

KŪNQŮ IN PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Kūnqǔ 崑曲, a scholar-oriented elite musical theatre, is enjoying a renaissance which began after its recognition on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2001. This dissertation is a case study of a 2015 *kūnqǔ* production based on a newly-created dramatic text, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* (Qǔ shèng Wèi Liángfǔ 曲聖魏良輔). The process of mounting the new *kūnqǔ* play from initial script to fully-staged production is detailed, and the ways in which essential traditional dramatic principles of *kūnqǔ* were referenced, understood, and applied by the artists involved are analyzed. My argument is then pursued through a comparison of the essential principles with the creative process for *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*, in which elements of the classic dramatic principles were changed due to creative decisions made by directors, composer, and lead actors. The criticism of hidden causes and results behind the production such as interpersonal and intergenerational conflicts and an overview of the initial purpose for which this production was envisioned—to serve a ceremonial role for *kūnqǔ* festivals—are examined, five years after its premiere. This case study, as an in-depth chronicle, has resulted in a critical review of the current challenges facing *kūnqǔ* innovation.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On August 4, 2014—a hot and sticky summer day in Bāchéng Town 巴城 of Kūnshān City 昆山—the initial meeting for a new *kūnqǔ* opera¹ production, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*, was held at the Yùshān shèngjìng 玉山胜境 (Jade Mountain Villa), a newly-developed residential town with architectural designs incorporating well-known Sūzhōu Gardens scenery. The choice of this location by the production team reflected its historical significance associated with Kūnshān *qiāng* 昆山腔 (Kūnshān-style singing), one of the precursors of *kūnqǔ* 昆曲 or 昆曲.² The figure connecting *kūnqǔ* to the location is Gù Jiān 顧堅, a character featured in the play who specialized in southern musical style and was credited with making the musical style of Kūnshān distinguishable as Kūnshān *qiāng*; the name by which it was known after it spread outside the Kūnshān area. He was an associate of Gù Yīng 顧瑛 (1310–1369, also known as Gù Āyīng 顧阿瑛), a wealthy aesthete known as a cultural leader in the Kūnshān area during the end of the Yuán dynasty. Gù Yīng built Yùshān jiāchù 玉山佳處 (Jade-Mountain Eden), a private garden comprising extraordinary vistas that inspired many poetic and literary works. Part of the garden at his residence, known as Yùshān cǎotáng 玉山草堂 (Jade-Mountain Thatched-Cottage), was famous for its cultural and poetry events called Yùshān yǎjí 玉山雅集 (Jade-Mountain Gatherings). These superlative gatherings hosted by Gù Yīng for poetry recitation during the Yuán dynasty were considered one of the three most famous *yǎjí* gatherings in Chinese history.³

¹ *Kūn qǔ* opera is the name used in the UNESCO's Intangible Heritage lists (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kun-qu-opera-00004>). I will use only the word *kūnqǔ* hereafter.

² The use of traditional or simplified Chinese is dependent on the time period of the original content.

³ The other two were the Lántíng yǎjí 蘭亭雅集 (Orchid-Pavilion Gathering) of the Eastern Jin dynasty 東晉 (317–420) and the Xīyuán yǎjí 西園雅集 (West-Garden Gathering) of the Northern Sòng dynasty 北宋 (960–1127).

The fecundity of its participants resulted in a fourteen-volume work of *Collected Poetry from the Thatched-Cottage Gathering* (*Cǎotáng Yǎjí* 草堂雅集), compiled by Gù Yīng. Gù Yīng was not only sophisticated at poetic composition but also passionate in staging the Yuán dynasty's *zájù* 雜劇 plays with his private troupe. Gù Yīng's poem describes the sensation of singing at the Jade-Mountain Thatched-Cottage:⁴

莫辨黃鐘瓦缶聲	Unclear if it is the sound of court instruments or pottery jars,
且携斗酒聽春鶯	Just carry a pot of alcohol and listen to the voice of spring warbler,
河西金觥新翻譜	Northern song from Héxī ⁵ named <i>Jīnzhǎn</i> is sung in new version,
漢語夷音唱滿城	This foreign music sung in Hàn language is popular in town.

The Mongols' Yuán dynasty songs were sung in a new musical style that used Hàn Chinese language, explaining the popularity of Kūnshān *qiāng* at the time, and incorporating an improved Southern lyrical melody. Gù Jiān's association with Gù Yīng brought this early *kūnqǔ* history to the Jade-Mountain Thatched-Cottage. Though Gù Yīng's original Jade-Mountain Eden is long gone, the newly-built Jade-Mountain Villa of the twenty-first century, modeled after Jade-Mountain Eden, underscores its historical significance. The trip to Kūnshān City began my *kūnqǔ* journey.

Purpose, Approach, and Aim

This is a case study of a *kūnqǔ* production based on a newly-created dramatic text. In this dissertation I will analyze the process of mounting the new *kūnqǔ* play, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* (*Qǔ shèng Wèi Liángfǔ* 曲聖魏良輔), from initial script to fully-staged production, in terms of the ways in which essential traditional dramatic principles of *kūnqǔ* were referenced,

⁴ From *Yùshān púgāo* 玉山璞稿, a poem titled “張仲舉待制以京中海上口號十絕附鄭九成見寄，瑛以吳下時事復韻答之”

⁵ Some scholars believe that *Hexi* is also the name of a Northern song, not the name of an area.

understood, and applied by the artists involved, in order to produce a critical review of the current challenges facing *kūnqǔ* innovation as illustrated here.

The path of *kūnqǔ* history is long and convoluted. This scholar-oriented elite theatre lost popularity to its rival, *jīngjù* in the eighteenth century and continued to decline. Through the efforts of *kūnqǔ* supporters, the art form managed to survive and yet has always faced existential crisis. The addition of *kūnqǔ* in 2001 to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list provided a well-deserved reprieve and a renaissance began. The Chinese central government hoped to atone for its neglect of *kūnqǔ* by instituting a new policy which exercised the soft power of culture. The Ministries of Culture and Finance co-implemented "Projects to Preserve, Protect and Support the National Art of *Kūnqǔ* Opera" (国家昆曲艺术抢救、保护和扶持工程实施方案) in 2005 in hopes of encouraging *kūnqǔ* to blossom anew; the results exceeded expectations. Repertoire presented in 2006 at the Third China *Kūnjù* Arts Festival in Sūzhōu by the nation's *kūnqǔ* troupes included both newly-created and newly-revived plays, for which the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance allocated RMB 10 million. Even so, the traditional plays that the UNESCO designation was intended to champion were missing. Some Chinese scholars debating this issue even continue to call for a halt in *kūnqǔ*'s development so that *kūnqǔ* troupes can focus on preserving the old repertoire rather than creating new plays. The central government appears satisfied with the results because the monies allocated for new productions, a convenient metric, have resulted in numerous new creations. *Kūnqǔ* troupes and core production members also benefited from the government's increased funding. In 2015, the General Office of the State Council revised its cultural policy and distributed a "Notice on Supporting the Inheritance and Development of *Xìqǔ* (Chinese "opera")" (关于支持戏曲传承发

展的若干政策) to provide an important guarantee for the inheritance and development of *xìqǔ*, in the areas of launching a *xìqǔ* census and establishing funding, supporting dramatic text creation, promoting *xìqǔ* performances as a public service, improving *xìqǔ*-related facilities, supporting performing groups, organizing *xìqǔ* personnel training and safeguarding the heritage, and popularizing *xìqǔ* education.⁶

I was very fortunate and grateful to be a part of this production from beginning to end. To gather information firsthand, I spent three months during the summer of 2015 in Nanjing, reviewing the rehearsal process by volunteering as log keeper and assistant stage manager for the production. I also conducted interviews with playwrights, directors, music composers, performers, and production company personnel who were involved with the play, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*, as well as some who were not. This field research initiated in 2014 has developed an overall picture of the practical challenges of transforming a new *kūnqǔ* script from a poetic text into a stage performance. The creation and performance of this all-star production provide an ideal model for considering the data I collected regarding the use of classical principles and the thinking behind the changes in those principles to make possible new productions for present-day audiences. This case study will be the first thorough explication of the process of staging a twenty-first century production in this theatrical form for which conventional formulas of performance have been in place for the past 400 years. It is my hope that through this explication and analysis, my dissertation will provide a critical review of the current challenges regarding the creative process of *kūnqǔ*, and thereby contribute to the

⁶ “Guowuyuan bangongting yinfa 《Guanyu zhichi xiqu chuancheng fazhan de ruogan zhengce》”, *Xinhua News Agency*, General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, July 17, 2015. Web.

understanding and perhaps even to the future process of inheritance of this oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

Review of Scholarship

The abundance of recent scholarly works about *kūnqǔ* and their many branches of theory and opinion in modern times held me back in my early stages of research. Uncertainty over whom to believe led me to become accustomed to tracing content to its very origins. For that reason, a great number of ancient treatises were reviewed.

First of all, Wèi Liángfǔ’s “Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” (*Qǔ lǜ* 曲律), focusing on describing pure singing techniques, appears only as an addendum to several drama collections. Wèi Liángfǔ’s text was assigned different titles, and the section order and wordings varied. Four versions are well-known:

1. “Wèi Liángfǔ’s Eighteen Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” (*Wèi Liángfǔ qǔ lǜ shíbā tiáo* 魏良輔曲律十八條) (Fig. 1.1) was found in the 1616⁷ copy of *An Anthology of Outstanding Songs from Wú*⁸ (*Wú yú cuì yǎ* 吳歛萃雅), compiled by Zhōu Zhībīāo 周之標 (Míng dynasty).

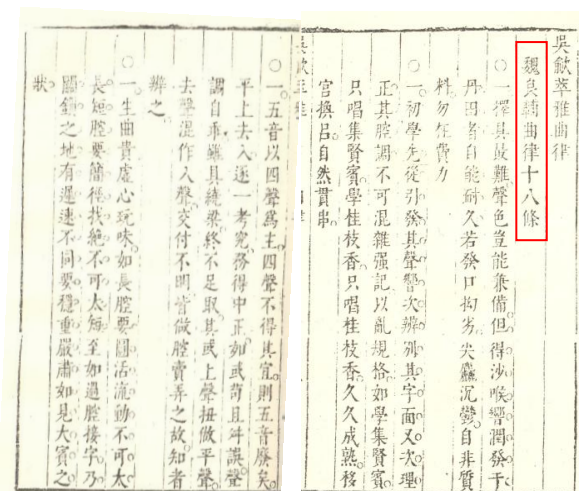


Fig. 1.1 “Wèi Liángfǔ’s Eighteen Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” from *An Anthology of Outstanding Songs from Wú*

⁷ Míng dynasty, Wànlì 44th year 明萬曆丙辰年

⁸ Translation adapted from Koo and Yue, *Wei Liang-fu: Rules of Singing Qu*, 2006, 35.

2. “The Origin of Kūn(shān) qiāng” (*Kūn qiāng yuán shǐ* 崑腔原始) (Fig. 1.2), credited to Wèi Liángfǔ, lists his seventeen sections of Rules of Singing *Qǔ*. From a 1623⁹ copy of *Free-Flowing Music from Cí Poetry* (*Cí lín yì xiǎng* 詞林逸響), compiled by Xǔ Yǔ 許宇 (Míng dynasty).

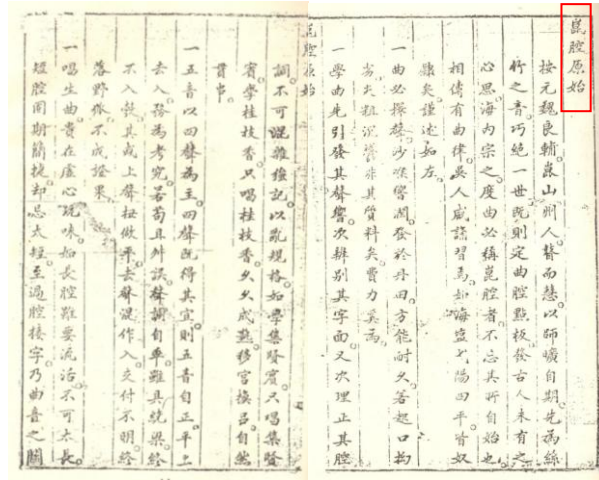


Fig. 1.2 “The Origin of Kūn(shān) qiāng” from *Free-Flowing Music from Cí Poetry*

3. “Wèi Liángfǔ’s Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” (*Wèi Liángfǔ qǔ lǜ* 魏良輔曲律) (Fig. 1.3) was found in a 1637¹⁰ copy of *Wu Kunqu Collection*¹¹ (*Wú sāo hébiān* 吳騷合編), compiled by Zhang Chushu 張楚叔 and Zhang Xuchu 張旭初 (Míng dynasty). It lists seventeen sections and while the order of sections is the same as “The Origin of Kūnshān qiāng,” the wording is slightly different.

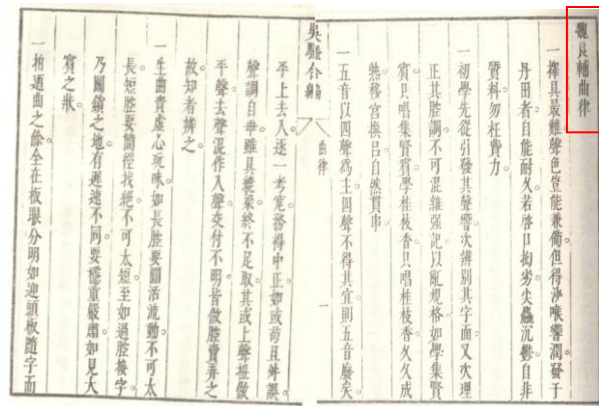


Fig. 1.3 “Wèi Liángfǔ’s Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” from *Wú Kunqu Collection*

⁹ Míng dynasty, Tiānqǐ 3rd year 明天啟癸亥年

¹⁰ Míng dynasty, Chóngzhēn 10th year 明崇禎丁丑年

¹¹ The complete title of the book is *Baixuezhai’s Selection of Yuefu Ballads: Wu Kunqu Collection* (*Báixuēzhāi xuāndìng yuèfǔ wú sāo hébiān* 白雪齋選訂樂府 吳騷合編)

4. “Twenty Notes from *The Red Coral of Yuèfǔ Ballads*” (*Yuèfǔ hóng shān fánlì èrshí tiáo* 樂府紅珊凡例二十條) (Fig. 1.4) from an 1800¹² copy (preface dated 1602¹³) of *The Red Coral of Yuèfǔ Ballads*¹⁴ (*Yuèfǔ hóng shān* 樂府紅珊), compiled by Qínhuái Mòkè 秦淮墨客 (Ming dynasty).

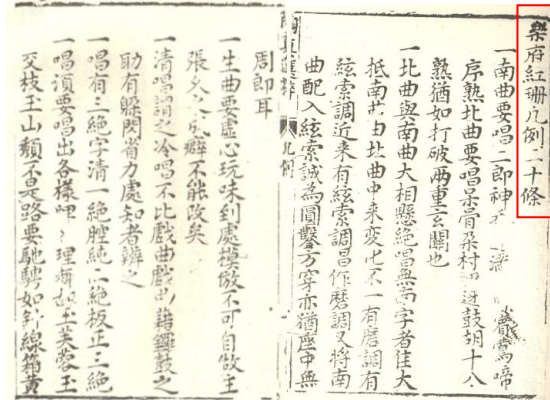


Fig. 1.4 “Twenty notes from *The Red Coral of Yuèfǔ Ballads*”

Wèi Liángfǔ’s “Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” was never published as a separate work and the varying lengths and wordings might be due to *qǔ* enthusiasts’ documentation of Wèi Liángfǔ’s teaching on various occasions, therefore causing various versions to exist. Also, scholars of the subsequent generation selected their favorites as guides to singing *qǔ* in their drama books; thus creating further variations. However, present-day scholars agree that the above four sources are reliable and align with Wèi Liángfǔ’s words as documented in various articles.

A few other versions¹⁵ exist but are controversial, including the twenty sections in “The Guide of Southern *Qǔ* (*Nán cí yǐn zhèng* 南詞引正)”¹⁶ on which the play *The Sage of Kūnqǔ*:

¹² Qīng dynasty, Jiāqìng 5th year, new engraving, 清嘉慶庚申年新鐫

¹³ Míng dynasty, Wànlì 30th year 明萬歷壬寅年. This Míng dynasty version has long since disappeared.

¹⁴ The complete title of the book is *Newly Printed, Classified, and Illustrated Selection of Storytelling: The Red Coral of Yuefu Ballads* (*Xīnkān fēnlèi chūxiàng táozhēn xuǎncù Yuèfǔ hóng shān* 新刊分類出像陶真選粹樂府紅珊).

¹⁵ For example, “Preface to Regulating *Qǔ*” (*Lǜ qǔ qiányán* 律曲前言) was a part of the 1639 book *Handbook for Qǔ-Singing* 度曲須知 by Shěn Chǒngsuí 沈寵綏 (Míng dynasty). It listed fourteen sections, eleven of which came from “Wèi Liángfǔ’s Rules of Singing *Qǔ*.” “Sections of *Qǔ*” (*Qǔ tiáo* 曲條), found in the Míng dynasty copy *Newly Engraved, Selection of Genuine Kūnshān Rhythmic Notation: Famous Cí of Yuefu Ballads* (*Xīn juān huì xuǎn biàn zhēn Kūnshān diǎn bǎn Yuèfǔ míng cí* 新鐫匯選辨真崑山點板樂府名詞) was determined to be incomplete

Wèi Liángfǔ was partially based. This version of *Wèi Liángfǔ*'s "Rules of Singing *Qǔ*" appeared in the *Authenticated Works Daily Records* (*Zhēn jì rì lù* 真蹟日錄), an early Qīng dynasty reprint discovered in 1960 and owned by *Lù Gōng* 路工. Since that discovery, scholars have been divided as to whether "The Guide of Southern *Qǔ*" was genuine or a forgery. The major argument for it being a forgery is its ambiguous provenance: *Lù Gōng* did not mention how he obtained this edition, who originally copied it, when this edition was printed, who collected it, and why *Lù Gōng* did not authenticate this edition with authorities at the time of discovery.¹⁷ Further details will be examined in Chapter 3.

Details about *Wèi Liángfǔ*'s life are scarce. Not only did references from scattered documentation creating an image of a sage appropriate for *Wèi Liángfǔ* need to be examined, but those many historical figures mentioned in the play who contributed to the development of *kūnqǔ* also had to be researched. The materials used in this dissertation to identify major characters and historical facts span the Yuán (1271–1368), Míng (1368–1644), and Qīng (1644–1911) dynasties. Documentary information could be found in bits of news and short literary sketches, such as the Yuán dynasty's *Records of Discontinuing Farming in Nan Village* (*Náncūn chuògēng lù* 南村輟耕錄), the Míng dynasty's *The Sequel of Jīng Forest* (*Jīng lín xù jì* 涇林續記), *Notes Penned at the Plum-Blossom Thatched-Cottage* (*Méihuā cǎotáng bǐ tán* 梅花草堂筆談), and *Sequel of the Collection of All Good Writings* (*Shuō fú xù* 說郛續), and the Qīng dynasty's *The Dream Recollections of Táoān* (*Táoān mèngyì* 陶菴夢憶) and *Book of Worldly*

because several front pages are missing. The remaining "Sections of *Qǔ*" consists of only seven and a half sections. From Wu Xinlei, "Ming keben Yuefu Hong Shan he Yuefu Ming Ci zhong de Wei Liangfu qu lun," 132–33.

¹⁶ The complete title is "Lived near Lóu river, known as Shàngquán, *Wèi Liángfǔ*'s The Guide of Southern *Qǔ*" (*Lóujiāng Shàngquán Wèi Liángfǔ nán cí yǐn zhèng* 婁江尚泉魏良輔南詞引正).

¹⁷ Lu Gong, "Wei Liangfu he tade zhuzuo *Nan ci yin zheng*," 67–68.

Affairs (*Yuèshì biān* 閱世編). Some information can be traced to the collected works of one or more authors, such as the Yuán dynasty's *The Register of Ghosts* (*Lù guǐ bù* 錄鬼簿), the Míng dynasty's *Collected Essays by the Studio of Four Friends* (*Sìyǒuzhāi cóng shuō* 四友齋叢說), and the Qīng dynasty's *New Records of Novelist Yúchū* (*Yúchū xīnzhì* 虞初新志) and *Notes on Poetry of Jìngzhìjū* (*Jìngzhìjū shī huà* 靜志居詩話). There are sources in critiques of music and dramas, such as the Míng dynasty's *Account of the Southern Style of Drama* (*Nán Cí Xù Lù* 南詞敘錄), *Talks on Qǔ Appreciation* (*Gùqǔ záyán* 顧曲雜言), and the Qīng dynasty's *Yúcūn's Notes on Qǔ* (*Yúcūn Qǔ Huà* 雨村曲話).

Another group of materials relates to the practicum of music and performance in *kūnqǔ*. They are important sources which were accumulated over many generations of observation by *kūnqǔ* practitioners for other *kūnqǔ* practitioners. To analyze and criticize the practical side of the production, theories, scores, notations, and play collections are crucial for the foundation of analysis. Regarding the compositional rules guiding *qǔ* tradition and the principles of singing *qǔ*, besides Wèi Liángfǔ's "Rules of Singing *Qǔ*," there are the Míng dynasty's *Rules of Qǔ from Bronze Mirror Studio* (*Fāngzhūguǎn qǔlǜ* 方諸館曲律) and *Handbook for Qǔ-Singing* (*Dùqǔ xūzhī* 度曲須知), the Qīng dynasty's *The Tradition of Sung Poetry* (*Yuèfǔ chuán shēng* 樂府傳聲), *Journal of Leisure Time* (*Xián qíng ǒu jì* 閒情偶寄), and *A Record of the Painted Boats at Yángzhōu* (*Yángzhōu huàfāng lù* 揚州畫舫錄), and the twentieth- and twenty-first-century's *Research on Kūnqǔ Singing* (*Kūnqǔ chàngqiāng yánjiū* 昆曲唱腔研究) and *From Lyrical Melody to Kūnjù* (*Cóng qiāngdiào shuōdào kūnjù* 從腔調說到崑劇). Musical information also existed in the prefaces to dramatic scores, such as *Sùlú's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* (*Sùlú qǔpǔ* 粟廬曲譜), *Zhènfei's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* (*Zhènfei qǔpǔ* 振飛曲譜), and in explanations

contained in the music score *Collected models of Kūnqǔ Qǔpái Patterns and Sequences* (*Kūnqǔ qǔpái jí tàoshù fànli jí* 崑曲曲牌及套數範例集) written by twentieth and twenty-first century qǔ experts. Musical and dramatic scores provide existing models as a creative tool for kūnqǔ playwrights and composers, such as the Qīng dynasty's *Comprehensive Notations of Southern and Northern Qǔpái in Nine Modes* (*Jiǔgōng dàchéng nánběi cígōng pǔ* 九宮大成南北詞宮譜), *Nashuying's Kūnqǔ Musical Scores* (*Nàshūyíng qǔpǔ* 納書楹曲譜), *Eyunge's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* (*Èyúngé qǔpǔ* 遏雲閣曲譜), and the twentieth- and twenty-first-century's *Sùlú's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* (*Sùlú qǔpǔ* 粟廬曲譜) and *Zhènfei's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* (*Zhènfei qǔpǔ* 振飛曲譜). In particular, the *Collected models of Kūnqǔ Qǔpái Patterns and Sequences* (*Kūnqǔ qǔpái jí tàoshù fànli jí* 崑曲曲牌及套數範例集) is now the standard source for those creating original kūnqǔ works and is available online. Another digitized source is the DVD software "Database of kūnqǔ's important scores and qǔpái songs" (崑曲重要曲譜曲牌資料庫) which is included with the book *Kūnqǔ Modes and Qǔpái Songs* (*Kūnqǔ gōngdiào yǔ qǔpái* 崑曲宮調與曲牌). The tones and rhymes are crucial when analyzing qǔpái music which applies its melodic contour to the rules associated with tonal language. The Yuán dynasty's *Tones and Rhymes Used in the Central Region of China* (*Zhōngyuán Yīnyùn* 中原音韻) is the primary source for identifying the tones used in qǔ composition. For analysis of movement, stage blocking and directions, the twentieth- and twenty-first-century's *Kūnqǔ Stylized Movement Trial Notation* (*Kūnqǔ shēnduàn shì pǔ* 崑曲身段試譜) and *Zhōu Chuányīng's Stylized Movement Notation* (*Zhōu Chuányīng shēnduàn pǔ* 周傳瑛身段譜) provide an invaluable descriptive choreographic reference.

Throughout this research process, I have been deeply appreciative of the availability of ancient printed collections in the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Hamilton Library and the online sources which provide authentic scanned images of ancient treatises. I am very grateful to all the institutions that are involved with these preservation projects and for their willingness to offer open sources for researchers.

Clarification of Terminology

Kūnqǔ, during its process of historical transformation, has been identified by many names during different time periods: Kūnshān *qiāng* 崑山腔 or Kūn *qiāng* 崑腔 (Kūnshān-style melodic passages¹⁸ or Kūnshān singing style), Kūn *diào* 崑調 (Kūnshān modes), *yǎbù* 雅部 (elegant music division in the court), *shíqǔ* 時曲 (popular dramatic songs), *shuǐmó diào* 水磨調 or *shuǐmó qiāng* 水磨腔 (Water Polished¹⁹ music), *kūnqǔ* 崑曲 (Kūnshān dramatic arias),²⁰ and *kūnjù* 崑劇 (Kūnshān drama). There are names used to identify *kūnqǔ* works based on their functions: *sǎnqǔ* 散曲 (literary songs), *qīngqǔ* 清曲 (non-dramatic songs), and *jùqǔ* 劇曲 (dramatic songs). Throughout this dissertation, I will use *kūnqǔ* as a generic term for this theatrical genre unless it is specified according to its historical time frame or its original content. This is due to *kūnqǔ* practitioners’ always referring to *kūnqǔ* during interviews and conversations. The commonly-seen term *kūnjù*, a name which gives a clear indication of its dramatic nature, is mostly used by scholars in their articles or books and as part of names for *kūnqǔ* companies.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Wichmann, *Listening To Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera*, 54.

¹⁹ *Shuǐmó* 水磨, lit. “water polish” refers either to a stone mill for refining flour that is powered by water or a production process that uses water to polish rosewood furniture. In the mid-Ming dynasty, Kūnshān *qiāng* 崑山腔 (Kūnshān lyrical melodies) was refined by Wèi Liángfū, who renamed Kūnshān *shuǐmó diào* (Kūnshān Water Polished style), indicating the refinement of this new singing style that later received nationwide popularity.

²⁰ Catherine Swatek, *Peony Pavilion Onstage: Four Centuries in the Career of a Chinese Drama*, 9.

There are terms related to the word *qǔ* 曲 throughout this dissertation. These terms are associated with *kūnqǔ* to different degrees. As a rule, *qǔ* refers to a literary tradition that combines poetry and music as a whole, language and melody as one. All forms of music-drama are under the broad rubric of *xìqǔ* 戲曲, a general term for traditional theatrical performances. The song composition in *kūnqǔ* is called *qǔpái* 曲牌, and each *qǔpái* of a specific title follows the restrictive tonal rules and rhyme schemes established in the existing *qǔpái* of the same title. When using the terms *qǔ* or *qǔpái* with its Northern tradition or Southern tradition, not only does it indicate regional difference but also characteristics positioned between syllabic and melismatic, energetic and lyrical, and diatonic and pentatonic. Furthermore, when referring to the Northern *qǔ* (*běi qǔ* 北曲) or the Southern *qǔ* (*nán qǔ* 南曲) combined with a play category, for example *zájù* 雜劇, or *nánxì* 南戲, or *chuánqí* 傳奇, the terms designate more than a music tradition; they together identify a *xìqǔ* genre unique in itself.

I will be using the term “dramatic text” to refer to the original text written by the playwright (see chapter 2), and the term “text for performance” to refer to the final version of the dramatic text, after the rehearsal process is complete; this second type of text is also used as side-titles in live performance (see appendix). Between these two texts, there are several revisions and emendations which will be analyzed accordingly.

Background — First Production Meeting

The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ (hereafter the *Wèi* play) is a newly-created play, written by a well-respected scholar-playwright from Taiwan and produced by award-winning directors, musicians, designers, and actors from China. The text of the *Wèi* play was commissioned in June

2010 by Kē Jūn 柯军,²¹ former Chairman of the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre (Jiāngsū Shěng Yǎnyì Jítuán Kūnjù Yuàn 江苏省演艺集团昆剧院, hereafter Shěng Kūn 省昆). Playwright Prof. Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh²² 曾永義 (hereafter Tsēng) is known for his scholarly works and contribution to the study of various traditional theatrical forms. Tsēng (b. 1941) was at the time working with Shěng Kūn on the second edition of his previous *kūnqǔ* creation, *The Butterfly Lovers* (Liáng Shānbó yǔ Zhù Yīngtái 梁山伯與祝英台). The initial idea for producing the *Wèi* play was to create a ceremonial play to commemorate Wèi Liángfǔ as the founder of the Kūnshān *shuǐmó diào* (Water Polished style of music). It would be a collaborative effort from both China (Nánjīng and Shànghǎi) and Taiwan to put on stage the innovative process of bringing *kūnqǔ* into being, so that practitioners in this field would always be able to feel a sense of gratitude for the foundations that Wèi Liángfǔ and his peers had set. Tsēng, who had done in-depth research on Wèi Liángfǔ, spent less than a month to complete his dramatic text.

The work on the production itself did not begin until August 2014 when the current Chairman of Shěng Kūn, Lǐ Hóngliáng 李鴻良, convened the first production meeting at the symbolic, rebuilt Yùshān Cǎotáng 玉山草堂 (Jade-Mountain Thatched-Cottage) located in the newly-developed Kūnshān Jade-Mountain Villa. There was no detailed information as to why the play was postponed for three years after the dramatic text was completed and published in an academic journal.²³ The explanation mentioned in the first production meeting and in the

²¹ Kē Jūn is currently president of the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group, CO., LTD. 江苏省演艺集团总经理.

²² In Taiwan names are romanized in Wade-Giles. When his name is written in mainland Chinese *pinyin*, it is spelled as Zēng Yǒngyì.

²³ *Taipei Theatre Journal*, 14 (2011): 185–202.

prologue of Tsēng's dramatic text was that the time lag was due to changes in Kē Jūn's administrative status.²⁴

The first production meeting, focusing on surveying opinions regarding Tsēng's dramatic text, brought together Shěng Kūn's Chairman Lǐ Hóngliáng 李鴻良; playwright Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh 曾永義; core performers Cǎi Zhèngrén 蔡正仁 (as Wèi Liángfǔ) and Zhāng Jūn 张军 (as Zhāng Yětáng); music director and composer Sūn Jiàn'ān 孙建安; Shànghǎi Kūnqǔ Opera Troupe Vice Chairman and musician Liáng Hóngjūn 梁弘钧; *kūnqǔ* scholar Gù Língsēn 顾聆森; writer Yáng Shǒusōng 杨守松; collector and entrepreneur Shěn Gǎng 沈岗; and Yuán drama researcher and entrepreneur Qí Xuémíng 祁学明. Both Shěn Gǎng and Qí Xuémíng were also developers of the Kūnshān Jade-Mountain Villa.

This was to be truly an all-star production, a production that promised a great collaboration to serve as a new milestone. Shěng Kūn's Chairman Lǐ Hóngliáng set this tone in his opening remarks, saying:

... A production team such as this is rarely seen. First of all is Prof. Tsēng's great playwriting. We also invited the well-known director, Shí Yùkūn 石玉昆 from Nánjīng whose background is particularly in the tradition forms of *jīngjù* and *kūnqǔ*. He not only has concepts [in terms of directing *xìqǔ*] but also had good collaboration with our company. For example, my *Little Butcher Sūn* (*Xiǎo Sūn tú* 小孙屠) was directed by Shí Yùkūn. Moreover, it is our great honor to have Mr. Cǎi Zhèngrén 蔡正仁 as Wèi Liángfǔ. This play is produced by both the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre and the soon-to-be-established Kūnshān Kūnqǔ Opera Troupe²⁵ (Kūnshān Kūnjù Tuán 昆山昆剧团), as the Troupe's premiere production.

²⁴ Kē Jūn later confirmed that it was due to his taking administrative leave. When he returned to the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group CO., LTD. in 2013, he asked Shěng Kūn's Chairman Lǐ Hóngliáng to produce this *Wèi* play. Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.

²⁵ Its official name is China Kūnshān Contemporary Kūnqǔ Opera Company (Kūnshān Dāngdài Kūnjù Yuàn 昆山当代昆剧院); the company publicly announced its establishment on October 12, 2015.

Four major discussions formed the focus of the meeting. First of all was Tsēng's clarification of *kūnqǔ* history and common misconceptions. He also provided his reasoning in terms of constructing plots, creating images of characters, and expressing his carefully-chosen words and *qǔpái* songs. Tsēng intended to present this play as a "trilogy"²⁶ from the earliest Kūnshān singing style (Kūn *qiāng* 崑腔), to the Water Polished style (*shuǐmó diào* 水磨调) of *kūnqǔ*, and finally, the birth of the theatrical form of *kūnqǔ*. Some disputes regarding the origin of *kūnqǔ* arose among the participants.

Second, concerns about healthy communications among core production personnel regarding text interpretation and revisions were brought up. Earlier, Tsēng had an unpleasant experience working with a director who changed his dramatic text without consulting with him and misinterpreted the text, resulting in an atmosphere which was incorrect for the plot. Tsēng resisted the revision and criticized that director's ability to interpret the poetic dramatic text, resulting in rumors that he was resistant to changing his dramatic text in any way. In this meeting, he addressed this, saying:

I have an open mind about the final revision of my dramatic text; I am not insistent about my own opinion only. But when someone put forward his opposite opinions regarding the play's subject matter, I needed to explain. If the subject matter cannot be explained, I will stick to my own view. Creativity sometimes requires logical thinking and lines of reasoning.

Tsēng's confidence regarding the genuineness and accuracy of play content came from his philosophy of playwriting. He noted, "My way of constructing a scenario is based on research. I research every aspect of the subject and accomplish a well-structured and coherent

²⁶ Tsēng specifically uses the term *sān bù qǔ* 三部曲 (lit. "three-part *qǔ*") to indicate the three major stages of *kūnqǔ* development.

play as if in one breath.” Indeed, Tsēng is recognized in academic circles first as a scholar and second as a playwright. He was also of the opinion that, “However one stages a play into a performance, it requires collective wisdom from playwright, director, musicians, designers and main performers.”

Third, ideas were raised about finding common ground between maintaining accuracy in *kūnqǔ*'s historical context, which was already fully present in Tsēng's dramatic text, and creating the drama necessary for storytelling. Tsēng wanted to depict the progress of Wèi Liángfǔ's thoughts as a singer who was searching for ways to polish an existing singing style and the process of generational development in poetic literature which made *kūnqǔ kūnqǔ*. Yet the wordy and lengthy monologues/dialogues and details of historical context became a major concern for actors, musicians, and scholars in the meeting.

Fourth, musical matters were discussed. The immediate challenge for the music director, Sūn Jiàn'ān, was to search for source material to compose the already-lost Kūnshān *qiāng*, the Kūnshān style of melodies which existed 650-plus years ago, as needed in Act 1 when Gù Jiān improved and presented it to the Emperor Zhū. The second challenge was to recreate the Water Polished singing style of Wèi Liángfǔ's time. There were historical facts about principles of Wèi Liángfǔ's Water Polished singing techniques documented in scattered articles and in his “Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” (*Qǔ lǜ* 曲律), but no actual music notation written by Wèi Liángfǔ in his Water Polished music style was found. The earliest manual of prosody which included *gōngchě* 工尺 melodic notes and *bǎnyǎn* 板眼 rhythmic beats is *Comprehensive Notations of Southern and Northern Qǔpái in Nine Modes* (*Jiǔgōng dàchéng nánběi cígōng pǔ* 九宮大成南北詞宮譜),²⁷

²⁷ Tan Longjian, “Fu Xueyi tan Jiugong dacheng nan bei ci gongpu,” 27.

written 1741–1746 in the Qīng dynasty, roughly one hundred eighty years after Wèi Liángfǔ’s death. The manuals of prosody collected more than 170 *cí* poems (a type of poetry with pre-existing tone structure and varying line-length) and 4,466 examples of Southern and Northern *qǔ* songs all marked with *gōngchě* music notation which date back to the Táng, Sòng, Yuán, and Míng dynasties.²⁸ Some scholars analyzed their musical structures and believed that they were mostly “*kūnqǔ*-ized” notation,²⁹ a product that had been further refined during the peak of *kūnqǔ* popularity in the mid-Míng and early Qīng dynasties.³⁰ Sūn Jiàn’ān as music director and composer³¹ therefore had to re-construct *qǔpái* songs back into their earlier forms in order to reflect this historical progress. To revive these iconic yet obscure Water Polished melodies was not an easy task. A third challenge came from the use of accompaniment throughout the play; how to produce tone colors that could clearly identify the difference between the pre- and post-Wèi’s Water Polished instrumentation while the entire play is given specific *kūnqǔ qǔpái* in the text.

²⁸ The number of pieces vary according to different sources. See Zheng Zuxiang, “《*Jiugong dacheng nanbei ci gongpu*》 Cidiao Laiyuan Bianxi,” 38, 40; Feng Guangyu, “Rang gudai yinyue wenxian zaixian fengcai - xiezai 《*Jiugong dacheng nanbei ci gongpu*》 bianyi wancheng zhiji,” 47; Liu Chongde, “《*Jiugong dacheng*》 yu zhongguo gudai ci qu yinyue,” 3; Tan Longjian, “Fu Xueyi tan Jiugong dacheng nan bei ci gongpu,” 25–26 ; Wu Zhiwu, “《*Taigu Chuanzong*》 yu 《*Jiugong Dacheng*》 de bijiao yanjiu - 《*Jiugong Dacheng*》 quwen, quyue cailiao lai yuan zhi san,” 48; Wu Junda, “Kunqu changqiang di zhuangshi yin ji qi jipu fa,” 24.

²⁹ Fu Xueyi, “Shitan Cidiao Yinyue,” 52; Zheng Zuxiang, “《*Jiugong dacheng nanbei ci gongpu*》 Cidiao Laiyuan Bianxi, 44.

³⁰ Xú Dàchūn 徐大椿 in his *The Tradition of Sung Poetry* (*Yuèfǔ chuán shēng* 樂府傳聲), “The Origins” (Yuán liú 源流), said: “In the mid-Míng dynasty the style of singing known as Kūn *qiāng* flourished, and up to now it has not lost its leading position. Today, even when one or two tunes of Northern *qǔ* are occasionally sung, they would be changed into a kind of *kūnqǔ* style Northern *qǔ*, and they are not the Northern *qǔ* of the olden days” (至明之中葉，崑腔盛行，至今守之不失。其偶唱北曲一二調，亦改為崑腔之北曲，非當時之北曲矣。). Translation by Koo and Yue, *Xu Da-chun: The Tradition of Sung Poetry*, 141.

³¹ Here the role of a “composer” in *kūnqǔ* or *xìqǔ* in general is different from that of a Western composer. I will discuss the role of a composer and the process of making music in later chapters.

The production timeline of the *Wèi* play is summarized as follows:

October 6, 2010	Playwright's original dramatic text completed.
July 2011	Playwright publishes that text in <i>Taipei Theatre Journal</i>
August 4, 2014	First production meeting
October 7, 2014	Playwright's revision of his original dramatic text based on discussions at the first production meeting; the 2 nd version of the dramatic text
November 26, 2014	Second production meeting
February 25, 2015	Staff member's proposed 3 rd edition of the dramatic text, based on playwright's revision and discussions in the second production meeting; most of this revision rejected by the directors
June 6, 2015	Directors' textual emendation, the 4 th version of the dramatic text
June 2015	Music notation for <i>qǔpái</i> songs ready for actors/singers (scores continue to be created and revised during rehearsals)
July 7, 2015	Official announcement of the production to the media and press
July 9–Aug. 13, 2015	Rehearsals (further revisions made by the directors in the process)
August 14, 2015	Directors' semi-final text for performance, the 5 th version of the dramatic text
August 16, 2015+	Rehearsals (which results in the final directors' text for performance, projected as side-titles; the 6 th version of the dramatic text)
October 1, 2015	Premiere at the Jiāngnán Theatre, Nánjīng
October 19, 2015	Performance at the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu

In the following chapters, I will describe and analyze the full process of bringing the dramatic text to its final performance form, beginning with a close analysis of the original dramatic script.

Chapter 2

The Sage of *Kūnqǔ*: Wèi Liángfǔ

This dramatic text is the original version by the scholar-playwright Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh 曾永義, written in 2010 and published in the *Taipei Theatre Journal* in 2011. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is a new play based on the life and contributions of Wèi Liángfǔ towards *kūnqǔ*. This play was originally titled *Wèi Liángfǔ* 《魏良輔》 and renamed *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* 《曲聖魏良輔》, following a suggestion made during the first production meeting. To comprehend the creative process, an understanding of the most essential aspects of classical dramatic history, elements, and techniques embodied in the play is necessary. This chapter therefore is devoted to a full translation of the original dramatic text, with annotations that identify and describe these important aspects.

This play text is written in traditional Chinese; the translation is mine and is intended to be more literal than poetic. The final text for performance (see Appendix) is written in simplified Chinese and was translated by Kim Hunter Gordon for the side-titles used in performance. In this chapter, the original dramatic texts in traditional Chinese and the English translation are given together, the former above the latter. Throughout the play, the word *qǔ* 曲 serves as a generic term associated with Northern *qǔ* and Southern *qǔ*, as well as with literary *qǔ* in poetry singing and dramatic *qǔ* used in staged plays. In the Chinese text, the names of the role categories are used to indicate the dramatic characters throughout the play, with the names of the characters mentioned in the stage directions at the beginning of each act or upon their entrance. For clarification in English to aid further analysis, both the names of the characters and their role categories are given. Here and elsewhere, Arabic numerals in a bordered box, e.g., 0.3, indicate

the specific line of text in a particular act. The first digit indicates the act (0 is the prologue) and the second digit indicates the line which includes the Chinese text and its translation. Not all lines will be marked; only the lines that will be discussed in the later chapters will be marked. The brackets [] indicate stage directions in the English translation. In both texts, the setting indicated in stage directions is provided for the reader's imagination, for example [Setting: a view of the Tiger Hill]. This stage direction, except as noted, does not imply scenic elements. The sign 【】 indicates the title of a *qǔpái* 曲牌 or fixed tune.¹ The square configuration of the Chinese characters preceding the 【】 provides information as to: 1) Northern or Southern *qǔpái*; 2) mode; and 3) literary form. For example, in 中呂 慢詞 【xxx】, the upper two characters indicate the *zhōnglǚ* 中呂 mode while the lower two characters indicate the literary form *màncí* 慢詞 functioning as an introduction. In another example, 南越調 近詞 【雁過沙】 【Yàn guò shā】 is a Southern *qǔpái* in *yuè* mode and the literary form of *jìncí*. Not all three pieces of information are provided in every instance. Sometimes the notation combines the mode and whether it is a Northern or Southern *qǔpái*, or only gives the mode used; the information will be clarified each time throughout the translation and, if necessary, in a footnote as well. Some words in *qǔpái* are set in a smaller font; these are called *chènzì* 襯字, lit. “decorative words.” These words are in addition to the regulated number of words required in the *qǔ* poem. In the traditional Chinese text, “。” indicates the punctuation mark known as a “period” in English, indicating the end of a sentence.

¹ Term adapted from Catherine C. Swatek 2002, *Peony Pavilion Onstage*, p. 10; and Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak 1991, *Listening to Theatre*, p. 291 FN 42.

《曲聖魏良輔》

The Sage of *Kūnqǔ*: Wèi Liángfǔ

A play by Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh 曾永義

家門大意

Prologue²

(副末上)

[*Fù mò* enters]

副末(唱)：中呂慢詞【沁園春】

Fù mò [sings]: 【*Qìn yuán chūn*】 in the *zhōnglǚ* mode and the literary form of *màncí*³

0.3 絳帳春風，上庠京國，暇日從容。

Teacher's words, like a spring breeze, float around the university in the capital, during this leisure time.⁴

且揮毫著墨，譜將崑曲，去脈來龍。

To pass the time, I composed a *kūnqǔ* play with my brush and ink and set it to music, expounding on its origin and development.

0.5 關目新穎，排場講究，按律填詞宿所宗。

The plot and performance⁵ are novel, the acts fastidiously structured.⁶ I composed lyrics to rigorously fit poetic rules.

0.6 魏良輔，平生志業，大呂黃鐘。正是：

Wèi Liángfǔ, dedicated his life to solemn music⁷. Indeed:

² The *jiā mén dà yì* 家門大意 or prologue is used to describe the playwright's purpose in writing a play and give a summary of its contents.

³ *Màncí* 慢詞, lit. "slow words," is a literary form which originated from the Sòng dynasty's *cí* 詞 poetic tradition. It required that the tones of words follow the rules and style of *mànqū* 慢曲, lit. "slow *qǔ*." It was later classified as an introduction in Southern *qǔ* notations.

⁴ While serving as visiting professor at Beijing University in September 2010, Tsēng started his writing during his leisure time.

⁵ *Guānmù* 關目 refers to plot and performance. A discussion can be found in Hsu Tzy-han 許子漢, *Research on Ming Chuanqi Drama: The Development of Three Elements in the Act Structure*, 125–42.

⁶ *Páichǎng* 排場, lit. "arrange acts," refers to the act structure.

⁷ *Dàlǚ huángzhōng* 大呂黃鐘(鍾) are two musical modes. From *The Rites of Zhou* (*Zhōu lǐ* 周禮), chapter three "Offices of Spring on Education and Rituals" (*Chūnguān zōngbó* 春官宗伯), section on "Music Department" (*Dàsīyuè* 大司樂): "... Therefore play the court instruments in the *huángzhōng* mode, sing in the *dàlǚ* mode, and

(吟介)

[Recites]

0.8 魏良輔翻新水磨調，

Wèi Liángfǔ refined the old style into the Water Polished style.

張野塘落拓蘇門嘯。

Zhāng Yětáng was in dire straits and yet reveled in his excellent talent⁸.

千人石嘯唱中秋夜，

People gathered at Tiger Hill's Thousand People Rock, singing popular *qǔ* on a mid-autumn night.

0.11 梁辰魚撐張崑劇纛。

Liáng Chényú unfurled *kūnjù*'s flag.

壹·序曲

Act 1: Introduction

1.1 (場上象宮中便殿，外扮明太祖朱元璋，老生扮顧堅，丑扮周壽誼，三小丑扮鄉野耆老。雜扮宮女太監。)

[Setting: a rest hall in the palace. On stage are a supporting older male role actor (*wài*) playing the Míng dynasty's first emperor Zhū Yuánzhāng; an old male role actor (*lǎo shēng*) playing Gù Jiān; a clown role actor (*chǒu*) playing Zhōu Shòuyì; three minor clowns (A, B, C) playing elders from the countryside. Bit-part actors (*zá*) play female court attendants and eunuchs.]

外(唱)：中呂【菊花新】

Emperor Zhū (*wài* role) [sings]: 【Jú huā xīn】 in the *zhōnglǚ* mode and the literary form of *yǐnzi*⁹

大明一統錦江山。

The Míng Empire has united a beautiful country.

dance the piece of *Yúnmén* (lit. “the cloud gate”), as ritual offerings to the Heavenly gods (...乃奏黃鍾，歌大呂，舞雲門，以祀天神。)” Here *dàlǚ huángzhōng* indicates solemn music, not necessarily only court music.

⁸ Here *Sūmén xiào* 蘇門嘯, lit. “Sūmén whistle,” indicates the taste of an excellent talent. In this play, *Sūmén xiào* also refers to the moment that Zhāng Yětáng magically found resolution in combining Southern and Northern *qǔ*.

⁹ *Yinzi* 引子, lit. “lead-in,” is a literary form that is used as a type of introduction serving as the actor's opening lines.

甘澍普施喜平安。

Like a wide-spread needed rain, enjoying peaceful times.

昨夜夢邯鄲，驚覺流年輕換。

Last night I had a dream of experiencing decades of glory and wealth. When I awoke I suddenly realized that years have already passed.

外（白）：朕驅逐胡虜，掃除群醜，建立大明，一統山河。御宇三十年，忽然古稀矣。今召集天下鄉野耄耆，賜宴偏殿，同慶眉壽，共樂太平。父老呵！

Emperor Zhū (wài role) [speaks]: I expelled the northern tribes, removed obstacles, built the Míng dynasty, and united the country. My reign has lasted thirty years, suddenly I am in my seventies. Today I gather the aged from all over the country, giving them an imperial banquet. We will celebrate our long life and enjoy peace together. My elders!

1.7 外（唱）：中呂過曲【駐馬聽】

Emperor Zhū (wài role) [sings]: 【Zhù mǎ tīng】 in the *zhōnglǚ* mode and the literary form of *guòqǔ*¹⁰

想朕早歲征鞍，萬里驅馳星月寒。

Thinking about my early days traveling on my horse on long expeditions, I rode thousands of miles in the cold moonlit nights.

1.9 那江南縵舞，塞外悲歌，宮內吹彈，

That music and dance south of the Yangtze River, the solemn songs beyond the Great Wall, and the instruments performing in the palace,

都付與大風掃滅雲盡翻。

All wiped out by my victory, like a storm that overturned the reign.

今日裏河清海晏擎金盞，

Today, the world is at peace. I hold up my golden cup,

1.12（合）同享福安，共祈眉壽共朝班。

[chorus] Let us enjoy good fortune and peace together, meet with the emperor and pray for his long life together.

¹⁰ *Guòqǔ* 過曲, lit. “passing *qǔ*,” is a literary form used as a type of main *qǔpái*, always set after the introductory *yīnzǐ*.

(老生出列，白)

[Gù Jiān, an old man steps out, speaks]

臣啟陛下。

Your Majesty!

[1.15] 老生 (唱) : 中呂過曲 【前腔】

Gù Jiān (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: 【Qián qiāng】¹¹ in the *zhōnglǚ* mode and the literary form of *guòqǔ*

[1.16] 伏維大業艱難，功蓋古今恢漢冠。

Your Excellency accomplished a great yet difficult feat, your success has restored the Hàn crown for all time.

[1.17] 欣逢良辰萬壽，普天同慶，舉世騰歡，

On this happy occasion of Your Excellency's birthday, the whole world celebrates, joining in this jubilation.

[1.18] 更分餘波沐日謁金鑾。

For the rest of the celebration day we pay our respects to Your Excellency.

[1.19] 今日裏玉尊傾盡海般寬。

Today, your generosity pours forth as wide as the ocean.

[1.20] (合) 同享福安，共祈眉壽共朝班。

[chorus] Let us enjoy good fortune and peace together, meet with the emperor and pray for his long life together.

外 (白) : 聞崑山周壽誼年屆一百有七，今日來否？

Emperor Zhū (*wài* role) [speaks]: I heard that Zhōu Shòuyì from Kūnshān is one hundred and seven years old. Is he coming today?

(丑出列)

[Zhōu Shòuyì, the clown role steps out]

¹¹ Qián qiāng 前腔, lit. “previous tune,” indicates that this *qǔpái* is the same as the previous *qǔpái* 【Zhù mǎ tīng 駐馬聽】.

丑（白）：臣在。

Zhōu Shòuyì (*chǒu* role) [speaks]: Here I am.

1.24 外（白）：你如何前來？如何得此長壽！

Emperor Zhū (*wài* role) [speaks]: How did you come here? How did you gain such longevity?

1.25 丑（白）：臣走來的，一口氣走了數十里路。臣子年八十，陪臣同行。一路氣喘如牛，屢次跌坐地上。臣無養生之道，但好唱曲，好飲酒，好美色！

Zhōu Shòuyì (*chǒu* role) [speaks]: I came on foot. I have traveled a long distance nonstop. My son has turned eighty and he has accompanied me on my journey. On my way, I gasped for breath like a cow, often falling to the ground. I have no recipe for achieving a noble age, but I have a passion for singing the *qǔ*, drinking alcohol, and loving pretty ladies!

1.26 外（白）：你好酒色，有福有福！聽說崑山腔很耐聽，你能唱給我們聽聽嗎？

Emperor Zhū (*wài* role) [speaks]: Your love for alcohol and beauty, good fortune, good fortune! I have heard that Kūnshān's lyrical melodies (Kūnshān *qiāng*) are pleasing, will you sing for us?

丑（白）：領旨。

Zhōu Shòuyì (*chǒu* role) [speaks]: I accept your order.

丑（唱）：

Zhōu Shòuyì (*chǒu* role) [sings]:

1.29 月子彎彎照幾州，幾人歡樂幾人愁。

The crescent moon shines over the country. Under the moon glow how many people are happy, how many people are worried?

1.30 幾人夫婦同羅帳，幾人飄散在他州。

How many couples are together under silk bed-curtains, how many are separated in different places?

（三小丑聽唱了山歌，也都爭著要獻唱。朱元璋覺其純樸可愛，令其一獻唱上來。）
[Three minor clowns (A, B, C) listen to the mountain folk song, all eager to sing. Emperor Zhū finds them pure and endearing, asking them to sing their songs one by one.]

甲小丑（唱）：

Clown A [sings]:

八字衙門朝南開，有理無錢莫進來。

The wide-open court gate faces south. Even if you are in the right, do not enter if you can't pay.

有錢官司包打贏，無錢官司打屁股。

With money you are guaranteed to win any lawsuit. Without money you are caned on your butt.

乙小丑（唱）：

Clown B [sings]:

天平地平，官府不平。

The horizon is *píng* (flat), yet the government is not *píng* (fair).

官府一平，天下太平。

If the government were *píng* (fair), the world would be *píng* (at peace).

天平地平，世道不平。

The horizon is *píng* (flat), yet the morals of the society are not *píng* (in order).

世道一平，天下太平。

Once the morals are *píng* (in order), the world will be *píng* (at peace).

丙小丑（唱）：

Clown C [sings]:

說鳳陽、道鳳陽，鳳陽本是好地方。

Speaking about Fèngyáng, Fèngyáng was once a great place being the birthplace of an emperor.

[1.42] 自從出了朱皇帝，十年就有九年荒。

Ever since Zhū became emperor, nine out of ten years have seen famine.

[1.43] 大戶人家賣驢馬，小戶人家賣兒郎。

Rich families sold mules and horses, poor families sold their children.

[1.44] 咱家沒有兒郎賣，身揸花鼓走四方。

I have no child to sell, so I carry a flower drum and travel in every direction.

[1.45] （外每聽一曲即皺一次眉頭，及聽〈鳳陽〉曲，勃然據案，沈吟一會，若有所悟而款款坐下。）

[The Emperor knits his eyebrows while listening to the folk songs; when the song “Fèngyáng” is

sung, he agitatedly knocks on his desk, then turns silent for a while as if he understands and slowly sits down.]

1.46 外（白）：歌謠出諸方音方言，流露諸方庶民心聲。朕宵衣旰食，勤政愛民，自負如此；而父老聲口，乃不堪若是，朕豈其然乎？當深切反躬自省，以民為鑑才是。啊！顧堅先生，爾為鄉紳，豈鄉音皆似此粗鄙哉！

Emperor Zhū (*wài* role) [speaks]: Folk songs come from local music and local language, they reveal common people's voices. I get up before dawn and eat late, diligent with state affairs and the love of my people. I am responsible for my actions and yet the elders say life is still unbearable. Could it really be so? I should sincerely reflect and learn a lesson from my people. Ah! Mr. Gù Jiān, you are a country gentleman, does the country language always sound vulgar like this?

1.47 老生（白）：啟陛下，土腔以歌謠為載體，每滿心而發，肆口而成，語不假雕琢；若以南北曲牌為載體，一者人工造就嚴格之音律，二者文士彩繪歌詞，於是腔調精緻而悅耳矣。臣嘗與知交名士楊維禎、顧瑛、倪瓚等研究南曲之奧秘而使之提昇，流播遐邇，因有「崑山腔」之稱，蒙陛下耳聞者，實經臣等改良之崑山腔，非周老所歌之土腔也。

Gù Jiān (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Your Majesty! The folk songs are sung with local music and local language. From each happy heart they emerge without much thought. These songs are as jade uncarved. But if we sing with the *qǔpái* of Southern and Northern *qǔ*, on one hand set strictly to tonal principles in music, on the other using colorful scholarly lyrics, then the lyrical melodies thereby become exquisite and pleasing to the ears. My scholar friends Yáng Wéizhēn, Gù Yīng, Ní Zàn and I, research the mysteries of Southern *qǔ* and improve it, spread it near and far. This is called “Kūnshān *qiāng*,” which Your Majesty has heard. It is in fact Kūnshān lyrical melodies we improved, not the music with local language sung by Mr. Zhōu.

1.48 外（白）：若此，能勞先生為朕歌一曲乎！

Emperor Zhū (*wài* role) [speaks]: If so, could you sing a song for me?

1.49 老生（白）：謹遵命。

Gù Jiān (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: I will obey.

1.50 (唱) ^{南商}調 【二郎神】

Gù Jiān [sings]: 【Èr láng shén】 in the Southern *shāng* mode.

從別後，正七夕穿鍼在畫樓。

After your departure, on Valentine's Day¹² I threaded my needle in my decorated tower.

暮雨過紗窗涼已透。

The afternoon rain blew through the window screen, the cold air gusted in.

夕陽影裏，見一簇寒蟬衰柳，水綠蘋香人自愁。

In the reflection of the setting sun, I see silent cicadas and dying willows, longing for the green water and apple scent of spring.

況輕拆、鸞交鳳友。得成就，真箇勝、似腰纏跨鶴揚州。

We were breaking apart as a couple. Once success is achieved, we will be together again, living in perfection, truly like those officials in Yángzhōu with wealth and long life.

1.55 老生（白）：啟陛下，此曲係永嘉人高則誠所製【商調·二郎神】套〈秋懷〉首曲。即作《琵琶記》之高明也。

Gù Jiān (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Your Majesty! This piece was written by Gāo Zéchéng from the Yǒngjiā area. It is the first part of the poem “In Autumn,” sung with the *qǔpái* 【*Shāng* mode · Èr láng shén】¹³. He is the playwright of *The Lute*, also known as Gāo Míng.

1.56 外（白）：朕覽《琵琶記》，以為五經四書在民間如五穀不可缺。此記如珍羞百味，富貴家其可無耶？適才卿家所唱【二郎神】，細膩宛轉，以低腔做美，極其耐聽。其所謂「崑山腔」者，當如先生之韻喉也。先生必以此傳世矣！

Emperor Zhū (*wài* role) [speaks]: I read *The Lute* and feel education by the Five Classics and the Four Books for common people, just like the five grains, is indispensable. This play is like a luxurious delicacy for wealthy and noble families, how can they do without? Just now you sang this song 【Èr láng shén】, it is delicate and lovely. Its beauty, taken from Kūnshān lyrical melodies,¹⁴ is extremely pleasant to the ear. This so-called “Kūnshān *qiāng*” should, just like your beautiful singing, be handed down for generations!

老生：（白）謝陛下誇獎。

Gù Jiān (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Thank you Your Majesty for your praise.

¹² Qīxī 七夕, a festival on the seventh day of the seventh month in the Chinese lunar year. This legend celebrates the precious evening when the cowherd (*niú láng* 牛郎) and the weaver girl (*zhī nǚ* 織女) meet on a bridge formed by magpies. This day is celebrated with much the same feeling as is Valentine's Day.

¹³ This is the *qǔpái* called 【Èr láng shén 二郎神】, a first *qǔpái* in a *qǔpái* set which is also called 【Èr láng shén】.

¹⁴ In her translation of the final text for performance, Gordon translated this literally as “base tune.” According to playwright Tsēng, *dī qiāng* 低腔 refers to “Kūnshān *qiāng*.” (Interviewed by Sūn Jiàn'ān, August 2015)

(燈漸暗)

[The lights fade out]

貳、切磋曲藝

Act 2: Exchange *Qǔ* Art Forms

2.1 (場上象居家。老生扮魏良輔攜笛上。)

[Setting: a living room. Onto the stage an old male role actor (*lǎo shēng*) playing Wèi Liángfǔ, enters with a bamboo flute (*dí*).]

2.2 老生 (唱) : 正宮
引子 【梁州令】

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: 【Liáng zhōu líng】 in the *zhènggōng* mode and the literary form of *yǐnzi*

十年辛苦度新聲，展轉過寒更，縷心南曲鬢霜生。

Ten years' hard work composing and singing new music. Through many cold restless nights I have grown gray hair, constantly brooding about the Southern *qǔ*.

2.4 喉轉調，聲婉協，口圓輕。

The voice is twirling, the four tones are harmonized and made smooth, and the method of pronouncing the words is round and light.

2.5 老生 (白) : 老夫太倉魏良輔，字尚泉。單生一女，窈窕伶俐。自幼耳濡目染，亦好音聲，取名鶯囀。父女二人過活，倒也清靜。老夫喜度曲，初習北調，絀於北人王友山。退而研習南曲，憤崑腔自先賢顧堅而後，轉之訛陋，平直無韻致，思有以創發改良。十年光陰，轉瞬經過，志業迄今未成。今日又約集諸友，切磋曲藝，探索門徑，敢待來也。

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: This old man Wèi Liángfǔ of Tàicāng city, is also known as Shàngquán. I have one daughter who is pretty and clever. She was influenced by her surroundings at an early age, appreciates a beautiful voice, and is named Yīngzhuàn. We have lived our life in peace. I love to sing. At first I learned the Northern *qǔ*, yet was not as good as Wáng Yǒushān from the north. I then turned to learning Southern *qǔ*. Because I was angry in spite of the efforts of scholar Gù Jiān, the Kūnshān singing style has been poor in quality, plain and without charm. I have been working to innovate and improve it. Ten years have passed in the blink of an eye and I have not yet achieved my goal. Today once again friends are gathering to exchange *qǔ* theory, explore the art form. They are coming.

2.6 (旦扮鶯鶯，領外大小末扮過雲適、張梅谷、謝林泉，挾板、簫、管上。)

[A young female role actor (*dàn*) playing Yīngzhuàn, enters with a supporting older male role actor (*wài* role), a supporting old male role actor (*dà mò*¹⁵) and a supporting male role actor (*xiǎo mò*) playing Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán. The three male actors enter carrying *bǎn* (clappers), *xiāo* (end-blown bamboo flute), and *guǎn* (double-reed pipe)¹⁶.]

旦 (白)：爹爹！伯伯叔叔他們三位都來了。

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [speaks]: Father! Three uncles are here.

(外、二末分念一句，合念末句)

[*Wài* role, two *mò* roles read one phrase each then read the last phrase together]

外 (白)：聲情律呂妙精微，

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: Feelings expressed by the voice and in modes that are based on the twelve *lǚ lǚ* tones are wonderful and profound.

大末 (白)：疾徐高低轉韻歸。

Zhāng Méigǔ (*dà mò* role) [speaks]: The tempo may be fast or slow; musical notes may be high or low; one must finish the word on its rhyme after being twirled in a sung phrase.¹⁷

小末 (白)：擷笛吹簫須襯和，

Xiè Línquán (*xiǎo mò* role) [speaks]: The playing of *dí* and *xiāo* flutes has to be appropriate.

¹⁵ There is no role category called *dà mò*. Since *dà* (lit. “big”) vs. *xiǎo* (lit. “small”) can also be interpreted as major vs. minor, or older vs. younger, here *dà mò* indicates the one older than the *xiǎo mò* based on the stage presentation. The role of *xiǎo mò* or *xiǎo mòni* did exist. The term refers to a character who first appears as a child and then later becomes a court official.

¹⁶ Historically, Guò Yúnshì 過雲適 was known as a Southern *qǔ* expert, Zhāng Méigǔ 張梅谷 was famous for playing *dòng xiāo* 洞簫 (end-blown bamboo flute), and Xiè Línquán 謝林泉 was known for playing *guǎn* (lit. “pipe” or “tube,” a double-reed instrument). However, Yú Wéimín 俞為民 implied that it was perhaps a *dí* (transverse bamboo flute) that Xiè Línquán was playing (Yu Weimin, *Song yuan nanxi kao lun*, p. 34). This interpretation was ultimately used in the production. In the Chinese text the terms *xiāo* and *guǎn* are separated by a Chinese ideographic comma which is usually used only to separate items in lists; I therefore translated this passage literally as two different instruments, the *xiāo* and the *guǎn*. If *xiāogǎn* 簫管 is combined as one term, it means wind instruments made of bamboo such as *xiāo* and *dí*.

¹⁷ *Guīyùn* 歸韻 refers to pronouncing the “tail” sound which finishes the word and produces the rhyme; it is one of the sophisticated singing techniques transforming the sound of a word into song. In most Han Chinese languages, a *zì* 字 or word consists of a “head” sound, a “belly” sound, and a “tail” sound. The pronunciation of a *zì* is not completed until the “tail” sound, which produces the rhyme, is concluded. This is one of the methods of pronouncing *zì* discussed by Xú Dàchūn 徐大椿 (1693–1771). For more information, see Koo Siu-sun and Diana Yue, trans., *Xu Da-chun: The Tradition of Sung Poetry*, pp. 65–67 “*Guīyùn* 歸韻” and pp. 172–74 “Concluding the *zì* on its rhyme.”

上三人（合白）：五音分辨不能違。

Above three people [speak together]: Singers cannot fail to distinguish five regions in the oral-cavity¹⁸ when producing words.

外（白）：尚泉兄！今日須將那不可破之窒礙排除了。

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: Brother Shàngquán,¹⁹ today we must remove the unsolved obstacles.

大末、小末（白）：你們二老儘管揣摩實驗，吾等以簫管配合就是。以二公歌曲之精湛，豈有不能破之理！

Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán (*dà mò* and *xiǎo mò* roles) [speak]: You two masters please go ahead polishing and experimenting with the *qǔ*; we shall collaborate with our *xiāo* and *guǎn* flutes. With your exquisite skills of singing *qǔ*, there is no way these obstacles cannot be overcome.

老生（白）：唉！聲音之道，自古難明，賴賢達而琢磨漸進也。

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: (sigh!) The way of singing since ancient times has been difficult to comprehend. We need wise men to polish and develop it.

2.16 老生（唱）：正宮
過曲【錦纏道】

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: 【*Jīn chán dào*】 in the *zhènggōng* mode and the literary form of *guòqǔ*

論宮商，漢相如只知纂組成章，五音自相將。

In terms of the rules of music, the Hàn dynasty poet Sīmǎ Xiāngrú knew only how to compile beautiful words and let the musical sounds²⁰ align on their own.

¹⁸ *Wǔ yīn* 五音, lit. “five sounds,” refers to the five regions or levels to produce sound in the oral cavity. Xú Dàchūn says, “The mouth releases *zì* from five different regions – the throat, the jaws, the tongue, the teeth, and the lips, and these are called ‘the five consonant-issuing positions in the oral cavity.’” (p. 109) “... Actually, they are located at five different levels, and though they all produce sounds from the oral-cavity they exert force from different positions at different levels... Therefore, when releasing a *zì*, if the singer wants to make the sound clear and high he should bring his breath up to exert force from the upper region of his oral-cavity...” (p. 113) (English translation by Koo Siu-sun and Diana Yue). In her translation of the final text for performance, Gordon translated this term as “pentatonic scale” which indeed is another meaning of *wǔ yīn* 五音, but I disagree with her since that is not a meaning that makes sense here.

¹⁹ Shàngquán 尚泉 is Wèi Liángfǔ’s courtesy name. For reasons of politeness, intellectuals have traditionally called each other not by their first names, but by “courtesy names,” especially when addressing those of the same generation or younger.

²⁰ *Wǔ yīn* 五音 here refers to the Chinese pentatonic scale, indicating music in general.

魏曹丕、但能取氣為長。

Cáo Pī of Wei²¹, his writing has merit for its spirit.

晉陸機一般脗唇調暢。

The Jin dynasty writer Lù Jī²² penned parallel couplets that can generally be recited smoothly.

直到那齊永明、四聲究講，

Until the Yǒngmíng period²³, poetic style carefully applied rules of four tones²⁴.

平仄傳李唐，杜子美工吟榜樣。

The poetic tone patterns of level and oblique continued into the Táng dynasty, when Dù Zǐměi²⁵ served as a model with his excellent use of four tones.

宋詞分去上，長短律、淺斟低唱。

Sòng dynasty *cí* poetry distinguished falling and rising²⁶ tones. Lines were composed in irregular lengths with rhyme schemes, and the finished poetry would be sung while drinking.

2.23 崑腔又落入新魔障。

Kūnshān singing style once again faces a new obstacle.

2.24 外（白）：尚泉兄於古代音律可謂了然於胸矣！古人於腔調，亦即語言旋律所以源生之理與所以構成之因素不明，又不知腔調必須緣其載體以見精粗，必須憑藉一己之音色口法乃能呈現；但知以感悟神會，祈其冥然之契合。此齊梁以前之所謂自然語言旋律也。齊永明間，乃因翻譯佛經，發現我國語音之運行原來有四種聲調平上去入，聲調之組合配搭，必去八病方能和諧有致。於是唐詩近體有平仄律，杜甫晚節漸於詩律細，既擅於運用自然音律，於人工音律更發明四聲遞換之理。降及宋詞，於其長短句律與句中平仄律外，即進一步分辨四聲，而歌樂越加融合。此吾兄已知之矣！則何不由其載體曲牌更上層樓，期其可以脫胎換骨，精入微渺，使語言、音樂旋律融而為一，則何如哉！

²¹ Cáo Pī 曹丕 (187–226), the Emperor of the Wèi Kingdom during the Three Kingdoms era (220–280), wrote *Lùnwén* 論文 (“Essay on Literature”), the first significant work on Chinese literary theory and criticism.

²² Lù Jī 陸機 (261–303) was known for his parallel couplet style. His lyric poems are allusive and sentimental.

²³ Southern Qí 齊 dynasty, Yǒngmíng 永明 period (483–493).

²⁴ Shěn Yuē 沈約 (441–513) was a prominent poet in the Yǒngmíng period, which was ruled by Emperor Wǔ of the Southern Qí dynasty. Shěn wrote *Sìshēng Pǔ* 四聲譜 (“Four Tones Manual”) in which Chinese characters were classified according to tone. He is credited with having defined the four tones, which are divided into the level tone and oblique tone categories, as well as with identifying the eight defects to be avoided in poetry.

²⁵ Zǐměi 子美 is Dù Fǔ’s courtesy name. Dù Fǔ 杜甫 (712–770) is considered the sage of Chinese poets.

²⁶ The falling and rising tones, as well as the pausing tone, are among oblique tone patterns.

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: Brother Shàngquán, you have a deep understanding of ancient tonal principles. The ancients, in regard to the lyrical melody,²⁷ or melody of language, had no understanding of its origin and compositional elements. Nor were they aware that the exquisiteness or coarseness of a melody is a result of the tune to which it was sung as a “vehicle”;²⁸ or that the exquisiteness would only be revealed based on the singer’s tone color and vocal techniques.²⁹ People in general only internalized the lyrical melody and hoped for a natural fit between language and melody. This so-called natural melody of language (*zìrán yǔyán xuánlǜ* 自然語言旋律) appeared before the Qí and Liáng dynasties. In the Qí dynasty’s Yǒngmíng period, due to the translations of Buddhist scriptures, it was discovered that four tones of level, rising, falling, and pausing were used in our nation’s language. The collocation of tones could be in harmony only if it removed eight defects. As a result the Táng dynasty’s Modern Style Poetry³⁰ regulated tone patterns into the law of level and oblique. Dù Fǔ in his later days gradually refined the versification. He not only was good at using natural tonal contour but also invented a standard tonal pattern (*réngōng yīnlǜ* 人工音律) by requiring that all four tones be used in the last word of every odd-numbered stanza (*sìshēng dihuàn* 四聲遞換). In *cí* poetry of the Sòng dynasty, in addition to irregular lengths and rhyme schemes of level and oblique tone patterns, *cí* poetry further distinguished four tones so that the lyrics and music would be in harmony. You know about it, my brother! Why not raise the bar by using the existing *qǔpái* as the “vehicle,” and refine it until it is reshaped, making language and melody as one. What do you think?

2.25 老生（白）：先生所言，實深獲我心。蓋腔調之於其載體，猶刀刀之於其刀體，刀之鋒利度，實緣其刀體之為鉛為銅為鐵為鋼；此亦猶腔調之精緻度，亦緣其載體之為號子為歌謠為小調為詩讚為曲牌為套曲；若此，如能將曲牌精緻化，其字數、句數、長短律、平仄聲調律、音節單雙律、協韻疏密律、句法結構律、對偶工整律，皆縝密講求，其腔調必極趨高度之優美矣，而若歌者復能美化其音色，巧運其口法，必能使字之頭腹尾音畢允，則此字正腔圓之崑山腔尚何鄙陋之有？其必能抽音轉絲而氣無煙火矣！諸君呵！

²⁷ *Qiāngdiào* 腔調 or lyrical melody follows the implied inflections of the text, identifying four tones and stressed and unstressed syllables. Tsēng here uses the phrase “melody of language” (*yǔyán xuánlǜ* 語言旋律) to explain the rather complicated *qiāngdiào* concept.

²⁸ *Zài tǐ* 載體, lit. “carrier.” This term implies that the musical and lyrical elements of a *qiāngdiào* will develop differently if they are based on different levels of musical and lyrical material. For example, if a *qiāngdiào* was developed from a well-constructed basis, its exquisiteness would be carried to a higher level than the one developed from primitive origins; therefore I use “vehicle” for clarity.

²⁹ *Kǒufǎ* 口法, methods for pronouncing *zì*, was promoted by Xú Dàchūn 徐大椿 (1693–1771).

³⁰ *Jīntǐ Shī* 近體詩, lit. “modern style poetry,” a group of new poetic forms that matured and was refined in the Tang dynasty (618–907).

Wèi Liángfū (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Teacher Guò, your words are truly capturing my heart. So that a lyrical melody vis-à-vis its vehicle, is just like the blade vis-à-vis its material: the sharpness of a blade, in fact results from its material, be it lead or copper or iron or steel. In just this way the exquisiteness of a lyrical melody derives from its vehicle, be it a work song, folk song, ditty, poetic song, *qǔpái*, or a sequence of *qǔpái*. It follows that, if we can refine each *qǔpái* with careful attention to the number of words and sentences, the rule of irregular lengths of a sentence, the level and oblique tone patterns, the rule of identifying rhythm by grouping the odd and even Chinese characters, the rule of the density (rapid or slow rhythm) of rhyme schemes, the rule of syntactic structures, and the rule of orderly parallelism of the text, then the lyrical melody will reach its ultimate grace. If the singers further beautify their tone color, skillfully utilize their vocal technique, and are able to complete voicing a word's head, belly, and tail sounds, how could the Kūnshān lyrical melodies be thought meretricious when the words are sung articulately and roundly? The voice would be able to spin the melody as if it were silk, carried on the breath gently but not impetuously. Gentlemen!

2.26 老生（唱）：【刷子序】

Wèi Liángfū (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: 【Shuā zǐ xù】³¹

改良曲腔，須研磨載體，精細多方。

To refine *qǔ* singing style, one must polish the tune on which it is based, being elegant in many ways.

2.28 協韻無訛，音節應辨單雙。

There shall be no error to the rhyme, the rhythm should be based on groupings of odd or even numbers of Chinese characters.

2.29 何妨，口法諸般雕琢，

You should as well polish different kinds of vocal techniques,

吞吐處、恰似蘭麝噴芳。

Every word pronounced, puffing out the words like spraying precious orchid and musk perfume.

³¹ Because 【Shuā zǐ xù 刷子序】，like the previous 【Jīn chán dào 錦纏道】，continues in the *zhènggōng* mode, functioning as the main *qǔpái guòqǔ* just as the preceding 【Jīn chán dào】，this additional information is not given again.

一任你逞高低、山迴谷響，

Allowing you to flaunt the pitches high and low, like a sound which surrounds the mountain and echoes in a valley.

終究是得急徐、氣清韻揚。

At last succeeding in setting the tempo fast or slow, the breathing is clear and the rhyme flows.

2.33 外（白）：尚泉兄果然抽音若絲而氣無煙火，一字一聲中，似已發其肯綮矣！何不更以名曲唐伯虎〈情東青樓〉【南中呂·榴花泣】為載體而歌之，請張謝二兄和之簫管，在下以板節之，以驗此新腔乎？

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: Brother Shàngquán, as expected, carefully sings each note like spinning silk, gentle and not explosive. Every word and every sound seems to be a focal point. Why not try your vocal techniques with Táng Bóhǔ's famous poetic cycle *Qíng jiǎn qīng lóu* ("Love Letters to the Brothel"), its first poem written in the *qǔpái* 【Liú huā qì】 in the Southern *zhōnglǚ* mode. I would like to invite brothers Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán to accompany it with *xiāo* and *guǎn* flutes; I will lead the beat with the clappers. Should we try this poetic piece with the new singing style?

老生（白）：敬聞命。敢請三兄合奏之。

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Yes, please. I dare to ask for your accompaniment.

2.35 老生（唱）：南中呂 【榴花泣】

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: 【Liú huā qì】³² in the Southern *zhōnglǚ* mode

2.36 [中呂石榴花首至三] 折梅逢使煩寄到金陵，是必見、那芳卿。

[*Zhōnglǚ* mode 【Shí liú huā】 phrases one to three] I snapped a plum branch, a symbol of my affections, which was sent to Jīnlíng³³ by a messenger. It must have been seen by my sweetheart.

將咱言語記取真。

Remember the language of my true heart.

[中呂泣顏回四至末] 一一的、說與他聽。

[*Zhōnglǚ* mode 【Qì yán huí】 phrases four to end] One by one, words for her ear.

³² 【Liú huā qì 榴花泣】 is a *qǔpái* that combines 【Shí liú huā 石榴花】 and 【Qì yán huí 泣顏回】 , both in the Southern *zhōnglǚ* mode.

³³ Jīnlíng 金陵, now Nánjīng 南京, the capital city of Jiangsu province. A fourteenth-century imperial palace was built here by the Míng dynasty's first emperor Zhū Yuánzhāng; its ruins are still known as the Míng Imperial Palace 明故宮.

自別來到今，急煎煎、遣不去心頭悶。

Ever since our farewell, anxiously, unable to dispel my brooding.

2.40 似楊花、覆去翻來，如芳草、削盡還生。

Like a profusion of flowers that ripple back and forth. As the fragrant grass is mown, it will grow back.

2.41 外（白）：佳哉！真天衣無縫矣！足下拍挨冷板，別開堂奧，盡洗乖聲。聲則平上去入之婉協，字出反切，期其頭腹尾音之畢勾。啟口輕圓，收音純細。蓋調用水磨，而能功深熔琢若此也。足下十年功夫，畢竟得之矣！得之矣！

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: Marvelous! That works perfectly! You led the song with the clappers (*lěngbǎn* 冷板)³⁴, expanded the sphere of *qǔ* singing, and cleansed it of discordant sounds. The four tones of level, rising, falling, and pausing are smoothed and harmonized. When each word is pronounced, the initial, middle, and final sounds (head, belly and tail) of each word are to be heard clearly and completely as expected. You have made the start and end of all words light and round. The final part of the vowels or consonant is articulated with clarity. Through the polished singing style *shuǐmó*, the singing achieves a high degree of sophistication. Your ten years of hard work has succeeded at last! Succeeded at last!

2.42 老生（白）：則此新腔，可以謂之水磨調乎？

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Therefore this new style, can it be called Water Polished style (*shuǐmó diào*)?

2.43 外、二末：（同白）是矣！是矣！可以謂之水磨調也。

Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán (*wài* and two *mò* roles) [speak together]: Yes! Yes! We can call it Water Polished style.

2.44 （老生與三末相顧而喜樂）哈！哈！哈！

[Wèi Liángfǔ and three friends look at each other joyfully] Ha! Ha! Ha!

（燈漸暗）

[The lights fade out]

³⁴ *Pāi āi lěngbǎn* 拍捱冷板, lit. “delay-in-tempo, cold *bǎn*-beat,” indicates that the song is sung in a slower tempo, and a “cold” and less emotional atmosphere is created. *Lěngbǎn qǔ* 冷板曲, lit. “cold *bǎn*-beat song,” refers to Wèi Liángfǔ’s non-dramatic Water Polished style of *qǔ*.

參、邂逅奇遇

Act 3: A Happy Encounter

(場上象蘇州府太倉衛市街，來往行人，老生、旦亦與焉。生扮張野塘落拓狀，上)
[Setting: a market scene in Taicāngwèi City, Sūzhōu Prefecture. On stage are pedestrians. An old male role actor (*lǎo shēng*) playing Wèi Liángfǔ and a young female role actor (*dàn*) playing daughter Yīngzhuàn also appear. A male role actor (*shēng*) playing Zhāng Yětang enters, looking dejected.]

(吟介)

Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [recites]

3.3 無端遣戍到蘇州，淪落太倉街市頭。

For no reason I was banished to Sūzhōu, miserable and abject, wandering in the Taicāng city market.

3.4 一嘯吳門天地闊，撥彈絃索恨難休。

I have opened up my world while singing in the Wú³⁵ region, yet I cannot stop being resentful while plucking the strings.

3.5 生(白)：小生張野塘是也，籍隸河北，遣戍太倉衛，落拓窮愁。性喜北曲，雅善絃索。今為天涯浪人，舉目無親，何況男兒壯志，全成泡影。思念及此，好不恨人也。

Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [speaks]: This young man Zhāng Yětang, is a native of Héběi Province. As an exile on the frontier of Taicāngwèi, I am filled with poverty and sorrow. I am fond of Northern *qǔ* and am good at playing string instruments. Now I wander afar and know no one. Not to mention that my ambition has vanished. When I think of this, how bitter I have become.

3.6 (生撥絃彈介，眾扮市人聞聲，圍攏觀聽介，老生、旦亦與焉。)

[Zhāng Yětang plucks strings as if he is playing. Pedestrians hear the music, surround him and listen. Wèi Liángfǔ and Yīngzhuàn also participate.]

3.7 生(唱)：北仙呂【村裏迓鼓】

Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [sings]: 【Cūn lǐ yà gǔ】 in the Northern *xiānlǚ* mode

³⁵ Wú mén 吳門, lit. “the gate of Wú,” an ancient city in the Wú region of the Three Kingdoms located in the Sūzhōu area.

3.8 俺雖非世家華胄，金章紫綬。

Though I was not born into a family of nobility or golden-seal high officials.

也則是簪纓門第，讀書養性，修身尚友。

I was brought up in the mandarin class. I study so as to develop my temperament, cultivating myself so as to surround myself with my betters.

只這襟抱中，肝腸裏，倒有些情義牢守。

For my aspirations, I kept my dignity deep inside.

今日個逢了禍災，遭了誣讟，值了渠醜。

I have faced crisis, suffered from slander, and encountered great misconduct.

3.12 不由人痛切齒、憤悲難剖。

Instinctively I feel extreme pain; the anger and sadness are difficult to separate.

3.13 (雜扮群丐三五人，踏歌行上，一人領唱，眾人和之。)

[Bit-part actors (zǎ) play three to five beggars, dancing and singing while entering. One beggar leads the singing, others follow.]

3.14 天災人禍無了休，懶惰修身得自由。

There is no end to natural and man-made disasters. Be at ease and self-cultivation will gain your freedom.

(合) 得自由。

[chorus] Gain your freedom.

世界逍遙真正爽，飄飄蕩蕩似浮鷗。

It is the best to wander carefree in the world, drifting like floating seagulls.

3.17 (合) 似浮鷗。

[chorus] Like floating seagulls.

3.18 雜(白)：看你這傢伙，與我等差不多，一身邋邋，會彈絃，會唱歌。來來！加入我們歡樂逍遙去吧！

Bit-part actor (zǎ role) [speaks]: Look at you, you are no different from us, so messy. You know how to play strings and sing, come come! Join us, let's be happy and free!

3.19 (群丐對生戲耍拉扯介，生推開介，作勢欲打介，群丐逃介，生感嘆彈介。)
[Beggars drag and make fun of Zhāng Yětang. Zhāng pushes them away, pretending to fight.
Beggars run, Zhāng sighs and plays.]

3.20 生(唱)：【元和令】
Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [sings]: 【Yuán hé lìng】³⁶

不意裏乞兒惹我憂，暮地裏歌韻動吾愁。
Unexpectedly these beggars make me anxious, suddenly songs move my sorrow.

想當今官家荒怠無了休，更兼那權臣敲剝不自由。
These days the Emperor is endlessly dissolute and slack, and powerful officials extort and exploit, leaving no liberty.

終害得生民塗炭落陰溝。
In the end they oppress the people to the utmost, causing them to live in hell.

眼見得盜橫行，丐亂投。
Seeing robbery rampant, beggars try anything when in a desperate situation.

3.25 萬方慘淡一片秋。
All is cloaked in gloom like a sad autumn.

老生(白)：呵！先生請了！
Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Oh! Greetings, young Sir!

生(白)：請了。
Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [speaks]: Greetings!

老生(白)：觀先生氣宇非等閒之人，緣何落拓異鄉！
Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: By watching you young Sir, it is clear that you are not an ordinary man, why are you cast out in a foreign land?

3.29 生(白)：老丈關愛，溫馨何限。只因家父在朝剛正，得罪奸相嚴嵩，致遭羅織。家父陷於牢獄身亡，在下遠戍太倉，將一腔憤懣，街頭吟嘯，卻遭乞兒調弄，人生至此，夫復何論！
Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [speaks]: Thank you sir for your kind concern. How nice of you. Just

³⁶ Like the previous 【Cūn lǐ yà gǔ 村裏逐鼓】，【Yuán hé lìng 元和令】 continues in the Northern *xiānlǚ* mode.

because my father, who was an upright official, offended the treacherous minister Yán Sōng, he was framed on trumped-up charges. My father was imprisoned and died, and I was exiled far away to Tàicāng. On the street I sang out loud expressing my indignation, and yet suffered teasing by beggars. Thus is life, what more can one say!

老生（白）：公子遭此噩運，感同身受。老夫不禁惻然心傷。

Wèi Liángfū (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Hearing of your misfortune, I fully understand. An old man like me cannot help but feel heartbreaking sorrow.

3.31 旦（白）：妾觀公子，定非池中之物。聽君北曲，颯然騰越，定是名師傳授。

Yīngzuàn (*dàn* role) [speaks]: I observe that you are not a person who has no great ambition. Listening to you singing the Northern *qǔ* so breezily and brilliantly, you must have been taught by a famous master.

3.32 生（白）：老丈悲憫，小姐誇獎，由衷感謝。在下北曲絃索乃得諸何良俊家老頓傳授。老頓乃正德爺宮廷樂師，以故尚為北曲元音。老丈！小姐呵！

Zhāng Yětāng (*shēng* role) [speaks]: Thank you sir for your compassion and my lady for your praise. I studied the Northern *qǔ* accompanied by strings under Dùn Rén³⁷, a music teacher at the home of Hé Liángjùn³⁸. Old Dùn was a court musician for the emperor of the Zhèngdé period³⁹, therefore his Northern *qǔ* were orthodox Yuán dynasty music. My good sir and lady!

3.33 生（唱）：【上馬嬌】

Zhāng Yětāng (*shēng* role) [sings]: 【Shàng mǎ jiāo】⁴⁰

提起那勝國謳，人間已廣陵秋。

Referring to music from the previous Yuán dynasty, like the twilight of the piece *Guǎnglíng*⁴¹ which almost disappeared from earth.

³⁷ Dùn Rén 頓仁 (Ming dynasty), an expert in the Northern *qǔ* of the previous Yuán dynasty. His theory of *Xiánsuǒ jiǔgōng* 絃索九宮 (“Nine modes of the Northern *qǔ* Accompanied by Strings”) regulates the ways of playing plucked string instruments when accompanying the Northern *qǔ* singing. He was later hired by Hé Liángjùn 何良俊 as a family music teacher.

³⁸ Hé Liángjùn 何良俊 (1506–1572), a Ming dynasty drama theorist. He promoted the idea that the dramatic text should be simple and as natural as normal speech and avoid over-characterization. “One would rather change the tune in order to follow the law of rhyme and sacrifice the delicacy of words, than write delicate words that do not scan with the tune.” (寧聲葉而辭不工，無寧辭工而聲不葉) He Liangjun, *Siyoushai cong shuo*, 343.

³⁹ Zhèngdé 正德period (1506–1521), during the Ming dynasty, about 150 years after the fall of the Yuán dynasty (1271–1368).

⁴⁰ Like the previous 【Cūn lǐ yà gǔ 村裏逐鼓】 and 【Yuán hé líng 元和令】，【Shàng mǎ jiāo 上馬嬌】 and the following 【Shèng hú lú 勝葫蘆】 continue in the Northern *xiānlǚ* mode.

感激那老頓傳新秀。

Grateful for Old Dùn who passed his knowledge to a younger singer.

3.36 將我這魯鈍生徒生造就，羞，但學得皮相怎相酬。

Cultivating a pupil like me who is dull-witted. Shame! I only learned skin-deep, how can I repay my gratitude?

3.37 老生（白）：足下忒謙虛了。足下氣韻磅礴橫生，當今北曲泰斗，非君莫屬。深願足下屈駕寒舍，一敘心曲如何？

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role speaks): You are too modest. You are full of majestic spirit like a master. I believe that in the present day, only you can fill the post of the leading Northern *qǔ* expert. I truly hope you can kindly visit my humble home, let us talk heartily about *qǔ*. What do you think?

