find images representing the primary needs of man—for instance, The Corners of the Mouth, symbolizing nourishment—and also images that picture the evolution of personality: Youthful Folly, Molting, Biting through, Possession, Return . . . , and, above all (the first two hexagrams), The Creative and The Receptive.\(^{164}\)

Wilhelm explains the two basic components of the hexagrams: "a whole, undivided line, representing the *yang* force, or a line divided in the middle, representing the *yin* force."\(^{165}\) The *yang* symbolizes brightness, heaven, virility, the positive, and masculinity while the *yin* symbolizes darkness, earth, docility, the negative, and femininity. These two components form the hexagrams, connoting natural phenomena
and events in a procedure of development. The hexagrams are read from bottom to top; the texts and appendix describe the meanings of the whole or broken lines. Chen Yi’s use of *Yijing* elements is selective, concentrating on its numerological and structural aspects.

The possible influence of another *Yijing* concept on Chen Yi is change. The concept of change, derived by observing natural phenomena, dominates the system of the book. Each line of the hexagrams indicates a stage of change in a life or phenomenon. The texts and appendix attached to each hexagram explain the meanings of each line in the hexagrams. The concept: “Change that is un-changeable” is a dialectical thought, which guides people to adjust their actions according to the law of nature along the course of evolution and development in personal and social lives.

Guo Qingye reports that Chen Yi tries to remain aware of the constant changes in life. Chen said, “All changes can arouse our creative imagination.” She has drawn inspiration from the central philosophical idea of the *Yijing* to create new sounds and forms. Her Symphony No. 1 abstractly describes her reflections on the history of human civilization and her aspiration in a youthful expression. Xu Ying notes that the fresh (unexpected) tone groups emerge in a rich orchestral texture. After listening to her 1986 concert, Li Ling remarked that Chen intends to create fluctuation and changes, which sometimes seem to be excessive and complicated. In her Piano Concerto and *Ba Ban* for piano solo she manipulates a sonic stream in constant change of timbre, rhythm, and pitch materials, exemplifying the idea of change in her music.
4. Elements of yin and yang

Chen Yi has referred to the words yin and yang in her dissertation and in her interviews. When she discusses the number eight in Chinese culture and the principal syndromes in traditional Chinese medicine, the first pair of syndromes are yin and yang. She explains the ideas about contrasting components in her Near Distance: the ancient culture and the modern world as yin and yang. She said “Near Distance, in fact, these two words stand far apart, they are antonyms. [Something] you can’t really hold, something doesn’t appear in front of you. . . . Near Distance, is an antonym of the ultra extreme of the distance, you can also interpret it as yin and yang.”¹⁶⁹ Her words show that she often thinks of pairs of components in terms of yin and yang when expressing ideas related to Chinese cultural traditions. Certainly, she has also been influenced by Western musical culture and the techniques commonly used to create contrasts. Chen often uses extreme contrasts in tempo, register, dynamic, and pitches. Nevertheless, the most familiar thought system for her is still Chinese. Thinking in terms of yin and yang is a way to explain her approach: juxtaposing and contrasting “the ultra extremes” in her composition.

The Yijing has been studied by scholars in different countries. The rational tradition of contemporary research downplays the divination text, its occult and sexual aspects by exploring its philosophical and numerological readings.¹⁷⁰ In this light, we may understand Chou Wen-chung’s use of binary arithmetic [0 = yin and 1 = yang] in the enumeration and transmutations of the eight trigrams and their translation into musical terms, reflecting the principle of yin-yang to construct his variable modes.¹⁷¹ (He divides
an octave into three equal segments; each features a conjunction of two major seconds, symbolizing the divided yin lines in the hexagrams, and a minor second plus a major third, symbolizing the undivided yang lines). Chen’s reference to the trigrams and hexagrams connects this ancient theory to her organization of Ba Ban. Both composers draw from the Yijing ideas of change, cyclical alternation, abstractness and suggestiveness of natural objects in their music (e.g., mountain-lake mode, mountain-song style).

5. Literary references

Chen Yi has shown a strong preference for meaningful titles, which may be related to shi yi (poetic meaning or imagination). Han Kuo-hung, ethnomusicologist and Professor at North Illinois University, discusses and analyzes the Chinese mind and its tradition of program music: “there is a strong traditional attitude favoring references to concrete objects in general and the use of descriptive titles in particular.”

Chinese musicians love literary connotations and like to interpret musical compositions from a literary point of view.

Chen’s titles acknowledge the sources of inspiration (e.g. Duo Ye), describe poetic images (Small Beijing Gong), and reflect Chinese philosophical thoughts and their realizations (Qi). Certainly, Chen must have known program music in Western repertoires, such as Franz Liszt’s Faust Symphony and Robert Schumann’s Carnaval, evoking vivid literary and sonic images. Chen often gives program notes to her works and CDs, explaining her allusions and inviting the audience to share the aesthetic experience within her music.

Noting the widely accepted theory in China, Han and other scholars write that some titles of Chinese works indicate metric structure, such as Shi Liu Ban (sixteen beats)
and *Old Ba Ban* (Old Eight Beats). Certain pieces are derived from the interludes of operas; they have no connection to the original text and are absolute music in nature.\textsuperscript{174} *Yu Diao* belongs to the latter type, which tells the source of the piece but has no literary meaning, while *Small Beijing Gong, Duo Ye, and Guessing* bear descriptive titles.

6. **The quality of fluidity**

A love of the quality of fluidity is shared by people in different cultures. For instance, fluidity is also a feature of French music. The Chinese mind perhaps favors fluidity above other musical elements (e.g., harmony), as can be seen in their heterophonic and monophonic textures. These textures support the sense of momentum in contrast with the attention to (vertical) harmony and counterpoint in the West. Chen Yi’s pieces often feature fluidity in heterophonic and monophonic textures. For instance, *Yu Diao* and *Guessing* depict children’s naive, active nature and emotions through their fast tempo, lively melodic line, and characteristic rhythms. Whether in Chinese music, calligraphy, or painting, artists and musicians often create a stream of sound, or lines representing the flow of energy. Lines and melodies flow naturally and freely, evoking the listener’s appreciation. Fluidity is created by an impetus of motion, a sense of living force, which is considered to be associated with the Daoist’s unconstrained style: the spontaneity of lines and sound.

7. **Terseness in expression**

Originating in the Chinese tonal language, the melody or the tones in a musical composition are often the central concern. Chen Yi avoids multiple layers of harmonies and uses a simple melody and spare texture as in *Yu Diao* and *Guessing*. In the same
cultural tradition, Chinese musicians and painters have cultivated their arts with similar aesthetics. A Chinese artist often leaves a large proportion of the paper blank; the blank space suggests the unlimited and the vastness of nature, evoking a sense of infinity. In music, monophony or heterophony in a linear texture reflects an idea of understatement. This terseness is a “cultivated quality.” Michael Sullivan, writing on Chinese art, notes that “The Chinese painter deliberately avoids a complete statement because he knows that we never know everything . . . All he can do is to liberate the imagination and set it wandering over the limitless spaces of the universe.”

8. The concept of qi

*Qi* (or chi) in Daoism refers to a vital although possibly unseen energy in nature. As the origin of the universe and all living beings, *qi* determines the qualities and characteristics of an artistic work, as well as the basis of psychological aesthetic activities. Chen Yi considers “*qi*” an “eternal power” and “one of the basic elements of nature.” She writes, “it [*qi*] is untouchable, mysterious, yet strong and powerful. It melts into air and light, like the space in Chinese paintings, filled into the dancing lines in Chinese calligraphy. It is also the spirit in the human mind.” She has translated the idea and feeling of *qi* into *Qi*, her quartet, and the Piano concerto *Baban*, illustrating the flow of *qi*. As a kind of natural language, her music is in part a realization of *qi* in sound.

9. Unity of the artist and the object (*yi-xiang*, meaning and image)

Chen Yi attempts to represent elements of Chinese culture in her music; she writes, “I believe that words and ideas can be translated into music.” Chen has tried to abstract the aesthetic ideas of Chinese arts, including sculpture, poetry, painting, and
calligraphy, into her music. (See quotation on p. 1) Her statement underlines the Chinese concept of yi-xiang, which unites the artist with an object in an artwork. An artist infuses the scene or natural image with his or her emotions or meanings (rather than only depicting an object's outward appearance). Therefore, the artwork is an allusion to or a metaphor of natural objects, the inherent qualities and the spirit of the culture. This allusiveness is also called xie yi, expressing emotions and meanings while depicting scenes, which can be perceived in Duo Ye. In a Chinese painter's words, Chen does not use gong bi (direct depiction of objects) but uses xie yi, describing the spirit inherent in the objects.

10. Shen-yun: the spirit and charm

Meng Weiyan reports that Chen Yi aims to present Chinese shen-yun in her music. Remembering the words of one of her first teachers about "speaking in her own language by her music," Chen considers "her own language" to be derived from Chinese techniques and particularly refers to Chinese shen-yun; she translates shen as Spirit, Value, and Essence. According to the Chinese Great Encyclopedia, shen refers to a realm of high-level thoughts in artworks, the essential spiritual trait, or sometimes refers to artistic imagination. The youthful vigor, boldness, naturalness, and effortlessness can be perceived as shen-yun in Duo Ye.

As yun (such as rhyme, charm) is expressed in Chinese painting, Chen Yi presents the yun in her music. For example, she tries to depict different melodic lines resembling the lines in calligraphy, which may be heard in the terseness of texture and the elastic
rhythm of floating lines. Yun may also refer to the spiritual quality and appearance and its implicit characteristics, the infinite interests in a realm beyond the realistic world. 184

11. Aesthetics of calligraphy

The aesthetic ideal in calligraphy reflects not only the structure of Chinese characters but also the spiritual and artistic qualities (shen-yun), the energy (qi) and spontaneity in the changing momentum and control of the flow of ink (in brush writing and painting). 185 For over three thousand years, calligraphy has been cultivated as an emblem of the elite culture. Mario Bussagli notes,

Calligraphy, painting and poetry are closely linked. The Chinese world of culture reflects a very special sort of society, one in which the “literate man” is both painter and poet besides scholar and philosopher. His brush serves to give written form to his thoughts and pictorial form to his fantasies and moods ... it is more a case of a man’s being reflected in his brush. 186

Chen Yi has said that in her music she has illustrated the rhythms of Tang-dynasty caoshu, cursive calligraphy, reflecting the shen-yun of Chinese arts. 187 With the simple tools of brush, ink, and a kind of fast absorbing paper, the Tang cursive calligraphers created ideograms with inner vitality and spontaneity. Alfred Frankenstein reports that Chou Wen-chung called his special compositional techniques “brushwork,” suggesting the flecks, twists, darts, and slashes of Chinese painting or calligraphy. 188 One may notice that Chen’s reference to the presence of calligraphy in her works emerged after her arrival in the United States. This might indicate that she has been influenced by Chou Wen-chung’s analogy of melodic brushwork. Holly Selby states “When Chen Yi composes, she thinks of the fluid, dancing lines of Chinese calligraphy.” 189 This is
reflected in her orchestral work *Linear*. Chen has also translated the spirit and image of calligraphy into her *Qi* and *Ba Ban*.

12. Emphasis on timbre

Like some Western music (e.g., impressionist music) that sensitively depicts the composer’s impressions of tone colors, Chinese instrumental music develops its distinct instrumental techniques to vary timbres. Chen Yi uses many techniques to suggest embellished tones, imitating the timbres or idioms of Chinese instruments. In the music of the *qin* (seven-string zither) and the *zheng* (sixteen- or more string zither), tone color is one of the central concerns. Robert van Gulik describes *qin* music as “painting with sounds,” in which “Each note is an entity in itself, calculated to evoke in the mind of the hearer a special reaction.”190 For instance, to elaborate and modify a vibrato of a single tone in *qin* music, twenty-six varieties are used. Abundant techniques are developed for altering pitches, such as plucking strings inward or outward, using the nails or the fleshy portions of the fingers. Although the piano as an equal-temperament instrument cannot imitate the subtlety of Chinese tones, Chen tries to imitate the timbres of *zheng*, Beijing gong, and other Chinese instruments on the piano.

F. Chinese scales and modes

In her piano pieces, Chen Yi has used Chinese traditional melodies and folksongs based on Chinese scales and modes; she also has used pantonal melodies, or pitch sets in the twelve-tone system, which depart from Chinese traditions. Because several theoretical treatises and dissertations have discussed the Chinese scalar system in detail,
this study focuses only on the discussions of scales and modes that may relate to Chen's music.

Tong Zhongliang, a music theorist at the Wuhan Conservatory of Music, writes,

In traditional Chinese music, scale and mode are two concepts that belong to different levels of tonal organization. The former refers to an ascending permutation of organized musical tones from a gong note to another gong note an octave higher, while the latter indicates which note in the scale is used to initiate the mode. Diaoshi (mode) is therefore a concept under the concept of yinjie (scale).\(^{191}\)

Chen Yi gives a brief description of Chinese modes in her dissertation. It is commonly known that Chinese music has often used pentatonic modes, called gong, shang, jiao, zhi, and yu, since ancient times. Because gong is the first mode, the beginning of a group of modes, the Chinese use gongdiao (gong mode) to refer to both its key and mode.\(^ {192}\) In this gongdiao system, each of the five principal tones could be a center of a pentatonic mode; one can obtain five pentatonic modes by re-ordering (rotating) the five tones without changing key (signature). The pitches of the modes are not absolute pitches, as those in so-diao-chang-ming-fa (movable do singing). For convenience, Chen Yi makes each of the five Chinese modes gong, shang, jiao, zhi, and yu correspond to the Western notes: C, D, E, G, and A (do, re, mi, sol, and la) respectively. In Example 1, Chen Yi shows first the Chinese modes in C gong system, which is easily understood; then she transposes them into G\(^{b}\) gong system, which is important and relevant in her Ba Ban. The five Chinese modes can be shown as follows:
During the period of the warring states (403-221 B.C), the bian gong (altered gong ≈ C♭) and bian zhi (altered zhi G♭ ≈ F♯) were added to the five tones, forming a seven-note scale. Adding or subtracting one third of the lengths of bamboo pipes, the ancient Chinese derived the twelve lū (pitches), which divided one octave into twelve tones. Although the twelve lū were not in equal temperament, they made transpositions of the same melody into relative keys possible. The earliest discussion of changing keys and modes appeared in the chapter “Li Yun” of the Book of Rites. The changes of keys and modes, xuan gong (shifting key) and fan diao (changing modes), can be summarized into three types:

a. xuan gong, change of key, e.g. changing from C gong to E gong (similar to the shift from C Ionian to E Ionian);
b. *fan diao*, change of mode without changing key, e.g. changing from C *gong* to G *zhī* (similar to the shift from C Ionian to G Mixolydian);

c. *xuan gong* and *fan diao*, changing both key and mode (e.g. changing from C Ionian to F Dorian).

These techniques were described by many classical books, such as *Yue Shu Yao Lu (Concise Extracts from Books on Music)* by Yuan Wanqing (639-689).¹⁹⁵ This book contains a diagram, which illustrates two plates: “The names of twelve *liǔ* (pitches) are written on the inside one, and the names of seven *shēng* (notes) on the outside.”¹⁹⁶ By rotating the inner or outer plates clockwise or counterclockwise, one may obtain as many as sixty (5×12=60) or eighty-four (7×12=84) keys or modes.

In Chinese folk music, regional modes, such as *yi-fan* mode, are used. Chen Yi used these modes in her piano pieces. I will discuss the *yi-fan* mode in Chapter III. One may need to be aware of three points regarding Chen Yi’s use of Chinese modes:

a. The Chinese twelve-*liǔ* (twelve pitches) and modes were not tuned in equal temperament; therefore, they are different from the Western chromatic scale. Sometimes, when Chen Yi uses grace notes and accidentals (e.g., frequently altering pitches from sharps to naturals) in Chinese tunes, she tries to depict the bending, gliding, and altered pitches rather than borrowing the idea of Western chromatic pitches or scales.

b. The Chinese concept of *fan diao* refers to “invading” other *gongdiao* areas. Using the techniques of *jie-zi* (borrowing Chinese characters), Chen Yi often changes modes through borrowing notes from relative keys, which is similar to the Western notion
of borrowing notes from parallel keys. However, this technique does not have the implication of functional harmonies.

c. Chen Yi uses a variety of xuangong and fandiao, including all three types of changing keys and modes. Many of them appear in transpositions of themes.

In summary, Chapter I gives a critique of conventional research and states the need for interdisciplinary study of Chen Yi's music; from these observations this dissertation sets up its goals to reveal the multiple aspects of Chen’s piano music. The review of historical and cultural context in the later twentieth century and of existing literature on Chen Yi introduces a field of investigation for the following chapters to explore the meanings and expressions of her piano pieces. A brief sketch of Chen’s life shows her development as a composer and offers a linkage to see her works comparatively and contextually. The statement of my approach maps out the analytical procedure in the other chapters, combining historical-cultural approaches with theoretical analytical methods. A short introduction of the terms and evolution of Chinese and Western aesthetics and philosophies lays out the foundation for analyzing Chen’s fusion of East and West. The Chinese aesthetic ideas will reoccur in discussions of different pieces, tracing the cultural roots of the works. The description of Chinese modes prepares the reader for the analyses which apply both Western and Chinese music theories when examining multicultural and musical influences in Chen Yi’s piano pieces.197

2 Chen Yi, Concerto for Piano (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1993; UMI 93-33,741), 1.
4 This study mainly uses the Chinese pinyin to indicate the pronunciation of Chinese terms, but I follow the usage of those who use the Wale Jiles system for their names. Names are given in Chinese order.


8 Chou Wen-chung, Chinese-American composer, scholar and teacher, is a seminal figure in contemporary American music. After completing his engineering studies in China, he came to America to continue his studies. He gave up his study of architecture at Yale University and took composition with Carl McKinley, Nicolas Slominsky and others at the New England Conservatory. When he moved to New York and did research on Chinese music, he took private lessons with Varèse (1949-54), which influenced his direction of research and compositions. His orchestral, chamber, and other instrumental works explore new sound effects by blending Chinese aesthetics and sources with contemporary techniques. He is the teacher of a group of Chinese-American composers. See *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., vol. 5, Stanley Sadie ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2001), 789-90, s. v. “Chou Wen-chung,” by Joanna C. Lee.

9 Zhou, 100.


13 Zhou, 12-14, and 224-228.


17 Chang, 121.


20 Chen, 1-2.


23 Zhou Jinmin, 224-29.

24 Zheng.


26 Xiaoman Zhang Wardell, *An Examination of Selected Contemporary Works Composed by Means of Numbers* (Ph.D. diss., The Claremont Graduate School, (CA) 1996; UMI 96-17,455), 41-9.


Yi Nuo, p. 4.

Ibid., 3.


Chen Yi said, “I think that each ordinary instrument has its distinctive sound and color, like the majority of ordinary people, they are always unknown, but they also have their value of development.” In Yi Nuo, p. 4.

Li, 16-17.


It was commonly known that Mao Zedong’s wife Jiang Qing, acting as a leading figure of the Cultural Revolution, promoted the use of Western orchestra in the modern Beijing operas.

The third point is taken from Li Songwen, 18. According to Li, Chen Yi wrote about her experience in the Guang Zhou Jingju Troupe, “In the mixed orchestra, I really paid attention to traditional plucking instruments, bowing, blowing, and percussion instruments, and singers and actors. I learned a lot from talking, working together with those musicians. For eight years, I was the concertmaster, composer, sometimes a round-face (Chinese) guitar (ruan) player when it’s needed. I learned fast.”

Li, 18.


(Peter) Alexander Goehr, British composer of German birth. He studied music at the Royal Manchester College of Music (1952-55) and attended Messiaen’s masterclass in Paris in the academic year 1955-56. Goehr has been recognized as a leading figure of avant-garde circles in London. He composed piano sonata, piano concerto, symphonies, choral and chamber works. In 1976 and in 1980, He was invited to give lectures and to advice on curriculum reform in conservatories in China. See *The New Dictionary of

52 Jin Maojun, Qing Xi Yin Yue: Zhongguo dang dai yin yue jia fang tan lu (Emotions Tied to Music: Interviews with Chinese Contemporary Musicians) (Shanghai: Shanghai yin yue chu ban she (Music Press), 2000), 104-106.


55 Li, 18.


57 Wang, 22-3.

58 Chen describes the exams at the Conservatory, “When you are given test[s], you should be able to tell the style, region, school, and so on. From the first minute hearing, you also should be able to compose melodies in certain given styles with text taken from old poems; traditional instruments (playing techniques, repertoire, structural principle), in Li, 19-20.

59 Li, 20.

60 Due to her extensive use contemporary Western compositional techniques, Chen has developed her musical style into the mainstream of American contemporary music while using her native Chinese cultural and musical elements. Chen considers musical works, which are inspired or influenced by American music and composer in the United State, parts of American music. Therefore I use the term “Chinese-American” to describe her developed musical style.

61 Meng, 77.


63 In the early 1990s when Su de San Zheng asked Chen how she defines her cultural identity and her music and whether she has ever questioned her cultural belonging, she answered, she never questioned [that] . . . because her native language is the natural thing; she can sing Jingju and speak Mandarin and Cantonese without effort. She considered her music as not American native music and as not belonging to majority American culture, in Zheng, 305 & 318.

64 Zheng, 307.

65 Irene Borger, “Chen Yi Interview,” in The Force of Curiosity (Saint Monica CA: CalArts/Alpert Award in the Arts, 1999), 278.

66 Yan Li, “Dui hua lu” (“Interview with Chen Yi”), Ai Yue (Philharmonic) (Beijing), (1996): 92 and 94.


68 Borger, 278.

69 Zheng, 318.


71 Yan Li, 98.


73 Chen Yi’s email to Li Xiaole, 3 October 2001.


76 In Chen Yi’s correspondence with Li Songwen, she mentioned that she wrote incidental music for her job at the local Jingju troupe (see Li, 18). I cannot find the titles of those pieces. Perhaps they are no longer performed due to their historical and political relations to the Cultural Revolution.
78 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
83 Ibid, 603.
85 Paolucci, xiii.
87 Ibid, 187.
88 Ibid, 186.
89 Ibid, 615.
91 Ibid.
94 Goehr, 616.
95 Chernyshevskii was a Russian socialist thinker, philosopher of materialism. He appraised Hegel’s dialectical theory but criticized Hegel’s idealist concept of aesthetics. He held that life experience is higher than art and that the essence of art is to reflect and capture life (experience). See *Zhongguo Da Bai Ke Quan Shu: Zhe Xue* (Chinese Grand Encyclopedia: Philosophy, vol. 21, ed. Hu Sheng (Beijing: Zhongguo Da Bai Ke Quan Shu chu ban she (Great China Encyclopedia Press, 1987), 92-93.
97 Woehrlin, 146-48.
99 Mattick, Jr., 5-6.
100 Goehr, 621.
103 Ibid.

Confucius, (Kong Qu, b. Lu State (now in Shan Dong Province) descendent of the Shang Dynasty, was born to a noble family which declined in the Song state. He was poor when young; he took an official position at the age of fifty. However, a political conspiracy forced him to leave his position and his country. He traveled in different states for thirteen years but failed to find an opportunity to achieve his goal of social reform. When he was old he returned to Lu where he died three year later. He was the first influential Chinese private teacher to teach numerous students. Among his students, many became renowned thinkers and scholars. Confucius’ teachings were recorded in the Analects. His ideal was to preserve the cultural heritage and traditional moral doctrines, through carrying out personal responsibilities in family and society thus forming a benevolent and harmonious society. See Fei Nianchun, “Kongzi,” in Jiang, 1-9.

Laozi, Master Lao (dates unknown) According to traditional accounts, there are three different Laozi. Scholars are sure neither of the identity of the “real” Laozi or his dates; they mention the accounts of Laozi found in Sima Qian’s Shiji (Records of Historian) as a main source. The book Laozi or Dao De Jing seems to be composed during the late Warring States period and contains Laozi’s and others’ quotations on the Dao (the pathway of nature) and De (virtue or excellence). Laozi developed the yin-yang theory and the idea of dao, contributing to the Chinese dialectical thought about the universe. See Cai, 92-94.

<http://www.rep.routledge.com/philosophy/cgi-bin/header.cgi?it=GOO1&helpmode=articleview...>


Jiang, 69.

Wang, 245.

Chen Yi, liner notes for Sparkle, Compact disc 804, CRI eXchange, 1999, 15.

Cai, 313-43.

Li Liping, “Ji Kang,” in Jiang, 125-32.

Wang Xiulan, “Shen Yue,” in Jiang, 140-45.


Chen, Concerto for Piano, 1.

Ibid.

Cai, 684-699.


Yan Li, “Dui Hua Lu” (Interview with Chen Yi), Philharmonic (Beijing) 1 (1996): 97.

Li Zehou, one of the most influential contemporary Chinese philosophers. Since graduating from the Beijing University in 1954, he has held positions such as researcher, vice-president of China’s Social Science Institution, Director of Aesthetic Research Office, and vice-president of China’s Aesthetic Society. He works include The Journey of Beauty (Beijing: Cultural Relic Press, 1981) and The History of China’s Aesthetics, Li Zehou ed. (Beijing: Social Science Press, 1984).

Li Zehou explains the double meanings of “experienced man”: containing external and internal contents, the social and cultural experience and psychological structure of man. “The sense of beauty is a
free feeling," he thinks that "the theoretical basis about the essence of beauty is humanization of nature. In dialect relations, man and nature, truth and beauty, intuition and intellect/reasoning . . . mutually permeate and unite in harmony in free and natural forms, which is beauty. (see Xuejun, “Li Zehou,” in Jiang 536-55).

Li Zehou, “Tan zhong guo ren de zhi hui” (“Discussion on Chinese Wisdom”), in Zhong xi yi shu bu jiao (The Comparison of Chinese and Western Aesthetic Arts) (Hubei: Ren min chu ban she (People's Press), 1986) 23.

Liu Xiaobo, a writer on philosophy, criticizes Li Zehou’s theory for lacking the rebellious spirit that thoroughly breaks with traditional conceptions. Liu thinks Li’s practical aesthetics is "the theory of historical sedimentation." Liu promotes a type of extremism eliminating the taboos of Chinese culture, such as sensate life, subconscious distress, and human tragedy. He wants to reveal the extreme sophisticated sides of man’s nature, which changes in different times and space. See Liu Xiaobo, “A Dialogue with Li Zehou—The Sensate, the Individual, My Choice,” Trans. Kent M. Peterson. Journal of Chinese Study in Philosophy 25/4 (Summer 1994): 26-73.


137 Liu Xiaobo, a writer on philosophy, criticizes Li Zehou’s theory for lacking the rebellious spirit that thoroughly breaks with traditional conceptions. Liu thinks Li’s practical aesthetics is "the theory of historical sedimentation." Liu promotes a type of extremism eliminating the taboos of Chinese culture, such as sensate life, subconscious distress, and human tragedy. He wants to reveal the extreme sophisticated sides of man’s nature, which changes in different times and space. See Liu Xiaobo, “A Dialogue with Li Zehou—The Sensate, the Individual, My Choice,” Trans. Kent M. Peterson. Journal of Chinese Study in Philosophy 25/4 (Summer 1994): 26-73.

Xu Ying, "Wang jin zhi qi Chan gu ding fa—qing nian zuo qu jia Chen Yi yin yue hui ting hou" (Creating Wonders from Contemporary, Setting up Rules from Ancient Tradition—a review of young composer Chen Yi's concert’), *Chinese Youth Daily*, 22 June 1986, p. 3.

Li Ling, “Zhao xia shan suo” (“The Dawn Clouds Are Shining”), *Guang Ming Ri Bao* (*Guang Ming Daily*), 3 July 1986, p. 3.


Guo Xin, "Eastern and Western Techniques in Qi by Chen Yi," 121.

Chen Yi, liner note to *Sparkle*, p. 5.

Yi Nuo, p. 4.


Chen Yingshi, 57-59.

CHAPTER II
A REVIEW OF SELECTED CHINESE PIANO COMPOSITIONS

The purpose of this review is to provide the reader with the historical background of Chen Yi's piano works. The selected compositions are considered representative of Chinese piano compositions and possible influences on Chen's piano music. Both in English and in Chinese, several important dissertations, books, and a thesis have been devoted to the subject of Chinese piano music. In these writings, the central concerns are how to continue and develop Chinese traditions and how to adopt Western techniques. Studies tend to focus on analysis of influential composers' works, but few studies offer criticism on the trends and directions concerning how to establish China's own piano music. Certain aspects, such as the relationship between piano music and Chinese language, are overlooked, and the criteria for evaluating Chinese piano music need to be discussed further.

Wei Ting-ge's thesis On the Chinese Piano Compositions (1987) and Bian Meng's dissertation The Formation and Development of Chinese Piano Culture (1996) are substantial and important studies on the subject. Wei's thesis consists of two main parts: Historical review and elicitation and exploration. In the historical review, he summarizes important composers' contributions and accomplishments in creating a repertoire of China's piano music, e.g., the use of Chinese folksongs with progressive tonality modulating to third-relation keys or the use of dissonant chords. In addition, he criticizes unsuitable adaptation of European harmonies in the process of nationalization of piano music.
His criticism is interesting but in part is ambiguous. Attacking non-selective adoption of complete atonality, he suggests four elements for successful Chinese piano works: expression of emotions, national spirit, contemporary style, and individuality. His criticism appears to be in the middle ground between conservative and avant-garde. On the one hand, he promotes new aesthetics and borrowing techniques from Bartók and Stravinsky. On the other hand, he opposes blind borrowing of the most avant-garde Western styles; he prefers not to break away from the reality (people's custom and taste), which include the current views of the audience. On the development of future Chinese music, he emphasizes the connection with the masses and social life, ethnic spirit, sincere emotion, and compositional individuality.

Due to the time this thesis was written, one might not know his attitude toward New-Wave compositions. He criticized a style which "neither can reach the sky nor descend to the ground," which may mean that he believes the compositions break away from traditions without reaching new heights. The titles of his editions, The 30 Famous Chinese Piano Pieces and A Collection of Famous Chinese Piano Pieces apparently emphasize their popularity in the repertoire of performance. Most of the compositions in his 1990s editions are based on traditional melodies in a populist, classical-romantic style; few compositions using polytonality and impressionist harmonies are selected, which appears to reflect his preference for a style accessible for the public. Although the piano compositions in contemporary style, including the works of Zhong Long and Chen Yi, won prizes, they are not included in his editions.
Bian Meng's dissertation (1996) for her Ph. D. in Fine Arts is a comprehensive study of China's piano culture. Its objectives are to explore the origins and development of China's piano music, the formation of Chinese piano education, and foreign influences upon its development, piano compositions, and the characteristics of Chinese pianists. Its breadth is unprecedented and significant in this field. Touching on the topics of Chinese philosophy and culture, Bian Meng offers some insights on Chinese piano compositions, particularly their significance and weaknesses. For example, she remarks that Chinese program music is more abstract and allusive than the European counterpart. Chinese composers create poetic images and reveal spiritual traits of the objects but not their superficial appearance. Listing sixty works, she introduces important Chinese composers and works with a brief summary. Bian explores new topics of Chinese pianists' performances and multiple directions of compositions, such as Zhao Xiaosheng's "Tai Ji" based on Zhou Yi (Yijing) and the cultivation of spirit and qi. While offering an incisive analysis of typical new works in the later 1980s, she describes the spiritual quality of the music, the sound, and relations to other arts, (e.g., Buddhist music, calligraphy, language). The result is that she saw a new era of pluralism (duoyuan hua) in music of this age. If she would offer more critical ideas on the debates and trends of compositions, her writing would be stronger.

Looking at China’s piano music and its possible influence on Chen Yi, this study briefly reviews major trends and a selection of typical works. To achieve this goal, I will look at four historical periods: 1910-49, 1949-66, 1967-76, and 1976-present. However, this study does not attempt to give a comprehensive analysis of a broad list of works since
other writings are available on such topics. For each cited period, I will mention the historical background for the representative pieces, the main characteristics, and their importance to Chinese piano music. These selected works meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. representing one or more aspects of a significant trend in Chinese piano music,
2. participating in an influential event or movement and being performed over a period of time by many Chinese pianists,
3. having possibly direct or indirect influence on Chen Yi’s piano music.

A. 1910-49

Before the 1930s, at an introductory level, the earliest Chinese piano pieces were written for general music education as a part of the nationalist movement in China. Although they were short and simple, they anticipated and reflected the development and modernization of China’s piano music. The pioneer pieces illustrate the following important trends:

1. Searching for inspiration from Chinese instrumental musical traditions. For example, based on Chinese traditional melodies, Zhou Yuanren’s the Fancy Ba Ban and Waves of Xiang Jiang (Xiang River, 1913) shows his treatments of traditional tunes, grace notes, and linear texture in monophony or heterophony with a Chinese flavor.

2. Linking ethnomusicological and linguistic studies to piano music. Zhao Yuanren was one of the first composers who did fieldwork collecting folksongs and related linguistic studies to his musical compositions. Like many of his vocal and piano
pieces, the melody of *Yangtze River Boatmen’s Song* (ca. 1933) is closely related to Chinese regional dialects and the working chorus of Boatmen. Although a collection of his complete works was published in 1987, Zhao's compositions and contribution to Chinese music have not received systematic study.

3. Adopting Western influences. Xiao Youmei, the president of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, directed serious studies on European music. His *Funeral March* (1916) and the *New Ni Shang Yu Yi Wu* (the *Dance of the New Rainbow Feather Clothes*, 1923) were influential among musicians. Inspired by the poem of Tang poet Bai Juyi, the *New Ni Shang Yu Yi Wu* was the first multiple-movement Chinese piano composition. These pieces show Xiao's applications of Western techniques and his effort to develop Chinese melodic and harmonic style with *minzu* (national and ethnic) characteristics. Zhao Yuanren’s *March of Peace* (1915) and *An Incidental Idea* (1917), and Li Rongshou’s *Ju Da Gang* (1921) use Western classical harmonies for school-song like melodies, which show an inclination to Western classical music.

After the founding of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1927 and under the influence of European musicians, Chinese piano compositions were written for concert performance; they reached a relatively high level of technical proficiency and artistic expression and were often performed in recitals. The typical works in this period were successful in using Western contrapuntal techniques and blending Western tonal and Chinese modal harmonies.

Alexander Tcherepnin (1899-1977), Russian pianist and composer, visited China and taught at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1934 and 36. He stirred up Chinese
musicians' national consciousness and promoted Chinese piano compositions by sponsoring the first competition for Chinese piano works (1934). He published *Piano Study on Pentatonic Scales* (1935), using Chinese instrumental techniques. For instance, In a toccata-like form, his *Hommage à la Chine* imitates the rolling techniques of the pipa; its pentatonic melody is combined with pianistic virtuosic passages of alternating hands. He performed this piece in each of his recitals in Europe between 1935 and 1936.

Tcherepnin brought pieces from the competition to the world stage. He Luting's (b. 1903) *Buffalo Boy's Flute* (1934) offers an example of descriptive instrumental pieces, depicting a scene of a shepherd boy playing bamboo flute. In a ternary form, Its pentatonic melody with repeated patterns resembles a traditional Chinese tune and flows naturally. In sections A and A¹ the Chinese melodies are mingled with two-part contrapuntal techniques. Section A¹ uses the Chinese “adding flowers” technique to embellish the melody of section A. Section B integrates a leaping pentatonic melody with Western tertian harmonies in homophonic texture. The music critic Wei Tingge and Bian Meng, the first Chinese pianist to earn a double Ph.D. (in Fine Arts and Piano) at the Moscow Conservatory, emphasize that this piece, as a cornerstone in Chinese piano music, shows that the synthesis of Chinese and Western elements is essential to the development of China's new music. According to Wei and Bian, European theory is applicable, but it must be digested and transformed through a “stomach” of Chinese aesthetics.

Another important piece in this period was Lao Zhichen's *Shepherd Pastime* (1934), which features quartal and quintal harmonies and bold juxtapositions of altered
chords and remote keys. A tendency toward modernizing Chinese piano music is seen in Ding Shande's "Dance of the Morning Wind" ("xiao fen zhi wu"), the finale of his 1945 Piano Suite *Spring Trip*. This piece continuously uses minor seconds and energetic rhythms with a passionate emotion. Ding's outgoing and youthful style with a modernist color foreshadows the elements of the new-wave music in the 1980s.  

As a type of new music created under the influence of Mao Zedong's "Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art," Qu Wei's *Flower Drum* (1946) apparently shows another direction of composition different from Xiao Youmei's elite-classic taste and approach. This piece presents flower-drum rhythms, folk pentatonic melodies, modal harmonies, and fresh shifts of keys (starting from G gong and ending with E♭ gong). Its (cheerful) festive atmosphere and creative use of folk tunes can be easily understood by ordinary people, which has allowed it to remain a recital piece for pianists, reflecting a populist approach in an artistic presentation.

Because the pioneers of Chinese modern music were educated in Western classical and romantic traditions, they emphasized the adoption of traditional Western techniques (counterpoint and harmonies) and the use of Chinese sources in their compositions and teaching.

**B. 1949-66**

The period from 1949 to 1966 witnessed an active production of various Chinese piano works composed in unprecedented quality and quantity. These works can be divided into five categories: a. pieces reflecting revolutionary movements and spirit, b.
newly composed pieces reflecting people's and children's life, c. works based on folksongs or traditional sources, d. works based on folk music of ethnic minorities, and e. music influenced by Russian and European Romanticism.

Because Mao Zedong's policy for the arts was an important criterion for evaluating compositions, composers often used revolutionary mass songs in constructing themes and variations. In this genre, Chu Wanghua's arrangements of the revolutionary songs *The Sky of the Liberated Region* and *Days of Standing Tall* are typical.\(^{13}\) These pieces carry clear political messages, celebrating victories of the revolution and depicting patriotic emotions. They often use entire melodies of mass songs and Western classical harmonies; their variations are built on embellishment of the melodies and changes of register and texture. In addition to their simplicity and conventional elements, Chu's use of grace notes imitating the gliding-finger technique of Chinese *ban hu* (a two-string fiddle) is allusive. Its brilliant texture expresses a happy feeling in a lively manner. These pieces were warmly received,\(^ {14}\) and they were important in a historical stage of Chinese piano music. Chen Yi's piano pieces share few similarities with these works. I discuss them because the reader may notice the differences between them and Chen's music.

As models of the original compositions, Ding Shande's *Children's Suite* (1953) and Shang Tong's *At the Distant Place* (1950) integrate traditional and unconventional elements. Ding's portraits of children's life are vivid and imaginative. Among the five pieces, the "Catching Butterflies" is the most interesting and innovative in the *Children's Suite* because it has no clear melody. Using a rustic tempo and rhythm, the two hands
alternate with one hand playing chords and another playing intervals. This arrangement implies two tonal tracks, depicting children's movements of catching butterflies. Avoiding functional progressions of Western harmonies, Ding treats traditional modes and modal harmonies in unconventional ways. The clash of dissonant chords and intervals illustrates his techniques in composing twentieth-century Chinese piano music.

Sang Tong's *At the Distant Place* (1950)\(^{15}\) is the first atonal piece that combines a Chinese folksong melody with the twelve-tone technique.\(^{16}\) This piece foreshadows Chen Yi's avant-garde approach and her use of dissonant harmonies including intervals of the tritone, fourths, and sevenths.

3. Among the folksong-based pieces, Wang Lisan's *Blue Flower* shows how he uses a folksong to reveal the inner feelings of the character, Blue Flower, in a mini-drama-like theme and variations form. The melodies and harmonies are varied and developed with emotions of love, conflict, passion, and sadness. It combines Western romantic harmonies with modal added-tone chords, producing clashes of dissonance. The dramatic shifts of modes and keys and flexible changes of tempo allude to the text of the folksong, suggesting the scenes or emotions in the text.

In terms of composition based on regional music, Huang Huwei's *Ba Shu Zhi Hua* (*Pictures of Ba Shu* [Sichuan] 1958) is closely related to regional folksongs and Western romantic elements. The motive a'-c"-d" (or *la-do-re*) is used throughout the pieces in different tempos, rhythms, and combinations, including the beginnings of the *Morning Song, Lyric Song*, and *Ah Ba Evening Party*. These pieces are terse and economical in traditional Chinese style, but the fifth piece *Spring Suburbs of Rong City*, is elaborated
with a romantic spirit. In tempo rubato, the pentatonic arpeggios and trills lead to a climax, where the modal and Western tertian chords are mingled to express a surge of poetic passion.

4. Sang Tong’s *Piano Suite: Seven Miniatures on Themes of Inner Mongolian Folksongs* features two recitative tunes on the piano and lends contrasting colors, emotions, and textures to a variety of folksongs. The first piece, “Dao Ge” (“Mourning Song”), repeats a phrase of pentatonic recitative in e\(^b\), a\(^b\), and b\(^b\) modes. The melodic falling fifths and downward endings are typical in cadence of Inner Mongolian folksongs. It uses various chords drawn from a wide range of keys and modes, including quartal, quintal, tertian, and added-tone chords for a drone effect. It resembles Bartók’s parlando passages and changing meters. Although most of the pieces, including “Children’s Dance” and “Love Song of the Prairie,” are conventional, “Sad Thoughts” emphasizes melodic leaps of fourth, fifth, and sevenths in a wide range, while using a sigh motive in melodic seconds and chords borrowed from remote keys. One may consider these chants pioneers that prefigure Chen Yi’s Jingju recitatives.

Ding Shande’s *Xin Jiang Wu Qu (Xin Jiang Dance)* No. 1 (1950) and No. 2 (1955) portray rustic ethnic dances of the Xin Jiang region. While imitating a rhythm of Xin Jiang’s percussion instruments in the accompaniment, the composer uses major and minor thirds simultaneously as a dissonant chord (E, G, G#, and B). The melodies are in conventional major or minor scales in a passionate style. The interlocked beats produce a driving force consistently. These pieces, based on ethnic music, enriched the colors of Chinese piano works and became popular in recitals.
5. Wu Zuqing and Du Mingxin’s Piano Suite *The Mermaid* is a set of excerpts from the music for the Ballet *Mermaid*, which shows strong influences from Russian and European romanticism. The *Shui Cao Wu (Seaweed Dance)* displays beautiful tunes in a style of songs without words; the *Shan Hu Wu (Coral Dance)* is like a fast fairy dance. Although the melodies are in Chinese style, the harmonic language sometimes is more closely related to Western romantic style, such as frequent shifts between parallel major and minor keys. The texture and contrasts in a full range of registers suggest orchestral colors.

During this period, following models of the Soviet Union, the Chinese government adopted a relatively open attitude toward Western classical and romantic music. When musicians participated in the nationalist movement using revolutionary songs and folksongs as major sources for piano compositions, they also tried to combine elements of Chinese modes and Western traditional music. A few composers explored sharp dissonance and contemporary techniques with care, which offered valuable examples for the following generations of musicians.

In this period, because Mao Zedong’s policy concerning literature and the arts emphasized the political function of music for the Chinese revolution and a populist approach for the masses, the communist leaders banned contemporary Western music as a product of “spiritual pollution.” Most Chinese musicians knew little about Western contemporary compositional trends. Under political movements of “class-struggle” and criticism, composers had to be extremely careful in compositions to avoid political
troubles. Consequently, many of China’s piano works were limited in a style based on traditional tunes, which Bian Meng calls “folksong plus harmony.”

C. 1966-76

The piano compositions in this period can be divided into two phases. At the early stage of the Cultural Revolution, composers and pianists were fiercely condemned and attacked for following a revisionist line; the piano was treated as a bourgeois instrument. Before 1970, only a few revolutionary piano pieces were composed, including the *Piano Accompaniment to the Red Lantern*. In the second phase of the early 1970s, schools such as *Wu qi yishu da xue* (the Five-Seven University of Arts), for workers, peasants, and soldiers were formed. In a political movement called “dou, pi, gai,” (fighting, criticizing, and reforming), composers arranged revolutionary model works and traditional music for the piano for teaching. Although many works were soon forgotten, the piano arrangements of traditional music by Li Yinghai and Wang Jiangzhong remain in the repertoire. This may be attributed to their high level of sophistication and the way these pieces explore the piano’s potential to produce sounds reflecting Chinese aesthetics and Western techniques. These pieces are satiated with Chinese flavor and their techniques are not as virtuosic as Yin Chengzong's pieces.

In the first phase of the revolution, to seek a road for Chinese piano music in the crisis of the Cultural Revolution, pianist Yin Chengzong arranged and played revolutionary songs for the public at Tian An Men Square. At the suggestion of a worker in the audience and with the support of Jingju artists and singers, Yin composed the
Piano Accompaniment to the Red Lantern,\textsuperscript{19} which gained the approval of Jiang Qing, Madam Mao. This was the first experiment that sought a union between the piano and Jingju and simultaneously played the piano and Chinese percussion instruments. In the eight excerpts, Yin uses Jingju melodies and rhythms, and mixes Chinese modal and Western harmonies. Yin imitates Chinese instruments, such as \textit{pipa} and \textit{zheng}, by fast repeating notes and sweeping pentatonic arpeggios; he also applies Western piano techniques, such as octave passages and big chords, to the dramatic introduction of the eighth piece. The \textit{Piano Accompaniment to the Red Lantern} pieces is more pianistic and with obvious influence of Western romantic piano music.

One argument concerning arranging traditional melodies is about the relationship between Chinese modal melodies and Western harmonies. Peter M. Chang notes that,

\begin{quote}
Since Maoists' legitimization of appropriating Western "scientific" compositional techniques for the Chinese musical revolution, that is, the fusion of Western harmony, counterpoint, and Chinese melody, continued to be manifested in the works of the second and third generations of Chinese composers.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Chou Wen-chung states his view about this matter,

\begin{quote}
The new Peking [Beijing] operas really tell what the new Chinese music is all about. . . . Hence the Western orchestra playing Chinese material in typically 19th-century Western compositional and harmonic styles, it's fascinating but incongruous to listen to.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

This problem seems to be associated with both ideology and techniques in arranging Chinese melodies. Nowadays, the criticism of "folksong plus harmony" is accepted by many Chinese contemporary composers. They are developing diverse styles by using both Western contemporary and Chinese traditional techniques.
In the second phase [the early 1970s], composers gradually expanded their scope to include the arrangement of folk and traditional music. A new approach was to arrange famous classic pieces from the “elite” qin music and other traditional instrumental pieces. Wang Jiangzhong’s *Meihua Sannong* (*Three Variations on the Theme of Plum Blossom*), *Bai Niao Chao Feng* (*A Hundred Birds Pay Tribute to the Phoenix*), and Li Yinghai’s *Xi Yang Xiao Gu* (*Xiao and Drum at Sunset*) are representative pieces of this genre. In middle or large size of variation forms, these pieces maintain Chinese flavor and aesthetics and develop lyric, virtuosic, or at times rustic qualities.

Because Wang’s pieces share some ideas of Chinese aesthetics with Chou Wen-chung’s works, I will briefly discuss *Meihua Sannong*. Embellishing tones in many subtle ways, Wang’s techniques of variation reflect the Chinese concepts of unity of nature and man and a single tone as a musical entity. Wang’s methods mainly are the following:

a. adding layers: using one layer of parallel fourths to embellish a secondary melody above a pentatonic theme or adding arpeggios below the theme.

b. adding attached tones: the composer imitates the open-string sound of qin, which represents the earth, or harmonics, which represents the heavens, by attaching soft octaves as grace notes at an octave below the main melodic notes, or attaching mordents and arpeggios to melodic tones.

c. applying two-part counterpoint to create clashes of minor seconds or unconventional sonorities.
d. changing registers and juxtaposing tunes in remote keys and modes, such as from F♯ gong to F gong, from C zhi to E gong.

Wang’s pieces vividly portray Chinese instruments’ sounds as they explore the piano’s idiomatic techniques and characteristics. These works illustrate abundant opportunities for using Chinese sources with Chinese aesthetics.

In general, piano works in this period intended to gain a place in China’s national music; they “tended to center around the direct adoption of (or minimally-changed arrangement of) Chinese folksong melodies,” Timothy Lane Brace notes. He also comments that, “This was especially true during the period of the Cultural Revolution which immediately preceded the period in which the xin-chao [new-wave] emerged and which provided the musical landscape in which the xin-chao composers spent their early youth.”

D. 1976 - present

In the fourth period, Chinese composers have absorbed contemporary Western music and quickly developed their piano compositions in late twentieth-century trends. Because Western twentieth-century music has been introduced into China, and musicians are no longer limited by “proletarian revolutionary thoughts,” composers have boldly experimented in the following areas:

1. finding new ways and sonorities to arrange Chinese traditional music (Zhou Long: Wu Kui: Dance of the Five Animals, 1983),
2. combining Chinese elements with early twentieth-century impressionist techniques (Wang Lisan: *Pictures of Kii Hagashiyama*, 1979),

3. using atonal or twelve-tone techniques while continuing their pursuit of Chinese *Shen Yun* (Luo Zhongrong: *Three Pieces for the Piano* and *She Jiang Cai Ling*, 1980s),


I will explain these categories of compositions in the following paragraphs.

1. At a national piano composition competition in 1983, Zhou Long, one of the most important young Chinese composers, presented *Wu Kui: Dance of the Five Animals*, a vigorous dance piece of the northern Man minority, which transforms Chinese folk music, Zhou’s experience in the remote farm, and natural scenes into sounds. Describing the hunters’ animated mask dance, Zhou highlights a masculine straightforward mood, leaping rhythmic figures, and accented quartal and quintal chords in the outer sections of a ternary form. In the middle section, a short lyric motive appears in a free counterpoint. He ingeniously combines Chinese traditional melodies and leaps of fourths of folksongs with multiple-line free counterpoint, which forms “Chinese tone-clusters in sequences of motives.” The frequent alternations of modes and keys expand the expression of piano works based on Chinese traditional and folk music.

Zhu Jian-er’s (1982) *Five Folksongs of Yunnan* explores new sonorities by arranging folksongs with contemporary techniques, such as bitonality. In toccata-like passages, *Guessing* portrays a humorous, witty, and vigorous children’s dance.
2. Inspired by the paintings of Japanese artist Kii Hagashiyama, Wang Lisan composed *Pictures of Kii Hagashiyama* (1979); he wrote a poem for each piece in this suite. Its significance lies not only in the relationships between painting, poetry, and music, but also in its Chinese rhythmic structure, a Chinese Buddhist melody, and Japanese *miyako-bushi* mode in an impressionist style. Using motives of natural scenes (ocean and temple), the composer makes allusions to life and death, struggle, and the story of the Chinese Buddhist Jian Zhen who brought Chinese culture and Buddhism to Japan two thousand years ago. The modal motives, parallel quartal or quintal harmonies, heterophonic texture, and pedal points recall Debussy's works.

3. Luo Zhongrong’s twelve-tone works may have directly influenced Chen Yi and Zhou Long. Although his three-song suite, *She Jiang Cai Furong* (1980) consists of songs for voice and piano, I mention it because it foreshadows Chen Yi’s use of twelve-tone technique in setting Li Qingzhao’s poems and Jingju reciting tones, including composing *Small Beijing Gong*. Using the technique of tone displacement, Luo matches the words and musical notes naturally in the style of reciting a Chinese poem.

Luo Zhongrong’s *Three Pieces for the Piano: Toccata, Dreaming Fantasy, and Flowers Flourishing* (1987) mingle Chinese pentatonic modes, *bian* (altered) tones, with twelve-tone techniques. His use of twelve tones is closer to Josef Matthias Hauer than to Schoenberg. These pieces employ tone rows, which consist of two six-tone subsets; each of them has implied pentatonic segments and *bian* tones; their structures have the characteristics of both twelve-tone and pentatonic music.
4. Zhao Xiaoshen’s *Tai Ji* (1987), a piano solo, demonstrates his invention of a compositional system based on the *Yin-Yang* philosophy and the logical system of the *Zhou Yi* (*Yijing*). Zhao’s *Tai Ji* consciously reflects the origin of the universe from a Daoist view. From his extensive research of the *Yijing*, Zhao derived the mirror structure of *yin-yang* hexatonic scales in opposition (see Fig. 2.1).

Kenneth J. DeWoskin, a Partner in charge of Strategy and Business Development for Pricewaterhouse Coopers in China and a former professor of International Business and Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Michigan, discusses the Chinese method in generating *yin-yang lü* based on the “Three-Part Subtraction-Addition” algorithm. “A string length and tension were set to sound the yellow-bell pitch. ... The string length was repeatedly multiplied by either two-thirds or four-thirds, the former being known as “inferior generation” and associated with *yin* processes, the latter being known as “superior generation” and associated with *yang* processes. There are two sequences created in this process. One is the sequence of half-tone ascension, step by step from low note to high note. The other is the sequence of generation, the order in which the tones are produced in the cycle of fifths. The pitches are divided into six *yin* and six *yang*.28 Zhao Xiaosheng states that the twelve *lü* (pitch) coincided with the theoretical inscription of *lü* on *Zeng Hou Yi bianzhong* (Marquis Zeng’s bell set ca. 5th century B.C.). This *yin-yang* system reflects a profound thought and will cast light on future compositions.29
The six yang lǜ

The six yin lǜ

Referring to the sixty-four gua (Sixty-Four Diagrams of divine symbols) chart of the Yijing, Zhao constructs a Tai Ji chart to organize his yin-yang modal system and chords in a circle, which breaks the traditional boundaries of modes and chords. In eight sections, the piece Tai Ji starts from a very soft minor second (or minor ninth D♭ and C) in a low register, symbolizing the Yin (C) and Yang (D♭) and the simplicity of Tai Yi and Liang Yi, the ancient concepts of the origin of the universe and music. Gradually, a fragment of melody appears and more tones are added; in melody, the piece features a sort of pentatonic sound with bian yin (altered tones) in combination with fragmented modal melodies and atonal pitch collections. The tai ji chords and arpeggios contain fourths, seconds, and thirds always in a symmetrical mirror form, illustrating the Yin-Yang structure. Its tempo changes follow the outline of an arch in the order of slow, acceleration, fast, and slow.
This piece is an illustration of organizing the twelve tones in an invented system of *yin-yang* structures; but its rhythm is similar to the ancient Chinese *qin* music that gave no strict instruction on rhythms, leaving to the performer to decide or interpret the rhythmic aspect of the music. *Tai Ji* won a first prize at the International Piano Composition Competition in China in 1987; Zhao gave a presentation on his "*Tai Ji* Compositional System" at New York's Columbia University in 1988. Chen Yi must have known of Zhao’s *Tai Ji* and his presentation. Chen mentioned the Eight Diagrams [Trigrams] and the *Yijing* in her dissertation; like *Tai Ji*, her *Ba Ban* also uses the Fibonacci series and the Golden Section. However, Chen emphasizes the rhythmic organization of *Ba Ban*.

E. An overview of Chen Yi's piano solo compositions

Chen Yi’s piano music can be seen as both a continuation of and a departure from previous Chinese piano music. On the one hand, her piano solo works consciously apply Chinese philosophy, aesthetics, traditional melodies and rhythms; on the other hand, these pieces use contemporary Western techniques to develop and modify the traditional materials and forms, exploring and creating unconventional sonorities and images.

Written in the period from 1984 to 2000, Chen Yi’s five solo piano compositions use relatively small- or middle-size forms to present her compositional approaches, illustrating the development of her individual style from Chinese national music to Chinese-American music. These works epitomize Chen’s philosophical and aesthetic
ideas, as well as her treatments of traditional sources and adaptation of Western contemporary techniques.

Yu Diao (1984) portrays children’s playful emotions and characteristics through introducing and elaborating a Henan regional opera melody in a flexible rhythmic-melodic formula (ban qiang ti). Yu Diao reflects Chinese aesthetics, e.g., naturalness, fluidity, and terseness in expression. Meanwhile, influenced by Bartók’s creative treatment of folksongs, Yu Diao adapts the Western techniques of counterpoint and unconventional harmonies derived from inflections and a variety of modes.

Small Beijing Gong (1993) depicts the percussive sounds of the small Beijing gong and Jingju (Beijing opera) ensemble in an atonal musical language. Echoing the avant-garde styles of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, this piece is built on pantonal or atonal melodies, dissonant intervals and chords, changing meter, and irregular accents, but its idioms, including a reciting tune accompanied by an ostinato and rhythms, are drawn from Jingju tradition and mirror Chinese aesthetics of linear movement and allusiveness.

To depict the welcoming rite of the Dong people (ethnic minority), Duo Ye (1984) presents and mingles three central melodic cells derived from Dong folksongs and a Jingju melody. While merging Chinese rhythmic sequences of yu-he-ba and the Golden Olive with Bartók’s polymodality and free contrapuntal techniques, this piece conveys vivid sound images with a vigorous folk spirit, rustic singing-dancing scenes, as well as the composer’s emotions. Duo Ye demonstrates Chinese aesthetics, e.g., yin-yang elements, spirit and rhyme, xie yi (describing the essence), and allusiveness in a hybrid form with elements of sonata, variation, rhapsody, fantasy, and concerto,
Guessing (1989) is based on the Yunan children’s song Cai diao (“Guessing”), but Chen Yi recomposed the phrases of the original tune by distilling its psychological characteristics rather than arranging the entire folksong. The spontaneity, naturalness, and rustic traits of Guessing convey the spiritual power inherent in the folksong. With the elements of variation, sonata, and scherzo, Guessing varies and develops the themes in monophonic, heterophonic, and polyphonic textures. The polymodal imitative or free counterpoint shows Bartók’s influence on Chen Yi. Guessing’s clarity and motoric rhythm appear to be in Stravinsky’s vein.

Piano solo Ba Ban (2000) for the Carnegie Hall Millennium Book blends such elements as Chinese philosophy and aesthetics, concepts of yin-yang, change, and calligraphy with Schoenberg’s twelve-tone method, Bartók’s polymodality, Alexander Goehr’s juxtaposition of modal and atonal segments, Chou Wen-chung’s “musical calligraphy,” Davidovsky’s logical form, and Druckman’s tonal quotations in atonal context. The musical analysis explores Ba Ban’s pitch and rhythmic organizations in developing three themes (Baban, a Chen Yi theme, and a twelve-tone theme), as well as the referential meanings in Chen’s transformed musical language as a Chinese-born American composer.
In 1911, China’s revolutionary forces overthrew the Qing dynasty and established the Republic of China, but soon a military leader Yuan Shikai, a warlord, came to power and allowed Japan to occupy the German colony Qing Dao. Chinese university students initiated the May Fourth movement that successfully forced the warlord government to renounce Japan’s Twenty-One Demands; thus the Japanese occupation was never legalized. To modernize China, Chinese intellectuals had sought for national salvation through education.

Zhao Yuanren (1892-1982). Having scored the second place in a national examination, he won a government scholarship to study at Cornell University in the United States, where he studied mathematics and music. After his graduation, he studied philosophy at Harvard University and earned a Ph.D. in 1918. Although he taught philosophy and science at Qing Hua University after he returned to China, he also showed unusual talent in linguistics. When the famous English philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) toured and lectured in China, Zhao served as his interpreter and was able to master local dialects with incredible speed. As a chief secretary of the Linguistic Academia Sinica (1925-29), he did fieldwork in regional dialects and folksongs, which became the inspiration of his compositions. See Liang Rongsheng, Western Influences on Chinese Music in the Early Twentieth Century (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1994; UMI 94-29,966), 3 and 9.

Zhao Yanren, Yin yue zuo pin quan ji (Complete Musical Works of Yuen Ren Chao (Zhao Yuanren), compiled by Chao Rulan (Zhao Rulan) (Shanghai: Shanghai yin yue chu ban she (Shanghai Music Press), 1987).


Alexandre Tcherepnine, Wu sheng yin jie de gang qin jiao ben (Piano Study of Pentatonic Scale) (Shanghai: Shang yie yin shu guan (Business Printing House), 1935), 39-43.


Ding Shande (1911-95) Chinese composer, pianist, educator, studied piano with B. Zakharoff at the Shanghai National Conservatory and won the Excellent Student Award for six years. He gave graduation solo recitals in several cities in 1935; then he had taught at the Tianjing Women Teachers’ University, Shanghai National Music School, and the Nanjing National Conservatory of Music. During 1947-49, Ding went to Paris and studied composition with N. Gallon, F. Aubin, N. Boulanger, and A. Honegger at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique. His piano piece collections, song collections, and Symphonies were published in Shanghai and Hong Kong. He served as judge in the International Schumann (1956) and Chopin Piano Competitions (1960). Ding is known as a pianist composer and his works are rich in expression and color. See the Chinese Music Dictionary II (Continuation), 37; Wang Yuhe “The New Music of China: Its Development under the Blending of Chinese and Western Cultures through the First Half of Twentieth Century,” The Journal of Music in China 3/2 (October 2001): 211-13.

Qu Wei (b. 1917), Chinese composer, graduated from Shanghai Xin Hua Teachers’ Art School in 1935; then, he taught at the Yan’an Luxun Art Academy and was one of the composers who wrote the opera White Haired Girl.


Shang Tong, (b. 1923) studied with W. Frankel, a Jewish musician and a student of A. Scheonberg at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Under the influence of the twelve-tone method, Shang became one of first avant-garde composers in China. See Jin Maojun, Qing xi yin yue: zhongguo dang dai yin yue jia fang tan lu (Emotions Bound to Music: Interviews of Chinese Contemporary Composers (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 2000), 58; also see Zhang Shigu, 29.

Shang Tong has taught harmony at Shanghai Conservatory of Music and composed influential works. The composition Seven Miniatures on Themes of Inner Mongolian Folksongs won the third prize at the World Youth Festive in 1957.

Peter M. Chang, Chou Wen-chung and His Music: A Musical and Biographical Profile of Cultural Synthesis (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1995; UNI 96-24,307), 57.


Chou Wen-chung did extensive research of Asian aesthetics. He notes “a pervasive Chinese concept: that each single tone is a musical entity itself, that musical meaning lies intrinsically in the tones themselves.” Chou found that Varèse’s concept of musical sound as a “living matter” is a parallel of this Chinese concept. See Chou Wen-chung, “Asian Composers and Twentieth-Century Western Composers,” Music Quarterly 57/2 (April 1971): 214-16.

Timothy Lane Brace, Modernization and Music in Contemporary China: Crisis, Identity, and the Politics of Style (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1992; UMI 92-39,218), 278.

Zhang Shi-gu, 62-63.


Wei Ting-ge, 169.


Kenneth J. DeWoskin, A Song for One or Two: Music and the Concept of Art in Early China (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1982), 46-7.


During this time, Zhou Wen-chung was evolving and developing his compositional theory of pitch-modal aggregates based on the Yijing.
CHAPTER III
ANALYSES OF *YU DIAO* AND *SMALL BEIJING GONG*

The main parts of this chapter focus on the analyses of *Two Chinese Bagatelles*: 1) *Yu Diao* (1984) and 2) *Small Beijing Gong* (1993). Each of these parts includes several sections on the cultural background and how each piece reflects Chinese aesthetics and Western techniques. Music-theoretical analysis includes structure, rhythms, pitch organization, and the sound of the piece. Other sections explore referential meanings in these two pieces.

**A. Yu Diao: An Analysis**

1. **Cultural background of Yu Diao**

   *Yu Diao* is a fine example of integrating Chinese aesthetics with Western techniques. These include the emphasis on naturalness and freedom in musical expression underlying Daoist aesthetics, the flexible use of *ban qiang ti* (rhythmic and melodic formula) balancing the changing and constant elements, Chinese modes, and the integration of Chinese folk antiphony with Western counterpoint.

   This piece mirrors the early 1980s, when the revival of Chinese folk music and the movement to modernize Chinese national music inspired new-wave composers, including Chen Yi. These composers adopted Western avant-garde techniques and utilized them to express their cultural identity with a spirit that explores the essence of Chinese traditional and folk music in a modern musical language.

   *Yu Diao* was written in the first year of Chen Yi's graduate study. In the notes of *Yu Diao*, Chen Yi states, "*Yu* means Henan province, *Diao* means ‘tune.’" The pitch
material is taken from the local operas in Henan province. Notably, this piece won the composition competition at the Beijing Chinese Children’s Piano Competition in 1984.”¹ *Yuju* has been popular throughout Henan province; it has spread to the north region of the Yang Zi River, the northwest, Xing Jiang, Tibet, and even Taiwan.²

Chen Yi states that Chinese traditional music has influenced her a lot; she unconsciously sings these kinds of melodies. It seems that *Yu Diao* crystallized in her mind as if she often sings it.³ *Yu Diao* shares certain characteristics of melodies of *Yuju* (Henan opera) and folksongs. Henan literally means south of the [Yellow] River, its geographical location in the middle of the central plain. With thousands of years of history, Henan is one of the cultural cradles that nurtured early Chinese arts and music. During the Qing dynasty, *Yuju* was called “*tu bang xi*” (grassroots-clapper play) or “*Bian Liang qiang*” (Bian Liang melody). Influenced by other regional genres, such as *kunqu* and *Han Ju*, the “*Yu dong diao*” (Eastern Henan tunes) and “*Yu xi diao*” (Western Henan tunes) are the main branches among the Henan regional styles.⁴

According to Hang Deying, *Yuju* originated in the 1930s; its forerunner was *Henan bang-zi* (Henan singing accompanied by the clapper), which rapidly developed in the regions of Kaifeng, Shang Qu, and Luo Yang. *Henan bang zi* was developed out of folk ballads and the regional story-telling singing, including the down-to-earth “*erhuang*” and “*xiansuo*.”⁵ Because *Henan bang-zi* expresses common people’s everyday lives, it has been beloved by audiences.⁶ In the 1920s and 1930s, the Education Department of the Henan government organized schools of *Henan bang-zi* performers and founded Henan opera troupes; the famous actors/actresses composed a group of new operas, which were a significant influence on *Yuju*’s reform and development.⁷
Yuju is closely related to regional dialects and customs in its subjects from ordinary people’s everyday lives and their use of language. Through Yuju we can see the people’s spirit, emotions, and aspirations. Most of the operas and their tunes are handed down through oral tradition, reflecting many artists’ creativity and teamwork.⁸

Yuju belongs to the northern ban qiang ti (rhythmic-melodic formula) or ban shi bian hua ti (rhythmic variation formula). Ban qiang is one of the forms in theater or storytelling in song (quyi). The ban, wooden clapper, is a lead instrument in the rhythmic structure.⁹

In Yuju, the er ba-ban (two eight-beats) is a basic rhythmic form, having a pair of phrases in a couplet, each phrase containing eight beats. Here ban means beat, which is often in 2/4 meter. Er ba-ban is the most expressive and flexible form suitable for depicting a cheerful mood.¹⁰

Although many Henan tunes are in pentatonic scales, Li Shuyin summarizes the two heptatonic scales commonly used in Henan folksongs: The first type of scale (1 2 3 4⁷ 5 6 7 1) has a long history. This scale seems to be similar to the Western Lydian mode, but its tuning is not in the equal temperament tuning. The Zhe Chuan Xia Si bianzhong (bronze bells), which were unearthed in 1978 and which date from 552 B.C., were tuned to this type of heptatonic scale, in which the 4⁷ is unstable and inflected between the 4 and 5. The 4⁷ coincides with the ancient Chinese tone bian zhi (flexible zhi tone) and is unlike the tone 4⁷ in equal temperament. Another type of heptatonic scale is in the range of 5 6 7⁷ 1 2 3 4. This type is not widely used, but it appears in the folksongs of Lingbao and Shan counties.¹¹
The first type of heptatonic scale can be found in “Si Chun,” ("Thinking of Spring") an instrumental prelude (ban tou gu) that expresses the depressed feeling or sadness of a woman. Starting with 5 and ending with 1, the following fragment from “Si Chun” frequently uses the 4# and 7 pitches with inflections, sliding upward or sometimes downward. In measure 25 of this fragment, 7 (ti) is marked with an upward (sliding) arrow. Measures 29 and 33 use both 4# and 4; in measure 33, the 4 (a♭) is marked with an upward slide. Obviously, 4# and 7 play important roles revealing the animated emotions.

Ex. 3.1. A fragment of “Si Chun,” mm. 22-38.

One may see a variant of another type of heptatonic scale (5 6 7♭ 1 2 3 4#) in Ex. 3.2. “Ban Che Haozi” ("Wooden Cart Work Song"). The “Ban Che Haozi” from the Xinxiang region opens with (m. 1) a leaping down of a sixth interval from G to B♭, which is one of the typical elements of Henan folksongs. Yu Diao uses a
downward leap of a sixth in measures 1, 3, and 7 and at the end of transitions 1 and 2 (mm. 13 and 19). (Examples of Chen Yi’s works reprinted by her kind permissions.)

Ex. 3.2 a. “Ban Che Haozi” (“Wooden Cart Work Song”), mm. 1-4.

Ex. 3.2 b. Yu Diao, mm. 1-3.

The folksong, “The Salesman Wanders throughout the World,”\textsuperscript{13} has the overall melodic frame [skeleton notes] of Chen’s Yu Diao. Its C - G emphasis and patterns around these two notes show the plain and unsophisticated character of the Henan folksong. This song is in a couplet form whose pairs of basic patterns and phrases are the essential elements of the structure of ban qiang ti (rhythmic-melodic formula).

Three of four types of Yuju tempos and rhythmic formulas start with a pick-up on a weak beat, which is typical in Yuju rhythm, beginning with yan (weak beat) falling on ban (strong beat).\textsuperscript{14} The folksong “The Salesman” uses this type of beginning.

Ex. 3.3. “The Salesman Wanders throughout the World,” mm. 1-4.
Yu Diao carries on this tradition, beginning with the third beat, zhong yan (the middle weak beat (see Ex. 3.2 b).

2. Chinese aesthetics as reflected in Yu Diao

a. Naturalness

When Irene Borger, the Program Director of The CalArts/Alpert Award in the Arts, asked Chen Yi about the sources of her compositions, the first things Chen Yi mentioned were Chinese folksongs and traditional music:

I went to the countryside to collect these folksongs when I was in China. I also had systematic training in Chinese traditional music. In school we learned Chinese folksongs, local operas, instrumental music, and quyi [a type of singing featuring story telling], in which you are actually telling stories musically. I learned both theory and the music itself. This influenced me a lot, and unconsciously I emerged singing these kinds of melodies. I could see what was natural, it’s so close to my native language and the daily life in our custom.\(^{15}\)

When Borger asked what she meant by “natural,” Chen explained, natural means things of style and spirit that emerge unconsciously from human beings. People don’t necessarily have to be taught.\(^{16}\)

From a philosophical viewpoint, Chen’s statement echoes the Daoist doctrines of naturalness; the essence of the Daoist ideal is to harmonize with natural law and with the good qualities in people’s hearts. In a similar vein, Chen Yi feels that the folk tunes are close to her native language and people’s daily life. Thus, she absorbs some folk elements as vocabularies in her natural musical language. Hence, Yu Diao presents its melody, rhythm, and form associated with Henan folksongs and customs.

It seems paradoxical that Chen Yi talks about unconscious things emerging from people as “natural” but also mentions her systematic training and learning of Chinese traditions, which seems to contradict Laozi’s phrase, “discard the wise.”\(^{17}\) One
explanation could be found in her personal temperament or tendency. Chen’s attraction to nature and to folksongs prompted her to absorb their elements and her native heritage as she did her mother tongue. Thus, her beliefs and musical expression coincide with the Daoist concepts of spontaneity and a natural language. These aspects of her compositions may be made clearer in the following sections. Like one speaking one’s native language, Yu Diao demonstrates naturalness in its easy-going manner, playful mood, use of Chinese traditional modes, and use of ban-qiang ti (rhythmic-melodic formula), which are elements of Chinese regional music. These characteristics and terms will be discussed further in the syntactic analysis.

b. Fluidity

As in some Western musical traditions (e.g., French music), the quality of fluidity is an important idea in Chinese aesthetics. The fluidity in Yu Diao can be seen in its relatively fast tempo (\( \frac{4}{4} = 120 \)) and flowing melody with few rests or pauses, which are filled with leaping figures of the left hand.

The sixteenth-note passages (mm. 24-27 and 38-40) increase the speed of the music since the sixteenth notes are shorter and faster than the previous quarter- and eighth-note passage. Thus, with crescendo, the sixteenth-note passages at the climaxes increase the fluidity and excitement of the piece.

c. Terseness

Terseness of texture and linear motion, two typical traits of Chinese aesthetics, are prominent in Yu Diao, and the melody is the center of musical interest in this piece. For example, as the melody is active in the first phrase (mm. 1-4), the left hand plays only a few notes on important beats. The linear movement of voices is prevailing, which can be
seen in the homophonic, contrapuntal, and monophonic textures (mm. 1-4, 14-18, and 24-29).

3. Influences of Western techniques

*Yu Diao* is influenced by Western twentieth-century techniques in its use of inflections, counterpoint, and atonal or pantonal elements. In the early 1980s, the most important influence of Western techniques appears to have been from Bartók. Bartók has been highly respected by Chinese musicians because his ethnomusicological works and his compositions embodied the Hungarian national spirit, but not all of his works and avant-garde approach were introduced into China under Mao Zedong’s regime. In the 1980s, in the revival of Chinese folk music, Bartók’s works received serious study. Chen Moh-wei notes that,

> Bartók is the most influential in developing her (Chen Yi) compositional techniques. In order to better understand how Bartók employed the folk tunes, Chen Yi analyzed the whole set of Bartók’s string quartets. Through this process she came to understand that the pitch content of a tune was not the main concern but only a means of expression. Therefore, it is through the integration of the spirit, rhythm, pitch level, form and structure that a tune serves both as emotional and intellectual content of a composition. In other words, the goal is not to use the tune literally, rather the ideas and the emotions that are conveyed.\(^{18}\)

Chen Yi has expressed her admiration for Bartók, “(I) went to the countryside with teams to collect folksongs, to learn how to record them and transcribe them, like what Bartók did.”\(^{19}\) *Yu Diao* shows how Chen Yi learned from Bartók in revealing the spirit and psychological aspects of folk music.

According to Li Songwen, composers of the previous generation also arranged folksongs, but they use classical-romantic functional harmonies to accompany folksongs. The new-wave composers, including Chen Yi, disregarded the early method of arranging
folksongs. "They went straight to the heart of folk music, much in the manner that Bartók engaged it."\(^{20}\)

To portray the playful, humorous feelings of children and her optimism, Chen Yi indicates "Allegretto Scherzando" at the beginning of the piece, which establishes the general character of *Yu Diao*. The cheerful and fun-loving feelings are exemplified in several ways:

a. The melody starts in a stepwise motion that is suddenly followed by a leap of a perfect fifth up and a sixth down.

b. The left hand is not always a partner to the melody, sometimes it is odd and often in "wrong keys."

c. The left hand becomes increasingly "naughty"; it seems to play notes in pantonality. Sometimes, it is a "noise-maker." The intervals gradually turn into atonal sounds, the noise of percussion instruments, which is clearly illustrated at the end.

d. Although the two main themes sound pretty and clever, the transitions often sound "out-of-tune" due to their use of inflected tones or the panmodal settings.

Timothy Lane Brace remarks that the *xin-chao* (new-wave) composers "adopted the most advanced Western modern and avant-garde techniques. These techniques differ radically from romantic ones in their handling of melodic/harmonic relationships," and in orchestration, they have broken down the barriers that tend to separate Chinese and Western instruments.\(^{21}\)
Chen Yi consciously applies counterpoint techniques, such as imitative and free contrapuntal phrases in the themes of *Yu Diao*. In measures 6-7, the lower voice imitates the higher voice after two and a half beats and at an octave below. Because it appears and ends naturally as a fragment embodied at the end of the theme, it resembles folk musicians' playing in antiphony in a natural manner without a trace of Western counterpoint.

In theme II, the counterpoint can be described as a free imitation. With a delay of two and a half beats at an octave below, the low voice imitates and embellishes the melody by adding tones in a slightly different rhythm (dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth). In measures 20, an invertible counterpoint emerges. The two voices exchange their melodies. The low voice becomes the leader; the high voice becomes the follower. From measure 24 on, they play the same melody in octave doubling with neither leading. This treatment is an example of Chen's adaptation of Western counterpoint. In *Yu Diao*, Chen Yi's juxtaposition of imitative polyphony, homophony, and monophony can be seen as an attempt to break down the barriers between Western and Eastern musical traditions.

4. Structure and rhythms in *Yu Diao*

In formal and theoretical aspects, at a macro-level, *Yu Diao* in a ternary form presents Chen's flexible use of *ban qiang ti* (rhythmic-melodic formula).

a. Large structure: flexible *ban qiang ti*  

*Yu Diao* has three sections and a total of 162 beats in 41 measures. Although the piece is based on a symmetrical couplet form, its phrases and sections are often
asymmetrical. The interaction between symmetrical and asymmetrical portions creates a sense of freshness and unpredictability. Its rhythmic structure is as follows:

Fig. 3.1. The rhythmic structure of *Yu Diao*

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<td>Measures</td>
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<td># of beats</td>
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The elastic structure of *Yu Diao* is Chen’s application of varied *ban qiang ti.* From this table, one can see that the beats and measure numbers are uneven and asymmetrical; but the overall design of ternary form (ABA') appears symmetrical. The phrases 1 and 2, 4 and 5, 7 and 8 are pairs of couplets; the phrases 3 and 6 are transitional. These transitions and the coda (phrase 9) feature repetitions, fragmentation, and extension of motives, which can be called repetition (*chong fu*), extension (*yan shen*), and adding flowers (*jia hua*).

The shift between couplets and extended transitional phrases shows interactions between regularity and irregularity. The form creates a sound that is quite different from strophic song form or traditional instrumental pieces. The sound is easy to follow since the rhythmic motive is repeated several times; it catches the listener’s attention by the subtle change of rhythms, splits of the motives, and new combinations of beats. The careful use of rests (m. 14) and changing meter (mm. 20-21) are other unconventional factors of the flexible *ban qiang ti.*
b. Rhythmic motives

At a micro-level, the rhythm begins on the third beat with a quarter note followed by a dotted eighth and a sixteenth on the fourth beat (m. 1 in Ex. 3.2 b). This dotted eighth and a sixteenth plus the following even eighths become a rhythmic motive in the transition 1 (mm. 11-12).

Ex. 3.4. Yu Diao, mm. 10-12.

Among the opening rhythms, Chen Yi derives another rhythmic motive from measure 3, two sixteenths plus two eighths (or an eighth followed by two sixteenths and two eighths), which becomes a main motive in transition 1 and spins out variants in measures 3 and 15-16. The motives are inter-related, building up an organic rhythmic structure.

Ex. 3.5. Yu Diao, mm. 8-9.

The rhythms of theme II (mm. 14-18) use motives of a quarter plus two eighths (m. 14) and some dotted rhythms without rest. This lyric phrase has four and a half measures with relatively longer notes, contrasting to the short motives of theme I.
c. Rhythmic techniques and devices

The left hand uses a rhythm motive acting as the *ban* (wooden clapper), an eighth plus a quarter as one of the central rhythmic cells. It sometimes becomes a pick-up eighth falling on another eighth. This rhythmic motive reflects children's vivacity and is used in transitions and at the end of the piece.

i. Use of *shou wei jie ying* technique (a beginning taking up from the previous ending). Chinese writers and performers of *quyi*, story telling arts, often use the *shou wei jie ying* technique in traditional novels (*zhang hui xiao shuo*) and in recomposed novels for their performances. Chen Yi spins out a rhythmic motive at the end of a phrase and uses it as the beginning of the next phrase. For example, the left hand motive at the end of phrase 1, a pick-up eighth plus a quarter in measure 4, is echoed by the right hand as a pick-up eighth plus two eighths in measure 5. The beginning of transition 1 is derived from the end of phrase 2 (two sixteenths followed by three eighths, mm. 7-8). Through using this technique, transition 1 appears to grow out of the previous phrase.
ii. Manipulating the “urging” (cui) technique, Chen Yi likes to use the urging technique to create climax. The repeated sixteenth-note patterns can be described as an embellished (adding flowers) Yu Diao melody in measures 24-27 and 36-39. The group of four sixteenths is altered as a three sixteenth-note group (m. 27) or two-sixteenth-note group (m. 38). The groups with fewer notes generate an urging (pushing forward) effect.

iii. Stresses or accents on syncopation or dotted rhythm acting as a ban (the wooden clapper). In measures 6, 13, 36-38, the left hand plays syncopation and dotted rhythms with stresses, which produce a percussive effect, signaling that a high point of the piece has been reached.
5. Pitch and modal organizations

a. Thematic materials

In *Yu Diao*, for the principal theme, Chen Yi uses a mode containing the pitches: a', (c''), c'', d'', e'', f''', and a'' (sol, ti, do, re, mi, sol). Centered at d'', this mode is a variant of the D gong or A yi-fan mode, which has the pitches: a', (b'), c'''↓, d'', e'', (f'''), g''↑, and a''. (The downward and upward arrows indicate the tendency of pitches to be played higher or lower than the pitches in equal temperament tuning.) The mode in *Yu Diao* shares the lower four pitches of the A yi-fan mode, but it usually does not use the g''↑ pitch; instead, it uses f''' as a basic tone. This f''' is a principal tone of the D gong mode, and it is an altered tone that exchanges with the tone g''↑ in A yi-fan mode. Chen Yi has studied the yi-fan scale and illustrates it at the starting pitch of g' in the following:

Fig. 3.2. Chinese Yi-Fan scale in Chen Yi's Dissertation Concerto for Piano.22
Chen Yi notes that in Cantonese music the ↓B and ↑F are micro-tones, frequently bending and exchanging with A and E respectively, which are basic tones in the traditional Chinese pentatonic modes.  

Because the seventh scale degree (yi) tends to sound lower, and the fourth scale degree (fan) sounds a little higher, they have specific colors not found in equal temperament in Western heptatonic scales.

Yu Diao has two main themes, and both of them use the pillar tones of 1 and 5, (do and sol). The themes may give a false impression of pentatonic melodies, but they use both pentatonic elements and inflected tones, which are not passing notes or neighbor tones. The inflected tones (the fourth, seventh, and sometimes third scale degrees) can be called flexible tones adding specific flavors for their Henan local identity.

Because the piano is an equal temperament instrument, it creates a disadvantage for the player trying to play a Henan tune with neutral or inflected scale degrees (these tones are between the semitones). Chen’s frequent use of the f♯ and f♯', c♯ and c♯' is her way of substituting for the flexibility of the mode and the subtle inflections in Chinese traditional music. The melody’s repetitive patterns in linear movement illustrate the simplicity of Chinese traditional music and economical use of materials. These traits may tell us what elements are preferable and considered to be beautiful in Chinese music.

Using the principal tones A, (C), C♯, D, E, F♯, and A, theme I mainly contains a descending figure of f♯" e" d" (mi-re-do, mm. 1 & 2) plus the cadential pattern of a' c♯" d" (sol-ti-do). The melodic notes in the first (slur) group rise to the higher a" (sol) followed by the lower c♯" and d" (ti and do) as a cadential figure. The second group of notes touches the lower a' (sol) and is followed by c" and d" (ti and do, m.2). This pattern
forms the basic shape of the first phrase: the upper and lower arches create a
reversed symmetrical contour of the melody. These two ache shapes in symmetrical
contour are show in Figure 3.3. Because the tune is in a sharp key in a relative high
register, and the mode sounds similar to a major scale; the sound of Yu Diao is bright and
cheerful.

Ex. 3.10. Yu Diao, mm. 1-3.

Figure 3.3. The melodic contour (symmetrical aches) of mm. 1-2 in Yu Diao.

Scholars often say that Chinese music is pentatonic; to be sure the music has a
pentatonic framework. However, Henan regional music often uses seven or more tones,
which make a distinct regional style. When we examine the relationship between the
right hand and left hand or the accidentals, we may find that the f# and f^b notes often
alternate; the same alternation also appears between c# and c^b. Obviously, Chen Yi is
conscious of and sensitive to the unstable pitches of the scale.

The second half of phrase a (mm. 3-4) is an embellished version of the first half
(mm. 1-2) of the phrase. Here Chen uses the technique of “adding flowers,” one of the
most commonly used variation techniques in traditional Chinese instrumental works. In
measure 3 the melody of the first measure is ornamented and the rhythm becomes faster because the eighth notes change into sixteenth notes. The motives are further ornamented from measures 24 to 27, where two hands play sixteenth notes with a crescendo. The decorative tones are added “flowers” to the basic notes of Theme I (mm. 2 & 7).

b. Modulation and motivic transposition

The third phrase (mm. 8-13) in Yu Diao uses a motive derived from the beginning of Theme I,24 which forms a sequence (mm. 8-10) descending stepwise and departing from the original mode. The right hand plays the motivic sequence, while the left hand plays parallel thirds and fifths, which descend stepwise. This transitional passage shifts (fan diao) from the mode centered at D to the mode of G gong at the end of section A. In this process, both hands use tones from remote modes in a pan-tonal context, departing from traditional Chinese modes and exploring pan-tonality.

The end of section A features repetitions of a motive of phrase a, which stops at the f\textsuperscript{#} (seventh scalar degree) without the tonic note g'. This ending makes the listener feel a need for resolution. The rests intensify this tendency, leading to section B.
The beginning of Theme II (mm. 14-16) is in a pentatonic context. The melody floats from D zhi (D E G A B) to G gong mode (G A B D E or do re mi sol la). Theme II is gentle, smooth, and lyrical, contrasting to the playful theme I. The melody moves into A gong (or E yi fan mode) (A B C# E F# or E F# G# A B C# D) in mm. 17-18. This type of shift changes both mode and key, which use an inflected G (G - G#) and leaps of a fifth, octave, and fourth. These techniques of changing keys are characteristic of Chinese music, using flexible tones and common tones without functional harmony.
In a short transition in mm. 18-19, a short motive (GBC, and EGA = sol ti do) grows out of the end of phrase 4 and suggests different modes. At the same time, the right hand plays intervals or a chord in different modes, producing a bitonal effect.

Then, the lyric theme II sounds in D zhi then G gong again (mm. 20-23). The two hands exchange their tunes moving in the same modes. The left hand plays the leader's melody, and the right hand imitates the melody as the follower. In measure 24, the two $f^{\#}$ in both hands bring out a fragment of theme I without the inflections. This embellished fragment of theme I in unison features sixteenth notes running upward (mm. 24-27), which create a climax. Here the G and flexible tones are absent and reserved for future use.
Section A' recaptures theme I in the original mode but in a relatively lower register (mm. 30-40). In the middle of the keyboard, the two hands play theme I in octave. In mm. 36-40, the right hand leaps a seventh to the high register, recalling theme I in the sixteenth-note pattern of the climax; at the same time the left hand plays parallel fifths of the C (yi) and G (fan) with accents. These fifths actually play a role of atonal sound by the drum and gongs, which leads to the two pillar tones of a'' and d'' (sol and do) in staccato, flying away in an abrupt ending.

Ex. 3.14. Yu Diao, mm. 38-40.
c. Hierarchical structure

Contemporary music theory emphasizes hierarchical pitch structure, which often calls forth the application of Heinrich Schenker’s analytical method. According to Paul Wilson, the prolongation model does not work well outside the common-practice literature: “Any attempt to find complete and convincing analogies to prolongation in post-tonal music is doomed to failure.” However, analysts may still make an approach to hierarchical structure, recognizing a differentiation in the structural importance in musical context and events.

To analyze Chen Yi’s *Yu Diao*, one must realize that this piece uses tones outside of traditional scales without the functional progression of Western classical harmony. Paul Wilson’s point is helpful here. Because *Yu Diao* is based on Chinese regional operatic music (Henan Yuju), the twentieth century pitch-set or twelve-tone theory are not the best tools to explain the modal nature of this piece in analysis. One can find an answer to this question in Chinese music theory.

The background level of the *Yu Diao* melody mainly consists of F♯-D-F♯-D, a melodic major third or a minor sixth (intervals). For the bass voice, the background level tones are D-G-F♯-D, a perfect fourth and a major seventh, and a major third. These tones, derived from the D *gong* and G *gong* mode, merge at the beginning of the sections ABA'
as both melodic and harmonic intervals, illustrating the favorite consonant intervals of Chinese modes.

In the middle section the tonal center moves a fourth up from D to G (m.14), which is a typical modulation (jandiao) in Chinese theatrical music and instrumental music. For example, in Jingju, jandiao often uses a new mode, a perfect fourth higher or a perfect fifth lower than the previous mode. When the A' section appears, the bass reinforces the f# tone at an octave below the treble voice (m. 30) as a signal of returning to the D mode. The fundamental tones in the bass voice are also F# and D.

Fig. 3.5. The background of *Yu Diao*.

The middle ground of *Yu Diao*: The melodic notes at the beginning of the phrases are f## e" a' d" d f## f' e' d". These tones can form the first five tones of the gong mode (do re mi sol). However, they appear in a descending line as mi-re-do with an inserted sol note (a') and with some octave displacements in this pentatonic mode. The tonic pitch d along with f# are used in important positions, showing the preference for a major third or a minor sixth interval. The important tones in the left hand are d a g' or d f# d', which appear sometimes at the beginning and the end of a phrase. The bass voice often shows
the pillar tones in a melodic fourth or fifth, such as d-g. The major third, minor sixth, perfect fourth and fifth are the favorite intervals carrying structural significance.

Fig. 3.6. The middle ground of Yu Diao.

The foreground of Yu Diao uses more than seven tones due to the use of inflections. These tones are filled between the do-sol pillars as embellishments of the basic tones. At the foreground level, the tonic D and the zhi tone A (= the Western dominant) are used in cadences as stable components of the melody. The third and the seventh scale degrees (f♯–f♯, c–c♯) are unstable, frequently exchanging with the inflected pitches. Alan R. Thrasher notes that Chinese instrumental music is rooted in vocal music. As in the oral tradition, without the use of notation, the musicians often interpret preserved pieces "by fleshing out" skeleton melodies. Yu Diao's ornamented melody is a product of this tradition; seven, nine, or more tones are used in the foreground to flesh out the skeleton melody (see Ex. 3.2 b).

In transitions (mm. 8-13), motives in sequences pass pantonal pitch areas, suggesting tonal ambiguity and instability, which contrasts with the clear modal melody in the main sections of Yu Diao and enrich its sonority (see Ex. 3.4, 3.5).
6. The Sound of *Yu Diao*

In a high register, the melody of *Yu Diao* begins in a sort of pentatonic scale centered at d'', which shares some similarities with the D gong mode and the A yi-fan mode. In the dynamic of \textit{mf}, the melody emphasizes its tonic and fluctuates between the higher and lower zhi tones (a" and a'). Although it uses inflected c#" and c '', the melody itself sounds very tonal and consonant. It is easy to sing and remember.

In four measures (mm. 1-4), the thematic pattern (e" f#" e" d" a" c#" d") based on the melodic formula Aa is heard four times. In four or five beats, this formula uses almost the same tones, but in each appearance, this formula is slightly varied. For example, the a" tone changes to a'; the c#" is inflected to c'''. In measures 3-4, the neighbor tones in sixteenth notes are added to embellish the melody, presenting an embellished variant of (Aa').

In the first phrase, the left hand plays a few harmonic or melodic intervals, which outline the D major or minor triad and an interval containing the pitches of g' and c' (the tones of yi and fan). The left hand's intervals cause some dissonant sounds because their relationship with the melody is in a second interval, or the intervals contain inflected tones. While some altered tones sound natural, the other inflected tones sound jarring. Perhaps, Chen Yi plays a joke by setting these odd tones in a humorous mood.

In the second phrase (or phrase b, mm. 5-8), the melody repeats a motive with a mordent that has two tones taken from the beginning of phrase a (e" and d''); then the melody elaborates and develops the motive, leaping up a major seventh to the pitch c#", which is a high point of section A. Immediately, the melody descends by steps, closing
phrase b by recalling the ending of phrase a, which has the character of rounded binary form.

In phrase b, the left hand’s figures are more independent; a sequence of parallel thirds and fifths with altered tones (b\textsuperscript{\textprime} and f\textprime\textprime) (mm. 5-6) makes this phrase sound in a pan-tonal context. In measures 6-7, the left hand imitates the melody of the right hand.

Phrase Ac is a transition to section B. At the beginning of phrase c (mm. 8-10), it uses a four-tone motive (a\textprime, g\textprime, f\textprime, d\textquoteright\textprime) derived from Aa\textprime to form a sequence descending to a pentatonic scale centered at g\textprime (G4). The second half of Ac is a transposed Aa centered at g\textprime (mm. 10-13). The left hand continues to use parallel thirds, fifths, and a minor seventh interval; the intervals of e\textprime\textprime and b\textprime and d\textprime c\textprime sound “out-of-tune” against the melody. In contrast to the conventional sound of the melody, the intervals in the left hand produce a modern flavor due to the use of inflected and borrowed tones drawn from remote modes and keys.

This manner recalls Bartók’s treatment of folksongs in his *Easy Piano Pieces* No. 8, Folk Song, which uses borrowed chords from remote keys (e.g., the chord containing C\textprime\textprime, e\textprime, and b\textprime\textprime) to accompany the melody in C Aeolian mode.

Ex. 3.15. Bartók, *Easy Piano Pieces* No.8, Folk Song, mm. 1-19.
At the end of phrase Ac, a sudden pause interrupts the music. Then, theme B (section B), a folksong-like melody (phrase Bd) enters in \textit{mp} in a very high register, which is centered at d" in mm. 14-15. This lyric theme seems to be in D \textit{zhi} mode (the tone D as sol). The melody moves up to G \textit{gong} mode (G as do in mm. 15-16), then, it moves down and ends with A \textit{gong} mode. The long arch-shaped theme II contrasts to the lively theme I, which is based on a short melodic formula.