3.38 生（唱）：【勝葫蘆】

Zhāng Yětāng (*shēng* role) [sings]: 【Shèng hú lú】

俺只待流水高山子期友，生死亦須求。

I have been waiting to meet a soul mate like Zǐqī⁴² who will appreciate the music of flowing water and high mountains. In life or death I, too, dream of searching for one.

俺曾走遍江湖四十州，今日竟相知謬賞，相見綢繆。

I have traveled the whole country, over forty provinces. Today, to my surprise, we became bosom friends because of your kind praise, bound together at first meeting.

3.41 從今便風雨也同舟。

From today on we share the same fate.

⁴¹ Guǎnglíng *sǎn* 廣陵散, lit. “*sǎn*-music of Guǎnglíng,” a famous *gǔqín* 古琴 piece associated with 嵇康 Xī Kāng (commonly pronounced Jī Kāng) (223–262). Xī Kāng, a well-known poet, philosopher, music scholar and *qín* virtuoso, was executed for offending an official. Before his death, Xī Kāng played this melody one last time, sighing that this piece, too, was dying.

⁴² Zhōng Zǐqī 鍾子期 (387–299 BC). According to the Daoist book *The Writings of Master Liè* (*Lièzǐ* 列子), in the chapter called “The Questions of Tāng” (*Tāngwèn* 湯問), Zǐqī was listening to a *gǔqín* 古琴 piece played by Yú Bóyá 俞伯牙, a *qín* virtuoso. When Bóyá intended to describe a high mountain with his playing, Zǐqī would comment “Great! The sound of the *qín* is like a majestic mountain.” When Bóyá depicted flowing water, Zǐqī would say “It sounds like a mighty river!” Bóyá was amazed how Zǐqī understood his heart and mind and developed an intimate friendship. When Zǐqī died, Bóyá was in great sorrow, believing that he could never find another soul mate like Zǐqī. Bóyá smashed his *qín* to pieces and vowed never to play the *qín* again.

旦（白）：先生！隨我爹和我走罷。

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [speaks]: Mr. Zhāng! Please follow my father and me.

（三人行介，到介，敘賓主坐介。）

[Three of them stage-walk and then arrive. Host and guest gesture for each other to sit.]

3.44 老生（白）：不瞞足下，老朽憤自先賢顧堅而後，南曲崑腔訛陋，與吳中同好十年琢磨，近日終於創發崑山水磨調，細膩宛轉，一洗人耳。只是北曲元音之勁切，一時尚難以入水磨，頗以為苦。足下呵！

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: To be honest, I was angry that in spite of the efforts of scholar Gù Jiān, the quality of the Kūnshān singing style of the Southern *qǔ* has become so poor. I have been polishing and refining it with my good friends in Wú (Sūzhōu) for ten years. Recently I finally distilled Kūnshān's Water Polished style. Its finesse and delicate singing, are pleasing to the ear. However the powerful Northern *qǔ* of orthodox Yuán dynasty music is difficult to integrate into the Water Polished style at the present time. I am troubled by it. My friend!

3.45 老生（唱）：越調
過曲【憶多嬌】

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: 【Yì duō jiāo】 in the *yuè* mode and the literary form of *guòqǔ*

我翻水磨，度雅歌，脫略古今爭許多。

I have refined the tune to Water Polished style, tempering these elegant songs. Untraditional to the past and present I have accomplished much.

感動新聲人著魔。

Moved by the new sound, people are captivated.

3.48 那絲竹相和，那絲竹相和，一洗耳陶心醉醅。

A beautiful correspondence of song, strings and flutes,⁴³ a beautiful correspondence of song, strings and flutes, refreshes the ears and the heart is enchanted.

⁴³ *Sī zhú xiānghé* 絲竹相和, lit. “silk and bamboo correspondence.” This term was documented in *The Book of Jin* (*Jin shū* 晉書), chapter “Treatise of Music” (*Yùè zhì* 樂志): “Xiānghé, an old musical form from the Hàn dynasty, had silk and bamboo instruments for accompaniment; the one who plays drum to regulate beats sings (相和，漢舊歌也。絲竹更相和，執節者歌。)” The melodies of Xiānghé came from Hàn folk songs that were originally sung without instrumental accompaniment. Xiānghé (lit. “correspondence”) was named for the characteristic that the singer and strings and flutes corresponded during the performance.

3.49 旦（唱）：【鬪黑麻】

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [sings]: 【Dòu hēi má】⁴⁴

3.50 這新調雖佳，那北聲不合。

Although the new Southern style is pleasant, Northern music does not integrate with it.

為此展轉沈思，辛苦摩挲。

For this reason, I ruminate over and over. Working hard to find a way.

鎮日裏，無奈何。

All day I felt helpless.

而今幸遇先生，似起沈疴。

Today I had the pleasure meeting you sir, and it's as if my illness is cured.

請竭心正訛，好教元音入錦窠。

Please put your heart and soul into rectifying the errors, so that the Northern Yuán music can conform to the brocade of the new Southern sound.

3.55 那南北調和，那南北調和，對酒當歌。

The integration of South and North, the integration of South and North. Ah! Before wine, sing a song⁴⁵.

3.56 旦（白）：請先生協助我爹，使北音入水磨，此千秋事業也，先生豈能吝惜！

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [speaks]: Please sir help my father; integrating Northern music into the Water Polished music, this is a great cause that can be beneficial for centuries—how could you be reluctant!

3.57 生（白）：南音北調有所扞格，此地氣使然。欲調適相得，恐非容易。然願效微勞，以報大德。

Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [speaks]: The contradictions between Southern and Northern music are due to their different environments. For them to be in harmony with each other, I am afraid it will not be an easy task. However, I wish to devote my humble merits to helping, thereby repaying your kindness.

⁴⁴ Like the previous 【Yì duō jiāo 憶多嬌】，【Dòu hēi má 鬪黑麻】 continues in the Southern *yuè* mode and functions as a main *qǔpái guòqǔ*.

⁴⁵ From Cáo Cāo 曹操's poem *A Short Song Ballad* 短歌行: "Before wine, sing a song; how long is life, how long? It seems like morning dew; with by-gones gone with woe." (對酒當歌，人生幾何！譬如朝露，去日苦多。) Translated by Zhào Yànchūn 趙彥春.

老生（白）：此等大事，必費工夫，萬望先生休足舍下，切磋琢磨，期其成就之日。
Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: Such a great task requires a lot of time and skill. I truly hope you will rest at my humble home, exchanging and polishing ideas, awaiting the day of success.

旦（白）：那先生不可推辭矣！
Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [speaks]: Then, sir please do not decline!

生（白）：如此，恭敬不如從命矣！
Zhāng Yětāng (*shēng* role) [speaks]: Well then, if you insist!

老生、旦（白）：哈！哈！那最好不過了。
Wèi Liángfǔ and Yīngzhuàn (*lǎo shēng* and *dàn* roles) [speak]: Ha! Ha! That would be the best!

肆、翁婿慶成

Act 4: Celebration

4.1（場上像喜堂慶餘，末扮張千上。）

[Setting: family hall after a marriage ceremony. A supporting old male role actor (*mò*) playing Zhāng Qiān enters.]

末（吟）：
Zhāng Qiān (*mò* role) [recites]:

4.3 人生大事在婚姻，昨日全家倍有神。

One of the major events in life is marriage. Yesterday the whole family was especially energetic.

4.4 行禮如儀鑼鼓鬧，青春不負駐良辰。

The ceremony was performed with the customary lively sound of gongs and drums. Enjoy your youth and may this day end happily.

4.5 末（白）：在下吳中國工魏良輔家院是也。自從張野塘公子下榻以來，日日與東翁、小姐磨合南北曲。小姐與公子日久生情。東翁日昨主持婚禮，成就美滿姻緣。今日新人擬往滄浪亭遊賞，囑我備好車馬。日頭已上三竿，新人敢待來也。

Zhāng Qiān (*mò* role) [speaks]: I am a butler for Wú's (Sūzhōu's) eminent artist,⁴⁶ Wèi Liángfǔ.

⁴⁶ *Guógōng* 國工, lit. "national artist."

Ever since Mr. Zhāng Yětang came to stay here, he has been working every day with the Master and young lady trying to integrate the Southern and Northern *qǔ*. My lady and Mr. Zhāng have spent much time together and developed feelings for each other. Yesterday the Master hosted a wedding ceremony, resulting in a blessed marriage. Today the newlyweds plan to tour the Surging Waves Pavilion,⁴⁷ entrusting me to prepare the carriage. Now it is late in the morning, the newlyweds are about to come.

(生旦攜手上)

[Zhāng Yětang and Yīngzhuàn enter hand in hand]

旦(唱)：正宮引子【新荷葉】

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [sings]: 【Xīn hé yè】 in the *zhènglǚ* mode and the literary form of *yǐnzi*

好夢春宵燭映紗，聽啼鶯、枝頭歌罷。

A sweet dream on a spring wedding night, candlelight shines on silk window screens. Listening to the oriole's calling, a song from a treetop.

(生)纏綿一夜月光華，從此恩情日轉加。

(Zhāng Yětang, *shēng* role continues) Lingering on a gorgeous moonlight night, therefrom our love grows every day.

生(白)：啊！娘子！得蒙卿家雅愛，配為婚姻，小生真三生有幸也。今日攜娘子賞玩滄浪亭，張千！車馬備就否？

Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [speaks]: Ah! My wife! I received your generous love and was matched for marriage, this is truly my supreme good fortune. Today I will take you, my wife, to tour the Surging Waves Pavilion. Zhāng Qiān! Is the carriage ready?

張千(應介)：早就備好了。

Zhāng Qiān [answers]: It has been ready for some time.

旦(白)：如此，請夫君上馬，妾上車。

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [speaks]: So, my husband, please mount your horse, I will get into the carriage.

(行介，做到滄浪亭介，場上轉象滄浪亭園林。生旦下車馬介。)

[They perform traveling, and then enact their arrival at the Surging Waves Pavilion. The setting

⁴⁷ Cānglàng Tíng 滄浪亭 or the Surging Waves Pavilion is located in one of the oldest gardens in Sūzhōu, built in the mid-11th century. It is one of the classical gardens in Sūzhōu on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

now suggests the garden where the Surging Waves Pavilion is located. The newlyweds perform descending from the horse and the carriage.]

旦（白）：好一片春光也！

Yīngzhuàn (dàn role) [speaks]: What a splendid spring view!

4.15 旦（唱）：仙呂過曲【醉羅歌】

Yīngzhuàn (dàn role) [sings]: 【Zuì luó gē】⁴⁸ in the *xiānlǚ* mode and the literary form of *guòqǔ*

〔仙呂醉扶歸首至四〕 風光滿目春瀟灑，滄浪之水漾清佳。

[*Xiānlǚ* mode 【Zuì fú guī】 phrases one to four] The scenery of spring elegance is pleasing to the eye. The water of *Cānglàng* (Surging Waves) ripples gracefully.

濯足濯纓皆不差，仰思子美實通達。

It does not matter whether the Surging Waves' water is clear or muddy; thinking back on why Sū Zīměi built the Pavilion is truly moving.⁴⁹

〔仙呂皂羅袍五至八〕 你看園中布翠，林內雜花。

[*Xiānlǚ* mode 【Zào luó páo】 phrases five to eight] You see, the garden is covered in sheets of green, the landscape blooms with a multitude of flowers.

放眼堪嘯，鳴泉鼓蛙。

Cast your eye broadly, nature sings through ringing spring waters and croaking frogs.

〔仙呂排歌末三句〕 竹風引，日影下。

[*Xiānlǚ* mode 【Pái gē】 last three phrases] In the bamboo forest where wind blows, under the shadow of the sun.

這小亭深處多優雅。

This small pavilion deep in the garden is elegant in every way.

⁴⁸ 【Zuì luó gē 醉羅歌】 is a *qǔpái* combining 【Zuì fú guī 醉扶歸】，【Zào luó páo 皂羅袍】 and 【Pái gē 排歌】，all in the Southern *xiānlǚ* mode.

⁴⁹ Sū Shùnqīn 蘇舜欽 (1009–1049), also known as Zīměi 子美, a North Sòng dynasty poet. He named his pavilion Surging Waves Pavilion (*Cānglàng Tíng* 滄浪亭) to commemorate Qū Yuán 屈原 who died to prove his innocence and integrity. The *Songs of Chǔ* (*Chǔ cí* 楚辭), an anthology of Chinese poetry, contains a short work called “The Fisherman” (*yúfù* 漁父), which documented a folk song in an incident in Qū Yuán’s life. This song was sung by a fisherman who gave advice to Qū Yuán, suggesting he should assess the political situation and respond accordingly: “The *Cānglàng* water is clear; it can be used to clean my crown tassel. The *Cānglàng* water is dirty; it can be used to clean my feet.” (滄浪之水清兮，可以濯我纓。滄浪之水濁兮，可以濯我足。) Here *Zhuó zú zhuó yīng* 濯足濯纓, lit. “washing feet, washing crown tassel,” an abbreviation of the lyrics from this folk song.

4.22 生（白）：似此景物，令人仰慕那蘇子美嘯傲林園之樂。而竹風發響，清韻橫流，又展轉疏林，與鳴泉相和，則別添瀟灑矣。

Zhāng Yětāng (*shēng* role) [speaks]: Looking at this scenery makes me admire Sū Zīměi who enjoyed living in his garden like a hermit. The bamboo rattles in the wind, its delicate sound spreading all over, passing through the open forest and resonating with the ringing spring waters. The overall feeling is one of forthrightness and sincerity.

4.23 （生長嘯迴旋如十部鼓吹介，嘯聲忽嘎然而止。）

[Zhāng Yětāng produces a prolonged transcendental whistle, the sound echoes like ten instruments played together. The whistle suddenly stops.]

4.24 旦（白）：夫君此嘯，與竹風妙響、石泉清鳴相應，真將天籟地籟人籟融而為一矣！此豈非雅似南北曲調之唱和於磨調之道乎！

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [speaks]: My husband, your whistle marvelously joins with wind blowing through the bamboo and mingles with the pure sound of the mountain springs. It truly brings together the sounds from heaven, earth, and humans! There must be a similar way of integrating the Southern and Northern *qǔ* in the Water Polished music!

生（白）：是矣！是矣！卿家明慧，得此了悟，亟速歸家報與丈人！

Zhāng Yětāng (*shēng* role) [speaks]: Yes! Yes! My wife is wise to have this insight, let us quickly return home and tell the Master!

（生旦乘車騎馬返家介，到介，場上象魏家廳堂。）

[Zhāng Yětāng and Yīngzhuàn perform getting on the horse and in the carriage and return home. They perform arriving. The setting now suggests the Wèi's family hall.]

4.27 旦（白）：爹爹！快快到堂上來！

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [speaks]: Father! Hurry to the hall!

（老生上）

[Wèi Liángfǔ enters]

4.29 老生（白）：何事如此緊急！

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: What is the urgent matter!

旦（白）：爹爹！女兒適才與夫君閒遊滄浪亭，夫君不禁長嘯，忽與天風竹韻鳴泉相應，則三籟合奏矣！以此例彼，則南北曲調，焉有不能調適於水磨之理！

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [speaks]: Father! My husband and I were strolling in the Surging Waves

Pavilion just now, and my husband was moved to produce a long, magical whistling sound.⁵⁰ Suddenly it mingled with the natural sound of bamboo rattling in the wind and the earthy ringing of spring water. Immediately all three sounds (sounds from heaven, earth, and humans) combined like an ensemble. Using this same method, then why couldn't the Southern and Northern *qǔ* blend together in the Water Polished style?

旦（唱）：仙呂過曲【八聲甘州】

Yīngzuàn (*dàn* role) [sings]: 【Bā shēng gān zhōu】 in the *xiānlǚ* mode and the literary form of *guòqǔ*

陰陽正反，卻調和無間。

Yīn and *yáng* like two sides of a coin, opposite yet in harmony with one another.

有如南北騰翻，香喉玉口，終將扞格連環。

Like the Southern and Northern *qǔ* turning and spinning into something new, if sung by a beautiful voice, these two opposites will finally interlink.

（生唱）地籟天音自扣關，海雨江風不暫閒，何難？

Zhāng Yětang [*shēng* role sings]: The sounds from earth and heaven approached, the sea rain and river wind are restless. What's so difficult to understand?

恰將廣寒宮、仙樂奏彈。

Like playing the heavenly music of the Guǎnghán Palace⁵¹ on the moon.

老生（白）：爾等於大自然得此妙諦，余亦若有所悟。吾等何不據此揣摩！

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: You two acquired this excellent result from nature, I also understand it. Why don't you continue to refine this accordingly!

4.37 生（白）：岳父大人，近日小婿為使南北曲磨合，特製三弦一把，以此加入協奏如何？

Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [speaks]: Father-in-law, I recently tried to adapt and put together the

⁵⁰ Gordon's translation of “*Fūjūn bùjīn cháng xiào* 夫君不禁長嘯” was “My husband was playing flute in a new style” which was based on the director's misinterpretation. I will discuss this phenomenon later in Chapters three and seven.

⁵¹ Guǎnghán gōng 廣寒宮, lit. “vast and cold palace.” According to Chinese mythology, Cháng'é 嫦娥 drank the elixir of life and flew up to heaven, residing in Guǎnghán Palace on the moon.

Southern and Northern *qǔ* and specially modified a *sānxián*.⁵² What do you think about adding it to our ensemble?

4.38 老生（白）：那最好不過！女兒女婿！協和歌唱來者！

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: That is great! My daughter and son-in-law! Work together with the singers!

4.39 老生（唱）：【解三醒犯】

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: 【*Jiě sān chéng fàn*】⁵³

4.40 〔仙呂解三醒首至合〕 和管絃、循腔品看。

〔*Xiānlǚ* mode 【*Jiě sān chéng*】, phrase one to chorus phrase〕 Winds and strings play together, following the melody with taste.

辨曲中，妙理頻繁。

When distinguishing *qǔ*, there are many profound principles.

今朝重按廣陵散，翻妙譜，絕塵寰。

In the present day we again play the forgotten *qín* piece “*Sǎn*-music of *Guǎnglíng*,” revitalizing music from excellent scores; this piece has now become a masterpiece.

恰似長空皓月十分寒，風掃殘雲雁影單。

Like the bright moon alone in the vast desolate sky; the wind swept away the scattered clouds reflecting the shadow of a solitary goose.

4.44 〔仙呂八聲甘州末二〕 牙板，調相從，南北回還。

〔*Xiānlǚ* mode 【*Bā shēng gān zhōu*】, last two phrases〕 Wooden clappers, together with melody, Southern and Northern *qǔ* are played again and again.

4.45 老生（釋板，拍案而起，白）：得之矣！得之矣！南北曲均能調適於水磨矣，北調亦入水磨矣！數十年苦心，至此不費矣！

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [Puts down the wooden clappers, strikes the table and stands up, speaks]: That’s right! That’s right! The Southern and Northern *qǔ* can be blended into the Water Polished style, and so can the northern modes! My ten years of hard work has not been a waste!

⁵² *Sānxián* 三弦, lit. “three-string,” is a Chinese plucked instrument.

⁵³ 【*Jiě sān chéng fàn* 解三醒犯】 is a *qǔpái* that combines 【*Jiě sān chéng* 解三醒】 and 【*Bā shēng gān zhōu* 八聲甘州】; it is in the Southern *xiānlǚ* mode and functions as a main *qǔpái guòqǔ*.

生（白）：恭喜岳父大人，賀喜岳父大人，小婿亦有榮焉。

Zhāng Yětāng (*shēng* role) [speaks]: Congratulations father-in-law! Rejoice father-in-law! I as your son-in-law also feel honored.

4.47 旦（白）：爹爹！只是水磨新聲，今尚止用於歌唱，如能進入戲曲搬演，豈不更好。
Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [sings]: Father! And yet, this Water Polished style only applies to pure singing. If it can be a part of dramatic stage performances, wouldn't it be wonderful!

4.48 老生（白）：吾有弟子梁辰魚，才高八斗，性情豪爽，可與之商量！女兒女婿，今日之成就，足以慶賀三杯！隨我去來！
Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: I have a student Liáng Chényú who has extraordinary talent and is forthright in nature. We can discuss this idea with him! My daughter and son-in-law, today's success is worth celebrating with three cups of wine! Follow me!

（燈漸暗，幕後合唱聲起）

[The lights fade out. Chorus behind the scene sings]

自來音樂理精微，百慮千思苦發揮。

From ancient times, music theories are profound; thousands of thoughts, hard to elaborate.

翁婿十年相剖琢，北音南調始無違。

Father and son-in-law for ten years analyze and polish, Northern sound and Southern music are integrated after all.

伍、衣鉢傳梁

Act 5: Passing On the Legacy

（場上象陽關大道，淨扮梁辰魚，騎馬僕從上。）

[Setting: a broad road. A painted face role actor (*jìng*) playing Liáng Chényú enters performing riding a horse. His servant follows.]

淨（吟介）：

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [recites]:

5.3 壯遊豪飲擅詞場，清引艷歌餘暗香。

I take grand tours, love hard drinking, and am good at writing *cí* poems. I sing poetry and love songs, leaving my fragrance behind.

5.4 名馬白金相餽贈，風流嘯傲自疏狂。

Famous horses and silver were given to me. My unconventional life style and forthright nature make me an introspective enthusiast.

5.5 淨（唱）：雙調【二犯江兒水】

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [sings]: 【Èr fàn jiāng ér shuǐ】⁵⁴ in the *shuāng* mode

〔雙調五馬江兒水首至五〕 陽關大道，陽關大道，青驄雲路杳。

〔*Shuāng* mode 【Wǔ mǎ jiāng ér shuǐ】，phrases one to five〕 On the wide open road, on the wide open road, on my black spotted white horse I gallop off into the clouds without a trace.

看驚飛宿鳥，一望春郊，牧童兒笛韻好。

Seeing frightened birds flying away from their nests, overlooking the spring field; the shepherd boy's flute playing pleasant sounds.

〔雙調金字今十至末〕 花樹韻多嬌，村姑過小橋。

〔*Shuāng* mode 【Jīn zì líng】，phrases ten to the end〕 Trees covered with flowers are charming with their enchanting beauty; village girls cross the small bridge.

風驟雲飄，燕影斜搖。

Suddenly the wind blows and the clouds drift; the reflections of swallows scatter away.

〔雙調朝元歌七至末〕 忽見得長亭裏，喧鬧吵。

〔*Shuāng* mode 【Cháo yuán gē】，phrases seven to the end〕 All at once I see a roadside pavilion, full of commotion.

手提肩挑，手提肩挑。

Things carried by hand and on the shoulders; things carried by hand and on the shoulders.

原來是雞酒魚棗，雞酒魚棗。

They turn out to be chickens, liquor, fish and dates; chickens, liquor, fish and dates.

⁵⁴ 【Èr fàn jiāng ér shuǐ 二犯江兒水】 is a *qǔpái* which combines 【Wǔ mǎ jiāng ér shuǐ 五馬江兒水】，【Jīn zì líng 金字令】 and 【Cháo yuán gē 朝元歌】；it is in the Southern *shuāng* mode and functions as a main *qǔpái guòqǔ*. This medley *qǔpái* is written in the Southern *qǔ* form but sung in the Northern *qǔ* style.

霎時間熱絡絡地將俺駐馬驕。

In a moment someone warmly takes the reins of my six-foot horse.

(淨下馬介，僕從下介。眾人殷勤候介。末扮父老，小生扮男子。)

[Liáng Chényú dismounts from his horse, his servant exits. On stage is a crowd of people waiting attentively, including a supporting male role actor (*mò*) playing an elderly man, and a young male role actor (*xiǎoshēng*) playing a young man.]

5.15 末(白)：聞道伯龍先生路過敝莊，莊人特備雞酒祖道，陪先生暢飲，以盡仰望之心。

Elderly Man (*mò* role) [speaks]: We heard that Mr. Bólóng⁵⁵ would pass through our humble village, so we villagers specially prepared chickens and liquor for a ceremonial banquet to celebrate your visit. We will drink with you wholeheartedly to show our respect and admiration.

淨(白)：既蒙厚愛，共君暢飲者！

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [speaks]: Since I am indebted for your kindness, let us drink freely!

(眾人與淨暢飲罷。)

[The crowd and Liáng Chényú drink freely.]

淨(白)：在下隨身有綾羅數匹，奉與諸君，望祈笑納。

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [speaks]: I have brought several bolts of silk and would like to offer them to you. I hope you will kindly accept this gift.

(末代表受綾羅介。)

[The elderly man represents the crowd and receives the silk.]

5.20 小生(白)：伯龍先生，吾等愛度曲，尤愛先生所倡導令師魏尚泉先生之水磨調，而多時未受教於先生矣。近聞蘇州酒樓樂戶多擅歌舞，先生既已近鄉里，何妨攜我等一睹盛況乎！

Young man (*xiǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Mr. Bólóng, we love to sing *qǔ*, particularly those you popularized and sing in your teacher Master Wèi Shàngquán's Water Polished style, though we have not received your instruction for a while. We recently heard that musicians in taverns in Sūzhōu are good at singing and dancing. Since, Sir, you are already nearby, why not bring us along and have a glimpse of the spectacle?

⁵⁵ Bólóng is Liáng Chényú's courtesy name.

5.21 淨（白）：有何不可！喜度曲者，請隨我往！

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [speaks]: Why not! Those who like to sing *qǔ*, please follow me!

5.22 (眾隨淨下。場上轉象歌樓舞榭。丑扮老鴇，老旦、貼、小旦、雜扮歌妓上。)

[The crowd follows Liáng Chényú and exits. The setting changes to a brothel. A clown role actor (*chǒu*) playing a procuress, an old female role actor (*lǎo dàn*), a supporting female role actor (*tiē*), a young female role actor (*xiǎo dàn*), and bit-part actors (*zá*) playing entertainers enter together.]

5.23 丑（數念介）：

Procuress (*chǒu* role) [speaks rhythmically]:

為人莫在北里平康，北里平康，

Decent people don't hang around in the red light district,⁵⁶ red light district.

翻轉歹心腸，笑裏刀藏，刀藏暗樁。

Hearts turn to vicious thoughts; behind the smile lurks evil; danger hides in a knife.

5.26 殺人不見血，劈剝獻酒漿。

People ruined without shedding blood, everything given away for the sake of liquor.

公子哥兒，有誰不被搜光。

Pampered sons of wealthy families, who doesn't get cleaned out!

5.28 來時油頭粉面，出門似狗叫汪汪。

They look good when they come in, but leave like barking dogs.

5.29 只有那豪俠仗義修髯俊偉郎，他名辰魚字伯龍姓叫梁，

Except for that gallant, handsome and loyal bearded gentleman, his name is Liáng Chényú also known as Bólóng.

5.30 善度曲、美容儀、八尺身長、

He is good at singing *qǔ*, handsome and tall.

5.31 逢佳節、列絲竹、極盡排場。

Every festival he arranges the best music performances.

⁵⁶ Běilǐ Píngkāng 北里平康, lit. “north district [named] Píngkāng,” was a red light district.

5.32 歌兒舞女，不見伯龍，以為不祥。

If singers and dancers miss Bólóng, they feel unfortunate⁵⁷.

5.33 今日上巳逢修禊，敢待來光，敢待來光。

Today is the spring festival of the purification ritual. We will wait for his presence, we will wait for his presence.

丑（白）：眾姐妹們！準備迎接梁相公者！

Procuress (*chǒu* role) [speaks]: Sisters! Prepare to welcome Sir Liáng!

（老旦等應介，淨率小生等上，丑等迎介，入坐定介。忽報魏良輔來訪，淨出迎老生介，入坐定介。）

[The old female and other entertainers await. Liáng Chényú, the young man and others enter.

Procuress and others welcome Liáng. Liáng takes his seat. Suddenly there is an announcement of Wèi Liángfǔ's arrival. Liáng walks out and welcomes Wèi, then both are seated.]

5.36 老生（白）：聞說徒兒擁眾至酒樓，乃追蹤而至。

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: I heard that you brought a crowd to the tavern, therefore I followed your trail here.

淨（白）：久未拜候吾師，今觀吾師容光煥發，想必家有喜事。

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [speaks]: My teacher, for a while I have not paid you a visit. Today by the look of my teacher's radiant face, it seems there must be a joyful family event.

老生（白）：為小女兒完成婚事，近日與女婿張野塘悟出北調南唱之方，不覺身曠神怡。

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: I carried out the marriage of my daughter, and then recently, with my son-in-law Zhāng Yětang, realized a way to sing Northern *qǔ* in the Southern style. I cannot help but feel exhilarated.

5.39 淨（白）：恭賀吾師諸般喜事，尤其解開南北扞格之祕，今日何不以師之水磨調，令歌兒歌之以侑觴！

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [speaks]: Congratulations, my teacher, on these joyful events, especially on the secrets that will unlock the differences between Southern and Northern *qǔ*.

⁵⁷ The information about the appearance of Liáng Chényú and his popularity among entertainers was documented by the Ming dynasty *qǔ* expert, Zhāng Dàfù 張大復 in his *Notes Penned at the Plum-Blossom Thatched-Cottage* (*Méihuā cǎotáng bǐ tán* 梅花草堂筆談), vol. 5, "Liáng Bólóng 梁伯龍."

Today, why don't we follow the Water Polished style and have my singers sing a song while we enjoy our drinks?

5.40 老生（白）：很好！就從你散曲集《江東白苧》選一曲吧！

Wèi Liángfū (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Very well! Why don't you choose a piece from your *sǎn qǔ* collection *White Nettles of the Yangtze Delta*.⁵⁸

淨（白）：小鬟！從《江東白苧》中唱一首妳拿手的！

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [speaks]: Little maid! Sing one of your best from my *White Nettles of the Yangtze Delta*!

小旦（白）：那就請唱【南仙呂入雙調·玉抱肚】〈過湘江〉。

Little maid (*xiǎo dàn* role) [speaks]: Then I shall sing “Crossing the Xiāng River” from *qǔpái* 【Yù bào dù】 in the Southern *xiānlǚ*-modulating-to-*shuāng* mode.

小旦（唱）：南仙呂
入雙調【玉抱肚】

Little maid (*xiǎo dàn* role) [sings]: 【Yù bào dù】 in the Southern *xiānlǚ*-modulating-to-*shuāng* mode

長途秋盡、阻西風、停橈遠津。

A long journey in the late autumn was interrupted by the west autumn wind, the oars stopped far from the ferry pier.

聽泠泠、寶瑟還傳，看班班、修竹猶存。

Listen to the flowing water ringing, it is crystal clear like the sound from a priceless zither (*sè*). See the mottled bamboos,⁵⁹ they grow thin and tall.

5.46 不知何處吊湘君，水盡南天不見雲。

I do not know where to pay my respects to the Xiāng goddesses.⁶⁰ Water ripples stretch far and indistinct, the southern sky cloudless.

⁵⁸ *Jiāngdōng báizhù* 江東白苧 or *White Nettles of the Yangtze Delta* is Liáng Chényú's literary collection of *qǔpái*. *Sǎn qǔ* 散曲 or literary song are intended to be sung in a non-dramatic setting.

⁵⁹ *Bān zhú* 斑(班)竹, lit. “Mottled bamboo,” is a type of decorative bamboo of great value. A legend tells of the Emperor Shùn (舜) who died suddenly by the Xiāng River. His two wives cried and their tears dropped onto the bamboo around the area, spotting them forever; therefore it is also known as *Xiāngfēi zhú* 湘妃竹, lit. “Xiāng consort bamboo.”

⁶⁰ Emperor Shùn's two wives were buried at the *Xiāngjūn Cí* 湘君祠, lit. “Xiāng river goddesses shrine,” located on the island of *Jūnshān* 君山 on the *Dòngtíng Hú* 洞庭湖 (Dòngtíng Lake) in Húnán province. *Dòngtíng Lake* connects with both the Xiāng River and the Yangtze River.

5.47 老生（白）：啊哈！水磨腔調真真可傳矣！由小鬟輩唱來尤妙哉！此小鬟緣何歌藝能如此之精！絲絲入扣，不差分毫！

Wèi Liángfū (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Ah ha! Water Polished singing can truly be passed down from generation to generation! The little maid's singing is especially marvelous! How could her singing be so exquisite? Her flawless artistry, like silk threads perfectly woven into the warp in a loom, not even one tiny mistake.

5.48 淨（白）：老師見問，請訴其詳，弟子教此諸姬度曲，為設廣床大案，面向西而序列之，將燈熄滅，弟子點清香一炷指揮之，聲之疾徐高下，視香火之起伏，遞傳疊和，兩兩三三。一韻之乖，觥罍如約。以故訓練有素，人人能歌善舞。（嘆介）唉！吾師聽稟：想我平生呀！

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [speaks]: Since, my teacher, you asked, please allow me to explain. As your student, I have trained my female performers to sing *qǔ* in this way: I arrange wide rectangular display tables and benches and sit facing the west, extinguish the lamp, and then I light a stick of incense and direct them to breathe according to the rise and fall of the smoke. Their voices blend in harmony, in groups of two or three. A clash of rhyme, just like a four-legged liquor vessel and a three-legged liquor vessel mistakenly tied together, is wrong.⁶¹ This is the reason why they need to be well-trained so that everyone can sing and dance well. (Sigh) Ai! Please listen, my teacher. When I think of my life!

淨（唱）：黃鐘過曲【降黃龍】

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [sings]: 【Xiáng huáng lóng】 in the *huángzhōng* mode and the literary form of *guòqǔ*

5.50 浪蕩江湖，舞女歌兒，走馬平章，

I live freely and wander all corners of the country.⁶² Spending time with female dancers and singers in brothels, on horseback I travel to red light districts.⁶³

5.51 將滿腔壯志，肆意銷磨，白玉飛觴。

I recklessly erode my deepest ambitions for white jade cups that pass back and forth in drinking.

⁶¹ The information about how Liáng Chényú trained his family troupe came from *Notes Penned at the Plum-Blossom Thatched-Cottage* (*Méihuā cǎotáng bǐ tán* 梅花草堂筆談) by Míng dynasty scholar, Zhāng Dàfù 張大復.

⁶² *Jiāng hú* 江湖, lit. “rivers and lakes,” is a term that not only implies all corners of the country, but also the world of itinerant entertainers, street doctors, and vendors.

⁶³ *Zǒu mǎ píng zhāng* 走馬平章 is associated with the idiom *Zǒu mǎ zhāng tái* 走馬章台. *Zǒu mǎ* 走馬 means “ride the horse” or “gallop on horseback.” *Píng* 平 refers to a red light district named Píngkāng 平康. *Zhāng* 章 refers to Zhāng tái 章台 in the Hàn dynasty's capital city of Cháng'ān, a street that was known for brothels. *Zǒu mǎ píng zhāng* therefore is translated “on horseback I travel to red light districts.”

鬢霜也，幸水磨曲韻，可付與、淺斟低唱。

I am in my old age with gray hair. Luckily for the existence of the Water Polished music, I will devote myself to singing while drinking.

願吾師，舉訛批謬，揭櫟榜樣。

I hope, my teacher, you will point out my errors and criticize my mistakes, being the model.

老生（白）：徒兒既已無心事功，而矢志於音聲歌唱，正所謂「吾道不孤矣」。伯龍呀！
Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: My dear student, if you have already let go of your ambition and devoted yourself to singing instead, it is exactly like the saying “On the path I walk I am in good company with someone with the same vision.” Ah, Bólóng!

老生（唱）：【前腔^{換頭}】

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: 【Qián qiāng huàn tóu】⁶⁴

斟量，磨調元音，發古輝今，十年涵養，

Consider, Water Polished music originated in ancient times and shines in the present day, through ten years of cultivation,

又經爾等，精細講求，盡力弘揚。

and through you and others who pursue its perfection and develop it to a greater brilliance.

徒兒呀！參詳。為師道心盡在，足下一人身上。

My dear student! Carefully observe. I as your old teacher gave all my heart to you.

萬望你，竿頭百尺，將之搬演劇場。

My greatest wish for you is utmost success in performing the Water Polished music on the stage.

5.60 老生（白）：水磨韻調，經為師創發，爾等弘揚，已臻爐火純青。只是於今尚為案頭清曲，未能以劇本為載體，搬諸場上，憾恨何限！而為師弟子，唯君稟賦穎異，青出於藍，足下其有意乎，與為師完成此志業。

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: The Water Polished music, through my invention and your development, has reached its culmination. Up to now, however, it is still pure literary songs, not dramatic texts which can be acted out on stage. How much I regret it! You, my dear student, are gifted and clever, and have surpassed me. Are you willing to achieve this goal with me?

⁶⁴ Qián qiāng huàn tóu 前腔換頭, lit. “previous tune with different head,” indicates that this *qúpái* is a variation of the previous *qúpái*, 【Xiáng huáng lóng 降黃龍】, with a different number of characters in the first phrase.

5.61 淨（白）：謹受師命，弟子敢不竭心盡力！弟子新近取西施吳王故事，撰為《浣紗記》⁶⁵。創作中，即處處講求吾師調法，更以鑼鼓身段配搭，化緊密為輕鬆，使之雅中帶俗，俗中見雅；使之雅韻機趣相為調理，思有以馳騁場上，但不知果然如何？

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [speaks]: I respectfully accept my teacher's order. As your student, I will make my utmost effort! I recently composed a new play based on the story of the beauty Xī Shī and the Wú lord, called *Washing Silk*. During the composition, at every step I paid attention to your honorable methods. Also I used percussion such as gongs and drums to match the actors' movements, transforming intensiveness to effortlessness. Making the play refined with some earthy elements; adding elegance to the vulgar; I want elegant verse and humor in harmony with each other. My thoughts are like a horse galloping across a field, but I am not sure how to realize them.

5.62 老生（白）：何不即《浣紗記》當下實驗，命爾所教導之歌兒舞女搬演，觀看其結果便知端的！

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Why don't we use the *Washing Silk* as an experimental project at this time? Ask the singers and dancers that you taught to act it on stage, then we will know the outcome after watching the result!

5.63 淨（白）：如此甚好。小鬟將《浣紗記》呈與吾師座前（小旦將《浣紗記》呈與老生，老生仔細翻閱，選出其中兩支曲子。）

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role) [speaks]: Very well. Little maid, bring the book of *Washing Silk* to my honorable teacher. [Little maid brings the book of *Washing Silk* to Wèi Liángfǔ. Wèi carefully reads and picks two *qǔpái*.]

老生（白）：就搬演〈泛湖〉中【錦衣香】和【漿水令】吧！

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Why don't you act out the two *qǔpái* 【Jīn yī xiāng】 and 【Jiāng shuǐ líng】 from the act "Boating on Lake Tai!"⁶⁶

5.65 小旦（唱，做介）：南雙調【錦衣香】

Little maid (*xiǎo dàn* role) [sings and acts]: 【Jīn yī xiāng】 in the Southern *shuāng* mode

⁶⁵ In Tsēng's original text published in the *Taipei Theatre Journal*, no. 14, in 2011, *Huànshā jì* 浣紗記 (*Washing Silk*) was written as 統紗記 on pp. 197–98. I believe that these were typographical errors and therefore corrected them throughout my text.

⁶⁶ Tàì Hú 太湖, lit. "great lake," is located in the Yangtze Delta in Jiāngsū Province and borders on Zhèjiāng Province. This is the lake where the beauty Xī Shī either died or disappeared. The act "Boating on Lake Tai" concludes the play *Washing Silk*.

你看館娃宮，荊榛蔽，響屨廊、莓苔翳。

Look, the Palace of Beauty⁶⁷ is hidden by brambles. The famous long corridor Xiǎng xiè láng⁶⁸ is covered with green moss.

可惜剩水殘山，斷崖高寺，百花深處一僧歸。

What a pity the Palace is now part of a dilapidated landscape, only the Língyán Temple left high on a cliff. A monk can be seen in the flowery spring.

空遺舊迹，走狗鬪雞。

The Wú Palace is now in ruins and only the images of those people who were addicted to entertainment and lived on others remain.

想當年僭祭，望郊臺、淒涼雲樹，香水鴛鴦去。

Recall the old days' when the Wú lord offered ceremonies that were beyond his status. Looking at the altar he built for worshiping heaven, miserable trees that rise above the clouds. A pair of mandarin ducks from Xiāngshuǐ⁶⁹ stream travelled far.

5.70 酒城傾墜，茫茫練瀆，無邊秋水。

The city of spirits and wine is gone. Only the shimmering autumn water of Liàndú beneath the Língyán Mountain seems to undulate and flow into the sky.

5.71 小旦（唱）：南雙調【漿水令】

Little maid (*xiǎo dàn* role) [sings]: 【Jiāng shuǐ líng】 in the Southern *shuāng* mode

採蓮涇、紅芳盡死，越來溪、吳歌慘悽。

In the Cǎilián River where the Wú lord and Xī Shī plucked lotus flowers, the red fragrant blossoms have all died. By the Yuèlái Stream that flows from Yuè,⁷⁰ the songs of Wú are sad and miserable.

⁶⁷ The Palace of Beauty was built on the slope of Língyán Mountain at the west of Sūzhōu. During the Spring and Autumn Period, the Wú lord, Fū Chāi 夫差, built it to please a beauty named Xī Shī 西施. Later it was burned by the Yuè lord, Gōu Jiàn 勾踐. Língyán temple was later built on the ruins of The Palace of Beauty.

⁶⁸ Xiǎng xiè láng 響屨廊, lit. “Echoing-wooden-shoes corridor,” was famous for the sound made when the beauty Xī Shī walked down the Chinese catalpa corridor wearing a pair of wooden shoes.

⁶⁹ There was a saying that Xiāngshuǐ stream was a bathing place for the beauty Xī Shī. This sentence implies that the Wú lord and the beauty Xī Shī were long gone.

⁷⁰ It was said that the army of Yuè entered the Wú territory through Yuèlái Stream.

宮中鹿走草萋萋，黍離故墟，過客傷悲。

In the palace, deer run through the overgrown weeds. The old ruins are bursting with millet, passersby grieve and lament.

離宮廢，誰避暑。

The summer palaces abandoned, who will spend time there avoiding the summer heat.

瓊姬墓冷蒼煙蔽，

The tomb of dead princess Qióng Jī⁷¹ is cold and filled with gray mist.

空園滴、空園滴，梧桐夜雨。

Drops fall in an empty garden, drops fall in an empty garden, as night rains filter through parasol trees.

5.77 臺城上，臺城上，夜烏啼。

Up in the forbidden city,⁷² up in the forbidden city, the night crow cries.

5.78 淨（白）：請教吾師，小鬟所歌而做表，則《浣紗記》是否可入水磨矣！

Liáng Chényú (jìng role) [speaks]: We ask for your advice, my teacher. Based on little maid's singing and acting, do you think that *Washing Silk* has embraced the Water Polished style of music?

5.79 老生（白）：入之矣！入之矣！既入《浣紗記》則入戲曲矣！吾道畢功於此矣！

Wèi Liángfū (lǎo shēng role) [speaks]: Indeed! Indeed! Since the Water Polished style is embraced by the *Washing Silk* play, it is embraced as a dramatic style! My goal has been accomplished!

5.80 淨（白）：請藉樽酒，致賀吾師焉。

Liáng Chényú (jìng role) [speaks]: Let us raise our spirituous cups and congratulate our teacher.

（場上作乾杯聲，燈漸暗。）

[On stage, the sounds of clinking, the lights fade out.]

⁷¹ Qióng Jī 瓊姬 was the Wú lord Fū Chāi's daughter.

⁷² Tái chéng 臺城, near Nánjīng City in Jiāngsū Province, was the forbidden city (i.e., imperial residence) of Wú, one of the Three Kingdoms.

陸、虎丘曲會

Act 6: The Tiger Hill *Qǔ* Festival

(場上象虎丘景色。外扮過雲適上。)

[Setting: a view of the Tiger Hill (Hǔqiū 虎丘). A supporting older male role actor (*wài*) playing Guò Yúnshì enters.]

6.2 外(唱)：仙呂入雙調引子 【夜行船】

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [sings]: 【*Yè xíng chuán*】 in the *xiānlǚ*-modulating-to-*shuāng* mode and the literary form of *yǐnzi*

6.3 節到中秋天氣爽，看士女、分外昂揚。

When it is time for the Mid-Autumn Festival, the weather is pleasant. Looking at the gentlemen and ladies, they are in especially high spirits.

6.4 曲會虎丘，最堪聆賞，明月一輪初上。

The *Qǔ* festival at the Tiger Hill is the most rewarding place to hear and appreciate. A bright moon rises.

6.5 外(白)：在下過雲適，今年中秋虎丘曲會，被推為盟主。主持曲會事宜，掌控大會程序。會中度曲競技，各憑本事，爭強不得。其高下強弱，誰拔頭籌，全依在下裁決。虎丘曲會，自古相傳，江南蘇州，蔚為年中盛事。你看！豪門貴胄、官宦人家、文人雅士、庶民百姓、扶老攜幼、三五成群，都向這虎丘紛紛來也。

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: I am Guò Yúnshì. This year I have been appointed the head of the Mid-Autumn Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival. I will host the *qǔ* festival and handle the programs. During the festival there are singing competitions. You should count on your abilities and must compete fairly. Whether you are strong or weak, who will win the competition will be decided by my ruling. The Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival is an ancient tradition and has become a mid-year extravaganza in Sūzhōu. Look! The noble class, the families of officials, literati and aesthetes, and ordinary people, bringing along the old and the young, are coming to the Tiger Hill in small groups.

6.6 (副淨末丑老旦貼小旦分扮各色人物同行上)

[A variety of characters enter, including martial painted face role actor(s) (*fù jìng*), supporting old male role actor(s) (*mò*), clown role actor(s) (*chǒu*), old female role actor(s) (*lǎo dàn*), supporting female role actor(s) (*tiē*), and young female role actor(s) (*xiǎo dàn*).]

6.7 眾人（合唱）：仙呂入雙
調過曲【夜行船序】

Everyone [chorus]: 【Yè xíng chuán xù】 in the *xiānlǚ*-modulating-to-*shuāng* mode and the literary form of *guòqǔ*

6.8 月色澄清，愛中秋佳節，倍添情興。

The moon is clear, and the love for the Mid-Autumn holiday brings much sentiment and enthusiasm.

6.9 雜沓裏，紫陌接踵塵生。

On the street, noise and excitement, many people appear on the country roads⁷³ in the region of the capital city.

6.10 （相見介）請了。

[People meet and show the way]: Please.⁷⁴

（副淨末丑）三位可也到虎丘參加曲會？

[Martial painted face role, old man role, and clown role characters speak]: Are the three of you also attending the *qǔ* festival at the Tiger Hill?

（老旦貼小旦）是的，我們還要唱曲奪彩。

[Old woman role, supporting female role, and young female roles speak]: Yes, and we will sing *qǔ* and hope to win!

（副淨等）我們也一樣，那就同行了。

[Martial painted face role and others speak]: We are just the same. Let's go together.

（合）休爭，各競爾能，全憑本事，謹遵號令。

[chorus] Do not be competitive. Do your best according to your skills and count on your abilities. Obey the orders.

6.15 和聲，牙板置胸中，但能暗中相應。

Harmonious sound. Have clapper beats in your heart. It will come together naturally.

6.16 （副淨等同下，老生引淨生旦同行上）

[Martial painted face role (*fū jìng*) and others exit. Wèi Liángfǔ (old male *lǎo shēng* role) enters

⁷³ Here referring to the country roads in the Sūzhōu area which were located in the same province as the Míng dynasty's old capital city, Nánjīng.

⁷⁴ The conversations between characters are conducted during the *qǔpái* music. Traditionally there is no interlude within a main *qǔpái*.

with Liáng Chényú (painted face *jìng* role), Zhāng Yětang (young male *shēng* role), and Yīngzhuàn (young female *dàn* role).]

6.17 眾人（合唱）：【前腔^{換頭}】

Everyone [chorus]: 【Qián qiāng huàn tóu】⁷⁵

宵永，月正空明。

All night, the bright moon shines in the center of the open sky.

鬥清曲，我等亦來乘興。

At the competition of *qǔ* pure singing, we also join with high spirits.

6.20 水磨調，遠近弘達聲名。

The Water Polished music, its fame is carried far and wide.

（旦白）爹爹！我等四人參加曲會，唱曲次序從年齡小的開始如何？

Yīngzhuàn [*dàn* role speaks]:⁷⁶ Father! Four of us joined the *qǔ* festival. For the performance order, how about starting with the youngest?

（生白）你搶先，我可不想作第二。

Zhāng Yětang [*shēng* role speaks]: You are preemptive. I do not want to be second.

（淨白）師妹說得有理，難道要師傅老師身先士卒？

Liáng Chényú “Bólóng” [*jìng* role speaks]: Sister you are right. How could we let our Master go first?⁷⁷

（老生）好！就依伯龍！

Wèi Liángfǔ [*lǎo shēng* role speaks]: Yes! I agree with Bólóng!

6.25（合）似長鳴，老鶴高崗，旭日東昇，鈞天響應。

[chorus] Like the long calls⁷⁸ of an old crane from a mountaintop, the morning sun is rising in the east, even the heaven echoes it.

⁷⁵ Lit. “previous *qǔpái* with different opening,” i.e., a variation of the previous *qǔpái* 【Yè xíng chuán xù 夜行船序】，with a different number of characters in the first phrase.

⁷⁶ Here, too, the conversations between characters are conducted during the *qǔpái* music.

⁷⁷ Here, Tsēng used the idiom of *shēn xiān shì zú* 身先士卒, meaning a general would lead the army and fight in front of the soldiers during the war. In this context it indicates “as pupils, how could we let our master be the first to compete?”

⁷⁸ *Cháng míng* 長鳴, lit. “long calls,” also implies that scholars put their ambitions and abilities to good use. Here it

6.26 似龍騰霞蔚瑞雲蒸，一吟世人覺醒。

Like a dragon rising high into the air, the scenery is splendid and magnificent.⁷⁹ A snort would awaken the whole world.

6.27 (眾到介，各就千人石上團團而坐。)

[The crowd arrives and sits on the famous Thousand Workman Stones⁸⁰ of the Tiger Hill]

6.28 外(白)：各位鄉親，今宵虎丘曲會，皓月當空，金風送爽。在下過雲適榮登盟主，請聽吾號令。在下先歌一曲為基準，然後依報名秩序遞歌，凡勝吾者，方可參加決賽奪彩。各位請聽者，

Guò Yúnshì (wài role) [speaks]: My fellow townspeople, tonight at the Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival, we are blessed with a bright moon in the sky and a cool breeze from an autumn wind. I am Guò Yúnshì and am honored to be the head of the festival. Everyone, please listen to my command. I will first sing a *qǔ* as a model and then singers will take turns in order of registration. Those who win over me will participate in the final competition and gain your victory. Please listen...

6.29 外(唱)：南仙呂入雙調【步步嬌】

Guò Yúnshì (wài role) [sings]: 【Bù bù jiāo】 in the Southern *xiānlǚ*-modulating-to-*shuāng* mode

6.30 昨夜春歸今朝夏。

Last night the spring ended and this morning the summer began.

時序如翻掌，相思惱斷腸。

The season changes like turning your palm, so quickly. The lovesick fear having their hearts broken.

只怕愁病無情，減卻容光。

I only fear that my lovesickness will dim my radiance.

6.33 血淚漬成行，點點滴在青衫上。

My copious tears run down my face. Every drop falls onto my humble clothes.

refers to Wèi Liángfū's contributions.

⁷⁹ *Xiá wèi yún zhēng* 霞蔚雲蒸, lit. "morning-glow is splendid, clouds are rising," is an idiom which not only describes the scenery as splendid and magnificent but also metaphorically indicates heroes or intellectuals who rise with spirit and talent.

⁸⁰ Translation adapted from Hǔqiū 虎丘 (Tiger Hill) official website <https://www.tigerhill.com/EN/index.php/llsyt>.

(眾鼓掌稱讚介，外打拱作揖謝介)

[The crowd claps and applauds. Guò Yúnshì salutes the audience with folded hands and deep bows.]

外(白)：請問列位，在下以何腔唱此曲？此曲出何處？回答正確，可取得賡唱資格。
Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: May I ask everyone, with what singing style did I sing this *qǔ*? Where did this *qǔ* come from? If you answer correctly, you will qualify to present the next song.

旦(白)：先生以崑山水磨調唱此曲，此曲一般稱作「昨夜春歸」，屬陳鐸南曲散套仙呂入雙調【步步嬌】，題目作〈夏日歸思〉，或謂王寵所作。

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role) [speaks]: Sir, you sang this *qǔpái* according to the Water Polished style. This piece is generally called “Last Night the Spring Ended.” It follows a Southern literary *qǔpái* sequence, 【Bù bù jiāo】 in the *xiānlǚ*-modulating-to-*shuāng* mode, written by Chén Duó. The title is “Thought of Return on a Summer Day,” possibly written by Wáng Chǒng.

外(白)：回答正確：請唱。

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: Your answer is correct, please sing!

6.38 旦(唱)：南商調【二郎神】

Yīngzhuàn (*dàn* role; portraying young female role Wáng Ruìlán 王瑞蘭) [sings]:
【Èr láng shén】 in the Southern *shāng* mode.

6.39 拜新月，寶鼎中、明香滿爇。

Praying to the new moon.⁸¹ In the incense burner, lighted incense is burning.

願我拋閃下男兒疾較些。

I wish to leave behind the lovesickness that I feel for my husband.

得再睹同歡同悅。

To have the chance to see us happy and joyous again.

(小旦)悄悄輕將衣袂拽。

[She sings now as *xiǎo dàn* role] (portraying the supporting young female role Jiǎng Ruìlián 蔣瑞蓮)

Quietly and gently pull my clothes.

⁸¹ Women in ancient time chose to pray to a new moon around the time of the mid-autumn festival, similar in feeling to Valentine's Day, asking for the reunion of husband and wife.

卻不道小鬼頭，春心動也。

However I am a little devil, my heart's desire for love aroused.

6.44 那喬怯，無言俛首紅雲滿腮頰。

Bashfully, mutely, her head down, cheeks blushing like red clouds.

(眾鼓掌介，旦答謝介。)

[The crowd applauds. Yīngzhuàn acknowledges.]

6.46 外(白)：唱得字正腔圓，可欣可喜！旦、小旦聲口，以一人而模擬唱出，尤其難得！看來今宵皆唱水磨調矣！請問此曲出處如何？

Guò Yúnshì (wài role) [speaks]: The words are sung articulately and roundly, how delightful! The lady is able to sing and portray both female and supporting female roles, especially rare! It seems tonight we will all be singing in Water Polished style! May I ask where this *qǔ* comes from?

(丑與副淨爭先回答)

[Clown and martial painted face roles race to answer]

副淨(白)：出自《琵琶記》！

Martial painted face role (*fù jìng* role) [speaks]: It comes from *The Lute!*⁸²

外(白)：不對！

Guò Yúnshì (wài role) [speaks]: Incorrect!

(丑嘲副淨介)

[Clown ridicules the martial painted face role]

6.51 丑(白)：不懂，沒學養，還搶先！看我來！此曲出自施惠《拜月亭》

〈幽閨拜月〉【南商調·二郎神】！

Clown (*chǒu* role) [speaks]: You don't know the answer and are not well-educated, how dare you call out first! Let me show you! This *qǔpái* comes from Shī Huì's *Moon-Worshipping Pavilion*, in the act "Moon-worshipping in the boudoir," set to the *qǔpái* 【Èr láng shén】 in the Southern *shāng* mode!

⁸² *Pípá* 琵琶 is a type of Chinese lute with four strings and a pear-shaped wooden body; therefore, the play *Pípá jì* 琵琶記, lit. "pipá tale," is also known in English as *The Lute*.

外（白）：答對！請唱！

Guò Yúnshì (wài role) [speaks]: Correct! Please sing!

6.53 丑（唱）：南仙
呂宮【光光乍】

Clown (*chǒu* role) [sings]: 【Guāng guāng zhà】 in the Southern *xiānlǚ* mode

和尚去出家，身上披袈裟。

I became a monk, leaving my family behind, wearing only Buddhist robes.

6.55 有人請我修功課，真箇快活光光乍。

I was asked to chant daily, I am such a happy monk.

6.56 生（白）：此曲出《南西廂》，淨丑小曲，不耐唱亦不耐聽，待我唱一支北曲，以醒俗耳。

Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [speaks]: This *qǔ* came from the *Southern Version of the Western Chamber*,⁸³ a coarse piece sung by a painted face or a clown. It does not pass the test of time for singing and listening. Let me sing a couple of Northern *qǔ* to arouse the common taste.

6.57 生（唱）：北仙
呂【點絳脣】

Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [sings]: 【Diǎn jiàng chún】⁸⁴ in the Northern *xiānlǚ* mode

遊藝中原，腳跟無線、如蓬轉。

I travel for study through the Central Plain, heels without strings, like a tumbling weed.

望眼連天，日近長安遠。

My gazing eyes link with heaven; “the sun is near, Cháng’ān is far.”⁸⁵

生（唱）：【混江龍】

Zhāng Yětang (*shēng* role) [sings]: 【Hùn jiāng lóng】⁸⁶

⁸³ Written by the Míng dynasty *chuánqí* playwright Lǐ Rìhuá 李日華.

⁸⁴ Translations for both 【Diǎn jiàng chún 點絳脣】 and the following 【Hùn jiāng lóng 混江龍】 are adapted from *The Moon and the Zither: The Story of the Western Wing*; edited and translated by Stephen H. West and Wilt L. Idema, pp.172–73.

⁸⁵ “The sun is near, Cháng’ān is far” is an idiom used to metaphorically express the challenge facing would-be scholar officials: the sun is near because one can see it just by raising one’s head, whereas Cháng’ān, a capital city that provides opportunities for people to earn fame and success, seems so far because not everyone can fulfill his ambitions.

⁸⁶ Because 【Hùn jiāng lóng 混江龍】，like the previous 【Diǎn jiàng chún 點絳脣】，continues in the Northern *xiānlǚ* mode, this additional information is not given again. Both *qǔpái* are from Volume I, Act 1 of the *Western Chamber*.

向詩書經傳，蠹魚似不出費鑽研。

Penetrating the *Poetry*⁸⁷ and *Documents*⁸⁸, the classics and traditions. Like a bookworm I never emerged but labored over my burrowing and rubbing.

將棘圍守暖，把鐵硯磨穿。

I stayed in the thorny enclosure⁸⁹ until my seat grew warm. And ground the iron inkstone until it was worn through.

投至得雲路鵬程九萬里，先受了雪窗螢火二十年。

Before I can make the ninety-thousand-mile cloud-path journey of the roc,⁹⁰ I'll first have to endure twenty years of snow-lit window and firefly light.

才高難入俗人機，時乖不遂男兒願。

Lofty talent does not fit well into the schemes of the vulgar; when time's athwart, there is no attaining the ambitions of a man.

6.65 空雕蟲篆刻，綴斷簡殘編。

In vain I whittle insects and carve seal-script characters.⁹¹ And stitch together broken strips and tattered texts.

(眾大加讚賞，掌聲不絕。)

[The crowd applauds energetically, endlessly clapping.]

6.67 外(白)：果然勝國遺音，勁切雄麗，而尚出諸水磨耶！難得！實在難得！

Guò Yúnshì (wài role) [speaks]: Indeed the music from the previous Yuán dynasty is powerful and glorious.⁹² And yet you bring out the Water Polished singing style! How rare! Really rare!

⁸⁷ *The Book of Poetry* (*Shī jīng* 詩經)

⁸⁸ *The Book of Documents* (*Shū jīng* 書經)

⁸⁹ “Thorny enclosure” (*jí wéi* 棘圍) indicates the examination ground. During the Táng dynasty, the imperial examination system was used as the path to the civil service. In order to prevent corrupt practices during the examination, the ground was bounded with a thorn fence.

⁹⁰ *Péng* 鵬 or roc is a massive bird often used in Chinese metaphors. For example *péng chéng wàn lǐ* 鵬程萬里, lit. “roc travels ten-thousand-miles in distance,” is used as a blessing for someone who has a bright future.

⁹¹ Whittling insects and carving seal-script characters indicate time consuming tasks.

⁹² These attributes of Northern *qǔ* come from Wáng Shìzhēn 王世貞 (1526–1590), a Míng dynasty poet and *qǔ* scholar. In the introduction to his *qǔ* theory book, *The Literary Grace of Qǔ* (*Qǔ zāo* 曲藻), he described the fundamental difference between the Northern and Southern *qǔ*, “...basically the Northern *qǔ* is powerful and glorious, the Southern *qǔ* is melismatic and gentle. Though both *qǔ* have roots in brilliant expression, you must be sure to include an earthly quality.” (大抵北主勁切雄麗，南主清峭柔遠，雖本才情，務諧俚俗。)

6.68 淨（白）：野塘所歌，眾所周知，出諸《北西廂》，在下亦來賡續元音，然後再來一支拙作《浣溪紗》。

Liáng Chényú (jìng role) [speaks]: Yětang's song, as everyone knows, was from the *Northern version of the Western Chamber*.⁹³ I shall continue this orthodox Yuán dynasty music,⁹⁴ and then allow me to sing my humble composition from *Washing Silk*.⁹⁵

（眾鼓噪稱許介）

[The crowd makes noise and cheers]

6.70 淨（唱）：北正宮【端正好】

Liáng Chényú (jìng role) [sings]: 【Duān zhèng hǎo】⁹⁶ in the Northern *zhènggōng* mode

不念法華經，不禮梁皇懺。

I do not recite the Lotus Sutra,⁹⁷ I do not practice the penitence of the emperor of Liáng,⁹⁸

颺了僧伽帽、袒下我這偏衫。

I've thrown away the sangha hat, stripped off the monk's red robes.

6.73 殺人心逗起英雄膽，兩隻手將烏龍尾、鋼椽搯。

A murderous heart has riled up my heroic gall; a pair of hands has tightly grasped the black-dragon-tailed iron club.

6.74 淨（唱）：北雙調【新水令】

Liáng Chényú (jìng role) [sings]: 【Xīn shuǐ lìng】⁹⁹ in the Northern *shuāng* mode

⁹³ The *Northern version of the Western Chamber* (Běi Xīxiāng 北西廂) is also known as *Romance of the Western Chamber* (Xīxiāng jì 西廂記), a *zaju* play written by Yuán dynasty playwright Wáng Shífū 王實甫. In contrast, the *Southern version of the Western Chamber* (Nán Xīxiāng 南西廂) was written by Míng dynasty *chuánqí* playwright Lǐ Rìhuá 李日華. The characters and plots were similar but the Southern version was criticized for its lack of artistic value.

⁹⁴ Refers to the following *qǔpái* 【Duān zhèng hǎo 端正好】.

⁹⁵ *Huànxīshā* 浣溪紗 is originally a title of *cípái* 詞牌. It is a sung *cí* poetry describing the story of the beauty Xī Shī and the Wú lord, similar to that of *Washing Silk*. Since Liáng Chényú's "humble composition" *qǔpái* 【Xīn shuǐ lìng 新水令】, comes from the play *Washing Silk*, I use the play name instead of *Huànxīshā*.

⁹⁶ This *qǔpái* 【Duān zhèng hǎo 端正好】 is selected from Volume II, Act 2 of the *Western Chamber*. Adapted translation from *The Moon and the Zither: The Story of the Western Wing*; edited and translated by Stephen H. West and Wilt L. Idema, pp. 231–32.

⁹⁷ *Fáhuá jīng* 法華經, the *Lotus Sūtra*, contains the teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is famous for providing beliefs and instructions teaching that all beings, including animals, have the potential to become a Buddha. It is considered as one of the most influential texts in Asian countries where Mahāyāna Buddhism is practiced.

⁹⁸ *Liángguáng chán* 梁皇懺, *Emperor Liáng Penitence*, is a Buddhist text dedicated to the Emperor Wǔ of Liáng 梁武帝 (464–549) who was a strong proponent of Buddhism. He banned the sacrifice of animals and promoted a vegetarian diet.

問扁舟何處恰纔歸，嘆飄流、常在萬重波裡。

I want to ask the boat whence I can return. Sigh for my life adrift, often floating on thousands of waves.

當日個浪翻千丈急，今日個風息一帆遲。

In former days I encountered turbulent waves that raced thousands of feet; today the wind stops and the sailing boat travels slowly.

6.77 煙景迷離，望不斷太湖水。

The misty spring view is seen far into the distance over the waters of Lake Tàì.

(眾鼓掌甚為熱烈，久久不能止。)(外舉手示意停止)

[The crowd gives warm applause, continuing for a long time.] [Guò Yúnshì raises his hand, signaling a stop]

外(白)：列位鄉親是否知道，適才歌唱者為誰？

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: My fellow townspeople, do you know who these singers are just now?

6.80 眾中老旦(白)：是鼎鼎大名的梁辰魚伯龍先生，他是當今吳中魏良輔先生的嫡傳弟子，最得意之傳人！列位又是否知道，先前歌唱之美女俊男為誰？

An old female in the crowd (*lǎo dàn* role) [speaks]: He is the great Liáng Chényú, Mr. Bólóng. He is a disciple of Wú's (Sūzhōu's) eminent artist Wèi Liángfǔ, Wèi's most proud successor! Everyone, do you also know the beautiful woman and handsome man who sang earlier?

眾中貼(白)：男的好像魏良輔先生門下周似虞，女的應是先生千金鶯囀小姐！

A younger female in the crowd (*tiē* role) [speaks]: The handsome man seems like Master Wèi Liángfǔ's student Zhōu Sìyú; the beautiful woman must be Master's daughter, lady Yīngzhuàn!

外(白)：答對一半，男的是魏先生快婿張野塘。

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: You are half correct, the handsome man is Master Wèi's son-in-law Zhāng Yětāng.

(眾紛紛然交頭接耳)

[The crowd whispers to each other]

⁹⁹ This *qǔpái* 【Xīn shuǐ lìng 新水令】 is selected from the act “Boating on Lake Tàì” which, as mentioned above, concludes the play *Washing Silk*.

眾（白）：難怪彼等唱曲，一位妙似一位，使我等不敢輕易出場！原來是魏先生一伙的！
The crowd [speaks]: No wonder when they sang *qǔ*, each one was more impressive than the other, making us fear to enter the stage! It turns out they are in Master Wèi's circle!

6.85 外（白）：今日國工魏先生亦駕蒞於此，不可放過如此良機，請列位鼓掌催促！
Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role) [speaks]: Today, the eminent artist Master Wèi is also graciously present here, do not pass up this opportunity. Please be generous with your applause!

6.86 (眾熱烈鼓掌，並高呼魏先生。老生款款起身，站上千人石上，舉手式止鼓掌聲。)
[The crowd gives warm applause and shouts out for Master Wèi. Wèi Liángfǔ stands up slowly, steps on the Thousand Workman Stones, raising hands to gesture for the applause to stop.]

6.87 老生（白）：老漢只好有辱清聽矣！曲取《琵琶記·吃糠》二支。
Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: This old man is grateful to you for listening! These two *qǔ* pieces come from *The Lute*, “Eat Husks.”

6.88 老生（唱）：南越調
近詞【雁過沙】
Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: 【Yàn guò shā】¹⁰⁰ in the Southern *yuè* mode and the literary form of *jìncí*¹⁰¹

媳婦！你耽飢、事公姑。
Daughter! You went hungry to care for us.

媳婦！你耽飢、怎生度？
Daughter! How could you bear that hunger?

錯埋冤你也不肯辭。
We wrongly blamed you,¹⁰² and still you didn't explain.

我如今始信有糟糠婦。
Today for the first time I believe that there really are “husk wives.”¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ The translation for both 【Yàn guò shā 雁過沙】 and the following 【Qián qiāng 前腔】 are adapted from *The Lute: Kao Ming's P'i-p'a chi* by Jean Mulligan, 159–60.

¹⁰¹ *Jìncí* 近詞 is a literary form which originated in the Sòng dynasty's *cí* 詞 tradition. It was later classified as a main *qūpái*, similar to *guòqū*, in Southern *qǔ* notations.

¹⁰² This line is my translation. Mulligan originally translated it as “We blamed you for nothing.”

¹⁰³ *Zāo kāng* 糟糠, lit. “distillers grains and rice husks.” These are types of food that poor people ate to allay their hunger in earlier times. *Zāokāng fù* 糟糠婦 or husk wives is used to describe wives who shared adversity.

媳婦！我料應不久歸陰府。

Daughter! Before long, I'll surely die.

6.94 媳婦！你休便為我死的把生的受苦。

Daughter! Don't let my death cause even more suffering to the living.

6.95 老生（唱）：【前腔】

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role) [sings]: 【Qián qiāng】¹⁰⁴

婆婆！我當初不尋思，教孩兒、往皇都。

Wife! I didn't think things through at first, and sent our son to the capital.

把媳婦閃得苦又孤，把婆婆送入黃泉路，只怨是我相耽誤。

My daughter-in-law was abandoned to suffering and loneliness, my wife put on the road to the Yellow Springs. Only I am to blame for your injuries.

6.98 我骨頭未知埋在何處所。

And my bones – where will they be buried?

6.99 (方老生度曲之時，眾閉目凝聽，隨音之高下急徐而相應符節，不知有明月，有清風。及曲終聲止，似聞餘音嫋娜不絕，而萬籟為之久久靜寂。其後如大夢忽醒而歡呼雷動。)

[While Wèi Liángfǔ sings, those in the crowd close their eyes and listen carefully. People react to the melody and tempo changes, unaware of the bright moon and the breeze. When the singing ends, the remaining sound is gracefully echoing, all nature is still and quiet. After that, the people awaken as if from a dream and cheer like thunder.]

6.100 (老生起立，外攜其手而高舉)

[Wèi Liángfǔ stands up, Guò Yúnshì raises his hand]

6.101 老生（白）：若魏良輔先生者，堪稱之為千古曲聖矣！

Old man (*lǎo shēng* role) [speaks]: Master Wèi Liángfǔ can be called the thousand-year Sage of *kūnqǔ*!

(在眾人高呼曲聖萬歲聲中，燈漸暗。)

[The crowd shouts “Long live the sage of *kūnqǔ*!” while the lights fade out.]

¹⁰⁴ Qián qiāng 前腔, lit. “previous tune,” indicates that this *qūpái* is the same as the previous *qūpái* 【Yàn guò shā 雁過沙】.

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Chapter 3

The Playwright's Dramatic Text: Its Historical Roots and his Revision

In the dramatic text (see Chapter 2), playwright Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh arranged the acts in line with major developments of the Kūnshān musical tradition. Tsēng first introduced the idea of a trilogy at the first production meeting: 1) Kūnshān singing style as Kūn *qiāng* 崑腔; 2) the Water Polished style as *shuǐmó diào* 水磨调 of *kūnqǔ*; and 3) the birth of the *kūnqǔ* theatrical form.

However, in the preface to his revised dramatic text, Tsēng clarified that the acts were organized into a tetralogy of:

- I. Kūnshān local music using local language (*tǔ qiāng tǔ qǔ* 土腔土曲)
- II. Kūnshān singing style known as Kūn *qiāng* or Kūn *qǔ*¹
(*Kūn qiāng Kūn qǔ* 崑腔崑曲)
- III. Kūnshān Water Polished style of non-dramatic *qǔ*²
(*Kūnshān shuǐmó diào qīngqǔ* 崑山水磨調清曲)
- IV. Kūnshān Water Polished style of dramatic *qǔ*³
(*Kūnshān shuǐmó diào jùqǔ* 崑山水磨調劇曲)

Since this case study pursues comparison of these essential principles with the creative process, it is important to know the roots of the plot and the historical facts on which the playwright based his original text. There are two approaches in this chapter. First is to trace the facts to their sources with quotations for authenticity. While enjoying the ride as a fact-detective, I look into the historical roots of and relationships between characters portrayed in the dramatic text with an

¹ Typically, scholars use the term *kūnqǔ* to identify Wèi Liángfǔ Water Polished style. Tsēng's second stage of *Kūn qiāng Kūn qǔ* 崑腔崑曲 is a literal contrast to the first development *tǔ qiāng tǔ qǔ* 土腔土曲. Tsēng pointed out that when its popularity grew beyond the Kūnshān area, non-Kūnshān residents would refer to this new style by its hometown and called it Kūn *qiāng* or Kūn *qǔ*. This definition is slightly different from *kūnqǔ* as used throughout this dissertation.

² *Qīngqǔ* 清曲, lit. "pure *qǔ*."

³ *Jùqǔ* 劇曲, lit. "dramatic *qǔ*."

open mind. This is in order to clarify which context is faithful to the history and which is manipulated by the playwright for dramatic effect. My goal is to compare actual, verifiable facts with the playwright’s depiction, from an impartial position based on my own historical research. Second is to provide the editorial suggestions that were given to the playwright in the first production meeting. Those suggestions and subsequent debate by actors, musicians, and scholars reflected their wishes for revisions to the dramatic text and hints as to potential performance elements. The playwright’s resulting self-revised text will be analyzed.

The preface to Tsēng’s revised dramatic text, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* (hereafter *Wèi* play), is subtitled “The history of Kūn *qiāng* development in traditional dramas—I wrote the *kūnjù* play *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*” (戲曲中的崑腔發展史—我編撰崑劇《曲聖魏良輔》). Tsēng first stated that his dramatic text was based on Southern *zájù* (*nán zájù* 南雜劇) play structure. The Southern *zájù* was a style that emerged during the Míng dynasty (14th to 17th centuries). A term, *nán zhī zájù* 南之雜劇 (lit. “the *zájù* of the south”), was first seen in *Drama Anthology* (*Qún yīn lèi xuǎn* 羣音類選), compiled by the Míng littérateur Hú Wénhuàn 胡文煥⁴ during 1593-1596⁵. (Fig. 3.1)

○卷二十五	玉乳記	東廂記	湖上奇逢	南西廂記	佛殿奇逢	鳴琴	場	○卷二十六	西廂記	高唐記	洛神記	帝世遊春	秦蘇頁賞	韓陶有晏
	丹月阻興	博情惹恨	致祭感夢	訪僧過紅	紅娘請生	鶯鶯見書	紅娘訂約	沈金瓶喜	夫人携紅	沈金瓶喜	沈金瓶喜	沈金瓶喜	沈金瓶喜	沈金瓶喜
	病起成親	春鴻詩宴	目夜聽琴	燒香吟句	夫人背盟	鶯鶯	鶯鶯	夫人携紅	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別
				報生聞道	紅娘訂約	紅娘訂約	紅娘訂約	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別
				鶯鶯	鶯鶯	鶯鶯	鶯鶯	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別
				鶯鶯	鶯鶯	鶯鶯	鶯鶯	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別	長亭送別

Fig. 3.1 Hú Wénhuàn’s *Qún yīn lèi xuǎn*

⁴ Tseng Yong-Yih, *Xiqu yuanliu xinlun*, 55.

⁵ Wang Yongjian, *Kunqiang chuanqi yu nan zaju*, 270.

This term, the *zájù* of the south, hints that this is a mixture of play structure and regional orientation. In general, mainstream Chinese theatrical culture can be classified into the Northern and the Southern traditions. In the north, the *zájù*, a four-act drama which originated during the Sòng dynasty (10th to 13th centuries), matured during the Yuán dynasty (13th to 14th centuries) and extended its influence to the Southern tradition. It continued to develop during the early Míng dynasty as the model dramatic genre known as Northern *qǔ zájù* (*běi qǔ zájù* 北曲雜劇; *zájù* plays composed in Northern *qǔ* style) yet was already in decline. In the south, Southern *qǔ* plays (*nán qǔ xìwén* 南曲戲文 or *nánxì* 南戲) had already reached their maturity by the early 13th century⁶ and were considered the earliest well-developed theatrical form in Chinese history. During the Yuán dynasty, this southern genre lost popularity to the *zájù* plays from the north and lay dormant until its renaissance at the end of the Yuán dynasty. By the mid-Míng dynasty, Southern *qǔ* plays had evolved into *chuánqí* form in which the number of acts range between a dozen and forty or fifty. Míng dynasty playwrights further blended the Northern *qǔ zájù* with the more fashionable southern style; this became known as Southern *zájù* (*zájù* plays composed in mostly Southern *qǔ* style) with from one to eleven acts. In Tsēng’s own words:

Southern *zájù* is a genre combining Northern *qǔ zájù* plays (otherwise known as Northern *qǔ*), Southern *qǔ* plays (otherwise known as Southern *qǔ*), and the Míng and Qīng dynasties’ *chuánqí* dramatic literature form⁷ (Míng Qīng *chuánqí* 明清傳奇). This mixture of forms was flexible in length and incorporated both Southern and Northern *qǔ*, although based mainly on Southern *qǔ* with some Northern *qǔ* elements. In terms of vocal arrangements, the format of each act might feature only one main singer (role), as in Northern *qǔ zájù* plays, or, like Southern *qǔ* plays, the number of singers in each act could be unrestricted. This is therefore the most suitable dramatic form for staging

⁶ Sun Mei, “Nanxi: The Earliest Form of Xiqu (Traditional Chinese Theatre),” v.

⁷ Míng Qīng *chuánqí* 明清傳奇 originated from Southern *qǔ* plays (*nánxì* 南戲) and became a nationwide dramatic form during the Míng and Qīng dynasties.

traditional dramas for modern theatre. Our performance should follow the Míng dynasty (Southern) *zǎjù* style and disciplines.⁸

The cultural identity of the Northern and Southern traditions was at first geographical, as the names suggest. When political power shifted between Hàn Chinese and non-Hàn Chinese and capitals moved back and forth between north and south, the Northern and Southern traditions known as Northern *qǔ* and Southern *qǔ* were conceptualized and stylized.

Referring to the acts in Tsēng's first dramatic text, the tetralogy of Kūnshān music was laid out as follows:

Prologue (*jiā mén dà yì*): *Fù mò* describes the playwright's purpose in writing the play and gives a summary of its content.

Part I of the tetralogy

Act 1 *Introduction*: Folk songs sung by Zhōu Shòuyì and other *chǒu* role actors represent Kūnshān local music using local language. This is the earliest documented event of Kūnshān singing style.

Part II of the tetralogy

Act 1 continued: Gù Jiān first improves the Kūnshān folk singing style with help from his scholar friends. The lyrical melodies, known as Kūn *qiāng*, become popular outside Kūnshān.

Part III of the tetralogy

Act 2 *Exchange Qǔ Art Forms*: Wèi Liángfǔ and his friends refine the old Kūn *qiāng* into a new vocal style named Water Polished style (*shuǐ mó diào* 水磨调).

Act 3 *A Happy Encounter*: Wèi Liángfǔ's intention to integrate Southern and Northern *qǔ* in his Water Polished style.

Act 4 *Celebration*: Zhāng Yětāng helps Wèi Liángfǔ accommodate the Northern *qǔ* into the Water Polished style, designed for pure singing (non-dramatic *qǔ*), as well as to enrich the musical accompaniment; these efforts result in a successful integration and the culmination of Wèi's vision.

⁸ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

Part IV of the tetralogy

Act 5 *Passing on the Legacy*: Liáng Chényú embraced Wèi Liángfǔ's Water Polished style in his new play *Washing Silk* and stages it as dramatic singing. This marks the birth of the *kūnqǔ* theatrical form, currently known as *kūnjù*.

Act 6 *The Tiger Hill Qǔ Festival*: A finale; this festival presents Sūzhōu cultural events during the Mid-Autumn Festival and shows the popularity of *kūnqǔ* singing. The final act enumerates the reasons that Wèi Liángfǔ would be cherished by later generations as the sage of *kūnqǔ*.

Since the purpose of this play was to feature Wèi Liángfǔ and his endeavors in refining the Kūnshān singing style, Tsēng spent three acts depicting Wèi Liángfǔ's problem-solving in order to achieve his ideal Kūnshān Water Polished style, and then ended with Wèi Liángfǔ's ultimate goal being carried on by his disciples. Although the four parts of the tetralogy were not equally distributed among all six acts, and the music in each part was not necessarily restricted to the single featured style, Tsēng maintained the equal significance of each of the four parts of the tetralogy and analyzed their key aspects in his preface:⁹

- I. *Tǔ qiāng tǔ qǔ* 土腔土曲 is basically the natural melody of language (see [2.24]). The folk songs are sung with Kūnshān local music and local language. "From each happy heart they emerge without much thought" (see [1.47]). Lines in folk songs were composed in various lengths and unregulated rhymes. This was the period before the middle of the Southern Sòng dynasty¹⁰, roughly up to 1200 AD.
- II. *Kūn qiāng Kūn qǔ* 崑腔崑曲 implemented *qǔpái* form and were mainly composed in a more syllabic and emotionally moving type of *qǔpái* called *cūqǔ* 粗曲.¹¹ Those *qǔpái* did not follow the rules of level or oblique tone patterns or syntactic structures. This was the period before the middle of the Míng dynasty,¹² roughly to 1520 AD.
- III. *Kūnshān shuǐmó diào qīngqǔ* 崑山水磨調清曲 or Wèi Liángfǔ's Water Polished style of *qǔ*. Composition of *qǔpái* pieces followed eight rules concerning: 1) the number of words (not including the decorative words); 2) the number of sentences required; 3) the length of each sentence (irregular lengths, variable number of words);

⁹ Tsēng Yōng-Yih, "The history of Kūn qiāng development in traditional dramas – I wrote the *kūnjù* play *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*," 5.

¹⁰ Southern Sòng dynasty (1127–1279)

¹¹ *Cūqǔ* 粗曲, lit. "raw *qǔ*." This is a type of *qǔ* best sung by painted face *jìng* role and clown *chōu* role actors.

¹² Míng dynasty (1368–1644)

4) the length of the semantic unit (identifying each unit by the rhythm of odd or even syllables); 5) the rule of syntactic structures; 6) the tone patterns (level or oblique tone); 7) the rule of rhyme schemes (the density or rhythm of rhyme); and 8) the rule of orderly parallelism of the text¹³ (see [2.25]). These *qǔpái* pieces were mainly composed using a melismatic and expressive type of *qǔpái* called *xìqǔ* 細曲,¹⁴ as well as *jíqǔ fāndiào* 集曲犯調 in which new *qǔpái* were created by combining parts from several existing *qǔpái*. Both Southern and Northern *qǔ* could also be organized as *qǔpái* sets. Singers needed to examine the tones carefully when pronouncing the words and phrasing the melodies; they also needed to complete the voicing of a word's head, belly, and tail sounds (see [2.25]). The language used in *qǔpái* should be subjected to the regulations in the book *Tones and Rhymes Used in the Central Region of China*¹⁵ (*Zhōngyuán Yīnyùn* 中原音韻); the tones and pronunciations faithful to the Mandarin of the time. This was the period when Wèi Liángfǔ's Water Polished style became popular during the Míng dynasty (1368–1644), roughly 1558¹⁶ AD and on.

- IV. Kūnshān *shuǐmó diào jùqǔ* 崑山水磨調劇曲 was contemporaneous with the Míng and Qīng dynasties' *chuánqí* dramatic literature form, a theatrical genre which began developing during the end of the Míng Jiājīng¹⁷ period when Liáng Chényú embraced the Water Polished style in his play *Washing Silk*. The key elements and compositional rules were the same as for Wèi Liángfǔ's Water Polished style for non-dramatic *qǔ*. Because of its use in theatrical performance, further efforts were made to incorporate the musical style with dance, acting, and instrumental music. However, with the use of percussive patterns and sounds that corresponded to acting movements and gestures, the desired ideal for non-dramatic *qǔ* vocal techniques became impossible to execute fully on stage (see [5.61]). In other words, the singing of dramatic *qǔ* on stage needed to be more flexible compared to the pure singing of non-dramatic *qǔ*.

As a scholar, Tsēng may seem conservative and heavily focused on historical facts in the dramatic text of *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*. As a playwright, however, he created some humor and human passion around those facts without over-emphasizing these added effects. I

¹³ “...每支曲牌都含有正字總數、句數、句長、語長、句式、聲調律、協韻律、對偶律等八個構成要素...。” Tseng Yong-Yih, *Cong qiangdiao shuodao Kunju*, 63.

¹⁴ *Xìqǔ* 細曲, lit. “fine *qǔ*.” This is a type of *qǔ* best sung by male *shēng* role and female *dàn* role actors.

¹⁵ “... in the Yuan dynasty, the phonologist and musicologist Zhou Deqing had compiled an important rhyme-book, *Tones and Rhymes Used in the Central Region of China*, which all composers and singers since then have respectfully followed, accepting the accents of Zhong-zhou (the ancient name for central China) as the orthodox rhyme-sounds to be used in singing all *qǔ*-works.” Koo and Yue, *Wei Liang-fu: Rules of Singing Qu*, xxxvii– xxxviii.

¹⁶ Tseng assumed Wèi Liángfǔ's Water Polished style was accomplished after the Míng dynasty, Jiājīng 37th year 明嘉靖三十七年 (1558). See Tseng Yong-Yih, *Cong qiangdiao shuodao Kunju*, 229.

¹⁷ Míng dynasty, Jiājīng period 嘉靖年 (1522–1566)

will examine both the historical significance of each act as it was carefully cultivated by Tsēng, and the suggestions for better storytelling that were made by participants of the first production meeting.

Prologue

The Prologue sets the basic structure to that commonly used in opening *chuánqí* drama, called either “self-introduction” (*jiā mén dà yì* 家門大意, lit. “introduction and outline”) or “a play opens with a *fù mò* on stage” (*fù mò kāi chǎng* 副末開場). The same model also applied to Southern *zájù* which is identical to *chuánqí* drama. Lǐ Dǒu 李斗 (1749–1817), in his *A Record of the Painted Boats at Yángzhōu* (*Yángzhōu huàfǎng lù* 揚州畫舫錄) said, “The theatre [play] opens with a *fù mò* on stage; he is like the troupe supervisor.” (*Líyuán yǐ fù mò kāi chǎng, wéi língbān* 梨園以副末開場，為領班) The honor of acting as *fù mò* commentator was given to the current Chairman of Shěng Kūn, Lǐ Hóngliáng. A perfect match! The main task of a *fù mò* is to make opening remarks on the germ of the playwright’s plot and the outline of the play. The *fù mò* first sang of the playwright’s purpose in writing the plot in free rhythm (see 0.3–0.6), explaining that this new *kūnqǔ* play expounded on *kūnqǔ*’s origins and development; the acts are daintily arranged and the lyrics rigorously fit poetic rules, all due to the dedication of Wèi Liángfǔ. This first *qǔpái* led to Tsēng’s pride in himself for being known for his rigorous *qǔpái* compositional skills. Based on ancient Chinese verse tradition, Tsēng put forward a method of phonetic and musical forms in which eight structural elements made each *qǔpái* unique from others; this is according to the eight rules of composing *qǔpái* mentioned above. These eight rules were invoked in Act 2 when Wèi Liángfǔ sought a way for the Kūnshān lyrical melody to

reach its ultimate graceful refinement. We will find more evidence that this play is rooted in Tsēng's *kūnqǔ* theories.

The *fù mò* then recites the outline of the play with linguistic rhythm (see 0.8–0.11), saying that Wèi Liángfǔ refined the old style into his Water Polished style of *qǔ* with the help of Zhāng Yětáng; *kūnqǔ* singing became popular and Liáng Chényú's effort to use *kūnqǔ* singing in his *chuánqí* drama started the *kūnjù* era. This prologue structure is a signature feature in all of Tsēng's new *kūnqǔ* plays. Though it may not be the case for other modern creations, it is characteristic of Tsēng's dramatic text and a traditional approach.

Act 1

Act 1 was based on an event described by Kūnshān novelist Zhōu Xuánwěi 周玄暉 in his *The Sequel of Jīng Forest* (*Jīng lín xù jì* 涇林續記), third volume. Zhōu Xuánwěi recounted short stories of historic figures during the Míng dynasty's Jiājīng and Wànlì periods. The story depicted the Míng dynasty's first emperor Zhū Yuánzhāng summoning the 107-year-old elder Zhōu Shòuyì from Kūnshān in 1373 (Hóngwǔ sixth year 洪武六年)¹⁸ (Fig. 3.2).

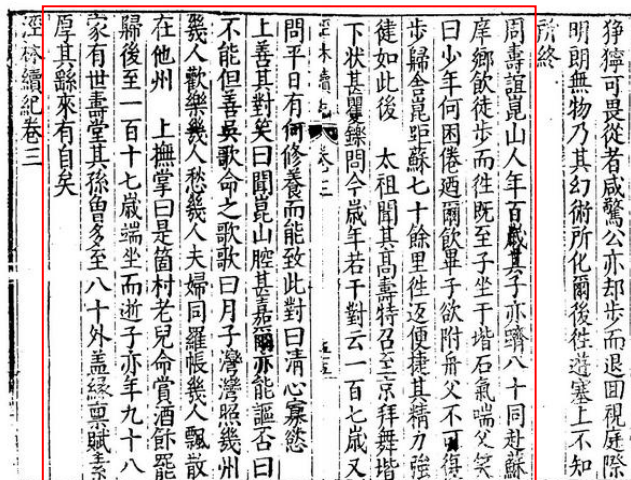


Fig. 3.2 *The Sequel of Jīng Forest* (vol. 3)

¹⁸ Wu Xinlei, “Lun yushan yaji zai kunshan qiang xingcheng zhong de shengyi ronghe zuoyong.” 120.