Another contrasting element is the two-voice antiphony. At two octaves below the melody and two and a half beats later, a second voice imitates the melody. This brief counterpoint lasts only two measures. Then, the second voice holds two relatively long notes (e"). After the first voice finishes the lyric theme II at A \textit{gong} note, the second voice imitates the three notes at the end of theme II as a motive, transposing it in different modes (mm. 18-19). However, at the same time, the intervals or chords in the right hand suggest the modes of G \textit{gong}. This short bitonal transition bridges the phrases \textit{d} and \textit{e}.

In a low register, the same lyrical melody recurs in \textit{mf}, but this time, the low voice becomes the leader. The high voice imitates theme II after two and a half beats at two octaves above. This technique of exchanging roles of voices is called invertible counterpoint in Western polyphony. Like phrase d, at the beginning of this antiphony, the imitation seems to be a real answer (exact imitation), but after two measures, it turns into a free counterpoint. Then, the two voices meet together at f\# tones, running into a fast passage in octave (mm. 24-27). This passage elaborates theme I by adding sixteenth notes and moving upward. This variation technique is called “urging” (\textit{cui}) in Chaozhou (a city in Guangdong province) music. Stephen Jones writes that the device of urging “is most lively and distinctive. It consists of rhythmic variations upon the basic melody,
without altering the meter; its syncopation and repeated notes often give a breathless
feeling.\footnote{Approaching the apex, the sixteenth notes are grouped into a three-note unit
\((c'^m, b'', a'')\) with accents, which breaks the regular beats and produces an effect of
pushing.}

Suddenly, a sixteenth rest causes a pause; then two groups of strong chords with
accents burst out. These groups are separated by an eighth rest. The second chord of
each group is a major seventh chord, dissonant and percussive, suggesting a strike of
percussion instruments.

After the strikes of chords, two melodic sixth intervals leap down with a
diminuendo. In the middle and low register, the melody of Aa by two hands in octave
reappears in a soft sound, which is the beginning of section A'. This reappearance of Aa
is marked by an accent on the dotted eighth notes e' and e. Other features of the Aa
remain, including the pitches and rhythms, except they are in a lower register. The A'b
phrase restates the Ab phrase in the same low register as A'a'.

The end of this phrase becomes a short coda, which uses the same techniques of
"urging," adding sixteenth notes to vary the high pitches of the melody with crescendo.
The left hand plays accented parallel fifths and plays the unusual fifth of the \(y\)-\(f\)an
interval \((c'- g')\), in which the lowered yi becomes c. These fifths sound not in the D mode
and key or in any other mode or key. They are for producing exciting and percussive
effects against the melody. In measure 39, when the right hand repeats the two tones of
a" and b", the left hand strikes the "out of tune" intervals with accents in a sort of
syncopated rhythm, which evokes a sound of an ensemble using drums and gongs.
Following a pause of an eighth rest, the two voices play the "urging" figure of the melody
in *forte* and in octaves. The piece finishes with a flamboyant gesture of an ensemble; however, it ends with a leap of a melodic interval using only the two principal tones, the *zhi* and *gong* tones of the D mode. This staccato ending highlights the humorous spirit of children.

![Fig. 3.7. The Sound of Yu Diao](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>A'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phrase</td>
<td>a (a')</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>a (trans.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>9-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode center</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>D G A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texture</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
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</table>

(H = Homophony, P = Polyphony, M = Monophony)

7. Referential meanings in *Yu Diao*

The referential meanings in *Yu Diao* lie in Chen Yi’s adaptation of Bartók’s spirit and compositional methods, the portrayal of children’s naïve and humorous emotions, and the techniques reflecting Chinese aesthetics.

*Yu Diao*, written in the same year that Chen Yi composed *Duo Ye*, is a product of Chen Yi’s ethnomusicological study. While *Yu Diao* illustrates Chen Yi’s music deeply rooted in Chinese traditions and aesthetics, it also shows her unconventional treatments of a traditional melody, including harmonization of a folk tune in pantonal context, which are the *xin-chao* (new wave) characteristics. *Yu Diao* also epitomizes some influences of Bartók and Wu Zu-qiang in Chen’s early career as a composer.

From a biographical point of view, *Yu Diao* exemplifies Chen’s view of Chinese national and modern music in the 1980s, in which she assumes the mission of bridging
traditional and contemporary music. At the time she composed *Yu Diao*, she was attempting to satisfy both nationalist and modernist demands and express her character by exploring the potential of the piano in playing Chinese regional music.

One path to achieve this goal was to absorb Bartók’s methods of treating folk music. As mentioned before, Chen Yi frequently uses inflections, atonal and pantonal elements, as well as counterpoint, echoing Bartók’s use of folksongs and blending Chinese traditional idioms with Western techniques in a youthful style.

In terms of using folksongs, the thematic materials seem to be not only from *Yuju* and from Henan province. I found that the lyrical theme II is similar to the beginning of a Jiangsu folksong “Gu Su Scenes.” The text of this song praises Hang Zhou and Su Zhou for their beauty as the Venice of the East. Theme II may reflect children’s love of their hometown or their regional culture. The music surpasses regional limitation.

Ex. 3.16. Jiangsu Folksong “Gu Su Scenes,” mm. 1-4.

This piece may reflect Wu Zuqiang’s influence on Chen Yi since *Yu Diao* was composed in 1984 when Chen Yi studied composition with Wu Zuqiang. Wu states that to explore the depths of specialization, content, and techniques is a goal of his compositions. He notes that, “techniques always serve the needs of thought and imagination. When learning traditional techniques, we should be sure not be bound by old usage; when pursuing new meanings, [one] should not leave the ordinary listener’s capacity too much behind.” Wu’s idea of keeping balance between convention and innovation may have influenced Chen Yi’s approach in *Yu Diao*. 
The influences of Chinese instrumental and percussion ensembles play vital roles in the climaxes in *Yu Diao*. A climax occurs before the A' section, and another climax occurs at the end of this piece. In a festive mood, these heights adopt the manner of a Chinese ensemble, playing an embellished theme in octaves, or playing the melody with patterns of upbeat strikes by *luo-gu* (drums and gongs). The evocative techniques of “adding flowers,” “urging,” and altered rhythms of *luo-gu* are often used to suggest the aesthetic ideas of *yi-xiang* (meaning of image) and *shen-yun* (spirit and charm or rhyme).

*Yu Diao* reflects the idea that, inspired by Bartók’s music based on Hungarian folksongs, Chen Yi has tried to revive Chinese traditional music and compose in her individual style. In an optimistic spirit celebrating the rich musical heritage, in *Yu Diao*, Chen Yi demonstrates her way of modernizing traditional regional music by using contemporary techniques, which offers some resolutions to the questions and controversies surrounding traditional Chinese music and the modernization of Chinese music.

8. Conclusion

In summary, *Yu Diao* is a significant piece in Chen Yi’s early career. It clearly establishes the composer’s Chinese origin and cultural identity, as well as her approach to modern Chinese national music. In a lively flow of Henan melodies, the influences of Chinese culture and music are illustrated in her musical expression. The spontaneity and naturalness mirror the ideas of Daoism. Her treatment of folksong and exploration of new sonorities recall Bartók’s approach in harmonizing folksongs and Wu Zuqiang’s idea about balancing the old and new. *Yu Diao* illustrates the qualities of fluidity, terseness, and economy in texture and materials, which are features in Chinese arts and music. The
flexible uses of ban qiang ti, Chinese modes, dissonance, and techniques
demonstrate the ideals of Chinese aesthetics including the structure containing
interactions of symmetry and asymmetry, and regularity and irregularity (varied ban
qiang ti).

B. Analysis of Small Beijing Gong

1. Historical background

In 1993, Chen earned her doctoral degree in composition with distinction from
Columbia University. Small Beijing Gong (1993) was written in the same year that Chen
Yi composed her Piano Concerto, Monologue (Impressions On the True Story of Ah Q)
for unaccompanied B♭ clarinet, Symphony No.2, Pipa Rhyme for pipa, and Song in
Winter for a trio of harpsichord, dizi (bamboo flute), and zheng (zither). Although it is
the shortest of these compositions, Small Beijing Gong represents her multi-cultural
approach in combining elements of Chinese and Western music.

Chen notes that “Small Beijing Gong takes its musical style from Beijing opera.
It’s [was] written for my childhood piano teacher Li Su-Xin’s 70th birthday celebration
concert, given in my home city Guangzhou in 1993.”³⁰ This piece uses a short Jingju
reciting tune, figures of jinghu or string instruments (including jinghu, a two-string
fiddle, jing-er-hu, similar to the jinghu but tuned lower, and yue qin, a plucked string
instrument), and rhythms of the small Beijing gong in a manner of a Jingju ensemble. In
a binary form, this piece, however, breaks away from modal tune formulas and ban-shi
(rhythmic formulas) in duple meters. In a twentieth-century avant-garde style, it features
new sounds in its atonal context, dissonant chords, uneven beat groups, and changing meter.

In Small Beijing Gong, Chen Yi intends to portray the sound and the inherent quality of this instrument, as well as the Jingju idioms; at the same time it reflects the Chinese aesthetic ideas of the unity of nature and man, tian-ren-he-yi (or wu-wo-ru-yi, the observed and the artist are as one), yi-xiang (meaning and image), shen-yun (spirit and charm) and Chou Wen-chung's influence.

In this piece, Chen seems to experiment in translating a Mandarin word into a Jingju reciting tune for the piano; Chen expresses the spirit of Jingju and Chinese percussion instruments and her own character in this piano solo. One can also find other elements of Chinese aesthetics in this piece, such as allusiveness, terseness, and linear movement in texture. Moreover, Chen's uses of dissonant atonal techniques, and speech-singing together with irregular beat-grouping and changing meter show the influences of Schoenberg and Stravinsky on her.

When composing music for Western orchestra, chorus, chamber music, and solo instruments, Chen Yi has never stopped writing for Chinese instruments and using Jingju idioms. Chen said, "My style is what I say most naturally, and the thing I say most naturally is definitely my native language, because language can be translated into music, this is my basic idea."31 On the one hand, the Small Beijing Gong expresses Chen's native and most familiar musical language; on the other hand, Small Beijing Gong breaks the Chinese traditions of modal melodic usages, phrase structure, and duple rhythmic organizations, which shows in her music the change of style from using mostly Chinese traditional elements and sounds to being mostly in modern atonal musical style.
In the late 1980s, when Chen Yi studied atonal techniques, she experienced conflicts; she translated the conflicts into her sextet *Near Distance* (1988). Chen has considered this work her most personal piece. She states, *Near Distance*, in fact, these two words stand far apart, they are antonyms [something] you can’t really hold, [something] which doesn’t appear in front of you . . . *Near Distance* is an antonym of the ultra extreme of the distance, you can also interpret it as *yin* and *yang*.

. . . During that period [of composition], the deepest and strongest shocks I had were the contrasts and the comparisons between the East and the West, the struggles between the ancient and the modern and those conflicts. All these were reflected in this piece.  

This piece uses the twelve-tone method to express her animated thoughts in an abstract style. As a result of Chen Yi’s study, she found a way to compromise and to bridge the two extremes. Her *As in a Dream* (1988) for soprano, violin, and cello is another early experimental work, which uses twelve-tone techniques to set two poems of Li Qing-zhao (1084-1151, the famous poet).

Su de San Zheng notes that, “Chen Yi was inspired by the idea of *yingsong* (recitative speech) from Peking opera, the most lasting sound from China for her, and made sure the linguistic tones of the Chinese words would not be mismatched.” In the voice part, Chen indicates gliding tones, grace notes, and slurs to express the Mandarin tones of the three syllables of the text; when people who understand Mandarin listen to this song, they will feel familiar with the tunes. She has applied the twelve-tone method in writing Jingju recitative-like passages in other works.

Chen said, “I felt in this way [music] can have more variety, twelve notes have more, micro-tonal music has even more [notes], more than twelve notes, so I combined all these things together; I used all of them [in this piece].” Chen Yi considered these
pieces experimental works, which combine the twelve-tone technique with the methods of playing Chinese instruments and Chinese reciting song. These pieces present her own language and the lingering charm of Chinese poetry and Jingju recitative.

In an article of 1991, Zhou Long (Chen Yi’s husband) writes that,

We are fortunate... to live in an age of rapid dissemination of information, which enables us to gain global as well as historical perspective[s]... I feel that the key is whether or not artists take a serious stance toward their mission of "carrying on and developing traditional culture." That is, either to absorb and extract the essence of various cultures in the service of a lasting creativity, or simply to imitate, to patch together a potpourri.

In 1992, Zhou Long used the rhyme of Jingju reciting tones with Chinese percussion rhythms and the style of qin music in his Soul for pipa and string quartet. Zhou’s statement exemplifies two points: first the key for today’s composers is to develop one’s traditional music and compose with multicultural elements, secondly, in his opinion, the composers must extract the essence of various cultures through creative works. The pursuit of a global-historical approach and the merging of essences of multiple cultures are the key points in both Zhou Long and Chen Yi’s works.

Zhou and Chen use Jingju idioms as one of the musical elements in their new musical and cultural identities. Small Beijing Gong is a product of this new perspective and cultural confluence. Small Beijing Gong uses dissonant intervals and atonal pitch combinations (non-serial) to create percussive effects.

One may ask why Chen chose atonality as the essence of the West and avoided the Chinese modes in this piece in her synthesis of musical traditions. The answer may be found in her teacher Chou Wen-chung’s compositional approach and aesthetics.
In the late 1980s and 1990s, Chou was evolving and developing his theoretical system of modes based on the hexagrams and reflective principle of the *Yijing*. He has progressed from his early impressionist use of Chinese modes, rhythms, and aesthetic ideas to abstract depiction of Chinese subjects and concepts, in which he has mingled the influences of Varèse and Webern with Chinese calligraphy aesthetics and change of subtle tone colors.

In an article on “Chou Wen-chung,” Nicolas Slonimsky points out that traditional arrangements of European folksongs, in academic four-part harmony, are intrinsically incompatible with the modal nature of folk music. . . . When pentatonic melodies of the Orient are harmonized in this conventional manner, the incompatibility between the melody and the harmonic setting is such that the very essence of oriental melos is destroyed. . . . Modern counterpoint, tending towards economy and allowing free use of dissonance, corresponds more intimately to the nonharmonic essence of oriental melos. . . . Chou Wen-chung is possibly the first Chinese composer who has attempted to translate authentic oriental melo-rhythms into the terms of modern Western music.40

Slonimsky introduces Chou’s resolution of the problem: Chou uses the characteristic Chinese modal intervals within opulent dissonance as he “paints in orchestral sonority, timbre, texture and dynamics.”41

Chou’s compositions and Chou’s perspective on reinterpreting Chinese traditions within the context of avant-garde Western music surely had a great impact on Chen Yi’s compositional approach and in establishing her musical identity as a Chinese-born American composer. Chen Yi’s avoidance of Chinese modes reflects her exploration of new sounds in American avant-garde idioms.

The instrument, small Beijing gong, became important in several of Chen’s compositions during 1993. Chen imitates the sound of this instrument at the beginning of
The small Beijing gong is a metal instrument made from resonant bronze. According to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, gongs used in the operatic traditions of north and central-eastern China are different in that their surface shapes are convex, with flattened central striking area and relatively narrow shoulders. Their most distinctive acoustical feature is that their pitches change after being struck. . . . for small gongs (about 22 cm in diameter), known as *xiaoluo* ('small gong') and other names, the pitch ascends.

Small Beijing gong is used in accompanying Jingju and other instrumental ensembles. Its sound is bright and penetrating and can be heard over a large orchestra. 

*Fig. 3.8. A player with a small gong (xiaoluo).*

One of the philosophical concerns that has been haunting Chen Yi is “to think about ignorance and civilization, lowliness and pride.” In the liner notes for the CD recording of the Symphony No. 2, she gives a similar explanation,

Since the time I began to understand human beings’ sincereness [sic] and honesty, ignorance, servility and avariciousness [avarice], a voice of yearning for civilization has haunted me continuously. It is impossible to return to primitive simplicity. We have to perfect ourselves and bring civilization to more people in the world through education and social reform. My Symphony No. 2 contains the experiences of waking up to reality, introspection and longing.
Perhaps Small Beijing Gong is in this trend of Chen’s thought; it utters a call to
wake the listeners; it offers a new voice, pointing to the future of cultural confluence.

2. Chinese aesthetics in Small Beijing Gong

Small Beijing Gong illustrates Chinese aesthetics in its programmatic title and
note and the inseparable relationships between music and the Chinese tonal language and
between music and Jingju. It also demonstrates the ideas of yi-xiang (meaning-image),
xie-yi (express the meaning), and shen-yun (spirit and rhyme) by creating the sonic
images of a Jingju ensemble, a recitative tune, and the small Beijing gong.

a. Literary reference and yi-xiang (meaning and image)

Carrying on the Chinese tradition of using programmatic titles and notes, the
descriptive title and note of this piece give clues to understanding the music and help
people to imagine the sound of the small Beijing gong and Jingju ensemble. This method
is often related to the ideas of yi-xiang and xie-yi.

Elizabeth Wichmann, expert of Jingju, writes,

The fundamental aesthetic aim of traditional Chinese painting, to “write [i.e.,
draw/paint] the meaning” (xie yi) rather than to write “realistically” (xie shi), is
frequently referred to by Beijing opera practitioners as being analogous to their
own. ... Beijing opera likewise aims first to strike the audience with a
resemblance to life—and then to convey the very essence of life.46

Chen Yi’s portrayal of the small Beijing gong can be seen as a sort of xie-yi in
music. This piece is both allusive and abstract. Chen creates patterns of sounds and
rhythms to portray the jinghu playing, reciting tune, and Jingju ensemble. However, she
does not use existing traditional materials but uses atonal methods to reflect the spirit and
sounds of Jingju, which is an abstraction at the border of likeness and unlikeness.
According to Xie Zongliang, the famous artist Qi Baishi states that, “The wonderful point of painting exists between likeness and unlikeness. Too much likeness is considered to toady to ordinary people; too much unlikeness is thought to cheat the world.” Therefore, to resemble the object but not totally to imitate the object is the ideal of Chinese painting. This ideal of Chinese painting may be helpful to explain Chen’s abstraction and portrayal of the small gong and Jingju ensemble.

Commenting on the common traits of art and music, Xie Zongliang emphasizes that aesthetic experience should evoke imagination and explore the implied meanings (yu yi) beyond the sound or painting. Leaving room for imagination and leading people to search for meanings are the common features of Chinese painting and music. Chen Yi’s allusive method, use of linear lines, and terse texture parallel these aesthetic ideas, which emphasize the artist’s feelings and meanings, rather than the literal sounds of Jingju.

b. The close relationship between language and music

Chen has been influenced by the Chinese tradition that integrates elements of language and music in a unity. Chen Yi writes that “The tune of Prancing Horses [an instrumental piece] becomes very rich and colorful because more tones than the usual five of the normal Chinese pentatonic scales are used, mixing the Yi Fan and Zhi modes in a way that closely mirrors the inflections of Cantonese speech.” Thus, she experiments with translating Chinese language and Jingju reciting tunes in As in a Dream, Small Beijing Gong, and other compositions, which freely use tones and intervals beyond the traditional modes. The melodic tones in Small Beijing Gong seem to imitate tones of Mandarin words in Jingju reciting-singing style. Shen Sin-Yan notes,
Interval dominates our musical language. This is particularly true of Chinese music. In reality the use of the equal temperament system is a simplification of our musical space. It has become monotonous and artistically limited in the subconscious realm of our brains. Composers for the Chinese orchestra must pay attention to this point - effectively utilize natural intervals and the incredible experience of a very broad tonal spectral system.\(^5\)

Because the close relationship between Chinese tonal language and music has been imbued in her mind, she often reflects this relationship in her music. For example, the rising and falling reciting tones of words are expressed by combinations of grace notes and long notes. This shows that Mandarin is used as a source of inspiration for her music.

c. Shen-yun: the spirit and charm

When Chen translates the theatrical Jingju idioms into her music, she also abstracts the spirit and intrinsic quality of the words and idioms, which convey the feelings of her heart, as though to call out and to awaken as the energy flows. In a way unifying the “portrayed item” and the artist (wu-wo-ru-yi), Chen endows the Small Beijing Gong with an animated spirit through bright percussive sound. This piece and its increasingly fast strikes may be seen as a portrait of Chen Yi’s own character: energetic, active, and tireless.

3. The influences of Schoenberg and Stravinsky

Schoenberg’s twelve-tone method and Sprechstimme (speech-song) together with Stravinsky’s use of irregular accents and changing meter provide Chen Yi with lasting inspiration. Small Beijing Gong demonstrates how Chen Yi integrates these influences with Chinese aesthetics and Jingju elements.
Li Songwen notes that Chen’s atonal technique in the vocal work *As in a Dream* articulates the Chinese texts in the manner of Schoenberg’s *Sprechstimme*. Chen describes this work as such:

In [To] my eyes and taste, Schoenberg’s *Sprechstimme* is close to our Beijing Opera reciting style. The singing pitches (in *As in a Dream*) are designed very carefully according to (various factors, including) reciting tones, tunes and features of Chinese music[al] style, general rules in (Western) atonal style, the singer’s ability and favorite notes and expressions, and imitation of Chinese instrumental playing on Western instruments.\(^5\)

Her study of Schoenberg’s *Sprechstimme* and Chinese music led her to explore a broad tonal spectrum, combining tonal and percussive atonal sounds in *Small Beijing Gong* without using a twelve-tone row.

Chen notes that she learned rhythmic pattern and texture from Stravinsky.\(^5\) As one of the most innovative composers of the twentieth century, Stravinsky is well known for liberating beats from the tyranny of bar lines. His uses of ostinato, robust irregular accents, and Russian folk tunes contributed to the development of twentieth-century avant-garde and national music. Chen’s uses of uneven meter (7/8, 5/4), changing meter (5/4, 4/4, 3/4), and irregular accents illustrate her knowledge of Stravinsky’s compositional techniques and style. Her fondness for dissonance, emphasis of rhythms, and treatment of the piano as a percussion instrument recall the manner of Stravinsky.

**4. Structure and rhythms**

*Small Beijing Gong* is a very short piece of twenty measures. In terms of large structural design, it consists of two main parts (A B), an introduction, a transition, and a short ending. The two main parts are through-composed with different lengths, but they
are inter-related by eighth-note patterns and a gong-like interval (f" e\textsuperscript{b}m\textsuperscript{n}). With the tempo marking of Allegretto animato, the whole piece features a relatively fast tempo (\( \downarrow = 112 \)) and irregular accents on weak beats, which reflect the character of small gong playing in Jingju.

This piece mainly uses three rhythmic techniques: "jirling-manchang" (fast playing and slow singing), gong beating and jinghu (two-stringed fiddle) playing, and jin-luo-migu (wild beating gongs and drums).

Fig. 3.9. Rhythmic Structure of Small Beijing Gong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Intro.</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Trans.</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Ending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phrase</td>
<td>Intro.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterns</td>
<td>ost.</td>
<td>jinghu</td>
<td>gong</td>
<td>ost.</td>
<td>var. gong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meter</td>
<td>7/8</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*Abbreviations: intro. = introduction, # = number, ost. = ostinato, var. = variation, ens. = ensemble, Trans. = transition)

On a micro-level, one can perceive distinctive rhythmic motives or patterns suggesting Jingju idioms. The piece opens with an ostinato that has seven eighth notes in regular 7/8 meter. This ostinato presents a rhythmic pattern of the jinghu or strings. Then, phrase a (mm. 3-6) uses a technique of Jingju ensemble called "jirling-manchang," in which the ostinato acts as the fast playing of Jinghu, and a melody above the ostinato carries prolonged tones as the slow singing. Peng Juan describes this style thus, "Fast playing accompanying slow singing has its particular color... In a free tempo of some theater music, the singing is free in rhythm, but the short phrase in accompaniment has a definite rhythm in indefinite repetitions." 53
Another new element of part I is its 7/8 meter. Usually, Chinese meters are 4/4, 2/4, and 1/4 (for a fast tempo); most melodies are in duple meter. Chen Yi opens this piece with the asymmetrical 7/8 meter, which shows the influence of Western contemporary music. The accents on down beats resemble the ban beating patterns.

Phrase b (mm. 7-9) features the strikes of the small Beijing gong above the jinghu ostinato. The gong mostly strikes on off-beats, which is typical in small gong beatings.

In the transition (mm. 10-11), the ostinato alone repeats once more. Then, it starts to change. After an eighth rest, a modified ostinato, which contains a sixteenth triplet and an eighth note, appears in a six-note pattern in 4/4 meter.

Phrase c (mm. 12-16) in part II varies the grouping of beats by subtracting beats from the ostinato as the gong strikes in syncopated or dotted rhythms; the accents of the gong and the ostinato sometimes go together, sometimes stress different beats. The shortened ostinato in 3/4 and 4/4 meter as well as the gong’s altered rhythms illustrate the flexible and active interactions between the gong and the ensemble.

Phrase d (mm. 17-19) features a sort of “wild beating of gongs,” resembling the technique of percussion instruments jin-luo mi-gu. The two hands mostly play sixteenth notes in a rhythmic unison. Suddenly, the strikes stop. Following a dramatic pause, a sixteenth-note triplet brings out a strong chord on the downbeat, which consists of an eighth note and a whole-note interval by two hands.

5. Pitch organization

The pitch materials in Small Beijing Gong are made up of three thematic materials: a seven-note ostinato (x), a reciting tune (y), and the minor seventh interval portraying the sound of the small Beijing gong (z). For convenience of analysis, I assign
the letters x, y, and z to these materials. In a binary form, part I introduces the materials x, y, and z; part II varies them in transpositions, changing meters, new rhythms, and rearranged pitch patterns.

Although Chen Yi states that this piece is atonal, it still has implied modal segments. The seven-note ostinato (x) consists of a, g', e', a', f'', b', and c'. These pitches can be divided into two segments: the first four notes are consonant in the traditional Chinese Ayu mode. The last three notes (f'', b', and c') outline a perfect fourth, a major seventh, and a tritone, which are often used by contemporary Western composers to produce dissonant sounds. Juxtaposing these two segments is Chen’s device of merging the traditional and modern musical elements.

Chen Yi apparently derives the ostinato by using the method of “borrowing notes.” In her dissertation, Chen Yi describes the four variation methods in Chinese ensemble music. She writes that, “The second [method] is borrowing notes, in which some notes replace the original and cause the mode to be changed.” An example of this is her altering of the original tune, a, g', e', a', g', c'', and e' [la sol mi la so do mi], the famous Jingju interlude in Ex. 4.16 in Chapter IV. To change the mode, she replaces the g' with f'', replaces the c'' with b', and e' with c'. Thus, the tune is changed into an atonal aggregate. This ostinato continues throughout the nine measures of part I.

Ex. 3.17. Small Beijing Gong, mm. 1-2.
Above the ostinato, the second pitch material $y$, a Jingju reciting tune, enters in measure 3. These tones translate the words in Mandarin into musical notes. Chen Yi states that she translates her own language and characteristics into her compositions; she also writes that, “I believe that words and ideas can be translated into music, which is a universal language.” For material $y$, Chen Yi uses grace notes and accents to stress the main reciting tones. The prolonged reciting tones are new pitches: $B^b$ and $C^\#$. The first two groups of these tones (grace notes and a prolonged tone) are in modal segments but not in one mode. Group $a$ ($f\text{-}g\text{-}b^b = sol\text{-}la\text{-}do$ or re\text{-}mi\text{-}sol) may be found in $B^b$ zhi or $B^b$ gong modes. Group $b$ gliding from $e''$ to $c''$ is a minor third in $c^\#$ jiao or yu modes ($e\text{-}c^\# = la\text{-}do$, or mi\text{-}sol). Group $c$ rises from $a''$ to $b^b$, which is a semitone that may be derived from a yi\text{-}fan mode (see Ex. 3.17 & Ex. 3.18).

Ex. 3.18. Small Beijing Gong, mm. 3-4.

The third pitch material ($z$) is a harmonic minor seventh interval $f''$ and $e^{b\#}$, which portrays the sound of a small gong. In measures 7-9, this dissonant interval strikes five times, usually on up-beats in a very high register.

Ex. 3.19. Small Beijing Gong, mm. 5-8.
b) Motivic variation and transposition

In a transition (mm. 10-11) the ostinato is doubled by the right hand. Then it is modified in a six-note pattern in which the f#' of material x is left out and the a' and b' are played together. This pattern is immediately displaced an octave higher. I call this material x'.

In measures 13-14, a new ostinato, the second variant of material x, appears; its pitches are e'', d'', b', a', and g''. There are two grace notes (g#", f#") attached to the first tone e''; in this group, the pitch d'' is new. I call this variant x'', which is consonant and identical to the b shang mode (b = re). It emphasizes pitch e'' with accents. In these measures in part II, the material z (the minor seventh interval) uses the same pitches in dotted and syncopated rhythms. Following this segment, a modified version of x is transposed in the pitches of c#", b", g#", c#", a#", c#" in measures 15-16. I call it x'''', which simply transposes the first five or six notes of the ostinato at a major tenth higher.

Ex. 3.20. Small Beijing Gong, mm. 13-16.

After a short pause, two sixteenth notes (d''' and e'''') bring out a transposed minor seventh interval (a'b" and g'b'"), z'. Immediately, z' is transposed again in the highest register. This minor seventh interval z'' takes the pitches b''' and a''''. In the last phrase of part II (measures 17-19), the two hands play together, alternating the intervals of a
major second (E and F♯) and a minor seventh in fast sixteenth notes. These atonal pitch aggregates make the piano sound like the percussion instrument, the small Beijing gong.

**Ex. 3.21. Small Beijing Gong, mm. 17-20.**

In the last two measures (mm. 19-20), the pitches suddenly fall into a low register. This figure has a retrograde y (b, g♯, f1) and a transposed z (G, A♭). I call them y' and z''.

In a semitone higher than the reciting tune but in a low voice, y' recalls the Jingju reciting tune, and the last pitch of this reciting tune is superimposed above the z'', forming a strike of a dissonant chord (A♭, G, and c♯) containing a major seventh and a tritone. The accent marks illustrate that this is the loudest chord of the piece. Unlike the high-pitched small gong sound, this strong four-beat chord in a low register seems to portray the strikes of all percussion instruments including the big gong, drum, cymbals, and all other instruments.

**Fig. 3.10. Pitch Organization in Small Beijing Gong**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure#</th>
<th>Intro. A</th>
<th>Trans. B</th>
<th>Ending</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2 3-6</td>
<td>7-9 10-11</td>
<td>12 13-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials (r.h.)</td>
<td>y z x z z z'' y'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(l.h.)</td>
<td>x x x x' x'' x''' z' z''</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*Abbreviations: r.h. = right hand, l.h. = left hand, # = number, Trans. = transition)
6. The sound of Small Beijing Gong

Generally, this piece features atonal, animated, and dissonant sounds, which are often found in American avant-garde music. However, this piece interweaves modal segments, which are derived from traditional Jingju idioms. At a local level, this piece is built on juxtaposition, integration, and superimposition of atonal and modal segments, which interact with each other in various rhythmic patterns. Listening to a sound portrait unfolding in time and space, this piece presents three Sound Images (SI): a jinghu or string ensemble image (SI 1), a Jingju reciting tune (SI 2), and the sound of the small Beijing gong (SI 3). The sound pictures can be described in four scenes in a binary form. The first part of the piece introduces three Sound Images in two scenes; the second part varies Sound Images in new combinations and rhythms and registers.

In scene a, at a relatively fast tempo (Allegretto animato $\text{J} = 112$), the first sound image (SI 1), an ostinato in 7/8 meter, sets the piece in motion. SI 1 sounds loudly in the middle register of the piano. Obviously, the first four tones of SI 1 clearly sound in a Chinese mode (A yu); however, the following three tones are atonal and produce jarring effects due to the use of melodic intervals of a tritone and a major seventh. The impulse of motion is created by the three upward leaps of large intervals on relatively important beats (a-g', a minor seventh = m7, e'-a', a perfect fourth = P4, and f'-b', a P4). The legato playing of “jinghu” adds a linear flow to the image; its fluctuating contour in a relatively fast tempo conveys a feeling of energy and excitement.
After two measures and two beats, the ostinato gradually becomes soft (mp) as the second Sound Image (SI 2), a high-pitched Jiugju reciting tune, enters. Wichmann writes that singing and speech are highly stylized in Beijing opera. Because the language is classical Chinese (wen yanwen), “each character represents a complete unit of meaning and is spoken in a single-syllable pronunciation.” The stylized speech-singing features prolonged tones. In this piece, the calling reciting tune presents three prolonged tones (b\textsuperscript{bn}, c\textsuperscript{#}, and b\textsuperscript{bn} in mm. 3-6). With accents, each of the tones is brought out by one or two gliding or falling grace-notes, which resemble the rising or falling tones in Jingju recitatives.

The second Sound Image itself (SI 2) can be seen as panmodal in nature (see 5. Pitch materials, p. 50). Its main tones are new pitches outside of SI 1. Scene 1 introduces the two sound images separately and presents them in the interaction of jin-la-man-chang (fast playing and slow singing).

In scene b, the third Sound Image (SI 3), a minor seventh harmonic interval, strikes the listener’s ears. In a register higher than SI 2 (mm. 7-9), SI 3 portrays the sound of the small Beijing gong. These new and high pitches are fresh and poignant (f"
and e^b") and are mainly played on upbeats. Scene b features the interaction between the jinghu ostinato (SI 1) and gong strikes (SI 3).

In a short transition, the jinghu ostinato is doubled in unison by two hands, then, it starts to vary by delaying an eighth note in 4/4 meter and omits one tone (mm. 10-11).

In scene c of the second part of the piece, first the jinghu ostinato shrinks its duration into a sixteenth triplet and an eighth note (m. 12); moreover, it omits two tones (F^# and C). When the gong strikes in dotted and syncopated rhythms, the jinghu ostinato changes into a new modal segment, which repeats three tones (e"-d"-b") with an accent on e" and wedges a seventh interval between the repeated three notes. Then, a transposed SI 1 moves to higher pitches, which is shorter than SI 1 and only uses five tones. The varied SI 1 using irregular accents breaks the regular sense of meter. Because the varied SI 1 is short and higher, the sounds in part II are further animated. At the same time SI 3 strikes in syncopation and dotted rhythms which coincide with the accents of the varied SI 1.

In mm. 15-16, the "gong" strikes only on the first beat of each measure, giving a sense of withdrawal. After a short pause, the two hands play the "gong sounds" wildly together in the highest register, pushing the piece to a climax. The wild gong sound suddenly stops; after two and a half beats rests, a retrograde version of SI 2 occurs in a low register, rushing to a chord that superimposes an augmented fourth on a major seventh. This heavy and dissonant chord portraits a clamorous strike by the entire ensemble in a robust style.
7. Referential meanings in Small Beijing Gong

Small Beijing Gong shows Chen Yi on the road to cultural confluence as she adopts the avant-garde approach to express her personal character and identity in the American musical scene. Its use of atonal pitch organization without the twelve-tone method may suggest the influence of "Taoist [Daoist] philosopher Zhuang Tsi’s [Zhuang zi] exhortation, ‘using things as things, but not being used by things as things.’" In other words, one should be one’s own master in dealing with things rather than a tool of things (such as being used by the twelve-tone method).

Although the piece is entitled Small Beijing Gong, it not only depicts the sound of the small gong, but also portrays the style of the Jingju reciting tune and ensemble. Chen’s use of Jingju idioms without using Chinese modes shows her critical selection of native traditions in a new combination of sound, which perhaps is influenced by Chou Wen-chung. According to Peter M. Chang, “from Varèse, Chou learned a great deal about how an artist should look at his tradition critically, absorbing the essence, and within the traditional framework developing a personal style.”

Her unconventional treatment of Jingju elements and new sonorities in Small Beijing Gong demonstrates that Chen Yi has explored new combinations of sound in a
personal style. Her fondness for new sounds and new approaches mirrors Varèse’s and Chou Wen-chung’s pursuit of new sound.

One possible referential meaning may be found in the title, in the word “Beijing.” Usually, Chinese gongs are called *luo*; large gongs are called *daluo* (large gong); small gongs are called *xiaoluo* (small gong). Chen Yi adds the word *Beijing* to *xiaoluo* to specify the instrument in Jingju ensemble, *not* in other ensembles. Since Chen worked in a Jingju orchestra for eight years, she has absorbed and used Jingju idioms as her natural musical language in her compositions. The word *Beijing* here has two meanings: first it is a synonym of the word, Jingju, secondly, it means the capital of China.

In *Duo Ye*, Chen uses a Jingju tune to represent herself and her colleagues as guests from Beijing. Therefore, the word *Beijing* has been connected with Chen’s personal musical identity. In *Small Beijing Gong*, the instrument is also embodied in the composer’s personal identity or as a tool expressing her feelings and ideas.

Chen Yi often assigns the small Beijing gong a specific role and a symbolic gesture. For example, the introductory piano solo cadenza of her Piano Concerto, “articulated by the sound of small Beijing gong, opens the concerto with high spirit. The sharp grace notes strike the ear and suggest the gesture of improvising on instruments.” In *Small Beijing Gong*, one of the referential meanings may be in the “high spirit” of blending the music of East and West.

Since Chen Yi often says that she believes that language can be translated into music, one may guess what the reciting tune is saying. An answer may be the three characters: *xiaojingluo* (small Beijing gong). For instance, the three notes (grace notes f\(^\#\), g\(^\#\), gliding up to b\(^b\)) follow the tone of *xiaojingluo*; the two pitches (e\(^\#\) and c\(^\#\)) similarly
follow jing. The third syllable luo (gong) is expressed by gliding from a" to b^m, which is repeated several times with accents. In each case the direction of the tones corresponds to the syllable of the Mandarin word. This can be an example that Chen consciously or unconsciously translates the Mandarin language into her music.

This piece shows that Chen Yi uses the instrument small Beijing gong with a symbolic persona. At the end of Chen Yi’s Symphony No. 2, the soft playing of the small Beijing gong with sliding harmonics on strings expresses her longing and dreams toward the future. In Small Beijing Gong, the dissonant intervals, like the gesture in Symphony No. 2, perhaps symbolizes a youthful spirit. The small gong’s penetrating sound makes it an ideal instrument to carry the role of calling and awakening.

8. Conclusion

Small Beijing Gong is a product of Chen’s pursuit of blending Chinese aesthetics, Chinese musical idioms, and the influences of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Chou in an American avant-garde style. In a spirit of exploring new sounds, this piece illustrates the Chinese aesthetic ideas of yi-xiang, tian-ren-he-yi, or wu-wo-ru-yi, shen-yun, allusiveness, terseness, and linear movement in texture. Small Beijing Gong merges Schoenberg’s Sprechstimme with a Jingju reciting tune and merges Stravinsky’s irregular accents and changing meter with Jingju small gong’s rhythms. These syntheses underline a new type of music with multicultural elements for children and for future generations. Contrasting to Yu Diao, Small Beijing Gong shows Chen Yi’s shift of focus from composing Chinese national music to creating a global music. This piece also shows that Chen has developed her musical style from one based on Chinese traditional music toward a kind of contemporary avant-garde style.


3 Irene Borger, ed. “Interview with Chen Yi,” in The Force of Curiosity (Saint Monica CA: Arts/Alpert Award in the Arts, 1999), 281.

4 Ibid.

5 Han Deying, Min jian xi qu (Folk Drama and Opera) (Zhengzhou: Hai yan chu ban she (Petrel Publishing House), 1997), 4. Han is the director of Henan Theater Research Institution, chief editor of the Henan volume of The History of China’s Operas and Theaters, and the author of dozens of articles.

6 Han, 16.

7 Ibid., 17.

8 Ibid., 6-8.


10 Han, 282.


12 Ibid., 27.

13 Ibid., 36


15 Borger, 281.

16 Ibid., 282-83.

17 Ibid, 19.


19 Chen Yi’s correspondence with Li Songwen, in Li Songwen, East Meets West: Nationalistic Elements in Selected Chen Yi’s Piano Solo Works of Chen Yi (Ph.D. diss., North Texas State University, 2001; UMI 3041912), 20.

20 Ibid., 13.

21 Timothy Lane Brace, Modernization and Music in Contemporary China: Crisis, Identity, and the Politics of Style (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1992; UMI 92-39,218), 279-80.

22 Chen Yi, Concerto for Piano (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1993; UMI 93-33,741), 6.

23 Ibid.

24 The motive a’ g’ f’ e” is derived from the opening tones f## e” d” a’.


27 The D gong mode uses the pitches d, e, f#, a, b (do-re-mi-sol-la), and the A yi-fan mode uses a, (b) c↑, d, e, (f#) g↑ (sol-ti-do-re-fa). In yi-fan mode, the pitches slightly higher than c and g frequently exchange with their lower neighbor tones. But the melody in Yu Diao uses mainly a, (c ) c#, d, e, f# (f) (sot-ti-do-re-mi). Stephen Jones, Folk Music of China: Living Instrumental Traditions (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 336.


30 Chen Yi, liner note for Small Beijing Gong in Chen Yi, Two Chinese Bagatelles, 4.

31 Su de San Zheng, Immigrant Music and Transitional Discourse: Chinese American Music
Many writers discuss the close relationship between the Chinese language and melodies. John Hazedel Levis notes that, “Chinese melody is more strongly related to language than is the case with any other melodic system.” The Chinese language is monosyllabic; for the same syllable, when uttered with different tonal movement (level, rising, falling), it means totally different things. Therefore, the tonal movement is the most fundamental element in both the Chinese language and music. See John Hazedel Levis, *Foundations of Chinese Musical Art* (Beijing: Fawen Press, 1936), 11, 21.

Zhou Long (b. 1953, Beijing) was born to a family of an artist and a voice teacher. He took piano lessons at a young age. After living in the countryside in Northern China during the cultural Revolution, he returned to Beijing in 1973 and resumed his musical training. In 1977, he enrolled in the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and studied composition with Professor Su Xia. Zhou has drawn inspiration from Chinese classic music and folk music and won composition competition prizes in China. After he graduated in 1983, he was appointed Composer-in-Residence with the Broadcasting Symphony of China. In 1985, He came to the United State and studied composition with Chou Wen-chung. He has adopted contemporary Western compositional techniques and has composed works that merge Eastern and Western cultures. His works have been performed in Asia, America, and Europe. His many honors and awards include the First Prize in the 5th International Composition Competition in d’Avray, France, 1991, and the Barlow International Competition, 1994. See “Zhou, Long” in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 2nd ed., vol. 27, Stanley Sadie ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2001), 809, and <http://www.presser.com/zhou.html>.


Chen Yi, liner note for *Chen Yi, Monologue* for unaccompanied Bb Clarinet (Bryn Mawr, PA: Theodore Presser, 2000), 5.


Elizabeth Wichmann, *Listening to Theater: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 2. Now the name Elizabeth Wichmann has been changed to Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak. Because her book cited in this dissertation was published before she was married, I still use the old name in the citations of her book.


Chen Yi, *Concerto for Piano*, 7.

Chen Yi, *Correspondence with Li Songwen* in Li Songwen, 25-26.

Chen Yi, email to Xiaole Li,” 22 August 2001.

Peng Juan, “Xi qu yue diu ban zou de feng ge he te dian” (“Styles and Characteristics of Orchestral Accompaniment in Traditional Opera”), *Xi Ju Xi Qu Yan Ju* (Studies in Traditional Theatre and Opera, Beijing) 5/10 (1996): 82.

55 Chen Yi, “Piano Concerto,” 2.
56 Gregory A. Grove, Chanticleer: A Brief History of American’s Only Full-Time Independent Choral Ensemble and A Survey of its Repertoire (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1996), 92. (no UMI#)
57 Wichmann, 24-25.
60 Chen Yi, Piano Concerto, 23.
61 Chen Yi, liner note for The Music of Chen Yi, 3.
CHAPTER IV
REVISITING DUO YE FOR PIANO SOLO

*Duo Ye* is a picturesque musical portrayal of the Dong people's welcoming rite.

In this chapter, I use *Duo Ye* in two senses: 1. The original Dong rite of welcome or celebration (of harvest), 2. Chen Yi's piano solo piece *Duo Ye* (1984). When referring to her piano piece, I always italicize the term.

**A. Historical background**

Chen Yi composed *Duo Ye* (1984) when China was in the midst of rapid social and cultural changes. As mentioned in Chapter I, several historical events had profound impacts on Chen Yi's life: the revival of Chinese folksongs nationwide, the Chinese government's open-door policy in its relation with Western countries, increasing artistic freedom and individuality, and Chou Wen-chung's visit to the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. The situations were like an old Chinese saying "A stone stirs up thousands of layers of waves." These events were like stones stirring up waves of consequences, including the New Wave composers and explorations in both Chinese and Western music. We may discern five elements of these consequences, which fostered Chen Yi's creativity.

First, the revival of Chinese musical traditions has sought for ethnic spirit and studies of Chinese cultural heritage with an unprecedented breadth and depth. Composers have gained inspiration from Chinese classical literature, poetry, painting, and percussion ensembles. For instance, Wang An-guo writes that Chen carefully studied traditional techniques including a rhythmic sequence called *yu-he-ba*, which uses a
formula controlling the total number of beats through a process in which beats increase in one part while they decrease in the other.²

Second, when Chou Wen-chung introduced his music and American music to musicians in Beijing, he also brought ideas of originality and individual creativity. Before the late 1970s, the Chinese Communist Party and government stressed that art and music must serve the needs of revolution and the masses. Compositions were expected to meet political criteria, praising the party’s leadership and revolutionary movements. After the 1980s, composers have sought a personal musical language to develop Chinese traditions and have used contemporary techniques. In 1978, the Central Conservatory of Music held a “Recital of Chu Wanghua Piano Compositions,” which was the first time a recital was devoted to a single composer’s piano works in the history of Chinese piano music.³ This event reflected the changing ideology and attitude toward individual creativity. The trend of pursuing individuality and new perspectives emerged in compositions, particularly in the New-Wave composers’ works.⁴

Third, the British composer Alexander Goehr taught courses of contemporary Western music at the Central Conservatory of Music in 1980, which brought Modern European perspectives to the young composers. In an intensive class, Chen Yi was selected to study with Goehr. Composers and scholars from music schools nationwide were invited to observe and attend the class. Since then, the young composers were vigorous in exploring dissonance and using Western twentieth-century techniques in works based on Chinese traditional subjects.

Fourth, the conservatory periodically held composition concerts and competitions; the school was active in cultural exchanges and in international
competitions for compositions. The string quartet Feng Ya Song by Tan Dun (a leading New-Wave composer and Chen Yi's classmate) was selected for the 1983 Weber International Chamber Music Competition and won the second prize. Although Feng Ya Song caused a heated debate and was banned because it shows "an esteem for elements borrowed from the bourgeoisie or capitalism," the young composers continued to blend Chinese aesthetics and Western contemporary techniques in their works, which won more and more prizes in competitions. Zhou Long's piano piece Wu Kui: Dance of Five Animals won a prize at the Chinese National Piano Composition competition in 1983.

Fifth, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a leftist political campaign called fandui Jingshen wuran (opposing spiritual pollution) was launched, which aimed to weed out bourgeois influences, including the capitalist ideology of individualism and "yellow music" represented by imported musical recordings from Taiwan and Hong Kong. A writer criticizes Tan Dun's Feng Ya Song because "it represents a tendency of being xiandai pai [modern school]—a synonym of decadent Western modern arts." This writer warns Tan Dun and other young composers that they have separated themselves from the masses, from reality, and incorrectly pursued individuality. He advises the young composers to correct their ideological problems.

During this time, Chen Yi finished her bachelor's degree and engaged in graduate studies to pursue a new phase of development. Inspired by Chao Zhou regional music Lions Playing Ball, Chen composed the one-movement Viola Concerto Xian Shi (graduation work 1983) for a Western orchestra with Chinese percussion instruments. In its rhythmic organization, this piece applies the principles of 'yu-he-ba' and the Golden Olive in progressively increasing or decreasing beats, presenting a Chinese aesthetic
logic and vivid musical images. In *Duo Ye*, Chen also uses these techniques, which will be discussed in the following analysis.

Li Songwen remarks that “The general impression of the piece [Viola Concerto] is in the vein of Bartók’s piano concerto. The formal structure is a typical concerto form of the Romantic era. The harmony is largely post-romantic, i.e. extensive use of dissonance while remaining basically functional.”

In 1984, Chen Yi composed *Duo Ye* by combining her studies of folksong, the rhythmic structure of the percussion ensemble, and contemporary techniques. She mastered the basic traditional compositional techniques, “the so-called *sidajian* ("four big tools"—harmony, counterpoint, musical forms, and orchestration), only included practices by Western composers from the Baroque to the late Romantic period,” but she chose to compose in contemporary avant-garde style based on folk and traditional sources.

Beside the conventional training, Zhou Jinmin notes, the young composers are less bound by Western classical and romantic aesthetics than the previous generations of composers. As they were more exposed to Western contemporary music and explored more deeply the world of Chinese traditional music and arts, they realized the potential of combining 20th-century Western contemporary music and Chinese traditional elements.

In 1984, whereas *Feng Ya Song* was attacked for its “defective” factors, Chen Yi’s *Duo Ye* was praised. Because *Duo Ye* grows out of folksongs, dance, and traditional ensemble but with creative uses of twentieth-century techniques, *Duo Ye* has been accepted by the judges of the National Piano Composition Competition and by music critics as a model balancing of traditional and modern elements.
B. Review of literature on *Duo Ye* for piano solo

Wang Anguo remarks that,

In *Duo Ye*, Chen Yi’s attitude is neither conservative nor rebellious. The principal themes display traditional rhythmic and modal qualities. Its motivic splitting, synthesis, extension, and development, the organization of themes, melodies, and pitch aggregates, the methods of progression, inversion and variation are drawn from traditions. . . . The cycles of irregular beat groupings and fixed harmonies of twelve-tone belong to contemporary compositional techniques. These two elements enrich *Duo Ye* and make it fresh and harmonious. 17

Wang emphasizes Chen Yi’s balancing of traditional and modern elements and mentions a couple of contemporary techniques, but he does not discuss modern elements further.

Analytical writings on *Duo Ye* apply Western music theory and Chinese music theory in structural analysis with the emphases on national, traditional elements, and Chen Yi’s craftsmanship in flexible use of materials and techniques. However, the writers do not explain their approaches and methodology in their analyses and seldom discuss the influences of contemporary Western composers in *Duo Ye* and its deviation from conventions and previous Chinese piano compositions. It is necessary to review the strong and weak aspects of the writings. The strong points of the writings are:

1. Viewing this piece from a historical perspective and regarding it as a product of the historical and cultural movements: Writers describe Chen’s impression from her trip for collecting folksong that inspired Chen to compose *Duo Ye*. In his dissertation *East Meets West*, Li Songwen notes Chen’s attempted synthesis of traditional Chinese and Western compositional techniques in the realm of twentieth-century music.

2. Applying the analytical methods of Western musical traditions and the twentieth century in structural analysis: Tan Jianping, Associate Professor at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, finds similarity between *Duo Ye* and the cyclic form of
the sonata and uses pitch class theory to illustrate the inner relationship between the themes and sections. His interest in exploring intervalic relations between themes reflects Western influenced analytical writing concentrating on formal and thematic analysis.

3. Highlighting the national elements, Chinese folksong influence, and traditional techniques: Almost every analyst emphasizes the motives derived from the folksong and the rhythmic organization of *yu-he-ba* and *jin-gan-lan* (the Sum of Eight and the Golden Olive, rhythmic sequences of increasing and decreasing beats in two parts), which are collective aspects of the Chinese culture.

4. Making connection to the styles and ideas of Stravinsky and Bartók: Lin Guixiong’s article “The Total Control of All Dimensions of Thematic Elements in Musical Development” applies Stravinsky’s idea of “dialectics of arts” and “logical illustration” in melodic progression, tonal relationship, polyphonic harmony, and rhythmic organization in the discussion of *Duo Ye.*18 This analysis illustrates the logical organization in *Duo Ye* and Chen Yi’s flexible use of structural devices. Lei Vai-Meng mentioned Bartók’s influence on Chen Yi in a note and quotes Chen Yi’s words about her admiration for Bartók. However, she does not explore this topic.

The weak points of these writings are:

1. Ignoring the influences of important contemporary Western composers: Obviously, analysts did not explore Bartók’s influence in *Duo Ye* although his influence on this piece is dominant.

Elaine Barkin writes on Chen Yi’s *Duo Ye No. 2* (1987) for orchestra that Chen’s blending of sounds shows “her obvious internalized love of late Debussy, early
Stravinsky, and folkish Bartók."^{19} She heard these influences in the sound of the orchestral version (as distinct from the piano solo) of *Duo Ye*.

However, in the analysis of the piano solo *Duo Ye*, Tang Jianping emphasizes the influences of both Western and Chinese cultural traditions without mentioning twentieth-century traditions and contemporary composer’s influences. He singles out Wagner’s influence on Chen: her way of recapturing and piling up of materials “as done by Wagner in his Overture to *Die Meistersinger*.” There may be Wagner’s influence, but Bartók’s influence is more direct and significant. Tang suggests that “the first three sections as a whole can be seen as an exposition in a single-movement sonata in late Romantic style.”^{20} This is not true to *Duo Ye*, because it is in a twentieth-century avant-garde style based on Chinese folk and traditional idioms.

2. Failing to discuss *Duo Ye*’s departure from conventions and from early Chinese compositions: It would be misleading to say that the key for *Duo Ye*’s success lies in its traditional elements alone. In fact this piece uses an avant-garde approach, quite different from the folksong-based or influenced pieces before the 1980s. *Duo Ye*’s polymodal antiphony and pantonal melodic-harmonic relationship recall Bartók’s treatment of folksongs using panmodality. Chen’s juxtapositions of different tempos, meters, and irregular accents pay homage to Stravinsky. The overall sonic images in *Duo Ye* are provocative and modern, breaking away from the traditional sound of Chinese piano music. This aspect should be addressed.

In 1985 there were many controversies and much confusion surrounding adapting atonality, twelve-tone, and other contemporary Western techniques in Chinese music. Perhaps people wanted to defend *Duo Ye* from being criticized as *xiandai pai* (modern
or to advise young composers to revive Chinese national heritage; therefore, they have emphasized *Duo Ye*'s nationalistic elements and avoided discussing the contemporary Western composers’ influences on it.

Today, in analysis of *Duo Ye*, one need not fear that one will be attacked by the “opposing bourgeois spiritual pollution movement” for adapting methods from “capitalist music.” In Chen Yi’s letters, she frankly expresses her admiration for Bartók and writes that her style is close to Bartók. An analyst should discuss this point when searching for ways in which Eastern and Western music blend.

3. Lacking discussions of the emotions and sounds in *Duo Ye*. Integrating Chen Yi’s feelings with the depiction of the Dong chorus-dance is a distinct feature of *Duo Ye*, which is very different from an emphasis only on a collective folksong perspective of mass appeal. While sections convey a primitive festive atmosphere with the noisy sounds of the celebrating crowd, the Adagio expresses her love for the Dong people in a slow and quiet Jingju melody. The analyses seldom discuss these contrasts of emotions and sounds.

4. Simplifying *Duo Ye*’s structure as a form similar to sonata. Despite the complex debates around “sonata principles,” *Duo Ye*’s three themes, non-meter sections, and frequent changes of tempo suggest flexible structural elements of impromptu, fantasy, and rhapsody, rather than the sonata. The existing analyses seem to be influenced by certain textbooks, focusing on formalized structural elements and technical aspects, which are not sufficient for revealing the multiple significance of the piece.

5. To use Allen Forte’s pitch-class (pc) set theory alone is not sufficient to demonstrate *Duo Ye*’s thematic organization. If one emphasizes small intervals as the
central cell in the chorus theme (d e g), it may not conform to the explanation in Chen Yi’s notes that E-C# (minor third) is the central tune. Chen derived the central motives from the Dong folksong and the Jingju melody, highlighting the modal intervals of a minor third, a perfect fourth, and a minor seventh, which does not emphasize the smallest intervals. In practice, we should not use the prime form of pitch-class theory alone to determine and indicate the central themes.

An analysis of Duo Ye needs to give a summary of its style, its components and an overall picture of its sound as well as structural analysis. Is Duo Ye in the romantic style or in 20th-century (contemporary) style? If one asks this question, I will say, obviously, Duo Ye is close to the style of Bartók and Stravinsky rather than Wagner and other late romantic composers.

My argument is that Duo Ye’s success and significance lie not only in its national and traditional elements but also in its intricate modern quality and spirit in blending Chinese aesthetics and folk idioms with the influences of Bartók and Stravinsky in exploration of polymodality, changing meter, spontaneous rhythms, and new structure.

Bartók and Stravinsky provide Chen with lasting inspiration for her composition. Chen has composed under more varied Western influences after she came to the United States. She continues to use polymodal and pantonal techniques and alternation of regular and irregular rhythms in her works, which are influenced by Bartók and Stravinsky with whom she became acquainted in China. Thus, analysts need to use both Chinese and Western musical theory to analyze Duo Ye.

Why when Feng Ya Song was criticized and banned, was Duo Ye praised? Perhaps it is because Duo Ye uses folk and traditional idioms, which can be heard clearly.
This approach could be seen as a populist appeal associated with proletarian music. Even though *Duo Ye* uses shocking dissonance and panmodality, it has gained approval from authority, winning a victory for Chinese avant-garde compositions. *Duo Ye* illustrates a fine digestion and merging of Chinese aesthetics and Western composers' influences with the Zeitgeist (contemporary spirit). This is *Duo Ye*’s important contribution to Chinese piano music. My revisiting of *Duo Ye* will demonstrate the above points of my argument.

C. Chinese aesthetics in *Duo Ye* for piano solo

1. Chinese philosophy and customs

According to Meng Weiyuan, Chen Yi gave a speech in Sacramento in February 1992, before a performance of her *Duo Ye No.2* for orchestra. Then, in a local newspaper, some of her words were printed in large size characters in English: “Language can be translated into music. In my music, there is Chinese blood, Chinese philosophy and custom. Music is a common language of man.”22 Meng notes that Chen has made a great effort to imbue her music with philosophical content and believes that simple and plain philosophical content can be understood and accepted by broader audiences.

When she composed *Duo Ye*, she aimed to portray the folk spirit. She said that the majority of a society is composed of ordinary people; their names are unknown, but their capacities for living and development are of similar value. Some Western modernist arts reflect one’s loneliness and sadness in society and appreciation of one’s own self-
expression. Chen disagrees with the idea that a composition is pure self-expression heedless of the listener. 23

Duo Ye for piano solo delivers a similar philosophical message, paying homage to the Dong people in remote regions. In her letter, Chen describes in detail the Dong people's simple, natural, and powerful music, which inspired her Duo Ye. 24 Chen Yi's thoughts parallel the following passages in Dao De Jing, the classic text of Daoism:

When his task is accomplished and his work done
The people all say, "It happened to us naturally." 25

Dao De Jing sees the spontaneity with which ordinary people accomplish their work as being close to the way (Dao).

Highest good is like water. Because water excels in benefiting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the way. 26

The Dong culture mirrors the images in the above passages. In remote mountain regions, the centuries-old Dong traditions and spirit survive there and live as a part of the natural environment. During her trip of collecting folksongs in Guangxi, Chen learned to know the Dong cultural and musical traditions. The Daoist thought is revealed through reference to natural objects. Traditional Chinese musical works and paintings often use natural objects to express feelings. Duo Ye shares and carries on this Chinese tradition.

According to Chen Yi, this word "duo ye" in the Dong dialect has no real meaning, but it is repeated again and again by the chorus in unified strong dance movements. 27 Chen uses the word "duo ye" as a natural thing and a symbol of the vitality and spirit of the Dong people, which vibrates through Chen's music.
In the following passages, I will show that *Duo Ye* demonstrates several Chinese philosophical and aesthetic ideas: *yin-yang* elements, the concept of *yi* (change), naturalness and spontaneity in improvisational style, program title and notes, *shen yun* (the spirit and rhyme of folksong and Jingju melody), linear movement, and *xingxiang-siwei* ( picturing in the mind’s eye or allusiveness in expression).

2. **Yin-yang elements and the concept of change (*yi*)**

The Chinese rhythmic pattern of *yu-he-ba* (*Sum of Eight*) and *jin-gan-lan* (*Golden Olive*) can be seen as an incarnation of the *Yin-Yang* emblem. In a pair of things, one element decreases, another increases.

*Yu-he-ba* (*Sum of Eight, loosely translated as fish collected as eight*) is a type of rhythmic sequence used in *shifan-luogu*, a traditional instrumental ensemble in East Central China. The bamboo flute, gong and drum are leading instruments in this genre. *Shifan-luogu* features alternations of melodic and rhythmic sections. Using the techniques of “Sum of Eight,” “The rhythmic structure of several sections in this ensemble is strictly controlled by numerical sequences.”

Chen Yi notes the beat patterns of “Sum of Eight”:  

\[ 7 + 1 = 8 \]
\[ 5 + 3 = 8 \]
\[ 3 + 5 = 8 \]
\[ 1 + 7 = 8 \]

Chen Yi flexibly applies the concept and principle of “Sum of Eight” in the introduction, climax, and in many passages of *Duo Ye* (without strict ratio of numbers). In a symmetrical union, the *yu-he-ba* rhythmic sequence achieves a balance by gradually adding or subtracting the same number of beats from the two parts in opposite directions. This example shows the balancing of positive and negative elements in rhythmic organization in Chinese music. A comparison of the *Yin-Yang* Chart and the *yu-he-ba*
beats demonstrates their striking similarities. These emblems on the one hand express the unchanging (consistent) elements of Yin and Yang and on the other hand the constant relative change between them.

Fig. 4.1. The Yin-Yang Chart and Yu-He-Ba Graph.

In the Yin-Yang Chart, the yin-yang components are interrelated as the white yang fish has a black yin dot within it and the black yin fish has a white yang dot. Similarly, in Duo Ye, theme I in measure 5 anticipates theme III’s intervals and contour, which can be seen as yin elements in a yang theme. Theme III contains a fragment of theme I, a yang element in the yin theme.

Levis notes that “This in reality [Chinese musical compositions built on rising and falling tones] divides all moving tones in a composition into two types—positive and negative—and shows the all-pervading influences in the Chinese mind of the yang and the yin, the positive and the negative, as the underlying forces throughout life.”

3. Naturalness and spontaneity

As discussed in Chapter I, Chen Yi’s music reflects the Daoist emphasis on free expression and the close union of music and nature. Cai Zhongde, Professor of
Musicology at the Central Conservatory of Music, writes that, “Daoist aesthetics mainly deals with the relationship between nature and music, believing music comes from nature and connects to the cosmos and humanity.31 The Daoist notion of tian fa gui zhen (the heavenly law treasures truth) emphasizes expressing man’s natural feelings against restraint.32

Chen Yi said that, “I prize emotion and freedom from standard practices.”33 She does so by using flexible tempo (ad lib.), changing meter (3/4, 2/4, 1/4), and motives in different modes to portray the spontaneity of leader-chorus antiphony and to express her deep admiration and love for Dong music and for Bartók.

Chen Yi also said, “I try to make each and every piece of my work logical, complete and technically perfect.”34 Chen pursues logic and perfection in her music, which is not consonant with the Daoist master Laozi’s words, which advocate “abandoning knowledge”35 and emphasizing intuition. Chen composes her music balancing free expression of emotions and logical structure.

4. Title and notes

Chen Yi entitles this piece Duo Ye and gives notes. In the 1986 edition, under the title, Chen Yi notes that, “The plain [zhi pu de] Dong people in Guangxi performed the happy Duo Ye dance to welcome guests from Beijing. How can one forget this enthusiastic scene and excitement?”36 This note immediately leads the player’s imagination to a remote Dong village. Another note explains that, “Duo Ye is an old traditional dance music form of Dong nationality from the Guangxi Province in China, in which the leader singer sings impromptu in music, words, and tempo, while others dance harmoniously in a circle, with a bonfire set in the middle.”37
The title and notes show the Chinese tradition of program music and “drawing images from natural objects” (yi wu qu xiang), conveying the idea of the unity between object and artist (wu wo ru yi), which transforms them both. In a creative process, an artwork derives the inherent spirit from the natural object, and the portrayed things enter the music in an artistic expression.\(^38\)

5. The idea of yue in Duo Ye

*Duo Ye* can be seen as an incarnation of the Chinese concept of *yue*, a combination of various aspects of arts including music. *Duo Ye* brings together naturally the elements of Dong language, dance, and Jingju. Unlike the Western notion of pure and absolute music, the intrinsic references of *yue* include “all the arts” (see Chapter I, p. 50). As Chen Yi noted in her letter, the lead singer improvised music and words based on the local dialect (e.g., *duo ye*). According to Zou Xiangping, a composer at Sichuan Conservatory of Music who visited a Dong village and participated in Duo Ye, Dong folksongs and Dong speech share similarities with rising, level, and falling tones. As in Jingju the tones of words are in harmony with the music, the intervals of the minor third and major second are in harmony with the Dong dialect.\(^39\) In the central themes, Chen uses these intervals which carry the characteristic tones of the Dong speech and singing and writes a Jingju tune with urban art traits: elaborate, sophisticated, and charming.

Sometimes the Jingju melody in unison imitates the jinghu and erhu playing in a Jingju orchestra. The interaction of these components of *yue* forms a rich sound stream integrating elements of Jingju with the Dong dance and singing.
6. Linear movement

*Duo Ye* exemplifies linear movement as a major feature in Chinese music. In the introduction, themes are introduced in monophony or as a melody above a drone. Thus, the attention and interest focus entirely on elements of the contour, progress of the melodic lines, and their rhythmic traits. This is an antithesis of the homophony and polyphony in Western music. Levis points out that:

> Great importance was given to line in melody by the Chinese throughout all the forms of their musical compositions. . . A melody is a line of tones; a line whose successive points are fixed sounds, which define its flexions, its rising, falling, poising, in various rhythmical forms. Melody is therefore the same element in music that the line is in a picture or drawing of any character, simple or complex.\(^4\)

This trait can be perceived while listening to *Duo Ye*; when layers are piled up later, the linear movement is still dominant. For example, in the Andante section, the elaborate Jingju theme is the focus while the leaping accompaniment conceals a counter melody and tones of themes I and II. Because the panmodal melody moves in a linear line and the accompaniment uses tones outside of pentatonic modes, the music is without the traditional sense of harmony.

Chou Wen-chung says that linear movement is a prominent characteristic of Asian music. Debussy’s orchestration shows that, “the sonority is largely the admixture of a number of melodic, rhythmic, registral, and timbre variants of a single linear movement,” which is an adaptation of the gamelan technique.\(^4\) Similarly, *Duo Ye* shows how Chen integrates traditional Chinese and Western contemporary elements in linear movement.
7. Xing-xiang-si-wei (picturing in the mind's eye)

The Chinese term xing-xiang-si-wei refers to a way of thinking. Literally, xing-xiang means images; si-wei means thinking. Thinking in images may occur in aesthetic experience or in composing music. This idea often connects natural objects to meanings.

Duo Ye is a descriptive composition with the practice of xing-xiang-si-wei. In her letter to Lei Vai-Meng (1990), Chen Yi describes the ceremonial scenes that inspired her Duo Ye, such as a bonfire, the chorus in black dresses, and the rustic dance movements. Her letter shows that Chen composed Duo Ye with these pictures in mind, and even after ten years, the Dong ceremony is still fresh and vivid in her memory. Chen Yi also writes about how she created the themes of Duo Ye. Theme I is taken from the chorus, but she uses it as a leader's improvisation. With her imagination, she replaces the choral part (theme II) with new material that depicts the dance in a circle; the accents of theme II portray the pounding of feet and the gestures of the dancers.42

In Western music, some composers also advocated and composed program music with images. Chinese and Western music share the same tradition of depicting images in music and using literary allusions; however, the Chinese have no such concept as absolute music or music for its own sake. Because Duo Ye was inspired by her fieldwork of collecting folksongs—a life experience, she derived the sonic images from the living performance of the Dong folksong and dance as she described the scenes in her letters and notes. Therefore, this approach and practice is typical with Chinese aesthetics (yi wu qu xiang, drawing images from objects) and more closely related to a Chinese way of thinking. Similarly, in her Song in Winter for the bamboo flute, harpsichord, and zheng,
Chen depicts the images of the pine tree and bamboo with a sublime spirit, which are the subjects of numerous Chinese paintings and poems.

Chen’s imagination does not conflict with her logical thinking, which controls the $y\-h\-e\-b\-a$ sequences in rhythmic organization. She does not directly arrange the folksong but distills its essence and replaces parts with her own materials in the spirit of the Dong people. $Xing\-xiang\-si\-wei$, a practice shared by Chinese artists, helps Chen Yi avoid being confined to numerological forms.

Chou Wen-chung emphasizes a fundamental Buddhist concept, “the material is immaterial, the immaterial material.”43 Seeing things from a higher viewpoint, one can know the power inherent in any individual thing and use things as things. Through using $xing\-xiang\-si\-wei$ as catalyst, a crystallization of perception emerges.

Chou cites a short Tang poem to illustrate this crystallization,

Wild geese
  flying across the blue sky above
Their image
  reflected on the water below
The geese
  do not mean to cast their image on the water
Nor the water
  [to] mirror the image of the geese. 44

This poem shows the way of $xing\-xiang\-si\-wei$, which captures the moment of natural beauty and transforms the image of true perception into an artistic creation. $Duo$ Ye’s sound portrayal illustrates the same principle.

**8. Spirit and rhyme**

Chen Yi absorbed the spirit of Dong folk music from observing and participating in the Dong rite of welcome. The plain melody and simple rhythms with accents convey sincere and hospitable feelings in a primitive atmosphere. The spirit of the Dong people
grows from their natural environment: villages surrounded by beautiful mountains, rivers, and forests, which are remote from war, corruption, and distrust. Thus, their music is saturated with warmth, rusticity, hospitality, and vigor. From her contact with peasants and the countryside, Chen Yi has gained the sources of imagination, energy, and power for her music. In Duo Ye, a Jingju melody represents the spirit of the Beijing guests. She elaborates the Jingju melody (adding flowers) with a sort of Chinese rhyme in free rhythm; its rhyme is reminiscent of the Chinese regulated verse (lù poem).

Elizabeth Wichmann writes that, “As a major component of Beijing opera, there are two levels of language used. The first and more heightened level is classical Chinese, the language of written classical literature made up of single written-character words. This gives Beijing opera a distinctly poetic and antique flavor.” One may hear the Jingju melody in different versions with different numbers of tones, which may be seen as a trait of poetic expression.

Chinese operatic melodies emphasize florid ornamental passages or long stretched tones in order to achieve special artistic effects. From an instrumental interlude, Chen derives her Jingju melody, which displays a Chinese rhyme in rising, falling, and leveled tones. She notes that the instrumental version of Jingju melody adds more notes (adding flowers), reflecting the traits and elaborate art of Jingju.

D. Influences of Bartók and Stravinsky

1. Bartók’s Influence

Chen Yi writes that her compositional style seems close to Bartók, and she admires very much Bartók’s creative ideas and style. She carries on Bartók’s spirit in
exploring new sounds by adapting his compositional principles to her own musical language and by merging contemporary Western techniques and native idioms. *Duo Ye* resembles Bartók’s most experimental works, such as *Improvisations* Op. 20 in several aspects:

a. use of folksong segments as motto themes,

b. bitonal or pantonal treatment of folk melodies and harmonies,

c. intervalic expansion and diminution,

d. specific rhythms (parlando declamation and clamorous syncopation),

e. combining elements of sonata, variation, and rhapsody forms.

The following paragraphs explain further Bartók’s influence on *Duo Ye*.

a. Without using complete folksong melodies, *Duo Ye* only uses centralized themes derived from them. This resembles a type of Bartók’s motto theme in *Two Romanian Dances* Op. 8a no.2, which develops two motto themes alternatively and extensively.51


\[\text{Music notation image}\]

b. *Duo Ye* often presents melodies in bitonal oppositions or pantonal texture. For example, the Largo-Allegro sections set folk tunes in different modes, which are similar to Bartók’s *Improvisations* Op. 20. Malcolm Gillies remarks that *Improvisations* Op. 20 shows
a bold linking of innovative techniques of folksong arrangement and atonal direction. In “The Relation of Folk-Song to the Development of the Art Music of Our Time,” *The Sackbut*, II/1, 1921, pp.5-11) Bartók explained that “the opposition of the two tendencies [bitonality] reveals all the more clearly the individual properties of each, while the effect of the whole becomes all the more powerful.”

Chen Yi has discovered the evocative sound and power of blending a folksong with pantonal or atonal techniques and has used opposition of themes extensively in *Duo Ye*.


![Ex. 4.2 a. Bartók, Improvisations Op. 20, III, mm. 1-4.](image1)


![Ex. 4.2 b. Bartók, Improvisations Op. 20, IV, mm. 23-26.](image2)

(See Ex. 4.8. Chen Yi, *Duo Ye*, mm. 1-3.)

c. Intervalic expansion and diminution are important techniques in Bartók’s thematic variation and development. Gillies writes that Bartók’s *Mikrokosmos* foreshadows his mature works. He writes,

The “Menuetto” from bb90 [Béla Bartók’s composition no. 90] presented a pioneering example of Bartók’s principle of expansion and contraction of
scalar intervals (see Ex. 3.2) – in this case notably a major 2\textsuperscript{nd} into a perfect 4\textsuperscript{th} – which would come to its most magisterial expression ten years later in the *Music for String Instruments, Percussion and Celesta.*

Ex. 4.3. Bartók, Nine Little Piano Pieces, “Menuetto,” mm. 3-4, 9-10.

Chen Yi also uses intervalic expansion and diminution to vary her themes. For example, theme I in *Duo Ye*’s first appearance outlines a minor third whereas theme II uses a major second and a minor third within a perfect fourth. These modal intervals are significant in the unity of *Duo Ye.* In the Allegro section (m. 17), the minor third is contracted into a major second and a minor second, then theme I expands upward a minor sixth (see Ex. 4.8).

d. Special rhythms create special effects

*Duo Ye* begins with a parlando declamation, which is the feature of the third movement of Bartók’s *Music for String Instruments, Percussion and Celesta.* *Duo Ye* accelerates from slow tempo to fast tempo, which resembles Bartók’s parlando rubato to *tempo giusto.*

In the climax of the Fugue movement in *Music for String Instruments, Percussion and Celesta,* Bartók uses a syncopated rhythm in high register in fortissimo, the cellos and double basses play the fugue theme in inversion strongly in octaves, responding to the syncopated rhythm. Chen Yi uses a similar syncopated rhythm and texture at the apex of *Duo Ye.*

Fugue, mm. 56-59.
Duo Ye appears in a form combining elements of sonata, variation, concerto, fantasy, and rhapsody. Like Bartók seeking new forms to express musical ideas, (e.g. mirror form in *Music for String Instruments, Percussion and Celesta*), Chen Yi has also explored structures with conventional and new elements. Several writers say that this piece is similar to a single-movement sonata form. They perceive this piece as generally paralleling the three-part sonata structure but disagree over whether Adagio is in exposition or development.

This question cannot be resolved by the conventional view of the sonata form. Chen Yi does not say that this piece is in a form similar to sonata. Instead, she writes that, "the entire piece [Duo Ye] consists of theme-exposition and development (Largo-Allegro), a lyric transition (Adagio), the development of the mountain song and dance (Andante), recapitulation (Allegro, meno mosso) and a coda (Vivo con animato)." In this form, there are new elements:
i. the non-metrical mountain song theme in Adagio (mm. 71-73),

ii. the opening alternation of slow and fast tempos in improvisational style,

iii. changes in meter and in tempo in Andante,

iv. a non-metrical Allegro at the beginning of the recapitulation

v. an exhilarating dance in the coda.

These elements suggest features of a rhapsody. There are elements of other forms. Therefore, we may consider Duo Ye as a hybrid form with the elements of sonata, rhapsody, fantasy, and variation. I will discuss these elements further in section E.

Structure and rhythm in Duo Ye.

2. Stravinsky’s influence

Chen Yi notes that she learned some rhythmic patterns and textures from Stravinsky. In Duo Ye, Stravinsky’s influence is seen in asymmetrical note grouping, blending tonal melody and atonal accompaniment, extensive use of ostinato, and changing meter.

In Bartók’s compositions and essays, he discusses many aspects of folk-music-inspired techniques in Stravinsky’s innovations. Stravinsky’s liberation of rhythms in using irregular accents, asymmetrical grouping, ostinato, and synthesis of tonal-atonal elements are his contributions to twentieth-century music.

a. Alternating symmetrical-asymmetrical eighth-notes units.

Bartók writes,

The beginning of the twentieth century was the moment of discovery of Eastern European folk music. In this music melodies of asymmetrical rhythmic movement were abundant, in Hungarian material no less than in Slovakian and Rumanian... Composers who are responsive to the influence of folk music, such as Stravinsky or the Hungarians, have made increasingly frequent use of this type of metrical structure [asymmetrical structure] in their works, much to the terror of
orchestral musicians. Even in Petrushka, and to a greater extent in *Le Sacre du Printemps*, Stravinsky writes asymmetrical bars made up of fairly quick eighth-note units, often with different bar-lengths in alternation—some symmetrical, some asymmetrical.\(^56\)

An excerpt from Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* shows that he uses different numbers of eighth notes and asymmetrical bars. A folk melody is played by the first violins and the flute; the flute and piccolos plays an ornamented version of the melody whereas the violins play the displaced tones in melodic intervals of sevenths or ninths. The melody first appears in a fragment of five eighth notes. After resting two measures, it recurs in a unit of fourteen eighth notes. Another important point is the hemiola, two eighth notes against eighth-triplets in the strings.
Chen Yi applies this technique in *Duo Ye*. In measures 30-34, Chen uses different numbers of eighth-note units to develop theme I, which first sounds in a unit of four eighth-triplets followed by an eighth note. Then, it becomes a unit of an eighth triplet followed by an eighth note (m. 45). The leaping staccatos and hemiola using two eighth notes against eighth triplets also resemble Stavinsky's hemiola in *Le Sacre*.

(See Ex. 4.13. Chen Yi, *Duo Ye*, mm. 27-34).
b. Tonal folk music compatible with the atonal trend

Chen Yi’s integration of tonal and atonal elements resembles Stavinsky’s treatment of a folk-like melody. Bartók remarks that Stravinsky’s use of folk-like motives forms a framework for his compositions in *Pribaotki*: “The characteristic brevity of these motives, all of them taken into consideration separately, is absolutely tonal, a circumstance that makes possible a kind of instrumental accompaniment composed of a sequence of underlying, more or less atonal tone-patches very characteristic of the temper of the motives.” Bartók gives three examples of underlying atonal accompaniment for modal melodies in *Pribaotki*. The second is shown in the following: “Persistent repetitions of the motive which is comprised of two measures in D minor

\[ \text{with the underlying ostinato accompaniment} \]

Chen Yi must have known Stravinsky’s blending of folk tune with atonal accompaniment; her Andante section in *Duo Ye* displays a similar texture and relationship between the melody and accompaniment. (See Ex. 3.14. *Duo Ye*, Andante, mm. 74-77).

c. Chen Yi’s love for Stravinsky is evident in her extensive use of ostinato or ostinato driving passages, highlighting the primitive zeal of folk music. She uses ostinato in persistent repetitions to create extraordinary excitement.
Bartók notes that,

from Le Sacre du Printemps onward, he [Stravinsky] seldom uses melodies of a closed form consisting of three or four lines, but short motives of two or three measures and repeats them "à la ostinato." These short recurring primitive motives are very characteristic of Russian music of a certain category. . . The steady repetition of primitive motives creates an air of strange feverish excitement even in the sort of folk music where it occurs. The effect is increased a hundred-fold if a master of Stravinsky's supreme skill and his precise knowledge of dynamic effects employs these rapidly chasing sets of motives. 59

A comparison of Stravinsky's ostinato in Le Sacre and ostinatos in Duo Ye illustrates Chen's adaptation of Stravinsky's techniques. Duo Ye's ostinatos resemble Stravinsky's patterns in dancing passages and in their varied lengths.

Ex. 4.6. Stravinsky, Le Sacre: Danse des adolescentes, mm. 106-112.

In this example, several ostinatos are used simultaneously in the wind instruments and in the strings. The melodic ostinato by the flutes is played in different lengths and clearly heard above the orchestra. (See Ex. 4.19. Duo Ye, mm. 131-34).
In measures 129-30, theme I in *Duo Ye* becomes an eighth-note ostinato in the right hand, repeating the central tune (E-C#-F#) while the left hand plays a three-note ostinato derived from the beginning of the Jingju theme. The accents on the first note of each three-note group blur the metric division and evoke a feeling of urging forward. This can be seen as a combination of the “urging” (*cui*) technique in Chinese ensemble and the influence of Stravinsky’s ostinato. The diminution of the motives (shortened note duration) across regular beat divisions drives an acceleration toward the coda, *Vivo con animato*.

In Stravinsky’s *Concerto en Ré pour Violin et Orchestre* (Ex. 4.7) the violin plays an ostinato across beats to create a high point, similar to the Chao Zhou “urging” technique. In *Duo Ye*, *Yu Diao*, and *Ba Ban*, Chen often uses this type of ostinato to approach a climax.

d. Changing meter

One of Stravinsky’s idioms is changing meter. In his *Concerto en Ré pour Violin et Orchestre*, Stravinsky employs changing meter in ostinato driven passages.
In traditional Chinese music, flexible rhythms and duple meters are abundant, but triple meter and frequently changing meters are rare. Chen Yi’s use of these meters (Duo Ye, mm. 84-92) evokes a sense of primitivism that shows the influence of Stravinsky’s changing metric groupings as he tries “to project the tumult and violence that were his recollections of the coming of spring to Russia.” (See Ex. 4.16. Duo Ye, mm. 84-92.)

In sum, Chen Yi’s adaptations of Bartók and Stravinsky’s techniques are mingled with elements of Dong folk tunes and a Jingju melody. Therefore, these influences are integrated closely with her native idioms and Chinese aesthetics.
Bartók points out that, "This influence is most effective for the musician if he acquaints himself with folk music in the form in which it lives, in unbridled strength, amidst the lower people, and not by means of inanimate collections of folk music. . . . then, we might say of him that he has portrayed therein a part of life." 61 Duo Ye reflects Bartók's idea mentioned above and the unbridled strength of folk music as well.

E. Structure and rhythm of Duo Ye

The merging of multiple structural elements should be the center of concern in analyzing Chen Yi's Duo Ye since she creates her music by digesting and applying all principles and everything learned through a process of integration. Duo Ye freely unfolds while portraying the lively Dong ceremony and expressing the composer's emotions with improvisational elements. Because Duo Ye is not bound to conventional forms, its structure defies easy categorization. Xu Ying, a Chinese music critic, suggests looking at Duo Ye's form in various ways, which is a flexible and open-minded approach. 62

Lei Vai-Mong, who earned her Ph.D. at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, writes,

In an interview on Radio Beijing 1985, Chen described her ideal in composition: "I try to make each and every piece of my work logical, complete and technically perfect. Besides, I prize emotion and freedom from standard practices." Chen Yi believes strongly in the principle of "Study and absorb everything by heart, but try to apply freely the learnt principles to every new situation with creativity and imagination." 63

From Chen's words, one can see the goals of her composition: 1. perfection in logical forms and techniques, 2. spontaneous emotions, 3. creative and imaginative music. I think that the combination of these three aspects is the most important point; furthermore, creativity and imagination imbue her compositions with vitality and bridge
the gap from traditional to future music. Therefore, this analysis explains how Chen Yi applies everything learned in creating *Duo Ye*.

*Duo Ye’s* logical form is manifest in its structure that combines elements of sonata, rhapsody, variation, and fantasy. *Duo Ye’s* rhythmic organization shows how Chen balances *yin-yang* components (e.g. contrasting tempos) and uses the sequences of *yu-he-ba* (the Sum of Eight) and the *jin-gan-lan* (the Golden Olive).

**Fig. 4.2. The Structure of *Duo Ye***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>Largo-Allegro</td>
<td>Adagio</td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>Allegro, meno mosso</td>
<td>Vivo con animato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>1-17-70</td>
<td>71-73</td>
<td>74-115</td>
<td>116 - 134</td>
<td>135 - 179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>I, II, I'</td>
<td>III, I'</td>
<td>III', I</td>
<td>I', III''</td>
<td>II', III'''', I''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequence</td>
<td><em>Yu-he-ba</em></td>
<td>Golden Olive</td>
<td><em>Yu-he-ba</em></td>
<td><em>Yu-he-ba</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This form not only contains exposition, development, and recapitulation—the basic parts of the sonata form—and the contrasts between a lyric movement and a fast dance movement (the second and third movements) but also illustrates the elements of free parlando declamation, acceleration, and a dazzling dance of rhapsody. A non-metered sweeping Allegro recalls the Baroque fantasy; the Adagio and Andante display a relationship between theme and variation. Sometimes, the antiphonal texture and shift from monophony to homophony and polyphony produce a concertato effect.

Therefore, one should avoid saying that *Duo Ye* is in a form similar to sonata. It is a newly invented hybrid form combining many logical links and contrasting elements of a variety of forms.
*Duo Ye*’s rhythmic organization is built on the principle of the *yu-he-ba* (the Sum of Eight) and the *jin-gan-lan* (the Golden Olive) sequences, which are used extensively and freely in many parts of the piece. According to Zhou Jinmin, the beats in sequences are counted by the numbers of Chinese characters. Each character stands for a strike on a percussion instrument. “A **是** is a strong beat at the center of the *ban gu* (a larger kind [wooden drum] than the one used in the Jingju, Beijing opera); a “—“ stands for a rest or a sustained note from the previous position; a 七 is played by small crash symbols with muted sound.” 64

Chen Yi notes that a unit of the *yu-he-ba* has four eight-character [eight-strike] phrases. The phrases are divided into two sub-phrases: while adding or subtracting two strikes (characters), one sub-phrase gradually increases, another progressively decreases. Fig. 4.3. The profile of a sequential unit of *yu-he-ba*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cymbal-Drum strikes</th>
<th>number of strikes</th>
<th>number of quarter note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>phrase 1</td>
<td>1 + 7 = 8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phrase 2</td>
<td>3 + 5 = 8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phrase 3</td>
<td>5 + 3 = 8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phrase 4</td>
<td>7 + 1 = 8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 七 = a cymbal strike with muted sound, 专栏 = a strong beat at the center of the drum. — = a rest or a sustained note.

The introduction of *Duo Ye* displays a progressive increase of beats in theme I and a decrease in theme II. Theme I represents the leader’s improvisational singing; theme II depicts the chorus responding to the leader. In the 1986 edition of *Duo Ye*, at the beginning of the treble staff, there is no time signature. The indications of a slow tempo (Largo, ∆ = 40) and free rhythm (*ad lib.*) resemble Bartók’s parlando rubato style in the third and seventh pieces of *Improvisations, Op.20* and in the third movement of *Music for*
Strings, Percussion, and Celesta. In the bass staff, a collective changing meter is notable 3/4, 2/4, and 1/4 in the 1986 edition of Duo Ye.

In 1984 there were few Chinese piano compositions which ventured to use changing meter combined with a non-metrical part. This unusual combination of changing meter and non-metrical immediately aligns Duo Ye with twentieth-century music rather than the traditional Chinese or Western Romantic music.

Ex. 4.8. Introduction of Duo Ye, mm. 1-17 (Theodore Presser edition).

With a flexible rhythm, the opening theme I starts with a quarter note followed by a half note (a total of three beats) in a declamatory style. In its second appearance (m. 5), the first note is shortened to an eighth followed by a dotted quarter as the three-beat group expands to a six-beat group. Theme I expands to seven beats (mm. 9-10) and eight
beats (mm. 12-13) in a combination of quarter, dotted quarter and eighths as the tempo becomes faster than at the beginning ($\lambda = 50$).

In the bass staff, theme II appears as a chorus part in Allegro in measures 2-4, 7-8, 11, and 14 while decreasing its number of beats from eight, to five, to four, to three. The alternation of a slow leader's song (Largo $\lambda = 40$) and a fast group dance (Allegro $\lambda = 120$) is derived from this age-old rite in a warm welcoming atmosphere, but the original chorus dance starts in a slow tempo rather than in Allegro.

Chen illustrates the rhythmic sequences in the introduction of Duo Ye and in the beginning of the recapitulation as follows:

Fig. 4.4. Yu-He-Ba rhythmic sequences in the Introduction of Duo Ye,

Largo-Allegro

\[ \text{number of quarter notes in the treble clef} \quad \text{number of quarter notes in the bass clef} \]
Recapitulation of *Duo Ye*, Allegro, Meno Mosso

The rhythms in the second part of the Allegro feature a hemiola (eighth triplet in the treble part against two eighths in the bass part mm. 30-31) and syncopated dotted rhythms (mm. 47-49). The hemiola resembles a hemiola passage in Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*; the syncopated and dotted rhythms present the patterns in Chinese percussion ensembles.

Ex. 4.9. *Duo Ye*, mm. 48-51.

In his dissertation, Zhou Jinmin illustrates an olive-shaped rhythmic pattern in a progressive increasing-decreasing metric cycle. Then, he uses an example to show Chen Yi’s use of the Golden Olive pattern in her Viola Concerto: *Xian Shi*.67
In the Adagio section of *Duo Ye*, a Jingju melody sounds in a Golden-Olive rhythmic sequence in an imagined mountain song style. Without a time signature, the Jingju melody progresses from a group of two and half beats (two quarter notes and an eighth note) to a group of eleven beats (a quarter note is considered one beat). After increasing beats to the middle of the olive shape (eleven beats), it decreases the number of beats. In addition, Chen also adds and subtracts layers of counter melodies to form the olive shape. At the end of the Adagio, the melody stops at a half note (two beats), the ending point of the olive shape, which is similar to the beginning point of the olive shape (two and a half beats). At the same time a bass voice states another olive-shaped sequence.

The beat-groups of 1, 3, 5, (quarters) and 12 (eighths and sixteenths) outline a variant of the olive pattern. The decreasing process of this sequence is in shortened note values since the notes change from quarters to eighths. An acceleration occurs in a group of twelve notes (a varied Jingju melody), which can be divided into a sequence of a decreasing number of notes in groups (7, 5, 3, and 1). Without strictly counting the beats, Chen freely applies the principle of the Golden Olive in the whole Adagio section and in its ostinato form in measure 73 (see p. 37, Ex. 4.10).
Ex. 4.10. Chen Yi, *Duo Ye*, Adagio, mm. 71-73.

The Andante is a variation and development of theme III and the other two themes in two subsections. The first subsection uses a tempo $\mathfrak{l} = 80$ similar to *yuanban* (primary-meter) in Jingju. Presenting a bright coloratura in dotted rhythms, theme III' with irregular beat groupings and phrases in various lengths conveys a sense parallel to the poetic feeling in *ci*, a poem with lines of irregular length.

In the Andante, each phrase of the varied Jingju tune initiates a prolonged note (a half note tied to an eighth note) preceded by a sixteenth note pick-up. Then a group of dotted sixteenths with grace notes follows the long note. This pattern imitates a Jingju
soprano's coloratura with an elaborate rhyme. The accompaniment divides the four quarter notes into three groups of eighth notes 3+2+3, which echoes the uneven grouping of eighth notes in the Fugue of Bartók's *Music for String Instruments, Percussion, and Celesta*. In Ex. 3.11, the eight beats of 8/8 meter are divided into uneven groups of eighth notes: 3+3+2 (see the dotted lines).


Then, a transitional passage occurs in 3/4 meter, and a group of triplets in parallel fifths leads to the second part of the Andante in 5/8 meter. The rhythmic pattern of the Jingju tune is similar to that of the first part of the Andante. However, the ostinato becomes a group of five eighth notes. Such an asymmetrical meter and beat groups are often found in twentieth-century compositions.

In Allegro (m. 116), theme I returns in a diminution of duration (a sixteenth followed by a quarter note). In this non-metrical section, groups of sixteenth notes run quickly. Chen indicates that "the slashed sixteenths are played as fast as possible, like grace notes. Unslashed groups are sixteenth notes in a fast tempo." This sixteenth-note passage resembles the running passages in a Baroque fantasy.

In Meno mosso and the coda, *yu-he-ba* sequences play a significant role in the measures 117-20 and 143-69. The syncopated chords in the treble staff (mm. 117) recall the rhythm in Bartók's Fugue of *Music for String Instruments, Percussion, and Celesta*.
The number of chords decreases while theme I in a low voice increases its beats and notes. This is an excellent example of the way Chen integrates Bartók's model with the *yu-he-ba* rhythmic sequence. In the coda, the ostinato (mm. 143-69) of the Jingju melody in the bass voice moves in a number sequence of 11, 9, 7, 5, 3, and 1. These numbers are the repetitions of the ostinato, which gradually decreases the number of repetitions while approaching the end of the piece.

Chen Yi and other writers discuss the significance of the application of the principles of *yu-he-ba* and the Golden Olive in *Duo Ye*. In addition to a review of their discussions, I emphasize that the application of rhythmic sequence illustrates the philosophical concepts of change and *yin-yang*, which are dominant thoughts in the *Yijing* (*I-Ching, the Book of Changes*). The rhythmic sequences create strong momentum and interesting rhythmic counterpoint, adding much joy to the aesthetic experience of listening to *Duo Ye*.

Lin Guixiong points out that Chen Yi's use of the *yu-he-ba* principle is quite flexible. Without a strict numeral ratio, Chen only uses its principles. Each time, Chen uses the principles of *yu-he-ba* and the Golden Olive sequences in a different way, which illustrates that the rhythmic sequence is one of the most variable elements in *Duo Ye*. Tang Jianping writes that [in the introduction of *Duo Ye*] "To combine the acceleration [theme I from slow to fast] with other material in constant tempo . . . is a creation of the composer."  