Emperor Zhū was curious about Zhōu Shòuyì's longevity, asking him "What did you do every day to cultivate such longevity?" Zhōu Shòuyì replied "A pure heart and few desires (*qīng xīn guǎ yù* 清心寡慾)." Emperor Zhū smiled and asked "I have heard that Kūnshān *qiāng* are pleasing, will you sing for us?" Zhōu Shòuyì responded, "I cannot, but I am good at Wú folk songs¹⁹ (*yuē bùnéng, dàn shàn Wú gē* 曰不能，但善吳歌)." He then sang "The crescent moon shines over the country... (see [1.29](#)–[1.30](#))." Tsēng made two changes to the original story. Zhōu Shòuyì was intended to be played by a clown *chǒu* role actor, therefore some humor needed to be in place. In Tsēng's text, instead of Zhōu Shòuyì replying "A pure heart and few desires," Tsēng turned the centenarian into a person who "has a passion for singing the *qǔ*, drinking alcohol, and loving pretty ladies! (*hào chàng qǔ* 好唱曲，*hào yǐn jiǔ* 好飲酒，*hào měisè* 好美色)" (see [1.25](#)). Here Zhōu Shòuyì's passion for singing the *qǔ* was in fact for singing Kūnshān folk songs since the word *qǔ* also means songs. Zhōu Shòuyì's passion for drinking alcohol possibly springs from Tsēng's own interest. Tsēng often jokes about himself that the highest official position he has held is chair of the "drinking party 酒黨." Finally Zhōu Shòuyì's passion for loving pretty ladies was perhaps Tsēng's way of winking at a "few desires." The second change arrives when Zhōu Shòuyì responds to Emperor Zhū about whether or not he could sing Kūnshān *qiāng* (see [1.26](#)). Instead of "I cannot, but I am good at Wú folk songs," Tsēng purposely had Zhōu Shòuyì say yes to the emperor and sing "The crescent moon..." portraying Zhōu Shòuyì as if he did not understand the difference between Kūnshān folk songs and the famous Kūnshān *qiāng*. This episode served to bring Gù Jiān into the picture so that Tsēng could explain the fundamental concept of Kūnshān folk songs and Kūnshān *qiāng*, the first and second parts of the tetralogy.

¹⁹ The language used in the Sūzhōu area and nearby Kūnshān belongs to the Wú linguistic system.

With well-defined role categories in which clown *chǒu* role actors sang the folk songs and an old male *lǎo shēng* role actor sang his improved lyrical style, Tsēng gave us a clear visual and aural view.

Present-day scholars consider Gù Jiān to be a murky figure in *kūnqǔ* history; his very existence has been debated. His name was mentioned in “The Guide of Southern *Qǔ*”²⁰ (*Nán cí yǐn zhèng* 南詞引正), a controversial version of Wèi Liángfǔ’s “Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” (*Qǔ lǜ* 曲律).

元朝有顧堅者，雖離崑山三十里，居千墩，精於南辭，善作古賦。擴廓帖木兒聞其善歌，屢招不屈。與楊鐵笛、顧阿瑛、倪元鎮為友，自號風月散人。其著有《陶真野集》十卷，《風月散人樂府》八卷行於世，善發南曲之奧，故國初有崑山腔之稱。

During the Yuán dynasty, Gù Jiān who lived in Qiāndūn, about thirty *lǐ* from Kūnshān, was an expert in Southern *qǔ* and good at composing ancient-style *fù* poetry. Kōke Temür²¹ heard that he was good at singing and summoned him repeatedly, but Gù Jiān was unyielding. He was friends with Yáng Tiědí, Gù Āyīng, and Ní Yuánzhèn,²² and also known as Fēngyuè Sànrén. He wrote ten volumes of *Táo Zhēn Yě Jí* and eight volumes of *Fēngyuè Sànrén Ballads* which were published. He was good at elucidating the profundity of Southern *qǔ* which became known as the Kūnshān singing style (Kūnshān *qiāng*) during the early period of our present dynasty.²³

The reason to point out this debate is that the paragraph mentioning Gù Jiān’s existence can only be found in “The Guide of Southern *Qǔ*” but not in other vetted sources. Scholars who choose to believe the authenticity of “The Guide of Southern *Qǔ*” also believe that Gù Jiān, who was a Southern *qǔ* musician, was the one who made the Kūnshān style of singing (Kūnshān *qiāng*)

²⁰ Koo and Yue translated *Nán cí yǐn zhèng* as “Southern *Qǔ* Works: Authenticated Versions.” See *Wei Liang-fu: Rules of Singing Qu*, 2006, 35.

²¹ Kōke Temür was a Mongol general during the late Yuán dynasty. In this paragraph, even though Gù Jiān lived during the Yuán dynasty which was ruled by the Mongol empire, as a Hàn Chinese he showed his loyalty to the Hàn by refusing to work with Mongolians.

²² Tsēng used this information that Gù Jiān was friends with Yáng Tiědí, Gù Āyīng, and Ní Yuánzhèn in Act 1 but referred to their names as Yáng Wéizhēn, Gù Yīng, and Ní Zàn, not by their courtesy names (see [1.47]). Among the three, Gù Yīng was the one who built *Yùshān cǎotáng* 玉山草堂 (Jade-Mountain Thatched-Cottage) and hosted *Yùshān yǎjí* 玉山雅集 (Jade-Mountain Gathering), a cultural and poetic event that contributed to the making of Kūnshān lyrical singing.

²³ Refers to the Míng dynasty.

well-known at the beginning of the Míng dynasty. This result would push the origins of *kūnqǔ* back 600 or more years from the present day. A few on one side worship Gù Jiān as *kūnqǔ*'s founding father. On the other hand, scholars who choose to believe “The Guide of Southern *Qǔ*” was a forgery further question the existence of Gù Jiān. Tsēng obviously belongs to the first group of scholars who are happy to find more documentation about *kūnqǔ* history. However, he specifically took time during the first production meeting to explain a common misconception:

Many people say Kūnshān *qiāng* was invented and developed by Gù Jiān, some say Wèi Liángfǔ was the creator, so there is a 600 history, or a 400 history, but they are all wrong! Gù Jiān merely improved the Kūnshān *qiāng*; Wèi Liángfǔ further refined it. Any type of lyrical melody (*qiāng diào* 腔調) could never be invented by one person. Because lyrical melody has a common quality that came from the pronunciation of the local language by local people it cannot be the result of one person's effort. There is another aspect of lyrical melody, which is vocal style (*chàng qiāng* 唱腔²⁴). This vocal style is purely dedicated to one person because each person has his/her unique tone color, vocal techniques, and methods for pronouncing words (*kǒu fǎ* 口法)... Singers express their emotion in language by singing with different dynamics and using different ways to handle melodies that follow the implied inflections of the text, with its stressed and unstressed tones, this is *xíng qiāng* 行腔.²⁵ Pronouncing words would bring out the sound; producing a melodic phrase would bring out the sentiment... Singers' vocal style is in fact central to our theatrical music... Theatrical music relies on the presentation of performers' singing techniques... With such a basic concept, the common quality of the local lyrical melody could be elevated by brilliant singers such as Gù Jiān, Wèi Liángfǔ, and Liáng Chényú.²⁶

Tsēng took the middle view, believing “The Guide of Southern *Qǔ*” to be genuine and that Gù Jiān existed, but reminding us that every step of improvement and development has its historical facts and therefore in the *Wèi* play, though focused on Wèi Liángfǔ, we can sense the group effort behind it.

²⁴ *Chàng qiāng* 唱腔, lit. “sung melodic-phrases.” The literal meaning adapted from Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak 1991, *Listening to Theatre*, p. 54.

²⁵ *Xíng qiāng* 行腔, lit. “moving the melodic-phrase.”

²⁶ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

Kūnqǔ scholar Gù Língsen 顾聆森 addressed his liking of Tsēng’s play in the meeting and praised its authenticity as traditional *kūnqǔ* using a *fū mò*’s self-introduction as a way to open the play. He wrote an article about Tsēng’s *kūnqǔ* creation *The Butterfly Lovers*, praising *The Butterfly Lovers* as a model for new *kūnqǔ* dramatic texts.²⁷ Another article, titled “How on earth can *kūnqǔ* be 600 years old?” (*Hé lái kūnqǔ liùbǎi nián? 何来昆曲600年?*)²⁸ criticized the famous TV documentary “*Kūnqǔ 600 Years*” (*Kūnqǔ liù bǎi nián 昆曲600年*), produced by China Central Television (CCTV), for misleading viewers, the media, and even some scholars by claiming that *kūnqǔ* had a 600-year history citing only evidence supporting this idea: Gù Jiān was good at elucidating the profundity of the Southern *qǔ* and it became known as the Kūnshān style of singing (*Kūnshān qiāng*) during the early period of the Míng dynasty. As an accomplished researcher, Gù Língsen thought it was not proper to simply change the timeline of origin with one source and arbitrarily crown Gù Jiān as its founder, “...*kūnqǔ* should start from Wèi Liángfǔ’s time up until now, 470 or more years.”²⁹ Gù Língsen strongly agreed with Tsēng about the three transformational stages of *kūnqǔ* history: Kūnshān *qiāng*, polished *kūnqǔ*, and staged *kūnjù*, as well as the concept that the Kūnshān lyrical melodies resulted from group efforts, not an individual’s innovation. He then made an unusual point:

As for Wèi Liángfǔ’s *kūnqǔ*, did Wèi Liángfǔ really refine the Kūnshān *qiāng*? Why do we think the Kūnshān *qiāng* was the basis of *kūnqǔ* and Wèi Liángfǔ refined this particular one? I have been doing research for many years and have read many ancient books. No one from ancient times ever said that Wèi Liángfǔ took the Kūnshān *qiāng* and refined it into *kūnqǔ*. No such claim! On the contrary, the Qīng dynasty poet Zhū Yízūn 朱彝尊 wrote that the Kūnshān singing style of *kūnqǔ* was transformed from the ancient

²⁷ Gu Lingsen, *Lingsen kunqu lun ji*, 489–95.

²⁸ Gu Lingsen, *Lingsen kunqu lun ji*, 144–52.

²⁹ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

style of Hǎiyán 海鹽 and Yìyáng 弋陽 and became Kūnshān style; he did not mention Kūnshān qiāng as the predecessor of kūnqǔ.³⁰

Zhū Yízūn 朱彝尊 (1629–1709), a Qīng dynasty poet and classicist, wrote in his *Notes on Poetry of Jingzhijū* (*Jingzhijū shī huà* 靜志居詩話), “...Wèi Liángfū was able to make his voice twirl (see 2.4) and began to transform the ancient styles of Hǎiyán and Yìyáng into Kūn(shān) qiāng...” (Fig. 3.3)

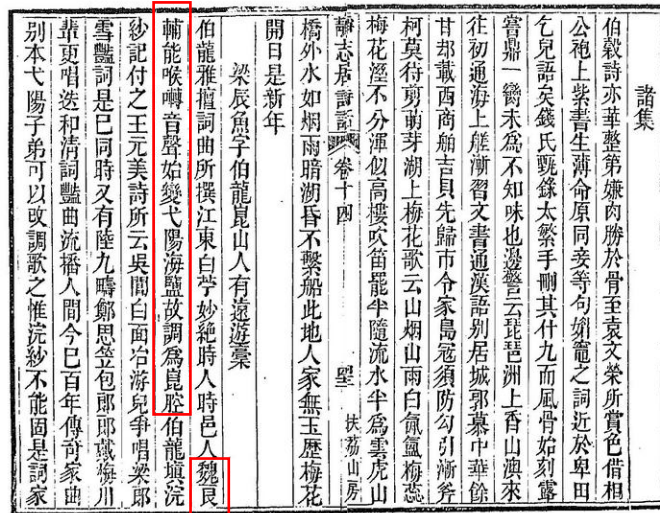


Fig. 3.3 *Notes on Poetry of Jingzhijū* (vol. 14, p. 42)

Gù Língsēn continued:

There are a couple of pieces of evidence that could prove that Kūnshān qiāng was not the father of kūnqǔ....For example, the Míng dynasty’s qǔ expert Shěn Chǒngsuí 沈寵綏 who wrote the *Handbook for Qǔ-Singing* (*Dùqū xūzhī* 度曲須知) and the Qīng dynasty littérateur Yú Huái 余懷 both said that the reason Wèi Liángfū refined the singing style was because he was “angry that the quality of the Southern qǔ has become so poor”.³¹ The Southern qǔ sounded as simple as a ditty, the length could be shorter or longer as the singers pleased and did not have much rhythm. ‘The Southern qǔ was straightforward and plain, lacking flavor and flourish’,³² so Wèi Liángfū had to change it. The Southern qǔ contained not

³⁰ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

³¹ Shěn Chǒngsuí 沈寵綏 (active during the end of the Míng dynasty) in *Handbook for Qǔ-Singing* (*Dùqū xūzhī* 度曲須知), chapter “The prosperity and decline of qǔ” (*Qū yùn lóng shuāi* 曲運隆衰) wrote, “Wèi Liángfū from Yùzhāng... born with a good musical ear, he was angry that the Southern qǔ has become so poor... (有豫章魏良輔者...生而審音，憤南曲之訛陋也).” Also see Fig. 3.5.

³² Yú Huái 余懷 (1616–1696?) in his essay “Listening to a Vocal Performance in Jichàng Garden” (*Jichàng yuán wén gē jì* 寄暢園聞歌記) wrote, “At that time the Southern qǔ was still straightforward and plain, lacking flavor and flourish. Wèi Liángfū worked on it, made his voice twirl, harmonized the tunes, and created a new style of singing...”

only the Kūnshān *qiāng*. There were four famous *qiāngs*.³³ Yìyáng, Hǎiyán, Kūnshān, and Yúyáo; plus Hángzhōu and ten more *qiāngs* used in singing the Southern *qǔ*. I therefore categorically say, according to these ancient experts, Wèi Liángfǔ absorbed the essence of the many *qiāngs* of the Southern *qǔ*, integrating the Northern *qǔ*, and created his own new singing style... Liáng Chényú then used this new singing style in his play and it became a popular theatrical genre... Since Wèi and Liáng were both from Kūnshān, people therefore called it the Kūnshān *qiāng*. This Kūnshān *qiāng* was Wèi and Liáng's *kūnqǔ*, different from the Kūnshān *qiāng* of 600 years ago.³⁴

Tsēng put forward his views on whether Wèi Liángfǔ refined the Kūnshān *qiāng* itself or the Southern *qǔ* of the mixed *qiāngs*:

The Southern *qǔ* originated in Wēnzhōu 温州. At first Wēnzhōu developed a local small-scale singing drama performed by comic actors. At the time comic actors used Wēnzhōu local language for performances. Later it was loved by commoners and the Wēnzhōu plays further absorbed *zájù* plays from the imperial court, becoming Wēnzhōu *zájù* or Yǒngjiā³⁵ *zájù*. Its plot and artistic elements were improved and spread to neighboring states. When Wēnzhōu's Southern *qǔ* style traveled to a new region, it would have intersected with the local style of singing. For example, when it reached the Hǎiyán region, the singing style would become Hǎiyán-Wēnzhōu *qiāng*, so as Hángzhōu-Wēnzhōu *qiāng*... In other words, the dominant lyrical singing style would retain its own characteristics but would also contain elements from other styles. This formed a *qiāng* system we call *shēng qiāng* 聲腔³⁶... each *qiāng* had its own strength and weakness. When two or more *qiāngs* met, some might blend with the other, some might be of equal strength... and some might keep their own style... The variety of *qiāngs* used in Southern *qǔ* plays (*nánxì* 南戲) therefore spread out through Wēnzhōu plays and fostered two systems: one represented by Hǎiyán and Kūnshān *qiāngs* which were considered more refined in style, the other represented by Yìyáng and Yúyáo *qiāngs* which were considered more vulgar in style... Mr. Gù's theory was based on Zhū Yízūn's saying: Wèi Liángfǔ created the Water Polished style (*shuǐmó diào*) by refining the Hǎiyán and Yìyáng *qiāngs*. However, Zhū Yízūn lived during the Qīng dynasty Kāngxī 康熙 period, quite distant from Wèi Liángfǔ's time³⁷. No other scholars mentioned this phenomenon concerning Wèi Liángfǔ's Water Polished style before Zhū Yízūn. Wèi Liángfǔ lived in

(當是時，南曲率平直無意致。良輔轉喉押調，度為新聲...)” English translation adopted from Koo and Yue, *Wei Liang-fu: Rules of Singing Qu*, 2006, p. 47. Also see Fig. 3.4 (right).

³³ The word *qiāng* here indicates the lyrical singing style derived from local language and the musical notes must match with the phonetic elements.

³⁴ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014. Also see Gu Lingsen, *Lingsen kunqu lun ji*, 180–81.

³⁵ Wēnzhōu was once called Yǒngjiā 永嘉.

³⁶ *Shēng qiāng xì tǒng* 聲腔系統 or vocal melodic-passage system. See Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak 1991, *Listening to Theatre*, 53. Here *Shēng qiāng* refers to some systematic and common elements which appeared in varieties of local theatrical performances.

³⁷ Roughly 150 or more years apart.

Kūnshān or Tàicāng cities of the Sūzhōu region ... the regional language belonged to the Wú linguistic system³⁸ ... The key point was that all Chinese theatrical genres had strong regional characteristics; in order to become a national theatre, it had to use the Mandarin of the time... I therefore think that Wèi Liángfǔ would have based it on the Kūnshān singing style then polished it with the language of Sūzhōu-Mandarin³⁹ ... If we set aside the relationship between Wèi Liángfǔ and Kūnshān, I am afraid we need more data to investigate this question. There is no doubt that Wèi Liángfǔ was the father of the Water Polished style...⁴⁰

Gù Língsen countered that he did not deny Kūnshān *qiāng*'s involvement in *kūnqǔ*, yet in modern times no one has a clue as to how the Kūnshān *qiāng* was being sung. However the Yiyáng *qiāng* can still be heard; for example, Yǒngjiā Kūnjù Troupe (Yǒngjiā Kūnjù Tuán 永嘉昆剧团) has performed the play *The Horse Trader* (Fàn mǎ jì 販馬記) in Yiyáng *qiāng*. Cài Zhèngrén 蔡正仁, who was to play Wèi Liángfǔ, confirmed that during his 60 years of performing *kūnqǔ* (1954–2014) he had not heard or learned how to sing the Kūnshān *qiāng*, “This could be a problem in terms of how to introduce the Kūnshān *qiāng* to the audience... what the Kūnshān *qiāng* is. This is a serious topic.” Cài Zhèngrén turned to music director Sūn Jiàn’ān 孙建安, saying “Perhaps you need to ‘create’ a Kūnshān *qiāng*.” Tsēng suggested that although there is no recording of the Kūnshān *qiāng*, in theory the *cū qǔ* 粗曲 (the raw style of *qǔ*) might have a greater chance of retaining its original form.⁴¹

Gù Língsen, on the basis of his academic views, offered some thoughts that were different from Tsēng’s plot design for Act 1. He referred to a composition theory of a phoenix head (*fèng tóu* 鳳頭), a pig belly (*zhū dù* 豬肚), and a leopard tail (*bào wěi* 豹尾) in which the beginning has to be beautiful, the middle has to be magnificent, and the end has to be loud and

³⁸ The Wú linguistic system includes similar languages used in the city of Shànghǎi and provinces of Zhèjiāng and southern Jiāngsū. Sūzhōu was traditionally the center of Wú culture.

³⁹ *Sūzhōu guānhuà* 蘇州官話, lit. “Sūzhōu-Mandarin,” is basically a type of spoken language combining the official Mandarin of the court and the Sūzhōu language of the Wú linguistic system.

⁴⁰ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

⁴¹ Ibid.

clear.⁴² Gù Língsēn considered that introducing Emperor Zhū Yuánzhāng and Gù Jiān in Act 1 actually weakened the fact that Wèi Liángfǔ was the sage of *kūnqǔ*. He therefore suggested starting Act 1 with the *qǔ* competition between Wèi Liángfǔ and Wáng Yǒushān 王友山. Doing so would create some contrast and conflict elements to the play. This incident was documented in Yú Huái’s essay “Listening to a Vocal Performance in Jichàng Garden.”⁴³

良輔初習北音，絀于北人王友山。退而鏤心南曲，足跡不下樓十年。當是時，南曲率平直無意致，良輔轉喉押調，度為新聲。

(Wèi) Liángfǔ at first studied Northern music but was inferior compared to Wáng Yǒushān from the north. He instead endeavored to perfect his skills on the Southern *qǔ*. He studied so painstakingly that his footprints could not be traced downstairs for ten years. At that time the Southern *qǔ* was still straightforward and plain, lacking flavor and flourish. Liángfǔ worked on it, made his voice twirl, harmonized the tunes, and created a new style of singing.” (Fig. 3.4 right)

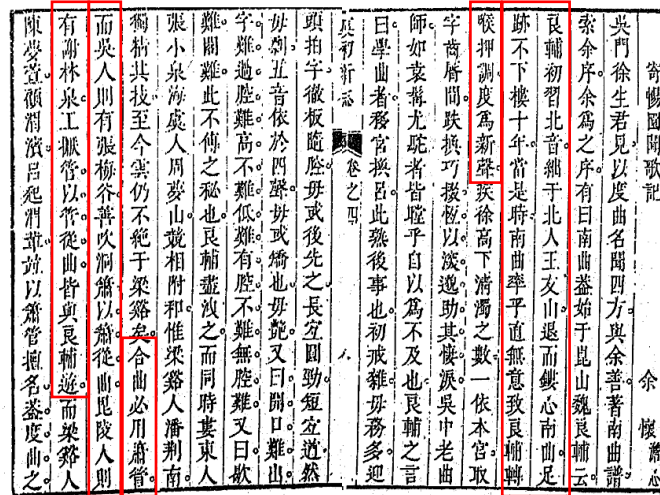


Fig. 3.4 “Listening to a Vocal Performance in Jichàng Garden”

⁴² Literary historian Táo Zōngyí 陶宗儀 was active during the late Yuán and early Míng. In his *Náncūn chuògēng lù* 南村輟耕錄 collected Yuán dynasty *qǔ* expert Qiáo Mèngfú 喬孟符 who expressed his opinion about composing the *yuèfǔ* 樂府 (translated as sung poetry or *yuèfǔ* ballad), “To compose the *yuèfǔ*, there is a method of *fēng tóu* (phoenix head), *zhū dù* (pig belly), and *bào wēi* (leopard tail), six words. The beginning has to be beautiful, the middle has to be magnificent, and the end has to be loud and clear. Especially the idea that connects the beginning and the end has to be fresh. If so, you can call it *yuèfǔ*.” Today’s *yuèfǔ* are poetry like *Zhē guì líng* and *Shuǐ xiān zǐ*. (喬孟符博學多能，以樂府稱。嘗云：「作樂府亦有法，曰鳳頭豬肚豹尾六字是也。大概起要美麗，中要浩蕩，結要響亮。尤貴在首尾貫穿，意思清新。苟能若是，斯可以言樂府矣。」此所謂樂府，乃今樂府，如《折桂令》、《水仙子》之類。). Tao Zongyi, *Nancun chuogeng lu*, vol. 8, 16.

⁴³ Yú Huái 余懷 (1616–1696?), *Jichàng yuán wén gē jì* 寄暢園聞歌記.

Gù Língsen's suggestion was to scrutinize and dramatize this incident instead of having Wèi Liángfǔ relate it in his introductory monologue as already existed in Tsēng's text (see [2.5](#)).

Shànghǎi Kūnqǔ Opera Troupe Vice Chairman and musician Liáng Hóngjūn 梁弘钧⁴⁴ shared a similar view:

As for the conflicts in plot structure, there are two contradicting points. The outer point of contradiction is Wáng Yǒushān; the inner point of contradiction is Wèi Liángfǔ's demanding of himself to develop the Water Polished singing style. It may be possible to combine these two and reflect on it... I believe the contradiction should not be a direct conflict. It should be a jump start kind of conflict... If we are to put the weight on music throughout the play, we are weakening the rest of the elements. Music can be overpowering. With that it may lead to choppy narration. This play is about the sage of *kūnqǔ*: Wèi Liángfǔ, this is his overall image. The composition is just a part of the play, an important part. If we over-emphasize the music it may not reflect well on his personality and the overall storytelling.⁴⁵

In Tsēng's opinion, the idea that is necessary to have conflicts as part of plot structure came from the influence of Western dramatic traditions. He stood on the principle that the intention and aesthetic foundation of traditional theatre is to appreciate its song, dance, and music, especially the singing:

If we purposely and forcefully create contradiction and conflict, we will violate this play's historic significance. More so, in order to present the sage image that was based on literature, we have to show the essence of Wèi Liángfǔ. The techniques of creating conflicts should not be the highest goal in traditional theatre. Even if there is a conflict, it should be presented in a natural way; it cannot be excessively affected... the intention and aesthetics should be manifest in music since the development of theatrical music aligned with the development of traditional theatres.⁴⁶

Tsēng confirmed that the act structure (*páichǎng* 排場) and the specific artistic style within each act contributed to show Wèi Liángfǔ's path of creative consciousness, a principal axis of the play.

⁴⁴ Currently, Liáng Hóngjūn serves as Chairman of the Shanghai Yueju Troupe 上海越剧院.

⁴⁵ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Act 2

Act 2 features the grand entrance of Wèi Liángfǔ. Wèi Liángfǔ's success established his sage status in *kūnqǔ* history since the Míng dynasty, yet we do not know exactly his birth and death dates. His actual birthplace is also a mystery; cities mentioned range from Kūnshān to Tàicāng to Yùzhāng. *Kūnqǔ* scholar Gù Língsēn deduced that Wèi Liángfǔ was active during the Míng dynasty's Jiājìng 嘉靖 period (1522–1567)⁴⁷. Wèi Liángfǔ's name is cited in numerous books written by *qǔ* scholars and lovers. Shěn Chǒngsuí 沈寵綏 (active towards the end of the Míng dynasty) said in his 1639 *Handbook for Qǔ-Singing*, chapter “The prosperity and decline of *qǔ*”:⁴⁸

嘉隆間，有豫章魏良輔者，流寓婁東鹿城之間，生而審音，憤南曲之訛陋也，盡洗乖聲，別開堂奧，調用水磨，拍捱冷板，聲則平上去入之婉協，字則頭腹尾音之畢勻，功深鎔琢，氣無煙火，啓口輕圓，收音純細。所度之曲，則皆《折梅逢使》、《昨夜春歸》諸名筆；採之傳奇，則有“拜星月”、“花陰夜靜”等詞。要皆別有唱法，絕非戲場聲口，腔曰“崑腔”，曲名“時曲”，聲場稟為曲聖，後世依為鼻祖，蓋自有良輔，而南詞音理，已極抽秘逞妍矣。

During the Jiājìng and Lóngqìng periods⁴⁹, Wèi Liángfǔ from Yùzhāng left his hometown and lived between Lóudōng (Tàicāng) and Lùchéng (Kūnshān). Born with a good musical ear, he was angry that the Southern *qǔ* has become so poor.⁵⁰ He therefore rid it of discordant sounds and expanded the sphere of *qǔ* singing. He established the use of the Water Polished singing style, and coordinated the song with the beat of the clapper.⁵¹ The four tones of level, rising, falling, and pausing are smoothed out and

⁴⁷ Gu Lingsen, *Lingsen kunqu lun ji*, 179.

⁴⁸ Shěn Chǒngsuí, *Handbook for Qǔ-Singing (Dùqǔ xūzhī 度曲須知)*, “The prosperity and decline of *qǔ*” (*Qǔ yùn lóng shuāi 曲運隆衰*), first volume, 2.

⁴⁹ Míng dynasty Jiājìng 嘉靖 (1522–1567) and Lóngqìng 隆慶 (1567–1573).

⁵⁰ See 2.5

⁵¹ In Shěn Chǒngsuí's *Handbook for Qǔ-Singing*, chapter “Comments on String Instruments” (*Xián suǒ tí píng 絃索題評*), “In our Wú region, ever since Wèi Liángfǔ, the Father of Kūn *qiāng*, established ways when producing a sung phrase by adapting the pronunciation of four tones in the Southern *qǔ*. It is so-called *shuǐmó qiāng* (Water Polished singing), *lěngbǎn qǔ* (lit. “cold *bǎn*-beat song”). For the past decades, there was no rival far and near. (我吳自魏良輔為崑腔之祖，而南詞之布調收音，既經創闢，所謂水磨腔、冷板曲，數十年來，遐邇遜為獨步。)” Zhōu Yíbái 周貽白 referred to *lěngbǎn qǔ* as non-dramatic songs or *qīng qǔ* 清曲, lit. “pure-singing songs” (Zhou Yibai, *Zhongguo xiju shi changpian*, 313). Yáng Yīnlǐú 楊荫浏 disagreed, saying “*Lěngbǎn qǔ* is a type of song that is slow in tempo. When the tempo is slower, it decreases the uplifting atmosphere so that the music sounds “cold,”

harmonized. The initial, middle, and final sounds (head, belly, and tail) of each word are expected to be heard clearly and completely. The singing achieves a high degree of sophistication,⁵² gentle and not explosive.⁵³ The start of all words should be made light and round. The final part of the vowels or consonant is articulated with clarity.⁵⁴ The songs he composed and sang were based on famous poems such as “Snapped a plum branch, sent by a messenger”⁵⁵ and “Last night the spring ended.”⁵⁶ Some were adapted from *chuánqí* dramas such as “Praying to the stars and the moon”⁵⁷ and “Shadow under the flowers, the quiet night.”⁵⁸ They should be sung with different techniques. This is not the kind of singing heard in the theatre. This style of singing is called Kūn(shān) *qiāng*, songs (*qǔ*) are called *shí qǔ*⁵⁹. On occasions of singing, people respected Wèi as the sage of *qǔ*. Later generations agreed that Wèi was the Father [of Kūn *qiāng*].⁶⁰ Probably ever since [Wèi] Liángfǔ, the Southern plays’ music theory had already reached its profound meaning and achieved its elegance.” (Fig. 3.5)

therefore it was called “cold *bǎn*-beat song.” (Yang Yinliu, *Zhongguo gudai yinyue shigao*, 863). Tseng indicated Wèi Liángfǔ’s new Kūn *qiāng* style can be called *shuímó diào* or *lěngbǎn qǔ* (Tseng Yong-Yih, *Cong qiangdiao shuodao Kunju*, 222). Wèi Liángfǔ himself mentioned about what is Pure-singing (*qīng chàng* 清唱). In “Twenty Notes from *The Red Coral of Yuefu Ballads*” (*Yuèfǔ hóng shān fánlì èrshí tiáo* 樂府紅珊凡例二十條) compiled by Qinhuai Moke, documenting Wèi Liángfǔ’s words “Pure-singing is called cold-singing” (*qīng chàng wèi zhī lěng chàng* 清唱謂之冷唱). In “Wèi Liángfǔ’s Eighteen Rules of Singing *Qǔ*,” Zhōu Zhībīāo wrote Wèi Liángfǔ’s words “Pure-singing, commonly refers to cold-wooden-bench” (*qīng chàng súyǔ wèi zhī lěng bǎn dèng* 清唱俗語謂之冷板橈).

⁵² See 2.41

⁵³ See 2.33

⁵⁴ See 2.41

⁵⁵ See 2.36–2.40. *Zhē mèi féng shǐ* 折梅逢使, first phrase of a 【Liú huā qì 榴花泣】 *qǔpái* written by the Míng dynasty painter and littérateur Táng Bóhǔ 唐伯虎. It is the first poem in a poetic cycle “Love Letters to the Brothel” (*Qīng jiǎn qīng lóu* 情東青樓).

⁵⁶ See 6.30–6.33. *Zuó yè chūn guī* 昨夜春歸, first phrase of a 【Bù bù jiāo 步步嬌】 *qǔpái* written by the Míng dynasty poet Chén Duó 陳鐸.

⁵⁷ See 6.39–6.44. *Bài xīng yuè* 拜星月 or *Bài xīn yuè* 拜新月 (lit. “Praying to the new moon”), first phrase of a Southern 【Èr láng shén 二郎神】 *qǔpái* from the play *Moon-Worshipping Pavilion* (*Bài Yuè Tíng* 拜月亭), Act 32 “Moon-worshipping in the boudoir.” Generally believed to be written by the Yuán dynasty’s Shī Hùì 施惠 who revised the *zájù* play 雜劇 of the same story by the Yuán dynasty playwright Guān Hànmō 關漢卿.

⁵⁸ *Huā yīn yè jìng* 花陰夜靜, the first phrase of a Southern 【Yàn guò shēng 雁過聲】 *qǔpái* from the play *Southern version of the Western Chamber* (*Nán xī xiāng* 南西廂), Act “Listen to the zither.” It was written by the Míng dynasty *chuánqí* playwright Lǐ Rìhuá 李日華.

⁵⁹ *Shí qǔ* 時曲 or “*Qǔ* of the time,” here referring to the Southern *qǔ* of the Water Polished singing style.

⁶⁰ Shěn Chǒngsuí said Wèi Liángfǔ was the Father of Kūn *qiāng* 魏良輔為崑腔之祖 (*Handbook for Qǔ-Singing*, chapter “Comments on String Instruments” (*Xián suǒ tí píng* 絃索題評)). Here “father (of the Kūn *qiāng*)” refers to the Kūn *qiāng* singing style that Wèi Liángfǔ refined. He therefore was the father of the Water Polished style of the Kūn *qiāng*, not the Kūn *qiāng* as local singing style. (Tseng Yong-Yih, *Cong qiangdiao shuodao Kunju*, 222).

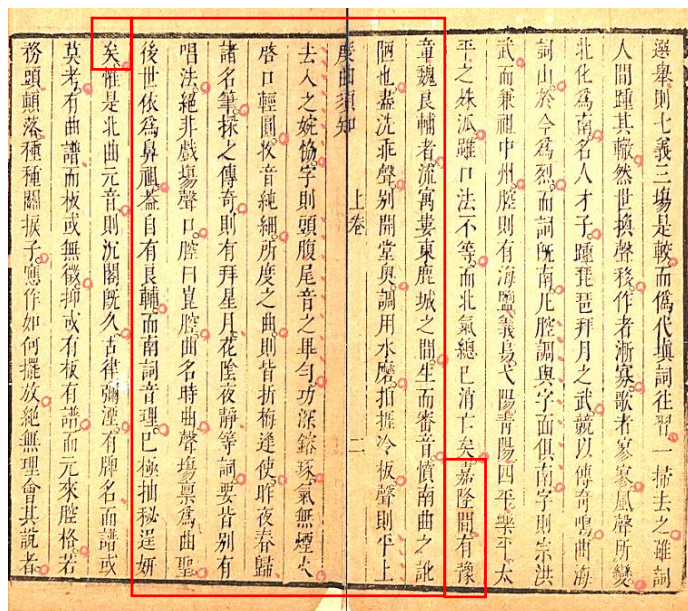


Fig. 3.5 Handbook for Qǔ-Singing, chapter “The prosperity and decline of qǔ”

Tsēng adapted most words from this paragraph into his dramatic text. Those sentences regarding Wèi Liángfǔ’s reasons to refine the qǔ singing style and the techniques that singers should follow appeared in Act 2, spoken by Guò Yúnshì 過雲適. According to the Míng dynasty’s Zhāng Dàfù 張大復:

而良輔自謂勿如戶侯過雲適，每有得必往咨焉，過稱善乃行，不即反覆數交勿厭。 [W]hen Wèi Liángfǔ obtained an idea, he always consulted with Guò Yúnshì. Only when Guò Yúnshì praised it would Wèi Liángfǔ go ahead and use it in his singing style. If Guò Yúnshì disagreed, then both of them would repeatedly exchange ideas tirelessly.⁶¹

In Tsēng’s text, Guò Yúnshì praised Wèi Liángfǔ’s new music, “Through the polished singing style *shuǐmó*, the singing achieves a high degree of sophistication. Your ten years of hard work has succeeded at last!” (see [2.41]). Wèi Liángfǔ right away confirmed “Therefore this new style, can it be called *shuǐmó diào* (Water Polished style)?” (see [2.42]) The reaction of Wèi Liángfǔ here now makes sense.

⁶¹ Zhāng Dàfù, *Notes Penned at the Plum-Blossom Thatched-Cottage* (*Méihuā cǎotáng bǐ tán* 梅花草堂筆談), “Kūn qīng 崑腔.”

Tsēng used three out of four songs mentioned in the above paragraph from “The prosperity and decline of *qǔ*.” The first song, “Snapped a plum branch, sent by a messenger,” is sung by Wèi Liángfǔ in Act 2. Tsēng uses this old and famous poetic song as his first case to introduce the so-called *shuǐmó diào* (Water Polished style) (see [2.42](#)). The next two songs, “Last night the spring ended” and “Praying to the stars and the moon” are used in Act 6 for the Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival. Both pieces are in the Southern *qǔ* style – “Last night the spring ended” was written as a non-dramatic poetic song, and “Praying to the stars and the moon” was a dramatic song from a Southern *qǔ* play. By arranging it so, Tsēng not only established its historical facts, but also revisited this Mid-Autumn Festival tradition, showing people from all corners of Sūzhōu singing the increasingly popular Southern style, both non-dramatic and dramatic songs, in the song contest.

The only major female character in the story is Wèi Liángfǔ’s daughter. According to Yè Mèngzhū⁶² of the early Qīng dynasty who collected news and anecdotes, Wèi Liángfǔ had a daughter who was a talented singer. As Wèi Liángfǔ’s daughter’s name is unknown, playwright Tsēng named her Yīngzhuàn 鶯轉, lit. “orioles’ trilling,” implying a magnificent voice, taken from the lyrics *mèng huí yīng zhuàn* 夢回鶯轉 (“Awakened from a dream by the sound of orioles’ trilling”) from the play *The Peony Pavilion*.⁶³ Although she is the major female role featured in the story, her first entrance functioned to introduce Wèi Liángfǔ’s music consultant Guò Yúnshì and his two musician friends Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán. By omitting her self-introductory entrance poem and song, her character was weakened and made less significant than

⁶² Yè Mèngzhū 葉夢珠 (1624–?), *Book of Worldly Affairs* (*Yuèshì biān* 閱世編), volume 10, “Notate” (*Jì wén* 紀聞), 1981: 222.

⁶³ Interviewed by Sūn Jiàn’ān, August 2015.

other male characters who appeared throughout. This is understandable since her existence and her marriage served chiefly to show why Zhāng Yětáng was so important to Wèi Liángfǔ.

Wèi Liángfǔ's two musician friends, Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán, were documented by Yú Huái, an early Qīng dynasty *littérateur*, in his essay “Listening to a Vocal Performance in Jichàng Garden”:⁶⁴

合曲必用簫管，而吳人則有張梅谷，善吹洞簫，以簫從曲；毘陵人則有謝林泉，工擷管，以管從曲，皆與良輔遊。

To accompany *qǔ* one must use *xiāo* and the *guǎn*. Zhāng Méigǔ of Wú region was good at playing the *dòng xiāo* 洞簫 (end-blown bamboo flute). He used the *xiāo* to complement the *qǔ* melody. Xiè Línquán of Píling (Chángzhōu) region was skilled in playing the *guǎn* 管 (double-reed pipe). He used the *guǎn* to complement the *qǔ* melody. They were both associated with [Wèi] Liángfǔ. (Fig. 3.4 left)

This brings another crucial element to what Wèi Liángfǔ did to refine the old Kūnshān singing to a new Water Polished style: the instrumentation. Xú Wèi, who lived during the time Wèi Liángfǔ was active, said in his 1559 book *Account of the Southern Style of Drama*:⁶⁵

今崑山以笛、管、笙、琵琶按節而唱南曲者，字雖不應，頗相諧和，殊為可聽，亦吳俗敏妙之事。

Nowadays when the Kūnshān *qiāng* performers sing the Southern *qǔ*, they tap the beats and are accompanied by the *dí* (flute), *guǎn* (pipe), *shēng* (mouth organ), *pípá* (lute). Although the words they pronounce do not correspond with the melodic contour, the music is pleasant to listen to. Indeed, this style of singing is an example of the ingenuity of the Wú people.

In the first production meeting, Tsēng estimated the timeline of its writing. Based on Xú Wèi's description of “the words they pronounce do not correspond with the melodic contour,” his account would have occurred before Wèi Liángfǔ arrived at his new Water Polished singing style. By knowing that Xú Wèi enjoyed the accompaniment of wind and string instruments at the

⁶⁴ Yú Huái 余懷 (1616–1696?), *Jichàng yuán wén gē jì* 寄暢園聞歌記.

⁶⁵ Xú Wèi 徐渭 (1521–1593), *Nán cí xù lù* 南詞敘錄.

time which was different from other southern singing styles that mainly used percussion, we know that there was already development in instrumentation in the Kūnshān area.

There were not many suggestions about how to revise Act 2 text during the first production meeting. One point came from Music director Sūn Jiàn'ān. He contributed two references associated with Wèi Liángfǔ's ten-year endeavor of improving Southern singing and the reason his new style was called the Water Polished style:

First, Wèi Liángfǔ studied so painstakingly that his footprints could not be traced downstairs for ten years. There was a rumor that he tapped the beats so hard and so long on his study desk that he made a wide dent on the surface. Shouldn't we present a scene like this in the play? Second, why do we call it a *shuǐmó qiāng*⁶⁶? It was because the process of producing rosewood furniture takes seventy-two steps. It uses water to polish the rosewood furniture until its surface becomes bright while not using any paint. The complexity of polishing furniture illustrates the exquisiteness of *kūnqǔ*. The Water Polished style of *kūnqǔ* in fact referred to the art of water polishing. We should tell the audience, ah, that is what it boils down to—*kūnqǔ*, just like rosewood furniture, it takes seventy-two steps. It turns out that singing *kūnqǔ* requires just such craftsmanship. If we add these explanations in the plot, the two key points [of the ten-year endeavor and the Water Polished style] could be articulated clearly.

Actor Cài Zhèngrén who played Wèi Liángfǔ agreed with music director Sūn Jiàn'ān, adding “We can design a carpenter role played by a clown role actor. Actually the little details can truly reflect big questions. By doing so, the audience will envision such a vivid image and quickly realize that *kūnqǔ* was polished with such a concept. I think this is important... We don't need a surprise twist in the story. This visualized process would most likely attract the audience.” Tsēng was fond of the idea, “The idea of having details is interesting. The reason that we call it the Water Polished style and the role of a carpenter can be added in the text.”⁶⁷ This agreement to

⁶⁶ *Shuǐmó qiāng* or *shuǐmó diào* both refer to the Water Polished style.

⁶⁷ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

involve a carpenter was not added to Tsēng's revised text. It apparently was an acting agreement that Tsēng allowed the director to add into the performance as a visual clue.

The other concern which occurred here and throughout the text was to make the speech discussing the evolution of literature seem less pedantic and easier to understand for modern audiences. Cài Zhèngrén expressed his concern:

After reading the entire play text, I am quite certain about the overall framework. I think very highly of Prof. Tsēng. Lots of the monologue and dialogue (*niàn bái* 念白) are highly specialized. So much so that I could not understand it the first time I read the text. It took me a long time to digest. I personally suggest to Prof. Tsēng, could you write that specialized stage speech in more commonly-used language?

Tsēng replied:

When we talk about the theories of song rhyming system, if we explained them in modern Chinese, it would sound wordy and too long; if we simplified those theories, they might not be clearly addressed. For example lyrical melody (*qiāng diào* 腔調, see [2.24–2.25]), vocal style (*chàng qiāng* 唱腔, see [1.47] and [2.5]), articulation (*yǎo zì* 咬字, see [2.24–2.25] and [2.41]), vehicle of musical and lyrical materials (*zài tǐ* 載體, see [1.47] and [2.24–2.25]), and methods for pronouncing a word (*kǒu fǎ* 口法, see [2.24–2.25] and [2.41]). The sage of *kūnqǔ* was indeed improving those methods. If I fail to refer to those theories, it will seem that I am not conscientious. I understand your concern, I will think of a way to improve them. In fact I felt the same way about that stage speech which included such specialized language, I will do my best to change them, especially those spoken by supporting role actors.”⁶⁸

The above Arabic numerals showed that the problematic lines of text were concentrated in a few areas. Shěng Kūn's Chairman Lǐ Hóngliáng, who plays Wèi Liángfǔ's music consultant, also added his opinion:

Although the *kūnqǔ* text is often following the historical context, we question whether or not it should be written based on historical facts. For example in the *kūnqǔ Double Link Plot* (*Liánhuán jì* 連環計⁶⁹), the background is in the era of the Three Kingdoms (220–

⁶⁸ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

⁶⁹ *Liánhuán jì* 連環計, a *chuánqí* play by Míng dynasty playwright Wáng Jì 王濟. Thirty acts. Based on stories selected from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sānguó yǎnyì* 三國演義).

280), but the painters portrayed in the story were from the Táng dynasty (618–907). How can that be possible? But in drama, they were united.

In his concluding remarks, Chairman Lǐ again addressed this issue, saying:

I also understand that this play is not a play with rollercoaster plots and bursting with passion. This is a play that serves as a new milestone in *kūnqǔ* circles, a documentary play. It is more important to present *kūnqǔ*'s vocal system and lyrical melodies; this is its main thread... President Kē⁷⁰ mentioned [to me] about his standpoint: *kūnqǔ* is *yǎyuè* 雅樂⁷¹, a refined style. Elegance is harmony. In other words, not only the director and playwright are in harmony and in happiness, we as actors, as re-creators, need harmony and happiness even more. [We want] audiences not only to listen to the beauty of *kūnqǔ* music, but also to attend *kūnqǔ* lessons and learn why Wèi Liángfǔ was the sage of *kūnqǔ*...and receive accurate *kūnqǔ* history.⁷²

This intention of pursuing harmony in the working process was positive but costly in terms of group dynamics. Issues that arose out of these good intentions will be examined.

Act 3

Act 3 introduces Zhāng Yětang, a crucial figure in helping Wèi Liángfǔ to further integrate Wèi Liángfǔ's Southern Water Polished style and the Northern *qǔ* with the enrichment of accompanying instruments. Yè Mèngzhū's *Book of Worldly Affairs*, volume 10, "Notate"⁷³ from which we learned about Wèi Liángfǔ's daughter, had a telling detail about Zhāng Yětang:

因考絃索之入江南，由戍卒張野塘始。野塘，河北人，以罪謫發蘇州太倉衛，素工絃索，既至吳，時為吳人歌北曲，人皆笑之。崑山魏良輔者善南曲，為吳中國工。一日至太倉聞野塘歌，心異之，留聽三日夜，大稱善，遂與野塘定交。時良輔年五

⁷⁰ Kē Jūn 柯军, President of the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group, Co., Ltd., was not able to attend the first production meeting.

⁷¹ *Yǎyuè* 雅樂, lit. "elegant music," refers to Chinese court entertainment. During the Qīng dynasty, when Emperor Qiánlóng (1736–1796) journeyed to the south, "The Salt Administration of Huái River by the rule maintains theatre troupes that classified into *huā* (floral) and *yǎ* (elegant) divisions so that the grant dramas for the Emperor and officials during their visit are prepared. *Yǎ* is *Kūnshān qiāng* (*kūnqǔ*). *Huā* includes *Jīng qiāng*, *Qín qiāng*, *Yiyáng qiāng*, *Bāngzi qiāng*, *Luólóu qiāng*, and *Èrhuáng diào*. In general they are called *Luàn tán* ("various instruments," referring to genres other than *kūnqǔ*). 兩淮鹽務例蓄花雅兩部以備大戲。雅部即崑山腔。花部為京腔、秦腔、弋陽腔、梆子腔、羅羅腔、二簧調。統謂之亂彈。" Li Dou, *Yangzhou huafang lu*, 107.

⁷² Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

⁷³ Yè Mèngzhū 葉夢珠 (1624-?), *Book of Worldly Affairs* (*Yuèshì biān* 閱世編), volume 10, "Notate" (*Jìwén* 紀聞), 1981: 221–22.

十餘。有一女，亦善歌，諸貴爭求之，良輔不與，至是遂以妻野塘。吳中諸少年聞之，稍稍稱絃索矣。野塘既得魏氏，并習南曲，更定絃索音，使與南音相近，并改三絃之式，身稍細而其鼓圓，以文木製之，名曰絃子。

Examining the importation of Northern *qǔ* that was accompanied by string instruments⁷⁴ to the lands of Jiāng Nán (south of the Yangtze River), it started with the garrison soldier Zhāng Yětáng. [Zhāng] Yětáng, a native of Héběi Province (north of the Yellow River), was banished and transported to Sūzhōu on the frontier of Tàicāngwèi⁷⁵ because of a crime. He was always skillful in singing Northern songs and playing string instruments.⁷⁶ Ever since he arrived in the Wú region (Sūzhōu), he sang Northern *qǔ* from time to time for Wú people,⁷⁷ but they all laughed at him.⁷⁸ Wèi Liángfǔ from Kūnshān was good at the Southern *qǔ* and was respected as Wú's eminent artist.⁷⁹ One day he went to Tàicāng, hearing Yětáng's singing he felt astonished. He then stayed and listened for three days and nights, giving his great compliments⁸⁰ and then became friends with Yětáng. At that time [Wèi] Liángfǔ was fifty or older. He had a daughter who was also good at singing. Some respectable young men vied for her hand but Liángfǔ did not give in. When he met Yětáng, Wèi then married her off. Young men in the Wú region heard the music, gradually praised the Northern *qǔ*. Ever since Yětáng married Wèi's daughter he too studied Southern *qǔ*. He adjusted [the technique of] the strings accompanying the Northern *qǔ* to suit the Southern singing style better. He also changed the shape of the *sānxián*,⁸¹ making the instrument a little smaller and its sound box round. It was made of wood and re-named the *xiánzǐ*.

This paragraph provides two key pieces of information revealing how valuable Zhāng Yětáng was to Wèi Liángfǔ. First was Zhāng Yětáng's knowledge of the Northern *qǔ*. We knew that Wèi Liángfǔ was good at singing the Northern *qǔ* but was unable to surpass Wáng Yǒushān from the north; therefore, he spent ten years trying to perfect his skills on the Southern *qǔ* (see [2.5](#)). This was one of the reasons that led to Wèi Liángfǔ's endeavor to refine the Kūnshān *qiāng*. Zhāng Yětáng's appearance must have driven Wèi Liángfǔ's ambition, wanting to absorb the essence of

⁷⁴ *Xiánsuǒ* 絃索, lit. "strings," refers to Northern theatrical genres and storytelling which are accompanied by string instruments. In the context of *qǔ* traditions it indicates the Northern *qǔ* style of music. See [3.32](#).

⁷⁵ See [3.3](#), [3.5](#) and [3.29](#)

⁷⁶ See [3.4](#)–[3.5](#)

⁷⁷ See [3.6](#)

⁷⁸ See [3.18](#) and [3.29](#)

⁷⁹ See [4.5](#) and [6.80](#)

⁸⁰ See [3.37](#)

⁸¹ See [4.37](#). *Sānxián* 三絃, a three-string plucked instrument. Here referring to the modified *sānxián*, called *xiánzǐ*.

the Northern *qǔ* and integrate it into the already-improving Southern *qǔ*, particularly the Kūnshān *qiāng* (see [3.44](#)). According to the Míng dynasty littérateur Shěn Défú:⁸²

自吳人重南曲，皆祖崑山魏良輔，而北詞幾廢。今惟金陵尚存此調。... 而吳中以北曲擅場者，僅見張野塘一人。

Even since people in the Wú region think highly of the Southern *qǔ*, they all follow in the footsteps of Wèi Liángfǔ from Kūnshān; the Northern *qǔ* was almost cast aside. Nowadays it is only in Jīnlíng (Nánjīng) where the Northern *qǔ* still remains... however in the Wú region the talent who outshone in the Northern *qǔ* is the one and only Zhāng Yětáng. (see [3.37](#))

We do not know the birth and death dates of Zhāng Yětáng. If Wèi Liángfǔ was presumably active during the Míng dynasty's Jiājìng 嘉靖 period (1522–1567), Zhāng Yětáng might have also been active at that time into the Lóngqìng 隆慶 period (1567–1573). One piece of evidence offers a possible timeline. According to the Qīng dynasty littérateur and drama theorist Lǐ Tiáoyuán 李調元 (1734–1803):

嘉隆間，崑山有魏良輔者乃漸改舊習，始備眾樂器而劇場大成。至今遵之。

During the Jiājìng and Lóngqìng periods, in Kūnshān there was a Wèi Liángfǔ who gradually improved the old tradition, starting to expand instrumentation and eventually the theatre form was accomplished. Until today we follow its form.”⁸³

In Tsēng's text, not only was Zhāng Yětáng portrayed as a virtuosic singer of the Northern *qǔ* and a string musician, but also his Northern *qǔ* was the orthodox Yuán dynasty music that he studied under court musician Dùn Rén 頓仁 (see [3.32](#) and [3.44](#)). However, there is no evidence that Zhāng Yětáng was a pupil of Dùn Rén. Based on the sources recording their activities, Zhāng Yětáng and Dùn Rén would both have been active during the Jiājìng period. Dùn Rén, a Míng dynasty musician, expert in the Yuán dynasty's Northern *qǔ*, was documented in *Collected*

⁸² Shěn Défú 沈德符 (1578–1642), *Talks on Qǔ Appreciation (Gùqǔ záyán 顧曲雜言)*, chapter “Passing on the Northern *qǔ*” (*Běidiào chuánshòu 北調傳授*).

⁸³ Lǐ Tiáoyuán's *Yǔcūn qǔ huà 雨村曲話* (Yǔcūn's Notes on *Qǔ*), *Lidai quhua huibian: xinbian Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* (vol. 6), 287.

Essays by the Studio of Four Friends (Siyóuzhāi cóng shuō 四友齋叢說) by Hé Liángjùn 何良

俊. In the chapter of *Cí Qǔ* 詞曲, Hé Liángjùn described Dùn Rén, now the Hé family music

teacher, whom he called Old Dùn (lǎo Dùn 老頓):

余家小鬟記五十餘曲，而散套不過四五段，其餘皆金元人雜劇詞也，南京教坊人所不能知。老頓言：「頓仁在正德爺爺時隨駕至北京，在教坊學得，懷之五十年。供筵所唱，皆是時曲，此等辭並無人問及。不意垂死，遇一知音。」是雖曲藝，然可不謂之一遭遇哉！

My little maids (house performers) memorized fifty and more *qǔ* songs. There are just about four or five literary *qǔpái* sequences, the rest [Northern *qǔ*] came from the Jīn and Yuán dynasties' *zǎjù* plays. Artists in the Royal Academy of imperial music in Nánjīng (lit. "Southern capital") were not familiar with [Northern *qǔ*]. Old Dùn said, "I, Dùn Rén, accompanied the Emperor of Zhèngdé to Běijīng (lit. "Northern capital").⁸⁴ I have cherished this imperial music I learned in the Royal Academy for fifty years. The songs (*qǔ*) for the banquets [in the present time] are all Southern *shí qǔ*.⁸⁵ Such [Northern] classical form, no one asked about it. Unexpectedly as a dying man I have met my bosom friend.⁸⁶ Although it was about the *qǔ* art form, isn't it a so-called sad encounter!⁸⁷

Whether Zhāng Yětáng was a pupil of Dùn Rén or not, the fact remains that Zhāng Yětáng's

appearance stimulated Wèi Liángfǔ into further pursuing the integration of Northern and

Southern *qǔ*.

Second, Zhāng Yětáng was knowledgeable about string instruments from the north, particularly the plucked three-string *sānxián*. *Qǔ* experts and scholars in the Míng dynasty often referred to the Northern *qǔ* as *xiánsuǒ* 絃索 (lit. "strings") due to the use of mostly plucked string

⁸⁴ Dùn Rén was a musician in the Royal Academy of imperial music in Nánjīng. Emperor Wǔ was famous for having been specially fond of theatre performers and naming them to important official positions. During the Zhèngdé 正德 period Emperor Wǔ visited Nánjīng. On his return he took Dùn Rén with him to the capital, Běijīng. Dùn Rén in his later life was hired by Hé Liángjùn 何良俊 as the family music teacher. The Zhèngdé period dated from 1506 to 1521. In Hé Liángjùn's *Collected Essays by the Studio of Four Friends*, vol. 8, "History" 4, he said "I remember when I was young, I was sixteen years old in the year of Zhèngdé xīnsì (1521) when Emperor Wǔ passed away. 嘗記得小時，余年十六歲為正德辛巳，武宗升遐。"

⁸⁵ *Shí qǔ* ("qǔ of the time") referred to Southern *qǔ*, particular Wèi Liángfǔ's Water Polished singing style.

⁸⁶ Hé Liángjùn was working in Nánjīng and then moved to Sūzhōu after abandoning his official position. The preface of his *Collected Essays by the Studio of Four Friends* was dated Lóngqīng 3rd year (1569) when the Northern *qǔ* was no longer popular. To Dùn Rén, Hé Liángjùn as a native of the south especially treasured the Northern *qǔ* and was willing to pass on this declining art form, no doubt showing Hé was a bosom friend of his.

⁸⁷ He Liangjun, *Siyouzhai cong shuo*, 340.

instruments to accompany singing. We learned that while Wèi Liángfǔ was working on improving the Kūnshān *qiāng*, Kūnshān singers already used *dí* (flute), *guǎn* (pipe), *shēng* (mouth organ), *pípá* (lute) to accompany their singing. But this was just the beginning of the experiment. The instrumentation that was arranged in order to achieve the most effective overall combination in fact was arrived at due to the efforts of Wèi Liángfǔ and Zhāng Yětáng. Zhāng Yětáng, who was an expert at playing the Northern *sānxián*, presumably wanted to have a string instrument that could serve to accompany both the Southern Water Polished singing and the Northern *qǔ* singing. He therefore created the smaller three-string plucked *xiánzǐ*. This reshaping of an old instrument was needed because of the tone color required to better support both the Southern and Northern styles. At the same time, Zhāng Yětáng and other *qǔ* experts provided theories on playing techniques since the plucking of strings produces beats and rules were needed to better match the Southern melismatic style.

Wèi Liángfǔ's daughter, Yīngzhuàn, was portrayed in this act as a lady who had a good ear, and recognized Zhāng Yětáng's talent (see [3.31](#)). She was also a daughter who could anticipate her father's wishes, knew that Wèi Liángfǔ needed an aide (see [3.50](#)–[3.55](#)) and therefore recruited Zhāng Yětáng to complete the task of integration (see [3.56](#)). Tsēng based his scene on the only documented source that “He [Wèi Liángfǔ] had a daughter who was also good at singing (*yǒu yī nǚ, yì shàn gē* 有一女，亦善歌)” and depicted her as a bright and intelligent female figure who did not hesitate to take the initiative. We know that Wèi Liángfǔ's daughter was married to Zhāng Yětáng because Wèi Liángfǔ was astonished by his expertise in the Northern *qǔ*. Remember that Zhāng Yětáng went to Sūzhōu Tàicāng not of his own will but was banished for a crime. Any father would not easily marry his daughter to a criminal just because

he was talented. Tsēng needed to make the transition reasonable, and he therefore made Zhāng Yětang the son of “an upright official who offended the treacherous minister Yán Sōng and was framed on trumped-up charges” (see [3.29](#)), so that Zhāng Yětang’s social status was raised higher than that of a soldier who had committed a crime. This is not based on historical documentation but was a needed transformation in order for Zhāng Yětang to have an appropriate “status” to marry Wèi Liángfǔ’s daughter. Some may argue that Chinese customs were particular about a marriage between families of equal social rank; it is most natural that Wèi Liángfǔ, as a musician, married his daughter to another musician. We do not know if this was the fact, but from a playwright’s point of view, as the special purpose of this production is to honor Wèi Liángfǔ, both families should be portrayed as elite, not common.

In the first production meeting, Actor Cǎi Zhèngrén contributed his idea of enhancing the plot to arouse the audience’s interest in the story:

I hope in every act when Wèi Liángfǔ enters, he would first address a concern or a problem. For example, I [as Wèi Liángfǔ] like Kūnshān music, but I am not satisfied with it, therefore I want to ‘create’⁸⁸ an ideal one. Then at the end of this act, Wèi Liángfǔ solved his concern by ‘creating’ Water Polished music. If this dramatic text can go through all the major steps of *kūnqǔ* developments by producing and solving a problem per act, I think this play would look great....Just when Wèi Liángfǔ was looking for a solution to integrate the Southern and Northern *qǔ*, he found Zhāng Yětang. Zhāng Yětang’s appearance might be accidental, but in fact it was necessary. Why? Zhāng Yětang was looking for a bosom friend of the Northern *qǔ* in the south. Wèi Liángfǔ was committed to integrating the Southern and Northern *qǔ* and was looking for a Northern *qǔ* specialist. This is the problem of the act. Finally they found each other on the street of Tàicāng. Voilà! They were standing in front of each other. “While I wore out my iron shoes in searching for answers nowhere to be found, by sheer luck I found the answer by chance without a great deal of effort” (*Tàpò tiěxié wú mì chù, dé lái quán bù fèi gōng fū* 踏破鐵鞋無覓處，得來全不費功夫。).⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Technically, Wèi Liángfǔ “refined” the already existing Kūnshān singing style and renamed it the Water Polished style. Most people use *chuàng zào* 創造 or “create” instead of “refine.”

⁸⁹ This metaphor came from the second half of a Chinese quatrain written by Southern Sòng dynasty poet Xià Yuándǐng 夏元鼎.

Kūnqǔ scholar Gù Língshēn held a different opinion:

Wèi Liángfǔ himself was a Northern *qǔ* specialist, so it may be problematic if he were looking for a Northern *qǔ* specialist. I have a thought. Zhāng Yětāng was banished to Tàicāng. He was an expert in the Northern *qǔ* but had to earn income by singing in public places. People in Tàicāng did not appreciate the Northern *qǔ* singing therefore he had to Southern-ize his repertoire so that people would understand. Wèi Liángfǔ happened to look for someone who could bring the Northern *qǔ*'s theory, model system, and instrumental accompaniment into the Southern singing style. The two of them click instantly, just when it is needed.

Tsēng appreciated everyone's ideas, reminding us that these points were basically embedded in the text although only briefly touched upon. "If we were to dramatize these points, it is practicable but time-consuming. I wonder if we have time to present them. However, I encourage everybody to present your ideas. Let's enrich our content and finally consider the time issue, will you agree with me?"⁹⁰ Tsēng's suggestion won a round of applause. Cài Zhèngrén, with excitement, complimented everyone's collective wisdom and efforts.

Act 4

Act 4 was constructed as a celebration of the marriage between Zhāng Yětāng and Yīngzhuàn, and the marriage of the Southern and Northern *qǔ*. A true double happiness! A butler opens the act by announcing the marriage and the reasons for their tying the knot in one quatrain poem (see [4.3](#)–[4.4](#)), followed by a monologue (see [4.5](#)). Butler Zhāng Qiān was considered far from an important figure who would have served to open each act, just as the Míng Emperor Zhū opens Act 1, Wèi Liángfǔ in Act 2, Zhāng Yětāng in Act 3, and later, Liáng Chényú in Act 5 and Guò Yúnshì in Act 6. Why would Tsēng break this pattern? A structural concept called *guānmù* 關目 underlies the framework of the Míng dynasty's *chuánqí* plays. It consists of ways to

⁹⁰ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

carefully lay out plots and acting for the entire play and for each act. As we know, Tsēng's Wèi play is based on the play structure of Southern *zájù*, a mixture of the Northern *qǔ zájù* plays, Southern *qǔ* plays, and the Míng and Qīng dynasties' *chuánqí* form. In his prologue in which the playwright's purpose in writing this play and a summary of its contents were presented, Tsēng described this play, "The plot and performance (*guānmù*) are novel, the acts fastidiously structured" (see [0.5]). The plot, unlike a story in which consecutive events are described, focuses on the cause and effect of an event. When the *chuánqí* dramatic text is put on stage, the *guānmù* needs to be adjusted accordingly, based on whether a plot should be acted and sung or should be related quickly in a monologue. In this case, Tsēng chose to have the butler open this act by quickly explaining the unseen falling-in-love and marriage scenes so that the audience would understand the leap in time. This is a technique commonly used in *xìqǔ* performances. In most cases, due to time constraints, the playwright would make the decision that some particular plot elements, despite serving as key components in describing the story, are not suitable to be acted on stage. They are thus shortened. In some cases these plot elements should not be rearranged on the timeline due to cause and effect, and therefore they are narrated, not performed.

By having the butler describe the happy occasion of marriage, Tsēng quickly moved his text onto the next scene, the marriage of Southern and Northern *qǔ*. Yet *kūnqǔ* scholar Gù Língsen said of the lack of the progress from Act 3 in which Zhāng Yětang had just met Wèi Liángfǔ's family to Act 4 in which Zhāng Yětang became Wèi Liángfǔ's son-in-law:

Zhāng Yětang becoming Wèi Liángfǔ's son-in-law requires some drama. Some conflict needed to occur between Wèi Liángfǔ and his daughter. Conflict IS drama. As a daughter, Yīngzhuàn helped her father to pursue a new singing style. When Yīngzhuàn was asked to marry Zhāng Yětang for the sake of *kūnqǔ*, she did not give in so easily – only if Zhāng Yětang would surpass Yīngzhuàn in singing *qǔ* would she marry him. This

creates dramatic progress. For example, Yīngzhuàn asks a question in the style of Southern *qǔ* and Zhāng Yětang has to answer it in the style of Northern *qǔ*. Back and forth for three rounds of questions and answers. In the meantime the alternation of Southern and Northern *qǔpái* into a *qǔpái* set (*Nán Běi hé tào* 南北合套) was merged and, by nature, a climax appeared.

Tsēng replied:

“This is a good idea. The problem is the time constraint. [Based on your suggestions] the content has become rich and dramatic, but there is no room for more *qǔpái* songs to be added. The reason I simply let them marry without spending time acting and singing was that this text should focus on discovering how to integrate the Northern *qǔ* in Southern Water Polished music. I therefore had these newlyweds travel leisurely into nature, grasping the moment that brings together the sounds of nature, earth, and man (see 4.24). This is also the moment they grasped the symphony of Southern and Northern *qǔ*. This was my reason.⁹¹

Tsēng had some concerns about defining the integration of the Southern and Northern *qǔ*, or to be specific, integrating Northern music into the Southern Water Polished music. This integration can be seen from two different perspectives. From the aspect of singing, there is Northern *qǔ* singing in Southern Kūnshān style (*Běi qǔ Kūn chàng* 北曲崑唱) or Southern *qǔ* singing in Northern *xiánsuǒ* style (*Nán qǔ xiánsuǒ chàng* 南曲絃索唱). From the perspective of organization, there is the alternation of Southern and Northern *qǔpái* into a *qǔpái* set (*Nán Běi hé tào* 南北合套): when one *qǔpái* is categorized as Northern *qǔ*, the singer should sing it in the fashion of the Northern style; when one *qǔpái* is categorized as Southern *qǔ*, the singer should sing it in the Southern style. In “Wèi Liángfǔ’s Eighteen Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” from *An Anthology of Outstanding Songs from Wú*:

北曲與南曲，大相懸絕，有磨調、絃索調之分。北曲字多而調促，促處見筋，故詞情多而聲情少。南曲字少而調緩，緩處見眼，故詞情少而聲情多。北力在絃索，宜和歌，故氣易粗。南力在磨調，宜獨奏，故氣易弱。近有絃索唱作磨調，又有南曲配入絃索，誠為方底圓蓋，亦以坐中無周郎耳。

⁹¹ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

Northern *qǔ* and Southern *qǔ* are greatly different. Respectively, they are *mó diào* 磨調 (Southern Water Polished style) and *xiánsuǒ diào* 絃索調 (Northern String-accompanied style). The Northern *qǔ* is more syllabic and the melodic phrases are shorter in duration and faster in pace. Wherever the melody is pressing, it is like tendons tightening. So the expression [in the Northern *qǔ*] was delivered more from the sung words and less from the melody. In the Southern *qǔ* it is more melismatic and the melodic phrases are longer and slower in pace. Wherever the melody is stretching, the drumbeat which marks the *yǎn* 眼⁹² becomes noticeable. So the expression [in the Southern *qǔ*] was delivered less from the sung words and more from the melody. The strength of Northern *qǔ* lies in its accompaniment by plucked string instrument(s). It is suitable to support singing [melodically and rhythmically] but the singer's voice may sound coarse. The strength of Southern *qǔ* lies in its polished singing style. It is suitable for singing solo [with only the clapper and drum beats] but the singer's voice may sound weak. Recently there are singers who sang Northern *xiánsuǒ* songs in Southern *mó diào* style, and others who sang Southern *qǔ* and used strings to accompany it. This is indeed like putting a round lid on a square pot, as if singers assumed there is no expert like Zhōu Yú 周瑜⁹³ sitting in the audience. (Fig. 3.6 right).

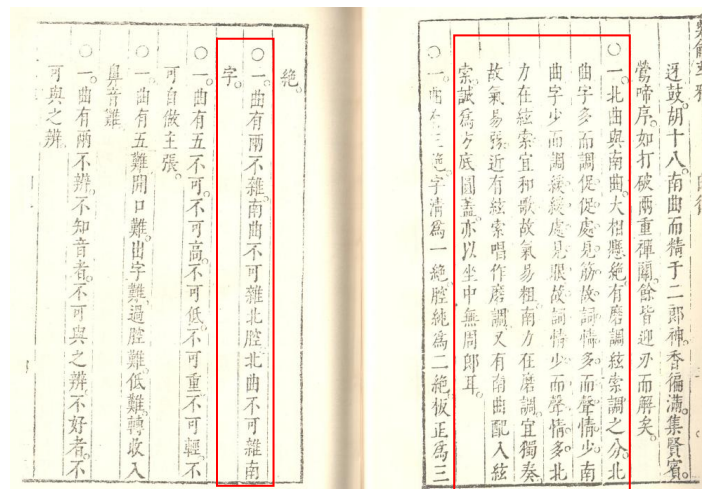


Fig. 3.6 “Wèi Liángfǔ’s Eighteen Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” from *An Anthology of Outstanding Songs from Wú*

Wèi Liángfǔ, during the process of integrating the Northern *qǔ* into the Southern *qǔ*, was in fact placing restrictions on how these two traditions should blend. He set a basic singing rule that:

⁹² When a *qǔpái* is metered, the clapper-beat or *bǎn* 板 marks the first beat of a measure in Western notation terms. The drum-beat or *yǎn* 眼 marks the rest beats of a measure in Western notation terms.

⁹³ Zhōu Yú 周瑜 (175–210) was a famous general during late Eastern Hān dynasty featured in the book *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* by Luó Guànzhōng 羅貫中. Zhōu Yú was known to be an expert in music. There was a saying at that time: “If there is a mistake made in the music, Zhōu will give a look.” (*Qǔ yǒu wù, Zhōu láng gù.* 曲有誤，周郎顧。)

曲有兩不雜：南曲不可雜北腔，北曲不可雜南字。

[When singing *qǔ*,] there are two aspects which should not be mixed. When singing the Southern *qǔ*, one should not mix with the vocal style and pronunciation that was meant to be used in the Northern *qǔ*. When singing the Northern *qǔ*, one should not mix with the vocal style and pronunciation that was meant to be used in the Southern *qǔ*. (Fig. 3.6, left).

Tsēng explained the evolution of integrating Southern and Northern *qǔpái* in the production meeting. This process of evolution is crucial for an understanding of the unique *qǔpái* system used in *kūnqǔ*, “At first, various *qǔpái* that were chosen to enrich a play were based on their pre-existing attachment to certain emotions. This usage can be seen in the Southern *qǔ* play *Zhāng Xié the First Place Scholar* (*Zhāng Xié zhuàngyuán* 張協狀元)⁹⁴...” Here, Tsēng traced back to the early development of both Southern and Northern traditions: in the Southern *qǔ* plays (*nánxì* 南戲), only the Southern *qǔpái* can be used in composing the play. The play *Zhāng Xié the First Place Scholar* was written in the Southern Sòng dynasty by an anonymous playwright and is considered one of the earliest Southern *qǔ* plays that has survived. The same rule was applied to the Northern *zájù* plays wherein only Northern *qǔpái* can be used in composing the play. Tsēng continued, “...Gradually certain *qǔpái* combinations, due to their coherent and liner characteristics, were favored by *qǔ* goers and became a *qǔpái* set. The order of a *qǔpái* set is much the same. For example the Northern *qǔpái* set *xiānlǚ* 仙呂 mode 【Diǎn jiàng chún 點絳唇】...”⁹⁵ Tsēng did not need to explain further since this is one of the famous *qǔpái* sets familiar to *kūnqǔ* practitioners. The Northern *qǔpái* set *xiānlǚ* 仙呂 mode 【Diǎn jiàng chún 點

⁹⁴ *Zhāng Xié zhuàngyuán* 張協狀元 (commonly seen as 張“協”狀元) or *Zhāng Xié the First Place Scholar* was compiled in the Míng dynasty’s *Great Encyclopedia of Yǒnglè Era* (*Yǒnglè dà diǎn* 永樂大典) under the direction of Emperor Chéngzǔ 明成祖 and was completed in 1408. This play was collected in volume 13991 (dramatic text 27), page 13 (page left) to page 54 (page left). The dramatic text title was *Zhāng Xié zhuàngyuán* 張協狀元, but throughout the play, the name of the first place scholar was written as 張叶 *Zhāng Xié*. *Yongle da dian xiwen san zhong* (CADAL), 26–108.

⁹⁵ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

絳唇】 often consists of *qǔpái* pieces in the order of 【Diǎn jiàng chún 點絳唇】 – 【Hùn jiāng lóng 混江龍】 – 【Yóu hú lú 油葫蘆】 – 【Tiān xià lè 天下樂】 – 【Né zhà lìng 哪吒令】 – 【Què tà zhī 鵲踏枝】 – 【Jì shēng cǎo 寄生草】 – 【Yāo piān 么篇】⁹⁶ – 【Shā wěi 煞尾】.⁹⁷

The exact order can be seen in *kūnqǔ* plays such as *Washing Silk* (*Huàn shā jì* 浣紗記), Act “Visiting Gōngsūn Shèng (*Fǎng shèng* 訪聖)”;⁹⁸ *The Palace of Eternal Life* (*Cháng shēng diàn* 長生殿), Act “Seeking the soul (*Mì hún* 覓魂)”;⁹⁹ and *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mǔdān tíng* 牡丹亭), Act “The Hell’s Judge (*Míng pàn* 冥判).¹⁰⁰ The *qǔpái* set can be extended. In *The Western Chamber* (*Xī xiāng jì* 西廂記), volume one, act one, the Northern “*xiānlǚ* 仙呂 mode 【Diǎn jiàng chún 點絳唇】” set was extended from a nine-piece *qǔpái* set to a twelve-piece *qǔpái* set.¹⁰¹ Sometimes this *qǔpái* set can be shortened. In most cases, it appears as a set consisting of only the first two of 【Diǎn jiàng chún 點絳唇】 – 【Hùn jiāng lóng 混江龍】 and/or the ending 【Shā wěi 煞尾】.¹⁰² The musicality of the *qǔpái* set is connected like a chain with a coherence that extends beyond the individual *qǔpái* and turns the *qǔpái* set into a whole. Tsēng continued his explanation of the next step, “The beginning of integrating the Northern and Southern *qǔ* came from the *Nán qǔ Běi diào* 南曲北調 or Southern *qǔ* sung in Northern style. Before the Míng Wànli era 明萬曆 (1573–1620), Northern *qǔ* was the official theatrical genre in the Yuán dynasty and continued to be a high art in the early Míng dynasty... It was accompanied mostly by

⁹⁶ In the Northern *qǔpái* set, when a *qǔpái* repeats for a second time, the repeated *qǔpái* is called 【Yāo piān 么篇】 instead of its *qǔpái* name again. In this case, the 【Yāo piān 么篇】 is 【Jì shēng cǎo 寄生草】.

⁹⁷ In Northern *qǔpái* sets, the ending *qǔpái* is called 【Shā wěi 煞尾】 or 【Wěi shēng 尾聲】 or 【Zhuàn shà 賺煞】.

⁹⁸ Documented in *Nashuying's Kunqu Music Scores* (*Nàshūyíng qǔpǔ* 納書楹曲譜), Zhèngjí, vol. 3 正集卷三.

⁹⁹ Documented in *Nashuying's Kunqu Music Scores* (*Nàshūyíng qǔpǔ* 納書楹曲譜), Xùjí, vol. 1 續集卷一.

¹⁰⁰ Documented in *Eyunge's Kunqu Dramatic Scores* (*Èyúngé qǔpǔ* 遏雲閣曲譜), vol. 3 卷三.

¹⁰¹ 【點絳唇】【混江龍】【油葫蘆】【天下樂】【村裏逐鼓】【元和令】【上馬嬌】【勝葫蘆】【後庭花】【柳葉兒】【寄生草】【賺煞尾】. Wang Shifu, *Xi xiang ji*, 6–21.

¹⁰² Xu Zihan, *Ming chuanqi paichang san yaosu fazhan licheng zhi yanjiu*, 207.

plucked string instruments and was widespread. [Because of the popularity of the Northern *qǔ*] the early Southern *qǔ* plays therefore could also be sung in the Northern *xiánsuǒ diào* (Northern String-accompanied style)... Furthermore, *qǔpái* from both the Northern *qǔ* tradition and the Southern *qǔ* tradition with the same modal systems can alternate, though the Northern *qǔpái* are sung with the Northern style by one actor throughout and the Southern *qǔpái* are sung with the Southern style by other actor(s) throughout. This is the alternation of the Southern and Northern *qǔpái* into a *qǔpái* set (*Nán Běi hé tào* 南北合套)...¹⁰³ The idea of alternating the Southern and Northern *qǔpái* first appeared in *sǎn qǔ* 散曲, a non-dramatic literary song form written by the Yuán dynasty poet Shěn Hé 沈和. According to the Yuán dynasty litterateur Zhōng Sìchéng 鍾嗣成:¹⁰⁴

沈和，和，字和甫。杭州人。能詞翰，善談謔，天性風流，兼明音律。以南北調合腔，自和甫始，如《瀟湘八景》、《歡喜冤家》等曲，極為工巧。

Shěn Hé, [first name] Hé, courtesy name Héfǔ, is a native of Hángzhōu. He is skillful in poetry and calligraphy and good at cheerful and humorous talks. He is talented by nature and lives an unconventional life style, and also understands musical tonal principles. The alternation of the Southern and Northern *qǔpái* started from (Shěn) Héfǔ. His literary songs such as ‘The Eight Views of Xiāoxiāng’¹⁰⁵ and ‘Quarrelsome Lovers’ are well known for their exquisiteness.” (Fig. 3.7)

¹⁰³ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

¹⁰⁴ *The Register of Ghosts* (*Lù guǐ bù* 錄鬼簿), written by Zhōng Sìchéng 鍾嗣成, documented 152 *qǔ* playwrights and performers of the Jīn 金 and Yuán 元 dynasties. The preface indicated that this book was written in 1330 (Zhìshùn first year 至順元年), later editions included *qǔ* practitioners up to 1345.

¹⁰⁵ The eight views of Xiāoxiāng (*Xiāoxiāng bā jǐng* 瀟湘八景) refers to the eight extraordinary scenes of the Xiāoxiāng area in Húnán province. They were compositional subjects loved by poets, painters, and musicians ever since the Sòng dynasty. Shěn Hé’s literary song of the same title starts with a Northern *qǔ* (N) and ends with a Southern *qǔ* (S): N【賞花時】—S【排歌】—N【哪吒令】—S【排歌】—N【鵲踏枝】—S【桂枝香】—N【寄生草】—S【樂安神】—N【六么序】—S【尾聲】.

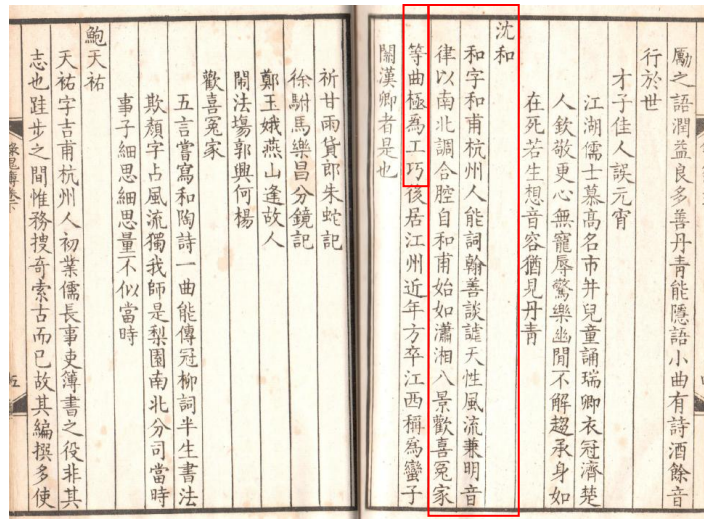


Fig. 3.7 *The Register of Ghosts*

In the dramatic Southern *qǔ* plays this same idea of alternating Southern and Northern *qǔpái* can be seen in *Little Butcher Sūn* (*Xiǎo Sūn tú* 小孫屠).¹⁰⁶ Like the play *Zhāng Xié the First Place Scholar*, it was compiled in the Míng dynasty's *Great Encyclopedia of Yǒnglè Era* (*Yǒnglè dà diǎn* 永樂大典). The first set that alternated the Southern and Northern *qǔpái* appeared in Act 9:

- ① Northern *qǔpái* (N) 【Xīn shuǐ lìng 新水令】 – ② Southern *qǔpái* (S) 【Fēng rù sōng 風入松】 – ③ N 【Zhē guì lìng 折桂令】 – ④ S 【Fēng rù sōng 風入松】 – ⑤ N 【Shuǐ xiān zǐ 水仙子】 – ⑥ S 【Fēng rù sōng 風入松】 – ⑦ N 【Yàn ér luò 雁兒落】 – ⑧ S 【Fēng rù sōng 風入松】 – ⑨ N 【Dé shèng líng 德勝令】 – ⑩ S 【Fēng rù sōng 風入松】 (Fig. 3.8). This is based on

the Northern *shuāng* 雙調 mode 【Xīn shuǐ lìng 新水令】 *qǔpái* set and alternated with a Southern *xiānlǚ* 仙呂 mode *qǔpái* 【Fēng rù sōng 風入松】. We do not know what was done musically at that time to alternate two different modes of Northern *shuāng* and Southern *xiānlǚ*.

In the *Comprehensive Notations of Southern and Northern Qǔpái in Nine Modes* (*Jiǔgōng dàchéng nánběi cígōng pǔ* 九宮大成南北詞宮譜), written 1741–1746 in the Qīng dynasty, the

¹⁰⁶ This play was collected in volume 13991 (dramatic text 27), page 1 (page right) to page 13 (page left).

alternation of the Southern and Northern *qǔpái* set that starts with the Northern 【Xīn shuǐ lìng 新水令】 was categorized in the *xiānlǚ*-modulating-to-*shuāng* mode (*Xiānlǚ rù shuāng diào* 仙呂入雙調).

Fig. 3.8 Little Butcher *Sūn*, Act 9

The second set that alternated Southern and Northern *qǔpái* appeared in Act 14 of *Little Butcher Sūn* in which a more straightforward method is used: ① N 【*duān zhèng hǎo* 端正好】 – ② S 【*jǐn chán dào* 錦纏道】 – ③ N 【*tuō bù shān* 脫布衫】 – ④ S 【*shuā zǐ xù* 刷子序】 (Fig. 3.9).

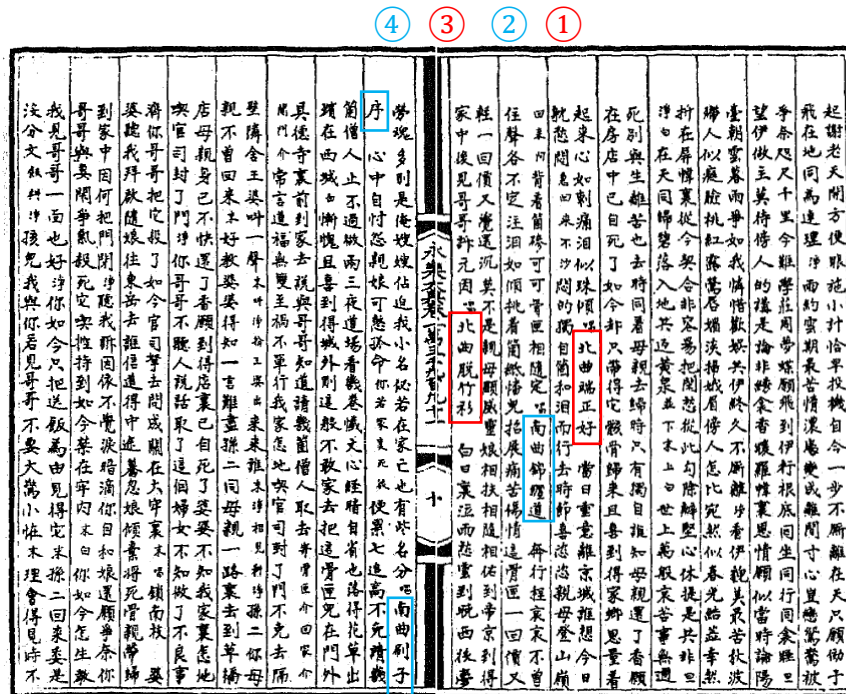


Fig. 3.9 Little Butcher Sun, Act 14

Tsēng concluded his explanation:

After Kūnshān's Water Polished style surpassed the Northern *xiānsuǒ* style due to Wèi Liángfū's and Zhāng Yětāng's endeavor to refine its instrumentation and singing style, the Northern *qǔ* singing in the Southern Kūnshān style (*Běi qǔ Kūn chàng* 北曲崑唱) became popular. So the Northern *qǔpái* we sing nowadays are all in the fashion of 'Northern *qǔ* singing in the Southern Kūnshān style.' They are classified as Northern *qǔ* but are in fact in the Water Polished style.¹⁰⁷

According to Qīng dynasty scholar Xú Dàchūn 徐大椿 (1693–1771) in his *The Tradition of Sung Poetry* (*Yuèfǔ chuán shēng* 樂府傳聲):

至明之中葉，崑腔盛行，至今守之不失。其偶唱北曲一二調，亦改為崑腔之北曲，非當時之北曲矣。

In the mid-Míng dynasty the style of singing known as Kūn *qiāng* flourished, and up to now it has not lost its leading position. Today, even when one or two tunes of Northern *qǔ* are occasionally sung, they would be changed into a kind of Kūn *qǔ* style Northern *qǔ*, and they are not the Northern *qǔ* of the olden days."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Translated by Koo, Siu Sun 古兆申 and Diana Yue 余丹. See *Xu Da-chun: The Tradition of Sung Poetry*, 141.

Tsēng specified earlier that Act 4 should focus on the discovery of how to integrate the Northern *qǔ* in Southern Water Polished music rather than the marriage itself; therefore he did not accept *kūnqǔ* scholar Gù Língsen’s idea of likening the alternation of the Southern and Northern *qǔpái* pieces to a plot similar to Turandot’s famous three questions. Tsēng at the time gave the reason of time constraints for not elaborating on this dramatic circumstance. A further element of the issue was that the integration that he referred to was not the alternation of the Southern and Northern *qǔpái* into a *qǔpái* set (*Nán Běi hé tào* 南北合套) as a musical organization, but the Northern *qǔ* singing in the Southern Kūnshān style (*Běi qǔ Kūn chàng* 北曲崑唱) as a musical style (see [4.45](#)). Another purpose of knowing how a *qǔpái* set came about is to lay out the principle that there is a rule in which a certain order of *qǔpái* pieces is to be followed, a rule later challenged by the directors.

Tsēng’s act structure in which he described the newlyweds traveling in nature and being deeply moved by the “sounds from earth” (see [4.22](#)), as well as Zhāng Yětang’s prolonged transcendental whistle in the wild (see [4.23](#)) and the moment they grasped the symphony of sounds from heaven, earth, and humans (see [4.24](#)), have deep roots in Daoism. *Dào* 道 (the Way) is often associated with nature. The terms *tiān lài* 天籟 (sounds from heaven), *dì lài* 地籟 (sounds from earth) and *rén lài* 人籟 (sounds from humans) were propounded by the ancient philosopher and Daoist Zhuāng Zǐ¹⁰⁹ 莊子 (369–286 BC). In the book *True Scripture of Southern Florescence* (*Nán huá zhēn jīng* 南華真經),¹¹⁰ Zhuāng Zǐ himself stated, “Heaven and

¹⁰⁹ Zhuāng Zǐ 莊子, formerly Chuāng Tzu, lit. “the Honorable Master Zhuāng.”

¹¹⁰ *Nán huá zhēn jīng* 南華真經 also known as *Zhuāng Zǐ*.

earth and I live together; myriads of things and I are but one.”¹¹¹ His concepts of the sounds from heaven, earth, and humans were recorded in a dialogue between the master Nánguō Zǐqí 南郭子綦 and his student Yánchéng Zǐyóu 顏成子游. The student observed the master’s teaching about sounds from humans and earth, and asks, “Sounds from earth come from air passing through cavities and holes. Sounds from humans come from playing bamboo and reed instruments, such as flutes. May I ask what sounds from heaven are?”¹¹² The master answered, “The so-called (sounds from heaven) come from wind blowing through all shapes of openings. What makes every one of them sound so distinct from all others comes from the natural shape of each passage. Who could have caused them to make all these sounds?”¹¹³ Of course, in the world of Daoism, the masters usually did not answer directly. Chung Wu who translated these passages commented, “The simplest answer is that sounds from heaven come from nature... What we can hear with our ears are the sounds from earth, which are objective. What we can hear with our minds (hearts) are the sounds from heaven, which are subjective.”¹¹⁴ Tsēng first described “the bamboo rattling in the wind, its delicate sound spreading all over, passing through the open forest and resonating with the ringing spring waters” (see [4.22](#)); these are the sounds from earth. Then “Zhāng Yětāng produced a prolonged transcendental whistle, the sound echoed like ten instruments played together” (see [4.23](#)), these are the sounds from humans. Both sounds from earth and humans are sounds of perception. When “the whistle suddenly stopped” (see [4.23](#)) and

¹¹¹ 天地與我並生，而萬物與我為一。See part one “The Inner Series (*Nèi piān* 內篇),” chapter two “On Equality (*Qí wù lùn* 齊物論)” Translated with Annotations and Commentaries by Chung Wu, *The Wisdom of Zhuang Zi on Daoism*, 46.