Chen Yi blends the Dong musical idioms, the principles of *yu-he-ba*, and the Golden Olive with Stravinsky's techniques (ostinato, uneven beat groupings, and
changing meter), and Bartók’s polymodality or pantonality, expressing the spontaneous emotions and vitality of Dong folk music.

F. Pitch materials and sound-in-Duo Ye

1. Basic pitch materials and sound

Chen Yi writes that, “in melodic materials [in Duo Ye], the central tune consisting of two tones (E and C#) and a melody in Jingju style, symbolizing the visiting Beijing guests, go through the entire piece.” The central tune (theme I) has a variant in a chorus theme, which is called theme II for convenience of analysis in this study. Themes I and II share the basic intervals of a minor third and a major second within a perfect fourth but in different orders, which may be indicated as a pitch class set [0, 2, 5]. Theme III, Jingju melody, features a seventh (minor or diminished seventh) followed by a minor third and a second interval. These intervals with a modal flavor are central cells used throughout the piece. The basic pitch organization of Duo Ye is shown in Figure 3.6.

Fig. 4.6. Pitch Organization of Duo Ye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>1 - 17 - 70</td>
<td>71-73</td>
<td>74-115</td>
<td>116 - 134</td>
<td>135 -179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>I, II</td>
<td>III, I</td>
<td>III', II', I</td>
<td>I', III'', II'</td>
<td>II'', III''', I''</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal center</td>
<td>G, E tonal</td>
<td>G A *</td>
<td>d, F# transpositions</td>
<td>G (E C F E) c</td>
<td>D, pantonal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The capitalized letters for modes suggest different gong modes; the small letters suggest yu modes at different pitches.

As a tone picture, the overall sound of Duo Ye portrays the enthusiastic Dong welcoming ceremony and expresses Chen Yi’s feelings and emotions interacting with the dance and singing. The sonic scenes include an introductory antiphony of a leader’s
singing and chorus-dance, a Jingju melody in a mountain song atmosphere, the
development of the Jingju tune and dance, the returning (recapitulation) of all themes,
and an exhilarating coda.

In measure 1, in a slow tempo and in an improvisational style, a leader’s theme
(theme I) consisting of e’ and c#” two tones in three beats is heard loudly in the middle
register of the piano (See Ex. 3.8). This minor third can be considered the first interval in
c# yu mode (c#, e, f#, g#, b (la do re mi sol).

A Dong folksong “Hou Lu” [Throat Path] for two voices collected in Chinese
Folksongs has a second voice part similar Chen Yi’s central theme. The melodies use the
same tones in two different yu modes. The beginning intervals (a downward minor third
followed by a perfect fourth) are as same as the beginning of Duo Ye. Another Dong
fongsong “Ga Qiao” [Ga Chiao] for two voices shows a similar example: the upper voice
sings one phrase first in A Gong mode above the A Gong tone (do re mi sol la = a’ b’ c#”
c” f””). Then, the lower voice sings a phrase in yu mode (a c’ d’ c’ d’ e’ c’). The
beginning intervals are a minor third and a major second, outlining a perfect fourth,
which are the basic intervals as Chen Yi described them in the Dong chorus part.

Ex. 4.12. “Hou Lu,”74 Dong folksong from Hunan
Ex. 4.13. “Ga Qiao,” Dong folksong from Hunan.

In measure 2, theme II, a three-tone modal theme with the tones: d e g g e d e g [0, 2, 5] in eight beats sounds in a circular movement centered at g, which may be regarded as in g gong mode. Theme II is superimposed on a drone of a perfect fifth (D♭ and A♮). This drone imitates the accompaniment of the sheng (a bamboo-pipe mouth organ). In a fast tempo (≈120) and in homophonic texture, theme II contrasts with the slow, short, and monophonic theme I. The accents of theme II depict the unified dance steps. Between theme II and the drone, a b♭ tone adds an atonal layer to theme II since it changes into c♯, returns to b♭, and changes to b ♭. This voice is novel in that it does not belong to any mode (see Ex. 4.7).

2. Intervalic diminution and expansion.

In measure 5, theme I expands to f♯ and to five beats: e', c♯', f♯, c♯', e' [3, 0, 5], presenting a symmetrical motto theme, which is drawn from the original chorus. Thus, theme I features a minor third below a major second (theme II features a major second below a minor third). In measure 9, theme I leaps from c♯ to b♭, a diminished seventh (c♯, b♭) that foreshadows theme III, a Jingju melody in Adagio. This diminished seventh appears to be a bianyin (altered tone) or an interval borrowed from a Western scale. The following tones (g' f♯ e' g') sound in melodic thirds and a minor second, which is a diminution of the major second. In measure 15, theme I leaps an octave higher (d♭, d♭)
and brings out tones in melodic thirds, seconds, a fourth, and a tritone at its end, illustrating the principle of the *yu-he-ba* sequence in progressive expansion of intervals and beats.

While theme I increases notes and beats and expands intervals, theme II decreases the number of beats until reaching a short chord containing B, e, and g superimposed on the drone (D♭ and A♭, m. 14). Thus, these pitches form a polytonal or atonal chord containing dissonant minor seconds, a minor ninth, and a tritone. This interaction of the leader and chorus continues in a sequence of increasing-decreasing beats (*ye-he-ba*); at the same time theme I accelerates to Allegro (see Ex. 4.8).

3. **Thematic combinations, variations, and transpositions**

The Allegro section presents two parts: the first develops the antiphony an octave higher. The second develops the themes in dancing staccatos and in parallel fourths and fifths. The motto themes are combined in harmonic or melodic intervals and transposed to different pitches and modes.

At the beginning of the Allegro (m.17 in Ex. 4.8), the two hands play an elaborate theme I in the treble register, imitating the style of jinghu and erhu playing an octave apart in unison. Following the motto theme e" and c#" in grace notes, the intervals become a major second (d#", c#") and a minor second (d#", e" in grace notes) in the second beat. Then the theme leaps up a minor sixth. The next group of tones (c#", b♭", g", b♭", g", f#", e", g", a", g", e", d", e", g" a" c"", d♭", b♭") contains a melodic diminished seventh, three minor thirds, a minor second (g", f#"), and two major seconds. Beginning with the diminished seventh, this melody carries a sort of modal or even exotic flavor and foreshadows theme III in Jingju style.
The following Allegro presents an alternation and integration of modal and pantonal thematic variants. In measure 18 Chen Yi uses an upward leap of a diminished seventh and the melodic intervals of a minor third, minor second, and major second, which resemble the pentatonic Jingju melody in linear movement, but deviate from the original melody, which does not use the diminished seventh and minor second.


In measure 20 this unison becomes parallel augmented ninths (minor tenths) played energetically (*con energia*) in two different modes. Moving in eighth notes, one of the parallel themes remains in c# *yu* and another is transposed to b♭ *yu* mode.

Immediately a folk antiphonal voice responds to the parallel themes. In measure 21, two harmonic minor sevenths (b♭, a♭, and G, f′) juxtaposed with themes I and II (f′ e′ c♯ e′ and b c♯ e′) sound in different pitches in the tenor range where theme I is reordered and the perfect fourth is reduced to a diminished fourth as theme II is joined in E *gong* mode. In measure 24 the treble parallel themes repeat again; the antiphonal pattern with
theme I follows and gradually reduces its beats and tones, reaching a single chord of two sevenths and leaping up to the treble register (m. 27).

There are abundant combinations of themes in variants juxtaposing original themes with their inversions and chordal forms. After establishing theme I in c# mode and varying it many times, Chen develops the themes in a pan-tonal context (m. 28 in Ex. 4.15). In the second part of the Allegro, in measures 28-29 (a transitional fragment) theme II is lined up vertically as a fourth interval in the right hand (d", g") with an attached f" grace note combined with the tone e in the left hand. In measure 30, the right hand juxtaposes theme I in c# with the tones a' c' b' in triplet (c" f" e' a' c" b') above the eighth notes of an ostinato (f a b in mm. 28-31), leaping from c" to a". The staccato ostinato in the left hand contains the melodic intervals of a minor third, a tritone, and a perfect fifth as a variant of theme II and a drone in the manner of Stravinsky, sounding in a pantonal context (see Ex. 4.5).

In an imitative phrase (mm. 32-36), theme I recurs loudly in the treble register. In dotted rhythm and in parallel fourths, the upper voice (c" a" d" c" a") sounds in A mode and the second voice in E mode. With a delay of a quarter note and at a major ninth and a tritone below the two voices of the right hand, the third (or tenor) voice imitates theme I in d# mode, forming a polymodal antiphony and producing a concertato effect. These alternations and imitations echo Bartók’s treatment of folk tunes.
Then, the leaping patterns of measures 30-32 are transposed to other pitches (a major second higher in the right hand and a minor third higher in the left hand). The patterns become shorter than their earlier appearance and move in contrary motion while the left hand plays melodic fifths and ninths.

Suddenly, a passage of percussive clusters interrupts the dance. In syncopated and dotted rhythms (mm. 47-50), a melody similar to theme II (d" e" fI" a") is combined with and supported by a group of diminished seventh chords and other dissonant chords, containing many minor seconds. These tone-clusters vividly depict a celebrative drumming scene and reveal the compatibility of atonal techniques and Chinese folk tunes.

The antiphonal phrase with dotted rhythms sounds again in octaves with added seconds (mm. 56-61). This time theme II takes the treble voice in G gong mode and theme I responds in the low voice in D# yu mode. Then, a transitional passage merges with theme I in the top voice (mm. 62-70). The chords and intervals played by the alternating two hands are in relationship of either a major seventh or a minor ninth. (See Ex. 4.9. Duo Ye, mm. 48-51.)
4. Polymodality

After the transition, theme III in Adagio (e" d" b" a" f") enters as a variant of the central intervals in a high voice with a nostalgic mood; the f" seems to be a borrowed tone, which will be discussed later. The most important sound of theme III is an upward seventh interval followed by a downward third and a second. The themes are pentatonic in nature; their intervals are consonant, lacking semitones. However, the treatments of these modal melodies are daring, which is influenced by Bartók’s compositional ideas.

Bartók writes that “a second striking feature of ancient melodies is the evident or the more or less disguised pentatonicism of their melodic line; that is, the scale on which these melodies progress is a minor scale whose seconds and sixths are missing (g b c d f g).” He notes the incompatibility of these scales with the usual tonic-dominant cadence and the missing scale degrees (the second and the six) are occasionally used as passing notes. He also remarks that

Polymodality is to be found especially in my works. . . . Melodies in such an archaic style can very well be provided also with the most daring harmonies. It is an amazing phenomenon that just the archaic features will admit of a much wider range of possibilities in harmonizing and treating melodies or themes of the pentatonic kind, than would be the case with the common major or minor scale melodies. In my Eight Improvisations for Piano I reached, I believe, the extreme limit in adding most daring accompaniments to simple folk tunes.

Using pentatonic tunes and intervals, Chen Yi demonstrates the ethnic and cultural traits of the themes, at the same time paying homage to Bartók and Stravinsky by avoiding clear tonal notes and using tones outside of modal scales. For instance, in measure 71, theme III is accompanied by an inversion of an F# major chord, which is non functional and not in the “correct mode,” showing the polytonal or atonal trend in contemporary compositions with folk music influences.
5. Integrating modal and atonal pitches

Without meter, theme III has elements of Jingju and urban music, so it uses minor
seconds, inflections, and modes containing more than five pitches. Moreover, Chen
juxtaposes modal fragments with atonal elements in polymodal contexts. Theme III
establishes diatonic intervals first but it ends with an atonal pitch or a bian yin (altered
tone). This gentle and gracious Adagio contrasts with the outgoing outer sections and
adds various tone colors and sophistication to the piece.

Theme III is heard in three fragments. The first four notes of this theme are
clearly in the G gong mode. However, it avoids the tonic G and ends with f♯, an altered
pitch (bianyin) attached to the modal melody.

Chen Yi writes that a favorite instrumental interlude in Beijing opera is c♯ b" b" b"
g" c" b" e", g" f" c" f♯. She derives her theme III from this melodic fragment and
uses the ornaments and minor seconds to embellish this pattern.³¹

Ex. 4.16. A famous Jingju interlude.

If one refers to the original Jingju melody, one sees that the original fragment is in
E gong mode (E F♯ G♯ B C♯) and the first two pitches are the fifth and fourth degrees of
the mode. Although theme III resembles the original Jingju tune, theme III of Duo Ye is
different from the Jingju fragment in several ways: 1. using modal fragments with grace
notes with minor seconds, 2. avoiding the tonic note and using an atonal ending,
and 3. adding layers in other modes.
After the rests, the second fragment of theme III introduces the tones (e'' f''
d'' c'' b'' c'' d'' c'' b'' c''), similar to the tones in C yi-fan mode, which are played by two
hands in unison, imitating the playing of jinghu and jing erhu with a "wandering
charm." The third fragment is a modified theme I in d# yu mode (f# d# g# d#
f#),
sounding with a secondary voice in parallel thirds below it. The second voice imitates
the beginning of theme III (d#' c#' a#') but at the end of the fragment drops to a' and g',
which are altered tones or atonal elements attached to the group. The drop of a semitone
seems to suggest a micro-tone or a bending tone in singing.

(See Ex. 4.10. Duo Ye, mm. 71-73).

After measure 71, theme III is transposed to different modes with many grace
notes of neighbor tones. A countermelody always enters after a few beats of the main
melody. Thus, the countermelody does not disturb the beginning of the melodic phrases
but adds a bitonal or pantonal layer to it.

To avoid a clear tonality, Chen puts the melodic fragments in remote modes or
pantonal groups. For example, at the beginning of measure 72, the fourth melodic
fragment sounds like it is in b-jiao mode while a countermelody in a low voice
approaches E gong but immediately moves away from E. One can hear the panmodal or
pantonal melodic fragments carry abundant semitones, major seventh, minor ninth
intervals, and inflections (See Ex. 4.9 mm. 71-72). (Here the modes are not limited to
pentatonic modes since the theme uses many tones outside of pentatonic modes. The
names of modes mentioned are for possible temporary modal centers.) The wandering
arch shape of the melody reveals the rising and falling tones of Jingju melodies and Chen
Yi's sensitivity. The Adagio ends with a strong bitonal chord (e b, g, and f#, b'', and
d") while the bass voice varies theme III in a pantonal aggregate in the Golden Olive sequence, accelerating to Andante.

In the first subsection of the Andante, theme III' starts with the e' tone as a sixteenth-note pick-up and leaps up a seventh to d", prolonging the high pitch (d"). Then, the wandering melodic line moves stepwise using the Chinese variation technique called “adding flowers,” adding neighbor tones and grace notes to embellish the melodic tones (e" d" b" g" d").

The left hand ostinato, a twelve-tone aggregate, is a combination of Schoenberg’s twelve tone method and Duo Ye’s central themes. The ostinato conceals an inversion of theme I (C F D) and the Jingju tune (C b\textsuperscript{b} g F e\textsuperscript{b}). The ostinato forms a panmodal accompaniment interacting with the Jingju melody in the right hand (mm. 74-77). This example shows how Chen Yi blends Duo Ye themes and Chinese aesthetics with Schoenberg’s twelve-tone method, Stravinsky’s ostinato technique, and Bartók’s uneven grouping of beats in portraying the Dong welcome rite and expressing her feelings.

Ex. 4.17. Duo Ye, mm. 74-77.

In the second subsection of the Andante, in an asymmetrical meter 5/8 (m. 90), theme III' continues to develop in three uneven phrases as the melody splits into short
segments (e.g., harmonic and melodic seventh intervals (f_e^b) or a seventh (f^#_e^m)) followed by a group of dotted eighths and sixteenths) (see Ex. 4.18).

Ex. 4.18. Duo Ye, mm. 84-92.

Then, in a transition, the central cell of theme I (the two tones in a melodic minor third) leaps in parallel fourths. Soon two hands play the central cell of theme I in parallel fourths together in polymodal settings (two hands are a major third apart mm. 108-113). Then, a fragment with arpeggiated sevenths and fourths (mm. 114-115) rises from the tenor register to a high e'' with crescendo, reaching the recapitulation Allegro, a fantasy-like passage.

6. Thematic reinforcement and opposition

In the recapitulation, (Allegro, m.116) themes I' and III'' reappear in forte, moving back and forth between mutual reinforcement and opposition of themes. Within a wide range of register, theme III is juxtaposed and combined with theme I'. The beginning minor seventh of theme III'' (A' G) sounds as a harmonic interval in two beats in the lowest register; after a dotted eighth rest, theme I' bursts in as a sixteenth (f^#m d^#m) and a quarter note in a three-layer unison. This returning theme I' may also be considered to be
a part of a modified Jingju theme (G ii°, d vii°) since these tones keep the contour and
intervals of theme III despite the seventh being a major seventh (G ii°).


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Theme I' immediately repeats (reinforces) in two three-note chords with the i°
and d vii° in the top voice in the middle register, which is a new element of the
recapitulation. At the same time an inversion of theme I (d I) in the left hand moves
upward a minor third in parallel fifths as an opposition to theme I'. The sounds of these
polytonal chords (the inversion and the chordal theme I') are dissonant due to their
intervalic relationships in minor seconds. Another opposition of theme follows. In
sequences of rushing sixteenth notes, a varied theme I is joined with a varied theme III
in the right hand; the left hand plays a varied theme III in the lowest voice.

This opposition of varied themes in running sixteenths is interrupted by theme I'
again in the three-layer unison, which expands to five tones as it does in measure 5.
Then, the sixteenth-note sequence, opposing the variants of themes I and III, runs in
different transpositions. As the left hand stops at three eighth rests, the right hand starts a
variant of the second fragment of theme III. Then the left hand imitates the right hand
pattern two octaves below as if in a chase. This chase turns into alternating octaves in
two hands reaching the climax of the piece.

In measures 117-20, the climax of Duo Ye, two sonic tracks are juxtaposed in a
sequence of yu-he-ba, which is a counterpoint inversion of the introduction (exchanging
the positions of the leader and the chorus). In the treble track, an F-minor triad is
superimposed on an F-major triad in fortissimo. In 7/4 meter, nine F major-minor
chords, which may present the chorus, strike in syncopated rhythm in six beats. Then, in
the bass sonic track, theme I (A' F#) roars in unison in two and a half beats. The groups
of the F major-minor chords strike again and again and each time decrease the number of
beats (four beats in measure 118, three beats in measure 119, and one beat in measure
120). Meanwhile, theme I played by two hands in unison increases its beats from two to
three, to four, and to five beats. These polymodal sound tracks and yu-he-ba sequence
demonstrate the ever-changing concept and yin-yang (positive verse negative)
components in music (see Ex. 4.20, yin-yang elements in decreasing versus increasing
beat-groups in yu-he-ba sequence, m. 116). The opposition and juxtaposition of
pounding major-minor chords in high register and a heavily accented melody in a low
register produce a thrilling effect. (This interaction recalls the texture at the apex of the Fugue in Bartók’s *Music for String Instruments, Percussion, and Celesta* (see Ex. 4.4a).

Ex. 4.20. *Duo Ye*, mm. 117-122.

From measure 121 onward, a sequence of transposition of themes is heard in a festive mood. In linear movement, the varied themes with central modal intervals guarantee that themes will be immediately recognizable. Theme I starts this sequence in its original c° yu mode (e° c° f° c° e°) in a high register (measure 121); at the same time, in a low register, many notes are added to theme II by the method of “adding flowers.” Thus, theme II becomes a surge of sixteenth notes in G° gong mode. In the middle of the keyboard, theme III acts as mordents (d° e° d', e' d' e') attached to eighth notes, which are separated by few rests. The mordents and eighth notes seem to sparkle, interacting with themes I and II.

In measures 123-24, theme III sounds in eighths and an eighth triplet in three and a half beats above theme II. In measures 125-34, theme I is transposed and pass from
several modes (d yu, f yu, c yu, g yu) and returns to c# yu while theme II passed from C gong, A gong, and other modes. In each measure, the themes enter new modes. Although the themes are quite modal and identifiable, the sonorities are rather dissonant, evocative, and exuberant because the intervalic relationships between two themes are often a minor ninth, a major ninth, or a major seventh. As themes move upward, they become shortened, using the Chinese “urging technique.” Theme I in a three-eighth-note pattern in the right hand and theme II in three sixteenth-note groups in the left hand interact with each other, reaching a new peak of burning energy in measure 134 (m. 134 in Ex. 4.22).

Ex. 4.21. Duo Ye, mm. 131-33.

When the right hand repeats the strong B-major chords in a very high register, the left hand repeats the two tones of g" and e" with a crescendo (theme I). Suddenly, the themes stop, and a dramatic two-beat rest signals the coda, Vivo con animato.

The coda begins in the lowest register as theme II reemerges in sixteenth notes with accents in its original G gong mode; between each of thematic tones, a B\textsuperscript{b} sixteenth note is inserted, which is an altered tone. As the leading voice in coda, theme II expands to eight measures and uses six tones (DEGAB\textsuperscript{b} C), moving in a circular motion up and
down. (DEGGEGEG, GEDEAGCB\textsuperscript{b} G). The drone (D\textsuperscript{b} A\textsuperscript{b}) becomes an ostinato of a melodic fifth in eighth notes against theme II.

Ex. 4.22. 

After eight measures, theme II becomes three-layer chords with the melody in the upper voice (m. 143) while theme III takes over the drone, acting as a six-note ostinato in sixteenth-notes. Although the top voice is modal, the other layers of the right hand chords are pan-tonal. These chords and the ostinato bring forth fresh sonorities beyond the limits of the modal and major-minor scalar systems. This example proves that piling up layers is an important method in the logical development of themes in \textit{Duo Ye}.\textsuperscript{83}

Since the ostinato pattern crosses the bar-lines and accents the first note of each pattern, it creates a driving effect in a Stravinskian vein. Between the phrases of theme II, the varied theme I appears in two eighth notes in a high register as if the leader’s voice calls out above the contrapuntal web of thematic activities.

Tang Jianping writes that,

Number sequence is greatly significant in the structure of the work. It deserves to be noticed that, while she [Chen Yi] uses this technique as a means for structural
organization, the composer also gives full play to the essence of the method. Example 2 [mm. 135-61] provides a passage from the coda, in which the six-sixteenth left-hand ostinato is repeated according to the sequence of [11, 9, 7, 5, 3, 1]. Meanwhile, the melody of the upper voice responds to the ostinato with a retrograde procedure.⁸⁴

Ex. 4.23. Duo Ye, mm. 143-67.

Tang illustrates the structural significance of Chen’s rhythmic sequences in the coda, which produces tremendous intensity and driving force. Each sequential cycle is transposed to a higher pitch. It is also worth mentioning that, in this Ex., Theme II is in a pattern of increasing beats and notes from two to three, to four, to five beats (quarter note as one beat). Although it is not an exact retrograde number sequence of the ostinato, it
does move from a small number to a large number, reflecting a considerably flexible adaptation of the principles of *yu-he-ba* sequence.85

In this vigorous sequence, theme II starts from a modal fragment centered at G and transposes to modal segments centered at e, c, f, and e♭. The left-hand ostinato [theme III] stresses the first note of each group at the temporary centers: D♭, B♭, F, c, g, and d (mm. 143-69) as surges of polymodal sounds rise higher and higher.

In measures 167-75, themes II and I are juxtaposed in a pattern containing b c♯ e (theme II) and a' g' e' (theme I). Alternating chords in the right hand with octaves in the left hand in sixteenth notes, the two hands play the same thematic pattern but a seventh interval apart. Due to the pounding and alternating of hands, these polymodal chords and octaves sound like drumming. Suddenly, the pattern and texture change when the tone-clusters (D♭ a♯n b♭ e g) strike loudly in syncopations in the high and low registers and in the middle of the keyboard (m. 175) and at last are held in a high register.

In measure 178, without making a change in meter or tempo, a flash-back of theme III in a soft voice appears (d'' e'' c♯b a' b' c''n) in a sensitive mood, which implies that measure 178 may need an indication of a change of meter and tempo. The flashback seems to resemble Berlioz’s manner of recalling his *idée fixe* at the end of his *Symphonie Fantastique*. A secondary layer under the second fragment of theme III is an inversion of an f-minor chord; but it has no harmonic function and ends with the motive b♭-g', which is a motto theme of theme I. A perfect fourth (b♭ and e♭n) is added under the g', forming a polytonal context.

In measure 179, the first three notes of theme III sound as light grace notes in the bass voice attached to the two accented tones of theme I (e' c'♭n) and finishing the whole
piece in octaves and in the original c\(^\#\) _yu_ mode. This ending mirrors the beginning of _Duo Ye_, the simple, primitive, and robust theme I.

Ex. 4.24. _Duo Ye_, mm.176-79.

This ending brings out several sudden and dramatic changes of dynamics, patterns and registers, provoking extraordinary excitement and unrestrained emotions.

**G. Referential meanings**

_Duo Ye_, a signature piece of Chen Yi, possesses multiple meanings. Emerging from rapid cultural and musical changes, _Duo Ye_ shows that Chen found a way to compose modern Chinese music based on traditional music with personal expression. While reflecting Chen Yi’s aspiration for reviving Chinese folk and traditional music, _Duo Ye_ presents a new Chinese musical style integrating Chinese aesthetics with contemporary Western techniques.

The introduction of _Duo Ye_ epitomizes the whole piece, in which a leader’s theme in c\(^\#\) _yu_ mode establishes a lead singer’s image with a warm and powerful voice. The voice is clearly modal, plain, and positive. The leader’s tune alternating with the chorus part is close to folk antiphony and reflects linear movement of the Chinese aesthetic idea; meanwhile this foreshadows the monophonic-polyphonic approach of the whole piece.
She uses the folk tune of the chorus as the leader's theme and replaces the choral part with new material, which proves that she uses sources freely and with personal devices.

Theme II and the drone (m. 2) begin with different modes forming a polymodal context, which acknowledges Chen's respect for Bartók and Stravinsky and her adaptation of their techniques. Because the polymodal aggregates are introduced softly, they do not sound strange and dissonant. This twentieth-century Western technique works closely together with the traditional elements. The clarity of themes, their modal elements, and linear movements conform to Chinese aesthetics. The naturalness and spontaneity of folksongs are captured in the flexible rhythm and tempo, which are epitomized in the introduction.

An autobiographical element may be found in the meaning of "Beijing guests," including Chen Yi. She uses a Jingju melody and other Jingju elements (jinghu and erhu) as a musical and cultural identity for her colleagues and herself, which gives this piece an autobiographical and personal mark. From the composition of Duo Ye, she has often used Jingju idioms to express her thoughts and identity, as in Small Beijing Gong. Duo Ye expresses her personal response to the Dong rite and her imagination and passion. Thus, a historical and ontological being is recorded in the sound of Duo Ye.

The Jingju melody in Adagio is embodied with a certain urban sophistication (e.g., elaborate grace notes and a flowing and a wondering quality). The uneven note-groups in the Golden Olive sequence convey Chen Yi's most lyric and intimate expression. In her letter to Lee Vai-Meng, Chen writes that the atmosphere of the slow middle section seems to be in a mountain song style. Mountain songs are usually sung in a loud and straightforward style due to the distance between the hills. (If one sings softly,
it is hard to be heard by another person standing at the top of another hill.) However, in introspective and reflective moods, this Jingju melody appears in a soft voice with a descending of registers and diminuendo, offering a sharp contrast with the robust dance. Obviously, this Adagio is Chen Yi’s recollection of the natural scenes and the people in the countryside rather than a scene of the Dong welcome rite.

The free polytonal antiphony in the Adagio recalls Bartók’s successive transpositions of motto themes in shifting tonality while the melodic fragments progress in the Golden Olive sequence, reflecting Chinese aesthetics in a symmetrical rhythmic and textural organization. Supported by a twelve-tone ostinato with concealed themes I and II, the Andante presents the longest melodies of this piece and the wandering charm of an embellished Jingju tune. This example shows how Chen Yi blends Duo Ye themes and Chinese aesthetics with Schoenberg’s twelve-tone method, Stravinsky’s ostinato technique, and Bartók’s uneven grouping of beats in portraying the Dong welcome rite and expressing her feelings.

At the climax of Duo Ye, the fantasy-like passage surges from a low register to the high register, bringing out the exuberant height of piling bichords interacting with a powerful theme I in a low register. The sequences of polymodal transposition are fully explored in dissonant sonorities like those in Bartók’s most experimental works. However, the modal characteristics of themes and their linear motion are very strong, which guarantee them to be identifiable. Chen’s merging of the techniques mentioned above shows her confidence in her integration of traditional and modern elements.

In following celebrating scenes (Allegro, Meno mosso, and Vivace), themes run in yu-he-ba sequences and interact with her spontaneous emotions. Although she
mastered logical structure, she is able to express spontaneous emotions. All musical
elements and learned techniques (e.g., polymodality, ostinato, tone-clusters) are called
into service to portray this modern sonic picture of *Duo Ye*. The coda of *Duo Ye* is not
only a celebration in the Dong rite, but also a celebration of Chen Yi’s discovery of a new
path, new style, and a new sound realm, in which the Dong people’s music and spirit, the
techniques of Bartók and Stravinsky, and Chinese aesthetics and musical idioms are
mingled in a natural and organic entity. In my observation, I sense an electrifying power
in the sonic image of *Duo Ye*. The exhilarating feeling and celebratory atmosphere tells
use that Chen Yi is joyful in exploring a way to modernize Chinese music.

**H. Conclusion**

In a twentieth-century Chinese avant-garde style, *Duo Ye* demonstrates how Chen
Yi incorporates Chinese music and cultural heritage while adapting contemporary
Western techniques to modernize Chinese music. The collective idea of *yue* is reflected
in *Duo Ye*’s use of Dong folk idioms, Jingju style melodies, and the sequences of *yu-he-
ba* and the Golden Olive, illustrating Chinese aesthetics in a logical structure, elastic
rhythm, spontaneous emotions, and imaginative music. *Duo Ye* has won a place as a
model piece balancing tradition and innovation in the battle between the New Wave
composers and the conservatives.

In philosophical terms, *Duo Ye* may be seen as a union of *yin* and *yang* (positive
and negative in a broad sense) and changing and unchanging components, (*yi* or *bian* and
*fei-yi* or *bu-bian*), which interpenetrate and saturate *Duo Ye*. There are many pairs of
elements such as Chinese aesthetics and Western influences, the modal intervals of
themes and rhythmic sequences, which are often presented in the forms of change and constancy. Deeply rooted in the essence of Chinese aesthetics, and Chinese folksongs, some of Duo Ye's elements (the tradition of programmatic title and notes, the linear motion of musical materials, and the central modal intervals) are conventional and unchanged, which may be called invariables, or the yang elements.  

Chinese people are familiar with these "invariables." For instance, when these themes containing these intervals appear (even in bitonal imitations or pantonal contexts), they are identifiable and become a means of facilitating perception and communication between the piece and the listener. The central tune (e' c#') of theme I at the beginning and end of Duo Ye symbolizes and summarizes the invariable components.

The rhythmic sequences, the most variable elements, can be seen as the yin elements. The introduction using the yu-he-ba sequence and changing meter in an improvisatory style shows the ever-changing components, the variables. The contemporary Western techniques of panmodal transposition, hemiola, and poly rhythms can also be seen as the variables, the yin components, which are developed in abundant contrasting forms and dynamics. The timbre and contextual elements also actively vary throughout the piece.

The changing and unchanging components are always relative, and are often integrated and juxtaposed as the yin-yang components are interdependent, complementary, and exchangeable. A close review of the literature on Chen Yi shows that folksong influence and national elements in Duo Ye have been explored and emphasized. There are many insightful discussions on this subject. The discussions of the yu-he-ba and Golden-Olive sequence are the focus in understanding Duo Ye, but the
modal elements need to be explored further since few analysts deal with this aspect in depth. The aesthetic, philosophical, and hermeneutic aspects of the piece remain unexplored.

Some analysts have made an important effort applying Forte's pitch-class set theory in analysis, showing interrelationship of materials and unifying factors (although the analyses do not explain their approaches and methodology). Using pitch-class set theory alone may not be sufficient to explain the modal intervals (the minor third and minor seventh at the beginnings of themes I and III) as the most important thematic materials, which are shown in Chen Yi's notes for Duo Ye.

In terms of structure, Duo Ye's form appears to be a hybrid form blending the formal elements of rhapsody, fantasy, sonata, concerto, and variation. A logical thinking links all thematic materials in five main parts, and detailed attention is given to rhythmic organization using yu-he-ba and Golden Olive sequences while exploring elastic tempo, ostinato, asymmetrical grouping of beats, uneven phrase length, and non-metrical sections.

Duo Ye's pitch organization is built on thematic modal intervals derived from the Dong folksong and a Jingju interlude. Chen's treatments of pitch materials use both traditional Chinese and Western compositional methods, including folk antiphony, imitative and free counterpoint, intervalic diminution and expansion, combination, juxtaposition, opposition, and transposition of themes in polytonal or pantonal context.

The significance of Duo Ye lies in the blending of diverse elements: Dong folksongs, Jingju idioms, Chinese aesthetics, Western contemporary techniques, explorations of new forms and sonorities with Chen Yi's cultural and musical identity.
Duo Ye presents an imaginative tone-picture of the Dong welcome rite with rich expression—robust, allusive, lyrical, sensitive, exuberant, vigorous, and evocative—in a fresh sonic world.

*Duo Ye*’s cultural significance may be seen in its worldwide acceptance. It has been performed by Chinese, American, and other pianists in different countries. The long list of performances includes performances in the First International Piano Competition, Beijing (1994), in Toronto (1990), in Strasbourg and Colmar, France (2000 and 2001), and at more than two dozen universities, music schools, and concert halls in the United States, such as a Columbia Composer Concert (1987), Juilliard School of Music (1996), Northwestern University, and a Carnegie Hall debut concert (2000). The performances of this piece represent a vigorous voice of Asian music on the world stage of classical music. Enthusiastic pianists from both East and West have played *Duo Ye* in promoting cultural exchange. Pluralism in music acts beyond national boundaries and cultures and brings Eastern and Western music idioms and people together.

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1. An ethnic minority people who live in southern China (such as Hunan, Guangxi, and Guizhou province).
2. Wang Anguo, “*Duo Ye* and *Chen Yi*,” *Ren Min Yin Yue (People’s Music)* (Beijing) 256/7 (July 1986): 22-23.
Yao Guanrong writes that, in a symmetrical sonata form, Chen uses the Western instruments to imitate the techniques of Chinese instruments, such as yehu (a two-stringed fiddle in Guangdong and Chao Zhou music) and pipa (a four stringed plucked instrument). Chen uses the idioms of Jingju reciting tune accompanied by a Jingju orchestra and Chinese instrument ensemble. In Yao Guanrong, “Jiaoxiang yue xin lei” (“Stringed Poem—A New Flower Bud of Symphony”), Ren Min Yin Yue (People’s Music) (Beijing) 238/1 (January 1985): 24-25.

The rhythmic formula is originated from the percussion ensemble shi-fan-luo-gu (Ten variations of gongs and drums). In Wang Anguo, “Duo Ye and Chen Yi,” Ren Min Yin Yue (People’s Music) (Beijing) 7 (July 1986): 22-23.

Wang, 23.

Lin Guixiong, “Zhu ti xing yin su zai yin yue fa zhan zhong de quan fang wei kong zhi—liang shou huo ji ang zuo pin fen xi” (The Total Control of All Dimensions of Thematic Elements in Musical Development), Wu Han Yin Yue Xue Yuan Xue Bao (The Journal of Wuhan Conservatory of Music) 3 (September 1988): 35-44.


Interview with Chen Yi, author unknown, Radio Beijing, 1985; quoted in Lei Vai-Meng, 60 and 64.


Lao Tsu (Laozi), 11.


Lao Tsu (Laozi), Tao Te Ching, 11.

Chen Yi, note for Duo Ye, in Yin Yue Chuan Zuo (Musical Compositions) 130/2 (Summer 1986): 1.


Zou Xiangping, “Dong xiang gu lou he wo de ji xing qu” (“Dong Drum Tower and My Impromptu”), Yin YueTan Suo (Explorations in Music) 3 (September 2001), 71.

Levis, 54.


Chen Yi, letter to Lei Vai-Meng, 1990, in Lei, 121.

Chou Wen-chung, 309.

Ibid., 309 and 315.

Chen Yi writes, “in the slow middle section, a Jingju tune [theme III] is so quiet and far away; even though the Jingju melody has urban traits, the atmosphere is like mountain song. It is somewhat mystic or elusive (bu-ke-zuo-mo). Perhaps, it reflects my feelings for nature (in countryside) and the Dong people.” In Chen Yi, letter to Lei, 121.

Ibid., (in Lei, 121).


Peng Juan, “Xi ju yue dui ban zou de feng ge he te dian” (“Styles and Characteristics of Theatrical Orchestral Accompaniment”), Xi ju: Xi Qu Yan Ju Yue Kan (Studies of Drama and Theatrical Music Monthly) 10 (October 1996): 82.

Chen Yi, Letter to Lei, in Lei, 121.

Ibid.


Gillies, 795.

Chen Yi, notes for Duo Ye. This note is not included in the Theodore Presser edition. It is attached in a score of Duo Ye from Chen Yi, 1999.

Chen Yi’s email to Xiaole Li, 22 August 2001.


Ibid., 318-19.

Ibid., 318.

Ibid., 343.

Ibid.

Bartók., 318-19.


Interview with composer Chen Yi.

Zhou, 224-225.


Chen Yi, note for Duo Ye, 1999.


Ibid.


Lin, 37.


Chen Yi, note for Duo Ye, 1999 (see note 52).

According to pitch set theory and its rules of permutation, some analysts indicated [0,2, 5] for the intervals in three themes as pitch class set (pc set). To seek unifying elements, this method seems insightful; however, theme III always appears with a seventh at the beginning. If one uses the ordered ascending number permutation, the reduced normal or prime form of theme III fails to distinguish itself from themes I and II. Therefore, this analysis uses pc set theory as an additional information but not as a principal method.
74 Zhongguo min ge (Chinese Folksongs), vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shanghai yin yue chu ban she (Shanghai Music Press), 1980), 567.
75 Ibid, 568.
76 Chen Yi, letter to Lei, 121.
79 Bartók, 318.
80 This fragment in cipher notation is 6555 3651 3212 and in solfeggio system is (la sol sol sol, mi la sol do, mi re do re).
81 Chen Yi’s letter to Lei.
82 Ibid.
83 Lin Guixiong notes that piling up (chong-die) thematic elements plays an important role in developing central themes in Duo Ye (e.g., chordal form of theme II in coda), in Lin, 39.
84 Tang, 134-135.
85 Chen Yi decreases the number of repetitions of the ostinato by subtracting two in each cycle; meanwhile, the right hand does not use a retrograde number procedure [1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11]. In the right hand, there is a repetition of theme II’s patterns according to the grouping of beat numbers 2, 3, 5 [beats].
86 The conventional components—the modal intervals, minor third, major second, perfect fourth, and sevenths in themes—are derived from the tonal language of the Dong people and Mandarin in Jingju are established firmly and transposed to different pitch levels.
87 Chen Yi’s email to Xiaole Li, 6 April 2003.
CHAPeR V
AN ANALYSIS OF GUESSING FOR PIANO SOLO

Chen Yi’s Guessing for piano solo is a portrayal of children’s guessing game based on a Yunan children’s song, Cai Diao (Guessing Song). This chapter discusses and analyzes Guessing in eight sections: A. Historical background of Guessing, B. Chinese aesthetics in Guessing and Chou Wen-chung’s influence, C. The influences of Bartók and Stravinsky, D. The structure and rhythms of Guessing, E. Pitch organization in Guessing, F. The sound of Guessing, G. The referential meanings, and H. Conclusion.

A. Historical background of Guessing

During 1988-89, in the midst of her doctoral program and the transition of her compositional style, Chen Yi composed Guessing (1989), Overture for Chinese Orchestra, and the Sextet Near Distance. As an important composer of Chinese new music, she has continued to produce works based on Chinese music and to express her feelings by merging Chinese musical traditions and Western contemporary techniques. These works are diverse in style and approach. Guessing is clearly tonal and more descriptive than Near Distance, which is atonal, symbolic, and abstract. The former is in her native language; the latter in her adopted American avant-garde musical language. These works were produced at a remarkable historical time noted for musical and cultural exchanges between the United States and China.

During the late 1980s, there was enthusiasm among Chinese and Chinese-American musicians to introduce new Chinese music and New Wave composers to the world. For example, according to Su de San Zheng, in 1987 a Chinese conductor asked
Chen Yi to "rewrite her prize winning piece *Duo Ye* (for chamber orchestra, 1986) into a full orchestral work (*Duo Ye No. 2*)"\(^1\) for the American debut of the Central Philharmonic Orchestra of China. This significant commission (although without pay) brought this piece to Avery Fisher Hall and ten American cities as the first Chinese contemporary orchestral work performed by the Central Philharmonic Orchestra of China in the United States. From that time Chen has attracted important patrons, has received commissions from the Hong Kong Orchestra, and was invited by the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan to perform her works.\(^2\)

Some goals of the new music are: To preserve and develop the Chinese musical tradition, including its cultural uniqueness, to gain international acceptance of Chinese new music as being musically advanced\(^3\) in global music and acceptance among Chinese-Americans. When the New Wave composers came to the United States, they evoked and spread the pride and consciousness of the Chinese musical heritage among Chinese immigrants through their music. During those years there was a movement promoting Chinese new music among Chinese-Americans, particularly immigrants in New York.

Susan Chang founded a Chinatown-based Chinese instrumental ensemble, *Chang Feng Zhong Yue Tuan* (*Chang Feng Chinese Music Troupe*) in New York in the early 1980s. Soon after Chen Yi arrived in New York in 1986, she joined the *Chang Feng* Chinese ensemble and wrote music for this group, which had a strong desire to perform new-style music composed for Chinese instruments and to present their Chinese-American musical identity. Some practical reasons for this movement included the need to market new Chinese music and to apply for funding from the United States
government. Moreover, the musicians found much joy in playing new music after overcoming the challenges of playing polymodal or atonal music. 4

From a self-expression viewpoint, Chen Yi showed pride in being a composer of Chinese New Wave music, and she was often presented as a “composer from China” or as a “Chinese woman composer” in music festivals or conferences. She soon established her musical and cultural identity in the new environment. Chen has consciously composed with Chinese musical idioms, which being her native musical language is her most natural expression. She always seeks inspiration from the Chinese cultural heritage by studying Chinese philosophy, aesthetics, traditional music, painting, literature, calligraphy, and other arts. In her program notes, interviews, and writings, she highlights Chinese sources as her central ideas, through which she establishes her individual voice. Hence, Chinese aesthetics and musical, cultural elements play a significant role in her career and musical style.

At that time, Chen and other Chinese New Wave composers had tried to compose works entirely or partially using the twelve-tone method in an atonal style. They felt conflict between Chinese musical traditions and the twelve-tone method. Each of them gained a different solution for composing in one’s own musical language while retaining his or her cultural identity. 5 Chen Yi and Zhou Long have used Western instruments to produce the sounds of Chinese instruments and to express Chinese philosophical and spiritual ideas, such as concepts of Buddhism or Daoism, as well as Chinese literary and artistic thoughts. For example, as mentioned before, Chen composed the song As in a Dream (1988) for soprano, violin, and cello on the poet Li Qingzhao’s poem, blending
twelve-tone technique with Jingju reciting-singing style. In Ding (1989) for clarinet, double bass, and percussion instruments, Zhou Long integrated a twelve-tone row and a tonal melody to reflect the Buddhist thought of meditation while exploring the tone colors and improvisational idioms of traditional Chinese and Western instruments.

Regarding her CD of chamber music from 1989 to 1999, Chen Yi writes that, “I express my feelings through my music, which combines Chinese and Western musical materials and mediums. . . . The inspirations and ideas behind the pieces are mostly Chinese.” These words give a hint to understanding Guessing’s style and characteristics. Reflecting the inspirations mentioned above, Guessing features a distinct Chinese sound and flavor derived from the Yunnan children’s song, which is so well-known that at least three Chinese composers (Wang Jianzhong, Chu Wanghua, and Zhu Jianer) have included Guessing in their compositions based on Yunnan folksongs.

Notwithstanding Chen Yi’s use of the same folksong, her Guessing is in the vein of Bartók; in this it is different from previous Chinese piano works before the 1980s and different from Chen’s other Chinese-American avant-garde works. On the one hand, its simple and strong traditional modal melody is the dominant feature of this piece; on the other hand, it is in a new style of using the folksong because she recomposed a melody with elements of the original folksong while using inflections, panmodal harmonies, and atonal clusters. Chen Yi’s compositional approach can be explained in Zhou Long’s (her husband’s) words. Zhou Long writes that,

For every generation, traditional culture is something already formed. What is crucial is how to rediscover and comprehend it more fully. In this process of understanding and discovery, culture will become a living tradition, maintaining its long historical continuity. While this continuity undeniably impacts on the
creativity of a given period, artists of one culture or tradition can also choose to absorb and extract the essence of various other cultures in the service of a lasting tradition. Such has been my goal in the pieces recorded here—to bring Western music theory concepts into my music which is always the result of my Chinese heritage.

Chen’s ideas concerning Chinese and Western traditions generally parallel Zhou Long’s goals although each of them has a distinct personal musical language and individuality.

B. Chinese aesthetics in *Guessing*

In the notes for *Guessing*, Chen Yi writes that her piece “was commissioned for the 1990 Renee B. Fisher Awards Competition. It is required repertoire for the Senior Division, which ranges in age from 14 to 18.” Chen Yi took a fragment from the very popular folksong “Guessing” and developed it in pitch, rhythm, and dynamics. She stresses that this piece projects a simple and rustic feeling in obviously strong Chinese style.

1. Allusiveness and descriptiveness

The text of *Guessing* describes a children’s guessing game; as one group sings the riddles, another group sings the answers. Chen Yi uses antiphonal phrases, ostinato against the theme, and imitative counterpoint to depict a vivid guessing scene. Her method of developing the musical theme suggests the interactions between the two groups of children. Her variations seem to allude to the guessing game, portraying the youthful spirit of children. The first two stanzas of the text are:

a. Little darling, little darling, we give you riddles to guess.  
What is long, long in the sky?  
What is long, long in the sea?
What is long, sold on the street?
What is long, long in front of younger sister?

b. Little darling, little darling, you give us riddles to guess;
The Milky Way is long, long in the sky;
The linked lotus is long, long in the sea;
The rice noodle is long, sold on the street,
The silk thread is long, long in front of younger sister.

The question-and-answer format is common in Chinese folksongs. *Guessing* introduces the entire theme two times, first in the treble staff, then in the bass staff, suggesting the two groups' singing of the riddle and the answer. Other examples of allusiveness can be found in various passages of *Guessing*.

2. **Dao and De: the way and spiritual power**

*Guessing*, though based on folk music, differs from a direct arrangement of the folksong. Avoiding using the entire children’s song, Chen aims to distill the spiritual power of the folksong to recreate a piano piece for children. Her approach echoes Chou Wen-chung’s words, which emphasize Zhuang Zi’s philosophical idea: “using things as things, but not being used by things as things.” Chen selectively uses elements of the folksong with devices that integrate her ideas of Chinese aesthetics, folksong, and Western contemporary techniques in a personal musical expression which coincides with the Daoist thoughts: attaining the “spiritual power inherent in nature” and “using things as things” in an artistic creation.

3. **The concept of simplicity (yi) and naturalness**

Chen’s words “simple and rustic” echo the *Yijing (I-Ching)* concepts of *yi* (simplicity or change) and spontaneity, the inherent qualities in traditional children’s songs. The piece starts from a single line in a simple rhythm, which is supported by a
linear single-note line (accompaniment). Simplicity along with terseness of texture are elements of a rustic style.

Du Yaxiong, professor of ethnomusicology at the Conservatory of China, emphasizes the *Yijing* concept underlying Chinese traditional music. He quotes a passage from the *Yijing*, “He who attains to this ease of Heaven [nature] will be easily understood, and he who attains to this freedom from laborious effort of [on] the earth will be easily followed. He who is easily understood will have adherents, and he who is easily followed will achieve success.”

Chen rewrites the folksong in a simple style, which captures the essence of the folksong and simplifies it, making it easy for the listener to follow and for the composer to develop. The ease and naturalness of *Guessing* illustrates the Chinese concept of simplicity as a high artistic expression close to nature, the Dao (way). In that context, worthy of mention might be the famous chapter entitled “Simplify, Simplify, Simplify” by Henry David Thoreau, the great American naturalist, who describes his life in harmony with nature in *Walden*.

In both Western and Chinese musical traditions, simplicity is considered a merit of artistic expression. However, ease and simplicity do not prohibit composers from developing complex forms and techniques and writing sophisticated compositions. For example, to compose for broad audiences, Aaron Copland used the American song “The Gift to be Simple” to compose the *Theme and Variations* for orchestra (in the ballet *Appalachian Spring*). On the other hand, he also wrote the sophisticated Piano Sonata and Piano Fantasy to explore new sounds and to express complex emotions. Simplicity and complicity are dual aspects in music; the gift is how and when to use them.
According to *Dao De Jing*, "Something and Nothing produce each other; The difficult and the easy complement each other". This Daoist idea holds that ease and difficulty coexist as complementary components. Furthermore, *Dao De Jing* states, "Difficult things in the world must needs have their beginnings in the easy; big things must needs have their beginnings in the small." Many composers build their works on the complementary relationships of simplicity and complexity, or big and small. The best use of these components in their compositions may reach the heart of common people and at the same time may convey an enlightened thought, alluding to something significant or sophisticated on a higher level.

Using the Chinese method of embellishing tones and adding complex sequences, Chen Yi uses polymodal counterpoint to vary *Guessing*’s simple tune, which can be seen as a development or a complement to the simple germinal musical elements rather than a corruption of the original.

4. Terseness and linear motion

The two voices in *Guessing* mostly use single notes and sometimes harmonic intervals in linear movement. The terse texture is either in monophony or free, sometimes imitative counterpoint, which parallels the Chinese use of space as part of the composition of a painting.

5. Additive and repetitive structure of phrases

The theme of *Guessing* is built on repetitive melodic cells. For example, the first melodic cell g’ c’ is repeated in measure 2, and the g’ a’ c’ cell is played in retrograde version in measure 3. One can find several repetitions of cells added to previous
measures in the theme. The additive-repetitive structure shows the simple formula of the children’s song, as well as the endless naïve inquiries typical of children. These traits help make this song more easily remembered. When comparing with the original children’s song “Guessing,” one may find that Chen Yi omits certain measures and varies the length of phrases, but she keeps the essential repetitive cells. She recreates the theme in eleven measures, which is a simplified version of the original song.

Ex. 5.1 a. Yunnan children’s song “Guessing.”

Ex. 5.1 b. Chen Yi’s Guessing theme.

The folksong “Guessing,” based on three motives, consists of two phrases in eight measures. Measure 1 introduces motive 1; measure 2 introduces motive 2. Measures 3-5 are varied repetitions of motive 2. Measures 7 and 8 finish the song with motive 3. In Chen’s recomposed Guessing theme, motive 1 is dominant, whereas in the folksong motive 2 is dominant. In the folksong motive 1 is a call for guessing, whereas motive 2 is set to several parallel questions and answers of the text. Motive 2 has more notes, which
conform to the linguistic tones of the text. These questions and answers form the main body of the song and are emphasized and repeated. However Chen emphasizes motive 1 and its upward melodic intervals in a calling manner. Motive 1, containing fewer notes than motive 2, is easier for development in instrumental music.

6. Qi yun (life energy and charm)

According to the Great China Encyclopedia, the Chinese aesthetic concept, yuan qi, [the combination of] cosmic energy and the life force [of the artist’s self], is the soul of an art work. Qi yun shen dong (life energy and charm give vitality) is seen in Chinese paintings, in which characters convey their individuality and spiritual quality. In Guessing, qi yun sheng dong can be felt in its fast tempo and cheerful expression. At the beginning of Guessing, the tempo is $J = 120$ and Scherzando. The fast tempo, forward energy, and playful mood reflect the Qi yun in Chinese instrumental music, as well as Chen Yi’s youth. The flow of energy in this sound stream may stimulate the listener’s excitement and joy.

7. Chou Wen-chung’s influence

When the movement to revive and modernize Chinese music continued in the late 1980s, Chen Yi came to the United States and studied composition with Chou Wen-chung, whose compositional philosophy and artistic ideas have profoundly influenced her. Chou writes, “One must search beyond the procedures of a musical practice, discern its original aesthetic commitments, and trace how its tradition has evolved.” His Windswept Peaks for violin, cello, clarinet, and piano (1990) is a product of his search for his cultural roots. This work epitomizes Chou’s use of Chinese aesthetic ideas and his
musical style that is both allusive and philosophical. It portrays the spirit of the Chinese intellectuals persecuted during the repression of the democracy movement during the Tainanmen Square Event in 1989. The title of this piece “is a translation of a well-known Chinese artistic expression, shan tao” (mountain waves), suggesting the “beauty of inner strength as symbolized by the gnarled pines and craggy rocks.”

According to Jerry McBride, in this work Chou builds an overall structure and ascending-descending patterns based on the pitch materials of his six double modes, reflecting the principles of the hexagrams of the Yijing. Moreover, Chou creates contours and rhythms in the manner of calligraphy, alluding to the controlled flow of ink on paper. Windswept Peaks is echoed by Chen Yi’s Song in the Winter, a trio for harpsichord, dizi (Bamboo flute) and zheng (Chinese zither) (1994). She drew inspiration from the evergreen pine and bamboo in Chinese paintings, praising their beautiful appearance and strong spirit against evil influences and unhealthy trends. Chen’s trio is for a combination of Western and Chinese instruments, something Chou did not attempt.

a. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Chou Wen-chung lectured extensively on fusing Asian and Western concepts and musical elements. He writes that “[I]f I seem to have dwelt on certain Chinese philosophical ideas, it is because of my conviction that we have reached the stage where a true remerger of Oriental and Occidental musical concepts and practices—which at one time shared a common foundation—can and should take place.” Like Bartók who in 1939 “declared that he wanted to make a synthesis of Eastern European folk music and Western European art music,” Chou Wen-chung
advocates merging the Oriental and Occidental, particularly Chinese philosophical and musical traditions and Western art music. His conviction has been passed to Chen Yi, who considers that bridging the East and West is one of the main goals of her composition. Chen states that her music “distills the essence of Chinese and Western musical traditions while attempting to develop new concepts of real music for society and future generations.”

Guessing is an example of such an effort to create music for future generations by blending Chinese and Western traditions.

b. Chou Wen-chung emphasizes recognizing the “nature power” inherent in every individual thing that the music is to bring forth. Chen Yi’s Guessing shows her attempt to bring forth the simplicity and naturalness of the folksong with rustic feeling. Highlighting the most identifiable modal intervals as germs of the composition, Chen “took a fragment of the tune from the song[,] then develop[ed] it in pitch, range, dynamic, rhythm and expression with basic techniques of piano performance.”

c. For decades Chou Wen-chung has developed a compositional system based on the principles of the Yijing (I-Ching) and Chinese aesthetics, such as “changing within a continuum of the timeless and unchanging—like the shifting patterns in a steadily flowing current” and “using things as things, but not being used by things as things.”

Chen Yi appears to be influenced by Chou’s ideas. For instance, in the sections of Guessing, (e.g., section D) the shifts between modal segments and atonal clusters and between forte and piano dynamics illustrate this concept of change.

Her selective use of the folksong theme reflects the idea of “using things as things,” which is quite different from other Chinese composers, who tend to use the entire
folk melody and arrange it in variations. Chen uses elements of the folksong as motives in constant thematic transmutation and interaction, expressing her emotions and exploring the essence and youthful spirit of the folksong.

C. The influences of Bartók and Stravinsky

In Guessing Chen Yi adapts influences from Bartók, Stravinsky, and Chou Wen-chung, synthesizing Chinese aesthetics and musical idioms with Western techniques in a flexible form that combines elements of both theme and variations and the scherzo.

1. Bartók’s influence

Benjamin Suchoff remarks that, “Bartók’s last stage of development was the synthesis of Eastern [European] folk-music materials with Western art-music [classical-music] techniques of composition,” he also writes that, “the latter, in turn, would combine J.S. Bach’s counterpoint, Beethoven’s progressive form, and Debussy’s harmony.” By blending Chinese folksongs with Bartók’s chromatic cells and polymodality, Guessing offers a similar synthesis of elements.

For instance, Guessing resembles Bartók’s Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs in that it blends a folk-derived melody with atonal or pantonal counterpoint and introduces the folksong with the accompaniment in a spare texture. Further, Chen’s use of a descending quasi-chromatic line and a pan-modal fragment in opposition to the main melody illustrates a tendency toward blending folk-derived melody with atonality.
a. Use of counterpoint

Bartók’s *Mikrokosmos* and *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs* contain many contrapuntal pieces, including No. 78, “Hommage à J.S. Bach,” in *Mikrokosmos*, Volume IV and No.12 in *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs*. Although Chen Yi’s counterpoint is different from Bartók’s, *Guessing* introduces the folk melody in the top voice and adds a descending countermelody below the folk tune, which is apparently influenced by Bartókian counterpoint.

Ex. 5.2 a. Bartók, *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs*, no.12, mm.1-6.

Ex. 5.2 b. Chen, *Guessing*, mm. 1-5.

In Ex. 5.2 a, while the top voice repeats the melodic cells of the folksong, added to the main melody are four layers of voices, including a couple of middle (auto) voices containing intervals of a third, fourth, and fifth, a drone of a sustained long tone in the tenor register, and a descending bass line. After an opening statement of the folk melody by the right hand, the left hand plays the folksong in a lower voice, while the right hand plays modal intervals in a higher register on weaker beats to accompany the melody.
In Ex. 5.2 b, the folk tune is presented in a manner similar to Bartók’s. The melody is first introduced in a treble voice, then in a bass voice. Starting from the tone g♭, a tritone below the melodic note c♯, a mostly chromatic descending line serves as a counter-melody (mm.2-6). Chen’s counter-melody freely uses chromatic pitches (mm. 2-6) and tones from other modes (b♭ a♭ g♭ and d♭ in mm. 8-9), which echo the treatment of a folk tune in Bartók’s “Ballad,” No.6 of *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs*. Moreover, *Guessing* continues to develop free or imitative counterpoint in polymodality, which will be discussed in the following passage of polymodal counterpoint. The atonal tendency aligns Chen’s *Guessing* with twentieth-century music.

Ex. 5.3. Bartók, *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs*, No.6 “Ballad,” mm.5-8.

b. Polymodal harmony and counterpoint

Chen Yi avoids the use of Western functional harmonies and often uses sets of chords belonging to other modes against the melody. Some parallel quartal and quintal chords recall Debussy’s planning of modal harmonies. Like Bartók, Chen creates harmonic tension with transposed polymodal chords containing a fourth and a tritone. Examples 5.4 a and b illustrate similarities between the harmonies of Bartók and Chen.
Ex. 5.4 a. Bartók, *Improvisations*, VIII, mm. 64-68.

Ex. 5.4 b. Chen, *Guessing*, mm. 94-98.

Ex. 5.4 c. Chen, *Guessing*, mm. 170-73.

Ex. 5.4 a reveals Bartók’s use of tritone-plus-fourth chord (0, 1, 6, 7) at a climax of *Improvisations* No. VIII. Ex. 5.4 b and c show Chen Yi’s method of creating climaxes in a Bartókian vein. There are more parallel examples of using the tritone in counterpoint by Bartók and by Chen. In Ex. 5.4 c, the lower voice freely imitates the upper voice with a delay of two and four beats in a polymodal context.
Chen Yi usually uses two voices playing the motive in different modes (mm. 61-64). These voices are often a tritone apart, resembling Bartók’s approach to bitonal or polymodal counterpoint through the tritone axis (e.g., mm. 59-62). The use of the tritone as a main method to develop the folk tune seems to indicate that her study of Bartók’s compositions has expanded to a new realm of sonorities.

Elliott Antokoletz writes that,

his [Bartók’s] prominent use of the tritone for the first time in the Fourteen Bagatelles also stems from his folk-music studies. The Lydian mode, which is not found in the Hungarian tunes, is strongly characteristic of certain Slovak melodies. According to Bartók’s own statement, “Romanian and Slovak songs show a highly interesting treatment of the tritone . . . in a Lydian mode. These forms brought about the free use of the augmented fourth.”

Ex. 5.5 a. Bartók, *Fourteen Bagatelles*, VIII, mm. 28-32.

Ex. 5.5 b. Chen Yi, *Guessing*, mm. 59-62.

In Chinese traditional music, the tritone is usually absent or rarely found.

In *Guessing*, Chen Yi frequently uses the tritone, adopting this contemporary Western idiom to expand the vocabulary of Chinese music.
c. Exploring new forms

As mentioned in Chapter IV, Chen Yi seems to explore new forms by integrating elements of various forms. Generally speaking, Guessing appears in a free variation form while adapting elements of sonata, scherzo, and two-part invention. One can also find a variety of themes and variations in Bartók’s *Fifteen Hungarian Peasant Songs*, such as No. 5 Scherzo. The simple folk tune is repeated and varied four times, accompanied by leaping figures with grace notes, intervals of the tritone, and sevenths. In a polymodal context with frequent change of tempos, No. 5 Scherzo includes the elements of both variation and scherzo, within which are unexpected changes of register, tempo, dynamics, varied texture and harmonies.

*Guessing* also shows elements of scherzo:

a. leaping figures with grace notes in a playful mood,

b. unexpected rests and dynamic contrasts,

c. light, piquant, and humorous character.

*Guessing*’s features of theme and variations include a self-contained theme clearly stated at the beginning, which is followed by a number of variations. The variation techniques include “adding flowers” (embellishing the melody by adding more notes, mm. 38-55), and manipulating rhythm, rhythmic diminution, and augmentation.

The elements of invention are free or imitative contrapuntal passages, in which the two hands now oppose and now imitate each other as in children’s group-singing games (mm. 67-77). *Guessing* intensively uses motivic cells in transpositions, developing the theme in rhythm, pitch, and dynamics with dramatic contrasting elements,
which are the traits of sonata form. *Guessing* illustrates a new form combining theme and variations, scherzo, and sonata with additional possibilities (toccata).

4. Heterometric passages

Rhythmic variation plays an important role in *Guessing*. This technique echoes Bartók's use of isometric or heterometric techniques to vary the melody in the “Village Song” No. 15 of the first volume of *Mikrokosmos*. In measure 26 in *Guessing*, the two hands play a motive (two eighths followed by a quarter) in rhythmic unison; from measure 29 onward, the two hands play a more or less similar rhythm that can be described as a heterometric device. This device recalls the way Chinese musicians often vary a section, manipulating rhythm while departing from the theme and reinforcing it at the same time.

Ex. 5.6. *Guessing*, mm. 24-33.
2. Stravinsky’s influence

Musicologists have commonly regarded some of Stravinsky’s important works as “neoclassical.” His Piano Sonata (1924) shows the characteristics of twentieth-century neoclassicism—particularly regarding clarity, regular or motoric rhythm, linear texture, percussive sonority, classical forms, modernist dissonance, and nontraditional tonality. All of these can be found in Chen Yi’s *Guessing*.

a. Spare texture and easy theme

In terms of texture, *Guessing* is closer to Stravinsky than to Bartók, whose texture often contains more layers, similar to the voices in Romantic piano works. The fast movements of Stravinsky’s Piano Sonata mainly use two voices, moving in a relatively narrow range. This sonata starts with rhythmic unison; then the left hand plays broken chords while the right hand plays long notes. Stravinsky dedicated this piece to Princess Edmond de Polignac and indicated Comodo (easy, leisurely) at the beginning of the piece. The entertaining atmosphere, easy start, and clarity of the main theme connect this sonata to neoclassicism. However, the pantonal melody with the “wrong notes” deviates from tonality, giving the piece a modernist color.

In a similarly texture, *Guessing* also starts with a simple melody and creates a playful atmosphere. The second voice in the left hand enters in a “wrong tone” and in a relationship of the tritone with the melody (g⁷ against c⁷). *Guessing*’s spare texture, clarity of theme, and easy approach resemble Stravinsky’s neoclassicism.
Ex. 5.7. Stravinsky, Sonata, Comodo (Movement 1), mm. 1-9.

b. Motoric rhythm

Stravinsky’s Piano Sonata uses a consistent tempo for movements I and III ($\text{d} = 112$). The basic rhythmic motives, such as eighth-note triplets and four sixteenth-note patterns, run throughout the movements. Unlike his earlier works in a Russian national musical style, this unique sonata uses few meter changes or irregular accents.

*Guessing* moves at a relatively fast tempo ($\text{d} = 120$) and then accelerates in some variations. The motoric rhythm is carried out by using consistent regular pulse, strong beats with accents, and basic rhythmic motives driving in various combinations. These are the elements of neoclassicism.
c. Use of dissonance

For Stravinsky’s music, harmonies are made more expressive through the use of major and minor seconds, augmented octaves, and minor ninths. In a non-legato phrase, with the mark of espressivo, the right hand plays a falling melodic diminished- or minor-seventh in the top voice; the left-hand accompaniment often forms a dissonant interval against the right hand on strong beats. Because the left hand moves in staccato, and the
dissonant interval is in open positions (e.g., a ninth), the “spicy” sound does not cause an “ear-splitting” effect but adds a modern flavor to the phrase.

Ex. 5.9. Stravinsky, Sonata, Movement I, mm. 35-41.

Compared to other Chinese composers' arrangements of the folksong, Chen Yi's Guessing seems to be “surprising,” due to the use of dissonance. In this way Chen departs from the practice of previous Chinese compositions. From Yu Diao and Duo Ye onward, Chen has explored dissonant and percussive sounds and the art of fun-making. This playfulness may be traced to Stravinsky's neoclassicism. (See Ex. 5.2 b. Guessing, mm. 1-11).

d. Neo-classical patterns or figures

In the first movement of his sonata, Stravinsky adds a contrasting scherzando passage alternating a small group of eighth and quarter notes in parallel thirds in the right hand with the two-eighth sequence in the left hand. Alternating leaping figures by two hands in a relatively narrow range are typical idioms in a classical scherzando.
Example 5.10 a. Stravinsky, Sonata, Movement 1, mm. 99-102.

Chen Yi uses a similar figure or pattern to depict the children’s guessing game. Her figure consists of two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth and an inverted triad, which are separated by rests. This figure also serves as a counterpoint to the melody (mm. 12-21).

Ex. 5.10 b. Chen Yi, “Guessing,” mm. 12-17.

Under the influences of Bartók, Stravinsky, and Chou, Chen Yi has consciously blended elements of Chinese aesthetics and traditional music with the ideas and techniques of contemporary Western models. Her uses of polymodal counterpoint and harmonies, progressive form, thin texture, motoric rhythm, and dissonance are based on the parallel she sees between Chinese aesthetics and Western avant-garde idioms and are guided by her vivid imagination of the children’s guessing game. Thus, Guessing offers an example of merging Chinese and Western musical traditions in a rustic style.
D. Guessing's structure and rhythms

In order to examine Chen's pervasive merging of Eastern and Western musical elements, this section offers a detailed description of Chen's devices in creating a large organic form that uses elements of theme and variations and scherzo and in interweaving Chinese aesthetics and variation methods with modern Western techniques.

1. The large structure

At a macro-level, Chen Yi's Guessing uses a rhythmic structure—fast-slow-fast—in seven continuous sections: A (theme), B, C, D, E (lyric and relatively slow), F, and G (coda). This is not in a conventional fast-slow-fast form but is reminiscent of it. The opening tempo (\( \textbf{j} = 120 \)) sets the piece in motion. To achieve a continuous flow with some contrasts in tempo, Chen does not use double bar lines between sections but instead uses rests, long notes, or uses transitions to connect sections, making the connection between sections smooth and natural sounding.

Figure 5.1 shows that duple meters and fast tempo are dominant in all sections except E, which serves as a contrasting passage of relaxation before resuming the fast tempo and the toccata-like coda. Without many tempo indications, Guessing achieves fluidity in rhythm and contrasts in a fast-slow-fast design.

Fig. 5.1. The structure and rhythms of Guessing

|---------|-----------|-------|-------|----------|----------|---|---|----------|---|----------|
2. The rhythmic motives

At a micro-level, Chen manipulates three rhythmic motives: 1. a pick-up eighth followed by a quarter or two eighths followed by a quarter, 2. a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth and two eighths, 3. syncopation featuring a quarter between two eighths. These rhythmic motives are derived from the folksong but differ slightly from the original tune. For example, according to Li Ling’s collection of folksongs, the first three notes of the original folksong “Guessing” are even eighths; the third eighth is followed by two sixteenths. Compared with the original folksong’s opening, the recomposed opening motive 1 (g' e" g' a' e") has a stronger tendency to lean to the downbeat and maintains the upward fourth as a call for guessing. The original song contains more even sixteenths; Chen does not use sixteenths in the opening theme but uses in later sections, which generates a feeling of acceleration for the whole piece overall.

Ex. 5.11 a. Yunnan children’s song “Guessing” (cai-diao).
Chen derives the syncopation from the cadence of the folksong; she uses tied notes to create syncopation in the last beat of measure 3 and the first beat of measure 4. Moreover, she extensively uses syncopation in the counter voice. The dotted and syncopated rhythms become significant in the climax. The rhythmic motives are carried over in transitions through, use imitative counterpoint, and are varied in augmentation and diminution.

**3. Rhythmic diminution and augmentation**

In measure 23, the motive of two eighths plus a quarter becomes two sixteenths plus an eighth first in the right hand, then in the left hand. In this example the figure serves as a “rhythmic cell” in a transition.
Ex. 5.12 a. Guessing, rhythmic diminution, mm. 22-23.

In measure 40 in the left hand, the rhythm of the opening motive of the piece, an eighth followed by a quarter, is augmented as a quarter followed by two tied quarter notes (= a half note). Thus, the length of the rhythm is doubled.

Ex. 5.12 b. Guessing, rhythmic augmentation, mm. 39-43.

At the climax of the piece, the two hands play dissonant chords in syncopation in four beats (m. 97), which shows the expansion of syncopation in both vertical and horizontal dimensions. As Guo Xin writes of Chen Yi’s Qi, the rhythmic design here is in the shape of a “telescope”—“a repeated small group of notes functions like a set of cylinders that slide into one another, becoming shorter as the number of repetitions decreases.”32
4. Other rhythmic devices

*Guessing* also displays a variety of rhythmic devices, including isorhythm (two hands play the same rhythm, mm. 26-27) or heterorhythm (two hands plays a similar rhythm, mm. 29-37), and rhythmic counterpoint (mm. 39-43). In Ex. 5.9 b the right hand plays an embellished melody derived from the folksong in sixteenths, while the left hand plays the augmented *Guessing* theme, which suggests the effect of an ensemble or two teams' playing of contrasting rhythms.

*Guessing* exploits rhythmic development and contrasts in fast-slow-fast tempos through using additive patterns or subtracting notes. For instance, the beginning tempo is $\downarrow = 120$. In measure 67, the tempo increases to $\downarrow = 132$, when the two hands play the motive in imitative counterpoint, and each time two or more notes are added to the motive, from three to five, to thirteen. In section E, although there is no marked tempo change, the tempo seems much slower due to reducing the number of notes and increasing the duration of notes. The half-note triplets in 4/4 meter and the prolonged chords with tied notes interrupt the flow of rhythm and the lyrical melody.
E. Pitch organization

1. General features

Guessing’s pitch organization shows a strong orientation toward traditional Chinese modality, as well as a strong influence of Bartók’s polymodal chromaticism. Like Bartók’s experimental works, Guessing lacks the conventional classical-romantic harmonies but intensively uses the motivic and contrapuntal treatment of thematic materials. Malcolm Gillies writes that, “Bartók acknowledged a change from a more Beethovenian to a more Bachian aesthetic stance in his works from 1926 onwards . . . Bartók identified polymodal chromaticism as a main ingredient of his idiom.”33 From a Lydian-Phrygian polymodal construction, he developed a structural type of “melodic new chromaticism.”34

Chen Yi has apparently found parallels to Bartók’s practice: 1. between Chinese folk antiphony and Western counterpoint, 2. between the use of dissonance in Western avant-garde and Chinese percussion ensemble, and 3. between the linear movement of Chinese modal melodies and the thin texture of neoclassical works. Thus, Guessing applies these parallels in weaving a web to integrate modal melodies with Western
contrapuntal polymodality, in motivic variations and development through transposition and modulation, and in exploration of dissonance.

2. The theme

At the beginning, Chen Yi introduces a recomposed *Guessing* theme in a G hexatonic mode (g a b\textsuperscript{b} c d f), which is derived from the original folksong. Starting from measure 2, a significant counter melody enters with a semi-chromatic pitch aggregate (g\textsuperscript{b} f c e\textsuperscript{b} d c) and a modal fragment (b\textsuperscript{b} a\textsuperscript{b} g\textsuperscript{b} d\textsuperscript{b}), providing a pantonal or polymodal context for the theme. This seems to signal that Chen Yi is adapting the method of polymodal chromaticism for this Chinese folksong-based piece.


3. Thematic modulation and transposition

After two statements of the *Guessing* theme, a transition appears. In measures 23-37 the beginning intervals, a major second and a minor third within a perfect fourth, act as a motive; it is transposed upward to different pitch levels (e.g., a c\textsuperscript{'} d\textsuperscript{'} and b\textsuperscript{'} c\textsuperscript{#} e\textsuperscript{''} (set inversion in measure 23 and 25). In Chinese this process can be seen as *xuan-gong*
(rotating the gong pitch), changing the tonic pitch without changing the mode. The rapid passing of different keys is a typical motivic development technique in Western music, spinning out melodic fragments made up of motives and moving in different key areas. What is new are the polymodal pitch aggregates. In measures 30-33, one can find two hands playing the motive in different modes simultaneously. The right hand plays the parallel fourths \( (e'' f'' g'' h'' a'') \) in modes with sharps, while the left hand plays the parallel fourths and fifths in other modes \( (f'' g'' b'' c'') \).

Ex. 5.15. Guessing, mm. 29-33.

In another transition before section C (mm. 61-65) and a contrapuntal passage (mm. 167-73), the transpositions or modulations \( (xuan-gong) \) lead to more active interactions between polymodal motives, producing unusual sounds.

4. The tonal arrangement of Guessing

Guessing compromises modal and atonal tendencies by alternating modal sections (sections A and E) and polymodal sections (B, C, and D). To create tension and excitement, Chen Yi uses atonal tonal clusters in the climax section D and coda (G).

In sections A and E, the modal center is stable and clear; in the other sections, the theme is varied through transposing motives in a polymodal procedure. Although the modal sense is strong, sometimes the motive is disguised with the tritone and fourths
(e.g., in the left hand, mm. 57 and 59). The "wrong notes" are added at the end of each group of modal tones (mm. 99-105), which contribute to the tonal ambiguity and the fun-making air.

Ex. 5.16. *Guessing*, mm. 57-58.

In Ex. 5.16, a tritone-plus-fourth chord (e" b" e" b") in the transition adds a modern flavor to this piece. On the third beat of measure 57, a variant of motive 1 appears with a perfect fourth superimposed on the tone e". The e" f" a" cell is in another mode opposing the right hand tones (d" c" a" g" e"). These pitch groups are components of the polymodal pitch aggregates. Figure 5.2 illustrates the pitch organization of *Guessing*.

Fig. 5.2. Pitch organization of *Guessing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>trans 1</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>trans 2</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>trans.3</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G (Coda)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mode center</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>modul.</td>
<td>D D D</td>
<td></td>
<td>D b</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>D G</td>
<td>D G</td>
<td>G C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C A b</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>F B b</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motive</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2, 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Modul. = modulation. D indicates two or more modes are used simultaneously. ^^^ = tonally unstable or in modulation.
5. The background, middle-, and foreground levels of *Guessing*

a. The background

Although *Guessing* does not use Western functional harmonies, such as the fundamental tonic chord, we can still examine the basic horizontal skeletal frame as the background voice-leading of *Guessing* in terms of linear movement. The important pitches on the strong beats of major sections for two basic voices outline a modal melodic structure. Chen Yi consciously uses the enlarged variation form for *Ba Ban*, which is based on the tones of the *Ba Ban* melody. A melodic fragment made of modal pitches is the background from which *Guessing* was composed. The melodic outline in *Guessing* may serve as a basis for understanding the enlarged variation form. Figure 5.3 illustrates the coherence at the fundamental level in *Guessing*.

Fig. 5.3. The background tones of *Guessing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice 1</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice 2</td>
<td>G♭=F♯</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ex. 5.17. The background of *Guessing*.
For centuries the method of using a melody or melodic fragment as the skeletal frame of a composition, known as the technique of enlarged form, has been cultivated in traditional Chinese music. Chen Yi explains this form and technique in her dissertation and applies it in *Ba Ban*. This is the Eastern counterpart of what Schenker discovered and analyzed in Western masters’ works, “the horizontal as the one and only source of content and cohesiveness.” This Chinese skeletal frame is not a solely chromatic or diatonic descending line but is a type of modal melody serving as the foundation of a composition, from which the foreground musical activities spring out and blossom. Inherited from the age-old method of variation technique, *Guessing* achieves cohesion in an organic unity of background, middle ground, and foreground.

b) The middle ground

In terms of linear movement, the middle ground of *Guessing* grows out of stepwise movement. In a broad sense, two adjacent tones are considered a step, including seconds and minor thirds in pentatonic, diatonic, and chromatic scales.

The stepwise movement can be found in many passages of *Guessing*. An example of middle ground linear movement may be heard from measures 61 to 92. For instance, the lower voice is grounded at D in measure 61; it descends to D♭ (m. 67), and to B (m. 74). In another example, a motive in the upper voice is centered at F in measure 67. It descends a half step to E (m. 74), moves up a minor seventh to d (m. 77) and is displaced to d' (m. 81), d'' (m. 83), and d''' (m. 87). Then the motive moves to c'' (m. 88), to b'''' (m. 90), to a'' and g'' (m. 92). This (F E d d'' d''' c'' b'''' a'' g'') descending line at a
middle ground level illustrates a stepwise motion (mixed half and whole steps) with some
octave displacement.

Ex. 5.18. A descending stepwise movement in the middle ground of *Guessing*.

\begin{verbatim}
\begin{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}

An ascending sequence in the left hand by a major second and a minor third is
notable in the coda. In measure 170, motive 1 appears in the tones c# d# f## (m. 170),
then in the tones e b f a b (m. 171) and in f## g b (m. 172). Thus, the first notes of the
three-tone motives form a fragment of the c# pentatonic scale (c# e b (=d#) f#), which is
also the motive 1 (see Ex. 5.4 c). These examples illustrate that the middle ground of
*Guessing* closely connects to the foreground folksong motive in linear motion and plays a
significant role in the structure of *Guessing*.

c. The foreground of *Guessing*

The foreground of *Guessing* presents a web of motives in modal and polymodal
interactions, which are more active in transpositions and modulations. For example, in
transition 1, motive 1 modulates from g a c' to a c' d', to b' c# e'' (m. 25), to e'' f## a''
(m. 30). This ascending three-tone motive goes up by steps g a b while interacting with
the descending three-tone fragment d' c' b (m. 23) and c' b a (m. 24) in the left hand.
This three-tone descending pattern is a variant of the countermelody in the opening
measures; it acts as a polytonal partner of the thematic motives.

In measure 24, a variant of motive 1 (f## a' f## a' b') appears in a new mode, which
is a leap of a sixth from the previous motive 1 a c' d' (m. 23). Another diminution of
motive 1 b' c#" e" (m. 25) follows, which can be seen as the continuity of the stepwise motion from measure 23 since b is a step higher than a, but it is displaced to b'.

Ex. 5.19. An example of foreground activities, mm. 23-27.

Schenker writes that, "Cohesiveness takes pride of place in music, as in other things. . . . the axial cohesion that extends from background to foreground is at the same time the lateral cohesion that functions horizontally at the foreground level. Only this type of cohesion, to put it biologically, attains the genuinely organic, the synthesis of a piece of music, the living breath."36

In Guessing, the foreground activities spring out of the opening theme and the background modal basis. The linear movement of modal motives is the principal method of composing Guessing, which conforms to Chinese aesthetics and helps blend a Chinese folk melody with Western polymodal and polytonal techniques, replacing the Western functional harmonies. One can find many organic connections between the background, middle ground, and foreground structural elements in Guessing.
F. The Sound of Guessing

In order to show Chen Yi’s pervasive integration of elements of this Chinese children’s song and Western techniques as a sonic product, this section describes the sounds of Guessing unfolding in time. Although this description overlaps with some previous analysis, it depicts particularly the main sonic characteristics of the subsections and Chen’s devices in creating a large form that blends elements of theme and variations and scherzo. Thus, this description brings together aesthetic, formal, rhythmic, and pitch components of Guessing in a coherent structure. As mentioned earlier, Guessing contains seven sections, A B C D E F G, with transitional passages. Each of them presents a distinctive texture and character while using the same germinal motives in variations.

Section A (mm. 1-22)

In two-voice counterpoint, a Guessing theme centered at C gong mode is heard twice, suggesting the question and answer teams of the game. In the first eleven measures, the cheerful folk melody sounds in the treble register (g’ c” g’ a’ c”) as the question team. In measure 2, a counter melody enters with g” in syncopation and descends mostly by half steps, which uses pantonal melodic and harmonic intervals to form a pantonal context. Then, the theme appears in a low register (mm. 11-22) as the answer team, above which the modal motives leap in a pantonal context.

Ex. 5.20. Chen Yi, Guessing, 12-17.
The central motive (g' a' c"), derived from the beginning of the theme, uses two sixteenths plus an eighth, a rhythmic diminution of the theme. The theme functions as the foundation in *Guessing*.

In a transition (mm. 23-37) to section B, the motive transposes upward while the two voices first play in imitative counterpoint then in heterophony. While the tempo accelerates, motive 1 reaches a high register and turns into a three tone figure in parallel fourths (e" f" a"'); the lower voice also becomes parallel fourths and fifths in other modes in a similar rhythm. The doubling of voices can be heard as a verticalization of motive 1.

**Section B (mm. 38-60)**

In a very high register in linear motion, the treble voice elaborates the thematic intervals taken from measures 6 and 7 as an ostinato of sixteenths (e" d" c" d" a" bmn a" bmn). The strong low voice sounds in octaves in a rhythmically augmented motive 1, which leaps up two octaves higher then returns to the low register. Despite leaps of the motive, octave displacement of the motive, the linear motion is obviously dominant.
While motive 1 transposes to other modes (mm. 46-54), the ostinato remains on the same pitches but adds a tone at a perfect fourth below the resounding a", producing a polymodal effect. A tritone-plus-fourth chord by both hands stops the ostinato in measure 55. After the meter changes to 3/4 (m. 56), motive 1 in the right hand varies in parallel fourths then in quintuplets, which leap down to a low register while the tritone-plus-fourth chord is superimposed on the first tone of motive 1 in the left hand.

Transition 2 (mm. 61-66) emerges in triplets as an elaborated theme using the tones DEGAC. Above the triplets, motive 1 (d\(^b\) g\(^b\) d\(^b\) e\(^b\) g\(^b\)) sounds in staccato with a layer at a perfect fourth below the tones. This vertically and horizontally varied motive 1 moves in polymodes, leading to the polymodal counterpoint of section C.

Section C (mm. 67-96)

In a fast tempo (d=132) and at a mezzo piano dynamic, the two voices start a bimodal imitation, which is an exact imitation at the beginning but soon changes into a
free imitation. Section C shifts from polyphonic texture to homophonic, monophonic, to polyphonic texture again, suggesting competitions between the guessing teams. The first voice acts as a leader, repeating motive 1 (F G Bb mm. 67-72) in additive patterns of eighths. With a delay of a quarter note, the second voice acts as a follower, imitating the first voice in another mode at a major third below it (DbEbGb).

Ex. 5.22. Guessing, mm. 63-74.

From measure 77, the second voice becomes harmonic intervals drawn from a pantonal palette and separated by rests. From measure 82, the second voice first joins the first voice to play a varied Guessing melody in octaves. Then it plays a counter melody in another mode. This active bimodal interaction leads to a climax (section D).

Section D (mm. 97-118)

Here the sonic image suggests an exciting children's game scene by fusing Western contemporary and traditional Chinese techniques (tone-clusters and reducing-increasing beats). The tone-clusters strike in syncopation, producing explosive drumming
effects. Suddenly a soft pantonal melodic segment of sixteenth triplets and quintuplets interrupts the tone-clusters. The segment ends with a "wrong note" and is followed by an unexpected rest, alluding to a fun-making gesture. In changing meters (4/4, 4/3, and 2/4) the tone-clusters strike again and again gradually reducing the number of beats from seven to six, to five, to four, to two. (see Ex. 5. 22.)

Ex. 5. 23. Guessing, mm. 94-103.

On the other hand the soft segment increases its beats from five to nine. The oscillations between forte and piano, between chordal and linear texture occur several times until a soft tone-cluster ends section D and signals the beginning of section E, all of which seems to reflect the Yijing concepts of yin-yang and bian (change).

Section E (mm. 119-37)

In monophony and above a sustained pedal of the soft tone-cluster, a modal melody played by the two hands in octaves is heard as a diluted sound (mezzo piano) with echoes (the tones interacting with the sustained sounds), which alludes to a mountain
song-like atmosphere. The emotion and sonic image evoke a sort of yearning, similar to the expressive middle section in *Duo Ye*. The spare texture and introspective atmosphere are similar to some Chinese paintings, leaving much space unfilled. In 4/4 meter, the elastic rhythms seem to depict a style of improvisation using three-half-note triplets per measure with prolonged tied notes. With ornaments around the tones, the two voices sometimes leap an octave higher. After an interruption of a few soft sustained tone-clusters, the melody gradually accelerates and modulates to a mode centered at F.

Section E, in a relatively slow tempo, functions as a contrasting middle part between the fast passages, highlighting the expressive melody.

Ex. 5. 24. mm. 114-24.

A transitional passage appears (mm. 145-150), which is an inverted counterpoint of measures 61-64. The eighth triplets present a varied theme while motive 1 sounds in parallel fourths above or below the varied theme in a retrograde form.
Section F (mm. 151-165)

In fortissimo and in sixteenths, a toccata-like passage emerges while the two hands alternate to play the original folksong melody. Adding to the excited mood, the left hand plays parallel fourths while the right hand plays the same melody in broken octaves.

Ex. 5.25. Guessing, mm. 150-53.

The motive is soon transposed to other modes, but some unexpected changes occur. Suddenly, a short pause (a whole rest in 3/8 meter) stops the vibrating sound. Then, the motive sounds again in pianissimo. The left hand crosses over the right hand and hits a high pitch, creating a fun-making effect. While the two hands play motives in different modal tracks in opposite directions, dissonant chords crash due to the use of bimodal tracks in the relation of a minor second and a tritone. At the end of section F, the motives are reduced to a bimodal tremolo, resonating in the highest register.

Section G (Coda, mm. 166-93)

The coda quickly summarizes and recalls the musical ideas of earlier sections. In fortissimo, motive 1 sounds in the lowest register in a form of three half-note triplets in octaves. Then, the two voices play upward melodic fourths and motive 1 in imitative
counterpoint; these motives are soon transposed to polymodes. When the original motive 1 (centered at C) using tritone-plus-fourth chords strikes in drumming rhythms, it is prolonged in sustained chords (mm. 178-86). At the same time, a variant of motive 1 in the low voice strikes in a mode centered at f#. The relation between the two clusters is a tritone; the use of tritone resembles Bartók's treatment of folksongs. After the sustained tone-clusters, motive 1 resumes a toccata-like figure and hammers out octaves in bimodes, finishing the piece with a pinnacle of children's hullabaloo. Because the surprising use of dissonance, including the tritone and tones from remote modes, is rare in traditional Chinese music, Chen Yi's pervasive polymodal counterpoint and playful dissonance open Chinese music to a new realm of sound.

Ex. 5. 26. Guessing, mm. 174-83.

G. Referential meanings in Guessing

Guessing expresses Chen Yi's aspiration to modernize Chinese music by merging Chinese aesthetics, traditional musical idioms, and Western contemporary models. This
piece also symbolizes Chen Yi's cultural and musical identity at the forefront of new musical trends, composing music for future generations, including both young Chinese and American pianists and audiences with different cultural backgrounds.

On the one hand, *Guessing* continues to represent and develop Chen Yi’s personal musical language in a style similar to *Duo Ye*—natural, robust, outgoing, energetic, and expressive. On the other hand, *Guessing* is somewhat different from *Duo Ye*, where she highlights traditional and nationalistic elements. *Guessing* serves not only to modernize Chinese music, but also to help merge Eastern and Western music, written with a broad universal appeal. Therefore, in a subtle way, *Guessing* reflects Chen’s changing focus.

1. Chen Yi’s ways of reviving and modernizing Chinese music

Chen Yi’s love for Chinese music is shown in her steadfast use, as the basis of her music, of famous folksongs, such as the children’s guessing song, and instrumental themes and techniques. Unlike previous generations of Chinese composers, she has explored the inherited spiritual power of the folksong rather than using the entire melody of the folksong. She has sought in Chinese music components that parallel Western idioms.

For example, she found that folk antiphony is similar to Western free counterpoint, which she has used and developed extensively. From the children’s song “Guessing,” she distills the modal intervals at the beginning of the melody, the repetitive and simple characteristics, and the playful spirit of the guessing game. To facilitate counterpoint and further development, Chen Yi omits some repetitions of the same motive and recomposes a folk-like melody for this piece. She uses distinctive rhythmic
motives, such as a pick-up eighth followed by a quarter and two eightths followed by a 
quarter. With the distinctive rhythms and melodic modal intervals, the central cells of 
Guessing are easily identifiable in the development and contrapuntal passages.

2. Composing with a personal signature

Like some contemporary composers who express their cultural identity through 
using their native idioms, Chen Yi has established her musical style based on Chinese 
aesthetics, folksongs, traditional music, and Chinese instrumental techniques while 
integrating techniques learned from Western composers, especially Bartók and 
Stravinsky. Guessing illustrates Chen Yi’s musical signature in this style and her 
personal voice in contemporary classical music in the United States.

3. The new focus of Guessing

As noted, Guessing shares many similarities with Duo Ye, but its focus appears to 
be upon blending the essence of Eastern and Western traditions, which differs from the 
celebrating of modern Chinese national music of Duo Ye. Chen Yi’s notes for Duo Ye 
and much critical writing on this piece emphasize the uses of Chinese folksong, the 
rhythmic sequences yu-he-ba and Golden Olive, and other nationalistic elements without 
extroding the merging of Chinese aesthetics and musical idioms with Western 
contemporary models. Perhaps Chinese critics and writers on Duo Ye want to avoid 
political controversies surrounding the use of Western contemporary techniques.

Chen Yi’s treatments of avant-garde techniques differ somewhat in these two 
pieces. In Duo Ye, she often presents the leader’s modal motive and the Jingju melody in 
the dominant position but sets the pantonal or twelve-tone aggregates in a secondary
position. For example, *Duo Ye* loudly introduces the monophonic folk tune, the leader's modal melody but presents the poly-modal chorus part and drone in *pianissimo*. She gradually and smoothly adds pantonal elements (e.g., Allegro mm. 17-42) smoothly.

*Guessing* introduces a countermelody descending mostly by half steps and emphasizes the g\(^b\) in a relationship of a tritone with the main melody by adding an accent mark on it. The folk melody and the Westernized countermelody both use forte dynamic and are stressed with accents. This treatment reflects a changing attitude and new focus, declaring the merging of East and West at the very beginning of *Guessing* and seeming to introduce a playful confrontation to traditional ears. Moreover, *Guessing* uses more tritones in dissonant chords in forte than *Duo Ye*, which mainly uses sevenths and ninths in a polymodal context. Because *Guessing* is a portrayal of a game, it features abrupt dissonant sonorities, many “out of tune” effects, and unexpected changes. Those treatments are close to Western avant-garde style.

**H. Conclusion**

Written in the middle of Chen Yi’s study at Columbia University, *Guessing* illustrates the development of Chen’s musical style. This piece portrays the children’s vigorous guessing game and spirit, as well as Chen’s youthful personality. The extreme contrasts of dynamics and registers reflect the ideas of *yin-yang* and change. The natural, robust style conforms to Chinese aesthetic ideas, such as *qi yun sheng dong*, and children’s spiritual power inherent in the folksong.
While drawing inspiration from Chinese philosophy, aesthetics, and a folksong, this piece uses more tritone-plus-fourth harmonies, abrupt juxtaposition of atonal tone-clusters and modal segments, and unexpected “wrong-tone” effects. To merge the essence of Eastern and Western traditions, Guessing explores the parallels between Chinese and Western idioms: Chinese folk antiphony parallels Bartók’s polymodal counterpoint, neoclassical clarity of texture parallels Chinese linear texture, striking dissonance parallels Chinese percussion instrument patterns, and Stravinsky’s motoric rhythms parallel Chinese spontaneous flow of rhythm. Guessing develops a structural device, combining techniques of motivic development, variation, counterpoint, scherzo, and toccata. While Chen uses traditional additive structure of phrase and modal pitch materials, her playful use of surprising dissonance adds new sonorities to Chinese piano music.

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1 Su de San Zheng, Immigrant Music and Transitional Discourse: Chinese American Music Culture in New York City (Ph.D. diss., Wesleyan University, 1993; UMI 94-31,002), 304.
2 Ibid.
3 Timothy Lane Brace, Modernization and Music in Contemporary China: Crisis, Identity, and Politics of Style (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1992; UMI 92-39,218), 234.
5 According to Su de San Zheng, “Tan Dun’s reaction to twelve-tone compositional technique was a total rejection after some struggling. Eventually, Tan Dun returned for musical inspiration to the sounds with which he had been the most familiar, the spiritual music of the ancient folk ritual ceremony,” in Zheng, 314.
6 Chen Yi, notes for Sparkle, Compact Disc 804, Cri eXchange, 1999.
8 Chen Yi, notes for the piano solo Guessing, from Chen Yi’s personal copy attached to Guessing published by Musical Compositions 146/2 (Summer 1990): 56-62.
According to the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, “Henry David Thoreau is considered one of the most influential figures in American thoughts and literature. He championed the human spirit against materialism and social conformity. His most famous book, *Walden* (1854), is an eloquent account of his experiment in near-solitary living in close harmony with nature and an expression of his transcendentalist philosophy.”