¹¹² 地籟則眾竅是已，人籟則比竹是已，敢問天籟。Translated by Chung Wu, *The Wisdom of Zhuang Zi on Daoism*, 36.

¹¹³ 夫(天籟者)吹萬不同，而使其自己也，咸其自取，怒者其誰邪? Translated by Chung Wu, *The Wisdom of Zhuang Zi on Daoism*, 37.

¹¹⁴ Chung Wu, *The Wisdom of Zhuang Zi on Daoism*, 37.

“... marvelously joins with the wind blowing through the bamboo and mingles with the pure sound of the mountain springs, [i]t truly brings together the sounds from heaven, earth, and humans!” (see [4.24](#)). This is the enlightening moment when the sounds from nature and humans become one. The heavenly sound is imperceptible and only exists in the state of “losing selves” which is a principal concept rooted in Daoism.

Zhāng Yětang’s prolonged transcendental whistle is also associated with a Daoist story. Ruǎn Jí 阮籍 (210–263), a poet and musician, met Sūn Dēng 孫登, a Daoist sage and musician, at the Sūmén Mountain and discussed the themes of longevity, immortality, and the practice of Daoism. Sūn Dēng did not respond. Ruǎn Jí then produced a prolonged transcendental whistle and took his leave. When he descended the hillside, he heard a sound like the call of a phoenix echoing in the rocky valley. It was Sūn Dēng’s magical whistling.¹¹⁵ Sūn Dēng did not intend to compete with Ruǎn Jí but instead reply to Ruǎn Jí’s questions. Paula M. Varsano explained, “Rather than speak in a language destined to hide as much as it communicates, Sun Teng [Sūn Dēng] offers his visitor a more direct representation of the ineffable Tao [Dào] – his superhuman whistle, a primordial sound that does not describe the secrets of the universe, but incarnates it... In Sun Teng’s [Sūn Dēng’s] nonverbal cosmic whistle—both an echo of Chuang-tzu’s [Zhuāng Zǐ’s] “heavenly flutes” [*tiān lài* 天籟 (sounds from heaven)] and a nod to the primacy of music over language—this narrative begins to find its way out of the impasse of verbalizing the ineffable.”¹¹⁶ Daoist stories and philosophy were not strangers in the traditional *xìqǔ* repertoire.

¹¹⁵ 籍嘗于蘇門山遇孫登，與商畧終古及栖神道氣之術，登皆不應，籍因長嘯而退。至半嶺，聞有聲若鸞鳳之音，響乎巖谷，乃登之嘯也。From *The Book of Jin* (*Jìn shū* 晉書), 49th vol., Biography Nineteen: Ruǎn Jí’s Biography (Lièzhuàn dì shíjiǔ 列傳第十九: Ruǎn Jí zhuàn 阮籍傳).

¹¹⁶ Varsano, “Looking for the Recluse and Not Finding Him In: The Rhetoric of Silence in Early Chinese Poetry,” 57. Varsano translated *tiān lài* 天籟 as heavenly flutes due to the word *lài* originally referred to an ancient medium

Playwrights in the Yuán, Míng, and Qīng dynasties, especially those who were talented in writing yet frustrated in pursuing or maintaining an official government position, turned their ambition into the search for spiritual wisdom. They might not be Daoist followers or intending to promote Daoism, but mythical elements that were embedded in Daoist tales are aligned with *xìqǔ* performances that combined falsehood (*xū* 虛) and reality (*shí* 實). Tsēng's act structure, in which Zhāng Yětang's prolonged transcendental whistle gave resolution to the integration of the Southern and Northern traditions with which Wèi Liángfǔ struggled, dramatically transcending mere historical authenticity throughout the play. Actor Zhāng Jūn 张军 (originally cast as Zhāng Yětáng) conveyed his concern:

I truly look forward to staging Prof. Tsēng's Wèi Liángfǔ. I am still unable to fully digest this dramatic text because the content is quite deep....I feel this text, just like Wèi Liángfǔ [as historical figure], contained some unknown parts. Prof. Tsēng's *qǔpái* combined the beauty of words and music, I think they are very elegant. It is a great challenge to the composer. As an actor, we hope the characters would fight against each other. This is our thought. When I read the text about Zhāng Yětang's prolonged transcendental whistle and how he transformed the Southern and Northern *qǔ* singing into one, I wondered how the scene should be performed. I hope Prof. Tsēng can understand that, from an acting point of view, actors wish to have a text when, if one has a sword, there will be a bloody scene. We actors therefore know exactly what we are doing....To be honest I just cannot figure out how Zhāng Yětang produces his prolonged transcendental whistle. I feel a major part of character interpretation comes from the music, but there is a lack of acting directions in the text.

Tsēng admitted that his text was not easy for actors to understand and replied:

The transcendental whistle was a way for *littérateurs* to express their inner emotion during the Wèi Jìn 魏晉 period¹¹⁷ (220–420). In the past someone wrote *Fù Poetry of*

size three-hole flute. *Lài* also means sounds from the cavity. In the realm of Daoism, the interpretation of *tiān lài* is close to “sounds from heaven” while “heavenly flutes” serves as a symbolic meaning.

¹¹⁷ During the Wèi Jìn 魏晉 period political power shifted frequently. Due to a long period of wartime, famous elites and *littérateurs* promoted freedom of thought and ideology. They looked for the purity of the spiritual world, believing in Daoism which allowed humans to extricate oneself from cruel reality and return to nature and one's true self. They did whatever they pleased and lived a simple and unrestrained life.

Laughter (*Xiào fù* 笑賦¹¹⁸), a poem which described the scenario of 嘯 *xiào*.¹¹⁹ In fact in this scenario there was a vocal sound people used to express their true and natural hearts and feelings. The sound symbolized the essence of the ancient voice when releasing one's own emotions in a most natural way. As if shouting 'Aaaaaah!' a cry to the sky like *yǎng tiān cháng xiào* 仰天長嘯¹²⁰ [Look up to the sky and produce a prolonged clear sound]. We should allow the actor to express it using his own voice.¹²¹

This conversation underlined the gap that existed between the text and performance, which resulted from the fact that the playwright and the actor did not see eye to eye on this point. To bridge the gap, healthy communication regarding textual interpretation between playwright and director is expected.

Tsēng concluded this act with the success of the new Water Polished *qǔ* style and further introduced its next stage: the theatrical form of *kūnqǔ*. At the end of Act 4, Yīngzhuàn, daughter of Wèi Liángfǔ, initiated a new idea, “And yet, this Water Polished style only applies to pure singing. If it can be a part of dramatic stage performances, wouldn't it be wonderful!” (see [4.47](#)). This suggestion paved the way to Act 5 in which Liáng Chényú 梁辰魚 created a play using Wèi Liángfǔ's new Water Polished music for the first time. Throughout the first production meeting, Cài Zhèngrén 蔡正仁 consistently reminded the playwright and all participants that the basic formula for each act structure should be based on Wèi Liángfǔ, who raised a question and then solved it but continued to raise new questions to solve later. Cài Zhèngrén as Wèi Liángfǔ suggested that Tsēng change the script to have Wèi Liángfǔ initiate the idea of composing music for onstage performances, not his daughter. Tsēng joked about how he felt that girls were smarter

¹¹⁸ *Xiào Fù* 笑賦 (Lit. “*Fù* poetry of laughter”) was written by Sūn Chǔ 孫楚 (3rd century) during the West Jin 西晉 dynasty. Sūn Chǔ's biography was documented in *The Book of Jin* (Jin shū 晉書), 56th vol., Biography Twenty Six: Sūn Chǔ's Biography (Sūn Chǔ zhuàn 孫楚傳).

¹¹⁹ Interestingly both jokes or laughter (*xiào* 笑) and whistle or cry (*xiào* 嘯) are both pronounced *xiào*. In the *Xiào fù*, the author described the attitude towards life which allow one to express freely one's feelings, such as whistling a song when grieving, which was the source of laughter.

¹²⁰ From *Mǎn jiāng hóng* 滿江紅 written by Yuè Fēi 岳飛 of the Southern Sòng dynasty.

¹²¹ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

than boys, but interestingly Tsēng did not make such a change in his revision. History does not provide any evidence that Liáng Chényú's staging the Water Polished music in a play was because of influence from Wèi Liángfǔ or his daughter. Neither does Tsēng's dramatic text suggest it. In the text, even though Yīngzhuàn suggested (see [4.47](#)) and Wèi Liángfǔ requested (see [5.60](#)) that Liáng Chényú achieve the goal of using Water Polished music in a play, Tsēng's text actually indicates that Liáng Chényú had already composed the play *Washing Silk* with methods similar to Wèi Liángfǔ's (see [5.61](#)). This aligns with the documentation of Zhāng Dàfù 張大復 that Liáng Chényú learned that Wèi Liángfǔ had refined the old Kūnshān singing style so that he was following in the footsteps of Wèi Liángfǔ, revising Yuán dramas and composed new songs, including the dramatic play *Washing Silk*.

Act 5

Act 5 described the birth of the *kūnqǔ* theatrical form, currently known as *kūnjù* 昆劇 (崑劇). *Kūnjù* is a term used to name *kūnqǔ* troupes and by present scholars when addressing content that only refers to theatrical form, not its pure literary form. Scholars commonly agree that Liáng Chényú 梁辰魚 (1519–1591),¹²² a Kūnshān native, first employed Wèi Liángfǔ's new Water Polished style as theatrical music for his play *Washing Silk*¹²³ (see [5.61](#)). The success of *Washing Silk* helped to popularize this new style of singing and the theatrical genre of *kūnqǔ*. The Míng dynasty *qǔ* expert Zhāng Dàfù 張大復 in his *Notes Penned at the Plum-Blossom*

¹²² Gu Lingsen, *Lingsen kunqu lun ji*, 240.

¹²³ Liáng Chényú's play *Washing Silk* was adapted from the Míng dynasty *chuánqí* play called *The Spring and Autumn Annals of Wú and Yuè* (*Wú Yuè chūn qiū* 吳越春秋) by the Eastern Hàn dynasty historian and littérateur Zhào Yè 趙曄. This is a privately-compiled historical record on the war between the kingdoms of Wú and Yuè during the Spring and Autumn Period with a focus on the story involving a silk-washing beauty Xī Shī 西施 and the Wú lord, Fū Chāi 夫差.

Thatched-Cottage (*Méihuā cǎotáng bǐ tán* 梅花草堂筆談) has a detailed description of Liáng

Chényú:

梁伯龍，風流自賞修髯，美姿容，身長八尺。為一時詞家所宗，艷歌清引，傳播戚里間。白金、文綺、異香、名馬、奇技、謠巧之贈，絡繹于道。每傳柑襖飲競渡穿針落帽，一切諸會。羅列絲竹，極其華整，歌兒舞女不見伯龍，自以為不祥。

Liáng Bólóng [Chényú] lived an unconventional lifestyle and enjoyed everything he did.¹²⁴ He had a long beard and a handsome appearance, about six feet tall.¹²⁵ His works were followed and highly esteemed by contemporary *cí* lyricist. His love songs and poetic songs were popular among the rich and famous.¹²⁶ Everywhere he went, he received endless gifts such as silver, silk, special incense, famous horses and delicate handcrafts.¹²⁷ On the Lantern Festival¹²⁸, the Double Third Festival¹²⁹, the Dragon Boat Festival¹³⁰, the Chinese Valentine's Day¹³¹, the Double Ninth Festival¹³², and every gathering, he would arrange the best music performances.¹³³ If singers and dancers had not met him in person, they would consider themselves unfortunate.¹³⁴ (Fig. 3.10)

¹²⁴ See [5.4](#) and [5.50](#)

¹²⁵ See [5.29](#)–[5.30](#)

¹²⁶ See [5.3](#)

¹²⁷ See [5.4](#) and [5.15](#)

¹²⁸ *Chuán gān* 傳柑, lit. “passing the oranges,” was once a custom on the night of the 15th day of the first Lunar month (known as *Shàngyuán Jié* 上元節 or the Lantern Festival), or the first full moon of a new Lunar year, noblemen would present each other oranges as gifts.

¹²⁹ *Xī Yīn* 禊飲, lit. “water purification and drinking,” was originally an ancient water purification ritual held on the riverside on the third day of the third month of the Lunar year. This festival was known as *Shàngsì Jié* 上巳節 or the Double Third Festival. See [5.33](#). Later the water purification ritual became a custom with people drinking alcohol on the riverside as part of spring excursion.

¹³⁰ *Jìng Dù* 競渡, lit. “compete the river crossing,” referred to the dragon boat competition held on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Lunar year. This festival is known as the Dragon Boat Festival.

¹³¹ *Chuān Zhēn* 穿針, lit. “thread a needle,” was a tradition when women praying for better sewing skills, they would thread five-colored strings through a seven-holed needle. This was part of the *Qīxī* 七夕 festival on the seventh day of the seventh month in the Lunar year. This legend celebrates the precious annual gathering when the cowherd (*niú láng* 牛郎) and the weaver girl (*zhī nǚ* 織女) met on a bridge formed by magpies. This day is celebrated with much the same feeling as is Valentine’s Day.

¹³² *Luò Mào* 落帽, lit. “falling hat,” came from a story when Mèng Jiā 孟嘉, a military officer, climbed the Dragon Mountain with General Huán Wēn 桓溫 and other staff members on the ninth day of the ninth month of the Lunar year, known as *Chóngyáng Jié* 重陽節 or the Double Ninth Festival. Mèng, always of graceful appearance, was unaware that his hat was blown off by the wind. The General observed his stillness and later teased him with a composition. Mèng responded it with an outstanding eloquence that amazed everyone. This event became a tradition that *littérateurs* would climb uphill, drinking, and composing poetry.

¹³³ See [5.31](#)

¹³⁴ See [5.32](#)

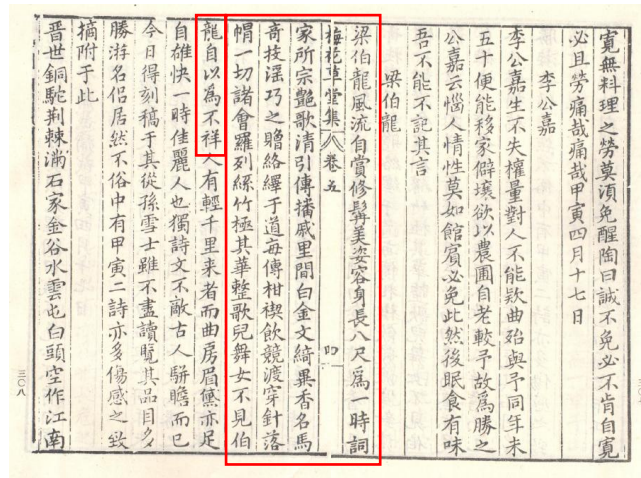


Fig. 3.10 Notes Penned at the Plum-Blossom Thatched-Cottage, vol. 5, “Liáng Bólóng.”

Liáng Chényú himself was an expert in singing *qǔ*, therefore he treated people who received his singing instruction strictly. Zhāng Dàfù witnessed how Liáng Chényú trained his singers:

往見梁伯龍教人度曲，為設廣牀大案，西向坐而序列之。兩兩三三，遞傳疊和。一韻之乖¹³⁵，觥筯如約。

In the past I saw Liáng Bólóng [Chényú] teaching people to sing *qǔ*. He arranged wide rectangular display tables and benches. He sat facing west and had singers sit on either side in an orderly fashion. Two or three of them sat together as a group and their voices blended in harmony. A clash of rhyme, just like a four-legged liquor vessel and a three-legged liquor vessel mistakenly tied together, is wrong.¹³⁶ (Fig. 3.11)

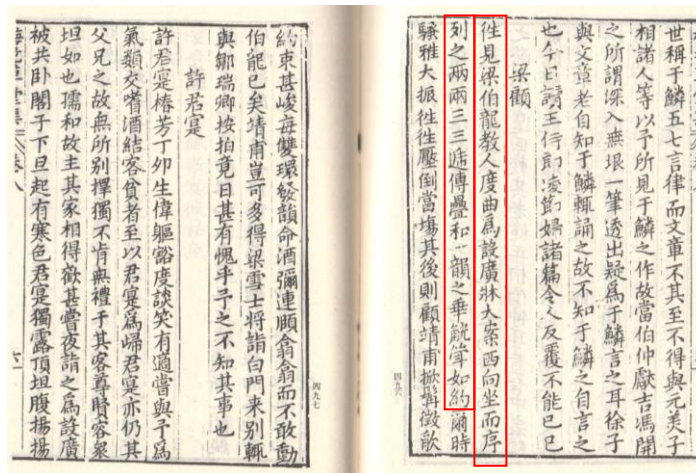


Fig. 3.11 Notes Penned at the Plum-Blossom Thatched-Cottage, vol. 8 “Liáng Gù 梁顧”

¹³⁵ Same as 乖, meaning “disharmony.”

¹³⁶ See [5.48](#)

The term *Kūn qiāng* 崑腔 or *Kūnshān* singing style has been used loosely throughout history. One thing of which we are certain is that when a musical style was bestowed with a regional name for the purpose of identification, that style had spread beyond the region over time and people needed to identify its origin. Wèi Liángfǔ's endeavor to refine the old *Kūn qiāng* into his new *Kūn qiāng* (*Kūnshān Water Polished style*) led the Míng dynasty *qǔ* expert Shěn Chǒngsuí to claim that Wèi Liángfǔ was the Father of *Kūn qiāng*¹³⁷. Zhāng Dàfù also credited Wèi Liángfǔ and other fellow musicians for their contributions, yet he thought Liáng Chényú was the one who distinguished the new *Kūn qiāng* from other styles and made it popular among noblemen and elites:

梁伯龍聞，起而效之。考訂元劇，自翻新調，作《江東白苧》、《浣紗》諸曲。又與鄭思笠精研音理，唐小虞、陳棣泉五七輩雜轉之，金石鑑然。譜傳藩邸戚畹金紫熠燿之家，而取聲必宗伯龍氏，謂之崑腔。

Liáng Bólóng [Chényú] heard [that Wèi Liángfǔ refined the old *Kūnshān* singing style] and followed the example of Wèi Liángfǔ.¹³⁸ He examined and revised the Yuán dramas and composed new songs. His *qǔ* works included literary song collection *White Nettles of the Yangtze Delta*¹³⁹ and dramatic play *Washing Silk*.¹⁴⁰ Also, he and Zhèng Sīlǐ studied music theory carefully. Táng Xiǎoyú, Chén Méiquán and five or seven others sang with their voice twirling [a technique that Wèi Liángfǔ developed], the percussion is loud and clear.¹⁴¹ His music scores spread among the households of aristocrats, noblemen, high ranking officials, and the rich and famous. To select a singing style one must follow Bólóng's model. This is called the *Kūn qiāng*. (Fig. 3.12)

¹³⁷ Shěn Chǒngsuí 沈寵綏, *Handbook for Qǔ-Singing (Dùqū xūzhī 度曲須知)*, chapter “Comments on String Instruments” (*Xián suǒ tí píng 絃索題評*)

¹³⁸ See 5.20 and 5.39

¹³⁹ See 5.40–5.46

¹⁴⁰ See 5.61–5.79

¹⁴¹ See 5.61

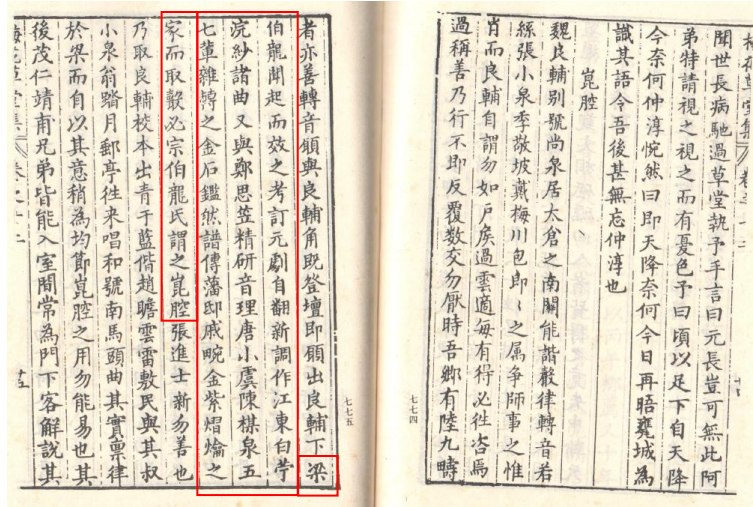


Fig. 3.12 Notes Penned at the Plum-Blossom Thatched-Cottage, vol. 12 “Kūn qiāng 崑腔”

This act gave the impression that Wèi Liángfǔ asked Liáng Chényú in person to apply his Water Polished music to a *chuánqí* play so that Liáng Chényú could help him achieve his goal (see [5.60](#)–[5.61](#)). There is no evidence that this conversation or request ever existed. However, as reviewed by the Qīng dynasty poet Zhū Yízūn 朱彝尊, Liáng Chényú’s *Washing Silk* closely followed the principles of Wèi Liángfǔ’s new musical style:

傳奇家曲別本，弋陽子弟可以改調歌之，惟浣紗不能，固是詞家老手。

In the past, actors who specialized in Yiyang style could change any *qǔpái* composed by *chuánqí* playwrights into Yiyang music and sing them. Only the play *Washing Silk* was unable to [be adapted in this manner]. No doubt [Liáng Chényú was] a master-hand of *cí* lyricist.”¹⁴²

The success of *Washing Silk* had a profound influence. Playwrights deliberately composed new plays for the Kūn qiāng musical style and a new dramatic *kūnqǔ* era had begun.

The Míng dynasty poet, Wáng Shìzhēn 王世貞 referred to the popularity of Liáng Chényú’s music in his poem “*Sing Liáng Bólóng*” (*Cháo Liáng Bólóng* 嘲梁伯龍):¹⁴³

¹⁴² Zhū Yízūn, *Jingzhijū shī huà* (vol.14), 42-43.

¹⁴³ Yu Weimin and Sun Rongrong, *Lidai quhua huibian* (vol. 2), 524.

吳閭白面冶遊兒，爭唱梁郎雪艷詞。

In the old city Chāngmén 閭門 of the Wú region [Sūzhōu],¹⁴⁴ both the intellectuals and common people frequent brothels¹⁴⁵ strive to sing Liáng’s gorgeous poetic songs.

七尺昂藏心未保，異時翻欲傍要離。

The ambitious heart of this tall and remarkable man was stymied.¹⁴⁶ At one time he was inspired to follow the footsteps of Yào Lí.¹⁴⁷

This poem also pointed out the true Liáng Chényú beyond his flamboyant image, an image to cover up for his struggles to fly high. Liáng Chényú was born into a family that held official status for generations. During his lifetime, domestic political storms among nobles, eunuchs, and powerful officials were rampant and foreign invasions happened constantly. Liáng Chényú had ambitions of serving the government but opportunities had been denied him. He therefore decided to “live freely and wander all corners of the country, spending time with dancers and singers in brothels, and travelled to red light districts (see [5.50](#)). He would “recklessly erode [his] deepest ambitions for white jade cups that pass back and forth in drinking” (see [5.51](#)), an outlet to calm his frustration and turned his ambition into self-liberation. Liáng Chényú in **【Hóng lín qín jìn 紅林檎近】**, the first *qǔpái* from the Prologue (*jiā mén* 家門) of his renowned *kūnqǔ* play *Washing Silk*, described his purpose in writing the play:

佳客難重遇，勝遊不再逢。夜月映臺館，春風叩簾櫳。何暇談名說利，漫自倚翠偎紅。請看換羽移宮，興廢酒杯中。

A fine passerby, hard to meet again, a pleasant sightseeing place never again to come across. The moonlight deep at night shone on the balcony and pavilion, the spring breeze ruffled the window shade. When do I have leisure time to talk about fame and wealth?

¹⁴⁴ See [5.20](#)

¹⁴⁵ See [5.22](#)

¹⁴⁶ See [5.51](#)

¹⁴⁷ Yào Lí 要離, a famous assassin in the Spring and Autumn period (771–476 BC). During the civil war of the Wú Kingdom, Yào Lí cut off his right arm and sacrificed his wife in order to earn the trust of the enemy nobleman, Qìng Jì 慶忌. After he assassinated Qìng Jì, instead of receiving awards, he killed himself for the sake of unifying the Wú Kingdom.

Free myself in intimate and passionate ladies' love. Take a listen to the music that changes, the rise and fall of power are reflected in a cup of wine.

驥足悲伏櫪，鴻翼困樊籠。試尋往古，傷心全寄詞鋒。問何人作此？平生慷慨，負薪吳市梁伯龍。

Like a swift steed sadly locked up in the stable or a bird who can fly high stranded in the cage, [I was not able to display my ability]. I searched for the past and expressed my grief through incisive writing. If you ask who wrote this, it was Liáng Bólóng who lived liberally and passionately all his life, yet penniless and frustrated in the Wú city [Sūzhōu].

Liáng Chényú's sentiments are also reflected in the closing act, "Boating on Lake Tai" (*Fàn hú* 泛湖), from which Tsēng selected two *qǔpái* pieces to represent *Washing Silk*. It described the political strategist Fàn Lǐ 范蠡, who resigned after successfully helping the Yuè lord destroy the Wú kingdom and vanished with the beauty Xī Shī, the love of his life, on Lake Tai. Unlike the majority of plays which end happily, with *dà tuán yuán* 大團圓, a final reunion, or marriage either physically or spiritually, the ending of *Washing Silk* was full of lingering thoughts. After Xī Shī sang the Southern *qǔpái* 【*Jiāng shuǐ líng* 漿水令】 (see [5.71](#)–[5.77](#)), Fàn Lǐ concluded this play with a Northern *qǔpái* 【*Qīng jiāng yǐn* 清江引】:

人生聚散皆如此，莫論興和廢。富貴似浮雲，世事如兒戲。唯願普天下做夫妻都是咱共你。

Life is but meeting and parting, not to mention the prosperity and downfall of the nation. Wealth and privilege are like clouds; they change unpredictably. The affairs of life are like child's play; they are reckless and spontaneous. I just hope the husbands and wives in the world could live together for a lifetime, just like you and me.

Liáng Chényú seemed to find himself through Fàn Lǐ, realizing that he had to free himself from the fact that ego and ambition are temporary, and only the sentiments, which Liáng Chényú entrusted to his writing, would last forever.

During the first production meeting, there was nearly no discussion about this act. Tsēng only joked that he and Liáng Chényú shared some personality traits: he could never secure an official position, only become a leader of a drinking “party.” After all, Liáng Chényú was such a dramatic character in his own right. Tsēng assigned Liáng Chényú to the role category of *jìng*, a painted face role. This was quite a fascinating and surprising idea. Based on the description above, Liáng Chényú would seem to naturally be portrayed by a male *shēng* role actor who better matched the image of a talented and dignified intellectual. For example, the *kūnqǔ* play *My Washing Silk*,¹⁴⁸ which premiered in 2010, featured Liáng Chényú as the main character played by the civil and martial *shēng* role actor, Kē Jūn 柯軍. Here Tsēng’s Liáng Chényú, as a painted face *jìng* role that normally features a man with physical and spiritual powers, gave a stronger and more liberal image of Liáng Chényú.

Act 6

The Tiger Hill *qǔ* Festival (*Hǔqiū qǔ huì* 虎丘曲會) has been a Sūzhōu tradition on the night of the 15th day of the eighth Lunar month—the full moon during the harvest season known as Zhōngqiū Jié 中秋節, or the Mid-Autumn Festival. The Tiger Hill is the favorite sightseeing spot of Sūzhōu residents and a must-visit place on the day of the Mid-Autumn Festival. The Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival hosted an outdoor singing competition and performances. Zhāng Dài 張岱 (1597–1679), a late Míng and early Qīng dynasty historian, essayist and playwright, documented the event in “The Mid-Autumn Night at the Tiger Hill” (*Hǔqiū Zhōngqiū yè* 虎邱¹⁴⁹中秋夜)¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Produced by the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre.

¹⁴⁹ Also known as Hǔqiū 虎丘. This historic site was certified as a 5A-rated National Tourist Attraction. See official site <https://www.tigerhill.com/EN/> for more details.

¹⁵⁰ Zhang Dai, *Taoan mengyi* (vol. 5), 8–9. According to Jonathan D. Spence, this book was written in 1646. See Spence’s *Return to Dragon Mountain: Memories of a Late Ming Man*, 222–23.

(Fig. 3.13). The following is a selection from this essay depicting the event schedule which indicates the importance of the structure of this act:

虎邱八月半，土著流寓、士夫眷屬、女樂聲伎、曲中名妓戲婆、民間少婦好女...之輩，無不鱗集。自...千人石...下至...一二山門，皆鋪氍席地坐...天暝月上，鼓吹百十處...十番鑼鼓...動地翻天...

On the 15th day of the eighth Lunar month at Tiger Hill,¹⁵¹ local residents and visitors, officials and their families, various entertainers, famous courtesans and actresses who sang *qǔ*, young wives and beauties among the common people...and so forth, all gathered together like a large school of fish.¹⁵² From scenic points of...the Thousand Workman Stones¹⁵³...all the way to...the first and second gates, people sat on the ground that was covered with rugs... When the sky became dark and the moon raised, the *gǔchuī* 鼓吹 music which played by winds and percussion could be heard everywhere...the *Shífān luógǔ* 十番鑼鼓¹⁵⁴ ensemble performed the famous music....The sound shook earth and heaven...

更定...絲管繁興，襍以歌唱，皆“錦帆開”、“澄湖萬頃”同場大曲...

As evening fell... The music played by string and wind instruments rose up. Joined with singing, [the song contest event opened with the crowd] singing famous *qǔ* pieces¹⁵⁵ such as “Brocade Sails Unfurled”¹⁵⁶ and “On the Boundless Lake Chéng”¹⁵⁷ [from Liáng Chényú’s *Washing Silk*]...

更深，人漸散去...席席徵歌，人人獻技，南北襍之，管絃迭奏，聽者方辨句字，藻鑒隨之。

Late in the evening, the crowd gradually dispersed... [The first round of contest started with] people on each mat requesting songs and everyone showing his or her skills.¹⁵⁸ The

¹⁵¹ See [6.3](#), [6.5](#) and [6.8](#)

¹⁵² See [6.5](#)

¹⁵³ *Qiān rén shí* 千人石 (same access as above). This is the main stage where the singing competition was held during the Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival. See [6.27](#) and [6.86](#).

¹⁵⁴ *Shífān luógǔ* 十番鑼鼓, lit. “Ten sounds of gongs and drums,” was originally military music which used various types of gongs, cymbals, drums, and wind instruments. It became standard repertoire played by folk music troupes and was popular in Sūzhōu area. Later some strings and flutes were added to the ensemble and this *kūnqǔ qǔpái* music became a part of their repertoire. It was commissioned for events such as festivals, weddings, and celebrations.

¹⁵⁵ See [6.20](#)

¹⁵⁶ *Jīn fān kāi* 錦帆開 is the first phrase from the Southern *qǔpái* 【*Pǔ tiān lè* 普天樂】 from Liáng Chényú’s *Washing Silk*, Act 14 “Hunting” (*Dǎ wéi* 打圍). This piece is sung by female role actors.

¹⁵⁷ *Chéng hú wàn qǐng* 澄湖萬頃 is the first phrase from the Southern *qǔpái* 【*Niàn nú jiāo xù* 念奴嬌序】 from Liáng Chényú’s *Washing Silk*, Act 30 “Gathering Lotus” (*Cǎi lián* 采蓮). This piece is sung by a painted face role actor.

¹⁵⁸ See [6.28](#)

Southern and Northern *qǔ* pieces alternated with wind and string performances. The moment the listeners identified the words and sentences, they began to comment on them.

二鼓人靜... 洞簫一縷... 與肉相引，尚存三四，迭更為之。

After nine into the stillness of night... [The second round of contest began with] the sound of a *dòng xiāo* 洞簫 (end-blown bamboo flute) still lingering in the air... The *xiāo* and the voice took turns leading each other. The remaining three or four contestants performed in turn under the moon.

三鼓，月孤氣肅... 一夫登場，高坐石上... 聲出如絲，裂石穿雲，串度抑揚，一字一刻，聽者尋入鍼芥... 不敢擊節，惟有點頭。然此時雁比而坐者，猶存百十人焉。使非蘇州，焉討識者？

At midnight, [the event concluded under] the lonely moon accompanied by respectful silence... A man appeared on the stage, sitting high on a rock... He controlled his voice attentively as if handling thin silk yet was as loud as if it could crack rock and pass through the cloudy sky. He connected melodic phrases melismatically; each word would take almost fifteen minutes to complete. People listened carefully as if they were on pins and needles... They were filled with excitement but were afraid to tap the rhythm. They only nodded their heads approvingly.¹⁵⁹ The remaining audience members, at least a hundred, sat side by side like a group of flying geese. If I had not visited Sūzhōu, how could I have met such an expert!



Fig. 3.13 *The Dream Recollections of Taoran*, vol. 5, “The Mid-Autumn Night at the Tiger Hill”

¹⁵⁹ See 6.15 and 6.99

Tsēng's plots as laid out in Act 6 show the overall spirit of the event. Every participant in the first production meeting applauded Tsēng for showcasing the Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival as the conclusion of this play. Zhāng Jūn (as Zhāng Yětáng) expressed his concern that the music presented in the *qǔ* festival might be a bit flat, lacking in power. Instead of having an old man singing alone on a rock, he thought there must be a more dramatic way to manifest this significance. Tsēng explained that it is quite clear in the record of the Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival that this event ended so quietly that even the sound of a pin dropping could be heard, "... when people hold their breath while listening to one person singing, that IS the *qǔ* festival. You may not reach the highest plot-point by having crowds simply applaud each performance."¹⁶⁰ Cài Zhèngrén (as Wèi Liángfǔ) pointed out that the Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival gave the actors a grand stage. He suggested that this act should also showcase group singing which is as important as solo singing. Tsēng understood that when this final act reaches its peak a group singing segment is needed, therefore he promised to select one piece for this purpose. Tsēng demonstrated his flexibility. He right away suggested the idea that when the sage of *qǔ* appears people cheer with joy and together sing a song such as "Packing up, the land of my country"¹⁶¹ (*Shōu shí qǐ, dà dì shān hé* 收拾起，大地山河) as long as it echoes the text before and after. Cài Zhèngrén agreed with Tsēng, quoting a famous saying that "Every family [sings] 'Packing up,' every household [vocalizes] 'Off guard'"¹⁶² (*Jiā jiā shōu shí qǐ, hù hù bù dī fang* 家家收拾起，戶戶不隄防);

¹⁶⁰ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

¹⁶¹ First phrase of Southern *qǔpái* 【Qīng bēi yù fú róng 傾杯玉芙蓉】 from the *chuánqí* text *kūnqǔ* play *The Record of Thousand Loyal Subjects* (*Qiān zhōng lù* 千忠錄. Also known as *Qiān zhōng lù* 千鍾祿, *Qiān zhōng lù* 千忠戮, or *Qiān zhōng huì* 千忠會), Act 11 "Seeing the cruelties" (*Cǎn dǔ* 慘觀). This play was written by the late Míng and early Qīng dynasty playwright, Lǐ Yù 李玉.

¹⁶² First phrase of Northern *qǔpái* 【Yì zhī huā 一枝花】 from the *kūnqǔ* play *The Palace of Eternal Youth* (*Cháng shēng diàn* 長生殿), Act 38 "Storytelling" (*Tán cí* 彈詞). This play was written in 1688 by the Qīng dynasty playwright, Hóng Shēng 洪昇 (1645–1704).

they are the two showpieces appropriate to be presented in concluding this *Wèi* play. However, the piece “Packing up, the land of my country” is about the toppling of the throne in the beginning of the Míng dynasty and derives from a play that was written more than two centuries later in the Qīng dynasty. *Wèi Liángfǔ* existed a hundred years before this incident. Would it work in a play that means to be paying tribute to *Wèi Liángfǔ*? In the earlier conversation with Lǐ Hóngliáng, although we learned that the *kūnqǔ* text often follows the historical record, we question whether or not it should be written based on historical facts. Both Cài Zhèngrén and Lǐ Hóngliáng suggested being open to the use of anachronism which has long been common practice in theatrical performance. Tsēng apparently agreed with this practice: “This dramatic text consists of artistic conceptions of falsehood (*xū* 虛) and reality (*shí* 實). The falsehood flattered its artistry as drama; the reality reflected the historical reliability as biography.”¹⁶³

By carefully selecting *qǔpái* pieces that were mentioned in the historic records and featuring them as the repertoire sung in the Tiger Hill song contest event, Tsēng clearly demonstrated the phenomena of the *qǔ* singing culture at the time of *Wèi Liángfǔ*. Each selection is unique in its own way and has a significant meaning in representing *qǔpái* pieces of non-dramatic and dramatic genres, from south and north, and good and bad. These *qǔpái* pieces which appear in the Tiger Hill contest are as follows:

6.29–6.33 – A Southern non-dramatic (literary) *qǔpái* known as “Last night the spring ended.” (*Zuó yè chūn guī* 昨夜春歸).¹⁶⁴ Shěn Chǒngsuí 沈寵綏 mentioned this particular piece while describing *Wèi Liángfǔ*’s early intention of composing and singing his Water Polished

¹⁶³ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4th, 2014.

¹⁶⁴ *Zuó yè chūn guī* 昨夜春歸, first phrase of a 【Bù bù jiāo 步步嬌】 *qǔpái* in a sequence titled “Thought of Return on a Summer Day” (*Xià rì guī sī* 夏日歸思). It was written by the Míng dynasty poet Chén Duó 陳鐸.

style using famous poems (Fig. 3.5) as discussed in Act 2 above.¹⁶⁵ In this act it was sung by the character Guò Yúnshì (older male *wài* role), who helped Wèi Liángfǔ achieve culmination of his Water Polished music and a host of the *qǔ* festival.

6.38–**6.44** – A Southern dramatic *qǔpái*, generally called *Bài xīn yuè* 拜新月 (lit. “Praying to the new moon”) or *Bài xīng yuè* 拜星月 (lit. “Praying to the stars and the moon.”). It was sung by the character Yīngzhuàn (female *dàn* role), daughter of Wèi Liángfǔ. Shěn Chǒngsuí in his *Handbook for Qǔ-Singing*, chapter “Examine *qǔ* in the Mid-Autumn Festival” (*Zhōngqiū pǐn qǔ* 中秋品曲) witnessed the event:

猶憶客歲中秋，有從千人石畔... 有唱拜星月曲者... 未幾有皤然老翁，危坐啓調，聽之亦拜星月曲也。

I still remember last year during Mid-Autumn Festival, next to the Thousand Workman Stones... someone sang “Praying to the stars and the moon” (*Bài xīng yuè* 拜星月)... Before long a white-haired old man, sat up straight and started to sing a melody. I listened to it, it was also the same song, “Praying to the stars and the moon.”¹⁶⁶

This piece came from the late Yuán and early Míng dynasty playwright Shī Hui’s Southern *qǔ* play *Moon-Worshipping Pavilion* (*Bài yuè tíng* 拜月亭). By having the host Guò Yúnshì say, “It seems tonight we will all be singing in Water Polished style!” (see **6.46**), Tsēng implied that this *qǔpái*, even though it was written in a much earlier Southern *qǔ* play style, was sung in the fashion of Wèi Liángfǔ’s new music.

6.53–**6.55** – A Southern dramatic *qǔpái* was selected from the *Southern version of the Western Chamber* (*Nán xī xiāng* 南西廂),¹⁶⁷ Act 10 “Exchange flirting glances at the Daoist

¹⁶⁵ *Handbook for Qǔ-Singing* (*Dùqǔ xūzhī* 度曲須知), chapter “The prosperity and decline of *qǔ*” (*Qǔ yùn lóng shuāi* 曲運隆衰).

¹⁶⁶ Shen Chongsui, *Duqu Xuzhi* (first volume), 10–11.

¹⁶⁷ Written by Míng dynasty *chuánqí* playwrights Cūi Shípèi 崔時佩 (resident of Hǎiyán) and Lǐ Rihuá 李日華 (resident of Wú, now Sūzhōu).

ritual” (*Mù chéng qīngjiào* 目成清醮). It was designated to be sung by an unnamed clown role actor in Tsēng’s text. Right away we can sense the lightness of this piece. However, this is a piece of crucial information Tsēng addressed. The reason this play was called the southern version was due to the use of Southern *qǔ* style on an adaptation from the Northern *qǔ* style version of the *Western Chamber*, known as *Romance of the Western Chamber* (*Xī xiāng jì* 西廂記).¹⁶⁸ This fact indicated the trend of singing the new popular southern music to an already exiting and well-known play from a previous time. The adaptation shared similar characters and play structures with the original play but was criticized for its lack of artistic achievement (see 6.56). Lǐ Yú 李漁 in his *Journal of Leisure Time* (*Xián qíng ǒu jì* 閒情偶寄)¹⁶⁹ strongly criticized the *Southern version of the Western Chamber*. This criticism shows important information as to why the creative process at this point became subject to disagreements regarding adaptation.

詞曲中音律之壞，壞于南西廂。凡有作者，當以之為戒，不當取之為法。非止音律，文藝亦然。...其文字之佳，音律之妙，未有過于北西廂者。自南本一出，遂變極佳者為極不佳，極妙者為極不妙。...此北本雖佳，吳音不能奏也。...作《南西廂》者，意在補此缺陷，遂割裂其詞，增添其白，易北為南，撰成此劇，亦可謂善用古人，喜傳佳事者矣。然自予論之，此人之於作者，可謂功之首而罪之魁矣。

There are bad tonal principles used in music in (*cí*) *qǔ* plays; they were from the play *Southern version of the Western Chamber*. All playwrights should consider this play as a warning and should not take it as a model; not only regarding the tonal principles in music but also its literary and artistic value....No play surpassed the *Northern version of the Western Chamber* for its well-worded phrases and the marvelous music that follows the tonal principles. Ever since the southern version appeared, it suddenly turned the well-worded phrases into badly-worded ones; and turned the marvelous music into extremely bad music....The northern dramatic text was great, but it cannot be performed in the southern style of Wú music....The person who wrote the *Southern version of the Western Chamber* intended to fix this problem, he then cut apart its text and added some

¹⁶⁸ A *zájù* play written by the Yuán dynasty playwright Wáng Shífū 王實甫.

¹⁶⁹ *Journal of Leisure Time* (*Xián qíng ǒu jì* 閒情偶寄), vol. 2 “*Cí qǔ* playwriting” (*Cí qǔ bù* 詞曲部), chapter “Tonal principles in music no. 3” (*Yīn lǜ dì sān* 音律第三), 4–8.

lyrics. He replaced the northern music with the southern music and compiled this play. You may say this person made the best of the ancient people's creation and was happy to pass down a good deed. However if you made the argument about the fact that this man, compared to a playwright, was someone who achieved merit [to re-popularize the moribund monumental northern version] and someone to blame [for downgrading this golden work to merely a piece of cheap metal].

6.57 - 6.65 – Two Northern dramatic *qǔpái* from the Yuán dynasty *zájù* play *Northern version of the Western Chamber* (*Běi xī xiāng* 北西廂).¹⁷⁰ Naturally it was arranged to be sung by Wèi Liángfǔ's son-in-law Zhāng Yětang (male *shēng* role) since Zhāng Yětang had been portrayed as an expert singer and instrumentalist in orthodox Yuán dynasty (Northern *qǔ*) music. Through Guò Yúnshì's mouth, Tsēng again reminded us about this new trend that even the powerful Northern music was sung in the refined Water Polished singing style (see 6.67), a reminder that the blend of Northern *qǔ* singing in Southern Kūnshān style (*běi qǔ kūn chàng* 北曲崑唱) had occurred.

6.70–6.73 – A Northern dramatic *qǔpái* from *Northern version of the Western Chamber*¹⁷¹ continues onto 6.74–6.77 – A Northern dramatic *qǔpái* from Liáng Chényú's new *kūnqǔ* play *Washing Silk*.¹⁷² Both were sung by the character Liáng Chényú (painted face *jìng* role). Having these two *qǔpái* sung one after the other, Tsēng symbolically indicated that the baton of the golden Northern tradition had been passed down to the Southern tradition when playwrights started composing plays specifically for the Water Polished style. It eventually spread its popularity nationwide and was known as *kūnqǔ* or *kūnjǔ*. Tsēng's selection of these

¹⁷⁰ Both *qǔpái* were selected from Volume I, Act 1 of the *Western Chamber*.

¹⁷¹ This *qǔpái* was selected from Volume II, Act 2 of the *Western Chamber*.

¹⁷² This *qǔpái* was selected from Act 45 “Boating on Lake Tai” which concludes the play *Washing Silk*. Notice in Tsēng's text when Liáng Chényú announced the piece he was about to sing, he referred to it as *Huàn xī shā* 浣溪紗 (see 6.68) instead of *Huàn shā jì* 浣紗記. *Huàn xī shā* originated from Táng dynasty Royal Academy music (*jiào fāng qǔ* 教坊曲) and became a *cí* poem (*cípái* 詞牌) as well as a *qǔpái*. Its content was often associated with stories of the beauty Xī Shī 西施.

two particular *qǔpái* gave the impression of how much depth Tsēng had put into structuring his play. The first *qǔpái* 【Duān zhèng hǎo】 from *The Western Chamber* is sung by a painted face *jìng* role actor who plays an unconventional monk, Huì Míng 惠明, a small but crucial character. He was an upright man and willing to fight against inequity and abhorred evil behavior. In this way he resembled Liáng Chényú. The second *qǔpái* 【Xīn shuǐ líng】 from *Washing Silk* is sung by a male *shēng* role actor who plays the political strategist Fàn Lǐ 范蠡. It was selected from the closing act, “Boating on Lake Tai” (*Fàn hú* 泛湖). As discussed in Act 5 above, Liáng Chényú reflected himself through Fàn Lǐ. The selection of these two *qǔpái* expressed the profound meaning behind them and presented a challenge for the actor who plays Liáng Chényú. To sing them back to back, the skills required to switch quickly between two extremely different vocal qualities and different ways of pronouncing words merit attention.

6.88–6.95 – Two Southern dramatic *qǔpái* were selected from the Southern *qǔ* play *The Lute* (*Pípá jì* 琵琶記), Act 21 “Eat Husks” (*Chī kāng* 喫糠¹⁷³), written by the late Yuán dynasty playwright Gāo Míng 高明, also known as Gāo Zéchéng 高則誠. They were sung by the character Wèi Liángfǔ (old male *lǎo shēng* role) and served as a finale that the public enjoyed very much, “When the singing ends, the remaining sound is gracefully echoing, all nature is still and quiet” (see 6.99). This description matches Zhāng Dài’s essay “The Mid-Autumn Night at the Tiger Hill” (Fig. 4.5) as if Wèi Liángfǔ was the last man in the scene. In fact “Wèi Liángfǔ’s Eighteen Rules of Singing *Qǔ*”¹⁷⁴ listed Wèi Liángfǔ’s opinion about *The Lute*:

¹⁷³ Also known as *Chī kāng* 喫糠. In the *chuánqí* collection of *Nuǎnhóngshì huikè chuánqí* 暖紅室彙刻傳奇, the title of this act was “Eat Husks, Self-loathing” (*Zāo kāng zì yàn* 糟糠自厭).

¹⁷⁴ “Wèi Liángfǔ’s Eighteen Rules of Singing *Qǔ*” (*Wèi Liángfǔ qū lǜ shíbā tiáo* 魏良輔曲律十八條) was found in the 1616 (Míng dynasty, Wànlì 44th year 明萬曆丙辰年) copy of *An Anthology of Outstanding Songs from Wú* (*Wú yú cuì yǎ* 吳歎萃雅).

琵琶記，迺高則誠所作。雖出于拜月亭之後，然自為曲祖。

The Lute was written by Gāo Zéchéng. Even though it appeared after the play *Moon-Worshipping Pavilion*, it was respected as forerunner and a model for the *qǔ* plays [Míng dynasty *chuánqǐ*].

Zāng Mào xún 臧懋循 (1550–1620), a Míng dynasty drama theorist and playwright, wrote in his “Forward from the White Camelia Hall’s *chuánqǐ*” (*Yùmíng táng chuánqǐ yǐn* 玉茗堂傳奇引¹⁷⁵) implying that Wèi Liángfǔ might have first used the *qǔpái* from *The Lute* for his Water Polished music experiments:

當元時所工北劇耳，獨施君美幽閨、高則誠琵琶二記，聲調近南，後人遂奉為矩矱。而不知幽閨半雜贗本，已失真多矣。即天不念、拜新月等曲，吳人以供清唱，而調亦不純，其餘曲名莫可考正。故魏良輔止點琵琶板，而不及幽閨，有以也。

During the Yuán dynasty, playwrights were skilled in composing northern dramas. Only Shī Huì’s *Moon-Worshipping Pavilion*¹⁷⁶ and Gāo Míng’s *The Lute*, two Southern *qǔ* plays, were held up as models for their tonal principles by later generations. People were unaware that the *Moon-Worshipping Pavilion* had been mixed with spurious copies; the majority of its content was distorted from the original. Even though dramatic songs such as “Heaven does not pity”¹⁷⁷ and “Praying to the new moon”¹⁷⁸ were sung as literary songs by Wú residences, the melodies were not authentic. The rest of the *qǔpái* were unable to be examined and corrected. Wèi Liángfǔ therefore modified the melody and rhythm from *The Lute* and did not touch *Moon-Worshipping Pavilion*. There were reasons for it.”¹⁷⁹

Another well-crafted plot arrangement by Tsēng is that, by concluding this play with *The Lute* for its historical significance as the modal of *chuánqǐ* plays, he also echoed *The Lute* in Act 1 when the Míng dynasty’s first emperor Zhū Yuánzhāng complimented Gù Jiān for improving the

¹⁷⁵ Yùmíng táng 玉茗堂, lit. “White Camelia Hall,” is the study hall of the Míng dynasty playwright and dramatist Tāng Xiǎnzǔ 湯顯祖.

¹⁷⁶ Shī Jūnměi 施君美 refers to Shī Huì 施惠 whose courtesy name is Jūnměi 君美. *Moon-Worshipping Pavilion* (*Bài yuè tíng* 拜月亭) is also known as *The Secluded Boudoir* (*Yōu guī jì* 幽閨記). See [6.51].

¹⁷⁷ “Heaven does not pity” (*Tiān bù niàn* 天不念), first three words from *qǔpái* 【Yú jiā ào 漁家傲】, was sung by an old female role actor in Act 13 “Weeping together at the branch road” (*Xiāng qì lù qí* 相泣路歧).

¹⁷⁸ “Praying to the new moon” (*Bài xīn yuè* 拜新月), first phrase from *qǔpái* 【Èr láng shén 二郎神】, was sung by a young female role actor in Act 32 “Moon-worshipping in the boudoir” (*Yōu guī bài yuè* 幽閨拜月).

¹⁷⁹ Yu Weimin and Sun Rongrong, *Lidai qūhua huibian: xinbian Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* (vol. 2), 622–23.

Kūnshān *qiāng* (see [1.56](#)). This incident was recorded in Xú Wèi's *Account of the Southern Style of Drama*.¹⁸⁰

時有以《琵琶記》進呈者，高皇笑曰：『五經、四書、布、帛、菽、粟也，家家皆有；高明琵琶記，如山珍、海錯，貴富家不可無。』

At the time [after Gāo Míng died] someone presented a copy of *The Lute* to the Emperor Zhū. The Majesty smiled and said: ‘The Five Classics and the Four Books for common people, just like cloth and silk, beans and grain, are daily necessities that every household should have; Gāo Míng’s *The Lute* is like luxurious delicacies from the mountains and oceans, it is indispensable to the wealthy and noble families.’¹⁸¹

The time between the reign of Emperor Zhū Yuánzhāng (1328–1398) and when Wèi Liángfǔ was active (1522–1567) was more than a century. Unifying the thread with *The Lute* highlighted the fact that “Its *cí* lyrics are elegant and classic. Its phonetic and melodic structures are exquisite and outstanding. It is the guiding principle of *cí* writing; one should not take it carelessly for convenience. One must sing from the beginning to the end, examine every word and phrase profoundly. Only then one can be called an eminent artist,”¹⁸² said Wèi Liángfǔ. Tsēng in fact gave this eminent artist (*guógōng* 國工) title to the character Wèi Liángfǔ (See [4.5](#), [6.80](#) and [6.85](#)). Gāo Míng’s elegant and graceful writing therefore was used as a lyrical text for Gù Jiān’s Kūnshān *qiāng* singing and for Wèi Liángfǔ’s Water Polished music. Folk dramatic texts were considered coarse and vulgar and were looked down on by literati, until talented scholarly officials and *littérateurs* such as Gāo Míng (who wrote to express his feelings as a frustrated Hàn Chinese *littérateur* chafing under the oppression of the Mongol Yuán dynasty) and Liáng Chényú

¹⁸⁰ Xú Wèi 徐渭 (1521–1593), *Nán cí xù lù* 南詞敘錄.

¹⁸¹ Yu Weimin and Sun Rongrong, *Lidai quhua huibian: xinbian Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* (vol. 2), 483.

¹⁸² 詞意高古，音韻精絕，諸詞之綱領，不宜取便苟且。須從頭至尾，字字句句，須要透徹唱理，方為國工。“Wèi Liángfǔ’s Eighteen Rules of Singing *Qǔ*.” See *An Anthology of Outstanding Songs from Wú* (*Wú yú cuì yǎ* 吳歛萃雅).

(who wrote against injustice) had turned their dramatic texts into an integral part of Chinese literature.

The first production meeting bore fruit. At the end, Tsēng applauded this satisfactory meeting, hoping the final product would convey the production team's perspective in its final performance. Cài Zhèngrén, knowing that Tsēng's biggest concern was the importance of healthy communication, concluded the meeting, "... I had a feeling that we will collaborate really well. Today's meeting established a good beginning. Under this circumstance, I think we have every reason to be successful,"¹⁸³ Tsēng now expected to revise his original text accordingly; this was in fact the most challenging part of process.

Tsēng's Revision

Tsēng's revision is minimal compared to his original and unrevised dramatic text translated in Chapter 2.

Tsēng edited the script utilizing several methods: First, he added prosaic language for explanation. Since the participants in the first production meeting had agreed that his text was generally overly technical, Tsēng made some changes to ameliorate this problem. In the Prologue, after *Fù mò* finished his recitation of the summary of the play's contents (after 0.11), he added a long five-paragraph explanation in modern Mandarin Chinese. The first paragraph cited the fact that in May 2001, UNESCO declared "*Kunqu* Opera" as one of the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity. It was a positive acknowledgement for Chinese culture and yet people are still not aware of the developmental history of *kūnqǔ*. The rest of the paragraphs referred to the tetralogy that Tsēng cited in the first production meeting: Kūnshān

¹⁸³ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

local music with local language (*tǔ qiāng tǔ qǔ* 土腔土曲); Kūnshān singing style known as Kūn *qiāng* or Kūn *qǔ* (Kūn *qiāng* Kūn *qǔ* 崑腔崑曲); Kūnshān Water Polished style of non-dramatic *qǔ* (Kūnshān *shuǐmó diào qīngqǔ* 崑山水磨調清曲); and Kūnshān Water Polished style of dramatic *qǔ* (Kūnshān *shuǐmó diào jùqǔ* 崑山水磨調劇曲).

The verbose and textbook-like monologues in Act 2 were a concern of the first production meeting participants, especially the core performers. By making the speech less pedantic and easier to understand for modern audiences, Tsēng added speeches in modern language for Zhāng Méigǔ (supporting old male *dà mò* role) and Xiè Línquán (supporting male *xiǎo mò* role), musicians who often appeared with Guò Yúnshì as a trio. After Wèi Liángfǔ sang a *qǔpái* 【Jīn chán dào】 explaining the evolution of literature in lines 2.16–2.23, a speech by Xiè Línquán was added. He joked about the complexity addressed in this *qǔpái*: “Old brother Wèi, this song of yours, sings about five dynasties’ history in linguistic and lyrical melodies development. The more I listened the more I got confused.” This addition lightened the mood. Guò Yúnshì, Wèi Liángfǔ’s music consultant, continued. He was originally given a long speech explaining the natural melody of language (*zìrán yǔyán xuánlǜ* 自然語言旋律), man-made standard tonal patterns (*réngōng yīnlǜ* 人工音律) and the rule that four tones be used in the last word of every odd number stanza (*sìshēng dihuàn* 四聲遞換). In Tsēng’s revision, he broke it down into two monologues and inserted several additional passages of dialogue by the two *mò* role actors. Their speeches simply reflected what Guò Yúnshì said and re-enforced the meaning in modern Chinese.

Second, Tsēng increased the interactions between characters. In Act 1, Emperor Zhū questions why country language used in folk songs always sounds vulgar (see 1.46). Gù Jiān in

the original text speaks about the quality of Kūnshān folk songs and how he contrasted them from his improved Kūnshān *qiāng* (see [1.47]). To smooth this transition and answer the Emperor's question directly, Tsēng added “[The folk songs]... were accompanied by percussion without strings and winds, therefore it sounded vulgar.”¹⁸⁴ He continued to add material about Gù Jiān and his friends improving it “with the use of winds and strings and polished singing skills,” therefore it spreads near and far; this is called the Kūnshān *qiāng*. Then, in the original text, Emperor Zhū simply asked if Gù Jiān could sing for him (see [1.48]). But in the revision, Tsēng allowed Emperor Zhū to digest what he just heard from Gù Jiān in line [1.47] and analyze Gù Jiān's reasons in additional content to line [1.48]. The Emperor goes on to say, “According to what you said, the improvement of lyrical melody is based on four aspects: One, the strictness of tonal principles in music. Two, the elegance of the language used in lyrics. Three, the vocal polishing that came from singers' tonal quality, pronunciation, and ways to handle melodies that follow the implied inflections of the text. Four, the use of winds and strings to accompany the singers and to enhance their feelings expressed by the voice. Through these four improvements, the vulgarity of folk songs sung in local music and local language can then upgraded into beautiful melodies that are pleasant to listen to. Is this what you mean? Could you sing a song for me?” These four improvements were in fact mentioned in the first production meeting when Tsēng explained about the Kūnshān *qiāng* which was first improved by Gù Jiān and yet Wèi Liángfǔ refined it further.

In Act 4 Zhāng Yětāng had become a son-in-law of Wèi Liángfǔ and discovered the integration of the Southern and Northern *qǔ* traditions. In the original text, Tsēng had Zhāng

¹⁸⁴ Sentences in “ ” are content added in Tsēng's revised dramatic text.

Yětang produce a prolonged transcendental whistle (*cháng xiào* 長嘯) right after line 4.22 when inspired by nature. Tsēng revised this transition by adding another conversation between the couple. Yīngzhuàn responded to Zhāng Yětang’s inspiration:

Now I heard you, my husband’s words. It suddenly reminded me, my father once discussed the difference between the Southern and Northern *qǔ*. He said the Northern *qǔ* uses a seven-tone system and the Southern *qǔ* uses a five-tone system. In the Northern *qǔ* it is more syllabic and the melodic phrases are shorter in duration and faster in pace. Wherever the melody is pressing, it is like tendons tightening. In the Southern *qǔ* it is more melismatic and the melodic phrases are longer and slower in pace. Wherever the melody is stretching, the drum-beat which marks the *yǎn* 眼¹⁸⁵ becomes noticeable. In the Northern *qǔ* the expression was delivered more from the sung words and less from the melodies. In the Southern *qǔ* the expression was delivered less from the sung words and more from the melodies. The strength of Northern *qǔ* lies in its accompaniment by plucked string instrument(s). The strength of Southern *qǔ* lies in its accompaniment by the clapper and drum beats. The Northern style is suitable to be sung with melodic support. The Southern style is suitable to be sung solo [with only the clapper and drum]. The Northern singer’s voice may sound coarse. The Southern singer’s voice may sound weak. I think even though the voices of the Southern *qǔ* and the Northern *qǔ* are different, in fact they are two sides of a coin and are balanced, complementing each other. In that case, the Northern *qǔ* is the bone and the Southern *qǔ* is the flesh. Isn’t there a way to homogenize the bone and flesh as one? Likewise the sounds from heaven and earth at the moment.

Zhāng Yětang speaks, “My wife, what you said had inspired me spontaneously. Allow me to *cháng xiào* (prolong whistle) awhile. You, my dear, listen to their pitches, length, and dynamics and try to feel it!” Then Zhāng Yětang produced a prolonged transcendental whistle, the sound echoed like ten instruments played together. Even though Tsēng added dialogue between the couple, Yīngzhuàn’s long observation serves the true purpose which is to indicate the difference in characteristics between the Southern *qǔ* and the Northern *qǔ*.

Third, Tsēng provided supplementary information for more clarification. In Act 1, after Gù Jiān finished the *qǔpái* 【Èr láng shén】 (see 1.50) he reported to the Emperor that it was a

¹⁸⁵ The drum-beat or *yǎn* 眼 marks the beats other than the downbeat of a measure in Western notation terms.

literary piece “In Autumn,” composed by Gāo Míng, the playwright of *The Lute* (see [1.55](#)).

Tsēng added more technical sentences as to why this literary piece was different from the folk song:

Because it belongs to the Southern *qǔpái*, there is fixed number of words, sentences, and irregular length that can be used. It also observed the rules of the level and oblique tone patterns and of rhyme schemes, therefore the lyrics are elegant. This cannot be the result of developing from folk songs and vulgar local music sung in local language. The reasons are the precise pronunciation which requires better vocal skills and the dynamics and intimacy through ways to handle melodies that follow the implied inflections of the text, in addition to the support of winds and strings. Only for these reasons would people love to listen to it.

These theoretical connotations were repeated by Wèi Liángfǔ in more detail in Act 2, line [2.25](#).

Tsēng intended to spotlight both Gù Jiān and Wèi Liángfǔ who were equally passionate about making the Kūnshān *qiāng* a better singing style, but it was Wèi Liángfǔ who successfully polished it into a fine art.

The concept of using winds and strings in accompaniment continued into Act 2. Tsēng intended to classify Kūnshān *qiāng* as either of poorer or better quality depending on whether the percussion or wind and string ensemble is used in the accompaniment. In Wèi Liángfǔ’s opening remarks, he speaks about his frustration that, in spite of the efforts of scholar Gù Jiān, the Kūnshān singing style reverted to its previous poor quality (see [2.5](#)). In Tsēng’s revision, he added another reason why Wèi Liángfǔ wants to improve it, saying, “... because the use of winds and strings has been abandoned, only the percussion continues to maintain the rhythm. Zhù Yǔnmíng 祝允明 during the Zhèngdé 正德 period also sighed with regret that it had become plain and without charm.” This added figure, the Míng dynasty littérateur Zhù Yǔnmíng, was an

expert in poetry and calligraphy. He had complained about the early Kūnshān *qiāng* in his *Trivial Talks* (*Wēi tán* 猥談), section “Singing *Qǔ*” (*Gē qǔ* 歌曲):

南戲... 今遍滿四方... 愚人蠢工，狗(狗)意更變，妄名餘姚腔、海鹽腔、弋陽腔、崑山腔之類，變易喉舌，趁(趁)逐抑揚，杜撰百端，真胡說耳。

The Southern *qǔ* plays... can be seen all over the place nowadays... Those ignorant performers and foolish musicians changed the facts by deliberately twisting self-imposed interpretation, falsely naming the singing styles as Yúyáo *qiāng*, Hǎiyán *qiāng*, Yíyáng *qiāng*, Kūnshān *qiāng* and so forth. They altered their voices, following the inflection of the tones, fabricating in many ways. This is true nonsense.

Zhù Yǔnmíng lived during 1460–1526, a period before Wèi Liángfǔ’s efforts to polish the Kūnshān *qiāng* (active 1522–1567), implying that the Kūnshān *qiāng* Zhù Yǔnmíng mentioned was the one that Wèi Liángfǔ also was angry about despite the efforts of scholar Gù Jiān. However without this reference as part of the plot, audiences unfamiliar with *kūnqǔ* history would not catch this thoughtful implication.

When Wèi Liángfǔ’s style of singing achieved a high degree of sophistication and he asked the trio musicians whether or not he could call his Water Polished singing style *shuǐmó diào* (see [2.42]). The trio spoke together saying yes, we can call it Water Polished style (see [2.43]). In the first production meeting there was a suggestion to have an additional actor acting as a carpenter polishing the rosewood furniture so that the idea when singing *kūnqǔ* requires such craftsmanship can be delivered visually. Tsēng agreed, but instead he added another long sentence spoken by all three musicians:

Yes! Yes! We can call it the Water Polished style. The singer who sings the Water Polished style, his or her pronunciation of each word and melody that follows the implied inflections of the language should be made like carving and engraving gold and jade; one must work carefully with water, polishing them with details. Only then it can achieve perfection. However the language used in the Water Polished style is subject to the book *Tones and Rhymes Used in the Central Region of China* (*Zhōngyuán Yīnyùn* 中原音韻). By using the official Mandarin used in central China, this style can spread to the whole

nation. Otherwise it would end up being restricted to a narrow zone in the Wú region. Furthermore one must improve and increase musical instruments so that they can support and enrich the timbre.

This long additional paragraph was designed to be spoken by three actors simultaneously. It is hard to believe that the playwright would make such an arrangement. Knowing that Tsēng did not like trivial details, it is most likely that he intended to let the director decide how to share this speech among the three actors.

Act 4 features the enrichment of adding musical instruments used for accompaniment. Zhāng Yětang offered to modify a *sānxián* (three-string plucked instrument), adding it to the music ensemble (see [4.37](#)) so that it could support both the Southern and Northern *qǔ*. Instead of immediately calling the singers after Wèi Liángfǔ compliments Zhāng Yětang's idea (see [4.38](#)) in the original text, Tsēng had Wèi Liángfǔ reflect, "That is great! In this way, the musical instruments of the Water Polished singing style had originated from earlier wooden clippers (*bǎn* 板) further adding the flutes (*dí* 笛 and *xiāo* 簫), a mouth organ (*shēng* 笙) and a pear-shaped lute (*pá* 琶). Nowadays we have developed and added a zither (*zhēng* 箏), a round-shaped lute (*ruǎn* 阮) and a *sānxián* (三弦), therefore "eight sounds (*bā yīn* 八音)" of winds and strings are playing together. Please present our music ensemble. My daughter and son-in-law! Work together with the singers!" The information gives a clear idea as to which instruments are employed to accompanying the singing and the different time periods in which they were added. The term "eight sounds" here indicates the number of instruments mentioned, not the Eight Sounds (*bā yīn* 八音) of metal (*jīn* 金), stone (*shí* 石), clay (*tǔ* 土), hide (*gé* 革), silk (*sī* 絲), wood (*mù* 木), gourd (*páo* 匏) and bamboo (*zhú* 竹)¹⁸⁶ which served as classification for musical instruments.

¹⁸⁶ *The Rites of Zhou* (*Zhōu lǐ* 周禮), chapter three "Offices of Spring on Education and Rituals" (*Chūn guān zōng bó* 春官宗伯), section on "Masters" (*Dà shī* 大師).

Among all the acts, there is no revision to Act 3 in which Zhāng Yětāng was introduced and in Act 5 which features Liáng Chényú and the birth of dramatic *kūnqǔ*. In addition to the three editorial methods, Tsēng kept his promise to actor Cài Zhèngrén that he would select one piece for group singing to conclude this play. In the final Act 6, the original text ended with an old man saying Master Wèi Liángfǔ can be called the thousand-year sage of *kūnqǔ*! (see 6.101) and the lights fade out while the crowd shouts “Long live the sage of *kūnqǔ*!” In his revision, Tsēng added, “Now let us respectfully invite the sage of *kūnqǔ* Wèi Liángfǔ to lead us singing *The Lute*, “Gazing at the moon on the Mid-Autumn Night,” 【Niàn nú jiāo xù】.¹⁸⁷ With the help of the chorus, we will conclude tonight’s Tiger Hill *qǔ* Festival.” Wèi Liángfǔ then sings 【Niàn nú jiāo xù 念奴嬌序】¹⁸⁸ and the crowd joins in:

長空萬里，見嬋娟可愛，全無一點纖凝。

Thousands of miles high in space. How delightful the beauty of the moon. Unspoiled by the slightest trace of cloud.

十二欄杆光滿處，涼浸珠箔銀屏。

On the twelve railings where light is flooding. Cool air soaks through pearl screens and silver shutters.

偏稱，身在瑤臺，笑斟玉斝，人生幾見此佳景。

Just as though we were dwelling in fairyland. Laughing, we fill our cups. In man’s life, how often can he see such a scene?

(眾合唱) 惟願取、年年此夜，人月雙清。

(Chorus) We only hope that year after year on this night, the moon and we alike will be free of clouds.

¹⁸⁷ *Pípá Jì* 琵琶記, Act 28 “Zhōng qiū wàng yuè 中秋望月,” *qǔpái* 【Niàn nú jiāo xù 念奴嬌序】. In the *chuánqí* collection of *Nuǎnhóngshì huikè chuánqí* 暖紅室彙刻傳奇, the title of this act was “Enjoy the moon on the Mid-Autumn Night (*Zhōng qiū shāng yuè* 中秋賞月). This *qǔpái* is in the Southern *dà shí* mode 大石調.

¹⁸⁸ The translation for 【Niàn nú jiāo xù 念奴嬌序】 is adapted from *The Lute: Kao Ming’s P’i-p’a chi* by Jean Mulligan, 202.

This *qǔpái* perfectly reflects the scenery and atmosphere at the end of the Tiger Hill *qǔ* Festival and the devoted thoughts of the attendees.

In sum, Tsēng's editing of his original dramatic text affected only the spoken parts, with changes that served to reinforce his vision. All of his original *qǔpái* pieces were kept and only one additional *qǔpái* was added at the very end. This indicates that when a playwright completes his *qǔpái* composition, lyrically and not musically, the chosen words were already best-suited for the pre-existing melody. In other words, the only way to change an individual *qǔpái* piece is to delete it entirely. In terms of the *qǔpái* set in which the number of *qǔpái* pieces share similar sentiments, they are connected in a specific order. In a few *qǔpái* sets, the playwright can pick a number of *qǔpái* pieces within a set of any length as long as they follow the tempo structure. Most *qǔpái* sets consist of a restricted order which the playwright has to follow without discretion. The director therefore should have extensive knowledge when making decisions about changing the *qǔpái* pieces.

The literary quotations and references in Tsēng's dramatic text are significant and their classical allusions should not be overlooked. Readers should therefore keep this in mind while reading the next chapters as the directors revised the dramatic text and made decisions during rehearsals in which these principles came up against the practicalities of staging the play.

Chapter 4

From Text to Performance: The Directors' Emendation

A second production meeting was held on November 26, 2014, almost two months after playwright Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh 曾永義 completed his dramatic text revisions on October 7. To that point, director Shí Yùkūn 石玉昆 had not yet joined the production team, since the dramatic text needed to be finalized in order for him to proceed to the next level of creation and design. Tsēng did not attend the second production meeting due to illness. In his absence participants openly expressed their concerns as actors. The core actors agreed about the great difficulty of staging this dramatic text, which they had already addressed in the first meeting. The Chairman of Shěng Kūn¹, Lǐ Hóngliáng 李鴻良, invited Yuán Wěi 袁偉 to the meeting for the purpose of further revising Tsēng's already-edited text. Yuán Wěi is a younger generation Shěng Kūn actor specializing in the *chǒu* 丑 (clown) role category and is the playwright of an experimental *kūnqǔ* play, *319 • Looking Back at the Forbidden City*, presented in 2014 at the Toki International Arts Festival (实验昆剧《319 • 回首紫禁城》—朱鹮国际艺术节2014). Yuán Wěi's edition was completed on February 25, 2015. He did not change much of Tsēng's revision; some humor between characters was added and an additional narrator would replace the *fù mò* commentator in the Prologue. This narrator would appear at the end of every act to raise questions for the next act; he would reveal himself to be a member of Shěng Kūn who time-travelled five hundred years to witness the glory of Wèi Liángfǔ in the Tiger Hill *qǔ* Festival. It was an interesting

¹ Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre (Jiāngsū Shěng Yǎnyì Jítuán Kūnjù Yuàn 江苏省演艺集团昆剧院).

transformation, but this edition will not be compared and analyzed here, since most of Yuán Wěi's edition was rejected by the newly-designated directors.

Director Shí Yùkūn resigned from this production due to family issues; therefore the director's position was reassigned to a team of directors, Zhōu Shìcóng 周世琮 and Zhū Yǎ 朱雅, a couple who rose to directors' status from their backgrounds as *xìqǔ* performers. Zhōu Shìcóng (b. 1950), son of the *kūnqǔ* master Zhōu Chuányīng 周传瑛 (1912–1988), was the former Vice Chairman of the Jiāngsū Province Kūnjù Theatre (Jiāngsū Shěng Kūnjù Yuàn 江苏省昆剧院²) and a National Director of the First Rank (国家一级导演) specializing in the *chǒu* 丑 (clown) role category. Zhū Yǎ, with a Master's degree in Theatre from Nanjing University, was a member of the Jiāngsū Province Beijing Opera Company (Jiāngsū Shěng Jīngjù Yuàn 江苏省京剧院) and a National Actor of the First Rank (国家一级演员) specializing in the *dàn* 旦 (female) role category. Zhū Yǎ not only held the position of director for the production, she also was given another responsibility, that of script adaptation, or text for performance arrangement (Yǎnchū běn zhěnglǐ 演出本整理).

In the following comparison and analysis, the several versions of the text will be referred to as: Tsēng's dramatic text (original, 2010); Tsēng's revision (2014); Yuán Wěi's edition (February 2015); and the directors' emendation (June 2015). This chapter is focused on the directors' emendation which would be used as the foundation for the script reading and onstage rehearsals.

Twentieth century scholars have categorized the activities of theatrical creation into two stages: 1) *yí dù chuàng zuò* 一度創作, the first stage of a work created by the playwright; and 2)

² Now Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre, also known as Shěng Kūn.

èr dù chuàng zuò 二度創作, the second stage of a created work which transforms or modifies the original work and must interpret and be faithful to the playwright's original intentions, traditionally done mostly by the actors but now primarily by directors. This practice, with its modern terminologies, is not new to the *kūnqǔ* world. Historically, there were also a sequence of texts. The first created work, known as *àn tóu* 案頭 (lit. "on the desk") or *wén běn* 文本 (lit. "literary text"), was a single source created by a playwright. The second created work, known as *chǎng shàng* 場上 (lit. "on stage") or *yǎn běn* 演本 (lit. "acting text"), could come from a spectrum of sources through different aspects of activities with the intention of facilitating a successful staged performance. Each text, whether a literary text or an acting text, could also be named after the playwright, the person who adapted it, or the collection from which the text was derived. It is ideal, and an ultimate goal of playwrights, that the dramatic text achieve both the beauty of literature and the beauty of performance. This perfect state is not often realized; even the great playwright Tāng Xiǎnzǔ 湯顯祖 (1550–1616) also received criticism for his world-renowned play, *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mǔdān tíng* 牡丹亭). There were recognized adaptations during Tāng Xiǎnzǔ's time, such as the text of Shěn Jǐng 沈璟 (1553–1610), the text of Zāng Mào xún 臧懋循 (1550–1620), and the text of Féng Mènglóng 馮夢龍 (1574–1646). A famous argument between Shěn Jǐng and Tāng Xiǎnzǔ about whether a playwright should obey the restrictions of the rules of *qǔ* or if one could bend the rules for the artistic conception of *qǔ* is still discussed and analyzed in present-day scholarly works. Transformation from a dramatic text to an onstage performance certainly is a professional's job requiring expertise in both literary and performative contexts.

Directors' Emendation

The directors' textual emendation was dated June 6, 2015, three months after Yuán Wěi's edition and before any type of rehearsals with actors. Zhū Yǎ who held duties of both text for performance arrangement and directing is credited with this directors' textual emendation. She confirmed that decisions on all changes were made in concert with her husband, director Zhōu Shìcóng. Text changes during the creative process are the norm for newly-created plays; this was not a unique undertaking by these particular directors. However, this emendation was made without consulting the playwright; Tsēng confirmed this for me after the play's premiere. It is possible that the production team was concerned about Tsēng's health issues, and therefore went forward with the revision without bothering him. Whatever the reason, the lack of communication that worried Tsēng in the first production meeting still materialized, despite the promise made by Shěng Kūn's Chairman.

Two phenomena are to be addressed first. One is the numbering of the acts, which affects the play structure as Southern *zájù*. Tsēng's dramatic text starts with a Prologue (家門大意 *jiā mén dà yì*) followed by Act 1. As noted earlier, a Prologue serves as a signature to open this Southern *zájù* play with a *fù mò* commentator who makes opening remarks on behalf of the playwright regarding the germ of the plot. That is, in this case, a play dedicated to the life and contribution of Wèi Liángfǔ, the sage of *kūnqǔ*. In the directors' emendation, instead of honoring the fundamental structure of Southern *zájù* on which this play is based, the emendation created an Introduction made up of the Prologue and Act 1; and the original Act 2 became the new Act 1. This change caused a little confusion. Fortunately, the acts' numbering system reverted during the rehearsal process; therefore, when analyzing comparisons between the playwright's text and

the directors' emendation, the act numbers will remain aligned with Chapter 2 in Tsēng's original text. This change may seem minor since, in the end, the Prologue is still a Prologue and Act 1 is still an Act 1; however, the change of the Prologue's original function as an overview of the playwright's purpose to serving as an Introduction compromised its authentic purpose. In line 0.6 Tsēng summarized his purpose in writing the play: "Wèi Liángfǔ dedicated his life to solemn music" (魏良輔，平生志業，大呂黃鐘。). The directors changed this line to "The first Ming emperor set the proper word enunciation for future generations"³ (洪武帝，傳瑜正音，萬世咏誦。)⁴. This change altered the significance of the Prologue in a Southern *zájù* play structure to mere words that announce the entrance of the Míng dynasty's first emperor, Zhū Yuánzhāng, as occurs in the next scene. In an interview regarding his explanation of this play, Tsēng specifically claimed:

I... scrupulously abided by composing lyrics to rigorously fit poetic rules, like Wèi Liángfǔ who dedicated his life to solemn music (see 0.5–0.6). This is to manifest that Wèi Liángfǔ spent his lifetime striving to further his career. That is, he endeavored to pay great attention to dramatic music as if it is the court music of *dàlǚ* and *huángzhōng* 大呂黃鐘, the most solemn music as ritual offerings to the Heavenly gods.⁵

Unfortunately, Tsēng's ambition and efforts to follow in Wèi Liángfǔ's footsteps were thwarted.

Another interesting phenomenon is that all the characters are given names throughout the entire play, regardless of the size of their roles. For example, in the stage directions (see 1.1) Zhōu Shòuyì, the 107-year-old elder that Emperor Zhū summoned, appears accompanied by three minor clowns A, B, and C, as written in Tsēng's dramatic text. The reason they are minor characters is because they do not have their own opening remarks to introduce themselves even

³ Translation by Kim Hunter Gordon, for side-titles used in performance.

⁴ The directors' revision is written in simplified Chinese.

⁵ Interviewed and recorded by Sūn Jiàn'ān, August 2015.

though one is Zhōu Shòuyì's 80-year-old son and the two others are elders from the countryside who all have singing roles. In the directors' emendation, Zhōu Shòuyì's 80-year-old son (Clown B) is named Zhōu Jìngshān 周鏡山 while Clown A is Shěn Sùlín 沈粟林 and Clown C is Lù Zǐyún 陸紫雲. According to director and script adaptor Zhū Yǎ, there is a meaning behind each name. For example, Shěn Sùlín's "Shěn" was inspired by Shěn Chuánzhǐ 沈傳芷, a famous *kūnqǔ* actor specializing in the *dàn* 旦 (female) role category who was recognized for his efforts to safeguard *kūnqǔ* tradition during its difficult time. Shěn Sùlín's "Sù" came from *qǔ* expert Yú Sùlú 俞粟廬 (1847–1930) who was famous for his Yú style of *kūnqǔ* singing, documented in the classic *kūnqǔ* notation *Sùlú qǔpǔ* 粟廬曲譜. Quite an effort went into naming those minor characters. What was the intention? The inference is that the performers cast in this production were drawn from three generations of Shěng Kūn actors and actresses. These minor characters were played by younger actors. However, most of them have earned prestigious performing awards and have their own fan bases nationwide. This might be the justification for naming each character, as a way to internally recognize that every role is important.

Categories of the Types of Changes

The description in Chapter 3 points out problems with the playwright's original text in terms of its stage-ability and theatricality. To analyze the directorial changes, categories of types of changes are designated according to the purpose of each type and the advantages and problems created by them. Examples are listed below under the following categories: 1. changes made to limit theoretical references; 2. changes made to shorten playing time; 3. changes made to make the piece more theatrically viable; and 4. changes made to end an act with a climax.

Some examples which may mix two or more types of changes are categorized based on their primary motive.

1. Changes made to limit theoretical references

This change was the most urgent and was the main issue discussed at both the first and second production meetings. Text deletions and abridgment are common ways to limit theoretical references. In speeches, pedantic text may also be replaced with more-commonly-used language. In the first production meeting, playwright Tsēng partially agreed with the principal actor Còi Zhèngrén to effect such changes, but insisted on retaining technical terms necessary in explaining literary evolution and compositional theories. The analysis in Chapter 3 shows the highly specialized text was concentrated in lines [1.47](#), [2.5](#), [2.24](#), [2.25](#), and [2.41](#). Therefore, the examples for comparison between Tsēng's text and the directors' emendation is prioritized here. Line [1.47](#) spoken by Gù Jiān was shortened. As discussed in Chapter 3, Tsēng had revised the line with Gù Jiān's response to Emperor Zhū, explaining that the percussion accompaniment was the reason that folk songs sound vulgar. In line [1.48](#) Tsēng added Emperor Zhū's observation about four ways that Gù Jiān had used to improve lyrical melody. This revision of Tsēng's served to increase the interaction between characters. The explanation in line [1.47](#) about the use of percussion vulgarizing folk songs was deleted in the directors' emendation. This affected Tsēng's idea that percussion indicates poor quality music while the wind and string ensemble connote better quality. Edited line [1.48](#) regarding Emperor Zhū's observations was retained but shortened. The most drastic change in this category is the deletion of line [2.5](#), Wèi Liángfū's self-introductory speech. With this deletion, the historical evidence regarding the fact that he had a daughter, his failure to defeat Wáng Yǒushān in a Northern *qǔ* singing contest, and

his reasons for improving the Kūnshān singing style all disappeared. Most importantly, the classical element of delivering a speech introducing oneself by a major character at his or her initial entrance in *xìqǔ* is sabotaged and a departure from convention. This change goes against what the playwright intended to deliver as a *zájù* play structure. Line [2.24](#) Guò Yúnshì's long speech about the natural melody of language, Buddhist scriptures, the Táng dynasty's Modern Style Poetry, Dù Fǔ's tonal patterns, the existing *qǔpái* as the "vehicle," and more was replaced by Yuán Wěi's edition, one of the very few edited texts retained in the directors' emendation. This is the speech by Guò Yúnshì explaining the evolution of language and melody used in literature and later in *qǔpái*. The purpose of having this speech was to reinforce the meaning as sung previously by Wèi Liángfǔ in 【Jīn chán dào 錦纏道】 (see [2.16](#)–[2.23](#)). In the emendation for line [2.24](#), the lengthy chronological linguistic development is simplified:

... To think that in all history, while many sages excelled at poetry, few actually understood the rules of music nor knew how its elements were placed together. Thus producing verse with only very average melodies... The assemblage of tones has to be reconciled with the eight taboos in poetry. Of course, brother Wei already knows this. But why not take it to new heights? Refresh and renew to the finest level of detail; combining language and music into one. What do you think?⁶

Not only is this speech shortened, the tone of the speech is also changed. In Chinese, the text is originally expressed with scholarly wording that was more suitable for a teacher like Guò Yúnshì. The simplified wording with a prosaic tone was now better-suited for Guò Yúnshì as a supporting role actor. The next line [2.25](#) was also much shortened. All the words having to do with the metaphor of the sharpness of a blade and the technical ways to refine *qǔpái*—two-thirds of the original dramatic text—were deleted. Of the fourteen lines of English translation, only

⁶ Translation by Kim Hunter Gordon, for side-titles used in performance.

three remain. Wèi Liángfǔ says, “My brothers and dear friends, your words are indeed capturing my imagination. We could work on the quality of singing and take more care in the enunciation of words by making each syllable clear from head, belly to tail. Pronunciation must be correct and its inflection rounded.”⁷ The directors indeed reached their goal of limiting theoretical reference.

2. Changes made to shorten playing time

This category mostly involved deleting or shortening a *qǔpái* piece or within the *qǔpái* set. The first example appears in Act 1 as a repeated individual *qǔpái* piece was shortened. In Tsēng’s original text, Emperor Zhū is announced and enters with a self-introductory *qǔpái*. Tsēng carefully mapped the ensuing scenario by having the Emperor Zhū sing a main *qǔpái* 【Zhù mǎ tīng 駐馬聽】 (hereafter 【Halting the Horse】⁸) (see [1.7]–[1.12]) expressing the world peace which followed his victory. This is immediately followed by Gù Jiān, who contributed to the popularity of the Kūnshān *qiāng*, singing the same *qǔpái* of 【Halting the Horse】 (see [1.15]–[1.20]), congratulating the Emperor on his birthday and for the restoration of the Hàn culture. Although listed as 【Qián qiāng 前腔】 or “Previous tune” (see [1.15]), indications are that this is the same *qǔpái* as the previous 【Halting the Horse】. The *qǔpái* 【Halting the Horse】 is suitable for depicting background information and is sung in succession like a musical conversation repeating two or three times. When 【Halting the Horse】 is written in the *zhōnglǚ* mode as a Southern *qǔpái*, it is structured with nine sentence-phrases (numbers indicate the word count in each phrase) separated by commas and periods: 4 + 7 + 4 + 4 + 4 + 7 + 7 + 4 + 7; or a

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The translation for this *qǔpái* title is adapted from *Romance of the Western Bower*, 413.

total of forty-eight regulated words (decorative words in smaller font are excluded). Musically, the first phrase is unmetered. Starting with the second phrase, it is metered until the end. The entire *qǔpái* should contain twenty *bǎn* 板 beats (the clapper-beat marking the first beat of a measure in Western notation terms). When this same *qǔpái* repeats, the first phrase of the repeated one should be metered.⁹ This can be illustrated by Tsēng’s composition of both *qǔpái*:

Emperor Zhū’s 【Halting the Horse】 (solo) 4 , 7 ◦ 4 , 4 , 4 , 7 ◦ 7 , (chorus) 4 , 7 ◦

Gù Jiān’s 【Halting the Horse】 (solo) 4 , 7 ◦ 4 , 4 , 4 , 7 ◦ 7 ◦ (chorus) 4 , 7 ◦

The underlined 4 , 4 , 4 sentence-phrases which appear in both *qǔpái* (see [1.9] and [1.17]) are called the *dǐng zú duì* 鼎足對, a parallel construction that is compared to a three-leg ancient ceremonial cooking vessel. The chorus parts that conclude both *qǔpái* share the same text, “Let us enjoy good fortune and peace together, meet with the emperor and pray for his long life together,” and are called *hé tóu* 合頭. In the Southern *qǔ* tradition, this means that all performers on stage sing together as a chorus. Sometimes the chorus sings the same text with the same melody, as in this case.

Unfortunately, in the directors’ emendation, both main *qǔpái* 【Halting the Horse】 were shortened and cut unevenly. Line [1.12], the first chorus part, was deleted from Emperor Zhū’s vocal part and lines [1.16], [1.18], and [1.19] were deleted from Gù Jiān’s part. The only chorus that was spared is sung by Gù Jiān as his continued solo part. After the cuts, the resulting text is as follows (deletions are marked with strikethrough lines in red, as well as the change of singing structure):

⁹ Wang Shoutai, ed. *Kunqu Qupai ji Taoshu Fanli Ji: Nantao I*, 466.

Emperor Zhū's 【Halting the Horse】 (solo) 4 , 7 ◦ 4 , 4 , 4 , 7 ◦ 7 , (~~chorus~~) ~~4 , 7 ◦~~
Gù Jiān's 【Halting the Horse】 (solo) ~~4 , 7 ◦~~ 4 , 4 , 4 , ~~7 ◦ 7 ◦~~ (solo) 4 , 7 ◦

Shortening 【Halting the Horse】 and lopping the same *qǔpái* into different lengths resulted in a radically altered composition.

A second example appears in Act 3 in a *qǔpái* set which has been shortened. Zhāng Yětang comes from the north, therefore he sings Northern *qǔpái* as his identifier. In Tsēng's dramatic text, Zhāng Yětang sings four *qǔpái* pieces in the Northern *xiānlǚ* mode: starting with Zhāng Yětang's self-introductory *qǔpái* 【Cūn lǐ yà gǔ 村裏逐鼓】 (hereafter 【Village drums】¹⁰) (see [3.7](#)–[3.12](#)); followed by *qǔpái* 【Yuán hé líng 元和令】 (hereafter 【Song of Peace】¹¹) (see [3.20](#)–[3.25](#)), *qǔpái* 【Shàng mǎ jiāo 上馬嬌】 (hereafter 【Charming on horse】¹²) (see [3.33](#)–[3.36](#)), and *qǔpái* 【Shèng hú lú 勝葫蘆】 (hereafter 【Better than Gourd】¹³) (see [3.38](#)–[3.41](#)). Zhèng Qiān 鄭騫 (1906–1991) in his *The Comprehensive Annotation of Northern Qu Sets*¹⁴ collected 139 Northern *qǔpái* sets in the *xiānlǚ* mode used in dramatic plays. Among them there are 26 *qǔpái* sets containing Zhāng Yětang's self-introductory *qǔpái* 【Village drums】. 25 of the 26 were organized in the order of 【Village drums】 – 【Song of Peace】 – 【Charming on horse】.¹⁵ In fact Zhèng Qiān specifically indicates that these three *qǔpái* have to be connected in such an order no matter if there are other *qǔpái* or *qǔpái* sets be added before 【Village drums】 or after 【Charming on horse】.¹⁶ Tsēng's Northern *qǔpái* arrangement in this act starts with the very same order: 【Village drums】 – 【Song of Peace】 – 【Charming on horse】 and

¹⁰ The translation for this *qǔpái* title is adapted from *Romance of the Western Bower*, 15.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The translation for this *qǔpái* title is adapted from *Romance of the Western Bower*, 17.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Zheng Qian, *Bei qu taoshi huilu xiangjie*, 39.

¹⁵ *Kunqu Qupai ji Taoshu Fanli Ji: Beitao*, 930.

¹⁶ Zheng Qian, *Bei qu taoshi huilu xiangjie*, 40.

then continues with the fourth *qǔpái* 【Better than Gourd】. This four-piece *qǔpái* set appeared in the famous play *The Palace of Eternal Life* (*Cháng shēng diàn* 長生殿), Act “Scolding the thief (*Mà zéi* 罵賊)”.¹⁷ However, in the directors’ emendation, the second *qǔpái* 【Song of Peace】 was cut from the set. The reason for deletion was that the directors had replaced beggars who tease Zhāng Yětang (see 3.19) with free-spirited young scholars. Therefore the *qǔpái* 【Song of Peace】 which was sung by Zhāng Yětang right after he had been teased, “Unexpectedly these beggars make me anxious...” no longer makes sense in the context. For the directors, this *qǔpái* could easily be deleted because the text is no longer suitable for the scene. In terms of the *qǔpái* set structure, deleting 【Song of Peace】 truly runs against the *qǔpái* set principle.

The third example appears in Act 6 when the deletion of *qǔpái* pieces occurred, and dramatic elements disappeared as well. This act depicts the annual *qǔ* festival on Tiger Hill with a focus on the singing contest. The opening *qǔpái* of the act, 【*Yè xíng chuán* 夜行船】 (hereafter 【Night boat】) (see 6.2–6.4), sung by Guò Yúnshì was deleted in the directors’ emendation. This *qǔpái* is an *yǐnzi*, a literary form that is used as a type of introduction serving as the actor’s opening lines. The directors continued to cut the first half of Guò Yúnshì’s self-introductory speech wherein he introduced himself as the host and the head of the Mid-Autumn Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival. Without the first opening *qǔpái* and the first half of the speech establishing Guò Yúnshì’s position in the event, this act starts with the second half of Guò Yúnshì’s speech (see 6.5) describing all kinds of people, old and young, coming to Tiger Hill in groups. After the crowd enters the stage as participants attending the event, the *qǔpái* 【*Yè xíng chuán xù* 夜行船

¹⁷ Documented in *Nàshūyíng’s Dramatic Scores* (*Nàshūyíng qǔpǔ* 納書楹曲譜), Zhèngjí, vol. 4 正集卷四.

序】 (hereafter 【Night boat prelude】) is then sung. *Qǔpái* 【Night boat prelude】 is in fact a *guòqǔ*, a literary form used as a type of main *qǔpái*, always set after the introductory *yǐnzi*. Confusion could occur in reading only the Chinese *qǔpái* titles, mistaking the 【Night boat prelude】 as an introductory prelude. The main *qǔpái* 【Night boat prelude】 is sung twice by the chorus indicating the two groups of people attending the *qǔ* festival at the Tiger Hill. In Tsēng’s dramatic text, the first 【Night boat prelude】 (see 6.7–6.15) contains the first group of common people who are on their way to Tiger Hill. The second 【Night boat prelude】 (see 6.17–6.26) is written as 【Qián qiāng huàn tóu 前腔換頭】 in the text (hereafter 【Previous tune with different head】) suggesting that the same *qǔpái* repeats with a different number of characters in the first phrase. It contains the second group of Wèi Liángfǔ, Yīngzhuàn, Zhāng Yětang and Liáng Chényú. Within each *qǔpái* 【Night boat prelude】 , several characters eagerly exchange their remarks about the contest. Tsēng’s arrangement gave continuity within the music and provided a visual clue to the audience that people were coming to Tiger Hill in groups. In the directors’ emendation, only the first two sentence-phrases of the first *qǔpái* 【Night boat prelude】 sung by the chorus were kept (see 6.8–6.9). The dialogues, the rest of the first *qǔpái* and the entire second *qǔpái* from line 6.10 all the way to 6.26, were deleted. The conversation of two different groups of people showing their excitement and eagerness to win is no longer presented. This scene is instead described by Guò Yúnshì as description rather than dialogues from within the characters’ hearts. The dramatic elements have disappeared.

The fourth example appears in both Act 2 and Act 3 where Wèi Liángfǔ’s daughter was temporarily removed from the script. The directors sacrificed Yīngzhuàn’s assistantship to her father as part of the dramatic elements created by the playwright and she abruptly made her first

appearance as the wife of Zhāng Yětang in Act 4. Tsēng’s original plot, having Yīngzhuàn appear in Act 2 was due to Wèi Liángfǔ’s self-introductory speech (see [2.5](#)) in which he proudly stated that he has one daughter who is pretty, clever, and possesses a beautiful voice. Now that Yīngzhuàn no longer exists, the directors also deleted Wèi Liángfǔ’s self-introductory speech; see the above discussion on changes made to limit theoretical references. With this deletion, we no longer hear about Yīngzhuàn until her marriage to Zhāng Yětang in Act 4. This deletion of Wèi Liángfǔ’s self-introductory speech also became problematic in mapping the two key reasons as to why Wèi Liángfǔ took ten years to refine the Southern *qǔ*—Wèi Liángfǔ’s losing the Northern *qǔ* singing competition to Wáng Yǒushān from the north and his anger over the Kūnshān singing style having been of poor quality despite Gù Jiān’s improvement of a century earlier—both are gone. In Act 3, Yīngzhuàn recognizes Zhāng Yětang’s talent (see [3.31](#)) and anticipates her father’s wishes. However, these supporting dramatic elements have been cut from the directors’ emendation. Knowing that Wèi Liángfǔ needed an aide (see [3.50](#)–[3.55](#), *qǔpái* 【Dòu hēi má 鬪黑麻】 , hereafter 【Fight black hemp】) and therefore recruiting Zhāng Yětang to complete the task of integration (see [3.56](#)) is also now nowhere to be found.

This deletion not only affects how this story is told but also the musical structure that the playwright carefully planned. Zhāng Yětang’s Northern *qǔpái* set is followed by a Southern *qǔpái* set sung by Wèi Liángfǔ and Yīngzhuàn. This is a common practice where the playwright uses Northern and Southern *qǔpái* to indicate that the characters are from the north or the south, or indicate their personality as being strong or elegant. In this case it is the origin of the characters that Tsēng was referring to. Wèi Liángfǔ’s 【Yì duō jiāo 憶多嬌】 (hereafter 【Remember the beauty】) (see [3.45](#)–[3.48](#)) is a Southern *qǔpái* in the *yuè* mode. This is a *qǔpái*

that can be sung as an individual *qǔpái*, a short two-piece *qǔpái* set in the order of **【Remember the beauty】** – **【Fight black hemp】**), or as a part of a longer *qǔpái* set called **【Xiǎo táo hóng 小桃紅】** (**【Little Red Peach Blossoms】** ¹⁸)¹⁹. Tsēng intended to have father and daughter sing the shorter set of **【Remember the beauty】** sung by Wèi Liángfǔ (see 3.45–3.48) and followed by **【Fight black hemp】** (3.49–3.55) sung by Yīngzhuàn, a nice gesture showing a close family relationship and their shared wish to find a way to integrate Northern and Southern *qǔ* traditions. Unfortunately Yīngzhuàn’s **【Fight black hemp】** had to be deleted due to her no longer appearing until the next act in the directors’ emendation. Regarding the *qǔpái* set principle, the deletion of Yīngzhuàn’s **【Fight black hemp】** does not affect the structure because Wèi Liángfǔ’s **【Remember the beauty】** can also be treated as an individual *qǔpái*. In terms of plot arrangement, without Yīngzhuàn singing about the difficulty of integrating the Northern music into the new Southern style and the pleasure of meeting Zhāng Yětang who might be their hope to help integrate south and north traditions, Wèi Liángfǔ and his daughter’s sense of eagerness has been lost with these excisions.

3. Changes made to make the piece more theatrically viable

In contrast to the deletions caused by shortening the duration of the play which also decreased the dramatic elements, some additional changes appear to be more theatrically viable in the directors’ emendation. In Act 1, the folk song “Fèngyáng” sung by Clown C or Lù Zǐyún was cut by half when the last two verses 1.43 and 1.44 were deleted. This is a decision that makes sense from a performance point of view. The main purpose of having this song is to point

¹⁸ The translation for this *qǔpái* title is adapted from *Play Script of The Young Lovers’ Edition of The Peony Pavilion*; translated by Lindy Li Mark, 67.

¹⁹ *Kunqu Qupai ji Taoshu Fanli Ji: Nantao*, 1429.

out that “Ever since Zhū became emperor, nine out of ten years have seen famine (see [1.42]),” therefore, the Emperor becomes agitated (see [1.45]). By cutting [1.43] and [1.44], the actor who played the Emperor could react at that moment without waiting through another two verses. Line [1.46] in which Emperor Zhū reflected on his actions and questioned Gù Jiān about vulgar country language was deleted. Instead, a court eunuch, a role added to this emendation, reacted to the accusation and shouted at Clown C “How dare you sing such an ineloquent ditty and enrage the Emperor?”²⁰ Gù Jiān originally replied calmly to the Emperor and explained the difference between folk songs and Kūnshān *qiāng*. In the emendation, because the Emperor’s anger was followed by the eunuch’s reaction to the accusation, Gù Jiān could no longer remain calm. He then said “Your Majesty, be not enraged! Whenever a true ruler is born into the world, there is always a natural disaster. But the empire is now prospering. Folk songs are flourishing and abound.”²¹ Gù Jiān then went on to explain folk songs as being like uncarved jade and to introduce his endeavors to improve them, known as Kūnshān *qiāng* in line [1.47]. This was a change to increase the drama and heighten the energy on stage, a common directorial practice. In the meantime however, the personality of Emperor Zhū was also changed from that of a leader who learns the truth and immediately engages in self-reflection to that of a leader who cannot stand the insult. The difference in depicting such a character is obvious.

Act 2 features Wèi Liángfǔ. Following the classical play structure, Wèi Liángfǔ would be the first character to enter the stage, and would then sing in his self-introduction *qǔpái* and give a self-introductory speech. In Tsēng’s dramatic text this tradition is followed. Wèi Liángfǔ enters

²⁰ Translation by Kim Hunter Gordon, for side-titles used in performance.

²¹ Ibid.

and sings a *qǔpái* 【Liáng zhōu líng 梁州令】 addressing his ten years of hard work (see [2.2](#)–[2.4](#)). He then delivers a self-introductory monologue about life with his daughter and his reasons for composing new music (see [2.5](#)). The directors’ emendation rotates the entrance order, having the three supporting male actors, who play musicians and friends of Wèi Liángfǔ, enter the stage first. With this change, Wèi Liángfǔ’s self-introductory *qǔpái* 【Liáng zhōu líng】 is now to be sung from behind the curtain. Chapter 3 explained the structural concept *guānmù* 關目, ways to organize plots and acting for the entire play and for each act. Except when there is a reason such as time constraints, the important figure featured in the act should open the act, especially if it is the first appearance of a major character. Singing behind the curtain is rarely seen in *kūnqǔ* plays but is a common practice in *jīngjù* (Beijing opera). Zhū Yǎ, as a former *jīngjù* actress, was understandably comfortable in executing this practice. Meanwhile, the directors inserted several short lines of dialogue spoken by the trio of musicians to lighten the mood. For example, after the dialogues about history and rules of music and poetry, one of the musicians reacts to his frustration in understanding the rules, and says, “What a mouthful!”²² This reaction is especially amusing and self-deprecating.

Act 3 features Zhāng Yětang. However, as occurred in the previous act, the directors rotated the original sequence, having three bit-part actors (*zá*) enter the stage before Zhāng Yětang. It seems the directors’ preference of how to open each act became a pattern in their emendation. Without changing the song content sung by beggars who were now transformed into young scholars, the lyrics of being at ease and wandering carefree somehow grafted an unserious playboy image onto them (see [3.14](#)–[3.17](#)). Since the beggars are now scholars, lines [3.18](#) and

²² Ibid.

3.19 where the beggars interact with Zhāng Yětāng were no longer needed. This change was made by the director because of his desire that every character on stage be elegant.

The role of Wèi Liángfǔ's butler, Zhāng Qiān, who originally serves to open Act 4 and explain the reasons that Zhāng Yětāng and Yīngzhuàn are married was cut in the directors' emendation. Dispensing with minor characters to avoid side issues is part of common practice needed to better manage onstage personnel. Instead, the trio of musicians take over the butler's narration. Since Yīngzhuàn has not yet appeared in the directors' emendation, more dialogue was created to first introduce Yīngzhuàn. However, there is a problem of consistency in terms of the tone of the language. Guò Yúnshì, one of the musicians, was known as a Southern *qǔ* expert and a music consultant of Wèi Liángfǔ. The other two, Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán, were musicians noted in historical documents. Tsēng's dramatic text gave them a scholarly tone in their speeches for they were well-educated and respected. In the directors' emendation, the tone of their added dialogues not only lightened the three musicians' personalities but also gave them, especially Guò Yúnshì, a rather confusing image due to some of Tsēng's scholarly texts being preserved as part of the new colloquial text. The texts between brackets { } are Tsēng's original text. The sensitivity in terms of changing tones in Chinese texts may not be reflected in the English translation.

{ 4.1 (場上像喜堂慶餘，外大小末扮過雲適、張梅谷、謝林泉上。)}

{ [Setting: a family hall after a marriage ceremony. A supporting older male role actor (*wài* role), a supporting old male role actor (*dà mò*) and a supporting male role actor (*xiǎo mò*) playing Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán enter.] }

外(白)：无巧不成书，魏老先生正在想，北曲如何加入水磨腔，这里就来了一位擅唱北曲的張野塘。

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role, speaks): What a happy coincidence, just as Mr. Wei was stuck for how to integrate northern verse into his Water Polished music, along comes Zhang Yetang to help him out.²³

小末（白）：先生的女儿莺啭小姐，清纯美貌，又通音律。

Xiè Línquán (*xiǎo mò* role, speaks): Mr. Wei's daughter, Yingzhuān, is a girl of such pure beauty and also very musical.

大末（白）：多少书香门第，官宦之家前来保媒提亲，他父女皆不为动。

Zhāng Méigǔ (*dà mò* role, speaks): How many scholarly families and government officials have sent matchmakers to ask for her hand, and he has submitted to none.

外（白）：老先生为了研习北曲，竟把女儿嫁给了没一分银子的北曲高手张野塘。
{自张公子下榻以来，日日与东翁、小姐磨合南北曲。小姐与公子日久生情。东翁日昨主持婚礼，成就美满姻缘。}我等以曲庆贺，共度良时。

别人嫁女吃宴席，尚泉嫁女唱昆腔。

正是：

{人生大事在婚姻，}

南腔北韵曲成神。

{行礼如仪锣鼓闹，}

{青春不负驻良辰。}

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role, speaks): But in order to crack the northern melodies, he has given his daughter to a poor scholar; the northern verse expert Zhang Yetang. {Since Zhang has been staying with them, he has been working with the old man and his daughter everyday trying to blend the northern and southern sounds. Feelings between the young man and lady have grown deeper by the day. Yesterday the old man held a wedding ceremony, realizing the beautiful destiny.} We provided the musical component, what a time we had!

When other people give away their daughters they hold a feast,
but when this man gives away his daughter he arranges a concert.

Indeed:

{Marriage is one of the most important occasions in life.}

Southern inflections on northern rhymes give the verse a soul.

{Performing the ritual bows to the sound of gongs and drums.}

{May they both enjoy their youth on this auspicious occasion?}

In the above speech by Guò Yúnshì, the Chinese text of “he has given his daughter to a poor scholar,” lit. “he marries his daughter to a Northern *qǔ* expert Zhāng Yětang who does not have a

²³ Here and the following translation comes from the side-titles translated by Kim Hunter Gordon.

piece of silver.” (竟把女儿嫁给了没一分银子的北曲高手张野塘) uses language that is humorous in tone and has a common vocabulary indicating a shallow personality. The couplets, lit. “When other people marry their daughters they hold a feast; when Shàngquán (Wèi Liángfǔ) marries his daughter he sings *kūn qiāng* (Kūnshān’s lyrical melodies)” (别人嫁女吃宴席，尚泉嫁女唱昆腔。) gave humor and lively tone to the Chinese text. This type of recitation in which couplets consist of the same number of words and are set to the same linguistic rhythm are mostly used in the clown role category in *kūnqǔ*. In fact, the designated actor who played Guò Yúnshì was Shěng Kūn’s Chairman Lǐ Hóngliáng who specialized in the *chǒu 丑* (clown) role category. Characters like Guò Yúnshì who serve an important function in the storytelling were traditionally suitable for *wài* role actors who normally play characters that are older and have higher social status. With Lǐ Hóngliáng’s image (clown role actor) in the character of Guò Yúnshì (old supporting male role), the directors tended to incorporate his comedic tone, adding more comic gestures and humorous remarks in Guò Yúnshì dialogue for the actor.

In Act 5, playwright Tsēng arranged for Liáng Chényú to visit Sūzhōu because nearby villagers want to experience singing and dancing in taverns and brothels where Liáng Chényú is famous for showcasing great performances. Wèi Liángfǔ heard that Liáng Chényú brought a crowd to the tavern, therefore he followed Liáng Chényú in order to meet with him. It seems strange that Wèi Liángfǔ would follow Liáng Chényú since Liáng Chényú is in fact Wèi Liángfǔ’s follower. It would make more sense that Liáng Chényú make some effort to greet Wèi Liángfǔ first and not vice versa. In the directors’ emendation this arrangement had changed to the latter. When the villagers encourage Liáng Chényú to visit Sūzhōu, Liáng Chényú instead says, “Why not! I intend to visit Master Wei. Those who like to sing *qǔ*, please follow me!”

(addition to line [5.21](#)), he therefore greets Wèi Liángfǔ and introduces Wèi Liángfǔ to the villagers who followed. Line [5.36](#) where Wèi Liángfǔ says he has followed Liáng Chényú's trail was deleted.

Liáng Chényú was excellent in singing and composing in the Kūnshān vocal style, therefore *qǔ* lovers believed, “to select a singing style one must follow the model of Bólóng's. This is called the Kūn *qiāng*.”²⁴ Since “both the intellectuals and people who frequent brothels strive to sing Liáng's gorgeous poetic songs,”²⁵ “[Liáng Chényú's] music scores spread among the households of aristocrats, noblemen, high ranking officials, rich and famous.”²⁶ The popularity of singing *kūnqǔ* among all levels of people had contributed to the nationwide movement; professional troupes on every corner competed with each other to stage this new theatrical form while the households of intellectuals and officials held performances in their home salons by their private troupes, called *jiā bān* 家班. In Tsēng's dramatic text Wèi Liángfǔ asks Liáng Chényú to have the singers he taught to act the *Washing Silk* on stage using Wèi Liángfǔ's new music (see [5.62](#)). Liáng Chényú then asks his little maid to sing and act (see [5.63](#)). The word *xiǎo huán* 小鬟, lit. “Little hair-bun,” refers to a child maid servant. This implies that Liáng Chényú, as in many literary households during Míng and Qīng dynasties, might have purchased and trained talented young singers and showcased them for greater pleasures. Possessing a private *kūnqǔ* troupe had become a trend during the Míng dynasty Wànli period (1573–1620), the end of Liáng Chényú's lifetime (1521–1594). Famous private *kūnqǔ*

²⁴ Zhang Dafu, *Meihua caotang bi tan*, vol. 12 “Kūn qiāng,” 15.

²⁵ Wáng Shizhēn's poem “*Sing Liáng Bólóng*” (*Cháo Liáng Bólóng* 嘲梁伯龍). Yu Weimin and Sun Rongrong, *Lidai qūhua huibian* (vol. 2), 524.

²⁶ Zhang Dafu, *Meihua caotang bi tan*, vol. 12 “Kūn qiāng,” 15.

troupes owned by Tián Hóngyù 田弘遇 (?–1643), Ruǎn Dàchéng 阮大鍼 (1587–1646), Mào Xiāng 冒襄 (1611–1693) and many more rich and famous notables were documented in miscellaneous historical records, prose collections, poetry, diaries, and even novels. It was understandable that Tsēng mixed this element into Liáng Chényú’s part of the story since this was a period of dramatic *kūnqǔ* and having a private household troupe symbolized the prosperity of *kūnqǔ*. Tsēng’s approach here focuses on the *qǔpái* singing selected from the act “Boating on Lake Tàì” of the play *Washing Silk*. In the directors’ emendation, it is the acting of “Boating on Lake Tàì” being featured. The directors deleted the little maid’s first *qǔpái* 【Jīn yī xiāng 錦衣香】 (see [5.65](#)–[5.70](#)) and inserted the first segment of the act “Boating on Lake Tàì” in which a fisherman interacts with the political strategist Fàn Lǐ and the beauty Xī Shī. Skipping most of the *qǔpái* pieces after the first segment, the selection jumps to the end of the act when Xī Shī sings a Southern *qǔpái* 【Jiāng shuǐ líng 漿水令】 (see [5.71](#)–[5.77](#)) followed by Fàn Lǐ’s Northern *qǔpái* 【Qīng jiāng yǐn 清江引】. To play the selected segments of the act “Boating on Lake Tàì,” three actors were needed as Liáng Chényú’s private troupe singers. The directors therefore named them with the stage names of Zǐyù 子玉, Xiǎohuán 小环 (the same pronunciation of *xiǎo huán* 小鬟, little maid) and Shuǐqīng 水青. This was the same process as in Act 1 where minor characters were given names to increase their value for the actors who played them. In this case the naming was more crucial because of Zhāng Jūn 张军. Zhāng Jūn had turned down his role as Zhāng Yětáng and accepted the much smaller role of Zǐyù, due to family issues. Zhāng Jūn is one of the founders of the soon-to-be-established Kūnshān Kūnqǔ Opera Troupe²⁷ and participated in the first production meeting, planning to open with the *Wèi* play as

²⁷ Its official name is China Kūnshān Contemporary Kūnqǔ Opera Company (Kūnshān Dāngdài Kūnjù Yuàn 昆山

the Troupe's premiere production. Zhāng Jūn's star status not only earned him special treatment from the directors so that his costume had to be made more lavish than others' costume, but also his name is listed second in the credits next to Cài Zhèngrén who plays Wèi Liángfǔ, both by special invitation.

4. Changes made to end an act with a climax

Toward the end of Act 1, playwright Tsēng had Gù Jiān thank Emperor Zhū for his praise, with the lights then fading out. In the directors' emendation, Gù Jiān does not thank Emperor Zhū for his praise. Instead, he says, "As Your Majesty commands, I will transmit this singing style onto ten thousand generations,"²⁸ after which everyone on stage shouts out "Long live the Emperor! Long live the Emperor!" Quite an emotional ending for Act 1. The content in Act 1 was intended to show Gù Jiān's endeavors in the first stage of *kūnqǔ* development. One century later Gù Jiān's Kūnshān singing style was seen as plain and charmless and had become the impetus for Wèi Liángfǔ's determination to refine it. Tsēng's rather quiet ending gave the impression that Act 1 paved the way for Act 2, in a simple and straightforward fashion. It was very different from the emotional finale in the directors' emendation.

It is important to remember that Tsēng's dramatic text is fundamentally a Southern *zájù* play or, simply speaking, a *zájù* play with mostly Southern *qǔ* music and some *chuánqí* elements. Some scholars have referred to an aesthetic concept in Chinese literature—*qǐ* 起, *chéng* 承, *zhuǎn* 轉, *hé* 合—as a way to analyze the Yuán dynasty's four-act *zájù* plays.²⁹ The words indicate four steps of composition. *Qǐ* 起, lit. "opening," employs both metaphor and analogy

当代昆剧院); the company publically announced its establishment on October 12, 2015.

²⁸ Translation by Kim Hunter Gordon, for side-titles used in performance.

²⁹ Qi Shijun, *Zhongguo gudai juben xingtai lungao*, 170.

which hints at what the writer intends to address later. *Chéng* 承, lit. “development,” continues the opening theme and provides further elucidation. *Zhuǎn* 轉, lit. “changing,” is a turning point to other views which derive from the development. *Hé* 合, lit. “concluding,” is a finale which sums up the hidden meaning from the first two steps of *qǐ* and *chéng* as well as the major points addressed in step three, *zhuǎn*, and culminates in a conclusion of significance. In music, the same ideas of theme, variation, development, and conclusion are also applied. In his book *The Art of Yuán Dynasty Zájù* 元代杂剧艺术, Xú Fúmíng 徐扶明 (1921–1995) cites the four steps as the progress of contradictory development: first, *qǐ* addresses the reason for the contradiction; second, *chéng* further intensifies the contradiction; third, *zhuǎn* reaches the ultimate contradiction yet goes into a precipitous decline; and fourth, *hé* concludes and solves the contradiction.³⁰ He basically summarized this progression as beginning, small climax, great climax, and ending. Tsēng in his article “The Origin and Formation of the Regularity of Yuán Zájù Plays”³¹ provided evidence that the *zájù* playwright aims for Act 2 and Act 3 as the two principal acts while Act 1 opens for the two principal acts and Act 4 serves as an ending with a focus on music. There is no evidence that Southern *zájù* dramatic texts have followed these same steps of composition, especially since plays have anywhere from one to eleven acts/scenes, rather than the four acts of Yuán *zájù*. But this structure does give a clue as to how playwrights approach building up to the climax of a work. One thing is certain however—any play would be structured with a beginning that gives an introduction to the story that follows. In this case Tsēng’s Act 1 served as the *qǐ* opening act in the sense that it opens with the analogy of Wèi

³⁰ Xu Fuming, *Yuan dai zaju yishu*, 89–90.

³¹ Tseng Yong-Yih, “Yuan zaju tizhi guilü de yuanyuan yu xingcheng,” 210.

Liángfǔ. This is why Tsēng ends Act 1 calmly, paving the way for Act 2, the entrance of Wèi Liángfǔ, the true spotlight of this play. To my mind, the hooray at the end of Act 1 in the emendation seems premature.

The ending of Act 2 was revised by Tsēng himself. In his revision he added supplementary information spoken by the trio of musicians in unison, agreeing on three points: the new singing style should be called the Water Polished style, the language should be subject to the book *Tones and Rhymes Used in the Central Region of China*, and more musical instruments for accompaniment ought to be added. The previous concern was whether or not the unison speech could be heard clearly. In the directors' emendation this monologue is shared by the trio of musicians, one person at a time. To conclude the act, instead of everyone on stage simply chuckling, waiting for the lights to fade out, the directors added a dramatic element to make their chuckling more meaningful. After Wèi Liángfǔ says "If so, we still have to continue to make a great endeavor together," Guò Yúnshì, who acknowledged Wèi Liángfǔ's ten years' efforts at the beginning of this act, gestures at Wèi Liángfǔ's table and makes a joke with a double meaning:

外（白）：这十年研磨，桌儿也成白了！

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role speaks): Over ten years of beating rhythm, the table has developed a hole like a mortar and pestle!³²

The Chinese pronunciation of *chéng jiù* 成白, lit. "become hollowed out," has been given the secondary meaning of *chéng jiù* 成就, lit. "become successful." The monologue therefore implies "Over ten years of beating rhythm, the table has developed into a success!" This change

³² Translation by Kim Hunter Gordon, for side-titles used in performance.

provides more possibilities for movement, gesture, and drama that are needed, an intelligent solution to illustrate the transformation.

The ending of Act 3 has a slight change in order to give a clue as to why the next act is about the marriage. After Zhāng Yětang states his wish to devote his humble merits to helping, thereby repaying Wèi Liángfǔ's kindness, Wèi Liángfǔ asks where Zhāng Yětang lives and if he has a wife and children. The eagerness is now switched to Wèi Liángfǔ's interest in matching his daughter and this talented young man. In fact, the topic of Wèi Liángfǔ marrying off his daughter for the sake of accomplishing his great task arose in the first production meeting. Some participants were in favor of the idea that Yīngzhuàn sacrifices her love life for the success of *kūnqǔ*; after all, the success of *kūnqǔ* is the ultimate goal in this play. Would modern audiences agree with this idea that a woman has to sacrifice for a man's ego? I wondered.

To end Act 4, two changes were made. First, in line 4.48 Wèi Liángfǔ celebrates the couple's accomplishment and invites everyone for a drink. Instead of the lights fading out and the chorus singing, the directors had Wèi Liángfǔ continue on to say "... everyone, please follow me to the Qǔyuán Tower 曲园楼 celebrating Southern singing and the Northern *qǔ*, the music of heaven and earth which mingled with the natural sound of bamboo rattling in the wind and the earthy ringing of spring water. It is accomplished today and the merit will last for a thousand autumns!" The tone of the last two words, thousand autumns (*qiān qiū* 千秋), echoes the emotion of the cheer "Long live the Emperor!" in Act 1. Unlike Act 1, this climax is necessary and matches well with the closing chorus singing, addressing the accomplishment of integrating the Southern and Northern music. The second change came from Yuán Wěi's edition in which a

narrator appears at the end of each act to raise issues for the following act. The directors replaced this narrator with Guò Yúnshì and revised Yuán Wěi's original wording.

外（白）：北曲南曲都入了這個昆山腔了。真是天大的事儿。南曲固然好聽，但美玉有瑕，加入北曲，两者方相得益彰。无论清曲還是氍毹搬演，從此以後，才真正形成了一個完整的框架。这真是：

舞臺搬演有根基，
南曲北曲终成剧。

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role, speaks): That both northern and southern melodies have entered the Water Polished Sound. Really is an achievement of enormous significance. Southern verse are obviously pleasant on the ear, but like a beautiful piece of jade it too has faults. If you add in northern verse, the benefit to both is obvious. Regardless of whether it just for singing or for use in theatre, from now we have a real framework for composing music.

Stage acting has its roots,
Southern and northern verse will fill its boots.³³

Looking back to the Yuán dynasty's *zájù* play structure—instead of having curtains that separate acts as in modern theatre, it is an empty stage or a stage without action which signals the changing of acts. The moment when actors enter and perform, they themselves create the scenery of the act which lasts until every actor leaves the stage. This brief gap between the acts also significantly indicates a different time period or space which it is necessary for the audience to grasp. When most of the actors had left the stage after the story was told and yet one or two remain on stage delivering further monologue or dialogue, it is called *diào chǎng* 吊場, lit. “hanging the act,” a transitional scene. The function of *diào chǎng* is to give words that reinforce the culmination of this act and foretell the drama of the next for the purpose of hanging the audience's curiosity for the next development. With Act 4 ending with a climax, celebrating the

³³ Translation by Kim Hunter Gordon, for side-titles used in performance.

integration of the Southern and Northern music, the transitional *diào chǎng* scene continues the excitement into the next act, the birth of dramatic *kūnqǔ*.

Act 5 ends with a new revised sequence in the directors' emendation. The dialogues and *qǔpái* songs performed by Liáng Chényú's three private troupe singers are selected from the act "Boating on Lake Tàì." The play within the *Wèi* play comes from the original dramatic text of the play *Washing Silk*:

5.63 梁辰鱼：如此甚好。子玉、小环、水青，你三人可将《浣纱记·泛湖》一段，演与众位评鉴。先生仔细翻阅这曲词意蕴。

Liáng Chényú (*jìng* role speaks): Very well. Zīyù, Xiǎohuán and Shuǐqīng. You three perform a segment of "Boating on Lake Tàì" for everyone's comments. Sir, please read carefully the meaning of its *qǔ* lyrics.

魏良辅：好，就搬演〈泛湖〉，我等赏观！

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role speaks): Yes, why don't you act out "Boating on Lake Tàì" for us to watch!

子玉：渔翁哪里？

Zīyù (as Fàn Lǐ, *shēng* role speaks): Old fishermen, where are you?³⁴

水青：相公有何吩咐？

Shuǐqīng (as fisherman, *chǒu jìng* role speaks): What orders does the young master have?

子玉：我要下船过湖中往海上去。

Zīyù (as Fàn Lǐ, speaks): I wish to cross the lake and make my way towards the sea.

水青：不知相公海上要到哪一方？若出了海，北风往广东，西风往日本，南风往齐国，今日恰是南风。

Shuǐqīng (as fisherman, speaks): Where does the master wish to go once he reaches the sea? If, on reaching the sea, there be a northerly wind we will float to Guangdong. Be there a westerly wind we will head towards Japan. Or be there a southerly wind to the kingdom of Qi. Today there happens to be a southerly wind.

³⁴ The following translation comes from the side-titles translated by Kim Hunter Gordon.

子玉：既是南风，就往齐国去罢！

Zīyù (as Fàn Lǐ, speaks): Since it's a southerly wind, lets go to Qi then!

水青：请相公夫人登舟。

Shuǐqīng (as fisherman, speaks): Sir and madam, please board the boat!³⁵

小环（唱，做介）：南雙調【漿水令】

Xiǎohuán (as Xī Shī, *dàn* role sings and acts): 【Jiāng shuǐ líng】 in the Southern *shuāng* mode. (see [5.71](#)–[5.77](#))

子玉：（唱）【清江引】

Zīyù (as Fàn Lǐ, sings): 【Qīng jiāng yǐn】³⁶

人生聚散皆如此，莫论兴和废。

Politics switches between unions and partings. Why talk of flourishing and decay?

富贵似浮云，世事如儿戏。

Wealth is like a floating cloud, Mundane affairs like child's play.

惟愿普天下夫妻都是咱共你。

Hoping only that husbands and wives, Are together as you and I today.

众：（击掌）好戏！好戏！

Everyone: (clap) Bravo, an excellent scene!

[5.78](#) 梁辰鱼：請教吾師，他等所歌而做表，則《浣紗記》是否可入水磨矣！

Liáng Chényú (speaks): Master, please tell me your thoughts. Based on this do think that Washing the Silken Gauze can adopt the Water Polished sound?³⁷

Wèi Liángfǔ is happy that his Water Polished style is embraced by the *Washing Silk* play as a new dramatic style of music (see [5.79](#)). Liáng Chényú then cheers for their accomplishment (see [5.80](#)). In Tsēng's original text, on stage there are the sounds of clinking and the lights fade out.

In the directors' emendation, before the cheers and fade out, Wèi Liángfǔ speaks:

³⁵ A skip of 15 *qǔpái* pieces to the end of the act.

³⁶ It is the Northern *qǔ* version of 【Qīng jiāng yǐn】.

³⁷ End of translation by Kim Hunter Gordon.

共贺曲词可成剧。

Let's celebrate the *qǔ* (literary singing) becoming a *jù* (dramatic play).

诗赋唱故事，昆韵传千古！

Poetry sings story, *kūn* music passes down to thousand generations!

The last couplets above consist of the same number of words and are set to the same linguistic rhythm used here again. The use of “thousand generations” (*qiān gǔ* 千古), is similar to Act 1’s cheer “Long live the Emperor!” (*wàn suì* 万岁, lit. “ten-thousand years”) and Act 3’s “thousand autumns” (*qiān qiū* 千秋), and provide another emotional climax here.

Act 6 or *shà wěi* 煞尾 (“ending”) in the directors’ emendation is the closing act of the *Wèi* play. To end Act 6, Guò Yúnshì, as the head of the festival, officially introduces Wèi Liángfǔ. The crowds welcome Wèi Liángfǔ by shouting out for Master Wèi (see [6.85]–[6.86]); Wèi Liángfǔ then announces the following *qǔpái* he will be singing comes from *The Lute*, “Eat Husks.” (see [6.87]). In the directors’ emendation, these lines were deleted. Without informing the audience where this *qǔpái* comes from, Wèi Liángfǔ goes on to sing the *qǔpái* 【Yàn guò shā 雁過沙】 (hereafter 【Wild goose flies over the sand】) (see [6.88]–[6.94]), a *qǔpái* originally sung by a *wài* role. The next *qǔpái* 【Qián qiāng 前腔】 (【Previous tune】), a repeat of the previous *qǔpái* 【Wild goose flies over the sand】 (see [6.95]–[6.98]), was cut from the sequence. Tsēng kept his promise by adding a *qǔpái* that could be sung chorally as a closing piece to conclude the *Wèi* play. That is the *qǔpái* 【Niàn nú jiāo xù 念奴嬌序】 (hereafter 【Beauty Niàn Nù, a prelude】) from *The Lute*, act “Gazing at the moon on the Mid-Autumn Night,” a song perfect for representing the Mid-Autumn Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival. Not to be confused with the word “prelude,” this *qǔpái* is actually a main Southern *qǔpái* piece as explained earlier, led by one or two singers and then joined by the crowd. In the directors’ emendation this piece was kept but it is no longer

the closing piece. Instead, the directors added dialogues after the *qǔpái* of **【Beauty Niàn Nú, a prelude】** and closed with a previously deleted *qǔpái* **【Previous tune with different head】** (see 6.17–6.20 and 6.25–6.26). This was a *qǔpái* used for a group of people attending the *qǔ* festival, in this case, the inserted conversations within the *qǔpái* were omitted. The new final sequence written in the directors' emendation is as follows:

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role sings): **【Beauty Niàn Nú, a prelude】** ...

Guò Yúnshì (*wài* role speaks): Today the Sage of sung verse, Mr. Wei, touches the whole world!³⁸

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role speaks): Ladies and gentlemen, the Water Polished Sound is born, merging the styles of north and south. This wasn't just the work of one man, but the literary radiance of a whole culture. We shall not let down the kindness of heaven, and must pass this music on through the ages!³⁹

The crowd (sings): **【Previous tune with different head】** ...

The End.

A reminder that **【Previous tune with different head】** indicates that this *qǔpái* is a variation of the previous *qǔpái*. Simply reading the new final sequence from the directors' emendation, this **【Previous tune with different head】** should be a variation of the previous *qǔpái* **【Beauty Niàn Nú, a prelude】** but this is not the case. From the previous explanation we know that this particular **【Previous tune with different head】** is in fact a variation of the *qǔpái* **【Night boat prelude】** which was deleted from the beginning of this act. With its repositioning at the end of this act, the name of this *qǔpái* should be written **【Yè xíng chuán xù huàn tóu 夜行船序換頭】** (**【Night boat prelude with different head】**) to clarify its poetic structure. However, the directors simply copied and pasted the *qǔpái* **【Previous tune with different head】** from position

³⁸ Translation by Kim Hunter Gordon, for side-titles used in performance.

³⁹ Ibid.

one to position two without clearly indicating with which previous tune this *qǔpái* is associated. This had misled the composer into setting the lyrics to a different *qǔpái* melody. This is a misconception made in the directors' emendation. However, the composer could still strengthen it with the compositional method discussed in the next chapter. In other words, without knowing the original layout of the dramatic text in the first place, this problem in fact only relates to the written text and not to the performance in practice.

The Pattern of Changes

There are considerable differences between the directors' emendation and Tsēng's dramatic text (plus his revision). First, the directors made changes to alter the sequence of these opening segments, from one significant individual who gives a self-introduction, a recounting of the past, to multiple minor figures who enter the stage with lively blocking, giving a vivid representation of the present. The following is a chart listing who enters and performs first:

Tsēng's dramatic text and revision	Directors' emendation
Prologue: <i>Fù mò</i> commentator	Introduction: Guò Yúnshì
Act 1: Emperor Zhū	
Act 2: Wèi Liángfǔ	Act 1: trio of musicians (including Guò Yúnshì)
Act 3: Zhāng Yětang	Act 2: three to five young scholars
Act 4: the butler explains the transition	Act 3: trio of musicians (including Guò Yúnshì) explain the transition
Act 5: Liáng Chényú	Act 4: Liáng Chényú
Act 6: Guò Yúnshì	Ending: Guò Yúnshì

Second, the textual manipulations in the directors' emendation intended to provide frequent great climaxes at the end of each act:

Tsēng's dramatic text and revision	Directors' emendation
Prologue: none	
Act 1: "Thank you Your Majesty for your praise" – none	Introduction: hooray "Long live the Emperor!" – great climax
Act 2: "Yes! We can call it Water Polished style. Ha! Ha! Ha!" – small climax	Act 1: "Over ten years of beating rhythm, the table has developed a hole like a pestle and mortar (a success)!" – small climax
Act 3: "Ha! Ha! That would be the best!" – small climax	Act 2: "Ha! Ha! Ha! Follow me." – small climax
Act 4: "... today's success is worth celebrating with three cups of wine!" – small climax	Act 3: "...the merit will last for a thousand autumns!" – great climax
Act 5: "Let us raise our spirituous cups and congratulate our teacher" – small climax	Act 4: "...Kūn music passes down to thousand generations!" – great climax
Act 6: crowd shouts "Long live the sage of <i>kūnqǔ</i> !" – great climax	Ending: "... must pass this music on through the ages!" – great climax

Finally, massive deletions and many extratextual emendations clearly led to considerable rearrangement for the onstage performance. Yet without consulting the playwright, the directors' textual emendation was problematic in terms of executing the underlying structure of the dramatic text. The meaningful linguistic tone suitable for certain scholarly characters was compromised for the modern audience, a compromise not necessarily appreciated by them. In fact, several commentaries published online after the premiere accused the playwright of using too much unconventional dialogue throughout the play, a complaint which was not fair to the playwright, as it was the directors' decision. The removal of the daughter before her abrupt reappearance as a wife had the unfortunate result of muting her voice, which also decreased our interest in her relationship to both her father and her future husband. On the positive side, the

overall changes led us well beyond the intricate text to a broader spectrum of performance, such as faster pacing and a richer visual appeal.

Chapter 5

Drawing Music from the Text

A playwright's dramatic text gives its readers an image of a story written with sequentially-organized poems and refined dialogues weaving and driving the plot. Its lofty writing has elevated *qǔ* culture, especially Yuán dynasty *qǔ* 元曲, to a position in the Chinese literary tradition comparable to that of Hàn dynasty *fù* 漢賦 (rhymed prose), Táng dynasty *shī* 唐詩 (poetry), Sòng dynasty *cí* 宋詞 (*cí* poetry), and Míng and Qīng dynasty *xiǎoshuō* 明清小說 (novels). When a *qǔ* play transitions from being read to being performed, its poetry is to be sung. This chapter focuses on how music is drawn from the text and how the melodic contours of singing and the tonal contours of pronunciation become one. I will, therefore, be analyzing the part of the music that is written in the text at the direction of the playwright and arranged by the composer who transforms an abstract *qǔpái* song title into live vocal music.

All phases of transformation in *kūnqǔ* history were driven by music. Let us begin with a quick review of the tetralogy of the Kūnshān musical tradition, in order: 1) Kūnshān local music with local language (*tǔ qiāng tǔ qǔ* 土腔土曲); 2) Kūnshān singing style known as Kūn *qiāng* or Kūn *qǔ*¹ (*Kūn qiāng Kūn qǔ* 崑腔崑曲); 3) Kūnshān Water Polished style of non-dramatic *qǔ* (*Kūnshān shuǐmó diào qīngqǔ* 崑山水磨調清曲); and 4) Kūnshān Water Polished style of dramatic *qǔ* (*Kūnshān shuǐmó diào jùqǔ* 崑山水磨調劇曲). The progression from one stage to the next was fundamentally a transformation in music. In other words, it is the music that reflects the evolutionary process. First, by implementing the Northern *qǔ* musical system, Southern

¹ Referring to Gù Jiān's intent to improve Kūnshān singing style; it presents a literal contrast to the first stage of Kūnshān local music with local language (*tǔ qiāng tǔ qǔ* 土腔土曲), since as a rule scholars use the term *kūnqǔ* to identify Wèi Liángfǔ's Water Polished style.

Kūnshān music was transformed from folk songs composed in unregulated rhymes to a *qǔpái* form. Second, by implementing the eight rules of composing *qǔpái* pieces, Wèi Liángfǔ transformed the raw type of *qǔpái* which did not follow the rules of level or oblique tone patterns into the refined Water Polished style of *qǔ* music. And, third, by adapting the Water Polished music to the Míng and Qīng dynasties' *chuánqí* dramatic literary form, the theatrical genre of *kūnqǔ* was born. No doubt, music is the soul of *kūnqǔ* and the reason it is unique from other theatrical forms. Music involved in a present-day *kūnqǔ* play can be classified as: 1) vocal music and speech; including *qǔpái* pieces that are sung solo (*chàng* 唱), *qǔpái* pieces that are sung as a chorus (*hé* 合), recitation (*yín* 吟) and spoken dialogues involving stretched linguistic tones (*bái* 白)—these terms indicate vocal forms that were specified as a part of the play text; or 2) instrumental music, functioning as overtures, atmospheric music, music accompanying movement and dance, interludes, and concluding sections. In the case of Tsēng's play, there is also instrumental music as a part of stage direction.

The responsibilities of a “composer” in *kūnqǔ* or other forms of Chinese traditional theatre are different from those of a Western composer. In Western vocal music such as chant, *lied*, operatic song, or choral singing, composers organize music based on systems including church modes, major, minor, pentatonic, chromatic, and whole-tone scales, atonality, and so forth. The music can be further restricted by using certain schemes such as strophic form, through-composed form (ballad), modified strophic form, aria, recitative, etc. Within the mode and/or form, Western composers write melody, rhythm, and harmony unique to each individual lyric, taking into consideration vocal range and type. Composers' names are often better known than the names of librettists or poets. In the *kūnqǔ* tradition, when a poet and a playwright

complete their poems and *qǔpái* pieces, having considered all the lyrical structures during the compositional process, the *qǔpái* melody is also conceptually completed and ready to be sung. In the distant past, this *qǔpái* melody may have been further modified by a singer as his or her secondary creative work. Ever since Western music began to have a great influence in China, in particular regarding concepts of instrumentation and orchestration for theatrical music, *kūnqǔ* production came to require more expertise in music composition and arrangement than previously. A position similar to that of a Western composer emerged. To better understand the function of a composer in *kūnqǔ*, we need to look back to its origins.

Kūnqǔ inherited its poetic singing form from the Táng and Sòng dynasties' literary *cí* tradition in which the *cí* poem is constructed in a restricted poetic form, known as *cípái* ("title of a *cí* poem"), and can be sung or recited. Quite a few stories are associated with naming the *cípái*. *Chronicles from Bì Jī Lane* (*Bì jī màn zhì* 碧雞漫志), written in 1149 by the Southern Sòng dynasty writer Wáng Zhuó 王灼, explored the history of sung poetry and examined the origins of twenty-eight *cípái* names. In volume five, for example, the *cípái* 【Niàn nú jiāo 念奴嬌】 (hereafter 【Beauty Niàn Nú】) was said to be dedicated to the Táng dynasty courtesan Niàn Nú 念奴, famous for her nightingale-like voice and melodious singing. Táng Emperor Xuán Zōng was fond of her beauty and talent, and often called on her to accompany him. The *cípái* 【Beauty Niàn Nú】 is said to be named in commemoration of the Emperor's thoughts of her. The original *cípái* 【Beauty Niàn Nú】 cannot be traced, but it is generally assumed that the piece was composed during Táng Emperor Xuán Zōng's *Tiānbǎo* 天寶 (742–756) period.² In matters of composition, when a *cípái* is favored and frequently sung, it is replicated following its linguistic

² Wáng Zhuó, *Bì jī màn zhì*, vol. 5, 1.

rules so that the progeny's tone contour, rhythm as relates to word groupings, and rhyme positions align with the already-existing melody. A famous *littérateur*, artist, calligrapher, and statesman of the Sòng dynasty, Sū Shì 蘇軾 (1037–1101), also known as Sū Dōngpō 蘇東坡, wrote several famous *cípái* 【Beauty Niàn Nú】. His well-known 【Beauty Niàn Nú】 *cípái* titled “Remembrance of the Red Cliff” (*Chìbì huái gǔ* 赤壁懷古) was replicated 258 times by 115 poets throughout history³ and was considered the standard form by generations of poets.⁴

Continuing on to the *qǔ* tradition, 【Beauty Niàn Nú】 also existed as a *qǔpái* (“title of a *qǔ* song”) composed for both non-dramatic pure singing and for dramatic *kūnqǔ* plays.

According to the *Imperial Collection of Qǔ* (*Yù dìng qǔ pǔ* 御定曲譜) edited by Wáng Yìqīng 王奕清, the *qǔpái* 【Beauty Niàn Nú】 is listed in three categories:

- 1) As a non-dramatic *qǔpái*; this is a Northern style literary song of *xiǎo lìng* 小令 (“short poem”). 【Beauty Niàn Nú】 in its *cípái* form was also known as 【Hundred Words Poem】 (*Bǎi zì lìng* 【百字令】) due to the number of words required in the original *cípái* form and was classified as a long poem. In Wáng Yìqīng's *qǔ* collection, the *qǔpái* form of 【Beauty Niàn Nú】 (【Hundred Words Poem】) only takes the first half of its original *cípái* form and is considered a short poetic *qǔpái*. Classification by length was eventually abandoned and each discrete literary song can be called *xiǎo lìng*.
- 2) As a dramatic *qǔpái*; this is written in the Northern *qǔ* form in the Northern (*gāo*) *dàshí* (高) 大石 mode and as an individual *qǔpái* which is not connected to other *qǔpái*.

³ Liu Zunming and Li Zhili, “Lidai ci yun Su Shi ‘Niannu jiao, Chibi huai gu’ di dingliang fenxi,” 10.

⁴ There are two forms of 【Beauty Niàn Nú】, one rhyming with level poetic tone and another rhyming with oblique tone. Sū Shì's “Remembrance of the Red Cliff” is rhyming with oblique tone which is more commonly used than the level tone form.

- 3) As a dramatic *qǔpái*; this is written in the Southern *qǔ* form in the Southern (*gāo*) *dàshí* (高) 大石 mode and in the *yǐnzi* literary form used as a type of introduction serving as an actor's opening lines. The Southern style is more commonly used than the one in the Northern style.

In a dramatic text, the playwright should indicate in the text whether 【Beauty Niàn Nú】 is in the Southern style or in the Northern style. If for some reason the style is not addressed, a composer can ascertain its style based on the role category presented in the text and whether the role's characteristics are suitable for a strong (Northern) or refined (Southern) personality, as well as the origin of the role which simply is either from the north or the south. A composer can also identify a *qǔpái*'s function—whether it is a discrete piece (Northern) or an introductory piece (Southern)—to determine its style. From that point, a composer will organize melodic notes according to already existing samples from *qǔpǔ* 曲譜, the collection of selected *qǔpái* music notation, and re-organize the melody accordingly, depending on pronunciation, word position, meaning, emotion, and many other factors that are different from the samples. This type of job is referred to as *pǔ qǔ* 譜曲 (“composing”), *zhì pǔ* 制譜 (“scoring”), *dǎ pǔ* 打譜 (“notating”), *dìng pǔ* 訂譜 (“setting the score”), *dǎ gōng chě* 打工尺 (“notating music notes”) or *chàng qiāng zhěng lǐ* 唱腔整理 (“vocal music arrangement”). During this re-organizing process, the composer may further elaborate the melody as a way to apply a new and creative approach. Details will be analyzed later in the chosen *qǔpái* piece from this play, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*.

The function of a composer in present-day *kūnqǔ* productions requires two dimensions. One, in terms of vocal *qǔpái* pieces which the playwright has chosen for the dramatic text, a

composer must draw music from the text and modify or refine its melody as his/her next creative task. Two, in terms of instrumental music which serves as overture/conclusion, atmospheric music or music accompanying dances, a composer must compose new music or rearrange music based on a *qǔpái* melody that is suitable for the purpose. The percussion music based on traditional percussive patterns, used to accompany movements or fighting scenes, is determined by the lead drummer. Consultation with the composer is not obligatory. There will be a brief discussion later but no analysis of the percussion music used in the *Wèi* play, due to the fact that the percussive patterns used in any *kūnqǔ* play are not written in the dramatic text.

The composer for *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* was music producer and trail-blazing composer Sūn Jiàn'ān 孙建安. Sūn Jiàn'ān is the Music Director of the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre and a National Musician of the First Rank (国家一级演奏员) specializing in *qǔ dí* flute, the primary melodic instrument to accompany *kūnqǔ* singing. A recipient of the prestigious Wénhuá Award 文华奖 in operatic and musical composition, considered the ultimate accolade in China, Sūn Jiàn'ān has composed symphonic music, musicals, ballet music, and hundreds of vocal and instrumental pieces. For his work in *kūnqǔ*, Sūn Jiàn'ān has won several Excellent Composition Awards 优秀作曲奖 composing music for a dozen *kūnqǔ* plays, both traditional and new, and for six experimental *kūnqǔ* plays. He also produces high-definition *kūnqǔ* CDs, publishes articles regarding *kūnqǔ* music, and lectures at universities and before the public. During the process of creating music for *A Dream Under the Southern Bough* (*Nánkē mèng* 南柯夢), one of the *Yùmíngtáng*⁵'s *Four Dream Plays* (*Yùmíngtáng sì mèng* 玉茗堂四夢) by Tāng Xiǎnzǔ 湯顯祖 (1550–1616), Sūn Jiàn'ān described

⁵ Name of Tāng Xiǎnzǔ's study.

the job of composing *kūnqǔ* music as being like “one is dancing with a chain.” In his article “Music by rule, *kūnqǔ* achieved” (*Qǔ zhèng ér kūn chéng* 曲正而昆成) he explained that the core *kūnqǔ* compositional technique:

…即依照曲词的内容和曲词的四声阴阳、清浊，就原曲牌的旋律进行调整加工，使原曲牌旋律和新的曲词紧密结合，但须保持原曲牌的主腔旋律，这就是谱就字和字就谱的辩证结合，作到字正腔圆、表情达意，又有原曲牌的旋律特征。

...should follow the content of the lyrics and their linguistic tones and initial voicing, follow closely to the melody of its original *qǔpái* and adjust accordingly with additional artistic treatment. This process will integrate the original *qǔpái* melody and the new lyrics while keeping the main motifs of the original melody. This is the combination of dialectics in which music notes yield to words and words yield to musical notes. The words will then be sung articulately and roundly, to express ideas and feelings accurately, and maintain the melodic characteristics of its original *qǔpái*.⁶

Some *kūnqǔ* practitioners and scholars have mistakenly considered this way of composing to be an easy job because of the compositional method of following the pre-existing *qǔpái* structure. Some were even of the opinion that arranging *qǔpái* melodies should not be considered original composition as newly created melodies are limited by the *qǔpái* structure, and therefore it is not composition by Western standards.

Throughout hundreds of years of *kūnqǔ* history, only a handful of musicians who were not playwrights were given credit for their contributions. Musicians such as Wèi Liángfǔ who developed Water Polished music, Yè Táng 葉堂 (Qīng dynasty) who revised music scores for Tāng Xiǎnzǔ’s *Yùmíngtáng’s Four Dream Plays*, and Xú Lín 徐麟 who emended *Cháng shēng diàn* 長生殿 (*The Palace of Eternal Life*) were known to *kūnqǔ* lovers. The job of a *kūnqǔ* composer, or of a vocal style designer (*chàng qiāng shè jì* 唱腔設計), is not an easy one. Arranging and composing *qǔpái* music requires a broad spectrum of knowledge on every aspect

⁶ Sun Jian’an, “Qu zheng er kun cheng,” 215.

of *kūnqǔ* structure and presents a constant challenge in finding balance between maintaining the tradition and expressing artistic creativity.

The Five Achievements of Composing Vocal Music

Vocal *qǔpái* music is what makes *kūnqǔ kūnqǔ*. Wāng Rényuán 汪人元, consultant to the Chinese Society for Xìqǔ Performance Research (Zhōngguó xìqǔ biǎoyǎn xuéhuì 中国戏曲表演学会) and the fifth Chairman⁷ of the Jiāngsū Theater Artists' Association (Jiāngsū shěng xìjù jiā xiéhuì 江苏省戏剧家协会), addressed his concerns in the article “Problems of Vocal Music in Contemporary *Xìqǔ* Development.” One of the significant causes for the existential crisis of contemporary *xìqǔ* is that there has been a lack of development in vocal music, Wāng Rényuán opined:

To duly recognize qualitative breakthroughs in the construction of vocal music, one should recognize that music is the soul of all Chinese *xìqǔ* performances. Throughout history, the rise or decline of a *xìqǔ* genre was aligned with the evolution of its vocal music and whether or not the music gained in popularity... In general the vocal music in *xìqǔ* performance has always been based upon inherited tradition. Nevertheless we must innovate to cater to new tastes and provide new content for modern audiences.⁸

Wāng Rényuán stipulates five standards which newly-created vocal music scores should ideally meet in order to be considered as lasting works. They are *xiàng* 像 (“resemble”), *zhǔn* 准 (“precise”), *měi* 美 (“beautiful”), *xīn* 新 (“novel”), and *gāo* 高 (“prestigious”).⁹ The following is a summary of Wāng Rényuán’s five levels of achievement; some supporting material regarding *kūnqǔ* is my own.

⁷ The current sixth Chairman of the Jiāngsū Theater Association is Kē Jūn 柯军, also President of the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group, CO., LTD.

⁸ Wang Renyuan, “Dangqian xiqu chuancheng, fazhan zhong de changqiang yinyue wenti,” 11.

⁹ Wang Renyuan, “*Xiqu yinyue chuanguo tan yao*,” 53–57.

1) *Xiàng* 像 (“resemble”): Blindly chasing innovation for its own sake, some *xìqǔ* composers implanted Western structures such as diatonic music in order to sound new and be recognized as a composer in Western terms. Wāng Rényuán rejected this approach given evidence of what is ideal vocal music design. Xú Lányuán 徐兰沅 (徐蘭沅) (1892–1977), a well-known *húqín* (two-string bowed fiddle) musician who accompanied the *jīngjù* master Méi Lánfāng 梅兰芳 (梅蘭芳) (1894–1961), contributed to the success of new vocal music in Méi Lánfāng’s new *jīngjù* plays and enriched the sound of the *jīngjù* ensemble by adding a lower pitched *èrhú* fiddle. He once said that hearing a good new piece of vocal music is “like both meeting a new friend for the first time and reuniting with an old friend.”¹⁰ Xú Lányuán worked with Méi Lánfāng for the long period of twenty-eight years, during which Méi Lánfāng created innumerable examples of new vocal music with which Xú Lányuán was closely involved. On this basis, Xú Lányuán summed up Méi Lánfāng’s principle of innovation as being: “[to] create something new within the comfort zone of the audience’s listening habits and seek unconventional effect within the conventional rules” (标新于人们的听觉习惯范围内，在通常的规律中立异。). *Jīngjù* aficionados are familiar with melodies and musical characteristics on which they rely to appreciate the traditional sounds so as to cultivate a taste for music. This is true for other forms of *xìqǔ* as well. Composers, no matter whether writing for *jīngjù* or *kūnqǔ* or other types of *xìqǔ*, should therefore not ignore this fact while creating new vocal music; it is respect for the foundations of music tradition.¹¹

¹⁰ Wang Renyuan, “*Xiqu yinyue chuanguo tan yao*,” 53.

¹¹ Ibid.

- 2) *Zhǔn* 准 (“precise”): The word “precise” in the context of *xìqǔ* music creation refers to music precisely portraying the personality of a character and the character’s feelings as well as the scenery required for drama. Excellent vocal music in *xìqǔ* performance requires not only that it should be pleasant to listen to but also that it precisely execute the emotion that the character is expressing in a specific place and at a specific moment. In other words, truly innovative vocal music should structurally align with the lyrics and create further emotional resonance. This is an attribute of a successful *xìqǔ* composer; a good sense of proportion in initiating new coordination of music and feeling is required.¹²
- 3) *Měi* 美 (“beautiful”): The beauty of a particular vocal music decides whether the piece can be separated from theatrical performance and still be loved by *xìqǔ*-goers and amateur *xìqǔ* singers. The crucial criterion of whether or not this vocal music will last for generations lies in its significance as being beautiful, its greater aesthetic value. Most commonly-seen problems occur in a newly-created *xìqǔ* play when composers or vocal music arrangers are not given enough time to fully communicate with actors and musicians in a give-and-take process. Therefore the requisite artistic treatment after the vocal music has been composed may be compromised. Wāng Rényuán uses words from the *jīngjù* master Wáng Yáoqīng 王瑤卿 (1881–1954) to describe the creation of vocal music:

找找事儿，认认人儿，琢磨琢磨心里劲儿，安腔儿、找俏头。

[First] nitpick the details [of the dramatic elements], recognize the personality [of a character], [and] ponder over the character’s heart. [Then] arrange and layout vocal

¹² Wang Renyuan, “*Xiqu yinyue chuanguo tan yao*,” 54.

music [accordingly], seeking the moment of artistic effect [to gain applause in the performance].¹³

In *kūnqǔ* performance, “seeking the moment of artistic effect” is referred to as *wùtóu* 務頭, lit. “engaging the head [of the matter].” Lǐ Yú 李漁, a late Míng and early Qīng dynasty playwright and novelist, wrote in his *Journal of Leisure Time* about his views on the definition of *wùtóu*:

曲中有務頭，猶棋中有眼，有此則活，無此則死。...一曲有一曲之務頭，一句有一句之務頭。字不聾牙，音不泛調，一曲中得此一句，即使全曲皆靈，一句中得此一二字，即使全句皆健者，務頭也。

When there is *wùtóu* in *qǔ* vocal music, it is like having an eye in playing *wéiqí* (Chinese chess); with it there is life, without it there is death...Every piece of *qǔpái* has its *wùtóu*; every phrase has its *wùtóu*. As long as the words are not difficult to pronounce and the melody is not difficult to sing, when a *qǔpái* has one phrase of *wùtóu*, it will make the entire piece intelligent; when a phrase has one or two words of *wùtóu*, it will make the whole phrase brilliant. This is *wùtóu*.¹⁴

Wāng Rényuán stresses that “seeking the moment of artistic effect” is not just to enrich already-brilliant vocal music with beautiful elements, it moreover reflects the spirit of pursuing excellence in the art of *xìqǔ* performance—a fine tradition from generation to generation, yet one which contemporary *xìqǔ* practitioners lose sight of. This omission results in many vocal pieces that, although they resemble traditional ones and precisely convey the dramatic elements during live performance, are not remembered after a performance or appreciated as valuable independent works when they are divorced from their dramatic content. The vocal pieces that are considered classics are the ones frequently sung or heard in a recital or a show of celebration—special selections which

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Xián qíng ǒu jì* 閒情偶寄, vol. 2 “*Cí qǔ* playwriting” (*Cí qǔ bù* 詞曲部), chapter “Different views on *wù tóu*” (*Bié jiě wù tóu* 別解務頭), 23–25.

are popular and loved by performers and audiences. Only a piece that has great aesthetic value can become an enduring masterpiece.¹⁵

- 4) *Xīn* 新 (“novel”): Vocal music should also demonstrate the taste of its own era. Even though *xìqǔ* music in general is stylized and conventional, it still has room for growth. The way to compose *xìqǔ* vocal music is to work as if composing in the form of theme and variations; it requires recapitulation of the old theme and constantly seeking novel elements for variation. Contemporary *xìqǔ* composers should compose vocal music that resembles the old melodies that *xìqǔ*-goers are accustomed to, especially in newly-created plays. However, a newly-created play contains newly-created characters and innovative dramatic elements; composers must precisely implant novel ideas necessary to reflect new aspects of a character and new sounds for atmosphere. I infer that one of the new practices reflects the mixing of traditional Chinese and Western instruments, classical or electronic, used in accompanying *xìqǔ* performances. This idea has been a part of the movement to be relevant to modern audiences. The constant challenge of finding a balance between upholding tradition and being open to innovation requires that a composer have the capability of coming up with the appropriate ratio. Wāng Rényuán suggests that not only should the portion of new elements in an old piece be measured based on the targeted audiences’ listening habits, but most importantly, after breaking the conventional music structure, the new works should continue observing the same

¹⁵ Wang Renyuan, “*Xiqu yinyue chuanguo tan yao*,” 55.

restrictive rules and traditional methods so that the combination of new and old is natural and its quality maintained.¹⁶

- 5) *Gāo* 高 (“prestigious”): This refers to the highest status in vocal music style. Good *xìqǔ* vocal music is further defined by its artistic level; therefore, a prestigious piece is determined by its ultimate artistic quality; this quality is closely associated with its in-depth artistic expression. The complexity of forms, the level of compositional skills, and the new usage of vocabulary are less essential to the ultimate artistic expression. A prestigious example of a vocal piece may appear to be simple but sincere, serious but graceful; a truly profound artistic combination. In other words, a skillful composition may not have a high quality, but a high quality composition must be far better than a simply skillful one in terms of its artistic value and its long-lasting charm.¹⁷ A perfect example of such a high appraisal of *kūnqǔ*’s prestigious vocal music is reflected in a saying “*Jiā jiā shōu shí qǐ, hù hù bù dī fáng* 家家收拾起，戶戶不隄防”¹⁸ (Every family [sings] ‘Packing up,’ every household [vocalizes] ‘Off guard’) which showcases two masterpieces¹⁹ from the Qīng dynasty.

To realize these five areas of achievement, every step of the compositional progress is crucial.

The following section will give further in-depth evidence of the beauty and complexity of the creative process specifically focused on a *qǔpái* piece in the production being analyzed.

¹⁶ Wang Renyuan, “*Xiqu yinyue chuanguo tan yao*,” 55–56.

¹⁷ Wang Renyuan, “*Xiqu yinyue chuanguo tan yao*,” 56–57.

¹⁸ In *Zhènfēi qǔpǔ* 振飛曲譜 (Zhenfei’s *Kunqu* Dramatic Scores), *bù dī fáng* 不隄防 is written as *bù tí fáng* 不提防, known by most *kūnqǔ* followers.

¹⁹ “Packing up” is the first phrase of Southern *qǔpái* 【*Qīng bēi yù fú róng* 傾杯玉芙蓉】from Li Yù’s *kūnqǔ* play *The Record of A Thousand Loyal Subjects* (*Qiān zhōng lù* 千忠錄), Act 11 “Seeing the cruelties” (*Cān dū* 慘觀). “Off guard” is the first phrase of Northern *qǔpái* 【*Yì zhī huā* 一枝花】from Hóng Shēng’s *kūnqǔ* play *The Palace of Eternal Youth* (*Cháng shēng diàn* 長生殿), Act 38 “Storytelling” (*Tán cí* 彈詞).

The Process of Composing Vocal Music

The timeline for composing *qǔpái* melodies normally starts when the dramatic text is completed and ready to be used for rehearsals. Not only does the composer or music arranger need to provide a musical score for the singer-actor when rehearsal starts, but also, by that point in normal situations, the *qǔpái* pieces written in the dramatic text in general will not be changed. The creative team work with the knowledge that this script will be further revised as a text for performance during the rehearsal process due to added dramatic elements in spoken dialogues, not in *qǔpái* songs. The case of the play *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* in which the directors continued to change the *qǔpái* structure even after the rehearsal process began is not common. To better understand how a *qǔpái* melody is composed and how changes are made for different reasons, I chose Zhāng Yětāng's self-introductory *qǔpái* 【Cūn lǐ yà gǔ 村裏迓鼓】 (hereafter 【Village drums】) from Act 3 as an example for detailed analysis. One reason is that the *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 was not shortened in the directors' emendation, therefore the analysis will be straightforward and is aligned with a sample *qǔpái* that is compared. Another reason is that 【Village drums】 is the first *qǔpái* piece of a four-piece *qǔpái* set. In Chapter 4, it was explained that the directors deleted the second *qǔpái* piece of this *qǔpái* set and therefore the *qǔpái* chain was broken. 【Village drums】 is a case in point, in which it loses its continuity to the next *qǔpái*. I will analyze this *qǔpái* as an example of how a composer transforms this first piece of a sequence into a stand-alone *qǔpái* needing an appropriate ending.

Before observing the rehearsal process of the *Wèi* play starting in July 2015, I spent one month in June 2015 learning the compositional process from music director Sun Jian'an. In my observation, the process of *qǔpái* composition comprises the following steps:

- 1) Select a pre-existing *qǔpái* sample that best matches the identically-named *qǔpái* written in the new dramatic text. Concerns include the mode, poetic structure, role category of the singer, character's emotion presented, and other required elements.
- 2) Replace the original text with new words in the pre-existing melody and properly position the words according to the rhyme scheme, the tone, the semantic unit by the rhythm of odd or even syllables, and whether they are decorative words (*chènzì* 襯字) or regulated words (*zhèngzì* 正字) required in the *qǔ* poem. (A responsible playwright usually indicates the decorative words with a smaller font in the dramatic text for accuracy.)
- 3) Adjust the musical notes and melodic contour to conform to the new words and tones (some *qǔpái* allow a few positions of a word's tone to be flexible).
- 4) Refine and smooth the melodic lines.
- 5) Final touches with the composer's personal approach.

The first step of selecting a pre-existing *qǔpái* sample requires a collection of *qǔpǔ* 曲譜 or *kūnqǔ* music/dramatic scores as reference. Each *qǔpǔ* is unique in its own way. The *Comprehensive Notations of Southern and Northern Qǔpái in Nine Modes* (*Jiǔgōng dàchéng nánběi cígōng pǔ* 九宮大成南北詞宮譜) (hereafter *Nine Modes*) compiled in 1746 includes samples of existing *qǔpái* pieces, both standard and well-established variations. It consists of a total of eighty-two volumes, covering thousands of *qǔpái* pieces including literary songs, dramatic songs, and songs used in court functions. They are marked with the punctuation, rhyme words, *gōng chě* 工尺 musical notes, *bǎn yǎn* 板眼 beats, and decorative words are given in a smaller font. It also provides annotations for better understanding of each *qǔpái*'s usage and for

clarification. This manual provides *qǔpái* references for compositions and can be used as music scores for singing.

The *Nàshūyíng's Kūnqǔ Music Scores* (*Nàshūyíng qǔpǔ* 納書楹曲譜) was compiled in 1792 by littérateur and *kūnqǔ* music expert Yè Táng 葉堂 (Qīng dynasty). This collection is considered an exemplar of the *qǔpái* pieces suitable for singing as non-dramatic literary songs or *qīng qǔ* 清曲 (lit. “pure-singing songs”). His Yè style singing techniques (Yè pài chàng kǒu 葉派唱口) have been honored and passed down by *kūnqǔ* practitioners and fans for generations. The characteristics of Yè style singing techniques stipulate: “Emphasize the initial sound of the word; deliver lyrical melodies with delicacy; the conclusion should be resonant, profound and never shallow; direct breathing with care and never in haste.”²⁰

Wáng Xīchún 王錫純 (Qīng dynasty), in the preface to his 1870 *Èyúngé's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* (*Èyúngé qǔpǔ* 遏雲閣曲譜), mentions his reasons for compiling the manual. Due to his love of *chuánqí* plays and the fact that there were no good dramatic scores available, Wáng Xīchún directed several in-house *kūnqǔ* actors, using *Nàshūyíng's Kūnqǔ Music Scores* and *Zhuì Báiqiú* 綴白裘 (*A Patched Cloak of White Fur*, a collection of dramatic texts), turning the non-dramatic scores into dramatic scores that were practical for *kūnqǔ* practitioners at the time. With detailed marking of musical notes and beats which better served for singing, *Èyúngé's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* is considered the go-to collection for onstage performances and is still loved by present-day professional and amateur *kūnqǔ* performers.

Yú Zhènfei 俞振飛 (1902–1993), compiler of *Sùlú qǔpǔ* 粟廬曲譜 (*Sùlú's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores*) and *Zhènfei qǔpǔ* 振飛曲譜 (*Zhènfei's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores*), was a *kūnqǔ*

²⁰ 出字重, 转腔婉, 结响沉而不浮, 运气敛而不促. See Tang Baoxiang, “Jiangnan qu sheng Yu Sulu” (series 2), 50.

scholar and a professional actor. His father, Yú Zōnghǎi 俞宗海 (also known as Yú Sùlú) (字粟廬) (1847–1930) inherited Yè Táng’s Yè style singing techniques, combining the excellent elements he learned from experts in non-dramatic singing with those of actors who sang in dramatic settings, plus his own personal enhancements. Yú Sùlú created a unique singing style we now refer to as the Yú style singing method (*Yú pài chàng fǎ* 俞派唱法). Yú Zhèn fēi further developed his father’s Yú style singing method, blending it with his own stage performances which helped to glorify the Yú style of performing arts on the professional stage. Yú Zhèn fēi’s famous essay “The Essential Instructions on Studying *Kūnqǔ*” (*Xí qǔ yào jiě* 習曲要解), first published as the preface of *Sùlú’s Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* in 1953 and later revised and included in *Zhèn fēi’s Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* in 1982 (preface dated 1981), concluded with theories of singing and methods of delivering speech. While the scores in *Sùlú’s Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* are written in *gōng chě* musical notes, those in *Zhèn fēi’s Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* are transposed into numbered musical notation.²¹ This cipher notation system is similar to the Western staff system, using numerals that correspond to musical notes. The monophonic and heterophonic nature of Chinese music has made *jiǎnpǔ* 簡譜 (簡谱) (lit. “simplified notation”) widely used in China since the beginning of the 20th Century. Furthermore, as its simpler and clearer *jiǎnpǔ* provides a convenient notation method for people who have never been trained to read *gōng chě* notation, *Zhèn fēi’s Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* therefore allows easier access for people who want to learn *kūnqǔ*. Yú Zhèn fēi’s numbered notation provides detailed documentation of the Yú style vocal melodies, including ornamentation reflecting techniques used in Yú style singing, and gives

²¹ The earliest published simplified notation is *Kūnqǔ xīn dǎo* 崑曲新導 (*The New Guidebook of Kūnqǔ*), compiled by Liú Zhènxiū 劉振修. Shànghǎi zhōnghuá shūjú 上海中華書局, 1928.

markings indicating the breath-change positions that are crucial to execute emotion appropriately.

The primary source for Sūn Jiàn'ān 孙建安, the composer of *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*, was *Kūnqǔ qǔpái jí tàoshù fànli jí* 崑曲曲牌及套數範例集 (Collected Models of *Kūnqǔ Qǔpái* Patterns and Sequences)²² (hereafter *Collected Models*), edited by Wáng Shǒutài 王守泰 (1908–1991) and fifteen other *kūnqǔ* scholars and professionals, a treatise of a fourteen-year long (1982–1996) endeavor. In its preface, the editors clearly address their purpose in creating the manual:

我們把傳統崑劇、崑曲的文學藝術結構，概括為“三體”。這三體是“集折體”、“聯曲體”和“曲牌體”。“集折”的意思在於說明傳統崑劇的一部傳奇是集若干個折子戲組成的。每個折子是一個完整的文學藝術單元。…每齣折子戲的文學內容，在賓白以外，是由聯綴若干支曲子組成的，故稱聯曲體。而每支曲子的曲詞，則是各按一定句數和字數規律組成的曲牌。曲牌這個名稱，古已有之。

《範例集》的編撰目的，是試圖揭示組成傳統崑劇、崑曲這三體的文學藝術程式。由於問題的複雜性，我們才邁開科學探索的第一步，祇是比較滿意地總結得出“詞式”、“樂式”和“套式”的規律。

We have summarized the literary and artistic structure of classic *kūnjù* and *kūnqǔ* into “Three [layers of] forms.” They are “collective-act form,” “joined-[*qǔpái*] song form,” and “*qǔpái* form.” The “Collective-act” is meant to explain that each *chuánqí*-based *kūnjù* play consists of a collection of extractable acts (*zhé zǐ xì*) each of which individually is a complete literary and artistic unit. . . . The literary content of each act, besides speeches, is comprised of a number of *qǔpái* songs that are joined together, therefore it is named “joined-[*qǔpái*] song form.” Furthermore, for every song, the lyrics are composed according to a long-existing *qǔpái* form which provides regulated numbers of sentences and words.

The purpose of compiling these *Collected Models* is to reveal the formula of the three layers of literary and artistic forms. Due to the complexity, we are just taking the first step towards its scientific exploration. We are relatively satisfied with our conclusion as to the rules of “prosodic models,” “[melodic] compositional models,” and “[*qǔpái*] sequence models.”²³

²² An online search engine is available on http://www.messyxin.com/ch/kunqu_tools/fanliji/ by Luàn shà nián guāng biàn 乱煞年光遍 (ID : MessyXin).

²³ Wang Shoutai, *Kunqu Qupai Ji Taoshu Fanli Ji: Nantao* (vol.1), 1–2.

This modern, updated collection gives contemporary playwrights and composers/*qǔpái* arrangers a perfect tool with which to select *qǔpái* and *qǔpái* sets and compose lyrics or music according to the summarized rules. Unlike the traditional music and dramatic scores in which the compiler selected one *qǔpái* as a standard and sometimes included several others as variations, the *Collected Models* looked into numerous *qǔpái* pieces; through parallel comparisons of *qǔpái* pieces with the same title, the editors then delineated the similarities, differences and the pattern of development of selected models. In other words, the traditional music and dramatic scores collected fixed-rule *qǔpái* pieces; the *Collected Models* provides templates of *qǔpái* models. The *Collected Models* is a handwritten manual with detailed annotations, analyzing prosodic rules with reference to *qǔpái* music transposed in numbered notation and, most importantly, points out the relationships between the literary phrases and the musical components of melodic phrases, primary motives (*zhǔ qiāng* 主腔), and musical notes in rhyme-word positions.

To picture the compositional steps in greater detail, I will use Zhāng Yětāng's self-introductory *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 from Act 3 as an example. The importance of 【Village drums】 was mentioned in “Twenty Notes from *The Red Coral of Yuefu Ballads*,”²⁴ also known as Wèi Liángfǔ's “Rules of Singing *Qǔ*.” Among hundreds of *qǔpái* pieces, Wèi Liángfǔ specified that to be skillful in singing the Northern *qǔpái*, one must be familiar with 【Dāi gǔ duǒ 呆骨朵】 【Village drums】 and 【Hú shí bā 胡十八】.²⁵ According to the *Collected Models*, the syntactical structure of 【Village drums】 requires a total of 11 phrases, classified into four lines of 2 phrases + 2 phrases + 3 phrases + 4 phrases, based on where the periods occur. The

²⁴ *Yuèfǔ hóng shān fānlì èrshí tiáo* 樂府紅珊九例二十條。Also see Fig. 3.6.

²⁵ Qínhuái Mòkè, *Yuèfǔ hóng shān* (vol.1), *Yuèfǔ hóng shān fānlì èrshí tiáo*.

rhyme words are located at the end of phrases ②, ④, ⑦, ⑩ and ⑪ (marked with a red triangle), phrase ⑨ is optional. A basic structure based on the number of regulated words would be:

- ① 4 words, ② 4 words[△]
 ③ 4 words, ④ 4 words[△]
 ⑤ 3 words, ⑥ 3 words, ⑦ 4 words[△]
 ⑧ 4 words, ⑨ 4 words[△], ⑩ 4 words[△], ⑪ 7 words[△]

There are variations; for example, Phrases ① and ② could change to 6 words. Phrase ③ could change to 5 words. Phrase ⑤ could be doubled. Phrases ⑧⑨⑩ could change to 3 words.

Phrase ⑧ could be doubled.²⁶ The 【Village drums】 in Tsēng's new text (see Chapter 2: 3.8–3.12) does use an 11-phrase structure as in the sample. Yet the number of lines that are based on where the periods are located turns Tsēng's 【Village drums】 structure into five lines with Phrase ④ doubled and Phrases ⑧⑨⑩ changed to 3 words (the regulated words are underlined, the rhyme words are in bold):

- ① 俺雖非**世家華胄**, ② **金章紫綬** (shòu)。
 ③ 也則是**簪纓門第**, ④ (**讀書養性**), 修身尚**友** (yǒu)。
 ⑤ 只這 **襟抱中**, ⑥ **肝腸裏**, ⑦ 倒有些**情義牢守** (shǒu)。
 ⑧ 今日個**逢了禍災**, ⑨ **遭了誣讒**, ⑩ **值了渠醜** (chǒu)。
 ⑪ 不由人**痛切齒、憤悲難剖** (pǒu)。

Tsēng's 【Village drums】 is in fact closer to the poetic structure of the same *qǔpái* title used in court functions, listed as the sample *qǔpái* in *Nine Modes*.²⁷ In Phrase ④, the four words in parentheses (**讀書養性**) are regulated words in the *Nine Modes* model but are treated as decorative words in the *Collected Models*. The musical treatment of regulated words and decorative words is different in terms of the duration of notes (decorative words are shorter) and

²⁶ Wang Shoutai, ed. *Kunqu Qupai ji Taoshu Fanli Ji: Beitao*, 930–31.

²⁷ See Volume five: Northern form, p. 28.

their position in a measure (decorative words are not positioned on the *bǎn* beats, the first beats in numbered notation).

In the *Collected Models*, three samples out of the twenty-six existing *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 are examined in detail. They are from 1) Act “Scolding the thief (*Mà zéi* 罵賊)” from *The Palace of Eternal Life* (*Cháng shēng diàn* 長生殿); 2) Act “Ten sides” (*Shí miàn* 十面) from *Ambushed from Ten Sides* (*Shí miàn máifú* 十面埋伏); and 3) Act “Retreat from woodcutting” (*Bèi qiáo* 北樵) from *The Fishing Bank Woodcutter* (*Yú qiáo jì* 漁樵記). The first sample is sung by a supporting older male role actor (*wài*) after his entrance recitation and self-introduction monologue. In this 【Village drums】 he expresses the thought that, even though he is a low ranking court musician and has never passed the imperial examination to be a court official, his virtue and loyalty make him resent those who hold high ranking official positions in the imperial court and yet have betrayed their country in a cowardly manner. He then continues to sing 【*Yuán hé lìng* 元和令】 (hereafter 【Song of Peace】). The second sample is sung by an old male role actor (*lǎo shēng*) after singing the *qǔpái* 【*Què tà zhī* 鵲踏枝】 followed by a fight scene. In this 【Village drums】 he moans that the war was a punishment from heaven due to the First Emperor’s brutal leadership, therefore three powerful figures are fighting for hegemony. Another fight scene follows. The third sample is sung by a male role actor (*shēng*) after singing the *qǔpái* 【*Tiān xià lè* 天下樂】 and engaging in a dialogue with his friends. In this 【Village drums】 he expresses his feelings about the hardships that they endure as a fisherman and a woodcutter who cannot be understood by those rich people who have a fireplace to keep warm during snowy times and have wine while enjoying a song sung by a beauty. He then continues to have a conversation with friends and sings a *qǔpái* 【*Jì shēng cǎo* 寄生草】.

The *kūnqǔ* composer, in order to choose which sample is a better fit for the new text, has to match their modes of expression, overall emotion, role category or gender, as well as the connection before and after the *qǔpái*. Tsēng's 【Village drums】 in his original dramatic text appears in the following structure:

Male role enters → entrance recitation → self-introduction →
 【Village drums】 – 【Song of Peace】 – 【Charming on horse】 – 【Better than Gourd】
 → continues to the Southern *qǔpái* pieces

This structure is very similar to the first sample from Act “Scolding the thief,” in which the *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 also provides a strong feeling of resentment expressing the characters’ extreme pain and anger facing the crisis. The sample *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 has been chosen. The next step is to carefully follow its blueprint and compose another version of 【Village drums】 with new lyrics and some creative musical ideas. It is worth noting that the editors of the *Collected Models* spent a great deal of effort highlighting and analyzing the primary motives (*zhǔ qiāng* 主腔) in composition. The theory of primary motives in *qǔpái* compositions was introduced by Wú Méi 吳梅 (1884 - 1939) in his 1914 publication *Leisurely Talks About Reading Drama* (*gù qǔ zhǔ tán* 顧曲塵談):

每一曲牌，必有一定之腔格。而每曲所填詞曲，僅平仄相同，而四聲、清濁、陰陽，又萬萬不能一律。故制譜者審其詞曲中每字之陰陽，而後酌定工尺，又必依本牌之腔格而斟酌之，此所以十曲十樣，而卒無一同焉者也。

Every *qǔpái* must have its established melodic patterns (*qiāng gé* 腔格). And the [new] lyrics that are substituted in each *qǔpái* only follow the regulated tone patterns of level and oblique. However, their four tones [of level, rising, falling, and pausing], voiceless and voiced sounds, dark and light registers differentiate them from the model. The musical arranger therefore examines the dark and light registers of each word and then decides on their musical notes accordingly. Also, he has to make deliberate choices about the music based on the model *qǔpái*'s established melodic patterns. This is the reason why ten *qǔpái* pieces have ten shapes and ultimately each one has unique characteristics.

Wáng Jiliè 王季烈 (1873–1952) replaced Wú Méi’s melodic patterns (*qiāng gé* 腔格) with his term “primary motives” and established it as the terminology for that by which certain melodic phrases represent the characteristic of its named *qǔpái*.²⁸ In his 1928²⁹ *Master Yǐnlú’s Notes on Drama* (*Yǐnlú qǔ tán* 蠙廬曲談) Wáng Jiliè explained the definition of primary motive:

凡某曲牌之某句某字，有某種一定之腔，是為某曲牌之主腔。如懶畫眉第一句之末一字，陰平則用四上尺上³⁰四，陽平則用合四上尺上四。此上尺上四，即為懶畫眉之主腔。

When there are certain melodic phrases [which repeatedly] appear in words and sentences of a particular *qǔpái*, these are the *qǔpái*’s primary motives. For example the last word of the first sentence in *qǔpái* 【Lǎn huà méi】. If the word is pronounced in the level tone in a dark register [similar to the first tone of modern Mandarin], the melodic phrase should be 6 – 12116 ; if the word is pronounced in the level tone in a light register [similar to the second tone of modern Mandarin], the melodic phrase should be 5 6 –12116 . Therefore 12116 is the primary motive of *qǔpái* 【Lǎn huà méi】.³¹

Wáng Jiliè also indicated the importance of recognizing primary motives as a part of four-step compositional techniques:

一曰點正板式，二曰辨別四聲陰陽，三曰認明主腔，四曰聯絡工尺。明此四者，而再多唱，多看前人所製宮譜，則於製譜之法，思過半矣。

First, one should refer to the rule of rhythmic form and modify it accordingly; second, one should identify four tones and dark and light registers of each word and distinguish them accordingly; third, one should recognize primary motives and apply it accordingly; fourth, one should link musical notes and deliver them smoothly. If one understands these four steps, as well as practicing singing more often and reading more music scores written by predecessors, then the matter of regulations in scoring a *qǔpái* melody has been largely resolved.³²

²⁸ Wu Junda, *Kunqu changqiang yanjiu*, 126.

²⁹ Wáng Jiliè first published his four-part theories, *Master Yinlu’s Notes on Drama*, as an opening guide to each of his four-part *Assembled Dramatic Scores* published in 1925. In 1928 Shanghai Shangwu Yinshuguan (Shanghai Commercial Press) compiled them into a single book under the same title.

³⁰ Chinese iteration mark

³¹ Part three “On composing” (*lùn pǔ qǔ* 論譜曲), chapter four “On the primary motive of each mode” (*Lùn gè gōngdiào zhī zhǔ qiāng* 論各宮調之主腔), p. 19.

³² Part three “On composing” (*lùn pǔ qǔ* 論譜曲), chapter one “On music notation” (*Lùn gōng pǔ* 論宮譜), p. 2.

In the *Collected Models*, all notation is written numerically, in which 1 equals the European solfège *do*, 2 = *re*, 3 = *mi*, 4 = *fa*, 5 = *sol*, 6 = *la*, and 7 = *si*. When the number is in a higher register, a dot above the number is applied; when the number is in a lower register, a dot is applied below the number. In general in Chinese music, a movable *do* is used. In other words, for example, in the key of D major, 1 is still referred to as *do*, however its pitch is D in the Western scale. The specific piece of *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 as follows is in *chě* key (1=C) in which 1 = *do* = C. There are two music notation systems used to analyze *qǔpái* 【Village drums】. The numbered notations are excerpted directly from the samples in the *Collected Models* and from composer Sūn Jiàn’ān’s final printed score. However, to show the melodic contours, Western staff notation is used. It is easier for readers who either can or cannot read Western staff notation to have a visual sense about the rising, falling, and curving contours. The numbered notation therefore is transposed into staff notation. This is regarding melodic contour. As for tonal contour, according to *Zhèn’fēi’s Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores*,³³ the tone pitches range from low level 1 to high level 5 (Fig. 5.1). The first tone *yīn píng* 阴平 (lit. “dark-level tone”) produces a level sound from high 5 to high 5. The second tone *yáng píng* 阳平 (lit. “light-level tone”) travels from mid level 3 to high level 5. This in fact produces a rising tone contour as seen in Fig. 5.1. Not to be confused with the third tone *shǎng shēng* 上声 (lit. “rising tone”) which is commonly translated as rising tone due to the character 上 which literally means “rise.” *Shǎng shēng* starts low level 2, dips down to low level 1 and then rises to high level 4. In other words the *shǎng shēng* produces a low bending sound. When exaggerating its bending tone contour, a

³³ Yu Zhenfei, *Zhenfei qupu*, 2.

low dipping sound is quickly followed by a rising sound. The fourth tone *qù shēng* 去声 (lit. “falling tone”) starts high level 5 and descends to low level 1.