15 *Qi yun sheng dong* was first proposed by Xie He (in the Nan Qi period, 479-501 A.D.), a painter and theorist. He wrote *Gu Hua Pin Lu* (*Records of Ancient Paintings*), which proposed six principles as standard characteristics of artistic works. See *Qi yun sheng dong* in the *Zhongguo Da Bai Ke Quan Shu* (*Great China Encyclopedia*) (Beijing: Hua Xia Press, 1990), 97-98.


19 McBride, 1018.

20 Chen Yi, notes for *Sparkle*.

21 Chou, 314.


24 Chou, 309.


26 Chou, 312.

27 Chou, 309.


29 Suchoff, 189.


36 Schenker, 7.
CHAPTER VI
AN ANALYSIS OF BA BAN

Chen Yi’s *Ba Ban* for piano solo represents her compositional paradigm merging Eastern and Western musical traditions with her identity as a Chinese-born American composer. This chapter shows how *Ba Ban* fuses Chinese philosophy and aesthetics with techniques of Western avant-garde composers (Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Bartók, Alexander Goehr, Chou, and Davidovsky), and with sonorities of Chinese instruments, illustrating a trend toward cultural confluence and increasing diversity in American music.

Here I investigate the historical background of Chen’s *Ba Ban* for piano solo, the elements of Chinese aesthetics, and Western techniques reflected in this notable piece. The section on theoretical analysis examines structure and rhythms, pitch materials and organization, and the new sonorities of *Ba Ban*. In the section of referential meanings there are discussions on symbolic meanings and the significance of this piece while expressing Chen’s personal feelings and cultural identity.

A. Historical background of *Ba Ban*

In Chinese musical tradition, “Ba Ban” has evolved multiple meanings: 1. eight beats, 2. eight phrases, 3. a title and a melody of a labeled tune for instrumental ensemble. The popular folk tune “Ba Ban” has become the basis of numerous Chinese instrumental pieces.

Commissioned by the Carnegie Hall Corporation, Chen Yi’s *Ba Ban* for piano solo (2000) draws inspiration from the Chinese traditional instrumental piece “Ba Ban”
and materials from her own Piano Concerto, which was written in 1993 as her dissertation piece. At that time, the study of Chinese traditional music had developed scientific and philosophical inquisitions. Du Yaxiong's 1999 article "The Form of Baban" stresses the structure of "Ba Ban" corresponding to the Fibonacci series and the Golden section. For instance, the combinations of beats in "Ba Ban" vary as 3+2+3 (phrases 1, 2, 4, 5) 4+4 (phrases 3, 6, 8), and 5+3 (phrase 7). Du Yaxiong writes,

...the structure of Baban corresponds to the mathematical proportion expressed in the Golden Section. In Baban, the additional four ban of the fifth daban [big beat = phrase] are numbered 41 to 44. Since the whole piece contains sixty-eight ban and 68 time 0.618—the Golden Section ratio—is 42.024 (or rounded off to 42), the point of division for the Golden section is right in the middle of the forty additional ban. ... The resultant ratio of 5:3—a part of the Fibonacci sequence—is further evidence supporting this conclusion.²

Chen Yi studied the scholarly articles on "Ba Ban" before composing her piece. In her note for the Ba Ban piano solo, she writes "Most Chinese folk solo pieces have a single theme each, with sectional developments in different speeds and performing techniques, with added decorations on the important notes from the melody. This inspired me to construct my piano solo piece in four sections, starting with the theme in the initial seven-measure phrases."³ Hence, she used elements of "Ba Ban," the Golden section, and the Fibonacci series in her compositions.

While studying with the professors at Columbia University, Chou Wenchung's research on the Yijing provided inspiration for Chen Yi. Mario Davidovsky encouraged her to compose music in a logical form based on compatible concepts between cultures. From Jacob Druckman, professor and composer, she adapted the technique of interweaving tonal quotations in atonal context. Hence, Chen's 1992 Sparkle and the
1997 Qi show equal flair in handling the *Ba Ban* and twelve-tone elements. Before analyzing *Ba Ban*, I will briefly discuss influences of four Chinese philosophical and aesthetic concepts, of Chou Wen-chung and Western composers.

**B. Chinese philosophy and aesthetics reflected in *Ba Ban***

1. **The Eight Trigrams of the *Yijing***

   She writes that "I believed there must be some logic according to Chinese aesthetics in this extraordinarily influential folk tune." Tracing this piece under many varied titles through a long period of time, she found her answer in seeking out the aesthetic essence of "Ba Ban" and the structure of the piece.

   Chen Yi writes,

   According to the Chinese folk saying, the "Baban" (Eight Beats) is based on the ancient theory of Eight Diagrams [in *Yijing*]. The diagrams are eight combinations of three whole or broken lines used in divination. Correspondingly, there are three groupings in the leading phrases in "Baban" (the first, the second and the fourth). The eight diagrams indicate eight different things in nature, hierarchy in family, personalities, animals, parts of the body, positions and seasons. In nature, for example, the diagrams indicate heaven, earth, thunder, wind and wood, rain and water, sun and fire, mountain and marsh. In practice, people overlap two diagrams to form a six-line diagram and thus get 64 different diagrams. "Baban" has eight 8-beat phrases, plus four beats that represent the four seasons, to get the Golden Section, so there is [sic. are] a total of 68 beats. 
The eight primary trigrams (diagrams in the passage cited above) represent metaphors of images symbolizing the germinal cosmic elements (heaven, earth, mountain, lake . . . ), including natural phenomena, human affairs, and the mind, which are in a state of flux. Chen Yi has studied the relationship between the Eight Trigrams and the “Ba Ban” structure; she emphasizes that the Chinese folk tune “Ba Ban” has a golden section, and its beat-grouping method follows the numbers of the Fibonacci series. For instance, the groups of beats in phrases 1 and 2 are 3+2+3. (The numbers, 1, 2, and 3 are also used symbolically by Laozi to explain the idea from simplicity to complicity in nature.)
A quotation of Laozi states the Daoist view of the origin of the universe:

There is a thing confusedly formed,
Born before heaven and earth.\textsuperscript{6}
Silent and void
It stands alone and does not change,
Goes round and does not weary,
It is capable of being the mother of the world.
I know not its name
So I style it ‘the way’. . . .
The way begets one; one begets two; two begets three;
Three begets the myriad creatures.\textsuperscript{7}

These words tell the Daoist view of the origin of the cosmos and the transition from simplicity to complexity. The 1, 2, 3 are presented in the Eight Trigrams and coincide the first three numbers of the Fibonacci series. The philosophical and aesthetic elements may be found within \textit{Ba Ban}'s musical components. For example, \textit{Ba Ban} starts with a single note, the $B^b$ (m. 1, the sliding grace note $a''$ is only a way to approach the main note $B^b$), which can be seen as the number one (note), and the $B^b$ leads to number two, the second
important note $E^b$ and to number three, the third note $A^b$. The beginning of *Ba Ban* suggests the style of a Chinese ceremonial ensemble and coincides with the Daoist statement that from the *Dao*, one, two, and three are born. Hence, the numbers in *Ba Ban*’s structure may be often related to philosophical and aesthetic ideas.

2. The concept of *yi* and *yin-yang*

In Chinese, the word *yi* has two meanings: 1. ease and simplicity, 2. change or transformation. I will focus on the concept of change reflected in *Ba Ban*. The idea of change in the *Yijing* reveals the Daoist philosophical view of the variable and invariable, the changing and constant forces in nature, human events, and in the mind.

Sun Zhengsheng explains that in the Eight Diagrams [e.g., ☉☉], “*Yijing* uses — to present *Yang*, and uses — — to present *Yin*, using these two simple odd and even numbers to symbolize the virile/the docile (male, positive and female, negative) and the moving/tranquil (movement and quiescence) qualities, characters, and roles of all changing phenomena . . . Every changing phenomenon in nature can be seen with spatial and time elements, containing the *yin* and *yang*, moving and tranquil qualities.”

In *Ba ban*, Chen Yi manifests these dual elements such as loudness-softness, high, brilliant sound and low, dark sound in constant transformation. To avoid conventionally formulated phrases, Chen uses contrasts of texture, timbre, tempo, and dynamics to show expected or unexpected changes in nature and the mind, which are clearly illustrated in the sounds of *Ba Ban*. 
3. Serenity and otherworldliness

Laozi’s statement of Dao leads people to reflect upon the abstract and unseen force in universe. He states three characteristics of dao: 1) Dao cannot be seen, heard nor touched; 2) there is no name for its transcendental nothingness and otherworldliness, 3) it is vast, and it has a spirit and phenomenon, which can produce 1, 2, 3.9 Laozi writes his concept of the sound of the cosmos, “Great music has little sound (da sheng xi yin); great phenomenon has no shape (da xiang wu xing).” He guides people to listen to the sound beyond the external physical world and to listen to the sound of the inner cosmos by heart and qi rather than by the ear. He describes Dao as something ambiguous, but in which there are phenomena, object, and spirit.10 His words have inspired artists to listen to the inner music and meditate on the metaphors (e.g., the hexagrams of heaven, earth, mountain, rain) and serenity of nature and man.

Ba Ban’s pianissimo passages explore the extreme soft realm of sound. The extreme soft segment (mm. 48-51) is followed by a strike of a chord. This juxtaposition of soft and sudden loud sounds may suggest the idea of change and may evoke in the imagination cosmic, orchestral sounds, or sounds in the human mind and in nature. It also conforms to the Western avant-garde aesthetics, highlighting extreme contrasts in dynamics.

4. Aesthetics of calligraphy

Calligraphy is linked to poetry and painting. Chou Wen-chung writes, “The cursive [grass] script represents the ultimate in the art of Chinese calligraphy, as its power of expression depends solely upon the spontaneous manifestation of the power inherent in
the controlled flow of ink." The strokes of Chinese characters in the flow of ink illustrate the artist's spirit, emotions, and his personality. Holly Selby notes that "When Chen Yi composes, she thinks of the fluid, dancing Calligraphy," portraying the fluid ink lines of varying density. Some "grass" script has the dragon-like or tiger-like quality full of energy. Chen Yi's love for "grass" script calligraphy is shown in her picture with the character "dragon" on the wall.

Fig. 6.2. Chen Yi's photo with calligraphy (the character "long," dragon).

Some segments of *Ba Ban* appear to suggest and evoke the floating lines of calligraphy as an image of a sort of dragon-like or tiger-like calligraphy. This discussion continues in the subsection "Chou Wen-chung's influence on Chen Yi."

5. Single tone as an entity

Chen Wen-chung emphasizes "a pervasive Chinese concept: that each single tone is a musical entity in itself, that musical meaning lies intrinsically in the tones themselves, and that one must investigate sound to know tones and investigate tones to know music."
This concept, often shrouded in poetic and mystic metaphors, is fundamental to many Asian musical cultures. Chinese musicians are expected to play music while imagining natural things and sounds to make each tone a living thing. With this tradition of elaborating single tones, *Ba Ban* imitates the sound of the *qin* (English "chin," one of the earliest seven-stringed zithers) and *zheng* (a plucked-string zither) by adding grace notes, inflected pitches in sevenths and ninths, or an arpeggio to each tone.

6. Chou Wen-chung’s influence on Chen Yi

This section continues the discussion of Chinese aesthetics but emphasizes Chou’s individual interpretation and use of Chinese cultural elements. Chou Wen-chung has explored the rational ideas in Chinese philosophy and aesthetics, including the structural elements of the Eight Trigrams in *Yijing*, the ratio of 1, 2, 3 in Daoism, and the suggestiveness of metaphors. His compositions and writings on comparisons of Chinese concepts with Western contemporary ideas, such as comparing the concept of “a single tone as an entity” with Varèse’s “moving sound mass,” have been influential. His use of Western instruments to imitate and amplify the sound of Chinese *qin* music has received favorable comments from music critics. Thus, Chou’s research on Chinese philosophy, aesthetics, musical idioms, as well as Western contemporary techniques expressed in his compositional approach has profoundly influenced Chen Yi’s composition.

At Columbia University, under Chou’s guidance, Chen expanded her research and drew inspiration from calligraphy, *qin* music, *Yijing* and Daoist concepts, which are traditional elite arts.
a. Mirroring Chinese philosophy in music

Peter Chang remarks that, “Chou turns to the suggestive approach of using Chinese melodies to trigger the listener’s imagination. Here, *Beijing in the Mist*, 1986) the variation principle in the traditional *lao ba ban* (old ba ban) or eight instrumental pieces serves as the basis for various treatments of the thematic material such as filtering, distortion, amplification, and enrichment.” Chen must have been aware of Chou’s use of the “Ba Ban” principle as a structural design and of his techniques in treating the thematic materials in various ways.

Chou’s *Pien* (transformation and change) is a musical incarnation of the *Yijing* concepts of change and *yin-yang*. Chou composed this piece by inventing six variable modes to symbolize the forces of nature, corresponding to the six-line diagrams of the *Yijing*. He explains the meaning and mutation of his six modes, stating that the philosophical idea of I, simplicity and change, the variable and invariable is the underlying principle of this work. As mentioned earlier, Chen Yi’s remarks on the *Yijing* and Eight Diagrams (*ba gua*) in *Ba Ban* show that she continues Chou’s compositional paradigm based on the ancient Chinese philosophy, empowering her music with profound metaphors and philosophical depth.

b. Imitation of Chinese instruments

Chou Wen-chung did extensive research on *qin* music. He imitates the sound and techniques of playing *qin* by using grace notes, arpeggiated chords with inflections. In his piano solo “The Willows Are New,” the ninths doubling the melodic motes are quite
modern, and yet still conform to the Chinese aesthetics and amplify the sound of the qin, suggesting an instrument in traditional tuning without equal temperament.


Ex. 6.2 b. Chen Yi, Ba Ban, mm. 1-5.

She discerned Chou’s techniques of imitating and manifesting the sounds of Chinese instruments out of the piano in his Pien, Cursive, and “The Willows Are New.” Thus, she was inspired to create fresh sonic images of the zheng, pipa, Beijing gong, chime, and an ensemble of percussion instruments in unevenly tempered tunings in Ba Ban. Chen Yi uses the same method (grace note, arpeggiated chords, and minor-ninth doubling) to imitate Chinese instruments and to introduce the Ba Ban theme, which can be seen as a gesture to pay homage to Chou Wen-chung.
c. The metaphor of calligraphy in musical tones

Although Chou’s modes consist of minor thirds and major seconds in ascending or descending orders, he often permutes inverted intervals (minor 3rd = major 6th, major 2nd = minor 7th) in curved lines in spare texture. He calls this technique “melodic brushwork,” exemplifying patterns of “classical Chinese ideograms in black ink executed with calligraphic penmanship.”

Ex. 6.3 a. Chou Wen-chung, Pien, mm. 155-58.

Ex. 6.3 b. Chen Yi, Ba Ban, mm. 53-58.

Using the same techniques to achieve the effect of “dancing lines of calligraphy,” Ba Ban illustrates that Chen apparently knew Chou Wen-chung’s analogy of musical calligraphy, which parallels Varèse’s concept of a moving sound mass.

The other aspects of Chinese aesthetics, such as allusiveness, “shen yun” (spirit and rhyme), and qi (vital energy) are also pervasively reflected in Ba Ban. Since I mentioned these concepts in the earlier chapters, here I omit them.
C. Influences of Western contemporary composers

1. Schoenberg

To enrich the sound of *Ba Ban*, Chen Yi uses a twelve-tone row as a theme, which first appears in measures 16-17. Chen writes that she learned some sonic design from the Second Viennese School composers, whose vertical consonance and dissonance really opened her mind. Thus, “my musical language became richer and more colorful, yet more dramatic and intense.” She flexibly uses this technique in *Ba Ban*. For instance, in Variations II and III, the twelve tones are piling up vertically as chords to support a *Ba Ban* motive in the top voice (see Ex. 6.13).

2. Bartók

Chen Yi writes that “The [my] creative direction, aesthetic taste and musical style are influenced by Bartók.” Chen’s goal of bridging and merging the East and West is in Bartók’s vein. Her open attitude toward her native and Western musical traditions can be traced to Bartók’s influence and techniques. Chen uses tonal and atonal elements in pan-tonal context and bitonal segments, mirroring Bartók’s techniques of polytonality or polymodality. The balance between tonal and atonal components also suggests Bartók’s aesthetics and style.

Bartok’s “The Sound of Clash and Clang” illustrates a rustic style in creating clashing sound by placing the two hand’s modal intervals in two tonal areas or tracks. The right hand is centered at Db while the left hand is centered at middle C. The two hands are in a relation of a dissonant minor second. This bitonal treatment produces clamorous sounds. Chen Yi uses a similar method to vary the *Ba Ban* theme.
Ex. 6.4 a. Bartók, Mikrokosmos for Piano, Vol. 4, No. 110,

“The Sounds Clash and Clang,” mm. 1-6.

Ex. 6.4 b. Chen Yi, *Ba Ban*, mm. 18-21.

Ex. 6.4b illustrates a brilliant bitonal passage, in which each hand plays traditional modal intervals (perfect 4th or 5th), but the tracks by two hands are in a relation of an augmented octave or a major seventh (= a minor second). The metal-like sound suggests the sonorities of a Chinese percussion instrument ensemble.

3. Stravinsky

Chen Yi notes that she learned rhythmic patterns and textures from Stravinsky. From him, Chen learned rhythmic variation techniques and an avant-garde approach to rhythm, including irregular accents, irregular note-grouping, and the use of syncopation.

a. Irregular accents: Stravinsky often displaces accents in opposition to the puls of regular meter, which causes a certain unpredictability. The tendency of distorting the meter is typical of Stravinsky’s style.

Ex. 6.5 b. Chen Yi, *Ba Ban*, mm. 85-93.

In this excerpt (Ex. 6.5 a), Stravinsky puts accents *sf* on up beats and uses syncopation to alter the feeling of pulse in regular meter. In *Ba Ban* Chen Yi applies this Stravinskian technique of altering the sense of regular meter, stressing irregular accents on weak beats and producing an effect of unpredictability (see Ex. 6.6 b).
Ex. 6.6a. Stravinsky, *Concerto en Ré pour Violon et Orchestre*, mm. 81-85.

Ex. 6.6b. Chen Yi, *Ba Ban*, mm. 43-52.
b. Chen Yi’s highpoint for the first section of *Ba Ban* (Ex. 6.6b) echoes Stravinsky’s syncopation and repetitive patterns in heterophonic texture. In addition to the rhythmic texture, she uses the tritone and other dissonant intervals to enhance the intensity.

4. Alexander Goehr

After studying with Goehr in a course at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing and in London in the 1980s, Chen apparently learned Goehr’s approach to avant-garde techniques, such as a flexible use of twelve-tone row.

According to the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, “Goehr evolved a highly personal method that mixed combinatorial serialism with modality and ‘bloc sonore’ techniques. This made possible a flexible and open-minded approach to a diversity of harmonic and contrapuntal methods from a broadly based structural perspective.” For example, his *Das Gesetz der Quadrille* for voice and piano uses a modal melody for the voice part, but the interludes use atonal segments, which anticipate Chen Yi’s blending of the folk tune with twelve-tone technique in *Ba Ban*. 
5. Mario Davidovsky

Mario Davidovsky encouraged Chen Yi to compose music in a logical form based on compatible concepts between cultures. Chen Yi sees compatible elements in the logical form and the enlarged "Ba Ban" form: expanding on using numbers in a logical order to group beats and to construct phrases and a form. Chen Yi writes,

... I also had the good fortune to study with Mario Davidovsky. It was like standing at a higher point and gave me the ability to consider not new music versus historical music, not East versus West, but to consider human thought. I began to see similarities in musical styles, aesthetics, customs, feelings, and principles.

Hence, Chen interweaves the elements of Chinese and Western aesthetic ideas and musical idioms as interacting components in *Ba Ban*. The examples of juxtaposing and
merging *Ba Ban* motive and beat groupings with the Chen Yi and twelve-tone motives and the Fibonacci series are shown in Ex. 6.10, 6.13, and 6.17.

Adopting a Western thought, Chen uses a logical thinking to construct her twelve-tone row in *Ba Ban*. For example, the numbers of the pitches (11, 5, 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 3, 4, 10, 7, 0) can be divided into a four symmetrical groups. The sums of the numbers of three-pitch groups are 17, 16, 16, 17. She explains the implication of the Fibonacci series in these numbers: "Although the atonal theme was not designed with the Fibonacci series in mind, certain suggestive proportions can be observed. The sum of two outside figures is 34, the ninth figure in the Fibonacci series. While each of the figure inside is twice as much as eight."\(^{21}\)

Fig. 6.3. Implication of the Fibonacci series in Theme III.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccccc}
11 & 5 & 1 & 2 & 6 & 8 & 9 & 3 & 4 & 10 & 7 & 0 \\
17 & 16 & 16 & 17 \\
8+8 & 8+8 \\
34
\end{array}
\]

Davidovsky was apparently influenced by Milton Babbitt’s idea of rational reconstruction in twelve-tone and electronic music techniques. His *Synchronisms* presents materials of recurring pitches intervals in the piano part, and electronic sounds in various permutations. In Ex. 6.8, at beginning of the *Synchronisms* No. 6, the piano material is dominant in a style similar to Webernian pointillism; the synthesized sound adds atonal sound to amplify, reshape, complement the piano material (mm. 12-16). Later the intervals (major 7\(^{th}\) and minor 9\(^{th}\)) in the piano part become a background of the
electronic dense chords (mm. 72-76). The relationship between the piano and the electronic sound undergoes role reversal.

Ex. 6.8 a. Davidovsky, *Synchronisms* No. 6, mm. 12-16 and 72-76.

In order to set up a logical arrangement for the major materials, Chen switched themes to either more prominent or less important positions. In Ex. 6.8b, the foreground
displays the atonal aggregates in high registers in dominant positions while each Ba Ban fragment appears as a complement at the end of the aggregates.

Ex. 6.8 b. Chen Yi, Ba Ban, mm. 136-144.

6. Jacob Druckman

Druckman’s orchestral work Prism integrates tonal quotations of three earlier composers’ operas Medea into atonal contexts. Austin Clarkson remarks that Druckman draws “the listener into a liminal world of fragmentary, interflowing images driven by an intense psychological dramaturgy,” and his correspondences among sound, speech, gesture, colour, and character at deep levels reflect human experience.22
In this fragment of *Prism*, the English horn plays a tonal lyric melody, but the other woodwind instruments play various atonal fragments surrounding the tonal quotation, suggesting an intense atmosphere surround the operatic character. Apparently, Chen Yi uses a similar technique to merge the *Ba Ban* theme with atonal fragments, producing hybrid sonorities in her own musical language.

**D. Structure and rhythm in *Ba Ban***

Chen Yi notes that *Ba Ban* includes four large sections: an introduction, three variations with three transitions, and a little coda. To build a coherent work and to
create momentum by shaping the music both toward and away from the climax, she uses the Fibonacci series and symbolic rhythms in \textit{Ba Ban}'s rhythmic organization. According to the order of introducing themes, I will call the \textit{Ba Ban} theme, Theme I; the Chen Yi theme, Theme II; and the twelve-tone theme, Theme III in the analysis.

1. Using the Fibonacci series

This piece achieves unity and spontaneity through using \textit{Ba Ban} beat groupings along with the Fibonacci series. At a macro-level, \textit{Ba Ban}'s eight sections, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H, correspond to the Eight Trigrams, to the title of eight large phrases, and to the fifth number of the Fibonacci series. Its overall tempo design outlines a fast–slow–fast form. At a micro-level, Chen often uses the Fibonacci numbers and the \textit{Ba Ban} method to group beats.

In Chinese folk music, each note is counted traditionally as a "point," regardless of its duration. Li Sun-wen notes that,

Another interesting aspect worth mentioning in the discussion of \textit{Ba Ban} is that, in Chinese folk music, each note is counted traditionally as a "point" regardless of its duration, hence each eighth note or quarter note receives one point. . . . the first five notes (four eighth notes plus a quarter note) carry five points, with the accent falling on the fifth point.\textsuperscript{24}

In this traditional practice, in the first two phrases the points are grouped as 5+3 (Ex. 6.2b). To create the high point for the introduction (mm. 43-48), she uses the Fibonacci numbers: 1, 2, 3, and 5 to group notes. These rhythms echo Stravinsky's syncopation in Ex. 6.4a (also see Ex. 6.6b). Chen Yi's signature method of using the Fibonacci series comes with full play in the repetition of the ostinato in measures 193-222. The numbers of the decreasing repetitions are 8, 5, 3, 2, 1.
2. Characteristic rhythms

Chen Yi creates contrasting rhythms for the themes and sections. These rhythms can be categorized as followings:

a. Theme I in a slow elastic tempo (Ex. 6.2b);

b. Transitional and diverse groupings of beats, e.g., Themes II and III in eighth, sixteenth triplets, quadruplets, or quintuplets (Ex. 6.12);

c. Varied embellished Theme I, imitating Chinese instrumental playing (Ex. 6.4b) and a mountain song rhythm, long-short-long (Ex. 6.13);

d. Strong hammering eighths and sixteenths such as triplets, and quintuplets;

e. Entire *Ba Ban* beat groupings in eighth triplets with eighth rests (Ex. 6.15).

The Introduction features rhythms 1, 2, and 3. The transitions use rhythm 2, leading to rhythm 3 in Variations II and III in a mountain song style. Variation III and the Coda articulate rhythms 3, 4, and 5, but ends with rhythm 2 in running sixteenths. While reflecting Chinese aesthetics and the ideas of change and *yin-yang* elements, Chen Yi juxtaposes these rhythms unpredictably, mirroring a Western avant-garde approach to rhythmic organization as well.

Fig. 6.4. The structure and rhythms of *Ba Ban*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
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<td>Theme</td>
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<td>Var.I</td>
<td>trans.2</td>
<td>Var. II</td>
<td>trans.3</td>
<td>Var. III</td>
<td>Climax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>Slow, ad lib</td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>Allegretto</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2/4</td>
<td>4/4</td>
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<td>2/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of rhythms</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>2, 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fast  Slow  (acceleration)  Fast
The foregoing discussion is more complex than Figure 6.3 would imply. However, the simplification will aid the reader to identify the main rhythmic characteristics.

E. Pitch organization

*Ba Ban*’s synaesthetic pitch organization reflects the strong influences of Chinese modality and Western contemporary techniques in three aspects: 1. the use of contrasting themes; 2. the parallel between Chinese variation techniques (e.g., adding-flowers) and Western motivic development, and 3. the parallel between an enlarged *Ba Ban* form and Davidovsky’s logical form.

1. Contrasting themes

*Ba Ban* uses three pitch materials: a pentatonic *Ba Ban* theme (Theme I), a Chen Yi Theme (Theme II), a five-note motive (B♭, C, C#, F♯ A), and a dissonant twelve-tone theme (B, F, C#, D, F♯, G♯, A, E, B♭, G, C, Theme III). The Roman numerals: I, II, and III assigned to the three themes correspond to the order in which they are introduced. It is interesting that Chen Yi numbers the twelve-tone motive as the second theme, perhaps because she considers it second in importance. It may be that the Chen Yi Theme is placed between the other two in the order of appearance to reflect her goal to bridge East and West. The introduction establishes a way of juxtaposing contrasting themes: Theme I is followed by the tritone arpeggios and atonal themes.

Theme I, a two-phrase folk melody, opens the piece in monophony or heterophony of a Chinese ensemble. The beginning tones from one to two, to three (B♭, E♭, A♭) and
the notes using quarter, half, and dotted half all conform to the numbers 1, 2, 3 of the Fibonacci series and the Daoist view from simple to complex. In the first phrase (mm.1-5), the melodic tones in G\textsubscript{b} gong mode (B\textsubscript{b}, B\textsubscript{b}, E\textsubscript{b}, A\textsubscript{b}, F\# = G\textsubscript{b}) are doubled by octaves and fifths and are embellished with grace notes and an arpeggiated chord. Chen Yi modernizes Theme I by adding a bitonal layer of the same melody at a minor ninth below the three low tones of phrases 1 and 2 (mm. 4-5 & 10-11). This bitonal coupling seems to portray and amplify the sound of the qin, echoing Chou Wen-chung’s treatment of a pentatonic melody in “The Willows Are New” (Ex. 6.6a). Theme I also shows yin-yang elements, such as the high and the low. (see Ex. 6.6b).

In the second phrase (mm. 6-12) melodic tones are embellished by groups of pentatonic and atonal grace notes, imitating the figures of qin or zheng playing (mm. 6, 8, 9, 10), which show the idea of a single tone as an entity and how Chinese musicians embellish tones (Ex. 6.11).

Ex. 6.11. Chen Yi, Ba Ban, mm. 6-9.

The two groups of atonal grace notes balance the modal Ba Ban tones and anticipate Themes II and III. “To enrich the sound and make a contrast,” Chen uses the
other two dissonant themes and arranges dissonant relations between parts. In her dissertation, Chen maps out a matrix for the twelve-tone theme. She extensively uses the twelve-tone motives, including its inversions, and blends it with other two themes. The atonal and unstable Themes II and III are introduced in the transitional measures 14-16, in which the tritone, the beginning interval of theme III, is dominant in an arpeggio, and the Chen Yi motive \((b^b, c', c#', f#')\) is hidden and appears in its inverted form \((a, b^b, c', c#', f#')\). The introductory Theme III only presents eight pitches \((b'' f'' c'' d'' g^{b}\, a'' a'' e^{b})\), mm. 16) with accents in fortissimo. The intervals of Themes II and III (the tritone, a major seventh, minor second) are the germinal ideas for generating tension and a compelling force.

Ex. 6.12. Theme II and Theme III in *Ba Ban*, mm. 14-17.

2. Developing thematic materials

Chen's blending and developing of themes can be categorized into three types:

a. Polymodal sonorities suggesting Chinese orchestral playing in heterophony;

b. Polymodal-atonal pitch aggregates in homophonic-monophonic alternation;

c. Modal and atonal motives interacting with each other in a polyphonic web.
I note three categories of thematic development. For the first polymodal type, for instance, in Ex. 2b, the right hand varies Theme I in two modes centered at F# and C#, whereas the left hand plays a similar tune in two modes centered at F and C. This technique in mm.12-17 uses quintal-quartal chords and parallel fourths with the melody in the top voice while alternating the two hands in sixteenths in a high register in heterophony. The harmonies are similar to the *sheng* (a Chinese bamboo mouth organ). The intervallic relation between the two hands is an augmented octave or a minor second in measures 18-20. Soon, the left hand plays a perfect fifth as pedal tones alternating with the right hand (mm. 18-29), which resembles a way of Chinese musicians’ varying of a melody while recalling Bartók’s polymodality (see Ex. 6.4b).

As the second type of merging themes, Theme I occurs in G *gong* mode (b" e" a" g") in Variations I and II in the style of a Chinese mountain song. The tones are in two fragments with long notes and ornaments here or there. The tones of Theme III are piled up vertically as chords to support theme I. Motive II (b' c#' d" g" b" b" d b") in running sixteenth quintuplets is inserted between two segments of Theme I as an ornament, alluding to the sweeping of strings of the *zheng* playing.

Ex. 6.13. Chen Yi, *Ba Ban*, mm. 64-68. (Here, the modal Theme I in the style of a mountain song is supported by theme III, the twelve tones.)
A typical example of the third type of merging themes can be found in Ex. 14, Motive I emerges first (m.175) and is transposed to an augmented fourth higher. Theme II's motive takes over the top voice, transposing upward from an f#-centered pitch group to a b-centered group. Meanwhile, Motive III's P0 form in the bass line appears as the first notes of the first three beats (C f# d' e') juxtaposed with the Ba Ban motive (d#' g#' c#' b). The superimposed motivic sequences move mostly by a second or a major seventh with increasing intensity.

Ex. 6.14. *Ba Ban*, mm. 175-76.

In the variations Chen Yi mainly uses varying motives transposed by the three types of methods. Variation II and transition II are transposed Variation I and transition I in homophonic and heterophonic alternations with minor changes. Variation III is full of polyphonic sequences of motivic transpositions.

Another polyphonic passage in measures 193-222 uses the Fibonacci series to build a sequence by transposed motives moving upward by second and third intervals (from B♭ to C, e♭, and F gong modes). The right hand plays Motive I followed by the intervals derived from Motive II. The left hand plays an ostinato, a six-tone Motive III, starting from its P0 form, then in P2, and P3, P8 forms. It recurs in the P0 form in
measure 221. Furthermore, Chen Yi adds a bitonal layer to Motive I at a major seventh below (mm. 199-221), which dramatically increases the tension of the sound. The major seventh frequents its appearances in joined motives as approaching to the climax (see Ex. 6.10), which ends in the highest register with two tremolos: a perfect fifth (d'' a'''') and a fourth (e'''' a'''''') in a bitonal context.

3. Concluding the piece

In the coda Theme III enters in its P9 form (A E b B C E F# G C# D A b F B b), repeating itself in three different octaves. The highest c''''' tone repeats to imitate the Ban Gu (a wooden drum), playing a complete set of Ba Ban beats (3+2+3, 3+2+3, 4+4, 3+2+3, 3+2+3, 4+4, 5+3, 4+4).

Ex. 6.15. Ba Ban, mm. 248-253.

Then, Motives I (c' d' d# g# b') juxtaposed with Motive II (d'' g' c'' b'b) rises from the middle of the keyboard in sixteenths; they repeat three times but each time at an
octave higher until reaching the highest b". Although the context is a mixture of modal and atonal elements, the C tone is the central pitch in this coda and for the second part of this piece.

Ex. 6.16. Ba Ban, mm. 253-57.

4. The enlarged Ba Ban form

Chen Yi states that one of the Chinese variation methods is to large the form, in which the original form is expanded in all parts by adding embellished notes without changing the structure of the tune. Apparently, she sees the parallel between the Western concept of logical form and the enlarged Ba Ban form. Chen writes, “I use the Chinese “enlarging form” method and the heterophonic variation principle to construct my concerto in terms of form and pitch.” In her Piano Concerto, she enlarges two large Ba Ban forms with different speeds and proportions and weaves tones around the basic pitches. For instance, a “Ba Ban” beat is enlarged to twelve quarter notes in the Concerto at the tempo of \( \frac{4}{4} = 132 \). Her Ba Ban for piano solo draws materials from her Piano Concerto. This principle and method can be discerned in Ba Ban for piano solo although it is shortened and its structure and parts are reorganized.
a. The background

Chen Yi writes that she carefully places the basic pitches (background) at important positions including long notes and highest positions, but sometimes in the middle of the texture. By examining the important notes at the beginning of sections, one may form a line of Ba Ban's skeletal tones (B\(^b\), A\(^b\), D\(^b\), G\(^b\), B\(^b\), C, B, A). Because of the omission of the orchestral parts of Piano Concerto, these tones do not appear as a Ba Ban melody. They can still show the modal tones of the background in the enlarged form, from which Chen builds up the sections. She states, "The B\(^b\) dominates the entire introduction with two downbeats, which represent the beginning notes in the original 'Ba Ban.'" In terms of pitch relations between parts, the first part of Ba Ban uses the G\(^b\) gong mode and ends with G\(^b\) (m.152). The long C note in measure 157 signals a new center for the rest of the piece. The basic pitch at the end of the second part is C, forming a relation of the tritone between the two ending basic pitches of the two parts.

Fig. 6.5. The Background of Ba Ban.
b. The middle ground and the foreground

At the middle ground level, the composer often arranges sequences of transposition in stepwise linear motion. For example, as mentioned earlier, in measures 193-222, the right hand plays the *Ba Ban* motive joined with the intervals of theme II. The *Ba Ban* motive is transposed upward by a major second or a minor third from B♭ to C, to E♭, to F♯ gong modes. (A minor third interval in a pentatonic scale is considered a step.) The left hand plays the motive of theme III; it also moves up stepwise, starting with the P0 form (C F♯ D E♭ G A), then continues in P2 (D G♯ E F A B), and P3 (E♭ F G♭ B♭ C), P8 (G♯ D A♭ B E♭ A), and returns to P0 (see. Ex.10, mm. 193-222).

**Fig. 6.6. An example of the middle ground in *Ba Ban***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>194</th>
<th>206</th>
<th>215</th>
<th>218</th>
<th>220</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial pitch of motives</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right hand</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>g#m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left hand</td>
<td>C I</td>
<td>D I</td>
<td>e♭</td>
<td>G♯ 1</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ex. 6.10 already shows the foreground activities of motivic transpositions by steps. At the foreground level, *Ba Ban* presents the three themes mostly in motivic versions. The *Ba Ban* motive is primarily distinctive in linear motion while themes II and III appear in both melodic and harmonic versions. As an antitheme of the Western
polyphony, the Introduction and transitions use motives mostly in monophonic or heterophonic texture (see Ex. 6.2b). In variations and in the climax, brief contrapuntal segments emerge and alternate with heterophonic texture and end with monophonic passages.

The foreground level mainly shows transposed and varied motives in heterophony, but the most interesting examples occur in passages using the Western counterpoint techniques. In measure 223 the Motive III in P6 and P7 is set in parallel major sevenths against Motive II in the bass (C D E b A b). Then Motive II migrates to the top voice and is doubled in parallel sevenths against Motive 1 in the bass (m. 224). In measure 226, the Motive III in octaves interacts with motive I. The counterpoint is intensified when two Motives I are accented and doubled with major sevenths against Motives II, which is further transposed upward with doubled layers of octaves and sevenths, reaching the two intervallic tremolos of a fifth and a four (m. 232) in the highest register.

Ex. 6.17. The foreground counterpoint in mm. 223-227.

The modal intervals derived from Theme I exemplify elements of the Chinese folk tune as components of the essence of Chinese musical traditions. The atonal pitches of
Themes II and III are represented by the use of the tritone, minor second, and major sevenths as the essence of contemporary Western music. Theme II contains both the Chinese intervals and Western intervals as a bridge of Themes I and III. The interaction and balance between the modal and atonal motives are the central thesis of pitch organization of *Ba Ban*.

![Fig. 6.7. Pitch organization of *Ba Ban*.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>trans.1</th>
<th>Var.I</th>
<th>trans. 2</th>
<th>Var. II</th>
<th>trans.3</th>
<th>Var. III</th>
<th>Coda</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
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<td>I, III</td>
<td>III</td>
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<td>D(^b)</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>P6</td>
<td>P4</td>
<td>P0</td>
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</table>

**E. The sound of *Ba Ban***

Chen Yi notes, “Writing for piano and other Western instruments in the full orchestra is a familiar experience for me, but adding new colors and letting them speak in my own language is something I want to explore and practice.”\(^30\) To reach her goals, Chen Yi uses the piano to produce the sounds of Chinese instruments and blends them with various modern Western musical idioms. She emphasizes that “general impressions of the style of Chinese mountain song singing and instrumental playing also influenced the sounds . . . of this piece.”\(^31\) While discerning atonal and dissonant Western modernist sounds, the listener can take Chen’s statement as a clue to appreciate *Ba Ban*, in which sonic images oscillate between or combine Chinese modal, polymodal, and Western atonal sonorities.
The sounds of this piece are built on three themes and varying motives: a two-phrase *Ba Ban* theme (Theme I or Motive I), the five-tone Chen Yi Theme (Theme II or Motive II), and the twelve-tone theme (Theme III or Motive III) in its permutations. It is noticeable that motivic transposition, juxtaposition, and combination play a vital role, breaking traditional sense of phrase, section, and variation, and creating an ever-changing flowing sound stream.

An overview of the sounds of *Ba Ban* can be found in the following phrases. In a grandiose gesture, Theme I opens this piece with a spirit of Chinese instrumental improvisation. Themes II and III enter in atonal transitions, either in a running figure or in varied beat groups in a dreamy mode. In Variations I and II, Theme I in a style of a Chinese mountain song is combined with and surrounded by Themes II and III. Variation III displays a virtuosic cadenza-like section, leading to a fierce competition among transforming motives, suggesting antiphonal, heterophonic and monophonic patterns in a Chinese ensemble. Leaving the bustling race, the coda softly recalls the themes and plays a complete set of *Ba Ban* beat groups in a high C tone, then "flies into the distance."\(^{32}\) The following discussions will focus on a survey of characteristic sounds in *Ba Ban* rather than a step-by-step description of the sounds.

1. **The basic sonorities**

Theme I and its variations can be considered as sonority 1. Sonority I mainly portrays the sounds of Chinese instruments and a mountain song. Moreover, it illustrates the concepts of *yin-yang* and change through the *Ba Ban* melody recomposed by using the Fibonacci series. In a slow and elastic tempo, the first phrase of the opening melody is
heard with ornaments in two groups of notes: 5+3 (b_bb b_bb e_bb a_bb g_bb + C# D# F#). The shift from high to low sounds shows an emphasis on alternating registers and yin-yang philosophical elements. The three low tones (C#D# F#) are doubled by a bimodal layer of the same melody at a minor ninth below, foreshadowing the coming polymodal passages.

Illustrating the concept of a single tone as an entity, the second phrase (mm.6-9) elaborates the melodic tones with groups of grace notes, imitating Chinese instrumental (e.g., the zheng and qin) playing with the adding-flower (embellishment) techniques. Notably, the two atonal ornaments (mm. 6 & 9) around the main melodic tones presage the coming transitional passages. The tone groups vary as 3+5+3. Again, the three low tones coupled by a bimodal layer below break the impression of equal temperament and resemble Chou Wen-chung’s treatment of a modal melody in “The Willows Are New.”

The atonal themes (Themes II and III), which define the second type of sonorities, seem to nullify the traditional sense of pitches. Themes II and III appear first in a fast transitional passage (mm. 14 & 16) in running sixteenths, in which an inversion of Theme II is hidden. In fortissimo, Theme III introduces only its first eight tones in large intervals in sixteenth sextuplets. The tones jumping up and down in a wide space reveal some Western avant-garde aesthetics: without a conventional sense of melody, the attention focuses on elements of rhythm, texture, and timbre, similar to Webernian and Varesian idioms.

Theme II in transitions I sound in extremely soft as a chord. Then the atonal intervals of major sevenths and minor ninths in even eighths or eighth-, sixteenth-triplets and quintuplets depict a meditative mood. In a spare texture, the soft tones seem to
suggest a dreamy or meditative mood while the floating lines may be heard as tone calligraphy with a flow of qi (vital energy). A few strikes of dissonant chords suggest an awakening from a dreamy mood (mm. 48-52). At the end of Transitions I and II, a complete theme III rises with a crescendo, leading to Variations I and II. Transition II uses and transposes the materials of Transition I at varying pitch levels.

In the passages in Variation III, sonority II functions as a tension maker. It produces interlocked tritones (m. 174) or accented Theme III in a drumming passage (mm. 184-189). The motivic intervals of a tritone and a major seventh or minor ninth are extensively used. All atonal and dissonant sounds are somehow related to sonority II.

Sonority III defines the combined modal and atonal themes. Sonority III can be further divided into three subtypes: a. Theme I dominates the combination; b. Themes II or III dominates the combination; c. all themes are equal and develop together in polyphonic texture. In an example of sonority IIIa (mm. 64-68), in fortissimo in the top voice, Motive I in the style of a Chinese mountain song is heard in G gong mode (b" e" a" g") with a rhythm that uses long-short-long notes in dotted rhythm. Notably, below Motive I, Theme III becomes the interlocked chords containing the tritone, a major seventh, a fifth, and other intervals, which Chen Yi invents to blend with and support the mountain song. Between the two Motives I, two varied Motive II in sixteenths gently flow as ornaments. After a sudden pause, an atonal arpeggio rises, but it joins Motive I, which acts as embellished tones in thirty-seconds and grace notes. In this combination (IIIa) the modal Theme I is dominant. In a relatively fast tempo (1 = 108), Variation II (section D and F) emerges as a transposed Variation I at different pitch levels with minor
changes, including adding ornaments above the melody. However, the intervals and patterns remain identifiably invariable, providing unifying elements.

2. Variation and development of sonorities

Sonority I mostly varies through polymodal heterophonic texture and added embellishment. For instance, a brilliant variant of Theme I vibrates in a polymodal context (mm 18-29). In a high register, the two hands alternate to play quartal-quintal chords and fourths and fifths in relations of sevenths and seconds. Then the right hand continues the chords while the left hand plays a repeated perfect fifth, portraying the rapid strikes of percussion instruments of definite and indefinite pitches: perhaps the small Beijing gong, cymbals, and yunluo (cloud gongs), and other percussion instruments. Other polymodal passages occur in measures 81-85 and 128-33, in which the right hand plays an ornamented modal melody while the left hand plays a simple version of the same melody in parallel perfect fourths in bi-modes (Ex. 6.18).

Ex. 6.18. Chen Yi, Ba Ban, mm. 81-84.

Sonority II often emphasize the tritone. For example, an arpeggio passage enters when the two hands play two pairs of arpeggio patterns in eighth triplets and quadruplets (mm.30-34). With the hands moving in opposite directions, the unconventional arpeggios use melodic intervals of the tritone, fourths, and fifths, bringing forth Theme III
(in an eight-tone group) in a high register. This figure in the top voice is transposed a whole step higher, but the low voice remains the same. The two hands are in a relation of a second interval.

In measures 184-192, sonority II develops into a drumming passage. "[A] big burst in the extremely low register" produces clamorous sounds at a fast tempo (\( \frac{\text{d}}{\text{d}} = 120 \)). The two hands alternate to play a single tone (B\(_1\)) in sixteenths; soon they alternate this tone with clusters when the tones of Theme III are accented and superimposed on the repeated B\(_1\) tones. The pounding sounds recall Bartók's technique in the "With Drums and Pipes," the first piece of Out of Doors for piano solo.

The second type of sonority III (III b) can be heard in section F (m.157-165), in which Theme III is emphasized. In a tone calligraphy passage, Motive III sounds in accented long tones in a low register in fortissimo. Meanwhile, Motives I embellish the disjunctive tones of theme III as ornaments. The juxtaposed Motives II and I rapidly cross the keyboard from low to high. Other features of this section involve frequent changes of dynamics and registers. A dancing line is often followed by a dissonant interval, a minor ninth or a major seventh.

The third type of sonority III (IIIc) roars in a bustling competition of contrapuntal motivic sequences in octaves (mm. 175-183). Motives jump up and down, back and forth in treble and bass voices in a call-response pattern. Theme II acts as a leader, rising in the bass voice (G A B♭ e♭) in an eighth followed by sixteenths (m. 176). Motives I and III juxtaposed in parallel octaves answer the call in sixteenth quadruplets or quintuplets (B♭ E♭ A♭ G♭ C G# A in m. 177). This call-response pattern is transposed up three times by
steps. The heated interactions between voices evoke symphonic effects through a mixture of atonal-polymodal sonorities. Then the motives are joined in a single melody in the order of motives I, III, III, II, III, II, III, II, rushing down to a very low register (mm.181-183).