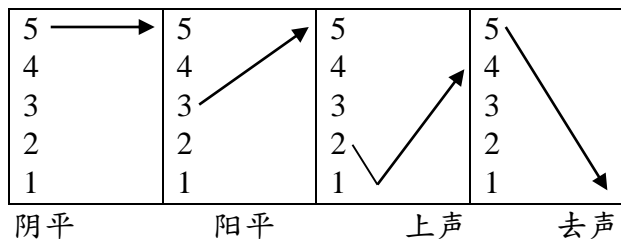


Fig. 5.1 Zhèn fēi's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores

To identify the tone names with their tone contours, the Chinese pronunciation of the first character is aligned with its tone name. In writing, the tone mark positioned above the vowel would do the same: first tone dark-level (*yīn* 阴) in which *ī* is marked with a level tone contour; second tone light-level (*yáng* 阳) in which *á* is marked with a rising tone contour; third tone rising (*shǎng* 上) in which *ǎ* is marked with a bending tone contour; and fourth tone falling (*qù* 去) in which *ù* is marked with a falling tone contour. Yú Zhèn fēi here is referring to the four tones of modern Mandarin. However when determining the four tones used in composing the Northern *qǔpái*, one should refer to the *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain* (*zhōngyuán yīn yùn* 中原音韻), written by the Yuán dynasty poet Zhōu Déqīng 周德清 (1277–1365) in 1324. Linguistically, the pronunciations of the lyrics written for the Northern *qǔpái* are inherited from the Yuán dynasty which had evolved from previous Hàn Chinese pronunciations. The Yuán dynasty *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain* is a guidebook to the phonological system used for composing the Northern *qǔpái*. One significant change in the Yuán dynasty's official spoken language was the disappearance of the pausing tone (*rù shēng* 入聲). Those words were originally pronounced in the pausing tone which can still be heard in singing the Southern *qǔpái*

music, and were reassigned to the tones of level (*píng shēng* 平聲), rising (*shǎng shēng* 上聲), and falling (*qù shēng* 去聲). This phonological development had changed the rules in *qǔ* composition from the phonetic structure, which had been regulated by level (*píng* 平) tone and oblique (*zè* 仄, including rising, falling, and pausing) tone to a more restrictive structure which was regulated by level (*píng* 平), rising (*shǎng* 上) and falling (*qù* 去) tones. Around the Wànlì period of the Qīng dynasty, the rising and falling tones were both further categorized with dark or light registers. Therefore, the six tone categories for Northern *qǔpái* are dark-level, light-level, dark-rising, light-rising, dark-falling, and light-falling.³⁴ Wǔ Jùndá 武俊达 (1916–1997), a well-known musician and theorist of *xìqǔ* music, dedicated a chapter in his *Research on Kūnqǔ Singing* (*Kūnqǔ chàngqiāng yánjiū* 昆曲唱腔研究), analyzing the relationships between the four tones and melodic patterns (*qiāng gé* 腔格): “In *kūnqǔ* singing, the four tones and their dark and light registers are clearly present at the beginning of the melodic patterns, followed by the melismatic lines or primary motives. The beginning part which justifies the four tones and their dark and light registers is called *qiāng tóu* 腔头 (lit. “the head of melodic pattern”) or *chūkǒu qiāng* 出口腔 (“initial melodic pattern”).” In composing *qǔpái* music, the tone contour of each word affects its melodic contour. For example, when a word is pronounced in the dark-level tone, the melodic phrase should be 1 – | 2 • 1 6 5 | 3 – and the steady note of 1 – reflects the sound of the first tone; when the word is pronounced in the light-level tone, the melodic phrase should be 6 1 – | 2 • 1 6 5 | 3 – and the ascending notes from 6 to 1 reflect the sound of the second tone.³⁵

³⁴ Yu Zhenfei, *Zhenfei qupu*, 2.

³⁵ Wu Junda, *Kunqu changqiang yanjiu*, 99.

appear at the end of each phrase (brackets [] are placed where the musical note or sign within the brackets belongs to the previous phrase.):

In *chě* key (1=C)

Primary motive 1

(尺調)

4 2 3 2 3^f 2 3 5^v 5 4 3 2

Phrase ① 難則倦樂 工卑濫,

Primary motive 2

4/4 3 3^f 2 3 | 5 5 3 2 7 6 | 5 4 3 5 — | 5

Phrase ② 碌碌 愚 暗。

Primary motive 4

5 2 3 2 | 1 2 3 5 3 2 | 7 2 7 6 5 6 7 | 7

Phrase ③ 也不曾讀書 獻策,

Primary motive 2

7 2 2 7 6 7 6 7 | 2 2 1 7 | 6 1 6 5 — | 5

Phrase ④ 登科及第向 鶴班高 踏。

Primary motive 3

5 1 2 1 2 | 3^f 2 0 5 4 3 5 — |

Phrase ⑤ 只這血 性 中,

Primary motive 1

5 3 2 1 2 3 2

Phrase ⑥ 胸脯內

Primary motive 2

(2) $\overline{2 \cdot 3}$

Phrase ⑦ 剛有些忠 肝義 膽

2. 6. 1 | 2. 3 2 1. 6 | 5

Primary motive 3

(3)

Phrase ⑧ 今 日個 親 喪 亡,

3. 2 1 2 | 1 1. 2 3. 2 0. 5. 4. 3 | 5 — 5 — |

Primary motive 1

(1)

Phrase ⑨ 遭 了 危 難,

1 5 2. 2 5 | 4. 5 4. 3 2 — |

Primary motive 2

(2)

Phrase ⑩ 值 了 變 慘,

1. 7. 6. 1 2[♯] 1. 7. 6. | 5

Primary motive 1

(1) (22)

Phrase ⑪ 不 由 人 痛 切 齒 聲 吞 恨 衝,

2 3 2. 3 | 5[♯] 3. 2 1. 2 | 5 5[♯] 2[♯] 1. 7. 6. | 1 2

Primary motive 1 appears in Phrases ①, ⑥, ⑨, and ⑪ and all travel from note 5 (*sol*) down to 2 (*re*) with different ornamentation in between. Phrase ① primary motive is considered as the standard one by Wáng Jiliè. Following are primary motives transposed from numbered to staff notation. Since the key used in the sample *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 is in *chě* key or 1 = C, the staff notation is in the C major key signature.

Primary motive 2 appears in Phrases (4), (7) and (10) with a variation in Phrase (2). The notes basically descend from 2 (*re*) down to 5 (*sol*) on the *băn* beat (first beat of a measure in numbered notation) or are sustained until the *băn* beat. This is due to the fact that the last words of all four phrases are rhyme words.

Primary motive 3 appears in Phrases (5) and (8). These two melodic phrases share the same melodic contour and rhythmic pattern.

Primary motive 4 appears in Phrase ③. The repeated B notes (7) give a strong flavor of the Northern *qǔ* style that is needed in this Northern *qǔpái*.



The overall structure in the sample *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 relating to primary motives and their ending musical notes is as follows:

- ① motive 1 [note 2], ② motive 2 [note 5]。
- ③ motive 4 [note 7], ④ motive 2 [note 5]。
- ⑤ motive 3 [note 5], ⑥ motive 1 [note 2], ⑦ motive 2 [note 5]。
- ⑧ motive 3 [note 5], ⑨ motive 1 [note 2], ⑩ motive 2 [note 5], ⑪ motive 1 [note 2]。


We have discussed the different characteristics of the Northern and Southern *qǔpái*. Since 【Village drums】 is a Northern *qǔpái*, the focus here will be the on the compositional elements of Northern *qǔ* music. Musically, the Northern *qǔpái* pieces are based on the diatonic scale (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) while the Southern *qǔpái* pieces are composed in the pentatonic scale (1, 2, 3, 5, 6). Wǔ Jùndá’s chapter “Melodic Patterns (*Qiāng gé* 腔格)”³⁷ explains in detail the relationships between the tone contour in pronunciation and melodic pattern in music for both Southern *qǔpái* and Northern *qǔpái* compositions. Although they employ different scales, there are similarities and differences in structure. The following are fundamental rules, called the “four tones melodic patterns” (*sì shēng qiāng gé* 四声腔格),³⁸ which are summarized in Wǔ Jùndá’s “Melodic Patterns” chapter. The focus will be the Northern style on which the sample *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 is based:

³⁷ Wu Junda, *Kunqu changqiang yanjiu*, 99.



³⁸ Wu Junda, *Kunqu changqiang yanjiu*, 100–21.







- 1) When the word is pronounced in the dark-level tone, the tone contour should be set to a sustained note and its pitch range should be relatively higher than other tones,





- 2) When the word is pronounced in the light-level tone, the tone contour should either be a sustained lower pitch note, e.g.:  or a rising stepwise motion,



- 3) When the word is pronounced in rising tone for both dark and light registers, the tone contour should either be a descending stepwise motion, e.g.:  which reflects its dipping sound; or descending and ascending stepwise motion, e.g.:  which reflects its bending sound. But the pitch range for the dark-rising tone should be relatively higher than the light-rising tone.

- 4) When the word is pronounced in the dark-falling tone, the starting note should be a higher note than the rest of the phrase followed by an upper grace note, then move down to the note which is one step lower than the starting note. In the Northern *qǔ*, since it is a diatonic scale, the melodic contour may appear  with a passing 7 (*si*) that is unique for Northern music. The grace note usually appears one note above the first note, such as  and . A few cases start with 4 (*fa*) . However, if the first note is 7 (*si*), the grace note will go to 2' (*re*)  instead of 1' (*do*) and its melodic pattern is .

- 5) When the word is pronounced in the light-falling tone, the starting note should be a note lower than the rest of the phrase followed by an upper grace note, then move up to the note which is one step higher than the starting note, e.g.: . In some of the

Northern *qǔ*, the last note may return to the first appearing note, e.g.:  and continue descending.

The next compositional step is to insert the new words into the chosen sample melody and properly position the words according to the rhyme scheme, the tone, the rhythm of odd or even phraselets, and other required considerations. The melodic notes then will need to be re-organized. Keeping in mind the tone contour of a word, its corresponding melodic patterns, and the primary motives, Sūn Jiàn'ān adjusted the musical notes to conform to the new words and tones, refined and smoothed the melodic contours, and gave it his final personal touch. The entire 11 phrases in *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 will be analyzed. Each phrase will be examined in the following order: 1) aligning the new words from Tsēng Yǒng-Yih's dramatic text to the sample *qǔpái* which includes its melody and lyrics, identifying the level tones (平, both tone marks ˉ and ˊ), rising tone (上, tone mark ˇ), and falling (去, tone mark ˋ) tone according to the *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain* and the 1715 *Imperial Collection of Kunqu Prosodic Scores*.³⁹ The phrase from the sample *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 is indicated as SAMPLE and Tsēng's new words from the *Wèi* play are indicated as NEW; 2) analyzing the structural similarities and differences between the two, pointing out the need of adjustment in composing the melody (in single space); 3) excerpting composer Sūn Jiàn'ān's composition for the *Wèi* play and analyzing his reasons of change (in double space). His composition is indicated as FINAL. The music notations of SAMPLE and FINAL were originally in numbered notation as in the *Collected Models* and in Sūn Jiàn'ān's copyrighted score. Staff notation is used to explain melodic and tonal contours.

³⁹ *Yùdìng qǔpǔ* 御定曲譜 by the Qīng dynasty scholar Wáng Yìqīng 王奕清 (1664–1737).

Phrase ①:

SAMPLE

Primary motive 1

(尺調) ㄨ 2 3 2 3^f 2 3 5^v 5 4 3 2

① 雖則俺樂 工卑濫,
suī zé ǎn yuè gōng bēi làn
去 平平去

NEW ① 俺雖非世 家華胄,
ǎn suī fēi shì jiā huá zhòu
去 平平去


This *qǔpái* starts with its first phrase in free rhythm. The first three words are decorative words. Even though they are not part of the regulated words which have to follow the tone patterns of level, rising, and falling, the composer usually will give them a different melodic contour to fit the tone contour more pleasingly.

FINAL

Primary motive 1

ㄨ 1² 3 3^v 3⁵ 2 3 5^v 6¹ 4 3 2 -^v

(唱) 俺 雖 非 世 家 華 胄, (zhòu)

In Sūn Jiàn'ān's final score, the first three decorative words of rising, level, and level are set to ㄨ 1² 3 3^v or  which are perfect for the tone contour since the rising should in general initiate a lower pitch than the rest of the phrase and the level tone should remain level. The four regulated words are matched with the tone patterns 去平平去 (falling-level-level-falling). Because the second level tone in the sample is dark-level (*bēi* 卑) and the new text is light-level (*huá* 華), Sūn Jiàn'ān, to better serve to differentiate the dark-level and light-level tones, changed:

from 
5 *bēi* 2

to

Primary motive 1 is retained in the new melody from note 5 (*sol*) down to 2 (*re*) with different ornamentation in between.

Phrase ②:

SAMPLE

② 磬磬 愚 暗。
 kēng kēng yú àn
 平 平 平 去

NEW ② 金章 紫 綬。
 jīn zhāng zǐ shòu
 平 平 上 去

Starting in Phrase ② and throughout, it is set in quadruple meter or in a meter with one *bǎn* beat (first beat of a measure) and three *yǎn* beats. The *bǎn* beat, although found on the first beat of a measure, an accented beat in the Western metrical system, in *kūnqǔ* notation the *bǎn* beat is not accented but a location where the rhyme words are set. The tone pattern of the sample Phrase ② is 平平平去 (level-level-level-falling) and the new text became 平平上去 (level-level-rising-falling), some deviation from the rules occurred. Since the third word in the new text was changed from level to rising tone, the melodic contour was expected to be different.

FINAL

金 章 紫 綬。(shòu)

In the sample, the first two words *kēng kēng* 铿铿, both level tones, are set to 3 3 (*mi mi*). The phrase then prepares to approach the next word *yú* 愚, also a level tone, on the notes 5 5 (*sol sol*). The ascending notes of 2 3 5 (*re mi sol*) pave the way to the tone contour of *yú* as a light-level tone. The new text also starts with two level tones but is set to 5 5 (*sol sol*) then drops to 7 (*si*) due to the next word *zǐ* 紫 being a rising tone which should be positioned in a lower register. Rhythmically, the sample music starts with an incomplete measure, placing the first word of Phrase ② on the second beat, a *yǎn* beat. The third word *yú* 愚 then appears on the first beat of the second measure and the fourth word *àn* 暗 on the first beat of the third measure, finishing with a measure-long primary motive 2 on the first beat of the fourth measure. Sūn Jiàn'ān starts with a complete measure, placing the first word on the first beat, a *bǎn* beat. He moved the third word *zǐ* 紫 to the third beat of the first measure instead and the fourth word *shòu* 綬 is on the first beat of the second measure, finishing with primary motive 2 on the first beat of the third measure. This change has made the pace faster than in the sample piece. It is expected that the missing measure here will be added to a later sentence since the number of *bǎn* beats is fixed.

SAMPLE 

FINAL 

The primary motive 2 of the new melody keeps $5 \underline{435} - | 5$ as its basic contour, similar to the sample which Wáng Jiliè analyzed as the variation of primary motive 2.

Primary motive 2

SAMPLE

FINAL

Yet the new primary motive 2 was raised an octave higher than the sample motive. If we refer to the text, the sample text where the primary motive 2 starts around the fourth word, literally means dull (*àn* 暗), referring to the singer who humbly claims he is a foolish man. However, the fourth word of the new text literally means the silk ribbon (*shòu* 绶) which is used by high officials for their golden-seal and refers to Zhāng Yětang’s desired elite status. From a performance point of view it is understandable that the two contrasting meanings should be delivered differently by the actor. The sample text requires the actor to sing in a lower pitch register for its darker and humble quality and the new text requires the actor to sing in a higher pitch register for a brighter, almost painful quality. In terms of movement the actor might have a different body posture and use different gestures indicating a foolish man or a high ranking official. This is why a competent *kūnqǔ* composer pays attention to such details.

Phrase ③:

Primary motive 4

SAMPLE

NEW

③ 也 不 曾 讀 書 獻 策，

yě bù céng dú shū xiàn cè

平 平 去 去


③ 也 則 是 簪 纓 門 第，

yě zé shì zān yīng mén dì

平 平 平 去

The first three decorative words have a different tone contour and therefore a different melodic line is expected. The tone pattern of regulated words in Phrase ③ is 平平去去 (level-level-falling-falling) and the new text is 平平平去 (level-level-level-falling). The third regulated word was changed from falling to level tone, and the melodic contour is expected to be different as well.

Primary motive 4
 FINAL $\widehat{2 \ 1 \ 3}$ $\widehat{2 \ 3}$ | $\widehat{6 \ 5 \ 4}$ $\widehat{3 \cdot \ 2}$ | $\widehat{7 \cdot \ 2 \ 7 \ 6 \ 5}$ $\widehat{6 \ 7}$ | 7
 也 則 是 簪 纓 門 第。

In Sūn Jiàn'ān's final score, the first three decorative words of rising, level, and falling is set to $\widehat{2 \ 1 \ 3}$ $\widehat{2 \ 3}$ | or . The first rising tone, *yě* 也, maintains the same musical note as in the sample text which goes in a descending stepwise motion 21 (*re do*), same as in Wǔ Jùndá's analysis. The second decorative word, *zé* 則, according to the *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain*, is originally pronounced in the pausing tone and was reassigned to the rising tone (*rù shēng zuò shǎng shēng* 入聲作上聲).⁴⁰ The musical notes should also be in a descending stepwise motion of 3 2 (*mi re*) to reflect the rising tone. According to Wǔ Jùndá, the rising tone could also be composed in a descending and ascending stepwise motion such as 3235 (*mi re mi sol*). In this case, the two rising tones here are both decorative words which rhythmically should quickly pass by. If we choose the 3235 melodic pattern, the rhythmic value would exceed three beats and one of the decorative words would land on the *bǎn* beat where only the regulated words should be placed. Therefore the shorter one-step descending motion of 3 2 (*mi re*) fits better in this case. The third decorative word, *shì* 是, is a light-falling tone which musically should be an ascending stepwise motion. To better connect them according to their melodic

⁴⁰ Zhou Deqing, *Zhong yuan yin yun* (vol.1), 13.

contour, the third decorative word is set to 2 3 (re mi) and the melodic line for the second and the third words is 3 2 3 (mi re mi).

Regarding the next four regulated words, in the sample text, *dú* 讀 and *shū* 書 are both level tones yet one is light-level (*dú*) and the other is dark-level (*shū*). The musical notes for both words should be level and the pitch range for the light-level note should be lower than the dark-level one. In this case, the light-level (*dú*) note is set to 1 (do), in the lower pitch range, while the dark-level (*shū*) is set to 5 (sol). Wǔ Jùndá says, “In *kūnqǔ* singing, the four tones and their dark and light registers are clearly presented at the beginning of the melodic patterns, followed by the melismatic lines or primary motives.”⁴¹ In this case, the bracketed music notes of 2 3 (re mi) and 3 2 (mi re) are the melismatic lines after each level tone contour.





In Sūn Jiàn’ān’s final score, both the words *zān* 簪 and *yīng* 纓 are dark-level tones, therefore, their pitch range is positioned relative to the higher pitch range of 6 (la) and 3 (mi).

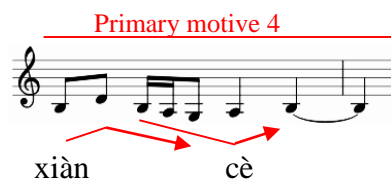


As for the primary motive, in the sample text the words that carry the primary motive 4 are *xiàn* 獻, a falling tone, and *cè* 策, originally pronounced in a pausing tone for Southern *qǔ* and reassigned to the rising tone for Northern *qǔ*.⁴² According to Wǔ Jùndá, in Northern *qǔ* music the melodic contour for the words with falling and rising tones are exchangeable. For example,

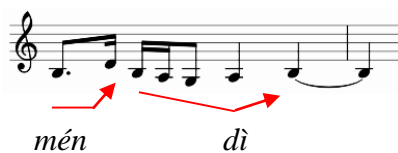
⁴¹ Wu Junda, *Kunqu changqiang yanjiu*, 99.

⁴² Zhou Deqing, *Zhong yuan yin yun* (vol.1), 13.

the tone contour for both pronunciations can be shared with a melodic contour of 5 4 3 5 (*sol fa mi sol*).⁴³ For a better connection, the falling tone word may have 5 4 3 (*sol fa mi*) as the main melodic pattern with the last 5 (*sol*) used as a note to carry on to the tone contour of the next word. In this case, the sample text has a falling tone (*xiàn* 獻) composed  and a reassigned rising tone (*cè* 策) composed  combined as:



Sūn Jiàn'ān kept the same primary motive 4 as in the sample text. In the new text, the aligned words are *mén* 門, a light-level and *dì* 第, a falling tone. Why would this very same primary motive work for different pronunciations? In Sūn Jiàn'ān's final score, he extended the word *mén* a little longer than in the sample text in order to establish the level tone and the word *dì*, a falling tone which shares the same melodic contour as a rising tone when it is needed. Therefore the primary motive is kept with a slightly different rhythmic elaboration:



⁴³ Wu Junda, *Kunqu changqiang yanjiu*, 115.

Phrase ④:

Primary motive 2

SAMPLE

2 2 7 6 7 6 7 | 2 2 1 7 | 6 1 6 5 — | 5

登科及第向鵷班高站。

dēng kē jí dì, xiàng yuān bān gāo zhàn⁴⁴

平 平 平 去

NEW

④ 讀書 養性， 修身 尚 友。

dú shū yǎng xìng, xiū shēn shàng yǒu

平 平 去 上

Regarding the first four words in both texts, even though they are listed as regulated words in the *Nine Modes*, musically they are treated as decorative words in the *Collected Models* (The fifth word in the sample text is definitely a decorative word). Each word therefore is set to a shorter musical note. They are placed on the second, third, and fourth beats of a measure to avoid being on the *bǎn* beat on which only the regulated words are allowed. The regulated words under primary motive 2 in the sample text are level-level-level-falling tones as in the model in the 1715 *Imperial Collection of Kunqu Prosodic Scores*.⁴⁵ In the new text the four regulated words are in level-level-falling-rising tones and changes to its melodic phrase are expected.

FINAL

1 2 1 2 3 | 6 6 5 3 6 5 6 4 | 3^v

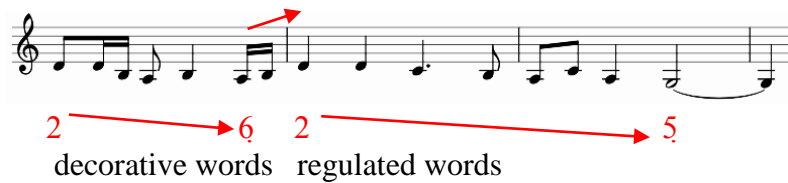
讀書 養 性， 修身 尚 友。

In Sūn Jiàn'ān's final score, his melodic phrases for both decorative words and regulated words are very different from the sample melody. For obvious reasons the new text by playwright Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh is constructed with different tone contours. Sūn Jiàn'ān chose not to retain the primary motive 2 in his new melody. The new rhyme word *yǒu* 友, instead of being stretched to five beats quickly moves on to the next text, lasting only one beat for this rhyme word. The pitch ranges are quite different as well. In the sample, the melody for the decorative

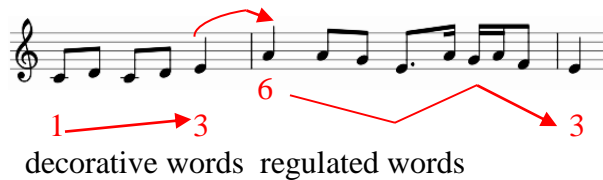
⁴⁴ This rhyme word *diǎn* is written 站 (“stand on tiptoe”), however in the *Nàshūyíng's Kūnqǔ Music Scores* (*Nàshūyíng qǔpǔ* 納書楹曲譜) and the *Master Yīnxiāngtáng's Kūnqǔ Dramatic Scores* (*Yīnxiāngtáng qǔpǔ* 吟香堂曲譜), it is written as *zhàn* 站 (“stand”) which is a variant character of 站.

⁴⁵ Wang Yiqing, ed. *Yúding qupu* 御定曲譜, vol. 2, p. 7.

words ranged between 2 (*re*) and 6 (lower *la*) and for the regulated words ranged from 2 (*re*) to 5 (lower *sol*), keeping the same pitch range for the two melodic phrases. Both melodic phrases are in descending motion but were connected with a passage of step/skip ascending scale motion.



In the final score, the melody for the decorative words ranges from 1 (*do*) to 3 (*mi*) and the regulated words range from 3 (*mi*) to 6 (*la*). The higher register conveys a clear intention of featuring the regulated words. With a leap between the two melodic phrases, the music suddenly generates an expansive feeling. In order to keep its sonorous emotion, the rhyme word is designed to be short and firm; therefore, the melismatic line after the rhyme word seen in the sample is avoided here.



Phrase ⑤:

SAMPLE

Primary motive 3

|-----|

1 2 | 1 . 2 | 3 2 0 5 4 3 5 - - |

只	這	血	性	中
zhǐ	zhè	xiě ⁴⁶	xìng	zhōng
		上	去	平

NEW

⑤ 只 這 襟 抱 中

zhǐ	zhè	jīn	bào	zhōng
		平	去	平

The first two words of both the sample text and the new text are decorative words. Since they are the same words, the melodic contour could remain the same. The regulated words under primary motive 3 in the sample text are in rising-falling-level tones. In the new text the three regulated words are in level-falling-level tones and a minor change for its melodic phrase should be expected.

FINAL

- - - - Primary motive 3

3 5 6 . 5 | 3 2 0 5 4 3 5 -^v|


只	這	襟	抱	中
---	---	---	---	---

In this final score the music notes for the decorative words are 3 5 (*mi sol*), different from the notes of 1 2 (*do re*) in the sample. The difference is due to their different pitch registers occurring in the previous for Phrase ④ which is composed with a very different intention in terms of dramatic expression. Even though the notes are different for the same words of *zhǐ zhè* 只這 in both the sample text and the new text, the melodic contour in both is ascending motion. Regarding the regulated words under the primary motive 3, the sample melody starts with note 1

⁴⁶ According to the *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain*, this word is originally pronounced in the pausing tone and was reassigned to the rising tones (*rù shēng zuò shàng shēng* 入聲作上聲). Zhou Deqing, *Zhong yuan yin yun* (vol.1), 27.


(do), which is the lowest note in the primary motive 3. This is due to the word *xiě* 血 being a rising tone which in general should be placed in a lower pitch range of a melodic phrase.

Primary motive 3

SAMPLE 

zhǐ zhè xiě xìng zhōng

Primary motive 3

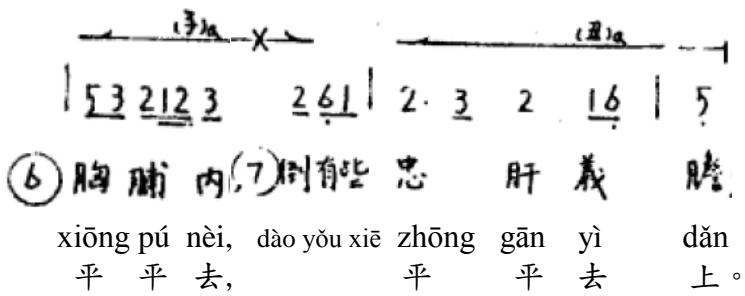
FINAL 

zhǐ zhè jīn bào zhōng

The first regulated word in the new text *jīn* 襟 is a dark-level tone, therefore the musical note in the final score for this word has to be placed in a higher pitch range of a melodic phrase.

Phrases ⑥ and ⑦:

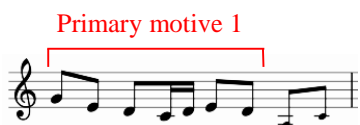
Primary motive 1 Primary motive 2

SAMPLE 

xiōng pú nèi, dào yǒu xiē zhōng gān yì dǎn
平 平 去, 平 平 去 上。

NEW ⑥ 肝 腸 裏, ⑦ 倒 有 些 情 義 牢 守。
gān cháng lǐ, dào yǒu xiē qíng yì láo shǒu
平 平 上, 平 去 平 上。

The primary motive 1 of Phrase ⑥ overlapped with the melody of Sentence ⑦, therefore they are to be analyzed together. In Phrase ⑥ it is level-level-falling tones in the sample text and is composed with primary motive 1, which fills the first three beats of this measure.



⑥ xiōng pú nèi ,

Yet in Phrase ⑦ the first three decorative words closely follow and need to fill in the rest of the beats within this measure to allow the regulated word to start on the first beat of the next measure. The three decorative words take a minimum of three eighth notes to be sung, therefore the first decorative word of Phrase ⑦ took over the last note of primary motive 1 of Phrase ⑥ for a smooth transition.



⑥ xiōng pú nèi ,

⑥ xiōng pú nèi ,

⑦ dào yǒu xiē zhōng gān yì dǎn

Phrase ⑦ then finishes its melody with its rhyme word, *dǎn* 膽 on the first *bǎn* beat. One may wonder why these three decorative words are not composed as one eighth note and two sixteenth notes since its total value fits into the fourth beat after the completion of primary motive 1. In this case, due to the mood and the pace required to express this *qǔpái* properly, the sixteenth notes serve mainly to elaborate the melody rather than to position the words, allowing the words to be sung without rushing or being sloppy.

FINAL

Primary motive 1					Primary motive 2																		
	5.	3	2	3	2	1 ^v	2	1	6	1		2	.	3	2	3	1	7	2	6		5 ^v	
	肝	腸	裏	倒	有	些	情	義	牢	守	。												
⑥	-----,											⑦	-----										

In the final score, the primary motive 1 of Phrase ⑥ contains the same basic melodic contour moving from 5 (*sol*) to 2 (*re*). The sample text uses level-level-falling tones while the new text uses level-level-rising tones; therefore the melody has been changed:

from

Primary motive 1

xiōng pú nèi

5 → 2

to

Primary motive 1

gān cháng lǐ

5 → 2

The new word *lǐ* 裏 is a rising tone which should stay in the lower pitch range of a melodic phrase. In comparison, the final score retains the similar melodic contour as in the sample melody, overlapping the primary motive 1 of Phrase ⑥ with the decorative word of Phrase ⑦ and finishes the regulated words with a more elaborate touch.

		Primary motive 1		Primary motive 2	
SAMPLE					
FINAL		5	2	2	5

Phrase ⑧

Primary motive 3

SAMPLE 3̣2̣ | 1 2 | 1 1̣2̣ 3̣2̣ 0̣5̣4̣3̣ | 5 — 5 — |

⑧ 今 日 個 觀 了 喪 亡，
 jīn rì guo⁴⁷ dǔ liǎo sāng wáng
 上 平 平

NEW ⑧ 今 日 個 逢 了 禍 災，
 jīn rì guo féng liǎo huò zāi
 平 去 平

The first three decorative words in both the sample text and the new text are the same, therefore the melody should be similar, if not identical. The regulated words under primary motive 3, besides *liǎo* 了 which is a decorative word, are composed in different tones: rising-level-level tones in the sample and level-falling-level tones in the new text. Some melodic change may be utilized for expressive purposes.

FINAL 6 5̣ 4̣ 3̣ | 2̣^{3̣} 1̣ 2̣ 3̣^{5̣} 2̣ 0̣ 5̣ 4̣ 3̣ | 5̣ . 6̣ 5̣ - V |

今 日 個 逢 了 禍 災，

Interestingly, although the same three decorative words, *jīn rì guo* 今日個, are used in both the sample and the final score, they are composed differently. The last musical note from the previous Phrase ⑦ in both the sample and the final score ends on 5 (lower *sol*) as their rhyme words. What is the reason that Sūn Jiàn'ān changed the melodic phrase of Phrase ⑧ in his final score? In the sample, Phrase ⑧ expresses a court musician's sorrow by saying, "Today I have witnessed death."

Interval of 6th Primary motive 3

⑦...dǎn, ⑧jīn rì guo dǔ liǎo sāng wáng

⁴⁷ This word 個 is pronounced *ge* in Mandarin. In *kūnqǔ* singing, this word should be pronounced *guo* instead.


In the new text, Zhāng Yětáng expresses his pain by saying, “Today I have faced a crisis.”

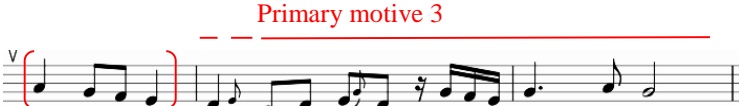
⑦...shǒu,⑧jīn rì guo féng liǎo huò zāi

Both characters express their resentments, yet the degree of leap from Phrase ⑦ to Phrase ⑧ in the final score (5 to 6, interval of 9th) is wider than the sample (5 to 3, interval of 6th), which makes Zhāng Yětáng’s crisis greater than that of the court musician witnessing death. Also, in the sample when the leap occurred, the melodic phrase quickly descended , expressing the three decorative words, *jīn rì guo* 今日個, meaning “today,” in a more calm manner. Yet, in the final score when the leap occurred, the first note of its melody is sustained a bit longer on the first decorative word , making *jīn* 今 of “today” more certain and emotional. At the beginning of this chapter, an example of the high regard in which *kūnqǔ* vocal music is held is reflected in the saying “*Jiā jiā shōu shí qǐ, hù hù bù dī fáng* 家家收拾起，戶戶不隄防 (Every family [sings] ‘Packing up,’ every household [vocalizes] ‘Off guard’) which showcases two masterpieces from the Qīng dynasty. In fact, the Northern *qǔpái* 【*Yì zhī huā* 一枝花】 which features the famous phrase “Off guard” is its first sentence, also included the words *jīn rì guo* 今日個 (“today”) as part of the poetry. This famous melody for *jīn rì guo* is composed in descending motion . The very same words with a similar melodic contour in the new composition bring forth immediate nostalgic familiarity. The audiences could right away connect the famous character, Lǐ Guīnián 李龜年, a court musician who wandered in the south of the country riven by political chaos, singing for a living, drawing many parallels with the new character, Zhāng Yětáng.

Sūn Jiàn'ān was able to keep the rest of words, although the tones are varied, under the primary motive 3 melodic phrase as in the sample. The first regulated word, *féng* 逢, is a light-level tone. Following after the melody of the first three decorative words 6 5 4 3 (*la sol fa mi*), the note continues to descend to 2 (*re*). With a little grace note of 3 (*mi*), the light-level tone has been established. To the second regulated word, *huò* 禍, was added a grace note of 5 (*sol*), making 3 5 2 a clear falling tone. The third, also the last regulated word *zāi* 災, was changed from 5 – 5 – (*sol sol*) with a breath accent in the sample into 5 • 6 5 (*sol • la sol* –) with a clear pitch rise to 6 (*la*) and down to 5 (*sol*) in the final score, allowing the singer to put extra energy on 6 (*la*) for a more dramatic effect.

Primary motive 3

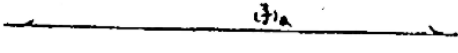
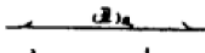
SAMPLE 

FINAL 

féng *huò* *zāi*

Overall, Sūn Jiàn'ān's final score delivers a more flowery sensation as well as more detailed instructions in singing.



Phrases ⑨ and ⑩



	Primary motive 1			Primary motive 2		
SAMPLE						
	⑨	遭 了 危 難,		⑩	值 了 變 慘,	
		zāo liǎo wēi nàn ,			zhí liǎo biàn cǎn	
		平 平 去,			平 去 上	
NEW	⑨	遭 了 誣 蔑,		⑩	值 了 渠 醜。	
		zāo liǎo wū miè ,			zhí liǎo qú chǒu	
		平 平 去,			平 平 上	

The tonal structure in the new text (level-level-falling, level-level-rising) closely follows the tonal structure in the sample text (level-level-falling, level-falling-rising), with just one change in Phrase ⑩ when the second regulated word *biàn* 變, a falling tone in the sample text, is now the word *qú* 渠, a light-level tone in the new text. The last regulated words, also rhyme words, are both rising tones, therefore the final score is expected to be the same on musical note 5 (lower *sol*).

FINAL	5	<u>2 3</u>	5 .	<u>6 5</u>		4 4	<u>0 5 4 3</u>	2	- ^v		<u>1 . 7</u>	<u>6 1</u>	<u>2 . 3</u>	<u>1 . 7 6</u>		5
		遭	了	誣		蔑,					值	了	渠		醜	

In comparison, the scheme of melodic phrases in both the sample and the final score is similar with some rhythmic elaboration.

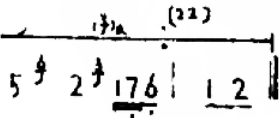
	Primary motive 1			Primary motive 2		
SAMPLE						
	⑨	zāo	wēi	nàn	⑩	zhí biàn cǎn
FINAL						
	⑨	zāo	wū	miè	⑩	zhí qú chǒu

In Phrase ⑨, the second regulated word in the sample text, *wéi* 危⁴⁸ is a light-level tone, according to the *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain*. Its melodic contour therefore moves from 2 (*re*) to 5 (*sol*) to establish the light-level tone. In the new text, the second regulated word is *wū* 誣, a dark-level tone; therefore its melodic contour is sustained on the 5 (*sol*) to establish the level tone nature. Followed by sixteenth notes 65 (*la sol*), they serve as a melismatic bridge leading to 4 (*fa*). In Phrase ⑩, the second regulated word in the sample text, *biàn* 變, is a falling tone. As in Northern *qǔ*, the melodic contour in general goes  for a falling tone. Yet in the new text, this position is replaced by a light-level tone, *qú* 渠. In order to keep the primary motive 2, Sūn Jiàn'ān sustains the 2 (*re*) so that the level tone can be established  and the rest of the notes serve as a melismatic line reaching to the low 5 (*sol*), ending with the rhyme word on the right note at the right *bǎn* beat.

Phrase ⑪

SAMPLE

Primary motive 1



⑪ 不由人 痛切 齒 聲吞恨 銜。

bù yóu rén tòng qiè⁴⁹ chǐ 、 shēng tūn hèn xián

去 上 上 平 平 去 平

NEW

⑪ 不由人 痛切 齒、 憤悲難 剖。

bù yóu rén tòng qiè chǐ 、 fèn bēi nán pǒu

去 上 上 去 平 平 上

⁴⁸ In modern Mandarin, 危 is pronounced as wēi (first tone) in Mainland China and wéi (second tone) in Taiwan; the latter is similar to a light-level tone as indicated in the *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain*.

⁴⁹ According to the *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain*, this word qiè 切 is originally pronounced in the pausing tone and was reassigned to the rising tone (*rù shēng zuò shàng shēng* 入聲作上聲). Zhou Deqing, *Zhong yuan yin yun* (vol.1), 27.

Phrase ⑪ is the ending phrase of the *qǔpái* 【Village drums】. The first half of the new text contains the same words; therefore the melodic line should be similar if not the same. The second half, the last four regulated words, is composed with different tones. Yet this phrase is a conclusion: even with a different tonal contour, the melody of primary motive 1 should be kept.

The ending phrase of each *qǔpái* strictly requires following regulated tone patterns by using the rule of level and oblique (*píng zè lǜ* 平仄律). Zhōu Déqīng addressed the importance of the last phrase of a *qǔpái* in his *The Rhyme Book of the Central Plain*:

詩頭、曲尾是也。如得好句，其句意盡，可為末句。

When composing a poem, it is the beginning phrase in which the poet strives for perfection; when composing a *qǔpái*, it is the ending phrase in which a *qǔ* writer strives for perfection. If a *qǔ* writer composes a good phrase which fulfills the intention, it can be the ending phrase.⁵⁰

Zhōu Déqīng listed regulated tone patterns of the ending phrases from sixty-nine *qǔpái* pieces in his *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain*.⁵¹ Since the ending phrase is normally the focal point, or *wùtóu* 務頭, of a *qǔpái*, in which its rich literature and dramatic musical moments are combined, he therefore recommended that a *qǔ* writer follow the regulated tone patterns precisely and rigorously. For the *qǔpái* 【Village drums】, the regulated tone pattern of the seven-word ending Phrase ⑪ is listed as 平 (level) - 仄 (oblique: rising or falling) - 仄 (oblique: rising or falling) - 平 (level) - 平 (level) - 去 (falling) - 上 (rising). A variation of 平 (level) for the last word can also apply.⁵² As stated earlier, the *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain* was written in the Yuán dynasty by Zhōu Déqīng 周德清 (14th century). The sample *qǔpái* came from *The Palace of Eternal Life* (*Cháng shēng diàn* 長生殿), a Qīng dynasty play by Hóng Shēng 洪昇 (17th century). The new play, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfū* was written by the

⁵⁰ Zhou Deqing, *Zhong yuan yin yun* (vol. 2), 36.

⁵¹ Zhou Deqing, *Zhong yuan yin yun* (vol. 2), 36–40.

⁵² Zhou Deqing, *Zhong yuan yin yun* (vol. 2), 39.

21st century playwright Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh 曾永義. The text of the sample *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 from Act “Scolding the thief” follows most of Zhōu Déqīng’s recommendations, only the first word was changed to falling tone. Tsēng’s new text changed three out of seven words. The following are the tone patterns for the seven-word ending phrase from the above three sources:

14 th century	平 - 仄 - 仄 - 平 - 平 - 去 - 上 (or 平)
17 th century	去 - 仄 - 仄 - 平 - 平 - 去 - 平
21 st century	去 - 仄 - 仄 - 去 - 平 - 平 - 上

Both the sample text and the new text use words that are not entirely compliant with the recommended rule from *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain*. Obviously there is room for variation in *kūnqǔ qǔpái* writing. The thoughts behind this strict demand on following regulated tone patterns has shown us that during Zhōu Déqīng’s time (1277–1365), the melodies of the Yuán dynasty *qǔpái* pieces not only are fixed but are also less flexible than in later times. In my opinion, the reason for employing restrictive tonal rules in *qǔpái* writing is to avoid the change of sung melody that is closely linked with the words. Most playwrights were not capable of composing *qǔpái* melodies; therefore, with all the tone patterns set as rules, playwrights could easily replicate the *qǔpái* music without taking the risk of writing new words which might go against their melodic patterns. On the other hand, there are playwrights who embrace creativity and search for optimal word choice in writing *qǔ* poetry, just as Tāng Xiǎnzǔ 湯顯祖 (1550–1616), who opposed the ancient and rigid rules, famously argued with Shěng Jǐng 沈璟 (1553–1610), who dogmatically obeyed the tone pattern rules. Shěng Jǐng believed that if the tonal rules were not followed, a singer’s voice would be disturbed and off-pitch. Tāng Xiǎnzǔ replied to

Shěng Jǐng's comment, satirized it saying he might as well just break and twist voices of all mankind. Tāng Xiǎnzǔ has proved his theory with his classic play *The Peony Pavilion* (*Mǔdān tíng* 牡丹亭) and was respected as the Shakespeare of China, honoring the rules by breaking them.

The composer concluded this *qǔpái* with the following melody:

FINAL

Primary motive 1

The notation shows a sequence of notes with lyrics underneath. A red line above the notes from the 10th to the 14th measure is labeled 'Primary motive 1'. The notes are: 1̇, 2̇, 1̇, 3, 3, 3, 6, 5, 6 | 2̇, 3̇, 1̇, 7, 6., 5 | 6., 1̇, 5, 6, 1̇ - | 1̇ - V 2̇, 3̇, 1̇, 7, 6 | 1, 2 - - ||

不 由 人 痛 切 齒、 憤 悲 難 剖。

In comparison, the final score was composed in a very different fashion. What are the reasons for its differences?

SAMPLE

Primary motive 1

The notation shows a sequence of notes with lyrics underneath. A red line above the notes from the 10th to the 14th measure is labeled 'Primary motive 1'. The notes are: 1̇, 2̇, 1̇, 3, 3, 3, 6, 5, 6 | 2̇, 3̇, 1̇, 7, 6., 5 | 6., 1̇, 5, 6, 1̇ - | 1̇ - V 2̇, 3̇, 1̇, 7, 6 | 1, 2 - - ||

bù yóu rén tòng qiè chǐ 、 shēng tūn hèn xián。

FINAL

Primary motive 1

The notation shows a sequence of notes with lyrics underneath. A red line above the notes from the 10th to the 14th measure is labeled 'Primary motive 1'. The notes are: 1̇, 2̇, 1̇, 3, 3, 3, 6, 5, 6 | 2̇, 3̇, 1̇, 7, 6., 5 | 6., 1̇, 5, 6, 1̇ - | 1̇ - V 2̇, 3̇, 1̇, 7, 6 | 1, 2 - - ||

bù yóu rén tòng qiè chǐ 、 fèn bēi nán pǒu。

Qǔpái 【Village drums】 is the first piece of a *qǔpái* set in which three *qǔpái* of 【Village drums】 - 【Song of peace】 - 【Charming on horse】 should be connected in that order. The sample 【Village drums】 would immediately move on to the next *qǔpái* 【Song of peace】 , forming the melody as follows:



... 【Village drums】 | 【Song of peace】 ...

Tsēng's new text in Act 3 is arranged in the very same order. However, due to the *qǔpái* 【Song of peace】 being summarily cut in the directors' emendation, the *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 instead is followed by dialogues and stage movements, breaking its continuity as shown in the sample.

In this case, even though the directors' decision failed to follow the *qǔpái* principle in which a *qǔpái* set should be presented as a whole, the composer or musical arranger has a duty to try to solve the problem. In the Act "Scolding the thief (*Mà zéi* 罵賊)" from *The Palace of Eternal Life* (*Cháng shēng diàn* 長生殿), this *qǔpái* set of 【Village drums】 – 【Song of peace】 –

【Charming on horse】 plus the *qǔpái* 【Better than a gourd】 are designed to be sung consecutively, without any monologue or dialogue in-between. These four pieces are put together expressing just one inner feeling: a court musician's resentment of those high-ranking officials who betrayed the country in a cowardly manner. Therefore, musically, these four *qǔpái* pieces should be composed in the formula of introduction, development, climax, and conclusion. In the sample, the melodic phrase for Phrase ⑪ ends quickly with two eighth notes of 12 (*do re*), indicating the unfinished nature and paving the way for the next *qǔpái* 【Song of peace】. Now that in the directors' emendation there was no transition to the next *qǔpái*, Sūn Jiàn'ān therefore treats the *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 as if it were an individual piece, composing the ending Phrase ⑪ with a melodic line full of dramatic emotion. In the final score, the high notes are on the *bù* 不 (a decorative word, lit. "cannot."), *tòng* 痛 (a regulated word, lit. "pain."), *qiè* 切 (a regulated

word, lit. “gnash.”), and *bēi* 悲 (a regulated word, lit. “sorrow.”), crying out these negative emotions. The overall pitch range in the final score is much wider than in the sample melody, increasing its sense of unease. Sūn Jiàn’ān doubles the duration of the last four regulated words, not only generating a feeling of slowing as should occur in a conclusion, but also, by exaggerating the words such as *bēi* 悲 (sorrow), creating a truly plaintive atmosphere. With these drastic changes, Sūn Jiàn’ān still managed to end this *qǔpái* with primary motive 1, indeed not an easy task.

SAMPLE

Primary motive 1



FINAL

Primary motive 1



Final Observations

Sūn Jiàn’ān’s final score of the *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 (Fig. 5.3) indicates that this piece is a Northern *xiānlǚ* mode piece and should be sung in 1=D. It is different from the sample

【Village drums】 in *chě* key (1=C) documented in the *Kūnqǔ qǔpái jí tàoshù fàn lì jí* 崑曲曲牌及套數範例集 (Collected Models of *Kūnqǔ Qǔpái* Patterns and Sequences), the primary source for Sūn Jiàn’ān. This change from C to D is analogous to the Western concept of moveable *do* where *do* (1 in Chinese numeric notation) is the tonic or principal note of the scale. What is the meaning of mode? What are the reasons behind the key change?

北仙呂【村裏逐鼓】 1=D Northern *xiānlǚ* mode 【Village drums】 1=D

ㄗ $1^{\frac{2}{J}}$ 3 3^{\vee} $3^{\frac{5}{J}}$ $2\ 3$ 5^{\vee} $6^{\frac{1}{J}}$ $4\ 3\ 2$ $-^{\vee}$ | $\frac{4}{4}$ $5\ 5$ $7\ 6\ 2\ 3$ | $5\ 6\ 4\ 3\ 5$ $-$ |
 (唱) 俺 雖 非 世 家 華 冑, (zhòu) 金 章 紫 綬。 (shòu)

5^{\vee} $2\ 1$ 3 $2\ 3$ | $6\ 5\ 4\ 3\ 2$ | $7\ 2\ 7\ 6\ 5$ $6\ 7$ | 7^{\vee} $1\ 2\ 1\ 2\ 3$ |
 也 則 是 簪 纓 門 第。 讀 書 養 性,

$6\ 6\ 5$ $3\ 6\ 5\ 6\ 4$ | 3^{\vee} $3\ 5\ 6\ 5$ | $3^{\frac{5}{J}}\ 2\ 0\ 5\ 4\ 3\ 5$ $-^{\vee}$ | $5\ 3\ 2\ 3\ 2$ $1^{\vee}\ 2\ 1\ 6\ 1$ |
 修 身 尚 友。只 這 襟 抱 中, 肝 腸 裏 倒 有 些

$2\ 3$ $2\ 3\ 1$ $7\ 2\ 6$ | 5^{\vee} $6\ 5\ 4\ 3$ | $2^{\frac{3}{J}}$ $1\ 2\ 3^{\frac{5}{J}}\ 2\ 0\ 5\ 4\ 3$ | $5\ 6\ 5$ $-^{\vee}$ |
 情 義 牢 守。今 日 個 逢 了 禍 災,

$5\ 2\ 3\ 5\ 6\ 5$ | $4\ 4\ 0\ 5\ 4\ 3\ 2$ $-^{\vee}$ | $1\ 7\ 6\ 1\ 2\ 3\ 1\ 7\ 6$ | 5^{\vee} $1\ 2\ 1\ 3\ 3\ 3\ 6\ 5\ 6$ |
 遭 了 誣 賅, 值 了 渠 醜。不 由 人

$2^{\frac{3}{J}}$ $1\ 7\ 6\ 5$ | $6\ 1\ 5\ 6\ 1$ $-$ | 1 $-^{\vee}$ $2^{\frac{3}{J}}$ $1\ 7\ 6$ | $1\ 2$ $- -$ ||
 痛 切 齒、 憤 悲 難 剖。

Fig. 5.3 Sūn Jiàn'ān's final score of the *qǔpái* 【Village drums】

The qǔpái 【Village drums】 is composed in the Northern *xiānlǚ* mode. The word “Northern” refers to the musical and singing style and its use of the diatonic scale for the *qǔpái* piece. What is the *xiānlǚ* mode? In English, the word “mode” specifically refers to a modal system which combines the theory of scale construction and its melodic formula required to properly execute this modal system. The modal concept behind the Indian *raga*, Persian *maqām*, or European Medieval church modes may also contain connotations associated with emotions and time,

embedding essential characteristics that are needed for musical creativity. In *kūnqǔ* music, the reference of emotional connotation is also present. The concept in which a mode is associated with a particular emotion came from *Chàng Lùn* 唱論 (On Singing), written by the Master of Zhī'ān from Yànnán (*Yànnán Zhī'ān* 燕南芝庵). This essay was selected and included in several important *qǔ* collections and *qǔ* theory books, including Zhōu Déqīng's *The Rhyme Book of the Central Plain* in the Yuán dynasty.⁵³ The Master of Zhī'ān from Yànnán (actual name unknown) listed seventeen modes, from which the *xiānlǚ* mode of the *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 should be sung refreshingly and lively, profoundly and seamlessly (*qīng xīn mián miǎo* 清新綿邈). As a theory, this has been questioned by contemporary *kūnqǔ* scholars for its contradiction between the abstract and the actual practice in *qǔpái* composition and interpretation in singing. As Xú Dàchūn mentioned, “many lyric writers of later times do not understand this rationale”; they then composed *qǔpái* without being concerned with how the emotion should be portrayed and this neglectful manner eventually created chaos in *qǔpái* classification. Yet playwrights cannot proceed without the function of modes in mind. *Kūnqǔ* inherited the theatrical structure of the Yuán dynasty Northern *qǔ zájù* (*běi qǔ zájù* 北曲雜劇) in which *zájù* plays were composed in the Northern *qǔ* style. In *The Art of Yuan Dynasty Zájù* (*Yuán dài zájù yìshù* 元代雜劇藝術), Xú Fúmíng 徐扶明 explained the modes used in the Northern *qǔ* tradition:

In simple words, the *gōng diào* 宮調 (mode) restricts the pitch range of a *guǎn sè* 管色 (lit. “the tone color of a *qǔ dí* flute”)... The so-called *guǎn sè* is also known as *diào mén* 調門 (key). Therefore the mode was used like today's key signature of C or D.⁵⁴ ... In the Yuán dynasty *zájù* plays, every first *qǔpái* piece of a *qǔpái* set is marked with its mode. For example the *zhèng* mode (*zhèng gōng* 正宮) 【*Duān zhèng hǎo* 端正好】 is followed by *qǔpái* pieces also in the same *zhèng* mode. The *shuāng* mode (*shuāng diào* 雙調)

⁵³ Zhou Deqing, *Zhong yuan yin yun* (vol. 2), 29.

⁵⁴ Xu Fuming, *Yuan dai zaju yishu*, 136.

【Xīn shuǐ lìng 新水令】 is followed by *qǔpái* pieces also in the same *shuāng* mode. There are many *qǔpái* pieces in the same modes.⁵⁵ ... According to the structure of a Northern *qǔpái* set, each set should employ *qǔpái* pieces in the same mode to avoid the chaos of mixing modes and discomfort when singing different *qǔpái* pieces of different natures.⁵⁶

The explanation by Xú Fúmíng provides the practical side of having a mode as a part of the *qǔpái*'s modal identity.

Nevertheless, mode is not exactly equivalent to key. Sūn Xuánlíng 孙玄龄, in his book *Music of the Yuan Dynasty's Literary Songs (Yuán sàncǔ dì yīnyuè 元散曲的音乐)* analyzed the Northern *qǔpái* pieces collected in Wáng Jiliè's *Assembled Dramatic Scores (Jíchéng qǔpǔ 集成曲谱)* and categorized the patterns in terms of relations between modes and keys by different categories of singers/actors. In the case of the *xiānlǚ* mode, there are four possible keys.⁵⁷

Mode	Keys	Role Categories
<i>Xiānlǚ</i> mode	<i>zhèng gōng</i> 正宫 (1=G)	male actor, painted face actor, old female actor
	<i>liù zì</i> 六字 (1=F)	young female actor, painted face actor
	<i>xiǎo gōng</i> 小工 (1=D)	young female actor, young male actor, male actor
	<i>chě zì</i> 尺字 (1=C)	male actor, painted face actor, old female actor

This analysis provides one possible reason as to why Sūn Jiàn'ān's final score of the *qǔpái*

【Village drums】 is composed in 1=D since it is sung by Zhāng Yětāng played by a young male actor, rather than the sample *qǔpái* 【Village drums】 which is composed in 1=C, designed to be sung by a supporting older male role actor.

When a *kūnqǔ* composer arranges the key for each *qǔpái*, besides the previous indicated *guǎn sè* 管色 (lit. “the tone color of a *qǔ dí* flute”) or *diào mén* 调门 (key), the concern arises of whether the pitch range of a particular *qǔpái* is suitable and manageable by the assigned

⁵⁵ Xu Fuming, *Yuan dai zaju yishu*, 137.

⁵⁶ Xu Fuming, *Yuan dai zaju yishu*, 138.

⁵⁷ Sun Xuanling, *Yuan sanqu di yinyue*, 179–85.

actor/singer. In Western opera, the pitch ranges for each voice such as soprano, alto, tenor, and bass are standardized for the most part, except for some unique vocal types such as coloratura, a type of soprano which requires a much higher tessitura than the standard soprano. When an aria is composed, the operatic singer can only practice it until they can bring out the best vocal quality that is suitable for the music and the character they are portraying. The music director and the producer will cast a wide net to obtain the best available singer for the role. In *kūnqǔ* performance, most of the productions are produced by the *kūnqǔ* company which programmed or commissioned the play. Without any external audition and casting, the *kūnqǔ* company would prioritize their in-house actors/singers, on some occasions engaging guest performers for publicity and marketing purposes. In this type of environment, the *kūnqǔ* composer or music arranger may have to negotiate with the actor/singer if a key change is required during the rehearsal period. Sometimes the actor/singer may even ask the *qǔ dí* flute player for a key change directly without getting permission from the composer or arranger. Sūn Jiàn'ān addressed this issue after his music score had been finalized and expressed his dissatisfaction due to the fact that the result sounded like a medley of different keys. Issues and problems in the rehearsal process will be examined in the next chapter.

In sum, the theory of *qǔpái* composition is complicated and requires meticulous attention to detail. Music creation may occur by inspiration or by showcasing talent; *kūnqǔ* composers and arrangers are different for the reasons that they have to carefully craft *qǔpái* music, following tradition closely and bringing forth new ideas without losing the classical beauty of *kūnqǔ*. The dramatic text is the foundation of a *kūnqǔ* play, a basis for creating music and theatrical performance. Great playwrights such as Tāng Xiǎnzǔ of *The Peony Pavilion* and Hóng Shēng of

The Palace of Eternal Life created masterpieces; however, it was Yè Táng and Xú Lín who further refined those plays with their music and made them the classics they are acknowledged to be today.

As the music director of the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre, Sūn Jiàn'ān serves as a leader taking the theatre's musicians under his umbrella. As a *kūnqǔ* composer, he draws *kūnqǔ* music from all sorts of play texts, promoting *kūnqǔ* music from *xìqǔ* stage to symphonic concert hall and to multimedia platforms. He often proudly says, “What I compose is *kūnqǔ* (昆曲), not Kūn songs (*kūngē* 昆歌).”⁵⁸ Sūn Jiàn'ān has turned the play *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* into a musical phantasmagoria. His sophisticated *qǔpái* pieces, both in Southern and Northern styles, have earned acclaim by professionals and amateurs. He creates atmospheric instrumental music that carefully depicts various scenarios and enriches emotions that are integral to the moment. His reviving the early Southern folk songs and entrusting melodies from the sources of the festive wind-percussion music (*chuīdǎ yuè* 吹打樂) and the narrative musical tradition originating in Sūzhōu (Sūzhōu *píngdàn* 蘇州評彈) provides a taste of *jiāngnán* 江南, south of the Yangtze River. Although there is no room for analysis of all of the musical elements in this chapter, Sūn Jiàn'ān has proven that the music composer plays a decisive role in creating *kūnqǔ* performance and needs to be acknowledged.

⁵⁸ *Kūngē* 昆歌 is a new term for a faster paced *kūnqǔ*-like melody set to a poem of *shī* and *cí* tradition.

Chapter 6

Communicating the Text through Performance

During the pre-production period from 2014 to June 2015, two production meetings were held, in August and November 2014; Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh's dramatic text was revised three times, followed by Tsēng's own revision of October 2014, Yuán Wěi's edition of February 2015 (most revised content was later rejected by the directors), and the directors' emendation in early June 2015; Sūn Jiàn'ān's score written in *jiǎnpǔ* numbered notation was dated June 2015. Yet throughout the rehearsal period in July and August 2015, the music continued to be created and revised along with the directors' ongoing emendation, which would continue to evolve and become finalized as the text for performance. The official announcement of *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* was made to the media and press on July 7, 2015, marking the establishment of the production and the beginning of its rehearsal period. The team of directors, a married couple comprised of husband Zhōu Shìcóng and wife Zhū Yǎ, rose to directors' status from their background as *xìqǔ* performers: Zhōu Shìcóng from *kūnqǔ* and Zhū Yǎ from *jīngjù*. During the official announcement to the media, Zhōu Shìcóng acknowledged his director's position as being one who should “discuss with” the actors and not “demand of” the actors. This directing concept was influenced by Lǐ Zǐguì 李紫贵 (1915–1999)¹, a member of the distinguished first generation of *xìqǔ* directors in the twentieth century. Lǐ Zǐguì was born into a family of *xìqǔ* artists and was a twenty-year veteran actor of old male and martial male categories. While performing on stage in his teens, he was also given the duty of directing the troupe. In his later days, he researched theatrical theories on performing and directing, including Russian theories such as the

¹ Interviewed and recorded in Nánjīng, August 13, 2015.

Stanislavski system, and Chinese treatises on *xìqǔ* such as Huáng Fānchūò's 黄旂绰 *Míng Xīn Jiàn* 明心鑑 (Mirror of the Clear Mind) and Lǐ Yú's 李漁 *Xián Qíng Ōu Jì* 閒情偶寄 (Journal of Leisure Time). Combining this research with his performance experience, Lǐ Zǐguì published *Collected Essays on the Arts of Xìqǔ Acting and Directing of Lǐ Zǐguì*² in 1992 which provided precious resources for modern-day *xìqǔ* actors and directors. His student commemorated his directing style with the following description:

I have seen Teacher Zǐguì directing many plays... He always patiently and pleasantly discussed and exchanged ideas with actors; therefore he inspired affection and respect from them. The harmonious environment built during rehearsals is due to his understanding that director and actors are equals during the creative process; a relation of mutual inspiration and collaboration. He in particular understood that a director should do his best to cultivate and cherish actors' passions and ideas in creativities; this is the achievement and duty of a director. He loved to say 'try it' at the rehearsals. In other words, he did not demand that the actors fulfill his composition and design. Instead, his tone of discussion and open-minded attitude would achieve a meeting of the minds between a director and an actor through practice.³

The rehearsal schedule for July 2015 combined two productions, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* and *The Peach Blossom Fan* (*Táo huā shān* 桃花扇), a classic play re-staged by Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre (Jiāngsū Shěng Yǎnyì Jítuán Kūnjù Yuàn 江苏省演艺集团昆剧院) (Hereafter Shěng Kūn) which has become one of the company's signature plays. Since the *Wèi* play was new to every participant in the company, significantly more rehearsal time was allotted to it. Generally six rehearsal days per week (often including Sundays and not including other performances held elsewhere), twice per day (roughly 9am-12noon and 1pm-5pm or 2pm-5pm and 6pm-10:30pm), were scheduled for rehearsals. This schedule could vary depending on whether outside performances took place. The first part of the rehearsals for

² Lǐ Zǐguì *xìqǔ biǎo dǎo yǎn yìshù lùnjí* 李紫贵戏曲表导演艺术论集

³ Jin Tong, "Shenqie mianhuai Li Zigui xiansheng," 56.

each act began with script readings. After four stages of rough reading (*cū dú* 粗读), further reading (*zài dú* 再读), meticulous reading (*xì dú* 细读), and refined reading (*jīng dú* 精读),⁴ the rehearsals then moved from a conference room to the company's Lán Yuàn Theatre 兰苑剧场 for onstage rehearsals.

Reading Rehearsals

Although Zhōu Shìcóng and Zhū Yǎ were both credited as directors, Zhū Yǎ served mainly to edit the directors' first emendation. Her duty during script reading rehearsals was to explain her views on the emotional process of each character's development and to provide reasons for her changes to the dramatic text. Zhōu Shìcóng would enhance his creative ideas and verbally draw the scenery with blocking and movements embedded in his imagined world. The period for reading rehearsals lasted about eight days between July 9 and July 20 and resulted in another edition of the directors' text for performance dated July 20, a semi-final version that was ready for stage rehearsals.

At that point, most of the *qǔpái* songs written in simplified numbered notation were in the actors' hands. Though traditionally *qǔpái* songs are in the format of *gōng chě* 工尺 musical notation, all actors but principal actor Cài Zhèngrén 蔡正仁 (as Wèi Liángfǔ) relied on this widely used twentieth century notation system. Cài Zhèngrén in fact had to transpose from the numbered notation back to the *gōng chě* notation in order to better memorize the songs.⁵ Cài Zhèngrén has won acclaim for his 65 years of excellent *kūnqǔ* performance to date and has earned the title “Living Emperor Táng (dynasty) Míng Huáng” for portraying the Emperor in the

⁴ Rehearsal notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 9, 2015.

⁵ Rehearsal notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 15, 2015.

play *The Palace of Eternal Life* (*Cháng shēng diàn* 長生殿). He is the foremost student of the great master Yú Zhèn fēi 俞振飛 and is the essential figure in passing down Yú's torch to new generations. This *Wèi* play is not only dedicated to Wèi Liáng fǔ 魏良輔 as the sage of *kūnqǔ*, but also pays tribute to Cài Zhèng rén 蔡正人 as a living legend.

The differences between the directors' semi-final edition and their previous emendation were mainly due to converting tedious monologues into more concise dialogue and simplifying text. Increasing the number of dialogue passages enriched the dynamics between the characters, creating interaction and dramatic effects. For example, in Act 1 when Emperor Zhū has a conversation with 107-year-old Kūnshān elder Zhōu Shòu yì, the original dramatic text is as follows (1.24-1.26):

Emperor Zhū: How did you come here? How did you gain such longevity?

Zhōu Shòu yì: I came on foot. I have traveled a long distance nonstop. My son has turned eighty and he has accompanied me on my journey. On my way I gasped for breath like a cow, often falling to the ground. I have no recipe for achieving a noble age, but I have a passion for singing the *qǔ*, drinking alcohol, and loving pretty ladies!

Emperor Zhū: Your love for alcohol and beauty, good fortune, good fortune! I have heard that Kūnshān's lyrical melodies (Kūnshān *qiāng*) are pleasing, will you sing for us?

The directors kept the same dialogue in their emendation. However, during the script reading rehearsals, the dialogue was changed as follows:

Emperor Zhū: How did you come here?

Zhōu Shòu yì: I came on foot. I have traveled a long distance nonstop. My son has turned eighty and he has accompanied me on my journey. On my way I gasped for breath like a cow, often falling to the ground.

Emperor Zhū: How did you gain such longevity?

Zhōu Shòu yì: I have no recipe for achieving a noble age, but I have three passions.

Emperor Zhū: Which three passions?

Zhōu Shòuyì: First I have a passion for singing the *qǔ*. Second I have a passion for drinking alcohol. Well, the third passion... I love pretty ladies!

Emperor Zhū: Your love for alcohol and beauty, good fortune, good fortune! Bring him a garden stool.

[A eunuch brings a Chinese drum shaped stool for Zhōu Shòuyì. Zhōu Shòuyì sits down.]

Emperor Zhū: I have heard that Kūnshān's lyrical melodies (Kūnshān *qiāng*) are pleasing, will you sing for us?

By rewriting these dialogues, the pace was now faster and more engaging between the two characters. Another added gesture is that by bringing a garden stool to Zhōu Shòuyì, the directors visually pay respect to the elderly. This is a fundamental Confucian ethic integral to Chinese culture and traditionally a social responsibility for which theatrical plays usually provide some moral education to illiterate people. Another example shows how breaking a monologue into more numerous lines of dialogue and increasing the number of dialogues can provide for appropriate reactions and smooth transitions. In Act 3 after Wèi Liángfǔ learned of Zhāng Yětang's expertise in singing Northern *qǔ*, he gives his commentary (3.37–3.38) in the original script:

Wèi Liángfǔ: You are too modest. You are full of majestic spirit like a master. I believe that in the present day, only you can fill the post of the leading Northern *qǔ* expert. I truly hope you can kindly visit my humble home, let us talk heartily about *qǔ*. What do you think?

Zhāng Yětang sings 【Shèng hú lú】

After script reading rehearsals, the directors decided to change Wèi Liángfǔ's monologue into a dialogue between the two:

Wèi Liángfǔ: You are too modest. You are full of majestic spirit like a master. I believe that in the present day, only you can fill the post of the leading Northern *qǔ* expert.

Zhāng Yětang: I don't deserve such honor!

Wèi Liángfǔ: I truly hope you can kindly visit my humble home, let us talk heartily about *qǐ*. What do you think?

Zhāng Yětang: I would follow you, Sir, and listen to your advice.

Zhāng Yětang sings 【Shèng hú lú】

This change allows Zhāng Yětang to react to Wèi Liángfǔ's compliment and request. Rather than having Wèi Liángfǔ's monologue transition directly to Zhāng Yětang's *qǐpái* song 【Shèng hú lú】 , the added response by Zhāng Yětang before his singing provides a smoother transition which can naturally draw the audience's attention to the singer. Furthermore, it allows the singer to set the tempo of his *qǐpái* song 【Shèng hú lú】 which is in one *bǎn* – one *yǎn* beat structure (duple meter) $\frac{2}{4}$ 0 3 6 5 | . The word *zhā* 扎 is written above the initial rest (0), indicating the sound of the *bǎn* (wood clapper). The lead drummer who plays the *bǎn* will hit this first beat based on the singer's speech rhythm and the energy the singer delivers. This passage can be initiated without the singer's guiding dialogue; however, by having this transition, the pace of speech and the pace of melody flow better from one to the other.

Another overall change in the directors' semi-final edition was to simplify the text by decreasing or omitting words and phrases that were difficult to pronounce or to understand. In the directors' emendation, a number of technical terms used for explaining literary evolution and compositional theories were revised or deleted, addressing a concern which had existed since the first production meeting a year earlier. After the script readings, further simplification occurred. For example, in Act 5 when Wèi Liángfǔ applauds Liáng Chényú's little maid's singing and Liáng Chényú replies to Wèi Liángfǔ by explaining his training method (5.47–5.48), the original script read:

Wèi Liángfǔ: Ah ha! Water Polished singing can truly be passed down from generation to generation! The little maid's singing is especially marvelous! How could her

singing be so exquisite? Her flawless artistry, like silk threads perfectly woven into the warp in a loom, not even one tiny mistake.

Liáng Chényú: Since, my teacher, you asked, please allow me to explain. As your student, I have trained my female performers to sing *qǔ* in this way: I arrange wide rectangular display tables and benches and sit facing the west, extinguish the lamp, and then I light a stick of incense and direct them to breathe according to the rise and fall of the smoke. Their voices blend in harmony, in groups of two or three. A clash of rhyme, just like a four-legged liquor vessel and a three-legged liquor vessel mistakenly tied together, is wrong. This is the reason why they need to be well trained so that everyone can sing and dance well. (Sigh) Ai! Please listen, my teacher. When I think of my life!

In the directors' emendation, two sentences were already omitted: "I arrange wide rectangular display tables and benches and sit facing the west" and "Their voices blend in harmony, in groups of two or three." This conversation was further shortened and simplified in the semi-final edition:

Wèi Liángfǔ: Ah ha! Sung well, sung marvelously! Like silk threads perfectly woven into the warp in a loom, not even one tiny mistake! Water Polished singing can truly be passed down from generation to generation! Ah! My student, how could her singing be so exquisite?

Liáng Chényú: Since, my teacher, you asked, please allow me to explain. As your student, I have trained my female performers to sing *qǔ* in this way: I extinguish the lamp and light a stick of incense and guide them to breathe according to the rise and fall of the smoke. This is the reason why they are well trained so that everyone can sing and dance well. Ai! When I think of my life!

The simplification also appears in the *qǔpái* song text. On a reading rehearsal day,⁶ an issue was brought up. Cài Zhèngrén was sight-reading the music from Act 2 in which Wèi Liángfǔ sings 【*Shuā zǐ xù*】 explaining ways and rules to refine *qǔ* singing style:

Wèi Liángfǔ (*lǎo shēng* role sings): 【*Shuā zǐ xù*】

2.27 To refine *qǔ* singing style, one must polish the tune on which it is based, being elegant in many ways.

⁶ Rehearsal notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 16, 2015.

2.28 There shall be no error in the rhyme, the rhythm should be based on groupings of odd or even numbers of Chinese characters.

2.29 You should as well polish different kinds of vocal techniques,

2.30 Every word pronounced, puffing out the words like spraying precious orchid and musk perfume.

Allowing you to flaunt the pitches high and low, like a sound which surrounds the mountain and echoes in a valley.

At last succeeding in setting the tempo fast or slow, the breathing is clear and the rhyme flows.

He pointed out the difficulty of singing the words *wú é* 無訛 (“no error”) from 2.28⁷ wondering if the text could be revised. The directors and the production coordinator, who was also an actor, immediately made a group decision to delete the two sentences 2.28 and 2.29. Without consulting with composer Sūn Jiàn’ān, they also decided how the melody should transition after the deletion. In fact, the deletion of two sentences instead of just the troublesome one was musically driven. The rhyme word of 2.27 ends on the *bǎn* beat. The already-composed music for 2.29 starts on the *bǎn* beat, so if only the 2.28 were cut, the result would clash and not be a seamless connection. Because the melody for 2.30 starts on the second half of the *bǎn* beat, the transition from the end of 2.27 can go smoothly, connecting to the beginning of 2.30. Sūn Jiàn’ān’s final music score shows his agreement with this new connection.

Other than the widespread changes resulting from creating dialogue out of monologues and simplifying the text, some revisions regarding the essence of the play were also made: the important critical thinking should come from Wèi Liángfǔ. Historically we give credit to Wèi Liángfǔ for many achievements, including refining the Kūnshān style of singing into his Water Polished style; establishing the linguistic rules appropriate for composition; identifying singing

⁷ *Xié yùn wú é, yīn jié yīng biàn dān shuāng*. 協韻無訛，音節應辨單雙。

techniques; adding musical instruments to create a rich sound; integrating Northern and Southern *qǔ*; and bringing about the birth of dramatic *kūnqǔ*. In Tsēng's dramatic text, much is credited to Wèi Liángfǔ. However, regarding the birth of dramatic *kūnqǔ*, there is actually no evidence that Wèi Liángfǔ gave the idea to Liáng Chényú or worked with him to apply his Water Polished singing style to Liáng's dramatic plays. Since this is uncertain, Tsēng instead created these dramatic plot lines by having Wèi Liángfǔ's daughter, Yīngzhuàn, initiate the idea. Tsēng addressed this issue in the first production meeting, joking to Cài Zhèngrén that he felt girls were smarter than boys. Now that Tsēng was absent from the rehearsal process due to illness, this issue came to life again. In Act 4, the original dramatic texts read as follows (4.47–4.48):

Yīngzhuàn: Father! And yet, this Water Polished style only applies to pure singing. If it could be a part of dramatic stage performances, wouldn't it be wonderful!

Wèi Liángfǔ: I have a student Liáng Chényú who has extraordinary talent and is forthright in nature. We can discuss this idea with him! My daughter and son-in-law, today's success is worth celebrating with three cups of wine!

In the directors' emendation, this part of the dialogue was retained. After the reading rehearsals, however, the dialogue was redistributed among the designated characters:

Wèi Liángfǔ: And yet, this Water Polished style only applies to pure singing. If it could be a part of dramatic stage performances, wouldn't it be wonderful!

Yīngzhuàn: Ah! Father! You have a student Liáng Chényú who has extraordinary talent. Writing lyrics and singing *qǔ* songs, he is capable of doing everything. Can we discuss this idea with him?

Wèi Liángfǔ: It suits me fine! Everyone, today's success is worth celebrating with three cups of wine!...

Another example of making sure that Wèi Liángfǔ is the one who provides crucial ideas occurs in Tsēng's own revision of Act 2. Historically, the wide dispersal of *kūnqǔ* was credited to Wèi Liángfǔ, through his use of the official Mandarin in the Water Polished singing. His

efforts toward enriching instrumentation and using improved musical instruments to accompany singing, such as using Zhāng Yětāng's modified *sānxián* (three-string plucked instrument), were also credited. Tsēng, in his own revision, added a long paragraph praising Wèi Liángfǔ's decision to use *Tones and Rhymes Used in the Central Region of China* (Zhōngyuán Yīnyùn 中原音韻) as a linguistic guidebook. Tsēng also had Wèi Liángfǔ acknowledge the improvements to musical instruments, which was absent from Tsēng's original dramatic text. In Tsēng's revision, this additional monologue is spoken simultaneously by a trio of musicians, friends of Wèi Liángfǔ's. In the directors' emendation, it was then broken down further:

Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán (trio of musicians): Yes! Yes! We can call it the Water Polished style. The singer who sings the Water Polished style, the pronunciation of each word and melody that follows the implied inflections of the language should be made like carving and engraving gold and jade.

Zhāng Méigǔ: One must work carefully with water, polishing them with details. Only then it can achieve perfection.

Guò Yúnshì: However the language used in the Water Polished style is subject to the book *Tones and Rhymes Used in the Central Region of China*. By using the official Mandarin used in central China, this style can spread to the whole nation. Otherwise it would end up being restricted to a narrow zone in the Wú region. Furthermore one must improve and increase music instruments so that they can support and enrich timbre.

Then, in the directors' semi-final version after reading rehearsals, the last monologue was taken from Guò Yúnshì and given to Wèi Liángfǔ for the very same reason: each act should be focused on Wèi Liángfǔ, who raises a question and then solves it and continues to raise new questions to solve later. The basic formula structure suggested by Cài Zhèngrén is indeed followed.

The reading rehearsals shone a new light on a text which so far had been re-written many times. The dramatic text was now becoming conversations and thoughts transmitted verbally. Many more interjection words were added to reflect conversational reaction or personal emotion

engaging conversations. For instance, in Act 2, playwright Tsēng ends the act with the accomplishment of a new Water Polished style (2.42–2.44) in the original text:

Wèi Liángfǔ: Therefore this new style, can it be called Water Polished style?

Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán (trio musicians): Yes! Yes! We can call it Water Polished style.

(Wèi Liángfǔ and three friends look at each other joyfully) Ha! Ha! Ha!

In the directors' emendation, some dramatic elements were added.

Wèi Liángfǔ: Therefore this new style, can it be called Water Polished style?

Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán (trio musicians): Yes! Yes! We can call it Water Polished style...

[Additional dialogue not applicable]

Wèi Liángfǔ: If so, we still have to continue to make a great endeavor together. Serve tea!

Guò Yúnshì: Over ten years of beating rhythm, the table has developed a hole (*chéng jiù* 成臼) like a mortar and pestle!

(Wèi Liángfǔ and three friends look at each other joyfully) Ha! Ha! Ha!

The pronunciation of *chéng jiù* 成臼, lit. “become hollowed out,” is a homophone of *chéng jiù* 成就, lit. “become successful,” an appropriate pun in this context. An interjected word and the repetition of the key word helps make this double meaning stand out. The directors therefore gave the actors more mutual interaction, allowing them to provide more verbal and physical humor to make their chuckling more meaningful:

Wèi Liángfǔ: Therefore this new style, can it be called Water Polished style?

Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán (trio musicians): Yes! Yes! We can call it Water Polished style.

[Additional dialogue not applicable]

Wèi Liángfǔ: Excellent! Serve tea!

Guò Yúnshì: Over ten years of beating rhythm, the table has developed a hole (*chéng jiù* 成臼) like a mortar and pestle!

Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán: Oh! A success (*chéng jiù* 成就)?

Wèi Liángfǔ: Success?

Trio musicians: A success!

(Wèi Liángfǔ and three friends look at each other joyfully) Ha! Ha! Ha!

Furthermore, the interjected sounds and words can also be used to initiate gestures.

Though reading rehearsals do not require that physical gestures and movements be presented, actors read with a physical sense and spacing in mind according to their past performing experiences. Tsēng originally opens Act 2 by featuring Wèi Liángfǔ's self-introductory *qǔpái* song and monologue. The directors changed the opening by having Wèi Liángfǔ's three musician friends enter first. With such a change, the stage was already occupied with three actors before Wèi Liángfǔ's entrance; therefore the interaction between the two groups of trio musicians and Wèi Liángfǔ has to be addressed. When Wèi Liángfǔ enters, the trio of musicians react to his appearance by saying "Ah! Master" (*a! xiān sheng!* 啊! 先生!). The rhythm of these three words are crucial for the gesture of *dǎ gōng zuò yī* 打恭作揖, an old example of Chinese etiquette, folding the hands and making a deep bow. The function of having "Ah!" prepares the folding of the hands and raising the body upright in order to execute a respectful bow synchronized with the saying of "*xiān sheng.*" Without an "Ah!" it is as if a symphony conductor gave the beat without a preparatory breath to indicate the tempo – the rhythm of the words and gestures would become awkward.

How to end this play, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*, was a matter for constant discussion among the directors and Cài Zhèngrén, who played Wèi Liángfǔ. Playwright Tsēng originally ended the play with Wèi Liángfǔ's singing of two *qǔpái* pieces from *The Lute*, Act 21 "Eat Husks." Based on suggestions from the first production meeting, Tsēng added the famous

qǔpái 【Niàn nú jiāo xù 念奴嬌序】 (hereafter 【Beauty Niàn Nú, a prelude】) from *The Lute*, Act 28 “Gazing at the moon on the Mid-Autumn Night,” to conclude his play. In the directors’ emendation, one of the two *qǔpái* pieces from *The Lute*, Act 21 “Eat Husks,” was deleted. The directors then removed the one remaining *qǔpái* piece from “Eat Husks” during the reading rehearsals. One issue came to the surface: with the deletions of both *qǔpái* pieces from “Eat Husks,” Wèi Liángfǔ was left with only one *qǔpái* 【Beauty Niàn Nú, a prelude】 to be sung before the finale. Cài Zhèngrén felt the ending to be unconvincing, especially as the entire play is dedicated to Wèi Liángfǔ. He recommended that Wèi Liángfǔ follow the Southern *qǔpái* 【Beauty Niàn Nú, a prelude】 with the Northern *qǔpái* 【Tuō bù shān 脫布衫】 (hereafter 【Doffing the Clothes】), to be sung consecutively. 【Doffing the Clothes】 , from the play *The Palace of Eternal Life* (*Cháng shēng diàn* 長生殿), Act 32 “Lamenting the Statue” (*Kū xiàng* 哭像), is one of the signature *qǔpái* pieces in Cài Zhèngrén’s repertoire. He is especially famous for singing the *qǔpái* set of 【Doffing the Clothes】 – 【Xiǎo liáng zhōu 小梁州】 – 【Yāo piān 么篇】⁸ on recordings and TV shows. Because 【Doffing the Clothes】 cannot exist as an independent *qǔpái* piece, Cài Zhèngrén’s recommendation that 【Doffing the Clothes】 be added actually meant adding the entire *qǔpái* set of 【Doffing the Clothes】 – 【Xiǎo liáng zhōu 小梁州】 – 【Yāo piān 么篇】 . However this idea was questioned by music director Sūn Jiàn’ān. The Southern *qǔpái* 【Beauty Niàn Nú, a prelude】 is a *xìqǔ* 細曲, (lit. “fine *qǔ*”), a type of *qǔpái* piece composed in a melismatic and expressive fashion. Its metrical structure is called *zèng bǎn* 贈板, lit. “augmented measures,” a form unique to Southern *qǔpái* pieces in which a one *bǎn*–three *yǎn* beat structure (quadruple meter) is multiplied into a double-quadruple or 8/4 meter;

⁸ 【Yāo piān 么篇】 indicates it is as same as the previous *qǔpái* 【Xiǎo liáng zhōu】

this form appears in the *Collected Models of Kūnqǔ Qǔpái Patterns and Sequences*. Since the duration of words is elongated in this form, and the melody set to each word is more melismatic, the *qǔpái* 【Beauty Niàn Nú, a prelude】 tends to progress more slowly. The Northern *qǔpái* 【Doffing the Clothes】 is a *jíqǔ* 急曲, (lit. “rushing *qǔ*”) composed in a one *bǎn*–one *yǎn* beat structure (duple meter) or 2/4 in the Western notation system. The syllabic and emotionally moving nature of *jíqǔ* lends it another name: *cūqǔ* 粗曲 (lit. “raw *qǔ*”). According to *kūnqǔ* music expert Wǔ Jùndá, the *xìqǔ* (“fine *qǔ*”) and the *cūqǔ* (“raw *qǔ*”) cannot in general be used interchangeably.⁹ This is one of the reasons that Sūn Jiàn’ān was not enamored of this abrupt switch from an 8/4 to a 2/4 metrical structure. However, if there is an artistic requirement for portraying contrasting emotions between different characters, the rule against mixing these two metrical types can be bent. Wǔ Jùndá provides an example from *The Record of a Thousand Loyal Subjects* (*Qiān zhōng lù* 千鍾祿) to show the use of metrical types to reflect a contradiction between two characters. This play was written by late Míng/early Qīng dynasty playwright, Lǐ Yù 李玉. In the act titled “Searching the Mountain” (*Sōu shān* 搜山), the plot involves the second Míng dynasty Emperor Jiàn wén 建文帝 and Chéng Jì 程濟, a member of the Imperial Academy. They have been hiding on Hèqìng Mountain 鶴慶山 to avoid being captured by the then-Prince of Yān 燕王, who overthrew Jiàn wén and became the third Emperor. Sixteen years later, when Chéng Jì sends off a friend of his and goes down the mountain, an old official, Yán Zhènzhí 嚴震直, searches the mountain and captures ex-Emperor Jiàn wén. When Chéng Jì returns and realizes what had happened, he immediately follows the trail in order to rescue him. Playwright Lǐ Yù used one introductory *qǔpái* plus nine main *qǔpái* pieces to form the musical

⁹ Wu Junda, *Kunqu changqiang yanjiu*, 36.

setting. The first main *qǔpái* is sung by a supporting old male role actor (*mò* 末) playing the old official Yán Zhènzhí who finds traces of the ex-Emperor Jiànwén and is anxious to capture him. Therefore the *qǔpái* 【Hǎo jiě jiě 好姐姐】 is a *jíqǔ* 急曲 (“rushing *qǔ*”) in 2/4 duple meter to better to convey his eagerness. Once this *qǔpái* is finished, the actor exits the stage and a young male role actor (*shēng* 生) playing the ex-Emperor Jiànwén enters. While Chéng Jì is away, the ex-Emperor Jiànwén is sighing about his past. The second main *qǔpái* 【Bù bù jiāo 步步嬌】 is used to reflect his sentimental feelings so an 8/4 double-quadruple metered *xìqǔ* (“fine *qǔ*”) is employed for this purpose. After the completion of this slower paced *qǔpái*, the old official Yán Zhènzhí enters again with soldiers intending to take down the ex-Emperor Jiànwén. The third main *qǔpái* 【Fēng rù sōng 風入松】 is sung as the ex-Emperor severely reprimands the renegade old official, using a 2/4 duple meter *jíqǔ* to express his wrathful emotion. In a case such as this, even though the overall rule does not recommend the abrupt changes between the fast paced duple meter and the slower paced double-quadruple meter, because of the progression of the plot and the emotions that are developed dramatically it can be treated differently. In the case of the *Wèi* play, the Southern *qǔpái* 【Beauty Niàn Nù, a prelude】 depicts one’s delightful feeling while enjoy the scenery on the mid-autumn night moon viewing. The Northern *qǔpái* 【Doffing the Clothes】 reveals the Emperor’s sorrow over his failure to save his favorite lady’s life. The contents of these two *qǔpái* pieces share no connection, unlike the example from “Searching the Mountain,” therefore the abrupt meter change should be avoided. Furthermore, the use of different modes of the Southern *dà shí* 大石 and the Northern *zhèng gōng* 正宮

consecutively, and whether the plangent nature of last *qǔpái* (set) 【Doffing the Clothes】 is appropriate for concluding the play were also Sūn Jiàn’ān’s concerns.¹⁰

Another unique idea for the conclusion was also suggested by Cài Zhèngrén after a discussion about changing the lyrics of 【Doffing the Clothes】 from existing *qǔpái* in the play *The Palace of Eternal Life* to new lyrics suitable for concluding the *Wèi* play. Cài Zhèngrén said:

The 【Doffing the Clothes】 that Wèi Liángfǔ sings is all right to change the lyrics. In my opinion it is better not to replace the lyrics. Just sing the very *qǔpái* from the play *The Palace of Eternal Life*. This *qǔpái* is sung by Cài Zhèngrén, not Wèi Liángfǔ. What do I mean? This is our last act “The Tiger Hill Qǔ Festival.” The last figure who appeared is not Wèi Liángfǔ, but instead Cài Zhèngrén. Wèi Liángfǔ created the Water Polished singing style and the music was passed down for more than four hundred years. We still sing it today. This states clearly that the Water Polished music continue to thrive. There is deep meaning in singing the 【Doffing the Clothes】 from *The Palace of Eternal Life*. The purpose of staging the play *Wèi Liángfǔ* was not only to prove that he is indeed the sage of *kūnqǔ*, but also that are successors continuing to carry on this tradition. These two purposes are very important. I feel that to sing the 【Doffing the Clothes】 from *The Palace of Eternal Life* [as Cài Zhèngrén] has a deeper meaning than as Wèi Liángfǔ. This move comes as surprise; however, it stands to reason. It indicates that after four hundred and seventy years, *kūnqǔ* continues to be sung for generations. This will be an interesting and meaningful new attraction. It will surprise the audience: although it is unexpected, it is after all reasonable. Just for your reference.¹¹

The two directors noted Cài Zhèngrén’s idea but did not make a commitment. Days later, this idea was rejected by the directors for the reason that the directors did not want to imply an equality between Cài Zhèngrén and Wèi Liángfǔ in this play. The directors and the company expect to stage this play every year to serve as the opening production for the annual *kūnqǔ* festival. If the play portrays Cài Zhèngrén as Wèi Liángfǔ’s reincarnation, what happens if another actor has to take over this role? The ideas for the conclusion were once again left unsettled.

¹⁰ Rehearsal notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 15, 2015.

¹¹ Rehearsal notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 15, 2015.

Onstage Rehearsals

The onstage rehearsal run coincided with reading rehearsals on July 10, 2015 and continued toward the scheduled premiere on October 1st in Nánjīng and as a grand finale to the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival in Sūzhōu on October 19th. On the first day, Zhōu Shìcóng addressed his overview of the *Wèi* play,

This play is a matter of greatness. It is about everyone's face (*miàn zi* 面子, referring to reputation) and the face of the Jiāngsū Province Kūnjù Theatre... I will make the rules. My rehearsal [process] is different from others. First, you will listen to me, walking the line (*zǒu xiàn lù* 走线路) (the first step in blocking when actors learn where to move and stand based on stage directions). After you walk well [knowing your positions and moving directions well], I will continue to process [the action], elaborate [your acting] layer by layer. Therefore, those of you off-stage, do not provide ideas from different angles [at this early blocking step]. I will not listen to any idea no matter how great the idea is. After this [first step] is done, let's get together and share ideas. Any good idea [that is considered], we will do it [accordingly]. This is the [first] rule. Second, please take good care of Mr. Càì Zhèngrén. Preparing table, chair and tea for Mr. Càì to rest on stage [right, behind curtain]. I will go on stage to communicate with him. [Mr. Càì] has to be well taken care of.

The ethics of respecting seniority apparently serves an important part of Zhōu Shìcóng's directing style.

Zhōu Shìcóng used three words to describe his directing method: *diǎn* 点 (lit. "points"), *xiàn* 线 (lit. "lines"), and *miàn* 面 (lit. "surface"). He explained, "*Diǎn* are points of support, points of sparkle. It is also known as golden point(s). *Xiàn* are lines of smooth flow. *Miàn* is an entirety."¹² In order for actors to "walk the line" (*zǒu xiàn lù* 走线路), Zhōu Shìcóng first "draws the line" (*lā xiàn tiáo* 拉线条). To best depict this process and analyze the point-line-surface created by the director, the *zǒu wèi tú* 走位圖 (blocking scheme) from the book *Zhōu*

¹² Interviewed and recorded in Nánjīng, August 13, 2015.

*Chuányīng's Stylized Movement Notation*¹³ is used here. This book, written by Zhōu Shìcóng's older brother, Zhōu Shìruì 周世瑞, documented the *shenduan* 身段 (stylized patterns of movement) of their father, the legendary actor Zhōu Chuányīng 周传瑛 (1912–1988). Traditionally, dramatic texts provide stage directions with the ending word *kē* 科 appearing mostly in the Northern *qǔ zájù* plays and *jiè* 介 appearing mostly in the Southern *qǔ nánxì* and *chuánqí* plays. They are written cues for actions, such as “Crowds make sitting action” (*zhòng zuò zuò kē* 眾作坐科) and “Court servants and ladies-in-waiting each hold a lantern and make leading the way action to the main actor and actress” (*nèishì, gōngnǚ gè zhí dēng yǐn shēng, dàn xíng jiè* 內侍、宮女各執燈引生、旦行介). Sometimes the direction is combined as *kējiè* 科介, for example “[Actor] make listening action” (*zuò tīng kējiè* 作聽科介). It is common practice that actors and actresses learn their stylized dance-acting movements, facial expressions, and blockings from their teachers or seniors verbally. This part of oral tradition in *kūnqǔ* performance constitutes the second stage of created works or *èr dù chuàng zuò* 二度創作, in which actors and actresses transform or modify the playwright's original work. In most oral traditions worldwide, the spoken dialogues or illustrations would eventually be transcribed for the sake of preservation. Interestingly, such a record of the verbal creative process in *kūnqǔ* performance appears mainly as side notes by actors and exists primarily as handwritten items in the hands of Qīng dynasty collectors.¹⁴ During the Qīng dynasty, the only publication that included detailed blocking descriptions was *A Record for Parsing Notes and Mirroring Great Performances* (*Shěnyīn jiàngǔ lù* 審音鑑古錄), compiled by Qínyīnwēng 琴隱翁 in 1834.¹⁵ This

¹³ Zhou Shirui 周世瑞 and Zhou You 周攸. *Zhou Chuanying shen duan pu* 周傳瑛身段譜.

¹⁴ Xu Rui, “Qing dai kunju shenduan pu kaoshu,” 66–67.

¹⁵ Fu Xueyi, “Hui qing hui sheng wei hou shi fa – tan kunqu shen gong pu,” 12.

book is a collection of *kūnqǔ* excerpts incorporating commentary regarding stage positions, movements, facial expressions, vocal quality, postures, images of characters written between snippets of songs or speeches and beside the key words as reminders.

In his postscript, Zhōu Shiruì indicates that the documentation styles of *Zhōu Chuányīng's Stylized Movement Notation* resulted after consulting books of *A Record for Parsing Notes and Mirroring Great Performances* (1834), Huà Chuánhào's 华传浩 *I Perform Kūn(qǔ) Clown Role* (*Wǒ yǎn kūn chǒu* 我演昆丑) (1961), and especially Zhāng Yuánhé's 張元和 *Kūnqǔ Stylized Movement Trial Notation* (*Kūnqǔ shēnduàn shì pǔ* 崑曲身段試譜) (1972). Zhāng Yuánhé (1907–2003), the oldest of the eponymous *Four Sisters of Hofei*,¹⁶ was born into a culturally elite family and received *kūnqǔ* education from renowned professional actor Yóu Cǎiyún 尤彩雲 (1887–1955) who specialized in the female role category. Zhāng Yuánhé played a significant role in promoting *kūnqǔ* in Shanghai, Taiwan, and the US. Her unprecedented creation, *Kūnqǔ Stylized Movement Trial Notation*, which provided descriptions of movements and facial expressions, blueprints of blocking schemes, and performance photos, gave Zhōu Shiruì a basic framework for his *Zhōu Chuányīng's Stylized Movement Notation*. Zhāng Yuánhé's book was published by a well-regarded *kūnqǔ* club in Taipei, *Péngyíng qǔjí* 蓬瀛曲集,¹⁷ founded in 1953 primarily by relocated mainland Chinese, a society consisting of *kūnqǔ* enthusiasts, talented amateurs, professors, notable academics, and high official class members. Taiwan has been the repository of *kūnqǔ* tradition following the Chinese Revolution. Nowadays

¹⁶ Annping Chin, *Four sisters of Hofei: a history*, New York; London: Scribner, 2002.

¹⁷ This club was originally unnamed. They eventually chose the name *Péngyíng qǔjí* in 1962.

there is a saying that the best *kūnqǔ* performers are in China and the best *kūnqǔ* audiences are in Taiwan.

To better demonstrate the director's early blocking of "drawing the line" and the final result, I will use symbols from *Zhōu Chuányīng's Stylized Movement Notation* to examine the director's Act 2 opening sequence. First, an understanding of stage positions (*dì wèi* 地位) is necessary. *Xìqǔ* stages (*xì tái* 戲臺) vary in shape. The space could be square like most of the stages built in the Yuán dynasty or rectangular like the smaller scale modern theatres built during and after the Míng dynasty.¹⁸ *Xìqǔ* theatres usually have an entrance door (*shàng chǎng mén* 上場門) upstage right and an exit door (*xià chǎng mén* 下場門) upstage left. The entrance door is decorated with a wooden sign above the door reading *chū jiàng* 出將 (lit. "out as a general") and the exit door with *rù xiàng* 入相 (lit. "in as a prime minister"). The *tái kǒu* 台口 (stage opening) is the center of the downstage center area. In Zhāng Yuánhé's *Kūnqǔ Stylized Movement Trial Notation*, she listed five stage positional terminologies with explanations:¹⁹

Jiǔ lóng kǒu 九龍口 (lit. "Mouth of Nine Dragons"), a position located about three *chǐ* 三尺 (about 39.37 inches in total) from the entrance door.

Dà biān 大邊 (lit. "big side"), stage left, the half stage space on the side of the exit door.

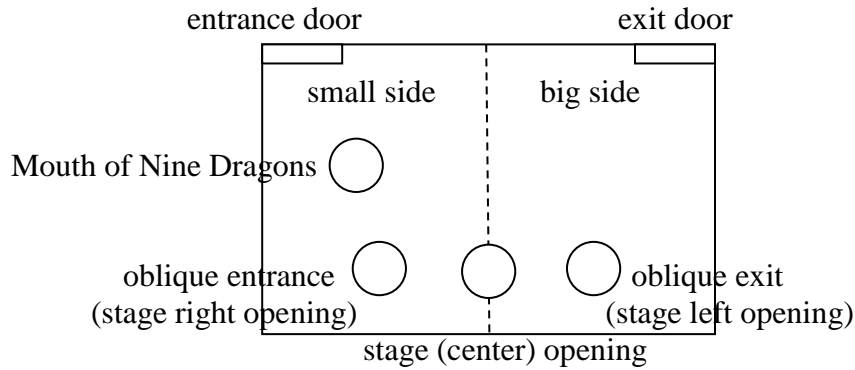
Xiǎo biān 小邊 (lit. "small side"), stage right, the half stage space on the side of the entrance door.

Shàng chǎng jiǎo 上場角 (lit. "oblique entrance"), also called the stage right opening (*yòu tái kǒu* 右台口).

Xià chǎng jiǎo 下場角 (lit. "oblique exit"), also called the stage left opening (*zuǒ tái kǒu* 左台口).

¹⁸ Du Daming, *Zhongguo tai tan*, 177–81.

¹⁹ Zhang Yuanhe, *Kunqu shenduan shi pu*, 121.



Jiǔ long kǒu 九龍口 (“Mouth of Nine Dragons”) is an important position where entering characters make gestures to adjust their attire or strike a dramatic pose called *liàng xiàng* 亮相 (lit. “brighten the face”) before moving onto the downstage center. It is similar in its placement to the aesthetic concept of the Golden Ratio in which a mathematical ratio of 1:1.618 is applied in laying out a Western art painting in order to create a sense of divine beauty in human minds. The “Mouth of Nine Dragons” is the eye-catching spot on *xìqǔ* stages where the major actors and actresses first present the mental state and attitude of the characters they portray and receive entrance applause from audiences before their introductory speech and singing. Since modern stages are larger than the old stages, the position of the “Mouth of Nine Dragons” is most likely in the area of stage right center rather than 39.37 inches from the entrance door as indicated by Zhāng Yuánhé and Zhōu Shiruì.

The following table will serve to examine the director’s Act 2 opening sequence utilizing graphic content and detailed descriptions:

Act 2: Exchange *Qǔ* Art Forms







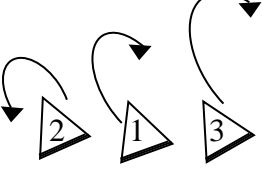

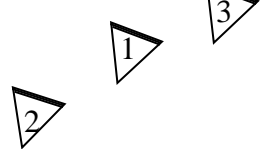

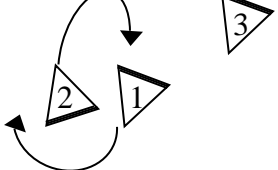

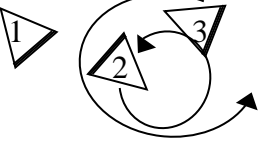

Name of character	Role category	Symbol	Carry-on prop
Wèi Liángfǔ	old male role (<i>lǎo shēng</i>)	○	<i>qǔpǔ</i> – an old paperbound book
Guò Yúnshì	supporting older male role (<i>wài</i>)	▽ ₁	wooden clappers <i>bǎn</i>
Zhāng Méigǔ	supporting old male role (<i>mò</i>)	▽ ₂	end-blown bamboo flute <i>xiāo</i>
Xiè Línquán	supporting male role (<i>xiǎo mò</i>)	▽ ₃	bamboo flute <i>dí</i>

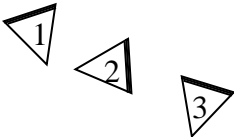

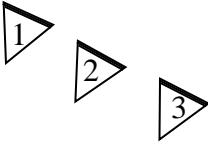

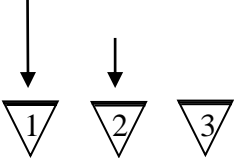



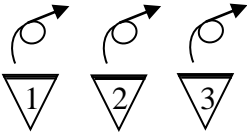

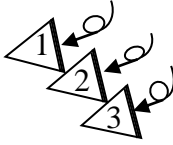

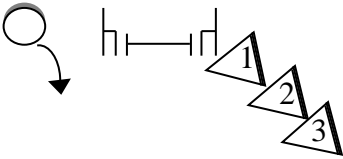

Symbols used in the blocking scheme:

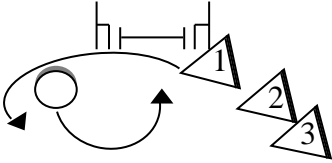

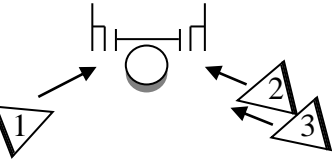

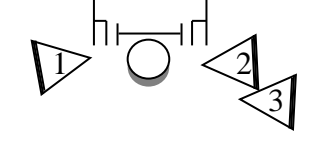

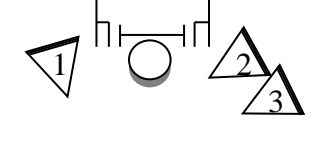

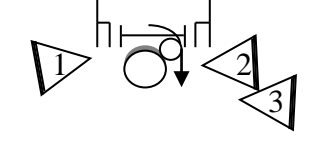

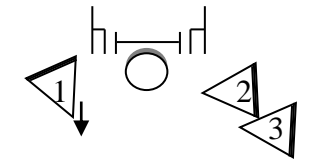

1. back back 2. turn around 3. table 4. chair
- ▽ ↻ ━━ ㄣ
- front front

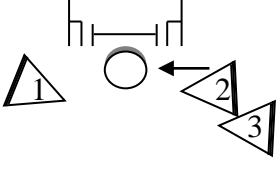

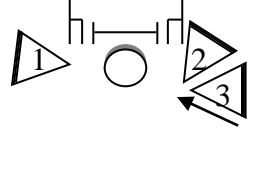

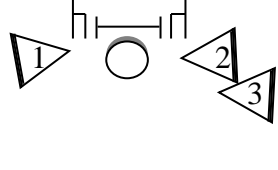

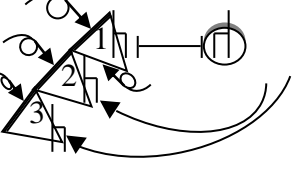

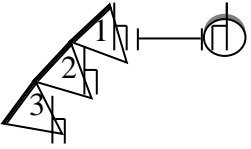

Text and description	Blocking scheme	Performance ²⁰
(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán enter with little-gong pattern accompanying)		
Guò speaks: Master Wèi has been working to innovate and improve it. Ten years have passed in the blink of an eye and he has not yet achieved his goal. Today once again friends are gathering to exchange <i>qǔ</i> theory...		

²⁰ Screen shots from video recording of the premiere performance, Nánjīng, October 1, 2015. Property of the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre (Jiāngsū Shěng Yǎnyì Jítuán Kūnjù Yuàn 江苏省演艺集团昆剧院).

Text and description	Blocking scheme	Performance
Guò, Zhāng, and Xiè speak: ... explore the art form.		
(Wèi Liángfǔ sings behind the curtain. Guò, Zhāng, and Xiè hear Wèi's singing) <i>Ten years' hard work...</i>		
... composing and singing new music.		
<i>Through many cold restless...</i>		
(Guò, Zhāng, and Xiè carefully listening and then gesture thumbs up) <i>... nights,</i>		
<i>constantly brooding about...</i>		
<i>... the Southern...</i>		

Text and description	Blocking scheme	Performance
<p>(Guò and Zhāng gesture “shh”) ... qǔ.</p>		
<p><i>I have grown gray hair.</i></p>		
<p><i>The voice is twirling,</i></p>		
<p>(Guò, Zhāng, and Xiè carefully arrange their hats and attire) <i>the four tones are harmonized and made smooth,</i></p>		
<p><i>and the method of pronouncing the words is round...</i></p>		
<p><i>...and light.</i> (Upstage lights on, table and chairs appear)</p>		
<p>(Percussive pattern: little-gong <i>chōutóu</i> 小锣抽头) (Wèi Liángfǔ enters humming a song unaware of his musician friends)</p>		

Text and description	Blocking scheme	Performance
(Wèi Liángfǔ stops briefly at the “Mouth of Nine Dragons” and continues walking in a semi-circle toward table front)		
(Guò, Zhāng, and Xiè gesture to approach Wèi who is still humming a melody)		
Guò, Zhāng, and Xiè speak: Ah! Master!		
(Wèi does not respond. Guò, Zhāng, and Xiè are laughing at his concentration on music)		
Guò, Zhāng, and Xiè speak again: Ah! Master! Wèi speaks: Aya! (surprised) Oh! Everyone!		
Guò speaks: Feelings expressed by the voice and in modes that are based on the twelve <i>lǚ lǚ</i> tones are wonderful and profound.		

Text and description	Blocking scheme	Performance
Zhāng speaks: The tempo may be fast or slow; musical notes may be high or low; one must finish the word on its rhyme after being twirled in a sung phrase.		
Xiè speaks: The playing of <i>dí</i> and <i>xiāo</i> flutes has to be appropriate.		
Guò, Zhāng, and Xiè speak: Singers cannot fail to distinguish five regions in the oral-cavity when producing words.		
Wèi speaks: Everyone, please have a seat!		
Guò speaks: Brother Shàngquán, today we must remove the unsolved obstacles.		

This sequence has a duration of about four minutes. The blocking scheme includes:

- a) horizontal downstage line
- b) diagonal line from downstage right to upstage left
- c) circular and serpentine motion
- d) diagonal line from upstage right to downstage left

- e) slightly diagonal array on stage left
- f) circular motion
- g) wedge formation
- h) horizontal upstage line plus slightly diagonal array on stage right

Formation changes like these are actions in progress: an artistic treatment to extend imaginary stage space. My insight about the *xìqǔ* stage is that it is not a platform but a space in time populated by actors and actresses. Their sequence of movements, pace of walking, position of pausing, and the words they sing and speak allow the free transformation of the space and time. When there is an actor, there is scenery. When the actor moves, the scene changes.

During the first half of this sequence before the appearance of Wèi Liángfǔ, the trio of musicians are creating a space distant from Wèi Liángfǔ. Their stylized movements and expressions while listening to Wèi Liángfǔ's singing clearly divides two different spaces: theirs and Wèi Liángfǔ's. The circular and serpentine motions depict the atmosphere as if they were traveling through the garden path of Wèi's household, and arrive on the doorstep of Wèi's study where they adjust their attire in order to greet Wèi Liángfǔ properly. The walking in circles which indicates travelling for a distance or a period of time is commonly used in *xìqǔ* performances. Yet combining circular and serpentine motions creates a dance-like scheme unique to *kūnqǔ* performance. The second half of the sequence starts when Wèi Liángfǔ enters the stage and the upstage lights shine on the table and chairs. In that moment the stage shifts to the space of Wèi Liángfǔ's study where he spent ten years polishing *kūnqǔ* singing. During the rehearsals, the director intended to change the space by having some stagehands move the table and chairs onto the stage. The final production shows that the director uses lighting techniques

for the same purpose. The wedge formation creates one strong point focusing on Wèi Liángfǔ, establishing his status as master. After the trio musicians pay their respects to Wèi Liángfǔ and are invited to sit together, Guò Yúnshì, the oldest of the three who was recognized as Wèi Liángfǔ's music consultant for the Southern *qǔ*, sits at the other end of the table from Wèi Liángfǔ, forming a horizontal upstage line. The two younger musicians sit in a slightly diagonal array providing a visual clue as to the importance given to the two actors at the table and the table becoming the focal point. The main subject of Act 2, *Exchange Qǔ Art Forms*, is introduced. The blocking schemes of the opening sequence truly show the director's elaborate planning.

The concept of point-line-surface is not alien to *xìqǔ* practitioners. Ā Jiǎ 阿甲²¹ (1907 – 1994) was a *xìqǔ* theorist, performer, and a distinguished first-generation *xìqǔ* director in the twentieth century who inspired Zhōu Shìcóng to become a director. He was recorded in a diary (December 1962–February 1963) while rehearsing a climactic ending in which people scatter in a chaotic situation, saying

In this scene one should first pay attention to the lines and points of stage blocking. The so-called point is a pause; from one point to another point, there is a line [created] in between. When there are points and lines, the rhythm should also be applied....If there is a sudden crisis happening in real life, people panic and go mad, not knowing what to do. To show this situation on stage, the blocking should be the opposite: it has to be orderly. To behave chaotically in an orderly manner; to act disorderly in a planned manner. Only in this way the panicked atmosphere can be expressed on stage. Chaos is disturbance of a rhythm in real life. On stage this chaos should be created with rhythm [in mind]. Otherwise it is not chaos in drama, but a chaotic drama.²²

²¹ Ā Jiǎ is a stage name. His original name is Fú Lǜhéng 符律衡

²² Lin Yu, “*Diaojin zuoyu – ji A jia daoyan yueju 《Li Xiangjun》*”, 29.

This point-line-surface principle can also be seen in stylized movements, such as pointing to the moon (Fig. 6.1). The photo shows the four points determined by the two performers' hand gestures, fan, and the direction of their gaze which provide the invisible lines that create a entirety which integrates the parts into a coherent whole.

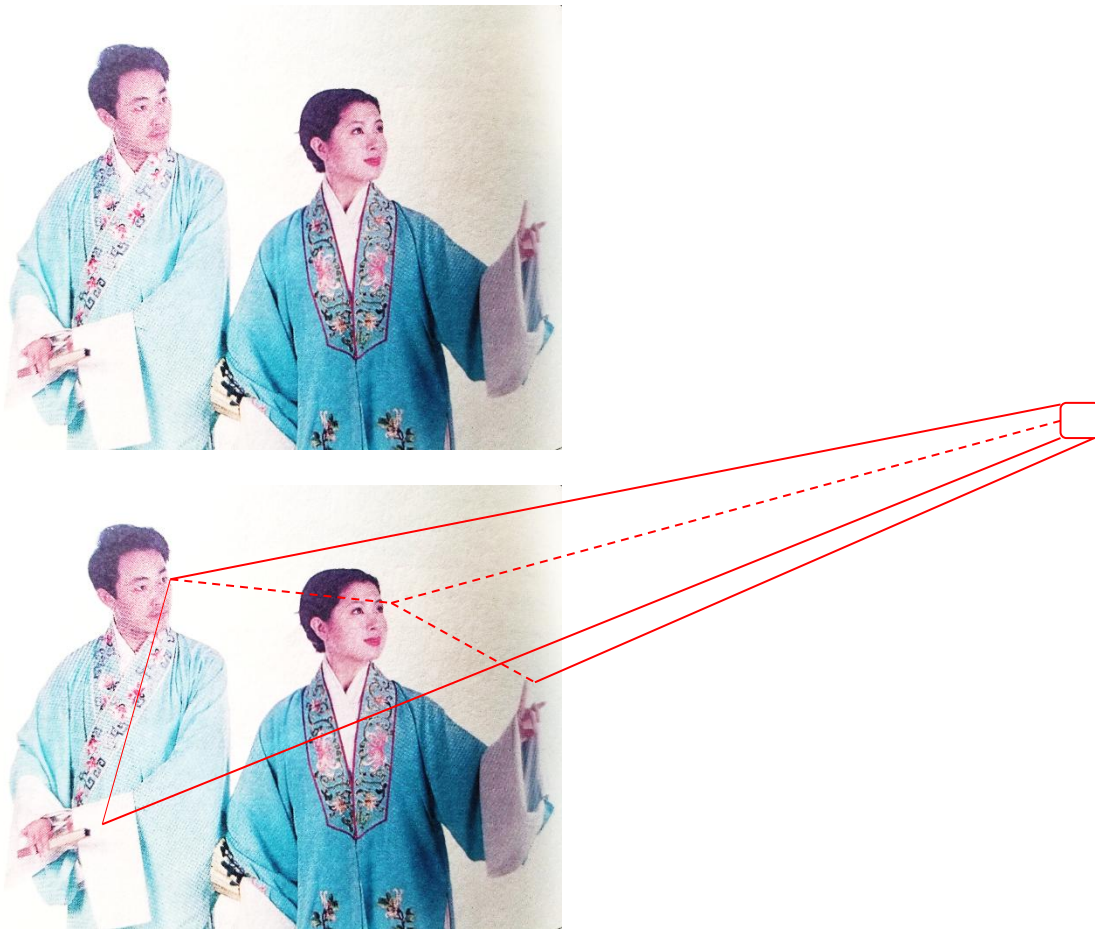


Fig. 6.1 Excerpt of “Meeting at the Pavilion” from *The Red Pear* 《*Hóng lí jì • tíng huì* 紅梨記·亭會》²³

In some cases, the point-line-surface stylized movement is akin to word painting. In the following example (Fig. 6.2), while singing the word “water,” the actress holds a cloud broom (*yún zhǒu* 雲帚), a prop indicating that she is a Taoist nun, swings it to the right and hits its tassel

²³ Photo of demonstration is captured from *Zhou Chuanying shen duan pu*, 398.

to the ground while walking back three steps.²⁴ Her movement of dragging the cloud broom forms a water-like pattern as if water were flowing. Her left arm holds a *qín* 琴, an ancient Chinese zither made of wood, the focus of this excerpt. By presenting it in a raised position, her posture draws a line from the highest point of the instrument through the center point of her body to the lowest point the tip of the cloud broom forming a line of flowing water from high mountains, a classic scenario in Chinese mountain-water style paintings (*shān shuǐ huà* 山水畫).



Fig. 6.2 Excerpt of “The Zither” from *The Jade Hairpin* 《Yù zān jì • qín tiǎo 玉簪記·琴挑》²⁵. Painting adapted from Wáng Jiàn’s 王鏊 *Mountain-Water Painting* 《Shān shuǐ tú 山水圖》, Qīng dynasty (1663), collection of The Palace Museum, Beijing.

The point-line-surface concept certainly applied to the blocking scheme of *zǒu wèi* 走位 (lit. “walking the stage positions), which in Zhōu Shìcóng’s words was “walking the line” (*zǒu xiàn lù* 走线路). Traditionally, this concept may not be intentionally included in acting or

²⁴ Zhou Shirui and Zhou You, *Zhou Chuanying shen duan pu*, 126.

²⁵ Photo of demonstration is captured from *Zhou Chuanying shen duan pu*, 181. There are variations for the choreography of this *qǔpái* 【Lǎn huà méi 懶畫眉】. The version of this typical movement on the word “water (palace)” came from the version of Yú Zhèn fēi 俞振飞 and Zhāng Xián 张娴.

blocking, but is rather the result of performers' intuition and training. However, since the directorial system became the norm in *xìqǔ* productions, this point-line-surface model as a framework for stylized movement and stage blocking design has become an intentional choice.

Actor's Artistic Competence Meets Director's Treatment

To fulfill the director's creative ideas requires the performers' competence and their knowledge leavened by years of training and performing experience. Zhōu Shìcóng identified *kūnqǔ* as a comprehensive aesthetic field of Chinese *xìqǔ* conventions in role categories (*zhōngguó xìqǔ chéngshì hángdāng de zōnghé shěnměi xué* 中国戏曲程式行当的综合审美学). Part of the reason *kūnqǔ* is respected as the mother of hundreds of *xìqǔ* genres was due to its well-established role categories system, a paradigm for other *xìqǔ* genres. This performing system allows future actors and actresses to study the conventions of singing, speech, dance-acting and/or martial movements in a chosen role category, cultivating vocabularies from all aspects of stylized performance, and putting together the language to execute the role type accurately and portray the character convincingly. Conventions may sound mechanical or stereotyped, yet actors and actresses still have room for creativity within its role type framework: freedom within rules, which is unique to *kūnqǔ* and *xìqǔ* in general. After all, *kūnqǔ* is a performing art expressing sentiment and reflecting circumstances which cannot simply be represented by conventions. Every professional *kūnqǔ* actor and actress is on board to create a character for the play while carrying a whole set of skills and conventions within him or herself. The director's job is to help each performer observe and experience the personality in order to

create the character. This is what Ā Jiǎ believed and propounded as the important duty as a *xìqǔ* director.²⁶

The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ was described by the media as a new *kūnqǔ* production “made by a team of Plum Performance Award winners and led by the ‘Living Emperor Táng (dynasty) Míng Huáng’ Cài Zhèngrén” (*Xinhua Newspaper*, September 30, 2015). The Plum Performance Award (or The Plum Blossom Award, *Méihuā jiǎng* 梅花奖) is the highest honor for *xìqǔ* performers in China. Among the cast members were four awardees: Cài Zhèngrén 蔡正仁 (played Wèi Liángfǔ) was one of the recipients of the fourth Plum Performance Award in 1987; Kǒng Àipíng 孔爱萍 (played Yīngzhuàn, Wèi Liángfǔ’s daughter) in 2009; Zhāng Jūn 张军 (played Zīyù, one of Liáng Chényú’s student actors) also in 2009, and Lǐ Hóngliáng 李鸿良 (played Guò Yúnshì) in 2011. In addition, there were many cast members who had won the Jiāngsū Province’s Red Plum Award and Red Plum Cup for *xìqǔ* performances: Qián Zhènróng 钱振荣 (playing Zhāng Yětāng), Sūn Jīng 孙晶 (playing Liáng Chényú), Jì Sháoqīng 计韶清 (playing Zhōu Shòuyì), Zhào Yútāo 赵于涛 (playing Emperor Zhū Yuánzhāng), Zhāng Zhēngyào 张争耀 (playing Xiè Línquán, one of Wèi Liángfǔ’s musician friends), Xú Sījiā 徐思佳 (playing Yǐzhī, Liáng Chényú’s student actress), and Zhōu Xīn 周鑫 (one of the bit-part actors who led the singing to open Act 3); this was truly a blossoming production. No doubt the cast members had the competence required to portray their roles.

Zhōu Shìcóng often used the phrase *jiā gōng* 加工 (lit. “add treatment”) indicating that he would give more thought to the artistic treatment of creating characters after viewing the performers’ initial interpretations. To examine the results after the director’s “add treatment,”

²⁶ A Jia, *Xiqu biaoyan guilu zai tan*, 55.

Liáng Chényú's entrance sequence in Act 5 will be analyzed. Liáng Chényú is described as "...that gallant, handsome and loyal bearded gentleman..." (5.29), an image passed down from historical documents. The handsome and bearded gentleman image for the role category could be that of *lǎo shēng* 老生 (old male role) or of *dà guān shēng* 大官生 (lit. "great state officials"), a sub-set of the young male role category who normally wears a black beard piece. The common image is shared between these two role categories; besides both wearing a beard piece, they both portray characters with distinguished and admirable natures. Yet playwright Tsēng's intention that Liáng Chényú be played by a *jìng* painted face role actor not only gives a stronger and more liberal image of Liáng Chényú as analyzed in Chapter 3, but also serves the purpose of covering a complete range of role categories needed for major characters, including the need for a painted face role category. Sūn Jīng 孙晶, the fourth generation of the Shěng Kūn company, is an accomplished painted face role actor who can sing well and execute physical acts effortlessly. He has all the skills that are unique for the painted face role to convey Liáng Chényú, who was a flamboyant star in his time. However, the director's approach to storytelling and depicting the image of the talented and dignified intellectual Liáng Chényú that audiences would expect morphed into a very different character. The revised Liáng Chényú is clearly not a painted face role apart from the most obvious element, the facial makeup. The following is a comparison between the actor's Liáng Chényú as a painted face role on the first day rehearsing the character (L column, the camera angle is from the left of the audience) and the director's Liáng Chényú as an old male role at the premiere performance (R column, the camera angle is from the right of the audience).

Act 5: Passing On the Legacy

Symbols used in the blocking scheme:

1. back 2. turn around 3. step back























Liáng Chényú as a painted face role ²⁷ (L)		Liáng Chényú as an old male role ²⁸ (R)	





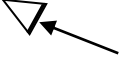

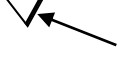













- (L) The actor runs in a circle reaching the “Mouth of Nine Dragons” position and turns around quickly, giving a strong dramatic *liàng xiàng* pose. The circle indicates that he is traveling for a long distance. The prop in his right hand is a horsewhip, indicating he is riding a horse.
- (R) The actor runs in a circle and faces backstage at the “Mouth of Nine Dragons” position, gesturing that he is looking back to see how far he has travelled. The actor then steps back, turns around and gives a strong dramatic *liàng xiàng* pose.

²⁷ Screen shots from video recording of the rehearsal, Nánjīng, July 13, 2015

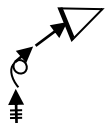



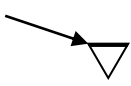




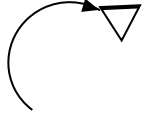

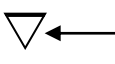

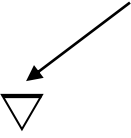





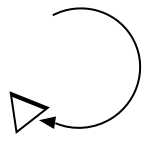

²⁸ Screen shots from video recording of the premiere performance, Nánjīng, October 1, 2015. Property of the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre (Jiāngsū Shěng Yǎnyì Jítuán Kūnjù Yuàn 江苏省演艺集团昆剧院).

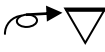







Liáng Chényú as a painted face role (L)		Liáng Chényú as an old male role (R)	
			
			
			
			
			

- (L) After looking into the distance, the actor runs to the stage center opening holding his horsewhip at shoulder level. After reaching the stage center opening, the actor acts in a sequence indicating that the horse is out of control with his body bent over and a leg kicked back. He jumps, making a turn while pointing his horsewhip upward, then performs a sequence of movements with full force indicating that he finally regains control. The actor ends with a dramatic *liàng xiàng* pose at stage left opening position with a wide open knee bent posture typical of a painted face role.
- (R) The actor takes a good look into the distance and then swings his horsewhip and runs toward the stage center opening, propelling his horse forward. After reaching the stage center opening, the actor acts in a sequence indicating that the horse is out of control in a kneeling position with his back erect. He turns his body into a spread eagle position and performs a sequence indicating his regain of control. The actor ends with a dramatic *liàng xiàng* pose at stage left opening position with upright position for an old male role.

Liáng Chényú as a painted face role (L)		Liáng Chényú as an old male role (R)	
			
			
			
			
			

- (L) The actor swings his horsewhip above his head while gazing into the distance. While walking toward stage right, he swings his horsewhip back and forth at shoulder level and moving his face left and right, unique to the painted face role category. He looks into the distance where he came from at the “Mouth of Nine Dragons” position and holds his horsewhip at his back. He runs in a half circle towards the stage right opening and quickly turns around, making a upstage facing *liàng xiàng*.
- (R) The actor gazes into a distance and walks (pretending to ride a horse) toward stage right, looking into the distance where he came from, steps back and moves towards stage right opening position, making a *liàng xiàng*.

Liáng Chényú as a painted face role (L)		Liáng Chényú as an old male role (R)	
			
			
			
<p>Continues from previous <i>liàng xiàng</i> pose</p>			
			
			
			

Liáng Chényú as a painted face role (L)	Liáng Chényú as an old male role (R)
	
	
	
	

(L) The actor runs in a circle towards upstage left. Moving to the stage right opening in quick and short steps, first left foot in front of right foot, then switching to an open knee position while accelerating. After making a quick *liàng xiàng*, he spins counter-clockwise toward stage center opening and makes a dramatic *liàng xiàng*.

(R) The actor takes a book out of the bag and studies it, walking toward upstage left in deep thought. He continues to study while moving stage right in quick and short steps. Again in deep thought he moves towards stage right opening in quick and short steps, making a *liàng xiàng* after a dramatic discovery. The actor walks sideways toward stage right opening. He turns around, secretly puts the book back in the bag and walks (rides) in a circle back to stage right opening position. He quickly spins counter-clockwise toward stage center and makes a dramatic *liàng xiàng*.

Note: The actor continues his stylized movements while singing his entrance *qǔpái* song. His entrance poetry was cut by the directors.

These two different approaches to Liáng Chényú's entrance sequence illustrate the mentalities of being an actor and a director. The actor's approach is to show the best possibilities to portray the painted face role, the role category assigned by the playwright. By presenting the dance sequence with hand gestures, body movements, walking, and postures that are unique to the painted face role, the actor is making a statement that he is Liáng Chényú and Liáng Chényú is he. However, the dance sequence choreographed by the director is focusing on Liáng Chényú who, now an old male role, has traveled far and who has studied hard even on horseback. The movements indicating Liáng Chényú's studying are clearly missing from the flamboyant image

as a painted face. While watching Sūn Jīng's performance of another character, Zhōng Kuí 鍾馗, a deity who disciplines all ghosts, the two directors commented favorably on the actor's physical beauty that presents a challenge for every painted face actor. Therefore, the decision to shift Liáng Chényú from one category to another had nothing to do with the actor's competence. In fact, Sūn Jīng as a professional painted role actor able to switch to a different role category has shown his competence in using conventions and executing the role at a professional level.

In conclusion, communicating the dramatic text through performative creation requires bold imagination and collegial collaboration from actors and directors. After all, it is the actors' and directors' decisions that the audience will see and hear. The reduction of the lengthy text through extensive deletions provides more room for physical and visual actions. It is obvious that in their attention to staging they were not content to rely on playwright Tsēng's dramatic text to create an effective performance. It is also clear that the directors made extensive changes to alter the sequence and pace of the play. Of course, these emphasize the fact that the revisions to the original text derive from the directors' good intentions; that is, to convey their artistic value through visual transformations. Through performance, the images in the text are brought to life and can never just remain in a dry text. The dramatic text, now communicated through performance, must be understood by the audience and critics so as to share a mutual point of view. Only by doing so can the artistic vision of all the creative team members be reflected and appreciated.

Chapter 7

Closing Thoughts

The Challenges as Seen in this Case Study

The ending for the play *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* was finalized by the directors and primary actor Cài Zhèngrén. As discussed in chapter 6, the *qǔpái* 【Beauty Niàn Nú, a prelude】, a Southern melismatic song originally written by the playwright Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh, does not transition well to the newly-added three-piece *qǔpái* set 【Doffing the Clothes】, a Northern syllabic song set proposed by actor Cài Zhèngrén. The final decision was to delete *qǔpái* 【Beauty Niàn Nú, a prelude】 and rewrite the lyrics for the *qǔpái* set 【Doffing the Clothes】. The new lyrics written by Tsēng sum up the emotional journey of Wèi Liángfǔ:

【脫布衫 Tuō bù shān】 (【Doffing the Clothes】)

惟淡泊 勢利名場。
I care not for wealth and eminence¹

偏喜好 鼓笛笙簧。
I just like the music and instruments

效韓娥 歌聲繞梁。
Lady Han's² voice once sung resounded in the rafters,

羨跨鳳 乘龍天上。
Nongyu³ became a musical phoenix ever after.

¹ English translation by Kim Hunter Gordon, for side-titles used in performance.

² Hán É 韓娥, a female folk singer during the Spring and Autumn periods (771–476/403 BC), who was famous for her beauty and her rich sentimental voice. The word “Lady” here should not be considered a title.

³ Nòngyù 弄玉 was one of the daughters of the Duke Mù of the Qín State (Qín mù gōng 秦穆公, 659 – 621 BC). In *The Legend of Immortals* (Lièxiān zhuán 列仙傳), Xiāoshǐ 蕭史 was good at playing the *xiāo* and his music would entice peacocks and cranes to land in the courtyard. Nòngyù was fond of him; the Duke therefore married her to Xiāoshǐ. Xiāoshǐ taught her to play the *xiāo* and imitate the calling of the phoenix. Years later, the sound of her *xiāo* was very similar to that of the phoenix. When the phoenix heard it, they would rest on the roof. The Duke then built the couple a phoenix tower in which to reside. One morning, the couple flew away with the phoenix. To commemorate their good marriage, the Qín State built the Phoenix Daughter Temple (Fèng nǚ cí 鳳女祠), where the

【小梁州 Xiǎo liáng zhōu】

十年裡研律析音 不下堂。
After a decade of labour stuck at home,

忽地里得意宮商，
Suddenly strikes a winning tone.

恰似天風海雨 驟飛揚。
Just like a storm picking up,

又倏地縵聲狀。
To then settle into a clear silk cup.

如淑氣拂池塘。
A mild air floats over the pond.

【么篇 Yāo piān】 (【Xiǎo liáng zhōu】)

這取生曲藝誰承望，
That I should create this music so fair,

不由人愧忤難當。
Is a weighty responsibility to bear.

願諸君細端詳，精論講。
I hope that all can scrutinize my work and find its faults⁴.

切磋同唱，永世播霓裳。
Together we spread it across the world.

The play ends with Wèi Liángfǔ concluding the Mid-Autumn Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival, similar to the structure in the playwright's dramatic text. However, the *qǔpái* pieces sung by Wèi Liángfǔ are now a Northern *qǔpái* set instead of the Southern *qǔpái* pieces (two pieces but both are *qǔpái* 【Yàn guò shā 雁過沙】) from the play *The Lute*. Thereby, the meaning of Wèi Liángfǔ's Water Polished music emerging from his efforts at polishing the Southern *qǔ* (see [2.5](#))

sound of the *xīāo* could be heard. In this phrase, *kuà fèng chéng lóng* 跨鳳乘龍, lit. “getting on a phoenix and riding on a dragon,” has become an idiom referring to a very happy marriage between a phoenix (daughter or woman) and a dragon (son or man).

⁴ Here 精論講 is better translated as “... and discuss it carefully and thoroughly.”

has been sacrificed somewhat. The ending, as a result, did not retain the time shift that Cài Zhèngrén suggested, with Cài Zhèngrén as Cài Zhèngrén singing his signature *qǔpái* set 【Doffing the Clothes】 from the play *The Palace of Eternal Life*, embodying a successor who continues to carry on the tradition. Nevertheless, singing a newly-texted *qǔpái* set 【Doffing the Clothes】 with a melody identical to the one in *The Palace of Eternal Life*, Cài Zhèngrén still successfully channeled his image through Wèi Liángfǔ and proved his master status in *kūnqǔ* performance. This is the power of music and the notable achievement of Cài Zhèngrén in the title role as Wèi Liángfǔ. An evaluation panel was held the same evening after the play concluded the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival in Sūzhōu on October 19, 2015, the second public performance after its premiere on October 1. Cài Zhèngrén expressed his humility to the panel:

I play Wèi Liángfǔ in a state of greatest reverence. Before our performance, we set up an altar on which incense burners were placed. We burned incense and paid respect to Wèi Liángfǔ with solemn worship. For the first time we, as members of the theatre troupe, held a ritual for our *kūnqǔ* ancestor before a performance. I think this is very important. After praying and burning incense, a spirit arose among all members—the purpose of continuing to cultivate *kūnqǔ* and carry it forward. We must promote this spirit... This play, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*, we must perform it well. Not only to educate *kūnqǔ* practitioners in *kūnqǔ* history, but also the audiences of the nation in which *kūnqǔ* came about and evolved. It is necessary to provide this education.⁵

Cài Zhèngrén has shown his leadership in the *kūnqǔ* world through his artistic direction for the *Wèi* play and many other productions, his hard work and sincere attitude as an actor, his humility at being a part of *kūnqǔ* lineage, and his benevolent and magnanimous personality. He did not take credit for the *Wèi* play's success at the box office. However, according to audience feedback

⁵ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.

posted on the internet,⁶ this play IS about Cài Zhèngrén; Cài Zhèngrén is the reason for them to attend; and because of Cài Zhèngrén this play is well worth watching.

China Kūnjù Arts Festival is a nationwide exhibition showcasing major *kūnqǔ* companies, *xìqǔ* academies, private *kūnqǔ* troupes and troupes from Taiwan. Held every three years, this festival provides the stage and funding for their artistic and creative achievements. The list of repertoire includes rearrangements of classical plays and newly-created plays such as the *Wèi* play. Besides performances, there are initiation rites, academic conferences, the Tiger Hill *qǔ* festival, and evaluation panels. The evaluation panel focused on *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* was the fourth one held during the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival in 2015. The panel consisted of *kūnqǔ* scholars, *xìqǔ* practitioners, government officials, and designers for theatre productions. They all agreed that the *Wèi* play serves as a seminal milestone, inscribing Wèi Liángfǔ's sage status into *kūnqǔ* history. *Kūnqǔ* musician (lead percussionist and conductor) and researcher, Zhū Wèizǒng 朱为总, expressed his excitement, saying:

After watching this play, I felt emotional. Our *kūnqǔ* needs this kind of play... I feel that since *kūnqǔ* has been developing until the present day and has protected for more than ten years [i.e., since UNESCO put it on the Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2001], we truly need a monument like this play. The collaboration of cultural elites and artists from both sides of the Taiwan Strait has emphasized this special meaning. I think that producing the *Wèi* play at the present time meant that it was destined to be written by Prof. Tsēng [of Taiwan] and performed by Mr. Cài [of mainland China]. [Because of them] this play has touched us emotionally.⁷

Indeed, Tsēng Yǒng-Yih was honored in 2014 by the Academia Sinica (中央研究院) for his scholarly works and contribution to the study of Chinese traditional theatres and named as an Academician, the highest honor in the study of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Republic

⁶ See Bibliography: Digital Media.

⁷ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.

of China. He is the first academician to specialize in *xìqǔ* in the history of the Academia Sinica. Cài Zhèngrén is a living legend in *kūnqǔ* performance and was selected in 2018 as China's Intangible [Cultural Heritage] Person of the Year (中国非遗年度人物), a tribute to an iconic figure who makes outstanding contributions in *kūnqǔ* protection and inheritance.⁸ Under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China,⁹ this honor was decided by a newly-established nationwide voting and online poll¹⁰ carried out by China's state media, *The Guangming Daily* (光明日报) and *Guangming Online* (光明网 <http://en.gmw.cn/>).

The members of the China Kūnjù Arts Festival evaluation panel also agreed that the *Wèi* play is academic and technically-oriented. This is the very same issue that arose from the first production meeting a year earlier. Wāng Shìyú 汪世瑜, a well-respected *kūnqǔ* actor specializing in the young male role category and recipient of the third Plum Performance Award, commented:

Today I watched *The Sage of Kūnqǔ* with a heart of awe and earnestness. I feel this play is indeed unique and deserving of praise. The playwright, director, and our principal actor deserve three words no easy task (*bù róng yì* 不容易, lit. "not easy"). It is to my surprise that this play was able to reach this quality. Drama IS contradiction. This play has no contradiction, no conflict. I think it is quite an achievement to be able to write in this manner. This is a textbook on *kūnqǔ*. It gives a clear picture to the audience of the development of *kūnqǔ* and its beginnings, especially the origin of the Water Polished singing. After seeing this play, I have even more respect for our Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh. He strictly followed the rule of tonal principles [of the *qǔpái*] and composed new words accordingly. The last *qǔpái* set 【Doffing the Clothes】 is a virtual replica of the one from the play *The Palace of Eternal Life*...¹¹

⁸ Zhongguo feiyi niandu renwu," *Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China*, 4 January 2019, Web.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Zhang Yuling, "2018 'Zhongguo feiyi niandu renwu' 30 wei timing houxuan ren chansheng," *Guangming Online*, 27 December 2018, Web.

¹¹ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.

He voiced his feelings of disbelief and delight. Here, “replica” refers to the similarity of melody and the tones of words in *qǔpái* composition; they are an exact audible replication. Thanks to the homophonic linguistic nature, even though the meaning of the words is different, the similarity of their tone contours minimizes changes to melodic contours. In Chinese poetry and *qǔpái* composition, this demand for replication in sound of the original word tone in the new words and melodic lines presents a great challenge when creating new meaning while preserving the original melodic motives, as Tsēng describes in his dramatic text (see [2.25](#)).¹² The familiarity of the music, even when presented with a different text in a different context, is why the new melodies, almost identical to the old ones, continue to be loved by *kūnqǔ* goers.

Cóng Zhàohuán 丛兆桓, a *xìqǔ* director who worked for the Northern Kunqu Opera Theater 北方昆曲剧院 in Beijing for decades, also commented on the academic approach of the play:

This play is a difficult one: it is difficult to write, to rehearse, to read, and to perform. It is very difficult to evaluate because it is about our founder... Moreover, *xìqǔ* incorporates songs and dances to present a story. The reason why this is not an easy task for Mr. Tsēng is because the content of the play is not suitable for songs and dances; there is no story to tell and there is no drama... These many difficulties have nothing to do with the endeavors of members of the production... This play gathers many masters and yet, if this play is intended to model our founder Wèi Liángfǔ, [tonight’s performance] is just a short-term victory. There is still a lot of room for improvement...¹³

Gōng Héde 龚和德, *xìqǔ* researcher and judge of several significant *xìqǔ* awards such as The Plum Performance Award, agreed, “This play is a biography with a very strong academic approach. We should not watch this play from the viewpoint of a theatrical play. It has its special quality, it has a special task of expression. Therefore we should watch this play from an

¹² The content of rules applied to the *qǔpái* composition was excised from this dialogue [2.25](#) by the directors.

¹³ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.

academic angle.”¹⁴ Mǎ Bómǐn 马博敏, a female role performer in *jīngjù* and a member of The National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference between 2008 and 2013 (第十一届全国政协委员), addressed the panel members with her thoughts, “Wèi Liángfǔ first refined the music which was then used in the drama, this is the basis of my perspective [for watching the play]... This play provides a great deal of academic information, I feel this is a good learning opportunity.”¹⁵ Zhāng Xúnpēng 张洵澎, a famous *kūnqǔ* performer, educator and a colleague of Cài Zhèngrén, said, “Today, watching this play, I feel I have attended a class. Previously I knew something about our forefathers. After watching this play, so many forefathers were presented in the play, major or minor. It was like having a class... to commemorate our ancestors... I thank Prof. Tsēng for giving us a lesson.”¹⁶

Gēng Xùhuá 赓续华, the editorial director of the magazine *Chinese Theatre (Zhōngguó xìjù 中国戏剧)* criticized the *Wèi* play from the audience's point of view:

I think I would like to critique this play in terms of academic quality, theatrical appreciation, and artistry. I am an ordinary audience member; I pay attention to theatrical appreciation. In this regard, I think the theatrical quality is in need of enhancement. Presumably, this play serves as a textbook and an entertainment for we insiders to enjoy, especially for those of us in the *kūnqǔ* community. [But] when this play is presented outside the *kūnqǔ* community, for example to people who work in local *xìqǔ* troupes or people in a *jīngjù* company, they may not be as familiar as *kūnqǔ* practitioners are to the history it presents. *Kūnqǔ* has [already] been described as an art for a small crowd, therefore we should not draw this circle smaller and smaller... Even though *kūnqǔ* emphasizes dramatic text, can you imagine what the theatrical quality of this play would be if it were to be performed by ordinary people rather than our beloved Master Cài Zhèngrén, Zhāng Jūn, Lǐ Hóngliáng, and Kǒng Àipíng, those Plum Performance recipients? Perhaps those who work in the *kūnqǔ* profession consider each *qǔpái* piece to be distinct from the others. [But] as an outsider, in truth, those *qǔpái* pieces are very much alike. I am an ordinary spectator. I hope, in the long run, this play will enhance its theatrical quality by emphasizing the vicissitudes of Wèi Liángfǔ's life... In this play,

¹⁴ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

everyone understands Wèi Liángfǔ; everyone accepts who he is. I am afraid that, without conflicts, this play may not last.¹⁷

Her concern was correct. *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* has not been staged since 2015; the play has basically fallen out of the *kūnqǔ* repertory. To reiterate, this play was produced by both the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre (hereafter Shěng Kūn) and the newly-established China Kūnshān Contemporary Kūnqǔ Opera Company (hereafter Kūn Kūn) as the new company's premiere production. There was every expectation that this *Wèi* play would be presented in future China Kūnjù Arts Festivals, as a way of paying respect to *kūnqǔ*'s ancestry. Instead, at the next (seventh) China Kūnjù Arts Festival, held in 2018, Shěng Kūn and Kūn Kūn presented another newly-created *kūnqǔ* production, *Gù Yánwǔ* 顾炎武. The title character *Gù Yánwǔ* (1613–1682) was a famous philosopher, historian, and philologist during the late Míng and early Qīng dynasties. He was a native of Kūnshān and opposed the Manchu conquest in his youth. The play *Gù Yánwǔ* has since been widely staged throughout China since its inception for important art festivals, commercial performances, and at universities in 2018 and 2019.¹⁸ *Gù Yánwǔ* experienced difficulties in the initial creative process. In February 2017, a production meeting regarding the dramatic text was held in Kūnshān City. Guō Qǐhóng 郭启宏, an award-winning playwright for spoken dramas (*huàjù* 话剧), various types of *xìqǔ* genres, and TV dramas, was commissioned by the Kūn Kūn as the playwright for *Gù Yánwǔ*. In this meeting he presented his dramatic text to Kūnshān City officials, *kūnqǔ* practitioners and scholars, and experts in Kūnshān culture and in *Gù Yánwǔ*.¹⁹ The follow-up

¹⁷ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015. It is commonly believed that being added into the standard repertory is the single most telling factor in a play's success.

¹⁸ As of July 2019, there were a total of thirty-five performances staged nationwide. See “Kaipiao | 2019 nian de ‘Gu Yanwu ri’ kunshan ren zheyang guo,” *Kunshan kunqu*, Weixin, 3 July 2019, Web.

¹⁹ “Kunju 《Gu Yanwu》 juben bianchuang yantao hui zhaokai,” *Kunshan kunqu*, Weixin, 24 February 2017, Web.

production meeting to discuss *Gù Yánwǔ*'s dramatic text was held in April 2018. At this meeting the playwright was changed to Luō Zhōu 罗周, a PhD in literature and a National Playwright of the First Rank (国家一级编剧).²⁰ As the youngest recipient and twice winner of the highest honor in playwriting, The China Theater Awards' Cao Yu Theater Award for Outstanding Writing (中国戏剧奖·曹禺剧本奖), she is considered the most prominent playwright of the new generation of *xìqǔ* creation. Just like Wèi Liángfǔ, *Gù Yánwǔ* is also a historical figure as a pioneer of Qing Dynasty Evidential Research (*kǎojùxué* 考據學), who advocated placing proof and verification at the heart of analysis of the classical tradition.²¹ Instead of writing a biographical play detailing his contributions, Luō Zhōu selected key points of *Gù Yánwǔ*'s life and constructed her six-act play with three farewells: "First a farewell to my mother, second a farewell to my bosom friend, and third a farewell to my wife. I am now left alone!" (初別母、再別友、三別妻，我今真个伶仃了!), as *Gù Yánwǔ* says in the play. His sorrows from the separations and death of his beloved did not stop him from taking on the responsibility of raising up the hearts of the people with Confucius' teachings in a time of political chaos. He maintained his identity as an adherent of the *Hàn* Chinese *Míng* dynasty and refused to work for the Manchu *Qīng* dynasty. His famous aphorism, "The rise and fall of a nation is every person's responsibility" (*Tiān xià xīng wáng, pǐ fū yǒu zé* 天下興亡，匹夫有責), has inspired many noble patriots and literary academics to undertake the responsibility of propagating *Hàn* culture and produce a lasting influence.

²⁰ "Kunju 《Wutong Yu》 《Gu Yanwu》 you you xin jinzhan," *Kunshan kunqu*, Weixin, 9 April 2018, Web.

²¹ Benjamin Elman, "Philology of the Early Modern or the Late Imperial: The Crisis of Chinese Classical Learning in the 18th Century," 19.

As noted, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* was designated as the premiere play for the new Kūn Kūn's establishment in 2015. Yet Kūn Kūn's many online announcements promoting the company and their productions did not mention the *Wèi* play at all. For example, the promotional material for the play *Gù Yánwǔ* mentioned that *Gù Yánwǔ* was the first newly-created play of Kūn Kūn²², and the play which represented Kūnshān for the first time after Kūn Kūn was established three years earlier²³. The entire *Wèi* play, about the Kūnshān style of singing later known as *kūnqǔ*, has been relegated to inactive status. *Gù Yánwǔ* and another popular Kūn Kūn production rearranged by Luō Zhōu, *Rain on the Phoenix Tree* (*Wútóng yǔ* 梧桐雨),²⁴ were promoted as the first collection of exquisite plays produced by Kūn Kūn.²⁵ No mention of *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* was made in any proprietary online material. It is understandable that publicity material by nature focused on the play to be promoted. Yet Kūn Kūn's establishment and its success are always mentioned as part of the promotional content. When Kūnshān City mayor, Dù Xiǎogāng 杜小刚, promoted his strategies for the city's development, he also pointed out that Kūn Kūn's two plays of *Rain on the Phoenix Tree* and *Gù Yánwǔ* should be regarded as an important cultural asset to raise the level of artistic creation.²⁶ It seems the *Wèi* play was intentionally ignored.

²² “Yimai xiangchuan Yuanchuang kunju Gu Yanwu jishi,” *CCTV Xiqu*, YouTube, 9 May 2019, Web.

²³ “Di qi jie zhongguo kunju yishu jie kaimu la! Kunju 《Gu Yanwu》 shouyan yuanman chenggong!” *Kunshan kunqu*, Weixin, 14 October 2018, Web.

²⁴ Based on a classic Yuán dynasty *zájù* play, *Táng Emperor Míng huáng on an Autumn Night with Rain on the Phoenix Tree* (*Táng míng huáng qiū yè wú tóng yǔ* 唐明皇秋夜梧桐雨), written by Bái Pǔ 白朴.

²⁵ “《Wutong Yu》 qingnian ban jingyan Suzhou , kaiqi Kunshan dangdai kunju yuan niandu xunyan,” *Kunshan kunqu*, Weixin, 23 April 2019, Web.

²⁶ “Kunshan shiwei shuji, shizhang Du Xiaogang: ba Kunshan jingyany inru “yidai yilu” zhong, rang shijie fenxiang Zhongguo jingyan!” *Kunshan kunqu*, Weixin, 9 March 2018, Web.

Let's revisit the evaluation panel for *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*. After watching the *Wèi* play for the first time, Tsēng thanked Shěng Kūn for inviting Cài Zhèngrén to perform in the play, so that the spirit of its dramatic text could unfold before everyone's eyes. He emphasized that all the plot points in his text were based on historical facts, not fabrications:

Today I would like to bring forward two problems [which occurred in tonight's performance] that need to be corrected in the future. The first concerns Zhāng Yětáng's prolonged transcendental whistle (*cháng xiào* 長嘯). [The written-character] *Xiào* 嘯 uses the radical *kǒu* 口 (lit. "mouth"). It is a lyrical sound used by littérateurs to express their inner emotion, and has been used since the Wèi Jìn 魏晉 period (220–420). For example, everyone has read *yǎng tiān cháng xiào* 仰天長嘯 (Look up to the sky and produce a prolonged clear sound) by Yuè Fēi 岳飛. People like Ruǎn Jí 阮籍 of Zhúlín Qīxián 竹林七賢 (The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove) are good at making a prolonged *cháng xiào* 長嘯; not at playing a long [*cháng*] *xiāo* 簫 [vertical flute]. This has to be corrected.²⁷

The definition of *cháng xiào* 長嘯 and ways in which to express it were discussed in the first production meeting in 2014. Unfortunately, this conversation was not reflected in the actual performance a year later. Zhāng Jūn, who participated in the first production meeting, later turned down the role of Zhāng Yětáng for a smaller role, citing personal reasons. Tsēng's concerns about healthy communications regarding textual interpretation and revisions did not survive the rehearsal process. Tsēng continued:

Second, I just found out that there are two *qǔpái* pieces which were added to my dramatic text, one is 【*Xiǎo táo hóng* 小桃紅】 , another is 【*Xià shān hǔ* 下山虎】 .²⁸ Whoever wrote these lyrics did an admirable job. However, the situation described in these lyrics does not agree with Wèi Liángfǔ's [actual] life; in fact, the information is wrong... Wèi

²⁷ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.

²⁸ The additional *qǔpái* pieces were added in Act 4 without playwright Tsēng's consent.

Liángfǔ did not take his daughter roving to Tàicāng.²⁹ This is not his life story... We must provide an accurate [account of the] life and deeds of Wèi Liángfǔ.³⁰

These two problems could simply be corrected if the *Wèi* play were to be staged in the future.

But the occurrence of these two problems indicates a more complex situation. They are evidence of problems that long existed in the social structure of an organization and the unilateral decision-making of a director.

Respect (as Virtue) or Hierarchy (as Social Order)

From day one, director Zhōu Shìcóng established the ethical importance of respecting seniority, making it one of his two rules during the rehearsal period. All cast members, mostly in their late twenties and late forties (in 2015), behaved as if they were students once again, respecting and obeying directors Zhōu Shìcóng (at the time, 66 years old) and Zhū Yǎ (in her early 60s), as well as principal actor Cǎi Zhèngrén (75 years old at the time), who also served as Artistic Director. This Confucian-style respectful behavior created a sense of harmony during the intense rehearsal process. However, its side effect—hierarchy—created obstacles to communications. To examine the hierarchical relationship in an organization or in a production ensemble is to look into the competence of company staff and cast members and their willingness to exercise their competence under social pressure. To transmit knowledge that is organized to express the essence of a role category is one way to reflect competence expediently: the actors and actresses organize elements of knowledge that they already possess and group them into a web that connects one to another. But this is not a full map of a complex structure.

²⁹ Referring to the lyric for 【Xiǎo táo hóng 小桃红】“...别父母离妻房千里寻梦，独携爱女流异乡...” “...Having left my parents and my wife. Over a thousand miles following my dream. Taking my daughter to a faraway life...” The translation comes from the side-titles translated by Kim Hunter Gordon.

³⁰ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.

The hierarchical relationship of an ensemble appears to be more dominant than the competence displayed by individuals in the company. The relationships between old and young, with or without title, with or without rank, and having or not having old acquaintances among the production participants, raise issues concerning how knowledge is structured. Competence may be manifest in terms of the ability to observe and reflect artistic maturity and experience as knowledge. The socially-aware control of transmitting this knowledge requires consideration of how to sustain competence in a way that maintains harmony within an ensemble. In most instances, the problem of hierarchy observed in this production resulted in a more passive and somewhat otiose way of participating—which is obedience.

One example of this barrier to communication concerns the interpretation of Zhāng Yětāng's prolonged transcendental whistle (*cháng xiào* 長嘯) in Act 4, one of the most grievous errors that playwright Tsēng pointed to as needing correction. As discussed in Chapter 3, Tsēng explained that the transcendental whistle was a way for *littérateurs* to express their inner voice, an ancient voice when releasing one's own emotions in a most natural way.³¹ During the stage rehearsals, however, the directors were unable to figure out how Zhāng Yětāng produced his prolonged transcendental whistle. They mistakenly interpreted the words *cháng xiào* 長嘯 as *cháng xiāo* 長簫, a long bamboo *xiāo*. Actor Qián Zhènróng 钱振荣 who played Zhāng Yětāng once offered his opinion that since *cháng xiào*'s “*xiào*” 嘯 uses the radical *kǒu* 口, meaning mouth, this word should indicate a meaning related to the voice. His suggestion was ignored by the directors. Without further communication with the playwright, the directors decided to use a

³¹ Recording of the first production meeting in Kūnshān, August 4, 2014.

long *xiāo* instrument as way to express the *cháng xiào* 長嘯. The original stage direction in Tsēng's dramatic text is as follows (*xiào* 嘯 is in red):

4.23 (生長嘯迴旋如十部鼓吹介，嘯聲忽嘎然而止。)
[Zhāng Yětang produces *cháng xiào*,³² the sound echoes like ten instruments played together. The *xiào* sound suddenly stops.]³³

The director's final text for performance changed it into a dialogue between the couple (Fig. 7.1):³⁴

Zhāng Yětang: 好，待我长嘯几声，试觉如何。
Yes! Let me try a few lines and see what it sounds like.

Yīngzhuàn: 好!
Alright!

Yīngzhuàn: 啊呀! 妙啊! 夫君此嘯，真将天籁、地籁、人籁，融而为一矣。
How wonderful. The sound of nature fused with that of man!



Fig. 7.1 Zhāng Yětang sits and pretends to play *xiāo*.
The background music is played by a *xiāo* player from the orchestra.

Zhāng Yětang and Yīngzhuàn then return home and report this good news to Wèi Liángfǔ.

Yīngzhuàn: 女儿适才与夫君闲游沧浪亭，夫君不禁长嘯，忽与天风竹韵鸣泉相应，这三籁合奏矣。

³² I have translated *cháng xiào* 長嘯 as a prolonged transcendental whistle. Here, to best reflect how and why the directors interpreted differently, I will keep the original Chinese term and not my explanation.

³³ This translation is mine.

³⁴ The translation comes from the side-titles translated by Kim Hunter Gordon.

We were in the Surging Waves Pavilion. My husband was playing flute in a new style. Suddenly it corresponded with the sounds of the wind and spring water. All three sounds worked together as one.³⁵

Astonishingly, the Chinese side-titles projected on stage during its public performances retained the use of the 口 radical *xiào* 嘯 instead of changing the word to the musical instrument *xiāo* 箫. Gordon's translation of "My husband was playing flute in a new style" ("*Fūjūn bùjīn cháng xiào* 夫君不禁长嘯") was obviously based on the director's misinterpretation. How many layers of ignorance and obedience contributed to making such a mistake, I wondered.

The obedience also extended to the musicians as part of the production. On the first day of stage rehearsals, director Zhōu Shìcóng explained his view of the play's overall flavor. Given the current practice of using symphonic music (a mix of Chinese and Western instruments) for the opening and closing of a play or its acts in modern *kūnqǔ* productions, Zhōu Shìcóng specified that his *kūnqǔ* should avoid the symphonic sound, preferring lighter sounds instead.³⁶ The so-called lighter sounds were in fact referring to the sound of traditional percussive patterns used to accompany entrance, exit, or a sequence of movements of a character. During the reading rehearsal³⁷ the director suggested using *xiǎoluó chōutóu* 小锣抽头 (little-gong *chōutóu*) for Wèi Liángfǔ's first entrance in the play, in Act 2. This idea continued to be used in stage rehearsals and with musicians who followed the lead of the *sīgǔ* 司鼓, (a lead drummer with duties similar to those of a music conductor). In *kūnqǔ*, the percussive pattern "little-gong *chōutóu*" is normally used to accompany the entrance and/or exit of a clown role actor, although it is sometimes used to accompany a young male role actor who portrays a poor young scholar. In general, this "little-

³⁵ The translation comes from the side-titles translated by Kim Hunter Gordon.

³⁶ Rehearsal notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 21, 2015.

³⁷ Ibid.

gong chōutóu” pattern provides a light and almost humorous sound quality.³⁸ Wèi Liángfǔ is definitely not to be identified as a clown type or a poor scholar, so music director Sūn Jiàn’ān could not comprehend this decision made by the director, and questioned the lead drummer. Typically, the percussion music based on traditional patterns is determined by the lead drummer, who has a vast knowledge of the conventional usage of percussive patterns, and therefore may or may not consult with the music director. In this case, the young lead drummer had the competence to make artistic decisions, but preferred to obey the director rather than correct him. Nevertheless, Sūn Jiàn’ān understood that this decision came from the director’s preference for using traditional percussion sounds, especially as this was the moment when Wèi Liángfǔ is in deep thought, figuring out a way to polish his music.³⁹ Instead of replacing the “little-gong *chōutóu*” pattern, Sūn Jiàn’ān paid respect to the director and the lead drummer for their professional status in this production, suggesting to the lead drummer that he play the tempo much slower so that Wèi Liángfǔ’s entrance would still sound restrained and calm, rather than light and amusing.

Zhū Wèizǒng 朱为总, one of the panel members who scrutinized the props used in the *Wèi* play, said:

Because this play is about Wèi Liángfǔ, the details that we call for should be scrupulously observed. As for the shape of the *sānxián* 三絃 (or 三弦, a three-string plucked instrument), since Zhāng Yětāng was an expert in Northern *qǔ* music, his *sānxián* must be a big *sānxián*. The instrument [that the actor] carried on the stage was small. After [Zhāng Yětāng] changed its shape [for its better use in music], [somehow] the *sānxián* he carried [on stage] was bigger than the original one! [But Zhāng Yětāng’s]

³⁸ Information confirmed by Sūn Jiàn’ān and Shěng Kūn’s lead drummer Shén Yáng 沈杨.

³⁹ Interviewed and recorded in Sūzhōu, October 20, 2015.

change [to the instrument] was to make it smaller so that it would be suitable to [accompany] *kūnqǔ*.⁴⁰

This is documented in Yè Mèngzhū's *Book of Worldly Affairs*, "Ever since Yětáng married Wèi's daughter he too has studied Southern *qǔ*. He adjusted [the technique of] the strings accompanying Northern *qǔ* to suit the Southern singing style better. He also changed the shape of the *sānxián*, making the instrument a little smaller and its sound box round. It was made of wood and re-named the *xiánzǐ*."⁴¹ The directors, Zhōu Shìcóng and Zhū Yǎ, emphasized from the beginning that their *Wèi* play should not be a play of archaeology, "The factuality is not important. What is important is the drama."⁴² "We are not doing archaeology. It works as long as it looks good on stage."⁴³ The directors decided to show a smaller *sānxián* first and replace it with a bigger one even though the opposite order was historical fact. Obviously, this attitude was not appreciated by panel members. This mistake could easily be fixed; however, the silence of the entire production team on the goals of the production and this detail was much more problematic.

There were production members who stood by what they genuinely believed. During a meeting with prop and headpiece designer Hóng Liàng 洪亮, Zhū Yǎ gave specific directions regarding the prop *sānxián*, "The things used on stage are props; they are not real... The *sānxián* is so big, how can anybody bear carrying it. I want you to make a *dānxián* 單弦, a small single-stringed one which is easy to carry on stage. Let's not do archaeology."⁴⁴ An ironic situation occurred here. *Sānxián* (lit. "three strings") is named for the fact that it is a three-string

⁴⁰ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.

⁴¹ Yè Mèngzhū 葉夢珠 (1624-?), *Book of Worldly Affairs* (*Yuèshì biān* 閱世編), volume 10, "Notate" (*Jìwén* 紀聞).

⁴² Said by Zhōu Shìcóng. Interviewed and recorded in Nánjīng, August 13, 2015.

⁴³ Said by Zhū Yǎ. Rehearsal notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 15, 2015.

⁴⁴ Rehearsal notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 21, 2015.

instrument. *Dānxián* (lit. “single string”) is a genre of narrative singing and storytelling which originated in the Northern regions. This is an art form where a solo singer accompanies himself with one *sānxián* instrument; therefore, it is called single [three-] string. Not knowing the definition of *dānxián*, the director asked the designer for a photo reference of a one string instrument. Luckily, the designer respectfully explained that there is no such instrument, and this embarrassing idea did not last. Hóng Liàng⁴⁵ is a well-respected prop and headpiece designer for *xìqǔ* productions, and is currently a member in set design at Shěng Kūn. He later spoke to me privately, explaining that the director’s idea of using a *sānxián* with only one string would have been possible if she had changed the text and context so that Zhāng Yětang treasures his *sānxián* so much that even though his instrument has broken down during his journey into exile, and has only one string remaining, he still keeps the instrument and can not let go.⁴⁶ A perfect image for Zhāng Yětang’s entrance, in which he says, “I have opened up my world while singing in the Wú region, yet I cannot stop being resentful while plucking the strings.” (see [3.4]) What a talented and experienced *xìqǔ* designer! Yet he did not offer this suggestion.

Music director Sūn Jiàn’ān quietly tolerated and ameliorated the incorrect usage of the “little-gong *chōutóu*” pattern, thereby preserving the appropriate entrance image for Wèi Liángfǔ. This is the result of respecting the lead drummer’s authority—it is his duty to make such decisions. Sūn Jiàn’ān constantly worked with actors Còi Zhèngrén and Qián Zhènróng to honor their requests, and refined his already-composed *qǔpái* songs to better reflect the singers’ ideas. The respect was mutual, healthy, and aimed to achieve the best results. Sūn Jiàn’ān’s 2010

⁴⁵ “Shéilái zhuāngshì nǐde nǚfā chōngguān,” *Global kunqu online*, Xuehua news, 8 July 2018, Web.

⁴⁶ Interview notes in Nánjīng, July 21, 2015.

article, “The Communication and Collaboration Between *Kūnqǔ* Composer and Main Artistic Roles of the Production” (*Kūnqǔ zuòqǔ yǔ zhǔchuàng tuánduì de gōutōng yǔ hézuò* 昆曲作曲与主创团队的沟通与合作), analyzes the importance of a composer actively communicating and collaborating with the playwright / play arranger, director, actor, musician, and stage designer during the creative process:

1. Collaboration with the playwright / play arranger: A composer should participate in discussions of the outlines of the dramatic text, provide opinions as to the internal pace of the plot development, and assist the playwright / play arranger in choosing the *qǔpái* songs appropriate for the music framework. Some acts may not include any singing or dancing, yet there is a subtext of musicality. This is a characteristic of *kūnqǔ* texts within the larger category of *xìqǔ*. (*Kūnqǔ* dramatic texts may not contain many pages, but their actual performing times are very different from the number of pages. Not every playwright understands each *qǔpái*'s characteristic structural mechanism and modal systems; elements such as music style, emotion, and structure; or the decorative words, modes, keys, and fingerings for *dí* flute playing.) This is the basic requirement for a dramatic text from *kūnqǔ* performance's viewpoint.
2. Collaboration with the director: The director is the organizer of the stage performance, an important creative personage who transforms a two-dimensional dramatic text to a three-dimensional stage presentation. A *kūnqǔ* director is not only an expert in *xìqǔ*, but also a specialist of *qǔ* music. The composer, during the creative process, must pay attention to the director's opinions and fully understand the director's overall conception and intentions regarding the play. (For example, the parts that need musical accompaniment and the parts that need percussive accompaniment result from a cohesive plan by the director which we should fully respect.) Of course, there are directors who do not understand music and do not have specific requirements in terms of music, or are even at a loss as to what to do with *qǔpái* singing. These problems may cause great perplexity in composing music. Cases like these require adequate communication from the composer, who analyzes and explains his music compositions to the director. In this way, a mutual language between the two will blossom, and the mood of the people will be much more pleasant.
3. Collaboration with the actors: To a *kūnqǔ* composer, the collaboration with the actors is most crucial and necessary. The actors are the main focus of the stage in *kūnqǔ* performance. The result of the music creation mainly depends on actors' stage presentation. To listen attentively to the actors' opinions and proactively collaborate with them are fundamental for *kūnqǔ* composer. The older generation actors have profound artistic attainments and abundant singing experiences and skills. They have a strong

ability to predict and to imagine their stage performance, reflecting how their singing may provide for the dramatic development and what their performance may bring to the stage effects. Meanwhile, the actors possess distinct personal styles and performance characteristics. The many ideas and suggestions that the actors put forward often point to the vital part and brought out the crucial elements. The *qǔpái* song that the composer creates and collaborates with the older actors to develop often becomes an excellent piece. However, they [i.e., these older generation actors] normally encounter issues such as the inability to read music notation and lack of knowledge in singing theory. The mid-career actors are the generation who inherits the past and ushers in the future. They in general have received specialized music education and have greater appreciation of and sharper awareness in music. They are able to comprehend and accept new elements and ideas in music creation. Collaborating with them often results in tacit understandings and achieves musical works that are full of imagination and creativity. The young actors' lack awareness of traditional performance know-how and are often not equipped with the experience and ability for re-creation. Their singing, dependent on music notation, does not have lingering charm and infectiousness. The composer therefore must make the best of marking the notation during the creative process, patiently and meticulously helping the young actors accomplish their singing during this period of rehearsals.

4. Collaboration with stage design: This type of collaboration is easily neglected. Music is an art of time; an art of auditory sense. Stage design is an art of space; an art of visual sense. Integrating these arts is a combination art of time and space. Modern *kūnqǔ* performance indispensably needs music and stage design to interpret the plot and scenery together. Music, like stage design, creates beauty through the use of contrasts. For example, the contrasts of colors, bright and dark, loud and soft, and fast and slow, and so forth.
5. Collaboration with the music ensemble: The collaboration between the composer and the ensemble is the most frequent and direct example. Interaction and communication with them directly leads to the outcome of the music. After composing the melodic line, it is often necessary to modify it according to singing ability, and to supplement it with music. After that there is the process of music arrangement and rehearsing the ensemble. The melodic score for an entire play contains of dozens of pages, however, the orchestral score may often be up to a thousand pages long. One can imagine that the nature of a composer's work is labor-intensive and stressful. The composer not only considers the choice of instruments, the choice of musical ranges, and the choice of solo instrument, but also considers the dramatic characteristics in music accompaniment and technical issues that deal with tutti and solo breathing, string playing method, fingering, bowing, and more. During the compositional process, the composer should constantly communicate and exchange ideas with musicians of the ensemble, so that the ensemble can satisfy the function of accompaniment with meticulous care and flawless artistry. When necessary, the ensemble will fulfill the function of instrumental performance, giving the audience a visually pleasing performance and a music delightful to the ear.

Although these are collaborations from a composer's viewpoint, the respectful relationship and care for others should be the standard for every production. As for this particular case, some small details became highly problematic and grew to eventually overwhelm the production. When the directors deleted some *qǔpái* song lyrics unevenly, due presumably to insufficient knowledge of *kūnqǔ* theory about which they made few if any inquiries, this lack of respect resulted in hostility during the early rehearsal stage. When two *qǔpái* songs were added without the playwright's authorization, this lack of respect resulted in disappointment, especially as Tsēng was given the promise at the first production meeting that miscommunication would not happen again. When a high ranking Shěng Kūn official, also an actor, behaved condescendingly to the composer and musicians in the ensemble, this lack of respect resulted in resentment. And ironically, this *Wèi* play is about a sage of music. The composer's creativity and the instrumentalists' efforts are often overlooked; the stardom of actor/singer, which is often used as a marketing tool for the box office and therefore celebrated. To correct this imbalance requires mutual respect from the leadership level, to which actors often ascend due to their status as actors. The company could start with gestures such as: including the composer as one of the featured speakers, along with the playwright, director, core actors, and company chair, in the production's official announcement to the media and press; listing the composer's name in promotional materials online and in printed publicity; and considering the composer and instrumentalists as part of a creative team instead of as adjuncts to the actors. Staging a *kūnqǔ* production is never the result of one individual's closed-door creation, but rather of multilayered collaborations. Taking for granted the composer and instrumentalists, as well as the costume,

headdress and prop designers, is an unfortunate practice which I strongly believe should be corrected.

Directors' Unorthodox Artistic Choices

The onstage rehearsal process contained surprises. One example from Act 4 concerns the enrichment of musical instruments used to accompany *kūnqǔ* performance, which is a major contribution for credited to Wèi Liángfǔ and Zhāng Yětāng. After Zhāng Yětāng offers to add his modified *sānxián* (see [4.37](#)), playwright Tsēng had Wèi Liángfǔ reflect, “That is great! In this way, the musical instruments of the Water Polished singing style—which originated in earlier wooden clippers (*bǎn* 板), to which were added the flutes (*dí* 笛 and *xiāo* 簫), a mouth organ (*shēng* 笙) and a pear-shaped lute (*pá* 琶), and now have been further developed by our addition of a zither (*zhēng* 箏), a round-shaped lute (*ruǎn* 阮) and a *sānxián*—therefore have eight sounds (*bā yīn* 八音) of winds and strings played together. Please present our music ensemble...” This information about eight instruments was added in Tsēng’s revised dramatic text in October 2014. In July 2015, a discussion was held right after the official announcement of *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* to the media and press. In the meeting, actor Cài Zhèngrén mentioned that he disagreed with using cello as a lower register instrument similar to those in the Chinese Orchestra. Instead, after discussions with Sūn Jiàn’ān, they arrived at the idea of using a *sè* 瑟, an ancient Chinese plucked zither with moveable bridges, in the ensemble. Its wide range (originally fifty strings; more frequently twenty-five strings) could cover the same low register that a cello could provide, though the sound quality is not as firm as a cello’s. The strong supporting bass part was not Cài Zhèngrén’s concern; rather, it was the “nationality” of the instrument that mattered. He said, “If we use a *sè*, it will be more like a *kūnqǔ* performance. I

insist not to use any Western instrument.”⁴⁷ Ten days later, Cài Zhèngrén further implied that, when it appeared on stage, it would be the first time that the *sè* was used in *kūnqǔ* music.⁴⁸

Traditionally the *kūnqǔ* ensemble is located on stage level, unlike the western orchestra located in the orchestra pit during opera productions. Therefore the *kūnqǔ* musicians and their instruments visually appear on stage, instead of being obscured auditory presences. At this point, the *sè* was discussed as one of the instruments used in the accompanying ensemble. Five days later during the reading rehearsal, Zhū Yǎ decided to revise her director’s emendation version to address the involvement of a *sè*. She said, “*Zhēng* 箏 (a zither, a frequently-used instrument with twenty-one strings) had not yet been created. *Sè* was THE *zhēng* at that time; *sè* was the predecessor of *zhēng*...”⁴⁹ This is not accurate information regarding the temporal origins of the *zhēng*. The *zhēng*, also an ancient Chinese plucked zither with moveable bridges using different tuning from the *sè*, is documented as having been in use during the *Qín* dynasty (221–206 BC),⁵⁰ more than two thousand years before Wèi Liángfǔ’s time. Zhū Yǎ continued, “Wèi Liángfǔ once bought a *húqín* 胡琴 (fiddle) from an old blind man. It was an *èrhú* 二胡 (two-stringed fiddle) that he traded for his *dí* flute. Yīngzhuàn learned to play it and played really well, therefore [in the content of eight instruments] a *qín*⁵¹ was in place. At that time the *sè* was the oldest *zhèng*. [So the text should be] ‘Nowadays we have developed and added a *qín*, a *ruǎn* 阮 (round-shaped lute), a *sè*, and a *sānxián*’.” This story of trading instruments, although novelistic, is found in no historical record. By using the word *qín*, she caused confusion for Cài Zhèngrén, who asked: “Is

⁴⁷ Meeting notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 7, 2015.

⁴⁸ Rehearsal notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 16, 2015.

⁴⁹ Rehearsal notes and recordings, Nánjīng, July 20, 2015.

⁵⁰ Chapter three “Strings” written by Bo Lawergren, *Music in the Age of Confucius*, 83.

⁵¹ *Qín* 琴 is a generic term for string instruments, therefore a gray area is created here for both fiddle and zither.

this *qín* a *gǔqín* 古琴?” Indeed, for most people with any knowledge of Chinese music, the term *qín* generally refers to *gǔqín* (lit. “ancient *qín*), a seven-stringed zither without a moveable bridge with a sliding timbral quality that gives it a uniquely ancient-Chinese sound. But, Zhū Yǎ claimed, “No, not a *gǔqín*, it is *húqín*, an *èrhú*.” In fact, the two-string *èrhú* used in the present-day *kūnqǔ* ensemble is a recent addition. Cài Zhèngrén then realized, “This *qín* is a *tíqín* 提琴.” *Tíqín* 提琴 is a bowed string instrument, known to be used in *kūnqǔ* because of Wèi Liángfǔ. Máo Qíling 毛奇齡 (1623–1716) in his *Xīhé’s Notes on Ci Poetry* (*Xīhé cí huà* 西河詞話) provided the following documentation about the *tíqín*:

若提琴則起於明。…太倉樂師楊仲修能識古樂器，一見曰此提琴也。然按之少音，於是易木以竹，易蛇皮以匏，而音生焉。時崑山魏良甫善為新聲，賞之甚，遂攜之入洞庭，奏一月不輟，而提琴以傳。

Like *tíqín* originated in the Míng dynasty... A Tàicāng musician, Yáng Zhòngxiū, was capable of recognizing ancient instruments. The moment he saw the instrument, he said it is the *tíqín*. However, when he pressed the strings, the sound was weak. He then changed [the horsehair bow] from wood to bamboo and replaced the snakeskin [-covered soundbox] with a gourd [or coconut shell]. As a result a [larger] sound was produced.⁵² At that time Kūnshān’s Wèi Liángfǔ [魏良輔] was good at new music. He enjoyed *tíqín* very much and thereupon brought it along to Dòngtíng (洞庭). He played it for a month without giving it up, and *tíqín* therefore became widespread.⁵³

In this paragraph, Dòngtíng 洞庭 refers to the two islands of East Dòngtíng (東洞庭 or 東山) and West Dòngtíng (西洞庭 or 西山) located in Lake Tàì (太湖). The passage seems to imply that Wèi Liángfǔ had traveled to Lake Tàì. Lake Tàì is also the location where Liáng Chényú’s *Washing Silk* (Act 45 “Boating on Lake Tàì”) concludes, and this is the play in which Liángfǔ’s new Water Polished style was first employed. Perhaps the phrase “... thereupon he brought it

⁵² Both *èrhú* and *tíqín* are two-stringed bowed musical instruments. However, the *tíqín* is not built with a *qiān jin* (千斤), a small loop of white strings placed around the neck which supports the vibrating lengths of the open strings and provides auxiliary resonance. The lack of resonance in playing *tíqín* is therefore resolved by replacing different materials.

⁵³ Mao Qiling, *Xihe ci hua* (vol. 35), 18.

along to Dòngtíng” indicates that Wèi Liángfǔ brought the *tíqín* along to the *kūnqǔ* ensemble used in *Washing Silk*, a play concluding at Lake Tàì.

Cài Zhèngrén’s assumed that the *qín* Zhū Yǎ mentioned was a *tíqín* 提琴. Zhū Yǎ agreed with Cài Zhèngrén, “Yes, it is a *tíqín* 提琴, a *qín* 琴 *tí* (提, verb. “carry”) in the hands.” Cài Zhèngrén immediately followed, “Then it should say *tíqín*, *ruǎn*, *sè*, and *sānxián*.” Zhū Yǎ continued, “If we say the word *tíqín*, modern audiences may understand it as a *xiǎo tíqín* 小提琴 (violin). Let’s make it simple, just *qín*!” Once the *sè* was claimed by the director as one of the instruments added by Wèi Liángfǔ, and the *qín* was now the fiddle *tíqín* 提琴, the directors’ text for performance spoken by Wèi Liángfǔ was revised as follows:⁵⁴

小婿张野塘近日研制三弦一把，前来协奏
My son-in-law has created a new three-stringed instrument, come and help accompany him.

为此我决意将珍藏多年的瑟一张
I have decided to give this antique fifty-string zither,

请看
(please, take a look)

赠与我儿，你夫妇可谓琴瑟调和
to my daughter. Now the two of you can really enjoy harmony at home.

如此水磨调之乐器
Thus the Water Polished orchestra includes:

有(众)笛 箫 笙 琶，还有(众)琴 瑟 阮 弦
[crowd speaks] horizontal flute, vertical flute, reed pipe, pipa [*dí*, *xiāo*, *shēng*, *pá*],
[crowd speaks] zither, se zither, ruan, and three-string [*qín*, *sè*, *ruǎn*, and *xián*].

这八音合奏定能美妙动听
These eight instruments together will definitely be... Charming! Moving!

⁵⁴ The translation comes from the side-titles translated by Kim Hunter Gordon.

This text for performance, compared to the playwright's, has omitted the wooden clappers *bǎn* 板 and deleted the zither *zhēng* 箏 zither, adding the *qín* 琴 and *sè* 瑟 zithers. As described above, the director insisted that the *qín* was the fiddle *tíqín* 提琴, and the zither *sè* was the zither *zhēng*, during Wèi Liángfǔ's time. However in Wèi Liángfǔ's speech, the idiom “*qín sè tiáo hé* 琴瑟调和” (“harmony of *qín* and *sè*”) was used as a blessing for an affectionate couple. This idiom has long been used to describe the harmony between married couples as the harmony created by playing both the zithers *qín* and *sè*. In the “Minor Odes” (*Xiǎo yǎ* 小雅) of the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shī jīng* 詩經), a verse⁵⁵ indicates that the two instruments *sè* (larger zither) and *qín* (smaller zither) performing together symbolizes harmonious life with wife and child (*qī zǐ hǎo hé, rú gǔ sè qín*. 妻子好合，如鼓瑟琴。). To manipulate the meaning of a *qín* from a zither (*gǔqín* 古琴) to a fiddle (*tíqín* 提琴) is unheard of. With the eight musical instruments featured on stage while Wèi Liángfǔ speaks about how his daughter and son-in-law are in harmony like *qín* and *sè*, music director Sūn Jiàn'ān stepped in and stopped the director from putting the fiddle *qín* on stage. Ironically, the fiddle *qín* was actually used as one of the important instruments for *kūnqǔ* in Wèi Liángfǔ's time, not the zither *qín*. What a chaotic situation! Furthermore, with the daughter playing the *sè* which she inherited from her father Wèi Liángfǔ, the son-in-law should have played the *qín* to make the idiom *qín sè tiáo hé* 琴瑟调和 more meaningful. Nonetheless, since Wèi Liángfǔ states that Zhāng Yětāng “has created a new three-stringed instrument,” the son-in-law must therefore hold a *sānxián* instead of playing the zither *qín*. To avoid visual awkwardness, the presentation of all eight instruments on stage was postponed until after Wèi Liángfǔ finished his speech (Fig. 7.2).

⁵⁵ This verse is from a poem about brotherly relationships titled *chángdì* 常棣.



Fig. 7.2 After Wèi Liángfǔ's speech, actors pretend to play the eight instruments.
Left to right: sè, xiāo, shēng, dí, singer, xián, ruǎn, pá, qín.