Ex. 6.20. *Ba Ban*, mm. 175-182.

Sonority IIIc using the Fibonacci series is heard in a spectacular sequence. In the lowest register (mm.193-222), Motive III becomes a six-tone ostinato, of which the numbers of the reducing repetitions are 8, 5, 3, 2, 1. This persistent repetitive pattern resembles Stravinsky’s ostinato, but the reducing ostinato following the Fibonacci numbers along with the motivic transpositions is Chen Yi’s device. At the same time, in the upper voice in a low register, Motive I and intervals of motive II (d G c B♭ F G B♭ + g♯ C♯ F♯ e A d + c F B♭ A♭) are joined in a pair of phrases (mm. 194-199). The first phrase sounds mostly in single melodic tones beside the last two intervals. The second phrase repeats the same melody but is added a layer of the tones at a major seventh higher to form a bimodal phrase with parallel major sevenths (mm.200-205). After two stepwise transpositions, suddenly the upper voice in the right hand leaps to the highest
register, playing a bimodal Motive I in syncopation (quarter and eighth notes with stresses). Immediately, Motive I leaps back to the low register and strikes another bimodal figure. Above the bass ostinato sequence, this leaping up and down over several octaves of the keyboard suggests groups of instruments in a Chinese orchestra in a fierce competition. The bimodal and atonal motives I evoke sonic images of Chinese percussion instruments interacting with each other in a spacial setting. The polymodal figures join quarters, eighths, and sixteenths in syncopated and dotted rhythms against the ostinato in even eighths. The synaesthetic and compound sounds are primitive and modern at the same time.

Besides the characteristics of sonorities in pitch, rhythm, and texture, abrupt changes of intensity, dynamics, and registers delineate the structure. Such changes occur between the apex of the introduction and transition I (mm. 47-48) and between the climax of the piece and the Coda (mm. 228-233). The pinnacle robust chords are followed by a soft chord or a single line of tones. Then, in the Coda, a single high c" tone repeats itself and summarizes the entire Ba Ban beat groups as 3+2+3, 3+2+3, 4+4, 3+2+3, 3+2+3+2+2, 4+4, 5+3, 4+4. Figure 6.7 outlines the sounds of Ba Ban in a simple chart.

Fig. 6.7. The Sonorities in Ba Ban.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>trans.1</th>
<th>Var.I</th>
<th>trans. 2</th>
<th>Var. II</th>
<th>trans.3</th>
<th>Var. III</th>
<th>Coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonorities</td>
<td>I, II</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>IIIa, II</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>IIIa, II</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>IIIb, I, II</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td>IIIc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In Figure 6.7, I = Theme I and its polymodal variants. II = atonal Themes II and III. IIIa is a combined sonority in which Theme I is dominant. IIIb is a combined sonority in which themes II and III are dominant. IIIc weaves three themes equally in a polyphonic race.
G. Referential meanings

*Ba Ban* represents Chen Yi’s mature style merging Chinese philosophy, aesthetics with Eastern and Western musical traditions. *Ba Ban* weaves the Chinese folk tune and the other atonal themes tightly in contemporary sonorities, but with colors and techniques of Chinese instruments. Its referential meanings lie in its integration of a broad variety of ancient and contemporary sources with balance, featuring a lofty and powerful spirit, and in Chen’s individual musical language.

In terms of aesthetics, *Ba Ban* involves extensive negotiation between Chinese and avant-garde concepts and idioms. Chen Yi adapts many Western contemporary techniques, including the setting of a polymodal context to modernize the “Ba Ban” theme.

Linking the atonal technique to Chinese aesthetics, the composer uses Themes II and III in monophony and heterophony, imitating the figures of the *zheng* and the dancing line of Chinese calligraphy in meditative transitions. In symbolic gestures, this piece uses the significant *Ba Ban* beat groups and the numbers of the Fibonacci series to construct the themes, rhythmic sequences, and the entire work while displaying the contrasting elements of *Yin-Yang*, as well as the concept of change in diverse timbre, tempo, texture, and dynamics.

In terms of personal identity, *Ba Ban* shows that Chen establishes herself as a Chinese-American composer, who is musically bilingual. Through drawing inspirations and merging sources and techniques from both her native and Western traditions, *Ba Ban* is transformed into an American avant-garde style with a global perspective and her
signature. Chen believes that her music reflects her personality. She is interested in and pursues fresh ideas as a creator. Having adapted atonal techniques and sources in the United States, her music has become more passionate and outgoing with a rich outlook.\(^{35}\) Li Songwen notes that when he has performed *Ba Ban* for both Chinese and Western audiences, they consider this piece is almost completely in Western style. "Some even specified the work as atonal in New York style."\(^{36}\) The audiences' reaction coincides with Chen Yi's words that as she lives outside of the [Chinese] culture, she combines more and reflects what she sees and lives with. It is natural that the atonal New York style becomes a component of her musical language.\(^{37}\)

On the one hand, Chen Yi's adoption of Western techniques and sounds reflects the trend of universalization of Western music and Asian composers' advancement in handling the Western avant-garde techniques. On the other hand, Chen and other Chinese-born composers bring Chinese aesthetics and idioms to American music and contemporary classical music, making Chinese musical tradition part of the world heritage across cultural boundaries. This is an unprecedented phenomenon in today's musical world. Although dichotomies exist and nationalism in music is still strong, people tend to share and accept the blending of multicultural elements rather than rejecting other musical cultures, which foreshadows future trends.

H. Conclusion

In the center of Chen Yi's output as a representative work of the Chinese-born American composer, *Ba Ban* for piano solo enlivens the ancient *Yijing* concepts of
change and *yin-yang* in a tone calligraphy, merging “Ba Ban” variation methods, structural elements with the Fibonacci series, and a broad spectrum of Western techniques, including serialism and polymodality. In a coherent work, *Ba Ban* spontaneously brings together the folkish and the philosophical, the simple and the sophisticated, the robust and the refined, East and West, contributing significantly to the diversity of American music.

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1. This Italicized title *Ba Ban* refers to Chen Yi’s *Ba Ban* for piano solo, which is different from the folk ensemble “Ba Ban” and her *Concerto for Piano*.


7. Sun Zhengsheng, *Yijing Ru Men* (Introduction to *Yijing*) (Beijing: Wen hua yi shu ban she (Culture and Arts Press, 1988) 528.


17. Chen Yi, email to Xiaole Li, 22 August, 1999.


23. Che Yi, notes for *Ba Ban*.


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27 Ibid., 32.
28 Ibid., 36.
29 Ibid., 37.
30 Chen Yi *Concerto for Piano*, 69.
31 Chen Yi, notes for *Ba Ban*.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
36 Li, 273.
37 Borger, 298.
37 Chen Yi *Concerto for Piano*, 69.
37 Chen Yi, notes for *Ba Ban*.
37 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
37 Borger, 286, 287, 289, & 298.
37 Li, 273.
37 Borger, 298.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

A. Chen Yi’s path and approach to composition

Chen Yi’s five piano compositions exemplify her goal of merging the essences of Eastern and Western musical traditions, illustrating the development of her musical style and her consistent effort to modernize Chinese traditional music and bridge cultures. Written during 1984-2000, a period of rapid social and cultural changes, these pieces reflect the historical era Chen lived through with its political movements and social changes.

The piano works can be seen as a journey or a process in which a young composer first pursued her quest for a new Chinese national music in the early 1980s. Since the 1990s she has focused on blending Chinese and Western musical elements. These works can be divided into two groups: in the first period, *Yu Diao* and *Duo Ye* illustrate Chen’s nationalist style as Chinese “new wave” music. The second group, *Guessing, Small Beijing Gong*, and *Ba Ban* for piano solo, written in the United States, demonstrate her international style. She has devoted herself to the creation of contemporary mainstream art music with a universal and global perspective.

When I asked Chen Yi “what are the reasons for your goals of merging Eastern and Western musical traditions? She emailed me the following statement:

The modern society is like a great network of complex latitudes and attitudes [longitude], everything exists in equal rights under different cultures, environments and conditions. They keep changing at every moment and interact with the others, so that each experience that we come across can become the source and exciting medium of our creation. As to the music composition, it reflects the precipitation of a composer’s cultural and psychological construct. A serious composer should learn to choose and adjust the yardstick, to establish
some relatively stable principles on which he or she can base the creation. Regarding my composition style, I believe that language can be translated into music. Since I speak out naturally in my mother tongue, in my music there is Chinese blood, Chinese philosophy and customs. However, music is a universal language, I hope to get the essence of both Eastern and Western cultures and write more compositions that embody my temperament and spirit of this brave new epoch, to improve the understandings between peoples from different cultural backgrounds, for the peace of our new world.\(^1\)

To review elements forming her musical style, this dissertation investigates the historical background of her music. Chen Yi’s childhood education and environment fostered her receptive attitude toward the music around her, including the studies of Western classical repertoire and her exposure to Chinese traditional music. Her inherent love for music and her flexibility in enduring hardship helped her survive the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution and intense labor in the countryside, which somehow made her discern the meaning of life and gave insight into ordinary people’s music and emotions.

In the 1980s, the revival of Chinese folksongs and traditional music gave her opportunities to study the rich Chinese cultural heritage, which supplied her with an abundant knowledge of Chinese folksongs, story-telling (*quyi*), theatrical, and instrumental music. The open-door policy after the fall of the Gang of Four and the introduction of Western contemporary avant-garde music inspired her to adapt modern Western techniques in her works. Her studies of ancient Chinese philosophies, Daoism, Buddhism, and Western scientific approach have expanded the scope and depth of her compositions. Through diligent cultivation, she has developed a spontaneous personal musical language with multiple influences from diverse musical traditions.
To solve the problem of adapting elements from other cultures and mingling seemingly irreconcilable concepts, Chen Yi has engaged in a process of searching, selecting, compromising, and integrating aesthetic and musical elements. From Chinese traditions, she distills the philosophy and aesthetics of the *Yijing*, the concepts of change and the metaphor of the Eight Trigrams, symbolizing the *yin-yang* qualities in nature. From folk music, she frequently draws on and uses the variation method of the enlarged “Ba Ban” form, $yuheba$ rhythmic sequence, melodic fragments, and folk antiphony. From Western traditions, she learned and selected the method of motivic development and counterpoint from classical music while adapting the contemporary techniques of Bartók’s polymodality, Schoenberg’s twelve-tone method, Stravinsky’s irregular rhythms, and Davidovsky’s logical form.

Influenced by Chou Wen-chung’s amalgamation of East and West, Chen uses compatible components and makes her individual integration of them, including the parallels of folk antiphony and counterpoint, the enlarged Ba Ban form and logical form, and Ba Ban beat groupings and the Fibonacci series. The common features among the two groups of pieces are as follows:

1. Like her compositions in other genres, which evoke the sonority of Chinese music, adherence to Chinese aesthetics is shown throughout these works. Influenced by the Chinese concept of *yue*, the pieces closely connect to other arts—Jingju (Beijing opera), dance, and calligraphy—and frequently use idioms from other arts. Linear motion in texture, allusiveness in expression, and fluidity pervade these works.
2. Except for Small Beijing Gong, these piano pieces use folk or traditional melodies as their themes. Although Yu Diao does not quote existing folk tunes, it uses folk-like melodies or folksong-derived phrases, underlining her principle of composing music based on Chinese traditional melodies. Chen Yi’s use of folk tunes is different from the older generation of Chinese composers. She uses tunes with a high potential of motivic qualities and seldom quotes the melody in a fixed-form manner. Instead, she highlights the asymmetrical (additive) melodic motives and develops them as a basic means to build up the pieces.

3. Chen Yi has explored rhythmic structure by using folk techniques, such as the yuheba, the Golden Olive rhythmic sequences, and Ba Ban beat groupings. The rhythmic sequences serve as a fundamental way to keep balance and to organize the whole work.

4. Chen Yi deviates from the traditional sonic images by exploring dissonance, percussive sounds, and atonal elements. In each piece, one can easily find the climaxes by locating the dissonant chords in specific rhythms.

5. These pieces demonstrate vitality, flow of energy, and an outgoing character beside some sensitive moments and lyric or meditative passages as contrasting aspects of Chen Yi’s passionate character.

The differences between the two groups of pieces are:

1. In the first group of pieces, Chinese nationalist concerns predominate. The adaptation of atonal elements is cautious and smoothly prepared compared with the second group of pieces. The goal of the second group of pieces is merging East and West. Therefore, the use of Western techniques is more direct and abundant. The atonal
themes, such as the twelve-tone theme in *Ba Ban* for piano solo, are treated with the same importance as the Chinese theme.

2. In the earlier works, *Yu Diao* and *Duo Ye*, Chen Yi mainly uses folk melodies, rhythms, antiphonal technique, and structures using elements from a variety of forms such as *banqianti* (melodic formula) and variations. *Guessing*, which can be considered in a transitional style, uses relatively longer melodic passages and a modal theme as the principal material for the work. With the development of Chen’s study of Chinese traditions, *Ba ban* addresses philosophical issues such as the Eight Trigrams of the *Yijing* (*I-Ching*) related to the Daoist view of nature and the scientific approach using the Fibonacci series in the organization of the piece.

3. The later works depart from Chinese modes with increasing use of atonal themes and dissonance. From the sonic images, sometimes, the Chinese style is not perceivable. In some passages, the sounds are Westernized with intense dissonance without modal or tonal traces. However, the atonal components are parts of the whole, and to a certain degree allude to modal segments or hide them in displacement as shown in *Small Beijing Gong* and *Ba Ban*.

4. Like Chou Wen-chung’s research and compositions, Chen Yi’s works written after the 1990s have increasingly alluded to the ancient Chinese philosophy of *Yijing* as the essence of Chinese cultural heritage. In *Small Beijing Gong* and *Ba Ban*, despite the use of Chinese folk or Jingju idioms, the expression is abstract and symbolic.
B. Chen Yi’s innovations

In the past decade, she has established herself as a successful composer in China, then later as a composer in America, actively composing with Chinese and Western musical elements in an individual musical language. Her use of compatible elements between musical traditions provides examples of selecting and mingling essences of cultures. She has integrated techniques of Schoenberg’s twelve tone method, Bartók’s polymodality, Stravinsky’s rhythms, Goehr’s juxtaposition of tonal and atonal components, Chou Wen-chung’s application of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics (e.g., calligraphy), Davidovsky’s logical form, and Druckman’s tonal quotations in atonal contexts. At the same time, she creates new sonorities by using Chinese folk music, variation method, rhythms, and instrumental sounds with rich emblems and imagination.

Her blending of multicultural influences becomes an organic intermingling of Eastern and Western musical concepts and materials. Although her concepts are rooted in traditions, the contemporary flavor of the later works overshadows traditional traces. As her music evolved an interweaving of modal, polymodal, and atonal components, the alternation between regular and irregular rhythms with increasing elasticity and irregularity, the frequent change of register and texture, and abrupt shift of timbre become more evident. These tendencies show some characteristics of post-Cage and post-Crumb avant-garde compositions in the United States.
C. Some criticism and reservations

Critics’ perceptions of Chen Yi’s compositions seem to raise certain questions about her works written in the United States. A general impression of her recent works is of Westernized sound. Li Songwen writes,

When listening to Chen Yi’s Ba Ban for piano solo, one may consider that the work is almost completely in Western atonal style. Even the pentatonic quality of thematic material X [the Ba Ban theme] is often blurred by the use of bitonal technique. I have performed this work for both Western and Chinese audiences and this seems to be a quite overwhelming reaction. Some even specified the work as atonal in New York Style.\(^2\)

Regarding sonorities, apparently Chen’s treatment of Chinese folk tune is closely related to contemporary Western style, including polymodality and counterpoint of atonal-polymodal motives, although these pieces are blended with Chinese aesthetics (e.g., tone calligraphy) and imagined Chinese orchestral sounds. Her 1990s pieces may not be considered as classical Chinese piano compositions by Chinese critics. For instance, the 1994 edition of Selected Famous Chinese Piano Pieces edited by Wei Tingge and others does not include the new-wave composers’ works and Chen’s 1990 Guessing but includes three other pieces based on the same folksong. While Duo Ye is selected in the repertoire of Chinese piano works by the Central Conservatory of Music for students,\(^3\) the other pieces may not be often played and published as classical Chinese piano music, which may reflect certain reservations of Chinese critics toward Chen’s piano music.

A criticism of Asian composers’ compositions is found in Chou Wen-chung’s article “Music by Asian Composers.”\(^4\) Chou proposes a careful scrutiny of music by Asian composers in accordance with Western contemporary practice. He asks questions about the cultural roots, contexts, aesthetics, its role in society, and contributions of Asian
composers' music. He considers that "for those Asian composers who are bent on being aesthetically independent, the current format of education is fraught with handicap and distraction." Chou criticizes Asian composers' attempts to "compete on terms acceptable to current trends." He goes on to say that "It would be sad if their contribution in the end is less to the future of their own culture, but more to the present time of the west. And it would be equally sad if their contribution is only the result of their talent and what they learn from the west, rather than that in combination with the wealth of unexplored resources in their own roots." Apparently, Chou encourages current Asian composers in China and in the West to discover the unexplored sources of their own culture in combination with their talent rather than conforming to what they learned from and shared with Western composers. He seems to suggest that Western universities will not produce Bartók-like composers. One needs to develop independent study and research of one's own culture and music by learning the essence of Bartók's works.

Chou urgently calls upon Asian composers to learn from Bartók, who studied non-Western music in accordance with the character of its own tradition, and from Edgard Varèse, whose creations were truly independent of the past and the present. Although this is not a direct criticism of Chen Yi, we might infer that Chou includes Chen in his "group of exceptionally talented individuals," whose contribution may "in the end is [be] less to the future of their own culture." He warns that certain Asian concepts have already been westernized by Cage, Messiaen, and Crumb. Western music needs non-Western music as its partner to interact with. "The mere thought of an universality based on a
single culture evokes an aura of artistic imperialism and intellectual colonialization. First of all, it implies the subjection of the artistic mind of other cultures. . . . More important, the strength of Western arts is precisely in its capacity of absorbing ideas from other societies.8 He advocates further rediscovery of the Asian musical heritage and being independent of current trends (e.g., Westernizing non-Western music) while evolving one's own compositional approach among Asian composers. Chou Wen-chung thinks that some Asian composers do not study their cultural and musical roots as deeply as Bartók did; therefore, their merging of Eastern and Western elements is superficial.

In some degree, Chen Yi's transformed musical style seems quite Westernized. The balance between her native musical elements and Western influence can be a topic of further discussion or debate. Ba Ban and other pieces do use Chinese techniques and idioms, such as the blending of Ba Ban motives with atonal segments in Ex. 6.13 and 6.14. Her application of Ba Ban beat groupings and the Fibonacci series at various levels and her association of the Yi jing's Eight Trigrams with the "Ba Ban" show her attempt at merging Chinese and Western aesthetic ideas at a structural and fundamental conceptual level.

Certainly, Chen continues to write for both Western and Chinese instruments by weaving Chinese and Western music idioms in her individual way. She crosses musical cultures as her musical bilingual language develops. She has arranged Chinese and American folksongs for chorus and set Tang dynasty poems to music; she explores and conveys imagined Chinese orchestral sounds and aesthetic ideas in new combinations.
Her music is expressed in both Chinese and Western genres or in a universal language and for broad audiences. Her works are performed in music festivals in the United States.

D. About Chen’s Fusion of East and West

Both Eastern and Western composers compose with elements of non-Western music and contemporary techniques. The numerous articles written on Chen Yi’s works, particularly on her piano solo *Duo Ye*, symphonies, *Duo Ye* No. 2, chamber music (e.g., *Sparkle*), and works for Chinese instruments (e.g., *Points for pipa*) reflect this trend of blending East and West. Her music, with inspirations from Chinese philosophy, aesthetics, Chinese folksongs, language, and instrumental sonorities, has received enthusiastic critical remarks from the elite circles of American composers. Allan Kozinn reports that Chen’s large body of work mingles Chinese and Western influences freely and colorfully.9 Writers emphasize her bold wit and striking orchestration in an elastic style, which distills Chinese and Western traditional music to form abstract canvases of sound.10

The writings on *Duo Ye* for piano solo are insightful in her use of folksong motives, antiphony, and *yuheba* rhythmic sequence, which underlie the whole structure of the piece. But they de-emphasize *Duo Ye*’s fusion of contemporary Western influences, resulting in a solely nationalist perspective, which may be seen as a reaction against influences of contemporary Western music.

A numerological study of Chen Yi’s fusion of Chinese and Western traditions is found in Xiaoman Zhang Wardell’s dissertation, “An Examination of Selected
Contemporary Works Composed by Means of Numbers.” This study holds that Chen’s fusion and application of the “Ba Ban” form and the Fibonacci series has significant and symbolic meanings in her Piano Concerto. Wardell explores in depth Chen’s integration of Chinese and Western principles in compositional structure.11 Chen’s use of “Ba Ban” form and the Fibonacci series is widely noted by scholars and musicians. However, the authors seldom discuss the philosophical and aesthetic roots in her works for piano solo.

In her notes for practice of the pieces in the Carnegie Hall Millennium Piano Book, the pianist Ursula Oppens emphasizes the surprising “complete integration of Chinese folk material and the nineteenth-century European tradition of virtuosic piano playing” in Ba Ban.12 Although Oppens uses pedal to bring forth the effect of Chinese gongs and suggests playing with “a fully imaginative range of colors and expression,” she compares the passages of Ba Ban with the impressionist wash of color and the grand octaves of the Tchaikovsky piano concertos.13 Oppens’ words reveal the close integration of Chinese folk music and European piano techniques in Ba Ban. On the other hand, she mentions neither the significant contemporary Western techniques nor Chinese instrumental sonorities, which shows a certain lack of comprehension by some pianists, whether Western or Chinese.

When I play Chen’s piano pieces, I sense that she is portraying the sounds of the zheng, qin, pipa, yangqin, small Beijing gong, and other percussion instruments here and there. The metaphors and imagination behind the sonorities need to be brought forth to illuminate the artistic thoughts. Perhaps, because Chen uses many atonal aggregates and
complicated techniques in an abstract language, the Chinese sounds and implications cannot be easily discerned and understood.

Meng Weiyan reported that after coming to America, sometimes Chen Yi felt vexed that the sounds of her works were becoming more and more Westernized. However, many Westerners do not think so. Meng lists several critical comments that praise Chen's compositions for demonstrating Eastern musical rhyme and colors and thoughtfully merging East and West.\(^{14}\) Meng goes on to report that Chen pays attention to the listener's aesthetics and tries to reach broad audiences. She says that the "training" of the listener's ear needs a hundred years. On the other hand, Chen thinks that composers should not follow listeners' ear, but they need to consider listeners' ears. Otherwise, compositions will not be able to find listeners.\(^{15}\)

Here the term "listeners' ear" can be interpreted as a synonym for musical convention and present aesthetic sense. From Chen's statement, one may see her principle of composition: considering and searching out roots from traditions without being bound to them; creating music with new sonorities for the confluence of musical traditions. In this direction, Chen Yi's music is for people from diverse cultures at the present time; at the same time she attempts to write music for posterity as a vehicle to bridge the past and the future, the populist and the experimental, and the East and the West.

Now, the argument—nationalism versus internationalism—is still going on without a conclusion. While Chen Yi's merging of East and West is widely known, the philosophical, aesthetic, and hermeneutic symbols in her piano compositions have not
been as fully understood as she wishes even by accomplished pianists. It is too early to summarize the reputation Chen’s piano solo music may receive. However, these works do provide examples of merging influences of Chinese and Western music in a sophisticated musical language. With equal thoughtfulness and flair in handling Chinese and Western materials, these piano works attract international attention. As Chen Yi’s piano compositions expand the horizon of contemporary piano music, the lives of these works will be seen in the performances of pianists and in scholarly studies.

1 Chen Yi, Email to Xiaole Li, April 6, 2003.
3 Bian Meng, Zhongguo gang qin wen hua zhi xing cheng yu fa zhan (The Formation and Development of Chinese Piano Culture) (Beijing: Hua Yue chu ban she (Hua Yue Publication, 1996), 167.
5 Ibid., 115.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid, 113.
10 http://www.gramophone.co.uk/newsAndEvents/news_detail.asp?page=1&archive=01/12/00
11 Xiaoman Zhang Wardell, “An Examination of Selected Contemporary Works Composed by Means of Numbers” (Ph.D. diss., The Claremont Graduate School, 1996; UMI 96-17,455), 41-50.
13 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cao shu</td>
<td>草书</td>
<td>Grass script, a type of calligraphy</td>
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<td>Chang-feng zhang yue tuan</td>
<td>长风中乐团</td>
<td>Chang Feng Chinese Instrumental Ensemble in New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ba Shu zhi hua</td>
<td>巴蜀之画</td>
<td>Pictures of Ba Shu (Sichuan Province), a piano suite by Huang Huwei</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bai niao chao feng</td>
<td>百鸟朝凤</td>
<td>“A Hundred Birds Pay Tribute to the Phoenix”</td>
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<td>Ban Che Haozi</td>
<td>بان车载号子</td>
<td>“Wooden Cart Work Song”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ban Hu</td>
<td>板胡</td>
<td>A bowed two-string instrument with a wooden board on the sound box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban qiang ti</td>
<td>板腔体</td>
<td>The rhythmic-melodic formula of operatic music</td>
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<td>板頭曲</td>
<td>Prelude, introduction of a piece</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bian</td>
<td>變</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bianyin</td>
<td>變音</td>
<td>Altered tones (changed tones)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bianzhong</td>
<td>編鍾</td>
<td>A set of bells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cai Diao</td>
<td>〈猜謎〉</td>
<td>Guessing Song, a folksong from Yunnan Province and a piano piece by Chen Yi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caoyu</td>
<td>草书</td>
<td>Grass script, a type of calligraphy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chong die</td>
<td>重疊</td>
<td>Piling up, a technique of variation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cui</td>
<td>催</td>
<td>A technique of urging in Chaozhou music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuan shen</td>
<td>传神</td>
<td>Convey the spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dao</td>
<td>道</td>
<td>The way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daodejing</td>
<td>《道德经》</td>
<td>The Book of the Way and Virtue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dao ge</td>
<td>悼歌</td>
<td>Mourning song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De</td>
<td>德</td>
<td>Virtue, excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dizi</td>
<td>笛子</td>
<td>Chinese bamboo flute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongzu</td>
<td>侗族</td>
<td>The Dong minority people in Southwest China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dou pi gai</td>
<td>鬥批改</td>
<td>Struggle, criticism, and reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duo Ye</td>
<td>多耶</td>
<td>The Dong people’s welcoming rite; Chen Yi’s piano solo piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er ba ban</td>
<td>二八板</td>
<td>Two eight-beats phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er hu</td>
<td>二胡</td>
<td>A bowed two-string fiddle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fan diao</td>
<td>犯調</td>
<td>Invading another mode, a way of changing mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feng Ya Song</td>
<td>《风雅颂》</td>
<td>Tan Dun’s String Quartet composed in 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gong</td>
<td>宮</td>
<td>A pentatonic mode (e.g., C D E G A), beginning on the first note of the pentatonic scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gong Li</td>
<td>功利</td>
<td>Merits (honors) and benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>和</td>
<td>Harmony, unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henan Bangzi</td>
<td>河南梆子</td>
<td>A type of Henan regional (theatrical) music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu yue</td>
<td>胡乐</td>
<td>Music from Northwestern people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An early Han Dynasty (late 2nd century) Compendium of knowledge which covers every subject from astronomy, calendrics to government and the art of warfare

"Salesman Wandering Around the World," a Henan folksong

A Chinese pentatonic mode (e.g., E G A C D) beginning on the third note of a pentatonic scale

Adding flower, embellish

A method of changing mode by borrowing notes

Classical texts

The Golden Olive

Fast playing (of instruments) and slow singing

A two-string instrument in Jingju ensemble

Beijing opera

Wild beating of gongs and drums

"The Blue Flower," a folksong and a girl’s name from Shanxi Province

Old six beats (a title of a labeled tune)

Old eight beats (a title of a labeled tune)

Ritual, propriety, or proper conduct

Tuning, (or pitch)

"Three Variations on the Theme of Plum Blossom,“ a qin piece

Aesthetics

Mengcius’ words, meaning “the people are more precious than the king.”

Buffalo Boy’s Flute, a piano solo by He Luting

A plucked string instrument

Labeled tunes

Vital energy

Vital energy and charm or rhyme produce vitality

Instrument, or a seven-string zither

Freshness, loftiness, lightness or indifference, and distance

Chinese story-telling art

Benevolence, one of the central ideas of Confucianism

Benevolent governance
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Characters</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ruan</td>
<td>阮</td>
<td>A plucked four-string instrument with a round body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ru meng ling</td>
<td>如夢令</td>
<td>As in a Dream, a lable of ci, a type of standardized poetic form (Li Qingzhao composed ci in this form.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shan</td>
<td>善</td>
<td>Goodness, kindness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shang</td>
<td>商</td>
<td>A Chinese pentatonic mode (e.g. D E G A C) beginning on the second note of the pentatonic scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She jiang cai fu rong</td>
<td>《涉江採芙蓉》</td>
<td>Stepping through the river to collect Fu Rong Flowers, a suite of art songs by Luo Zhongrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shenyun</td>
<td>神韻</td>
<td>Spirit, rhyme, and essence (according to Chen Yi’s words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi</td>
<td>实</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi er lü</td>
<td>十二律</td>
<td>The twelve pitches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi fan luo gu</td>
<td>《十番锣鼓》</td>
<td>An instrumental ensemble type of East Central China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si chun</td>
<td>《思春》</td>
<td>“Thinking of Spring”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi Yi</td>
<td>《十翼》</td>
<td>Ten Wings, Commentaries on the Yijing by various authors including King Wen of the Zhou Dynasty, Confucius, and other scholars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shou wei jie ying</td>
<td>首尾接應</td>
<td>An end and a beginning (of something) conjoin and echo each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiji</td>
<td>太極</td>
<td>The ultimate extreme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tian ren he yi</td>
<td>天人合一</td>
<td>Unity of man and nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu qi yi shu da xue</td>
<td>五七藝術大學</td>
<td>The May Seventh University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Qui</td>
<td>《五魁》</td>
<td>The Dance of Five Animals, piano piece by Chen Yi’s husband Zhou Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu wo ru yi</td>
<td>物我如一</td>
<td>Unity of the artist and the object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang qin</td>
<td>扬琴</td>
<td>A stringed instrument played by hammers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yan shen</td>
<td>延伸</td>
<td>Extending (materials), a technique of composing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi</td>
<td>易</td>
<td>Change, ease, or simplicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi Fan</td>
<td>乙反</td>
<td>The pitches similar to F and B in a scale in equal temperament tuning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yijing</td>
<td>《易經》</td>
<td>The Book of Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi jing</td>
<td>意境</td>
<td>The realm of art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yiwu Quxiang</td>
<td>以物取象</td>
<td>Drawing image from objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yin-yang</td>
<td>陰陽</td>
<td>The basic pair of components in the universe, male-female (positive-negative) in Chinese philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yixiang</td>
<td>意象</td>
<td>Spirit and images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu</td>
<td>羽</td>
<td>A pentatonic mode (e.g., A C D E G) beginning on the fifth note of the pentatonic scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yudiao</td>
<td>豫調</td>
<td>Melodies of Henan province</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Music and arts
Record of Arts and Music (2nd century B.C.)
Moon instrument, a plucked string instrument with a round body (sound box)
Sum of eight, a technique of rhythmic sequence
Henan regional opera
A book on music by Yuan Wanqing (639-689)
String Poem, Chen Yi’s Viola Concerto
Image, or phenomena
Filiality
An imaginative story by Zhuangzi
Picturing in the mind’s eye
Void
Rotating the tonic note gong to other pitch levels, a way of modulation in Chinese music
Novels having chapters and sections
Marquis Zeng’s bell set
A pentatonic mode (e.g., G A C D E) beginning on the fourth note of the pentatonic scale
Plain and simple
Golden mean, equilibrium
Commentary (or interpretation)
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Books and Dissertations:


Huang, Joan Qiong. *An Early Fusion of Oriental and Occidental Ideas—A Discussion of the Characteristics of Three Orchestral Works by Chou Wen-chung and 'Three


Lu Ji and He Luting, eds. 呂騫, 賀緣汀 編. *Zhongguo da bai ke quan shu* 《中国大百科全书》 第 29 卷: 音乐舞蹈 (*Chinese Grand Encyclopedia: Music and


Wardell, Xiaoman Zhang. *An Examination of Selected Contemporary Works Composed by Means of Numbers*. Ph.D. diss., The Claremont Graduate School, 1996; UMI 96-17,455.


*Zhongguo Da Bai Ke Quan Shu* 《中國大百科全書》 (*China’s Great Encyclopedia*). 上海: 中國大百科全書出版社 (Shanghai: China’s Great Encyclopedia Press), 1980.


**Articles in Dictionaries, Journals, and Newspapers:**


Chang, Bin-bin 常彬彬. “Gu niang shi ge zuo qujia” (This Lady Is a Composer). *Gong ren ri bao* 《工人日报》 (Workers’ Daily, Beijing), 27 July 1986, p. 3.


_____. “Answer to Li Xiaole on DuoYe.” [Email] 7 September 1999. Xiaole Li’s Collection. University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu.


_____. “Email to Xiaole Li,” 22 August 2001.

_____. “Email to Xiaole Li,” 25 January 2003.

_____. “Email to Xiaole Li,” 6 April 2003.


_____. “Chen Yi: I Hear the Tragic Motif in My Symphony Again and Again.”


______. “Homage to Rebel Eleanor Roosevelt and a Cause.” *San Jose Mercury News*, 12 December 1998, sec. SV Life, p. 9E.


"S.J. Symphony Takes It Too Slow, Chen Yi’s work proves the most rewarding." San Francisco Chronicle, 7 February 2000, sec. E, p. 3.


<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/1999/05/16/ PK80304.DTL>.


——. “Modal formations and transformations in the first movement of Chou Wenchung’s Metaphors.” Perspectives of New Music 35/1 (Winter 1997): 153-86.


Li, Ling 李凌. “Zhaoxia shanshuo” 《朝霞闪烁》 (“The Dawn Clouds are Shining”). Guang Ming Ri Bao 《光明日报》(Guang Ming Daily), 3 July 1986, p. 3.


Liu, Zhengwei 刘正维. “Zhongguo xi qu yin yue xing tai de min zu xing” 《中国戏曲音乐形态的民族性》 (The Ethnicity of Musical Patterns in Chinese Opera”). Xiju Xiqu Yan Jiu Yue Kan 《戏剧戏曲研究月刊》 (Studies of Traditional Theatre and Opera) (Beijing) 10 (1996): 72-77.


Peng, Juan 彭娟. “Xi qu yue dui ban zou de feng ge he te dian” (戏曲乐队伴奏的风格和特点) ("Styles and Characteristics of Orchestral Accompaniment in Traditional Opera"). *Xi Ju Xi Qu Yan Ju* 《戏曲戏曲研究》(*Studies in Traditional Theatre and Opera, Beijing*) 10 (1996): 82-84.


Qi, Yao 启垚. “Xin chao lun zheng pin shu” (新潮论争述) ("A Description and Criticism on the Controversy of ‘Xin Chao’ (new wave)"). *Ren Min Yin Yue* 《人民音乐》 (*People’s Music*) 3 (1988): 8-11.


Shen, Xuan 沈旋. "Xian min de Feng ge xin ying de shou fa" 《鮮明的風格 新穎的手法》("Brilliant Style and Modern Technique"). Ren Min Yin Yue 《人民音乐》(People’s Music) 7 (1982): 31-34.


Works: Chen Yi’s works, except by particular publishers which are indicated, are published by Theodore Presser, (on rental or for sale) in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

Orchestra:

1983  
*Xian Shi* Viola Concerto  
First Performance: China Film Studio Symphony, Yao Guanrong, conductor, Beijing.

1986  
*Duo Ye No.1* for Orchestra (Percussion and Strings)  
First performance: Beijing Symphony Orchestra, Lan Shui, conductor, Beijing.

1986  
*Two Sets* for Wind and Percussion Instruments  
First performance: the Central Philharmonic Orchestra of China, Lan Shui, conductor, Beijing.

1986  
*Sprout* for String Orchestra  

1986  
Symphony No.1  
First performance: the Central Philharmonic Orchestra of China, En Shao, conductor, Beijing.

1987  
*Duo Ye No. 2* for Orchestra  
Commissioned and first performed by the Central Philharmonic Orchestra of China, New York.

1992  
Piano Concerto  
Commissioned and first performed by the Brooklyn Philharmonic, Dennis Russell Davis, conductor, Margaret Leng Tan, piano, Brooklyn (1994).

1993  
Symphony No. 2  
Commissioned and first performed by The Women’s Philharmonic, JoAnn Falleta, conductor, San Francisco.

1994  
*Shuo* for String Orchestra.  
Commissioned and first performed by San Jose Chamber Orchestra, Turner, conductor, San Jose.

1995  
*The Linear*  
Commissioned and first performed by Oakland Youth Orchestra, Wes Kenney, conductor, Oakland.
1994  
*Ge Xu* (Antiphony)  
Commissioned by Meet the Composer. First performance: the Women’s Philharmonic; JoAnn Falletta, conductor, Berkeley.

1995  
*Romance of Hsiao & Ch’in* for 2 Violins & String Orchestra  

1997  
*Fiddle Suite* for Huqin and String Orchestra  
First performance: Xu Ke & Japan Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, Toyama, conductor, Tokyo, Japan.

1997  
*Golden Flute* for Flute and Orchestra  
Grant from the National Endowment for The Arts. First performance: Donna Orbovich and the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra, Yong-yan Hu, conductor, Duluth, MN.

1998  
*Romance and Dance* for String Orchestra  
First performance: Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, Dennis Russell Davis, conductor, Stuttgart, Germany.

1998  
Percussion Concerto  

1999  
*Momentum*  

1998/99  
*Eleanor’s Gift* Concerto for Cello and Orchestra  
Commissioned by the New Heritage Foundation. First performed by the Women’s Philharmonic, Apo Hsu, conductor, Paul Tobias, cellist, San Francisco.

1999  
*Spring Festival* for Middle School Band  
Commissioned by American Composers Forum New Band Horizons, premiered by Hale-Smith Middle school Band at the Kansas City Junior High School Music Festival (2000).
2000 Dunhuang Fantasy—Concerto for Cello and Orchestra

2000 *KC Capriccio* for Wind Ensemble & Mixed Choir

2001 *Chinese Dance Suite* for Violin and Orchestra
Commissioned Award from the Koussevitzky Foundation for Terrie Baune and the Women’s Philharmonic, Apo Hsu conductor, first performance in San Francisco, CA.

2001 *Ba Yin* for Saxophone Quartet and String Orchestra.
Commissioned by Stuttgart Kammerorchester and the Rascher Sax Quartet, Dennis Russell Davies, conductor. 

**Vocal and Instrumental Music:**

1985 *Three Poems from the Song Dynasty*
Text by Li Qing-zhao, Xin-Qi-ji, and Su Shi for Chorus. (SATB).
First performance: Central Philharmonic Society Chorale, Yan Liangkun, conductor, Beijing.

1988 *As in a Dream*
Two Songs for Soprano, Violin, and Cello.
Text by Li Qing-Zhao. Commissioned and first performed by soprano Rao Lan and Inoue Chamber Ensemble, New York.

1994 *A Set of Chinese Folk Songs*
A Cappella. Commissioned by Meet The Composer. First performed by Chanticleer, San Francisco. Children’s choir & string orchestra /quintet version commissioned by Meet the Composer; first performed by Aptos & Jordan Middle Schools, Palo Albany & Lick-Wilmerding High School, Bay Area.

1995 *Tang Poems Cantata* for Chorus (SATB) and Chamber Orchestra
Commissioned and first performed by the Bradley University Chorus & Orchestra, John Jost, conductor, New York.

1995 *Singin' in the Dark* (Songs of the American Frontier) for Choir & Orchestra (Alice Parker/Chen Yi) First performed by Chanticleer and San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco.
1995-96 *Sakura* (Japanese Folk Song) for A Cappella (arranged by Chen Yi) First performed by Chanticleer, Asian tour.

1995-96 *Arirang* (Korean Folk Song) for A Cappella (Arranged by Chen Yi). First performed by Chanticleer, Asian Tour.

1996 *Lament of the Twin Stars*
Arranged from Cantonese Music for Male Choir. Commissioned by Center for Educational Telecommunications. Theme music of the documentary ancestors in Americas.


1997 *Spring Dreams* for Chorus (SATB) Commissioned and first performed by Ithaca College Chorus, New York.

1999 *Chinese Poems* for children’s chorus in six levels Commissioned and performed by San Francisco Girl Chorus; Sharon Paul, conductor, San Francisco.


2001 *Chinese Mountain Songs* for violin and orchestra Commissioned by vocal ensemble Kitka with a grant form NEA, first performance: Music in China, in San Francisco, CA.


2001 *Capriccio* for Mixed Choir, Organ and Solo Percussion. First performance: March 2002 by Evelyn Glennie and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at the Olympic Arts Festival, Salt Lake City, UT.


Symposium on Choral Music. First Performance: August 2002 by the Elmer Iseler Singers in MN.


**Instrumental Solo:**

1980  *Fisherman's Song*  

1984  *Yu Diao* for Piano Solo  
Winner of the Composition Contest for Beijing Children's Piano Contest, First performance, Children's Piano Contest, 1985.

1984  *Duo Ye* for Piano Solo  
First Prize 4th China National Composition Competition. First performance: Chen Min, Beijing.

1989  *Guessing* for Piano Solo  

1991  *The Points* for Pipa  

1993  *Small Beijing Gong* for Piano Solo  
First performance: Prof. Lee Soo Sin at Celebration Concert, Guangzhou.

1993  *Monologue* for Clarinet in Bb (Impressions on *The True Story of Ah Q*). Commissioned and first performed by the Inter-Arts, London.

1999  *Ba Ban* for Piano Solo  

Instrumental and Chamber Music:


1987  *Wind Quintet*  
First performance: The Composers Conference Ensemble, Efrain Guigui conductor, Wellesley, MA.

1989  *Near Distance* Sixtet for Flute, Clarinet, Percussion, Piano, Violin, Violoncello.  
First performed by Chamber Ensemble in Sound and Silence, Krakow, Poland.

Commission grant from the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust.  
First performance: New Music Consort; Claire Heldrich, conductor, New York.

1992  *Song in Winter*  
Trio for Harpsichord, Di and Zheng. Commissioned by Pro Musics.  
First performance: Joyce Lindorff & Music From China, New York.  
Alternate version quartet commissioned and performed by Alea III, Boston University.

1997  *Qi* for Chamber Ensemble  

1998  *Sound of the Five* for Cello & String Quartet.  

1998-99  *Feng* for Woodwind Quintet  
Commissioned Award from Chamber Music America for San Francisco City Winds. First performance: San Francisco City Winds, Berkeley.

1999  *Song of the Great Wall* for Eight French Horns  
2001  *Ning* for soprano, violin, cello, and pipa
Commissioned by Chamber Music Society of Minnesota. First performance in St. Paul, MN.

2001  Duet for Flute and Guitar
Commissioned by Laura Gilbert and Antigini Goni, to be recorded on Kock International.

2002  *... as like a raging fire...* for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano.
Commissioned by Network for New Music with a grant from MTC.

**Chinese Instrumental Orchestra and Ensembles**

1985  *Xie Zi* for Sheng, Liuqin, Zheng, Sanxian

Commission grant from the NYSCA. First performance: Music From China, New York.

1989  Overture for Full Orchestra
Commissioned and first performed by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Richard Tsang, conductor, Hong Kong.

1990  Overture No. 2 for Full Orchestra.
Commissioned and first performed by Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Tang Liangde, conductor, Hong Kong (1991).

1991  *Suite* (three movements); Quintet for Pipa, Di, Yangqin, Sanxian, Erhu.

1993  *Pipa Rhyme* for Pipa and 14 Players.
Commissioned and First performed by Tang Liangxing and Taipei Municipal Chinese Classical Orchestra, New York.

**Discography:**

Chen Yi's Sound Recordings:

1986  *Duo Ye, Xian Shi, Symphony No. 1, Sprout; Two Sets* for Wind and Percussion Instruments. Cassette Tape, AL-57, China Record Corporation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Work Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td><em>Sound and Silence</em> (Chen Yi and her Music). Produced by Katherine Adamov Films (French), and ISCM (International Society for Contemporary Music), and Polish TV. Videocassette.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td><em>As in a Dream</em>; Chen Hongyu, Soprano, Vera Hsu, Violin, and Ted Mook, Cello. Compact Disc CCD 94/388, China Record Corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td><em>Chinese Myths Cantata, Duo Ye No. 2 Ge Xu (Antiphony), Symphony No. 2</em>. Compact disc NA 090, New Albion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td><em>Romance of the Hsiao and Ch’in</em>. Barbara Day Turner, conductor, San Jose Chamber Orchestra. Compact disc SJCO1, BMS Recording.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td><em>Colors of Love</em>; &quot;Written on a Rainy Night,&quot; &quot;Wild Grass&quot; (From Tang Poems); vocal ensemble by Chanticleer, Compact disc 3984-24570-2, Teldec.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1999  *Sparkle, As in a Dream, Qi, Duo Ye, Shuo, Song in Winter, Near Distance.* Compact disc 804, CRI eXchange.

2000  *Ba Ban* for Piano Solo

2000  *Duo Ye No. 2* for full orchestra
Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Tsung Yeh, Label: Hugo, Hong Kong, HRP7204-2.

2000  *The Points* for Pipa Solo
Chinese Traditional & Contemporary Pipa Music. Wu Man Pipa, Compact Disc 7043/4, Nimbus, NI.

2000  *Momentum* for full orchestra
1999 Contemporary Chinese Composers Retrospective Concerts, Taiwan, Symphony Orchestra, David Chen, conductor, [026189890046].

Videography:

*Sound and Silience* (Chen Yi & Her Music)

*Overseas Artists* (New Concept in Creation)
A documentary film of Chen Yi
Taiwan Public TV, Taipei, Taiwan, 1991.

CD-ROM:

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15BN 1-57304-907-7, UPC 0-70993-00907-6 (Windows).

Other Musical Scores:


Chao, Yuenren (Zhao, Yanren). Zhao Yuan Ren zuo pin quan ji (Complete Musical Works of Yuen Ren Chao). Compiled by Chao Rulan. Shanghai: Shanghai yin yue chu ban she (Shanghai Music Press), 1987.


**Other Composers’ Sound Recordings:**


1998  Druckman, Jacob. *Windows for Orchestra, Dark Upon the Harp, Animus II.* Biographical and program notes by Harold Meltzer, Compact Disc 781, CRI.