The Ambiguity of Role Categories

Gōng Héde 龚和德, *xìqǔ* researcher and judge on the evaluation panel for *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*, had concerns about the images of the characters, “As for this play, I feel there is an image that is quite far from what I had imagined. That is Liáng Bólóng (Chényú). His appearance in costume and makeup, and the way he sings... He is [supposed to be] a handsome man... he did not appear so in the play... Zhāng Yětang's image is also still not clear... In the future their appearances need to be [clarified and] elaborated.”⁵⁶ Zhāng Jìdié 张寄蝶, the 1987 Plum Performance Award recipient and a famous clown role actor, gave a suggestion to Lǐ Hóngliáng 李鸿良 who played Guò Yúnshì, “Teacher Lǐ's spoken dialogues combined Sūzhōu dialect (*sūbái* 苏白) [employed by the clown category in which Lǐ specialized] and Zhōngzhōu speech-tones (*yùnbái* 韵白) [employed by serious characters⁵⁷, which Lǐ portrayed]. We had a hard time reconciling these two. Indeed, there is a connection between your Sūzhōu dialect and

⁵⁶ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.



⁵⁷ Elizabeth Wichmann, *Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera*, 204

Zhōngzhōu speech-tones, yet it creates a lot of burden (*bāofú* 包袱, lit. “cloth-wrapper”).

Especially when you jump into the Sūzhōu dialect [as a clown] and it is not synchronized with your makeup [as an old male], it has made no impression.”⁵⁸ *Wúyú qīngyīn* 吴歆清音, an online news site with the mission of promoting traditional culture and passing down the arts of *xìqǔ*, commented that:

To be honest, everybody has a different opinion about the arrangement of role categories in *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*. From the viewpoint of character design, Wèi Liángfǔ obviously is a *lǎo shēng* 老生 (old male role). Yīngzhuàn is a *guīmén dàn* 闺门旦 (refined young female role), that is correct. Zhāng Yětang is a *xiǎo shēng* 小生 (young male role), that also good. However Liáng Bólóng (Chényú) in any case does not look like a *huā liǎn* 花脸 (painted face role); he should also be a *lǎo shēng* (old male role). Guò Yúnshì, no matter how I see him, he looks like a *lǎo shēng*, too.⁵⁹

Here is a chart comparing original character designs by the playwright (sample images are for reference) and the final presentation as revised by the directors:

Role category designed by playwright		Role category revised by directors	
Role description	Sample image	Role description	Final image ⁶⁰
Wèi Liángfǔ as a <i>lǎo shēng</i> 老生 (old male role), wears a black beard piece; sings and speaks with natural voice in all ranges.	 61	Wèi Liángfǔ as a <i>dà guān shēng</i> 大官生 (a sub-set of the young male role), wears a black beard piece; sings and speaks with natural voice in a lower register and falsetto in a higher register.	

⁵⁸ Recording and notes of the judges' panel, the Sixth China Kūnjù Arts Festival, Sūzhōu, October 19, 2015.

⁵⁹ Wuyu qingyin 吴歆清音, “《Qu sheng Wei Liangfu》 jinwan yazhou kunqu jie, kanguoderenzheyangpingjia...” *Global kunqu online*, October 19, 2015, Web.

⁶⁰ Screen shots from video recording of the premiere performance, Nánjīng, October 1, 2015. Property of the Jiāngsū Province Performing Arts Group Kūnjù Theatre (Jiāngsū Shěng Yǎnyì Jítuán Kūnjù Yuàn 江苏省演艺集团昆剧院).

⁶¹ Screen shot from “【Kunqu】 Qianzhonglu • Candu Yu Zhenfei Zheng Chuanjian 1980 nian ban (zhiyou yizhi Qingbei yufurong!),” *bilibili*. Screen shot. 18 March 2018, Web.

Role category designed by playwright		Role category revised by directors	
Guò Yúnshì as a <i>wài</i> 外 (supporting older male role), older than a <i>lǎo shēng</i> and wears a white beard piece.	 62	Guò Yúnshì as a <i>fūchǒu</i> 付丑 or 副丑 (male clown role with <i>shēnduàn</i> movements like a <i>wài</i> role).	
Liáng Chényú as a <i>jìng</i> 淨 (painted face role).	 63	Liáng Chényú as a <i>lǎo shēng</i> 老生 (old male role).	

As seen, Wèi Liángfǔ was originally designed to be a *lǎo shēng*. When Cài Zhèngrén took over the role and transformed the character into a *dà guān shēng*, a sub-set of the young male role in which he specializes, the voice range and vocal quality changed accordingly. However, the appearance of both roles which included wearing a black beard gave a similar impression to the audience. Guò Yúnshì is originally a *wài*, a white bearded *lǎo shēng*, portraying characters who are aged, reverent, and gentle. Lǐ Hóngliáng, who specializes in an array of clown-related roles, portrayed his character as a *fūchǒu* 付丑 role type, which employs movements similar to those of a *lǎo shēng*, and had to dispense with a *fūchǒu*'s usually two-faced and treacherous personality and corresponding facial expressions. Liáng Chényú was played by an actor whose specialty is the *jìng* painted face role, as the playwright originally

⁶² Photograph from “Kunqu 《Chang sheng dian • Tan ci》 Ji Zhenhua dashi sangyin hongliang, wutai fengdu jijia,” *kknews*, 18 December 2018, Web.

⁶³ Photograph from “Bai xi zhi zu, bai xi zhi shi – kunqu zhong de sheng dan jing mo chou,” *kknews*, 1 November 2016, Web.

specified. The actor playing Liáng Chényú was advised to *lǎo shēng yìng háng* 老生应行 or to perform in the name of *lǎo shēng*, since the movements and spirit of an old male were better suited to the character Liáng Chényú.⁶⁴

The system of role categories is the foundation of *kūnqǔ* performance and a system that hundreds of *xìqǔ* genre plays have followed for centuries. Five main role categories (*zǒng jiāmén* 总家门)—male (*shēng* 生), female (*dàn* 旦), painted face (*jìng* 净), supporting male (*mò* 末), and clown (*chǒu* 丑)—were codified during the Sòng dynasty, as seen in the *zájù* plays of the north and the *nánxì* plays of the south. Subcategories (*xì jiāmén* 细家门) evolved out of these five main categories and developed into from ten to twenty additional specific role types. That is why the dramatic text for *kūnqǔ*, even to this day, associates the characters with their role categories. In other words, the names of the characters are mentioned in the stage direction at the beginning of each act or upon their entrance. For the rest of the act, it is the role category which is identified for each individual's speech and singing in the text. In keeping with this tradition, playwright Tsēng composed his *Wèi* play in such a fashion. The directors then altered this tradition in their first draft of the directors' emendation, replacing the role categories with the characters' names and indicating every character's name no matter how large or small the role. The text for performance on paper therefore looks like a play for a spoken drama. The references to distinct role types disappeared due to the actual characters' names being listed in the text. Every single character seems equally important because he or she receives a name. The argument here is not about the text for performance, which may not have ever been published, or to question the actors' abilities to portray their characters. It is about the ambiguity of the role

⁶⁴ Confirmation with Sūn Jīng, May 26, 2019.

categories starting from the written text: the directors could no longer identify the character by his/her designated role type, because using the name instead reduces the sensibility of conventional role images. This ambiguity may well have transmitted to and affected the directors' decisions when the mixing and matching of original character role categories in the text and actors in performance occurred.

Vigorous Debate is Necessary for Fruitful Artistic Collaboration

The 2001 UNESCO designation of *kūnqǔ* as Intangible Cultural Heritage gave *kūnqǔ* a well-deserved reprieve and its renaissance began. However, it was the 2004 production *The Peony Pavilion: The Young Lovers' Edition* (Qīngchūn bǎn • Mǔdān tíng 青春版·牡丹亭), produced by the renowned author Pai Hsien-Yung 白先勇, which brought worldwide fame and fans to the beauty of *kūnqǔ*. The Shěng Kūn company caught the youth wave and produced *The Peach Blossom Fan (1699)* (1699 • Táohuā shàn 1699·桃花扇) in 2005, with cast members in their early 20s and one female lead⁶⁵ in her teens, portraying a 16-year-old character her own age. Those fourth-generation actors who had recently graduated from the Jiangsu Provincial Theatre School (Jiāngsū Shěng Xìjù Xuéxiào 江苏省戏剧学校) were the most fortunate. They had the opportunity to perform on a fully professional stage, unlike the third-generation actors who graduated in 1985. Lǐ Hóngliáng, a member of that third generation, recalled the ten years after graduation as the “ten lost years.”⁶⁶ During that period, the *kūnqǔ* stages belonged to the older generation of actors. The third-generation actors could only play bit roles, or worse, had no roles to play. They survived by working side jobs, and some never came back to the field of

⁶⁵ Shàn Wén 单雯, Plum Performance Award (*Méihuā jiǎng* 梅花奖) winner in 2019.

⁶⁶ “Kunqu de shichang: yige yangben,” *Sānlíán Life Week*, 13 April 2015, Web.

kūnqǔ. This was the state of *kūnqǔ* performance in the late twentieth century. Now in the twenty-first century, third-generation actors have become the teachers and leaders in *kūnqǔ* circles. They see opportunities for themselves in their middle-age as well as for the younger ones. With the company transitioned from a state-run institution to a commercial performing arts enterprise, the leadership refused to repeat this history so as to avoid the next generation falling into the same old trap again. Third-generation actor Kē Jūn believes, “After we graduated in 1985, our generation of actors were rarely given important positions. But after the declaration by UNESCO, the situation surrounding *kūnqǔ* slowly improved. To protect this heritage, we did not allow the fourth generation actors to wait for another twenty years to reach their potential. They are facing more temptations than we did, so we must seize the opportunity now, letting them feel that there is hope for *kūnqǔ*. *Kūnqǔ* can embody the value of life; *kūnqǔ* can have a future.”⁶⁷ Thanks to his leadership, the annual number of performances by Shěng Kūn have increased from 50 shows in 2004 to 692 in 2014.⁶⁸ With this large number of performances, actors and musicians may earn a better income. However, the exhausting schedule has worn out some popular actors, leading them to reprise the same performances because of the lack of time to prepare new repertoire.⁶⁹

The effort to market the company has been successful. Frequent lectures and demonstrations by actors and musicians have served to cultivate *kūnqǔ* followers and fan bases. These *kūnqǔ* fans typically have attained a higher education diploma, and work in professions that have nothing to do with *kūnqǔ*. In general, they are supporters of actors/singers; they care

⁶⁷ “Kunqu de shichang: yige yangben,” *Sānlián Life Week*, 13 April 2015, Web.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Conversation with actors in 2015.

about *kūnqǔ* in every way; and they criticize *kūnqǔ* out of their love for it. They are willing to travel from afar, from city to city, and spend money on tickets. They share *kūnqǔ*-related articles and promote *kūnqǔ* books and DVDs, preoccupying themselves with the future of *kūnqǔ*. They have online affinity groups, exchanging information about shows and their feedback on them. For example, there are levels of aesthetic appreciation and criticism concerning the play *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*. Most short commentary posted online emphasized the love of their authors for the performers:

- “Cài Zhèngrén is thumbs-up excellent.” – Enchanted Land⁷⁰
- “Sister Kǒng⁷¹ and uncle Qián⁷² are a couple who are responsible, good-looking singers.” – 家有仙妻白素贞⁷³
- “...This is the last play of the 2015 Kūnjù Arts Festival, a documentary play written by Tsēng Yǒng-Yìh and performed by members of Shěng Kūn. It is helpful to understand the origin of *kūnqǔ*. The drama is weak, however, what drama do you watch in this play? The maniac fans watch sister Kǒng’s blingbling watermelon-red water-sleeves and listen to Cài Zhèngrén’s singing. It is worthy...” – 美卡 Mecca⁷⁴
- “In fact, I saw it twice at the Jiāngnán Theatre, one rehearsal and one official performance. During the official performance one of the wall screens fell down, the entire audience drew in their breath. Emperor Cài⁷⁵ was not affected at all. Truly a master. The script is not very interesting, however, it is a very *kūnqǔ*-specific and easy-to-understand textbook of *kūnqǔ*’s development. And Emperor Cài, teacher Qián, prince Zhāng⁷⁶, and Yào yào⁷⁷, these are good voices! I posted a little video during curtain call, my mom asked me what are you watching? How come the audience is so crazy!” – 苏苏⁷⁸

⁷⁰ Enchanted Land. Comment on “Qusheng Wei Liangfu de duanping,” *douban*, 7 October 2015, Web.

⁷¹ Kǒng Àipíng 孔爱萍 plays Yīngzhuàn, Wèi Liángfǔ’s daughter.

⁷² Qián Zhènróng 钱振荣 plays Zhāng Yětang.

⁷³ Jia you xianqi Bai Suzhen 家有仙妻白素贞. Comment on “Qusheng Wei Liangfu de duanping.” *Douban*, 8 October 2015, Web.

⁷⁴ Meika mecca 美卡 mecca. Comment on “Qusheng Wei Liangfu de duanping.” *Douban*, 26 January 2016, Web.

⁷⁵ Cài Zhèngrén 蔡正仁 plays Wèi Liángfǔ.

⁷⁶ Zhāng Jūn 张军 plays Ziyù, one of Liáng Chényú’s student actors.

⁷⁷ Nickname of Zhāng Zhēngyào 张争耀 who plays Xiè Línquán, one of Wèi Liángfǔ’s musician friends.

⁷⁸ Susu 苏苏. Comment on “Qusheng Wei Liangfu de duanping,” *Douban*, 26 January 2016, Web.

- “What a once-in-three-year *kūnqǔ* gala festival! It is too sad that I only watched the finale. But in my one and only *kūnqǔ* play I saw Emperor Cǎi, auntie Kǒng, Yàoyào, and a bunch of famous actors, so I feel happy. It is a beautiful newly-created play. The whispered *kūnqǔ* history and an aftertaste of romance, though making up the role types was suspicious, it has reached perfection. I expect to meet again in three years!” – 莉莉玛莲⁷⁹
- “October 1, 2015 at the Jiāngnán Theatre. Went for the purpose of Emperor Cǎi. The script is average.” – 罔两⁸⁰
- “For the entire play, it is enough to listen to Cǎi Zhèngrén’s singing. So far this is the most powerful and wonderful singing I have ever heard.” – 其後⁸¹
- “My entire focus is on enjoying singing. I am not clear about the plot...” – 东篱叟⁸²

Some bloggers wrote lengthy articles posted online, praising and summarizing the play with their preferences:

- I love Shěng Kūn’s style of changing acts; the stage hands wear long gowns moving and setting up the sets on stage in natural and poised manner. I love Shěng Kūn’s pure silk and bamboo music; the pieces of background instrumental music that played occasionally in each act are worthy enough to play individually in an infinite loop. I love Shěng Kūn’s song lyrics and singing; they are elegant and charming, the rhyme scheme is well-knit. I also love the curtain call of this play; everyone goes on stage and sings a classical song, extremely satisfying... I am used to watching romantic plays full of gifted scholars and beautiful ladies. This play does not have dramatic ups and downs; it is more like a picture thesis describing the origin of the Water Polished music. My buddies therefore called it a *kūnqǔ* stage documentary. However the entire play satisfies the pleasures of the senses audibly and visually; every detail with concentrated attention satisfy perfectionists. Delightfully we saw so many famous actors last night, the entire stage reflecting the sparkling stars. Emperor Cǎi’s singing was profound and melodious, clear and definite. With his radiant look and great spirit, he did not look like a 75-year-old man. – Shěng Bìwú 沈碧梧⁸³
- Really, as a newly-created play, people are prepared to be struck by the lightning, especially after reading the script... Why on earth would I want to recommend it? No nonsense, because there is Emperor Cǎi!... I have to say, *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ*

⁷⁹ Lilimalian 莉莉玛莲. Comment on “Qusheng Wei Liangfu de duanping,” *Douban*, 30 January 2016, Web.

⁸⁰ Wangliang 罔两. Comment on “Qusheng Wei Liangfu de duanping,” *Douban*, 1 August 2017, Web.

⁸¹ Qihou 其後. Comment on “Qusheng Wei Liangfu de duanping,” *Douban*, 27 September 2017, Web.

⁸² Donglisou 东篱叟. Comment on “Qusheng Wei Liangfu de duanping,” *Douban*, 5 June 2018, Web.

⁸³ Chenbiwu 沈碧梧. “heyi jieyou , weiyou shengge | huainian 《qu sheng Wei Liangfu》,” *Caifu*, 4 February 2016, Web.

initiated a new path for *kūnqǔ*'s artistic development: *kūnqǔ* documentary... In sum, this is a play depicted in a fresh and wonderful style... It is worth watching. Why? Because there is Emperor Cài!... To be honest, Mr. Tsēng Yǒng-Yih's *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* is a bit short on plot and the speech is a bit modern... However, as a scholar who researches rhyme scheme and theories, Mr. Tsēng's lyrics are remarkable... Compared to a contemporary newly-arranged *Kūn* musical, his composition is professional, professional, very professional! Many *qǔpái* lyrics are quite beautiful. Especially Zhāng Yětang's two *qǔpái* songs, simple and elegant, quite a relic in the style of orthodox Northern *qǔ* of the Yuán dynasty. After all, Mr. Tsēng gave [character] Zhāng Yětang his true love! Certainly, one can use one phrase to describe the plot of the entire play: everybody sings... Emperor Cài sings from beginning to the end, this is key to getting our money's worth. At the end Emperor Cài added a *qǔpái* 【Doffing the Clothes】, full of modes and full of keys. It is just like a cold drink in June and red-envelope gift money in Chinese New Year, extremely satisfying! – Wúyú qīngyīn 吴歛清音⁸⁴

These words are genuine, some are sarcastic. Yet some people did not hesitate to give their most critical assessments. For example:

Although it served as the finale for the Kūnjù Arts Festival; although playwright Tsēng Yǒng-Yih is respected as the godfather of traditional *xìqǔ* in Taiwan; although Cài Zhèngrén outdid himself tonight; it did not work! *The Sage of Kūnqǔ: Wèi Liángfǔ* is merely a paper that depicts the origin of the Water Polished music. Its long-term illness of loose, empty, boringness, all the bad habits of the literati's *chuánqí* plays of the Míng and Qīng dynasties, are exposed here. It has no conflict, no feeling, no fate, and no soul that breathes with the audience. It therefore is just a self-amusing karaoke party. – Fěnmò pànguān 粉墨判官⁸⁵

The vibrant atmosphere of young fans' participation, physically and verbally, gives hope to *kūnqǔ*. In the twentieth century, experts called out for reform in order to attract young audiences. If we attend to their feedback, young audiences of the twenty-first century want tradition and authenticity.

Interestingly, there has been silence from academia. The online group Fěnmò pànguān 粉墨判官 that commits itself to being the gardener, lit. “sweeper,” of the pear garden (the *xìqǔ*

⁸⁴ Wuyu qingyin 吴歛清音, “《Qu sheng Wei Liangfu》 jinwan yazhou kunqu jie, kanguoderenzheyangpingjia...” *Global kunqu online*, October 19, 2015, Web.

⁸⁵ Fenmo panguan 粉墨判官. Comment on “Qusheng Wei Liangfu,” *Weibo*, 20 October 2015, Web.

circle) and the guardian of the chrysanthemum jug (the *xìqǔ* world), points out the problems with drama criticism for *xìqǔ* productions:

In fact there is not much controversy regarding the *Wèi* play because people who praised this play spoke approvingly from their love as fans, from their respect for the core members of the production team, and from partially-selected *qǔpái* texts to their liking. They did not criticize using historical, aesthetic, and artistic criteria! But the ease and grace of individual *qǔpái* texts and the magnificent singing could not conceal the mediocrity and paleness of the play's literary merit and could not conceal its formulaic and dull aesthetic value! The most paradoxical thing is that the denizens of the world of theatre on the one hand appeal for theatrical criticism, and on the other hand passionately pander to one another. — Fěnmò pànguān 粉墨判官⁸⁶

This “scratch my back and I will scratch yours” phenomenon has become the norm between scholar “experts” and *xìqǔ* practitioners. Recently there have been online debates regarding Chéng-style *jīngjù* actress Zhāng Huǒdīng 张火丁, who rearranged and staged a Méi-style *jīngjù* play, the well-known *Bàwáng bié jī* 霸王别姬 (“Farewell my concubine”) on May 25, 2019. Chéng-style *jīngjù* is an artistic form inherited from the unique female (*dàn* 旦) singing style of Chéng Yànqiū 程砚秋 and the hundreds of plays that he either created or specialized in. The play *Bàwáng bié jī* is considered the classic of classics, a symbol of Méi Lánfāng's 梅兰芳 *jīngjù* style. Zhāng Huǒdīng's decision has divided *jīngjù* lovers: people who welcome the challenge of revising it and people who do not see the need. These debates boosted another round of “Zhāng Huǒdīng fever” after her 1990s' Zhāng Huǒdīng phenomenon (Zhāng Huǒdīng xiànxàng 张火丁现象), a wave which generated new *jīngjù* followers through her sensational performance. Whether her *Bàwáng bié jī* was a success or not depended on one's opinion, but all scholars, experts, and fan representatives who participated in the evaluation panel hosted by The National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts (Zhōngguó xìqǔ xuéyuàn 中国戏曲学院, NACTA)

⁸⁶ Fenmo panguan 粉墨判官. Comment on “Qusheng Wei Liangfu,” *Weibo*, 23 October 2015, Web.

on May 26 paid high tribute to her creativity and performance ability. No one had any suggestions for further improvement. Two days later, an online article titled “Look how an ‘expert’ extols!” (Kàn “zhuānjiā” zěnme pěng! 看“专家”怎么捧!) was posted on the site of *Jīngjù dào chǎng*⁸⁷ (京剧道场). The writer, who attended the evaluation panel, documented the talk by Fù Jǐn 傅谨, a NACTA Professor and a member of the China Literature and Art Critics Association (Zhōngguó wényì pínglùn jiā xiéhuì 中国文艺评论家协会). The writer criticized a powerful *xìqǔ* authority and representative expert for assessing Zhāng Huǒdīng’s *Bàwáng bié jī* with such flattering comments, similar to a fan’s praise.⁸⁸ According to the writer, the lack of serious criticism from academia and *xìqǔ* insiders will eventually lead to overly-rosy self-regard and the surrender to a mass market driven by paramount economic considerations.

The criticism in this dissertation may sound overwrought, but as the *Wèi* play has not been staged again since 2015, it is evident that the company admits there are problems with this production and that some creative aspects must be revised or even jettisoned in order to put it on stage again. This is merely one case among many successful productions that Shěng Kūn has produced. *Kūnqǔ* in the twenty-first century has two faces: that of an intangible cultural heritage, and that of a living creative art. These two identities seem to exist as a contrast in duality; the fact is that they also complement each other. *Kūnqǔ* actors trained with traditional repertoires, imitating conventional techniques, create and will re-create further. *Kūnqǔ* composers trained in traditional percussive patterns, applying music theories for folk instrumental ensembles or even Western orchestration, will create and re-create as well. Shěng Kūn has been a leader in

⁸⁷ 京剧道场, WeChat ID: jingju20140808

⁸⁸ Jingju daochang 京剧道场. “kan ‘zhuanjia’ zenme peng!” *weixin*, 28 May 2019, Web.

experimenting with new ideas. Kē Jūn has produced or co-produced experimental *kūnjù* (*shíyàn kūnjù* 实验昆剧) and new concept *kūnqǔ* (*xīn gàiniàn kūnqǔ* 新概念昆曲). Shí Xiǎoméi⁸⁹ *Kūnqǔ* Studio 石小梅昆曲工作室, under the brand name *chūnfēng shàngsì tiān* 春风上巳天 (“the spring breeze on the double third fest.”), is devoted to collecting and unearthing traditional *kūnqǔ* excerpts (*zhézi xì* 折子戏). An innovative production of a series of excerpts (*xìliè zhézi xì* 系列折子戏), *Shì Shuō Xīn Yǔ* 世说新语 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*), will be staged starting in November 2019. Lǐ Hóngliáng calls this a production of Shěng Kūn’s strategic creation project, in its current stage. The goal is to enrich Shěng Kūn’s repertoire and create representative works for the fourth-generation actors, hoping that these young performers amass their own masterpieces. A bright future ahead, best wishes!

In this dissertation, playwright Tsēng’s process of text creation has been shown to follow a scholarly approach, resulting in a dramatic text with truthful references to the content and context, but with some problems as well, including a lengthy exposition and lack of dramatic conflict. Despite many historical facts, Tsēng’s text is also a fiction, a dramatized history which provides literary images depicting the characters through their role categories. The role categories system retains distinctive characteristics for each and a unifying element between a character and the actor who plays the role. The directors’ process of performative creation projects a very different vision from that of the playwright. The quickly shifting blocking and fast pace in exchanges of dialogue serve to generate theatrical effectiveness. The image of a few role categories, however, gradually became more and more ambiguous during the rehearsal

⁸⁹ Shí Xiǎoméi 石小梅, a second-generation Shěng Kūn actor, was trained as young female role category in the 60s and later to a young male role category in the 70s.

process. To my knowledge, the revealing emendation has never been discussed between the playwright and the directors. Within the production, the problematic hierarchy from top down and the passive respect from bottom up also created an obstacle for communication and cooperative creativity. In my considered opinion, the lack of honest communication ultimately doomed the production to failure. In the meantime, the outside criticism crucial for *kūnqǔ*'s growth and development has actually weakened, due primarily to economic influences, and instead has become a mutual appreciation society. Those who give harsh comments are, after all, in the minority; some appear driven by emotion. As a neutral outside researcher, I consider myself to be well-placed to make honest judgments. Some may argue that this one case does not apply to other productions and companies. They may be right, but perhaps they might better understand this case study as an in-depth chronicle of producing a critical review of the current challenges facing *kūnqǔ* innovation.

APPENDIX

The Text of Performance

The following text was projected for the public performances on October 1 and October 19, 2015. Unlike the dramatic text which includes stage cues and other information, this text for performance serves as side-titles for the audiences. Therefore the text only lists actors' lines and songs. In this case which no action is indicated, I will add necessary information such as the names of the characters and whether the text should be spoken or sung in the parentheses (in blue). The text for performance has been changed to simplified Chinese as it is the writing system used in China. The *qǔpái* titles written in 【】 are listed in Chinese only. Within the *qǔpái* lyrics, the decorative words (*chènzì* 襯字) added to the regulated poetic structure are no longer set in a smaller font as indicated in the original dramatic text. Without differentiating the font, the decorative words are presented as a part of the lyrics. The sense of poetic structural significance is missing. This text for performance is translated by Kim Hunter Gordon (UK) without editorial changes.

新编昆剧

曲圣魏良辅

Wei Liangfu: Sage of Musical Verse

(Overture)

编剧: 曾永义 (台湾)

Playwright: Tseng Yong-yih

演出本整理: 朱雅 (特邀)

Script adaptation: Zhu Ya (by special invitation)

导演: 周世琮 朱雅 (特邀)

Directors: Zhou Shicong Zhu Ya (by special invitation)

艺术指导: 蔡正仁 (特邀)

Artistic direction: Cai Zhengren (by special invitation)

作曲·配器: 孙建安 洪敦远 (台湾)

Orchestral composition¹: Sun Jian'an Tun-Yuan Hung

舞美设计: 于少非 (特邀)

Set design: Yu Shaofei (by special invitation)

灯光设计: 郭云峰

Lighting design: Guo Yunfeng

服装设计: 徐瑛 (特邀)

Costume design: Xu Ying (by special invitation)

化妆造型设计: 蒋曙红

Make-up design: Jiang Shuhong

盔帽·道具设计: 洪亮 缪向明

Headwear and prop design: Hong Liang Miao Xiangming

副导演: 杜九红 (特邀)

Assistant director: Du Jiuhong (by special invitation)

剧本英文翻译: 郭冉 (英籍)

English translation: Kim Hunter Gordon (UK)

中文字幕: 岳瑞红

Chinese subtitles: Yue Ruihong

演员表

Cast

魏良辅: 蔡正仁 饰 (特邀)

Wei Liangfu: Cai Zhengren (by special invitation)

¹ The translation here should be composition and orchestration.

子 玉: 张军 饰 (特邀)
Zi Yu²: Zhang Jun (by special invitation)

张野塘: 钱振荣 饰
Zhang Yetang: Qian Zhenrong

莺 啭: 孔爱萍 饰
Yingzhuan: Kong Aiping

过云适: 李鸿良 饰
Guo Yunshe: Li Hongliang

梁辰鱼: 孙晶 饰
Liang Chenyu: Sun Jing

朱元璋: 赵于涛 饰
Zhu Yuanzhang: Zhao Yutao

顾 坚: 刘效 饰
Gu Jian: Liu Xiao

张梅谷: 顾骏 饰
Zhang Meirong: Gu Jun

周寿谊·晋清: 计韶清 饰
Zhou Shouyi / Puqing³: Ji Shaoqing

谢林泉: 张争耀 饰
Xie Linquan: Zhang Zhengyao

乙 芝: 徐思佳 饰
Yizhi: Xu Sijia

大太监·水青: 钱伟 饰
Chief eunuch / Shuiqing: Qian Wei

周镜山·魏检: 曹志威 饰
Zhou Jingshan / Servant: Cao Zhiwei

² It is written Ziyu throughout the text.

³ This is the wrong pronunciation. 晋清 should be pronounced Jinqīng.

沈粟林·穆咏农: 计灵 饰
Shen Sulin / Mu Yongyi: Ji Ling

陆紫云·沈项福: 陈睿 饰
Lu Ziyun / Shen Xiangfu: Chen Rui

贝 贤: 周鑫 饰
Beixian: Zhou Xin

菊 寿: 杨阳 饰
Jushou: Yang Yang

项 生: 陈超 饰
Xiangsheng: Chen Chao

梁 桂: 黄世忠 饰
Liang Gui: Huang Shizhong

杏 香: 丛海燕 饰
Jixiang: Cong Haiyan

企 斋: 张静芝 饰
Qi Zhai: Zhang Jingzhi

车夫·太监: 周鑫 丁俊阳 石善明 李伟 黄世忠 陈超 杨阳 饰
Coachmen / eunuchs: Zhou Xin, Ding Junyang, Shan Shanming, Li Wei, Huang Shizhong, Chen Chao, Yang Yang.

指挥·司鼓: 单立里
Conductors and Percussion: Shan Lili

主笛: 陈辉东
Lead flute: Chen Huidong

演奏: 江苏省演艺集团昆剧院乐队
Orchestra: Jiangsu Kunju Ensemble

演出: 江苏省演艺集团昆剧院
Company: Jiangsu Province Performing Arts Group Kunju Theatre

序幕

Prologue

(Guò Yúnshì sings)

中吕【沁园春】

绛帐春风 上庠京国

暇日从容

Teacher's words, like a leisurely spring breeze, float around the college of elders,

且挥毫着墨 谱将昆曲

explaining the composition of Kunqu scores,

去脉来龙

expounding their lines and curves.

关目新颖 排场讲究

The plot of this new play I have written has novelty and grandeur.

按律填词宿所宗

It is poetically rigorous.

洪武帝传瑜正音

万世咏诵

The first Ming emperor set the proper word enunciation for future generations.

(Guò Yúnshì recites)

正是

魏良辅翻新水磨调

Indeed.

Wei Liangfu developed the Water Polished Sound.

张野塘落拓苏门啸

Zhang Yetang's talent landed in Suzhou ground.

千人石嘤唱中秋夜

On Huqiu's famous rock on a softly sung mid-autumn night.

梁辰鱼撑张昆曲纛

Liang Chenyu raised Kunqu's flag to a new height.

第一场

Act 1

(Emperor Zhū sings)

中吕引子【菊花新】

大明一统锦江山

The great Ming has united a splendid empire.

甘澍普施喜平安

Bringing peace and happiness to all places; a welcome rain after the drought.

昨夜梦邯郸

Last night I had a fantastic dream.

惊觉流年轻换

When I woke I suddenly realised my youth has already passed.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

一统山河

Having unified the empire.

御宇三十年

忽然古稀矣

After being emperor for thirty years, suddenly I'm an old man.

今召集天下乡野耄耋

赐宴偏殿

Today I will gather the elderly for an imperial banquet.

同庆眉寿 共乐太平

We will celebrate our longevity and together enjoy these times of peace.

(Emperor Zhū sings)

中吕过曲【驻马听】

想朕早岁征鞍

When I think of my early days on the battlefield.

万里驱驰星月寒

Riding thousands of miles, enduring cold winter nights.

那江南縵舞

That silky Jiangnan dance,

塞外悲歌 宫内吹弹

Those melancholic northern songs. The music of court.

都付与大风扫灭云尽翻

All within my dominions.

今日里河清海晏擎金盞

Today, the empire is at peace and raises its golden cup.

(Gù Jiān speaks)

臣启陛下

Your Majesty!

(Gù Jiān sings)

【前腔】

欣逢良辰万寿

We are so happy on this day to celebrate Your Excellency's birthday in universal celebration.

普天同庆 举世腾欢

The empire is ecstatic with joy.

同享福安

共祈眉寿共朝班

Prospering together in peacetime, praying that long may it last.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

闻说昆山周寿谊

年届一百有七

今日来否

I heard that in Kunshan there is a Zhou Shouyi who is 107 years old.

Will he come today?

(Gù Jiān speaks)

已在殿外侍候

He is already waiting outside.

(Emperor Zhū speaks, the chief eunuch answers)

来

有

-Come.

-Here, sir.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

宣他们觐见

Bring them in!

(Chief eunuch speaks)

遵旨

Very good.

万岁有旨

The emperor has spoken.

众位乐者觐见

He invites the guests to present themselves in the hall.

(The guests speak)

领旨

Understood.

(Zhōu Shòuyì speaks)

万岁爷大老倌在哪里

Where is the emperor?

(Gù Jiān speaks)

万岁爷在上

His Majesty is just there.

(Zhōu Shòuyì speaks)

万岁爷在上

小民见过万岁爷叩头

His Majesty is just there, I must kowtow when I see him.

(The chief eunuch speaks, the guests answer)

平身

万万岁

-At ease.

-Long live the Emperor!

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

周寿谊 你是如何前来

Zhou Shouyi, how did you travel here?

(Zhōu Shòuyì speaks)

回万岁爷

老老是一步一步走来的

Your Majesty, I walked here by foot.

这是我儿子 名唤周镜山

This is my son, Zhou Jingshan.

今年正好八十岁

年纪还小呢

He turned 80 this year. Still a young boy.

他陪老老一同前来

He accompanied me on my journey.

一路上气喘如牛

Gasping for breath all along the way.

数次跌坐地上

Falling to the ground on several occasions.

还不及我老老

Still not as fit as his old man!

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

周寿谊

你是如何得此长寿呢

Zhou Shouyi, how have achieved such a noble age?

(Zhōu Shòuyì speaks)

回万岁

老老无养生之道

只有这三好

Your Majesty. I have no particular method, just three healthy passions.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

哪三好

What three passions are these?

(Zhōu Shòuyì speaks)

这一好唱曲

The first for singing verse.

第二好饮酒

The second ... for drinking wine.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

这第三好么

And the third?

(Zhōu Shòuyì speaks)

这第三好么

The third you ask...?

好美色

Cavorting with pretty ladies!

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

什么

What did you say?

(Zhōu Shòuyì speaks)

老老好色 长寿心得

这也不算什么罪

I enjoy the company of women. This is the honest account of my experience.

It does not amount to any crime.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

你好酒色 有福有福

A passion for wine and women. How resplendent!

来 赐绣墩

Bring the man a seat.

(Zhōu Shòuyì speaks)

多谢万岁爷

My deepest gratitude, your Majesty.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

周寿谊

闻说昆山腔很是耐听

Zhou Shouyi, I hear that Kunshan music is particularly pleasing.

你能唱与我们听听么

I wonder if you sing some for me?

(Zhōu Shòuyì speaks, Emperor Zhū responds)

万岁爷听启

唱来

-Certainly, your Majesty!

-Start at once.

(Zhōu Shòuyì sings)

月子弯弯照几州

Moonshine meanders o'er many a town.

几人欢乐几人愁

How many men are happy,

how many men frown?

几人夫妇同罗帐

How many husband and wife are under a silk drape?

几人飘散在他州

How many in other places separate?

(Shěn Sùlín speaks)

万岁

小人沈粟林也来唱一段

Your Majesty, Shen Sulin will also sing one for you.

(Shěn Sùlín sings)

八字衙门朝南开

The yamen door only opens to the south.

有理无钱莫进来
A just man lives hand-to-mouth.

有钱官司包打赢
With money, a lawsuit is easily won.

无钱官司打屁腮
Without money, you just get a smack on the bum.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

这八十岁的儿子在哪里
And where is this 80-year-old son of yours?

(Zhōu Jingshān speaks)

在
小民便是周镜山
Here I am. Your servant Zhou Jingshan.

也为万岁唱上一曲
I will also sing a verse for Your Majesty.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

快快唱来
Come, come sing!

(Zhōu Jingshān sings)

天平地平 官府不平
The heavens are even,
The earth is flat.
Only the state is set on thieving.

官府一平 天下太平
If the authorities were fair, the world would be at peace.

天平地平 世道不平
If the heavens and the earth were in order, so would be the morals of the time.

世道一平 天下太平
If the morals of the time were in order, the empire would be at peace.

(Lù Ziyún speaks)

小民陆紫云
也来献唱一曲

Humble servant Lu Ziyun also furnish your Majesty with a number.

(Lù Ziyún sings)

说凤阳道凤阳

Fengyang is great,
Fengyang well-known.

凤阳么本是好地方

Fengyang the origin of the imperial throne.

自从出了朱皇帝

Ever since Zhu rose as sovereign.

十年么就有九年荒

Of ten years, nine have been in famine.

(The chief eunuch speaks)

哆 大胆村夫

You audacious villager!

竟敢唱此不雅之调

触怒龙颜

How dare you sing such an ineloquent ditty and enrage the Emperor?

(Gù Jiān speaks)

万岁息怒 万岁息怒

Your Majesty, be not enraged!

凡真龙降世 必有大灾

Whenever a true ruler is born into the world, there is always a natural disaster.

今已盛世天下

民谣土腔遍生

But the empire is now prospering. Folk songs are flourishing abound.

土腔以歌谣为载体

The folk songs are the carriers of local dialect.

每满心而发 肆口而成

From each happy heart do they emerge without much thought as to the content.

语不假雕琢

故俚俗粗鄙

This language is as jade uncarved, thus a little coarse.

若以南北曲牌为载体

If it was carried within standardised melodies.

二者人工造就严格之音律

And set strictly to musical rules.

三者文士彩绘歌词

Using the poetic lyrics of the scholar class.

臣尝与知交名士

杨维桢 顾瑛 倪瓒等

My scholar friends Yang Weizhen, Gu Ying, Ni Zan and I,

研究南曲之奥秘

research the mysteries of southern verse.

这四者么 略施管弦

腔调精致而悦耳

Matching it with the fine accompaniment of silk and bamboo instruments.

因有昆山腔之称

Because of our group, this is called Kunshan music.

蒙陛下耳闻者

Of which Your Majesty has heard.

实经臣等改良之昆山腔

We are in the course of improving this Kunshan music.

非周老所歌之土腔也

These are more than the mere ditties of merry scholars.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

若此 如先生所言

则腔调艺术之提升

If that is so, and you are emphasising the improvement of art...

格律之精 語言之优雅

The essence of poetic metre, the elegance of language...

唱腔之细腻

以管弦伴奏

and the refinement of melodies, with pipes and strings as accompaniment...

经此四者

方能进为宛转美听之腔调矣

With these four elements in place, then these could indeed develop into sweet sounds.

先生能否为朕唱上一曲

Could you sing such a one now for me to hear?

(Gù Jiān speaks)

陛下圣明

As Your Majesty is of keen intelligence and a masterful judge,

容臣咏唱《琵琶记》

首曲【秋怀】

please allow me to sing the opening aria of the Tale of the Pipa.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

唱来

Indeed, please sing.

(Gù Jiān sings)

南商调【二郎神】

从别后

正七夕穿鍼在画楼

In his absence on the festival, threading my needle in the ornamented tower.

暮雨过纱窗凉已透

The rain having burst through the screen window.

夕阳影里

见一簇寒蝉衰柳

In the shadow of the setting sun, weary cicadas and drooping willow.

水绿苹香人自愁

The fragrance of the green river grass makes me sad.

(Emperor Zhū speaks)

朕览《琵琶记》

Listening to The Tale of the Pipa,

以为五经四书如民间五谷不可缺

I feel education by the four texts is surely as important as nourishment by the five grains.

此记如珍羞百味

Such delicious recipes of the intellect.

富贵家其可无耶

How could the noble houses go without?

适才卿家所唱【二郎神】

Just now my subject sang this aria.

细腻宛转 以低腔做美

极其耐听

Its finesse, taken from a base tune made beautiful,
is extremely pleasurable to the ear.

其所谓昆山腔

This so-called Kunshan music.

当如先生之韵喉

先生必以此传世矣

Must from your melodic voice-box be
transmitted to the world!

(Gù Jiān speaks)

谨尊圣谕

臣必将此曲传与万代

As Your Majesty commands,

I will transmit this singing style on ten thousand generations.

(The crowd speaks)

万岁万岁万万岁

Long live the Emperor!

第二场 切磋曲艺

Act 2: Verse Theory

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

魏老先生

因之思有以创发改良

Mr Wei wishes to develop and improve music.

十年光阴转瞬经过

志业迄今未成

Ten years have flashed by and his ambition has yet to be achieved.

今日又约集诸友

切磋曲艺

Today he has yet again gathered a group of friends to discuss the art of the verse.

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

探索门径

To explore its composition.

(Wèi Liángfǔ sings off stage)

正宫引子【梁州令】

十年辛苦度新声

Ten years hard work on a musical plight,

展转过寒更

缕心南曲鬓霜生

Restless many a cold night,

The southern verse veteran obsessed with his fight.

喉啾调声婉协

口圆轻

For an accurate note and graceful sound,

Enunciation that is both light and round.

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

啊先生

Ah, sir!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

啊列位仁兄

Ah, my dear friends.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

声情律吕妙精微

The 12-pitch system has true emotional depth.

(Zhāng Méigǔ speaks)

疾徐高低转韵归

Rhymes floating from high to low and fast to slow.

(Xiè Línquán speaks)

撮笛吹箫须衬和

The sounds of the horizontal and vertical flutes must be set off against one another.

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

五音分辨不能违

One cannot violate the order of the pentatonic scale.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

列位请坐

Please each of you take a seat.

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

请

Please.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

尚泉兄

今日须将那不可破之难题排除了

Brother Wei, today we must sort that out that difficult problem of yours.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

是啊

Indeed.

(Zhāng Méigǔ speaks)

你们二老尽管揣摩实验

We leave it to the two masters to experiment and find a solution.

吾等以箫管配合便是

We shall accompany you.

以二公歌曲之精湛

With your exquisite singing,

岂有不能破之理

How can we not solve this problem?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

若论声音之道

千难万难

岂是这般容易哟

My friends, when it comes to music the difficulties are numerous.

It will never be easy.

(Wèi Liángfǔ sings)

正宫过曲【锦缠道】

论宫商

汉相如只知纂组成章

Of musical theory:

The Han poet Sima Xiangru just knew how sounds align.

五音自相将

With five pitches identified in his time.

平仄传李唐

杜子美工吟榜样

The Tang noted inflections level and oblique,

Du Fu was particularly fine.

宋词分去上

长短律 浅斟低唱

In the Song tones were also brought into line,

Poetry would be sung over wine.

昆腔又落入新魔障

Now in Kunshan we face the new challenge of our time.

(Zhāng Méigǔ speaks)

妙妙妙

好一部历朝历代语言腔调

之来龙去脉与曲折变化

Marvelous, what a wonderful song about how verse developed!

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

尚泉兄 于音律之道

真可谓研之既深

Brother Wei, you have a deep understanding the rules of music and poetry.

了然于胸

You know verse from back to front.

想从古到今

To think that in all history,

喜爱诗词文赋之先贤

大家不可谓不多

while many sages excelled at poetry.

然则于腔调一说

Few actually understood the rules of music.

又不明其构成之要素

Nor knew how its elements were placed together.

恐终不免落入

一般语言旋律耳

Thus producing verse with only very average melodies.

(Zhāng Méigǔ speaks)

啊兄

这个一般语言旋律 尚不精确

Brother, to say that these melodies are average is not entirely accurate.

依我之意么

该称之为自然语言旋律耳

In my opinion one should think of them simply as “the melodies of natural language”.

(Xiè Línquán speaks)

啊呀呀好拗口也

What a mouthful!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

列位请坐了

Please all of you sit down.

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

有坐

We will.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

请

Please.

(Xiè Línquán speaks)

既如此说

想是还有人工一种

与之对应否

Even so, I still believe there are elements that are human rather than natural.

(Zhāng Méigǔ speaks)

还应有一个新说辞

Yes, that should be an important new concept.

只是还不曾归纳确立矣

But we must establish it fully.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

对 调之组合搭配

必去八病方能和谐有致

The assemblage of tones has to be reconciled with the eight taboos in poetry.

此乃尚泉兄已知之矣

Of course, brother Wei already knows this.

则何不由其载体曲牌

更上层楼

But why not take it to new heights?

期可以脱胎换骨

精入微渺

Refresh and renew to the finest level of detail;

使语言音乐旋律

融而为一

combining language and music into one.

则何如哉

What do you think?

(Zhāng Méigǔ speaks)

人工语言旋律

乃是唐诗宋词元曲的种种规律

But the musicality of human language is present in poems of the Tang, Song and Yuan.

然谓四声递换

This is called “the interaction of the four tones”.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

列位仁兄之言

深获我心

My brothers and dear friends, your words are indeed capturing my imagination.

凡歌唱者复能美化其音色

巧运其口法

We could work on the quality of singing and take more care in the enunciation of words,

使字之头腹尾清楚

正所谓字正腔圆也

by making each syllable clear from head, belly to tail. Pronunciation must be correct and its inflection rounded.

(Wèi Liángfǔ sings)

【刷子序】

改良曲腔

须研磨载体 精细多方

To improve verse and tune,
The fine detail of words must be studied and known.

吞吐处 恰似兰麝喷芳

Where to hold back and where let go.
Singing them like spraying perfume.

一任你逞高低

山回谷响

And moving between high to low,
Like a mountain echo.

终究是得急徐

气清韵扬

From hurried to slow,
Clarity of breathing for a sound that will glow.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

尚泉兄果然抽音若丝

而气无烟火

Brother Wei really does tease out music like drawing out silk, gently with no explosions.

何不以名曲唐伯虎

《情柬青楼》当中的

【榴花泣】而歌之

Why not try this technique with Tang Bohu's poem Crying Pomegranate Flower,

请张谢二位仁兄和之箫管

with messieurs Zhang and Xie on pipes and flute,

在下以板节之

故验此新腔乎

and myself on these clappers, clapping according to the new method!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

好 就请三兄合奏之

Good idea! In that case may I invite you three to offer such an accompaniment...

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

请

Please.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

列位请了

When you are ready.

(Wèi Liángfǔ sings)

南中吕【榴花泣】

折梅逢使烦寄到金陵

Frantically send I a plum branch to Jinling.

是必见那芳卿

It must be seen by her my darling.

将咱言语记取真

With all my heart's feeling,

一一的说与他听

Unto her revealing.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

妙妙妙

真正天衣无缝矣

Marvelous, that really was flawless!

字出反切

其头腹尾音之毕匀

The head, belly and tail of each word were could be heard clearly.

启口轻圆 收音纯细

Each sound launched with softness and finished with precision.

足下十年功夫

毕竟得之矣

The result of ten years of hard work, finally realised. A real accomplishment!

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

得之矣

A real accomplishment!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

只此新腔

还需要取个名儿

But this new style ... needs a name.

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

是啊

Indeed.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

有了

就将此腔称为水磨调如何

I've got it!

Let's call it the Water Polished Sound, what do you think?

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

水磨调

是矣是矣

Water Polished Sound?

Yes, yes!

就称之为水磨调也

It should indeed be called the Water Polished Sound.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

好 就称为水磨调

Great, Water Polished Sound it is then.

(Zhāng Méigǔ speaks)

凡唱水磨调者

All those who sing the Water Polished Sound,

其吐字行腔

当有如雕镂金玉

should sing words with the same delicacy as engraving gold or jade,

还须加水慢工 细细研磨
方能使之臻于精美无瑕
delicately carving them as if under flowing water.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

是啊 这水磨调必须以
《中原音韵》为准

The Water Polished Sound should use The Rimes of the Central Plain⁴ as its pronunciation standard.

才能用之于四海
That way it will be understood across the four seas.

不然拘囿于吴中一地
Otherwise it will be limited to only the Wu area.

岂能成其大业
How then could it become a great undertaking?

还要改良扩充乐器
We also need to improve our accompanying instruments.

唱奏合一
使水磨调大放生色也
Voice and accompaniment should be as one to give the Water Polished Sound its lustre.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

对对对
要成为国之雅韵
Yes, yes! It must become the national elegant music.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

看茶
Time for tea!

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

吃茶
Tea is served!

⁴ Same as the *Rhyme Book of the Central Plain*.

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

请
Please.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

这十年研磨
桌儿竟成臼了
Over ten years of beating rhythm,
the table has developed a hole like a pestle and mortar!

(Zhāng Méigǔ and Xiè Línquán speak)

是啊 成就了
It has. You mean a martyr?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

成臼(就)了
A mortar.

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

成就(臼)了
A martyr of a mortar!

第三场 邂逅奇遇

Act 3: Fortuitous Encounter

(Bèi Xián sings)

天灾人祸无了休
Natural disaster and war will spree.

懒惰修身得自由
Better to self cultivate oneself and be free.

(Bèi Xián, Jú Shòu, and Xiàng Shēng sing)

得自由
Be free.

世界逍遥真正爽
飘飘荡荡似浮鸥

Those footloose in the world have it best;
Floating as a bird by the sea.

似浮鸥
As a bird by the sea.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

走啊
Onward I travel!

(Zhāng Yětang recites)

无端遣戍到苏州
For no reason banished to Suzhou,

沦落太仓街市头
Falling on Taicang city market roads,

一啸吴门天地阔
Singing within the Wu region's broad enclose.

拨弹弦索恨难休
Plucking my strings my resentment grows

(Bèi Xián, Jú Shòu, and Xiàng Shēng speak, Zhāng Yětang answers)

啊军爷
列位
- Greetings, officer!
- Greetings to each of you!

(Bèi Xián, Jú Shòu, and Xiàng Shēng speak, Zhāng Yětang answers)

军爷请了
列位请了
- Welcome!
- Thank-you

(Bèi Xián speaks)

看这一军役
竟能弹弦唱歌曲
I see this officer can play music and sing.

来来来

加入我们同唱一首
同度良曲

Come, come, come! Join our gathering and sing us a number.

(Jú Shòu and Xiàng Shēng speak)

是啊

Yes, do!

(Zhāng Yětang speaks, Bèi Xián, Jú Shòu, and Xiàng Shēng answer)

列位啊

先生

- Gentlemen!

- Sir!

(Zhāng Yětang sings)

北仙吕【村里逐鼓】

俺虽非世家华胄

Though I am not of noble keel.

金章紫绶

Nor wearing an official ribbon, nor wielding golden seal.

也则是簪缨门第

I was brought up in an educated home.

读书养性 修身尚友

Nurtured by books, to former genius do I kneel.

只这襟抱中肝肠里

倒有些情义牢守

For these my beliefs driven by righteous zeal.

今日个逢了祸灾

遭了诬蔑 值了渠醜

I confronted crisis to be slandered unreal.

不由人痛切齿

愤悲难剖

Agonising is the pain and indignation I feel.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

好

Excellent!

(Bèi Xián, Jú Shòu, and Xiàng Shēng respond, Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

好

先生请了

Very good! Greetings young gentleman!

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

老丈请了

Greetings, my good sir!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

观先生气宇非等闲之人

听先生唱曲

By your bearing I can see you are no ordinary man,
and to hear you sing...

满怀悲愤之情

为了何事

It is as if your heart is filled with grief and indignation.
Why is this?

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

多蒙老丈关爱

Thank-you sir for your kind attention.

只因家父在朝刚正

My father was an upright minister at court,

得罪奸相严嵩

致遭罗织

Posing a threat to the traitor Yan Song,
he was framed on false charges.

家父陷于牢狱身亡

在下远戍太仓

He died in prison and I escaped to Taicang,

将一腔愤懑
街头吟啸
where I sing of my grievance on street corners.

哎 人生至此
夫复何论
Such is life...
What else is there to say?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)
先生遭此不幸
使人恻然心伤
Hearing of your misfortune is most upsetting.

听君北曲
定是名师传授
But your rendering of that northern verse,
it must have been taught by a great master.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)
在下北曲弦索
乃得何良俊家老顿传授
I studied northern verse under old Dun.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)
哦老顿
Ah, old Dun!

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)
老顿乃正统爷宫廷乐师
Old Dun is one of most orthodox masters at the imperial court!

老丈啊
My good sir:

(Zhāng Yětang sings)
【上马娇】
提起那胜国讴
人间已广陵秋

Thinking of those Yuan verse,
Now almost lost on earth.

感激那老顿传新秀
Grateful I am to Dun's oath,

将我这鲁钝生徒生造就
To accept a pupil of such little worth.

羞 但学得皮相怎相酬
Ashamed! That my learning is of no great depth.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

忒谦了
观先生气韵磅礴横生
Be not so modest! I can tell the extent of your mastery.

可是张
Zhang!

莫非先生就是当今
北曲名家张野塘
Are you by any chance the famous northern verse expert, Zhang Yetang?

(Zhāng Yětāng speaks)

不敢 正是在下
I am no expert, but that is indeed my name.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

啊呀呀失敬了
Pardon me for not realising earlier.

(Zhāng Yětāng speaks)

岂敢
请问先生是
Of course not. Dare I enquire as to your name?

(Bèi Xián speaks, Bèi Xián, Jú Shòu, and Xiàng Shēng respond)

这是魏良辅 魏老先生
This is Wei Liangfu, the venerable Mr Wei.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

哦 原来是魏老先生
闻名震耳 久仰了

Ah, so all along this is Mr Wei! I have long been looking forward to meeting you.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

不敢 请先生屈驾寒舍
一叙心曲如何

Not at all. I hope you can come into my humble abode so we can talk more about the singing of verse.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

愿随先生聆听赐教

I am indeed most eager to learn from you.

(Bèi Xián, Jú Shòu, and Xiàng Shēng speak)

如此 我等告辞

In that case, we shall leave you both to it.

(Wèi Liángfǔ and Zhāng Yětang speak to Bèi Xián, Jú Shòu, and Xiàng Shēng)

请
请

-My respects!

-My respects!

(Wèi Liángfǔ and Zhāng Yětang speak to each other)

请
请

-Please!

-Please!

(Zhāng Yětang sings)

【胜葫芦】

俺只待流水高山子期友
生死亦须求

I have long been hoping to find my bosom mate,
In life and death would I wait.

俺曾走遍江湖四十州

Having travelled over forty a state,

今日竟相知谬赏
相见绸缪

Today we finally find each other,
On meeting we entwine as strands in a plait.

从今便风雨也同舟

From today on we are connected by fate.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

请坐

Please, have a seat!

(Zhāng Yětāng speaks)

有坐

Thank-you.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks, Zhāng Yětāng answers)

先生请

请

- Please have some tea!

- Thank-you!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

先生

老朽与吴中好友们

潜心十年

Mr Zhang, I have been working hard now for ten years.

终于创研了水磨曲调

And have finally created what I call the Water Polished technique of singing verse.

(Zhāng Yětāng speaks)

水磨曲调

The “water polished” technique you say?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

足下呵

My friend:

(Zhāng Yětāng speaks)

先生

Good sir,

(Wèi Liángfǔ sings)

越调过曲【忆多娇】

我翻水磨 度雅歌

I have created the Water Polished tune,

脱略古今争许多

Surpassing musical conflicts old and new.

感动新声人着魔

An original sound enchanting to hear,

那丝竹相和

那丝竹相和

Accompanied by instruments of silk and bamboo.

一洗耳陶心醉醅

Refreshes the ears and rouses the heart too.

(Zhāng Yětāng speaks)

啊呀妙哇

先生创法水磨新腔

真个可喜可贺

How marvelous, this invention of yours is surely a cause for joy and celebration.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

只是还有一事困扰

There is but one problem.

(Zhāng Yětāng speaks)

先生 何事困扰

What is that?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

我有意将北曲元音

融入水磨

I want to bring the vowel sounds of northern verse into it,

至今不得其解

but until today still haven't been able to find a way to do so.

唉 颇以为苦

It's tremendously difficult.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

是呀

北调南音有所扞格

此乃地气使然

Yes, there are conflicts of terrain and sound between north and south. People adapt to their environments.

欲调相得 恐非容易

That wouldn't be a simple task.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

是呀

此等大事 必费工夫

Indeed, such an undertaking requires a lot of work.

还要仰仗先生大力相助

I hope you would be willing to help me!

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

愿效微劳

以报知遇之恩

I'd be happy to help, to repay you for the compliments you have paid me.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

好

Good.

不知先生现居何处

Where do you currently live?

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

惭愧

孤身飘零 四海为家

I am ashamed to say that I am currently of no fixed abode; the four seas are my home.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

如此敬请先生休足舍下

In that case, you must stay with me.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

如此恭敬不如从命

It sounds like I had better do what I am told.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

先生随我来

My good sir, follow me!

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

来了

Coming.

第四场 翁婿庆成

Act 4: The Son-in-Law

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

真正是无巧不成书

What a happy coincidence,

魏先生正在想

这北曲如何融入水磨腔

just as Mr Wei was stuck for how to integrate northern verse into his Water Polished music.

这里就来了一位

擅唱北曲的张野塘

along comes Zhang Yetang to help him out.

(Xiè Línquán speaks)

魏老先生的女儿莺啭小姐

清纯美貌 又通音律

Mr Wei's daughter, Yingzhuān, is a girl of such pure beauty and also very musical.

(Zhāng Méigǔ speaks)

多少书香门第

官宦之家前来保媒提亲

How many scholarly families and government officials have sent matchmakers to ask for her hand.

他父女皆不为动
and he has submitted to none.

魏先生为了研习北曲
But in order to crack the northern melodies.

竟将女儿
嫁与那落魄的书生
he has given his daughter to a poor scholar;

北曲高手张野塘
the northern verse expert Zhang Yetang.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

自张公子下榻以来
Since Zhang has been staying with them,

日日与东翁小姐
磨合南北曲
he has been working with the old man and his daughter everyday trying to blend the northern and southern sounds.

小姐与公子日久生情
Feelings between the young man and lady have grown deeper by the day.

经我等撮合 终成美事
Asking me to act as a go-between, it has finally become a decided matter.

日日磨时时磨
Merging all day.
Polishing all night.

竟磨出个家主婆
He's managed to polish himself out a wife!

昨日东翁主持婚礼
成就美满姻缘
Yesterday the old man held a wedding ceremony, realising the beautiful destiny.

我等以曲庆贺

共度良时

We provided the musical component, what a time we had!

别人嫁女吃宴席

When other people give away their daughters they hold a feast,

尚泉嫁女唱昆腔

but when this man gives away his daughter he arranges a concert.

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

正是

Indeed.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

人生大事在婚姻

Marriage is one of the most important occasions in life.

(Zhāng Méigǔ speaks)

南腔北韵曲成神

Southern inflections on northern rhymes give the verse a soul.

(Xiè Línquán speaks)

行礼如仪锣鼓闹

Performing the ritual bows to the sound of gongs and drums.

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, and Xiè Línquán speak)

青春不负驻良辰

May they both enjoy their youth on this auspicious occasion!

(Yīng Zhuàn sings)

正宫引子【新荷叶】

好梦春宵烛映纱

A candlelit wedding night dream.

听啼莺 枝头歌罢

Hearing the oriole's song, perched on a beam.

(Zhāng Yětāng speaks)

娘子

My lady.

(Zhāng Yětang sings)

缠绵一夜月光华

Such a night of lingering bliss.

从此恩情日转加

Our affection will grow each day.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

啊娘子

得蒙卿家雅爱

配为婚姻

My lady, I thank you for your boundless affection.

塘 真乃三生有幸

So lucky I am to have you as a wife.

想当日我与岳丈相遇

便是在这沧浪亭中

To think of that day when I met your father by chance here in the Surging Waves Pavilion.

今日与娘子再赏此园

And now here I am with you admiring its garden.

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

便是

Quite.

好一片风光也

And what a marvelous garden it is!

(Yīng Zhuàn sings)

【醉罗歌】

风光满目春潇洒

The scenery so full and sweet.

沧浪之水漾清佳

The rippling water in so clean a state.

濯足濯纓皆不差

In it you could wash either silk or feet.

仰思子美实通达

And like Zimei who built it, be at peace with fate.

你看园中布翠

林内杂花

You see the emerald green sheet,

And forest flowers in bloom,

放眼堪啸

The orchestra of nature has come,

鸣泉鼓蛙

With springs that sing and frogs that drum.

竹风引 日影下

Bamboo conducts the wind, and creates shadows with the sun.

这小亭深处多优雅

The design of this pavilion is most exquisitely done.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

娘子 似此景物

My lady, like this scenery,

令人仰慕那苏子美

啸傲林园之乐

how one admires its creator Su Zimei and the solace he found in his garden.

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

而竹风发响 清韵横流

The wind blows resonantly in the bamboo and the water of its natural course.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

又展转疏林 与鸣泉相和

则别添潇洒矣

And when the whole forest matches together with the sound of the water, it's even more powerful.

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

正是

Yes!

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

我记得岳丈曾论
南北曲之异趣

I remember your father once said of the difference between northern and southern verse,

北曲辞情多而声情少
南曲则辞情少而声情多
that the northern verse is lyrical and the southern musical.

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

妾以为南北曲音声虽殊
而实在正反相倚

I always thought that although different, they must be somehow interdependent.

可以互补有无
And should be able to complement each other to make something even better.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

倘以北曲为骨

If you thought of the northern style as the bones...

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

南曲为肉

And southern style as the flesh...

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

岂有不能骨肉均匀之理

Then why not put them together as one?

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

即眼前天籁之与地籁也

Like the combined sounds of nature right in front of us.

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

好 待我长啸几声

试觉如何

Yes! Let me try a few lines and see what it sounds like.

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

好
Alright!

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

啊呀妙啊 夫君此啸
真将天籁 地籁 人籁
融而为一矣

How wonderful. The sound of nature fused with that of man!

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

啊娘子
我们亟速归家
报与岳丈大人
Ah, my wife, let us quickly return home and tell the old man!

(Wèi Liángfǔ sings)

【小桃红】
一柱清香一盏茶
One stick of incense and a cup of tea,

尘心原不染仙家
Robs not the divine heart of its divinity.

别父母离妻房
千里寻梦
Having left my parents and my wife.
Over a thousand miles following my dream.

独携爱女流异乡
Taking my daughter to a faraway life.

心儿上
口儿边均都是
In both my heart, thoughts and deeds do I strive:

北曲重辞声情少
For the northern verse are lyrical but lack a musical sigh.

南曲重声少辞情

And the southern musical with no linguistic high.

曲韵脱略古今

For music to be freed from constrains old and new

南北扞格得环连

The contradiction must be broken between these two.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

想我尚泉呼

To think that I, Wei Liangfu:

(Wèi Liángfǔ sings)

【下山虎】

怎生的十年劳神

老燕携雏

After a decade of brooding

An old bird together with flock.

高柳鸣蝉 水磨成曲

As cicadas singing from willow branches high,

That Water Polishing may become a style.

辞声璧合

南音北曲谱华章

For the perfect match of lyric and music,

That the north and south may combine.

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

爹爹 爹爹

Father, father.

有了

We've got it!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

儿啊 什么有了

My child! What have you got?

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

女儿适才与夫君
闲游沧浪亭
夫君不禁长啸

We were in the Surging Waves Pavilion. My husband was playing flute in a new style.

忽与天风竹韵鸣泉相应

Suddenly it corresponded with the sounds of the wind and spring water.

这三籁合奏矣

All three sounds worked together as one.

以此例彼 则南北曲调

焉有不能调适于水磨之理

If it worked in this instance why could it not be so for the Water Polished music?

(Yīng Zhuàn sings)

仙吕过曲【八声甘州】

阴阳正反 却调和无间

Two elements, different like yin and yang. Brought together as one.

有如南北腾翻

香喉玉口

North and south merged by dulcet voice.

终将扞格连环

Contradictions finally settled into perfection.

(Zhāng Yětang sings)

地籁天音自扣关

The natural sounds of the earth approach,

海雨江风不暂闲

何难

The sea, rain and wind are never silent.

Isn't it obvious?

恰将广寒宫 仙乐奏弹

Like a heavenly palace on the moon, the music of fairies is always around us.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

尔等得此妙谛
我亦若有所悟

How clever of you both! I am beginning to awaken to it myself.

(Zhāng Yětāng sings)

岳丈大人
小婿为使南北曲磨合

Father-in-law, in order to combine northern and southern characteristics,

特制三弦一把
以此加入协奏如何

I have designed a special three-stringed instrument. What do you think?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

好
快请众位好友前来合奏

Excellent!

Quickly go and invite our friends to come round and help accompany it.

(Servant speaks)

有请众位先生

The master invites the assembled gentlemen inside!

(Guò Yúnshì, Zhāng Méigǔ, Xiè Línquán and others speak)

来了

We are coming!

啊先生

Ah, sir,

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

约我等前来何事呀

for what purpose have you summoned us?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

小婿张野塘
近日研制三弦一把
前来协奏

My son-in-law has created a new three-stringed instrument, come and help accompany him.

为此我决意将珍藏多年的
瑟一张

I have decided to give this antique fifty-string zither,

请看

(please, take a look)

赠与我儿

你夫妇可谓琴瑟调和

to my daughter. Now the two of you can really enjoy harmony at home.

如此水磨调之乐器

Thus the Water Polished orchestra includes:

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks, the crowd speaks the names of instruments)

有 笛 箫 笙 琶

还有 琴 瑟 阮 弦

horizontal flute, vertical flute, reed pipe, pipa, zither, se zither, ruan, and three-string.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

这八音合奏

定能

These eight instruments together will definitely be...

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks, the crowd speaks the last two words)

美妙 动听

Charming! Moving!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks, the crowd responds)

列位请了

请

- Please take your positions

- We are ready.

(Wèi Liángfǔ sings)

【解三醒犯】

和管弦 循腔品看

Pipes and strings; follow the melodies with care.

辨曲中 妙理频繁

Within each verse there is many a clever flare.

今朝重按广陵散

As when the Guangling verse was passed from heaven to the world,

(The crowd sings)

翻妙谱 绝尘寰

Today we develop the earthly scores into divine works.

恰似长空皓月十分寒

Just like the bright moon in the open sky swept clean by the wind,

风扫残云雁影单

With the shadow of a single goose flying through broken clouds.

牙板 调相从

南北回还

Clappers and music work together,

North and south as one.

(Zhāng Yětāng speaks)

恭贺了

Congratulations!

恭喜岳丈大人

贺喜岳丈大人

Congratulations father-in-law!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

如此看来

南北曲均能调适于水磨矣

It seems northern and southern verse really can be integrated together in the Water Polished Sound!

(The crowd speaks)

调适于水磨矣

They integrate very well!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

数十年苦心

至此不费也

So ten years of hard work was not all for nothing!

想此水磨新声

今尚止于歌唱

This Water Polished Sound is currently good for songs.

如能用于戏曲搬演

这才是我最大的心愿啊

But if we could integrate it with staged drama, that would be my greatest wish come true.

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

爹爹

你有弟子梁辰鱼

Father, your student Liang Chenyu is extraordinarily talented.

才高八斗 编词度曲

无所不能

He can write poetry and set music. There is just nothing he can't do.

可否与之商量

Why not discuss the idea with him?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

正合我意

Just what I was thinking.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks, the crowd responds)

列位啊

先生

-My friends,

-Sir!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

南腔北曲 天地之籁

southern sounds and northern lyrics, the music of heaven and earth combined,

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks, the crowd speaks the last two words)

成在今日 功在千秋

was created on this day, but shall continue for a thousand autumns!

(Transitional scene *diào chǎng* 吊場, lit. “hanging the act”)

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

北曲南曲

自从都入了这个水磨腔了

That both northern and southern melodies have entered the Water Polished Sound.

真是天大的事儿

Really is an achievement of enormous significance.

南曲固然好听

但美玉有瑕

Southern verse are obviously pleasant on the ear, but like a beautiful piece of jade it too has faults.

加入北曲

两者之相得益彰

If you add in northern verse, the benefit to both is obvious.

无论清曲

还是舞台上唱戏

Regardless of whether it just for singing or for use in theatre,

从此后才真正形成了

一个完整的套式

from now we have a real framework for composing music.

正是

舞台搬演有根基

南曲北曲终成戏

Stage acting has its roots,

Southern and northern verse will fill its boots.

(Shuǐqīng speaks off stage)

师傅 慢点走哇

Master, slow down!

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

又来了

真是想啥来啥

There it happens again! Whatever I think of seems to turn into reality...

会唱戏的上场了

Its time for the theatricals to come to the stage.

第五场 衣钵传梁

Act 5: Passing the Mantle

(Liáng Chényú sings)

双调【二犯江儿水】

阳关大道 阳关大道

On a broad road,

青骢云路杳

On my horse I gallop through the cloud.

看惊飞宿鸟 一望春郊

Startling the soaring birds I admire the rural spring scene

牧童儿笛韵好

The herding boy flute sound is serene

花树韵多娇

村姑过小桥

Trees laced with flowers rich.

Village girls cross the small bridge

风骤云飘 燕影斜摇

Suddenly the wind clears the clouds,

The swallows dart around.

(The crowd speaks off stage)

伯龙先生

Mr Liang,

(Liáng Chényú sings)

忽见得长亭里

喧闹吵

Suddenly I hear in the long pavilion, Conversing and commotion.

手提肩挑 手提肩挑

Lifting in baskets and crates.

原来是鸡酒鱼枣

鸡酒鱼枣

Chickens, wine, fish and dates.

霎时间热络络地

将俺驻马骄

Presently I arrive and am met at the gates.

(The crowd speaks)

伯龙先生有礼了

Mr Liang, it is an honour!

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

少礼

Please, no need to be so polite.

(Mù Yǒngnóng speaks)

先生路过敝庄

庄人特备鸡酒祖道

Sir passed through our humble village, the locals have been preparing chicken and wine for a banquet in your honour.

陪先生畅饮

以尽仰望之心

To drink with you to show our respect and admiration!

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

既蒙厚爱 共君畅饮者

Thank-you for you kindness. Let us drink together!

在下随身有绫罗数匹

奉与诸君 望祈笑纳

I have brought two sections of damask silk, I would like to present them to you as a gift.

(The crowd speaks)

多谢伯龙先生

Thank-you to Mr Liang!

(Shěn Xiàngfú speaks)

先生 吾等喜爱度曲

尤爱尚泉先生之水磨调

Sir, we love to sing verse, particularly those sung according to Mr Wei's Water Polished style.

先生既已近乡里

何妨携我等一睹盛况

Since you are here, why not join us in watching a grand spectacle.

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

有何不可

Why not indeed!

我正欲拜望尚泉先生

I had in fact planned on visiting Mr Wei.

水青

先去通报吾师

Shuiqing, run along and inform the master.

(Shuǐqīng speaks)

是哉

Yes.

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

喜好度曲者

请随我往

Those who like to sing verse, follow me!

(The crowd speaks)

请

Please.

(The crowd intones rhythmically)

为人今在江南水乡

For the good old folk of Jiangnan now,

江南水乡 心慈情更长

The kind-hearted humour of the water town

笑里迎春 春迎霞光

Smiles welcome spring, spring welcomes the sun,

得见那豪侠仗义

修髯俊伟郎

Everyone wants to catch a glimpse of gallant bearded one.

善度曲美容仪

八尺身长

An excellent singer, handsome and tall,

歌儿舞女 不见伯龙

以为不祥

To miss Liang Chengyu is a misfortune to befall.

今日上巳逢修禊

敢待来光 敢待来光

Today is the festival of the purification rite,

But we can't wait to see him most of all!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

徒儿在哪里

Where is my beloved disciple?

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

师傅在哪里

Where is my master?

师傅请上

徒儿叩拜师傅

I bow in reverence to my master!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

快快请起

Quick, quick, stand up!

(Liáng Chényú speaks, Zǐyù and Yǐzhī answer)

你们见过大先生

见过大先生

-Come quickly and meet my master!

-Our respects to the Master!

(Shuǐqīng speaks)

水青见过大先生

Shuiqing pays his respects to the master!

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

列位

这位便是吾师魏先生

All of you, this is my teacher Mr Wei Liangfu.

(The crowd speaks)

见过魏先生

Our respects to Mr Wei!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

免礼

Please, don't stand on ceremony

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

梁桂

带领他们 茶楼歇憩

Lead them to the tea pavilion where we will relax.

(The crowd speaks)

多谢伯龙先生

Our thanks Mr Liang!

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

师傅

久未拜候吾师

Master, it has been a while since I saw you last,

今观吾师容光焕发

I see you are glowing with happiness.

想必家有喜事

I assume there must be joyous family news?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

只为小女完成婚事

My daughter recently was married,

近日与小婿张野塘

悟出北调南唱之方

and in the last few days together with my son-in-law Zhang Yetang we managed to combine northern and singing styles.

故而身旷神怡

That's why you see me in such good spirits.

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

恭贺吾师诸般喜事

Congratulations on this marvelous wedding,

尤其解开南北扞格之秘

and especially on unlocking the secrets of these musical contradictions.

今日何不以师之水磨调

令歌儿歌之以侑觞

Today, why don't we listen to the Water Polished Sound as we enjoy our wine?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

好

就从你散曲之中

选上一曲吧

Very well, let us attempt to use it with one of your lyrics!

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

是 乙芝

A fine idea. Yizhi!

从《江东白苧》中

唱一首你娴熟之曲

Sing one of your best from my White Nettles of the Lower Yangtze collection.

(Yìzhī speaks)

是

那就献唱《过湘江》

Yes. I shall sing

Drifting down the River Xiang.

(Yìzhī sings)

【玉抱肚】

长途秋尽 阻西风

停桡远津

A long autumnal road, blocking the westerly wind.

Pulling up the oars far from the pier.

听冷冷 宝瑟还传

Hearing the tinkling of the zither.

看斑斑 修竹犹存

Seeing the spotted bamboo.

不知何处吊湘君

Where should I pay homage to the Xiang river god?

水尽南天不见云

Were it run dry, the southern sky would hang no cloud.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

啊呀呀 唱的好

唱的妙

Beautifully sung!

丝丝入扣 不差分毫

Exquisite phrasing, not even a tiny error.

水磨腔调真真可传矣

Water Polished music really could be passed on far and wide.

啊徒儿 乙芝的歌艺

缘何如此之精妙哪

How come Yizhi's singing is quite so meticulous?

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

师傅见问 待诉其详

Since you ask, I will explain my method.

弟子教此诸姬度曲

将灯熄灭

I have taught many girls to sing verse in this way. I first extinguish the lamp,

点清香一炷引之

声之疾徐高下

视香火之起伏

Then I light a stick of incense and train their breathing according to the patterns of smoke.

故而人人训练有素

能歌善舞

Absolutely anyone can be taught in this way.

想俺平生乎

When I think over my life:

(Liáng Chényú sings)

黄钟过曲【降黄龙】

浪荡江湖 舞女歌儿

走马平章

Hanging around the pleasure quarters listening to girls sing, from place to place.

将满腔壮志

肆意销磨 白玉飞觞

Instead of pursuing my ambitions, I whiled away the hours finding solace in the bottle

鬓霜也 幸水磨曲韵

可付与 浅斟低唱

Lucky in my old age that my teacher has created the Water Polished Sound I have something truly worth contributing to,

(Liáng Chényú speaks, then sings)

师傅啊

愿吾师 举讹批谬

揭糞榜样

Master, I hope you will criticize my mistakes and support my successes.

(Servant speaks)

小姐与姑爷出堂

The mistress and son-in-law have arrived in the hall!

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

伯龙兄长

见过伯龙兄长

My regards, brother Liang.

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

师妹

Sister!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

伯龙 这便是我的小婿

张野塘

Chenyu, this is my son-in-law Zhang Yetang.

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

见过野塘兄

My respects to Zhang Yetang!

(Zhāng Yětāng speaks)

见过伯龙兄

Our regards, brother Liang.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks, Liáng Chényú answers)

啊徒儿

师傅

- My dear student!

- Master!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

为师有意将水磨韵调

用于戏曲搬演

In order for me to succeed in bringing the Water Polished Sound on the stage,

徒儿能否与为师

完成此业否

would you be willing to help out your old teacher?

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

师傅之命

弟子敢不尽心竭力

Not lightly will I accept this duty, and will do no less than my very utmost.

弟子近日取西施吴王故事

撰为《浣纱记》

In fact I have recently composed a play based the story of the beauty Xishi and the King of Wu, called Washing the Silken Gauze.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

噢《浣纱记》

Washing the Silken Gauze!

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

此出处处讲求吾师之调法

This play needs the expertise that only you can provide.

以锣鼓身段配搭

化紧密为轻松

I want the gongs and drums to match the actors movements, which I want to be tight yet seem relaxed,

使之雅中带俗

I want there to be coarseness within elegance

思有以驰骋场上

但不知果然如何

But how all this can actually be realised I know not.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

何不将《浣纱记》

当下实验

Why don't we use Washing the Silken Gauze as experimental project?

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

吾师所言极是

An excellent idea.

子玉 乙芝 水青

Ziyu, Yizhi, Shuiqing,

你三人可将《浣纱记·泛湖》一段

演与众位评鉴

act out the scene “Boating on the Lake” for our hosts to comment on.

(Zìyù, Yìzhī, and Shuǐqīng speak)

是

Yes.

(Zìyù speaks)

渔翁哪里

Old fishermen, where are you?

(Shuǐqīng speaks)

来哉

Here I am!

相公有何吩咐

What orders does the young master have?

(Zìyù speaks)

我要下船

过湖中往海上去

I wish to cross the lake and make my way towards the sea.

(Shuǐqīng speaks)

不知相公

海上要到哪一方

Where does the master wish to go once he reaches the sea?

若出了海

If, on reaching the sea,

北风往广东

西风往日本

there be a northerly wind we will float to Guangdong.
Be there a westerly wind we will head towards Japan.

南风往齐国

Or be there a southerly wind to the kingdom of Qi.

今日恰是南风

Today there happens to be a southerly wind.

(Ziyù speaks)

既是南风

就往齐国去罢

Since it's a southerly wind, lets go to Qi then!

(Shuǐqīng speaks)

请相公夫人上船啊

Sir and madam, please board the boat!

(Yīzhī sings)

南双调【浆水令】

采莲泾 红芳尽死

At Cailian Jing, the red lotus flowers are dead.

越来溪 吴歌惨凄

On the Yuelai river, the songs of Wu are tragic.

(Ziyù sings)

【清江引】

人生聚散皆如此

Politics switches between
unions and partings,

莫论兴和废

Why talk of flourishing and decay?

富贵似浮云

世事如儿戏

Wealth is like a floating cloud, Mundane affairs like child's play.

惟愿普天下夫妻
都是咱共你

Hoping only that husbands and wives, Are together as you and I today.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

好戏 好戏

Bravo, an excellent scene!

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

师傅

他等所歌而做表

Master, please tell me your thoughts.

则《浣纱记》

是否可入水磨矣

Based on this do think that Washing the Silken Gauze can adopt the Water Polished sound?

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

好好好 融入水磨

Excellent! To blend it with the Water Polished technique is to sing a story with poetry.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks, the crowd repeats the last three words)

这叫做诗词唱故事

昆韵传四方

Let us spread the Kun sound across the four directions!

第六场 煞尾 虎丘曲会

Act 6:

The Huqiu Festival

(Guò Yúnshì sings)

仙吕入双调过曲【夜行船序】

月色澄清

Tonight's moon is bright and clear.

(Zhāng Méigǔ sings)

爱中秋佳节 倍添情兴

We love the mid-autumn day and its emotional cheer.

(Xiè Línquán sings)

杂沓里

紫陌接踵尘生

From all paths do the people appear.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

江南苏州

蔚为年中盛事

In Suzhou, this is to become a grand calendar occasion

你看 豪门贵胄

官宦人家 文人雅士

Look, members of all the noble houses, public officials and scholars.

庶民百姓

扶老携幼 三五成群

Also the common folk, young and old alike.

都向这虎丘纷纷来也

They come to Huqiu in threes and fours.

(The crowd speaks, Zhāng Yětang answers)

野塘兄

列位

-Brother Yetang!

-Greetings to you all!

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

列位乡亲

Friends and relatives,

今宵虎丘曲会

皓月当空 金风送爽

tonight at Huqiu with a bright moon in the sky, with a cool autumn wind.

在下过云适 荣登盟主

请听吾号令

I am honoured to have been appointed leader of an alliance.

在下先唱它一曲
Here my command.

然后依报名秩序递歌
After that we will follow a sequence according to registered names.

凡有胜吾者
方可参加决赛夺彩
Those victorious are invited to the final competition.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks, the crowd answers)

各位请听者
请教
-Listen ye!
-Please do.

(Guò Yúnshì sings)

南仙吕入双调【步步娇】
昨夜春归今朝夏
The spring of yesterday to the summer today,

时序如翻掌
相思恼断肠
time passes like the flipping of a hand.

只怕愁病无情
减却容光
I just fear that worries and illness will reduce my
beauty.

(The crowd applauds)

好
Excellent!

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

请教列位
在下以何腔唱此曲
Please, each of you, in which style was the verse that I just sang.

此曲出何处

Where did this verse come from?

回答正确

可取得赓唱资格

Whosoever answers correctly wins the right to sing the next one.

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks)

先生以昆山水磨调

唱此曲

This verse was sung according to the Water Polished technique,

此曲称作昨夜春归

it's called "Yesterday Evening Spring Ended"

南曲散套仙吕入双调

【步步娇】

It was a southern melody called Bubujiao.

夏日归思

乃王宠所作

The verse was Pondering the End of Summer by Wang Chong.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

回答正确

请唱

Correct answer, please sing!

(Yīng Zhuàn speaks, the crowd responds)

请

请

-Please!

-Please!

(Yīng Zhuàn sings)

南商调【二郎神】

拜新月 宝鼎中

明香满爇

Paying respect to the new moon. Incense from the burner, Bright and fragrant burns bright like a candle

愿我抛闪下男儿疾较些
Let me think less of my loved one,

得再睹同欢同悦
Of seeing him and being happy.

(The crowd applauds)

好
Excellent!

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

唱得字正腔圆
可欣可喜
Sung with perfect enunciation and round melody, excellent!

以小旦声口 而模拟唱出
尤其难得
The young lady is able to portray the full meaning. That is a particularly rare quality.

看来今宵皆唱水磨调矣
It seems today we are all singing Water Polished music!

请教此曲出处如何
May I ask, what work does this verse come from?

(Speaking off stage)

出自《琵琶记》
It comes from The Tale of the Pipa

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

不对
Wrong!

(Jinqīng speaks)

你不懂
没学养 还抢先
You wouldn't know, you have no education. To think you still call out first!

大家听我说
Everybody listen up.

此曲出自施惠

《拜月亭·幽闺拜月》

【南商调·二郎神】

This verse comes from Shi Hui's Praying Moon Pavilion sung to the melody Erlangshen.

(Jinqīng speaks, Guò Yúnshì answers)

阿差

不差

-Is that right?

-Correct!

(Guò Yúnshì speaks, the crowd repeats)

请唱

You are invited to sing!

(Jinqīng sings)

南仙吕宫【光光乍】

和尚去出家

As a monk I leave my family abode,

身上披袈裟

Wearing only a Buddhist robe.

有人请我修功课

Invited to self cultivate,

真箇快活光光

Now I am ready to luxur...

乍

...iate

(Zhāng Yětang speaks)

此曲出《南西厢》

净丑小曲

This verse was from the southern Tale of the Western Chamber sung by a clown.

待俺唱支北曲

以待赐教

I shall sing a northern verse and look forward to hearing your opinions on it.

(The crowd speaks)

请

请教

-Please!

-Please do.

(Zhāng Yětāng sings)

北仙吕【点绛唇】

游艺中原

脚跟无线 如蓬转

I travel around the central plain, aimless like flotsam.

望眼连天

日近长安远

Looking to the skies, I see the sun but I am further from Chang'an.

(The crowd was astonished)

好

Excellent!

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

果然胜国遗音

劲切雄丽

As expected a Yuan dynasty verse, powerful and handsome.

而尚出诸水磨耶

And sung in the Water Polished style!

难得 实在难得

How rare, a real rarity!

(Liáng Chényú speaks)

方才所歌 众所周知

That song, as everyone knows,

【点绛唇】出诸《北西厢》

我等也献上一曲

was from the northern version of The Tale of the Western Chamber.

Now I shall sing a little number.

(Liáng Chényú sings)

北正宫【端正好】

不念法华经

不礼梁皇忏

I read not sutras,

Nor native Buddhist texts,

彪了僧伽帽

Tossing away my monk's bonnet,

袒下我这偏衫

Removing my Buddhist dress

杀人心逗起英雄胆

Those murderous bandits awaken my heroic heart,

两只手将乌龙尾

钢椽搯

With both hands now grasp I dragon tails,

Armed with steel nails.

(The crowd applauds)

好

Excellent!

(Zǐyù sings)

北双调【新水令】

问扁舟何处恰才归

How long until this boat can take me home?

叹漂流 常在万重波里

A sigh for my floating life, carried by a thousand waves

当日个浪翻千丈急

Once a wave so big

快到齐国哉

We are almost at the Qi kingdom

今日个风息一帆迟

But today's calm sea makes progress slow.

(Yìzhī sings)

烟景迷离

望不断太湖水

Lost in mist, far from lake Taihu now.

(The crowd applauds)

好

Excellent!

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

列位乡亲是否知道

方才歌唱者是什么人啊

Everyone, do you all know who these singers are?

(Zhāng Méigǔ speaks)

是鼎鼎大名的梁辰鱼

伯龙先生

This is none other than the eminent Liang Chenyu

与他的三个弟子

子玉 乙芝 水青

and his students Ziyu, Yizhi and Shuiqing.

此乃当今吴中国工

魏良辅先生的嫡传弟子

And this is the Wei Liangyu's most important successor.

列位又是否知道

先前歌唱之二位为谁

Do you know who the two people singing before were?

(Shěn Xiàngfú speaks)

男的好像魏良辅先生门下

周似虞

Was not the man Mr Wei's pupil Zhou Siyu,

女的应是先生千金

莺啭小姐

And the lady his daughter Miss Yingzhuan.

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

答对一半

前半段女的

是先生千金莺啭

Almost correct, the lady is indeed Yingzhuān

后半段男的

是魏先生快婿张野塘

but the man was Mr Wei's son-in-law Zhang Yetang.

(Qǐ Zhāi speaks)

难怪彼等唱曲

一位妙似一位

Now wonder these verses are getting more and more impressive.

使我等不敢轻易出场

We dare not sing ourselves!

(All male characters speak)

原来是魏先生一伙的

They are all Mr Wei's circle.

(The crowd speaks)

先生

Good sir.

(Wèi Liángfǔ sings)

【脱布衫】

惟淡泊 势利名场

I care not for wealth and eminence

偏喜好 鼓笛笙簧

I just like the music and instruments

效韩娥 歌声绕梁

Lady Han's voice once sung resounded in the rafters,

羨跨凤乘龙天上

Nongyu became a musical phoenix ever after.

十年里研律析音不下堂
After a decade of labour stuck at home,

忽地里得意宫商
Suddenly strikes a winning tone.

恰似天风海雨骤飞扬
Just like a storm picking up,

又倏地缦声状
To then settle into a clear silk cup.

如淑气拂池塘
A mild air floats over the pond.

这陋生曲艺谁承望
That I should create this music so fair,

不由人愧怍难当
Is a weighty responsibility to bear.

愿诸君细端详
精论讲
I hope that all can scrutinize my work and find its faults.

切磋同唱
永世播霓裳
Together we spread it across the world.

(The crowd applauds and cheers)

好好好
Excellent! Excellent!
Excellent!

(Guò Yúnshì speaks)

当今曲圣魏先生
音贯寰宇呀
Today the Sage of sung verse, Mr Wei, touches the whole world!

(The crowd speaks)

音贯寰宇

Touches the whole world!

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks, the crowd answers)

众位父老乡亲

先生

-Ladies and gentlemen,

-Good sir.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks)

水磨曲成 融贯南北

the Water Polished Sound is born, merging the styles of north and south.

非在下一人之力

一人之功

This wasn't just the work of one man,

乃是我民族文脉之璀璨

but the literary radiance of a whole culture.

(Wèi Liángfǔ speaks, the crowd speaks the last two words)

我等不负皇天之恩

定能传唱千古

We shall not let down the kindness of heaven, and must pass this music on through the ages.

(Curtain call, the crowd sings) 【念奴娇序】

宵永 月正空明

This endless night under a moon bright,

斗清曲

我等亦来乘兴

Together sharing verse tonight,

水磨调

远近弘达声名

The name of Water Polished Music reaches a new height.

似长鸣 老鹤高岗

旭日东升 钧天响应

Like the call of the crane echoing from mountaintop slight.

似龙腾霞蔚瑞云蒸

Or dragon prancing through steamy rose cloud,

一吟世人觉醒

to the world below shining a light.

全剧终

谢谢观赏

The End

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